

# COMMUNICATING IN WRITING

## WORKSHOP GUIDE



## CONTENTS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES .....	3
FEATURED VIDEOS .....	3
VIDEO 1 – STRUCTURING A REPORT .....	4
VIDEO 2 – FORMATTING A REPORT .....	5
VIDEO 3 – EMAIL ETIQUETTE .....	6
COMMUNICATING IN WRITING – ACTION PLAN.....	7

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will help you write reports and use email productively.

A good report takes minutes to read, holds its value for months and can be made available globally to countless people within any organisation. It can also demonstrate the writer's knowledge of the subject and quality of thinking.

To use email effectively you need to manage your inbox and apply the principles of good communication.

This guide is designed for a manager or a facilitator to deliver a short workshop featuring videos from the Video Arts Workplace Essentials Series. Each video comes with a series of activities around the following structure:

**LOOK** - watch the video and reflect on the content and message.

**THINK** - activities and questions linking the video to their own experience and workplace.

**REMEMBER** - a summary of the key learning points.

**Each section relating to the video will last around 15 minutes.**

**ACTION PLAN** - At the end of the series of videos and activities delegates should be encouraged to share the most important actions they will take and record actions on their Personal Action Plan sheet.

## FEATURED VIDEOS

- Structuring a report
- Formatting a report
- Email etiquette

## VIDEO 1 – STRUCTURING A REPORT

### LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

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Most people see report writing as a daunting task but you don't need to be a budding author to write a readable report. Structuring and formatting a report so that people find it easy to read is a skill we can all learn.

### THINK (10 minutes discussion)

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Ask the group to think about the best way to structure a report so that it's readable?

Being clear about what the report is actually for will help you structure it:

- Gather information and select the relevant points – you don't need to include all the information in the report, so be clear about what the main points are.
- Give the report a logical order: a beginning, middle and an end. And keep it to the point.
- Think about who wants the report and why they want it. Knowing your objectives before you start will help you get a clear picture before you begin.

### REMEMBER (recap, 2 minutes)

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- List objectives.
- Organise the points.
- Structure the document.

## VIDEO 2 – FORMATTING A REPORT

### LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

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It's easy to get carried away and add lots of jargon to a. You might think it will make you look intelligent, but it's more likely no one will read it. Reports have to be readable for your entire audience, not just the few who might be technical whiz kids!

### THINK (10 minutes discussion)

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How can you strike a balance between making a report readable, whilst including the technical information that's required?

Suggest the following points to the group,

- Above anything else, your report should be readable. This doesn't have to mean dumbing it down; just using shorter words, sentences and paragraphs can make it an easier read.
- Make your report more readable by applying headings, sub headings and using wide space text consistently.
- Include the more technical information in the appendices and add a glossary if you think it needs one.

### REMEMBER (recap, 2 minutes)

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- Avoid jargon: use plain English.
- Make it readable.
- Package the report attractively.

## VIDEO 3 – EMAIL ETIQUETTE

### LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

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Email can be a major distraction at work. Repeatedly checking email interrupts your work and loses focus. Once you've been side-tracked, it takes time and effort to switch gears and get back to what you were doing.

### THINK (10 minutes discussion)

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Ask the group how they manage the constant barrage of emails?

Suggest the following tips;

- Turn off email alerts during busy times and especially during meetings!
- Set aside specific times during the day to check your email.
- Instead of reading messages several times, deal with each message just once...act on it, file it, delete it or tag it for future action.
- When sending emails, keep them short and simple and write specific subject lines.
- Keep your inbox tidy by classifying emails into different folders.
- Avoid group emails and keep work email for work.

### REMEMBER (recap, 2 minutes)

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- Turn off alerts.
- Make time for emails.
- Organise messages.
- Answer promptly and check before sending.
- Use relevant subject lines.
- Prune emails regularly.
- Use out-of-office.

## COMMUNICATING IN WRITING – ACTION PLAN

Remind the group of the key learning points from this session.

Divide the group into pairs. Ask each member of the group to identify one specific action they will take to apply what they have learned when they return to work.

Ask for two or three examples. Bring the session to a close.