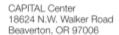# City of Beaverton

High Impact Business Writing

Instructor
George Knox

Perceptual (Learning) Styles

Each person has a preferred style of perception for processing stimuli. This style is directly related to the individual's immediate environment, emotionality, physical and sociological needs.

- **Auditory** – Focuses on what is heard.
- **Visual** – Focuses on what is seen.
- **Tactile** – Focuses on what is touched and manipulated.
- **Kinesthetic** – Focuses on moving within contextual environment.

While an individual has a preference, different styles may be learned, used and combined to fit a specific context. Different styles may work better in different situations. The most effective methods of learning involve combining styles.

*Adapted from Dunn & Dunn Learning Styles Model

Rhetorical Strategy (PAT)

1. **Purpose**
   i. Topic
   ii. Goals (Inform, persuade, entertain, record, respond, etc.)
   iii. Requirements (Schedule, materials, budget, tools, delivery, etc.)
2. **Audience**
   i. Who? Multiple audiences?
   ii. Expectations (Content, style, delivery, etc.)
   iii. Requirements (Schedule, delivery, materials, etc.)
3. **Technique**
   i. Format
   ii. Style
   iii. Delivery

Purpose and audience MUST be analyzed before effective choices in technique may be made.

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Stylistic Issues

Business Style

- Purposeful
- Persuasive
- Flexible
- Economical
- Reader-focused

Strategies

- Gain attention early in the document
- Clarify benefits to the reader
- Always include a "request for action" (direct or implied)
- Frontload a positive message/backload a negative message
- Use and repeat identifiable key words
- Explain technical or unfamiliar terms as needed
- Prepare for multiple audiences
- Avoid conversational and narrative styles
- Consider multiple modes of delivery

Technical Style

- Purposeful
- Informative
- Structured
- Economical
- Product/process-focused

Strategies

- Design document to be "used" rather than "read"
- Provide for document navigation
- Frontload most technical documents
- Use appropriate technical and industry terms including acronyms
- Create distinct document sections based on functional use
- Use technical graphics whenever possible
- Provide necessary caution and warning messages
- Prepare document for use within technical setting (e.g. factory floor)
- Consider multiple modes of delivery

Diction (Word Choice and Order)

Diction affects meaning, tone and emphasis.

- Use specific, familiar language to ensure understanding
- Use appropriate formality and connotation
- Avoid figures of speech, pretentious and sexist language
- Use active voice to emphasize the actor or subject of the sentence; use passive voice to emphasize results or object of the sentence
- Use direct/front loaded message to emphasize the main point early in the document (e.g. for "good" news)
- Use indirect/back loaded message to emphasize the main point later in the document (e.g. for "bad" news)

Common Document Formats

- o **Letters :** Formal correspondence used for "official" business; Contractual significance; Signature required; External communications (usually)

- o **Memos:** Less formal correspondence providing information, requesting action or documenting decisions; Internal communications

- o **E-mail:** Less formal than letters and memos; May serve same functions as letters, memos or phone; "Electronic paper trail"; Internal and external communications

- o **Reports:** Formal presentation of factual information or results (various formats)

- o **Proposals:** Formal document meant to inform and persuade (various formats)

- o **Executive Summaries:** Synopsis of report or proposal usually submitted as part of a larger document

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Proofreading

Purpose: Locate and mark errors and needed changes in a document.

General Strategies:

- Approach w/ *fresh eyes*. (Wait before proofing or use another proofreader.)
- Know why you are proofreading. (Proof ideas and flow for revision; proof sentence structure and grammar for editing.)
- Proofread for the audience. (Look for what the reader will stumble on or miss.)
- Mark the problems; don't fix them. (Proofreading is not revision or editing.)
- Proof multiple times. (Proof at least once for revision and once for editing.)
- Look for necessary changes only. (Don't create a new document.)
- Read both silently and aloud. (This tests both meaning and flow.)
- Proofread in *chunks*. The order typically doesn't matter.

Proofreading for Revision

Purpose: Check content and order for clarification or restatement. The writer "becomes" the reader, asking, "Does this make sense? Does it work?"

- Read for overview. Does the document present ideas effectively and appropriately? Does the document *flow*? Is *formality* appropriate?
- Determine purpose of document.
- Find the main point or thesis. Does it match the purpose?
- Find the evidence or details. Do these support the main point?
- Check paragraph *order* and *weight*. Is order and development effective and appropriate?
- Proof individual paragraphs for relevance and transitions. Are all paragraphs needed and connected?
- Repeat as necessary.

Proofreading for Editing

Purpose: Find sentence-level problems. Spot awkward or unclear sentences, and mechanical (i.e., spelling, punctuation and grammatical) errors.

- Proofread at least two times. (Once for clarity and once for mechanical problems.)
- Be aware of your problem patterns as a writer (spelling, sentence structure, etc.). Check for these first.
- Find the topic sentence within a paragraph before the support sentences. (The topic sentence "drives" meaning.)
- Make sure each paragraph has only one topic sentence. (If the topic changes, start a new paragraph.)
- Check spelling separate from grammar & punctuation.
- Read sentences backwards to check spelling.
- Use writing assistants (spell-check, grammar-check), but don't use *autocorrect*. WA's don't catch all errors and frequently make grammatical misdiagnoses.

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Suggested Resources for Grammar and Style

- **Keys for Writers: A Brief Handbook**
  By Ann Raimes

- **How 12 (Handbook for Office Workers)**
  By James L. Clark, Lyn R. Clark

- **The American Heritage® Book of English Usage**

- **The Elements of Style**
  By William Strunk
  On-line at http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html

- **Merriam-Webster Dictionary & Thesaurus**
  On-line at http://www.m-w.com/dictionary.htm

- **A Writer's Reference**
  by Diana Hacker
  On-line at http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/hacker/writersref/

- **Common Errors in English**
  On-line at http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/

- **Better English Grammar**
  On-line at http://www.better-english.com/grammar.htm

- **High Impact Business Writing Web Site (City of Beaverton)**
  On-line at http://cob/departments/HumanResources/Training/

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