



Business Writing

Quick Reference Guide



Before You Write

Before you start writing, it's important to understand what business writing is and identify the objective of your message.

What is business writing?

The primary purpose of business writing is to provide information so the reader can learn something or do something. It could be supplemental information for a meeting, a report, or a request.

How do you determine the objective?

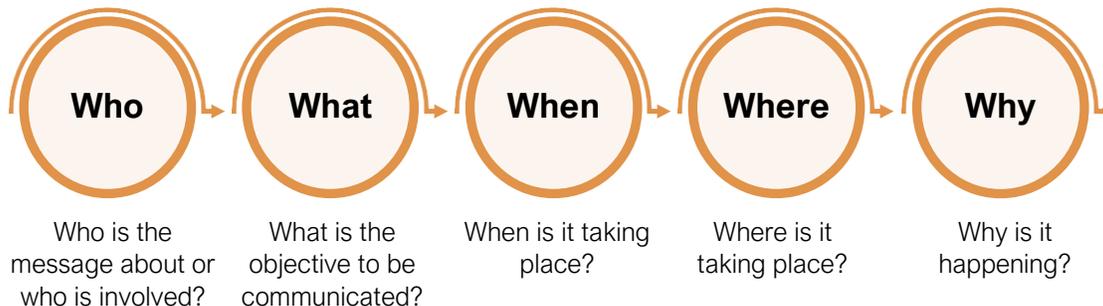
The message needs to have a clear objective to be effective. Identify who the reader is and what they need to know or do. Consider:

The purpose is to _____ so that readers will _____.



Organize Your Thoughts

Organizing your thoughts before writing helps to craft a more direct and effective message. Following the 5 W's is one method used to gather information for business writing.



Write Your Message

Being an effective writer is an essential business skill. Those who perfect their writing skills are better at advancing their career, build confidence in others, and gain the ability to direct, persuade, and inform.

Follow these simple rules when writing your message:

- 1 **Be Concise:** Use only the words necessary to convey your message.
- 2 **Be Clear:** Be specific instead of general, be definite instead of vague.
- 3 **Be Positive:** Make definite statements and avoid noncommittal language.
- 4 **Be Active:** The active voice is direct, and it sounds energetic and confident.
- 5 **Be Professional:** Act in a way that meets the standards of your profession.

Anatomy of Communication

Just like other forms of writing, business writing has 3 basic parts: A greeting, a body, and a closing. Keep this in mind as you write.

Dear Howie,

Congratulations on your promotion!

Rayna Oden told me the good news last week. I understand you were chosen from a large pool of candidates; what a great testament to your skills and talents as a programmer.

I look forward to working with you more in the near future.

Sincerely,
Reed Stephens
Project Manager

Greeting

Kicks off your message and sets the tone.

Body

Where the bulk of the communication takes place.

Closing

Wraps up your writing and allows you to leave a lasting impression.

When writing, people naturally want to start with background info, then details of the issue, and finally the call to action. However, many people don't take the time to read an entire message. Instead, start with the call to action. That way the objective will be addressed, even if the reader doesn't thoroughly read the entire message.

Editing

Revising your work is essential in writing; rarely will you get the message right in the first draft. Read through your work and revise it until it says exactly what you want it to say.



Step away before you dig in

If time allows, give yourself some time away from the document.



Get feedback from others

Sharing your writing with others ensures your document reads the way you want it to.



Print the document

No matter how good you are at reading and writing on-screen, it is still easier to read from paper.



Read the document aloud

Hearing your message will give you a better idea of how it will sound to others as they read it.

Document Design

Just as important as what you write in a message is the design and layout of the document. A reader can glance at the design and decide if the document is worth reading. It's extremely important to consider the length of the document, the font size, and the amount of white space on the page.

Keep paragraphs short—no more than 5 to 7 sentences

Add extra space between paragraphs

Use at least 1" margins for printed documents

Marketing Meeting

Recent economic changes have presented us an opportunity to increase business. We'll discuss how to take advantage of this on **Thursday, November 19th** at 9:30am in the conference room.

We will discuss:

- How to gain the attention of customers in the right markets
- Which branding initiatives to focus on

Attendance

Everyone on the team is required to attend

Questions?

Contact Alan with questions prior to the meeting.

Bold key information and headings

Use lists over paragraphs whenever possible

Serif fonts (AaBbCc) are best for printing

Sans-serif fonts (AaBbCc) are best for on-screen reading