

Helen's 9 Rules for Better Business Writing

A Practical, Interactive 90-Minute
Audio Conference for Administrative Assistants,
Secretaries and Other Office Support Staff

Featuring **Helen Wilkie**

PRESENTED BY

**The Office
Professional**

Rule No. 1

Write for your reader

1: Write for Your Reader

Trust deposit option

70 lb text duplex finish

No load

Laprosopic procedure

GAAP

Upper deck masking

Full bleed

First North American Rights

Rule No. 2

Use simple words

2: Use Simple Words

Instead of

ascertain

expedite

optimum

utilize

erroneous

aggregate

forward

terminate

concept

Consider

find out

speed up

best

use

incorrect, wrong

total

send

end, finish

idea

Rule No. 3

Cut out the fluff

3: Cut Out the Fluff

Instead of

in the majority of instances

as you may or may not know

of a confidential nature

in advance of

in the event that

I would like to make a

suggestion that

Consider

usually

as you may know

confidential

before

if

I suggest

3: Cut Out the Fluff

Instead of

final outcome

new breakthrough

honest truth

the future ahead

past history

foreign import

absolutely perfect

very unique

consensus of opinion

Consider

outcome

breakthrough

truth

the future

history

import

perfect

unique

consensus

Rule No. 4

Make your language inclusive

4: Inclusive Language

Express the sentence in the plural form:

Each employee must shut down his system at the end of the day. ✘

All employees must shut down their systems at the end of the day. ✔

4: Inclusive Language

Use the definite article:

The member will disclose to **his** client any interest in a business which may affect **his** client.

The member will disclose to **the** client any interest in a business which may affect **the** client.

4: Inclusive Language

Use “they” as a singular pronoun:

Every executive is entitled to **his** own parking space.

Every executive is entitled to **their** own parking space.

Rule No. 5

Use correct grammar

5: Use Correct Grammar

The students who had finished the exam left early.

The students, who had finished the exam, left early.

5: Use Correct Grammar

Only I want you to stand over there.

I ***only*** want you to stand over there.

I want ***only*** you to stand over there.

I want you ***only*** to stand over there.

I want you to ***only*** stand over there.

I want you to stand ***only*** over there.

5: Use Correct Grammar

Mary likes John more than *me*.

Mary likes John more than *I*.

Rule No. 6

***Use the right word
in the right context***

6: Right Word, Right Context

Continually ⇨ **continuously**

Accept ⇨ **except**

Uninterested ⇨ **disinterested**

Imply ⇨ **infer**

Client ⇨ **customer**

Imminent ⇨ **eminent**

Later ⇨ **latter**

Lose ⇨ **loose**

Precede ⇨ **proceed**

Envelop ⇨ **envelope**

Rule No. 7

Write in the active voice

7: Active Voice

Active Voice:

I

Subject

wrote

verb

the report.

object

Passive Voice:

The report

object

was written

verb

by

me.

subject

Rule No. 8

Avoid convoluted sentences

8: Convoluted sentences

Regarding the matter of the employee parking lot, due to the fact that it poses a safety hazard as it is being handled at present, all employees need to, at this time, park on the east side until such time as the construction is, in the near future it is hoped, completed.

Rule No. 9

Be nice!

9: Be nice!

Vinegar Words

- **blame**
- **fault**
- **careless**
- **failure**
- **inferior**
- **negligence**
- **penalty**
- **complaint**

Honey Words

- **please**
- **thank you**
- **appreciate**
- **understand**
- **agree**
- **excellent**
- **service**
- **value**

9: Be nice!

Because the **defective** motor that we purchased from you **failed** to perform its function, we are **dissatisfied** and are returning the **faulty** motor for immediate replacement.

9: Be nice!

Although we have generally been pleased with your products, the on/off switch on our new motor does not work as it should. We are, therefore, returning the motor, and look forward to receiving a replacement as soon as possible.

Helen's 9 Rules for Better Business Writing

- **Write for your reader.**
- **Use simple words.**
- **Cut out the fluff.**
- **Make your language inclusive.**
- **Use correct grammar.**
- **Use the right word in the right context.**
- **Write in the active voice.**
- **Avoid convoluted sentences.**
- **Be nice!**

Tips for Better e-mail

- **Substitute for ink on paper**
- **Upper and lower case**
- **White space between paragraphs**
- **Your words must speak for you**
- **Use meaningful subject line**
- **Before you hit the 'send' key – think**

**For more e-mail tips, see “Focus On...E-mail” at
<http://www.mhwcom.com/pages/focusemail.html>**