Word Order

- Adverb of time ⇨
- subject ⇨
- auxiliary verb ⇨
- frequency adverb ⇨
- verb ⇨
- direct object ⇨
- indirect object ⇨
- adverb of manner ⇨
- adverb of place ⇨
- adverb of time

Business writing has clear rules. It needs to be informative. It should follow the right tone. It must be easy to follow. It ought to be grammatically correct. It has to be well formatted. It should be clear. It should be concise. It should be direct.

So, how can we manage to do all this?

Better Business Writing

Business writing has its own rules. It must be informative and tell readers something they don't already know. It should follow the right tone because a report is not a WhatsApp to a friend. It has to be ordered and easy to follow. It ought to be grammatically correct and well formatted.

Follow traditional word order

You can change word order if you wish, but paying attention to grammar always helps to transmit clear messages. Check the word order chart at the head of this article and try to follow it.

Avoid overusing *for* and *of*

Scan your text for prepositions and see whether they can be replaced by more economical constructions. Avoid writing "The material for the meeting" if "The

meeting material" will do. Make ample use of the Saxon genitive and say "The company's boss" instead of "The boss of the company".

It also pays to sidestep other prepositions as well. "The office at the warehouse" would read better as "The warehouse office". "The man from DHL" seems too long when compared to "The DHL man". Economy is a plus so shorter is generally better.

Use the active voice

Writing "The product was sold by Peter" is longer and less direct than "Peter sold the product". Apply the active voice whenever possible. As a plus, your prose will sound more direct and energetic.

Avoid empty words

We don't really need the word *really* in this sentence. Eliminate words that don't carry an obvious meaning. In fact, we don't even need *obvious*! "Words that don't carry a meaning" is clear enough.

Likewise, be careful with redundancies that add words but don't add value, such as "Facebook, the social media giant". We all know Facebook is a *social media*

Use positive words to create positive rapport.
Write "Your stand looks better this year" instead of "Your stand looked worse last year."

Put your main points first.
Readers will know what your consider important. You'll also save people time and give them the chance to stop if they are not interested.

Pay attention to gender.
If you're not positive about someone's gender (is this Mr or Ms Taylor Lewis?) check with someone who knows or use gender-neutral language. They and their are now acceptable gender-neutral singular pronouns.

giant so these three words would carry negative points on conciseness.

Use everyday vocabulary

Favour plain words over jargon. Complicated vocabulary is harder to understand. Of course, write specialised terms if your readers are familiar with them but go for simpler words when possible. Choose begin instead of commence, help instead of assist and use in place of utilise. Your text will be easier to read and therefore easier to understand.

Use headings

Include headings to guide readers through your thoughts if you are producing anything longer than a page. One of your tasks is to make sure your message is understood effortlessly so it makes sense to tell your readers what every section is about.

Write short sentences

Try to keep most sentences to less than ten words and seldom go over twenty. Need to explain something complicated? Combine them with link words such as *but*, *so* or *however*.

Limit emails to a few paragraphs

You might have many important things to say. However,

getting your email read is more important than whatever you've written on it. Emails are often checked from smartphones so brevity is always welcome. Need to explain something complex? Send an attachment.

Avoid being abstract

Readers find concrete statements more helpful than theoretical ones so you should support any general statement with examples or facts.

For instance, the sentence "Competition in our sector has increased" needs to be amplified, because *drastically* is vague. One way to quantify the increase would be to write: "Last year we faced three competitors in our sector; this year we face five."

Four Cs: correct, complete, clear and concise.

Concise: Keep your paragraphs, sentences and words as short as possible. Clear: Never burden your readers with complicated grammar or complicated words. Complete: State the intention of your message, the type of response you want and check there's no information missing. Correct? Let's read about correct now.

Read it aloud

If it's an important piece of writing, read it out aloud. Doing so will help you get rid of typos, missing words or changes in rhythm you may not have spotted while writing.

Write once, check twice

If possible proofread your text hours or–better still–days later. The brain is tricky and will ignore errors that it's just

made. Also, when we are tired, upset or too busy we can write things we don't actually want anyone else to read. Rereading text after some time will allow you to spot mistakes, be more objective and say exactly what you want to say.

Andrew's advice? The object of a message is for people to understand it, so write as simply as possible.

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