Business Writing: old skill, new paradigm

Nick Brieger

Objectives

- To show the development of approaches to teaching business writing

- To demonstrate the application of an alternative approach

- To illustrate the approach with some materials and tasks

A framework for business writing skills: a starting point

LANGUAGE

STYLE

STRUCTURE

Correct language:
Grammar
Vocabulary and expressions
Punctuation
Spelling
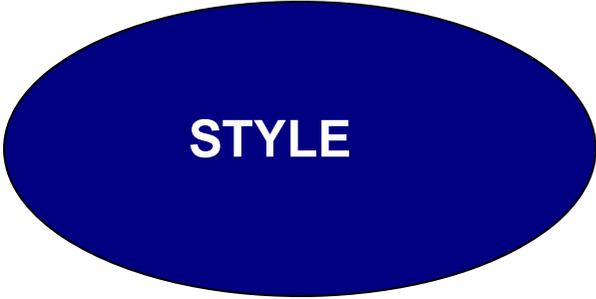
Appropriate style:
Formal vs informal
Direct vs indirect
Simple vs complex
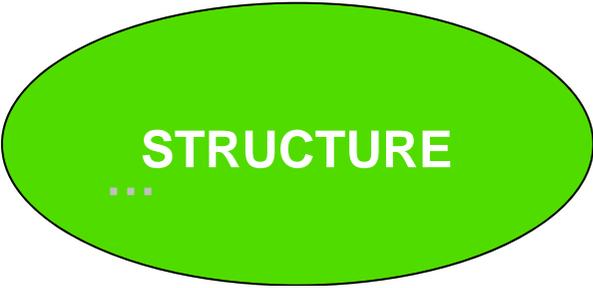
Clear structure:
format and layout, in terms of paragraphs, headings, white spaces

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A framework for business writing skills: next step

1. Writing as product

Quantity of information: how much info?
Technical level: technical detail of info, specialist knowledge

SUITABILITY of … … CONTENT

ACCURACY of … …. LANGUAGE

Grammar
Vocabulary and expressions
Punctuation
Spelling

TRANSPARENCY of … … STRUCTURE

APPROPRIACY of … … TONE / STYLE / REGISTER

Words / expressions: simple vs complex
Sentence length: fog index
**Sentence structure:** simple vs complex

External structure: clear format and layout, eg paragraphs, headings, white spaces
Internal structure: connections between ideas, eg linking words between sentences

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A framework for business writing skills: next step and another perspective

2. Writing as process

1. Clarify your purpose

2. Think about your readers

3. Make a start: collect information

4. Select the relevant information (content)

5. Write your first draft (structure and tone)

6. Review and edit (structure, tone and language)

7. Revise and write second / final draft (all areas)

CONTENT

STRUCTURE   TONE

LANGUAGE

Collins
English for Business

WRITING

Nick Brieger

POWERED BY COBUILD

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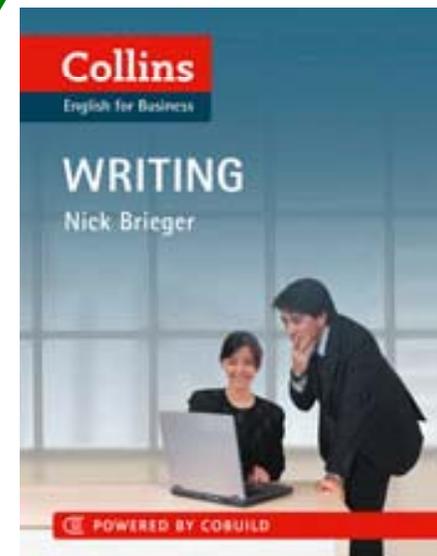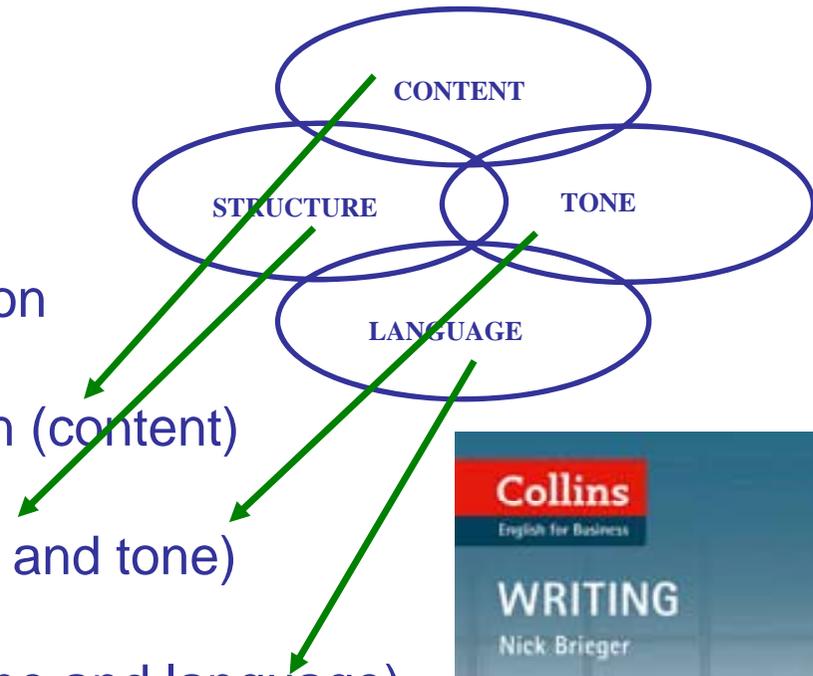
A framework for effective business writing: a new paradigm

Readability describes the ease with which your document can be read. This focuses on the reading process.

**Impact** describes the intended result of your writing.

Accuracy (of language) describes the correct use of language.

READABILITY of…
…. CONTENT

$+$

IMPACT of…
…. WRITING

$+$

ACCURACY of …
… LANGUAGE

FINANCIAL TIMES
Essential Guides
BUSINESS WRITING
HOW TO WRITE TO ENGAGE, PERSUADE AND SELL
IAN ATKINSON

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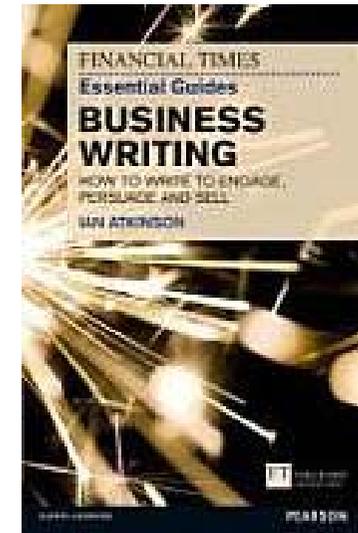
Deconstructing the new paradigm, ie making it SMART

Readability / Impact criteria
Content:
Quantity of information
Technical level
Words / expressions:
simple vs complex
Sentence length:
fog index
Sentence structure:
simple vs complex

**READABILITY of…
…. CONTENT**

+

**IMPACT of…
…. WRITING**

External structure: clear format and layout,
eg paragraphs, headings, white spaces
Internal structure: connections between ideas, eg linking words between sentences

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Measuring readability

1. Gunning Fog Index

The total number of words is divided by the total number of sentences to equal the average number of words per sentence.

The number of words with more than 3 syllables is divided by the total number of words to equal the Percentage of difficult words.

Total these two figures (1 and 2) and multiply that total by 0.4. This figure is the Fog Index in *years of education*.

2. The Flesch Scale

The Flesch Reading Ease Scale is the most widely used formula outside of educational circles. It is the easiest formula to use, and it makes adjustments for the higher end of the scale. It measures reading from 100 (for easy to read) to 0 (for very difficult to read). A zero score indicates text has more than 37 words on the average in each sentence and the average word is more than 2 syllables. Flesch has identified a "65" as the Plain English Score. In response to demand, Flesch also provided an interpretation table to convert the scale to estimated *reading grade and estimated school grade completed*.

Let's try them.

http://www.readability-score.com/

Increasing readability and impact tasks

Trainee tasks

Review your text to **increase readability**, ie reduce fog index, and **impact**.

Task 1

Make your text more **readable** and 'impactful' by changing the balance of sentence structures. This normally means:
- using a greater variety of sentence structure
- thinning out dense complex sentences
- integrating some shorter (simple) sentences for impact

Task 2

Use the fog index analysis to review the vocabulary in your text. Make your text more **readable** and 'impactful' by changing some of your technical / complex words to simpler words. Alternatively, you can provide language support for your technical / complex words with:
- synonyms
- reformulations
- exemplifications

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Increasing readability and impact tasks (cont)

Task 3

Review your text in terms of its **external** structure.

Check your text in terms of transparency of:

- overall layout
- headings
- paragraphs
- white space
- bullet points
- numbering

Task 4

Review your text in terms of its **internal** structure.

Pay particular attention to your use of linking words between sentences.

These show the logical / chronological connections between your ideas; and help your reader to read fluently.