

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 tend to write long sentences. Although this might be how the words flow out of my mouth, one of the benefits of writing is that I have a chance to edit my work before sending or giving it to the 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.
- 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.
- Aids in the overall writing process.

How to Create an Outline

- Determine the purpose of your writing.
- Brainstorm, make a list of important points in your writing.
- Organize the ideas, arrange the ideas in sections and subsections from general to specific.
- Label, create main headings and sub headings.

Paragraph development

- Remember: you are trying to say something (your premise) which should be clear and understandable.
- Topic sentence: introduce what you are talking about. 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 pretty much provides a decent outline to the paper, the request, the letter or whatever you're writing.
- Body: explain what you're talking about; your argument, description, examples and/or personal experiences.
- Conclusion: wrap it up, drive your point home.

Grammar

Grammar can be 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 whenever possible. Active voice means the subject is performing the verb. Passive voice means the subject receives the action.
- Avoid overusing *there is, there are, it is, it was*, etc.
- Do not use slang, limiting language limits your ability to convey your point to vast audiences.

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 will relieve the pressure knowing that you can go back later and edit.
- Remember to re-read and look especially closely for miss-spelled words or wrong words like these:

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

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

I've struggled with writer's block on several. It is said that every writer experiences it, 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.

Tips not made up or overheard 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/>

You can find more information on the following at the web addresses provided 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/>