

Creative Business Writing

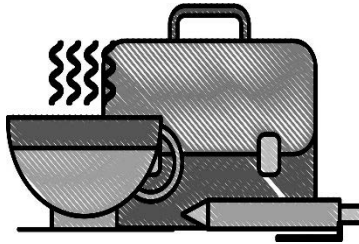


Clear. Concise. Descriptive.

Ashan R. Hampton

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Ashan's original research, *History of the Arkansas State Hospital 1859-1930*, was published in the *Pulaski County Historical Review* (1995) and continues to be cited by history scholars today. Her articles on notable African American Arkansans also appear in the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*.

With her doctoral studies on hold, Ashan has found success in online education. She produces and teaches her own writing and grammar courses for global audiences through her company, Cornerstone Communications & Publishing. Ashan is also a published author, digital media producer, proofreader and copyeditor.

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Introduction

I'm Not that Creative!

The last time I taught in a traditional classroom was to a group of adult learners who left their full-time jobs to attend class from six until ten at night. I would like to say they were eager to learn how to improve their writing skills, and to soak in the knowledge of their favorite English teacher for four hours once a week, but they were not. These students were tired, hungry and uninterested in education for the sheer joy of learning. They wanted better jobs and opportunities for a better life.

Because I had dealt with this kind of recalcitrant student many times before, I opened the class with the benefits of good writing in the workplace, and the high cost of poor writing skills when it comes to landing a new job or getting a promotion. Once I hooked them, they began to ask questions about my background. At the time, I was working as a digital media coordinator for a local newspaper's marketing agency. I built all the websites that customers ordered for their small businesses. All of them.

From start to finish, I envisioned, designed, created and launched small business websites. I also completed all SEO activities from keyword research to inserting those words into every image, headline and page title on the website. I also created and voiced slideshow videos to showcase on the agency's YouTube page and the customer's new website. My students were impressed. This was very creative work. Later, they would use my creativity as an excuse for their simple, lackluster writing.

During an in-class exercise, I took a red pen and provided on-the-spot verbal and written feedback on everyone's assignment. Of course, all of their sensitivities and insecurities flared up. One brave, exasperated student said, "I'm just not that creative." Others moaned in agreement. "You build websites, and write books, and you do all these things, so it's easy for you." Again, more muffled "*amens*" from the peanut gallery. At this point, I was an expert at fielding student complaints about my high expectations and high achievements outside the classroom.

So, I paused for a beat and allowed their frustrations to register. After a moment, I said, "I'm not asking you to be creative. I'm asking you to be more descriptive; to give more details so that people aren't left with questions after reading your writing." That in a nutshell is the purpose of this book—to show you how to produce clear, concise, descriptive workplace or business writing, so that you can avoid confusion, embarrassment or possible lawsuits.

Chapter One

Types of Business Writing



Photo from Pexels.

What is Business or Workplace Writing?

In short, business writing—also called workplace writing—consists of documents that are most commonly written and distributed by employees and employers in a job setting. Email is the most common form of business writing. However, the *out-of-order* sign on the bathroom stall also counts as workplace writing. Whether it is to convince millionaires to invest in a product or to instruct people to clean the microwave after each use, the purpose of business writing is to inform, persuade or educate readers.

Although business writing is often direct, brief or technical, it can also incorporate techniques that are often associated with fiction writing or oral speech presentations. Depending on the audience and situation, stale business writing might need a bit of spice or pizzazz to grab and maintain a reader's attention. Such expository writing techniques are covered later in this book. At this point, however, it might be helpful to review the kinds of documents that are often created in the workplace.

Common Types of Business Writing

Examples:

- Agendas
- Biographies
- Blog Articles
- Briefing Notes
- Cover Letter
- CV/Résumé
- Emails
- Letters
- Meeting Minutes
- Memos
- Press Releases
- Proposals
- Reports
- Sales Letters
- Speeches
- Summaries

General Formatting

Unless you are given special instructions for a special project, use these general guidelines when creating business documents:

- Times New Roman, Georgia or a similar serif font type.
- 12-point font size, no smaller than 11 pts.
- Single space.
- White, 8 ½" x 11" blank, unruled paper.
- Type in Microsoft Word, Google Docs or a universally recognized file type.
- If a document is longer than five paragraphs, or one page, send it as an email attachment.



See examples and read explanations for these common business documents on the following pages.