

10 TIPS FOR WRITING PROFESSIONAL DOCUMENTS



1. **Know your purpose.** Before embarking on your writing project, step back to ensure you understand the big picture. What's the purpose/objective/rationale? Ensure your content is relevant.
2. **Consider your audience.** As you begin writing, ask yourself "Who is the audience?" If it's not obvious, get clarification. Know whether you need to be informative (i.e., pass along information) or persuasive (i.e., convince the reader). Proposal writing is an example of both.
3. **Identify the parameters.** Many writing projects (e.g., articles, proposals, abstracts) will have word and/or page limits. Not following established parameters can result in your work being rejected and/or edited. If you aren't sure, ask the publisher.
4. **Plan ahead.** Even for short documents, follow Covey's principle to begin with the end in mind. Know where you hope to end up and plan how you'll get there – use headings and sub-headings to provide a structure then "fill in the blanks."
5. **Get past writer's block.** It is natural for any writer to experience a time when writing becomes a struggle. Take a break from the project, get some fresh air, or ask for help. Most importantly try to avoid staring at a blank page for hours as your frustration increases.
6. **Find your flow in writing.** Flow, as described by Csikszentmihalyi, is a time when you're truly connected to your task; there are no distractions and time seems to fly by. Flow moments can occur as you write – the pages seem to fill themselves.
For more, visit: <https://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/flow-and-cohesion>
7. **Choose a "voice."** Identify your "voice" or writing style up front and be consistent throughout, including whether you are going to write in first person (I or we), second person (you), or third person (s/he or they). This will be especially important if co-authoring; each writer will have his/her own style but "style switching" is awkward for your reader. Also, be consistent about verb tense – are you writing about the past (e.g., wrote), present (e.g., write), or future (e.g., will write)?
8. **Work to your strengths.** Not everyone is a good creative writer, proof reader, or designer. Some will struggle with planning, parameters, or outlines; others find typing limits creativity, preferring to use paper and pen. Identify your writing strengths and work to those; access support for those areas that are a challenge.
9. **Develop writing standards.** Develop (and use) a writing standards checklist (or style guide) for each project. Standards may include font typeface and size, margins, spelling, punctuation, and word usage. Ensure you write within the established standards and pass them along to your proofreader/editor.
10. **Adopt a fat free writing style.** Good professional writing is clear, concise, and easily understood.



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