

Writing in Organizations

Prepared by Dr. Magdy Alhaj

MGM 202

Lecture 1



Writing and Your Career

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Lecture 5

Course Outline

Lecture 1: Getting Started: Writing and Your Career.

Lecture 2: The Writing Process and Collaboration at Work.

Lecture 3: Writing Routine Business Correspondence.

Lecture 4: Writing Letters: Some Basics for Communicating with Audiences Worldwide.

Lecture 5: How to Get a Job: Searches, Dossiers, Portfolios, Résumés, Letters, and Interviews.

Lecture 6: Designing Successful Documents, Visuals, and Websites.

Lecture 7: Writing Instructions and Procedures.

Lecture 8: Writing Effective Short Reports.

Lecture 9: Writing Proposals.

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- 1- Writing—An Essential Job Skill.**
- 2- Writing for the Global Marketplace.**
- 3- Four Keys to Effective Writing.**
- 4- Characteristics of Job-Related Writing.**
- 5- Ethical Writing in the Workplace.**
- 6- Successful Employees Are Successful Writers.**

1- Writing—An Essential Job Skill:

Writing is a part of every job, from your initial letter of application conveying first impressions to memos, e-mail, blogs, letters, websites, proposals, instructions, and reports. Writing keeps businesses moving. It allows employees to communicate with one another, with management, and with the customers, clients, and agencies a company must serve to stay in business.

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Clearly, then, writing is an essential skill for employees and employers alike. According to **Don Bagin**, a communications consultant, most people need an hour or more to write a typical business letter. Mistakes in letters are costly for workers as well for as employers. As **David Noble** cautions in his book *Gallery of Best Cover Letters*, “The cost of a cover letter (in applying for a job, for instance) might be as much of a third of a million dollars—even more if you figure the amount of income and benefits you don’t receive, say, in a 10 year period for a job you don’t get because of an error that got you screened out.”

Chapter 1 gives you some basic information about writing in the global marketplace and raises major questions you need to ask yourself to make the writing process easier and the results more effective. It also describes the basic functions of on-the-job writing and introduces you to one of the most important requirements in the business world—writing ethically.

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2- Writing for the Global Marketplace:

The Internet, e-mail, teleconferencing, blogging, and e-commerce have shrunk the world into a global village. Accordingly, it is no longer feasible to think of business in exclusively regional or even national terms. Many companies are multinational corporations with offices throughout the world. In fact, many U.S. businesses are branches of international firms. A large, multinational corporation may have its products designed in **Japan**; manufactured in **Bangladesh**; and sold in **Detroit**, **Atlanta**, and **Los Angeles**. Its stockholders may be in Mexico City as well as Saudi Arabia—in fact, anywhere. In our global economy, every country is affected by every other one.

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- Competing for International Business

Companies must compete for international sales to stay in business. Every business, whether large or small, has to appeal to diverse international markets to be competitive. Each year a larger share of the U.S. gross national product (GNP) depends on global markets in China, Saudi Arabia, India, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere. Some U.S. firms estimate that 40 to 50 percent of their business is conducted outside of the United States. **Wal-Mart, for example**, has expanded into hundreds of stores in mainland China, and **General Electric** has opened plants in more than 60 countries.

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- Communicating with Global Audiences

To be a successful employee in this highly competitive global market, you have to communicate clearly and diplomatically with a host of readers from different cultural backgrounds. As a result, don't presume that you will be writing only to native speakers of American English. As a vital part of your job, you may be communicating with readers in **Singapore, Jamaica, and South Africa**, for example, who speak varieties of English quite different from American English. You will also very likely be writing to readers for whom English is not their first (or native) language. These individuals, who may reside either in the United States or in a foreign country, will constitute a large and important audience for your work.

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- Seeing the World Through Their Eyes

Writing to these international readers with proper business etiquette means first learning about their cultural values and assumptions—what they value and also what they regard as communication taboos. They may not conduct business exactly the way it is done in the United States, and to think they should is wrong. Your international audience is likely to have different expectations of how they want a letter addressed or written to them, whether they allow you to use their first name, how they prefer a business meeting to be conducted, or how they think questions should be framed and asked and agreements reached.

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Their concepts of time, family, money, the environment, managers, and communication itself may be nothing like those in the United States. Visuals, including icons, which are easily understood in the United States, may be baffling elsewhere in the world. If you misunderstand your audience's culture by inadvertently writing, creating, saying or illustrating something inappropriate can cost your company a contract and you your job.

- Cultural Diversity at Home

Cultural diversity exists inside as well as outside the company you work for. Don't conclude that your boss or co-workers are all native speakers of English, either, or that they come from the same cultural background that you do.

3- Four Keys to Effective Writing:

Effective writing on the job is carefully planned, thoroughly researched, and clearly presented. Its purpose is always to accomplish a specific goal and to be as persuasive as possible. or a commissioned report to the president of the company, **your writing will be more effective if you ask yourself these four questions:**

1. Who will read what I write? (Identify your audience.)
2. Why should they read what I write? (Establish your purpose.)
3. What do I have to say to them? (Formulate your message.)
4. How can I best communicate? (Select an appropriate style and tone.)

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The questions who? why? what? and how? do not function independently; they are all related. You write (1) for a specific audience (2) with a clearly defined purpose in mind (3) about a topic your readers need to understand (4) in language appropriate for the occasion. Once you answer the first question, you are off to a good start toward answering the other three.

4- Characteristics of Job-Related Writing:

Job-related writing characteristically serves six basic functions: (1) providing practical information, (2) giving facts rather than impressions, (3) supplying visuals to clarify and condense information, (4) giving accurate measurements, (5) stating responsibilities precisely, and (6) persuading and offering recommendations. These six functions tell you what kind of writing you will produce after you successfully answer the who? why? what? and how?

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- 1. Providing Practical Information.**
- 2. Giving Facts, Not Impressions.**
- 3. Supplying Visuals to Clarify and Condense Information**

Visuals are indispensable partners with your words to convey information to your readers. On-the-job writing makes frequent use of visuals such as tables, charts, photographs, flow charts, and drawings to clarify and condense information. Thanks to various software packages, you can easily create and insert visuals into your writing.

Visuals play an important role in the workplace.

4. Giving Accurate Measurements.

5. Stating Responsibilities Precisely

Because it is directed to a specific audience, job-related writing should make absolutely clear what it expects of, or can do for, that audience. Misunderstandings waste time, cost money and can result in injuries. Directions on order forms, for example, should indicate how and where information is to be listed and how it is to be routed and acted on.

6. Persuading and Offering Recommendations

Persuasion is a crucial part of writing on the job. In fact, it is one of the most crucial skills you can learn in the business world. **Persuasion** means trying to convince your reader(s) to accept your ideas, approve your recommendations, or order your products. Convincing your reader to accept your interpretation or ideas is at the heart of the world of work, whether you are writing to someone outside or inside your company.

- Writing Persuasively to Clients and Customers

Much of your writing in the business world will promote your company's image by persuading customers and clients (a) to buy a product or service or (b) to adopt a plan of action endorsed by your employer. You will have to convince readers that you (and your company)—your products and services—can save them time and money, increase efficiency, reduce risks, or improve their image, and that you can do this better than your competitors can.

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Expect also to be called on to write convincingly about your company's image, as in the case of product recalls or discontinuances , customer complaints, or damage control after a corporate mistake affecting the environment. You may also have to convince customers around the globe that your company respects cultural diversity and upholds specific ethnic values.

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A large part of persuasion, too, is supporting your claims with evidence. You will have to conduct research; provide logical arguments; supply appropriate facts, examples, and statistics; and identify the most relevant information for your particular audience(s). Notice how the advertisement in **Figure 1.6** below offers a bulleted list of persuasive reasons—based on cost, time, safety, efficiency, and convenience—to convince correctional officials that they should use General Medical’s services rather than those of a hospital or clinic.

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An advertisement using arguments based on cost, time, efficiency, safety, and convenience to persuade a potential customer to use a service.

Figure 1.6



**GENERAL MEDICAL
WILL STOP THE
UNNECESSARY TRANSPORTING
OF YOUR INMATES.**

- We'll bring our X-ray services to your facility, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.
- We can reduce your X-ray costs by a minimum of 28%. X-ray cost includes radiologist's interpretation and written report.
- Same day service with immediate results telephoned to your facility.
- Save correctional officers' time, thereby saving your facility money.
- Avoid chance of prisoner's escape and possible danger to the public.
- Avoid long waits in overcrowded hospitals.
- Reduce your insurance liabilities.
- Other Services Available: Ultrasound, Two Dimensional Echocardiogram, C.T. Scan, EKG, Blood Lab and Holter Monitor.

General Medical Services Corp.
A subsidiary of
FMI
Federal Medical Industries, Inc. O.T.C.
950 S.W. 12th Avenue, 2nd Floor Suite, Pompano, Florida 33069
(305) 942-1111 FL WATS: 1-800-654-8282

**General Medical Is Your On-Site
Medical Problem Solver**

Visual stresses the need for a more efficient way to transport prisoners for medical attention

Bulleted list conveniently and persuasively uses factual data to convince

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- Writing Persuasively In-House

As much as 60 percent of your writing may be directed to individuals you work with and for. In fact, your very first job-related writing will likely be a persuasive letter of application to obtain a job interview with a potential employer.

On the job, you may have to persuade a manager to buy a new technology or lobby for a change in your office or department. To be successful, you will have to evaluate various products or options by studying, analyzing, and deciding on the most relevant one(s) for your boss. Your reader will expect you to offer clear-cut, logical, and convincing reasons for your choice, backed up with persuasive facts.

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As part of your job, too, you will be asked to write convincing memos, e-mails, letters, blogs, and websites to boost the morale of employees, encourage them to be more productive, and compliment them on jobs well done. You can also expect to write persuasively to explain and solve budget, safety, or marketing problems your company faces.

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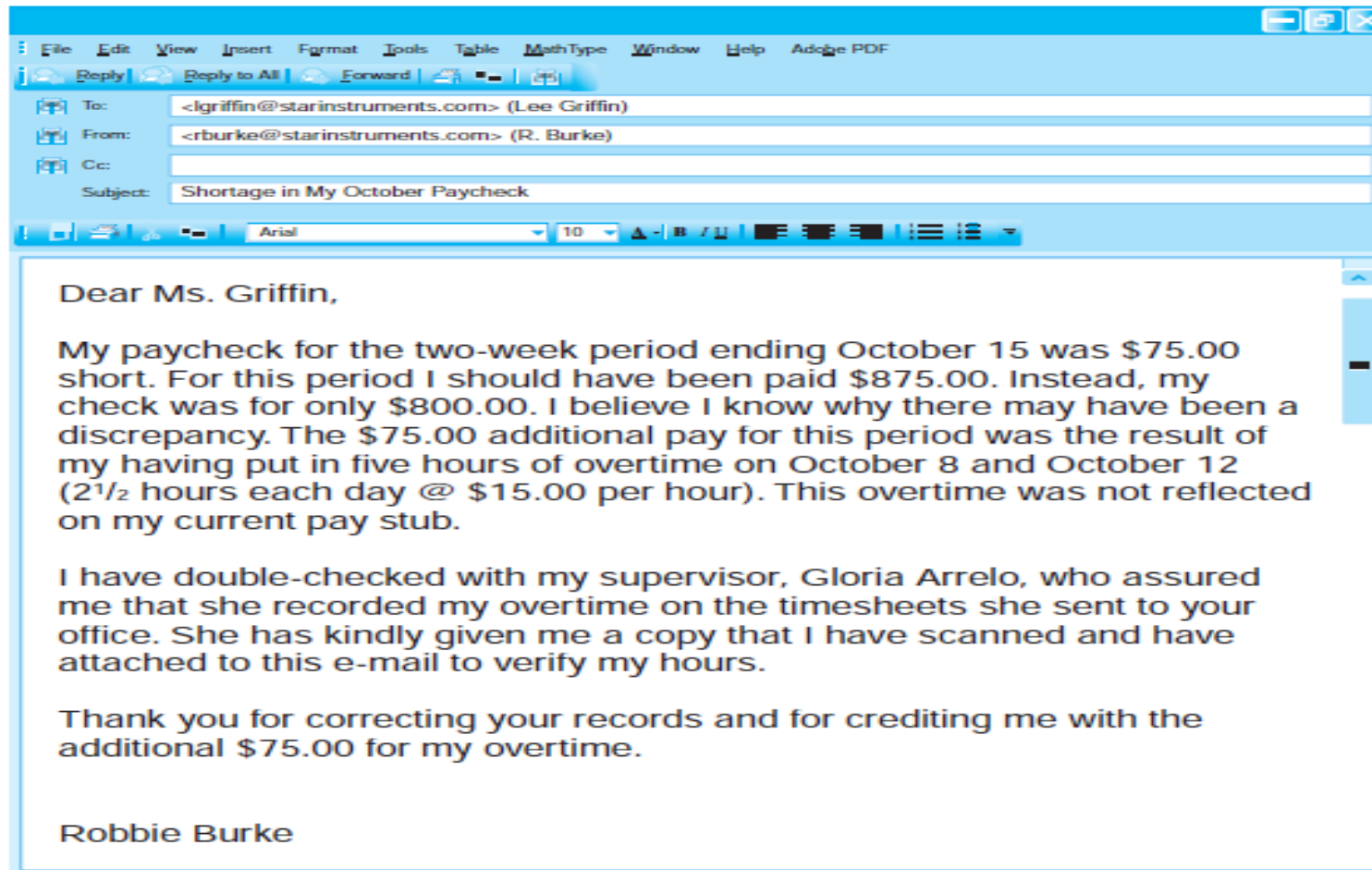
Figure 1.7 is a persuasive e-mail from an employee to a manager reporting a payroll mistake and persuading the reader to correct it. The e-mail contains many of the other characteristics of job-related writing we have discussed. Note how the writer provides factual, not subjective, information; attaches a time sheet (a type of visual); gives accurate details; and identifies her own and her immediate supervisor's responsibilities. The writer's tone is suitably polite yet direct.

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A persuasive e-mail from an employee to a business manager.

Figure 1.7



Clearly explains and documents the problem

Offers further evidence

Closes politely with request

5- Ethical Writing in the Workplace:

One of your most important job responsibilities is to ensure that your writing and behavior are ethical. **Writing ethically means** choosing language that is right and fair, honest and just with your employer, co-workers, and customers. Your reputation and character plus your employer's corporate image will depend on your following an ethical course of action. Many companies are proud of their ethical commitments to the environment, the community, and the global marketplace.

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- Ethical Requirements on the Job

In the workplace, you will be expected to meet the highest ethical standards by fulfilling the following requirements:

- Supplying honest and up-to-date information about yourself in your résumé and job applications.
- Respecting co-workers, customers, and suppliers in conduct that avoids bullying, discrimination, or any other unfair or unprofessional behavior.

- Refusing to use language that makes false claims or tries to deceive readers with ambiguous words, jargon, or misleading visuals.
- Avoiding language that excludes others on the basis of gender, race, national origin, religion, age, physical ability, or sexual orientation.
- Maintaining accurate and current records at work.
- Complying with all local, state, and federal regulations.

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- Adhering to your profession's code or standard of ethics, internal audits, licenses, and certificate requirements.
- Following your company's policies and procedures.
- Honoring guarantees and warranties and meeting customers' needs impartially.
- Cooperating fairly and on a timely basis with your collaborative team.
- Respecting all copyright obligations and privileges.

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- Computer Ethics

Computer ethics are essential in the e-commerce world of work. A good rule to follow is never to do anything online that you wouldn't do offline. Never use a company computer for any activity not directly related to your job. It would be grossly unethical to erase a computer program intentionally, violate a software licensing agreement, or misrepresent (by fabrication or exaggeration) the scope of a database. Also, posting anything that attacks a competitor, colleagues, your boss, or your company is considered unethical.

- Employers Insist On and Monitor Ethical Behavior

Ethical behavior is crucial to your success in the workplace. Your employer will insist that you are honest, show integrity, and exhibit loyalty in your professional relationships with clients, co-workers, supervisors, inspectors, and vendors.

To make sure you are acting responsibly on the job, employers can legally monitor your work—electronically, through cameras, or by personal visits. Some of these visits are not announced (such as the secret shopper who reports on the customer service he/she received at a store).

Employers can monitor the behavior of their employees for several reasons:

- to determine if a worker is doing his/her job correctly
- to identify wrongdoing on the employee's part
- to improve service, production, communication, transportation
- to ensure legal compliance with state and federal codes
- to heighten security measures

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- Some Guidelines to Help You Reach Ethical Decisions

The workplace presents conflicts over who is right and who is wrong, what is best for the company and what is not, and whether a service or product should be changed and why. You will be asked to make a decision and justify it. While this book cannot cover all kinds of ethical problems, here are a few guidelines to help you respond ethically on the job.

- 1. Follow your conscience** and “to thine own self be true.”
- 2. Be suspicious of convenient** (and false) appeals that go against your beliefs.

3. **Meet your obligations to your employer,** your co-workers, your customers, and the global community.
4. **Take responsibility for your actions.** Saying “I do not know” when you do know can constitute a serious ethical violation.
5. **Honor confidentiality at work.** Never share sensitive/confidential information with individuals who are not entitled to see or hear it.
6. **Document your work carefully and honestly.** Rely on hard evidence: documentation, tests, testimony, valid precedents.

- 7. Keep others in the loop.** Confer regularly with your collaborative writing team and report to your boss as often as you are instructed to give progress reports and to alert him or her about problems.
- 8. Treat company property respectfully.** Use company supplies, networks/ computers, equipment, technology, and vehicles responsibly and only for work-related business.
- 9. Think green in the workplace.**
- 10. Weigh all sides before you commit to a conclusion.**

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- Writing Ethically on the Job

Your writing as well as your behavior must be ethical. Words, like actions, have implications and consequences. If you slant your words to conceal the truth or gain an unfair advantage, you are not being ethical. False reporting and advertising are false writing. Bias and omission of facts are wrong. Strive to be fair, reliable, and accurate in reporting events, statistics, and trends.

6- Successful Employees Are Successful Writers:

As this chapter has stressed, being a successful employee means being a successful writer at work. **The following guidelines, which summarize the key points of this chapter, will help you to be both.**

1. Know your job—assignments, roles, responsibilities, goals, what you need to write, and what you shouldn't, and to whom.

2. Analyze your audience's needs and what they will expect to find in your written work.
3. Write clearly and appropriately for your international readers.
4. Respect the cultural diversity of co-workers, managers, customers, and vendors whether they live in the United States or in another country.
5. Make sure your written work is accurate, relevant, and practical, and include culturally appropriate visuals to help readers understand your message.

6. Document, document, document. Submit everything you write with clear-cut evidence based on factual details and persuasive, logical interpretations.
7. Keep your computer safe from viruses and other computer emergencies.
8. Be prepared to give and to receive feedback from co-workers, managers, and customers to meet all deadlines.
9. Follow your company's policy, and promote your company's image and traditions.
10. Be ethical in what you say, write, illustrate, and do.

TITLE OF LECTURE

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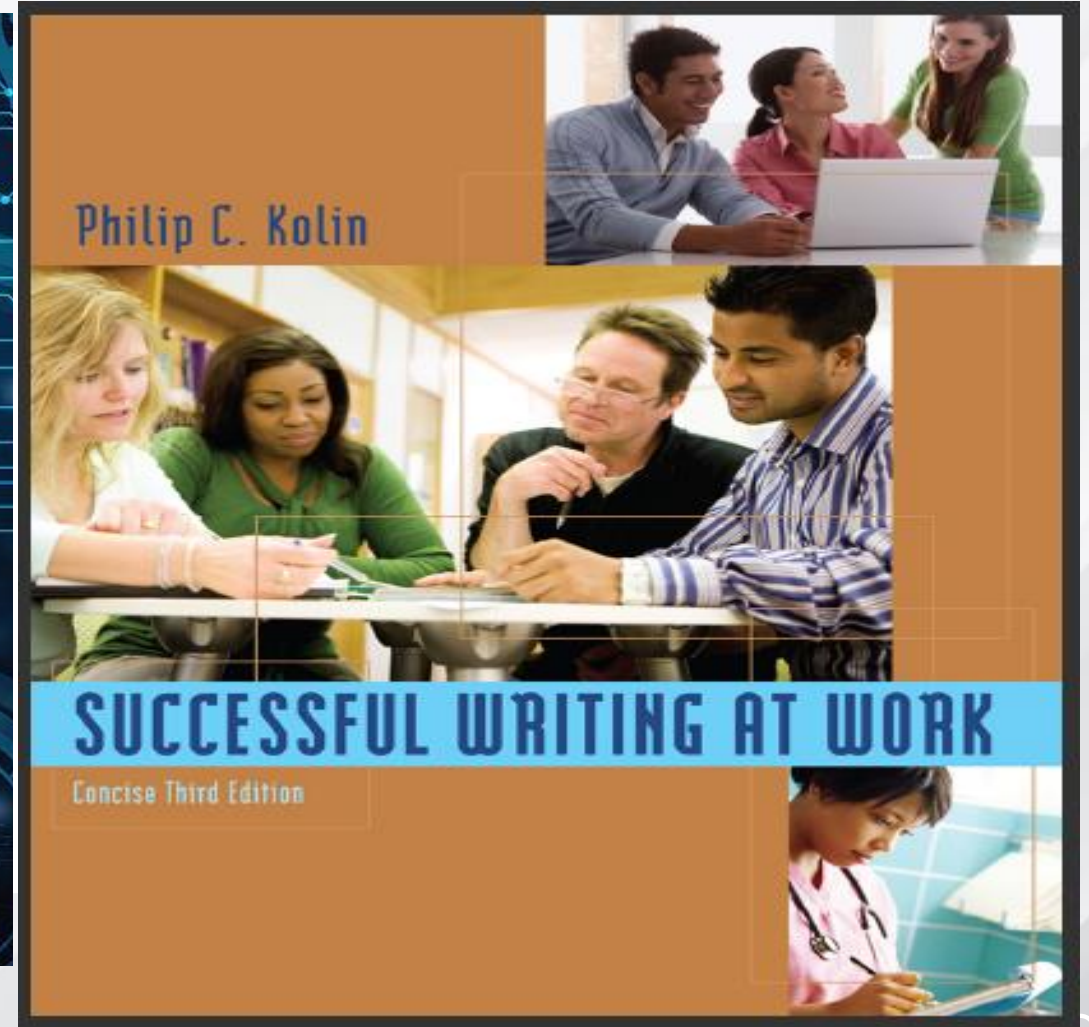
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University of Southern Mississippi

Chapter 1



Thank You