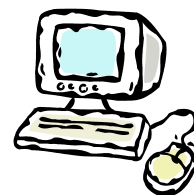
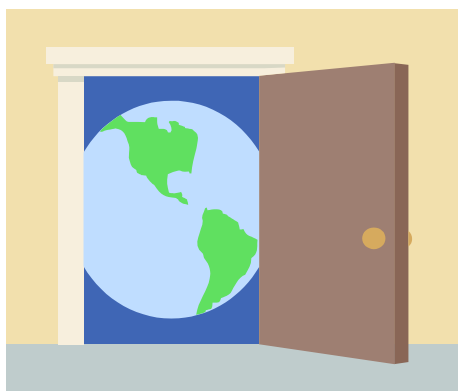
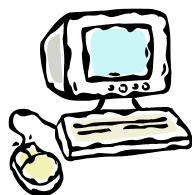


# WORKPLACE WRITING SKILLS

## DEVELOPING CLARITY AND ACCURACY

A RESOURCE TO SUPPLEMENT EXISTING PUBLISHED MATERIALS



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Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT DOES THIS RESOURCE CONTAIN?

This is not a curriculum that encompasses all the materials needed for a course on effective workplace writing skills. Rather, it focuses on structured writing practice using the participants' own workplace vocabulary. The specific targeted skills are only part of a comprehensive curriculum.

This resource DOES NOT contain the needed exercises, examples and models; many other necessary skills; or the vital reference lists of grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. These are not included because either my class did not need them, or I could easily find them in currently published resources.

What this resource DOES contain is:

### **Instructional Handouts and Worksheets:**

- **“Writing Characteristics”** provides basic awareness about writing;
- **“Different Types of Writing”** provides practice with some specific types of writing that are used in the workplace;
- **“Effective Words”** focuses on the nuances of workplace language;
- **“Grammar”** focuses on verbs, which often cause the most difficulty;
- **“Spelling”** includes strategies to help learners improve their spelling.

**“Assessment of Instruction”** – examples for instructors, learners, and managers

**“Curriculum Resources”** – lists of both internet and print.

## WHY ARE WORKPLACE WRITING SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Businesses and organizations rely on efficient and effective written communication.

E-mail is the most common way to communicate in the workplace. Yet, it is very difficult to write effective, clear e-mails with too little time and too many to read and respond to.

Employees do not know how to write effectively for the workplace. They are intimidated and frustrated.

Misunderstandings occur. Much time is lost in writing and trying to read unclear communications.

Effective workplace writing skills need to be intentionally taught, practiced, reinforced, and valued.

## WHY DID I DEVELOP THIS RESOURCE?

I developed this resource when I was teaching Workplace Writing Skills to a group of bi-lingual supervisors at Kripalu, Center for Yoga and Health, Stockbridge, MA. This was funded by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education with a Workplace Education Grant.

The contents are based on the writing skills that the participants needed to learn and practice. I found that existing published curriculum did not provide the contextualized structured writing practice to reinforce the specific skills.

I am posting this resource on the web-site so it will be useful to other instructors. The success of these materials is demonstrated by the comments of the managers that they have seen “amazing” improvement in the clarity and accuracy of inter-departmental e-mails by the participants. The participants themselves have noticed that they are much more confident and efficient in their writing and that they make noticeably fewer mistakes.

### **WHO IS THIS RESOURCE FOR?**

This resource is designed to be used by an instructor: professional, workplace supervisor/manager, or volunteer, who will work with the learner in a positive and supportive way.

Learners are native English speaking, bi-lingual, intermediate and advanced level ESOL employees who want to improve their written communication in the workplace

Ideally, learners need an identified “mentor” to provide on-going support, to edit their workplace communications, and reinforce the skills learned.

### **HOW DO YOU USE THIS RESOURCE?**

This resource is supplementary material to existing curriculum. As such, it is not sequential, and is designed so that the instructor can pick-and-choose what is relevant.

- Parts can be used in the classroom and integrated into a writing lesson.
- Parts can be used as a stand-alone writing lesson.
- Parts can be used by the learner as a homework assignment, a classroom assignment, or for additional practice.

**ASSESS** the learners’ needs and progress throughout the course.

**TARGET** the specific skills the learners need. Some of those skills are included in this resource.


With each skill, provide:

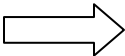
- Examples, samples, models, explanations etc. to **TEACH** the skill.  
Published business writing and grammar books contain many good examples.  
The instructor’s role is to explain the skill or concept and enable the learners to relate it to their own workplace situation.
- Structured practice opportunities to **REINFORCE** the skill.  
Many of the practice activities in this resource require the learners to use their own language relevant to their specific workplace needs.  
The instructor’s role is to provide supportive correction and guidance.
- Encouragement to **USE** the skills learned.  
The instructor’s role is to encourage the learners to check their workplace writing for the correct use of the skills that they have learned, and report the improvement in their writing.

# SPEAKING VS. WRITING



Writing does not always communicate your meaning.  
The reader creates the meaning.  
Speaking uses many more communication tools:  
Writing has no body language;  
                  has no tone of voice;  
                  has no facial expressions.  
Writing has only words.

||| **BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WRITE.**  
||| Be careful with anything that concerns  **negative** emotions.



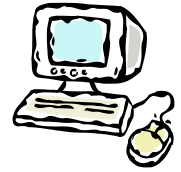
## PRACTICE

E-mail received: *I heard at the meeting that you said I was rude to you!*  
Response: *I never said you were rude to me.*

- **READ** each sentence below emphasizing the bold word.
- **DISCUSS** the meaning and implication of each statement.
- **ADD** another sentence to clarify the meaning of each.

1. **I** never said you were rude to me.
  
2. I **never** said you were rude to me.
  
3. I never **said** you were rude to me.
  
4. I never said **you** were rude to me.
  
5. I never said you were **rude** to me.
  
6. I never said you were rude to **me**.

# GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE TONE



**TONE** – THE ATTITUDE OF THE WRITER TO THE SUBJECT AND AUDIENCE.  
IT AFFECTS HOW THE READER WILL PERCEIVE THE MESSAGE.

## PLANNING TO WRITE

- **What is your purpose? What is your intent?**  
Only write when you have a clear sense of why you are writing.
- **Who is your audience? What is the best way to reach your reader?**  
Writing is always an extension of the relationship you have with a person.  
Try to visualize the person reading and reacting to your writing.

## PRESENTING THE INFORMATION

- **Be Confident**  
You can feel confident if you have planned, organized, and are knowledgeable about the material. You want the reader to do as you ask or to accept your decision. If you write confidently you will be more persuasive.

- **Be Courteous and Sincere**  
You can build goodwill for yourself by using a tone that is polite and sincere. Without sincerity, politeness can sound condescending. If you are respectful and honest, readers will be more willing to accept your message, even if it is negative.

*For example:*

**Not:** *You didn't read the instructions carefully, thus your system has shut down.*

**But:** *The system may automatically shut down if any installation errors occur.*

- **Write at an Appropriate Level of Difficulty**  
Write at an appropriate level of difficulty in order to clearly convey your message. Your writing needs to match the reading abilities of your audience. Do not use complex passages or terms that the reader will not understand. Conversely do not use simple terms or insufficient examples if the reader is capable of understanding your writing.

➤ **Use Nondiscriminatory Language**

Nondiscriminatory language is language that expresses equality and respect for all individuals. It does not use any discriminatory words, remarks, or ideas. Make sure your writing is free of sexist language and free of bias based on such factors as race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disability.

- Use gender-neutral language.

**Not:** *Chairman*

**But:** *Chairperson*

**Not:** *Executives and their wives*

**But:** *Executives and their spouses*

**Not:** *Dear Gentlemen:*

**But:** *To Whom It May Concern:*

**Not:** *Each student must provide his own lab jacket.*

**But:** *Students must provide their own lab jackets. Or: Each student must provide his or her own lab jacket.*

- Avoid demeaning or stereotypical terms.

**Not:** *After the girls in the office receive an order, our office fills it within 24 hours.*

**But:** *After the office receives an order, our office fills it within 24 hours.*

- Omit information about group membership.

**Not:** *Connie Green performed the job well for her age.*

**But:** *Connie Green performed the job well.*

➤ **Stress the Benefits for the Reader**

Write from the reader's perspective. Instead of writing from the perspective of what the reader can do for you, write in a way that shows what you can do for the reader. A reader will often read a document wondering "What's in it for me?" Stressing reader benefits will help you to avoid sounding self-centered and uninterested

**Not:** *I am processing your order tomorrow.*

**But:** *You will receive your order in two weeks.*

# FUNCTION, FORM, STYLE, TONE



## ➔ PRACTICE

COMPARE THESE THREE E-MAILS. THINK ABOUT:

- Function - the relationship to the reader and the purpose
- Form - the organization, format, construction
- Style - the type of writing
- Tone - the attitude of the writer

WRITE A REPLY TO EACH REFLECTING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH.  
USE THE COURSE RESOURCES INCLUDING THE “WRITING CHECKLIST.”

1

Writing Class Participants,

Just a reminder to bring your pre-course assessment to class on Wednesday, if I have not got it already.

Also, thank you for emailing me copies of your recent communications. They have helped me design the course and priorities.

Looking forward to seeing you on Wednesday.

Christine

2

Hi Everyone, Hope you are having a good week and consciously thinking about your writing. It was great to be with you last week and get to know you and find out what you need to improve your writing. The emails you copied me on helped me decide what to teach you. It's all going to be very useful and practical. Your standard of writing is very good – but we need to work on a few things to make it better. By the way, I'm sorry to bother you about this, but I really need the pre-course assessment. So, consider this a reminder. If you could give it to me on Wednesday I would really appreciate it. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone again on Wednesday. We will have binders and handouts and worksheets to practice the writing skills. It's going to be wonderful. Thanks, Hugs, Christine

3

Writing Class Participant:

I need your pre-course assessment if you have not given it to me. Bring it to class on Wednesday.

Christine Polk  
Instructor

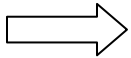
# ORGANIZING LISTS



- Lists organize and classify ideas.
- Lists make a series of items clear and more convincing.
- Lists can be used as a reference to remember/confirm/clarify something previously said or agreed upon.

## PRINCIPLES

- **Lists need to contain items of the same classification/category.**  
For example: conclusions must be separate from recommendations, causes from effects, past from present, etc.
- **Lists need to have parallel grammar construction.**  
They must begin with the same part of speech.  
For example: all are sentences, all begin with verbs, etc.  
If an item cannot be phrased in a parallel construction, it is probably a different category.
- **Lists need to be limited to five points per category.**  
Lists need to be easy to understand and remember.  
If there are more than five items, create more categories, or divide the information into smaller pieces.
- **Lists need to be organized according to importance or how the items relate to each other.**
- **Lists need to have bullets or numbers.**

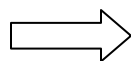


## PRACTICE

**CORRECT** the following bulleted list.

Ways to ensure effective writing:

- Short sentences are a good idea.
- Divide your writing into paragraphs.
- Editing your writing before you send it is essential.
- You must avoid spelling mistakes.
- To check your writing, read it aloud.



**USE:** Write a list of ways to ensure workplace safety.

# COMPLAINT



➔ **PRACTICE** Brainstorm problems you have had with other businesses.  
Chose one to write a complaint about.  
Follow these **GUIDELINES**.

## **tone**

- Keep it short.
- Focus on the result you want rather than on a person's or company's incompetence.
- Use whatever tone – light/angry/disappointed/concerned – you think will get results.
- But, be tactful. Do not be harshly critical.

## **1. OPENING**

If possible say something positive about the company or your relationship.  
Introduce your problem.

- We have enjoyed a long-standing relationship, but
- I am concerned about
- I was disturbed to see
- Last month we ordered

## **2. FOCUS**

Explain the problem. Make sure you have all the information about the problem.  
Cite the steps, if any, that have been taken to resolve the problem, so far.  
State continuing instances of the problem or failure to solve it. (Complaints are often documented in writing because talking has not worked.)

- This is not consistent with
- This type of misunderstanding makes it difficult for us.
- I was under the impression that we agreed on
- My expectation was that
- In our previous discussions, we said

## **3. ACTION**

Tell the company your solution and when you want it implemented.  
You could mention acceptable alternatives or ask the reader for some.

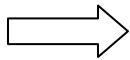
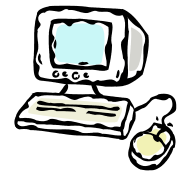
- What can we do to correct the problem?
- What alternatives can you suggest?
- When will you know

## **4. CLOSING**

Mention a specific follow-up step and date.  
Be as pleasant and positive as possible.

- I want to work with you.
- I appreciate your attention to this and I expect
- I would like you to
- I don't want to cancel, so

# COMPLAINT ABOUT A PRODUCT



**PRACTICE** Brainstorm problems you have had about products.  
Chose one to write a complaint about.  
Follow these **GUIDELINES**.

## GOAL

To write to the right person who will take responsibility to fix your problem.  
You often need to write about a complaint because talking has not worked.

## TO NE

Keep it short.

Be tactful. Do not be too critical. Be as positive as possible.

## 1. STATE YOUR PROBLEM

**Be as specific with dates, model numbers, descriptions etc.**

First sentence

- On (date) I ordered/bought/purchased by phone/internet/mail/in your store .....

Product problems

- Part of the product/order (specify) was missing/broken/damaged.
- It is defective/does not work. (How?)
- It is very poor quality. (How?)
- It is the wrong item/color/size/quantity/style/model.
- I am returning the enclosed ..... because ....
- There was no packing slip/directions.

Shipping problems

- ..... arrived/got here/delivered too late/damaged.

Billing problems

- The invoice/billing/information is wrong/incorrect.
- I was billed too much/for the wrong item.
- There is a problem/mistake/an error on my bill/account/invoice.
- I cancelled the order on (date) but I have been billed for it.

## 2. FOCUS

**Why do you need to write?**

State the steps that have already taken to resolve the problem.

- I have telephoned \_\_\_ times. (Give dates and who you spoke to.)
- I was told that the item/credit/check will be sent/replaced. It has not arrived.
- I left a message on your voice-mail and have had no response.
- Your representative could do nothing about this.
- The person I talked to could not help me.

Add your opinions if you like.

- I am disappointed/concerned/disturbed.
- This is obviously unacceptable/unsatisfactory.

### **3. ACTION**

Tell the company your solution and when you want it done.

You could mention acceptable alternatives.

If possible say something positive about the company.

- I have been using your business since .... and have always had excellent service.
- You were recommended to me by... as an excellent company.
- I bought this from you because of your excellent reputation.

Requesting

- Please .....
- I would appreciate if you would .....
- I would like you to .....
- I want/expect you to .....
- You need to .....

Action

- ....replace/exchange it.
- ....send/give me a credit/refund.
- ....send me the missing items.

### **4. CLOSING**

Mention a specific follow-up step and date.

- Please write by (date). Please check my address so there is no mistake.
- I will expect ... by (date)
- Please call my phone (number) and leave a message about what you will do and when.

# RESPONSE TO A COMPLAINT WHEN YOU ARE NOT AT FAULT



## ➔ PRACTICE

- **BRAINSTORM** complaints that you have had.
- **CHOOSE** one to respond to.
- **FOLLOW** these **GUIDELINES**.

### **TONE**

Maintain a neutral tone and stick to the facts.  
Be courteous.

### **1. OPENING**

Thank the person for writing about the problem. Acknowledge the person and the feelings. People write complaints to be heard, to get sympathy, an apology, action, or some financial adjustment.

**“I’m sorry” and “I regret” means you did nothing wrong.**

**“I apologize” means you did do something wrong.**

- Thank you for your e-mail expressing your disappointment.
- I appreciate you letting us know about this.
- I understand your frustration.
- I regret you had trouble/difficulties.
- We regret the misunderstanding/miscommunication about .....
- We are sorry to hear about .....

### **2. FOCUS**

Relate to the specific problem. Explain why you are not at fault.

Do not suggest that the reader shares the blame, even if s/he does.

- Unfortunately this was beyond our control/out of our hands
- I’m sorry that we couldn’t do anything about
- Our handbook/policy/information says
- We were under the impression that
- The information you provided indicated

### **3. ACTION**

Relate to what the reader wants.

- I looked into what happened, and I learned that .....
- Unfortunately I cannot (do whatever the reader wants) but I can .....
- .....is, of course, out of our control.
- I will pass your letter on to .....

### **4. CLOSING**

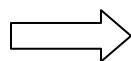
End on a positive note.

- We are committed to/take pride in high-quality customer service.
- You are important to us.
- We look forward to seeing you again and trust that (mention things from the letter that will be better.)



# RESPONSE TO A COMPLAINT

## APOLOGY



**PRACTICE** Brainstorm complaints that you have had.  
Chose one to respond with an apology.  
Follow these **GUIDELINES**.

### **TONE**

Express your regret and concern, but not too much.  
Don't make excuses or offer long explanations.  
Sincere apologies can help mend relationships.

### **1. OPENING**

Acknowledge the mistake.

- We have received your letter of February 19, 2009 about .....

### **2. FOCUS**

Admit your mistake and accept responsibility for the error: the "pure apology" sentence.  
Do not suggest that the customer share the blame (e.g. by suggesting s/he is too sensitive).  
Do not blame someone else.

- Thank you for notifying us about ....
- We are sorry to hear about .....
- We regret the error ....
- I apologize for ....
- Rarely happens.
- You are correct.
- That should not have happened.
- I understand your disappointment/frustration.

### **3. ACTION**

Be clear about the solution, adjustment or compensation (if asked and appropriate).

- We will not charge you for .....
- Enclosed is ....
- We are willing to ....
- As a token of our regret ....

### **4. CLOSING**

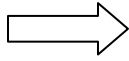
Try to restore the customer's faith. You could apologize again.

Explain how you will avoid similar problems in the future.

End on a positive note.

- Again, my sincere apology.
- We have high standards for .....
- We are taking steps to ensure that this does not happen again.
- We appreciate your business and hope that .....
- We look forward to seeing you in the future.
- You are welcome to call me to discuss this further.

## RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND/OR OPINION



### PRACTICE

WRITE a response to this e-mail from your manager.

Department Heads:

In preparation for the managers' meeting, I want to know your opinion about how the present economic situation has impacted your job and your department.

1. What challenges have you faced?
2. What changes have you needed to make?
3. What challenges do you see in the future?
4. What can we do to meet these challenges?
5. What is positive about our current situation?

Please respond this week.

Thank you,

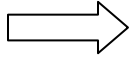
Christine

### FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES:

- Use a bulleted narrative format.
- State your most important points early.
- Be specific. Give examples.
- Make sure you emphasize what a great job you are doing.
- Be supportive of the challenges.
- State the positive and potentially positive.
- Be clear if you want your manager to do something soon.



## RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND/OR OPINION



### PRACTICING 3 DIFFERENT TENSES

WRITE a response to this e-mail from your manager, (or a manager from an imaginary company.)

Department Heads:

We are up-dating the information we give to new employees about our company.

We want to know what you think is the most important information to include.

1. What our company is like now: including the values, work environment, expectations etc.
2. A description of our company's background and history.
3. What our company will be like in the future.

Please respond this week.

Thank you,

Christine

#### FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES:

- Use a bulleted narrative format.
- Be specific. Give examples.
- Use the correct verb tense.
  - Question 1: Simple Present.
  - Question 2: Simple Past.
  - Question 3: Simple Future.
- Underline each targeted verb tense.



# TALKING TOPICS

## TO USE WITH PRACTICE OF:

RECORD OF YOUR SPOKEN IDEAS

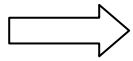
RECORD OF A SPEECH

MINUTES OF A MEETING

1. What are the major differences between young staff members and older staff members? How is age significant?
2. What specific ways can you increase workplace safety?
3. Should all employees take first-aid courses, such as CPR?  
Why or why not?
4. In the development of the budget, what is more important, higher pay, or better benefits? Explain.  
What further benefits would you like?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a multi-cultural workforce?
6. What can the top administration learn from the staff?  
How do you suggest they can learn?
7. What can be done to encourage more and better qualified candidates to apply for openings?
8. What are the essential characteristics of an effective manager?
9. What advice would you give to new employees?
10. What are the best methods of disciplining staff?
11. CHOOSE YOUR OWN TOPIC.



## RECORD OF YOUR SPOKEN IDEAS



### PRACTICE

**SPEAK** on a topic for about 2 minutes from the "Talking Topics" list.

**WRITE** an e-mail in response to:

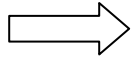
"Send me an e-mail about the ideas you spoke about."

### FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES.

- **Include as much about your spoken ideas as you think is appropriate.**  
Sometimes spontaneous ideas are not suitable for a written record.  
Expand and delete according to your later thoughts.
  
- **Organize your ideas with bullets.**
  
- **Prioritize them.**  
The most important point/idea is .....  
..... is less significant  
On reflection I do not now think that .....
  
- **Include ideas and thoughts you did not speak about, but are important.**  
Something else to consider is .....  
I did not have time to mention .....
  
- **Acknowledge the positive interaction.**  
I'm glad I had the chance to share my ideas with you.  
Thank you for asking my opinion.
  
- **Mention future plans**  
If you would like to talk with me more .....  
I would be happy to develop these thoughts.  
Would you like me to share these ideas with .....



## RECORD OF A SPEECH



### PRACTICE

**LISTEN** to a person speaking about a "Talking Topic."

**FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES.**

#### 1. MAKE NOTES

- Write key words or phrases as the speaker talks.
- Organize your notes with the main idea and important details.
- Add any you missed when the speaker stops.

#### 2. WRITE THE RECORD ON A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER

- Start with an introductory sentence: who spoke about what topic.
- Include all the important points. It is a summary of what is said.
- Write as a narrative with bullets.
  
- No "value judgments". Keep your own thoughts out. Just record what was said.
  
- Write so that if your audience was not present they would understand.

#### 3. SHARE

- Read your "record" to the group.
- After you have shared, ask the speaker to clarify anything that is not clear.

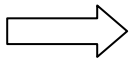
#### 4. REFLECT

- After others have shared, discuss how the versions are the same and different.



# MINUTES OF A MEETING

## THE RECORD OF DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS.



### PRACTICE

LISTEN to two or more people discussing a "Talking Topic."

FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES.

#### 1. MAKE NOTES

- Record which person is talking.
- Write key words or phrases as the speaker talks.
- Organize your notes with the main idea and important details.
- Add any you missed when the discussion stops.

#### 2. WRITE THE "MINUTES" ON A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER

Start with an introductory sentence about the topic of the discussion.

Include all the important points. It is a summary of what is said.

Write as a narrative with bullets.

No "value judgments". Keep your own thoughts out. Just record what was said.

Write so that if your audience was not present they would understand.

#### 3. SHARE

Read your "Minutes" to the group.

After you have shared, ask the speakers to clarify anything that is not clear.

# PROPOSAL



## PURPOSE:

To advocate for (make a case for) a certain action, policy, or position.

## GUIDELINES

### Think about the reader before you start to write.

- How much information does your reader need?
- How does your proposal meet the needs/goals of the reader?
- Will your reader like your proposal, or need to be persuaded?

### Organization (Refer to “Outline a Proposal”)

1. Opening Statement
2. Your Position
3. Issues, Ideas
4. Conclusions
5. Recommendations, Action Plan
6. Closing

### Tone

Be confident, but write as a carefully considered idea.  
Have a collaborative tone.

### EXAMPLES OF LANGUAGE TO USE

I propose that/recommend that/suggest that  
I have an idea for you to consider.

This would enable us to  
..... will benefit the company by  
This will have a significant long-term benefit.

If you are concerned about....then we can  
It is important that we be involved because  
....will demonstrate our support for

This will enable us to achieve our goal of  
Everyone would benefit  
This should take care of the problem

I am confident that  
I appreciate your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.  
Please let me know what you think

# OUTLINE A PROPOSAL



**MAKE NOTES** — use this page as a template.

- Organize your brainstorming ideas.
- Use words and phrases, not sentences. Focus on the content.
- Use all or some of these ideas in your final proposal.

## 1. Introduction: Opening Statement

What prompts this proposal? Why are you writing this?

Why is it important?

## 2. Proposal

What do you want your reader to do? (This is your first sentence of the second paragraph.)

What background information does your reader need?

## 3. Ideas

After you have listed your ideas, number them in order of importance.

Idea

Advantages

Disadvantages

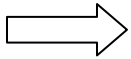
## 4. Conclusion (Based on your most important idea.)

## 5. Proposal and Action Plan

## 6. Closing - What specific response would you like?



# PROPOSAL



## PRACTICE

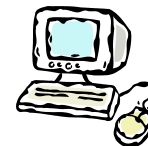
Your manager has asked for your proposals to improve the quality and productivity in your company.

- **RESPOND** to one of the following questions. State your reasons for your answer.
- **FOLLOW** the "Proposal Guidelines."
- **PLAN** before writing. See "Outline a Proposal."

1. If you could buy one expensive item for your company, what would it be?
2. What are the characteristics of people you would not hire?  
How would you find out?
3. What are the characteristics of people you would hire?  
How would you find out?
4. How could your company improve the quality of customer service?
5. How would you increase the productivity and efficiency in your company?

Your own idea

6. What would you like to recommend to your supervisor or manager? Write a proposal.



## TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES

- *Connect sentences, ideas, paragraphs. (Like a bridge)*
- *Link sentences and ideas smoothly.*
- *Give your reader clear signals to understand your thinking.*
- *Lead your reader to make assumptions.*

### **To SHOW TIME, SEQUENCE**

At this time, at this point, now, during, simultaneously, concurrently, first, second etc., today etc. next, then, after, afterwards, following this, soon, later, before, previously, earlier, recently, once, meanwhile, in the meantime, until, finally, eventually, last, lastly.

### **To CONTINUE THE SAME IDEA**

And, again, and then, too, next, further, furthermore, moreover, in addition, besides,

### **To REPEAT**

As I have said, as I have noted.

### **To GIVE AN EXAMPLE**

For example, for instance, such as, in this case, on this occasion, in this situation, to demonstrate, to illustrate, as an illustration, namely, to be specific, specifically, in other words.

### **To SHOW CAUSE AND EFFECT**

Because, because of, consequently, thus, so, so that, since, therefore, due to (the fact that), as a result, resulting from.

### **To EMPHASIZE**

Definitely, extremely, absolutely, positively, emphatically, unquestionably, without a doubt, without reservation, certainly.

### **To SHOW IMPORTANCE**

A significant factor, a primary concern, a key feature, a central issue, above all, especially important, important to note, most of all, pay particular attention to, the basic concept, the principal item.

### **To COMPARE**

By comparison, compared to, similarly, or, likewise, equally important, same.

### **To CONTRAST**

whereas, on the other hand, unless, in contrast, different from, even though, rather.

### **To SHOW AN UNEXPECTED RESULT**

although, in spite of, despite, but, yet however, nevertheless.

### **To QUALIFY (The idea is not exact.)**

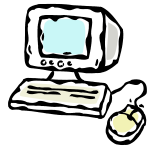
Almost, could, should, might, maybe, nearly, probably, except.

### **To PROVE**

Because, since, obviously, evidently, in fact, as a result.

### **To SUMMARIZE, CONCLUDE**

In brief, summing up, in summary, to sum up, to conclude, in conclusion, as I have shown, as I have said, thus, accordingly, evidently, it is evident, for this reason.



# TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES

## To ADD TO THE SAME IDEA

in addition            in addition to (followed by a noun)

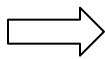
also    too    moreover (formal)    furthermore (formal)

besides (followed by a noun)    as well (informal)

### EXAMPLES:

The report was very informative. It had some excellent ideas.

- The report was very informative. **In addition (also)**, it had some excellent ideas..
- **In addition to (besides)** some excellent ideas, the report was very informative.
- The report was very informative. It had some excellent ideas **too (as well)**.
- The report was very informative. **Furthermore (moreover)**, it had some excellent ideas.



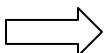
### PRACTICE

**ADD** another sentence to continue the main idea of each of the following.

**USE** each transitional word or phrase in the box.

**UNDERLINE** the transitional word or phrase in your new sentence and in the box.

1. I had a lot of work to do today.
2. Our budget is tight this month.
3. There will be no more overtime.
4. The latest shipment was damaged.
5. I didn't get a good performance review.
6. Writing in English is difficult.
7. Our department staff are all computer literate.
8. I can change my schedule.



**WRITE 3** of your own sentences about something in your workplace.

# TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES

## To SHOW IMPORTANCE



A significant factor    the primary concernmost of all

a key feature            a central issue            above all

especially important    important to note            the principal item

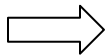
the basic concept            pay particular attention to

### EXAMPLES:

Notice the different grammar constructions.

Check and edit your correspondence.

- **The key feature/basic concept** in writing is to check and edit your correspondence.
- **Pay particular attention to** checking and editing your correspondence.
- **Most of all/above all:** check and edit your correspondence.
- **A primary concern/a central issue** is to check and edit your correspondence.
- Checking and editing your correspondence is **especially important**.
- **It is important to note:** check and edit your correspondence.



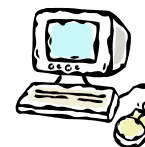
### PRACTICE

**WRITE** sentences about what is important in your workplace.

**USE** some of the transitional phrases in the box.

**UNDERLINE** the transitional word or phrase in your sentence and in the box.

# TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES



## TO SHOW DIRECT CONTRAST

ANSWERS THE QUESTION, "HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT?"

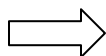
while	whereas	but
however	on the other hand	

### EXAMPLES:

Notice the different punctuation.

The department copier was broken. The main copier was fine.

- The department copier was broken, **but** the main copier was fine.
- The department copier was broken. **On the other hand** the main copier was fine.
- The department copier was broken; **however**, the main copier was fine.
- The department copier was broken, **whereas/while** the main copier was fine.



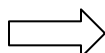
### PRACTICE

**ADD** to these sentences to show a direct contrast.

**USE** each transitional word or phrase in the box.

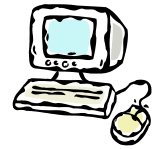
**UNDERLINE** the transitional word or phrase in your sentence and in the box.

9. I had a lot of work to do today.
10. Our budget is tighter this month.
11. There will be no over-time this month.
12. The latest shipment was damaged.
13. I didn't get a good performance review.
14. Writing e-mails is easy.
15. Our department staff are all computer literate.
16. I can work weekends.



**WRITE** your own sentences to show a direct contrast.

# TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES



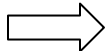
## TO SHOW AN UNEXPECTED RESULT

despite	in spite of	despite the fact that			
although	even though	but	yet	however	nevertheless

### EXAMPLES:

Everyone met their deadline. The report was late.

- The report was still late, **although/even though** everyone met their deadline.
- The report was still late, **despite the fact that** everyone met their deadline
- The report was still late, **despite/in spite of** everyone *meeting* their deadline. (Note different form of the verb.)
- Everyone met their deadline, **but/yet** the report was still late.
- Everyone met their deadline; **however/nevertheless** the report was still late.



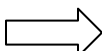
### PRACTICE

**ADD** to each of the following sentences to show an unexpected result.

**USE** each transitional word or phrase from the box.

**UNDERLINE** the transitional word or phrase in your sentence and in the box.

17. I had a lot of work to do.
18. He was late to the meeting.
19. Our budget is tighter this month.
20. There will be no more overtime.
21. She needs some staff to change their days off.
22. The director postponed the deadline.
23. The latest shipment was damaged.
24. I didn't get a good performance review.



**WRITE** your own sentences to show an unexpected result.

# TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES



## TO SHOW CAUSE AND EFFECT

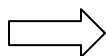
CAUSE – THE REASON      EFFECT – THE RESULT

Cause:	because	because of (followed by a noun)	since
Effect:	therefore	due to (followed by a noun)	as a result      so

### EXAMPLES:

The report was late. The copier was broken again.

- The report was late **because** the copier was broken again.
- The report was late **because of** the broken copier.
- **Since** the copier was broken again, the report was late.
- The copier was broken again, **therefore/so/as a result** the report was late.
- **Due to** the broken copier, the report was late.



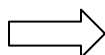
### PRACTICE

ADD to the following sentences to show either cause or effect.

USE each transitional word or phrase from the box.

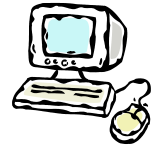
UNDERLINE the transitional word or phrase in your sentence and in the box.

1. I had a lot of work to do.
2. He was late to the meeting.
3. Our budget is tighter this month.
4. There will be no more overtime.
5. She needs some staff to change their days off.
6. The director postponed the deadline.
7. The latest shipment was damaged.
8. I didn't get a good performance review.



WRITE your own sentences to show a cause and/or effect.

# DIRECT/LESS DIRECT LANGUAGE EXAMPLES



Note: Less Direct language is also called "Indirect" or "Polite" language  
This does not mean that you cannot be direct and polite at the same time.  
Writing in the United States tends to be more direct than other cultures.

## DIRECT LANGUAGE

## LESS DIRECT LANGUAGE

### MAKING SUGGESTIONS/OPINIONS/IDEAS

I think .....  
I have an idea .....  
Why don't we ....?  
We should .....

If we can/could .... We can/could...  
I'm wondering if we could....?  
Maybe we could/should....  
What do you think about.....?  
Might we be able to...?  
Have you considered.....?  
Would \_\_\_\_\_ work/be okay?

### AGREEING WITH SUGGESTIONS/OPINIONS/IDEAS

\_\_\_\_\_ is fine.  
O.K. Let's ....  
I agree that .....

I like your suggestion to....  
.... is a good idea.  
...sounds like a good idea.  
I'm pleased to hear that .....

### DISAGREEING WITH SUGGESTIONS/OPINIONS/IDEAS

I can't agree...  
Your suggestion/plan won't work.  
....is not possible at this time  
I disagree.  
You are wrong.

I'm not sure ...  
I wonder if ... would be better  
I received your suggestion about .... but....  
Thank you for your suggestion, however ....  
You have a good point about ... However, I think.....  
I'm afraid I don't think that...  
I don't really agree that....  
In my opinion.....  
It seems to me that .....

I can understand how strongly you feel about this, but I'm sorry that ....  
I understand your point of view, but I have to disagree. I....

# DIRECT/LESS DIRECT LANGUAGE



## → PRACTICE LESS DIRECT LANGUAGE - EDITING

### A. CORRECT THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES

1. I agree the decision.
2. Would writing to others in the department.
3. I'm afraid too expensive what you suggest.
4. A different schedule be better.
5. I like your suggestion adding the graphics.
6. I wonder you could speak to them directly.
7. Could we making the change later.
8. I'm not sure this idea working.
9. Why don't we delaying the meeting until next week.
10. Maybe we have more time to think about this.

### B. CHECK YOUR ANSWERS WITH A PARTNER AND/OR THE INSTRUCTOR.

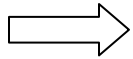
### C. WRITE THE CORRECTED SENTENCES FROM DICTATION

With a partner:

1. One person dictates sentences 1 - 5 to your partner.  
The other writes down each sentence on another piece of paper.
2. Change roles, using sentences 6 - 10.
3. Both check your sentences with the corrected ones.



## DIRECT/LESS DIRECT LANGUAGE



### PRACTICE LESS DIRECT LANGUAGE

THE FOLLOWING ARE EXAMPLES OF VERY DIRECT LANGUAGE.

WRITE LESS DIRECT, MORE POLITE, COURTEOUS WAYS OF SAYING:

1. I think ..... (Making a suggestion)
2. I want .... (Asking for something)
3. I need you to ..... (Asking the reader to do something)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is fine. (Agreeing with a suggestion)
5. Don't forget .....(Reminder)
6. I don't agree that ..... (Disagreeing with a suggestion)
7. I cannot come ..... (Declining an invitation)
8. I can't ..... (Responding to a request)
9. You didn't do ....(Complaint)
10. It's not our fault. (Responding to a complaint)

# DIRECT/LESS DIRECT LANGUAGE



## ➔ PRACTICE WITH PROPOSALS

- **READ** the seven proposals below.  
Write 'A' next to the ones you agree with,  
or 'D' next to the ones you disagree with.
  
- **CHOOSE** one proposal that you **AGREE** with.  
**WRITE** two responses **with the reasons** why you agree:  
one response - very direct; one response - very polite.  
Think of a reason to be very direct, or very polite.  
Refer to the "Examples of Direct/Less Direct Language."
  
- **CHOOSE** one proposal that you **DISAGREE** with.  
**WRITE** two responses **with the reasons** why you disagree:  
one response - very direct; one response - very polite.  
Think of a reason to be very direct, or very polite.  
Refer to the "Examples of Direct/Less Direct Language."

### PROPOSALS

1. \_\_\_\_ There will be coffee available all day for all employees.
2. \_\_\_\_ All employees need to be computer literate.
3. \_\_\_\_ All employees will take a first aid course including CPR, during work hours.
4. \_\_\_\_ Rather than laying-off employees, we will be reducing everyone's hours by 10%.
5. \_\_\_\_ Because we have so many customers, staff will be required to work over-time on a regular basis.
6. \_\_\_\_ To promote company identity, all employees, will wear the exact same company uniform.

# DIRECT/LESS DIRECT LANGUAGE



## → DISCUSSION

WRITE NOTES ABOUT THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, BEFORE THE DISCUSSION.

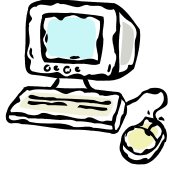
The questions relate direct and less direct language to the functions of communication: your relationship with your reader and what you want to say (your message).

### Direct Language

1. What do you feel as the writer when you use direct language?
2. What do you feel as a reader when you read direct language?
3. When is it appropriate to use direct language?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of direct language?
5. When can communication be direct as well as polite?

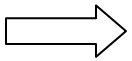
### Indirect Language

6. What do you feel as the writer when you use less direct language?
7. What do you feel as a reader when you read less direct language?
8. When is it appropriate to use polite, indirect language?
9. What are the advantages and disadvantages of indirect language?
10. When can communication be indirect and not polite?



## NO “FRAGMENTS”

- A fragment is a group of words that does not fully state an idea.
- A fragment often is without a subject or a verb.
- A sentence needs to be about a complete idea, with all the necessary information.



### PRACTICE

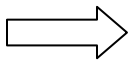
Make these “fragments” into complete sentences:

1. Whether he decides to go to the meeting or not.
2. Although we might accept his proposal.
3. When he left the meeting.
4. I think we could do it, but if we do.
5. Regardless of how you handle the matter.
6. If I wasn’t concerned about what my manager would say.
7. The Director, who was very pleased with the presentation.
8. We won’t meet our budget if the spending.
9. When I forgot to respond to the e-mail.
10. Because we were short-staffed.

## NO “RUN-ON” SENTENCES

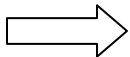


- A “run-on” sentence is two or more sentences that are written together without the correct punctuation.
- A sentence needs to be about only one complete idea.
- Each sentence should have one - or maximum two - verbs in it.
- Limit the length of your sentences to 20 words maximum.



### PRACTICE

- Edit these “run-on” sentences.
  - Add punctuation and capital letters.
  - You might need to add, delete and/or change words.
1. At two o'clock I have a meeting it will last an hour.
  2. It was a very interesting meeting that proved to be very helpful to Michael too and it finished on time.
  3. Don't worry about what I think worry about what your supervisor thinks.
  4. Tell Mary hello if you see her it's been weeks since we've talked.
  5. The secretary typed the letter and then edited it and then copied it and then mailed it.
  6. When the meeting started Mr. Jones made his recommendation which was discussed at length before the chairperson decided to take a vote and the recommendation was defeated.
  7. I told you I would type the letter but if you need it today you will have to do it yourself because I have a report that my manager wants tomorrow.
  8. The salesman made me a good offer I think I will buy it.



### CHECK your workplace writing for run-on sentences.

- Notice the verbs.
- Divide sentences that are too long.
- Read your writing aloud to “hear” when to add periods.



## 6 VERB TENSES CHART

	SIMPLE	PROGRESSIVE
PRESENT	She <u>works</u> every weekend.	She <u>is working</u> overtime too.
PAST	He <u>worked</u> 5 days last week.	We <u>were working</u> upstairs when you came in.
FUTURE	He <u>will work</u> 6 days next week.	I <u>will be working</u> here tomorrow morning.

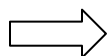
**REFER** to a grammar book or on-line grammar resources for the explanation of the meanings of the tenses.



## PARALLEL VERB FORM

VERBS THAT ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT NEED TO HAVE THE SAME STRUCTURE.

Parallel verbs = parallel construction.



### PRACTICE

- **UNDERLINE** the two parallel verbs. (Either side of the **bold** word.)  
The **bold** word shows where two parts of the sentence are parallel.  
(and, or, than)
- **CHANGE** the construction of one verb to match the parallel verb.

#### Example:

*make*

It doesn't take a long time to edit your e-mails **and** making them perfect.

1. Writing in a polite style is better **than** to be too abrupt.
2. Lists classify ideas **and** making a series of items clear.
3. Write an informative subject line **and** to make it interesting.
4. It is better to write in short sentences **than** using complex constructions.
5. The closing tells the readers what you want them to do **or** making it clear what you will do.
6. Always ask the meaning of a word rather **than** guessing wrongly.

# SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE



## → USE

1. What do you do everyday at work?  
Use then/next/before/after/later etc.
  
2. What do you always/usually/often/sometimes/rarely/never do at work?
  
3. Think of questions using the simple present tense that you might ask a staff member:  
Answer the questions as if you were that staff member.  
  
Who .....  
  
What .....  
  
When .....  
  
Why .....  
  
Where .....  
  
How .....

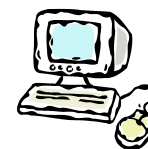


## PAST TENSE

### → USE

- CHOOSE A SUBJECT.
  - WRITE A PARAGRAPH ABOUT YOUR WORKPLACE.
1. Yesterday
  2. Last week
  3. Last month
  4. Last year
  5. The best/worst time
  6. A time you were scared/proud/other strong emotion
  7. A special workplace event
  8. A time you helped someone
  9. A time someone helped you
  10. Your previous job

# VERB TENSES



## ➔ PRACTICE

**FILL IN** the correct form of the tense of the verb "to work".  
Each one is a different tense.

1. She \_\_\_\_\_ *every day* to keep the schedule updated.
2. We \_\_\_\_\_ on the schedule *when* the manager interrupted us.
3. He \_\_\_\_\_ 2 days *last week* on the schedule.
4. She \_\_\_\_\_ on tomorrow's schedule *right now*.
5. We \_\_\_\_\_ on the schedule all day Monday *next week*.
6. I \_\_\_\_\_ on the schedule tomorrow morning, *when* you come in.

**WRITE** above each auxiliary (helping) verb:

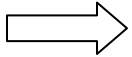
- PR – Present. All verbs showing action going on NOW.
- PA – Past. All verbs showing action in the PAST.
- F – Future. All verbs showing action in the FUTURE.

**CHECK** your answers with the "Verb Tenses Chart."

**IN PAIRS**, take turns **EXPLAINING** the meaning of the verbs.

- **USE** each complete verb from above.
- **ONE PERSON ASKS:**  
"When do you use \_\_\_\_\_? Use a verb tense example. (is working, worked, will be working etc.)"
- **ANSWER:**  
Identify the tense and explain the meaning.

# VERB TENSES



## PRACTICE AND USE

1. **TALK** about each question with a partner using the correct verb form.  
Use more than one sentence.
2. **WRITE** the answer to each question with the correct verb form.  
Use more than one sentence.
3. **UNDERLINE** each part of the verb: the "helping" verb and the "main" verb.
4. **CHECK** your answer with the "Verb Tense Chart."

### Simple Present

What specifically does your workplace do to ensure the highest safety standards?

### Present Progressive

What are people doing in the room right now?

### Simple Past

What happened last week/month at work that was different than this week?

### Past Progressive

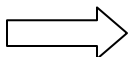
What were you doing today before you came to class?

### Simple Future

What will you do next week that is different than this week?

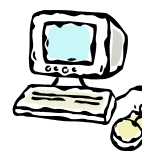
### Future Progressive

What will you be doing tomorrow at this time?



**CHECK** your workplace writing for correct verb tenses.

# VERB TENSES



## → USE

- **FINISH** these sentences using the correct verb tense.
- **CHECK** the "6 Verb Tenses Chart" if you need to.

1. Everyday . . . . .

2. Earlier today . . . . .

3. Later today . . . . .

4. Right now . . . . .

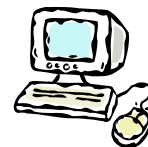
5. Next month . . . . .

6. Every weekend . . . . .

7. Tomorrow . . . . .

8. Yesterday . . . . .

- **LABEL** each sentence with the name of the verb tense.



# LEARN TO SPELL DIFFICULT WORDS

→ DO THESE STEPS IN ORDER

1. **Read** the word OUT LOUD.

2. **Say** it in a sentence.

3. **Copy** it as you **s-p-e-l-l** it OUT LOUD.

Underline the problem part of the word.

4. **Pronounce** the word as it is spelled.

5. **Cover** the w

**Visualize** it for a count of 10.



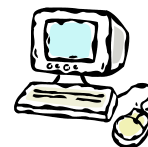
**S-p-e-l-l** it out loud and

*Write* the word.

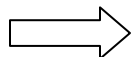
Underline the problem letters.

6. **Uncover** the word.  **check** your spelling.

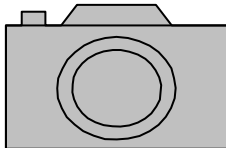
7. **Repeat, repeat, repeat. . . . .**



## IMPROVE YOUR SPELLING

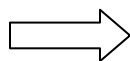


### IDEAS FOR YOU TO USE

- 1. DON'T** try to spell correctly while you are thinking what to write.  
**Check your spelling later.**
- 2. LEARN** only 5 - 10 most important words at a time.
- 3. USE THE CLUES:**
  1. Phonics: the sound of the letters
  2. The look of the word
  3. The spelling rules
  4. The structure of the word: prefix, suffix
- 4. READ the word OUT LOUD.** If there is more than one syllable,  
**say** each syllable clearly and **count** the syllables. **S-p-e-l-l** each syllable.
- 5. PRONOUNCE** the word as it is spelled.
- 6. RE-WRITE** the word many times: larger, smaller, in different colors.  
Write the problem part of the word to "stand out".  
The brain remembers things better in color.  
**S-p-e-l-l** the word as you write it.
- 7.**  **"PHOTOGRAPH"** it in your mind. **Look** at the word for 5 seconds. Then write what you **remember**. **Check** it. **Correct** the spelling. **Repeat**.
- 8. MAKE A PICTURE** or graphic of the word:  
"see" with two eyes; "sea" with a wavy line **Sea in a wavy line.**
- 9. CREATE** your own spelling dictionary.
- 10. FIND** words that have **the same spelling pattern**.
- 11. ASK** someone to **test** you on the words **everyday**.



## WRITING CHECKLIST



**USE THIS LIST TO CHECK YOUR WRITING BEFORE YOU SEND IT.**

Function - to communicate the purpose and information most effectively.

Style - to fit the purpose to be most effective.

Tone - to ensure the most effective relationship with your reader(s).

### Form - organization

Subject line – interesting, informative

Purpose first – to tell the reader about..., to ask the reader to ...

Precise about expected outcome – when you want a response, or task done.

Amount of information – only necessary

### Vocabulary - careful choice of words

### Structure

Sentence structure - short, one idea, average length 18 – 20 words.

Paragraphs – one topic, 5 sentences or less, 1 – 1½ inches of text.

Grammar

E.g. words in the correct order

verbs – agreement between subject and verb

correct tense

### Format

Double space – between greeting and start

between paragraphs or change of topic.

between last line and closing

Closing – your name

Bullets for a list

### Mechanics

Spelling – Don't rely on spell-checker. If you are not sure, use a dictionary.

Punctuation – periods

commas

colons

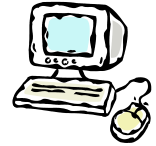
Capitalization – beginning every sentence

proper nouns





# USEFUL WEBSITES



- **TRY** them out. **BOOKMARK** the most useful.
- **MAKE NOTES** beside the ones you like.
- **SEARCH:** "Business Writing Skills," to find information about business writing and business examples.
- **SEARCH:** "Grammar, \_\_\_\_\_," to find explanations, examples, and practice about specific grammar skills.
- **ADD** your own favorite web-sites.

\*Online Writing Lab, Purdue University  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts>

Dave's ESL Café  
[www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com)

The English Page  
[www.englishpage.com](http://www.englishpage.com)

English Learner  
[www.englishlearner.com](http://www.englishlearner.com)

Test your English  
[www.elsus.com/eslcenter.htm](http://www.elsus.com/eslcenter.htm)

ESL PartyLand  
[www.eslpartyland.com](http://www.eslpartyland.com)

Activities for ESL Students  
[a4esl.org](http://a4esl.org)

About ESL  
[www.aboutesl.com](http://www.aboutesl.com)

English Club  
[www.englishclub.com](http://www.englishclub.com)

Learning Materials and Quizzes  
[eslgold.com](http://eslgold.com)

Useful Links  
[edufind.com/English/grammar](http://edufind.com/English/grammar)

Lessons and Quizzes  
[English-Zone.com](http://English-Zone.com)

Explanations of Grammar  
[www.English4today.com](http://www.English4today.com)



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