

On the Job **WRITING**



#communicating@work

Lesson 1

ANYONE CAN WRITE

Drew, a recent community college graduate, stays busy in his new job as office assistant for Environmental Solutions, Inc., a start-up company owned by two young partners who grew up mowing lawns together to fund their field hockey tournaments around the region.



When Drew was hired, the partners made clear that writing would be part of the job. That was fine with Drew because he had always gotten good grades in English. Writing essays in school had never been a problem for him.

Today, though, he's struggling after Lex, the partner who handles marketing and advertising for ESI, asked him to

write a draft email to customers about the company's expanded service hours. *"Trees need trimming, bushes have to be pruned and fertilized, and plant beds are screaming for a good weeding. Customers need us to work longer days,"* said Lex.

Seeing that Drew is having difficulty getting started with the draft, Lex takes a few minutes to share his own history with writing on the job. He tells Drew his story.

"I'm a dig-in-the-dirt guy, not a writing guy, and I didn't have good school grades like you. But it didn't take long for me to know that ESI's survival depends not only on how good we are at landscaping and environmental improvement, but also on how successful we are in getting the word out about our little company.

Since Matt is the bookkeeping guy, I turned into the writing partner. I taught myself to write with a lot of online lessons and even more practice. Let me tell you, if I can write, anyone can write!"

In this lesson, you will discover:

- Why writing matters in the workplace
- Three reasons why on-the-job writing may feel awkward

DID YOU KNOW

?

Reading affects writing and writing affects reading. Research shows that the better you read, the better you will be at writing. The more you write, the more you will improve your reading.

"Every time you read, you receive a writing lesson—that is, how to spell, punctuate, use proper grammar, structure a sentence or paragraph, or organize a text." (Scholastic)



WHY WRITING MATTERS

Today's companies depend on information to maintain their competitive edge, and that means all employees, in every position from the CEO to the newest hire, must be able to write well.

- Engineers draw project plans, but they also prepare proposals, write technical instructions, and create presentation materials.
- Physical therapists write treatment plans for patients to use on their own at home.
- Legal assistants draft preliminary documents for their supervising lawyer.
- Childcare aides write snack menus and notes for parents.
- Automobile specialists order supplies, prepare estimates, and other documents.
- Chefs write recipes and prepare instructions for dishes they create.
- Scientists explain their experiments and studies.



You, too, will be expected to write on the job. Some of the items you may prepare include the following.

Types of Workplace Writing Tasks

Fill in forms	Compose letters	Develop an employee manual
Write proposals	Prepare catalog descriptions	Prepare business tweets
Request information	Respond to customers	Take notes for a team
Create brochures	Send email	Develop a blog
Prepare directions	Write reports	Write minutes of meeting
Record telephone conversations	Write website copy	Other documents



Why do you think Drew, who made good grades in English during school and had no trouble writing essays, is struggling with writing on the job?

REASONS WRITING MAY FEEL AWKWARD

Writing comes more easily for some people than others. To become a better writer, you need to recognize three of the most common obstacles.

Fear of Failure

Fear of writing may be triggered by an unpleasant writing situation in your past. Did you write something embarrassing that others saw? Did an overly strict instructor or supervisor mark up your writing with a red pen?

Try these recommendations to help you overcome your fear of writing.

That was then; this is now You get a fresh start in new situations. Tell yourself that a bad experience does not mean bad, future experiences.

Identify the negative association Face up to what is scaring you about writing. Admitting a problem is the first step to correcting it.

Do What Works Some people need privacy to write. Others prefer soft music or a snack. Make yourself comfortable.

Lack of Formal Training

Neither Mark Twain nor William Shakespeare finished high school, and yet they were very successful writers. If you lack formal writing training, as they did, these techniques will help:

- Read, read, read. Read books, cell phone stories, websites, instructions and other things.
- Choose a topic you know well and write about it. Revise until it is clear.
- Ask a friend or family member to review something you write and point out parts they don't understand. Revise your sample and ask again.

Poor Motivation

When you do something well, you are motivated to do it more. Improving your writing skills will increase your motivation to write. Try these motivations:

- Take short breaks from writing.
- Know that writing well makes you a more valuable employee.
- Allow time. Squeezing a big writing project into limited time won't do.

ACTIVITY 1.1



Are you comfortable with writing tasks? If yes, explain why writing is not a problem for you. If no, which of the reasons for avoiding writing applies to you?

Think about a career that may be in your future. From *Types of Workplace Tasks*, identify types of writing you may be called on to do in your job.