

Goal: Write Work-Related Material

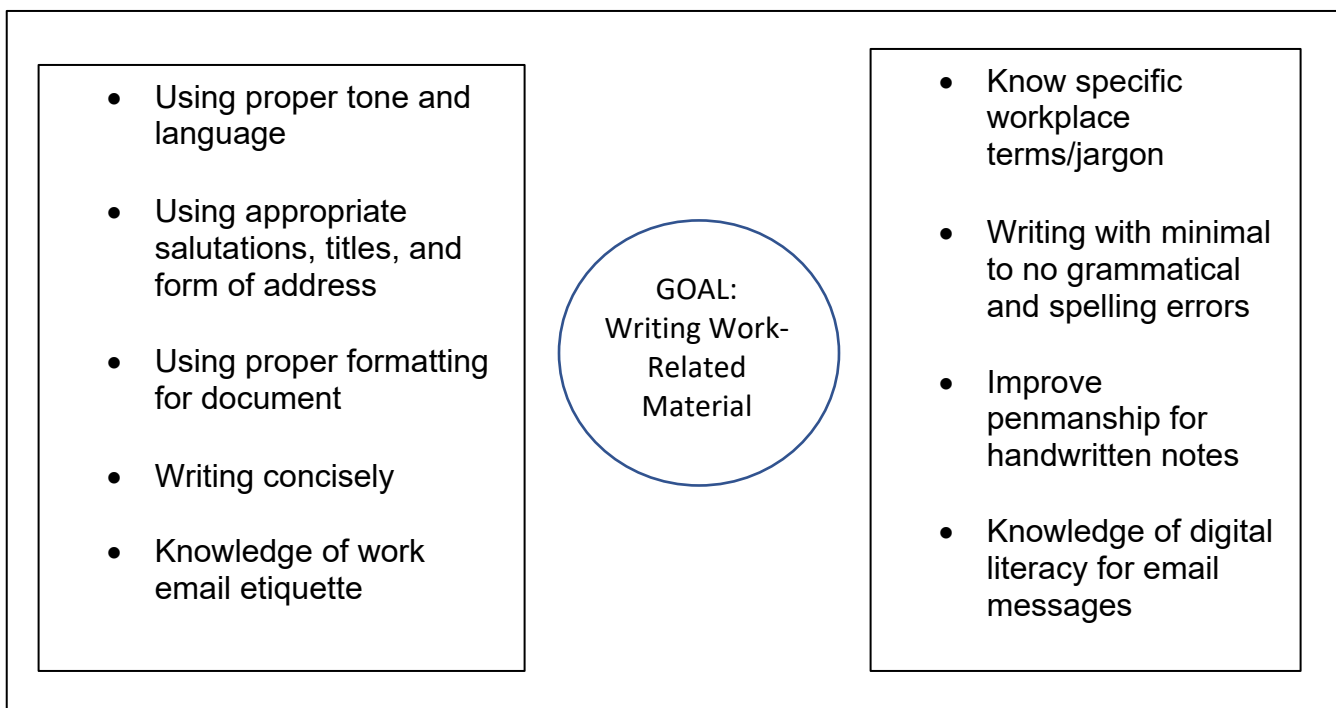
Contributed by Charmaine Mendez, Moreno Valley Public Library

Introduction

No matter what one's job is, it is inevitable that you will need to write work-related material, whether it be a performance report for someone you supervise, a note to your manager explaining why you deserve a raise, taking notes for a meeting, or writing a letter of recommendation for a co-worker. Knowing how to write work-related material is crucial for communicating effectively with management and co-workers, accomplishing work-related tasks, and keeping written reminders of tasks that need to be accomplished. Verbal communication is a regular part of the work day, but written communication is just as important.

Guidepost I: Where to Start

Before getting started, it is important to pay attention to the skills the learner already knows that may come in handy when writing work-related material, and what skills still need to be learned. One way to accomplish this is by breaking up the learner's goal of writing work-related material into individual short-term elements. Tutors can begin by asking learners why they are interested in writing work-related material and who their intended audiences may be. This can help determine what type of work-related material needs to be written and what the ultimate goal for learning how to write this material is. For example, a learner might want to successfully write a character reference letter for a co-worker. Below is a mind map, breaking down this goal into short-term components or objectives.



Tip: Remember, every mind-map will look different and is based on individual skill levels and abilities. One may need to start with basics as tutors and learners move their way across the learner's mind-map. For example, a short-term component of this goal may be learning how to use e-mail applications. This will call for the need to focus on digital literacy skills instead of reading or writing practice for that specific lesson.

Guidepost II: What You Will Learn

Once tutors and learners have identified smaller components of the larger goal of writing work-related material, tutors can begin planning their lessons based on that short-term goal and begin assembling materials and activities that relate to the learner's goal. Transparency is essential in the adult learner's journey; therefore, it is important to explain to learners what they will be learning throughout that lesson, how they will learn the concepts (what methods will be used), and why that activity is important and relevant in achieving the learner's goal. Below is a list of resources and materials that tutors can use to help plan lessons and activities.

Book Suggestions

Brown, Laura. *The Only Business Writing Book You'll Ever Need*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2019.

Canavor, Natalie. *Business Writing for Dummies, 3rd ed.* For Dummies, 2021.

Davidson, Wilma. *Business Writing: Proven Techniques for Writing Memos, Letters, Reports, and Emails that Get Results, 3rd ed.* St. Martin's Griffin, 2015.

Roman, Kenneth and Joel Raphaelson. *Writing That Works: How to Communicate Effectively in Business, 3rd ed.* Collins Reference, 2000.

Online Resources

Video Tutorials: Here are a variety of online video resources for tutors and learners. Use these to brainstorm lesson activities or to forward to learners to use as a supplement to reading or writing practice.

[Video – Unit 1 Writing in the Workplace](#)

[Video – Unit 2 Writing in the Workplace](#)

[Video – Unit 3 Writing in the Workplace](#)

[Video – Unit 4 Writing in the Workplace](#)

[Tutor Ready Writing: The Writing Process](#)

Sample Message & Text Templates: Here are a variety of samples and templates that learners can use to write out their own business-related letters at work.

[Writing the Basic Business Letter](#)

[Different Types of Letters with Examples](#)

[Sample Character Reference Letter \(Written for Friend\)](#)

Example: Writing Templates--See templates at the end of this lesson.

Online Writing Tools:

[Workplace Writers](#)

[GCF Global – Business Communication Tutorial \(especially lessons 6 – 12 on business writing\)](#)

[How to Improve Your Writing Skills at Work](#)

[Business English vocabulary – Writing Business Letters](#)

[The 10 Types of Business Writing You Should Master](#)

Guidepost III: How You Will Learn

Once tutors and learners have established what needs to be focused on and why it relates to the overall goal of writing work-related material, they need to decide **how** these skills will be taught and practiced. Focus on including multiple multi-sensory activities that are directly based on the learner’s individual learning preferences and interests. Ensure that these activities further reinforce necessary key vocabulary and concepts needed to write work-related material. Below are a few vocabulary words and concepts important to writing work-related documents, along with a few examples of multi-sensory activities that can be used as reading and writing practice.

1. Key Vocabulary & Concepts

- **Audience**
 - Who is the recipient of the message? Is it for a co-worker, supervisor, or human resources representative?
- **Greetings/Salutation**
 - Use professional greetings including “Dear,” or “To Whom It May Concern.” You may use “Hi/Hello [recipient’s name],” or “Greetings” in an e-mail to keep it brief but still warm and friendly.
- **Closing/Signature**
 - Including “Sincerely,” “Best Wishes,” “Respectfully,” “Appreciatively,” and “Best Regards”
- **Common Types of Workplace Writing**
 - Letters of Recommendation
 - Character References
 - Follow-up Letters
 - Incident Reports
 - Business Reports
 - Press Releases
 - Meeting Agendas

2. Reading Practice

1. Use practice templates like those included at the end of this document or from the online resources to practice reading common types of workplace writing samples, paying attention to the format, salutations used, and the tone of the message.
 - a. Ask comprehension questions
 - b. Determine the purpose of each writing sample, identifying the audience

2. Using a similar approach as the activity above, read sample messages related to various workplace scenarios. Create a general template with learners that they can use as guidance when doing their own writing.

3. Writing Practice

1. Practice writing workplace material by sending e-mails, letters, or texts to the tutor, supervisor, or co-worker depending on the occasion.
 - a. These messages can be used to draft templates and can be kept in a writer's portfolio for future use.
 - b. Focus on being non-emotional with the message, being straightforward and to the point, using facts rather than just opinions.
2. Have learners respond to pre-written prompts:
 - a. Example: Write a text message to your supervisor letting them know that you have to take time off work today to take care of your sick child.
 - b. Example: Write a letter of recommendation for a co-worker who is trying to get a promotion within the company.
 - c. Example: Write an incident report about an accident that you witnessed at work in which a co-worker tripped over a power cable on the floor.

5. Real World Practice (Field Trips)

1. Create a message template with the learner using laminated word magnets to practice composing common work-related material. Use a white board to rearrange the magnets in a way that makes sense.
 - a. Use necessary word connectors and workplace vocabulary that is specific to one's field of work.
2. Introduce the learner to soft skills (See ["What are Soft Skills"](#)), non-technical skills that are related to one's success in the workplace, such as communication, time management, team work, and motivation. Discuss with the learner which skills that they feel are their strengths and which ones are their weaknesses. Practice writing a workplace document related to a particular skill that the learner is working on.
 - a. Example: Write an e-mail to your boss about adjusting a deadline for a project because of work overload (the skill of **Communication**).
 - b. Example: Write a letter to a co-worker thanking them and encouraging them after they have had a rough day at work (the skill of **Positivity**).

Guidepost IV: What worked, what didn't, what can you use?

An important process of tutoring an adult learner is constantly discussing what was learned during a lesson and whether or not the learner thought it was helpful. A successful lesson ends with this reflection process which helps determine which activities and lessons can be kept and what can be done differently. It is equally important to focus on and acknowledge milestones (progress made) throughout the completion of the learner's goal. Below are some points to consider when reflecting and a few milestones that get learners closer to achieving their goal of writing work-related material.

- Ask the learner which exercises and activities are helpful and which ones are not so helpful. If something is too challenging or confusing, break it down into smaller steps and goals. Go through the examples and explain them to the best of your ability.
- There is always room for improvement. If one style of teaching a concept is not working, try another method. Find out their learning style so that you can better adapt the lessons in a way that helps them to understand better.
- Review with the learner what concept(s) they worked on today and how they can use their new knowledge on their own to achieve their goals. Provide them with resources that they can refer to at home, such as the letter templates.
- Keep track of the learner's progress. Looking back at accomplishments is encouraging. Keeping a learner portfolio of their completed tasks and milestones is a great way to see how far they have come and to review any past concepts as needed (see Milestones).

Milestones:

- The learner understands the component steps and necessary skills needed to write workplace material independently (INITIAL EFFORT)
- Writing the first workplace material with the tutor's help (MAKING PROGRESS)
- Writing the first workplace material by themselves (CONTINUED PROGRESS)
- Writing workplace material using e-mail, text, or letter, distinguishing between formal and informal types of writing (GOAL ACCOMPLISHED)

Tip: To document progress, keep a learner portfolio of photocopies or screenshots of the first notes that the learner wrote, comparing the first notes with the more recent ones to keep track of progress.

Sample Letter: Character Reference

May 12, 2021

Mr. Theodore De La Cruz
Hiring Manager
2605 Valencia Ave.
Santa Clarita, CA 91321

Dear Mr. De La Cruz,
I highly recommend Christopher Potter for the position of sales manager. For as long as I have known him, Christopher has been an exceptional team player at Penny Pincher Financials. He encourages the team to reach their goals each day and goes the extra mile to assist those who need help. He does a wonderful job training new employees and challenging us to be our very best. Christopher is also a very organized person. He recently organized an online silent auction fundraiser event with community partners which saved our company from having to close its doors.

Christopher is hard working, dedicated, determined, kind, caring, and eagerly takes initiative. I am so grateful he is our consultant department supervisor and I am confident that he will do an exceptional job at being a sales manager at Morton Technology. Please let me know if you have any questions and I would be happy to answer them. Thank you for your consideration.

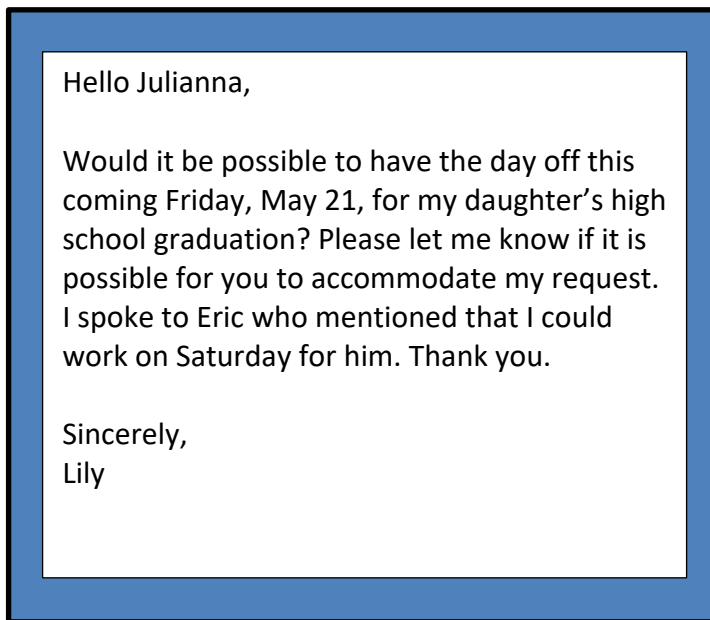
Sincerely,
Diana Tibayan
310-269-4572
Diana.Tibayan@ppfinancials.com

Point out to the learner the formal heading on top with the date, name, title, and address of recipient, the salutation and closing, the body of the letter, and the sender's contact information at the end of the letter.

Questions to ask the learner:

- What works well in this message?
- What can you use from this message for your own letter or e-mail?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the tone formal or informal?

Sample E-mail: Day Off Request



Point out to the learner that because this is an informal e-mail, the body of the message, salutation, and closing are more conversational in tone, yet still respectful since it is addressed to a supervisor.

Questions to ask the learner:

- What works well in this message?
- What can you use from this message for your own letter or e-mail?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the tone formal or informal?

See the Online Resources section of this lesson plan for additional examples and templates for notes.