WRITTEN COMMUNICATION
competency

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COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES

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Difficulty

Easy
Stroll

Tough
Climb

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UNIVERSITY

Written Communication

Effective performers write clearly and concisely, composing informative and convincing memos, e-mails, letters, reports, and other documents. Regardless of the format, they are able to use the written language to convey both substance and intent with accuracy.

Level	Performance Indicators and Behavioral Examples
4 **Strategic**	• Capable of producing sophisticated, professional documents at the highest level (e.g., annual reports, Board reports, journal articles, etc.); can function both as author and editor of the work of others; assumes responsibility for the overall product and sees it to completion. • Demands the highest quality in written communications that reflect on the organization (marketing materials, press releases, internal and external communiqués, etc.) • Implements sustainable written communication forums for the organization (e.g., newsletters, regular communiqués, etc.)
3 **Advanced**	• Holds function accountable for clear and concise written communications. • Writing is captivating, engages reader; uses interesting, appropriate, and differing styles depending on reader. • Uses and incorporates facts, quotes and analogies to add interest to written documents. • Produces documentation that accurately reflects goals, projects, and initiatives. • Consistently serves as a role model and mentor for strong written communication; is sought by others for help in developing written materials.
2 **Applied**	• Writing is well organized and easy to follow. • Provides coherent, literate messages. • Writing expresses key points and demonstrates knowledge of topic. • Supplies necessary supporting facts. • Checks for accuracy, understanding of subject.
1 **Elementary**	• Prepares clear and concise e-mails and other basic required written communications; message is clear. • Uses proper grammar and punctuation. • Goes to supervisor when needed for review/editing of written documents; learns from copyediting, shows improvement and doesn't repeat mistakes.
0 **Inadequate**	• Writing is disorganized and hard to follow; purpose of document is not readily apparent; message not communicated clearly or effectively. • Gives too little or too much information. • Writing lacks actions expected, or next steps. • Topics and/or language are inappropriate; emotional tone is inaccurate or offensive. • Written work contains misspellings, poor grammar, improper punctuation, etc. • Writing is such a chore that it takes inordinate time and/or causes excessive distress; just the thought of a writing assignment can cause paralysis. • Style is not appropriate for audience; too formal or informal.

Significance

Effective Written Communication provides another alternative for communicating your message, an essential tool for success in any organization. Good writing is good thinking. Critical thinking and creativity improve as writing skills improve.

Best Ways To Develop

Read, write, and review. Read to expand your vocabulary and your writing skills, and don't read just one genre. Expand your reading list to include a variety of fiction and non-fiction material. Begin writing your thoughts down – it not only preserves them, but also rehearses writing skills.

Improving Your Capacity

Get feedback on your written communications.

Simplify. Practice writing one-page memos. Avoid wordiness, unnecessary details or overuse of technical jargon.

Revise. It is unlikely that your first draft will be perfect.

Don't recreate the wheel – look for past documents to serve as templates.

Read: *PBS Write to the Point* by Rosemary T. Fruehling and N. B. Oldham.

Read: *Better Business Writing: Techniques for Improving Correspondence (Fifty-Minute Series)* by Susan Brock.

Read: *The Business Style Handbook: An A-Z Guide for Writing on the Job With Tips From Communications Experts at the Fortune 50*0 by Helen Cunningham and Brenda Greene.

Start Today

Investigate and sign up for a credible writing seminar.

Identify a classmate that is a good writer; ask him/her to mentor you for a while, that is, review all your written material, make comments, and give feedback.

Join or start a book club! Get together informally with a group of friends to read and discuss a variety of books.

Tips

• Organize your thoughts before writing.

• A good report is like a good speech: it contains an attractive opening, an overview, well-developed points using facts, examples and stories, and a succinct summation.

• Reading is a good way to improve your writing.

• Write it then set it aside then read it again before sending it out

• Use a proofreader when needed

Remember, the key to improving competency is not just learning about the skill but choosing a takeaway and developing an action plan to put new behaviors into practice until it becomes a natural response.

Development Action Planning Form

Step 1: Choose a competency area to develop.

Target Competency: _____

Step 2: Describe a positive outcome in the target area of competence; include your vision of a preferred future state.

Goal Statement:_____

Vision Statement: _____

Step 3: List the benefits to achieving your desired end state.

Benefits: _____

Step 4: Brainstorm the actions you might take to achieve your goal. For each, anticipate obstacles and options for overcoming them.

	Action Steps	Obstacles	Options
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Step 5: Finalize your action steps based on your brainstorming in Step 4. Now, list each action you must take to achieve your goal, including time frames and resources you will need.

	Action Steps	Time Frames	Resources
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			