

Regional Micro-Enterprise Credential: Four Rules for Effective Writing

(Updated: June 12, 2017)

Most Louisiana high school students can and should improve their writing skills.

Effective writing doesn't have to be complicated.

You can follow four simple rules that will help you write effectively.

Rule 1: Outline the key points you intend to make. Start the act of writing by creating bullet points for each of the key points you intend to make.

Do *not* try to write full sentences at first. Instead, just create a bullet point for each key point you intend to communicate.

Rule 2: Write topic sentences for each key point. A topic sentence states the main point of the paragraph.

Make sure your topic sentences are "concise" (clear and short).

At this point you'll have a series of topic sentences waiting to be arranged into an effective piece of writing.

Rule 3: Place your topic sentences in logical order. This could be called "building your argument" or "making your case." *Create a logical flow of topic sentences that most effectively communicates your message.*

Rule 4: Provide additional supporting detail for each key point. Finally, add supporting information that gives your reader more details about the point you're making with any of your topic sentences. Some topic sentences require additional support detail – some will not.

When you add supporting detail, make sure that your paragraphs are no longer than nine lines long. Readers skip over "dense word blocks" like long paragraphs. Readers remember short paragraphs, especially one sentence paragraphs.

That's it! Each document you write will be better if you use these four rules for effective writing.

Standard Organization for a Business Memo

A memo is a business document that helps individuals throughout a business learn about an issue and/or make an important business decision.

The best memos use a standard organization:

- Issue – concisely describe the issue or decision the memo will address;
- Recommendation – indicate your conclusion / recommendation;
- Supporting Points – provide the logical points that support your recommendation. You can use bullet points instead of topic sentences;
- Next Steps – indicate what needs to happen next if the readers agree with your recommendation.

Standard Organization for a Business Memo

- Issue
- Recommendation
- Supporting Points
- Next Steps

The mistake most memos make is by putting the conclusion last. Academic papers may require the author to provide his/her reasoning prior to stating his/her conclusion. *But business memos inform readers most efficiently by putting their conclusions up front, because business readers want to learn what your recommendation is right away.*