

# Business Correspondence

Part 15a of  
“Communications”  
A Fairfield University E-Course  
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# Section 15 Schedule

<b>Session 15a</b>	<b>1/07</b>	<b>Business Correspondence</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
<b>Writing assignment</b>		<b>Write a memorandum to file assessing our 2-year CMT Ecourse. Do an honest critique of course strengths / weakness and give suggestions for improvements.</b>	<b>No Class 1/12 or 1/14</b>
Session 15b	1/19	Review selected submissions	
Session 15c	1/21	Review for MT 9	
<b>MT 8 (Sat,Cheshire)</b>	<b>1/24</b>		
MT 8 Results	1/26		

# Section 15: Business Correspondence

- Rules of good writing
  - Content
    - the seven “C’s”  
(conversational, clear, concise, concrete, constructive & correct)
    - The five “W’s”  
(who, what, when, where, & why)
  - Process (analyze, organize, write & revise)
  - Grammar / Spelling (errors are negative non-verbal symbols)
  - Citations (give references, don’t plagiarize, follow “Fair Use”)
- Business Letters
  - Style
  - Structure
- Business Memoranda
  - Structure
  - Purpose (Informative, Directive or Administrative)

# Good Writing

Dr. Kirk Swortzel, Mississippi State University

1. Spell the names right  
If you can't find out any other way, call the office of the person to whom you are writing.  
When in doubt, use Ms. -- don't guess a woman's marital status
2. Get the address right  
Follow the guidelines for addressing envelopes from the U.S. Postal Service.
3. Include only one topic per letter  
Know the purpose and write to that purpose.  
Keep the reading time under 1.5 minutes.

# Good Writing - 2

4. Be courteous and considerate of the reader
  - a. Respect readers as people and professionals.
  - b. Use praise but not flattery.
  - c. Don't exaggerate -- maintain trust.
5. Make the first sentence great
  - a. Get to the point.
  - b. Let the reader know if the letter is a reply to their correspondence.
  - c. Example (from a letter soliciting funds for UNICEF):  
"In the ten seconds it took you to open and begin to read this letter, four children died from the effects of malnutrition or disease somewhere in the world."

# Good Writing - 3

6. Stop when you're through
  - a. Avoid "call if you have questions" types of endings.
  - b. Can include a personal note if you are close friends.
7. Highlight important words/points
  - a. Use underlining.
  - b. Use boldface type.
  - c. Use italics.
  - d. Use larger font sizes
  - e. Use ALL CAPS.
8. 8. Use standard English
  1. Avoid telescoping sentences.
  2. Avoid incomplete sentences.
  3. Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

# Good Writing - 4

## 7. Edit and rewrite

1. Avoid having all paragraphs the same length.
2. Use short and varied sentences.
3. Keep the average sentence length between 7 and 17 words.
4. Avoid jargon (terms that are highly technical and understood by only a few people).
5. Avoid flowery terms (e.g., magnificent, exceptional).
6. Use active voice.
7. Use short words.

# Good Writing – 5

## 7. Follow the seven “C's”

Each letter/memorandum should be:

1. conversational
2. clear
3. concise
4. complete
5. concrete
6. constructive
7. correct



# Clear Writing (ibid.)

## 1. **Keep sentences short.**

Sentences must vary in length to avoid boring the reader. But they should mostly vary between short and very short. The average length of your sentences should fall somewhere between 7 and 17 words. A good rule of thumb is to look carefully at any sentence that comes close to being three typewritten lines long. It should probably be changed.

## 2. **Prefer the simple to the complex.**

If the right word is a big word, go ahead and use it. But, if a shorter word does the job, use it. For example: use "Change" instead of "Modification" and "Use" instead of "Utilization."

## 3. **Prefer the familiar word.**

The most familiar words are ten short ones: the, of, and, a, in, to, I, is, it, and that. When writing, choose the word that will be known by most people.

# Clear Writing - 2

## **4. Avoid unnecessary words.**

Slash words mercilessly. Only put words back in if they are necessary to make the sentence clear.

## **5. Put action in your verbs.**

When active verbs are used the noun acts. Passive verbs have the noun acted upon. For example: "The fullback hits the line." (Active) "The line is hit by the fullback" (Passive).

## **6. Write like you talk.**

Some grammarians would insist that "write like you talk" is poor grammar. However, you should be yourself while you write.

## **7. Use terms your reader can picture.**

Avoid fuzzy words such as: conditions, situations, facilities, inadequacies. Use words that can be visualized.

# Clear Writing - 3

## 8. Tie in with your reader's experience.

Much communication fails because writers ignore readers' beliefs. Words vary in meaning. Meaning is determined entirely by the readers' past experience and purposes. It is not enough to write so that you will be understood. You must write so you can't be misunderstood.

## 9. Make full use of variety.

Introduce enough variety of sentence length, structure, and vocabulary. Variety is a chief ingredient in the art of writing. A [thesaurus](#) or [Webster's Dictionary](#) will help.

## 10. Write to express, not to impress.

No writing is easy. But we make it more difficult by seeking out long, unfamiliar words.

# Letter Writing Tutorial

- See

[http://www.theofficecompany.com/Articles\\_Forms/current/ltr\\_tutor\\_p1.htm](http://www.theofficecompany.com/Articles_Forms/current/ltr_tutor_p1.htm)

and/or

<http://www.business-letters.com/business-letters.htm>

# Memo Writing Tutorial

- See

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/pw/p\\_memo.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/pw/p_memo.html)

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