

emPOWERED™ Business Writing

PREWRITE • ORGANIZE • WRITE • EVALUATE • REVISE • EDIT • DESIGN

Business Writing

PREWRITE

YOUR GOAL

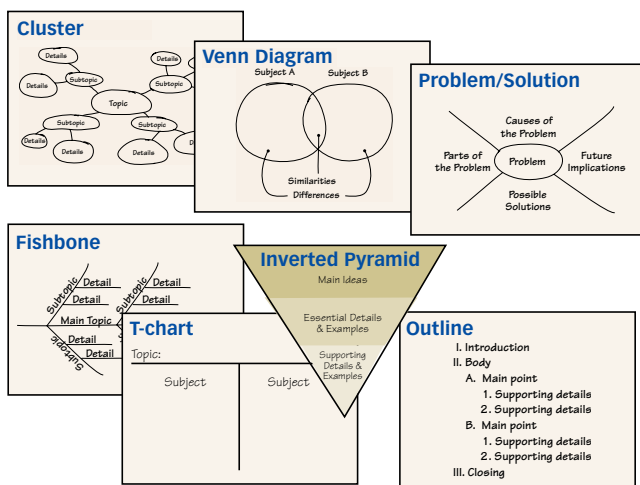
When you prewrite, identify your purpose, your audience, the context, and the desired result. Ask the following questions to get started. (pp. 74–75) *

1. Why am I writing this?
2. Who is the reader?
3. How much does my reader know?
4. What do I want the reader to think or do?
5. What are her or his needs, biases, questions?
6. How can I get the desired result?
7. What information do I need?
8. Where can I find this information?
9. What form of writing should I use?
10. When and where do I need to send or submit this?

ORGANIZE

YOUR GOAL

Gather information and details and organize your thoughts carefully. Depending on your reason for writing, use one or more of the following graphic organizers. (pp. 75–77) *



ADDITIONAL ORGANIZING PATTERNS (pp. 18–19) *

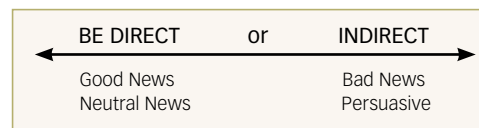
- Three-part structure
- Chronological order
- Alphabetical order
- Cause/Effect
- Order of importance
- Spatial order
- Categorizing
- Questions/Answers

WRITE

YOUR GOAL

Write a draft based on your prewriting plan and gathered information. Follow the drafting guidelines to achieve your desired result. (pp. 78–81) *

- Use the appropriate style.

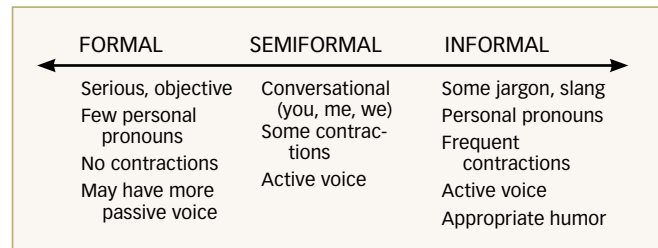


Convey Good or Neutral News (p. 21) *

Convey Difficult or Bad News (p. 22) *

Convey Persuasive Ideas (p. 23) *

- Use the appropriate tone. (pp. 26–27) *



- Use complete and accurate details to state and support your main point and to answer your readers' main questions. (pp. 11–16) *

1. What do you mean?
2. Can you prove it?
3. Why is it important?

- Draft your document.

Use your prewriting material.

Write an opening, a middle, and a closing.

Develop a logical flow.

Use paragraphs for longer documents.

- * See *Write for Business*, www.upwritepress.com

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EVALUATE AND REVISE

YOUR GOAL

Evaluate and revise your draft to achieve clarity and emphasis based on the five questions below. (pp. 82–87) *

1. Is the purpose clearly stated and positioned strategically in the document?
2. Are my ideas clear and presented in a logical way?
3. Did I choose words well?

Avoid wordiness, redundancy, jargon, overuse of big words, meaningless modifiers, and negative words.

Use specific nouns and verbs.

4. Could I improve any sentences?

Avoid fragments, choppy sentences, tired sentences, and rambling sentences. Use helpful transitions and linking words and phrases.

5. Do I need to share the document with others for review and comment?

EDIT AND PROOFREAD

YOUR GOAL

Create a document with strong, clear sentences free of distracting errors in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. (pp. 88–89) *

STRONG SENTENCES

- 1 Use active voice instead of passive voice.

Rob **finished** the report. (active)

The report **was finished** by Rob. (passive)

FYI **Active voice** means that the subject acts or does something. **Passive voice** means that the subject is acted upon. Passive verbs always begin with a form of “be”—*am, are, is, was, were, be, being, been*, etc.

- 2 Choose strong verbs.

Tired: I **had a discussion** of the incident with the Undercoating Crew. They **gave me their confirmation** that these problems had occurred before.

Energetic: I **discussed** the incident with the Undercoating Crew. They **confirmed** that these problems had occurred before.

FYI In the tired sentences above, weak verbs followed by noun objects are used in place of single, strong verbs. Note how the strong verbs energize the sentences.

- 3 Be certain that subjects and verbs agree.

The operation **manual covers** key issues. (singular **subject**, singular **verb**)

The operation **manuals cover** key issues. (plural **subject**, plural **verb**)

The operation **manual** and the **checklists cover** key issues. (two **subjects** joined with *and*, plural **verb**)

Either the operation **manual** or the **checklist covers** key issues. (two singular **subjects** joined with *or*, singular **verb**)

Either the operation **manual** or the **checklists cover** key issues.

Either the operation **manuals** or the **checklist covers** key issues. (two **subjects**, one singular and one plural, joined with *or*; **verb** agrees with the nearest subject)

The **manual**, as well as the checklists, **covers** key issues. (one singular **subject** + added information, singular **verb**)

The **manuals**, as well as the checklist, **cover** key issues. (one plural **subject** + added information, plural **verb**)

- 4 Make the pronoun-antecedent reference clear.

Although our **CEO** always writes and revises **her speeches**, **she** asks someone to read **them** aloud to **her**. (Although this sentence has two **antecedents** and four **pronouns**, the sentence is clear.)

The employee **retreats** offer **opportunities** to build leadership **skills**. **They** should not be missed.

Unclear: Which **antecedent** does **they** refer to?

Clear: The employee retreats offer opportunities to build leadership skills. **These opportunities** should not be missed.

Clear: Do not miss the opportunities to build leadership skills at an employee retreat. (It is often necessary to rewrite the sentence to make it clear.)

- 5 Be certain singular pronouns agree with their antecedents.

Susan paid for **her** lunch.

(singular, feminine **antecedent**; singular, feminine **pronoun**)

Mr. Costa paid for **his** lunch.

(singular, masculine **antecedent**; singular, masculine **pronoun**)

One of the reports is missing **its** cover.

(singular, neuter **antecedent**; singular neuter **pronoun**)

FYI Other singular pronouns: *either, neither, each, anyone, everyone, everybody, somebody, nobody, another*, and *none*

FYI When *anyone* or *everyone* is used to refer to both sexes or either sex, you will have to choose whether to offer optional pronouns or to rewrite the sentence.

Everyone will turn in **his** or **her** time card. (optional pronouns)

All **employees** will turn in **their** time cards. (rewritten using plurals)

- 6 Be certain a plural pronoun has a plural antecedent.

After **employees** attend a Writing Better Workshop, **they** have more confidence. (plural **antecedent**; plural **pronoun**)

After **employees** attend a Writing Better Workshop, **their** confidence increases. (plural **antecedent**; plural **pronoun**)

- 7 Be certain a pronoun agrees with a collective-noun antecedent.

The personnel **committee** has completed **its** report. (singular **antecedent**; singular **pronoun**)

The **committee** will cast **their** votes tomorrow.

(When members of a collective noun, such as *committee*, are acting as individuals, use a plural **pronoun**.)

FYI To avoid debating whether individuals are acting or the group is acting, rewrite the sentence.

The committee **members** will cast **their** votes tomorrow.

COMMA

- 8** Use a comma before a **coordinating conjunction** (*and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so*) in a compound sentence. Ability may get you to the top, **but** only character will keep you there.

“A doctor can bury his mistakes, **but** an architect can only advise his client to plant vines.” – Frank Lloyd Wright

FYI Do not use a comma with a *compound verb*.

Marva **checked** the file and **removed** two unneeded documents.

- 9** Use a comma after most **introductory word groups**. **Although Charlemagne was a great patron of learning**, he never learned to write properly. (**adverb clause**)
Despite much practice, Charlemagne’s handwriting remained poor. (**prepositional phrase**)

FYI The comma is usually omitted if the **word group** follows the main clause. These **word groups** are often needed to complete the meaning of the sentence and, therefore, should not be set off with a comma.

Maybe Charlemagne didn’t learn **because he had an empire to run**.

There’s no sense making mistakes **if you don’t learn from them**.

- 10** Use a comma if the **word group** following the main clause is **NOT essential to the meaning of the sentence**.

Such word groups often begin with **even though, although, while**, or another conjunction expressing a contrast.

Charlemagne never learned to write properly, **even though he continued to practice**.

- 11** Use commas to separate three or more items (words, phrases, or clauses) in a **series**.

The best workplace chair has **a padded seat, an adjustable backrest, and a lumbar support**.

FYI Use *parallel wording* for all items in a series.

Many employees balance working with **caring** for a family and home, **getting** exercise, and **finding** time to relax. (The items in the series all begin with *-ing* words.)

Many employees **care** for a family and home, **get** exercise, and **find** time to relax. (Each item begins with a verb.)

- 12** Use commas between two or more adjectives that **modify the same noun equally**.

Our database provides **reliable, efficient** information for our sales force.

TESTS FOR EQUAL ADJECTIVES

- 1. Switch the order of the adjectives.**

If the sentence is still clear, the adjectives are equal. (If **reliable** and **efficient** were switched, the sentence above would still be clear; therefore, use a comma.)

- 2. Place *and* between the adjectives.**

If the sentence is still clear, insert a comma (without *and*). (If *and* were used between the adjectives above, the sentence would still be clear.)

- 13** Use commas to set off items in a **date** and in an **address**.

The convention will be held **May 7, 2005**, in **Atlanta, Georgia**.

The convention hotel is located at **35115 West State Street, Atlanta, Georgia**.

We will attend the hearings in **Washington, D.C.**

FYI Do not use a comma before the zip code:

Burlington, WI 53105

- 14** Use commas to set off **word groups** that simply add information to a sentence.

Roy, **who is training to be a manager**, promotes our department’s goals.

Good service at a reasonable rate, **which sums up the department’s goal**, brings success.

Drive-in banks, **according to E. Joseph Cossman**, were built so cars could meet their real owners.

Scott Erickson, **a landscape designer**, uses his laptop at the office and in the field.

- 15** Do not put commas around information needed for the sentence to make sense.

Employees **who are praised for new ideas** offer creative, workable solutions to problems.

Companies **that offer flexible hours** often have happy, efficient workers.

Landscape designer **Scott Erickson** uses his laptop at the office and in the field.

- 16** Use commas to enclose initials, a title, or names that follow a surname.

Mr. Anton Sellek, **Sr.**, and James Matthews, **Esq.**, will arrive before noon.

Daly, **C. U.**, and Herr, **I. M.**, are not alphabetized correctly on this list.

FYI It is also acceptable to use **Jr.** and **Sr.** without commas.

John Kennedy Jr. had a variety of careers.

- 17** Do not use commas to set off Roman numeral suffixes.

John Williams III gave an inspiring after-dinner talk.

- 18** Use commas to set off the exact words of the speaker from the rest of the sentence.

“**Nothing in fine print is ever good news**,” quipped Andy Rooney.

SEMICOLON

- 19** Use a semicolon to join two closely related sentences.

When business is good, it pays to advertise; when business is bad, you’ve got to advertise.

- 20** Use a semicolon to join two sentences connected by a conjunctive adverb (**also, besides, however, instead, then, therefore**). Use a comma after the adverb.

Driving a rental car in an unfamiliar city is stressful; **however**, sometimes a person has no choice.

APOSTROPHE

21 Use an apostrophe and an s with a singular noun to show ownership.

- Brent's résumé the building's main entrance
- everyone's input today's stock quotes
- a year's experience the Bank of Madison's policy

FYI When a singular noun of more than one syllable ends with an s or a z, the possessive may be made with only an apostrophe.

- Dallas' (or Dallas's) skyline
- Kansas' (or Kansas's) cornfields
- A waitress' (or waitress's) tips

22 Use only an apostrophe with plural nouns to show ownership.

- Bosses' Day several committees' reports
- two cents' worth

23 Use an apostrophe and an s in the last word in a series to show joint possession.

- Yolanda, Sara, and Elana's project proved successful. (All three work together on one project.)
- Yolanda's, Sara's, and Elana's projects won awards. (Each one works on her own project.)

HYPHEN

24 Use a hyphen to join two words that serve as a single adjective preceding a noun.

- Only double-insulated wire should be used.
- She usually takes a middle-of-the-road position.

FYI Do not use a hyphen when the words forming the adjective follow the noun.

Use only wire that is double insulated.

25 Use a hyphen to join numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine when they are written out.

- twenty-one sixty-six ninety-nine

QUOTATION MARKS

26 Place periods and commas inside quotation marks.

- "Double-check the hotel reservations, Dave," said Mr. Schmidt. "Our flight is late."
- My favorite song is "Walk This Way."

27 Place question marks and exclamation points inside quotation marks when they are part of the quotation. Place them outside when they are not part of the quotation.

- I almost laughed when he asked, "Will that be a problem?"
- Did you hear Molly say, "Oh, no, sir"?

FYI If you have questions about capitalization, please see *Write for Business*, pages 273–276.

DESIGN

YOUR GOAL

Design your document so that the information looks inviting to the reader. (pp. 59–70) *

1. Create a reader-friendly design.
2. Choose easy-to-read typefaces and type sizes.
3. Add headings and subheadings in longer documents.
4. Use parallel words for headings and subheadings.
5. Use bullets or numbers for lists.
6. Keep all items in a list on the same page.
7. Use appropriate margins and lines of a moderate length.
8. Try boldface, underlining, highlighting, italics, boxes, uppercase, and color for emphasis.
9. Consider using charts and other graphics.
10. Include white space.

FIND IT IN *WRITE FOR BUSINESS*

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