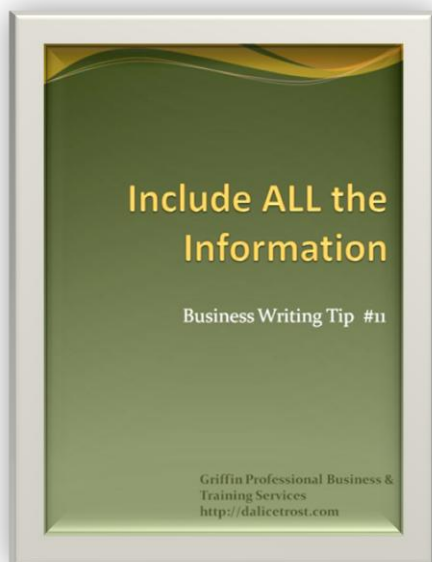


## Getting to Grips with Business Writing

### Business Writing Tips #11 - #15



#### Tip #11

##### Include ALL the information

Make sure you have included all the information you need to convey.

This tip takes us beyond answering the who, what, where, when, why and how. And beyond making sure your information is clear. It's almost a combination of the two, but I think it deserves a tip of its own.

In this tip I'm referring to the importance of not assuming your audience knows what you are talking about. It's about making things easy for them and saving them time.

Example:

**The deadline for my request in yesterday's email is now 15 September.**

On the surface this looks fine – but how many emails did you get yesterday? Do you know exactly what they are referring to? It's probably pretty easy to find out, but wouldn't it be easier if the writer was more explicit?

**The deadline for the quarterly sales report I asked you for yesterday has been brought forward from 30 September. I now need it by 15 September.**

This second version is much clearer and you don't have to go away to hunt up the reference. You know exactly what they're talking about.

Now you don't have to spend time checking back to find the original email. Think about how precious people's time is and avoid wasting it.

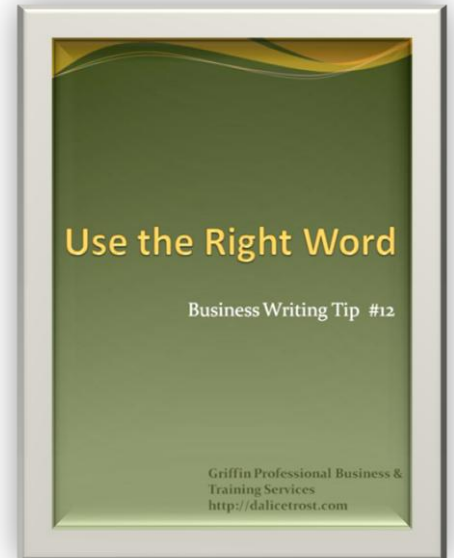
\*\*\*\*\*

### Tip #12

#### Use the right word

Make sure you use the right word.

A common source of errors in Business English is using the wrong word. There are many words that sound the same or very similar, but are spelt differently and have quite different meanings and usages. Most of your readers will understand the meaning even if you use the wrong spelling. But incorrect spelling and word use looks unprofessional. Remember, every piece of written communication you send out gives an image of your brand.

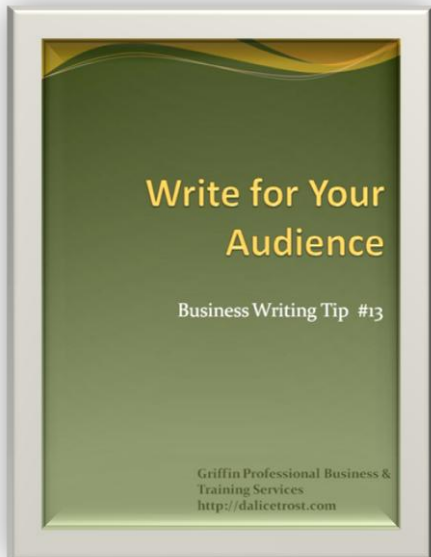


**Here is a short list of some words that are commonly mixed up:**

- Stationary and stationery
- Compliment and complement
- Loose and lose
- Where and we're
- Hear and here
- Their, there and they're
- Your and you're
- Its and it's
- Affect and effect

If in doubt, check.

\*\*\*\*\*



### Tip #13

#### Write for your audience

Know who your audience is and write for it.

Knowing who you are writing for goes hand-in-hand with identifying your reasons for writing. Keep who and why in mind and you will be able to engage your reader and keep them reading.

This is a principle that holds true for any written communication, whether it's a business letter, report, sales letter or advertisement. Think about what you know about the recipient – their position in the company, their age, their gender, their

technical know-how. Then use the information when you write.

Knowing who you are writing for will help you:

- Choose the appropriate vocabulary – you will know if they understand your business's jargon or not. If not, don't use it
- To avoid words that put up barriers and use those that are clear and simple to understand – 'make unclear' not 'obfuscate', 'the item I mentioned in the previous paragraph' not the 'aforementioned'
- Adopt the right tone – you can be familiar with your coworkers, but if you're writing to a board member or a client, you may want to be more formal. 'Good morning' rather than 'hi'

\*\*\*\*\*

### Tip #14

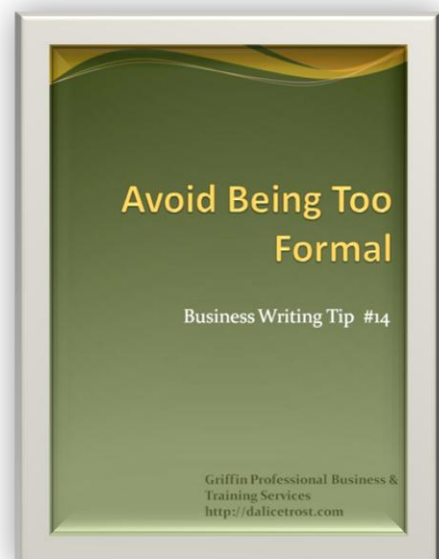
#### Avoid being too formal

Unless you're writing to a head of state you really don't need to be incredibly formal with your writing.

Polite is good.

#### Check Spelling of Names and Correct Titles

People are sensitive about their names. It is a mark of respect to make the effort to spell it correctly whether it's a letter, email or handwritten note. It may not win you any points, but getting it wrong will surely lose you some.



### Business Letters

#### How to Address People

If you don't know their name, 'Dear Sir or Madam' is an appropriate salutation. If you do know their name but haven't met them or don't know them well, use 'Dear Ms Xx' or 'Dear Mr Yy'. If you are already on first name terms with them, if you don't use their first name they may wonder why you are being so formal, and they may be offended.

#### How to Sign Off

When you use their name it is usual to sign off 'Yours sincerely'. If you don't know their name use 'Yours faithfully'.

I once received a letter with the sign off, 'I remain, Sir, your obedient servant'. Clearly this person had forgotten that I was a woman (it was addressed to Ms Dalice Trost) and was following a formula. This formula was frequently used by the armed forces. It really has no place in business life. It is excessively formal, and virtually meaningless. It will also place you firmly in the middle of last century – and I'm sure you don't want to be there.

### Business Emails

Business emails are usually less formal than letters. That said, many of the complaints about correspondence from companies relate to excessive informality. If you are emailing someone who has emailed you and you are not sure about which tone to use, mirror the tone that they used. In other words, reply where possible in a similar way to the way that they addressed you. If they wrote 'hello', write 'hello' rather than 'hi'.

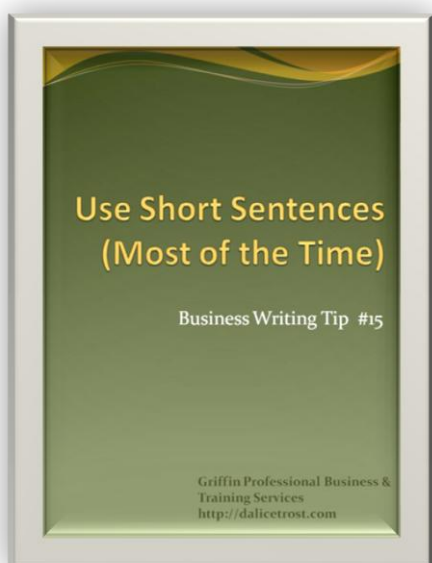
\*\*\*\*\*

### Tip #15

#### Use short sentences (most of the time)

Long sentences are not incorrect. The thing is, with long sentences the grammar and syntax often become complex, which may lead to confusion.

Long sentences have principal clauses and subordinate clauses; they often include a number of pronouns referring to different things and people; they need to be punctuated carefully to make them easily understandable to the reader; and often the focus of the sentence gets lost.



## Getting to Grips with Business Writing

---

It is good to vary sentence length. To have some long. And some short. Sentence length variety makes writing more interesting to read. But you don't want to make it hard for your reader. You don't want them to have to struggle to work out what you mean.

In literature, readers may be more accepting of long sentences. In business, short, concise and clear are the keywords to remember when it comes to sentence length.

Remember:

- include only one idea per sentence - at the most, two
- make sure the relationship between the subject and the verb is clear
- use conjunctions and transitional phrases to make your work read smoothly

\*\*\*\*\*

### About the Author



Dalice Trost is a freelance B2B copywriter, TEFL teacher and corporate training provider. She works with companies and individuals to ensure that they are communicating effectively in English. Her extensive network of experienced, proven international trainers in all aspects of business differentiates her from the crowd of corporate training providers. Visit her website at <http://dalicetrost.com> for details of the corporate training and business services she offers through her Prague based company, Griffin Professional Business & Training Services.

Dalice has worked in both the public and private sectors in Australia and the UAE, and is now enjoying European life in the Czech Republic. She spent more than 10 years working for a major B2B conference and training provider developing conference and training programs in just about all aspects of business. Her first Kindle ebook, *A Busy Person's Guide to Networking*, is available from Amazon. Follow @dalicejt on Twitter.

For more Business Writing Tips visit Dalice's blog at:

<http://dalicetrost.com/blog>