

# Six helpful writing tips!

**1. Use a friendly, down to earth tone.**

Be real. Write directly to the reader using words like you, we, etc.

**2. Keep sentences and paragraphs short and simple.**

Include only one idea per sentence.

**3. Choose your words carefully.**

Avoid formal language—use simple, familiar words instead.

**4. Make it easy for your readers to find information.**

Choose a title that lets people see immediately whether it's relevant to them. Write your message in logical order. Put the most important information first. Make sure the ideas flow logically, with clear links between them. If it's a set of instructions, put them in the order they should be carried out. Use lists and bullet points to make information easier to grasp.

**5. Layout and design matter too.**

Remember to maintain white space, and choose graphic images that include diverse subjects. Don't use anything that could potentially offend someone or violate copyright.

**6. Write, check and rewrite.**

Use this checklist to assess your first draft. Then rewrite and check it again.

.....

## Tone

Is the tone down-to-earth and friendly? Have you written directly to the reader (using “you”, “we”, etc.)?

## Content

Does it stick to the most important information?  
Does it tell the readers what they need to know?

## Language

Will the words be familiar to most readers? Have you minimized jargon, acronyms and technical language, and explained the ones you decided to include?

## Sentence & Paragraph Structure

Are the sentences simple and straightforward, with one idea in each? Are the paragraphs or units of information manageable?

## Organization

Is the purpose clear at the beginning? Is there a logical flow of ideas, with clear links between ideas? Is information easy to find? Are there headings or graphics to clarify and point the way? Are important points highlighted apart from the text?

## Layout & Legibility

Does the material look inviting? Do the paper and ink colors maximize readability? Is the type size and style easy to read? Is there plenty of “white space”? If there are graphics, are they simple, culturally and socially appropriate, and placed so they don't interfere with the text?

# Resources for Writing and Design

## Web site for beginning designers

[www.designiy.com](http://www.designiy.com)  
(Design It Yourself)

## Web sites for free or inexpensive graphics

[www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com)  
[www.dreamstime.com](http://www.dreamstime.com)  
[www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com)

## Helpful books for beginning designers

- ▶ ‘The Non-Designer’s Design Book’ by Robin Williams
- ▶ ‘The Non-Designer’s Web Book’ by Robin Williams and John Tollet
- ▶ ‘Terrific Training Materials: High Impact Graphic Designs for Workbooks, Handouts, Instructor Guides, and Job Aids’ by Darlene Frank

## Web sites for Writing, Grammar and Spelling Tips

[www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com)  
The Merriam-Webster site includes a dictionary with audio pronunciation, a thesaurus and a new Spanish-English dictionary.

[www.webgrammar.com](http://www.webgrammar.com)  
Just like the sweet English teacher you remember.

[www.askoxford.com/betterwriting](http://www.askoxford.com/betterwriting)

## Helpful Books for Novice Writers

- ▶ ‘Grammatically Correct: The Writer’s Essential Guide to Punctuation, Spelling, Style, Usage and Grammar’ by Anne Stilman
- ▶ ‘Prentice Hall Writing and Grammar: Vocabulary and Spelling’
- ▶ ‘English Grammar for Dummies’ by Geraldine Woods
- ▶ ‘Associated Press Stylebook’

## For more information or assistance, please contact:

Nora Bruce  
[nbruce@edfund.org](mailto:nbruce@edfund.org)  
916.526.8438

Gina Maucieri  
[gmaucier@edfund.org](mailto:gmaucier@edfund.org)  
916.526.8263