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“Write as You Speak” – Please, Don’t

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Whoops! I missed one. “Writing as you speak” should top my list, [*10 Most Common Errors in Professional Correspondence*](#), found in my book, “Write to Influence!”



Many people neglect to review, edit, and revise initial drafts. In fact, the initial draft often becomes the final. This rush to market – or rush to print – results in people writing as they speak, producing verbose, cumbersome, and often redundant text.

“Powerful writing is constrained by time and space.” This is the core principle I teach in my workshops. I refer here to the reader’s time (and patience) and finite space (i.e., opportunity) allocated to make your case (e.g., space-constrained forms).

“Writing as you speak” violates both. It forces readers to waste valuable time trying to discern the intended message, obfuscated in cumbersome text, and minimizes your ability to influence because you did not effectively leverage the space.

For this article, I include in “professional writing” communication associated with the workplace as well as correspondence submitted when seeking a competitive opportunity, such as essays for a scholarship submission and applications for a grant.

Here are several examples of “writing as you speak,” following by the edited versions.

Before: He plans to start off his trip next month and is concerned over the fact that the project is behind schedule.

After: He will travel next month and is concerned that the project is behind schedule.

Before: There are few organizations centered around this field and internships are hard to come by.

After: Few organizations focus on this field; internships are rare.

Before: I plan to work my way up and eventually be a successful officer in the corporation.

After: I plan to have a successful career in the corporation.

Before: To be truly successful in the field of marketing, I believe people skills are of the utmost importance, as humans are the primary and most volatile component of business negotiations.

After: People skills are essential to marketing and successful business negotiations.

Before: By succeeding in my education and entry level experiences in my field, I must have the ability to complete my education and financial means to participate in valuable opportunities such as internships.

After: I need money to complete my education and participate in internships.

Before: Work as a psychiatrist will strongly reflect my natural skills – logical reasoning and written communications as well as fulfilled a role I tend to, that of an honest counselor based on objective expertise.

After: My ability to assess, evaluate, and communicate is suited to a psychology career.

Before: The classes at my university both give the knowledge on the fundamentals of architecture and, more importantly, skill sets architects use when preparing products for their clients.

After: At the university, I've learned fundamentals of architecture and skills to prepare products for clients.

Ready for a quiz? Can you reduce this sentence to 10 words? Hint: Begin with, "This is..." The answer is at the end of this article.

The reason that I'm writing this sentence is to provide you with an exercise in which it is possible for you to identify and discard each and every word that is useless.

Remember the adage, "Haste makes waste?" It's true ... especially when writing in the workplace. So, I recommend two actions:

- 1) Invest the additional time and effort to refine your product. Can you be more precise in your terminology? Is your tone perhaps too colloquial for the task at hand?
- 2) Read your draft aloud slowly; listen to the words. They often speak volumes. Then, revise accordingly.

Answer to the quiz: This is an exercise to identify and discard useless words.