

Elevate your business writing and make a strong impression



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Whether it's a project proposal or a quick email — writing for business is something you do almost every day. It's how you communicate, work on projects, build support for initiatives, and much more. That means there are a lot of stakes riding on how well you communicate. However, doing something frequently doesn't mean it comes naturally.

In this special report, we've collected the best of Business Management Daily's advice on how to elevate your business writing. From avoiding common grammar mistakes and editing your writing, to how to make that angry email sound more professional — we've got the tips and tricks you need.

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8 common grammar mistakes to avoid in business writing

When you're writing for business, you want to put your best foot forward, but when grammatical errors litter your writing, it can leave you looking less than polished.

While perfect grammar is difficult to achieve for even the most highly skilled and published writers, you can avoid some common grammatical mistakes with practice.

The following are common errors writers make, and if you can avoid these 8, you're one step closer to being a more polished writer.

Mixing up “then” and “than”

Only one letter separates the words “then” and “than,” yet they have drastically different meanings.

“Then” is used to express a time frame. For example, “She has to complete the assignment, then she will go to lunch.”

While “than” is used to compare. For example, “Her current assignment is shorter than the previous one.”

While most people who read the words in context will be able to decipher the meaning, it's still best to avoid this mistake altogether.

Adding prepositions to the end of a sentence

Using a preposition at the end of a sentence in everyday speech is common. However, it is technically incorrect and you should avoid doing so in your business writing because it makes your writing more informal. Prepositions are words that establish a relation between the subject and object in the sentence. Examples of

common prepositions include: under, of, off, on, to, from, by, in, below, at, above, around, down, and with.

For example, instead of asking “where are they going to?” you can simply ask “where are they going?”

If you find it challenging to write a sentence without putting the preposition at the end, rewrite it, so it doesn’t include the word.

Using the incorrect version of “they’re,” “there,” or “their”

These 3 words sound identical in speech, but they have different spellings in writing. It’s necessary to differentiate between the different meanings to use them properly.

“They’re” is a contraction for “they are.” Ex: They’re my favorite clients to support.

“Their” refers to something owned by a group. Ex: We are using their data in the presentation.

“There” refers to a place. Ex: Do you want to go there for the retreat?

Once you have a solid understanding of the difference between the three, be sure to double-check your writing when using them since they’re easy to mix up.

Writing in a passive voice

Passive language is another common grammatical mistake to avoid in your business writing. Essentially, your writing is passive when the subject of the sentence is acted upon by the verb. In contrast, active writing is when the subject performs the action stated by the verb and follows the subject + verb + object formula. When you don’t utilize that formula, your writing lacks clarity, as is the case with writing in the passive voice.

Here’s an example of passive vs. active writing.

Passive sentence:

The presentation was created by Bobby.

In this example

Object (Presentation) + Verb (Created) + Subject (Bobby) is the incorrect formula.

Active sentence:

Bobby created the presentation.

In this example

Subject (Bobby) + Verb (Created) + Object (Presentation) is the correct formula.

Using “they” instead of “it” when referring to a company

A company is a singular noun. Therefore when referring to it in your writing, you want to use the word “it” instead of “they.” While you might think about a company as including various people and want to reflect the people in the company by using “they,” “their,” or other plural words when referencing it, doing so is inappropriate grammatically.

Incorrect: We enjoy the airline because they can accommodate our last-minute flight needs.

Correct: We enjoy the airline because it can accommodate our last-minute flight needs.

Using “Who,” “Whom,” “Whose,” and “Who’s” inappropriately

There’s no doubt that these 4 words are similar; however, they carry different meanings that you want to differentiate between in your writing.

Here’s an overview of what they mean.

“Who” refers to a living noun: “Who is attending this afternoon’s meeting?”

“Whom” usually refers to someone who receives something: “To whom will you address this letter?”

“Whose” refers to ownership of an item or other noun: “Whose team earned the highest numbers last quarter?”

“Who’s” is a contraction for “who is” and identifies someone doing something: “Who’s taking over the data analysis for Tanya?”

Using the word “Alot”

“Alot” isn’t actually a word. At least not with that spelling or in the way you typically use it.

When referring to a large number, you want to write the words separately “a lot.” For example, “I have a lot of candidate applications to review today.”

Another similar-sounding word is “allot,” but this refers to setting aside an amount of an item for a particular reason. For example, “I will allot the team \$1,000 to get this project off the ground.”

Inaccurate subject-verb agreement

The subject and verb of a sentence should either be plural or singular. You can’t have a singular subject and a plural verb or vice versa.

Incorrect: The best employees tries their best to get the job done well.

Correct: The best employees try their best to get the job done well.

In the above example, “employees” is a plural subject, and the verb “tries” is a plural verb.

Don't count on spellcheck to catch everything

Thankfully, technology makes it easier to identify and correct these common grammatical mistakes and many more. Artificial intelligence developed by spelling/grammar checkers in word documents and websites like Grammarly allows you to scan your business writing for the errors you don't even know you're making.

But, since you can't rely entirely on technology, understanding these mistakes independent of these grammar tools can help you put your best foot forward in your writing.

How to edit your own writing before you hit send

Depending on how you feel about writing, it can be a wonderful means of communication or a daunting task that goes on forever. No matter where you stand, knowing how to write and edit your work gives you an advantage in your life and career. This is true whether you're drafting a business proposal, writing an email, preparing remarks for a meeting, and much more.

Editing your work not only lets you fix typos, but also lets you check for clarity to ensure your key points are easily understood. After all, it can be hard to interpret one's intention and tone of voice in writing. Once you hit send, it's off to the recipient to decipher what you've written. With that in mind, it's worth taking a few extra minutes to look over and edit what you've written.

When editing, here are some tips to keep in mind to make the process easier and lead to a better outcome

Write first

When you write, don't try to make it perfect as you go. Instead, focus on getting your ideas down on paper the first go-round. Following this process allows you to get all of your information on paper and complete your writing's overall structure.

If you try to edit as you go along, you will likely elongate the process, adding unneeded stress along the way.

One strategy to ensure you do this is to set a timer and only write. Depending on your project's length, this could be 15 minutes, 30 minutes, or an hour. Your only rule during this time is to write with no editing until the timer goes off.

Come back to it

Once you finish writing, it's best to give yourself some time before beginning the editing process. Putting some distance between the writing and editing phase will allow you to edit with fresh eyes so you can pay attention to every detail instead of glossing over them.

Edit in a different format

Editing your copy can be easier if you edit it in a different format than how you wrote it. When editing your own writing, your brain is more likely to skim over it because you know already what it's supposed to say. This makes it easier to miss mistakes. However, some simple changes can help undo this tendency. For example, if you typed it on your computer, you can print it out, edit it, and then update the word document.

Alternatively, you can write on paper, then type it on your computer and edit it. Using this method might be more time-consuming than writing and editing on the computer, but it can help you if the change in format makes it easier to edit.

Alternatively, you might find it beneficial to edit your copy on a different screen. For example, you can write on your laptop and edit on your desktop. Any differences you can create can make it easier to complete the editing process.

Read it aloud

Trying to edit your copy in your head can be challenging. Instead, read your writing aloud and edit it. It's also helpful if you read it how you would speak it. So, don't speed read to get the editing process done as soon as possible.

Take your time reading so that you can edit it properly. You'll easily pick out places where the sentence structure and word choices sound a little odd when you can hear the words.

Use your resources

There are various resources available online to make the editing process easier.

Some options include Grammarly.com and Thesaurus.com.

Grammarly.com is an editing website that will provide you with specific recommendations to improve your writing. It edits based on clarity, engagement, delivery, and overall style using artificial intelligence. Many browsers also have Grammarly extensions that will highlight recommendations as you write.

A thesaurus is also a helpful tool for you if you find yourself using the same words repeatedly. You can utilize a thesaurus to vary your vocabulary when communicating.

Follow basic writing conventions

When editing your writing, here are a few things to look out for.

Keep sentences short

Extending your sentences' length can make it more complicated for your audience to understand what you're saying. Instead, keep your sentences short, succinct, and to the point.

Don't use "that"

Using the word "that" is a common yet often unnecessary writing practice. When editing, ask yourself if "that" is needed to maintain your sentence's meaning and value. The same goes for other filler words, such as really, just, perhaps, and rather.

Replace "thing" with a descriptive word

"Thing" is another word that doesn't have the same value you might assume it does. Instead of using the word "thing," you can replace it with a more descriptive word.

For example:

Don't say — The only thing to remember is you usually don't need to use the word "that."

Instead, say — The only writing rule to remember is you usually don't need to use the word "that."

Eliminate passive voice

Using passive voice is another standard yet unnecessary writing convention that takes away from your work quality. Active voice focuses on the subject completing an action. In passive voice, the action happens to the subject. Passive voice can be confusing for even the best writers, so let's look at an example.

Here's an example of passive writing: My first home is one I will always remember.

Compare this to the active voice: I will always remember my first home.

Active voice adds more clarity and an overall better flow to your writing.

Use contractions

In our everyday communication, we tend to use contractions (example: it's instead of it is or we're instead of we are), and the same should be true for your writing. While this won't be true in certain settings, like legal documents, for example, contractions are increasingly common even in professional business writing.

When editing, scan through your writing and ensure you're making use of contractions. It'll help your text flow better for readers.

Keep the reading level in mind

The average person reads at a 6th-8th grade level. This doesn't mean you need to speak down to your audience, but it does mean all of your writing doesn't need to read like a college essay. Consider using simple and shorter word alternatives where possible, and try to avoid unnecessary jargon. The easier your writing is to engage with, the better the reader's experience will be.

One way to check the reading level of your text is to use [Hemingwayapp.com](https://hemingwayapp.com). It will provide you with the reading level and changes you can implement to make your writing simpler, eliminate hard-to-read sentences, reduce passive voice, and more.

20 professional words to use to elevate your writing

Whether you're writing an email, proposal, report, or presentation, you want to put your best foot, or in this case, your best words forward. Part of writing more professionally is simply upgrading your word choices.

There are certain words in the English language that sound more casual and others that give a more powerful impression. When you use power words in your writing, you can set yourself apart with more [professional communication](#).

Here are 20 words or phrases you can use to make your writing sound more professional.

Provide

Instead of saying give, you can use the word provide.

For example...

Don't say: I will give you a copy of the data from last quarter's report

Instead say: I will provide you with the data from last quarter's report.

Receive

Instead of saying get, you can use the word receive.

For example...

Don't say: Did you get the package I sent via the pony last week?

Instead say: Did you receive the package I sent via the pony last week?

Attend

Instead of saying come, you can use the word attend.

For example...

Don't say: I'm unable to come to Tuesday's professional development session.

Instead say: I'm unable to attend Tuesday's professional development session.

Assist

Instead of saying help, you can use the word assist.

For example...

Don't say: Do you need me to help you with the upcoming project?

Instead say: Do you need me to assist you with the upcoming project?

Discuss

Instead of saying talk, you can use the word discuss.

For example...

Don't say: Let's schedule a time to talk about the issue.

Instead say: Let's schedule a time to discuss the issue.

Certainly

Instead of saying yes, you can use the word certainly.

For example...

Don't say: Yes, I agree with that idea.

Instead say: Certainly, I agree with that idea.

Modify

Instead of saying change, you can use the word modify.

For example...

Don't say: We need to change the time of next week's meeting.

Instead say: We need to modify the time of next week's meeting.

In Conclusion

Instead of saying finally, you can use the phrase in conclusion.

For example...

Don't say: Finally, keep in mind that I will be out of the office next week.

Instead say: In conclusion, keep in mind that I will be out of the office next week.

However

Instead of saying but, you can use the word however.

For example...

Don't say: That's a great idea in my opinion, but upper management must sign off.

Instead say: That's a great idea in my opinion, however, upper management must sign off.

Moreover or furthermore

Instead of saying also, you can use the words moreover or furthermore.

For example...

Don't say: Also, I found the report to include a compelling argument for plan B.

Instead say: Moreover, I found the report to include a compelling argument for plan B.

Or say: Furthermore, I found the report to include a compelling argument for Plan B.

Ramifications

Instead of saying consequences, you can use the word ramifications.

For example...

Don't say: The consequences can be severe for all stakeholders if this falls through.

Instead say: The ramifications can be severe for all stakeholders if this falls through.

Consensus

For example...

Instead of saying opinion, you can use the word consensus.

Don't say: We are seeking the opinion of all involved in the new project.

Instead say: We are seeking the consensus of all involved in the new project.

For instance

Instead of saying like, you can use the phrase for instance.

For example...

Don't say: I want you to incorporate video in the presentation —like a 5 minute summary of the latest report for ease of understanding.

Instead say: I want you to incorporate video in the presentation. For instance, a 5 minute summary of the latest report for ease of understanding would work.

Straightforward

Instead of saying easy, you can say straightforward.

For example...

Don't say: The directions for the next step are easy.

Instead say: The directions for the next step are straightforward.

Perspective

Instead of saying opinion, you can say perspective.

For example...

Don't say: We are seeking the opinion of our accounting team before moving forward.

Instead say: We are seeking the perspective of our accounting team before moving forward.

Provided that

Instead of saying as long as, you can use the phrase provided that.

For example...

Don't say: I am open to that option as long as you have data to back up the decision.

Instead say: I am open to that option provided that you have data to back up the decision.

Elaborate

Instead of saying “what do you mean”, you can ask someone to elaborate.

For example...

Don't say: I'm not sure what you mean by that statement.

Instead say: Can you elaborate on that point?

Imagine

Instead of saying guess, you can say imagine.

For example:

Don't say: I guess it's time to test out a new hiring process.

Instead say: I imagine it's time to test out a new hiring process.

Objective

Instead of saying goal, you can say objective.

For example:

Don't say: Our goal is to double enrollment in the training.

Instead say: Our objective is to double enrollment in the training.

How to write an angry email professionally in 8 steps

A work-related issue pops up and leaves you seeing red. You hit reply on your email or open a new message and begin to write an angry email in response, typing the first thing that comes to mind. However, you remember it's crucial to maintain professionalism despite your emotions, but how?

That's when you turn to Google for answers. "How do you write an angry email professionally?" You're in good company, it's a question we've all asked ourselves at one point or another.

The next time you find yourself in this position, remember, you can still get your points across while doing so in a manner that won't end up with a reprimand from your boss or a meeting with HR. Any time you feel inclined to send an angry email, follow this simple process to check your mindset, evaluate the best form of communication, and craft an effective professional message.

Check your mindset before you write an angry email

Express your emotions

Anger is a healthy emotion, but bottling it up isn't.

You likely can't say everything you want to say in your email and avoid the negative repercussions. However, to start, write an initial email that says everything you want to express. Let out all of your feelings, emotions, and insights, but do so in a Word Document. Then, when done, read it and delete it.

While not a long-term solution, doing so can be therapeutic. It gives you the sense of relief that you need in knowing that you were able to express your feelings in a safe space. It also helps you think through your thoughts more clearly before responding.

Alternatively, talking it out to yourself or a trusted friend or family member might be an excellent alternative to writing about it. Ultimately, you want to choose a method that works best for you, just don't bottle it all in.

Take a breath

Just like it's not best to send a text message or respond in an argument when angry, it's also not best to write an email when angry — especially at work. With emotions running on high, you're more likely to respond based on your initial feelings and say something you might later regret.

Before composing your message, give yourself some room to breathe. You may wish to get up from your desk and walk around for a few moments, complete a one-minute meditation, or simply distract yourself for a while. Just know that you don't have to respond right away when you start seeing red.

A delay of 30 minutes an hour, two hours, or more lets you reapproach the situation with a clear head. This can truly save you from sending a message that could leave a negative mark on your professional record and damage relationships with colleagues, clients, or stakeholders.

Reconsider the matter at hand

Sometimes a situation occurs, and your initial thought is — that's wrong!

But, if you take a second look, your insight might reveal that it's not what you initially thought. This is especially true in [written communication](#), as it's easy to misinterpret someone's words or intentions. If you compose and send an email based on your initial feelings, before taking the time to consider the reality further, it's too late.

That's why if you feel you've been wronged or a situation leads to feelings of anger for whatever reason, think once, twice, and three times to ensure you're not overreacting or misinterpreting.

Evaluate your options

Determine the best communication method

If, after the above, you determine that your emotions are indeed warranted, consider whether communicating about the issue via email is the best approach.

Conversations that might bring about heightened emotions are often best had in person, by phone, or via a Zoom meeting. Communication via text-based platforms is notorious for miscommunication, misunderstanding, and often making the situation worse. This is the opposite of what you want. If your goal is [communicating effectively](#) and coming to a reasonable solution, communicate strategically.

Upon further thought, depending on the severity of the situation, you might even discover bringing in additional support to help resolve the problem before it escalates. This can sometimes work better than going at it alone.

Still, there are times when an email response may be necessary.

Remember emails live forever

One final tip before you choose to send an angry email is to remind yourself that emails live forever.

A good rule to remember is if you wouldn't want the message to be plastered on the newspaper's front page or be tagged on social media for all of your friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and community to see, don't write it.

It doesn't mean the conversation doesn't need to occur. However, the approach might be better suited for a spoken conversation. If not, then you'll want to maintain a high level of professionalism in your communication. You should always assume that emails you send, especially professionally, are not private.

Steps for writing an angry email professionally

If you've gone through all the above steps and still feel that an email is your best option, then there are some strategies you'll want to implement to do so effectively.

Keep it brief

When emotions are high, you're more likely to convey all of your thoughts and feelings regarding a situation to ensure you communicate your viewpoint. However, in truth, you should do the opposite and keep it brief.

The more concise you are, the less likely you are to incorporate something you might later regret.

Additionally, getting deep into the weeds can bog down your email and cloud the most important points you wish to convey.

Maintain formality

Sending an email when upset can lead to messaging you might later wish you could take back. So throughout your email, err on the side of formality.

Remember all of the basics of writing a proper work-related email like:

- Include proper greetings
- Address the purpose of the email early on
- Be straightforward
- Stick to the facts
- Include an appropriate salutation
- Maintain a positive and respectful tone of voice
- Make any requests or follow-up actions clear

Maintaining formality makes it easier to be professional, even when it's related to a touchy subject.

Read your message aloud

Sometimes you don't realize how a message sounds until it's read aloud.

If possible, write your email then read it aloud after breathing, considering the circumstances, and remembering that emails live on forever.

When reading the message aloud, try to do so from a neutral place and eliminate any words/phrases that might come across as rude. However, also watch out for words that seem timid.

Your goal shouldn't be to act as though nothing is wrong. Instead, you want to find a way to communicate regarding the circumstances while maintaining your professionalism. It's common to err on the side of timid or apologetic language in an attempt to offset feelings of anger. However, stuffing your feelings completely can make matters worse down the road and prevent you from reaching a resolution.

