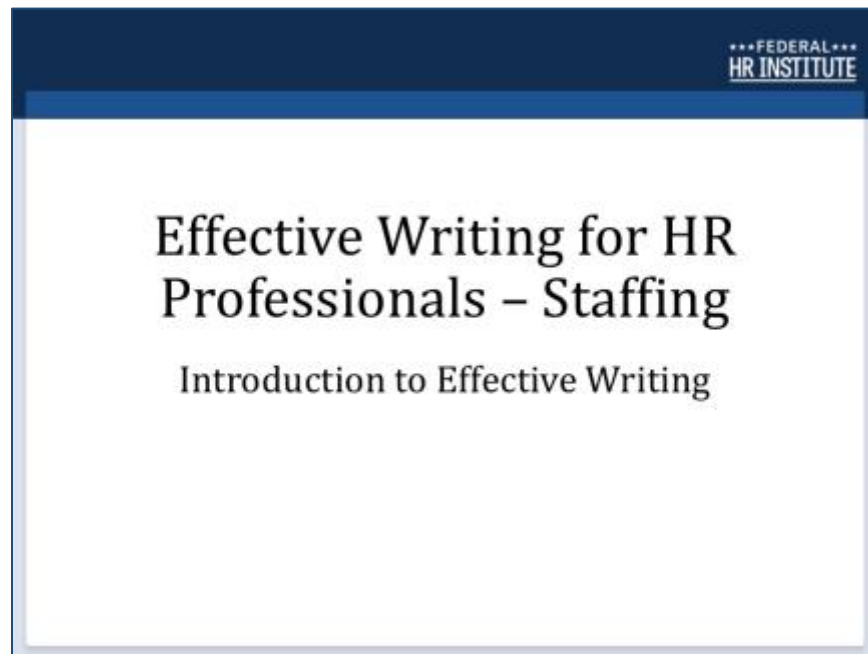


Lesson 1:
Introduction to Effective Writing

Participant Guide

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Lesson Introduction



Slide 1

Welcome to the *Foundations of Effective Writing for HR Professionals—Staffing* course. This first lesson, *Introduction to Effective Writing*, will introduce you to the course and the basic principles of effective writing.

Course Goal



Slide 2

The overarching goal of this course is to teach HR staffing professionals to apply critical thinking techniques to plan, organize, compose, and refine effective written communication in various forms.

Course Objectives

What You'll Learn in This Course ***FEDERAL***
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Slide 3

- What are the basic principles of effective written communication?
- How can I plan effective messages?
- How can I tailor a message for the audience?
- How can I tailor a message for the medium?




Slide 3

What You'll Learn... (continued) ***FEDERAL***
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Slide 4

- How can I develop clear, concise, coherent, and easy-to-read written communication?
- How can I write effective persuasive messages?
- How can I revise written communication to improve clarity, conciseness, completeness, and correctness?



Slide 4

This course will answer the questions shown on the slides, enabling you to achieve the following learning objectives:

- Explain principles of effective written communication.
- Apply methods of organizing thoughts to plan effective messages.
- Develop a message that is tailored for a particular target audience.
- Develop a message that is tailored for a particular communication medium.
- Develop clear, concise, coherent, and easy-to-read written communication.
- Write a persuasive message.
- Revise written communication to improve clarity, conciseness, completeness, and correctness.


Course Overview

Course Overview (Day 1)	
FEDERAL HR INSTITUTE	
Slide 5	
Time	Lesson
9:00–10:30	Introduction to Effective Writing
10:30–10:45	Break
10:45–12:00	Planning the Message
12:00–1:00	Lunch
1:00–2:50	Tailoring the Message for the Audience
2:50–3:05	Break
3:05–4:30	Tailoring the Message for the Medium

Slide 5

Course Overview (Day 2)	
FEDERAL HR INSTITUTE	
Slide 6	
Time	Lesson
9:00–9:30	Tailoring the Message for the Medium, continued
9:30–10:10	Composing the Message
10:10–10:25	Break
10:25–11:25	Composing the Message, continued
11:25–12:25	Lunch
12:25–1:30	Composing the Message, continued
1:30–2:15	Composing Persuasive Messages
2:15–2:30	Break
2:30–3:15	Composing Persuasive Messages, continued
3:15–4:20	Refining the Message

Slide 6



Time	Lesson
9:00–10:25	Refining the Message, continued
10:25–10:40	Break
10:40–11:25	Course Summary

Slide 7



These slides present an overview of the entire course. You will complete activities to practice implementing principles of effective writing, working through the writing process.

How to Obtain Credit for the Course

How to Obtain Credit for the Course

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Slide 8



Score an average of 80% or higher on course activities

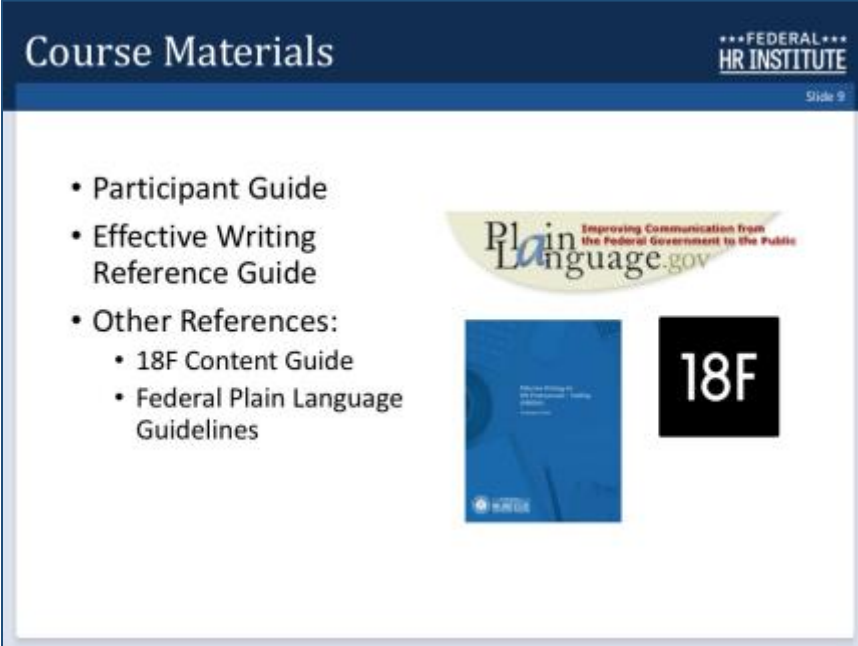
Score 80% or higher on the post-test

Slide 8

To demonstrate achievement of the learning objectives, you must:

- Answer at least 80% of questions correctly in a post-test
- Complete classroom activities and earn points based on evaluation against a rubric; you must achieve an average of 80% for successful completion of the course

Course Materials



Course Materials

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Slide 9

- Participant Guide
- Effective Writing Reference Guide
- Other References:
 - 18F Content Guide
 - Federal Plain Language Guidelines

Plain Language.gov
Improving Communication from
the Federal Government to the Public

18F

Slide 9

Your Participant Guide (PG) is designed to serve as a useful reference after you leave the course. There is plenty of room to take notes, and the PG includes all activity worksheets.

In addition to the PG, the course materials include an Effective Writing Reference Guide with information about grammar and mechanics.

Although many different style guides exist, the course follows the styles outlined in the 18F Content Guide because of its widespread use in the federal government. The 18F Content Guide is available here: <https://pages.18f.gov/guides/>.

In addition, this course heavily references the Federal Plain Language Guidelines, available here: <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/index.cfm>.

Introductions

Introductions

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Slide 10

Share your

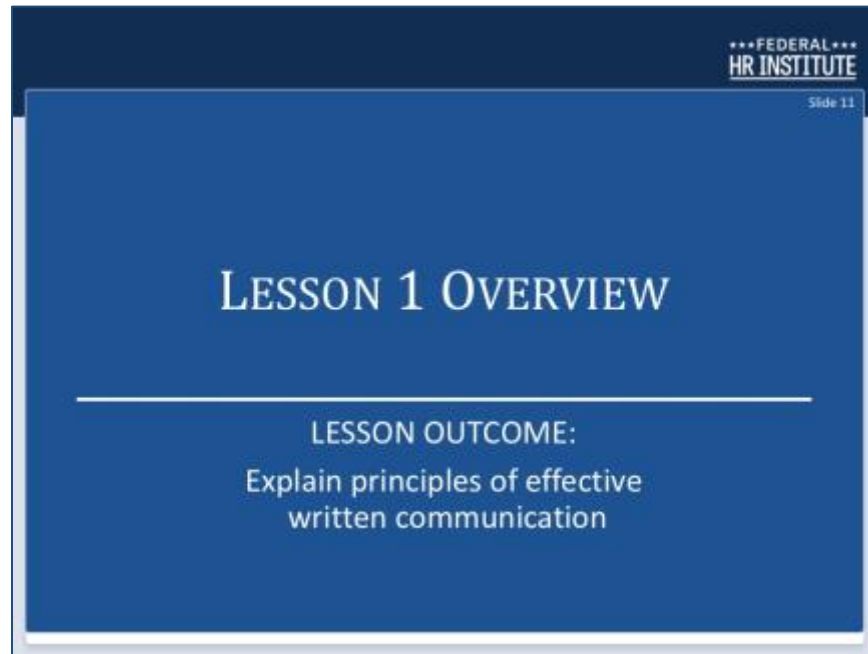
- Name
- Title/Job Description
- Agency
- Course Expectations
- Types of Documents/
Messages You Write



Slide 10

Let's take a few minutes to get to know each other. As directed by your instructor, please share your name, title/job description, and agency, along with your expectations for the course and the types of documents or messages you typically write.

Lesson Overview



Slide 11

In this lesson, you will learn the principles of effective written communication.

Lesson Objectives

What You'll Learn

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Slide 12

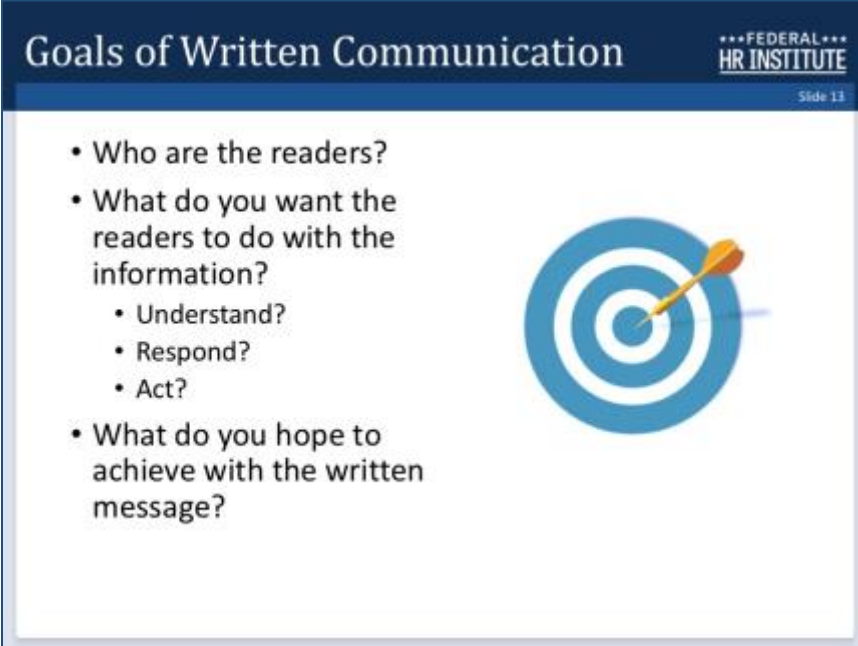
- What result should written communication achieve?
- What differentiates effective from ineffective writing?
- What are the steps in the writing process?

Slide 12

This lesson will answer the questions shown on the slides, enabling you to achieve the following learning objectives:

- Identify the results to be achieved through written communication.
- Differentiate between effective and ineffective writing, including the use of plain language.
- Identify the steps in the writing process.

Goals of Written Communication



Goals of Written Communication

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Slide 13

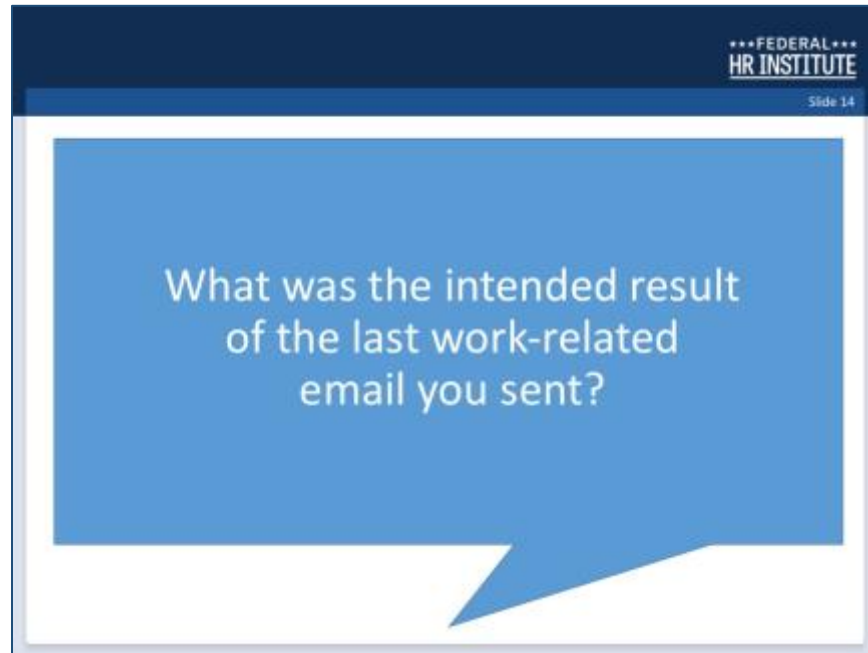
- Who are the readers?
- What do you want the readers to do with the information?
 - Understand?
 - Respond?
 - Act?
- What do you hope to achieve with the written message?

Slide 13

When determining the goals for your written communication, consider the following questions:

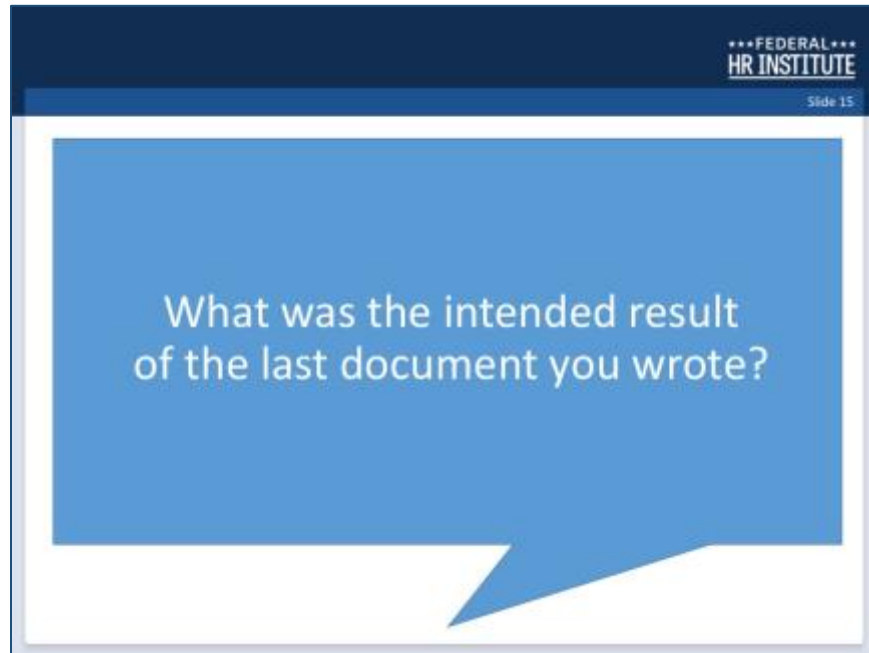
- Who is the reader?
- What do you want the reader to do with the information?
 - Is the message merely for informational purposes?
 - Do you need a response?
 - Does the reader need to take action?
- What do you hope to achieve with the written message?

Always consider the intended result of your communication. If you're not sure what result you want, your reader definitely won't know.



Slide 14

Think about the last work-related email you sent. What was its intended result?



Slide 15

Think about the last document you wrote. What was its intended result?


Principles of Effective Writing

Principles of Effective Writing

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Slide 16

- Writing is effective when it achieves its intended results
- How can you ensure that your writing is effective?

A photograph showing a person's hands writing in a notebook on a desk. The person is wearing a light blue shirt. The background is a solid orange color.

Slide 16

You can gauge how effective your writing is by examining whether it achieves its intended results. If you are not getting the expected results, consider whether your readers are receiving the message you intended to send.

How can you ensure that your writing is effective?

Activity 1-1: What Makes Effective Writing


Activity 1-1

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Slide 17

What Makes Effective Writing ?

- Work with a partner
- Analyze each writing sample and determine:
 - Is it effective?
 - Why or why not?



Slide 17

In this activity, you examine some writing examples and determine what makes them effective or not. Use the activity instructions and worksheet on the next page.

Activity 1-1 Worksheet: What Makes Effective Writing?

Instructions

1. Work with a partner.
2. Analyze each writing sample on the next page and determine:
 - Is it effective? Consider whether the message is clear and achieves its intended purpose. Write “Y” for yes and “N” for no.
 - Why or why not? List reasons for the message’s effectiveness or ineffectiveness in the table below.

Example Number	Effective? (Y/N)	Reasons for Effectiveness / Ineffectiveness
1		
2		
3		
4		

Activity 1-1. Worksheet, continued

Example #1

Protect your community from natural disasters!

- Build safely in the flood zone, or remove buildings altogether.
- Engineer buildings and infrastructure to withstand earthquakes.
- Create and enforce effective building codes.

Example #2

We must receive your completed application form on or before the 15th day of the second month following the month you are reporting if you do not submit your application electronically or the 25th day of the second month following the month you are reporting if you submit your application electronically.

Example #3

Make sure you cook both your turkey and your stuffing completely. If you don't, bacteria that can make you sick may still be alive. Here are the most important things to remember about stuffing:

Cook the stuffing separately—it's MUCH safer! If you absolutely have to cook the stuffing in the turkey, use a thermometer to make sure the stuffing reaches a temperature of 165 F and the turkey reaches a temperature of 180 F in the innermost part of the thigh. Measure the temperature of both the turkey and stuffing! Don't just trust a pop-up indicator!

Example #4

When a filing is prescribed to be filed with more than one of the foregoing, the filing shall be deemed filed as of the day the last one actually receives the same.

Activity Debrief


Activity 1-1 Debrief

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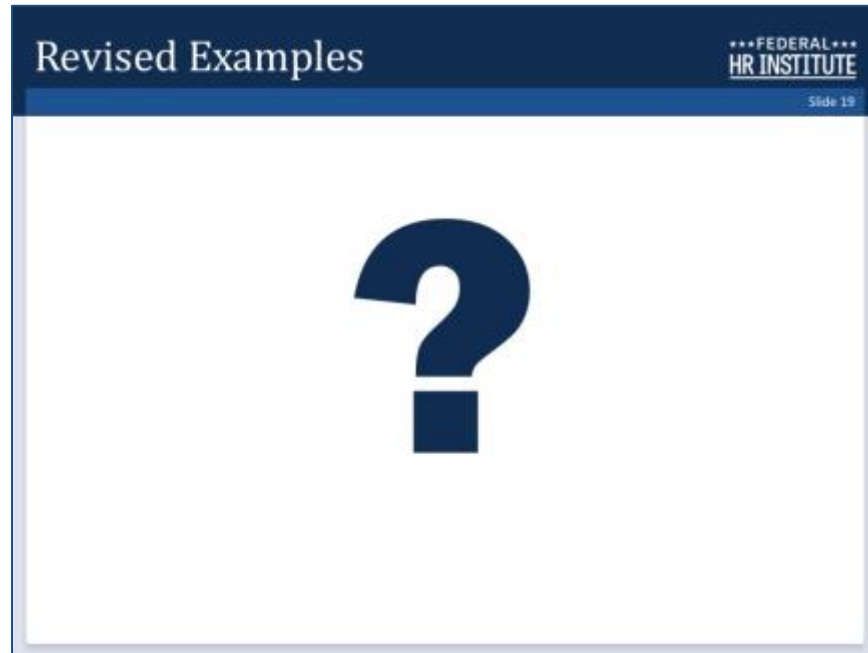
Slide 18

Effective or Ineffective?

- Example #1
- Example #2
- Example #3
- Example #4



Slide 18



Slide 19

Consider how you could improve the examples you just read.

Plain Language Overview



Slide 20

Plain Language Overview

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Slide 20

- ✓ Write for your audience
- ✓ Organize to meet your readers' needs
- ✓ Choose words carefully
- ✓ Write short, well-structured sentences and paragraphs

Refer to: <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/>

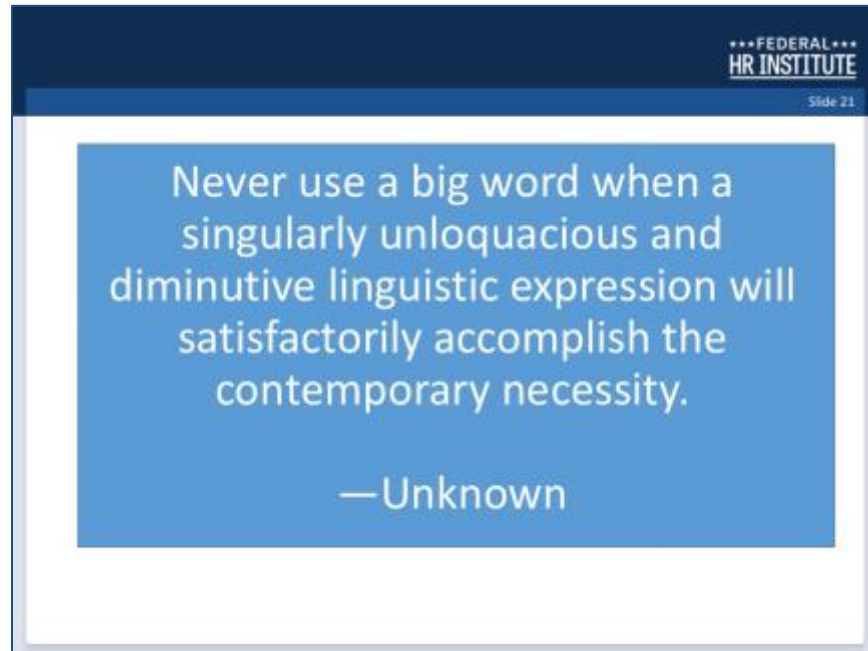
Slide 20

One of the most important characteristics of effective writing is using plain language. The Plain Writing Act of 2010 requires Federal agencies to use “clear government communication that the public can understand and use.” Using plain language saves money and increases government efficiency. By improving public understanding of government communications, plain language reduces the need for agency staff to clarify messages, assist with forms, and correct errors.

Using plain language means that you should:

- Write for your audience.
- Organize the message to meet your readers' needs.
- Choose your words carefully.
- Write short, well-structured sentences and paragraphs.

You will learn about plain language guidelines later in this course, and you can refer to the government website for more information: <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/>.



Slide 21

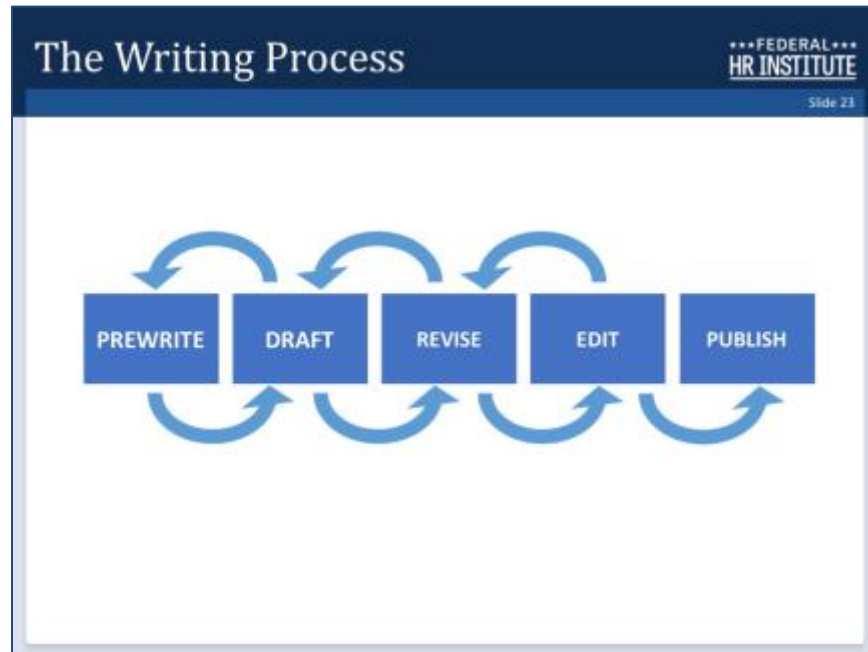
Some writers seem to think that bigger words and longer sentences equal better writing. However, short, simple sentences with common language are generally best. The aim of plain writing is not to “dumb down” your messages, but to ensure that they are clear, concise, and easy-to-read—unlike this slide!



Slide 22

How does using plain language in your written communications demonstrate service excellence?

Overview of the Writing Process



Slide 23

You probably learned about the writing process in elementary school. These five steps are no less relevant in your day-to-day job.

Step 1: Prewriting

Prewriting ***FEDERAL***
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Slide 24

Plan what you will write:

- Who is the intended audience?
- What do you want the reader to do, and by when?
- What do you want to say?
- How will you organize the message?

```
graph LR; PREWRITE[PREWRITE] --> DRAFT[DRAFT]; DRAFT --> REVISE[REVISE]; REVISE --> EDIT[EDIT]; EDIT --> PUBLISH[PUBLISH]; PUBLISH --> PREWRITE; DRAFT --> PREWRITE; REVISE --> DRAFT; EDIT --> REVISE; PUBLISH --> EDIT;
```

Slide 24

Prewriting involves planning what you will write. Consider the following questions:

- **Who is the intended audience?** Write with that person or group in mind.
- **What do you want the reader to do, and by when?** Specify your expectations, and set a deadline if appropriate.
- **What do you want to say?** Brainstorm your ideas and get them on paper (or the screen) without worrying about grammar, spelling, and the like. Editing comes later in the process and will only slow you down at this point.
- **How will you organize the message?** Create an outline to keep your message on track.

Obviously, you won't create a written outline for every message you write, such as a brief email to a colleague. However, spending a few moments upfront to think about these questions before typing that message will help ensure its effectiveness.

You will learn about—and practice—prewriting techniques in lessons 2 through 4.

Step 2: Drafting

Drafting

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Slide 25

Write the first draft:

- Flesh out the ideas you brainstormed
- Follow your prewriting plan

```
graph LR; PREWRITE --> DRAFT; DRAFT --> REVISE; REVISE --> EDIT; EDIT --> PUBLISH; REVISE --> DRAFT; EDIT --> REVISE; PUBLISH --> EDIT;
```

Slide 25

In the drafting step, you will flesh out the ideas you brainstormed, following the organization structure you planned, and create your first draft. Yes, for most formal writing, you really do need to write multiple drafts. Your high school English teachers weren't being mean to you by making you write a first and second draft. They were trying to teach you an important lesson: no one writes perfect paragraphs on the first try.

You will learn about composing the message in lessons 5 and 6.

Step 3: Revising

Revising

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Slide 26

Revise for clarification:

- Read over your writing and make initial revisions
- Get feedback from a peer to make additional revisions

```
graph LR; A[PREWRITE] --> B[DRAFT]; B --> C[REVISE]; C --> D[EDIT]; D --> E[PUBLISH]; B --> A; C --> B; D --> C; E --> D;
```

Slide 26

Revise means “to see again” and is a critical step in the writing process. Revision is about looking at the writing from a new perspective—often after some time has passed—and ensuring that the intended message comes across clearly. In this step, you are analyzing what you have written to determine if you have said what you meant to say, with the appropriate tone, and whether your reader will understand it.

Revising is different from proofreading, which comes in the next step. Sometimes you will catch grammatical or spelling mistakes during your first pass, but be careful not to let these sorts of mistakes distract you from reviewing the overall message.

Reading the message or document aloud will allow you to hear problems that otherwise your mind will “fill in” as you are reading. Whenever possible, you should also request feedback from peers or supervisors, as appropriate. The only way to determine how someone else will receive your message is to have someone else read it.

For short, simple messages, the second draft might not be much different from the first. You might need only to move a sentence or add clarifying language.

Step 4: Editing

Editing ***FEDERAL***
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Slide 27

Proofread and correct mistakes:

- Check grammar and mechanics
- Ensure appropriate organization and formatting

```
graph LR; PREWRITE --> DRAFT; DRAFT --> REVISE; REVISE --> EDIT; EDIT --> PUBLISH; DRAFT --> PREWRITE; REVISE --> DRAFT; EDIT --> REVISE; PUBLISH --> EDIT;
```

Slide 27

An error in formal writing is like a fly in a bowl of soup. No matter how good the soup smells, you won't want to taste it. Errors make readers question the authority and knowledge of the writer. No matter how well-organized and thought-out your writing is, one misuse of "their" vs. "they're" can interfere with the reader's perception and acceptance of the message. (We'll discuss commonly confused words later in the course.)

After you have ensured that the message says what you need to say clearly and cohesively, you should proofread for mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics. Again, it is helpful to have a peer or supervisor to review your writing. Someone else will almost always be able to catch your mistakes better than you can.

A peer reviewer could perform the revising and editing steps together, submitting one critique back to you. However, they should consider organization, flow, and clarity separately from grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics.

Step 5: Publishing

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Slide 28

Provide the message to the audience:

- Send an email or letter
- Begin the approval process for a government publication
- Publish a website
- Post a message to social media

```
graph LR; A[PREWRITE] --> B[DRAFT]; B --> C[REVISE]; C --> D[EDIT]; D --> E[PUBLISH]; C --> B; D --> C; E --> D;
```

Slide 28

Publishing means providing the message to the audience. This step can be as simple as hitting “Send” or as complex as gaining approvals for releasing a new policy.

You will learn about the revising, editing, and publishing steps in lesson 7.

Lesson Review

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Slide 28

Lesson Review

What are some questions you should consider to determine the goals of your writing?

What are some strategies you can use to make your writing more effective?

What are the steps in the writing process?

Slide 29

Check your understanding of lesson concepts by answering the following questions:

- What are some questions you should consider to determine the goals of your writing?
- What are some strategies you can use to make your writing more effective?
- What are the steps in the writing process?