



Writing: Strategies

ESSENTIAL SKILLS TIP SHEET

Use these practical tips to help you improve your **writing** skills at a higher level:

- ✓ Use a strong opening statement (two or three lines) to get your reader's attention.
- ✓ State the most important information first.
- ✓ Create an outline before you start to write; only list key points.
- ✓ Prepare a table of contents for long documents.
- ✓ Use the active voice to keep your writing simple and direct. Focus on the **person** or **thing** (e.g. use "Sylvain wrote the report" rather than "The report was written by Sylvain").
- ✓ Give examples when information is complex or when you want to reinforce a point.
- ✓ Keep the use of technical terms to a minimum. If they must be used, make sure to explain them so that the reader easily understands them.
- ✓ Avoid unnecessary words and delete wordy phrases.
- ✓ Avoid using two words that have the same meaning in one sentence.
- ✓ Try to use words that do not specify a gender (e.g. use "firefighter" instead of "fireman").
- ✓ Use a colon [:] to introduce lists (e.g. the committee now includes the following people: the director, the administrative assistant, the analyst, and the student).
- ✓ Use a semicolon [;] to separate a complex series of items (e.g. there were employees from Ottawa, Ontario; Calgary, Alberta; and Montreal, Quebec at the conference).
- ✓ Use transition words to combine sentences with similar ideas or content (e.g. the weather forecast says it will be hot today; *however*, I am going to wear a sweater).
- ✓ Tailor your writing to your audience (e.g. use professional language when communicating with a client).
- ✓ Review your writing and anticipate questions your reader may have. Incorporate the answers into your writing.