The importance of writing well

Do you ever get that sinking feeling before you send an e-mail, report or article you've written? Or are there some things that you have to psyche yourself up to open fearing a difficult read? Welcome one and all! The good news is, you are perfectly normal. Even Shakespeare agonised over word choice and meaning.

'My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go.'
Claudius, *Hamlet*

Or as [The Economist Style Guide](#) puts it 'clarity of writing usually follows clarity of thought. So, think what you want to say, then say it as simply as possible'.

Easier said than done, says you. But never fear, writing well is a skill just as speaking well is. And skills, as we know, require practice. An article in the [Huffington Post](#) stated that writing was a critical skill for success. So, no pressure. *Honestly*, no pressure. In this article, we aim to provide some guidance to hone your skills.

E-mails

To write an effective e-mail:

1. Choose your recipients well (To: for action, CC: for info).
2. Use a clear subject line (e.g. 'Working from home survey to complete - will take 5 min').
3. Start with a polite greeting ('Dear Human Person').
4. Get to the point ('Could you please review the attached by next Thursday, providing comments on Section 2 & 3 only?').
5. Be concise.
6. Only change fonts or colours when necessary. (Say it with us 'business e-mail'.)
7. Use a simple sign off ('Kind regards').
8. Perform a grammar & spell check (British English) & send.

Tips on writing e-mails: [10 Powerful Tips for Writing an Effective Email (yourdictionary.com)](#)

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Reports

Under the guidance of the Chief of Staff, this year's SG1 report, which gives an annual overview of the Organisation's activities, got a face-lift. Here are some tips on how to follow suit with your reports:

1. Know the objective of the report.
2. Know who your audience is.
3. Create a plan, including titles, of what to cover – avoid repetition and don't let key messages get lost.
4. Use figures or tables to complement your text.
5. Use lists to make information more digestible.
6. Give clear examples.
7. Refer to impacts of the work/research/programme.
8. Use an agreed document template – don't let your message get lost in inconsistent formatting.
9. Ask colleagues to review your text.
10. If for an external audience, get it copy-edited and remember to get it validated.

Tips on writing reports/articles: [General advice on writing a report (open.edu)](open.edu)

For more resources and guidance on writing, see the newly released [Publications Unit SharePoint](SharePoint) site.

And as the *Huff Post* puts it, 'this article may fall under Skitt's Law - where anything discussing grammar and spelling will include grammar and spelling mistakes' but please forgive us this once.

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