Certified Travel Associate (CTA) Program

Professional Skills Course

Business Writing Skills

Activities Workbook
Lesson 1: Business Writing Principles

Case to Consider

Your boss has asked you to prepare an email about your company’s recent decision to reimburse employees for their work-related education. She wants to know specifically how many employees have taken advantage of the new policy, what types of programs they have completed, and what effects the agency has realized as a result.

Assume you’ve already determined your audience, why you’re writing, and what result you’re trying to achieve. Now you must figure out what to say to accomplish your objective. List three sources you might consult to help you prepare this report.

1. 
2. 
3. 

Case to Consider

Now that you’ve determined what information you want to include in your email about the new educational reimbursement policy, the next step is to draft an outline. What key points do you want to cover in the report that you will submit to your boss?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

While there are many ways you can format your email, you may decide to structure it around five key areas: overview, participation, types of educational programs, workplace effects, and recommendations.
Practice Session

What would you substitute for the following commonly used cliches?

Back to square one

Play it by ear

Ballpark figure

Beyond the shadow of a doubt

Hit the nail on the head

Please don’t hesitate to call.

User-friendly

Thank you in advance
Practice Session

Rewrite the following vague sentences in more specific language.

1. Vague: Your prompt response would be greatly appreciated.
   Specific: __________________________________________________________
                  _______________________________________________________

2. Vague: Your airline’s new service into this city will have a positive impact on our business.
   Specific: __________________________________________________________
Practice Session

Rephrase the following sentences for a more positive tone.

1. Negative: This notice is regarding your failure to remit payment on our invoice.

   Positive: _____________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

2. Negative: Mr. Hamilton claims you never notified him of the policy cancellation.

   Positive: _____________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

3. Negative: You consistently fail to show up for work on time.

   Positive: _____________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

4. Negative: If you delivered the documents, as you claim, we failed to receive them.

   Positive: _____________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

5. Negative: I’m very sorry about any inconvenience you allegedly suffered from my delay in getting you the information you need.

   Positive: _____________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

6. Negative: Because of additional security measures, don’t expect to use curbside check-in.

   Positive: _____________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
Practice Session

Five words are misspelled in the list below. Can you find and correct them?

separate  questionnaire  feasible
embarass  liason  accommodation
licensed  occasion  priviledge
Lesson 4: Marketing Communications

Practice Session

Every product, every service, every travel destination has its own selling points. The copywriter tries to discover features that are appealing, accurate, and, if possible, unique. List eight points about your agency, product, or service that you would make in persuading a prospective customer to do business with you.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
### Part I: Self-Assessment

#### A. Business Writing Habits Assessment

Assess your writing habits by answering “yes” or “no” to the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I own a dictionary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I own and use a writing handbook or style manual published within the past 10 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I know where to find answers to my questions about grammar and spelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I follow these steps in the writing process: planning, researching, writing, editing, and proofreading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I present one main purpose at the start of my business correspondence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I know how to develop an outline or writing plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I know how to write a draft from an outline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I proofread my first drafts and fix errors or parts that are unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I ask a colleague to read my writing for an objective opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I can type reasonably well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Number of “Yes” Answers**

**Scoring Guide:** If your score was:

- **8–10** You have very effective business writing habits. You understand the skills needed to complete business writing projects successfully.
- **6–7** You’re familiar with many of the habits successful writers have, but you may need to work to improve your habits in the workplace. Look carefully at the statements you checked “no.” These are items you’ll need to work on.
- **4–5** You understand the basics of business writing, but reviewing the tips and advice in this course will help you further develop your business writing skills.
- **0–3** Though much of the information in this course is new to you, you can learn to develop your skills and enjoy writing by diligently practicing these strategies.
B. Business Writing Experience Assessment

Assign a number to each writing activity listed below, depending on how often you perform it now or have performed it in the past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily (5)</th>
<th>Weekly (4)</th>
<th>Monthly (3)</th>
<th>Once in a while (2)</th>
<th>Never (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

____ Email

____ Posts on social media

____ Letters to clients or suppliers

____ Website or brochure copy

____ Reports or proposals

____ Articles for newsletters, newspapers, or trade periodicals

____ Written promotional materials

____ Total Score

Scoring Guide: If your score was:

30 or more  You have a great deal of experience in many different kinds of business writing activities.

21–29  You may do three or four writing activities frequently — or you may have some experience doing many types of writing activities. In either case, you are familiar with business writing activities. Just be sure you understand all the steps required for each project before you dive in.

15–20  You probably don’t write often — or you engage in only one or two writing activities frequently. Business writing may be new to you, so the tips and advice in this course should be helpful.

7–14  You have little business writing experience, and much of the information in this course is probably new to you. Practice the strategies described here for further development of your business writing skills.
C. Business Writing Attitude Assessment

Assign a number to each activity listed below, depending on how much you enjoy it now or have enjoyed doing it in the past. To find your score, add up the numbers you wrote in the spaces provided and divide by the number of the activities listed.

Enjoy very much (5)    Enjoy somewhat (4)    Feel neutral about (3)
Dislike somewhat (2)    Dislike intensely (1)

____ Email
____ Posts on social media
____ Letters to clients or suppliers
____ Web site or brochure copy
____ Reports or proposals
____ Articles for newsletters, newspapers, or trade periodicals
____ Written promotional materials

____ Total Score

**Scoring Guide:** If your score was:

4.6 or more    You like to write and probably enjoy a variety of business writing activities.

3.6–4.5    You may enjoy business writing activities or have favorite business writing tasks. In either case, you probably don’t dread the prospect of writing.

2.6–3.5    You may feel neutral about writing in general — or you may enjoy some tasks but dislike others. In either case, you probably understand the value of developing good writing skills in your profession.

2.5 or less    You really don’t like to write, and you probably don’t look forward to business writing tasks. You may be able to improve your attitude a bit if you talk to other travel professionals, colleagues, or friends who can point out to you the benefits of writing.
Part II: Editing Practice

A. Revise the following. Eliminate wordy and redundant phrases, choose simple language, and use white space for greater readability.

**First Draft**

As you may or may not know, I’ve commenced the process of working with human resources to take advantage of my right as an employee of this agency to a temporary leave of absence. I thought at first I would need three weeks to re-prioritize my personal and professional responsibilities, but I have ascertained that four weeks is more viable. Therefore, I am officially requesting leave from August 1 to September 1. I notify you at this point so you can plan ahead and start training a temporary replacement on the basic fundamentals of the CRS. Please advise whether or not you will need my assistance for training a temporary agent.

**Revised**
B. Revise the following. Use courteous language to achieve results and convey a more positive tone.

**First Draft**

Dear Ms. Macy:

I am writing on behalf of our client, Mr. David Tailby, to express extreme dissatisfaction with your “Four Island Fling,” which departed from Honolulu on November 20. Mr. Tailby was an unfortunate participant of this tour, and I demand a written apology and full refund due to your embarrassing service.

Three months before departure we had requested vegetarian meals for Mr. Tailby for the entire two weeks of your tour. Perhaps you would prefer special requests with less advance notice, because you obviously were not able to handle this one. Mr. Tailby reports that at each hotel he received the same meal, a cheese omelet. Surely your so-called deluxe tour company could have managed more variety and imagination.

Mr. Tailby’s awful experience with your company not only damaged your reputation but my relationship with a valuable customer. Send the apology and full refund to my attention immediately.

Sincerely,

Priscilla Henderson

cc: Mr. David Tailby
Revised

Dear Ms. Macy:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

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____________________________________________________________________
C. Revise the following. Eliminate excess words, and then correct any errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice.

**First Draft**

Dear Sara:

This letter is to confirm you on the Disney Magic Tour departing March 15. Your traveling partner supposably sent in payment; witch I haven’t yet received.

Irregardless of whom sends payment, we will need your full payment, accept your deposit witch you already paid, no later than 14 days prior to your departure date (March 25). Having received that, vacation bags containing hotel, transfer, and Admission tickets will be sent to you.

Sarah, thank you for planning your vacation with Sunshine Travel. We look forward to insuring your satisfaction throughout your trip.

Sincerely,

Richard Beaton
Travel Consultant
Revised

Dear Sara:

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________
Part III: Writing Practice

A. Writing Memos and Letters

Write an email and thank-you letter in response to the following scenario.

Scenario

Your Far East Airlines sales representative, Jay Dubbs, has announced a weeklong fam trip to Asia. Among the 10 area agents he has invited is Jessie, an agent who works for you and services a corporate account with frequent business in Asia. Mr. Dubbs has arranged deluxe hotel accommodations, site inspections, and a variety of educational and entertaining tours for a negligible price, so you approve Jessie’s participation in the fam trip and arrange for coverage in her absence. Several weeks after Jessie returns from the reportedly successful and educational trip, you are shocked to hear through the grapevine that Mr. Dubbs received only a single thank-you note from that trip, and it wasn’t from your agency. You are embarrassed that the sales representative, hotel representatives, ground transportation providers, and tourist board representatives will remember your agency as one that did not have the professional courtesy to thank them for their efforts. You know that a simple thank-you note (or lack thereof) can speak volumes about your professionalism and the professionalism of your company. To ensure that such an oversight does not happen in the future, you’ve decided to write an email reminding your employees to send thank-you letters to suppliers, and you attach a sample as a guideline.
Email

To: All Staff
From: (Your Name)
Date: October 11, 20xx
Subject: Supplier Thank-you Letters
Sample Thank-you Letter

October 11, 20xx
Mr. Jay Dubbs
Far East Airlines
123 Bowdoin Avenue
Boston, MA 02134

Dear Mr. Dubbs:

Sincerely,

(Your Name)
(Your Company)
B. Writing Proposals

Draft an outline of a proposal that will fulfill the needs of the RFP in the following scenario. Create a purpose and summary statement, and organize the body of your proposal using as many of the suggested subheadings below that you feel are necessary to cover the information requested in the RFP.

- General agency information — the credentials of the bidding agency.
- Back-office management — the agency’s reservations and back-office management systems.
- Supplier relations—the agency’s ability to provide negotiated prices with travel suppliers.
- Communications — communications capabilities, including telephone systems, fax, email, computer link-up, and so on.
- Document delivery — in-town and remote delivery programs.
- Special arrangements — special services the agency provides, such as meet-and-greet, passport and visa services, VIP programs, and so forth.
- Meeting and group travel — ability to deliver meeting, incentive, and conference services.
- Revenue sharing — rebate offerings, override commissions, and so on.
- Site visit/negotiations — availability for interviews and site visits during negotiations.
Scenario

On your desk this morning was a Request for Proposal (RFP) from a fast-growing, nonprofit trade association with annual travel expenses in excess of $300,000 a year. According to the RFP, the association is seeking to ensure greater accountability for its travel expenses and is therefore interested in centralizing all of its travel with a single agency. You have been charged with drafting a proposal in response to this RFP. You've decided to begin the task by writing an outline that will cover each of the following services requested in the association's RFP.

1. Provide and consult on all travel services.
2. Assist in monitoring travel expenses.
3. Assist in developing travel policies and procedures.
4. Plan and arrange group and meeting travel.
5. Create and maintain traveler profiles.
7. Provide 24-hour telephone service.
8. Issue and deliver all travel documents in a timely fashion.
10. Provide lost-baggage assistance.
11. Assist with visas and passports.
12. Establish and staff on-site retail branches.
13. Provide qualified, experienced personnel.
14. Create and review MIS reports on request.
15. Provide discount hotel program/negotiated rates.
16. Assist with consolidation of company travel.
17. Pay revenue sharing in a timely fashion.
Planning Outline for Proposal

I. Purpose

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

II. Scope of Services

Subhead 1: ______________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

Subhead 2: ______________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

Subhead 3: ______________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

Subhead 4: ______________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________

• ______________________________________________________________________
Subhead 5: __________________________________________
  • ________________________________________________
  • ________________________________________________
  • ________________________________________________
  • ________________________________________________

Subhead 6: __________________________________________
  • ________________________________________________
  • ________________________________________________
  • ________________________________________________
  • ________________________________________________

III. Summary

____________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________

IV. Addenda

____________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________
C. Writing Press Releases

Believe it or not, you are a newsmaker. Or, you will be, when you finish your CTA program. Write a press release announcing your new CTA certification. Keep the release to one page, and include the following information within the release:

- Your name and job title
- Your hometown
- Your company name
- Requirements of the CTA program
- Your office city or town
- Brief description of The Travel Institute

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LOCAL TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL EARNED CTA DESIGNATION

FRAMINGHAM, MA (__________) — __________________________

______________________________

(Company name) (Contact)

______________________________

(Street address) (Contact Phone)

______________________________

(City, state, zip)

______________________________

(Phone)

LOCAL TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL EARNED CTA DESIGNATION

FRAMINGHAM, MA (__________) — __________________________

______________________________

(Company name) (Contact)

______________________________

(Street address) (Contact Phone)

______________________________

(City, state, zip)

______________________________

(Phone)

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