

Syllabus

Course introduction: objectives and scope of the Body of Knowledge

What are the 'writing risks'?

Course outline

Key principles

Why is 'how we write' important?

Writing clearly

Up front, clearly state the purpose of writing

What is a clear layout?

How to communicate clear messages

How long should sentences be?

What techniques can be used to reduce sentence length?

Grammar lesson #1: What is a Sentence, Subject and Verb?

What is the 'subject-to-verb distance *rule of eight*'?

How should sentences and paragraphs be structured?

How to write coherently – what are 'arcs of coherence'?

How can topic sentences be used to help with coherence?

How can conclusion sentences be used effectively?

Grammar lesson #2: What are Nouns, Pronouns and Prepositional Phrases?

Preposition examples

What is the guidance regarding prepositional phrases?

Why does Plain English improve writing clarity?

Writing concisely

What is the 'introductory phrases *rule of eight*'?

What tool helps with concise writing?

How can vertical lists help writing to appear concise?

Writing precisely

Two reference booklets to help with precise writing

How to choose an appropriate tone

Checking content is correct and accurate, and information is relevant with no gaps

What are common grammar pitfalls to avoid?

Why is punctuation important?

When should commas be used?

When should colons and semi-colons be used?

When should apostrophes be used and what are the common pitfalls?

Introducing remaining elements of the Body of Knowledge

Identifying, and using, the Active and Passive Voice

Planning and checking writing

What 'writing myths' can be exploded (ignored)?

'Hedging' and 'Weasel words'

The course has three main objectives:

- to describe, explain and illustrate the key **principles** for professional writing
- to describe and illustrate some **techniques** to help you apply these principles
- to provide a **Body of Knowledge** for you to refer to when writing.

The Body of Knowledge consists of:

Two reference booklets

- *House Style Document*
- *Diction Election Lists* – to help you choose the right words. For convenience, some extracts from the booklet have also been provided as an A4 aide-memoire.

Six pdf (A4) aide-memoire tools

- *Word Economy Lists* – to help you write concisely
- *Plain English Lexicon* – to help you choose words that are likely to be easily understood
- *Writing-Quality Checklist* (including *Essential grammar in a nutshell*)
- *Why planning is important* and *Top 10 tips for planning effectively and implementing the plan*. The pdf also includes an extract from this workbook on *How to choose tone*.
- *An introduction to two types of review: Editing and proofreading* (including *Top 10 tips for how to self-edit* and *Top 10 tips for how to proofread*)
- *Top 10 tips for managing colleagues' writing* and *Top 10 tips for effectively providing feedback on writing*.

This course workbook – and a separate pdf Appendix with Guidance Notes covering:

- Guidance Note A: *Top 10 tips for a clear layout*
- Guidance Note B: *Top 10 tips for the effective use of vertical lists*
- Guidance Note C: *Top five grammar pitfalls to avoid*
- Guidance Note D: *Top 10 writing myths exploded*
- Guidance Note E: *Top 10 tips for producing presentation slides*
- Guidance Note F: *Top 10 tips for good emails and tips for good reports*. For convenience, this is also provided as a pdf aide-memoire.
- Guidance Note G: *Top 10 tips for identifying and using the Active and Passive Voice*
- Guidance Note H: *Making effective use of punctuation*.