

Better Writing for Better Jobs

Real-Life Practice

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Writing Concepts Directory

Topic	Exercises	Topic	Exercises
Punctuation, capitalization	1–4, 7	Sarcasm and slang	32, 36
Spelling, possessives	1–4, 7	Exaggeration	33, 36
Subject-verb agreement	5, 7	Pompous (self-important) constructions	34, 36
Pronoun references	6, 7	Sexism and bias	35, 36
Double negatives	8, 14	Awkwardness	37, 38, 42
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Jargon	25, 29	External paragraph unity	60, 66
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Redundancy	28, 29	Interview request letter	63–66
Strong vs. weak verbs	30, 36	Résumés	67, 68
Nominalizations	31, 36	Follow-up letters	69, 70

How to Use This Book

Anyone entering the job market today directly from high school, a GED program, or a junior or technical college needs competitive writing skills. This publication will help you develop them through exercises based on real job situations.

These exercises require you to do more than fill in forms. On-the-job writing is much more than that. In this book you will closely examine sentence mechanics, word choice, tone, point of view, detail, organization, and job writing formats. While doing so, you will work toward a clear, concise style that you can use to communicate with confidence.

While *Better Writing for Better Jobs* generally progresses from “simple” to more complex concepts, each exercise makes use of a variety of writing and business communications principles. For example, the main purpose of a given exercise may be to make you aware of common verb errors. But you and fellow learners could also use it as the springboard for a discussion of memo style, business etiquette, or the particular field of work mentioned in the exercise.

You will find short “Checkups” throughout the text. They always cover material found in the previous four to six exercises. These will help you see whether you have mastered the material before you move on. You can also check your answers for the exercises and Checkups. Notes and answers are provided for each section.

In any writing class, it is good to discuss the principles and procedures before beginning an exercise. Be sure you understand the “concept” that usually appears at the top of the exercise before continuing. If the exercise requires creative thinking, a class brainstorming session may be in order. Working in pairs or small groups will also be helpful in some cases. Workplaces today often rely on group and team effort. This will give you valuable practice.

As you move into paragraph writing, allow plenty of time to revise. Revision is absolutely necessary for good writing. If it is hard for you to see how you could improve your own writing, you might want to trade papers with other students and give each other fair, honest criticism.

If some exercises seem too complex, you can break them into smaller, shorter tasks. For example, instead of plunging into writing a whole paragraph at once, first come up with the main idea, then the topic sentence, then the supporting material, then the concluding sentence. Lastly, redraft the whole paragraph.

What if you think you can’t do a certain exercise because you know little about the particular business mentioned? Remember that it’s clear writing you’re shooting for, not expert knowledge of that field.

Also take into account your own learning style. Some people learn best by reading about what they’re supposed to do, some by hearing about it, some by seeing examples, some by talking about it, and others by all of the above. Some people work best on their own, quietly, while others thrive on sharing ideas. Some people need background noise in order to concentrate. When possible, try to accommodate each other’s needs.

Completing this book will help give you a solid foundation in business writing skills. You will be convinced of how important these skills are by collecting and studying samples of reports, memos, letters, and forms from the working world, and through listening to guest speakers from local businesses and industries. Work with your teacher to gather these resources and people and to learn from them. *Better Writing for Better Jobs*, combined with outside resources, will give you a substantial edge over job seekers who haven’t done the work. And remember, learning is a lifelong project. We hope you will find it an enjoyable one.

SECTION 1

Writing Sentences That Make the Grade

1. Employee Suggestions: Sentence Basics

Directions

A co-worker is about to give her supervisor the following list of suggestions for improving working conditions and morale. She has asked you to look at it first and correct her mistakes in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. Rewrite each numbered suggestion on the lines below it. Circle the errors in the old sentence first, if you need to. Try to improve the style and rhythm of the sentence as you rewrite it.

Inkspot Printing, Inc.
Interoffice Memo
To: Ms. Alvarez
From: Sarah Jones
Date: 8/26/99



At the August 25 meeting of the Employee Input Committee, we came up with the following ideas and comments.

1. Employees should get a bigger discount: on Company Products and services.

2. Inkspot should revue it's salary structure, since many employees question whether they are being payed enough?

3. The copy machene operators, would like gas masks to save them from the gross odours.

4. Employees want to have a say in how projects assigns to the different work groups.

5. A speciale certificate for employees with especially good ideas for improving the company would be real nice.

6. Wonderful Web Designers the company who we sometimes use their work has been getting even more sloppier.

7. Everyone on the nite crew at the Washington st. plant would like to have the electronic alarm code a key and access to the supply room.

8. We should elect two people each month, to watch for employees who are affective; and rewards them with a free lunch!

9. We think Carrie m. is steeling (from the company.

10. The companies motto should be just when you need us their we are with good advise.



Which of the suggestions above would management welcome? Which lack backup information? Which are just silly?

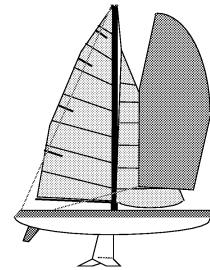
2. Instructions for a Substitute: Sentence Basics

Directions

You're filling in at Bilgewater Marine Maintenance for someone who is on vacation. He has left you a list of instructions for the week. As you look it over, you notice several mistakes in each instruction. Rewrite each sentence on the lines below it so that you'll have a clear list. Try to improve the style and rhythm of the sentences as you correct the errors.

BILGEWATER MARINE MAINTENANCE

Date: June 20, 1999
To: Vacation substitute
From: Jim Z., Customer Service



1. Since you don't know who's desk is who's in here put all finished paperwork in the department box in the mailroom.

2. I don't have no personal stationary, so just write your letters on the company Letterhead.

3. All of the customers names addresses and phones are in the database in my computer.

4. Just between you and I, the electrical department tends to lose special parts, so you got to watch them alot.

5. Each customer service person has their own color coded order forms mine's green.

6. Juanita Darwin's boat, should be ready Tuesday for her trip to Easter island.

7. Boris Tanda, the Dentist, was resistant when I told him it would cost 452 to fix the hole on his port bow give him a call to straiten this out).

8. The Carson yacht has a bad starter; The part should be in while your there.

9. Allie Finster's boat's riggen's pullies have all rusted; the ordernumber for a better pulley is 00573-2.

10. Congradulations on getting the hardest job in the company; mine; now get to work!

3. Summary of Work Completed: Sentence Basics

Directions

Circle the errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling in the summary, then rewrite the paragraph on the blank lines that follow. Some sentences do not contain errors.

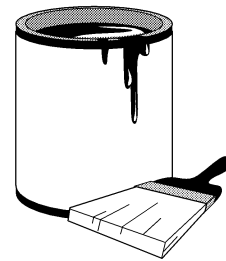
BRUSHWORKS PAINT COMPANY

Job Summary

Date: September 19, 2001

To: Jenny Ladder

From: Tremaine Brown, Supervisor, Crew 3



We finished the McCall job yesterday at 6 P.M. We used 5 galons of B and G paint in Moonglow, which is more unique as a color. Mr. McCall wanted us to use Moonlight, but that was the most expensive of the two and he didn't want to pay more. We took and used red for the trim. About them rosebushes—I told Phil to keep his ladder off of the porch, but thats where it was at when I came outside. The can of Cottage Red was setting there because I had put it there earlyer. When Phil stepped backward he kicked the can and it

Norbert,

Please send these out ASAP. As I told you before, its Jone's policy to pay on delivery. Add whatever shipping you think is fare. If their will be a delay, please phone or faxe me immediately.

Thanx,
Lindsey

P.S. Please be sure to send the Earlybird brand claw hammer—it's wrapped handel is the best.

Fax Transmission

To _____ Attention _____

Fax _____

Ship to _____ Fax _____

_____ Phone _____

Attention _____

No.	Qty.	Description	Contractor Price
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Note _____

