



I. Select Content to Accomplish Objectives

Determine Your Objectives

- Know your objectives and how they will shape your message
- Know the types of objectives that are relevant to business writing
- Write in a reader-oriented fashion

Analyze the Readers

- Identify the readers
- Identify what the readers know, do not know or misunderstand about
 - The writer
 - Their position in relationship to the subject
 - The subject
- Identify how the readers feel about the subject, their position and you, the writer

Select facts and concepts to accomplish the objectives with these readers

- Select facts, concepts and procedures to accomplish each objective
- Use only relevant information that will achieve the objective
- Include enough information for the reader to achieve the objective

II. Organize So Readers Follow You Easily

Organize so readers understand and remember

- Organize from the outside in: the main points, then subpoints.
- Use an outline to organize
- Create a well-organized message

III. Select Strategies to Have the Impact You Desire

Write clear openings and closings so the reader knows what is in blocks of text

Use strategies to help the reader understand the message

- Write the context, content and action at the beginning of every message
- Place memory information at the beginning
- Emphasize important points in the ending
- Select an appropriate difficulty or technical level
- Use an appropriate formal or informal stance with the reader
- Know any requirements for the document, especially legal requirements, and satisfy them
- Satisfy reader expectations for the document

IV. Write Clearly, Simply and Directly

Write using clear, simple words, sentences and paragraphs

- Use simple words

- Keep the terminology at the level and background appropriate for the readers
- Use mostly short, simple sentences
- Use clear, organized and coherent paragraphs
- Use transitions to help readers follow the story

Write concisely without redundancies and deadwood

- Eliminate deadwood and redundancies from the writing
- Shorten the word combinations that use too many words
- Combine sentences to use fewer words

V. Edit to Polish Your Writing

Edit to ensure that the writing is so clear that the reader cannot misunderstand

- Date drafts
- Edit for overall organization
- Check for conciseness and completeness
- Keep sentences to 15 to 20 words or less
- Keep one or two ideas in most sentences, but no more than three
- Use action verbs when possible
- Keep ideas that work together close to one another
- Avoid prepositional phrases when possible
- Use active voice
- Break out lists into bullets
- Use words at an appropriate technical or difficulty level for the reader
- Use a tone appropriate for the message and relationship
- Avoid "-ion" constructions
- Define terms
- Use precise words
- Avoid stilted words
- Use plain English words
- Avoid weak words that are so overused they convey little meaning
- Include transition statements that help to hold the information together

VI. Format for Clarity and Readability

Use an attractive, easy-to-follow format for the writing

- Keep margins to one inch on all sides. If the document is bound, leave an extra quarter of an inch on the bound side
- Do not use full justification. Leave the lines ragged right
- Use white space when possible
- Break all lists of more than three items or with items that are longer than five words each into bulleted lists

- Use a numbered list when you have a sequence, steps or procedure
- Keep paragraphs to five or six lines with an occasional four or seven line paragraph
- Skip lines before and after headings in single-spaced documents. Skip two lines before a first level heading and one before all other headings
- Skip a line between paragraphs when you single space a document
- Use headings for all sections
- Include graphics and illustrations when appropriate
- Use 11- or 12-point fonts. Use only one type of serif font and possibly one sans serif font. Don't use two serif or two sans serif fonts
- Use no more than one color as an accent. Do not use color for headings
- Use little bolding and underlining. Reserve them for the most important places
- Make the most important idea stand out by centering it and skipping space before and after, but don't use it more than once

VII. On-Line Message Etiquette

Use an attractive, easy-to-read format for the writing

- Have a clear heading that states the date, the receiver's name, your name and enough about the subject to let the reader evaluate the message
- Keep lines of text to fewer than 80 characters
- Use white space just as you would for printed writing
- Use shorter paragraphs. Try to keep paragraphs to three or four lines if possible
- Use headings
- Write your message in one screenfull when possible. If you can't, don't cut it short so it's difficult to understand

On-Line Message Etiquette, con't

- Do not use capitals for entire lines of text, unless they are headlines

VIII. Proofread for Correctness

Proofread so the usage is correct

- Proofread for the things that would create problems for your company
- Proofread for formatting and consistency
- Proofread charts, graphs, and illustrations
- Do a separate numbers check

- Check dates and times
- Check phone numbers
- Proofread for usage
- Proofread the punctuation
- Proofread for spelling