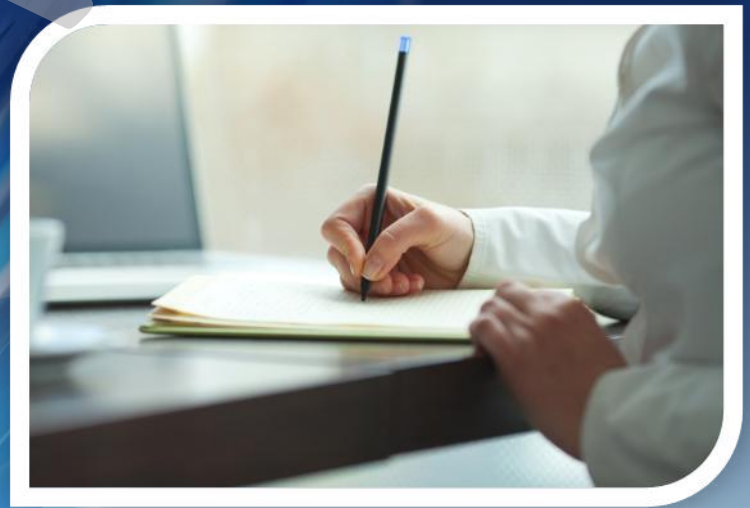




REPRODUCIBLE TRAINING LIBRARY

Customizable Soft-Skills Courseware

Solid Business Writing



Instructor Guide

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Instructional design and learning philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core-skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- Brainstorming sessions with target audience
- Library research
- Online research
- Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Subject Matter Experts (SME)
- Interviews with trainers

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:

- Learning objectives — effective tools for managing, monitoring and evaluating training
- Meaningfulness — connects the topic to the students' past, present, and future
- Appropriate organization of essential ideas — helps students focus on what they need to know in order to learn
- Modeling techniques — demonstrate to students how to act and solve problems
- Active application — the cornerstone to learning — helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation
- Consistency — creates consistent instructions and design to help students learn and retain new information
- Accelerated learning techniques — create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles

Application of Adult Learning Styles

Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions, and lectures within each course. This ensures that the learning will appeal to all learning styles and will be retained.

Please note: Only the pages highlighted in yellow below are those featured in this preview.

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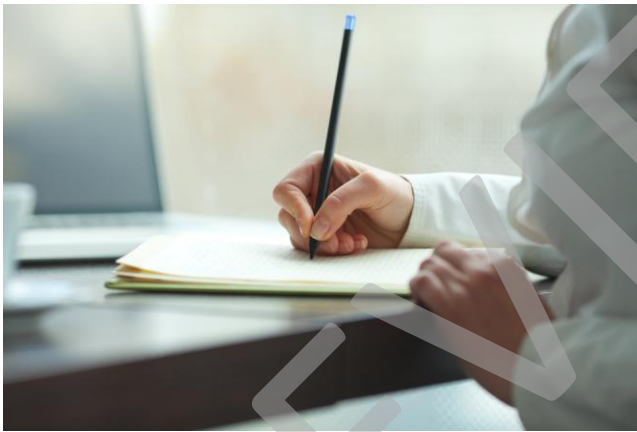
PREVIEW

Course objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge of and ability to:

- ◇ Implement techniques to effectively write all types of business documents
- ◇ Utilize outlining to plan documents
- ◇ Follow acceptable e-mail protocol
- ◇ Edit and proofread for complete and professional documents

Chapter One



PREPARING TO WRITE

Reasons to write well

Writing is a critical skill in the workplace because it:

- ◇ Represents your contributions and the importance of a task or project you're working on
- ◇ Creates an image with words
- ◇ Increases communication
- ◇ Represents your level of competence
- ◇ Helps to avoid misunderstandings

Why do we churn out babble that is boring to write and to read? We tend to:

- ◇ Think more words are better
- ◇ Think bigger words are better
- ◇ Present undeveloped ideas
- ◇ Try to impress others

Ingredients of a well-written document

We recognize when they are missing, but it's harder to identify what the necessary components are. Here's the list.

A well-written document:

- ◇ Cuts to the chase
- ◇ Is clear
- ◇ Is correct
- ◇ Is conversational
- ◇ Is easy to read



Transition: Acknowledge that many participants don't like to write, then transition to the reasons why it is important to write well (like it or not!). People judge us by the way we write, just as they do by the way we dress or talk. More and more, contact with coworkers and customers is through writing and the telephone. There is less face-to-face interaction. This makes it worthwhile to craft well-written documents.



We recognize when a document is not well written. Yet it can be hard to pinpoint what is missing. This list of ingredients provides a fail-safe checklist of the components of a well-written document. If these items are present, then the document is complete. Behavioral goal: Be able to identify the components of a well-written document. The built-in assumption is that this knowledge provides a foundation for the ability to prepare well-written documents.

Start with planning



- Know your readers.
- Include all necessary information.
- Desired action.
- Type of document.

Transition: The old adage “less is more” applies to writing. Spend more time planning and less time writing. This will produce better results.

Outline your message prior to writing. When planning what to write, focus 100% on the message and what you intend to say. You are less likely to leave something out or make a mistake.

Audience analysis

Topic:	
Who will receive the document?	
What do they need to know about the topic?	
Why are you writing to them?	
What questions might they have?	
Why should they be interested?	

Activity: Review the sample Audience Analysis form with participants. Have them complete the copy in the appendix for a document they are currently writing or plan to write.

Behavioral goal: Be able to produce a complete outline prior to writing a document.

How to spend less time writing

Plan before you write. This breaks down the writing process, makes it more manageable, and produces better results. Not to mention, you spend less time on the actual chore of writing.

When planning a document, consider who will read it, what information to include, the action you want readers to take, and what type of document will best present the information.

Who will read it?

Before writing you need to consider who the readers will be. Think about their perspective on the topic and what pieces of information they will want to have. This lets you compose a reader-centered document and increases the probability of getting the desired results.

Sample audience analysis	
Topic:	Notify staff of construction in the main parking area and alternative parking arrangements during this time.
Who will receive the document?	Company-wide staff.
What do they need to know about the topic?	They need to know when construction will begin, the anticipated duration, how their parking will be impacted, and where they can park.
Why are you writing to them?	The memo will provide additional information and answer anticipated questions.
What questions might they have about the topic?	How long will the construction last? Where can they park during this period? Why is the construction being done?
Why should they be interested in the topic?	They will not be able to park as close to the building as they are accustomed.

We've all read an e-mail or letter and "read between the lines," thinking, "They sound really angry!" We add a perceived emotion of the writer. It is the tone of the letter that creates this, which is why it is important to make sure your words convey the tone you would like the message to have.

Exercise: Tell participants to rewrite the sentences.

Possible solutions:

1. Janine reported tremendous productivity gains for the Zagtec line.
2. The final deadline was not met by the project team due to a printing error.
3. Congratulations! You have been chosen by your peers and management to receive the employee-of-the-month award.
4. Due to a decrease in revenue and across-the-board budget cuts, many personnel have a mandatory reduction in work hours. Effective Monday, your work hours will be reduced by 50 percent.

Use the active voice

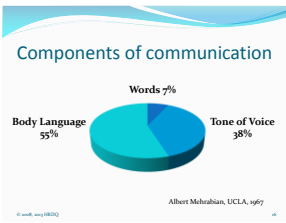
Rewrite the sentences below in the active voice.

1. At the morning meeting, tremendous productivity gains were reported by Janine for the Zagtec line.

2. Due to a printing error, the project team has not met the final deadline.

3. Next, consider the most appropriate tone. Write a message to tell someone that they have won the employee-of-the-month award.

4. Write a message to tell someone their work hours have been reduced by 50 percent.



Transition: Have you ever misunderstood an e-mail? You thought it said one thing, only to find out later that the writer intended something totally different. This is a daily occurrence and is often the result of relying only on words.

Review the components of communication. These are the components for face-to-face interactions. Note how much of the communication we are accustomed to is lost in e-mail.

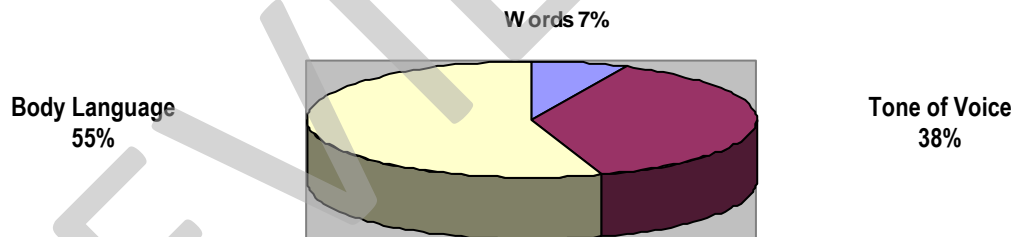
The other factor with e-mail is the speed with which it can be written and sent. Have you ever sent an e-mail and wished you could take it back? There are more misunderstandings with e-mail than written memos, due to the quickness with which it happens. E-mail is written and sent with the push of a button. It is quick and convenient. It captures our initial reactions and thoughts—which aren't necessarily our final or most calm thoughts. Writers often overlook basic writing

E-writing

Electronic communications remove 92 percent of the information we normally count on to interpret messages.

E-mail users have realized they cannot depend on body language or tone of voice, leaving only words to convey the message. This makes word choice and sentence composition more important than ever.

Components of communication



Albert Mehrabian, UCLA, 1967.

What's all the fuss?

There are several reasons that e-mail is a great communication tool.

E-mail:

- ◇ Provides immediate results
- ◇ Is virtually free
- ◇ Is backed-up
- ◇ Is the preferred method for most people

E-mail rules

1. Get to the point.
2. Be nice.
3. Edit.
4. Reply.
5. Write only what you would broadcast.

Transition: Just as you would demonstrate good manners when interacting with someone in person, use proper netiquette to avoid offending others with e-mail as well.

Discuss emoticons. Such as :-) :-(etc.

These help convey the tone of the message. Beware of overusing them. And don't type in all caps. Use them only for emphasis.

Emoticons

- :) Happy
- :(Sad
- :-| No feeling
- :) Wink
- >:) Mischievous
- wink

Give your e-mail personality by using emoticons.



More emoticons

- :| Angry
- %-) Confused
- 8-o Shocked
- :-(Crying
- :-* Kiss
- X-) Brain dead



Although you want to retain a conversational tone in e-mail, don't go overboard.

Communicate appropriately to your readers. Never use e-mail to avoid personal contact. Some news simply needs to be delivered in person.

Behavioral goal: To be able to prepare concise, direct, and effective e-mail that is not misinterpreted.

Netiquette

Given the text-only limitations of e-mail, "netiquette" has emerged to provide guidelines for e-mail.

E-mail rules

Get to the point

- ◇ Be direct and concise.
- ◇ Do not overload readers with too much information.
- ◇ Keep the reader's attention.
- ◇ Deliver a message with impact.
- ◇ Include all necessary pieces of information.

Be nice

- ◇ Choose your words carefully.
- ◇ Use a conversational tone.
- ◇ Choose your tone carefully.
- ◇ Carefully choose the receiver of the message.
- ◇ Use humor cautiously.
- ◇ Never send e-mail when you are upset.

Edit

- ◇ Always reread prior to sending.
- ◇ Edit just like a written document.

Reply

- ◇ Always answer e-mails that require a response.
- ◇ An acceptable response time is two business days.
- ◇ Make sure to respond to all questions asked.
- ◇ Use return receipt accordingly, not all the time.

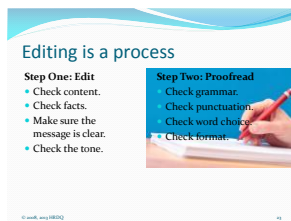
Don't broadcast

- ◇ Do not write anything in e-mail that you would not want broadcast to many people. Never assume e-mail is confidential.
- ◇ Never make negative or disparaging remarks.

Ask, "What do you think when you receive a document that has typos and errors in it?" Solicit answers from the group.

Answers will include: sloppy work, incompetence, writer doesn't care, slacker, etc.

This is why editing is a crucial step. Don't even think about sending out a document that you have not edited at least once.



Transition: We all make mistakes. It's easy to mistype a word, use the wrong word, or misspell something.

It's all too easy in written or electronic documents to fire off an e-mail with these errors included. We know that this is bad.

Think about your reaction when you receive something with errors in it. Ask, "What is your reaction when you receive something with errors in it?"

Edit, edit

Your writing represents your work, and work with simple errors looks shoddy. Editing ensures that your work is complete.

There are two separate steps in the editing process: (1) editing and (2) proofreading.

Step one: Edit

Step one is to edit. Check your content. Check your facts. This means reading the document over to make sure it says exactly what you want it to say. The purpose is to make sure the message is concise, clear, and complete. Nothing more. Also, check the tone of the message at this point.

- ◇ Don't rely solely on the spell-check.
- ◇ Double-check numbers, dates, and names.
- ◇ Ask someone else to read the document.
- ◇ Use breathing room between writing and editing.

Tip: Read the document backwards when editing. This forces you to focus on each word and increases accuracy.

Course review

1. False. Make documents visually appealing and easy to read.

2. Catchy, informative

3. None of the above. The compare/contrast method outlines the features of two or more items.

4. No. This sentence is written in the passive voice. In the active voice it would be: *Team members hit four home runs at the baseball game.*

5. False. Words convey 7 percent of the message meaning.

6. "Netiquette" defines the guidelines for acceptable behavior of electronic communication.

1. When writing business letters, use one paragraph to get as much information as possible on one page.

True False

2. Subject lines for memos and e-mails should be:

- a. Catchy
- b. Informative
- c. Lengthy
- d. Racy

3. When using the compare/contrast organizational method for writing a document:

- a. Content is organized in the order things occurred
- b. The bottom line is presented first
- c. Content is organized in order of importance
- d. All of the above
- e. None of the above

4. Is the following sentence written in the active voice?

At the baseball game, four home runs were hit by team members.

Yes No

5. Fifty-five percent of a message's meaning (in interpersonal communication) is conveyed through words.

True False

6. What is "netiquette"?

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