



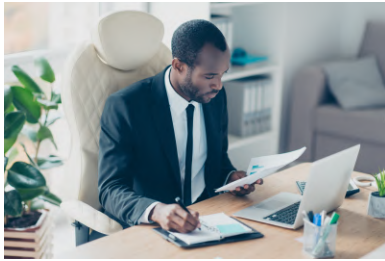
Effective Writing

with Sarah Wachter, Dods Associate and media and communications specialist.

Does a typical week at work look something like this?

Whether you are at your home office or at headquarters, chances are that among the list of essential tasks was to persuade or convince someone to take a course of action through a piece of your writing – whether it was a policy brief, a business plan that requires signoff of the management team, or a white paper that forms the basis of kickstarting a broader debate leading to a decision on a law, regulation, or to feed information into a working group. How many times did you walk away from a meeting, or a discussion, wondering if your idea or approach in writing was clearly understood, and even more importantly, compelling and urgent enough to prompt fast action? It is very likely that you had a few doubts that your message was able to deliver on your objective.

The skill of writing effectively in order to win over your team, staff, stakeholders, or a public or private partner is vital to achieving your objectives. But effective writing skills, especially for those for whom English is a second, third, or even a fourth language, can sometimes make you second-guess whether you will be able to achieve your goal.



As more business is bound to be conducted virtually even when the pandemic finally ends, it is undeniable that circulating written communications, before or after a virtual meeting, will become a fixture of daily business. All the more reason to take stock of your writing abilities at this pivotal moment.

But being a skilled writer is not just the domain of senior leadership who have access to communications professionals to help them hone and polish their messages. In today's flattened hierarchies, and multinational working groups and teams, in a world moving in near real-time and when major events can upend the best-laid plans, your ability to write well and under short deadlines, to get to the point quickly and with impact, matter even more.

The good news is, that even for professionals who have a strong skill level in English but are not fluent, working in English as a non-native can actually be an asset. As long as it is viewed that way. Each language has its set of rules and techniques that are understood to be the gold standard, and English is no exception. Except that the body of best practices in English



actually runs counter to those of many romance languages and Germanic languages in wide circulation in Europe. Therefore, it is important to adopt a different mindset when setting down to create a persuasive case in English.

Just to cite one example: as a language of migration, the history of how English developed is very different from many other languages. As peoples from many countries settled in Anglophone countries through the centuries, whether in the UK, Canada, the US or Australia, people had to begin quickly to communicate in order to trade, farm, and form new communities.

As a result, the gold standard of communication in English favours simple language, simple sentence structure, and direct forms of address, with a preference for the active over the passive voice. Contrast that with French, or German, for that matter, where the pinnacle of proficiency is seen as using long, complex sentences, conveying complex concepts and using long words. In English, the opposite is true: these more complex forms are at times viewed with scepticism, and not considered to have the same level of clarity and authority as a simpler approach.

Think for a moment about some of the world's most effective communications today, and the language and sentence structure that is used. The most recent example of communication that had a considerable impact was the statement uttered by Mario Draghi during his tenure as President of the European Central Bank in the depths of the global financial crisis. When he said the EU would do 'whatever it takes' to support the euro. Those four words changed the course of history and have all the hallmarks of persuasive use of English: the statement is brief, direct, and uses everyday language. Those four little words reversed the course of history, giving a shot of confidence to financial markets, undergirding the euro, and building credence for the ECB's unconventional methods.

Effective writing in English requires adopting a mindset, and the systematic application of the principles and practices in English, no



matter the objective – whether you are trying to persuade one official, one organization, or an entire governing body. It requires regular application of a body of practices, from how to craft a compelling key message to editing, organizing and ordering your material, to writing

sentences and paragraphs of the right order and length, adding important finishing touches, from the tools of rhetoric to techniques of persuasion, such as repetition at key moments of your most takeaway message.

To learn more about how you can help you or your team to enhance their writing skills at work or perhaps you and they want to learn more about how to influence and persuade through writing or in speaking, you can attend the free webinar on Thursday, September 30th or call Dods Training, and ask for Christine Tokar. We can organize bespoke training from 1 to 5 days in Effective Writing at Work, Influencing and Persuading through Writing and Speaking, Managing Media Interviews, Crisis Communications, Drafting and Writing Briefs, to name a few. Dods Associate Trainers are experts in their fields and deliver hands-on participatory, relevant and practical training.



Training Outline

On this one-to-two-day remote or in-person training programme, we offer you the opportunity to learn this body of best practices and to get practical, hands-on experience applying them to your current work. The group size is kept small to allow for a high level of personal 1:1 support from the facilitator who is an experienced international journalist and communications consultant working with public sector institutions, a skilled communications trainer and a progressive coach.

Outline

- The core principles of good writing in English
- A simple technique to organize your information for greater impact
- Sentences and paragraphs: the rules to follow
- Common grammar mistakes to avoid
- Techniques journalists use – and you can, too - when writing on a tight deadline
- Common mistakes professionals make in their writing and quick fixes for them
- Language hacks to make your writing more professional and memorable
- Key message architecture
- The twin building blocks of crafting a compelling message:
- How to motivate your audience and write a call to action
- Easy-to-use techniques of persuasion and memorability using the tools of rhetoric
- Editing techniques for greater brevity and authority
- The final edit: how to make sure your writing has flow and style



Contact Christine.Tokar@dodsgroup.com or May.Muhtadi@dodsgroup.com for further details.