WRITING AT WORK a guide to better writing in administration, business and management





Contents

Preface

	Acknowledgements	xv
1	Writing at work	1
	Writing for yourself 1	
	Writing helps you to observe 1	
	Writing helps you to remember 2	
	Writing helps you to think 4	
	Writing helps you to plan your work 4	
	Writing helps you to be well organised 4	
	Writing helps you to avoid stress at work 5	
	Improving your writing 5	
	Recording interesting ideas as they come to mind 5	
	Using your diary 5	
	Dating everything you write 6	
	Working to an up-to-date job list 6	
	Writing good instructions 6	
2	Do it this way	8
	Essential characteristics of business communications 8	
	Accuracy 9	
	Appropriateness 9	
	Balance 9	
	Brevity 10	
	Clarity 10	
	Coherence 10	
	Completeness 10	
	Consistency 10	
	Courtesy 10	

xiii

Postcards 38

	Explanation 11	
	Forcefulness 11	
	Impartiality 11	
	Interest 11	
	Objectivity 12	
	Order 13	
	Originality 13	
	Persuasiveness 13	
	Precision 13	
	Relevance 14	
	Simplicity 14	
	Tact 14	
	Think – plan – write – revise 14	
	Thinking 15	
	Planning 15	
	Writing 16	
	Checking and revising 18	
	Improving your writing 22	
	Considering which characteristics are essential in	
	business communications 22	
	Criticising other people's writing 22	
	Criticising your own writing 25	
	Reviewing your procedures 25	
3	Write a better letter	28
	Business letters and memoranda 28	
	The parts of a letter 31	
	The receiver's address 31	
	The date of sending 32	
	The salutation or greeting 32	
	The subject heading 33	
	The first sentence 34	
	The body of a letter 34	
	Ending a letter 35	
	The complimentary close 35	
	Signing a letter 36	
	Continuation sheets and enclosures 37	
	The reference line 37	
	Copies 38	
	Mass-produced unique letters 38	

	Electronic mail 41 Improving your writing 43 Dating, signing and filing everything you write 43 Ensuring each communication is well presented 44 Keeping a record of all correspondence 44 Looking again at copies of your letters 45 Preparing an application for employment 45	
4	On form	50
	Data sheets as records 50 Forms as concise communications 51 Good forms make for good administration 51 Designing forms 53 Using forms 54 Improving your writing 55 Designing a telephone message form 55 Using forms to help you work efficiently 55 Completing an application form for employment 56	
5	Say it with words	57
	Business English 57 The meaning of words 59 Some words commonly confused 59 Other words commonly misused 61 Grandiloquence 63 Superfluous words 63 Specialist terms 65 Trade names 66 Abbreviations, contractions and acronyms 66 Improving your writing 67 Using a dictionary 67 Choosing words 67 Defining specialist terms 68	
6	Say it without flowers	69
	Words in context 69 The repetition of a word 69 The position of a word 70 Idiomatic expressions 71	

		\sim	
V11	1 1	$\cup on$	tents

	Circumlocution 72 Verbosity 72 Reasons for verbosity 74 The need for commenting words and connecting words 76 Improving your writing 77 Using words 77 Editing the work of others 77 Writing précis and summaries 79 Writing a book review 80	
7	Say it without words	81
	Using numbers as aids to precision 81 Preparing tables 84 Using illustrations as aids to explanation 86 Photographs 86 Line drawings 87 Line graphs 88 Histograms 89 Bar charts 90 Pie charts 92 Plans and maps 93 Diagrams that are not drawn to scale 93 Preparing illustrations 94 Dimensions 94 Drawing 95 Improving your writing 97 Writing legends (captions) to figures 97 Checking your illustrations and legends 98	
8	Something to report	99
	Planning your report 99 Preparing a topic outline 100 Numbering the sections of your report 104 Writing your report 104 The front cover 105 The title page 106 The Abstract or Summary 108 The Table of Contents 109 The Introduction 109 The Methods (or Procedure) 109 The Results 109	

	The Discussion 110 The Conclusions 110 The Recommendations 110 The Acknowledgements 110 The Bibliography or list of References 111 The appendices 112 The index 112 The distribution list 112 Improving your writing 112 Checking your manuscript (first draft) 113 Preparing your typescript 114 Checking your typescript 116 Preparing the index 117 Marking the typescript for the printer 118 Corresponding with an editor 119 A checklist for referees (and authors) 119 Checking the proofs 120	
9	Helping your readers	122
	Writing for easy reading 122 How to begin 123 Control 123 Emphasis 124 Sentence length 125 Rhythm 126 Style 126 Capturing and holding your readers' interest 127 Using good English 129 Obstacles to effective communication 130 Rules for efficient communication 130 Improving your writing 130 Learning from people who write well 130 Learning by writing 131 Checking your writing for readability 132	
10	Finding and using information	133
	Sources of information 133 Dictionaries 133 Encyclopaedias 134 Handbooks 134 Standards 134	

	\sim		
х	t ion	nten	170

	Directories 135	
	Books 136	
	Reviews 136	
	Specialist journals 137	
	The Internet (World Wide Web) 137	
	Intranets 139	
	Improving your writing 139	
	Reading to some purpose 139	
	Making notes as you read 140	
	Citing sources of information 142	
11	Just a minute	144
	The papers for a committee meeting 144	
	The Minutes of the last meeting 145	
	The Agenda for the next meeting 148	
	Supporting papers 150	
	Supporting papers 150	
12	Talking at work	151
	Being interviewed 151	
	Talking on the telephone 153	
	Making good use of a telephone 155	
	How to make a call 155	
	How to take a call 157	
	Using a telephone message form 157	
	Talking in a meeting 158	
	Preparing for the meeting 158	
	Listening 158	
	Speaking 159	
	Poster presentations 159	
	Talking to the media 160	
	Talking to an audience 160	
	Preparing a talk or presentation 162	
	Preparing visual aids 166	
	Using a blackboard, whiteboard or flip chart 167	
	Using an overhead projector 168	
	Using slides 169	
	Delivering a talk 170	

	Appendices
1	Punctuation
2	Spelling
3	Computer appreciation

Bibliography

Index

Contents xi