



The corporate writing guide: Creating consistent, concise and clear communication



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A photograph of an egg processing facility. In the foreground, a curved metal grate conveyor belt is filled with brown eggs. In the background, there are stacks of egg cartons and a yellow conveyor belt also carrying eggs. The scene is brightly lit with industrial lights.

**FCC is totally
focused on
agriculture**



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Benefits of having a writing guide

- Creates a clear, consistent voice for the corporation
- Helps educate writers and editors and makes them more effective in their roles
- Increases consistency, clarity and content reuse across documents



How to develop a writing guide

1. Determine its content
2. Determine its structure
3. Get it approved



Grey area

Standards that aren't clarified in your industry resources and must be determined based on your recommendation and/or what the corporation wants



1. Determine its content

- a. Identify who will use it and the corporate content
- b. Choose industry resources
- c. Determine the sections
- d. Identify standards, clarifying grey areas
- e. Create examples for the standards



a. Identify who will use it and the corporate content

- Internal and/or external writers and editors
- Non-professional writers
- Just you?
- Internal or external content
- Informal or formal content
- Electronic or paper



b. Choose industry resources

- Canadian Press
- Canadian Oxford Dictionary
- Chicago Manual of Style



c. Determine the sections

- Review industry resources for ideas.
- Review other writers' work.
- Consider a design section for formatting standards that affect writing and editing.
- Avoid processes, procedures and writing training.
- Don't include the rationale for the standards.



d. Identify standards, clarifying grey areas

- Track questions your co-workers, content providers and the other professional writers ask you. Note the grey areas.
- Don't reproduce the industry resources.
- There are times when you'll go against industry standards.



e. Create examples for the standards

- Use “a” if the abbreviation begins with a consonant, but note the following exceptions:
 - an FCC employee, an FSR helped the customer, an HR consultant
- Capitalize “board” when it’s part of a board’s proper name and in subsequent references.
 - The FCC Board of Directors meets quarterly.
The Board wants to revise its mandate.



A writing guide isn't a way to outline right and wrong grammar and style – it's a way to capture the agreed-upon standards that arise from content discussions.



Your writing guide is a work-in-progress – examples will need to be updated, standards will change, new standards will be added and standards that no longer apply will need to be removed.



2. Determine its structure

- a. Length
- b. Language
- c. Storage



a. Length

- Don't start with a specific length in mind.
- Consider style sheets for project-specific standards.



b. Language

- You need a writing guide in every official language your corporation uses.
- Create the writing guides in all applicable languages simultaneously and of equal quality to ensure that all employees can benefit from them.



c. Storage

- Paper or electronic
- Network drive
- Intranet



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3. Get it approved

- a. Fellow professional writers
- b. Writers' managers, directors and vice-presidents
- c. Everyone else who reviews and approves content
- d. Negotiation and influence



a. Fellow professional writers

- Engage them to help create the writing guide.
- Build partnerships.



b. Writers' managers, directors and vice-presidents

- Get their alignment and support by understanding what they prefer and why they prefer it.



c. Everyone else who reviews and approves content

- You may have to align to standards that aren't your recommendation.
- You may have to argue against standards that are their preference and/or completely wrong.



d. Negotiation and influence

- It's an ongoing process.
- Never underestimate the power of your expertise.
- Be curious – research, research, research!



Ensure that the creation of the writing guide is a collaborative effort and provides benefits for everyone involved.



The FCC Writing Guide today

- Regular use
- Writers community of learning exchange
- Business writing training



“Easy reading is damned hard writing.”

– Nathaniel Hawthorne



Requests for the FCC writing guide

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Questions?





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