

Basic Writing Tips

Being back in college and having writing-intensive courses has reminded me of the challenges surrounding writing. We have created this page to offer some basic writing tips that will hopefully set you off on the effective writing path, or simply help you to hone your skills.

When I write like I talk, I write sentences that are too long. Although this might be how the words flow out of my mouth, I appreciate having the chance to edit my thoughts before they get to the listener (reader).

Why an Outline is important

- An outline can help you organize the information that you want to convey whether writing a personal or legal letter, creative writing, and academic writing.
- It gives you an ordered overview of your writing, which can help you see something you may have missed or need to take out of the writing.
- It aids in the overall writing process.

How to Create an Outline

- Determine the purpose of your writing.
- Brainstorm: make a list of important points to include in your writing.
- Organize and arrange your ideas in sections and subsections from general to specific and create headings and subheadings for each section.

Paragraph Development

- Remember: you are trying to say something (your premise) which should be clear and understandable.
- The first sentence in each paragraph should give the outline or the basic idea for the paragraph. Read the first sentence of each paragraph and see if it provides a decent outline to the paper, the request, or the letter you're writing.
- The rest of the paragraph should explain your first sentence so the reader has a clear picture without too much information.
- Conclusion. The final paragraph or two are there to bring all the paragraphs together and then create a summary based on the information you've shared throughout the document.

Grammar

Grammar can determine the difference between getting your point across or being totally misunderstood. The words you use and how you use them are very important components of writing. Here are some grammar tips to help strengthen your writing skills that we found at [GrammarBook.com](http://www.grammarbook.com). for more information visit- <http://www.grammarbook.com/grammar/effWrite.asp>

- Use concrete rather than vague language.
- Avoid vague language.
- Use active voice when possible. Active: Sue changed the tire. Passive: The tire was changed by Sue.
- Avoid overusing *there is, there are, it is, it was*, etc.
- Do not use slang.

Second Guess Yourself!

Write drafts! Computers are great for coming back to something and making big changes like moving paragraphs to reorder your argument.

- Proofread to check for spelling, grammar and flow.
- Know yourself. Are there mistakes you make more often than others? Double check for those!
- Know your goal: what is your point? Are you conveying it clearly?
- Writing drafts, knowing that you can go back later and edit, will relieve the pressure
- Remember to re-read, and look especially closely for miss-spelled words or wrong words like these:

accept/except	your/you're
effect/affect	their/they're/there
lay/lie	theirs/there's
loose/lose	then/than
passed/past	principle/principal
personal/personnel	capital/capitol
moral/morale	compliment/complement
its/it's	

Writer's Block For more information visit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Writer%27s_block

It is said that every writer experiences writer's block so here are some helpful tips to help you get through it:

- Write through it, don't think just write!
- Walk away for a while and return with a fresh perspective.
- Exercise or do some other activity that gets the blood flowing.
- Use people and things around you for inspiration.

You can find more information on the internet by checking out the links below.

Apostrophes-

<https://swandawritingresources.wikispaces.com/file/view/Avoiding+Apostrophe+Catastrophes.pdf>

Commas-

<http://www.grammarbook.com/punctuation/commas.asp>

Semi-colons, colons and dashes-

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/semi-colons-colons-and-dashes/>

Tips not made up by Fair Shake or overheard in public have been borrowed from the following website:

<http://www.techrepublic.com/blog/five-apps/five-simple-tips-that-will-improve-your-writing-a-thousand-percent/>

Go to our Basic Writing Tips page for more information: <https://www.fairshake.net/basic-writing-tips/>