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Introduction

Writing is an essential skill in today's economy. We rely on words more than ever in the digital-age workplace, on messaging platforms and social media as well as in classic forms like memos and reports. And given how much reading is done on mobile devices, being able to write succinctly is critical to workplace success.

Clear and direct language—free of needless words and jargon—improves communication within an organization and supports informed decision-making. People who write well on the job are more effective at carrying out their organization's mission and more likely to advance professionally.

The primary audience for this book is professionals in the first decade of their careers, whether in the corporate world, at a non-profit organization, or in the public sector. If you are one of these people, you may still be developing the skill of writing an effective email communication, a persuasive memo, or a compelling slide deck. If you struggle with the fundamentals of writing, you may not be ready for this book. But if you can string together sentences and are looking for ideas on how to make your writing more accessible and powerful, *Writing on the Job* is for you.

This book will also be useful to people further along in their careers who find themselves with new responsibilities—or new communications platforms—to navigate. For example, the book explains how to write for social media and advises on tasks assigned to managers and executives, such as providing critical feedback through performance reviews or delivering a speech.

2 INTRODUCTION

This book draws on my own experiences writing on the job for more than twenty-five years, in the White House and on Capitol Hill as well as in the private sector. It also relies on techniques I've developed in the classroom at Princeton University, where I train young professionals to write clearly and effectively. The book begins with the basics: how to develop a professional style, get started on a piece of writing, create a first draft, and edit it into a strong final product. It then offers advice on more than a dozen forms of writing, from a one-line tweet to a lengthy report, using concrete examples and templates. The book also provides guidance on how formal or informal to allow your language to be, and how to strike the right tone so your message gets heard. Throughout, it emphasizes the “bottom line up front” approach used by the US military to ensure efficient communications.

The goal is to help you write effectively on the job—and enjoy doing it!



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