

## Five MORE Tips for Clear, Concise and Powerful Business Writing

You put money and effort into writing and sending business materials. But are readers responding the way you'd like? Or...

Do you get the feeling that no one is reading your letters, your website, or your newsletter articles?

Is the silence overwhelming when you ask for a reply to your letters or e-mails?

Do your communications lack clarity and polish?

Every business person can write, but not everyone is a great writer. *The good news is that you can learn to be a **better** writer.*

Just as suggested in the original "Five Tips..." don't toss out what you've already written. Look over your material with these additional five tips in mind. Soon, your first draft will be transformed into a finished document that achieves your goals.

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### 1. Running On and On and On and

*You can't run forever without stopping.*

*Your writing needs to stop and take a breath every now and then, too.*

If a sentence is more than 30 words long, or if your material has a lot of "ands," chances are you are trying to communicate too many ideas at one time. Stick with one idea per sentence for maximum clarity so you have room for needed details. Even if the result is longer overall, your reader will understand each distinct point.

Our program offers the flexibility to make the best decisions for your business regarding cash flow, and we guarantee that your correct amount of payroll taxes will be paid on time.

*changes to*

Our program offers the flexibility to make cash flow decisions that benefit your business. We also guarantee that your payroll taxes will be paid on time, in the correct amount.

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People react differently to each treatment and the costs are evenly divided over the four-month term.

*changes to*

People react differently to each weekly treatment over the four-month course. For your convenience, costs are evenly divided over the treatment term.

### **2. In Order To Form a More Perfect Union**

*With apologies to the preamble of the U. S. Constitution,  
“in order to” is a huge waste of printer ink.*

The phrase “in order to” turns a friendly communication into something bordering on a scientific conference paper. “In order to” can always be replaced with “to.” The other words will take care of themselves.

I am writing in order to explain my whereabouts during the power outage.

*changes to*

I am writing to explain where I was during the power outage.

*Writers seem compelled to use overly-formal language whenever they use “in order to” in a sentence. Case in point, the word “whereabouts.” What is this, Perry Mason?*

In order to understand the new tax law, you must read the latest IRS publications.

*changes to*

To understand the new tax law, you must read the latest IRS publications.

### **3. Son of “Spill Chick”**

**Spell check makes a genius out of a bad typist,  
as long as he remembers to proofread.**

As mentioned in the first Five Tips for Clear, Concise and Powerful Business Writing, spell check will ensure that your document has correctly spelled words, but it doesn't catch instances when you've accidentally used the *wrong* word.

Breathe/Breath

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“Breathe” is an action. “Breath” is a thing.  
*When you breathe, you take a breath.*

From/Form

Constantly/Consistently

Show/Shoe

Consumer/Consumed

*and any other words with all or many of the same letters*

The trick is to *read your material out loud* to catch mistakes.

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### 4. Repetition Can Be Your Friend

*Sixth grade English assignment:  
Don't use the same word twice in your entire essay.  
Good news for today:  
You're not in sixth grade anymore.*

You have complete permission to use the same word several times in your writing. You may even use a word twice in one sentence (gasp!) if needed for clarity. Why? Because the alternatives are lackluster, and potentially confusing, words such as “that” and “them.”

A customized website offers more credibility than a MySpace page, and that is worth more than the differences in costs between them.

*changes to*

A customized website offers more credibility than a MySpace page, and credibility is worth more than the differences in costs between the two web presence options.

You will be given two cards and two letters. Please place them in the green envelope.

*changes to*

You will be given two cards and two letters. Please place one card and one letter in the green envelope.

### 5. Bulleted Lists – Right on Target

*Thanks to desktop word processing, everyone can create a bulleted list.  
Unfortunately, no one is issuing bullet licenses.*

A good bulleted list should literally pop with concise, clear information or steps to follow. Make sure each entry follows the same structure. Otherwise, the material becomes wishy-washy. In most cases, starting each line item with an action word (verb) is the most effective choice.

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Follow these three steps to enter data:

- The on-duty manager should be reached by phone first.
- Log in to the system and follow the password prompt.
- The data you've collected goes in the fields shown on the screen after login.

*changes to*

Follow these three steps to enter data:

- Phone the on-duty manager.
- Log in to the system using your password.
- Wait for the data entry screen and then enter collected data in the appropriate fields.

Also, verify that lists of items are in a logical progression or order.

To maintain an open discussion, please

- have one speaker speaking at a time,
- consideration of all opinions,
- raising hands to be recognized.

*changes to*

To maintain an open discussion, please

- raise your hand to be recognized,
- remain silent while others are speaking,
- consider all opinions presented.

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