

Step 1

PREWRITING TIPS

Adapting to Task and Audience: Eight Steps

1

Spotlight audience benefits.

The warranty starts working for you immediately.

2

Cultivate the “you” view.

*You will receive your order.
Your account is now open.*

Adapting to Task and Audience: Eight Steps (cont.)

3

Be conversational but professional.

Your report was excellent, not Your report was totally awesome!

4

Use sensitive language, avoiding gender, race, age, and disability biases.

*office workers, not office girls
doctors/they, not doctor/he or nurse/she*

Adapting to Task and Audience: Eight Steps (cont.)

5

Express your thoughts positively.

you will be happy to... not you won't be sorry that...

6

Be courteous.

*Please complete the report, not
You must complete the report!*

Adapting to Task and Audience: Eight Steps (cont.)

7

Simplify your language and use familiar words.

salary not remuneration

begin not commence

8

Use precise, vigorous words.

fax me, not contact me

buy staples, not get those things for me

Developing Reader Benefits and “You” View

Sender-Focused

We are requiring all staffers to complete these forms in compliance with company policy.

Because we need more space for our new inventory, we are staging a two-for-one sale.

Receiver-Focused

Please complete these forms so that ***you will*** be eligible for health and dental benefits.

This two-for-one sale makes it possible ***for you*** to buy a year’s supply of paper but pay only for six months’ worth.

Developing Reader Benefits and “You” View (cont.)

“I” and “We” View	“You” View
We take pleasure in announcing an agreement we made with HP to allow us to offer discounted printers in the student store.	An agreement with HP allows you and other students to buy discounted printers at your convenient student store.
We are issuing a refund.	You will receive a refund.
We need your account number before we can do anything.	Would you mind giving me your account number so that I can find your records and help you solve this problem?
I have a few questions on which I would like feedback.	Your feedback is important. Please answer a few questions.

Negative Expressions & Hidden Messages

Negative Expression

You overlooked

You state that

You failed to

You claim that

You are wrong

You do not understand

Your delay

You forgot to

Hidden Message

You are careless

But I don't believe you

You are careless

It is probably not true

I am right

You are not very bright

You are at fault

You are not only inefficient but also stupid and careless!

Being Conversational but Professional

Unprofessional

Look, dude, this report is totally bogus. And the figures don't look kosher. Show me some real stats. Got sources?

Improved

Because the figures in this report seem inaccurate, please submit the source statistics.

Overly Formal

Pertaining to your order, we must verify the sizes that your organization requires prior to consignment of your order to our shipper.

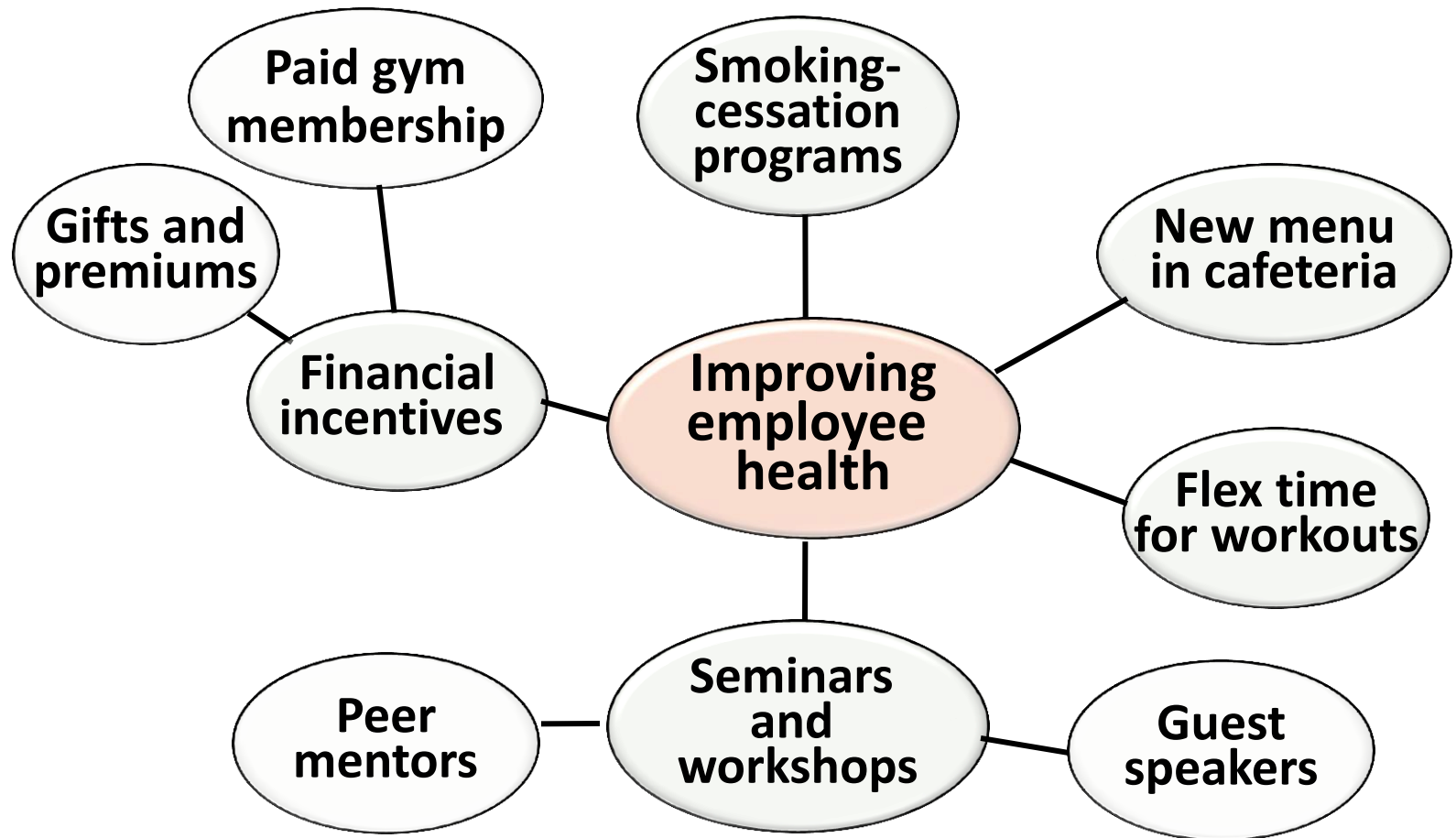
Conversational

We will send your order as soon as we confirm the sizes you need.

Step 2

WRITING TIPS

Organizing Data: Creating Cluster Diagrams



Organizing Data: Subcluster Diagrams

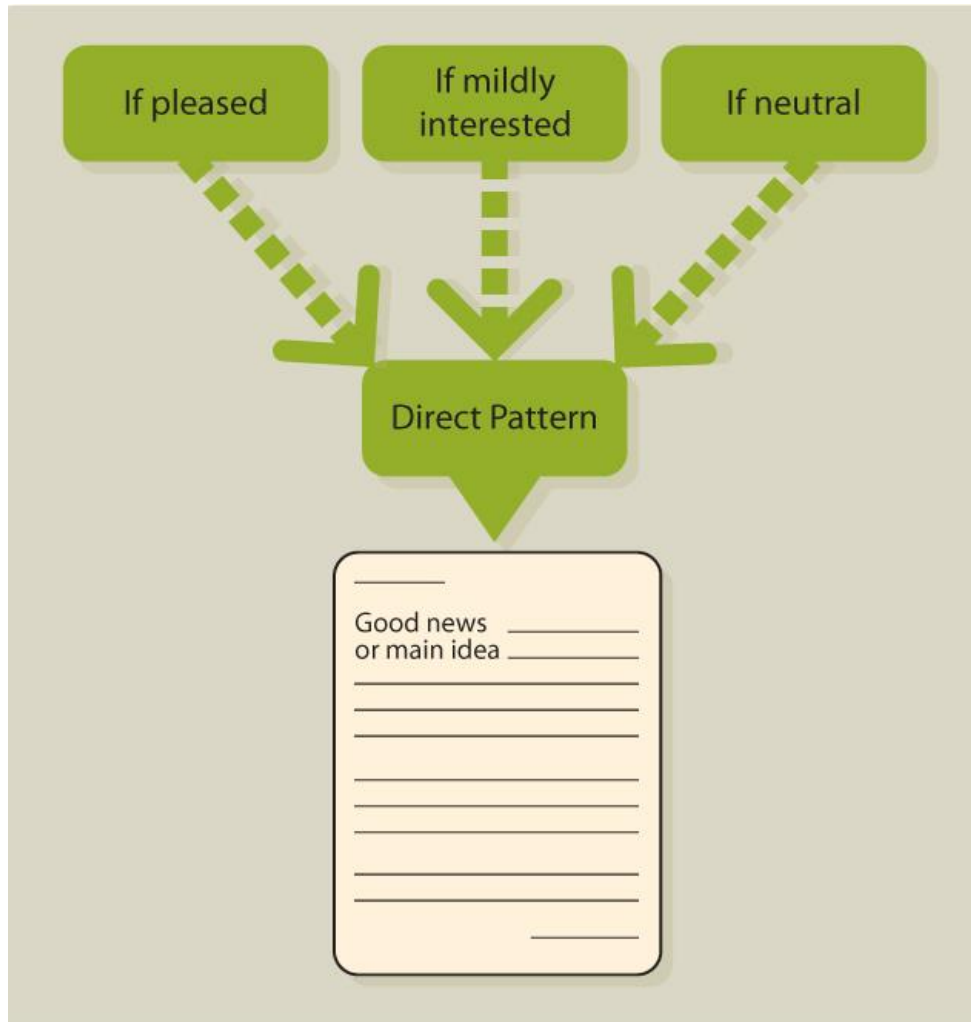
- Analyze the ideas in the original cluster diagram.
- Cross out irrelevant ideas; simplify and clarify.
- Add new ideas that seem appropriate.
- Study the ideas for similarities.

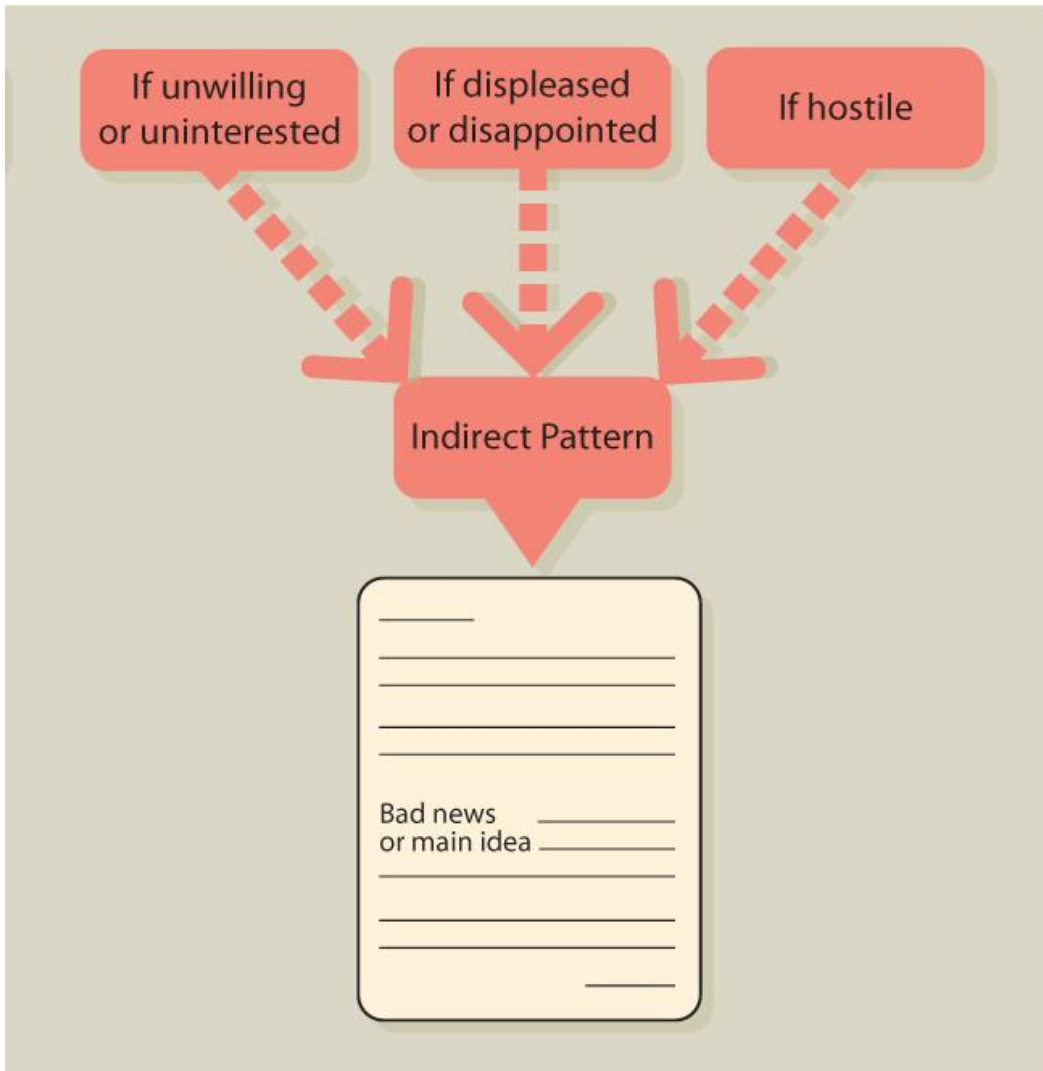
Organizing Data: Subcluster Diagrams (cont.)

- Group similar ideas into classifications (such as *Incentives*, *Organizational Changes*, and *Programs*).
- If the organization seems clear, prepare an outline.
- For further visualization, make subcluster circles around each classification.

Grouping Ideas Into Patterns:

Direct for Receptive Audiences





Grouping Ideas Into Patterns:

Indirect for Unreceptive Audiences

Sentence Fragments

FRAGMENT

Because most transactions
require a permanent record.
Good writing skills are critical.

The recruiter requested a
writing sample. Even though
the candidate seemed to
communicate well.

REVISION

Because most transactions
require a permanent record,
good writing skills are critical.

The recruiter requested a
writing sample even though
the candidate seemed to
communicate well.

Run-on Sentences

RUN-ON

Most job seekers present a printed resume some are also using Web sites as electronic portfolios.

One candidate sent an e-mail another sent a traditional letter.

REVISION

Most job seekers present a printed resume. Some are also using Web sites as electronic portfolios.

One candidate sent an e-mail resume; another sent a traditional letter.

Comma Splice

COMMA SPLICE

Some employees responded
by e-mail, others picked up the
telephone.

POSSIBLE REVISIONS

- Some employees responded by e-mail, and others picked up the telephone.
- Some employees responded by e-mail; however, others picked up the telephone.
- Some employees responded by e-mail; others picked up the telephone.

Effective Sentences: Sentence Length

Use short sentences.

Those under 20 words are most readable.

Sentence Length

8 words

15 words

19 words

28 words

Comprehension Rate

100%

90%

80%

50%

Effective Sentences: Emphasis

Emphasize important ideas.

Put main ideas first; use them as subjects.

Choose vivid words.

Unlabelled

Send your crisis response team,
but also hire a public-relations
specialist.

Labelled

Send your crisis response team;
but, *most important*, hire a
public-relations specialist.

Effective Sentences: Emphasis (cont.)

Emphasize important ideas.

Put main ideas first; use them as subjects.
Choose vivid words.

General

One business uses personal selling techniques.

Vivid

Herbalife uses face-to-face selling techniques.

Effective Sentences: Emphasis (cont.)

Emphasize important ideas.

Place important ideas first or last in the sentence.

Unemphatic

All production and administrative personnel will meet on May 23, at which time we will announce a new plan of salary incentives.

Emphatic

On May 23 all personnel will meet about salary incentives.

Effective Sentences: Emphasis (cont.)

Emphasize important ideas.

Place important ideas first or last in the sentence.

Unemphatic

Although you are the first trainee that we have hired for this program, we have interviewed many candidates and expect to expand the program.

Emphatic

You are the first trainee that we have hired for this program.

Effective Sentences: Active and Passive Voice

Use active-voice verbs for most sentences.

Example: *We launched an investigation.*

Use passive-voice verbs to de-emphasize the performer and/or to be tactful and conceal the doer of an action.

Examples: *Cash refunds cannot be made.*

An error was made in our sales figures.

Effective Sentences: Dangling Modifiers

Avoid errors with modifiers.

Keep phrases close to the words they describe.

Not this: *An autopsy revealed the cause of death to be strangulation by the coroner.*

But this: *An autopsy by the coroner revealed the cause of death to be strangulation.*

Effective Paragraphs: Three Plans

Create paragraphs that follow one of three classic paragraph plans:



**Direct
Plan**

**Pivoting
Plan**

**Indirect
Plan**

Effective Paragraphs: Direct Plan

**Direct Plan
common in
business**

Pivoting Plan

**Indirect
Plan**

Define, classify, illustrate, or describe

1. Main sentence
2. Supporting Sentences

1. Main sentence
2. (Limiting Sentence)
3. Supporting Sentences

Direct Plan: Example with Optional Limiting Sentence

Main
Sentence

Flexible work scheduling could immediately increase productivity and enhance employee satisfaction in our entire organization.

Limiting
Sentence

Such scheduling, however, is not possible for all employees.

Supporting
Sentences

Managers would be required to maintain their regular hours. For many other employees, though, flexible scheduling permits extra time to manage family responsibilities. Feeling less stress, employees are able to focus their attention better at work; hence they become more relaxed and more productive.

Effective Paragraphs: Pivoting Plan

**Direct
Plan**

**Pivoting
Plan**

**Indirect
Plan**

Compare and contrast

1. Limiting sentences
2. Main sentence
3. Supporting sentences

Pivoting Plan: Example

Limiting
Sentence

Foreign service careers are certainly not for everyone. Many representatives are stationed in remote countries where harsh climates, health hazards, security risks, and other discomforts exist.

Main
Sentence

However, careers in the foreign service offer rewards for the special people who qualify.

Supporting
Sentences

Foreign service employees enjoy the pride and satisfaction of representing Canada abroad. They enjoy frequent travel, enriching cultural and social experiences in living abroad, and action-oriented work.

Effective Paragraphs: Indirect Plan

**Direct
Plan**

**Pivoting
Plan**

**Indirect
Plan**

**Persuade; deliver bad news;
describe cause and effect**

1. Supporting sentences
2. Main sentence

Indirect Plan: Example

Supporting Sentences

According to a recent poll, more than half of all white-collar workers are now dressing casually at work. Many high-tech engineers and other professionals have given up suits and ties, favouring khakis and sweaters instead. Our own consultants say they stand out like “sore thumbs” because they are attired in traditional buttoned-down styles, while the businesspeople they visit are usually wearing casual clothing.

Main Sentence

Therefore, I recommend that we establish an optional “business casual” policy allowing consultants to dress casually as they perform their duties both in and out of the office.

Build Coherence: Link Ideas

Sustain the key idea by repeating or rephrasing it.

Our philosophy holds that every customer is really a guest. All new employees to our theme parks are trained to treat guests as VIPs. These VIPs are never told what they can or cannot do.

Build Coherence: Link Ideas (cont.)

Dovetail sentences: connect the beginning of each new sentence with end of previous sentence.

*New hosts and hostesses learn about the theme park and its facilities.
These facilities include telephones, food services, bathrooms, and
attractions, as well as the location of offices. Knowledge of administrative
offices and the internal workings of the company, such as who's in
administration, ensures that staffers will be able to serve guests fully.
Serving guests, of course, is our No. 1 priority.*

Build Coherence: Link Ideas (cont.)

Use a pronoun as a link to an antecedent:

All new park employees receive a two-week orientation. They learn that every staffer has a vital role in preparing for the show. This training includes how to maintain enthusiasm.

Use Transitional Expressions

To Add or Strengthen	To Show Time or Order	To Clarify
additionally	after	for example
again	before	for instance
also	earlier	I mean
besides	finally	in other words
likewise	first	that is
moreover	meanwhile	this means
furthermore	next	thus

Use Transitional Expressions (cont.)

To Show Cause and Effect

accordingly

as a result

consequently

for this reason

so

therefore

hence

To Contradict

actually

but

however

in fact

instead

rather

though

To Contrast

as opposed to

at the same time

by contrast

conversely

on the contrary

on the other hand

similarly

Compose Short Paragraphs

Eight or fewer printed lines are most readable.

Don't put the reader to sleep!
Improve comprehension.

Step 3

REVISING TIPS

Revise for Clarity, Conciseness, and Readability

- Eliminate flabby expressions.
- Limit long lead-ins.
- Drop unnecessary fillers.
- Reject redundancies.
- Purge empty words.

Revise for Clarity, Conciseness, and Readability (cont.)

- Keep it short and simple.
- Dump trite “business” phrases.
- Drop clichés and slang.
- Unbury verbs.
- Control exuberance.
- Design for readability.

Eliminate Flabby Expressions

FLABBY

- As a general rule
- At a later date
- At this point in time
- Despite the fact that
- Feel free to

CONCISE

- Generally
- Later
- Now; presently
- Although
- Please

Eliminate Flabby Expressions (cont.)

FLABBY

- In addition to the above
- In all probability
- In the event that
- In the near future

CONCISE

- Also
- Probably
- If
- Soon

Limit Long Lead-ins

Delete unnecessary introductory words.

Wordy: We are sending this announcement to let everyone know that new parking permits will be available January 1.

Concise: New parking permits will be available January 1.

Drop Unnecessary Fillers

Avoid wordiness.

Wordy: There was an unused computer in
the back office.

Concise: An unused computer was in the
back office.

Reject Redundancies

Say it only once!

collect together

contributing factor

past history

basic fundamentals

personal opinion

perfectly clear

unexpected surprise

few in number

Purge Empty Words

Unclutter your sentences.

As for the field of athletic shoes, the degree of profits sagged.

This is to inform you that we have a toll-free service line.

Not all members who are registered will attend the conference.

Purge Empty Words (cont.)

Unclutter your sentences.

As for ~~the field of~~ athletic shoes, ~~the degree of~~ profits sagged.

~~This is to inform you that~~ we have a toll-free service line.

Not all [registered] members ~~who are~~ ~~registered~~ will attend the conference.

Keep It Short and Simple

Strive for clarity.

Wordy and Unclear

Employees have not been made aware of the potentially adverse consequences regarding the use of these perilous chemicals.

Improved

Warn your employees about these dangerous chemicals.

Dump Trite “Business” Phrases

Use fresher, more vigorous phrases.

- As per your request
- Enclosed please find
- Every effort will be made
- In receipt of
- Please do not hesitate
- With reference to
- As you requested
- Enclosed is
- We’ll try
- Have received
- Please
- About

Dump Trite “Business” Phrases (cont.)

Eliminate stale, puffed-up expressions.

Trite: Pursuant to your request, enclosed please find a job application.

Improved: As requested, we have enclosed a job application.

Drop Clichés

Clichéd Expressions

- Have become exhausted by overuse
- Lack freshness and clarity

Examples:

- Below the belt
- Last but not least
- First and foremost
- Think outside the box
- Make a bundle

Drop Slang Expressions

Slang is composed of informal words with arbitrary and extravagantly changed meaning.

Examples:

- Snarky
- Lousy
- Blowing the budget
- Bombed
- Getting burned

Unbury Verbs

BURIED VERBS

- Conduct a discussion of
- Give consideration to
- Make an assumption of
- Perform an analysis
- Reach a conclusion that
- Take action on

UNBURIED VERBS

- Discuss
- Consider
- Assume
- Analyze
- Conclude
- Act

Control Exuberance

Control enthusiasm and guard against excessive use.

Excessive Exuberance

We *totally* agree that we
actually did not *really* give
his proposal a very fair
trial.

Businesslike

We agree that we did
not give his proposal a
fair trial.

Designing Documents for Readability

- Employ white space to enhance readability.
- Left justify text and maintain ragged right margins without justification.
- Choose an appropriate typeface.

Apply Graphic Highlighting

- Letters, such as (a) and (b) within the text
 - Numerals, such as 1, 2, and 3, listed vertically
 - Headings and bullets
 - Font type and size
 - CAPITAL LETTERS
 - Underscores
 - **Boldface**
 - *Italics*
-

Use Numbered Lists for High “Skim Value”

Follow these steps to archive a document:

1. Select the document.
2. Select a folder.
3. Provide a file name.
4. Click “Save.”

Use Bulleted Lists for High “Skim Value”

Consumers expect the following information at product Web sites:

- Price
- Quality
- Performance
- Availability

Add Headings for Visual Impact and Readability

We need to discuss a number of topics at our next meeting:

Budget. Come prepared to discuss our expense requests.

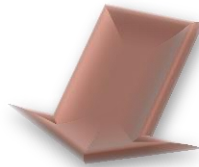
Schedule. Who will be taking vacations or leaves?

Hiring. Soon we must begin the hiring process to replace Matt.

A Word of Caution

Don't overdo graphic highlighting!

Too much emphasis leads to busy-looking documents, clutter, and confusion.



To be safe, use *no more than three* highlighting elements on a single page.

How to Proofread Routine Documents

- For computer messages, print a rough copy to read.
- Look for typos, misspellings, and easily confused words.
- Watch for inconsistencies and ambiguous expressions.
- Check for factual errors.

How to Proofread Complex Documents

- Print a copy, preferably double-spaced.
- Set it aside and take a breather.
- Allow adequate time for careful proofing.
- Expect errors. Congratulate yourself each time you find a mistake!
- Read the message at least twice—for meaning and grammar/mechanics.
- Reduce your reading speed. Focus on individual words.