

WRITING CONCISELY (PART 1)

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The subject matter that shall be discussed in this article is about the importance of writing in a manner that allows you to make known all of the items you wish to express in only a few words.

Have I lost you yet? For those of you still scratching your heads over what that sentence means, here is a clear translation: This article discusses the importance of concise writing.



First, let's establish what "concise writing" means. You may think it means to summarize a topic; however, a summary is a brief account of main points, while something written concisely expresses all points in a few words.

Simple. Succinct. Better.

Why is concise writing important in business correspondence? Or, why is wordy writing unfavorable? Wordiness often leads to miscommunication. Filling a page with words will not get your point across more effectively. Simple and succinct is almost always better.

Wordy business communication can also frustrate your reader. This is especially true in a digital age when colleagues and customers are used to getting their information quicker than ever. By using more words to make your point, you've also used up more of your reader's time. They notice. And their response is often to stop reading your writing or giving it the attention it deserves.

How formal does your business communication need to be?

Sometimes in business communication, we use excessively formal language. Instead of letting this be your default mode of communication, examine just how formal your business communication needs to be. Try to be both personable and professional. By taking the formality of your writing down a level, you can make your writing more concise and increase the chances your message will be both read and understood.

Think how time consuming and perplexing it can be to read a legal document. Verbosity in legal and formal agreements is sometimes necessary, but your other business communications should be as clear and succinct as possible.

The examples below show varying levels of formality in business correspondence:

- Should you require any assistance with the implementation of the latest guidelines, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. (formal)
- If you need assistance implementing the latest guidelines, please contact me. (less formal)
- Need assistance implementing the guidelines? Contact me. (informal)

Although there is nothing wrong with the first sentence, the second and third ones more clearly and succinctly communicate the author's point. And when your customers and colleagues have dozens or hundreds of other emails and reports to read, chances are they will appreciate a shorter version.

Practice concise writing.

Let's look at some examples of poor, wordy writing and their revisions:

Wordy:

Taking into consideration the large degree to which our quarterly sales are down, it is in our best interest to let some members of our sales team go.

Revision:

Considering the steep decline in our quarterly sales, we should downsize our sales team.

Wordy:

The reason behind wanting to merge with a multinational company was so that our brand would be recognized by people all over the world.

Revision:

We merged with a multinational company because we wanted our brand recognized internationally.

Now see if you can make some of your own revisions. Take a quick look at a recent email or report you've written and see if you can fine-tune your writing and make it more digestible for your readers.

One tip to start writing more concisely is this: when you've finished writing, check the number of words and then decrease that number by 10%. If this proves difficult, consider working with an editor or someone in your office with great writing skills to help you revise your work.

More Writing Tips

Interested in learning more tips on concise writing? Look for upcoming posts where we'll discuss common “wordy traps” people fall into when writing and how you can avoid them. Need help improving your writing? [Give us a call.](#)