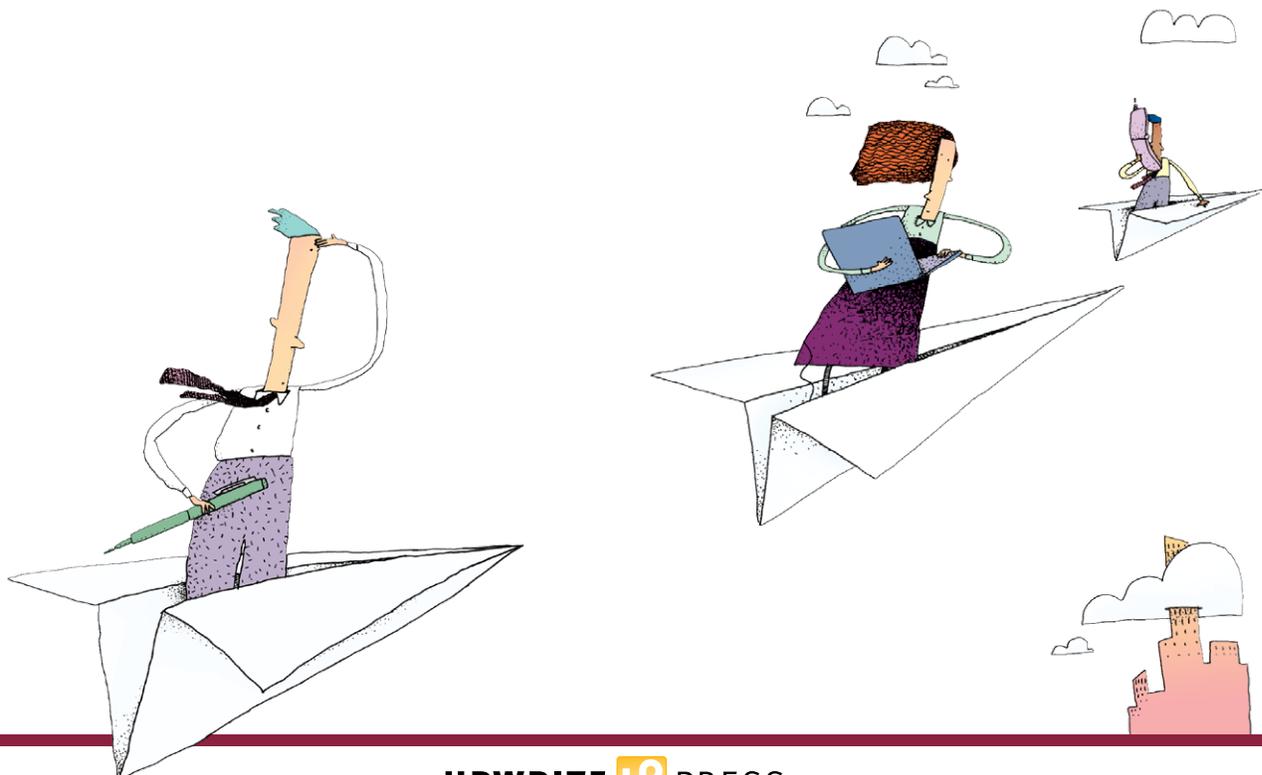


The Key Forms of Business Writing

What are the key forms of business writing?

Different situations and messages call for different forms of writing. The forms listed below address the primary writing needs of anyone involved in business. Courses in the Write Program provide timely, research-based instruction for creating each of these forms.

Form	Description
Correspondence	includes e-mails, memos, and letters—essential forms of day-to-day business communication.
Reports	share the information needed for businesses to prosper.
Proposals	lay out plans to meet a business's needs, from developing a new market to solving a problem.
Instructions	provide the how-to documents that help a business and its clients carry out their work.



Key Form: Correspondence

Why correspond in writing?

Members of any business must regularly correspond, either in person, by phone, or through writing. Written correspondence is preferred when

- your message is complicated and detailed,
- you and your reader need a written record of the communication,
- you have a large and scattered audience, and/or
- you do not need immediate feedback.

What makes correspondence effective and productive?

To get results, correspondence must be positive, clear, orderly, and prompt. After all, the purpose of corresponding is to communicate with individuals or groups to accomplish something.

Characteristics of Effective Communication

Characteristics	Examples
Effective correspondence . . .	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• addresses a person whenever possible, not a title or department.	Dear Sarah <i>or</i> Dear Ms. Falwell
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• opens with an informative subject line or opening sentence.	Subject: Promotion of Mona Vail to Full-Time Graphic Artist
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• stresses benefits to the reader.	An updated shopping cart would reduce customer frustration and increase sales.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses “you” in positive situations but avoids it in negative ones.	I appreciated your workshop at the Radisson, especially your explanation of . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• assumes a team approach.	We offer our customers a line of safety equipment unmatched in the industry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• includes lists, short paragraphs, and headings for easy reading.	We'll discuss these items: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Shawn Greer's internship.2. His last two evaluations.3. His letter of recommendation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• avoids business jargon.	Let's rethink our fall catalog. <i>(instead of)</i> The corporation ought to redeploy marketing initiatives vis a vis the end-year selling vehicle.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• is timely, but never sent in anger.	Thank you for meeting with me last week at the national sales meeting.

Key Form: Reports

Why write reports?

Reports offer businesses and organizations the information they need to produce, evaluate, and carry out their work. Reports, long and short, help businesses by . . .

- creating a record for routine and special activities;
- documenting details related to incidents, projects, and studies;
- checking results of work, plans, and production; or
- evaluating options and making decisions.

What are the common types of reports?

The chart that follows identifies the main types of reports, along with their goals. To determine which type of report to use, you need to identify your purpose, your reader, and his or her expectations.

Types of Reports

Type	Examples	Writer's Goal
Incident	accident, breakdown, error, or stoppage	Examine a situation to determine causes, effects, and solutions.
Periodic	weekly, quarterly, or annual; evaluation, department, or status	Provide information at regular time intervals so work can be tracked.
Progress	initial, interim, completion, or follow-up; activity, campaign, project, or grant	Provide details about how a project or job is progressing.
Trip	conference, convention, customer service, field, inspection, sales trip	Share results of activities that happened away from the workplace.

Key Form: **Proposals**

Why write proposals?

The noun *proposal* means “plan.” Whenever an individual in a business or organization puts forth a written plan, he or she is developing a proposal. Proposals are critical to a business’s success because they suggest action, innovation, and problem solving. To write a strong proposal, make sure that you . . .

- know your audience,
- make clear the benefits of your plan,
- sound reliable and credible,
- provide examples of past success stories, and
- present an eye-appealing, easy-reading final draft.

How should I plan a proposal?

Effective proposals are carefully planned because they are important pieces of writing, intended to promote a new product, to sell a service, to establish a new business relationship, and so on. Answering the 5 W’s and H (who? what? when? where? why? and how?) can be an effective planning strategy.

Key Form: Instructions

Why write instructions?

Instructions help businesses and organizations and their clients carry out their work. Plant workers need instructions to use equipment, lab technicians need safety guidelines, managers need protocol for employee reviews, and so on. Effective instructions are clear, complete, chronological, and current.

What else do I need to know about the style of instructions?

Write your instructions in direct, active sentences. (*Turn the cash register key to the left*, rather than *The cash register key should be turned to the left.*) Also use strong command verbs (*remove, apply, rinse*, and so on).

Common Command Verbs

In instructions, use precise command verbs that the reader will understand:

address	dig	insert	pour	scan	tip
align	download	inspect	press	scroll	total
begin	drag	lift	print	select	transect
boot up	drain	load in	pull	send	trim
call up	drill	lock	push	shift	turn
change	drop	loosen	raise	shut off	twist
check	ease	lower	remove	slide	type
choose	enter	make	replace	start	unhook
clean	fasten	measure	reply	state	unplug
click	fill	move	review	switch	use
clip	find	notify	rinse	take	ventilate
close	flip	oil	roll	tear	verify
connect	follow	open	rotate	test	wash
cut	identify	place	save	tighten	wipe
delete	include	plug	saw	tilt	wire