

Business Writing Skills

- You're very welcome this afternoon!
- Session starts at 2pm
- You will be muted as you arrive (I will explain this further)
- You do not need your webcam for this session
- If you are having trouble hearing me, try leaving the session and re-joining, running the software from chrome or if you have headphones in plug them out



HELLO!

I am **Olivia Roche**

I am a trainer since 2014.

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Business Writing Skills



Olivia Roche

Agenda

- The importance and principles of good business writing
- Impact of poor writing practices
- Planning to write – the purpose, objectives and the reader
- Structuring your writing
- Clarity and consistency – revisiting Plain English
- Grammar and punctuation
- Editing and proofreading
- Q&A session



The importance and principles of good English writing





Structure information logically.

Use short sentences.

Group information into paragraphs.

Write as you speak.

Keep your reader in mind.

Use everyday words.

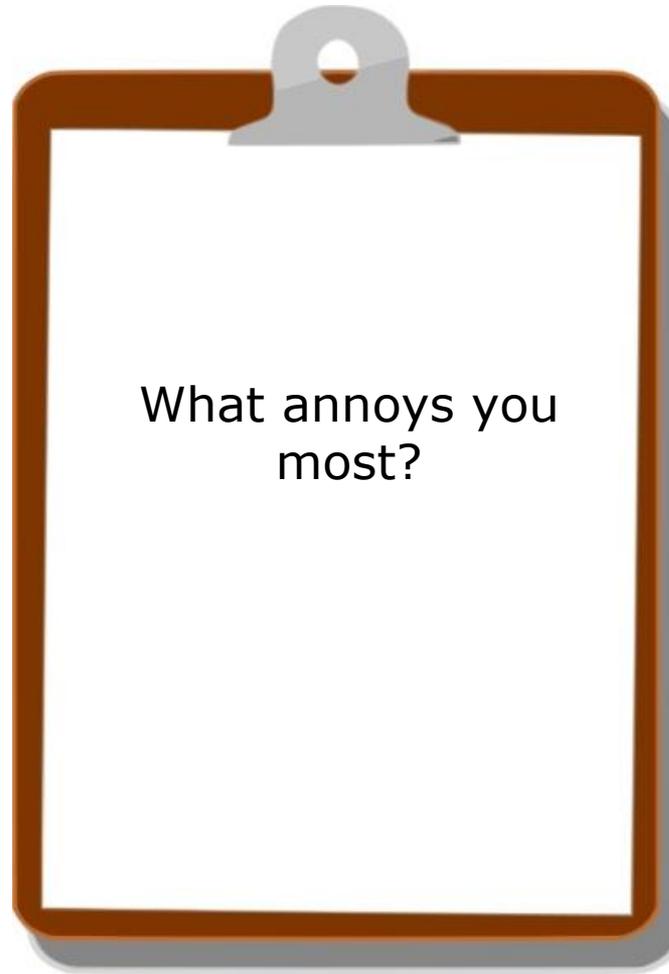
Explain terminology and acronyms.

Don't use colloquial language or clichés.

Impact of poor business writing

- Writing is among the most expensive business activities. 90% of effort and money goes in to writing, the equivalent of hundreds and even thousands of hours of valuable non-productive hours. If it is poorly done the entire venture might be wasted
- Discounts credibility of the business
- It dilutes your message – messy grammar and misspelled words are likely to slow the reader down and make them lose interest
- Creates a bad first impression of you, as the writer

Exercise



Planning to write – the purpose, objectives and the reader

- Define your subject.
- Define your objective.
- Define your sub-headings. The sub-headings must be related to your objective.
- Define the readers': Wants, Needs & Level of understanding.

Structure

- Why – Tell them what you are going to tell them
- What – Then tell them
- How
- What next?

Not be
more than
16-20
words

Sentences
should...

Say only
one thing
at a time



Audience Analysis

Was your document requested?

Who are the Audience: Primary/Secondary?

What is their level of skills/knowledge/experience/education?

What is their priority?

How receptive will they be to the message?

What is their cultural background?

What action do I want them to take?



It's about them not you

Know who you're talking to

Know what their pain points are and address them

Answer questions they might be thinking

Offer the reader something useful for nothing

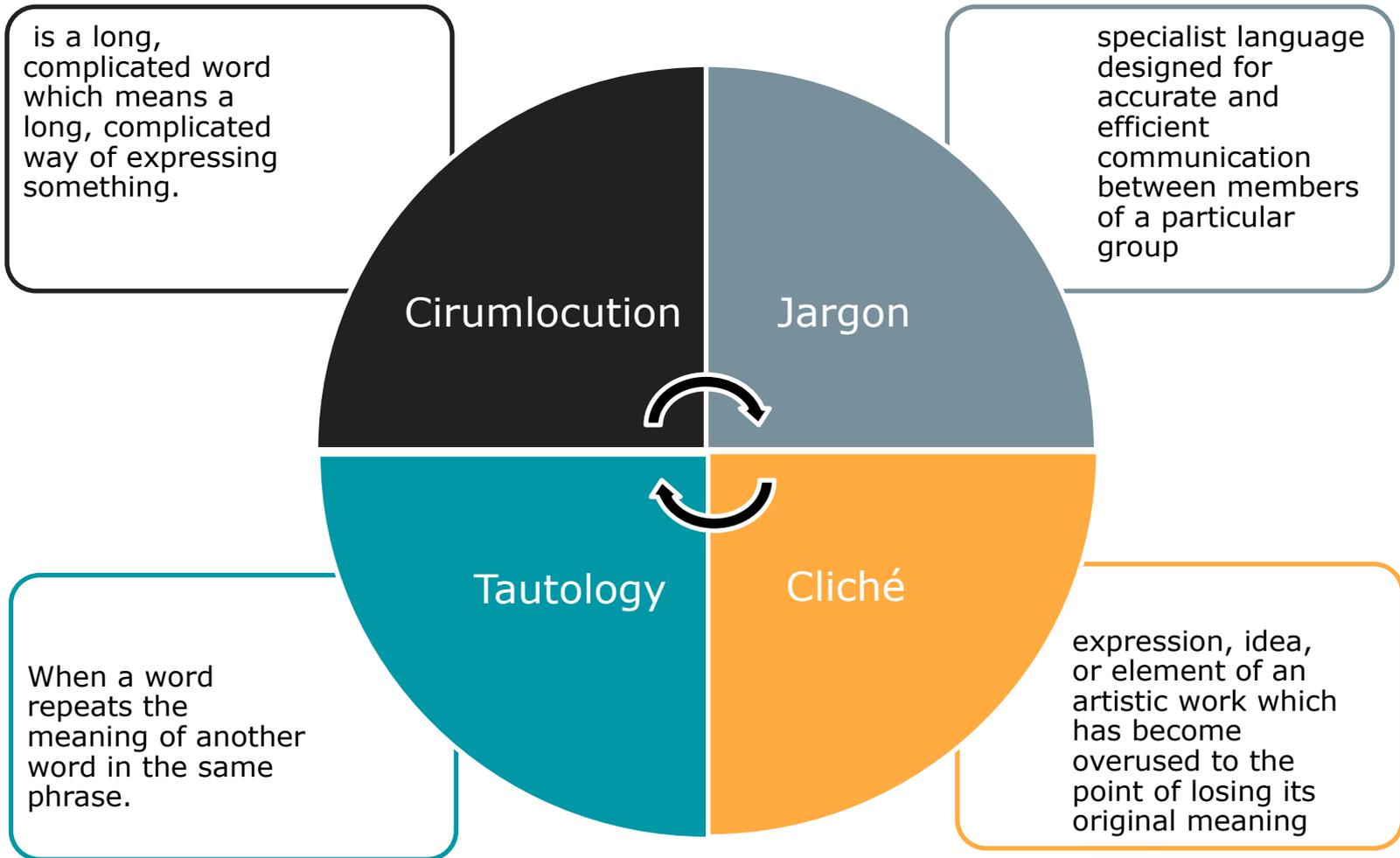
Plain English

- Active verbs make your writing clearer and less formal. For example, 'We will write to you soon with details of the event' is better than 'details of the event will issue shortly'; 'we provide information on the EU' is better than 'EU information can be sourced here'.
- Keep sentences short if you possibly can. Fifteen or twenty words are plenty. Depending on what you are communicating, and who you are saying it to, longer sentences are sometimes OK. They should not make more than two points, though, or else your purpose may get lost.
- Avoid jargon, It's fine to use jargon among the staff
- Avoid foreign expressions. Depending on what you are communicating, and to whom, even common terms, such as 'i.e.' and 'pro rata', may be unintelligible to some of your target audience.

Plain English

- The first time you use them, spell out unfamiliar abbreviations and acronyms – You may use them every day, but other people don't, so they won't always know what you are talking about.
- Cut out any unnecessary words and phrases. Keep it simple! 'If there is a fire...' is easier to understand than 'in the event of a fire...'; 'books returned late' is easier to understand than 'overdue items'.
- Use terms consistently. If it's a 'plan', it's not a 'strategy'; if it's a 'counter' it's not an 'issue desk'.
- Lists can make information easy to understand, but long lists are exhausting to read. Break them up with sub-headings, or highlight the key words with bold text or good use of contrasting colour.
- Headings and sub-headings can help readers to find their way around a document. Introductions and colour-coding can also help people to navigate through a text

What you should avoid in order to write clearly



What should this translate to?

'I am responding to your recent written communication regarding an enhancement in your remuneration package outside the normal bounds of the company appraisal system and wish to inform you that your aforementioned request has been unsuccessful '

- 
- Be concrete in your writing. Don't be vague.
 - Be specific. Don't be general.
 - Be straightforward.
 - Use active voice.
 - Be positive in your writing.
 - Use short phrases and sentences.
 - Use a conversational tone of voice in your writing.
 - Use familiar and easily recognisable words and phrases.

Email Writing

- Subject line – Use a title that is relevant to your content
- Subject line – remove Re and Forward
- Salutation – Hi, Hello or Dear
- Content – Don't use emoticons or text language
- Content – Don't type complete words in capitals
- Content – Explain abbreviations and acronyms upon first use
- Sign off – include your name
- Sign off – include your contact details

Revision of Grammar and Punctuation



The Importance of Punctuation and Tone



Noun	Name of a person, place or thing	Joe Schmidt, Ireland, Six Nations	Adjective	Describes a noun or pronoun	Fast, cold, grey, ugly
Pronoun	Replaces a noun	He, she, mine, it, this	Adverb	Describes a verb	Quickly, heavily, finally
Object	The person or the thing affected by the action described in the verb	James sat under the sun. It burnt him	Preposition	Indicates the temporal, spatial or logical relationship of the object of the sentence to the other words of the sentence	On, over, inside, against, during, throughout, along etc
Verb	Expression of action of state of being	To run, runs, ran, etc.	Conjunction	Links words and phrases in a sentence	And, so, but, for, after

Capitalisation

- The first letter of the first word of a sentence
- The pronoun 'I'
- The names of specific people, places and organisations
- The days of the week, months, and holidays
- Titles preceding names, but not titles that follow names
- The names of countries, nationalities and specific languages
- The first word in a sentence that is a direct quote

Their = Ownership

- E.g. Their Reports were completed on time
- They're = They are
- E.g. They're running the reports
- There = position
- E.g. The reports over there

Its vs It's

- E.g. the printer is slow, it's taking forever
- to print this document
- Its = possessive form of it
- E.g. the building has its own canteen



Use numerals for anything that you are describing that has a unit of measurement.

e.g.

€250

4kg

10MB

For everything else, spell it out.

e.g.

Four cats

Two hundred years

Editing & Proofreading

Editing

Editing is what you do as soon as you finish your first draft. You can edit your draft on several levels including content, overall structure, paragraphs, clarity and style

Proofreading

Proofreading is the final stage of the editing process, focusing on the surface errors such as misspellings and mistakes in grammar and punctuation. You should only proofread if all other editing revisions are finished

Read your work backward

- Starting with the last sentence and working your way in reverse order to the beginning. Supposedly this works better than reading through from the beginning because your brain knows what you meant to write, so you tend to skip over errors when reading forwards.

Read your work out loud

- This forces you to read each word individually and increased the odds that you'll find a typo or mistake.

Always proofread a printed version of your work

- You are likely to miss more errors when reading off a computer screen than going over it on paper

Give yourself some time

- If possible let your work sit for a while before you proofread it. You are able to clear your mind and approach the writing from a fresh perspective, then your brain is more able to focus on the actual words, rather than seeing the words you think you wrote

Have someone else read your work

Recap

- The importance and principals of good business writing
- Impact of poor writing practices
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THANKS!

Any questions?
30 min Q&A

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