

how the ideas in your message benefit the reader. Remain polite throughout and use language that is inclusive and free of discrimination and bias. Write with a confident tone that is firm and decisive but not egotistical. Remember that what you are writing represents you and your organization.

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn to

1. use plain, precise, and familiar language to get to the point, prevent misunderstanding, and write with impact;
2. identify and eliminate problem words that do not convey your meaning clearly and directly;
3. choose accurate and appropriate words to create constructive, inclusive, reader-oriented messages;
4. identify strategies for concise messaging;
5. develop a conversational and confident tone and adjust it to suit a range of writing purposes, professional situations, and readerships;
6. differentiate between personal style and impersonal style.

Key Concepts

abstract nouns things not knowable through the senses. (p. 78)

acronym a pronounceable word formed from the initial letters of other words (e.g., NATO). (p. 77)

active voice a writing style in which the grammatical subject of a sentence performs the action. (p. 84)

ambiguity a term that describes an obscure or inexact meaning. (p. 73)

analogy an explanation of the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. (p. 79)

buzzwords fashionable, technical, or computer jargon. (p. 75)

clichés overused, tired expressions that have lost their ability to communicate effectively. (p. 76)

concrete nouns things knowable through the senses. (p. 78)

connotation a word's implied or associative meaning, often coloured by emotion. (p. 86)

denotation a word's literal or dictionary definition. (p. 86)

emoticon symbol consisting of a sequence of keystrokes that produce a sideways image of a face conveying any one of a range of emotions. (p. 77)

expletive construction a phrase such as *there is/are* or *it is/was* at the beginning of a clause, delaying the introduction of the subject. (p. 85)

formality the level of writing; whether the writer is using the appropriate register based on an observance of the rules and conventions of writing. (p. 87)

idiom a word or phrase that has a meaning different from its literal meaning. (p. 79)

impersonal style a style of writing that seems objective and detached based on its use of third-person pronouns. (p. 88)

jargon a term that describes (1) the specialized terminology of a technical field or (2) outdated, unnecessary words used in a business context. (p. 75)

nouns words that name people, places, things and abstract concepts. (p. 82)

noun conversions or nominalizations verbs that have been converted into nouns with the addition of *-ment* or *-tion* endings. (p. 82)

passive voice a writing style in which the grammatical subject of a sentence is acted upon. (p. 84)

personal style a style of writing that seems warm and friendly based on its use of first- and second-person pronouns. (p. 87)

phrasal verb a verb that combines with one or more prepositions to deliver its meaning. (p. 73)

plain style or plain language a style of writing that places value on simplicity, directness, and clarity. (p. 72)

prepositional phrase a phrase beginning with a preposition and functioning as a modifier. (p. 84)

pronouns words that replace or refer to nouns. (p. 73)

redundancies unplanned repetitions. (p. 83)

salutation a greeting at the beginning of a letter (e.g., “Dear Ms. Gill”). (p. 91)

slang coined words or existing words that are informal and have meanings specific to particular groups or localities. (p. 77)

tone the implied attitude of the author to the reader, as reflected by word choice. (p. 86)

verbs words that describe actions, occurrences, or states of being. (p. 82)

voice a term that describes a verb’s ability to show whether the subject of a sentence acts or is acted upon. (p. 73)

we-attitude a writing style that focuses on the shared goals and values of the writer and the reader(s). (p. 90)

you-attitude a writing style that focuses on the reader rather than the writer. (p. 89)

Review Questions

For sample answers, see below.

1. What are three principles of plain-style writing?

2. Which of the following phrases represents clear writing?
 - a) The company would be happy to reimburse you for any out-of-pocket expenses, providing proper documentation is available upon submission of said documents.
 - b) As long as all receipts are provided and purchases are recorded, you will be reimbursed for expenses.
 - c) Hand in your receipts so you can get your money.
3. How can you improve your writing style?
4. What is wrong with the following sentence?

“Our salesman will be in touch shortly with a deal you can’t resist.”
5. What are three ways to achieve conciseness?
6. Why is tone important in business writing?
7. Why is it important to stress reader benefits?
8. What are three aspects of inclusive language?

Review Questions: Answers

1. Plain style principles include using common, everyday words, except for necessary technical terms; using reasonable sentence lengths; using active-voice verbs and phrasal verbs; using personal pronouns (*I, you, and we*); using unambiguous language; and placing the subject as close as possible to the verb. (pp. 72–73)
2. Phrase (b) (As long as all receipts are provided and purchases are recorded, you will be reimbursed for expenses) represents clear writing. (pp. 72–73)
3. Ways of improving your writing style include replacing clichés and retiring outdated expressions, eliminating slang, and avoiding instant messaging abbreviations and emoticons. (pp. 76–77)
4. The sentence (Our salesman will be in touch shortly with a deal you can't resist) is exclusionary, vague, and boastful. (pp. 78–80)
5. Ways to achieve conciseness include eliminating long lead-ins; revising noun conversions; eliminating redundancies; eliminating or revising empty words and phrases; using strong, precise, accurate verbs; revising prepositional phrases; eliminating fillers; shortening multiple *that/which/who* clauses; and combining shorter sentences. (pp. 81–85).
6. Tone is important in business writing because it conveys your attitude toward the reader and the subject matter. (p. 86)
7. It is important to stress reader benefits so that readers can see how the information concerns them and how they stand to benefit from it. (p. 89)
8. Three aspects of inclusive language: don't make discriminatory comments, use only gender-neutral job titles and salutations, and use masculine pronouns reasonably. (pp. 90–91)