

## TOPIC A: GETTING STARTED~ WRITING BASICS

The basics of good writing are easy to learn. First, realize that writing takes time and practice. It is important in writing to be clear, concise and able to express yourself and the message effectively!

### 1. Organize your Information

Know your subject, details, and the purpose of your writing.

### 2. Correct Spelling/Proper Plurals

Check your spelling to ensure that you are accurate as well as professional. Don't always count on spell-check. Use a proof reader!

### 3. Grammar

Using the correct format and usage of words, sentences, and make your letter, memo, or e-mail shine.

### 4. Appropriate Word Use

Using the appropriate word in your communications is crucial for good writing.

### 5. Clarity and Tone of Message

Is your reader receiving the message as you intended? Be sure to review the "tone" of your words.



Remember that in writing:

*Having more words doesn't mean it will be better!  
Believe that you can always improve your writing skills!  
Good writers are made, not born!*

*Practice, practice, practice!*

*-Business Writing, Davidson 2001*

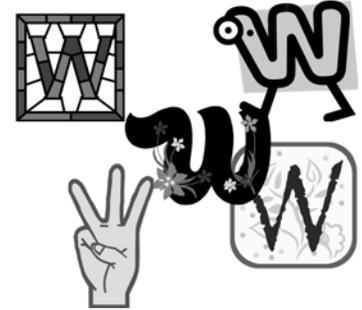
# WRITING BASICS 1: ORGANIZE YOUR INFORMATION

“Know your subject, details, and the purpose of your writing.”

What are you writing, to whom are you writing, why are you writing, where are you establishing a platform for your information, and when must it be complete?

The questions to be answered when writing are the 5 W's:

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?



You should answer at least **two** of these in your first paragraph, and leave your readers wondering about the other three in order to entice them to read on. The opening statement - you know **when** (today), you know **who** (I've just finished...) and you know **what** (an online class on business writing). Be honest, aren't you even a little curious to find out **where**? And you'd love to know **why**!

While the overall organization of your writing helps readers follow your ideas, you should also use strategies. Writing strategies prepare readers for the organization of your writing. These strategies include using visual clues to guide readers, as well as transitional markers from paragraph to paragraph.

Building reader expectations helps your readers anticipate the content of your writing. This way, readers are not caught off guard by upcoming details. You build your readers' expectations by:

- Informing readers of what you are writing about within the first two paragraphs.
- Telling readers the order in which you will discuss your topic. For example, "In this proposal, I first provide a literature review, followed by my original research."
- Stating three ideas when you say three ideas exist. For example, "Faculty members voiced three opposing arguments."
- Providing a table of contents for longer reports.

Effective transitions inform readers of changes within your writing. By using transitions, your readers are prepared for the flow of your ideas. Effective transitions logically connect paragraphs with one another.

Transitions are used to:

- Introduce an idea:  
First, readers will know this is the first idea.
- Introduce examples:  
For example, this is a transition.
- Indicate a contrast:  
However, be sure your transitions accurately show how ideas relate to one another.
- Prepare readers for more information about the same idea:  
In addition, transitions connect sentences to one another. Words such as "and," "or," "nor," "but," "so," "for," "yet" link sentences together.
- Indicate a conclusion:  
Finally, readers will know this is the last idea.

### Quick Guide to Organizing Information

- Sorting out from the collected data the essential information that your reader(s) will need
- Developing sentences to accurately express and convey the information
- Grouping these sentences together in a structure of paragraphs that express the main idea(s).
- Arranging the paragraphs into an overall format that shows their relationship to one another and ultimately leads to a conclusion

Iacone, Salvatore J., Write to the Point, 2004.

## WRITING BASICS 2: PROOFREADING~CORRECT SPELLING/PROPER PLURALS

“Check your spelling to ensure that you are accurate as well as professional! Don’t always count on spell-check! Use a proofreader!”

The importance of proofreading your writing cannot be stressed enough! Ensuring the accuracy of your spelling can be one of the most stressful and tedious tasks in writing. The spell-check button? Let’s *not* count on it...

The irony of proofreading is that nothing is ever guaranteed 100%! There are mistakes in books, newspapers, and other periodicals that have been carefully perused and proofread by others. Why? Because as long as there is a human doing the proofreading, mistakes will be made and overlooked. The most meticulous proofreader can still mistake *there* and *their*, as well as *affect* and *effect*. The key in all good writing is to minimize the risks of errors in spelling and use of plurals.

The most important thing in proofreading is to make sure that you are reviewing for accuracy of spelling, grammar and correct format. You should not be criticizing the content, which is referred to as editing rather than proofreading.

### Some Common Proofreading Errors

- Letter and space omission
- Punctuation errors
- Spelling errors
- Grammar and usage errors
- Lowercase instead of uppercase

## THE TOP 10 BASIC SPELLING RULES!



10. The letter **Q** is always followed by **U**; in this case the letter **U** is not considered to be a vowel.

Qwerty is one of the Modern-English words that contain **Q** not followed by **U**

9. The letter **S** never follows **X**.
8. The letter **Y**, not **I**, is used at the end of **English** words.

Examples of this rule include **my**, **by**, **shy**, and **why**.

7. To spell a short vowel sound, only one letter is needed.

Examples of this rule include **at**, **red**, **it**, **hot**, and **up**.

6. Drop the **E**. When a word ends with a silent final **E**, it should be written without the **E** when adding an ending that begins with a vowel. In this way, **come** becomes **coming** and **hope** becomes **hoping**.
5. When adding an ending to a word that ends with **Y**, change the **Y** to **I** if it is preceded by a consonant. In this way, **supply** becomes **supplies** and **worry** becomes **worried**.
4. **All**, written alone, has two **L**'s. When used as a prefix, however, only one **L** is written.
3. Generally, adding a **prefix** to a word does not change the correct spelling.
2. Words ending in a vowel and **Y** can add the suffix **-ed** or **-ing** without making any other change.

and the #1 Basic Rule of Spelling is...

“**I** before **E**, except after **C**, unless it says **A** as in **neighbor** and **weigh**.”

## MOST COMMONLY MISSPELLED WORDS

**ACCEPT** - to receive

The United Way gratefully accepts donations.

**EXCEPT** - apart from; excluding; to take or leave out

The bookstore will welcome donations of all books, except romance novels.

**ADVICE** - recommendation; guidance

The guidance counselor offered advice on how best to apply to the college.

**ADVISE** - to offer guidance or wisdom

The former President advised the Senator to stop lying to voters.

**ALLOWED** - permitted; acceptable

The non-students would be allowed to attend this year's party.

**ALOUND** - audibly; out loud

She read the story aloud in class, with no errors!

**BOARDER** - paying guest in a house

He was going to take in more boarders until the last room was rented.

**BORDER** - boundary or edge, particularly of a geographical region.

Illegal aliens continue to stream across the border in record numbers.

**BRAKE** - a mechanical device that causes a vehicle to slow or stop

He applied the brake slowly while backing out of the driveway.

**BREAK** - to shatter; destroy

To say her heart did not break when he left her would not be true!

**BREATH** - noun, air inhaled or exhaled

His honesty was a breath of fresh air.

**BREATHE** - verb, to inhale or exhale

I will breathe a sigh of relief when errors in reference books are eliminated.

**CAPITAL** - an upper case letter; seat of government; assets, funds or financial resources

His company had sufficient capital to open new facilities in the state capital of Topeka.

**CAPITOL** - the actual building in which the legislature of a country or state meets

The governor announced she would approve the funding for the roads in a speech given today at the capitol.

**CITE** - refer to; to quote; document

The research paper would ultimately cite twelve sources that were later proven not to exist.

**SIGHT** - vision; spectacle

The snow-covered peaks surrounding Mammoth Mountain are a sight to behold.

**SITE** - location; position; place

The site of the new bank was abandoned when it was discovered to be haunted by the ghost of Jesse James.

**COMPLEMENT** - something that completes; brings to perfection

The wine complemented the roast and vegetables.

**COMPLIMENT** - an expression of praise or flattery

She received many compliments on her new book.



**COUNCIL** - a group that consults or advises

The city council voted unanimously to organize the Holiday parade.

**COUNSEL** - to advise

The student was counseled before deciding to take the popular course in basket weaving.

**DESERT** - arid region; abandon

Contrary to popular belief, many deserts are abundant with plant and animal life.

**DESSERT** - a sweet course served at the end of a meal

*\*The easiest way to differentiate the spelling of these two words, is to remember that you always want two servings of that scrumptious dessert. The scorching desert is spelled with just one "s" but that delicious dessert is spelled with two.*

**HEAR** - to perceive sound

He could hear the footsteps of the approaching zombies, but it was too late to escape.

**HERE** - at this place; at this point in time

Here at the Lincoln Library, we work to improve the accuracy of the reference sources we all rely on, both online and off.

**ITS** - of, or belonging to

The book and its author were both in attendance at the signing.

**IT'S** - contraction for "it is"

It's going to take months before all the errors are documented.

**PRINCIPAL** - a person who has authority; primary; most important

The school principal resigned when it was discovered he was actually a bank robber.

**PRINCIPLE** - a fundamental truth; the original source; integrity

He was a man of principle.

**STATIONARY** - motionless; standing still

The police report indicated his car was not stationary at the time of the accident.

**STATIONERY** - writing paper and envelopes

Sandy purchased office supplies downtown at the new stationery store.

**THEIR** - possessive form of they

Their scientific study was full of inaccuracies and falsified data.

**THERE** - indicates location; in attendance

He went there to do some research on former President.

**THEY'RE** - contraction for "they are"

They're going to plan a vacation to Niagara Falls, NY.

## PLURALS

The correct use of plural and possessive forms may seem like a minor issue. In effective writing, however, incorrect forms, especially misuses of apostrophes, stand out like red flags!!

### Plural forms

The plural form of a noun indicates simply that there are **more than one** of the person or thing in question. For most nouns, the plural form includes the letter "s" at the end of the word:



dogs            cats  
mirrors        trees

### Nouns ending in s, z, ch, sh, and x

Nouns with these letters at the end call for an "es" in the plural form. This added syllable makes pronunciation easier:

beaches        wishes  
bushes         foxes

### Nouns ending in o

Some nouns ending in o are pluralized with an "s," while others call for "es." These words must be memorized, because there is no simple rule to explain the differences.

echo becomes echoes  
auto becomes autos  
potato becomes potatoes

### Nouns ending in y

To form the plural of nouns ending in y, drop the y, and add "ies."

family becomes families  
story becomes stories  
baby becomes babies

### Irregular plural forms

man becomes men            fungus becomes fungi  
woman becomes women     person becomes people

Thief becomes thieves (note that not all words ending in "f" follow this pattern: roof/roofs)