

Writing Skills

Seminars

Professional Communication



Introduction



What are the Writing Skills seminars?

Linguarama offers Writing Skills seminars for professionals, aimed at helping non-native users of English to improve their work-related documents.

Linguarama has worked in this area for some years with many large, multinational firms. Currently, Linguarama provides Writing Skills seminars for Assurance, Advisory, Audit, Tax, Human Resources, and Legal Practitioners. Most Writing Skills seminars are of two or three days' duration and take place on the client's or other premises.

Who are they for?

Writing Skills seminars are for professional staff who need to write documents in English. They may already be experienced professionals who need to "brush up" their writing skills. Alternatively, they may be new recruits who will be required to write in English. Participants will generally have a good standard of English, around Linguarama Level 2.0 or above (a good intermediate or advanced level).

Why do professional staff need writing skills courses?

Most multinational firms use English to communicate with clients. Professional staff regularly have to write documents in English, although they are not native speakers. Despite having a good level of spoken English, many of them have not considered the elements of good writing. They therefore tend to write as they speak, or to translate from their first language. This results in documents which are unclear to the reader and inappropriate in style. There are also often certain grammatical mistakes caused by first language interference.

Attending a Writing Skills seminar helps participants become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, and have an increased understanding of what makes successful writing. As a result, professional documents are clearer, more effective, and are more quickly produced.

What do we mean by effective writing skills?

Linguarama Writing Skills seminars generally cover all the elements of effective writing in a professional context. These include:

- Structure and Clarity
- Style
- Tone
- Grammar
- Functions
- Cohesion
- Using Plain English

Structure and Clarity:

organising the information and making it clear for the reader

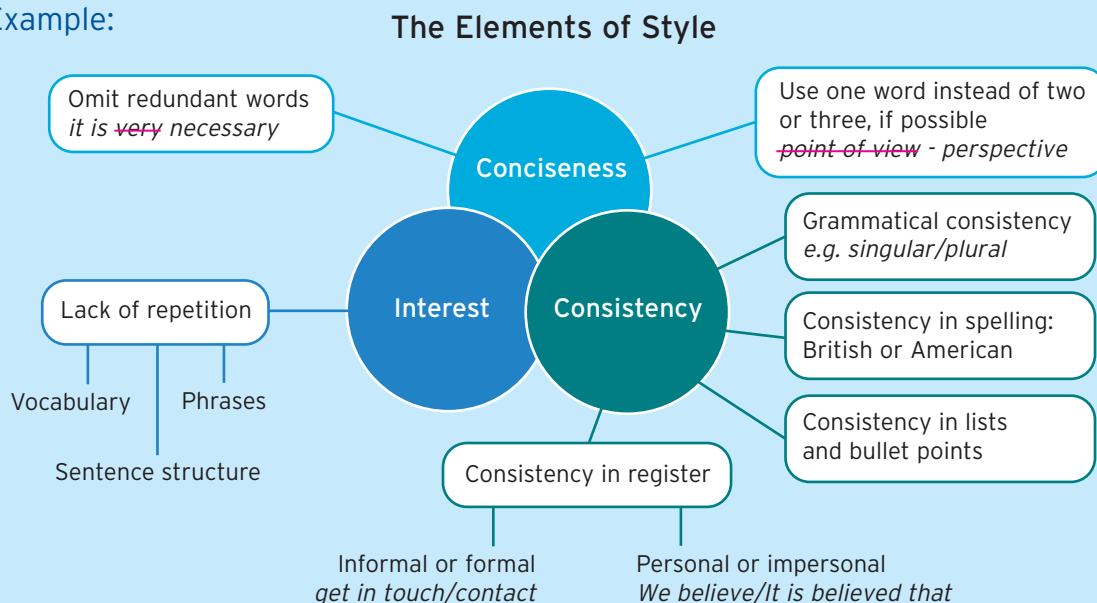
Example:

Put yourself in the reader's shoes and start with the topic. Readers do not start to process the information until they have found the key information. If this is in the middle of the text, it will be unclear.

Style:

choosing the right level of formality; writing concisely and consistently

Example:



Tone:

using appropriate language for the situation

Example for a strong recommendation:

It is of the utmost importance that you introduce new control procedures as soon as possible.

Grammar:

with particular attention to typical mistakes

Example:

I often write ...

We have used this method since six years.

I should write ...

*We have used this method **for** six years.*

Functions:

special phrases used for a particular purpose, eg, recommending; giving an opinion; emphasising important points

Example:

Dear Mr Richards

making reference

*With reference to your letter of 28 February regarding the possible purchase of software for your accounting systems, **we have pleasure in** enclosing details of our spreadsheet programmes.*

using a polite phrase

making a recommendation

*We **would recommend that** you consider purchasing the 2XZ package which seems to be the most suitable for your purposes.*

focusing attention

***May we draw your attention to** the fact that there is a special discount on this product during March.*

offering further assistance

*If you have any further questions, **please do not hesitate to contact us.***

using a polite ending

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



J. Benson

Cohesion:

linking ideas; using reference words and phrases to avoid repetition;
referring backwards and forwards in a document

Example:

Connectors

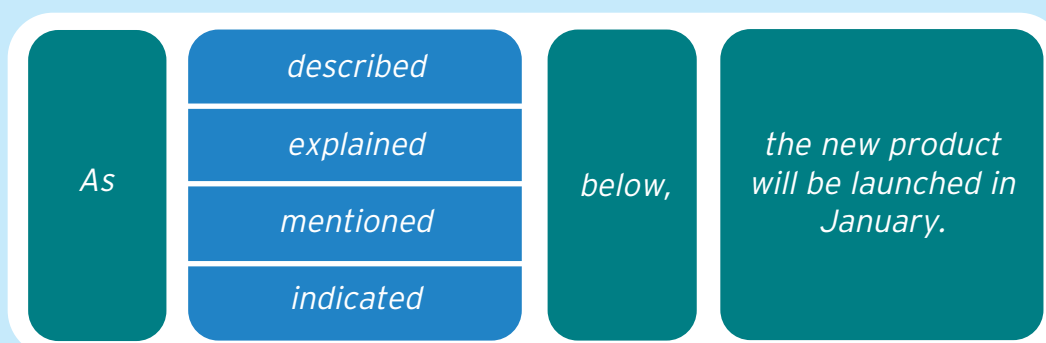


Reference phrases

Mr Lacos and Mr Ibsen will visit us on Tuesday 12 March.

***The former** is the Managing Director of our operations in France and Italy.*

Reference in the document



Using Plain English:

using clear language designed to inform, particularly important in legal writing

Example:

Archaic English

*Pursuant to your letter dated 10 January, ...
Please find hereinunder...*

Plain English

*With reference to your letter dated ...
Please find below ...*

The Process



Before the seminar

Designing the material

Linguarama works very closely with the client to design a tailor-made seminar which meets the needs of the participants. After carrying out a detailed needs analysis, Linguarama asks the client to provide a substantial amount of relevant company-specific documents (with all confidential information removed in advance). These documents are used as the basis for the design of the seminar. Because the materials clearly relate to their own work situation, participants immediately see the relevance of the seminar.

Size of group

We recommend an average number of eight to ten participants in each group, and a maximum of twelve. This is to allow time for maximum individual analysis and feedback to the participants.

Pre-seminar task

Linguarama provides a pre-seminar task for the participants. This normally requires them to:

- complete a questionnaire about their language learning background and use of English
- write a letter about their professional background and current responsibilities
- submit a recently written, unedited professional document.

This pre-seminar task is assessed by the tutor who gives personal feedback on individual strengths and weaknesses, and focuses on any common problem areas.



During the seminar

Tutors

Linguarama seminar tutors are members of the Linguarama GPP Seminar and Consultancy team. They have extensive experience of working with professional clients on writing skills seminars in many parts of the world.

Materials

All participants receive a set of seminar materials and a copy of the Linguarama Writing Skills book. For Legal Drafting seminars, they are also provided with a book on Legal Drafting in English.

Tasks

At the end of each day, participants complete an extended writing task which is assessed by the tutor and returned with feedback.

A Typical Outline Programme for a Two-Day Seminar

- Introduction
 - What makes effective writing?
 - The writing process (the stages a writer needs to go through before the finished document)
 - Introduction to the Linguarama Writing Skills book (a useful reference tool for the future)
 - Clarity
 - Functions
 - Tone
 - Accuracy (common grammar and vocabulary problems, feedback on pre-seminar task)
 - End-of-day writing task
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- Detailed individual feedback on the end-of-day task
 - Style:
 - conciseness
 - consistency
 - formality
 - Cohesion:
 - connectors
 - reference
 - Review and summary
 - Final writing task (to be returned after the seminar with detailed feedback)



After the seminar

Report

After the seminar, the tutor writes a report for the client and, where required, includes feedback on each participant's writing ability.

Follow-up

If required, Linguarama can provide further seminars at a later date. We can also provide a series of follow-up writing tasks which participants complete and submit in order to obtain further feedback and advice.

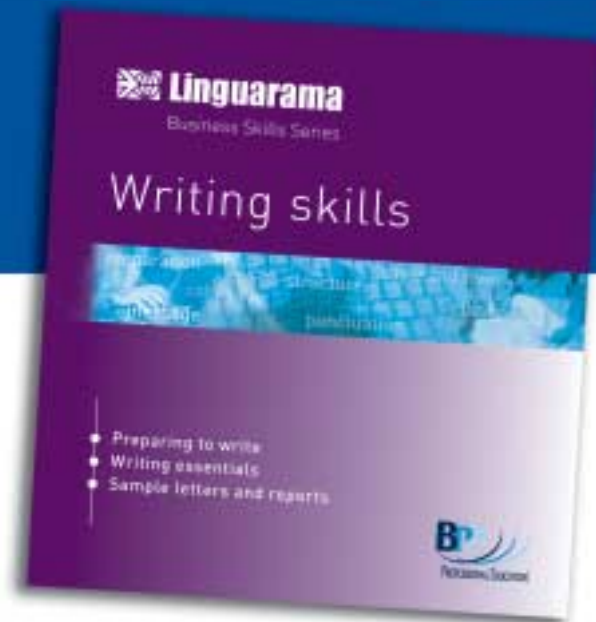
Outcome

At the end of the seminar, participants will:

- understand the elements of effective writing
- have heightened awareness of individual problem areas and will therefore write more accurately
- be able to produce more effective professional documents.

Reference material

Linguarama has produced a reference book to support the Writing Skills seminars.



Other books in this series: Meetings, Negotiations, and Presentations, are given out on our Business Skills seminars.



Other services

In addition to Writing Skills seminars, the Linguarama GPP Seminar and Consultancy Unit provides Business Skills Seminars and Cultural Awareness Training.

It also provides language assessments, including the design of specially-commissioned company-specific tests, and other advisory services to help organisations train their international personnel effectively.

For further information please contact:

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Linguarama offers a wide range of programmes in language and International communication. Please contact us for more information.

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