



COLLEGE OF MEDIA AND PUBLISHING

ONLINE COURSES IN COPYWRITING, PROOFREADING, MARKETING, SEO AND WRITING

Copywriting course

Lesson 06: How to write great copy

OBJECTIVES

After studying this Lesson, you will be able to:

1. Define the qualities needed to write attractive and effective copy.
2. Explain the need to write with your reader in mind.
3. Explain the importance of good spelling, grammar and punctuation.
4. Define the techniques that apply to most spheres of writing.
5. Apply these techniques to a range of exercises.
6. Determine the strengths and weaknesses of copy written using Artificial Intelligence.

COPYWRITING COURSE LEARNING MATERIAL

It's important to learn the fundamental techniques that will enable you to write what is appropriate for the person or people who are reading it. There is no point in writing a friendly email and a business proposal in the same way.

However, there are some rules and techniques that apply to most spheres of writing.

You will examine some of them now.

WRITING FOR YOUR TARGET READER

If you don't write with your reader in mind, the copy will never do the job properly. You must identify your intended reader(s) before you put pen to paper, since this will influence the content and the writing style.

Writing copy without knowing who it's for is a bit like Ford building a new car and then trying to work out who to sell it to. The market research always comes first, no matter what you are writing. See:

<https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Target-Market-Analysis>

<https://www.marketingdonut.co.uk/marketing-strategy/your-target-market>

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/target-audience>

<https://youtu.be/t0meZUDSJv4>

Activity

Find three different types of content on the internet, such as an About Us webpage, an online brochure or a social media post. With each piece, ask yourself these questions:

1. What language was used? Friendly? Formal? Overfamiliar? Pushy?

Click or tap here to enter text.

2. Was it easy to read? Were you able to run your eyes over the words comfortably or did you have to go back and reread some parts of it?

Click or tap here to enter text.

3. How did the content make you feel? Interested? Bored? Excited? Or, nothing at all?

Click or tap here to enter text.

4. Did you want to read on? If so, why? If not, why not?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Remember: your target reader determines the way you write.

You also need to consider the culture of those involved in certain types of writing. For instance, solicitors write in a particular way, using a certain “language”. And teenagers writing a music blog use a different writing style altogether.

Writing copy without the reader in mind is a bit like going on a trip to London for the day without knowing where you are going and what you want to do. You will probably wander around and do nothing in particular.

A lot of copy wanders around and does nothing in particular in terms of achieving its purpose, whether it's to **inform the reader** or to **get them to respond** in some way.

Identifying your copy's target reader isn't something you make up as you go along. That is a bit like building a new house without having an architect design it first. Or, constructing a building and then deciding whether it's a conservatory, a farmhouse or a shop.

Unless you know who you are writing for, you will never be able to adapt your copy and writing style effectively.

How often have you listened to a politician make a speech and not had a clue what they were talking about? It was not your fault.

The problem was that *they* did not understand who their intended audience was or, if they did, were unable to adjust their language accordingly. A well-delivered message, whether spoken or written, should be like Cinderella's glass slipper – a perfect fit.

Imagine you are a doctor visiting a primary school to do a talk called “My job”. You stand at the front and say:

After taking the Hippocratic Oath, I decided to become a registrar at the local infirmary and then, after three years, went to a local NHS Trust as a locum.

The chances are that no child would understand a word you said.

You would have done better to say:

My job is to make people well when they are sick. I used to work in a hospital. But, now I work in a doctor's surgery, just like the one mummy takes you to when you are poorly. I help out when other doctors are away.

Example

Imagine that you have been asked to write content to promote theatrical productions in London's West End.

The first thing to ask yourself is: "Who is it for?"

The answer to that question is probably: "Adults who want to find useful information quickly."

Now, think of what this means in terms of the way the content is written:

- It will be simple, brief and easy to understand.
 - It will be set out using short, bulleted lists of information.
 - It will offer reviews.
 - It will have an online booking option or provide numbers or websites where people can book tickets.
-

Unless you know **who you are writing for**, you will never be able to pitch your content and writing style effectively.

A newspaper editor told his staff to stand at the office window and look at people on the other side of the road queuing for buses. There was an old lady carrying a bag of shopping, a harassed mum with an upset toddler and a couple of middle-aged men.

Then he said to them: “If those people down there don’t understand every word you have written, then you have failed in your job. You have got to identify your audience and write for them.”

His advice particularly applies to any form of commercial writing.

Below are some of the factors you need to bear in mind when determining your intended audience.

Where are they from?

A mailshot giving details about forthcoming events in Sevenoaks chiefly wants to attract people who live in that geographical area.

But, a webpage about tourist attractions in London will attract Londoners and people from all over the planet who either want to find out about London or who are planning to visit the city.

This means that you are writing for people who may be fluent English speakers as well as many who are not. This presents challenges straight away in writing to cater for both.

Are they male or female, or will you target both genders?

A supplement promoting makeup will primarily attract women. However, a brochure about products concerning going bald is likely to have men as its **intended audience**.

How old are they?

A competition that features Peppa Pig is aimed at under-fives and their parents and is written accordingly. But, a mailshot offering advanced books for people studying Old Testament Hebrew is most certainly aimed at adults.

What is their level of education?

A website offering news about Manchester United is intended for people from all kinds of backgrounds, ranging from unemployed teenagers who left school with no qualifications to university professors who happen to be fans.

What do they know about the subject already?

If you purchase Practical Photography magazine, the chances are you know a fair bit about photography already. So, this is why the content does not explain the basics in much detail.

However, a magazine called Easy PC is aimed at PC novices and is written and presented accordingly. It explains everything and assumes that the reader knows little or nothing about the subject.

What is their status?

Is the content aimed at company directors and captains of industry? Or the person in the street? Or, both?

Once you have established your target audience, then writing the content becomes less hit and miss. Market research is the key to success. You get the idea? You adjust your message to suit your reader.

Tip: A good technique is to write a pen picture of your target reader.

Ask yourself if the content is aimed at:

- A cuddly granny.
- A teenager with street-cred.
- A well-off middle-aged businessman.

Or, who? Picture them and write accordingly.

Activity

Write 100 words on each of the following, using the appropriate language:

- Explain your favourite TV programme to an 80-year-old aunt.
 - Describe your last holiday to a five-year-old.
 - Describe your hobby to a sassy 16-year-old girl.
-

You should find that each piece of writing is completely different because you are writing for different target readers.

This is where versatility in your writing style comes in. You may love writing with a humorous tone, with multiple plays on words and quirky idioms. But you can't use that style for every project and every client. You need to be able to change your style according to the intended reader.

WRITING FOR THE WEB

Copywriters can make a living writing in many different formats, including web content projects. Whether you are asked to draft content from scratch for an exciting new website or need to give existing content a refresh, don't underestimate the importance of learning to write for the web.

The majority of web writing falls into two broad categories:

1. Web content that appears on the homepage, About us page, etc.
2. Informative articles to populate blog pages.

We will focus on web content. SEO article writing is covered in Lesson 15.

At the start of any website project, your client should supply you with the following:

- A site map: this details the number of pages required, their titles and how they link together to create a customer journey through the website.
- The information that needs to be included on each page: the facts around which you will weave your content.

- Audience information: who are you writing for?
- Comprehensive information about the benefits their product or service deliver.
- Any SEO strategy that needs to be incorporated into the content.
- Required tone, style and language choices.
- Key sales messages, including calls to action to drive clicks to other pages, queries and sales.

Unless your skills extend to web design, you will also be working alongside a web designer who will form part of the project team. And, you will no doubt have the classic chicken and egg conversation: which came first? The design or the copy?

Equipped with all this insight, you will then be writing about various elements to do with the client's business. They will want you to sell their product or service in the most persuasive way possible.

You will be responsible for engaging visitors, so that they understand what the client is offering and, most importantly, bring business in. Your words can really swing it one way or the other.

In order to do this successfully, you need to know what the key elements of a website are. They include:

Homepage

This is the main website page and is often the first page visitors see if they have found their way to the site from a search engine. It houses the navigation bar and helps visitors find their way around the website.

It gives visitors a general overview of the products, services or personality, with links to pages with more detail.

This is TV personality Nadiya Hussain's homepage:

<https://www.nadiyahussain.com>

Navigation bar

A set of buttons or images in a row or column that serves as a control point to link the user to sections on a website. This is also known as the menu.

Products and services page

This is where you sell your client's product or service, be it an HR expert or a global yoghurt brand. It's arguably the most important page, as it's where visitors can be turned into clients. It's where you can help bring the money in. A number of essential skills are needed to write a Products and services page.

See [here](#) for more information.

Contact us page

There is no point in asking people to contact you for more information if they can't find out how to do it. In many cases, especially if you are a small business, you will need to include a phone number and email address.

Some companies ask that people submit their queries through a contacts form on the website. See an example of a Contact us page here:

<https://www.grammarly.com/contact>

About us page

This is where you tell visitors who the client is. Think about what information is essential here – what does the reader need to know?

[Search Engine Journal](#) recommends that good About us pages need to tell some of the client's story, but not necessarily all. They believe it should also include some personal information, skill sets and testimonials.

See an example here: <https://dashingdish.com/about>

FAQs

Visitors to a website will often ask questions. In order to avoid being bombarded with the same questions over and over, some companies provide a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section.

As a copywriter, you may be asked to provide short but self-explanatory answers to questions the client is often asked, or expects to be asked. A couple of sentences for each answer should be enough.

Here is an example questions page: <https://support.travelrepublic.co.uk>

Other sections are included on websites, but this content will depend on the product or service. For example:

- An author will have a section on their books with links to buy. See Jon Krakauer's books page:

<https://www.jonkrakauer.com>

- A pub will provide a link to their menu:

<https://www.thecharliepurleypubbbognor.co.uk/menus>

- A wellbeing expert will provide a link to their key products:

<https://www.freshskin.co.uk/shop/wellbeing>

ANALYSING THE WEBSITE'S OBJECTIVES

You have only about six seconds to make a good impression on your webpage visitor. If they don't like what they read within this time span, they will probably leave.

So, to capture them in six seconds, you need to know who they are and what they want from your website, so that you can write content that makes visitors know they have come to the right place. This means knowing what the website's objective is: who the website is for and what it is for.

Once you have established who and what your website is for, writing content becomes more focused. You will have a clear message in mind and will be able to communicate it to your visitor – the person the website is for.

This will then keep them on the website long enough to do whatever it is your website is for, whether you want them to buy something or read some information.

For specific tips on writing effective web copy, take a look at these:

<https://sendgrid.com/blog/11-rules-for-writing-website-copy>

<https://gathercontent.com/blog/how-to-write-great-web-copy>

WRITING TECHNIQUES

The best way to learn to write good copy is to read good and bad examples.

So, get online and look for some press releases. Explore homepages for brands, large and small. Dig deep into their blogs. Buy copies of national papers and good consumer magazines and read their promotional copy over and over again. Read mailshots that come through your letterbox.

Examine the language and the way it's used. Study the way sentences are constructed and how the copy is put together.

Below are some general rules for writing good copy. They apply to most spheres of writing. Learn them and use them.

Create a great opening sentence

Listen to Cleland Thom's podcast "Getting your copy off to a flying start":

<https://soundcloud.com/collegemedpub/getting-your-copy-off-to-flying-start-mixed>

The opening (or first) sentence is the most important part of any copy. Why? Because if readers are not instantly attracted by the opening sentence, they may not read the rest of the copy.

There is no point in having some absorbing and fascinating information halfway through the copy. If the reader is turned off by the opening sentence, they may never get as far as halfway.

The importance of a good opening sentence can't be stressed strongly enough. Many copywriters spend as long writing this as they do on the rest of the copy.

Most will tell you that they are always trying to improve their opening sentences. It's a skill that takes a lifetime to learn. The time to start learning is now.

What are the **purposes** of an opening sentence?

- It must grab the reader's attention.
- It must make them want to read on.
- It must tell the reader **the most dramatic, interesting and unusual aspect of the copy**: the thing that sets this piece of copy apart from the rest.

This is the "**angle**". The angle you identify may be different from the one your client wishes you to use. The bottom line is that you have to follow the client's instructions.

But, you should be prepared to explain why a good angle is vital for fulfilling the main goal of the text, which is to get people to read it and respond to it. You will become increasingly confident at doing this as your experience grows.

What are the **qualities** of a good opening sentence?

- It must be short: 18-25 words maximum.
- The first six or seven words should contain a key fact, for example:

Lucky residents are going to win thousands of pounds.

A brainy man has won a national quiz competition.

Bemused clients had their phones cut off.

- The sentence structure must be simple: no commas, no sub-clauses.
- Unless people's names, names of organisations, etc. are the most important part of the story, (ie. famous people or well-known organisations) or the brief specifically stipulates that they should be included, they must be left out of the introduction and put lower down the copy. For example:

Wrong:

Downtown resident Fred Biggs is opening a new store.

Right:

An enterprising resident is opening a new store.

Wrong:

The local branch of the Women's Royal Volunteer Service is appealing for help.

Right:

A care group is appealing for help.

Wrong:

A retired footballer is shaving his head for charity.

Right:

David Beckham is shaving his head for charity.

- Keep everything simple. Avoid using off-putting abbreviations, statistics, etc:

Wrong:

Factory output is up by 1.3%, an improvement of 0.7% on this time last year.

Right:

Factory output is booming according to figures published today.

- Take time to study the opening sentences in different types of copy.
- Try to find examples of brief, enticing writing. Aim to emulate it.

Be fluent

Read the following sentence:

If you are a householder or maybe you are a business and you are thinking of fitting a burglar alarm system on your premises, then here is an opportunity for you

- you are invited to consult a leading Crime Reduction Expert for advice on how to make a cost-effective investment.

Bit of a mouthful, wasn't it? The chances are you got lost halfway through and had to read the sentence over again in order to understand the meaning. If this was the opening sentence of a piece of copy, then one thing would be guaranteed: your reader would stop reading it.

It's too long and it's not fluent. So, how do you write fluently? This can be summarised in one simple tip: **write as you speak**.

Let's see a more fluent version of that same sentence:

An expert is offering advice on burglar alarms to help you choose the right equipment without paying too much.

See the difference? The second version is far closer to the way you would say it.

Most people speak in fairly clear, fluent English. But, when they start writing, they can become overbearing, complicated and even pompous.

For instance, you may tell your friend:

I'm just popping out to the café for a cuppa and a cake.

But, if you were writing the same information, you may well write:

I am proposing to sojourn to the restaurant and partake in a beverage and an item of confectionery.

When you write your copy, imagine you are talking to a friend and use the same language. Or, if you are struggling to write something fluently, say it out loud. If necessary, say it to a friend. They may wonder what on earth you are talking about, but, at least you will be able to note how it came out and write it down before you forget.

Do what a salesperson would do. Think about how you would sell the product to someone if you met them face to face. Then, write accordingly. The best copy often has a kind of “you-and-me-talking” quality to it.

This is a good article on how to write good copy:

<https://www.wanderlustworker.com/12-tips-for-writing-compelling-copy-that-sells>

And, one on mistakes to avoid:

<https://neilpatel.com/blog/learning-from-bad-copy>

Activity

Rewrite the following sentence to give it **fluency**:

A protest is being planned soon for residents of the town against the county council’s announced proposals to extend the lifetime of the controversial landfill waste disposal facility in the town.

Click or tap here to enter text.

You can check your version against the [model answer](#) at the end of this Lesson. The same applies to some other activities in this Lesson. There is no need to send them in for marking.

Be consistent

Read the following sentence:

Kieran is a regular customer and was always one of the first to place an order when a new product is launched.

You will notice the inconsistency. It begins by saying Kieran **is** but then goes on to say he **was**.

The sentence should read:

Kieran is a regular customer and is always one of the first to place an order when a new product is launched.

Note this point in relation to contractions (I'll, you've, there's, etc.) and non-contractions (I will, you have, there is, etc.): choose which style to use before starting to write (in general, keep non-contractions for more formal, academic copy) and keep it consistent throughout.

Keep it short and simple

Readers nowadays are usually in a hurry and don't have the time to plod through long words, sentences and paragraphs. They need to be able to glance through things quickly.

So, as a general rule, try to ensure that about 60% of the words in your copy contains six letters or fewer. Also, sentences should be under 25 words each. And, paragraphs should comprise a maximum of two or three sentences.

When it comes to sentence length, a good litmus test is to read it out loud. If you have to pause for breath halfway through, it's too long. Split it up, aiming for flow, readability and impact at all times.

And, don't be afraid to start a sentence, or paragraph, with a conjunction to achieve that. You must also use simple sentence constructions and avoid sub-clauses.

For example:

This vehicle, which is the top of the range both in America and in Europe, comes complete with 20 new features fitted as standard.

The phrase "which is the top of the range both in America and in Europe" is a sub-clause, and it slows the reader down.

It would be far better to say:

This vehicle comes complete with 20 new features fitted as standard. It is top of the range both in America and in Europe.

Also, avoid complicated statistics and figures. Simplify them. Use phrases like "up to 10%" or "two out of three".

Activity

Rewrite the following, using **short, simple sentences and paragraphs** that are two sentences maximum:

Police are warning people, especially the elderly, and those who live on their own, not to leave their house keys in the back doors of their homes following a burglary two weeks ago in the town centre. Police officers investigating the case believe that the thief, believed to be a passer-by, put their arm through a catflap and turned a key, which was left in the lock. Once inside they stole a purse, which belonged to the occupant, containing £100 in cash.

Click or tap here to enter text.

You can check your version against a [model answer](#) at the end of this Lesson.

Cut the jargon

When you think about it, our language is littered with jargon and clichés that are nothing more than a waste of space and a waste of the reader's precious time.

Look at the following examples:

A large number of

Why not say **many**?

All of a sudden

Why not say **suddenly**?

At this moment in time	Why not say now ?
During the course of	Why not say while ?
Give consideration to	Why not say consider ?
In spite of the fact that	Why not say despite ?
The majority of	Why not say most ?
Units of housing	Why not say homes ?
Secure the funding	Why not say get the money ?
Owing to the fact that	Why not say because ?
Was a witness to	Why not say saw ?
Behind schedule	Why not say late ?
In short supply	Why not say scarce ?

The list is endless, and a good writer should be on the watch for cumbersome phrases and jargonised words. Aim to eliminate them every time.

Plain English, an “anti-jargon” website, offers this free pdf guide to download:

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf>

It will also test your copy for jargon:

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/drivel-defence-text.html>

There is a useful test you can take to see how clear your writing is. It's called the SMOG test. This stands for Simplified Measure of Gobbledygook.

Use this online SMOG calculator:

<https://thefirstword.co.uk/readabilitytest>

Activity

Examine the following words and phrases and write shorter **jargon-free** alternatives next to them:

At an early date: Click or tap here to enter text.

At the present time: Click or tap here to enter text.

Commence: Click or tap here to enter text.

Worst ever: Click or tap here to enter text.

Face up to: Click or tap here to enter text.

In addition to: Click or tap here to enter text.

Behind schedule: Click or tap here to enter text.

Ahead of schedule: Click or tap here to enter text.

Seating accommodation: Click or tap here to enter text.

Lacerations and contusions: Click or tap here to enter text.

Sustained injuries: Click or tap here to enter text.

In the event of: Click or tap here to enter text.

You can [check your answers](#) at the end of this Lesson.

Write scannable text

Shoppers visiting a big department store tend to fall into one of two categories: they go either because they need a particular item or they go to browse and stop only if something catches their eye.

Busy readers tend to be the same. If they pick up a newspaper, for instance, they are either looking for a particular item like the crossword or TV guide, or they skim the pages and stop only if something catches their eye.

With promotional copy, readers fall into the second category. So, you need to adjust the way you write to accommodate their reading habits. These people don't read information. They scan it.

To be a successful copywriter, you must be able to write scannable text.

Here are some tips:

- Make your sentences and words as short as possible.
- Avoid unfamiliar and complicated words.

- Keep capital letters to a minimum. They slow the reader down.
So, don't refer to Uptown District Council Cabinet Member for Arts and Recreation, but to Uptown District Council's cabinet member for arts and recreation.
- Avoid unnecessary punctuation. Just use the punctuation that's absolutely vital for sense and meaning: full stops, commas, apostrophes, colons and speech marks.
- Eliminate semicolons altogether. And, beware of the exclamation mark and its potential for overly-salesy cheesiness.

Try to make the subject of consecutive sentences the same. For example:

Harry Dwyer has been voted secretary of Uptown Labour party for the fifth year running.

The committee endorsed him unanimously at a special meeting last night.

Emily Dwyer was appointed social secretary for another year.

You will see that each sentence has a different **subject**. It would be better to rephrase the copy:

Harry Dwyer has been voted secretary of Uptown Labour party for the fifth year running.

He was endorsed unanimously by the committee at a special meeting last night.

His wife, Emily Dwyer, was appointed social secretary for another year.

Harry Dwyer is now the subject of every sentence, making it a smoother read.

Don't use too many adjectives

The general rule with copywriting is that you should let facts speak for themselves. Use adjectives (descriptive words) only when they are justified by facts. They are a

useful tool for adding colour and variety, but don't go mad with them. Use them subtly. They can easily tip your tone into too salesy.

So, resist the temptation to refer to everything as:

- Sensational.
- Brilliant.
- Amazing.
- The best ever.

Readers are bored with words like these and generally don't believe them. It's far better to use an endorsement, where a customer describes the product in their own words.

But, it is acceptable to use some "hot words" such as:

- Free.
- Profit.
- New.
- Now.
- Secret.
- Easy.
- Save.
- Guarantee.
- Today.

These have been shown to grab the reader's attention. But, don't overdo them.

Be honest

There's an awful lot of flannel and even downright lies out there. The advertising and public relations industries are not greatly respected for their honesty.

But, customers and clients soon see through dishonest copy. Aim to set high standards of honesty from the start of your career. It will pay off in the end.

Keep it flowing

Start sentences with words like “And”, “But”, “So” (followed by a comma). They keep the copy flowing.

If you have always thought this approach is “wrong”, forget what you may have been taught or led to believe. Using conjunctions like this is one of the easiest tricks in the book to create readability and impact.

Avoid repetition

Scan your copy carefully for repeated words. When you use the same word multiple times, it can easily slow your copy down. For example:

The company has always prided itself on providing exceptional customer service. We believe no other company provides its customers this level of service.

Instead, use alternatives to add colour and variety to your copy:

The company has always prided itself on providing exceptional customer service. We believe no one else will offer you such high standards.

Write to suit the way people read

There are many different reading methods. We all use them without realising it. Writing attractive copy involves writing to suit the way people read.

This can vary from document to document:

Scanning: flicking through, searching for something you know you want and ignoring everything else, for example, scanning a dictionary.

Careful reading: absorbing, considering and digesting the copy, for example, reading a legal document.

Light reading: reading for pleasure but not with a great deal of concentration, for example, reading a newspaper.

Skimming: glancing through to get a general idea of what the copy is about. You might stop and read a section word for word if it interests you, for example, reading a sales letter.

Activity

Which of the four reading methods above would you use for:

- Reading a company's health and safety policy.
 - Reading a newspaper during your coffee break.
 - Looking up a number in a phone book.
 - Reading the instructions for a new piece of equipment.
-

Watch your spelling

Your spelling needs to be good, perfect, in fact. And, you will probably have a good idea already whether your spelling is weak, strong or somewhere in between.

A boy was once reprimanded by his teacher for misspelling a word. She said: "You should have looked it up in the dictionary."

He replied: "Why would I look it up, if I didn't know it was spelt wrong?"

This is an important point. Many writers miss things because they don't realise they're wrong. So, it's important that you identify words that catch you out and either list them or learn to spell them correctly.

The secrets of good spelling are to:

- Keep a small dictionary with you at all times or use an online one like:
<https://www.collinsdictionary.com>

Refer to it often. If in doubt, however small the doubt, look a word up.

- Create your own dictionary. Buy an A-Z notebook and write down the words that often trip you up.

Leave enough space to write them over again. Keep looking at a word, then cover it up, write it down again and check it.

- Check everything you write. Get into the habit of checking the spelling of every word you write.

This will develop accuracy and improve your spelling.

- Use a spellcheck. Most software packages have one. Run it every single time you complete a piece of copy. But, never rely on it 100%.

They pick out obvious errors but not mistakes like using **toe** for **tow**.

- Here are some good interactive spelling tests:

<https://howtospell.co.uk/spelling-rules-quiz>

<https://www.usingenglish.com/quizzes/170.html>

Punctuate properly

Punctuation marks help to make copy clear and easy to read. Many of them indicate pauses you would make if you were reading the copy aloud.

Some people find it difficult to punctuate, possibly because they are not taught how to at school. Others may fall into poor habits over the years.

Whatever the level of your punctuation confidence, make sure that you are familiar with these possible pitfalls: comma splices, Oxford commas, colon use and how to present quotes.

Here are some good tutorials and exercises to help you learn:

https://www.ole.bris.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/courses/Study_Skills/grammar-and-punctuation/index.html

<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/punctuation1.html>

<https://www.englishgrammar.org/punctuation-exercise>

Activity

Write down as many punctuation marks as you can think of:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Check your answers here: <https://www.lexico.com/grammar/punctuation>

Remember that it's acceptable, sometimes, to break rules of punctuation. It depends on who you are writing for.

For instance, most magazines start a quote with a colon:

Mrs Jones said: "This is disgusting."

However, the correct rules of punctuation say you should use a comma:

Mrs Jones said, "This is disgusting."

If you don't already, adopt the colon style to introduce a quote.

Many publications don't use semicolons. They replace them with full stops.

And, some documents start and end quotes with single quotation marks:

Mrs Jones said: 'This is disgusting.'

However, most grammar guides say you should use double quotation marks:

Mrs Jones said, "This is disgusting."

Stick with double quotation marks for quotes.

Deviations from standard rules may offend writers who are defenders of the Queen's English. But, in the modern world of written communication, the only person who always uses the Queen's English is the Queen.

Your decision about punctuation will depend, again, on **who you are writing for**. If you are writing a business report, you will probably want to stick to the rules of punctuation.

But, if you are writing a chatty email to a colleague, correct punctuation may not be necessary.

Here are some simple tips to improve your punctuation:

- Use short sentences: sentences with more than 25 words are difficult to follow. So, if you divide long sentences in two, it will save you having to use a colon, comma or a semicolon.
- Keep paragraphs short: just two to three sentences each. This will make your writing easier to read.
- Check your work: read your work back to yourself, out loud. Does it sound right? Would you say it that way?

Activity

Pick up any piece of written material: a newspaper, magazine, report, memo, etc. Use a highlighter pen to pinpoint every punctuation mark used on one or two pages.

Analyse why they have been used.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Use effective grammar

As with punctuation, the rules of “good grammar” are often not used. Many clients believe it's more important to communicate with their readers in language they can easily understand, rather than Queen's English.

But, some employers and organisations insist on correct grammar being used. Solicitors, publishers and government departments, for example, can be very clear about this. And, if they *do* require you to follow the correct rules of grammar, then it's important for you to know them yourself.

You can learn them at:

https://www.grammarbook.com/grammar_rules.asp

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/grammar>

Make sure that you refer to these websites if you need to follow the correct rules of grammar.

You can also find useful grammar exercises at:

<https://elt.oup.com/student/practicegrammar>

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/exlist/exlist.htm>

Write to persuade

Finally, and crucially, always write to persuade. This approach should be applied to all types of copy but is especially important in web content, promotional content such as leaflets, brochures and advertorials, and any form of advert.

Take a look at the following two different opening line versions for a safe deposit company's homepage:

Our safe deposit centre offers world-class security to people who want to store their precious possessions.

Get peace of mind by storing your precious possessions at our maximum-security safe deposit centre.

The first version describes what the centre offers, which is fine and does the job reasonably well.

The second version also describes what the company offers. But, it also leads on a benefit for the target customer, persuading them that this centre can give them what they are looking for: peace of mind and reassurance.

So, write for your reader first. Use "you" and "your", start sentences with imperative verbs, and pose questions to make your readers feel engaged. They will therefore be more likely to respond positively to your messaging.

THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Many organisations are using AI to create website and social media content quickly and cheaply. But it's easy to overstate the benefits.

So far in this lesson, you have studied the many ways that a copywriter must fine-tune their content and writing style to match the target reader.

AI *cannot* meet all these criteria. And it cannot produce the focused and personalised material necessary for attracting responses in the competitive online environment.

So, AI does not herald the demise of the copywriter. Quite the opposite! It is creating a demand for copywriters who are better than AI, because content written by humans is more effective.

Also, AI content primarily targets search engines, which **drives** people to a website.

But good copywriters can write content that **engages with** people once they have landed on it.

What can AI do?

AI can write content for:

- Websites.
- Blogs.
- Marketing emails.
- Adverts for Google, Facebook and other social media platforms.
- Social media posts.
- Ecommerce product descriptions, headlines and titles.

How do you use it?

First, you need to choose your programme.

Here is a list of AI generator tools:

<https://clickup.com/blog/ai-content-creation-tools/>

However, most content writers use [ChatGPT](#). It's good and free. You will need to open an account here: <https://chat.openai.com>

Try asking it: "Write me some commercial copy about trainers for children."

This is a useful tutorial:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTxsNm9ldYU>

Advantages

AI can:

- Quickly produce well-written articles for free.
- Give you ideas.
- Make suggestions, generate headlines, and propose alternative phrasing.
- Help you optimise language, tone and messaging for the intended audience.
- Tailor copy to specific demographics or user preferences.
- Optimise or repurpose old content.

Disadvantages

AI has its drawbacks. It:

- Has a clinical and generic style. It lacks personality and emotion or sounds too perfect and polished. In contrast, human language is often imperfect, using slang, subtleties, quirks, colloquialisms, and regional variations that give it character and authenticity. AI-generated material is frequently devoid of character. It's a bit like using stock photographs.
- Cannot impart imagination, sensitivity, novelty, empathy, or life experience.

- Doesn't always use an appropriate or consistent tone. Tone is how the writer's attitude or opinion about the topic is expressed. Is it funny, serious, angry, exciting, personal, affecting, informed, knowledgeable, intelligent, interesting, engaging, or conversational?

AI may not get the tone right as it has no idea what the organisation's persona is, so, therefore, no idea what tone to adopt.

Example

James, a jazz enthusiast, is asking AI to write a post on 20th century American Jazz composers for his blog.

He may already be using a humorous tone in his blog, but AI won't know this, so the excerpts it extracts may include a mix of funny, serious, wry, or even cantankerous tones.

James will have to edit the AI draft to introduce his tone into the text.

- Cannot produce new ideas. It draws on existing data, whereas copywriting requires fresh ideas and creative thinking.
- Doesn't understand human behaviour and emotion. This is essential with digital marketing, which seeks to make an emotional connection with users.
- Cannot provide opinions or personal observations that are valuable to help users decide whether to buy a product or service.
- Makes mistakes, especially when writing about specialised or technical subjects. Instead, it often overuses industry buzzwords which makes the content sound amateurish.
- Uses repetitive phrases or clichés.
- Doesn't consider the audience's cultural background, resulting in potentially offensive language.

- Can breach copyright because it can only use information that is already online.
- May not capture an organisation's ethos or personality.
- Cannot guarantee originality. If two rival organisations ask AI to write an article on the same subject, they will both end up with similar articles.

Humans can write content that stands out because it's more persuasive, empathetic, interesting and creative. A machine can't.

Activity

Visit these two websites:

<https://adolos.substack.com/p/feeling-unproductive-maybe-you-should?s=r>

<https://theeverygirl.com/things-to-do-when-youre-feeling-unproductive>

Which website uses AI content? Why do you think that?

Should you use AI?

AI can help you in many ways. It can:

1. Provide draft content.

For example, if you type this instruction into ChatGPT:

Write a blog post on horse riding lessons for children

It will give you this:

Title: Unleash the Joy of Horse Riding: Engaging Lessons for Children

Introduction: Horse riding is a captivating and exhilarating activity that offers children a unique opportunity to connect with nature, develop confidence, and cultivate essential life skills. Whether your child dreams of galloping through open fields or simply desires to forge a special bond with these majestic creatures, horse riding lessons provide an ideal platform for growth and enjoyment. In this blog post, we will explore the numerous benefits of horse riding for children and offer insights into creating engaging and enriching lessons that will ignite their passion for equestrian adventures.

1. Building Confidence and Responsibility:

Horse riding lessons empower children with a sense of confidence and responsibility. As they learn to control and communicate with their equine partners, they develop a strong sense of self-assurance. The act of mounting, grooming, and caring for a horse instils a deep sense of responsibility, teaching children the importance of commitment and nurturing.

2. Physical and Mental Well-being: Engaging in horse riding provides children with a wonderful opportunity to engage in physical exercise and stay active. Riding a horse requires balance, coordination, and core strength, which contribute to overall physical development. The rhythmic motion of the horse also has a calming effect, promoting mental well-being and reducing stress levels.

3. Building Trust and Empathy: Interacting with horses encourages children to develop trust and empathy. Horses are perceptive animals that respond to human emotions and intentions. Through horse riding lessons, children learn to understand non-verbal cues, practice patience, and establish a harmonious relationship based on mutual trust and respect. These skills extend beyond the stables and positively impact their interactions with others.

4. Developing Focus and Concentration: Horse riding demands focus and concentration, as riders must be aware of their surroundings and respond to the horse's movements. By practicing exercises that improve concentration, such as navigating obstacles or performing precise movements, children enhance their ability to focus and stay present, which can translate into improved performance in academics and other areas of their lives.

5. Enhancing Social Skills: Horse riding lessons provide children with a unique social environment. Group lessons allow them to interact with fellow riders, fostering teamwork, camaraderie, and a sense of community. They learn to communicate effectively, offer support to their peers, and celebrate achievements together, building lasting friendships based on shared interests.

6. Promoting Outdoor Appreciation: In a world dominated by screens, horse riding offers children a refreshing break in the great

outdoors. Spending time amidst nature encourages an appreciation for the environment and instils a sense of responsibility towards its preservation. Children gain a deeper understanding of the natural world as they observe the horse's relationship with its surroundings and learn about proper stable management.

2. Provide ideas.

For example, if you type this instruction into ChatGPT:

Give me website content ideas for selling holidays to holland

It will give you these:

1. "Discover the Beauty of The Netherlands: Unforgettable Holiday Experiences Await!"
2. "Exploring Amsterdam and Beyond: Plan Your Perfect Dutch Vacation"
3. "Experience Dutch Culture and History: Unveiling the Charms of The Netherlands"
4. "Escape to the Dutch Countryside: Serenity and Adventure Await"
5. "Unwind and Relax: The Best Dutch Spa Retreats for Your Holiday"
6. "Bike Tours in The Netherlands: Pedal Your Way to Adventure"
7. "Tulip Fields and Windmills: Embrace the Iconic Dutch Landscapes"
8. "Family-Friendly Fun in The Netherlands: Exciting Activities for All Ages"

9. "Indulge in Dutch Cuisine: Culinary Delights for Food Lovers"

10. "Off the Beaten Path: Hidden Gems and Secret Treasures of The Netherlands"

Remember to tailor the content to your specific travel agency or website and highlight unique offerings, package deals, itineraries, and special experiences available for visitors to The Netherlands.

3. Write tweets.

For example, if you type this instruction into ChatGPT:

Write me five tweets promoting a new cake shop

It will give you these:

1. "Indulge in a sweet symphony of flavours at our brand-new cake shop! From rich chocolate to fruity delights, we've got your cravings covered.

Come and experience a slice of heaven! 🍰🌟

#CakeShop #SweetTreats #GrandOpening"

2. "Calling all cake enthusiasts! We're thrilled to announce the grand opening of our cake shop. Step into a world of decadence and delight as we serve up delectable creations that will leave you craving for more. Visit us today!

🍰😋 #CakeLovers #GrandOpening #SweetTooth"

3. "Satisfy your sweet tooth at our newly opened cake shop! From elegant wedding cakes to whimsical birthday treats, our skilled bakers create edible works of art that taste as good as

they look. Join us in celebrating the joy of cake! 🍰🏠 #CakeShop #SweetDelights #Celebration"

4. "Discover a slice of happiness at our charming cake shop. Each bite is a blissful journey of flavours, textures, and pure indulgence. Treat yourself or surprise someone special with a scrumptious delight. Don't resist the temptation! 😊🍰 #CakeShop #Indulge #Temptation"

5. "Attention cake connoisseurs! Our cake shop is now open, and we can't wait to delight your taste buds. From classic favourites to unique creations, we handcraft cakes that are a feast for the senses. Join us in the celebration of all things cake! 🏠🌟 #CakeLovers #SweetSensations #GrandOpening"

4. Write content for all other social media platforms.

This can include posts for Facebook, scripts for TikTok and articles for LinkedIn.

But your role is to refine Chat GPT's output by including elements that it *cannot* provide, such as:

- Empathy with the audience's emotional needs.
- A fresh, compelling writing style that uses colloquialisms and cliches.
- An organised structure.
- An engaging, audience-specific register and tone.
- Personal experience, comments and observations.
- New ideas.

Human copywriters can bring a unique understanding of brand voice, context, and emotional nuances, placing their copy ahead of any rival organisation's content.

Activity

ChatGPT was instructed to create a 100-word article promoting secretarial services. It created this article:

Streamline Your Business Operations with Professional Secretarial Services

In today's fast-paced business world, efficiency and productivity are key to success. That's where professional secretarial services come into play, offering a valuable solution for businesses seeking to streamline their operations.

Professional secretaries bring a wealth of skills and expertise to the table, ensuring smooth administrative processes and allowing you to focus on core business activities. From managing correspondence to organizing meetings, handling documentation, and maintaining schedules, they take care of the essential tasks that keep your business running smoothly.

By outsourcing secretarial services, you can save valuable time, reduce overhead costs, and access a pool of talented professionals with specialized knowledge in various industries. These services offer flexibility, allowing you to scale up or down as needed, ensuring optimal resource allocation.

Moreover, professional secretaries possess excellent communication skills, attention to detail, and confidentiality. They understand the importance of maintaining professional etiquette, providing a positive impression to clients and stakeholders.

In a world where time is of the essence, partnering with a reputable secretarial service provider empowers your business to operate efficiently, stay organized, and maximize productivity. Unlock the benefits of professional secretarial services today and give your business the competitive edge it deserves.

List any weaknesses you find in the copy.

Then list ways you could improve it.

Other areas where AI can help

AI is ideal for freelance copywriters. It can help them:

- Plan their schedules or tasks.
- Beat writer's block.
- Research articles.
- Curate content. AI algorithms can sift through vast amounts of content to curate relevant articles, blog posts, and news pieces for copywriters. This can update copywriters on industry trends and provide supporting materials for their writing.

Can AI negatively affect SEO?

Google will not penalise web copy that is written by AI. But it will:

- Penalise sites that publish content that is flawed, inappropriate or unoriginal, whether written by people or AI.
- Reward sites that provide valuable, relevant and useful content, whether written by a human or AI.

Quality matters. If content is badly written, contains grammatical errors or lacks relevance to a user's search intent, it may not perform well in search engine rankings, no matter who wrote it.

And, Google dislikes spammy or manipulative tactics and keyword stuffing.

So, a good copywriter should review and edit AI-generated copy, so that it:

- Aligns with Google's guidelines on SEO best practices.
- Is relevant to the target audience.
- Provides relevant and helpful information.

Also, keep abreast of Google's guidelines regarding AI-generated content to ensure compliance.

These are Google's latest guidelines:

<https://developers.google.com/search/blog/2023/02/google-search-and-ai-content>

ANY QUERIES?

If you have any queries, please contact your tutor via the OLA.

ASSIGNMENT

ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS

You can find instructions here:

<https://ww2.collegeofmediaandpublishing.education/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=2>

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

Identify something you need to write and then write it. It can be a report, memo, letter, email or a proposal – anything you like, maximum 250 words.

Make sure that you identify your target reader before you write it and **tell your tutor who it is** at the start.

Then, write for them.

QUESTION 2

Write **one** short, powerful, **opening sentence** for each of the following points, using **all** of the facts given:

- a. Prince William is scheduled to visit a housing estate. It's in Tower Hamlets, East London. While he's there, he'll be given a poem by Leanne Malone, seven.
- b. A plan has been announced by Islington Council. It's for a new sports and leisure centre. It will cost £5m to build and will provide 100 new jobs.
- c. A chocolate company, Nestlé, is offering people the chance to win one million free bars if they find a silver star inside the wrapper of some of their products.

QUESTION 3

Use the **most important** facts in the points below to write short, powerful, **opening sentences**. This means you will have to decide what to put into the sentence and what to leave out.

Remember, write **one** sentence only, per point. Be selective when choosing which facts to keep.

- a. The transport minister has called on local councils to reduce the 30mph speed limit to 20mph in residential areas. Recent trials showed that such a limit reduces the number of child road deaths by 80%.
- b. Factory manufacturing rose by 0.7% in July. This follows a 2.1% fall in June. Industrial production, including oil, rose 0.8% in July, 2.8% better than last July. The figures were released yesterday by the government and are seen as indications of economic recovery.
- c. A health expert is warning teenagers about going on diets that leave out essential minerals like calcium. Sally-Ann Denton, Islington's community physician, says she understands why teenagers want to keep an eye on their weight. But, too little calcium can increase the risk of them getting life-threatening brittle bone disease when they are older.

THE NEXT LESSON

Your next Lesson will be available for download from the OLA once this assignment has been graded.

MODEL ANSWERS

Here are the answers to the activities.

Fluency – activity answer

Residents are invited to a demonstration against county council plans to extend the life of the town's rubbish tips.

[Return to activity](#)

Keeping things short and simple – activity answer

Police are warning people not to leave their house keys in the back doors of their homes.

This follows a burglary two weeks ago in the town centre.

The elderly and those who live on their own are at risk.

Police believe the thief was a passer-by who reached through a cat flap and turned a key that had been left in the lock.

Once inside, the burglar stole a purse containing £100.

[Return to activity](#)

Eliminating jargon and clichés – activity answers

At an early date: **soon**

At the present time: **now**

Commence: **start**

Worst ever: **worst**

Face up to: **face**

In addition to: **as well as**, or **plus**

Behind schedule: **late**

Ahead of schedule: **early**

Seating accommodation: **seats**

Lacerations and contusions: **cuts and bruises**

Sustained injuries: **was injured**

In the event of: **if**

[Return to activity](#)
