



Writing Effectively for the ILO

Module 1 - Printable Effective Writing: Strategies and Principles

Introduction

This module will guide you through an analysis of your work-based writing strengths and weaknesses. On the basis of your analysis, you will be able to fine-tune your approach to readers and to writing.

At the ILO mastery of the writing process is essential. The demands are great and the mission important. Writing is a vital medium for disseminating information about efforts to improve international labour standards. Without it, there would be no accurate recording of actions taken or discussions among governments and their social partners, and no means of informing people of successes achieved and challenges ahead.

The writing context has several layers of difficulty. Much ILO writing must be translated, often into several languages and within a very tight timeline. Some of it must be divested of internal jargon before it can be relayed to the public and to donors or even to other parts of the ILO. These constraints have an effect on the fabric and style of the writing required.

This course aims to help you handle work-based writing tasks as effectively as possible. It seeks to help you establish strategies and skills that are general enough to fit a wide range of writing tasks. Ultimately it aims to assist your busy readers by making their reading tasks easier through writing that is clear, well organized, and as brief as practicable.

Module objectives

By the time you have completed this module, you should be able to produce work-based writing that shows you can:

- **formulate** a clear objective for each document you write;
- **analyse** your target readers and their needs and write appropriately to meet those needs while achieving your own objectives;
- **identify** barriers that may prevent written communication from being effective;
- **write** in a style that is appropriate to your readers and your work context;
- **develop** strategies to help improve your writing process;
- **recognize** aspects of ineffective writing;
- **apply** editing techniques to help avoid and correct ineffective writing.

This first module tackles the basics of good organizational writing by focusing on how communication works and what prevents it from being effective.

You will find activities throughout this course. As you work your way through the first module, you will use the activities to analyse your own writing, and try some new approaches. The activities will help you focus on the strengths and weaknesses of your own work. You will be able to try out some analysis of your own work as part of the Module 1 assignment.

The work in Module 1 lays the foundation for the second level modules. You will choose and complete one of these second level modules in order to complete the requirements for passing this course.

You will find at least some of the concepts in this module very familiar. If you are tempted to skip any exercise because you feel you already understand the principles and practices in it, please make sure you at least think about the concept in relation to your own writing. There is often a gap between what we understand and what we put into practice. Many of the activities are actually harder to do than they look. Try them **before** you compare your responses with the suggested responses. Otherwise, you will miss the benefits of practice with immediate feedback that this course offers.

Communicating with your tutor

You should have made contact with your tutor by now. Your tutor is there to help, motivate, and provide an active resource for you. Contact your tutor whenever you need further explanation of the course materials or clarification about what to do.

As you work through the module, you will see a page called "Progress Check." These indicate good times to contact your tutor, if you have any questions or comments about the course materials or if you want to send all or part of your assignment work for review.

There is a progress check reminder at the end of each section in this module. The list below provides a set of links to the points in the course where you are encouraged to get in touch with your tutor. On these pages you will find some questions or directions to prompt you in your discussions with your tutor. These messages are not mandatory assignments, they are a benefit for you. Regular contact with your tutor will help you get the most out of the course.

- Progress check: [Your first assignment](#)
 - Progress check: [Principles of effective communication](#)
 - Progress check: [Writing strategies](#)
 - Progress check: [Sentences and paragraphs](#)
 - Progress check: [Editing and revising skills](#)
 - Progress check: [Submitting your assignment](#)
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Assignment preparation task 1: Thinking about your assignment

Your assignment for this module consists of two separate parts: [Assignment 1A](#) and [Assignment 1B](#). Each of these parts is explained in detail at the end of the module. As you work through the module you will be given guidelines for preparing your assignment. This page offers some advice for thinking about your Assignment 1A.

Assignment 1A involves a critical analysis of your own workplace writing. Look back through some of the writing you have been doing lately at work and choose three or four samples. These can be in any format: letter, memo, fax, email (of some length), briefing note, report, etc. A variety would be most useful. Print copies and keep them handy or put them in a folder on your computer desktop so that you can refer to them easily when you need to, as you begin to prepare your first assignment. You will choose one of these samples to analyse in Assignment 1A.

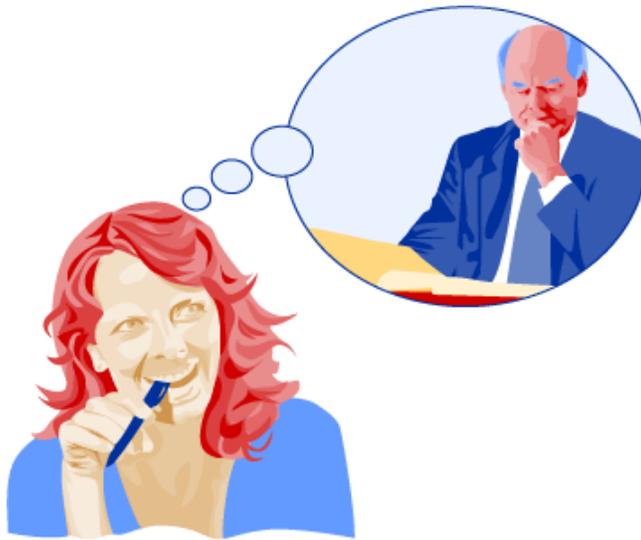
Progress check: Your first assignment

At this point, you are only beginning to think about this part of the assignment. However, if you are uncertain about what to do at this point, it is a good idea to [email your tutor](#) in order to confirm that you are on the right track.

SECTION 1: Thinking about communication

To be an effective writer you need to understand how communication works and what prevents it from working. Understanding the theory will give you the tools to:

- analyse workplace communication situations and choose the best approach for each writing task;
- predict and prepare for barriers that could prevent you from getting your readers to do what you want.



Communication terminology

As an ILO employee, you are more than familiar with the use of jargon or UNese (or ILOese). Jargon is fine as long as everyone knows what the terms mean. This course has some jargon too ordinary words used in specific ways. Spend a minute or two to make sure you are familiar with the way some words will be used in this course. Knowing the jargon will make it easier for you and your tutor to discuss your work and for you to benefit from your tutor's feedback.

Terminology	Description
Communicator (sender, source)	The speaker, writer or some kind of signaller
Message	The content of what is to be communicated (thoughts, ideas, information, instructions, etc.)
Audience (receiver)	The listener, reader, viewer
Statement of purpose (desired response, purpose)	What the communicator wants the audience (reader) to do
Communication channel (medium)	The means used to get the message from sender to receiver (fax, email, telephone, etc.)
Environment	The setting in which the communication takes place
Feedback	The information that is given back about the message
Communication barriers (noise)	Whatever causes difficulties during the communication process

Your first activity for the course will give you an opportunity to make sure you understand this terminology.

Activity 1: Practice with communication terminology

Consider the following scenario:

You work at Headquarters in the Geneva office. You are expecting a Russian visitor, who rings to ask you directions. Your Russian is very basic; his English and French are limited. He has not been to Geneva before, but intends to catch a bus to ILO headquarters. You give instructions on how to catch the correct bus and how to get in once he gets to the door.

From the above scenario, you need to identify the elements in the left column. Drag the elements in the right column up or down to match the elements in the left column.

Communicator (sender, source)	Instructions on how to get to your office at the ILO	
Message	You	
Audience (receiver)	Telephone: that is, oral communication	
Statement of purpose (desired response, purpose)	Russian visitor	
Communication channel (medium)	Your visitor's questions and your questions to him	
Environment	Language problems: visitor has little background on Geneva; possible nervousness on part of visitor; cultural differences in giving/receiving instructions	
Feedback	Telephone communication in a second language for at least one participant and possibly both	
Communication barrier (noise)	As a result of your instructions your visitor will reach your office without experiencing undue difficulties	

Check Answer

Choosing a proper communication channel

Consider the example we just used in the previous activity. What would be the best channel to communicating the required information? Would you rather do it orally (e.g., by telephone) or in written form (e.g., email, fax)? In order to write a useful note you would need to anticipate the questions your visitor might have:

- Which bus?
- Which direction?
- How do I get a ticket?
- How do I recognize which bus stop to get off at?
- How do I recognize the building?
- Which door do I use?
- Where is the building in relation to where I am staying?

A written note is no easy option here. Telephone allows more immediate feedback to help clarify your message. A written note compels you to guess what your visitor's questions might be and answer them in advance. With either channel, you still have language problems to overcome, but you might assume that your visitor's reading comprehension skills are better than his oral skills, especially over the telephone. For each communication activity you undertake at work, you need to select the channel that:

- is the most appropriate for the circumstances;
- gives you the best chance of achieving your objective (or desired response).

Pausing to consider possible obstacles that may block your message will help you choose an appropriate channel.

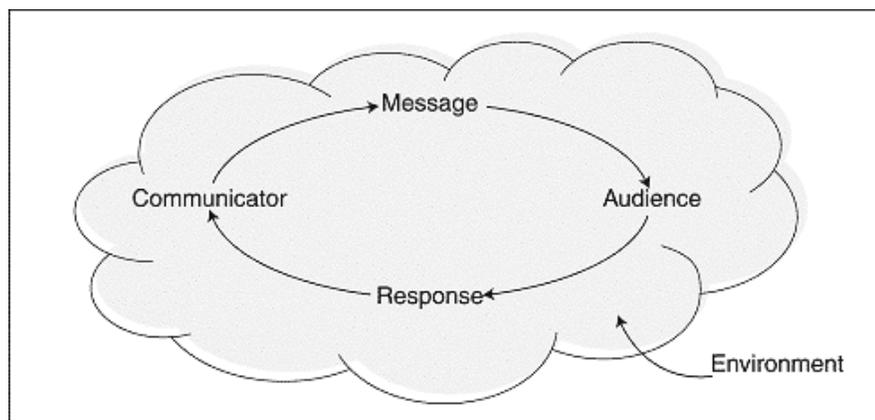
Activity 2: Choosing the best channel

What are the advantages and disadvantages in using each of these two channels of communication for the scenario described?

CHANNEL	Advantages:	Disadvantages:
Telephone		
	<input type="button" value="Check Answers"/>	
Written note		
	<input type="button" value="Check Answers"/>	

Communication models

Communication theory offers many different models of how communication works. For this course, the following simple but useful model of communication will serve the purpose of providing us with common ground.



This model emphasizes several very important points:

- Communication is circular, not linear.
- Communication is not a one-way process: the receiver (audience) has a part in it.
- Producing the desired response from the audience is the crucial concern.
- The environment or context in which the communication takes place affects the process.

- The audience response (feedback) affects future communication.

Based on a diagram in Maree Bentley, Mary Munter's Business Communication: Strategy and Skill, Prentice Hall, Singapore, 1991.

'Noise' in communication

The model also shows that communication is so imperfect that we hardly ever manage to get the thoughts in our mind across to our audience perfectly.

Consider the possibilities for error:

- the communicator (writer) turns his or her ideas into words to create a message;
- the message goes through some kind of imperfect channel;
- the audience (reader) turns the words back into ideas (interprets the message);
- the reader responds by providing (or not providing) the writer's desired response;
- throughout the process, the environment is exerting an influence.

Interference, distortion, or distraction causes loss of meaning. We refer to this type of barrier as noise. Noise sets up barriers to getting your message across, no matter how well you write. Recognizing its existence helps you minimize its effects.

Types of noise

- Emotional (hostility, indifference on the part of the reader, other pressures on the reader, etc.)

Example: Your boss acted on your last recommendation and as a result was criticized by his boss.

- Semantic blocks (connotations of words, discriminatory language, etc.)

Example: Your reader is extremely sensitive to gender bias in writing, and you have used "he" throughout the document to refer to people in general.

- Physical barriers (What your eyes see on the page or the screen)

Examples: print is too small, fax is of poor quality.

- Timing barriers

Examples: too late, too early, wrong time.

- Selectivity (Could be caused by overload or the specific focus of the reader)

Example: Your reader reads only the first and last paragraphs of documents because of lack of time.

- Perceptual (seeing what you expect to see, the reader's own experience etc.)

Example: When you look at this:



Which do you see?



Activity 3: Identifying noise

Consider the following scenario, with these questions in mind:

- What barriers can you predict?
- How would the environment influence the wording and timing of your memo to your supervisor?

You would like to get approval for a budget increase for your project. The project is going well and you feel your request is justified. However, you know your immediate supervisor has been under pressure lately, particularly regarding financing of other projects undertaken by your section. Your immediate supervisor will be leaving in two weeks for an extended business trip, and you hope to get this issue resolved before then.

What barriers can you predict?

How would the environment influence the wording and timing of your memo to your supervisor?

Check Answers

Assignment preparation task 2: Identifying noise

During the coming week, identify and note examples of noise that might hinder you from getting your written messages across effectively. (Email is fertile ground to explore.) Note the steps you took to minimize the effect of the noise you anticipated. You will need this data when you come to writing your assignment.

Create an assignment folder on your desktop. Use this folder to store all the files you will create for the assignment task.

Here are some examples of the kind of noise others have identified. (Of course, you should find your own examples for this activity.)

Example 1

Your new supervisor has an obsession about using apostrophes correctly. If she finds apostrophe mistakes in a report, she tends to assume that the contents of the report are unreliable.

Example 2

Your reader has only worked for the ILO for three days.

[Assignment prep task 1: Thinking about your assignment](#)

[Assignment prep task 2: Identifying noise](#)

Desired response and purpose

Defining your statement of purpose

When we write at work, we write to inform, persuade, publicize, convince, record and so on to make a difference to what our readers know. To do this successfully, you must know both the subject and what you want to achieve: your statement of purpose.

Determining the desired response you want from the reader

Good work-based writing defines clearly what you want to happen as a result of what you are writing. In other words, effective writing is very clear about what writers want readers to do as a result of reading their documents. Keeping this concept constantly in mind helps you in two important ways. First, you no longer waste time writing things that neither further your purpose nor meet your readers' needs. Second, you write more clearly.

In an organization like the ILO it sometimes seems there is no communication purpose or objective for you to consider: you write because you are required to write.

This perception is common because you may be given a writing task in very general terms, such as:

- We need something on the working conditions and labour-management relations in the textile industry in Southeast Asia.
- We need a policy paper on increasing the number of women in senior positions.
- We need minutes for this meeting.

Unfortunately, writing without a clear objective is a sure path to ineffective writing that it is both boring to produce and boring to read.

Pinning down your purpose

When you become outcome-oriented in your writing, you produce documents that are more effective and more interesting. As a first step, you must work out what you actually want your reader to do. Word frames can help you to do that. Below are examples of word frames.

As a result of reading my message (report, letter, email, fax), my reader will ...

Examples

As a result of reading my letter, **my supervisor will arrange for training for the department.**

As a result of reading my email, **my colleague will meet me at the airport.**

As a result of reading my report, **our donors will provide additional funding.**

Once you have identified the kind of response you want, you will find it easier to phrase your minutes, letter, report, or proposal to get what you want the first time. As you work your way through the production of your document, your statement of purpose gives you a constant point of reference. It keeps you on track and helps you produce brief, reader-focused writing.

Activity 4: Statement of purpose

In this activity, you will need to consider statement of purposes for the following forms of communication. Write the

objective in the space below the description of the message.

1. **A flyer for this course.**

2. **A memo to colleagues requesting assistance with the organization for an upcoming professional development session.**

[Click to Compare](#)

Assignment preparation task 3: Analysing barriers to communication

In the previous [assignment preparation task](#), you were asked collect samples of your writing. Take one of those samples now and think about whether or not it qualifies as a piece of effective writing.

As you review your selected writing sample, consider the following questions.

- What was your statement of purpose (or desired response)?
- Who was the audience and what were the audience's needs?
- Were you aware of any 'noise' that could create a barrier for you?
- Did you take actions to overcome the barriers?
- Were you successful? If not, why not and how would you resolve the situation next time?

As you write about this experience, save your work in a Word document. You will be able to use this analysis as part of your [Assignment 1A](#).

[Assignment prep task 1: Thinking about your assignment](#)

[Assignment prep task 2: Identifying noise](#)

[Assignment prep task 3: Analysing barriers to communication](#)

Analysing your readers

Effective communication has only taken place if you get the response you want from your reader. To achieve this, you need to focus strongly on your reader's needs (not on your own) during every step of the writing process.

When writing memos, emails, faxes, briefing notes, reports and proposals, you may be in the fortunate position of knowing quite a lot about your reader(s). However, there will be situations, especially in communication external to ILO, when you know very little. In these circumstances your task becomes more difficult, and you will need to be careful not to assume background knowledge that the reader may not have. In such cases it is especially important to avoid the use of UNese or ILOese.

It is surprising how many writers forget about their readers. Keeping the reader uppermost in your mind as you write is the single most important means of improving your writing.



Identifying and classifying your reader

The question: 'Who is your reader?' is deceptively simple. It is most likely that you will have multiple readers for your writing, some primary (like your immediate supervisor) and others more remote (secondary) but who, nevertheless, need to be kept in mind. It is useful to identify the key decision-maker among your readers. Who can authorize the action you want taken?

- For someone taking minutes of a meeting, this may be the chairperson who signs off on the minutes.
- For the ILO field office reporter, this may be the person who controls the budget and can authorize expenditure on what is needed.

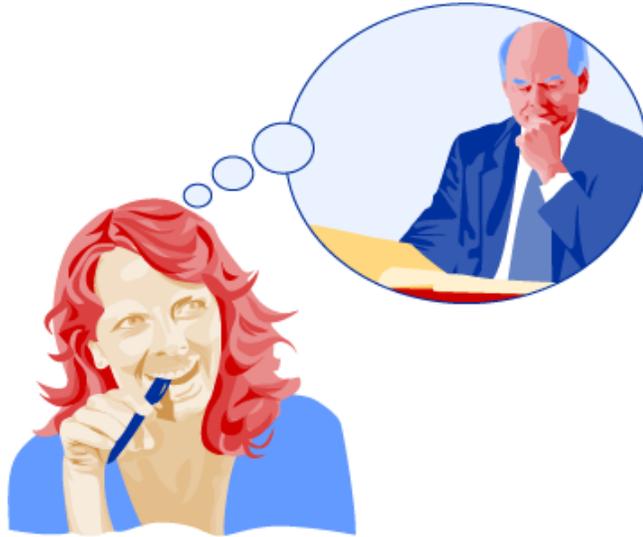
Writing is more difficult if you have both primary and secondary readers and even more difficult if you don't have a clear idea of your readers' backgrounds. Nevertheless, you can make some assumptions. Most busy ILO staff, for example, do not have time to read overly long documents.

Characteristics of your reader

When thinking about your reader, it's important to keep in mind:

- the importance of your document for your reader;
- your reader's familiarity with the subject matter;
- your credibility with your reader;
- beliefs or values that may prevent your reader accepting and acting on your document;
- time, budgetary, psychological pressures upon your reader;
- the reading format of your document: screen or paper.

Good writers always keep their readers in mind. They remember their readers because they want their writing to achieve its purpose and they target the readers who can make this happen.



Assignment preparation task 4: Analysing your reader

Assignment 1A requires you to analyse something you have written in the past. Who were the readers of this piece of writing? Was it one person? Several? What do you know about the readers of this writing sample? What was your desired response from them?

To help think about these questions, the [Reader Analysis Form](#) asks these and other pertinent questions.

The purpose of the reader analysis form below is to help you focus on your reader's needs. You will gain practice in using it in [Assignment 1A](#) for this module and also in the assignment for your optional second-level module.

Once you have internalized the concept of reader analysis and begin thinking habitually in a reader-oriented way, you may find you no longer need to use a form. You may continue to find it helpful, though, especially as a basis for collaborative writing.

Click here to open the [Reader Analysis Form](#). Save a copy to use for your first assignment. As part of your assignment (1A), fill in the form now and send it off to your tutor for review.

[Assignment prep task 1: Thinking about your assignment](#)

[Assignment prep task 2: Identifying noise](#)

[Assignment prep task 3: Analysing barriers to communication](#)

[Assignment prep task 4: Analysing your reader](#)

Progress check: Principles of effective communication

You have completed the first section of this module. The focus has been fairly broad to add to your foundational knowledge of communications.

Some of the concepts introduced in this section, such as 'noise' or reader analysis, may be new to you. If you are still unclear as to the meaning or significance of any of these concepts, [this is a good time to contact your tutor](#).

"Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort." (John Ruskin)

SECTION 2: Adopting a writing strategy

In this section we'll work through an approach to write efficiently. You should find this approach applicable to all work-related writing tasks regardless of the format (letter, fax, report, briefing note, email, etc.).

Most effective writers write their first drafts without worrying about mistakes in spelling, grammar, punctuation, or sentence and paragraph structure. They stay focused on getting down what they really want to say. Then they go back

and look at how to say it correctly. Today's computing power can either assist or, at times, hinder this approach.

A workable procedure is as follows:

- prewriting
- organizing
- drafting
- editing
- proofreading

In this section, you'll work through these five steps.

Step 1: Prewriting

"Writing is a lot like life itself. You can start with a plan and try to follow it, or you can wing it and deal with the consequences."

Joe Kraynak, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Microsoft Office 97*, QUE, Indianapolis, 1998.

Prewriting is about generating material or ideas or both. Whether gathering information you have inside your head or researching outside sources, you have to start somewhere. Many of us, confronted with a daunting writing task, will suffer from what is known as writer's block.



Prewriting techniques

The following techniques explore methods you can use to help you produce a first draft quickly, avoid writer's block and clarify your thoughts. Try some or all of these early on in the writing.

Brainstorming

Write down all the ideas you have about your writing task. You can do this on paper or directly onto your computer. If you prefer to speak while you're brainstorming, you can even record brainstorming ideas on your voice mail! While brainstorming:

- do not cross out or delete any ideas or words;
- do not worry about spelling or finding the correct words;
- do not allow anything to interrupt your flow of thought;
- do not evaluate or criticize any aspect of your writing.

The following techniques are really variations on the theme of brainstorming.

The random list

List everything that comes to mind and then sort it into groups. Look for connections: sequential, spatial, chronological, topical, pros and cons, etc.

FCR

This technique is useful if your topic requires a solution. Divide your page into three headings: findings (F), conclusions

(C), and recommendations (R). List your ideas in these three categories.

Journalistic approach

Useful if your task is to convey information. Ask and answer six questions:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

Question and answer chain

Look at the subject from your readers' perspective. Put yourself in your readers' position by asking:

- What are my readers' main questions likely to be?
- What do they need to know?

Examine your answers to these questions. What additional questions emerge? Follow the question and answer chain until you have exhausted all questions.

Free writing

Set yourself a limited time for free writing: say five minutes for a task like a letter. Just write without worrying about grammar, spelling, sentences, structure or anything else. If you get stuck, repeat the last words you have written until new thoughts start to come.

Whichever brainstorming approach you take, the end result will be similar. Instead of a blank piece of paper, you will now have a list or several paragraphs containing many of the ideas you want to include in the document you are writing.

Outlining your ideas

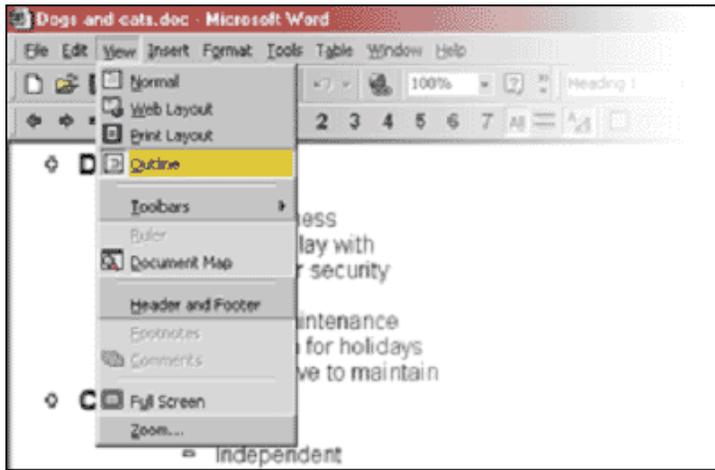
One of the most efficient ways to brainstorm is to use the Outline facility (under View menu) in Microsoft Word. It provides an excellent tool for efficient brainstorming, and helps you get the writing task itself started in the process. The Outline facility in Word allows you to work in a way that suits you best. You can use the Outline facility to:

- build your plan;
- reorder information;
- change headings; or
- add to or delete from the plan at any stage.

One of its advantages is that whatever work you do in the Outline view will immediately appear in your document; you are not wasting any effort at all. Outline lets you work in any part of the document in any order you choose.

Levels of headings

The Outline facility operates on the idea of levels of headings. For writing of any length (for example, reports), the concept of levels of headings (main headings, sub-headings, sub-sub-headings etc) is extremely important and will be explored more fully in the Report Writing module. For now, you might like to try Outline next time you have a major writing task. You will find it under the VIEW pull-down menu or you may have it on your toolbar as an icon. Your screen may be a little different from the one below, depending on the version of Word that you are using.



If you are unfamiliar with this facility, you will find it useful to read the appropriate sections in the **HELP** menu.

Activity 5: Using the Outline tool in Word

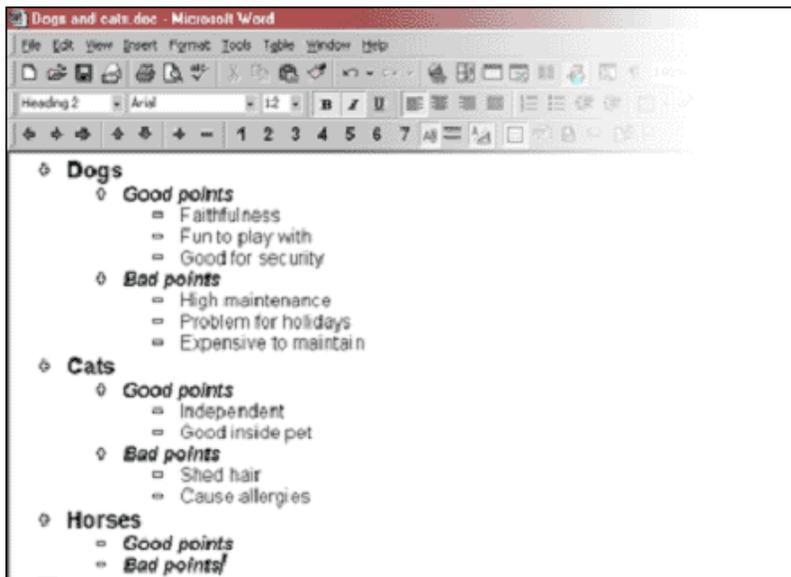
If you haven't used Outline view, try this exercise; it's not as long as it looks. The content of this exercise is deliberately simple in order to allow you to concentrate on the process.

- Open a new document.
- Go to VIEW and click on OUTLINE.
- Type in **Dogs** and hit ENTER.
- Type in **Cats** and hit ENTER.
- Type in **Horses** and hit ENTER.
- You now have three first level headings for a report you are writing on *The Best Pet to Buy for Children*. These are main headings, called HEADING 1 on the pull-down menu on your toolbar next to the window that gives the font you are using.

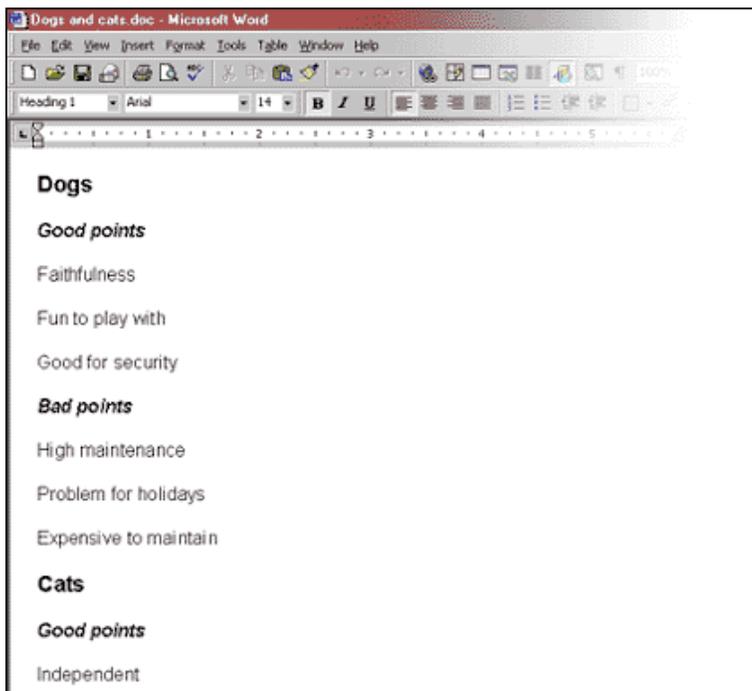
Now go back to **Dogs** and position your cursor at the end of the word, hit ENTER and then click on the second arrow on the Outline toolbar (or hit TAB). You are now going to put in a number of sub-headings for your discussion on dogs. There are two. Type in **Good points**, hit ENTER and then type in **Bad points**. These two headings are second level headings (HEADING 2 on the pull-down menu).

Position your cursor at the end of **Good points** and hit ENTER and then TAB. You will now be able to put in some third level headings (HEADING 3): **Faithfulness** ENTER; **Fun to play with** ENTER; **Good security** ENTER. Go through the same process making up some level 3 headings under **Bad points**.

Do the same for Cats, making up your own second and third level headings. Your Outline view should look like the following:



When you have finished this, go to VIEW and click on NORMAL. You will see something like this.



Now you are free to start writing within this plan anywhere you like. Let's say you feel ready to start writing about ***Fun to play with***. Go to the heading and place your cursor after it. Hit ENTER. Type a short paragraph.

Now go back to VIEW and hit OUTLINE. You will see your paragraph there with all your headings. Go to the toolbar and click on the 3, then the 2 and then the 1. This will enable you to see your plan at different heading levels.

Imagine you now decide you should have started with ***Cats*** rather than ***Dogs***. Put your cursor on the plus sign in front of ***Cats*** and drag ***Cats*** and position it in front of ***Dogs*** (or vice versa). If you now go back to NORMAL view, you will see that all the subheadings were moved with the heading. You can also change the level of heading by using TAB or the arrows on the toolbar.

Outline will only work if you assign levels of headings. However, going through this process of deciding on heading levels is in fact the process of sorting out your material, structuring your thinking and ordering your ideas all essential steps in drafting effectively.

Note: these instructions demonstrate various functions in Microsoft Word that can be helpful to you in the writing process. Subsequent versions of Word may display these functions differently than displayed here. However, the basic functionality behind each demonstration is consistent and should be available to you in whatever version your computer has.

Step 2: Organizing

"Order and simplification are the first steps to the mastery of a subject." (Thomas Mann)

From thinking to writing

Once you have come up with some ideas or gathered your information in whatever way is comfortable for you, you must bring some order to them and some structure to your document. The process of generating ideas is quite different from the process of structuring them.

Keep in mind that your reader doesn't really care about the process you went through to get to your conclusions or recommendations. The reader wants a clear, concise end product, together with enough proof to show that you had adequate information to base it on, and that your thought processes were logical. Organizing your document often means deciding not to include some of the ideas you brainstormed in the prewriting step.

Developing a hierarchy of ideas

Effective structure or organization is based on providing a hierarchy of ideas for your reader.

You, as the writer, have to do the hard work so that your reader has an easy time of it. If you don't, the reader will give up on your document.

To provide a clear hierarchy, you need to:

- focus on your statement of purpose;
- stress your conclusions and recommendations;
- divide your writing into main ideas;
- subdivide these into supporting ideas.

Next you need to choose an appropriate order for your ideas. This order will depend on your purpose—your statement of purpose.

When your objective is to explain something, you can order by means such as:

- time
- components
- level of importance.

The reader needs some kind of framework in order to follow your explanation.

When your objective is to ask for action you can use:

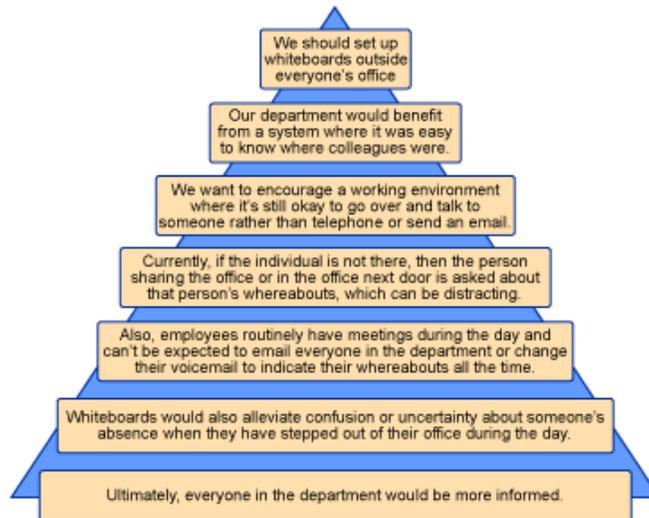
- a direct approach for a reader you think is likely to agree with you
- an indirect approach for a reader you think will disagree with you.

Activity 6: Organizing

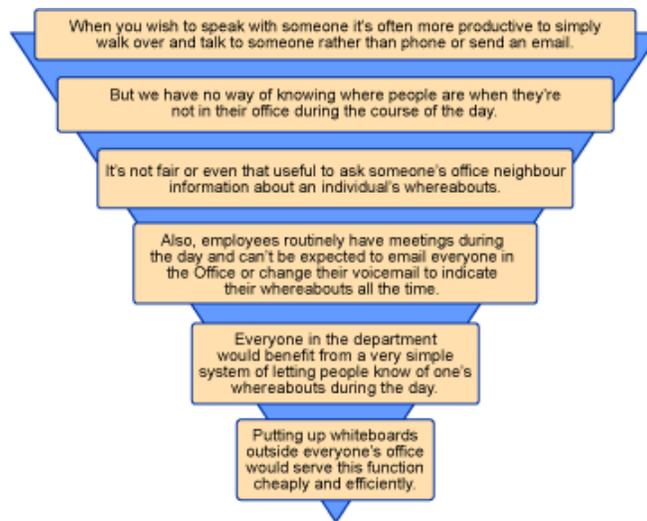
Let's say you are interested in introducing a new practice in your department: putting up whiteboards outside all offices for everyone to indicate their presence or absence. This is bound to be acceptable to some but not to others, for various reasons. For example, you might think this is a good way to let people know where you are when you've stepped out of the office. However, others might see the whiteboards as a way of keeping track of people's movements or instituting an unwelcome level of control over staff members.

Now suppose you wish suggest this idea to your supervisor in an email. If you knew your supervisor were already interested in this idea or had complained about not knowing where people were when they were out of the office, then you have some context to guide the organization of your ideas. You could begin simply by stating your main point.

The following diagram indicates a **direct approach** to this type of email:



Now consider that you were writing the same email to someone who might be more hostile to the idea. The following diagram reveals a more **indirect approach** to conveying your message:



You will read more about this type of arrangement of ideas when you come to the section on [paragraphing](#) in this module.

Step 3: Drafting

Drafting refers to the actual process of putting the first version of your document together.

Four useful hints for successful drafting are:

- Concentrate on getting down what you want to say. Free up the writing stage by ignoring both mechanical errors (spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.) and the search for the perfect word. Just keep your thought flow going.
- Do not try to write an introduction first or stick to a beginning-to-end structure unless that is what works best for you.
- If you work best on a hardcopy draft, aim for a printed copy with plenty of space available: triple spaced and with wide margins.
- Leave a time gap between drafting and editing.

Sometimes you won't have the luxury of time for a thorough drafting process. You may think that you need to just get down to writing a polished version and forget about the drafting. Really, though, time spent in drafting will save you time in the final writing process. So the time is worth it!

Step 4: Editing

Careful editing is key to effective writing. It should not be done immediately after drafting. A time gap will enable you to look at your writing with the eyes of the reader rather than the writer.

Editing is a two-stage process: macro- and micro- editing.

Macro-editing

Editing at the macro-level involves looking at the big questions: :

- How well will the document achieve your purpose?
- How appropriate is it for readers and how effectively has it met their needs?
- Is the overall shape, look and design of the document appropriate for your objective?

When you read a document at the macro-level, identify anything that will be counter-productive to achieving your purpose. By considering your reader(s), you may decide that you need to:

- add information if they need more context or background to your message;
- eliminate extra information if they are very familiar with your subject;
- add examples to clarify your points.

By focusing on the overall structure of the document, you may decide that your message will be clearer if you:

- reorganize the document;
- strengthen particular sections of your document, like introductions, conclusions, and recommendations;
- improve the transitions between sections and between paragraphs.

Micro-editing

Editing at the micro-level is about making sure all the mechanical elements are correct, such as:

- sentence and paragraph structure
- grammar
- punctuation
- spelling
- word usage

These elements are important since mistakes damage your credibility. If they are significant enough they can distract your reader from focusing on your message. At worst they can brand your effort as unreliable, or make it impossible for the reader to understand your message.

Many officers in the ILO are operating in a language other than their mother tongue. Inevitably, second language types of errors will be present, but in general, these kinds of errors are different from the more avoidable mechanical errors we are discussing here. Micro-editing is something you should be doing as you write your documents. You will have another chance to catch these errors when you do your proofreading.

This course assumes a good level of competence in these mechanical elements. Your tutor will give you feedback on any problems identified in your work and will refer you to resources for further help.

Activity 6: Micro-editing

Each of these examples contains a common problem that can be solved with careful micro-editing. Identify the problems in the sentences in the following list and rewrite if necessary:

1.	International law is useful when there are gaps in national law and labour standards, comments by supervisory bodies can also be helpful.
----	---

	<p style="text-align: right;">Reset</p>
<p>Show Hint</p>	
<p>Show Solution</p>	
2.	<p>Various initiatives, using the Internet among other means, to promote better health and safety practices.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Reset</p>
<p>Show Hint</p>	
<p>Show Solution</p>	
3.	<p>The 62 staff members receive low salaries and a lot is expected of them, which leads to high turnover.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Reset</p>
<p>Show Hint</p>	
<p>Show Solution</p>	
4.	<p>Less people appear to be applying for assistance.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Reset</p>
<p>Show Hint</p>	
<p>Show Solution</p>	
5.	<p>Mr Singh is one of those staff members who takes great pride in the quality of their work.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Reset</p>
<p>Show Hint</p>	
<p>Show Solution</p>	
6.	<p>Negotiating with private industry and recipient countries are part of the planning process for proactive procurement.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Reset</p>

Show Hint	
Show Solution	
7.	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;"> <p>On returning from Thailand, a mission report is required.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 5px;"> <input type="button" value="Reset"/> </div>
Show Hint	
Show Solution	

Step 5: Proofreading

Proofreading is the final check of your document to ensure that it is error free. This checking is your responsibility because you are the owner of the document. It should never be neglected. Even quick emails need careful proofreading before you press that 'send' button.

If you try to proofread a document in the same way as you normally read, you will not pick up many errors. In normal reading, we predict what the text is going to say and then confirm our predictions by sampling some of the text. We don't actually read every word. This problem is compounded by familiarity with the text. We know what we meant to say and with a quick read we mentally fill in the meaning as we go. Good readers more often than not make poor proofreaders because they are so focused on extracting meaning rather than on the surface structure of what they are reading.

Proofreading tips

To proofread effectively, you need to move away from your normal way of reading. Below are some of the techniques used by professional proofreaders:

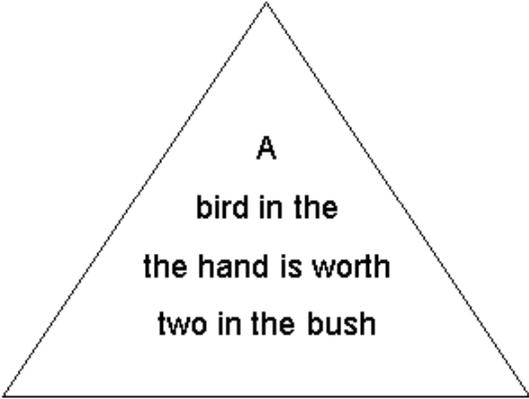
- Read the document aloud. This helps you to focus on every word.
- Use a piece of paper to reveal only one line at a time. This prevents your eye from doing its normal sampling and predicting movements.
- Go through the document several times, each time focusing on a different aspect (for example, once for repetition and omissions; once for spelling and punctuation; once for layout).
- For really important work, get a colleague to proofread your document. (Writers are usually too close to their documents to proofread well.)
- Allow enough time for proofreading and always leave an interval between finishing the writing and doing the proofreading.
- Use the spelling and grammar checker, but remember that it will not pick up all errors. See the section on Using Electronic Tools to learn what your spelling checker can and cannot do.

Activity 7: Proofreading

The task

Proofread the following to identify any errors.

1.	
----	--



Show Hint

Show Solution

2.

New legislation was developed in part to reduce the incidents of child labour. The law is just part of the country's efforts to ensure the well being of it's workers as well as support productive and affective working environments.

Reset

Show Hint

Show Solution

3.

Further to your email communication of 25 and 31 April concerning the situation of local satff memebbers in the new country office we would like to share with your our experience.

Reset

Show Hint

Show Solution

4.

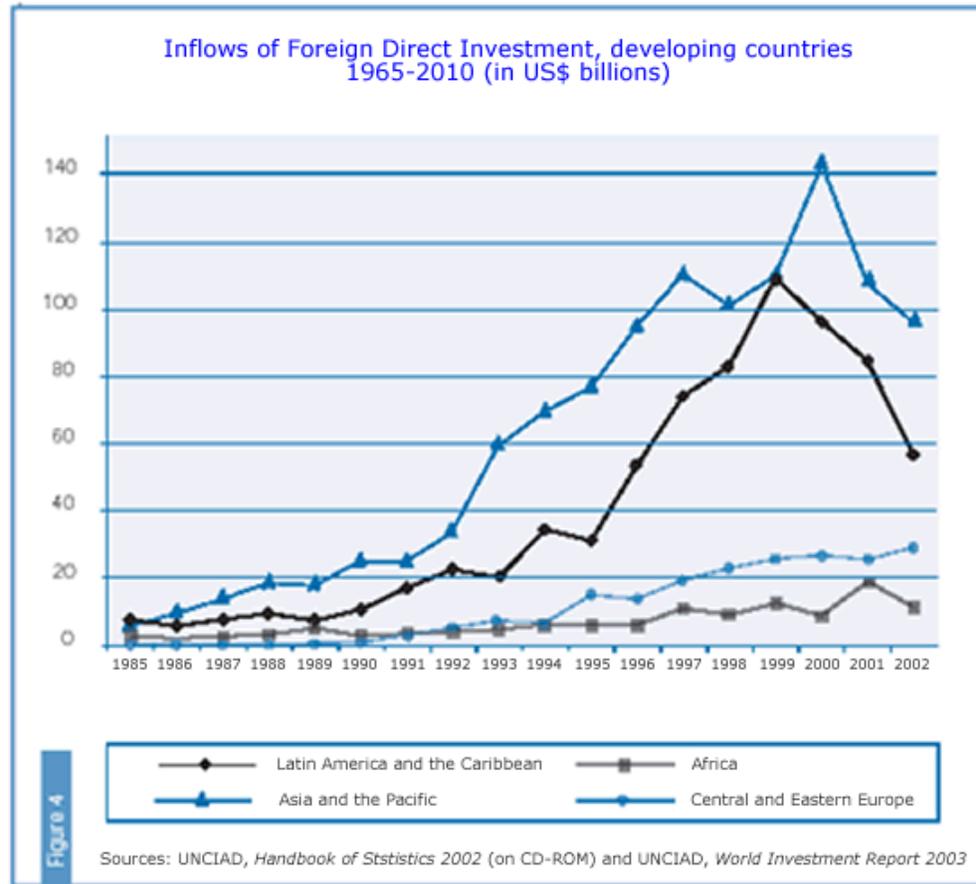
The joint guidelines will published in several languages and disseminated by the Office, with social dialogue activities and training to encourage their implementation.

Reset

Show Hint

Show Solution

5.



Show Hint

Show Solution

Using the grammar and spell checker

Microsoft Word provides a spelling and grammar checker that can be very useful as an editing tool. It can also cause a lot of frustration because it has no sense of the context in which you are writing. This may result in your not wanting to use it at all.

Do not rely solely on electronic writing tools. You still need to read your work very carefully with your own eyes.

With electronic writing tools, you must be the one in charge. You should dictate to the software what you want checked. To make these tools work efficiently for you, you need to have a good idea of the strengths and weaknesses of your own writing style.

Using the grammar checker

To use the grammar checker effectively, you need to have a reasonable understanding of grammatical terms. The following may help:

Passive sentences

In passive sentences, the subject of the sentence has the action performed on it. Although the passive tense can be useful, too many passive constructions make your document boring to read.

Phrases

These are simply groups of words without verbs (for example, of the Government).

Possessives

If you have difficulty knowing where to place an apostrophe you need to have this box checked. Possessives are words

that show ownership (for example, The Director's staff). The misuse of it's and its is a common problem.

Relative clauses

These are clauses that begin with words like who, which and that. Word concentrates on using the correct pronoun and on punctuation and placement.

Using the spelling checker

The spelling checker in Word is a powerful and highly useful tool. It enables you to write quickly without undue concern for spelling errors and it will pick up 'typos' for you. However, you should be aware of what your spelling checker cannot do.

Your spelling checker cannot:

- replace the need for final proofreading
- distinguish between easily confused words like principle and principal (your grammar checker can, if you click on COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS in the customizing option)
- pick up an incorrect but real word that you might have accidentally typed in (for example, "the Director new the informant")
- recognize proper nouns; it will pick them all up unless you add them to the custom dictionary (for example, Jijiga).

Activity 8: Proofreading vs. spell checker

Look at the following passage.

The growing impotence of Information and Communication Technologies a cross the world is changing hour lifestyle, and has bean at the centre of concussions, both four socio-economic research and police-making, fore over a decade. It as led the social partners to enhance social dialogue as a means off addressing quay bargaining issues, notably the future of work and quality in the Informatoin Society. Among the 20 industrial sectors that the ILO's Sectoral Activities Programme covers, the media and entertainment industries halve been. At the forefront of these changes along with the electronics and telecommunications industreys.

Reset

Copy and paste this paragraph into an MS Word document and then run a spell check. You'll find that the spelling and grammar checker finds only a few spelling errors. But is that all? Have another look and see if you can spot all the errors. There are at least 14 grammar and spelling errors that the automated checkers didn't catch.

<input type="button" value="Show Hint"/>	
<input type="button" value="Show Solution"/>	

Assignment preparation task 5: Describing your writing process

Make some notes on what you have discovered about your practice of the writing process as described in this module. You will need this data for [Assignment 1A](#).

You can include the ideas from these notes in your analysis of the selected piece of writing that you are providing as part of Assignment 1A. In your analysis of this writing sample, consider the following:

- What was the process you followed for the writing sample you are providing?

- Did you organize your writing?
 - Did you write a draft before you prepared a final version?
 - Did you do any editing and proofreading before completing your writing sample?
 - What effect did any of these steps in the process, whether you did them or not, have on your final product?
-

[Assignment prep task 1: Thinking about your assignment](#)

[Assignment prep task 2: Identifying noise](#)

[Assignment prep task 3: Analysing barriers to communication](#)

[Assignment prep task 4: Analysing your reader](#)

[Assignment prep task 5: Describing your writing process](#)

Progress check: Writing strategies

You are at about the halfway point of the first module. How's it going? [This is a good time to let your tutor know about your progress.](#)

Some questions to consider are:

- Have you managed to find a suitable writing sample to analyse for the first part of your Module 1 assignment (1A)?
 - Are you finding the content of this first module relevant to your needs as a writer at the ILO?
 - How are you finding the material: difficult, easy, confusing, clear?
-

SECTION 3: DEVELOPING YOUR WRITING SKILLS

Thinking and writing processes differ. Thinking can be quite lateral, loose and unstructured. However, if writing is to be effective, it must be coherent so that the reader can follow the logic of the document.

Coherence is achieved by:

- putting ideas together in your sentences in a way that shows the relationship between the ideas;
- placing sentences in paragraphs in a way that all sentences contribute to the paragraph's central idea or theme;
- using the logic of your organization to hold together paragraphs and enable an easy flow from one paragraph to the next.

Without these features, your writing will lack coherence (flow) and your reader will have a difficult time understanding you. There are many factors in writing that work together to create a coherent and convincing document. In this section, we will explore some of the areas where mistakes are most frequently made.

Putting ideas together

Sentences are made up of ideas. At its most simple level, a sentence can have just one idea, for example:

We cannot grant your request.

With such a sentence the reader probably expects to know why the request cannot be granted. This is a related idea that is best placed in the same sentence.

We cannot grant your request because we have no funds left in this year's budget for this kind of expenditure.

It is not as effective to convey this idea in two sentences:

- We cannot grant your request.
- We have no funds left in this year's budget for this kind of expenditure.

This leaves out the relationship between the two ideas and forces readers to work it out for themselves by guessing about the relationship. A good sentence shows the relationship between the parts clearly by using the correct joining words. On the other hand, if a sentence uses a joining word incorrectly, it can change the entire meaning of the

sentence.

If a sentence has two ideas of equal importance closely enough related to be in the same sentence, you need a joining or coordinating word (also known as a coordinate conjunction) that will keep them equal. Below is a list of coordinating words.

- [and](#)
- [but](#)
- [so](#)
- [nor](#)
- or a [semi-colon](#) (;)

In most cases, however, we want to make one sentence the main idea and join it to a related but subordinate or less important idea. For this job you need different joining or subordinating words. Below is a list of some of these words divided into different categories.

Time	Conditional	Cause and effect	Contrast	Words that link nouns from one idea to another
when	if	because	although	who
before	as long as	so that	while	which
as	unless		despite	that

You can create good sentences by working out how the various ideas relate to each other, selecting your main idea, and choosing an appropriate way of putting the ideas together to reflect their relationship. If there isn't a relationship between the ideas, don't put them in the same sentence.

Activity 9: Putting ideas together

Combine the following groups of sentences into one or two sentences that clearly indicate the relationship between the ideas:

Example 1

- Results achieved in employment services are important.
- They play a role in matching labour supply and demand and implementing active labour market policies.

Reset

Show Solution

Example 2

- Progress can be reported for public employment services.
- Much work still needs to be done.

Reset

Show Solution

Example 3

- The ILO was also instrumental in the establishment of a Coordinating Team on Rural Infrastructure Development (CTRID).
- CTRID is an interagency committee with members from different government ministries and departments.

Reset

Show Solution

Example 4

- Good practices and success stories are being documented.
- The reason they are being documented is because they can have a multiplier effect.
- They affect other enterprises.
- They affect the supply chain and subcontractors.

Reset

Show Solution

Ordering ideas within sentences

It is the writer's job to make reading as easy as possible for the reader. In the previous screen, you saw examples of sentences that used coordinating or subordinating words to join ideas. Such words are useful to showing the relationship between ideas. However, you still need to be careful not to overdo it. That is, your sentences still need to be readable and focused on a main idea.

In work-related writing, it is usually important to make the main point of the sentence easy to find and any conditions or qualifications clearly subordinate. Have a look at the following example that makes too much use of subordinating and coordinating words.

Because personal and social development of individuals and the benefits to society from lifelong learning should be highlighted, this report argues that members should establish a national qualifications framework to facilitate lifelong learning and to realize other objectives, which the state government supports while pointing out that there are other principal factors underpinning the establishment of the national qualifications framework.

<input type="button" value="Show Improved Version"/>	
Explanation	

Parallel structure

It helps readers if you organize your writing so that like constructions echo like ideas. This is called parallel structure, and it is a great aid for giving your writing force and clarity. Parallel structure is particularly important in lists and bulleted points.

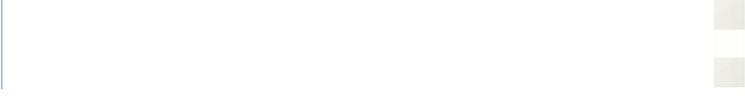
Below, on the left, you will see examples where parallel ideas are not reflected by parallel grammatical structure.

POOR	BETTER
By the end of this module, you will learn both editing and to proofread.	By the end of this module, you will learn both editing and proofreading.
He took a new job as coordinator, minute taker, and organizing publicity.	He took a new job as coordinator, minute secretary, and publicity officer.
Daily duties include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • taking minutes of meetings; • obtaining files from archives; • transcribe from dictaphone; • help visitors; • The Director's schedule must be printed for each day. 	Daily duties include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • taking minutes of meetings; • obtaining files from archives; • transcribing from dictaphone; • helping visitors; • printing the Director's daily schedule.
The Department priorities for the following period include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparation of Department's strategic plan; • a new manager needs to be hired; • to recruit three additional officers; • recommend a set of suitable projects for approval. 	The Department priorities for the following period include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing the Department's strategic plan; • hiring a new manager; • recruiting three additional officers; • recommending a set of suitable projects for approval.

Activity 10: Parallel structure

Use parallel structure to improve the following extracts.

Example 1	In all its activities, the ILO observes the following principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups; • the respect of human rights; • paying close attention to gender concerns; • applying wherever possible safe and healthy working conditions; and • peace building efforts in the areas also affected by political conflict should be promoted.
------------------	---

	 <p data-bbox="911 352 1000 390" style="text-align: center;">Reset</p>
<p data-bbox="131 436 350 468" style="text-align: center;">Show Solution</p>	
<p data-bbox="123 512 261 543">Example 2</p>	<p data-bbox="391 512 1390 596">I am enclosing both the interim narrative and financial reports respectively for March together, along with a mission report about last month's trip to Thailand. As well, for April I have enclosed a detailed expenditure report.</p>  <p data-bbox="878 850 967 882" style="text-align: center;">Reset</p>
<p data-bbox="131 930 350 961" style="text-align: center;">Show Solution</p>	
<p data-bbox="123 1005 261 1037">Example 3</p>	<p data-bbox="391 1005 1094 1037">She is fast, efficient and a supervisor of great effectiveness.</p>  <p data-bbox="878 1207 967 1239" style="text-align: center;">Reset</p>
<p data-bbox="131 1283 350 1314" style="text-align: center;">Show Solution</p>	

Assignment preparation task 6: Clarity

What have you discovered about the clarity of your writing?

- How do you put your sentences together?
- How is your use of parallel structure?
- Are you specific enough when you need to be?

[Assignment prep task 1: Thinking about your assignment](#)
[Assignment prep task 2: Identifying noise](#)
[Assignment prep task 3: Analysing barriers to communication](#)
[Assignment prep task 4: Analysing your reader](#)
[Assignment prep task 5: Describing your writing process](#)
[Assignment prep task 6: Clarity](#)

Paragraph and document flow

Now that you have considered good practice for developing sentences, let's move to the next level of organization: the paragraph.

Paragraphs help both readers and writers. They give readers a framework to use to make sense of the ideas you are trying to communicate. They give you as the writer a means of systematically developing the main ideas you want to get across. Paragraphs also give you a way to connect that idea to the other ideas you are presenting. Each paragraph should develop a specific idea that supports your statement of purpose.

There is no ideal length for a paragraph. Paragraphs are effective because they work to support an idea, not because they have a particular number of words or sentences.

Good paragraphs use three important techniques to guide the reader:

- A good paragraph has a **topic sentence** that presents the main idea of the paragraph.
- The topic sentence contains a **controlling idea**. The other sentences in the paragraph work together to support this controlling idea.
- An effective paragraph follows a **pattern of organization** that is easily recognizable. There are many patterns available to writers. We will be looking at a few of them in the following pages.

In the next few sections, you'll work through examples of good and bad paragraphs from ILO documents. By the time you finish, you'll have a good understanding of all these new terms!

Activity 11: Identifying paragraphs

Look at the following letter. Then click the buttons to see how the same letter is divided into paragraphs. Do you notice a difference in the readability of the letter?

Dear Colleague,

You have been selected by your Director or Executive Director for the next Management and Leadership Development Programme (MLDP). A background paper on the programme is attached. This is the second programme since the MLDP was launched. The first started in September 2004 and 56 participants are currently in the third phase of the programme undertaking the self-directed learning modules in their workplace. For the sake of clarity we shall refer to your "cohort" as MLDP2. Once the list of participants in MLDP2 is finalized, we will share it with you. It should be stressed that the programme is quite demanding with an ongoing commitment over the period of the course of three to four hours of learning time per week in addition to time at the workshop. It would be appreciated if you could inform us by 8 July 2005 whether you are able to confirm your participation in this programme. If you are able to do so, you can also tell us your preference for one of the workshops (see the attached schedule for workshop times and a full description of the programme). We look forward to your participation, should you be able to do so. If you have any questions, please contact a member of the MLDP team.

Best wishes,

With Paragraphs

Without Paragraphs

Topic sentences

A topic sentence contains the main idea or theme of the paragraph. If you had time only to read one sentence in a paragraph the topic sentence would give you the essence or main thrust of that paragraph. Skilled readers look for topic sentences to grasp general meaning quickly. A clear and well-placed topic sentence in each paragraph helps to make your work more accessible.

For workplace writing the best position is usually right at the beginning of the paragraph. This position helps your reader the most and enables those who are too busy to read the whole document to skim through it and capture the main ideas.

Examples

Have a look at the following topic sentences in two simple examples:

This new system causes problems for our staff members in several ways. Many are operating on computing equipment unable to cope with such large programs. Using the system requires training that many ILO staff members are currently unable to access....

Donors require timely and consistent reports. Reports that miss deadlines may seriously impact on donors' capacity to continue funding. Reports that do not follow donors' requirements in content and layout may have the same impact....

Now take a look at the following topic sentences. By reading these sentences, you should be able to guess what the rest of the paragraph will include. After you read the topic sentence, write down what you expect the paragraph to cover in the text area to the right (jotting down just words in point form is fine). Then reveal the rest of the paragraph to see if your assumptions about the paragraph were correct.

<p>The subjection of children to forced labour through trafficking has age and gender dimensions.</p>	<p>_____</p>	<p>Reveal the rest of the paragraph</p>
<p>The ILO alone cannot respond to all the recommendations of the Commission's report.</p>	<p>_____</p>	<p>Reveal the rest of the paragraph</p>
<p>Another impact of ICTs on journalists is the fact that for 20 years, technology has been one of the most popular subjects for publishing.</p>	<p>_____</p>	<p>Reveal the rest of the paragraph</p>
<p>For the ILO to play its full role in building a social dimension of globalization, a policy of strategic alliance building is needed.</p>	<p>_____</p>	<p>Reveal the rest of the paragraph</p>

As a reader, you immediately have a set of expectations built into these topic sentences about the kind of information the paragraph will contain. It is your job as a writer to fulfil the reader's expectations. If you set up reader expectations that you do not fulfil, your reader will have difficulty understanding your message and is unlikely to give you your desired response.

Controlling ideas

Good topic sentences contain a generalization and a controlling, or defining, idea. This idea tells the reader how the paragraph is held together. It indicates the structure of the paragraph in order to help the reader comprehend the relationship between the various sentences in the paragraph.

In the paragraph on the previous page about the ILO's role in the social dimension of globalization, the topic sentence is:

For the ILO to play its full role in building a social dimension of globalization, a policy of strategic alliance building is needed.

The controlling idea is: **strategic alliance building**.

Look again at the complete paragraph to see how these words control and order the content of the paragraph. You'll notice right away that the paragraph focuses both on potential allies and on the nature of the proposed alliances.

*For the ILO to play its full role in building a social dimension of globalization, a policy of strategic alliance building is needed. Among the Organization's **potential allies** are a number of civil society organizations. The **ILO's constituents** may therefore wish to consider developing a policy of outreach to **selected civil society organizations** where there is a **shared concern on issues** of priority to the Organization. It will prove increasingly useful for the **tripartite constituency** to find ways to **talk and listen** to democratic **civil society organizations** in ways that are consistent with the goals of the **Organization and of its constituents**.*

In the topic sentences provided in the other examples on the previous page, the controlling ideas are:

- The subjection of children to forced labour through trafficking has **age and gender dimensions**.
- The **ILO alone cannot respond** to all the recommendations of the Commission's report.
- Another impact of ICTs on journalists is the fact that for 20 years, **technology has been one of the most popular subjects** for publishing.

Activity 12: Identifying controlling ideas in topic sentences

You will analyse the same paragraphs as the previous activity. So you've already discovered what the topic sentence is for each one. For this activity, do the following:

- Select the word or phrase that reveals the controlling idea of the paragraph. This controlling idea will be part of the topic sentence.
- Click on the **Show Solutions** link to check your answers.

Example 1	The approach of the ILO InFocus Programme on Child Labour (IPEC) is firmly based on partnerships among all relevant sectors of society. Right now IPEC is working actively with thousands of partners throughout the world, from national governments to local agencies, from multinational corporations and employers associations to small businesses, from international trade union federations to local unions, and from international organizations to rural charities. All of them are committed to the struggle against child labour.
Show Solution	
Example 2	Many women suffer from unequal treatment in employment, as women, or specifically in relation to their reproductive role. Maternity protection is a crucial element in the struggle to achieve equality between men and women workers, as well as an essential element in the basic protection of women and children. The ILO was a pioneer in this area, and in the first year of its existence in 1919, adopted Convention No. 3 on maternity protection. By placing maternity protection on the agenda of the 1999 International Labour Conference, the Governing Body expressed confidence that the time was ripe for new international standards on this subject.
Show Solution	
Example 3	The need for better knowledge management has received considerable attention through the United Nations system, and has been noted in many reports and resolutions. While at the individual institutional level, and at the level of some of the inter-agency groupings, improving knowledge sharing and managing knowledge assets is being addressed, what has been lacking in an overall coordinated approach to this subject. Such an approach would allow existing efforts to join together under a consistent framework and guide future efforts.
Show Solution	

Organizing a paragraph

There are many ways to develop paragraphs. It's the writer's job to make sure that the structure or organization of the paragraph is made clear to the reader. Have a look at the following types of paragraph structure. This is not an exhaustive list but it does give an indication of the variety of paragraphs that you can compose.

<p>Chronological</p> <p>Begin with what happened first and take it from there.</p>
<p>The ILO has developed standards specifically regarding migrant workers in two different political contexts: first,</p>

in 1949, in the aftermath of the Second World War and, second, in 1975, in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis.

[CLICK TO SEE HOW THE PROGRESSION OF TIME DEFINES THE PARAGRAPH.](#)

The yellow highlighted items are markers of time, while the blue highlighted areas provide some context to the date.

Classification

Arrange examples of the claim made in the topic sentence.

Knowledge sharing is a key aspect of anti-trafficking and other work against forced labour. Good practices must be documented on a systematic basis. Study tours and international meetings have proved useful for cross-fertilization of experience. Information on forced labour and tools to combat it must be made available in local languages. And where so many international agencies are involved in accordance with their individual mandates, there is a need to establish an inter-agency learning environment where information on effective strategies can be shared.

[CLICK TO SEE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TOPIC SENTENCE AND THE EXAMPLES.](#)

The blue highlighted area is the controlling idea. The yellow highlighted items are examples of knowledge sharing practices. The topic sentence is revealed to be in bold.

Definition

Arrange the information around a definition.

Social dialogue is defined by the ILO to include all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. It can exist as a tripartite process, with the government as an official party to the dialogue or it may consist of bipartite relations only between labour and management (or trade unions and employers' organisations), with or without indirect government involvement. Consultation can be informal or institutionalised, and often it is a combination of the two. It can take place at the national, regional or at enterprise level. It can be inter-professional, sectoral or a combination of all of these.

[CLICK TO SEE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TOPIC SENTENCE AND THE EXAMPLES.](#)

The yellow highlighted items are elements of the definition of social dialogue, which is the controlling idea highlighted in blue.

Contrast and comparison

Demonstrate similarities or differences between two or more people or things.

The social costs of labour migration in terms of fractured families and communities are without a doubt at least as significant as those related to the more measurable economic costs. The effects are almost never gender-neutral. In parts of South Africa, when a man leaves to work on mines and plantations, the wife left behind effectively becomes the head of a one-parent family. Similarly, in Kerala in India, there are around 1 million "Gulf wives". On the other hand, when it is the mother who migrates, the consequences for the family can be even more serious. In Sri Lanka, more than half a million women work in the Gulf and elsewhere. This has many implications for the family and community left behind particularly for the children.

[CLICK TO SEE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TOPIC SENTENCE AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE PARAGRAPH.](#)

The blue highlighted items combine to make the controlling idea. The yellow highlighted areas reveal how the comparison is structured using transition words and phrases that indicate similarity or contrast.

Ask and answer a question

What does this mean for action to combat child labour? Experience shows that a combination of economic growth, respect for labour standards, universal education and social protection, together with a better understanding of the needs and rights of children, can bring about a significant reduction in child labour. It tells us that continuous vigilance is needed to sustain improvements in the face of deep and rapid social, economic, and political change.

[CLICK TO SEE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TOPIC SENTENCE AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE PARAGRAPH.](#)

The blue highlighted area identifies the controlling idea. The yellow highlighted areas refer to the actions needed to support that idea: i.e., what sort of action can combat child labour.

Induction

Infer a general principle from a line of reasoning. The topic sentence is usually last. Here it is underlined.

Crises produce devastating effects on societies, particularly in poor, vulnerable countries. Armed conflicts, natural disasters, financial and economic downturn, and difficult political and social transitions destroy socioeconomic infrastructure, the very means of production, natural and human resources, and vast numbers of jobs. The magnitude, pervasiveness and alarming upward trend of such human tragedies demands a special ILO focus.

[CLICK TO SEE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TOPIC SENTENCE AND THE DETAILS THAT SUPPORT IT.](#)

The highlighted items are examples of hardships that make the ILO's role essential as well as the areas where the ILO needs to focus its attention.

Deduction

The opposite of induction, this paragraph moves from the general to the particular. The topic sentence introduces the general idea, which is then followed by details and a conclusion.

Work-related accidents and diseases continue to be a serious problem in both developed and developing countries. The ILO estimates that workers suffer 270 million accidents every year. There are at least 335,000 fatal injuries caused by accidents at work. Further avoidable suffering is caused by 160 million cases of occupational disease. Taking accidents and diseases together, the global estimate of work-related deaths amounts to 2 million per year, and this is probably an underestimate.

[CLICK TO SEE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TOPIC SENTENCE AND THE DETAILS.](#)

The highlighted items reveal the evidence used to support the controlling idea of the serious problem of accidents and diseases to workers.

Headings versus topic sentences

In many documents, it is often clearer to state the main purpose of your paragraph in a heading rather than in a topic sentence. The same rule applies: all sentences in the paragraph should contribute to the main idea. You still need some kind of controlling idea in the text to help the reader understand how the sentences or points relate to each other.

Neither do headings eliminate the need for a pattern of organization in the paragraph. Layout and use of devices such as bullet points, however, can be used to reveal the pattern.

TOPIC SENTENCES	HEADINGS
The new guidelines have many shortcomings and are poorly presented.	Problems in New Guidelines
The delegates have been selected from three different areas.	Delegate Selection

Headings and subheadings should have high skim value for your readers. They should make sense on their own and be informative.

Activity 13: Writing headings and topic sentences

Look at the following two paragraphs. Both are missing their topic sentences. Write an appropriate sentence for each and provide a heading that reflects the meaning behind the topic sentence that you write.

Paragraph 1	Staff may fear changes in their functions, transfers or even termination of the contractual relationship. The stress is particularly severe for those having short-term contract arrangements. The
--------------------	--

negative effects on staff of rumours and misinformation can be avoided by the responsible chief directly advising staff, at the earliest opportunity, of any proposals or decisions for change.

Your topic sentence:

[The original topic sentence](#)

Your heading:

[A possible heading](#)

Paragraph 2

Being closest to the local economy and, consequently, to the local population, local authorities clearly have a key role in developing partnerships and promoting cooperation between various local public and private actors. In the context of job creation, it is particularly important that local authorities have powers that give them the potential to create new jobs, so their actions are likely to have a considerable impact on the local labour market. Although they are often major employers, their role may need to be strengthened if they are to play their part more efficiently.

Your topic sentence:

[The original topic sentence](#)

Your heading:

[A possible heading](#)

Paragraph and document flow

Paragraphs with flow are easier for the reader to follow. In documents, effective flow comes when each paragraph seems to flow on from the one before and where the relationship between the paragraphs is perfectly clear. In paragraphs with flow, each sentence flows from the one before in a discernible pattern. The topic sentence and controlling idea give the roadmap for the paragraph. Coherence is achieved by skilful use of:

- transitional words and phrases

- pronoun references
- repeated words
- parallel construction

Compare the following three paragraphs and consider their “flow.”

Paragraph 1	The most important evidence of the success of the programme is the capacity of the partner communities, government agencies, and NGOs to sustain the results achieved. This success can be attributed mainly to the effective use of the community-driven participatory approach. The approach, which is primarily anchored on sustainable indigenous or traditional knowledge systems and practices, enables communities to take the lead in their own development processes and limits development agencies only to the provision of facilitative support services.
See Analysis	
Paragraph 2	The ILO's crisis work is still internally and externally seen as primarily employment-themed. The next programme phase would be raising appreciation of ILO's broader agenda by assuming additional crisis-response competencies within the ILO. The programme could be moved to a more cross-cutting position within the Office. There is a chance to demonstrate the integrated and field-oriented nature of ILO's crisis programme.
See Analysis	
Paragraph 3	The ILO has been helping countries in the region to establish the rule of law and rights at work in a number of ways. Firstly, on the legislative side, ratification by the member States of the ILO's eight fundamental Conventions has risen. For example, Fiji, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen have ratified all eight core Conventions. In addition, China has declared all fundamental Conventions applicable to the Macau Special Administrative Region, China. Finally, with the announcement in March 2005 by its Parliament that it had approved the proposal to ratify Conventions Nos. 29 and 105, Mongolia will join the countries that have ratified all eight core Conventions.
See Analysis	

Transitional words and phrases

This list of transitional words and phrases is classified according to different kinds of markers.

Type of marker	Example
Semantic markers. They indicate how ideas are being developed.	firstly, secondly, finally
Markers for illustrations and examples	for instance, for example
Markers that introduce an idea that runs against what has been said earlier	but, nevertheless, yet, although, by contrast, however
Markers showing a cause and effect relationship between one idea and another	so, therefore, because, since, thus, consequently, for this reason
Markers that show the writer's intention to sum up the message	to summarize, in other words, it amounts to

Markers indicating the relative importance of different items	it is worth noting, it is important to note that, the next crucial point is
Markers used to rephrase what has already been said	in other words, put differently, that is to say
Markers that express a time relationship	then, next, after, while, when

Activity 14: Developing paragraphs

Rearrange the following sentences into a logically developed paragraph. Use the transition words to help you find the correct order.

Paragraph 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To be successful in a job interview, you should demonstrate certain personal and professional qualities. 2. Furthermore, you must make such a positive impression that the interviewers will remember you while they are interviewing other applicants. 3. And finally, if you really want to impress, you must convey a sense of self-confidence and enthusiasm for work. 4. Besides care for personal appearance, you need to be careful about your manner of speaking and ensure that you speak in a friendly but polite manner. 5. The first and often most lasting impression will be made by the clothes you wear so you should take care to appear dressed suitably for office work. 6. You need to create a good image in the limited time available, usually not more than an hour. 7. You should also be prepared to speak knowledgeably about the requirements of the position.
Your paragraph:	
	
<input type="button" value="Show Answer"/>	

Guidelines for constructing good paragraphs

- Decide what the paragraph will deal with. Write this down as a topic sentence OR as a heading.
- Think about all the issues or sub-ideas that your paragraph should include. Think about how they relate to your main idea.
- Based on the relationship between the sub-ideas and the main idea, build a controlling idea into your topic sentence. If you have used a heading instead of a topic sentence, write a first sentence for the paragraph containing your controlling idea.
- Using a pattern of organization stemming from your controlling idea, put your sentences together.
- Ensure your paragraph flows by using transitional words and phrases that are appropriate to the pattern of organization that you have chosen.

Assignment preparation task 7: Developing paragraphs

Have a hard look at the way you habitually construct paragraphs. Observe:

- where you tend to place topic sentences;
- if you build in controlling ideas;
- if your paragraphs have a pattern of organization, or logical development and flow, supported by appropriate transitional words and markers.

For the writing sample that you're working with for Assignment 1A, consider each of the paragraphs in your sample and try to indicate where the controlling ideas and topic sentences are in each paragraph. Can you say whether your writing takes a direct or indirect approach?

[Assignment prep task 1: Communicating with your tutor](#)

[Assignment prep task 2: Identifying noise](#)

[Assignment prep task 3: Analysing barriers to communication](#)

[Assignment prep task 4: Analysing your reader](#)

[Assignment prep task 5: Describing your writing process](#)

[Assignment prep task 6: Clarity](#)

[Assignment prep task 7: Developing Paragraphs](#)

Progress check: Sentences and paragraphs

The section on writing good sentences and paragraphs is essential to becoming an effective communicator. As a writer these are your main tools for conveying your messages. This section has explained some useful techniques for forming sentences from ideas, joining parts of sentences, developing paragraphs, and using key words and phrases to guide your reader. If you're having any troubles understanding these concepts, then you should contact your tutor for further or more detailed explanations.

SECTION 4: Editing your writing

Effective writers realize that their first draft is usually just that: the first draft, not the final draft. This section will help you identify and edit aspects of writing that may prevent you from achieving the result you want from your reader.

You will focus on several aspects of writing that contribute to wordiness or excessive length. These include padding, redundancy, repetition, incorrect use of the passive voice, and noun-based writing. At the same time you will be able to practice refining sentences and paragraphs to make them clear, concise, and accurate. Writing clear, accurate prose that communicates your message effectively to your reader has a positive effect on your own credibility, and ultimately on the ILO's reputation. It's well worth the effort!

This module also includes a section on discriminatory writing, and how you can avoid using words and phrases that reflect poorly on specific groups of people.

Readability issues

"Writing that is not read or only partially read is failed writing."

Robert D. Eagleson, *Writing in Plain English*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1990.

Writing is hard work! No one wants to produce documents that discourage targeted readers from reading them. Yet sometimes readers don't finish the documents they begin. Lack of time is the most often quoted reason for not getting through all the reading required of the job. Yet, it is possible that these same readers are producing more writing for others who also have insufficient time to read it.

In preparation for this course, we spoke to several employees from the ILO at all levels. In these discussions it was abundantly clear that there was a desire for shorter, clearer, and more reader-focused documents.

What are some of the features of documents that are hard and so time consuming to read?

- volume
- dense looking writing that looks hard to read (full of long sentences, long paragraphs and unbroken text)
- no summaries for long documents such as reports
- poor organization and no road map
- gobbledegook — confusing, unnecessarily complex and incomprehensible language

Let's work through some ways of making the task easier and faster for the readers of the documents you write. Productive strategies are:

- keeping sentences down to size;
- eliminating wordiness (padding, redundancy, pomposity, etc.);
- using active rather than passive constructions;
- taking a verb-based approach.

Making sentences shorter

Let's begin by examining the basic unit in writing: the sentence.

Readers usually read all the way to the punctuation at the end of the sentence to capture its meaning. When the sentence is long and packed with sub-ideas, conditions, and qualifications, the writer is imposing a lot of strain on the reader.

Here is an ILO example from a report:

This period generally coincides with the point of accelerated expansion of the programme, the inclusion of the elimination of child labour as a core labour standard and its subsequent incorporation into the Declaration of Fundamental Rights and Principles at Work (1998), the new Child Labour Convention No. 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999), and the restructuring of IPEC as an InFocus Programme (1999) combining all work on child labour into an integrated structure, including support in implementing the Declaration, and Conventions Nos. 138 and 182.

(91 words)

Note that this sentence, in addition to its length, loses the integrity of its structure halfway with the continual addition of participle phrases (beginning with –ing words: restructuring, combining, including).

And another from a Governing Body paper:

With regard to the first of the pending questions, namely the Committee's recommendation concerning the sentencing of seven trade unionists to between 15 and 26 years' imprisonment and its request that the Government should take steps to ensure their immediate release and keep it informed in this respect, the Committee regrets that most of the Government's reply repeats its previous arguments which had already been examined, to the effect that: (1) the persons in question are neither trade union officials nor workers; (2) they were funded by the United States Interests Section in Havana and terrorist mafia organizations of Cuban origin; (3) the complainants' allegations were not proven and the conclusions and recommendations have been manipulated for improper political motives.

(120 words)

Sentences of these lengths and complexity are not reader friendly. Writers sometimes use them in an attempt to be comprehensive, but the result is difficult to read and not helpful for anyone who must act on the information. In the example above, for instance, we don't know the subject (the Committee) until after 48 words and three lengthy clauses.

Why do we writers create such problems for our readers? Mostly for the best of reasons: we think we must pack related ideas together and must ensure that the reader gets the whole message in all its complexity in one go. Many also believe that short sentences are an indication of an immature, non-professional style.

Unpacking long sentences

Let's have a look at a few sentences from other ILO documents and see if they can be unpacked:

Despite the continuing difficult situation which has aggravated the social and economic condition of Palestinian workers and their families, as presented in the 2005 Report of the Director-General to the International Labour Conference on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, the ILO made progress in and further expanded the programme endorsed by the Governing Body in June 2002.

(61 words; 1 sentence)

This sentence has six ideas:

1. The situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories has been difficult.

2. These difficulties have aggravated the social and economic conditions of Palestinian workers and their families.
3. The 2005 Report of the Director-General to the International Labour Conference described this difficult situation.
4. The Governing Body endorsed a programme in June 2002.
5. The ILO has made progress in this programme.
6. The ILO has expanded this programme.

You can see that even by unpacking the sentence, the meaning becomes clearer. Some of these six ideas depend on each other and need to go together; some are more important than others; and the order of ideas needs attention. Below is a revised version.

The 2005 Report of the Director-General to the International Labour Conference described the difficult economic and social conditions of Palestinian workers and their families in the occupied Arab territories. However, the ILO has made progress in and expanded the programme which the Governing Body endorsed in June 2002.

(48 words; 2 sentences)

The revision is not much shorter but breaking it into shorter sentences has made it much easier to read.

Activity 15: Unpacking long sentences

Unpack these sentences and then rewrite to improve them. (You may finish with a greater number of sentences.) Remember, the suggested answers offer only one possibility. You may have found an equally effective way to improve the quality of these sentences.

Sentence 1	A study was undertaken at the Organization during March 2005 to assess how ILO freelance editors are currently recruited and managed and to make recommendations for improving the pool of reliable freelance editors available to the ILO and standardizing headquarters procedures for recruitment, accreditation and payment of such editors.
Your sentence: <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 80px; width: 100%;"></div>	
<input type="button" value="Show Answer"/>	
Sentence 2	While the overall responsibility for providing a safe and healthy working environment rests with the employer, who should demonstrate commitment to OSH by putting in place a documented programme, available to workers and their representatives, that addresses the principles of prevention, hazard identification, risk assessment and control, information and training, workers have a duty to cooperate with the employer in implementing this OSH programme, and in respecting and applying procedures and other instructions designed to protect them and others present at the workplace from exposure to occupational hazards.
Your sentence: <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>	

<input type="button" value="Show Answer"/>	
Sentence 3	<p>The legislative bodies of the organizations should bring to the attention of the host countries the significance of adequately informing the local administration, public services and business communities, especially those situated outside the capital or seat of the various organizations, about the privileges, immunities and benefits granted to the United Nations system organizations, their staff members and officials, so as to facilitate the exercise of these privileges, immunities and benefits and to ensure that the staff and officials of the organizations receive adequate cooperation and understanding in the fulfilment of their obligations.</p>
<p>Your sentence:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	
<input type="button" value="Show Answer"/>	
Sentence 4	<p>Change and restructuring often provide opportunities to improve work organization and the content of jobs and for changes in roles and responsibilities which may enhance skills and career development while leading to better and more efficient use of staff resources as well as other resources.</p>
<p>Your sentence:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	
<input type="button" value="Show Answer"/>	

Even though short sentences are generally easier on your reader, be careful not to take this too far. You should not put your trust in a formula that states an optimal number of words per sentence. There are times when long sentences are necessary, and in the hands of skilled writers, can be effective. Some difficult concepts require fairly long sentences to do them justice. Even in these cases, though, it is often best to write short, clear sentences first and then combine them through skillful editing, rather than start with a long sentence.

Too short or too long?

You may have noticed that this module has given advice about the hazards of making sentences too long and making them too short. Your guiding principle should be to make understanding as easy as possible for your reader. This way you will avoid sentences, long and short, that will cause troubles for your reader.

Avoiding wordiness

"It is the responsibility of official writers to be intelligible — not to confuse people and make their lives difficult with unfamiliar words and longwinded, impenetrable sentences..."

Roz Kelly MHR, in a foreword to Robert D. Eagleson, *Writing in Plain English*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1990.

Another common complaint about ILO writing is its verbosity or wordiness. This tendency is often excused by stating the need for formality in many documents, especially those involving governments. More often though, the wordiness is caused by falling into what is called 'formula writing': it may seem easier to piece together well-worn phrases rather than think about how to write clearly. Wordy writing is difficult, boring and slow to read. It can also be inappropriate if it is more formal than the writing context requires.

Examples

- It is noteworthy that a partnership mode of working became the modus operandi of the Initiative at the national, provincial and community levels.
- We make reference to your fax of 9 June, advising us of further details of the situation with regard to the nominated venue for the above training. In response to the queries you have raised therein, I should like to respond to them serially.
- With regard to the hotel brochure we have received from you, we are assuming that we do not have to make a selection of a menu therefrom for the week's lunches and that the brochure is for our information only. Please advise if we are in error concerning this matter.

Apart from taking a lot of time to read and not being particularly clear, the kind of very formal writing in the last two sentences does not suit the content. But what is it exactly that makes these sentences so wordy and hard to read?

- Using padding phrases and words that do not add to the meaning (**noteworthy, mode, modus operandi, situation, in respect of, with regard to, therein, therefrom**),
- Using verb phrases instead of simple verbs (**make reference to** instead of **refer**; **make a selection** instead of **select**),
- Using complex words when simple ones will do the job better or could simply be left out (**serially** instead of **in turn** or **one by one**).

Activity 16: Eliminating padding

Take the following sentences and rewrite them simply:

Sentence 1	It is noteworthy that a partnership mode of working became the modus operandi of the initiative at the national, provincial, and community levels.
Your sentence: <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 100px; width: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"></div>	
<input type="button" value="Show Answer"/>	
Sentence 2	We make reference to your fax of 9 June, advising us of further details of the situation with regard to the nominated venue for the above training. In response to the queries you have raised therein, I should like to respond to them serially.
Your sentence: <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 100px; width: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"></div>	
<input type="button" value="Show Answer"/>	
Sentence 3	With regard to the hotel brochure we have received from you, we are assuming that we do not have to make a selection of a menu therefrom for the week's lunches and that the brochure is for our information only. Please advise if we are in error

concerning this matter.

Your sentence:

Show Answer

Activity 17: Repetitious phrases

Have a look through this list and click on the repetitious phrase to remove the redundant word.

REPETITIOUS PHRASE	ANSWER
absolutely complete	
active consideration	
actual truth	
assemble together	
attached hereto	
basic fundamentals	
causal factor	
cease and desist	
collect together	
complete stop	
consensus of opinion	
contributing factor	
enclosed herewith	
end result	
entirely complete	
exactly identical	
final outcome	
follows after	
full and complete	
future plans	
great majority	
important essentials	
initial preparation	
integral part	
midway between	

new innovations	
past history	
personal beliefs	
personal opinion	
potential opportunity	
refer back	
repeat again	
very unique	
visible to the eye	
vitaly essential	

Find a shorter way to write these phrases:

LONGER VERSION	SHORTER VERSION	Answer
prior to the start of	<u>Compare</u>	
a sufficient amount of	<u>Compare</u>	
because of this reason	<u>Compare</u>	
we might well enquire as to why	<u>Compare</u>	
due to the fact that	<u>Compare</u>	
in the event that	<u>Compare</u>	
it would be appreciated if you	<u>Compare</u>	
in the course of	<u>Compare</u>	
on the question of	<u>Compare</u>	
in view of the fact	<u>Compare</u>	
within the realm of possibility	<u>Compare</u>	
was of the opinion that	<u>Compare</u>	
in a number of cases	<u>Compare</u>	
at the present time	<u>Compare</u>	

a majority of

Compare

Here is a list of pompous words and phrases: words or phrases that sound self-important or pretentious. Click on any that you are inclined to use often. In your future writing try to use the simple version recommended.

ELIMINATE	RECOMMENDED
pursuant to	
be cognizant of	
commence, initiate	
optimal	
fiscal expenditures	
interface with	
terminate	
ascertain the data	
herein, therein	
parameters	
the undersigned	
aforementioned	
forward, transmit	
insufficiency	
render inoperative	
pending determination of	
utilize, utilization of	
per your request/per our discussion pursuant to your request/our discussion, as per your request/our discussion in accordance with your request in compliance with your request	
enclosed please find, attached hereto please find	
should additional assistance be required	

Pick out the redundant words and phrases in the following sentence.

We should not try to anticipate in advance those great events that will completely revolutionize our society because past history tells us that it has been the ultimate outcome of little events that has unexpectedly surprised us.

Show Answer

Using active rather than passive constructions

Long sentences and difficult-to-understand writing often contain many verbs written in the passive rather than the active form.

Identifying passive constructions

When you use an **active construction**, the subject of the sentence does the action to the receiver of the action.

The dog bit the man.

The dog	bit	the man
(Subject and doer)		(Receiver of the action)

In the passive version of this sentence the subject of the sentence has the action performed on it.

The man was bitten by the dog.

The man	was bitten	by the dog
(The receiver of the action)		(The agent or doer of the action)

These two sentences seem harmless enough, but let's consider some work-related ones.

Passive	It was decided by the supervisor that the interviews should be conducted.
Active	The supervisor decided to conduct the interviews.

You can see that the passive version is longer (about 35%), weaker and less crisp.

Although in principle it is best to use the active, you should keep in mind that there are times when the passive voice is quite useful and appropriate. Examples are listed under each usage.

- When the receiver is the most important item and needs emphasis.

Example:

Distribution practice will be changed considerably by this new legislation.

Optical fibres are being used increasingly in telecommunication networks.

- When naming the subject is awkward or unnecessary;

Example:

Therese was re-elected president of the Staff Club.

- When it is desirable to conceal the doer of the action;

Example:

The postman was bitten as he passed my postbox.

Activity 18: Identifying passive verbs

Decide if each sentence would be improved by writing in the active voice. If so, rewrite the sentence.

Sentence 1	The results of Mr Tong's examination will be
-------------------	--

reviewed by us Friday next at the latest.

Your sentence:

Show Answer

Sentence 2

The submission was agreed to by the Director General.

Your sentence:

Show Answer

Sentence 3

After an assessment of the most recent budget overruns, the decision has been made to cancel the renovation of the third floor of this building.

Your sentence:

Show Answer

Sentence 4

These indicators can be used by health personnel to assess the quality of care and services provided by them.

Your sentence:

Show Answer

Sentence 5

Overall, a more critical evaluation with regards to the success (or failure) of specific aspects of a project needs to be made by us.

Your sentence:

Show Answer

Verb-based writing

The next time you are impressed by the quality and clarity of a piece of writing, have a close look at it. You are likely to find that the writing is strong on verbs and light on abstract nouns (names of concepts or qualities that you cannot see or touch: for example, conclusion, consideration, realization). If you resist the tendency to write 'elongated' verbs like the ones below, your writing will be both improved and shorter. Use vigorous verbs whenever possible to give your writing strength.

Elongated verbs

Have a look at this list of verb phrases. Write down in the space provided the concise way of saying the same thing. In these cases, the answer is just one word.

ELONGATED VERBS (verb plus noun plus preposition)	CONCISE VERBS	ANSWER
Perform an analysis of	Compare	
Take action on	Compare	
Make assumptions about	Compare	
Be in a position to	Compare	
Effect a change in	Compare	
Reach a conclusion about	Compare	
Give consideration to	Compare	
Is corrective of	Compare	
Make a decision regarding	Compare	
Is dependent on	Compare	
Bring to an end	Compare	
Make an examination of	Compare	
To be cognizant of	Compare	
Place an order for	Compare	

Make a realization that	<input type="text" value="Compare"/>	
Make a recommendation that	<input type="text" value="Compare"/>	
Effect a reduction in	<input type="text" value="Compare"/>	
Exhibit a tendency to	<input type="text" value="Compare"/>	

Activity 19: Revising noun-based writing

Consider the following extract and try to improve it by reducing the number of abstract nouns and increasing the number of verbs:

Click to identify the noun-based elements of the sentence. Then write your own improved, verb-based version and compare.

A noun-based sentence	Consistent with its mandate for advocacy and dialogue, ILO has had involvement in the mobilization of the vastly increased resources needed for the promotion of tripartite discussions, in particular the support of consultations on the establishment of local working groups and the encouragement of further collaboration among constituents.
Your sentence	<input type="text"/>
Show Nouns	
A More Verb-Based Solution	

Assignment preparation task 8: Wordiness

Using your selected writing sample as a basis for your analysis, note your findings about the wordiness (or otherwise) of your writing, especially uses of the following:

- padding words and phrases
- repetitious phrases
- overly formal vocabulary
- passive constructions
- noun-based writing

You can include your observations in your discussion as part of Assignment 1A.

[Assignment prep task 1: Communicating with your tutor](#)

[Assignment prep task 2: Identifying noise](#)
[Assignment prep task 3: Analysing barriers to communication](#)
[Assignment prep task 4: Analysing your reader](#)
[Assignment prep task 5: Describing your writing process](#)
[Assignment prep task 6: Clarity](#)
[Assignment prep task 7: Developing Paragraphs](#)
[Assignment prep task 8: Wordiness](#)

Discriminatory writing

ILO cannot, and does not, discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, beliefs, or religion. For this reason it is important to take care that your writing is free of any kind of discriminatory language or phrasing. This is not a simple matter of replacing he by he/she or mankind by people or of avoiding slang terms for ethnic groups.

From a communication effectiveness standpoint, readers will not be inclined to respond in the way you want them to if you have offended them by using language that they consider discriminatory. Both your credibility and your effectiveness can be at stake.

Currently, you need to be careful in your use of language in the areas below. Be warned though: what is regarded as non-discriminatory today may be discriminatory tomorrow. We will concentrate on the following:

- race
 - gender
 - disability and chronic illness
 - age
-

Types of discriminatory writing

Race

The use of ethnic and racial labels, names, and expressions that are created and used to portray certain groups as inferior or superior to others is discriminatory. Given the international nature of ILO's work, it is imperative that non-discriminatory language in relation to race and ethnicity be used.

Gender

ILO places great emphasis on the need to use gender-sensitive language. Gender-specific language expresses bias in favour of one sex and thus discriminates against the other. In general the bias is usually in favour of men and against women.

You should aim for non-sexist language (sometimes called gender-neutral, non-gender specific or inclusive language) that includes women and treats women and men equally.

A common problem in writing is the use of the masculine pronoun to generalize for all people. A more subtle discrimination occurs in the use of examples and illustrations where women are often left out or when describing people in power; it is usually men who are used as examples.

Disability and chronic illness

The chief trap to avoid is emphasizing the disability or chronic illness rather than the person. Labels such as 'deaf and dumb', 'Mongoloid', 'retarded', are still commonly used, but should be avoided.

Often people with a disability are referred to collectively as 'the disabled', 'the handicapped', 'the mentally retarded', 'the blind', 'the deaf', 'the infected' or 'paraplegics', 'spastics', 'epileptics', etc. These terms have the effect of depersonalizing the description of people and equating the person with the disability or illness.

If it is necessary or desirable to be more specific about the type of disability involved, the same strategy is recommended: that is, not to focus entirely on the person's disability in the description. Do not put the disability first and the person second.

Age

Different societies and cultures vary in their perception and valuing of age. Care should be taken in writing to reflect this

sensitivity by avoiding inappropriate language relating to age.

Alternatives to discriminatory writing

The table provides a list of some typical examples of discriminatory writing along with our proposed alternatives for saying the same thing. Have a look and see if you recognize any of these terms or expressions.

Original	IMPROVED
The department head must submit his draft budget by March.	Department heads must submit their draft budgets by March.
The applicant must place his signature on the dotted line.	You must sign on the dotted line.
Mankind	People, human beings
Manpower	Workforce, personnel, employees, human resources
The average man	The average person
male nurse	nurse
female doctor	doctor
chairman	chair, chairperson (You can use 'chairman' or 'chairwoman' if you know the gender of the chairperson)
The disabled, the handicapped, disabled people	people with disabilities
The physically handicapped	people with physical disabilities
victim of HIV/AIDS or HIV/AIDS sufferer	people living with HIV/AIDS
confined to a wheelchair	wheelchair user

Activity 20: Avoiding discriminatory language

Rewrite the following sentences, in more appropriate language.

Sentence 1	A doctor will be hired to help probationers evaluate cases and he will be expected to conduct training also.
Your sentence	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
<input type="button" value="Show Answer"/>	
Sentence 2	If a supervisor dresses well, he presents a positive image to his subordinates.
Your sentence	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
<input type="button" value="Show Answer"/>	
Sentence 3	The patients were brought into the interview room and heard their case notes read aloud by an attractive young woman.

Your sentence	
<input type="button" value="Show Answer"/>	
Sentence 4	Although he is confined to a wheelchair, my colleague is able to work in this office because it is designed to accommodate the disabled.
Your sentence	
<input type="button" value="Show Answer"/>	

Progress check: Editing and revising skills

Now that you have worked through the module and have read the assignment instructions, this is a good time to keep your tutor informed of your progress on the assignments. Have you begun both parts (1A and 1B)? Are there any parts of the assignment that are unclear to you?

Assignment 1

The assignment work for this module falls into two parts:

- In [Assignment 1A](#), you explore and reflect on the elements of your own writing competence.
- In [Assignment 1B](#), you demonstrate that you can improve the effectiveness of poorly written and undeveloped text.

Click to the next two screens to read in detail a description of each of these two parts. You are also requested to submit a checklist with your assignment to ensure that you've submitted all the required parts of the assignment.

Feedback

Your tutor will review your work to determine if:

- You've understood the principles of effective communication as described in the module;
- These are aspects of your writing that you can improve further with more work on the assignment.

Resubmissions

If a resubmission is required, you can then rework the assignment in the light of your tutor's feedback. You can resubmit your work for review up to two times. If after three submissions, your tutor still finds serious problems with your writing that haven't been resolved, you will be unable to continue with the rest of the course. Therefore, it is important that you understand the requirements of the assignment.

⇒  If you are unclear on what to do or what to submit, then let your tutor know.

Assignment 1A

You are required to write an in-depth analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of your work-related writing, supported by a specific example from your writing.

Your analysis must include a piece of writing that you have composed in the past. It can be any type of writing: memo, email, report, letter, minutes, etc. (If it is a long piece of writing, you can submit an extract of the original that supports your analysis.) It should be something that you believe is an example of writing that could have been more effective given what you now know, having read the contents of Module 1.

In your analysis, you must demonstrate knowledge of the following areas:

- the writing process
- reader awareness
- your statement of purpose (or desired reader response)
- sentence structure and composition
- paragraph development
- problematic areas of writing
- elements of good writing style

Use the activities and [assignment preparation tasks](#) to lead you through the process of collecting data about how you write.

Consider this assignment to be like a mini-report. That means your writing should be clearly structured with coherent paragraphs and sentences. You can use headings to reveal the structure of your report if you think that will help.

Further help: If you still find yourself stuck on this analysis, then have a look at some [guiding questions](#) to help structure your analysis and focus your thoughts.

The performance criteria

You will successfully complete this part if:

- Your analysis is supported by an example from your own work-related writing; do not send the entire if it is more than a page. Use an extract from your work-related writing to support your points.
 - Your analysis is written in well constructed and connected paragraphs, and is around 500 words.
 - You have submitted a completed Reader Analysis Form.
 - Your responses are in complete sentences.
-

Assignment 1B

Your tutor will send you this part of your assignment after you make initial email contact. This assignment part has two main components to it.

Improving writing samples

Included in this exercise will be a number of sentences and paragraphs that demonstrate problematic writing as described in Module 1.

For each sentence or paragraph provided, you must indicate what the main weaknesses are. You must also provide a revised version that improves upon the original sample.

Paragraph development

For this exercise your tutor will provide you with a single block of text. You must turn it into a presentable piece of writing by making paragraphs, adding headings and topic sentences, and including appropriate transition words to improve the flow of the text.

The performance criteria

You will successfully complete this part if:

- you correctly identify weaknesses in the extracts and submitted sentences;
 - your rewritten versions of the extracts show improvement in readability, style, and paragraph development.
-

Assignment 1 preparation tasks

These are located throughout the module. They are designed for you to work on them as you come to them during the course of your studying through the module.

- [Thinking about your assignment](#)
- [Identifying noise](#)
- [Analysing barriers to communication](#)

- [Analysing your readers](#)
- [Describing your writing process](#)
- [Clarity](#)
- [Developing paragraphs](#)
- [Wordiness](#)

Assignment 1 checklist

1. Have I completed Parts 1A and 1B of the assignment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
1. Have I made a back-up copy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
1. Are my files clearly labelled and organized so my tutor can easily find all the parts of my assignment? (lastname_M1A)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
1. Have I proofread and run a spell check on all parts of the assignment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Assignment 1A	
1. Have I selected a sample of my writing (about one page in length) for analysis.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
1. Have I completed and included a Reader Analysis Form for the target readers of my sample piece of writing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
1. Have I identified BOTH strengths and weaknesses in my writing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
1. Have I used the module activities to help me provide examples from my own writing to support my statements about my writing sample's strengths and weaknesses?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Assignment 1B	
1. Have I analysed and revised the extracts that my tutor has sent out to me?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
1. Have I organized, revised, and rewritten the block of text my tutor has sent out to me?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
1. Have I rewritten each extract to improve its clarity, conciseness, and correctness?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

Progress check: Submitting your assignment

You have now worked through the entire module and should be ready to submit your assignment. Please read the assignment instructions carefully and use the checklist as a guide for when you are ready to submit your assignment.

You must send your assignment to your tutor via email.

If you are uncertain about anything related to Module 1 or the assignment requirements, [please contact your tutor](#) right away. If you have worked through the entire module at this point, you should be prepared to put together your assignment.

Module 1 Activity Map

Activity 1: Practice with communication terminology
Activity 2: Choosing the best channel
Activity 3: Identifying noise
Activity 4: Statement of purpose
Activity 5: Using the Outline tool in Word
Activity 6: Micro-editing
Activity 7: Proofreading
Activity 8: Proofreading vs spell checker
Activity 9: Putting ideas together
Activity 10: Parallel structure
Activity 11: Identifying paragraphs
Activity 12: Identifying controlling ideas in topic sentences
Activity 13: Writing headings and topic sentences
Activity 14: Developing paragraphs
Activity 15: Unpacking long sentences
Activity 16: Eliminating padding
Activity 17: Repetitious phrases
Activity 18: Identifying passive verbs
Activity 19: Revising noun-based writing
Activity 20: Avoiding discriminatory language

Course resources

[PUBL Guide for Authors](#)

This guide is produced by the Editorial Unit of the Bureau of Publications. It provides a concise set of guidelines for preparing a document for publication within ILO. By following these guidelines, authors can contribute to a more efficient editing process for their work.

[ILO House Style Guide](#)

This document provides considerable guidance on the style and mechanics of English-language writing, including spelling, punctuation, formatting, citations, copyright, and much more.

[The Deluxe OFFDOC Guide for Report Writers](#)

This is a temporary document for use until the new version of the ILO House Style Guide becomes available. It provides a very useful checklist for authors to review before submitting their manuscript for editing. The checklist contains a list of editorial points to consider as well as some practical advice on the process of writing and editing at ILO. Probably most useful for writers is the concise list of tips to keep in mind when writing and editing a report.

Web resources

The Internet English Grammar

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/>

This site is both a self-study course and a comprehensive resource of information on English grammar, designed primarily for university undergraduates. It covers the basic functions and forms of words and moves on to more complex units such as phrases, clauses, and sentences. The site includes a large glossary and several interactive exercises.

Guide to Grammar and Writing

<http://cctc2.comnet.edu/grammar/>

Excellent site especially for sentence and paragraphing help.

Guide to Grammar and Style

<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/s.html>

Alphabetical arrangement — good quick resource.

The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation

<http://www.grammarbook.com/>

A comprehensive on-line book covering many common problem areas, including punctuation. (Skip the promotional first page.)

The University of Calgary: The Basic Elements of English Grammar Guide

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/>

Comprehensive site for grammar and punctuation help. Includes self-marking exercises.

William Strunk Jr: The Elements of Style

<http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html>

One of the oldest and best style guides around.