

How to Write Dynamic Business Letters

by Carol Dunitz, Ph.D.

The recipients of your letters will judge the quality of your business by the quality of your communication. That's why your writing needs to be accurate, strong, and vivid. But don't worry. You don't have to be the world's most talented wordsmith to write dynamic business letters. You simply need to refer to some easy-to-follow guidelines. Once you get the hang of the them, the techniques will become second nature. You'll automatically apply them to your writing.

Outline before writing letters. Organize your thoughts in a logical order. Then state them as succinctly as possible to maintain your reader's attention. Say it right the first time. This will eliminate redundancy since you won't have to restate ideas in other terms.

Be precise and use good grammar. Avoid vague words that do nothing to drive your communication forward. Avoid monotonous writing by substituting pronouns or other nouns for ones you have already used. Use action verbs. Passive verbs make writing drag.

Express your ideas simply. Don't use stuffy jargon. Don't be overly technical. And don't use "fifty cent" words. When a short word will do the job, use it! Write with confidence. That confidence will come across in your letters. Be succinct and to the point. Get to the Point. Your reader will appreciate it.

Be conversational. For the most part, your writing will improve if you make an effort to write the way you speak. Don't be intimidated by your word processor. It's there to make your life easier, not to make you clam up.

Use short paragraphs and sentences. Lead with a topic sentence that tells what you plan to address in the paragraph. Follow up with as many sentences as you need to complete your thoughts and no more. Your average sentence should have no more than 15 to 20 words. Shoot for even shorter sentences where possible.

Variety is the spice of life. Use specific, concrete words. Paint pictures in your reader's minds. Avoid monotony and dullness. Avoid cliches. Avoid being cutesy or clever. You are not writing advertising copy. Make your points in a business-like fashion. Don't write the way you think you should write. Let your personal voice emerge. Your writing should be as individual as your signature.

Stay high on human interest. Draw on your experiences and your reader's experiences. Use stories and scenarios they can identify with.

Show genuine sincerity and concern. Don't be obsequious. Be real.

It's not always easy to edit your own work. You have to be able to put some distance between yourself and your writing. Set the letters you've written aside for review the next day. You'll bring a fresh perspective with you.

Try applying the tips in this article to your writing. You'll be surprised how quickly you'll turn the "ho-hum" into dynamic communication.

Carol Dunitz, Ph.D. is president of The Last Word LLC, a communication and creative services company. She is a professional speaker and author of 'Louder Than Thunder,' a parable about listening and interpersonal communication. Dunitz is the playwright, lyricist and composer of 'Bernhardt on Broadway,' a musical about Sarah Bernhardt. She can be reached at 312.523.4774, cdunitz@lastword.com or www.DrCarolDunitz.com.