COMMUNICATION: BUSINESS WRITING FUNDAMENTALS

Participant Guide
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COURSE OVERVIEW

*Business Writing Fundamentals* is designed to improve written communication. This course will review basic rules of writing, provide guidelines for the planning, organizing, drafting, and editing processes, and discuss how to structure writing in an online environment. Appropriate business writing protocol will also be discussed. Implementing the techniques presented in this course will produce writing that is clearer, more professional, and more effective.

Course Objectives:

- Participants will review basic punctuation, grammar, and spelling rules.
- Participants will identify and change inappropriate language in written communications.
- Participants will learn techniques for planning and organizing business communications, creating clear, concise, accurate, and professional writing to achieve maximum impact.
- Participants will practice techniques for effective editing, proofreading, and formatting.
- Participants will demonstrate transfer of business writing principles to online communications.
SECTION 1: REVIEW OF WRITING BASICS

In order to write professionally, it is important to understand the grammar and spelling rules that serve as the framework for language. This section will cover the most common mistakes that writers make and review the grammar and spelling rules that are most applicable to business writing.

Activity 1: Correct a Passage

Correct the passage below. Look for all types of errors.

Guys-

Tomorrows meeting has been rescheduled, we will be meeting on thursday instead. We will cover recruiting advertising community outreach and supervisor’s responsibilities. Their will be time at the end to discuss the affects of the new dress code, and any other concerns. Me or Marie will send out an itinerary. Its important that everyone be on time because I need 2 leave at 3 for a another meeting- with the lady from champaign. Be on time

Michael
COMMON GRAMMAR MISTAKES

“There,” “Their,” and “They’re” – “There” is an adverb that refers to place or position. “Their” is a possessive adjective used when referring to more than one person. “They’re” is a contraction of “they are.”

- “If I get there first, I’ll send you a message.”
- “Their conclusion is not scientifically sound.”
- “They’re going to be in town all of next week.”

“Effect” versus “Affect” – “Effect” is usually a noun and “affect” is usually a verb. (EXCEPTIONS: The only common usage of “effect” as a verb is in the phrase “effect change.” When used as a noun, “affect” refers to a person’s emotions or feelings; this usage is common in psychology.)

- “A cause and effect relationship has not been proven.”
- “Inclement weather will affect shipment time.”

“I” versus “Me” – “I” is used when you are the subject of the sentence. “Me” is used when you are the object. For example:

- “She and I went to the meeting.”
- “That discussion is between you and me.”

The best way to check if a sentence is correct is to eliminate all extra words and see if what’s left makes sense. Remove the extra words from the sentences below to see why they are incorrect.

- Incorrect: “Gina and me are going to grab some lunch.”
- Incorrect: “Frank showed the e-mail to Tanya and I.”

You would say “I am going to grab some lunch,” so the first sentence above is incorrect. You would say “Frank showed the e-mail to me,” so the second sentence is also incorrect.
Fragments – All sentences must contain a subject and a verb and express a complete thought. A sentence that is missing any of those elements is referred to as a fragment. The following sentences are fragments:

- **Incorrect:** “Because he has not finished the report yet.” ➔ “Let’s wait until tomorrow because he has not finished the report yet.”
- **Incorrect:** “A record of good work habits since you were hired.” ➔ “I see that you have a record of good work habits since you were hired.”
- **Incorrect:** “Which is an innovative approach.” ➔ “Pamela suggested creating a wiki, which is an innovative approach.”

Run-ons – A run-on sentence is not simply a sentence that seems too long. A run-on sentence occurs when two complete sentences are merged into one without the necessary conjunction or punctuation. Comma splices (as seen in the two sentences below) are a type of run-on sentence.

- **Incorrect:** “The clock wasn’t working, I had to check the time on my cell phone.”
- **Incorrect:** “Thursday will work for me I’d have to meet after 5:00 p.m.”

There are three basic ways to fix run-on sentences: separate them, use a semicolon, or add a conjunction (with a comma):

- “The clock wasn’t working. I had to check the time on my cell phone.”
- “The clock wasn’t working; I had to check the time on my cell phone.”
- “The clock wasn’t working, so I had to check the time on my cell phone.”

- “Thursday will work for me. I’d have to meet after 5:00 p.m.”
- “Thursday will work for me; I’d have to meet after 5:00 p.m.”
- “Thursday will work for me, but I’d have to meet after 5:00 p.m.”
PUNCTUATION

Commas – Commas are used to separate items in a list, after introductory phrases, to join independent clauses with coordinating conjunctions, and to set off clauses that are not crucial to a sentence.

• “The flyer says to bring paper, pencils, and glue.”
• “After we receive approval, we will share the findings online.”
• “We are trying to save money, so we bought the refurbished model.”
• “The interface, which was designed by an outside consultant, is very easy to navigate.”

Avoid comma splices by including a coordinating conjunction (such as “and”, “but,” or “so”) when merging two independent clauses.

“The first design is more stable.” ← “It is also less visually appealing.”

“The first design is more stable, but it is also less visually appealing.”

Semicolons – Semicolons are used to connect two independent clauses when a comma isn’t enough but everything should remain in one sentence. Semicolons are also used to separate items in a list when the items contain other punctuation. Do not capitalize the first letter of the word following a semicolon unless the word is a proper noun.

• “Stack the boxes of equipment behind the desk; we can deal with them tomorrow.”
• “The meeting will be attended by Dr. Jorgenson, a medical doctor; Dr. Patel, a researcher; and Tabitha Smiley, a graduate student.”

Colons – Colons are used to introduce a list, description, or explanation. Colons are also often used after greetings in business letters (for example, “Ms. Kennedy: [...]”).

• “Any request must include: a cover page, a brief rationale, a breakdown of projected expenditures, and the requester’s contact information.”
Parentheses – Parentheses are used to set off material that is supplementary and could be removed without affecting the meaning of a sentence. In business writing, the use of parentheses should be kept to a minimum.

- “The new room was completely empty (except for several power strips).”
- “It might be a good idea to contact Elisa (from Admissions and Records) to confirm.”

Dashes – Dashes (more specifically, em dashes) can be used in place of commas or parentheses. They are often used when commas are already used in the material between the dashes. The em dash, seen in the sentence below, is not to be confused with a hyphen. Do not put a space before or after dashes. To create an em dash in Microsoft Word, hit the hyphen key twice and then type the next word without inserting a space. The em dash will automatically appear. On a Mac, hit Option+Shift+hyphen.

- Incorrect: “Everyone- students, faculty, and staff- participated in the event.”
- “Everyone—students, faculty, and staff—participated in the event.”

Apostrophes – Apostrophes are used to show possession or in contractions. For plural nouns, the apostrophe showing possession is always placed after the ‘s,’ as shown in the fourth example.

- “The moderator’s notes were very comprehensive.”
- “The children’s schedule seems to be lacking.”
- Singular noun: “Elias’s transportation plan was approved.” OR “Elias’ transportation plan was approved.”
- Plural noun: “The professors’ lounge will be closed next week.”
CAPITALIZATION

Proper nouns – All proper nouns should be capitalized. Proper nouns are unique people, places, institutions, or things. Days of the week and months are considered proper nouns. When short, common words such as “of,” “and,” “for,” and “the” appear in proper nouns, they should not be capitalized.

- “Janet left a message on your desk.”
- “UIC stands for the University of Illinois at Chicago.”
- “The Great Cities Institute is hosting a speaker on Friday.”
- “Three UIC faculty members will be presenting in New York in May.”

Brand names – Brand names, which are also proper nouns, should be capitalized.

- “The UIC Flames are sponsored by Adidas.”
- “Applicants should be proficient with Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel.”
- “You will need Adobe Reader to view the file.”

Titles – Capitalize any title that comes before a person’s name.

- “Dr. Barajas will be out of the office until April 10th.”
- “I just received the invitation from Mr. Bertolini.”
- “Please forward this information to President Hogan.”

Titles of works – Capitalize the title of any work, such as an article, book, video, or CD. Notice that the word “the” is capitalized when it is the first word of the title of a work.

- “It might be helpful to review ‘The Integration of Fieldwork and Survey Methods’ before you begin.”
- “Steven Pinker’s The Blank Slate addresses some of the issues that you mentioned.”
- “After that, I will show a clip from Food, Inc.”

Internet – The word “Internet” should always be capitalized.

- “For some reason, we cannot connect to the Internet.”
SPELLING

Spell-check

- Will catch many grammar and spelling errors
- Should not be relied upon

Look it up

- Online dictionary
- Search engine
- UIC “Find People” page (www.uic.edu/uic/search)

“It’s” versus “Its”

Usually, adding an apostrophe to a word makes it possessive. *It* is an exception. *It’s* is a contraction of *it is*. *Its* is the possessive form of the word.

- *It’s* a nice day today.
- Be sure not to change any of *its* settings.
Different positions at UIC have different writing requirements. Employees are responsible for creating a variety of documents ranging from e-mails to grant proposals. This section will cover how to apply basic business writing principles to different formats.

What are the most common writing formats that you encounter in your job?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

How might you apply what you’ve learned to different formats?
SECTION 2: APPROPRIATE WORKPLACE LANGUAGE

Business writing should be free of any language that is discriminatory or potentially offensive. This section will discuss what language that is inappropriate and provide examples for how it can be changed.

GENDER NEUTRALITY

Alternatives to “He or She”

The phrase “he or she” is a common way of making a sentence gender-inclusive. While acceptable, this phrase is somewhat awkward, and should be avoided if possible.

Use the plural

- “All employees should turn in their timesheets by 3:00 p.m.”
- “Staff members should shut down their computers before leaving work.”
- “Assistants should check the message board every morning.”

Use “You”

- “You should turn in your timesheet by 3:00 p.m.”
- “You should shut down your computer before leaving work.”
- “You should check the message board every morning.”

Use a list

Sometimes, using a gender-neutral word like “you” or “they” does not work, as in the following example (because the word “they” is plural):

Incorrect: “Johnston’s replacement needs to be an experienced programmer. They should have at least three years of experience with COBOL. They need to be proficient with web design. They should have a college degree, preferably a master’s.”

You can solve this problem by creating a list:

Correct: Johnston’s replacement should have the following qualifications:

- Three years COBOL experience
- Web design proficiency
- College degree, master’s preferred
Rewording

You can also reword sentences to make them gender neutral.

- **Incorrect**: “If your assistant needs more sign-in forms, she can download them.”
- **Incorrect**: “When the driver requests payment, give him the voucher.”
- **Correct**: “Your assistant can download more sign-in forms if necessary.”
  - **Correct**: “Give the voucher to the driver when payment is requested.”

**Gendered terms**

Below is a list of acceptable replacements for gendered terms.

- businessman → businessperson
- chairman → chairperson, chair, presiding officer
- man-hours → hours worked, hours
- mankind → people, humanity, human beings
- man-made → synthetic, artificial
- manpower → workforce, workers, staff
- workman’s compensation → workers’ compensation

**Job titles**

Job titles should be gender neutral. See the examples below:

- congressman → congressperson
- foreman → supervisor, manager
- garbage man → garbage collector
- mailman → mail carrier
- policeman → police officer
- salesman → salesperson, sales representative
- stewardess → flight attendant
Salutations

- Use “Ms.” when addressing women, married or single.
- Determine a woman’s preference.

Unknown gender

If the gender of an addressee is unknown, do not guess. When name and gender are unknown, use “Sir or Madam.” For groups of unknown people, use a collective term such as “Friends,” “Associates,” “Colleagues,” “Members,” or “Employees and Staff.” See the examples below:

- “Dear Chris Wolf,”
- “To: J.F. Newman”
- “Dear Sir or Madam,”
- “Dr. Wellington:”

Unknown sexual orientation

Do not assume that a person is heterosexual. Avoid hetero-normative comments. Use a neutral term such as “significant other” instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend.”

- Inappropriate (if Megan’s sexual orientation is unknown): “Maybe Megan will bring her boyfriend.” —> “Maybe Megan will bring someone.”

OFFENSIVE or DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE

Avoid flattery

Do not use descriptive terms such as “sweetie,” “honey,” “sugar,” “babe,” “broad,” “stud,” “dude,” “boy,” et cetera.

- Inappropriate: “Mr. Fogel’s attractive assistant, Olivia, dropped off the memo.” —> Better: “Mr. Fogel’s assistant, Olivia, dropped off the memo.”
“Girls”

Referring to women as “girls” or “gals” is not acceptable. Always use the word “women.”

- Inappropriate: “One of the girls from upstairs will show you where to go.”
  - Better: “An employee from upstairs will show you where to go.”

“Ladies”

- Avoid referring to women as “ladies.”
- Use “women” or a collective term such as “colleagues.”

Race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and disability

Business writing should not contain any words or phrases that demean a person on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

- Rephrase classifications that divide people into white and non-white groups.
- Omit words that perpetuate negative attitudes or that draw attention to a person’s race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.
- Omit words, phrases, or ideas that might humiliate members of a particular group or suggest a stereotype.
- Omit any negative or demeaning comments.

Inappropriate:

- “The new policy should increase the hiring of non-whites.”
- “Sheila is handicapped.”
- “Tim is deaf and blind.”
- “Frank has been committed.”

Better:

- “The new policy should promote diversity.”
- “Sheila has a disability.”
- “Tim is hearing and vision impaired.”
- “Frank has been hospitalized.”
SLANG and VULGAR LANGUAGE

Business writing should not contain slang words, vulgar language, or texting abbreviations.

- **Inappropriate:** “I dig the new flyer.”  ➔  “I like the design of the new flyer.”
- **Inappropriate:** “Damn, I thought I attached the file.”  ➔  “Sorry, I thought I attached the file.”
- **Inappropriate:** “Plz come over 2 the new bldg.”  ➔  “Please come over to the new building.”

TONE

**Be polite and respectful**

Polite and respectful communication is just as important in writing as it is in face-to-face interaction.

- **Inappropriate:** “Print the materials now.”  ➔  “Please print the materials as soon as you get a chance.”
- **Inappropriate:** “Bring me the new report.”  ➔  “Please drop off a copy of the new report by 2:00 p.m. Thanks!”
- **Inappropriate:** “Did you even read my message?”  ➔  “Sorry for the confusion. I only need the log sheets from last week (Feb. 7 - Feb. 11).”

**Assume the best intentions**

- Err on the side of being overly polite.
- Assume that a message sender has good intentions.
- If there is a misunderstanding, follow up in person.
Activity 2: Making Language Appropriate

Identify the problem or problems with each example. Then, correct each on the line below.

1.) If a repairman comes, tell him to leave an itemized bill.
________________________________________________________________________

2.) The seat has been vacated, so a new chairman will need to be appointed.
________________________________________________________________________

3.) Thanks for bringing in cookies today. You’re such a sweetie.
________________________________________________________________________

4.) Ask the girl at the front desk which room to set up in.
________________________________________________________________________

5.) I can def come meet you b4 lunch.
________________________________________________________________________

6.) I don’t know what the hell I was thinking.
________________________________________________________________________

7.) The last person in the office needs to shut down the computers. They should also turn off the lights and lock the door.
________________________________________________________________________

8.) Paul Edwards is from England. I bet he likes fish and chips.
________________________________________________________________________

9.) If a construction worker needs a drink, tell him to use the water fountain down the hall.
________________________________________________________________________
SECTION 3: PLAN BEFORE WRITING

AUDIENCE

Identify an audience

All messages must be tailored to an intended audience. This may include people other than the person who is being directly addressed.

Most readers unconsciously ask the following questions upon receiving a business document:

- What is this about?
- What am I supposed to do?
- When do I need to have it done?
- What do I have to know? (data, facts, background information)
- How do I feel? (motivated, frustrated, ambivalent)

When identifying an audience, consider the following questions:

- What is the audience’s communication type or preference?
- Should the tone of the message be casual or formal?
- How much background information does the audience need to know?
- What is the audience’s reading level?
- How might the audience react to this message?
Activity 3: Identifying an Audience

Brainstorm different audiences that you have to address in your professional writing.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Which specific factors must be taken into account when considering your audience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word choice</th>
<th>formatting</th>
<th>tone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reading level</td>
<td>familiarity with subject</td>
<td>subject line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spelling</td>
<td>possible reaction</td>
<td>communication preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
<td>capitalization</td>
<td>interest level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consider a piece of writing you need to complete soon. Identify the audience you will be addressing. Then, write about how you will tailor your writing to fit that audience.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
IDEAS

Brainstorm

The following brainstorming techniques are often helpful:

- *Free writing*—Write down all of the thoughts that pop into your head.
- *Key words*—Write down a list of words that capture your main points.
- *Outline*—Create a list or flowchart that shows how you might cover a topic.
- *Mapping*—Draw a word web or create clusters of related words.

![Figure 1. An example of mapping.](image-url)
Activity 4: Brainstorming

*Use at least one brainstorming strategy to come up with ideas for helping UIC become more visible.*

*How might the ideas you generated be thematically grouped or otherwise organized?*
SECTION 4: CREATING A DOCUMENT

Once ideas have been generated and organized, it is time to begin writing. This section discusses how to ensure that a document clearly communicates the desired message.

BE CLEAR

State the purpose

Explicitly state the purpose of any written communication in order to prevent confusion.

Use concrete terms

Concrete terms and examples are much easier to understand than abstract ones. Whenever possible, use concrete terms and examples and provide concrete information.

- Abstract: “Create a user-friendly, interactive method for generating feedback.”
- Concrete: “Create an online survey that attendees can use to share their opinions on the conference.”

Use active voice

Sentences in passive voice should be avoided because they are longer and tend to be more difficult to understand.

- Passive voice: “The files were given to me by Anita.”
- Active voice: “Anita gave me the files.”

Use specific verbs

Specific verbs will maximize the impact of your message.

- Not specific: “We did the pictures.” ➔ “We formatted the pictures for the presentation.”
- Not specific: “Ahmad will get the necessary materials.” ➔ “Ahmad will purchase the necessary materials.”
Confirm information

When writing a message, it is often useful to refer to a previous message, conversation, or agreement as a way to confirm information (i.e. to make sure that people are on the same page). Here are some examples:

- “As we discussed earlier…”
- “To clarify…”
- “In light of yesterday’s agreement…”
- “To follow up…”

Activity 5: Using Active Voice, Transitions, and Concrete Terms

*Change each sentence from passive voice to active voice.*

1.) I was given a task by my supervisor.

__________________________________________________________________

2.) It was determined by the committee that the report was inconclusive.

__________________________________________________________________

3.) Results will be published in the next issue of the journal.

__________________________________________________________________

*Identify places in this paragraph where transition words might help.*

We will rebuild the engine. We will check to see if that fixes the problem. This will be a time-consuming process. It might take up to a week. We might need to adjust the computer settings. That could take up to one full day. We will need other people to work on our other projects while we are working on this one.
Make these abstract sentences more concrete. (Assume that the context is your job.)

1.) “The thing we talked about the other day might work.”

2.) “What happened in there really made me reconsider.”

3.) “Pretty soon, we will be addressing that issue.”
Organize the message

Here are some ways to organize a message so the audience can follow it easily:

- **Importance**—Start with the most important information and then move on to less pressing issues.
- **Chronological**—Lay out the way a series of events happened or should happen.
- **Cause and Effect**—State the cause of an event and then the resulting effect.
- **Problem and Solution**—State the problem and then the solution (or possible solutions).
- **Compare and Contrast**—Describe the similarities and differences between different scenarios or phenomena.
- **Who, What, When, Where, Why, How**—Provide all of these details (preferably in a vertical list).
- **Process or Sequence**—Describe a series of steps, parts, or issues.
Activity 6: Paragraph Organization

Review the different organization techniques below. Then, choose the best one for each of the given writing scenarios.

- Importance
- Chronological
- Cause and Effect
- Problem and Solution
- Compare and Contrast
- Process or Sequence

1. An e-mail about tasks that must be completed by the end of the day.
   ________________________________________________________________

2. A report about how grant money was spent.
   ________________________________________________________________

3. A memo about how a department will respond to a new UIC policy.
   ________________________________________________________________

4. A flyer about a lecture.
   ________________________________________________________________

5. A shared document about how to request a new ID badge.
   ________________________________________________________________

6. A report explaining the differences between two different medical procedures.
   ________________________________________________________________

7. A meeting outline.
   ________________________________________________________________

8. A speech introducing a speaker.
   ________________________________________________________________

9. A safety posting for a lab.
   ________________________________________________________________

10. A grant.
    ________________________________________________________________
BE CONCISE

Eliminate unnecessary information
Simple sentences are less likely to be misunderstood or misinterpreted and more likely to result in action.

- **Redundant**: “Participation is voluntary, so you can attend if you want to.” —> “Participation is voluntary.”
- **Wordy**: “UIC is very proud to provide a plethora of year-round indoor and outdoor recreational activities for the enjoyment of faculty, students, and staff members.” —> “UIC provides a variety of recreational activities for faculty, students, and staff.”

Keep paragraphs short

- Improves readability
- Forces writer to be concise

Stay on topic
Messages should address the topic at hand and nothing else.

- **Inappropriate**: “The new schedule, which I think is unfair and should be changed, will take effect at the beginning of next week.” —> “The new schedule will take effect at the beginning of next week.”

BE ACCURATE

Check your spelling and grammar

- Basic writing mistakes are unprofessional and avoidable
- Use a dictionary, thesaurus, or search engine
- Use spell check
- Have a colleague proofread

Fact check

- Make sure times and dates are correct
- Search online for information if necessary
Proofread

Here are some proofreading tips:

• *Read for spelling and grammar*—Ignore the big picture the first time through; only look for basic mistakes.

• *Start at the end*—Especially when reading for spelling and grammar, it is often helpful to read the last sentence of a document first and work your way to the beginning.

• *Read for tone and style*—Read with your audience in mind and think about how your message might be received.

• *Read aloud*—This time-tested strategy is the best way to catch errors and awkward phrasing.

• *Take breaks*—After reading through a document once, set it aside and come back to it later. A fresh perspective (even after 10 minutes) will help you catch different errors.

• *Have someone else help*—Someone who is not familiar with a document is likely to find different errors.
Activity 7: Proofreading

Proofread the following memos. Correct any spelling and grammar errors.

Where might a bulleted list might help make the memo clearer?

Where could the tone be adjusted?

Are there any facts that need to be checked?

Memo 1: Monthly progress reports

All employees must submit a progress report at the end of each month. The report should include current projects, what has been completed, what has not been completed what materials have been used, what materials remain and the estimated completion date for each project. Each report should have a cover page, each page of the report needs to have a header indicating the date, employee name, and department. Reports are due by the 30th day of each month, with the exemption of February. Do not wait until the last minute to write the report. Improperly formatted reports will not be reviewed.

Memo 2: Request form

UIC will be hosted a conference on Wednesday, April 7, 2011. Professors from Columbia College, Illinois State College, Elmhurst College, Malcolm X College, Northwestern University, DePaul University will be there. I’m not sure where it will be. Any employee who wishes to attend must fill out a request form soon. It might be boring but its a way to get out of the office.

Memo 3: No more leftovers

The refrigerator is provided so employees can bring a lunch from home. Space is limited. Stop filling it up with leftovers from department events. If this abuse continues, the director will be notified.
SECTION 5: FORMATTING

In order for a message to be effective, it must be visually appealing. This section will discuss how to format messages so they are inviting and readable rather than intimidating and confusing.

Keep it simple
- Keep words to a minimum
- Use basic formatting for e-mails

Use white space
- Avoid large blocks of text
- Insert spaces between paragraphs

Use headings
- Help readers follow the logic of a document
- When applicable, create a table of contents so readers can find a specific section

Use emphasis
- Use CAPITALIZED, italicized, or bold letters to emphasize important information
- Use emphasis sparingly

Use lists
- Letters, numbers or bullets

Include visuals
- Tables, charts, graphs, and pictures can complement writing
Activity 8: Formatting

*How would you reformat this letter to make it easier to read? Where are the logical breaks?*

February 10, 2011
To: UIC Recommendation Committee, Summit on Climate Change
Dear Colleagues,

Briana Jackson is highly qualified to represent UIC at the Summit on Climate Change in Washington, D.C. this spring. She has the experience, education, and public speaking skills necessary to contribute meaningful insight to policymakers on the role of the United States in reducing carbon emissions. I have worked with Briana in the Luminescence Laboratory for the past three years. She assisted in experiment design, data collection, data analysis, and the publishing of journal articles. Her most notable achievement at the Luminescence Laboratory was the design of an innovative experiment to measure the effects of the climate change on the erosion of the Indiana Sand Dunes. Her findings will be published later this year. As an academic, Briana has demonstrated an impressive understanding of how knowledge from different disciplines can be applied to climate change research. Her undergraduate and graduate work in chemistry and geology provide a solid base for her work in the Luminescence Laboratory as well as for her doctoral research. As part of a recent lecture series, Briana discussed the preliminary findings from her doctoral research with a group of UIC students and professors. Her presentation was clear, compelling, and relevant to the current discussion of mitigation strategies. She was comfortable breaking down complicated concepts and thoroughly answered a variety of questions about research design. For the reasons explained above, I believe that Briana Jackson should represent UIC at the Summit on Climate Change.

Sincerely, Jeffrey DeLonge, Ph.D., Research Engineer, Luminescence Laboratory, University of Illinois at Chicago

*How would you reformat this e-mail to make it clearer?*

From: friedman@uic.edu
Sent: Tuesday, March 1, 2011
To: daleyp@uic.edu
Subject: Three steps for reimbursement

In order to be reimbursed for any meal expenses from this weekend you will need to do three things. Collect all of your receipts and highlight meal expenses. (Add up the purchases to determine your total reimbursable spending for the weekend.) Get a reimbursement form from the office. (Each attendee must fill out a separate form.) Turn in the completed reimbursement form along with your receipts to Dennis by the end of the week. Thanks!

Barbara Friedman
SECTION 6: E-MAIL

It is important to remember to apply business writing principles to e-mail, even though the medium is often used casually. This section explains how to use e-mail responsibly and professionally.

RESPONSIBLE USE

Not private
- Do not use e-mail to share sensitive or privileged information.
- Remember that once a message is sent, it cannot be deleted.

Standard English
- Treat e-mail like traditional written communication.
- Follow standard spelling, grammar, and punctuation rules.

Inappropriate messages
- Do not send commercial messages to co-workers.
- Do not forward spam messages such as chain letters to co-workers.

Arguments
- Do not debate opinions over e-mail.
- Do not criticize a co-worker’s idea over e-mail.

Tone
- Err on the side of being overly polite and friendly when writing e-mail messages.

Department or unit guidelines
- Confirm department or unit policy on e-mail.
- Adhere to department or unit policy on e-mail.

Simple formatting
- Do not add special formatting to e-mail messages.
- Ideally, a reader should not have to scroll down when reading a message.
COMPONENTS

Subject line
- Always include a subject line
- Should be specific and shorter than 10 words

Greeting
Make sure to include the recipient’s proper title in your greeting. If you are unsure about the spelling of a name, look it up. Commas are commonly used, but you may use a colon in a greeting that only includes a recipient’s name:
- “Dear Dr. Matteson,”
- “Ms. Whitney:”

Body
- Should be a complete thought on a single topic
- Should provide necessary context

Closing
Before the sign-off, it is often appropriate to add a final sentence thanking the recipient. (In some cases, this line can be used instead of a sign-off.) Examples include:
- “Thanks!”
- “Thanks again!”
- “Thanks for your help!”
- “Thank you for your time!”

There are a variety of sign-offs that can be used. Examples include:
- “Regards,”
- “Sincerely”
- “Respectfully,”

Signature
- Provides all of a person’s contact information in one place
- Should include: full name, department or unit, address, e-mail address, phone number (with any extensions), and fax number
SECTION 7: WRITING IMPROVEMENT PLAN
List at least three concepts from this course that you will apply to your writing. Explain how you will apply each.

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APPENDIX

Resources


http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/ Purdue Online Writing Lab

UIC Identity Resources – Office of Marketing Communications  www.identity.uic.edu
Handouts

SPELLING RULES

Plurals

1. Add s to form the plural of most singular nouns.
   - car → cars
   - page → pages

2. When a word ends in a y preceded by a consonant, change the y to i and add es. If a word ends in a y preceded by a vowel, just add es.
   - copy → copies
   - policy → policies
   - attorney → attorneys

3. When a word ends in an s, sh, x, or ch, add es.
   - business → businesses
   - dish → dishes
   - fax → faxes
   - teach → teaches

4. When a word ends in an f or fe, replace the f or fe with ves. (EXCEPTION: If changing the ending to ves would make the noun into a verb, add s for the plural.)
   - half → halves
   - life → lives
   - EXCEPTION: proof → proofs

5. If a noun ends with an o preceded by a consonant, add es. If the o is preceded by a vowel, just add an s.
   - veto → vetoes
   - scenario → scenarios

   EXCEPTIONS: “Memos” does not have a second e. Both “zeros” and “zeroes” are acceptable.

6. Form plural letters, numbers, and abbreviations by adding an s.
   - Three As
   - 1970s
   - HMOs
The Silent E

If a silent e is preceded by a consonant, drop the e before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel. Leave the e if the suffix begins with a consonant.

- arrive ➔ arrival
- guide ➔ guidance
- manage ➔ management
- achieve ➔ achievement
- EXCEPTIONS: judgment, mileage (and others)

I Before E?

Follow the old saying: “I before E except after C, or when sounds like A as in neighbor or weigh.”

- achieve, believe, piece
- receive, ceiling
- EXCEPTIONS: science, either, weird, foreign

Prefixes & Suffixes

1. When you add a prefix to a word, the original word doesn’t change, even if it begins with the same letter as the last letter of the prefix.
   - anti + bodies = antibodies
   - with + hold = withhold
   - over + reacting = overreacting

2. If adding a suffix results in a double letter, leave the double letter.
   - abnormal + ly = abnormally
   - open + ness = openness
   - ski + ing = skiing

3. In verbs, change the final y to an i before adding es or ed. Keep the final y when adding ing. If the y is preceded by a vowel, always leave it in.
   - try ➔ tries, tried, trying
   - stay ➔ stays, stayed, staying

4. When using the prefix all or the suffix full, drop the second l.
   - altogether
   - careful
   - beautiful
   - thoughtful
TRANSITION WORDS and PHRASES

accordingly 
additionally 
after 
afterward 
also 
alternatively 
although 
another 
as soon as 
aside from 
as a result 
at that point 
at the same time 
basically 
because 
before 
but 
consequently 
despite 
due to 
eventually 
finally 
for example 
for instance

for now 
for the time being 
from now on 
however 
if 
in fact 
in general 
in order to 
in other words 
in light of 
in the future 
in this case 
in this situation 
in this case 
instead 
later 
likewise 
maybe 
meanwhile 
more importantly 
necessarily 
next 
now 
on the other hand 
other than 
otherwise 
overall 
provided that 
rather 
similarly 
since 
so 
specifically 
still

the fact that 
the next step 
then 
therefore 
though 
to clarify 
to summarize 
unfortunately 
unless 
until 
usually 
when 
with the exception of 
with this in mind
USEFUL VERBS

accommodate  define  inform  
achieve  deliver  initiate  
adapt  demonstrate  instruct  
address  describe  integrate  
adjust  design  interact  
advance  determine  intervene  
advice  develop  interview  
advocate  discuss  introduce  
aid  document  involve  
analyze  issue  
anticipate  edit  
apply  eliminate  join  
approve  emphasize  judge  
arrange  enable  
assess  enforce  keep  
assign  enhance  
assist  establish  learn  
attend  estimate  list  
balance  evaluate  listen  
begin  expand  locate  
build  explain  maintain  
check  facilitate  map  
clarify  familiarize  maximize  
collaborate  focus  measure  
collect  form  mediate  
combine  foster  mentor  
communicate  frame  merge  
compare  fulfill  minimize  
compile  model  
compose  gain  modify  
conduct  gather  monitor  
consider  guide  motivate  
consult  
contact  handle  negotiate  
continue  help  notify  
contribute  highlight  
convert  
coordinate  identify  obtain  
correct  illustrate  open  
create  implement  organize  
critique  improve  outline  
decide  influence  participate
perform
plan
practice
predict
prepare
present
prevent
prioritize
process
produce
promote
proofread
propose
prove
provide
publicize
qualify
quantify
raise
reach
read
realize
recognize
recommend
record
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reinforce
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simplify
specify
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strengthen
structure
study
submit
suggest
summarize
support
target
teach
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train
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upgrade
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validate
verify
view
volunteer
work
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