IFS Center for Educational Excellence

Training and Developing Workers for the Insurance and Financial Services Industry

Business Writing

Course Description

This course will help build writing skills and eliminate the biggest stumbling blocks of business writing: writer's block, wordiness, structural problems, clutter, and inappropriate tone. It will also help students gain a solid grip on everyday grammar and punctuation dilemmas, from when to use a semicolon to what the difference is between "that" and "which," to just what it means when a student's spell checker says the writing is incorrectly in passive voice. This program includes hands-on practice in crafting professional documents.

Delivery Details

14 hours, 2 days

Content

- The basic format of a letter–bottom line, elaboration, call-to-action, nice line.
- The "short is better theory"--short words, sentences, and paragraphs.
- Analyzing writing by computer--reading ease, grade level, percentage of passive sentences, word length, sentence length, etc.
- Effective writing practices---the 5Ws and H, how to move from the general to the specific, keep "like with like," and create smooth transitions.
- Dealing effectively with writer's block.
- Tailoring content and technicality level to specific audiences.
- Overcoming common barriers to writing effectively, including structural flaws, wordiness, and inappropriate tone.
- Using five-step process when writing correspondence.
- Eliminating up to 60% of grammar and punctuation errors by doing two simple things.
- The importance of grammar and punctuation in terms of clarity and professional image.
- The major parts of speech and their most common usages.
- The nine major verb tenses and when to use them.
- Avoiding common mistakes made with subject-verb-pronoun agreement, misplaced modifiers, active and passive, parallel construction, and more.
- Correctly using often misused words such as affect/effect, ensure/insure/assure, that/which, since/because, further/farther, etc.
- Purposes and common usages of all major punctuation marks.
- Avoiding common mistakes made with each of the major punctuation marks.
- Learning editing skills.
- Using a style manual to increase grammar and punctuation skills.

Learning Outcomes –

After completing this course, participants will be able to:

- Decrease the time it takes to write a letter by incorporating three pre-writing techniques.
- Demonstrate improvement in their use of grammar and punctuation.

Methodology

- Lecture
- Free-writing
- Clustering
- Post-it outlining,
- Small group writing exercises
- IFS industry related online punctuation and grammar drills

Materials –

Each student will receive a packet of handouts.

Pre-requisites

- High School diploma or GED. English at the12th grade level.
- One year of experience in the Financial Services Industry recommended.

Assessment

- Students will complete pre and post writing exercises.
- There will also be self-graded pre and post grammar and punctuation quizzes.

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