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LifeTrack: Writing 101

2 

The 7 Cs of Good Writing

Lesson 1 – Introduction

3 

Types of writing

- Creative writing
- Technical writing
- Business correspondence
- Blessing & exhortation
- Journaling
- Advertising
- Resume writing

4 

Why is it important to write well?

- To honor Christ
 - Allows you to leave a legacy of your blessings, spiritual insights, and spiritual journey for others
 - For those pursuing post-secondary education, it is essential for good grades

5 

Why is it important to write well? (2)

- To have a good career
 - Brother's boss at NASA -- "I'd rather have someone who made a C in engineering and an A in English than someone who made an A in Engineering and a C in English."
 - Why? Because many engineers don't communicate well.
- Sets you apart from the vast majority of people in the job market.

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Why is it important to write well? (3)

- Furnishes you a job skill that translates into many different industries.
- Furnishes you a job skill that is not easily done by someone in another country.

7 

The 7 Cs of good writing

- 1. Clear
- 2. Concise
- 3. Colorful
- 4. Compelling (or concrete)
- 5. Correct
- 6. Cohesive
- 7. Christ-centered

8 

WRITING SHOULD BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD

Be clear
Keep it simple
Use direct language
Avoid ambiguity

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Luke 1:1-4

- *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,*
- *Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;*
- *It seemed good to me also, **having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first**, to write unto thee **in order**, most excellent Theophilus,*
- *That thou mightest **know the certainty of those things**, wherein thou hast been **instructed**.*

10 

Why Luke wrote

- Others had written about Christ, but there was still not a full-enough account
- He wanted to put things “in order” – to attach a proper chronology and logical order
- He wanted to reinforce the teaching of others
- He wanted to help Theophilus be certain of certain truths

11 

Use direct language

- Say what you mean and mean what you say

- Don't try to sound ostentatious or more scholarly than you are
- Don't pad your writing with "fluff" – this is the most common problem with student writing

12 Keep it simple

- Before – "High-quality learning environments are a necessary precondition for facilitation and enhancement of the ongoing learning process."
- After --- "Children need good schools if they are to learn properly."

13 Keep it simple (2)

- Before – "If there are any points on which you require explanation or further particulars we shall be glad to furnish such additional details as may be required by telephone."
- After – "If you have any questions, please phone."

14 Ambiguity

- Ambiguous – means that a word can have more than one meaning and the reader isn't sure which meaning you intended.
- Ambiguity leads to "Humpty-Dumpty Syndrome" – where individuals fail to realize that words have many meanings and others may not be able to surmise the intent of a particular statement.

15 Avoid ambiguity

- Read your work out loud to yourself after you've written it.
- Have someone else read the document and highlight anything they didn't understand.
- The 500 most used English words each have an average of 23 different meanings.
 - The word "round" has 70 distinctly different meanings.

16 Are you sending the right message?

- "2 female Boston Terrier puppies, 7 weeks old, Perfect markings, 555-1234. Leave mess."
- "Dinner Special -- Turkey \$2.35; Chicken or Beef \$2.25; Children \$2.00"
- "Used Cars: Why go elsewhere to be cheated? Come here first!"

17 What message are you sending?

- When Gerber started selling baby food in Africa, they used the same packaging as in the US, with the beautiful baby on the label. Later they learned that in Africa, companies routinely put pictures on the label of what's inside, since most people can't read.

18 What message are you sending? (2)

- Actual newspaper sentences:
 - We do not tear your clothing with machinery; we do it carefully by hand.
 - After Governor Baldrige watched the lion perform, he was taken to Main Street and fed twenty-five pounds of red meat in front of the Fox Theater.
 - Dr. Benjamin Porter visited the school yesterday and lectured on "Destructive Pests." A large number were present.

19 Pronoun confusion

- More newspaper sentences:
 - The Duchess handled the launching beautifully, confidently smashing the champagne against the prow. The crowd cheered as she majestically slid down the greasy runway into the sea.
 - Anti-nuclear protestors released live cockroaches inside the White House Friday, and these were arrested when they left and blocked a security gate.

20 Do your titles make sense?

- Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Expert Says
- March planned for Next August
- L.A. Voters Approve Urban Renewal by Landslide
- Quarter of a Million Chinese Live on Water
- Hershey Bars Protest

21 Do your titles make sense? (2)

- Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers
- Safety Experts Say School Bus Passengers Should Be Belted

- Drunk Gets Nine Months in Violin Case
- Survivor of Siamese Twins Joins Parents
- Farmer Bill Dies in House
- Iraqi Head Seeks Arms

22  **Do your titles make sense? (3)**

- Stud Tires Out
- Lung Cancer in Women Mushrooms
- Teacher Strikes Idle Kids
- Reagan Wins on Budget, But More Lies Ahead
- Squad Helps Dog Bite Victim
- Shot Off Woman's Leg Helps Nicklaus to 66

23  **Do your titles make sense? (4)**

- Plane Too Close to Ground, Crash Probe Told
- Miners Refuse to Work after Death
- Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant
- Stolen Painting Found by Tree
- Two Soviet Ships Collide, One Dies
- Two Sisters Reunited after 18 Years in Checkout Counter

24  **Do your instructions make sense?**


- Actual instructions:
 - On a bag of Fritos: You could be a winner! No purchase necessary. Details inside.
 - On a bar of Dial soap: Directions: Use like regular soap.
 - On some Swann frozen dinners: Serving suggestion: Defrost.
 - On Tesco's Tiramisu dessert: (printed on bottom of the box) Do not turn upside down.

25  **Do your instructions make sense (2)**

- On packaging for a Rowenta iron: Do not iron clothes on body. (But wouldn't that save more time?)
- On a Korean kitchen knife: Warning: keep out of children. (hmm...something must have gotten lost in the translation...)

26  **Will it translate?**

- 1 • Act naturally
- Resident alien
- Genuine imitation
- Good grief
- Almost exactly
- Sanitary landfill
- Legally drunk
- Jumbo shrimp
- 2 • Small crowd
- Soft rock
- Sweet sorrow
- "Now, then ..."
- Taped live
- Peace force
- Plastic glasses
- Tight slacks
- Pretty ugly

27  **Will it translate? (2)**

- 1 • Working vacation
- Found missing
- Advanced BASIC
- Same difference
- Alone together
- Silent scream
- Living dead
- Synthetic natural gas
-

-
- 2 • Passive aggression
- Clearly misunderstood
- Exact estimate

28 Will it translate? (3)

- Following the tragic JFK Jr. accident, Reuters reported:
 - Thursday July 22 9:22 AM ET (Reuters) "Kennedys Board Cutter On Way To Sea Burial"
- The story was corrected so that a "kitchen board cutter" could not be inferred:
 - Thursday July 22 10:15 AM ET (Reuters) "Kennedys Board Ship To Scatter JFK Jr.'s Ashes"

29 Avoid long sentences

- Short sentences are easier to understand.
 - Maximum sentence length should be 18-23 words.
 - **Effective** writers vary the length of their sentences. They use short sentences to make terse points, and then use longer sentences when more complex arguments or richer descriptions are needed.

30 Avoid run-on sentences

- Make sure punctuation helps rather than distracts from the idea.
- Put separate thoughts in separate sentences.
 - Before: "A detailed and thorough critical analysis must be made of this text in order to understand the experiences, and resulting viewpoint, of this much established, but deeply traumatized writer, whose life itself is a varied and interesting text."

31 Avoid run-on sentences (2)

- After: "A detailed and thorough critical analysis must be made of this text in order to understand the experiences, and resulting viewpoint, of this much established, but deeply traumatized writer. His life itself is indeed a varied and interesting text."

32 Ambiguous terms to avoid

33 Ambiguous terms to avoid (2)

34 Ambiguous terms to avoid (3)

35 **BAD WRITERS USE AMBIGUITY TO COVER UP THEIR REAL MEANING**

36 Examples

- "IT HAS LONG BEEN KNOWN" ...
 - I didn't look up the original reference, but yes, I have heard? But perhaps it is not true!
- "A DEFINITE TREND IS EVIDENT" ...
 - These data/observations are practically meaningless (but pay attention to them if you are investing in the stock...).

37 Examples (2)

- "WHILE IT HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE DEFINITE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS" ...
 - I made an unsuccessful attempt but I still hope to get it published.
- "THREE OF THE MEN WERE CHOSEN AS MODELS" ...
 - The others didn't make any sense.

38 Examples (3)

- "TYPICAL PICTURE IS SHOWN" ...
 - This is the prettiest photo.
- "MY ARTICLES WILL BE IN A SUBSEQUENT REPORT" ...
 - I might get around to this sometime, if pushed/liked.
- "IN MY EXPERIENCE" ...
 - Once.

39 Examples (4)

- "IN CASE AFTER CASE" ...
 - Twice.
- "IN A SERIES OF CASES" ...

- Thrice.
- “IT IS BELIEVED THAT”...
 - I think.
- “IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT”...
 - A couple of others think so, too.

40 Examples (5)

- “CORRECT WITHIN AN ORDER OF MAGNITUDE” ...
 - Wrong.
- “ACCORDING TO STATISTICAL ANALYSIS”...
 - Rumor has it.
- “A STATISTICALLY-ORIENTED PROJECTION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE FINDINGS”...
 - A wild guess.

41 Examples (6)

- “A CAREFUL READING OF OTHERS ARTICLES”...
 - Three pages of notes were obliterated when I knocked over a cup of hot milk tea.
- “IT IS CLEAR THAT MUCH ADDITIONAL WORK WILL BE REQUIRED BEFORE A COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF THIS PHENOMENON OCCURS”...
 - I don’t understand it.

42 Examples (7)

- “AFTER ADDITIONAL STUDY BY MY COLLEAGUES”...
 - They don’t understand it either.
- “THANKS ARE DUE TO VEERENDER FOR ASSISTANCE WITH THE WRITING AND TO HARBAJAN FOR VALUABLE DISCUSSIONS”...
 - Mr. Veeru did the work and Mr. Harbajan explained to me what it meant.

43 Examples (8)

- “A HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT AREA FOR EXPLORATORY STUDY”...
 - A totally useless topic selected by myself.

44 Homework

- Write a 2-page autobiography on a computer
- Font size – 10-12pt
- Have someone other than a family member read this and highlight anything that does not make sense to them or that leaves them with a nagging question
 - Save this copy
- Rewrite your autobiography to clarify these points and have someone else read it
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