How to Choose a Business Writing Course

This is the most definitive guide online about how to choose a business writing course.

To be successful in business today you must be able to communicate clearly through written text. The ability to write clearly and convey complex information logically is a huge competitive advantage in any industry.

Bottom Line? Individuals and teams that communicate clearly succeed at work.

After 19 years of teaching business writing courses, we wanted to create a guide to help you choose the right course. This guide details how to create a custom corporate writing program and how to choose a business writing course as an individual.

View our current business writing courses.

CHAPTER 1

Fundamentals of Choosing a Course

Choosing an online business writing course is not only a financial investment but an investment in your professional future. For this reason, we encourage you to scrutinize and vet each option. It's critical to your success that you make the right choice.

Why are Goals Important?

The first step in choosing a course is to define your goals. It will be difficult to choose the best class if you do not identify the outcomes you want to achieve. Here are a few goals we often see for both individuals and businesses.

Common Individual Goals:
- Significantly increase writing speed
- Convey complex information with more clarity
- Professionally disagree and write more persuasively
- Write in a professional and competent tone and voice
- Improve proofreading skills
- Write more efficiently
- Improve written English communication as a non-native writer

Common Organizational Goals:
- Reduce expensive communication mistakes
- Clearly convey insights and business opportunities
- Standardize the writing style across a division
- Invest in employees growth and develop future leadership
- Increase professionalism and persuasiveness of the sales department
- Decrease employees' time spent writing while increasing accuracy
- Increase employee productivity and accuracy while decreasing cost

Determine Your Starting Point
You want to choose a course that helps you reach your goals. To do this, you need to understand your starting point. You probably already know you some of your weaknesses. We recommend taking a piece of paper and jotting down a quick list.

Quickly draw a "T" on a sheet of paper. On the top of the "T" write down the goals which you are looking to achieve. Then in the bottom left corner, write down your strengths or the strengths of your group. On the bottom right side, list out your weaknesses.

This framework will make it easier for you to evaluate the courses, instructors, and providers. You want to ensure that the course you choose matches your goals and is structured to help address your strengths and weaknesses.

Goals

Strengths | **Weaknesses**
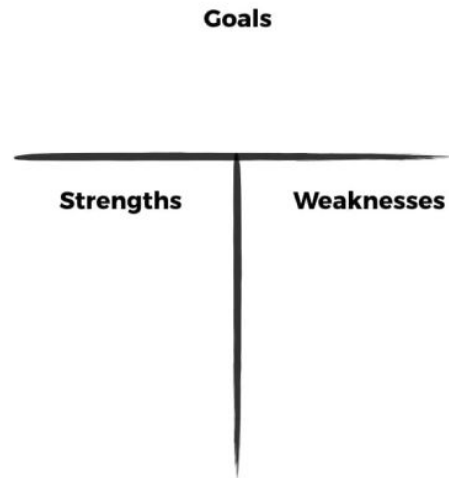
How to Evaluate a Business Writing Course

You will quickly learn that there are many options and configurations of business writing courses. This chapter will review what to look for when evaluating your options.

Important: The next two sections are dependent on if you are a company looking to provide a course to employees or an individual looking to take an online class.

6 Steps to Create a Custom Corporate Program

Are you thinking of creating a custom writing education program for your employees? This section covers how to build a custom program in six steps. At the end of this chapter, you will have a roadmap for the next steps to create a custom program. You can always contact us if you have any additional questions.

1. Create Project Brief

The first step is to outline what your objectives are for the program. The section above outlines how to identify your project goals, team's weaknesses, and strengths. Expand on this to create your project brief. This brief should detail the requirements for your organization.

A project brief will help you clarify not only what you are looking for but help companies bidding to understand what you are looking for.

2. Outline "Unique Requirements"

We find each custom program has what we call "unique requirements." These are elements that are distinct to your project. Make sure to identify these beforehand and ensure the course is built to support these.

Here are a few examples of unique course requirements we have helped design:
- Industry-specific elements
- Company writing models
- Scalability of the course to multiple geographic areas
- Integration with internal training programs
- Specific reporting, tracking, and registration
- Document compliance for regulatory board review
- Coaching for major documents
- Individual coaching and mentoring
- Ongoing educational program

3. Create Evaluation Criteria

The next step is to decide what criteria you will use to evaluate your training options. We have created a helpful rubric to aid in structuring your decision-making process. Notice we have chosen value instead of price. The lowest cost option does not always offer the best value.

Use the rubric below to evaluate. The rubric helps to visualize your evaluation in a structured manner. Score each item on a scale of one to four, with one being the lowest score and four being the highest.

[DOWNLOAD PDF PRINTABLE VERSION OF THE RUBRIC](#)

Content of Course
Content is comprehensive to the needs of the project. It is organized logically and focuses on employee outcomes as outlined in the project brief.

Industry Expertise
The company has experience in your industry. They understand the needs and challenges specific to your sector. They have worked with similar companies in your industry and size.

Additionally, the company specializes in business writing, rather than general training.

Instructors
The instructors have both academic and practical knowledge of business writing specifically. There are enough instructors to meet your needs.

See the section below on how to evaluate an instructor in more depth.

Delivery
The course uses multiple methods of instruction and interaction to reach learning outcomes. The learning management system (LMS) is easy to use and flexible enough to meet your needs.

Ability to serve "Unique Requirements"
The ability to accommodate unique needs has been demonstrated. The company is clear about how the training will accommodate these challenges.

Verify that the company will interview some of your employees and review actual work documents. This will confirm that the training will truly meet your unique requirements.

Value
The course offers a positive return on investment. It offers the best course for our employees at a fair price.

Bonus: How to Calculate ROI
It's easy to calculate the ROI of our courses. We created a calculator that lets you adjust the salary of your employees and the potential decrease in the time they spend writing. Then the calculator will show the ROI on your new business writing program.

4. Interview, Evaluate, and Select

During the next stage, you want to use your unique evaluation criteria to review the course options. This is a time to talk with the provider and iron out details. Make sure to discuss outcomes, timeline, and budget. Once you have selected the training provider, they can start designing your custom program.

5. Design Course

The fifth step is for the company to create the program. They should work with you to ensure all project criteria are met. This phase should be collaborative between both parties.

6. Kickoff and Execution

Once the course development is complete, it is time to launch the program. You can start enrolling students and tracking results. Periodically it is important to evaluate the program and make updates where necessary.

CHAPTER 2.2

Choosing an Online Course as an Individual

Choosing an online class can be overwhelming. With so many courses you need to be able to identify what course will put you ahead at work. If you already completed the exercise in the first section you already have a list with your goals, your strengths, your weaknesses. Now it's time to choose the right course.

Ask For The Outline

When looking at courses make sure to review the course outline. Make sure that it addresses all the weaknesses you have written down on your list. Look for a comprehensive course that uses multiple methods for teaching the content.

Review Instructor Interaction

Look for courses that allow individual interaction with an instructor. This will allow you to ask questions and gain more actionable feedback.

The instructor should not only provide feedback on your writing but also on your skills as a writer.

Students often rate their one-on-one interaction with their instructor as one of the most valuable parts of our web-based courses.

Ask how much interaction you will get with the instructor and what their feedback will look like. Learn more about our instructor feedback here.

We go into more detail on how to choose an instructor in chapter five.

Course Structure & Quality

You won't be able to view the course in its entirety before buying, but there are a few ways to evaluate the structure and quality. Chapter Four details how to review the structure of a course.

For quality, try to dig deeper than the course outline. Ask if you can watch a sample lesson or view a video that highlights parts of the course.

You can also look at the quality of the articles that they publish on their blog. This is often indicative of the quality of content creation in the course.

Testimonials

Review testimonials from the course. Look for individuals that hold similar learning goals as you. If they publish course reviews, read through both the best and worst scoring reviews.

As an alternative to reviews, you will often find companies release results from their post-course evaluations. These evaluations may be more valuable as reviews are often given by individuals that had a very good or very poor experience.

Schedule a Discussion

Scheduling a discussion can help answer any remaining questions. See if they have a phone number you can call or a link to schedule a call. Make sure to create a list of questions before the call.

Find a Course

Make sure to review multiple courses to ensure you are choosing the right one. Providers often have multiple courses that address different learning objectives. In the next chapter, we review our business writing courses and detail the differences between each offering.

CHAPTER 3

Types of Courses

Take a look at some of our business writing courses to see which best meets your needs.

While our courses have a similar structure, the content varies greatly based on the objectives of each course. From practicum courses in proposal and report writing to our best-selling business writing techniques course, we have a variety of courses available to match your specific goals.

CHAPTER 4

Course Structure Analysis

Why is Pedagogy Important?

Pedagogy is the theory and practice of how to best teach. This is important because it dictates how your online course is structured.

You want to ensure courses are developed by experts in both the content and adult learning theories. As an adult, you learn differently than a child. Our courses are based on Robert Gagne's theory of adult education. Our courses are designed for high-performance individuals in professional industries.

Below are the essential elements to look for in the structure of a course.

Feedback

Instructor feedback is the most valuable part of an online course. It ensures that you get personalized feedback and support that will change the way you write at work. Make sure to carefully review the level of engagement that you will receive throughout your course.

Don't assume all courses come with instructor feedback. Many courses do not offer detailed feedback.

Don't accept merely submitting a document you've written at work for instructor feedback. That feedback will be language editing only. You want feedback that is more holistic, which addresses your ability to assess your audience, plan a document, present relevant content, organize it well, sequence it appropriately, extract what is truly important, and assess the words you use and the way you use them. You want more than mere editing.

Much better is receiving feedback on your writing based on a scenario. This will allow your instructor to assess your planning, organization, sequencing, and the words you choose and how you use them.

Demand a full, holistic review of your writing, not a mere edit.

Instructors should also use this time to expand the lessons and include supplemental resources based on your writing.

Ideally, you are also receiving full support for the duration of your course.

Most importantly you want to look for a course that offers feedback to your goals and you as a writer. Verify that the course asks you to submit your course goals. To become an advanced

business writer, you need feedback on your skills as a writer that are specific to your needs. Specific goals allow your instructor to provide feedback that will immediately improve your actual writing at work.

Individual feedback is one of the most important ways to hone your business writing skills, so make sure it's meaningful.

Varied Methods of Instruction

It is important that there are multiple methods of instruction in the course. This makes the material easier to understand and ensures participants stay engaged.

These are the methods of instruction we include in our courses:

Video Examples
Video walkthroughs show step-by-step the skills being taught.

Discussion
Discussion is an opportunity to test new ideas and explore complexities of the content.

Written Text
Written text is used throughout the courses to teach major writing concepts.

Model Writing
Mock writing allows you to apply new concepts in an optimal situation. This is an excellent way to practice new concepts.

Case Studies
Pioneered at Harvard Business School, case studies allow students to reflect on the situation and explore alternatives.

Scenario-Based Exercises
These exercises focus on learning by doing. These exercises are practical and focus on solving real-world problems.

Visual Infographics
Graphics can aid the explanation of a concept that is difficult to understand through written text.

Document Models
Annotated examples of typical documents can be used to illustrate challenges and improvements.

Presentations
Slide presentations allow information to be taught in a chronological manner with visual aids.

Current Research
We provide links to current research and best practices published by educational institutions and colleagues we trust. This content augments the course material.

Annotated Documents
Annotated documents help you get personalized feedback on your writing. These are key to identifying and correcting the mistakes you make in your writing.

Quizzes
Quizzes not only test that you understand a concept but help cement recently learned material. They also indicate if more help is needed.

Class Size

It is important to ask the class size of the course you are taking.

All our online courses are individually paced and instructed. This allows you to progress at your preferred pace and interact as needed with your instructor.

Job Aids

In addition to learning materials, some courses offer example materials to help you after the course. We call these job aid or resource documents. They are quick reference guides that you can print out and keep at your desk. They ensure you are reminded of key concepts taught during the course. Each of our courses comes with multiple job aids.

Post-Purchase Support

Your learning doesn't stop after the course is completed.

Our courses offer vetted support after the course. This ensures you successfully apply your new writing skills to your day-to-day work.

Ongoing support after our courses includes:
- Monthly business writing newsletter for clients.
- Client-only web form to submit ongoing business writing questions.
- Access to exclusive webinars.

How are the Courses Taught?

Online courses are delivered in our learning management system (LMS), which allows you flexible login access, and links to all integrated resources. This allows us to track, support, and assess your writing properly. Our online courses allow you or your team to train any time, pace, or place.

Course Certificate

After completing the course, you will earn a personalized certificate. You can display your certificate to the certification section of your LinkedIn profile, download to print, or mention in your résumé.

In-Person Seminars and Workshops Structure

We offer onsite training for corporate groups. These allow you to train a group of individuals at the same time. We have presented customized workshops to companies around the world.

CHAPTER 5

Evaluating Instructors

The secret to the effectiveness of our courses is the instructors who teach them. An outstanding instructor is the difference between a good course and an outstanding course. The instructor's teaching and feedback will be key to your success. For this reason, it is important to evaluate the instructor you will be working with.

We thought the best way to help you evaluate an instructor is to share what we look for when hiring an instructor.

The Requirements for Our Staff

Theoretical and Practical Experience
It is important to us that our instructors have both a deep academic and professional background in writing generally and business writing specifically. This ensures that they understand both the theory and the application of writing in business today.

Similar Industry Experience
Business writing differs depending on the application and industry. We look for instructors that have a diverse background of industry experience. This ensures we can staff business writing experts in all major industries. To see the industries we have worked with before please view our client list.

Communication Skills
The teacher must be able to organize and articulate their ideas clearly. They must be able to clearly answer questions and explain concepts through a variety of approaches. To be engaging, they must be passionate about the topic. And, they must be warm and caring.

Content Knowledge
Outstanding instructors have a comprehensive understanding of their area of instruction. When we hire instructors, we look for successful college-level teachers.

About Instructional Solutions

We have been delivering online business writing courses since 1998, following optimal online and adult learning principles. We develop all content ourselves, based on our expert credentials and ongoing research.

Key Outcomes
- Proven results from thousands of participants
- Train anytime, pace, or place
- Instructor feedback linked to course goals ensures improvement
- Interactive, tracked training delivered to a global audience

View our current business writing courses.

Contact Us

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