Writing skills are an important part of communication.  Good writing skills allow you to communicate your message with clarity and ease to a far larger audience than through face-to-face or telephone conversations.

You might be called upon to [write a report](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/report-writing.html), plan or strategy at work; write a grant application or [press release](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/press-release.html) within a volunteering role; or you may fancy communicating your ideas online via a blog.  And, of course, a well written [CV or résumé](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/cv-resume.html) with no spelling or grammatical mistakes is essential if you want a new job.

**Today, when anyone can be their own publisher, we see more and more examples of poor writing skills both in print and on the web.  Poor writing skills create poor first impressions and many readers will have an immediate negative reaction if they spot a**[**spelling**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/spelling.html)**or**[**grammatical mistake**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/grammar1.html)**. As just one example, a spelling mistake on a commercial web page may cause potential customers to doubt the credibility of the website and the organisation.**

**For many of us it will have been a long time since we were taught any *writing skills* and a refresher may be needed.**

**This section of SkillsYouNeed aims to make you think about your writing - from**[**grammar**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/grammar1.html)**,**[**spelling**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/spelling.html)**and**[**punctuation**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/punctuation1.html)**, how to plan your writing, and the various processes and checks to go through before pressing print or broadcasting your message online. It also provides guides for specific pieces of writing that you may need to produce, whether at school, university, or in the workplace.**

## Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation

Correct grammar, punctuation and spelling are key in written communications.  The reader will form an opinion of you, the author, based on both the content and presentation, and errors are likely to lead them to form a negative impression.

**If you are unconvinced about the importance of accurate writing, think of the clues we use to identify spam emails, “phishing” websites, and counterfeit products: poor grammar and spelling.**

Similarly, some employers state publicly that any **[CV or résumé](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/cv-resume.html%22%20%5Co%20%22Writing%20a%20CV%20or%20Resume)** containing spelling or grammatical mistakes will be rejected immediately, whilst a [BBC news article](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-14130854%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) quotes research that calculates spelling mistakes cost online businesses “millions” in lost sales.

**Checking for poor writing and spelling mistakes should be seen as a courtesy to your readers since it can take them much longer to understand the messages in your writing if they have to think and re-read text to decipher these.**

All written communications should therefore be re-read before sending to print, or hitting the send button in the case of emails, as it is likely that there will be errors.  Do not assume that spelling and grammar checkers will identify all mistakes as many incorrect words can indeed be spelt correctly (for example, when “their” is used instead of “there” or “principle” instead of “principal”) or entire words may be missing. If at all possible, take a break before re-reading and checking your writing, as you are more likely to notice problems when you read it fresh.

Even if you know spelling and grammar rules, you should still double-check your work or, even better, have it proof-read by somebody else. Our brains work faster than our fingers can type and accidental typographical errors (typos) inevitably creep in.

## Improving Your Writing Skills

The good news is that writing is a skill which can be learned like any other. One trick for checking and improving your work is to read it aloud. Reading text forces you to slow down and you may pick up problems with the flow that your eye would otherwise skip over.

#### There are a number of areas to bear in mind as you write.

As well as grammar, spelling and punctuation, it’s important to **[remember your audience](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/know-your-audience.html)**. Always write with your audience in mind, and it can also help to bear in mind **[the medium](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/know-your-medium.html)** in which you plan to publish. This knowledge will help you to decide whether you need to write in a **[formal style or a more informal one](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/formal-or-informal.html)**, and will also help you to decide on a suitable **[structure](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/structure.html)**.

Finally, have a look at our page on **[Common Mistakes in Writing](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/common-mistakes1.html)** and **[Gender Neutral Language](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/gender-neutral-language.html)** to help you avoid falling into some easy traps.

## Writing under Specific Circumstances

There are many times in your life when you will be asked to write something very specific. Whether this is to take notes of a conversation, write the minutes of a formal meeting, or prepare a report, all these types of writing require specific skills, and usually a particular style.

### Writing at Home

**Many people would say that the art of letter-writing is dying out.** However, there are still many times when you need to put pen (or word processor) to paper. See our page on **[How to Write a Letter](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/letter-writing.html)** for more.

### Writing in the Workplace

**Being able to write well is a skill which will get you a long way in the workplace, partly because it is fairly rare in many places.**

One skill that many people lack, especially in management and other professional environments is the ability to write in plain English. That is avoiding unnecessary jargon, industry specific buzzwords and clichés and keeping sentences short and concise. See our page **[Writing in Plain English](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/plain-english.html)** for more.

Taking the time to polish your writing skills is likely to pay off in the longer term, and learning how to write specific types of documents will also be useful.

See our pages on **[How to write a report](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/report-writing.html), [a business case](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/business-case.html), [an executive summary](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/executive-summary.html) and [a press release](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/press-release.html)** for some specific examples that may also have wider applications. For example, being able to prepare a strong summary is a skill that is extremely useful for briefing senior managers.

You may also find our pages on **[note taking for reading](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/notes-reading.html)**, **[note taking for verbal exchanges](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/notes-verbal.html)** and **[taking minutes: the role of the secretary](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/meeting-secretary.html)** useful if your job or a voluntary role includes recording formal meetings.

### Writing Job Applications

**At one time or another, most of us need to write a job application.**

Nowadays, job applications usually require a **[CV or résumé](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/cv-resume.html)**, together with a really strong **[covering letter](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/write/covering-letter.html)**. A **[good LinkedIn profile](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/general/using-linkedin-effectively.html)** will also help your application to stand out from the rest, as will **[managing your online presence](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/general/managing-online-presence.html)** effectively.

### Writing for Study

**Apart from the workplace, you are most likely to need writing skills as part of a course of study, whether at college or university.**

You may, for example, need to write essays, a report, a research proposal or even a dissertation or thesis. These pieces of work are often very long, and need careful structuring and writing.

For more information about all of these, see our **[Study Skills](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/study-skills.html)** pages, including specific pages on **[writing an essay](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/essay-writing.html)**, **[a research proposal](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/research-proposal.html)**, **[a literature review](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/literature-review.html)**, and **[a dissertation or thesis](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/dissertation-writing.html)**. Finally, don’t forget to read up on **[Academic Referencing](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/academic-referencing.html)** to ensure that you don’t fall foul of any plagiarism guidance.