



SMARTER THAN THE AVERAGE GUIDE

HBR Guide to

Better Business Writing

Engage readers
Tighten and brighten
Make your case

By Bryan A. Garner



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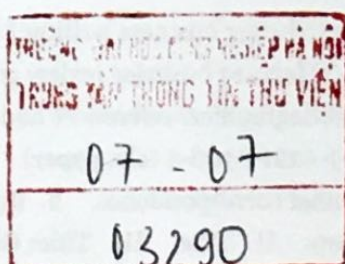
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Bryan A. Garner



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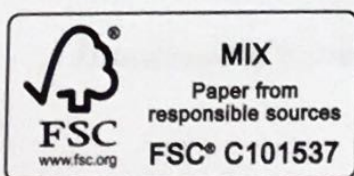
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What You'll Learn

Do you freeze up when writing memos to senior executives? Do your reports meander and raise more questions than they answer for key stakeholders? Do your e-mails to colleagues disappear into a void, never to be answered or acted on? Do your proposals fail to win clients?

You'll lose a lot of time, money, and influence if you struggle with business writing. And it's a common problem. Many of us fumble for the right words and tone in our documents, even if we're articulate when we speak. But it doesn't have to be that way. Writing clearly and persuasively requires neither magic nor luck. It's a skill—and this guide will give you the confidence and the tools you need to cultivate it.

You'll get better at:

- Pushing past writer's block.
- Motivating readers to act.
- Organizing your ideas.
- Expressing your main points clearly.

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Introduction: Why you need to write well

You may think you shouldn't fuss about your writing—that good enough is good enough. But that mind-set is costly. Supervisors, colleagues, employees, clients, partners, and anyone else you communicate with will form an opinion of you from your writing. If it's artless and sloppy, they may assume your thinking is the same. And if you fail to convince them that they should care about your message, they *won't* care. They may even decide you're not worth doing business with. The stakes are that high.

Some people say it's not a big deal. They may feel complacent. Or they may think it's ideas that matter—not writing. But good writing gets ideas noticed. It gets them realized. So don't be misled: Writing well *is* a big deal.

Those who write poorly create barriers between themselves and their readers; those who write well connect with readers, open their minds, and achieve goals.