

Writing for the government

Full Day



A practical course based on public sector examples from Australia and overseas.

Writing for the reader

- What are the worst aspects of traditional bureaucratic writing
- Why do people write documents in a very formal style?
- How to choose the appropriate style and level of formality for a document
- How to rewrite passive bureaucratic sentences in the active voice
- Writing documents from the reader's perspective, not the agencies
- The key to showing empathy without patronising people

Structuring reports, letters and emails

Choosing the right structure for a document saves time and increases its impact. In this session we provide several document structures. Each structure has a different purpose. Effective writers choose the *best* structure to achieve their objective.

- How to organise information into digestible chunks
- The '5P' structure for writing logical reports
- The SCRAP structure for writing clear letters and email messages

What is Plain English?

- Using everyday terms for everyday ideas
- When is it OK to use jargon?
- Turning legal language into plain English that is precise and correct
- Tailoring the language to the knowledge of the reader
- How to convert *nominalizations* back into *vigorous verbs*

Explaining policies or decisions

- How to explain complex policies in everyday terms the reader will understand
- How to write directly to your audience
- Relating the policies directly to the customer's issue or question
- Choosing visual words to make abstract ideas more concrete for the reader
- The most commonly used clichés - what do they really mean and what are better alternatives?



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Staying objective when presenting facts

- The key to staying *objective* without writing in the *passive voice*
- The classic subjective phrases that undermine the credibility of reports

Persuading the reader

- Why it is critical to use the terms 'you' and 'yours' early in a document?
- Identifying the difference between the *features* and *benefits* of a recommendation
- How to use benefits to *sell* your recommendation

Editing

- The rules for deciding what to keep and what to cut
- Making recommendations specific and concrete

Presenting documents professionally - video

An excellent Dawn French video outlines the rules for presenting documents in a professional way.

- How to make documents look readable
- Choosing descriptive headings that are relevant and meaningful to the reader

Putting it into practice

Throughout the day participants complete exercises and case studies to practise the skills. Specific examples from the participants' work can also be incorporated into the course.



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