

# Report writing

The art of writing a good report



A Video Arts production featuring  
Dawn French and Reece Dinsdale

**video arts**<sup>TM</sup>

## Report writing

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The art of writing a good report

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## Titles in this series:

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**Absence minded:** managing absenteeism

**An inside job:** meeting internal customer needs

**Building the perfect team:** Belbin's team role theory in action

**Can you spare a moment?:** counselling skills for managers

**Demanding customers:** customer care made perfect

**Does the team work?:** improving effectiveness through teamwork

**First among equals:** leading a team

**Going to a meeting, part 1:** messing up a meeting

**Going to a meeting, part 2:** meeting menaces

**How am I doing?:** the performance review

**How to lose customers without really trying:** keeping the customer satisfied

**I wasn't prepared for that:** overcoming the fear of making presentations

**I'd like a word with you:** the discipline interview

**If looks could kill:** the power of behaviour

**It's your choice:** selection skills for managers

**Meetings, bloody meetings:** making meetings more productive

**More bloody meetings:** the people side of meetings

**Negotiating - tying the knot:** a skill for life

**No complaints?:** complaints and the customer

**Not my type:** valuing diversity

**On the receiving end:** making call centres more effective

**Performance matters:** the importance of praise

**Performance matters:** the need for constructive criticism

**Project management:** leading a project team

**Report writing:** the art of writing a good report

**Selecting the perfect team:** utilising internal and external resources

**Sell it to me! parts 1 & 2:** essential skills for a salesperson

**Straight talking:** the art of assertiveness

**Talking to the team:** how to run a team meeting

**Team spirit?:** how to be an effective team member

**Telephone behaviour:** the rules of effective communication

**The balance sheet barrier:** the basics of business finance

**The best of motives, parts 1 & 2:** informing and involving

**The dreaded appraisal:** both sides of the appraisal interview

**The grapevine:** communicating in a world of change

**The helping hand:** coaching skills for managers

**The paper chase:** cutting back on paperwork

**The unorganised manager, parts 1 & 2:** damnation and salvation

**The unorganised manager, part 3:** divine intervention

**The ultimate change show:** managing change

**The ultimate stress show:** managing stress

**Who sold you this, then?:** effective after-sales service

**You'll soon get the hang of it:** the techniques of one-to-one training

# Contents

**4-5** Video-based training from Video Arts

**6-8** Introduction

**9-11** What the pack contains

**12-30** Course leader's guide

**GTW-1-GTW-20** Group training workbook\*

**SSW-1-SSW-37** Self-study workbook\*

**OHP-1-OHP-9** Presentation slides/OHPs\*

Certificate\*

\*Copies of these resources are also available in electronic formats to allow you to customise them to your specific requirements and to print the required number of copies from the master for the sole purpose of the training envisaged by the programme, and not for any commercial purpose.

# Video-based training from Video Arts



Congratulations on choosing **Report writing** from Video Arts to help develop the skills in your organisation. Video Arts is recognised as the world leader in video-based training, with over 30 years' experience in staff development. With a portfolio of more than 250 video, DVD and CD-ROM/on-line programmes covering all the essential skills of business, you can remain confident that training with Video Arts is the most effective way to improve the skillset of the people within your organisation.



Dawn French gives Reece Dinsdale tips on writing perfect reports.

## Why train?

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### **Train hard, fight easy - Marshal Zhukov**

These days, it is difficult for organisations to become successful and stay that way. The pace of change is faster, competition is tougher, customers are more demanding, innovation is more prized, but harder to achieve.

Part of the response has been to create leaner, flatter, more flexible structures, but structures don't run organisations and create success, people do - intelligent people, energetic people, reliable people and, most of all, people with the right mix of up-to-date knowledge and skills.

That means people who are trained, not for a lifetime's work, not just once in a while, but as a central, continuing part of their working lives.

## Why use video-based training?

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**Video is familiar.** Television is how most people find out what is going on in the world. It is not surprising that this is a medium they are comfortable to learn from when they are being trained.

**Video makes demonstration easy.** We can show situations being handled badly. We can contrast that with how to handle them well.

**Video is flexible.** It can be the cornerstone of a course run for a group by a specialist trainer. It can quickly provide simple, clear lessons for a team whenever it is convenient for them. It can bring interest and enlightenment to a self-study programme.

**Video injects realism.** It lets us present those being trained with emotional, as well as rational, problems to solve. Ask a group '*how would you deal with an angry customer?*' and you will get a tidy, textbook answer. Use video to confront them with an angry customer and you will get a much more realistic reaction.

**Video provides variety.** Different people learn in different ways and none of us has an infinite attention span. Video provides us with a powerful means of injecting variety into our training.

## Why use Video Arts' programmes?

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### **Winston Churchill once said that he loved to learn, but hated being taught.**

That is the secret of successful training: how to help people who want to learn. We do it by combining:

A storehouse of professional knowledge and expertise, developed over 25 years and drawing on some of the best minds in the business.

The highest possible production values, both in the videos we produce and in the support material that goes with them.

The magic ingredient - humour - which can make a delight of the dullest subject.

# Introduction

Most people in business know their own minds and opinions and can contribute to conversations, meetings and debates as and when required without too much difficulty. Some people are highly articulate - they possess a wide vocabulary and can express themselves so that other people know exactly what they mean.

When it comes to putting their thoughts in writing, however, these same people can often hit trouble. The ability to think logically and sequentially suddenly deserts them and a form of paralysis takes over. Asking them to produce a written report can prompt a reaction which is similar to that which occurs when they're asked to present to a large group of people. It seems a daunting task.

Knowing the basics of report writing takes the mystique out of the situation. There are a number of simple principles which, if followed, can guide even a novice through from a wary beginning to a confident conclusion.

This programme explains these guidelines and will be of great assistance to those people in your organisation who need to produce reports of excellent quality.

## Objectives

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Those who work their way through the **Report writing** training programme will be able to:

- Recognise the importance of well-written and well-presented reports
- Identify areas where their report-writing skills need to improve
- Apply six simple principles to make their reports more effective
- Devise an Action plan to improve their report-writing skills

## Using Report writing

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- **Dual use.** The programme can be used either as a conventional training course with a small group, or for self study by individuals. The pack contains guidance and appropriate materials for each use
- **Electronic resources.** Most of the support materials, such as OHPs and the workbooks, are supplied electronically. This makes it easy for you to customise them to your specific requirements and allows you to print as many copies as you need for group or individual use

## The target audience

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The programme is designed primarily for all managers and executives in organisations who write reports.

A group size of eight to twelve is ideal.

## The course leader

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You do not have to be a professional trainer to lead a group through the programme. Line managers will be able to deliver this course with confidence by using the materials and detailed guidance provided.

## Further resources

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**Note: Report writing** is also available in the Video Arts Interactive Learning series.

Other titles available from Video Arts which will help you improve the writing skills within your organisation include:

- **The writing programme: simplicity and written communication** This title is from Video Arts world series. It provides five simple rules and one question to give an immediate, measurable improvement in people's writing. The programme focuses on reports, proposals and long letters
- **The business writing pocketbook** This is one of the hugely successful Management Pocketbook series

# What the pack contains

## **The Report writing video**

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The video features Dawn French as Denise and Reece Dinsdale as Phil, colleagues in a commercial organisation. Denise has asked Phil to write a report for the Executive Committee on energy costs for heating the offices and workshops.

Phil is responsible for the organisation's technical services. He is a competent, confident engineer. However, he has no understanding or experience of report writing, a fact which becomes all too clear to him during the course of the video.

Denise explains the essentials of report writing to Phil and, by taking him through six key principles, helps him to produce a first-class document.

There is a caption after each of the six learning points and a brief summary at the end.

## Course leader's guide

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- An outline of a half-day programme
- How to prepare the programme
- A detailed session plan. This tells the course leader precisely what to do and which resources to use in each session of the programme

## Group training workbook

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This workbook allows those taking part in a group training course to record the conclusions they reach during the various sessions and the actions they propose to take as a result of the course. The workbook is supplied in an electronic format.

The workbook also contains a copy of the course objectives and programme and a set of notes which summarise the main points of **Report writing**.

## Self-study workbook

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This workbook, which is supplied in an electronic format, contains detailed instructions which enable individuals to work systematically through the programme. Users are prompted to record their answers to questions about what they have seen and to produce an Action plan.

The workbook also contains a set of notes which summarise the main points from **Report writing**.

## Links to NVQs

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Both workbooks contain a checklist of material which those who have taken part in the programme should collect, such as copies of reports they have written. These will form a portfolio of evidence which they can use to support a claim for competence in elements of NVQs.

## Presentation 'slides'/OHPs

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These are master copies supplied in Microsoft® PowerPoint® on computer disk for printing on to acetate or for use as a computer-driven 'slide' show.

## Certificate

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There is also a blank certificate, supplied electronically, which users can customise and issue to those who have completed the course based on **Report writing**.

## Computer disks

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As explained earlier, the computer disks contain copies of:

- Objectives and programme (Microsoft® Word®)
- Group training workbook (Microsoft® Word®)
- Self-study workbook (Microsoft® Word®)
- Presentation 'slides'/OHPs (Microsoft® PowerPoint®)
- Certificate (Microsoft Word)

(Microsoft®, Word® and PowerPoint® are trademarks of Microsoft Corporation.)

# Course leader's guide

Course programme

How to prepare the programme

**Session 1** Introduction and objectives

**Session 2** Report writing: the principles

**Session 3** Put the objective in writing

**Session 4** Organise your points into related groups

**Session 5** Structure the report

**Session 6** Avoid jargon: use plain English

**Session 7** Make it readable

**Session 8** Package the report

**Session 9** Action plan



# Course programme

**This is a suggested programme for a half-day course based on Report writing.**

You may choose to incorporate additional sessions to cover key points specific to your organisation or just take elements of the course and run a series of short sessions covering each aspect of **Report writing** individually.

If you would like help in facilitating this course or in adapting it to your specific requirements, call Video Arts Training Services. An experienced training consultant can advise you or, for an agreed fee, design and run a course for you.

**Video Arts Training Services can be contacted on:**

Video Arts Limited

Tel: 020 7400 4800

email: [info@videoarts.co.uk](mailto:info@videoarts.co.uk)

The programme overleaf is an outline of the course.

Each session is covered in detail later in the Course leader's guide.

Good technique makes report writing simple.



<b>Session no.</b>	<b>Session content</b>	<b>Approx. timing</b>
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Introduction and objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and housekeeping</li> <li>• Objectives</li> <li>• Structure of the course</li> </ul>	<i>10 mins</i>
<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Report writing: the principles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>	<i>60 mins</i>
<b>Session 3</b>	<b>Put the objective in writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video excerpt</li> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>	<i>15 mins</i>
<b>Session 4</b>	<b>Organise your points into related groups</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video excerpt</li> <li>• Exercise and discussion</li> </ul>	<i>30 mins</i>
<b>Break</b>		<i>15 mins</i>
<b>Session 5</b>	<b>Structure the report</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video excerpt</li> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>	<i>40 mins</i>
<b>Session 6</b>	<b>Avoid jargon: use plain English</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video excerpt</li> <li>• Exercise</li> </ul>	<i>25 mins</i>
<b>Session 7</b>	<b>Make it readable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video excerpt</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>	<i>20 mins</i>
<b>Session 8</b>	<b>Package the report</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video excerpt</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>	<i>15 mins</i>
<b>Session 9</b>	<b>Action plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video summary</li> <li>• Action plans</li> <li>• Course summary</li> </ul>	<i>10 mins</i>
<b>Total:</b>		<i>4 hours (including break)</i>