

Business Communications I: Business Grammar and Composition

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National Association of Elevator Contractors



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About this Study Guide

This guide is intended to supplement your individualized Skillsoft learning by providing materials and examples specific to the vertical transport industry.

The content of this guide reinforces business communications concepts, specifically in the following areas:

- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Sentence Structure
- Vocabulary

Information included in this study guide is intended for educational purposes only. Check with your company for specific guidelines.

Abbreviations

The following rules and examples of abbreviations can be found in Skillsoft as follows:



Course: Business Grammar: the Mechanics of Writing

Section: Job Aids

Topic: Abbreviations

Rule	Example
<p>Add professional designations after a person's full name. Remember to include a comma after the name and before the designation.</p> <p>NOTE: Do NOT use both a title and a designation.</p>	<p>John Currant, Esq. Felicia Silpa, Ph.D. Hanesh Patel, M.D. <i>or</i> Dr. Hanesh Patel, but <i>not</i> Dr. Hanesh Patel, M.D.</p>
<p>Use "Ms." to refer to a woman when:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) a woman prefers the title; 2) a woman's marital status is unimportant; 3) a woman's marital status is unknown 	
<p>In all but the most formal documents, you may abbreviate the names of well-known businesses and organizations, including labor unions, societies, associations, and government agencies. Familiar acronyms are also acceptable. The style for these abbreviations is usually all capital letters with no periods.</p>	<p>FBI AFL-CIO MIT IBM CBS NASDAQ</p>
<p>Abbreviating parts of a company's name can also be appropriate.</p> <p>*Remember to abbreviate a company's name based on the way the company refers to itself.</p>	<p>Co. Corp. Inc. Ltd.</p>
<p>Abbreviations for units of weight and measure rarely include periods. One exception is the abbreviation of inches.</p>	<p>14 in. (inches) 14 km, 10 m, 33 kg, 9 mm</p>
<p>Some units of measure are abbreviated using a single letter as a symbol.</p>	<p>3 T (tablespoons) 45°F (Fahrenheit) / 45°C (Celsius) 1 L (liter)</p>

Rule	Example
Abbreviations for units of measurement never take an s to indicate the plural.	1 m or 12 m, not 12 ms
If a term of measurement is used as a modifier, you should add a hyphen between the number and the unit.	A 15-ft board A 45-in. blade

Active Voice/Passive Voice

Active voice is usually favored over passive voice because it makes clear when an actor is acting – it also results in more direct, strong, and livelier prose. However, there are some reasons for passive voice.

Use the active voice to identify when a subject/actor is acting:

The technician resolved the problem. (active) vs. The problem was resolved. (passive)

Use the passive voice when:

1. you don't know the actor;
2. when the actor is unimportant to your point; or
3. when you want to place your emphasis on the acted upon.

Something leaked through the ceiling. (active) vs. The ceiling was affected by a leak. (passive)

Capitalization



The following rules and examples of capitalization can be found in Skillsoft as follows:

Course: Business Grammar: the Mechanics of Writing

Section: Job Aids

Topic: Capitalization

Lists

Unnumbered – Do not capitalize unnumbered list items

Numbered – Capitalize items after the period in numbered lists:

E.g.: Three factors of erosion are:

1. Weather
2. Time
3. Other Environmental Damage

Bulleted – Do not capitalize bulleted lists.

E.g.: To succeed, you should

- have clear goals
- know your abilities
- try to keep learning

Headings

Title case headings – capitalize all words except prepositions fewer than four letters, articles (e.g., *the*, *a*, and *an*), conjunctions (e.g., *and*, *but*, *for*, and *or*) and the infinitive verb *to*. Always capitalize the first and last word in a title.

- The Art of Sales
- Meeting the Client Halfway
- Strengths to Focus On
- What to Look for in a Client
- Convince Your Clients but Don't Lose Them
- How to Win the Sale

Sentence case headings - capitalize only the first word in a title, the first word in a subtitle, and any proper name.

- Insurance policies in practice
- Principles of business
- Would you buy this?
- Operations in the United States

Comma Usage

Commas are used in a variety of situations, and they help guide the reader to understand the meaning in a sentence. Here are some examples of reasons to employ commas; for further information about comma usage, see links to grammar guides both online and in print.

- 1) To separate items in a series of three or more items.
Apply hard work, skill, and ingenuity to succeed.
- 2) To distinguish parts of dates and addresses.
On Monday, May 23, 2007, the customer filed a complaint with the Better Business Bureau at 2000 Daniel Davis Avenue, West Chester, Pennsylvania 19380.
- 3) To set off introductory parts of the sentence.
Tools at hand, the technician was prepared for a busy day.
- 4) To transition in quotations.
"I apologize for the *delay,*" said the customer service manager.
- 5) To combine clauses in a compound sentence. Frequent conjunctions include *and, but, or, yet, so*.
The day was busy, *and* the technician was prepared.

Run-On Sentences

Run-on sentences occur when two independent clauses are joined without any linking words or punctuation, in effect “running together.”

The elevator slowed it ground to a halt. (Run on)

You can remedy a run-on with punctuation by using a period or a semi-colon. You can add a comma at the end of the first independent clause and use a coordinating conjunction (*and, or, but are favorites*) to link the two clauses.

The elevator slowed. It ground to a halt.

The elevator slowed, and then it ground to a halt.

Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments are incomplete clauses or phrases which lack a subject and/or verb. They may be dependent clauses, or they may simply be phrases. Sentence fragments may be intentionally used to sound informal or achieve some other stylistic effect, but writers should be careful in using this strategy in professional contexts because readers may miss the effect and read the fragment as an error instead.

To revise a sentence fragment, join it with a nearby independent clause, or add the appropriate subject and verb to make its own sentence.

The company is reporting its losses. Although promises to keep its employees. (fragment)

The company is reporting its losses, although promises to keep its employees. (corrected)

Subject-Verb Agreement

Verbs and subjects make up key elements of sentences, and their agreement ensures the coherence of those sentences. Verbs and subjects should agree in number—singular or plural—and in person—first, second, and third. There are numerous conditions to consider the agreement of verbs and subjects, two of which are listed here. For a more thorough account of the instances of subject-verb agreement, visit the online and print resources for grammar.

- 1) Multiple subjects combined by and are plural.

A flashlight, clipboard, and service sheet were carried by each technician.

- 2) Collective subjects referred to in a group term (eg team or company) should agree depending on how the group is used. If the individual subjects in the group are referenced, the agreement should be plural. If the group as a whole is referenced, the agreement should be singular.

The company collaborate on presentations at the conference. (company references multiple employees)

The company leads the industry in customer service. (company references the entire organization)

Writing Numbers

The following rules and examples of abbreviations can be found in Skillsoft as follows:



Course: Business Grammar: the Mechanics of Writing

Section: Job Aids

Topic: Numbers

One simple rule you should follow when it comes to numbers is to spell out numbers of ten or less and use numerals for all others.

Rule	Example
You always spell out a number that begins a sentence.	Forty people attended the service.
Spell out numbers of ten or less.	We have ten orders to fill today.
Write numbers greater than ten in numerals.	She won 15 of 20 cases last year.
Use words when you're unsure of a number or when you have indefinite numbers.	We have several million potential customers.
Use numerals for exact or precise numbers.	We need 788 units by Wednesday.
Numerals stand out in text, so use them to highlight important numbers.	The company's profit was up by over \$885,000 last quarter.
Long numbers use many words to spell out, and they're more difficult to read in words, so you express them in numerals.	We've manufactured 38,430,938 units since the company started.
Combine numbers and words when writing very big numbers like millions, billions, and trillions.	We've shipped over 3 million orders to date.
When a sentence contains more than one number, apply the most convenient form – words or numerals – consistently.	Each of the 10 employees made over 50 sales last month. Of the 450,000 developers in the country, 65% work from home.