Learning Networks of Ontario

Clear Writing Tips

Write directly to your readers.
- a) know your audience
- b) think about your message before you write
- c) write as if you are having an informal conversation with your reader
- d) say what you need to say – remove unnecessary words

When centering information that takes more than one line
- left side justify
- increase the margins on both sides

This makes it look centred but easy to read.

How you format your document is just as important as your message.
Left side justify your documents, leaving the right side unjustified.

The design of your document is just as important as your message.
- a) use a serif font (e.g., Book Antique, Old Bookman)
- b) use upper and lower case letters
- c) use 12 point font and larger
- d) limit the number of fonts you use
- e) don't use italics

Keep your background clean.
- a) don't use watermarks behind words
- b) have a good contrast between the lettering and the background

Use words that are easy to understand.
- a) use words with two syllables or less
- b) use the active voice

Use sentences that are easy to read.
- a) keep sentences simple and short – no longer than 12 words
- b) use full sentences only when it makes sense to do so
  (e.g., list important information away from the text)

Put important information first.
Your reader may not get to the end of your document so don't bury important information.

Help your reader access information easily by using bullets.
Bullets
- are for lists and partial statements
- should be used consistently
- don't need capitals, colons, commas or periods
- aren't for full sentences

Bold or underline, never do both.

Write information in the order you want things carried out.

Use graphics to make the message clearer.
- a) use graphics that relate to the message on the page
- b) use graphics wisely – don't clutter the page

Use white space wisely.
- a) use 1.5 spacing between lines
- b) use no less than a one inch margin

Be clear. We'll show you how.

www.learningnetworks.ca

Ontario Trillium Foundation

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