

The top 7 business writing skills you should master

Even if your position doesn't include the word 'writer,' good business writing skills are a must for any professional, regardless of industry. In fact, [two-thirds of employees](#) working for large companies write as part of their jobs, which goes up to 80% for service companies. While you may not write 100-page reports on a daily basis, you probably write emails and communicate with colleagues via messaging services like Slack.

For this reason, better business writing will lead to more effective communication in your organization.

For example, if you can quickly type up a concise email summing up your team's duties for a new project — everyone will know what to do, and your productivity will rise as a result. But if you use a poor writing style where the same email contains convoluted instructions that don't make sense — nobody will know what their role is in the new project, which can cause costly delays and mistakes.

That's why effective business writing skills are so necessary for all professional positions. The more you can refine the quality of the written communication at your organization, the more your efficiency and productivity will rise.

Do you want to become a better writer in the business world?

If so, you've come to the right place. We're covering 7 of the top business writing skills that every professional needs to master. Along the way, you'll learn best practices related to formatting, sentence structure, proofreading, and more.

Why do business writing skills matter?

From being able to craft effective emails to making company social media posts — writing is everywhere in business.

That's especially true in today's age, with the increasing prevalence of remote work across all industries. These remote workers rely even more on writing to keep up with their tasks via email and online chat.

Besides communicating with colleagues, professional writing skills come in handy for:

- PowerPoint presentations
- Summarizing the results of a report or study
- Creating step-by-step training tutorials for employees

- Creating convincing sales pitches and calls to action
- Drafting a formal business letter to another company

These are just a few examples where writing skills pay off. Also, the written word leaves a record behind that colleagues can refer to later — something you can't do with the spoken word.

That's why it's best to write out all-new training materials instead of giving a vocal presentation. That way, new employees can refer back to the training documents later.

Poor business writing skills waste time

Another reason why writing skills are so crucial is that **lousy writing wastes a lot of time and causes mistakes.**

There's plenty of evidence to back this up, too.

According to Josh Bernoff, professional author and ex-Forrester analyst, 81% of employees agree that poor writing wastes their time. Not only that, but he reports that bad writing **costs businesses nearly \$400 billion a year.**

That's a big reason why effective writing is one of the most sought-after skills by recruiters. The National Association of Colleagues and Employers reports that **73.4% of all employers** desire candidates with strong written communication skills.

That's why you should strive to improve your own writing to make yourself a more desirable hire to employers. Writing well will also save you time and improve efficiency and productivity, so it's a win-win.

7 business writing skills that will help you get ahead

Now that you know why writing skills are so essential, it's time for our crash business writing course. These seven skills will help you refine any piece of writing to near perfection, regardless of the subject.

Being a great business writer doesn't mean you need an advanced vocabulary or a perfect understanding of grammar. The goal isn't to reinvent the wheel when it comes to writing. In other words, you don't have to go off on profound tangents while attempting to be poetic.

Instead, good business writing is all about being **concise, efficient, and engaging.**

#7: Begin with in-depth research

The first step to writing any business document is to do calculated research. Of course, if you're writing a simple email or Slack chat to a colleague, you can skip this step (but you should still consider your tone and ensure that the information you included makes sense).

Yet, conducting in-depth research is always a must if you're writing a blog, detailed email, whitepaper, or business letter.

Also, research can, and should, take many forms — not just searching on Google or Wikipedia for quick answers.



Examples of effective research

techniques include:

- Consulting Reddit and Facebook groups to learn more about your target audience/customer
- Speaking with experts in the field you're writing about
- Analyzing data from online tools and apps (such as Google Search Console)
- Vetting online sources to verify their credibility
- Consulting with your colleagues on a company matter

These are all ways you can gather information on a subject before putting pen to paper.

Setting research goals

While research is undoubtedly critical, it can be easy to get lost in this phase if you aren't careful. Thorough research is always a good thing, but if you spend too much time researching, you'll have less time to write before your deadline approaches.

To avoid over-researching, always set **research goals** beforehand. A research goal lays out what you hope to accomplish with your research.

As an example, let's say that you're writing a PowerPoint presentation on the spending habits of your target audience during the holidays. As such, your research goal would be:

- To discover how your target audience spends money during the holiday season.

Once you meet that goal, you can wind down the research phase and move on to the next step. Certain documents may require more than one research goal, but it's essential to set them so you don't get lost doing research forever.

#6: Create an outline

A successful piece of writing requires a logical flow that transitions from one topic to the next seamlessly. The most reliable way to do that is to start by writing an outline for the document.

What's an outline?

It's a simplified version of all the points you want to cover in your piece. There's no need to get too detailed here; a simple series of bullet points will suffice.

The point of an outline is to give you a roadmap to follow when writing the piece. Without one, it can be easy to venture away from the topic by going on unnecessary tangents. Also, you may forget to include essential points without an outline, so you should always make one — even if it's brief.

An outline will save your life if you have a word count that you need to hit with a piece. Outlines are the easiest way to calculate and hit your word count.

Outlines are invaluable for collaborating with others, too. If you're going to write a presentation with a colleague, outlining it beforehand will help you both stay on the same page.

Here's an example of an outline:

- Intro - 200 words
- Why is Blank Necessary? - 500 words
- What are the Benefits of Blank? - 500 words
- What are the Cons of Blank? - 500 words
- Conclusion - 200 words

There's a simple outline for a 1,900-word document. As you can see, we included the word count for each section. That's how easy it is to create an outline, and the benefits of it are tenfold.

#5: K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple Stupid)

The acronym K.I.S.S. sums up what it takes to achieve great writing — keeping it simple stupid.

All too often, professionals think that business writing needs to be complicated. That's not true at all, especially if you want your employees or customers to understand what you're talking about. To drastically increase the retention of your writing, always use **simple words and short paragraphs**.

Not only does that make your writing easier to read, but it's also scanner-friendly.

What's that mean?

Well, [79% of internet users](#) scan written content they see online. That means they don't hang on every word — they quickly go over the page to find the most relevant/engaging content.

Internet users aren't the only ones that read this way, either.

Your employees will likely scan your emails and chats to find the juiciest bits of information that most pertains to them. Knowing this, you should structure your writing in a scanner-friendly way. That will not only improve the retention rate of your customers but also of your coworkers as well.

For word choice, do your best to keep them short and simple. If there's a simpler term that you can use instead of a complicated one, you should always use the version that's easier to understand.

Here's an example:

Convolutd: All employees must refrain from engaging in recreational activities on any digital devices during our standard hours of operation.

Simple: All staff must put away their smartphones and focus only on their tasks during the work day.

While the first sentence may make the writer seem 'smarter,' it's long-winded and confusing. The second sentence is far easier to understand and effectively gets the message across.

#4: Tell stories with your writing

Do you struggle with engaging your audience when writing?

If so, the best way to put an end to that is to master the art of storytelling — one of the most influential business writing skills. Conveying your message by telling a story is a highly effective way to improve retention, and there's scientific evidence for it.

Research by Uri Hasson at Princeton showed that whenever someone begins telling a story, the [listener's brain activity syncs with the storyteller](#). That means your audience will be directly engaged with you in a way that isn't possible outside of telling stories. Beyond that, stories trigger the reward circuits in our brains to come to life.

A great story can convince customers to convert, coworkers to pay attention to an email, and higher-ups to listen to what you have to say. Good writers are well aware of this, which is why they always weave storytelling with blogs, emails, whitepapers, and more.

#3: Choose the proper tone for the piece

The tone is a huge aspect of writing that you shouldn't ignore. Not only is it crucial to nail the tone for your organization, but you'll also want to know which tone works best for your customers.

Most businesses generally prefer a professional tone when communicating internally or with other companies. A more formal tone is accepted at some companies, especially with their customer-facing content. Many blogs tend to adopt a relaxed tone, as the goal is to emulate speaking to a friend.

It would be best always to consider the tone you're going for before beginning to write a piece. To do so, consider the needs of those who will read it.

Will this go to the higher-ups at your company, or are you writing a blog to appeal to dog lovers?

The former requires a professional tone, while you can get away with a more lax tone for the latter.

Also, you should almost always use an active voice when writing. That's because writing in a passive voice is often too wordy and confusing.

Here's an example:

- **Active voice:** Jerry disconnected his desktop computer.
- **Passive voice:** The desktop computer was disconnected by Jerry.

The active voice example is concise and far easier to read than the passive example — so always opt for an active voice whenever you can.

#2: Run a spell-checker and grammar checker

Once you've hammered out the first draft for a piece, it's time to start the revising process. No document comes out perfect on the first try, so you'll naturally have to do some editing.

There are plenty of tools out there that can help you with proofreading for spelling and grammatical errors. [Grammarly](#) does a great job in this regard, as do other tools online.

Yet, whenever you run one of these programs, don't automatically accept all its corrections. These tools are by no means perfect, and they can't infer the context or meaning of specific phrases. Double-check each one of its corrections to make sure that it's a sound criticism.

For instance, Grammarly can make some outstanding suggestions for rearranging sentence structure. At the same time, it can also ruin a sentence by wanting to switch out a word or change its tense — so keep a close eye on it.

#1: Don't overly rely on tools (proofread it yourself too)

Once you've run the grammar and spell checker, you still aren't done. Now it's time to do the most crucial task, which is to **read the entire document out loud to yourself**.

While this step may seem cumbersome, it's definitely necessary. Specific phrases and sentences may seem like they make sense as you write them but sound different out loud. Remember, tools and apps are great, but you will always be your best editor. Do your best to identify any spelling or grammatical errors that your tools didn't pick up.

Also, getting a second opinion from someone is always a good idea. Have them read the entire document to ensure that it's concise and clear in its meaning.

Final takeaways: Top 7 business writing skills

No matter the industry, business communication always involves a healthy amount of writing. As such, improving your business writing skills is always a good thing.

Clear and concise writing saves time, increases productivity, and converts web users into customers.

That's why it's worth striving to improve your skills as a business writer. Doing so will also make you more

attractive in the eyes of potential employers, which is always a plus.