

# *EFFECTIVE BUSINESS WRITING WORKSHOP*



by

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# TENSES

*It's all about time.*

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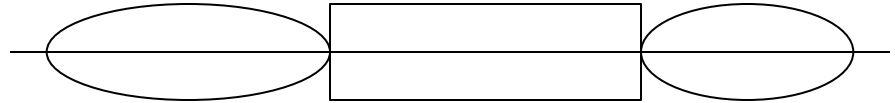
# TENSES- TIME LINE



Tell us the timing when an event happens.

**\*\*[X = completed action, ..... = on-going]**

a) The report was submitted yesterday.



b) I had ordered dinner before you brought the cake.

\_\_\_\_\_

c) The dog was barking the whole night.

\_\_\_\_\_

d) This is an urgent matter.

\_\_\_\_\_

e) This job has been pending since last week.

\_\_\_\_\_

f) I'm still working on this report.

\_\_\_\_\_

g) We will be sending the stocks to you soon.

\_\_\_\_\_

h) I have had my dinner.

\_\_\_\_\_

i) I had my dinner.

\_\_\_\_\_

# Past

# Present

# Future



Simple Past	Simple Present	Future
I <u>worked</u> here for five years.	I <u>work</u> everyday.	I <u>will work</u> very hard.
Past Continuous	Present Continuous	Future Continuous
I <u>was working</u> when you called yesterday.	I <u>am working</u> now.	I <u>am going to be working</u> when you arrive tonight. I <u>will be working</u> when you arrive tonight.
Past Perfect	Present Perfect	Future Perfect
I <u>had learned</u> a little English before I <u>moved</u> to the U.S.	I <u>have worked</u> in several different countries.	I <u>will have worked</u> every tense by the time I finish this course. I <u>am going to have worked</u> every tense by the time I finish this course.
Past Perfect Continuous	Present Perfect Continuous	Future Perfect Continuous
I <u>had been working</u> for five years before I moved to the U.S.	I <u>have been working</u> for ten years.	I <u>will have been working</u> for over two hours by the time you arrive. I <u>am going to have been working</u> for over two hours by the time

# CONFUSING TENSES

## PRESENT PERFECT VS PAST SIMPLE



### When to use Present Perfect?

1. To talk about something that happened in the past at an unknown time, and which is still important **now** (e.g. we can feel/see the result of the action).
2. To talk about **experience**, i.e. what has happened up to now.  
You can use (already, not yet, never/ever).

a) I **have given** your report to the Managing Director.

*(I gave it to him and he has it now)*

b) I **have sent** them the catalogues they wanted.

*(I sent them. They are in the post now)*

c) I **have never been** to Africa. *(In my entire life, until now)*

d) I **have not eaten** breakfast yet. *(I am hungry now)*

e) I **haven't (yet) seen** him this morning. *(This morning is not yet finished, so it means up until now...)*

BUT

f) I **didn't see** him this morning. (time mentioned- Past Tense)

*(I am speaking in the afternoon. This morning has finished).*

# CONFUSING TENSES

## PAST PERFECT

This is often wrongly used in Malaysia instead of the simple past or present perfect. In practice, you should use the past perfect very rarely- only when you really need to.

WHEN to use?

- Refer back to completed actions that happened before other events in the past (ie you need at least two events happening in the past)
- In reported speech

a) When I **arrived** at the office, the meeting **started**.

*(I arrived at the office and then the meeting started).*

b) When I **arrived** at the office, the meeting had **started**.

*(I got to the office late; the meeting had already started).*

c) He **said** the negotiation **had gone** well.

***DRAW TIMELINES & EXPLAIN THE FOLLOWING:***

*i) When I got home, my wife cooked the dinner.*

*ii) When I got home, my wife has cooked the dinner.*

*iii) When I got home, my wife was cooking the dinner.*



# COMMON TENSE PROBLEM: PAST PERFECT

*REPORTED SPEECH- is used to tell people what other people have said. So have to shift the tense of what was said backwards, into the past.*

- i) Christine phoned and said she **would meet you next week.**  
*(She actually said: “ I will meet you next week.”)*
- ii) Hisham said he was going to the meeting after visiting the factory.  
*(He actually said: “ I’m going to meeting after ...”)*
- iii) The garage told me they **could** fix my car in a day.  
*(They actually said: “ We can fix your car in a day.”)*

**Quiz: You cannot use the past perfect when describing a single event in the past. So decide which is correct.**

- a) Last week the Prime Minister had announced new measures.
- b) Last week the Prime Minister announced new measures.
- c) I had received your email yesterday.
- d) I received your email yesterday.
- e) He left the company ten minutes ago.
- f) He had left the company ten minutes ago.
- g) I thought we had already chosen the new branch office, but our boss changed his mind.
- h) I thought we choose the new branch office, but our boss had changed his mind.

# Keep Tenses Consistent

Tenses can be easily muddled up in business writing. The goal here is to not shift tenses in the flow of the sentence.

SHIFTED TENSE	CONSISTENT TENSE
As soon as he completed the report, he <b>walked</b> out of the room and <b>was heading</b> to the cafeteria to joined his co-workers.	
If Lee <b>would pay</b> more attention at work, he <b>can be</b> an excellent asset to the company.	
In 2009, the CEO <b>said</b> she <b>is</b> fed up with the rising customers' complaints	



# QUIZ

## COMMON ERRORS IN SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

Put a tick for sentences that are correct. Correct the sentences that are grammatically incorrect. Explain why the sentence is incorrect.

1. Her partner and business associate, **Jan Smith**, **distribute** the daily mail.
2. Every pair of trousers he **tried on were** too dark.
3. The **staff are eating** at their desks to make Thursday's news deadline.
4. Neither his partner nor his **neighbours speaks** highly of him
5. The **team is carrying** the flag onto the field.
6. The group of store **managers have begun** to arrive, one by one.
7. **Mathematics is** an area most store managers have experience with.
8. An advertising campaign or a direct mail **effort is designed** to reach large number of people.
9. A special event, along with direct **main, have** a great impact.
10. Special events **certainly represents** a significant investment of work.
11. Another excellent use of advertising specialty **items are** as a reward.
12. **Here are** a few ideas for how to distribute the goods.
13. Both- either a second of a subsequent **call – are considered** to be a follow-up call.
14. **There are** potential sources of sounds that may be offensive to your customers.
15. Focus **groups is** especially useful for business.
16. A cluster of brightly-colored **flowers makes** a positive impression.
17. There are trademark laws for **anyone that have** established a business name.

# THREE-STAGE EDITING PROCESS

## MESSAGE

1. Is the purpose clear?
2. Is the action required of the reader clear?
3. Are the other important points clear?
4. Is the tone appropriate for the message?
5. Is the message written in the right tone for the desired results?

## ORGANISATION

1. Is the info separated into chunks that are easy to digest?
2. Are your key points arranged in a logical sequence?
3. Does each paragraph contain just one basic idea so readers won't get confused?
4. Are the transitions unifying sentences, paragraphs and sections to help ideas in the document flow smoothly from start to finish?
5. Could the subheadings before key sections make it easier to read?

## MECHANICS

1. Spelling/ typos
2. Punctuation
3. Grammar
4. Word usage

# **Editing Grammar**

1. Do Subjects & verbs agree in number?
2. Do nouns and pronouns agree in number?
3. Is the text written in consistent Tenses
4. Are your sentence written in parallel structure?
5. Are bulleted points written in a parallel structure?
6. Are subheadings written in a parallel structure?
7. Is everything written in complete sentences- where appropriate?
8. Are there short, choppy sentences that can be combined for better flow?

## **WORD USAGE**

1. Is there any stuffy language that can be replaced with simpler words?
2. Are there any weak passive verbs that can be replaced with more powerful active verbs?
3. Can you eliminate any redundant language?
4. Is there any jargon, buzz words or 'business- speak- that can be simplified with more widely understood terminology?

# Steps to Improve Workers' Writing Skills

1

- Decide if there's a lack of writing skills among employees

2

- Identify employees who need the most help

3

- Get senior management's buy-in for writing training program

4

- Choose the best learning method(s) use with your employees

5

- Design a writing training program with training consultant

6

- Follow up to maximise results

7

- Create a corporate culture that stresses good writing

8

- Link good writing to leadership and advancement

9

- Establish company writing style standards

10

- Encourage submission to company publications

11

- Stress straightforward language for employees whose first language is not English.

# TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

The basics for communicating effectively include:

- Determine the purpose of your communication: Why is the communication necessary?
- Identify the audience: Who is the receiver of the communication?
- Consider what the audience needs to hear.
- Develop a clear, concise, correct, logical message.
- Maintain a positive attitude. (Attitude in writing can be reflected in the word choice).
- Responsibilities in communicating include:
  - Ethical and legal consideration: Be honest in your communication.
  - Give accurate information.
  - Use gender neutral language (business person for businessman, flight attendant for stewardess)
  - Be aware of cultural differences: gestures, body language, slang,



*Thank You*



Feel free to drop us an email:  
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