INTRODUCTION

At the World Health Organization (WHO), you may write for a wide variety of purposes: to propose projects, to report on activities, to correspond with colleagues, to inform stakeholders on project outcomes and to announce new initiatives. To a large degree, the organization's success depends on how well you communicate your ideas to others. Getting others to accept your ideas, recommendations, and directions depends on your ability to communicate effectively. When they are accepted, your ideas will often lead to action—a project, an initiative, or a change in the way things are done.

In this course, you will explore techniques that can help to improve your writing. The course has been developed with a simple underlying idea: with sound methods and systematic effort, you can become a more competent writer. Writing effectively is a skill that you can develop and improve.

In this module you will work through the writing process as a way to explore writing skills. You will not only read about the process, but you will also engage in that process throughout the module. Along the way, you will have the chance to try out several techniques that can help improve your writing.

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Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- distinguish elements of effective and ineffective writing for the purposes of writing for WHO;
- identify strengths and weaknesses in your writing and in samples from WHO, based on the core assumptions about effective writing introduced in this module;
- analyse your readers and their needs and plan appropriately to meet those needs while achieving your purpose for a particular writing task;
- evaluate strategies to help improve your writing process.

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Preparing for your first assignment

As you work through this module, you will need to have some of your own writing to refer to. Before you go further, please select three documents you have written. They could be short reports, substantive emails or some other document you produce in the course of daily work. As you work through the module, you will be referring to these documents for examples. You may refer to more than three documents if you wish.

The documents should be written in paragraphs, rather than in point or table form. They will be most useful if they are at least four-six paragraphs long. Your analysis of these documents will form the basis for your Module 1 assignment.

Throughout this module, you will find activities entitled "Portfolio preparation." As you complete the activities you will build a portfolio of examples and analysis. This portfolio will form the basis for Part A and Part B of your Module 1 assignment. Preparing your portfolio will also help you focus on your goals for the second module of the course.

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Writing effectively at WHO

This course will help you explore the subject of effective writing by examining examples of both ineffective and effective writing. Effective writing, however, can mean many things to different people.

Consider the following statements made by WHO staff on the question of effective writing. What do these mean to you in your own position as a writer at WHO? Do you agree?

- A proposal could be rejected because it seems sloppy or disorganized.
- Good writing can create wonderful opportunities in making sure our programmes are recognized.
- Our writing needs to be worldwide. There's never been a greater need for integration of efforts. It is a holistic approach.
- With correspondence, you need to think about how a person receives it.
- Writing is important. Donors don't forget and they themselves are accountable – so we have to be too.
- Good writing remembers the human factor, the reason we're doing our work.
- Effective writers have clear objectives. They link their activities to impact.
- Good reporting is part of a larger process. Proposals, programme activities, and results are all part of the cycle.
- You have to know your audience when you write.
- The issues with good writing are getting to the point and knowing your audience.
- Proofreading catches mistakes, saves time.

These ideas of good organization, reader focus, and integrating your writing with that of others at WHO are the focus of this module.

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Reflection: Identify components of effective writing

You have read some comments from WHO staff about effective writing. What does effective writing mean to you? Is it easily achieved? What are its features? Take a few moments now to write your own thoughts on effective writing.

> **Note:** *This is the first of your reflection activities in this course. In this type of activity, there is no "correct" answer. The goal of these activities is to prompt you to consider different aspects of effective writing from a range of perspectives. We recommend that you record your reflections in a Word document for your own reference. Your answers needn't be long or detailed. Write what you think is important. Then, as you work on your assignments, review your reflections to see if your thoughts on effective writing have changed or if there is any particular characteristic you hope to incorporate.*

Identify barriers to effective writing

Writing is effective when it communicates a message and achieves your purpose.

Sometimes barriers to communication can prevent understanding of the message, making writing ineffective. Sometimes barriers can lessen the credibility of your message. For example, if you send a letter without proofreading it for correct spelling and grammar, your reader may not understand all of the words, or may be annoyed since you seem not to have taken the time to communicate clearly. Either reaction is a barrier for you in communicating with your reader. Or you may have asked a colleague to help you with an urgent project, but you realize that she has been encouraged by her manager to cut back on her workload. This presents a barrier for your request that you need to consider; otherwise, your request is bound to receive a poor reception.

Another way to think of these barriers to communication is to view them as noise that interferes in the communication process. If you are speaking to someone face-to-face in a very noisy room, it can be difficult (although not impossible) to communicate your message. That is an example of physical noise that prevents communication. Perceptual barriers, semantic barriers and cultural barriers are examples of noise that can interfere with written communication.

Overcoming barriers to effective communication

Perceptual barriers:	The reader may make assumptions about you or the situation; perhaps you are new to the organization, or the situation is a challenging one. To get your message past these barriers, provide evidence to support your claims and enhance your credibility.
Emotional barriers:	The reader may be influenced by emotions; they may be angry to hear about a situation, or fearful that acting as you request will cause problems with others. To get your message past these barriers, provide evidence to support your claims.
Semantic barriers (related to meaning and language):	The reader and the writer may not commonly use the same technical language. To get your message past these barriers, explain technical terms when they must be used. Assume your readers are intelligent, but not experts in your area.
Cultural barriers:	The reader and writer may not share an understanding of the culture of the organization or of the country or region. To get your message past these barriers, be aware of the ways culture affects what you are writing.

There are other kinds of barriers. It is not important that you memorize the list. What is important is that you get in the habit of predicting possible barriers; you can then try to avoid them so that your message gets through.

Practice: Analyse barriers to communication in specific situations

To practise, here are descriptions of several documents and their intended readers. In each case, identify what you think may be the barriers to communication the writer must overcome to write effectively for that reader. This example will guide you.

The document	A Terms of Reference document outlining the terms for the services of a translator.
The purpose of the document	To explain responsibilities and tasks of the translator of a report to the government.
The readers	Your supervisor, the contractor, and the procurement officer.
How will the writer know that communication has been effective?	The supervisor and procurement officer will approve the terms and the contractor will agree to them, setting the project in motion.
What potential barriers to communication exist for the readers of the message?	Emotional barriers – Any of the readers may feel there is too much or too little work for the remuneration. The supervisor may not have agreed with the selection of the contractor. Practical barriers - It may be difficult to start the contract in the time specified.
What potential barriers to communication exist for the writer of the message?	The writer may not be convinced that the translator has enough background on the subject matter to do an effective translation.

Now you try. Think about the documents described. For each one, describe how the writer will know the communication has been effective and identify barriers that might interfere with the readers' understanding of the message.

Example 1 Read the example on the left, and then write your comments in the space provided. Click on the button to reveal our comments.

The document: A proposal for funding for a project to initiate a road safety programme.

The potential donor: An energy company based in the US. The company has many interests and partnerships throughout Africa and Asia. It has limited experience in international development work but is seeking to boost its social responsibility profile.

The project: A road safety programme, including educational activities, alternative transportation initiatives.

The readers: Initially someone in the Corporate Giving office. Ultimately the decision to proceed will be made by the Board of Directors, since this represents a new direction for the company.

Your comments:

Click here to reveal our comments.

Reflection: Analyse barriers to communication in your context

Consider the writing you do most frequently. What types of barriers do you feel are the most significant for you? For each barrier you identify, identify one or two ways you could overcome the barrier with your writing.

The writing process

In this section you will work through an approach to writing efficiently. This approach is applicable to all work-related writing whether you are writing a letter, a report, a briefing note or an e-mail.

A writing process that is workable includes the following stages:

- o Prewriting
- o Organizing
- o Drafting
- o Revising
- o Proofreading.

Let's look at these and consider useful techniques for completing each stage.

PREWRITING

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.

Prewriting is part of the planning stage in the writing process. You must first establish what it is you want to say and why you want to say it. Only then can you proceed to determining how to communicate your ideas.

When we write at work, we write to inform, persuade, publicize and convince: 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: i.e., your purpose.

Defining Your Purpose

Writing with purpose means writing while paying attention to the final outcome of your document: you need to work out what you want your reader to do. Simply answering that fundamental question about why your reader needs your document should help you determine your purpose.

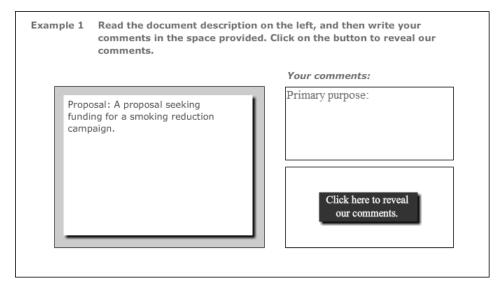> *As a result of reading my message (report, letter, email, briefing note), my reader will …*

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 proposal,	our donors will provide additional funding.

Once you have identified the kind of response you want, you will find it easier to focus 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 purpose gives you a constant point of reference. It keeps you on track and helps you produce brief, reader-focused writing.

Practice: Define Your Purpose

Look at these document descriptions and titles. What is the primary purpose of each document? Check our suggested response once you have noted your own idea.

Example 1   Read the document description on the left, and then write your comments in the space provided. Click on the button to reveal our comments.

Your comments:

Primary purpose:

Proposal: A proposal seeking funding for a smoking reduction campaign.

Click here to reveal our comments.

Portfolio preparation: Define your purpose

Look at the examples of your own work that you selected as you began this module, and identify the purpose of each.

You will get the most benefit from this activity if you take the time to do it thoroughly. For each document, write a sentence that begins, "When the reader is finished reading this document…" and describes the outcome you were seeking when you wrote the document.

Was your purpose achieved?

> *Note: Remember, the portfolio preparation activities you will find throughout this module form the basis for completion of your assignment. You will be asked throughout the module to examine your own documents and find examples of points discussed in this course. These examples will form the basis of Part A and Part B of your Module 1 assignment.*

Identifying and analysing your readers

Your communication is effective when it achieves results—that is, you get the response you want from your readers, and they take the action you hope they will take. To achieve this, you need to keep your purpose in mind. At the same time, you need to focus strongly on your reader's needs during every step of the writing process. To do that, you should first ask, "Who is my reader?" It is a deceptively simple question, but on closer inspection, you will find it provokes some complex responses. It is most likely that you will have multiple readers for your writing. Some (like your immediate supervisor or a funder) will be primary readers, and others will be secondary readers, but still need to be kept in mind. It is also useful to identify the key decision maker among your readers. For example, if action is to be taken, ask yourself, "Who can authorize the action I want taken?"

For proposals, this will be the person or persons who may be approving the idea, supplying funds, or both.

For donor reports, this may be the senior representative of the donor organization.

For mission reports, this may be the appropriate authorities, the task team, or both.

For correspondence, this is the person to whom the letter, memo, or email is addressed.

For minutes, this is the individuals given responsibility for particular tasks recorded in the minutes.

Practice: Identify primary and secondary readers

Identifying the primary reader and significant secondary readers for your documents allows you to focus on their needs and anticipate barriers. This is a key step in planning an effective document.

Earlier, you identified the purpose for several documents. Look at those documents again. This time, identify the primary reader for each document, and any secondary readers who are particularly significant.

Example 1   **Read the document description on the left, and then write your comments in the space provided. Click on the button to reveal our comments.**

Your comments:

Document:
A proposal seeking funding for a smoking reduction campaign.

Document purpose:
After reading this document, the reader will approve funding for this project.

Primary reader:

Secondary readers:

Click here to reveal our comments.

Portfolio preparation: Identify primary and secondary readers

Look again at the documents you selected earlier.

You've already identified the primary purpose you had for writing each document. Now identify the primary reader and any significant secondary readers for the documents. Think about each reader. On reflection, were there any potential barriers involving your reader(s) that could have prevented your document from being effective?

You may find that you had considered some potential barriers and responded to them in your writing. For instance, perhaps you provided background information about a programme in a report to a new staff member, or summarized a current situation for your busy manager before making a new request.

You may also find thinking about the documents again helps you identify barriers you had not thought of when you wrote the original documents.

As you work through this module, you'll have opportunities to reflect more on these barriers and devise ways to overcome them in documents you write in the future.

Reader analysis

When you analyse your readers, you are focusing on barriers that might prevent them from accepting the main message of your document. The easiest way to do this is to answer a series of questions about your readers.

Begin by thinking about how much your readers know about the situation you are writing about, and how much more they need to know to make the decision you want them to make. This question will help you determine the scope of your document.

Then, think about barriers that interfere with your purpose.

Are you aware of any practical barriers? (Perhaps you are proposing a new project in a time of budget cuts, or asking someone to do something that will be difficult for them to achieve.)

Are you aware of any perceptual barriers? (Is your reader likely to have an understanding of the situation you are writing about that you feel is inaccurate?)

Are there any emotional barriers? (Are you pointing out errors made in a project someone has completed, or indicating weaknesses in a department's performance? The reader may have a strong emotional reaction.)

Thinking about barriers means identifying reasons your readers may not act on your message as you hope they will. Analysing these barriers and planning ways to overcome them will help you achieve your purpose.

A reader analysis

To see how the reader analysis works, and the type of barriers it can uncover, we'll think more about the evaluation report used as an example in an earlier activity.

Evaluation: An evaluation report examining the outcome of a training course on administering routine vaccinations. The primary reader for this report is the manager in charge of the training programme. To answer the questions, assume that the report author is a healthcare worker who has moved from work in the field to training.	
What does the reader know about the situation?	The manager understands training programmes and programme evaluation because of her background in education. She does not have much knowledge of healthcare, and she has recently arrived in India so may not have a good understanding of the needs of course participants.
What else does the reader need to know about the situation?	The manager needs to understand the qualifications of those who take the training programme. It would be helpful if she understood how the programme was developed, since it was based on an earlier programme and modified in response to an earlier evaluation.
What barriers to communication might prevent your reader from acting on your main message?	**Perceptual barriers:** The manager might think the course is at too basic a level, since she is not familiar with the skill level of village health workers. **Practical barriers:** I believe significant revision is required for this program. To do the revisions I will need help from an instructional designer. We have not budgeted for this.
What will you do in the document to overcome each of the barriers you identified?	I will be sure to explain the qualifications and previous experience of the village health workers who are the programme participants. I will explain the need for programme revision in terms of increasing efficiency, shortening the programme, and retaining more workers for this project. The revisions will save money and this will help pay for their costs.

Portfolio preparation: Analyse your readers

Now consider your own documents. Refer again to the three documents you selected earlier. Think about the primary reader of each document, and answer the questions. (In this case, you are using the questions to analyse documents after you have written them. The questions will be more useful as you integrate them into your planning process.)

- o What did the reader know about the situation before you wrote?
- o What else did the reader need to know?
- o What barriers could have prevented communication of your main message?
- o What, if anything, did you do to overcome these barriers? What could you have done?

You can complete this analysis by opening this Reader Analysis Form. Be sure to save the document in a folder for later reference.

Composing a main message

Once you have established your purpose and identified your readers, you will have a good idea of what you need to communicate to your specific audience. We refer to the single most comprehensive idea that you want to communicate as your main message. Writing this main message is a pivotal step in the prewriting process. With your main message, you express in only one or two sentences the central idea of your document. This applies to any type of writing from basic emails to complex reports. By establishing a clear main message, you have created for yourself a reference point for your entire document.

You can use your main message to guide your document in two important ways:

o You can assess how focused your document is;

o you can check that your writing is organized to help achieve your purpose.

Examples of main messages in documents

The following examples should give you a better idea of what a main message looks like in a document. The examples are short excerpts but they all include a stated main message. As you plan a document, you should find that you can develop and compose main messages at any level of your document, from a broad main message to encapsulate an entire report all the way to the topic sentences of individual paragraphs.

Example 1 *WHO India Country Programme Action Plan*

Over the last five years, India has seen impressive economic growth as well as some progress in terms of human development. The economy has gone from strength to strength, with growth rates of 9.4 percent in 2006-07[1] as compared to 5.6 percent in 2001-02[2], while the population below the poverty line has dropped from 36 percent in 1993-94 to 28.3 percent in 2004-05[3]. However, in its approach paper for the 11th Five Year Plan[4], the Government of India (GOI) recognizes that even these impressive growth rates are not fast or equitable enough to reach disadvantaged populations. GOI has adopted National Development Targets which are in line with – and at times more ambitious than – the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While the current rate of progress of a number of indicators is not sufficient to meet many of these targets, the government's commitment to "inclusive growth" presents a unique opportunity to improve the lives of all Indian children.

Example 2 *Email to programme assistant*

Subject: re: visa for Switzerland

Good morning Roberto,

Although the Swiss authorities will not extend Schengen visas, your intern should apply for a carte de legitimation once he arrives, and this will cover the whole period of his internship. So there will be no need for a visa once he has the carte.

I hope that helps.

Best regards,

Amanda

Example 3 *2010 Annual Review*

WHO - Reproductive and Child Health (RCH)

1. Results Achieved:

The RCH programme has made some progress this year in meeting programme objectives, but there is still much to be done at the grassroots level. At the policy level, major global innovations have found recognition in new national health policies, such as the use of zinc with the new oral rehydration salt (ORS) formulation for the treatment of diarrhea and use of VVM to improve vaccine safety and efficacy.

Example 4 *Programme report*

Awareness and knowledge of prevention are crucial to checking the spread of HIV in India, the second largest HIV-prevalent country in the world. As a part of the joint UN response and within the context of National Aids Control Plan III, WHO collaborates with the Government of India and other partners in four key areas we call the 4 Ps: prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV; provide paediatric treatment; prevent infection among adolescents and young people; and protect and support children affected by HIV and AIDS.

Practice: Compose a main message

Earlier you identified the purpose and primary readers for a series of documents. Now let's take it one step further. For each of the documents described, write a one-sentence main message. Remember, the main message is the central idea of the document. Everything else that is written in the document will provide support for the main message. Don't worry if your main message is not exactly the same as ours; there are many possibilities and no one correct response.

Example 1   Read the document description on the left, and then write your comments in the space provided. Click on the button to reveal our comments.

Document:
A proposal seeking funding for a smoking reduction campaign.

Document purpose:
After reading this document, the reader will approve funding for this project.

Your comments:

Main message:

Click here to reveal our comments.

Portfolio preparation: Identify your main message

Earlier in the module, you were asked to select three writing samples from you past work. Look at these examples now. In each case, consider your main message. Is it clearly articulated in the document? If it is, underline it. If it is not, write the main message for the document now.

Some practical considerations for prewriting

Once you have established your purpose and main message, you can begin to generate the ideas that will form the content of your document. The following techniques explore methods you can use to help you identify your ideas quickly, avoid writer's block and clarify your thoughts. Try some or all of these early on in the writing.

Random list	List everything that comes to mind and then sort it into groups. Look for connections: sequential, spatial, chronological, topical, etc.
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. Once you have this, the next steps are to organize the ideas and create a first draft of the document.

Identifying required content

Before you begin writing, it can be helpful to spend some time organizing the information you will need to complete your document. The work you have already done in identifying the purpose, main message and audience for the document will help you to do this.

It is particularly important to do this preparation early in the process when some of the information you must gather must come from other people. It's helpful to busy colleagues to ask for information early; the sooner you identify what you need, the more time they will have to help you by providing it.

What will you need? That depends on your document. Here are some ideas to help you identify what is necessary.

- o If you are writing minutes, you will need the agenda and the minutes of the last meeting.
- o If you are writing a letter or email in response to something you have received, you will need the letter or email you received.
- o If you are writing a project report, you will need the original proposal to ensure you report on everything the project promised to accomplish.
- o If you are writing a proposal, you will likely need templates provided by the donor agency. You will need an accurate project budget and will likely require assistance producing it.
- o If in your reader analysis you have identified barriers to understanding or points at which the reader may need to be convinced, you may need statistics, studies or other material from which you can draw evidence for your points.

Begin assembling these reference documents early in the writing process to save yourself frustration later.

Assignment: Part A

Now that you have completed this consideration of the prewriting stage of the writing process, it is time to submit Part A of the Module 1 assignment.

Your tutor will comment on your assignment and give you feedback. Your tutor may ask you to revise what you have written and re-submit it. The process of revising in response to feedback and reflection is itself an important part of the writing process.

You will assemble Part A of the assignment based on the work you have been doing with documents you wrote at work.

Look at the [Assignment page](#) to see the details of the Part A assignment.

ORGANIZING

Brainstorming allows you to establish the main ideas you wish to convey in your document; organizing now requires you to put some order to those ideas. The process of structuring your ideas is quite different than generating them.

It's not essential for your readers to know about the process you went through to get to your main ideas. They definitely do want to know that your ideas make sense. Readers want a clear, concise end product, with evidence of adequate information and logical thought processes. Organizing your document means prioritizing your ideas and even deciding not to include some of the ones you came up with in your prewriting stage.

For longer documents, like reports, organizing involves creating an outline with a hierarchy of headings and subheadings. For short documents you don't need to do this. However, you still need to be able to arrange your ideas in a way that will make sense to your readers. In this case, your outline may not exist as a separate document, but you still need a sense of the hierarchy of your ideas as you wish to present them.

Parallel structure

Parallel structure refers to the alignment of ideas with their presentation in a text. It is based on the principle that elements that are similar in function should be similar in form. For example, a report on the success of a project might include sections on the activities completed as part of the project, work that remains to be done and recommendations for a second phase. Since each of these sections would be of similar importance, each would contain a similar level of detail and be identified with the same level of heading. Another example: an email describing a new, three-step process could include three paragraphs, each one describing one of the steps. Since all three steps are important, all three would receive equal emphasis.

Parallel structure operates at different levels, from the overall structure of your document all the way to how you put your sentences together. At this point, your focus is on the document-level structure. Later, in the next section on Drafting, you will see the same approach occurring at the sentence level.

Recognizing the parallelism allows your readers to predict the form and the flow of your ideas. Have a look below at some examples of good and not-so-good parallel structure that is used to reveal the organization of different documents. Move your cursor over the document to see our comments on the documents.

Example 1: Long Report
Strategic plan for malaria control and elimination in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region 2006-2010

Parallel (correct)	Not parallel (showing lack of organization)

1. Introduction
 	
2. Regional malaria situation
2.1 Regional overview
2.2 Malaria control activities
 	
3. The regional malaria strategy 2006–2010
3.1 Goal and objectives
3.2 Guiding principles
 	
4. The role of WHO and partners
4.1 WHO
4.2 Governments
4.3 Communities
4.4 Multilateral and bilateral agencies
4.5 Non-governmental organizations and the private sector
 	
5. Estimated budget
	1. Introduction
	2. Regional malaria situation
	3. Regional overview
	4. Malaria control activities
	
	Part II
	  1. The regional malaria strategy 2006-2010
	    a. Goals and objectives
	    b. Guiding principles
	
	Part III
	  2. The role of WHO and partners
	  3. Our partners
	  4. Governments
	  5. WHO
	  6. Communities
	  7. Multilateral and bilateral agencies
	  8. Non-governmental organizations
	    a. The private sector
	
	What are the estimated costs?

Practice: Put ideas together

Look at this brainstormed list of bullet points. It represents the kind of notes you might make as you prepare to write a document. In this case, the document is an email to be sent to all staff, outlining the steps they must take to prepare for the move to a new building in two weeks.

To complete this activity:

- o Review the list of bullet points.
- o Identify the main message you would like to convey in this memo.
- o Focusing on the main headings, organize the points into a hierarchical outline that supports the main message, paying attention to parallel structure.
- o Check the suggested response when you are finished.

- o Personal belongings in labeled boxes
- o Consult list for new location
- o Everything must be ready for the movers on Thursday, June 12.
- o Back up computer files to system
- o Review files and discard unneeded items
- o Pack files into hanging boxes
- o Label file boxes
- o Shut down computers June 11
- o No personal belongings (fans, clothing, etc.) in your office space.
- o Tag your office chair with a label with your name and new office number.

- o Label each component of your computer with your name and office number.
- o Labels in mail room
- o Do not disconnect computer equipment.
- o Do not label printers, copiers and other shared resources.
- o Do not tag items such as wastepaper baskets,
- o Do not attend work June 12
- o Plan to unpack June 13
- o Unpack your own files and personal possessions.
- o Computing services will reconnect your computer

Main message:

Outline:

Click here to reveal our comments.

DRAFTING

Drafting is the process of getting your ideas into sentences and paragraphs according to your outline. The transition from planning to drafting can be challenging.

Just as it was in the prewriting stage, your primary task is to get the words down on the page. The structure you have established during pre-writing and the information you have gathered will help guide your writing. At this point, you should not be concerned with the finer points of style and mechanics. You will have time to work on those aspects of your draft later. Trying to get it all perfect the first time is the surest way of developing a case of writer's block. So don't worry about making mistakes in your writing during this stage. It is much easier to revise a first draft than it is to write it in the first place.

Another strategy you can try is to write your document in the order that works best for you. Do not try to write an introduction first or stick to a beginning-to-end structure unless that is what you prefer. Write the sections that come easiest to you and then go back and try the harder ones.

People often underestimate the efficiency of drafting, thinking they can complete their writing task more quickly by writing their final product in one brave effort. However, time spent in drafting will save you time overall. The time spent on these preliminary steps is worth it!

Ordering ideas into paragraphs

The main organizational unit for your ideas is the paragraph. Developing paragraphs in any kind of document means you have shifted your efforts from planning to drafting.

But what is a paragraph? If you remember only one thing about paragraphs, let it be this: a well-written paragraph supports a single main idea. To use our own terminology, a paragraph contains a single main message. Remember this as you compose and review your paragraphs. A paragraph is effective because it supports a single main idea, not because it has a particular number of words or sentences.

Good paragraphs use three important techniques to guide the reader. You will explore each of these techniques in more detail in this section of the module.

- An effective paragraph follows a pattern of organization that is easily recognizable and reveals the logical arrangement of the sentences. There are many possible patterns depending on your intentions.
- The pattern of organization is made evident through the use of structural elements such as parallel structure. You've already looked at this at the document level; now you can see how it works within paragraphs and sentences.
- The sentences in the paragraph work together to support a single point. One of these sentences, the topic sentence, states the main idea of the paragraph.

Look for the pattern of organization in example 1, parallel structure in example 2, and the topic sentence in example 3; then move your cursor over the examples to view our comments.

Example 1: Pattern of organization (from an email)

In order to have your travel costs processed and reimbursed, please ensure that you take the following steps:

First, collect all your receipts.

Second, send them via internal mail to my office, with Attn: Joelle – Travel Costs for YOUR NAME written on the envelope.

Third, …

Fourth…

Example 2: Parallel structure
From "Strengthening care for the injured: success stories and lessons learned from around the world." (WHO 2010)

Each case study follows a similar structure.

1. Introducing and defining the problem: includes an explanation of the trauma care scenario upon which the new programme or change was built.

2. Explaining the improvements made: what did stakeholders do to address the problem? Practical aspects are emphasized, so that people working in similar environments can adapt the methods.

3. Assessing the results of the improvements: looking at one or more of structure, process, outcome.

Example 3: Topic sentences (from Fact Sheet on Avian Flu, 2006)

Avian influenza is an infectious disease of birds caused by type A strains of the influenza virus. The disease occurs worldwide. While all birds are thought to be susceptible to infection with avian influenza viruses, many wild bird species carry these viruses with no apparent signs of harm.

Other bird species, including domestic poultry, develop disease when infected with avian influenza viruses. In poultry, the viruses cause two distinctly different forms of disease – one common and mild, the other rare and highly lethal. In the mild form, signs of illness may be expressed only as ruffled feathers, reduced egg production, or mild effects on the respiratory system. Outbreaks can be so mild they escape detection unless regular testing for viruses is in place.

In contrast, the second and far less common highly pathogenic form is difficult to miss. First identified in Italy in 1878, highly pathogenic avian influenza is characterized by sudden onset of severe disease, rapid contagion, and a mortality rate that can approach 100% within 48 hours. In this form of the disease, the virus not only affects the respiratory tract, as in the mild form, but also invades multiple organs and tissues. The resulting massive internal haemorrhaging has earned it the lay name of "chicken Ebola".

Paragraph patterns

There are many ways to develop paragraphs. It's your job to make sure that the structure or organization of the paragraph is 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.

Chronology	Begin with what happened first and take it from there. **Example** At the start of 2000, the price of combination antiretroviral drugs to treat one patient for one year was typically between US$ 10 000 and US$ 12 000. By the end of 2000, prices of US$ 500 to US$ 800 were approved for patented and generic drugs for low- and middle-income countries. By December 2001, certain combinations became available for US$350 per person per year. **Typical connectors:** first, second, third before, after, when, later
Classification and listing	Arrange examples to support the claim made in the topic sentence. **Example** Because of new policies and the new data about the epidemiology of TB-HIV in the Region, the Western Pacific Regional Office recognized that updates to the previous regional framework were needed. The goal of this updated framework is, therefore, to draw on global documents, along with relevant recently published evidence, to improve TB-HIV control through the following primary means. First, national TB programmes and national AIDS programmes need to work collaboratively to decrease the case-fatality rate for persons with both TB and HIV through earlier detection of TB and HIV and appropriate management of people with both. Second, as one of the steps to achieve this, new approaches are needed to improve the rates of HIV testing among TB patients and of TB screening among people living with HIV. Third, TB laboratories must be expanded to meet the challenges of diagnosing TB and drug-resistant TB in people living with HIV. Finally, TB infection control measures must be scaled up to prevent transmission of disease within health facilities, a step made even more important in the era of multidrug-resistant (MDR) TB and extensively drug- resistant (XDR) TB. **Typical connectors:** first, second, third, finally, also
Evidence and illustration	Support a claim made by the topic sentence. **Example** Some things are changing straight away. For example, insurers can no longer refuse coverage for children, deny coverage to children with pre-existing illnesses or set lifetime coverage limits. Dependent adults younger than 26 will remain covered by their parents' policy if they are not offered health coverage at work. Small companies (with 25 or fewer employees with an average wage of up to US$ 50 000) can get tax credits to offset up to 35% of the cost of premiums this year, rising to 50% in 2014. **Typical connectors:** for example, for instance, in other words
Compare and contrast	Demonstrate similarities or differences between two or more people or things. **Example** Although West/Central Africa's drinking-water coverage improved from 49 per cent in 1990 to 55 per cent in 2004, it needs to reach a far target of 75 per cent by 2015. The total number of people in the region without access to improved drinking-water sources actually increased over the 1990–2004 period. In Eastern/Southern Africa, the situation for access to drinking water is similar, as the region improved coverage from 48 per cent in 1990 to 56 per cent in 2004 but faces a target of 74 per cent. In CEE/CIS, meanwhile, coverage has stagnated at 91 per cent; its 2015 goal is 96 per cent. **Typical connectors:** although, but, whereas, however, meanwhile, similarly, in the same way

Question and answer	Ask a question and let the rest of the paragraph provide the answer. **Example** It has been several years since PAHO opted for the use of new information technologies in the production of educational materials and technical information resources; however, with this material we have both reinforced and made a significant qualitative leap forward with regard to this option. In what way? This multimedia tool makes more intensive use of more sophisticated, efficient technologies and combines different resources and uses, making it much more versatile and easy to use while enhancing its didactic potential. In its design and development, videos, graphic animation in two or three dimensions, images, sound, text, graphic presentations and technical publications are combined, creating a virtual learning environment or atmosphere in order to learn all there is to know about the safe hospital.
Cause and effect	One condition produces an effect or causes are determined for a particular condition. **Example** In all countries, enforcing the laws that do exist remains a challenge. As a result, violence against children goes unpunished. There is much to be done to train and support law enforcement and judicial personnel to understand the key role they play in protecting children against violence. **Typical connectors:** because (of), therefore, as a result (of), consequently, for this reason, since

Topic sentences

A topic sentence contains the main message 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.

Usually the best position for the topic sentence is right at the beginning of the paragraph. This enables readers who are too busy to read the whole document to skim through it and capture the main ideas.

You will notice that, as a reader, you immediately develop expectations about the rest of the paragraph based on the topic sentence. It is your job as a writer to fulfil these expectations. If you create expectations and don't fulfil them, your reader will be confused and may not respond to your document in the way you hope.

Topic sentences serve two main functions.

- They **carry the story line** of your document. If readers were to skim only the topic sentences, they should be able to follow that story line.
- They **predict** what information is going to be included in the paragraph. The sentences that make up a paragraph should reinforce the story line established by the topic sentence.

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Practice: Evaluate topic sentences

Look at these example paragraphs. In each case, the topic sentence is the first sentence. Does the topic sentence represent the main message of the paragraph in each case? If it does not, what might be a more appropriate topic sentence?

When you have considered each paragraph, compare your responses to ours.

Example 1   Read the paragraph on the left, and then write your comments in the space provided. Click on the button to reveal our comments.

We sent two urgent shipments using your courier company to our West Bengal state office in Kolkata. We found both shipments arrived two weeks after they were sent. Please explain why these deliveries were so late.

Your comments:

Topic sentence good or bad?

Suggested topic sentence:

Click here to reveal our comments.

Practice: Write topic sentences and paragraphs

Now it's your turn.

In this exercise, you will be asked to compose a complete paragraph. You will see a main message and a list of points of information to include in the paragraph. It's up to you to write a topic sentence that conveys the main message of the paragraph and to put the information in a coherent order. When you are finished, compare your paragraph with ours. Your responses will not be exactly the same as ours, but they should convey the same main idea.

Example 1   **Given point-form description of content and a main message, write a paragraph with an appropriate topic sentence.**

Main Message:
Deaths by diarrhoea dehydration are unnecessary and easily preventable through the use of oral rehydration therapy.

Points:
- Each year, more than four million young children die of diarrhoea dehydration
- Deaths can be prevented
- ORT is oral rehydration therapy
- Revolutionary, low-cost
- Made of water, sugar, salt
- Easy for parents to prepare
- 1984: ORT saved half a million kids
- 38 countries have begun large scale production
- Over next 5 years, ORT is planned to reach half of the world's families
- Can save 2 million kids every year

Your paragraph:

Click here to reveal our comments.

Portfolio preparation: Analyse paragraphs

Once again, refer to the documents you selected at the beginning of the module. This time, look at the paragraphing. Look for one example of a good paragraph in each document. Analyse it carefully. What makes it a good paragraph? Have you used the appropriate organizational pattern? Is the topic sentence particularly clear?

When you've done that, look through the documents and find an example where the paragraphing could be improved. When you have found the example, note what the problems are with the paragraph. Then rewrite it following the principles in this section.

> *Note: This activity will form part of Part B of your Module 1 assignment. For this part of your assignment, record your answers in a portfolio analysis document. Add to this document as you go through the module and subsequent assignment preparation activities, and you will be ready to submit the assignment when you reach the appropriate point in the module.*
>
> *Save the work you do in a folder on your computer for easy reference; it is easiest to save the documents you are working from and your portfolio analysis document in the same folder. You will be asked to submit the portfolio analysis document, plus the original documents, as your assignment.*

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REVISING FOR STYLE AND MECHANICS

The techniques you've practised so far have demonstrated ways to focus on your readers and write a first draft. Now we'll work on revising. Revising is integral to effective writing, and is a standard phase in the writing process. Analyzing your draft for its strengths and weaknesses, and revising to strengthen the writing is the best way to produce effective written communication.

The rest of the module focuses on some common trouble spots. We'll look at two different aspects of the first draft: style and mechanics, and document flow and consistency.

In the 'style and mechanics' analysis, we'll analyse strengths such as active voice, verb-based writing, and brevity, compared with their less-effective counterparts passive voice, noun-based writing, and wordiness. In the discussion of flow and consistency, we'll explore ways of ensuring a smooth logical flow of ideas through the document.

Verb-based writing

Verb-based sentence constructions use verbs to govern the action of the sentence. The 'opposite' form, noun-based constructions, aligns sentences around nouns.

Noun-based writing is common to a bureaucratic style that can be long-winded and tiresome to read. For example, instead of saying "The project officer decided to review the operations", the noun-based sentence might say: "The project officer made a decision to conduct a review of the operations." Notice how the two verbs in the original sentence (decided and review) have stretched into noun-based phrases (made a decision, conduct a review).

Our goal is to use verb-based constructions. Verbs bring life to the writing; they convey action and engage the reader. By comparison, there is no direct action in noun-based writing; nothing seems to happen. Noun-based constructions also tend to use more words.

Have a look at these two paragraphs: one is noun-based, and the other is verb-based. Notice the difference in readability between the two.

Example with noun-based writing

> Four teams from the state office conducted a visit of the areas worst affected by the floods and completed an assessment in six affected districts. The teams made the observation that the government teams are of sufficient capacity and that there is availability of adequate materials in affected areas. There is a potentially dangerous situation for epidemics as a result of the stagnant water, and the extent of damage to health infrastructure will gain clarity once there is a decrease in the water levels.
>
> (84 words)

[Show nouns]

Example with more action-oriented writing

[Click here to reveal verb-based example.]

Practice: Revise noun-based phrases

In each case, the noun-based phrase can be replaced by a single verb. Which verb would you use?

Enter your choice, then click see our suggestion.

Noun-based phrase	Your verb	Answer
Make a realization that		Show answer
Make a recommendation that		Show answer
Effect a reduction in		Show answer
Exhibit a tendency to		Show answer
Make a decision		Show answer
Take a decision		Show answer
Reach a conclusion about		Show answer
Make an examination of		Show answer
Place an order for		Show answer
To be cognizant of		Show answer
Conduct an analysis of		Show answer

Practice: Identify noun-based phrases in a paragraph

Improve these five sentences by using verbs, rather than nouns, to convey the important concepts. Enter your responses, then compare your responses with ours. Notice how much shorter the verb-based sentences are.

Example 1

When we made the realization that the manager was not able to attend, we made a decision to cancel the meeting.

Your revision:

Click here to reveal
our revision.

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Portfolio preparation: Verb-based writing

Now review the three documents you selected at the start of the module, and compile your own examples of noun- and verb-based writing.

We encourage you to find as many examples as you can of this concept in your sample documents. If you find many examples of a particular weakness, pay special attention to it; it likely indicates a pattern in your own writing where you can improve. When you assemble your assignment portfolio, you will choose one or two of the examples to send to your tutor for feedback.

Do you find examples of noun-based writing? If so, document the original sentences, and then revise them with verb-based constructions. Record the original sentences and your revisions in the portfolio analysis document you started earlier.

Do you find examples of energetic, verb-based writing? If so, congratulations! Document these examples too.

> *We encourage you to find as many examples as you can of this concept in your sample documents. When you assemble your assignment portfolio, you will choose one or two of the examples to send to your tutor for feedback.*

Active voice

The active voice is the result of writing with verbs and with attention to the actions you want to convey in your document. The active voice makes your sentences direct and concise.

The passive voice is the opposite. As the term suggests, the passive voice does not initiate action; it receives it. A document written primarily in the passive voice becomes indirect, abstract, and wordy.

Compare the two voices: active and passive.

Active voice			Passive voice		
Maria	**managed**	**the project.**	**The project**	**was managed**	**by Maria.**
agent/subject	verb	object	subject	verb	agent
In the active version of this sentence, the subject of the sentence is the doer; she performs the action on the receiver.			*In the passive version of this sentence, the subject of the sentence is the receiver; it has the action performed on it.*		

Using active and passive voice

There are times when the passive voice is appropriate, but writers tend to over-use the passive voice, especially in workplace writing. This table compares uses of the active and the passive voice. These are general observations, and there are always exceptions to these conditions. However, our point is that you should have a good reason for deciding to use the passive voice.

Uses of the active voice	Uses of the passive voice
Active makes it clear who is performing the action in the sentence (the *doer*).	Passive tends to emphasize the event, rather than the doer.
Example:	**Example:**
Our two project officers set up the vaccination camp in December.	*The vaccination camp was set up in December.*
	Passive may be useful when the doer is not known.
	Example:
	The package was lost en route to Bhopal.
Active voice gives the writer the option of being more personal.	Passive voice removes the personal connection.
	Example:
Example:	
Based on my observations, I recommend the following changes.	*Based on the observations described, the following changes are recommended.*
	Passive voice can disguise the doer.
	Example:
	It was decided that the programme should be cancelled without delay.
Active voice is more concise and direct than passive voice.	
Example - active version:	**Example - passive version:**
The deputy director decided to implement the new program.	*It was decided by the deputy director that the new programme would be implemented.*

Active voice and effective writing

Have a look at another version of the passage you read earlier about the visit to flooded areas. The text is less effective than it could be because it contains too many instances of the passive voice. As with noun-based writing, using the passive voice makes the text wordy and dilutes its meaning.

After you've read the passage, click to display highlighted instances of the passive voice. Then click to compare the improved, more active version. Which do you think is more readable? Which conveys the information most effectively?

Sample passage in the passive voice

A visit to the areas worst affected by the floods was conducted by four teams from the state office and six affected districts were assessed. The observation was made that the government has sufficient teams and adequate materials are available in affected areas. A potentially dangerous situation for epidemics is posed by stagnant water and the extent of damage to health infrastructure will be known once the water recedes.
(69 words)

> Show passive constructions

Sample passage in the active voice

> Show revision in
> active voice

Practice: Passive to active voice

Transform each sentence from passive to active voice. Once you have done so, compare your responses to ours.

Example 1

The need for clean drinking water was identified by the local government as its top priority for the coming year.

Your revision:

> Click here to reveal
> our revision.

Practice: Active voice

For each sentence below, decide whether or not the passive voice is appropriate. Check **Y** if it is appropriate, and **N** if it is not. Revise the sentence if the use of the passive voice is inappropriate. Then click to display our analysis.

```
Example 1

  The package was lost in transit.


  ☐ appropriate        Your revision:
  ☐ not appropriate



                        Click here to reveal
                          our comments.



```

Portfolio preparation - The active voice

Look through your three sample documents for examples of the passive voice and the active voice.

1. Document sentences where you have used the active voice.
2. See if you can find examples where you have used the passive voice inappropriately. Document those sentences, and then revise them so they're in the active voice.
3. See if you can find examples where you have used the passive voice appropriately. Document those sentences and explain why the passive voice is justified.

Add these examples to your Assignment 1 portfolio analysis document.

> We encourage you to find as many examples as you can of this concept in your sample documents. When you assemble your assignment portfolio, you will choose one or two of the examples to send to your tutor for feedback.

Brevity

Brevity is a virtue. Its opposite, wordiness, is frequently mentioned when people describe writing that is not very 'readable' and does not communicate effectively.

The number of words in a sentence does not correspond to the ability of the sentence to convey meaning. In fact, the more unnecessary words there are, the greater the tendency for readers to become overwhelmed and fail to understand the message. Wordiness undermines effectiveness.

Therefore, brevity is an important focal point when you are revising. How can you say what you need to say in the most concise way possible?
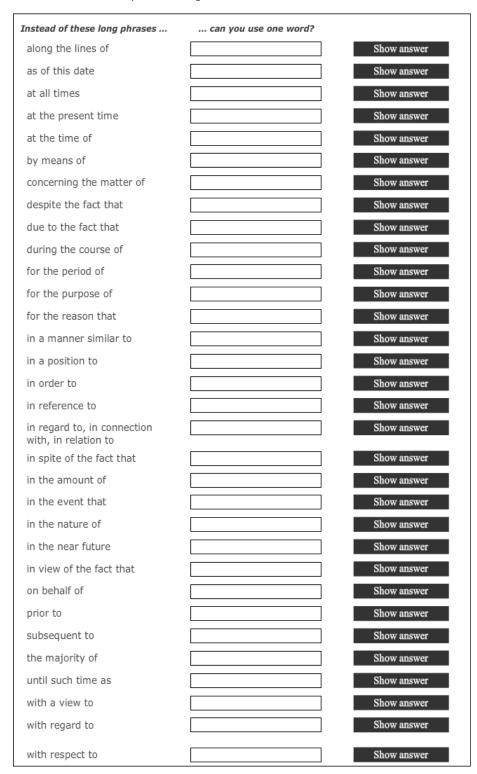
Remember too, that the revision techniques we're studying – for example, using active voice and verb-based constructions – usually result in passages with fewer words and clearer messages. If you can communicate your message briefly, it's most likely that your document is clear, concise and focused – in short, effective!

Practice: Transform wordy phrases

Sometimes wordiness comes from extra phrases. Sometimes it comes from unnecessary repetition. Sometimes whole sentences are unnecessary. However it occurs, it leads to paragraphs like this:

> "We make reference to your fax of 9 June, advising us of further additional 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. Our partner is providing the necessary support required for safe and secure drinking water systems."

In the next three activities, practise revising to reduce wordiness.

Instead of these long phrases …	… can you use one word?	
along the lines of		Show answer
as of this date		Show answer
at all times		Show answer
at the present time		Show answer
at the time of		Show answer
by means of		Show answer
concerning the matter of		Show answer
despite the fact that		Show answer
due to the fact that		Show answer
during the course of		Show answer
for the period of		Show answer
for the purpose of		Show answer
for the reason that		Show answer
in a manner similar to		Show answer
in a position to		Show answer
in order to		Show answer
in reference to		Show answer
in regard to, in connection with, in relation to		Show answer
in spite of the fact that		Show answer
in the amount of		Show answer
in the event that		Show answer
in the nature of		Show answer
in the near future		Show answer
in view of the fact that		Show answer
on behalf of		Show answer
prior to		Show answer
subsequent to		Show answer
the majority of		Show answer
until such time as		Show answer
with a view to		Show answer
with regard to		Show answer
with respect to		Show answer

Practice: Revise sentences to make them briefer

Please mark the wordy phrases in these three sentences with the highlighting pen. If you highlight something by mistake, click the "Start over" button to refresh your page. When you've completed your analysis, click to see our comments and a suggested revision for a briefer version of each sentence.

Example 1   Start over

This consultation represents the second stage in the operational planning process for the time period 2010-2011.

Click here to check
your answer.

Practice: Revise a wordy paragraph

In the paragraph below, please use the highlighting pen to mark mark the phrases that seem wordy to you. If you highlight something by mistake, click the "Start over" button to refresh your page. Check our suggested response to see if you agree. Then revise the paragraph to eliminate the wordiness.

When you've completed your revision, click to see ours. Your revision will not be identical, but it should be similarly brief.

Original paragraph   **Start over**

As of this date, project managers should take up the task of reviewing their annual performance for this year by identifying actual results against the intended results for this year. This review should be along the lines of that done last year, and should follow the guidelines provided. This review of annual performance should not be more than three pages long. Project managers should provide an overall performance review within those three pages; there is no need for more specific submissions at this time. Please note that, due to the fact that the information provided will feed directly into the Annual Report, it should be written with an external audience in mind. Concerning the matter of page length, it is of particular importance given the considerable time constraints of those drafting the Annual Report that this guideline be adhered to, despite the fact that many project managers must address multiple activities in a space thus limited.

Click here to show wordiness.

Portfolio preparation - Brevity

Now review your own sample documents. Look for redundant phrases, padding and words that do not help directly convey your meaning.

Document the examples that you find, and revise them to demonstrate that you can make wordy expressions more effective.

Add the examples to your Assignment 1 portfolio analysis document.

We encourage you to find as many examples as you can of this concept in your sample documents. When you assemble your assignment portfolio, you will choose one or two of the examples to send to your tutor for feedback.

Precision

Precision is another remedy for wordy writing. Precise information helps get your point across, and can make your writing more persuasive. Precision sends the message that you know what you're talking about; therefore, precise writing can enhance your credibility.

Vagueness – the opposite of precision – relies on general descriptors like most, few, significant, considerable, apparently and seemingly. These are problematic words because they are open to interpretation. The result is writing that obscures the value of specific data, and raises questions more than it answers them.

The sentences below express some research findings. Can you determine specific values here? Do you feel you understand the research results?

- There was a significant decrease in the number of emergency response activities from March to August 2010.

    (How much is significant—30%? 50%? More than that?)

- Most of the people interviewed claimed that complaints were heard but not recorded.

    (Does most mean a simple majority – i.e. over 50% – or is it closer to 100%? And how many were interviewed? Five, or 500?)

- Few people were aware of the changes to policy.

    (How many are few?)

Precision examples

Effective writing at WHO includes quantifiable information when it is available. If a numeric value can help your reader understand the finding, then you should include it and explain its significance. However, you must choose your data carefully so that you deliver specific information without overwhelming your reader with detail.

Precision helps you convey your message succinctly, by clarifying your ideas, points and arguments. Precise data gives your readers clear information.

We noted earlier that vague qualifiers (most, few, significant) are problematic because they are open to interpretation. The meaning the reader derives could vary widely, depending on who that reader is. Consider some of the possible interpretations of these phrases by the readers identified in each example. Decide for yourself how you would interpret the phrase, then estimate what others might think. There are no right or wrong answers, only interpretations; that is the problem with lack of precision!

Click here
to begin.

Practice: Precision

Now let's analyse three paragraphs for the quality of precision.

Can you see weaknesses resulting from vague language? How effectively does each one communicate with readers? Consider each paragraph, then read our reflections.

Example 1

Efforts worldwide on access to treatment for children with HIV have reached a new milestone, with tens of thousands more children receiving life-saving HIV treatment at the end of 2009; but many more lives could be saved if more infants started on medication earlier according to new recommendations from WHO.

Click here to reveal
our comments.

REVISING FOR FLOW AND CONSISTENCY

We've been analysing writing at the level of individual words and phrases, and looking at revision techniques and some of the mechanics of writing style. We'll now look at how the effective writing principles we've introduced can be applied to the overall document. We'll examine writing style in terms of establishing a logical flow of ideas.

Earlier in the module, in both Prewriting and Drafting, you looked at techniques for organizing ideas – using an outline or a hierarchy to establish a logical flow, and working with the paragraph as your primary organizing unit.

The paragraph is still your main building block. Remember that a well-written paragraph supports a single main idea, one main message. The logical flow is your way of guiding your readers, helping them remember what you want them to know, and providing them with the means of hearing and accepting your message.

Using connector words

Connector words establish and maintain the flow of ideas in your document. You can use connectors to indicate that the document is continuing to explore the current idea, or signal that there is a change in direction. Connectors can direct your readers towards a specific logical conclusion, that is, the point you want to make or the message you want to convey. Connector words help your readers see the links between ideas.

The following examples illustrate how connectors clarify the flow of ideas within a paragraph.

Example 1

Road traffic crashes kill over 1.2 million people and injure between 20-50 million each year. Unless safety is addressed urgently, the numbers of road traffic collisions are expected to increase, becoming the fifth leading cause of death by 2030. For this reason, WHO has promoted increased awareness of road safety, and in so doing has identified several highly cost-effective interventions, which if implemented across the globe would save hundreds of thousands of lives and hundreds of millions of dollars every year. The overall purpose is to raise the profile of road traffic injuries on public health agendas globally.

Click here to reveal our comments.

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Practice: Add appropriate connector words to a paragraph

There are many words and phrases used to connect ideas. The list below contains some of the more common ones.

Addition			Causality, Consequence		
again	besides	furthermore	as a result	for this reason	so that
also	equally important	in addition	because	consequently, in consequence	therefore
at the same time	first, second (etc.)	including	in so doing	in order to	thus
Comparison, Contrast			**Examples**		
although	in comparison/ contrast	on the contrary	for example	for instance	in other words
likewise	in spite of, despite	similarly	particularly	indeed	in fact
in the same way	nevertheless	whereas	to illustrate		
Place			**Summary**		
above, below	far away	here	all in all	in conclusion	on the whole
adjacent to	east, west (etc.)	nearby	finally	in summary	therefore
beside	elsewhere	there	in brief	last	thus
Time					
after, afterward	hitherto	shortly	[dates]	meanwhile	thereafter
before	immediately	subsequently	first, second (etc.)	presently	ultimately

The sample paragraph describes some of the social outcomes of legislation prohibiting smoking in public places. The blanks represent missing connector words or phrases, without which the meaning of the paragraph is not very clear. Read the paragraph and add the connector words or phrases you think are most appropriate. When you're done, check our suggested responses.

Country XXX's tobacco control policy is built on a two-part foundation: legislation and excise tax increases. The government has passed legislation that prohibits smoking in all public places, _____ workplaces. _____ increasing the implicit costs of smoking, the legislation represents a clear transfer of property rights from smokers to non-smokers. _____ previously, smokers enjoyed the right to pollute the air, the legislation unambiguously assigns non-smokers the right to unpolluted air. _____ the direct impact of the legislation on tobacco consumption is still unclear, the legislation has continued the trend of deglamorizing smoking in Country XXX. _____ , smoking is no longer regarded as socially acceptable by large portions of the population.

Click here to reveal our comments.

Parallel structure at the sentence level

Earlier we discussed the idea of parallel structure at the document level. There, it referred to structural issues such as maintaining the same level of heading for document components of equal importance.

At the sentence level, parallel structure can take several different forms: single words, phrases, or clauses. As always, it is based on the principle that elements that are similar in function should be similar in form. It particularly shows up—or should show up—in two kinds of situations: lists and comparisons. Parallel structure is evident both in a sentence's grammatical structure and in its visual presentation.

Parallel structure is not only a grammatical structure, it is also a very good way to organize the information in your sentences and paragraphs. Recognizing the parallelism allows your readers to predict more easily the form and the flow of your ideas. Have a look below at some examples of poor parallel structure, and then click with your mouse on each example to see an improved version.

Poor parallel structure	Better parallel structure
By the end of this module you will learn both editing and to proofread.	Click here to reveal our comments.
She took a new job as coordinator, minute-taker, and organizing publicity.	Click here to reveal our comments.
Daily duties include: • taking minutes of meetings; • obtaining files from archives; • transcribe from dictaphone; • help visitors; • the Directors's schedule must be printed for each day.	Click here to reveal our comments.

Practice: Organize with parallel structure

In each of the three examples included, there are problems with parallel structure. Review the examples, identify the problems and correct them. Once you have done so, check our suggested response.

Example 1

We have three priorities for the next week:
- finish planning the workshop
- invitations to panel panelists
- finish the evaluation report for last week's session

Your revision:

Click here to reveal
our revision.

Portfolio preparation: Parallel structure

Review your own sample documents and look for examples of parallel structure. Have you used parallel structure correctly? If you have, record some examples. If you find examples that need correction, revise them now. Pay particular attention to lists; it is easy to make a mistake in parallel structure at this level.

> *We encourage you to find as many examples as you can of this concept in your sample documents. When you assemble your assignment portfolio, you will choose one or two of the examples to send to your tutor for feedback.*

Sentence structure – working with branching sentences

Earlier in this module, you looked at using connector words and phrases to establish a logical flow of ideas. Sentences that use connector words are usually compound or complex sentences – sentences that either coordinate ideas, or subordinate one idea to another. We use the term 'sentence branching' to identify sentences that 'branch off' to include secondary ideas and/or include qualifiers or conditional statements.

Branched sentences can be difficult for the reader to follow if they become too long and complex. A document in which sentence branching is out of control will seem long-winded and difficult to understand.

Sentence structure – working with branching sentences

When branching is not used effectively, the sentence presents the reader with two main problems:

- The subject and verb may be buried deep within the sentence, and therefore the reader may not be able to see the main idea of the sentence.
- The main subject and verb may be separated by a subordinate clause. In this case, the reader is forced to hold one thought while trying to understand another one before continuing on with the meaning of the sentence.

Here are three versions of the same sentence to illustrate the perils of sentence branching. For each example, try to find the main subject and verb and note its position in the sentence. Then compare your analysis with ours; click the Show Structure button to see the subject and verb underlined and the branching highlighted.

Along with allocating sufficient resources towards ensuring the quality of life of the next generation of citizens, particularly those who have been excluded from receiving social benefits and services, governments must make sure that their policies promote universal public health.

> **Show Structure**

Governments, in addition to the allocation of sufficient resources towards ensuring the quality of life of the next generation of citizens, particularly those who have been excluded from receiving social benefits and services, must make sure that their policies promote universal public health.

> **Show Structure**

Governments must make sure that their policies promote universal public health and that they are allocating sufficient resources towards ensuring the quality of life of the next generation of citizens, particularly those who have been excluded from receiving social benefits and services.

> **Show Structure**

Sentence structure

Review these sample sentences. Each uses branching.

Is the branching appropriate? If you think it is not, revise the sentence. When you are finished, compare your answer with our suggested response.

Example 1   Read the sample sentence, and then write your revisions in the space provided
                if the branching is inappropriate. Click on the button to reveal our comments.

Despite the early success of the program and its apparent acceptance by most parents and
children, and even though it is widely recognized that HIV knowledge is of great importance if
adolescents are to protect their own health, some parents objected.

Your revisions:

Click here to reveal
our comments.

Practice: Sentence structure

Write a paragraph based on the points in each bulleted list. Try to write sentences that use dependent clauses correctly, and without excessive branching. Remember your work with connector words – you may need to use connectors to help establish logical flow through the paragraph. Also consider that you may not need to use all the words that appear in the lists.

We have provided a suggested response for the first example and checklists for the other two. When you have completed your paragraph, reread it and consider:

- sentence structure
- parallel structure
- document flow and consistency.

Look for:

- verb-based writing
- active voice
- brevity
- precision.

Example 1   Write a paragraph based on the points in each bulleted list on the left.

- Polio eradication is the top operational priority for WHO.

- Immunization campaigns must be implemented in infected areas.

- WHO needs the collaboration of Ministries of Health to reach and vaccinate children in areas of insecurity.

- Ongoing conflict, prevailing climate of fear, and population movements hamper the conduct of effective polio campaigns.

Your paragraph:

Click here to reveal our comments.

Portfolio preparation: Sentence structure

Analyse the sentence structures you used in the documents you've been working with through this module. Do you have some examples of branching sentences – sentences with dependent clauses?

Decide whether you've used branching appropriately or excessively. Revise any sentences that use excessive branching to demonstrate appropriate use of dependent clauses.

Document all your sample sentences and revisions for inclusion in your Assignment 1 portfolio.

> *We encourage you to find as many examples as you can of this concept in your sample documents. When you assemble your assignment portfolio, you will choose one or two of the examples to send to your tutor for feedback.*

Non-discriminatory writing

WHO does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, beliefs or religion. It is easy to avoid gross examples of discrimination: expressions that portray one ethnic group as superior or inferior to others, or gender-specific language that favours males over females. As a writer, you need to be aware of other more subtle ways discriminatory language can interfere with your main message.

Gender	○ Using masculine pronouns to generalize for all people. It is preferable to use "humankind" rather than "mankind," for example. ○ Using only men as examples
Disability and chronic illness	○ Emphasizing the chronic illness or disability rather than the person. Use "wheelchair user," not "wheelchair bound." Use "people with epilepsy" rather than "epileptics."
Age	○ Focusing on age when it is not relevant. Use "the project manager," for instance, rather than "the young project manager." If you need to emphasize something related to inexperience, it is preferable to say "the inexperienced project manager." Inexperience and youth are not synonyms, nor are age and wisdom.

You can often revise discriminatory writing quite easily to eliminate the unnecessary noise it causes in communications. Revise these examples, and compare your responses to ours.

Example 1

It is our hope that within the next year, facilities for the disabled will be greatly improved with the addition of elevators and curb cut-outs.

Your revision:

Click here to reveal our revision.

Assignment: Part B

Now that you have completed this consideration of the revising stage of the writing process, it is time to submit Part B of the Module 1 assignment.

Your tutor will comment on your assignment and give you feedback. Your tutor may ask you to revise what you have written and resubmit it. The process of revising in response to feedback and reflection is itself an important part of the writing process.

Part B of the assignment is based on the portfolio preparation activities you have completed.

Look at the Assignment page to see the details of the Part B assignment.

PROOFREADING

Proofreading is the final stage of the writing process. When you proofread, you check your document for smaller mechanical errors and correct them. Even though you may be in a hurry, or have a tight deadline, you must proofread your document to ensure correctness and consistency in the finest details.

Proofreading is not the same as just reading. Proofreading requires you to focus on the details (mechanics) of your draft— spelling, punctuation, grammar. Think of it as 'micro-editing', looking at the so-called 'little' errors.

Proofreading gives you the chance to polish your document and ensure that it reflects your own professionalism. Readers will notice mistakes and omissions, and a document of any sort with a lot of editorial mistakes creates an impression of ill-prepared or sloppy work. That can damage your credibility. Errors may also introduce avoidable noise into the communication.

The WHO Style Guide

WHO has an organization-wide Style Guide. The WHO Style Guide specifies conventions of spelling, punctuation, and the use of numbers and abbreviations; it offers direction on spelling of words with hyphens and accents, and acceptable spelling of foreign words and place names. The WHO Style Guide also lists the acceptable forms of address for dignitaries, country names and much more. We recommend that you familiarize yourself with the WHO Style Guide; find it on your Intranet.

Other guidelines apply to writing specific types of documents. For example, if your document will be going out under the signature of the DG or the RD, the required forms and protocols are very specific. These guidelines are well documented and are available from HQ.

Check with your own department for style guidelines; regional offices often have individual ones. Your regional style guide is available on your Intranet.

Capitalization

Proper nouns should always be capitalized. However, beyond this basic rule, capitalization conventions vary between organizations and regions. Most of the time, the conventions at WHO follow standard usage rules, but if you are in doubt about when to capitalize a word, consult your style guide.

Here are the guidelines on one problematic application of capital letters – nouns of rank or position.

- o Use lowercase for descriptive nouns such as president, state and minister when they stand alone or are used generically (a state budget, a government leader, a health ministry).
- o Use capitals for these nouns when they are part of a full name or title, for example, the **President of France, Ghana's Minister of Health**. Use **Department of the Environment**, but **government departments**.

You may need to include specialized technical or scientific terms in your document, and the WHO Style Guide contains capitalization guidelines for these types of terms.

- o For example, generic names in the Linnaean binomial nomenclature, such as *Trypanosoma spp.* and *Schistosoma spp.*, take an initial capital letter, but the English names of such organisms, **trypanosome** and **schistosome**, do not.

Spelling

British spelling, rather than American, is normally used at WHO-HQ. The general rule is to follow the spelling listed in the latest edition of The Concise Oxford dictionary. Exceptions are listed in the WHO Style Guide; there may also be regional variations. Exceptions are generally of three types:

- o acknowledging a different spelling that has become established usage in WHO
- o respecting the recommendations of international nomenclature-setting bodies
- o reproducing quoted materials, or book or article titles, or organization names, for which the original spelling must be kept.

Disease names, chemical names, and drugs and pesticides generally follow the spellings established by other international bodies. Exceptions are noted in the WHO Style Guide.

- o Disease names – International Nomenclature of Diseases (IND) spellings; other medical terms follow British usage, with some exceptions such as hemoglobin (not haemoglobin).
- o Pharmaceuticals – International Proprietary Names (INN) spellings
- o Chemical names – International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) spellings

WHO house style includes preferred spellings of words ending in -ize, -ise and –yse.

- o WHO uses the –ize ending when there is a choice between using the suffix –ize or –ise (for example, organize or organise).
- o WHO uses –yse endings for words like analyse, dialyse and hydrolyse.

Consult the WHO Style Guide for the spelling of individual words with these endings.

Punctuation

Your goal as a writer is to make your meaning clear, and make your document easy to read; punctuating correctly is an important part of achieving that goal.

Follow standard usage rules for the punctuation in your document. If you are in doubt about whether you have used punctuation appropriately for WHO, consult the WHO Style Guide; it contains guidelines on using colons and commas, apostrophes, brackets and parentheses, hyphens, and much more.
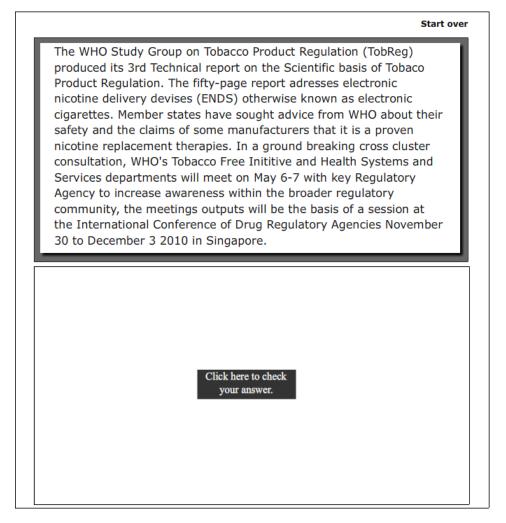
Numbers

WHO house style includes specifications about using numbers in text. Here are a few excerpts from the WHO Style Guide that cover common questions.

- o Spell out whole numbers less that 10; use figures for 10 or more. However, if a sentence begins with a number, spell it out.
    - o The physician saw six patients on Friday, for a total of 15 that week.
    - o Twenty of the 60 samples tested positive.

- o Use figures with units and unit symbols and abbreviations.
    - o The health clinic was 3 km from the village.
    - o Samples were collected on day 3 of the study.
    - o See Chapter 5 for more information.

- o Write non-decimal fractions in words; do not hyphenate (two thirds of the village exhibited symptoms).

- o Write dates as day, month, year, with the month spelled out in full (15 June 2010).

- o Use figures to specify decades (The first case of HIV/AIDS was reported in the 1980s).

- o Express measurements in SI units (the "metric system" – consult the SI brochure for details).

- o Use numbers and the percent symbol to express percentages (not the words per cent).
    - o The rate of road traffic fatalities has increased by 15%.

- o Use the 24-hour clock to express time of day.

Practice: Proofreading a paragraph

Mark the errors you find when you proofread this document using the highlighting pen. If you highlight something by mistake, click the "Start over" button to refresh your page. When you are finished, compare the paragraph with our response. Remember to consult the WHO Style Guide if you are unsure of WHO style.

Start over

The WHO Study Group on Tobacco Product Regulation (TobReg) produced its 3rd Technical report on the Scientific basis of Tobaco Product Regulation. The fifty-page report adresses electronic nicotine delivery devises (ENDS) otherwise known as electronic cigarettes. Member states have sought advice from WHO about their safety and the claims of some manufacturers that it is a proven nicotine replacement therapies. In a ground breaking cross cluster consultation, WHO's Tobacco Free Inititive and Health Systems and Services departments will meet on May 6-7 with key Regulatory Agency to increase awareness within the broader regulatory community, the meetings outputs will be the basis of a session at the International Conference of Drug Regulatory Agencies November 30 to December 3 2010 in Singapore.

Click here to check your answer.

Assignment: Part C

Now that you have completed the module activities, it is time to submit Part C of the Module 1 assignment. Part C of the assignment is based on your reflections on your own writing.

Look at the Assignment page to see the details of the Part C assignment.

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ASSIGNMENT 1

The assignment work for this module has three parts. You can read the details for each on the next few screens. Be sure to submit all required components for each assignment. If you are unsure about what to do, don't hesitate to contact your tutor.

Feedback

Your tutor will review your work to determine if you have understood the principles of effective communication as described in the module, and how you can further improve aspects of your writing.

Resubmissions

Revising is an important part of the writing process. When your tutor asks you to revise and resubmit, you can rework the assignment using your tutor's feedback as a guide. 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.

When to submit your assignments

- In Part A, you will analyse a document you wrote at work. Submit Part A when you have completed the prewriting section.
- In Part B, you will submit a portfolio of examples of the aspects of writing discussed in this course. Submit Part B when you have completed the revising section
- In Part C, you will prepare for the second module by reflecting on the importance of the writing you do at work, and setting personal goals for improvement. Submit Part C when you have completed the proofreading section.

Example assignment

You may find it helpful to refer to this example of a completed assignment.

Part A: Analyse a document

Step 1: Choose a document that you have written for work; choose from among the documents you have been examining throughout this module. The document can be of any type, should contain at least four paragraphs of text, and should be no more than three pages in length. Whichever document you choose, it should be something that you think could have been better, based on what you have learned while studying Module 1. Your task will be to analyse how well your writing conveyed your message to your readers and met your readers' needs.

Step 2: Complete a reader analysis form for the document.

Step 3: Based on your reader analysis, is there anything you would do differently if you were communicating the same message today? Write a reflection (two or three paragraphs) documenting your ideas. Try responding to the following questions in your reflection:

- Did you state the main purpose of your document clearly, and did you do so at (or near) the beginning of the message?
- Did you analyse your reader's needs and try to meet them? In other words, did you craft your document to meet your reader's needs?
- Were you aware of any barriers (timing, workload, language, emotional, perceptual) that could have negatively affected the communication process? If so, did you take action to overcome these barriers? Were you successful? If not, why not and how would you try to overcome the barriers next time?
- Can you identify any other changes that might have made the document more effective? Please write your reflection in full sentences and paragraphs (not bullet points).

To submit to your tutor:

- Document used for analysis.
- Completed reader analysis form.
- Reflective paragraphs evaluating the success of the message, and identifying changes that might have made it more successful.

Part B: Analyse strengths and weaknesses

You completed various Portfolio Preparation activities as you worked through this module, analysing your own past work and seeking examples of the concepts presented. In those activities, you identified either good examples or those needing improvement. If improvements were required, you revised the samples you had discovered. You recorded these examples in a portfolio analysis document.

Since we asked you to find as many examples as possible, your collection may be quite large. Review your examples now. Choose one or two examples of each concept and submit your completed portfolio to your tutor.

Your tutor will provide feedback on your portfolio. If there is a concept you find particularly challenging, submit two examples. That way you will receive more feedback on that particular concept.

This part of the assignment enables you to demonstrate your ability to assess and improve your own writing.

To submit to your tutor:

- A portfolio containing examples of major concepts addressed in this module, including paragraphing, parallel structure, sentence branching, noun-based writing, passive voice and wordiness. Please identify a maximum of two examples for each of these six topics, and submit the full documents from which you took these examples.

Of the samples that need improvement, identify the writing flaws (e.g., lack of structure in paragraphs, poor parallel structure, noun-based writing, overuse of the passive voice, etc.).

Of the samples that you think demonstrate good writing, explain why this is so. What features does your writing contain (good structure, style, mechanics, etc.)?

Where necessary, revise examples to conform with module guidelines.

Submit your portfolio using this three-column portfolio analysis table, with the example in the first column, your comments on it in the second column, and your revision (if required) in the third column.

Part C: Describe your workplace writing, and identify your goals for the second module

We know you have already decided which module you will complete next: Reports and Proposals, or General Office Correspondence. Now that you have almost completed Module 1, it is time to look ahead to the second module.

To do this, please:

- Write a description of the types of writing you most commonly do at work. Your description should include an explanation of the importance of each type of writing. How does this writing help your area of WHO achieve its goals?
- Reflect on the writing process as you have practised it in Module 1, and on the feedback you have received from your tutor. Are there aspects of writing that are more challenging than others in the work you do? Focusing on these specific challenges and ways to overcome them can help you get the greatest benefit from the second module. Think ahead to the second module, and identify one or more goals you hope to achieve as you complete the module.

To submit to your tutor:

- A document of at least three paragraphs describing the writing tasks you most commonly complete at work and explaining their importance, written in coherent paragraphs that conform to the guidelines for effective writing provided in the module.
- One or more goals for the additional module, based on the writing tasks you most commonly do and your experience of the first module.

Among other things, your tutor will focus on mechanics, style and the tone of the document. Your description will help your tutor prepare to guide you more effectively in the second module, and your tutor's feedback may alert you to particular areas of your writing to focus on.

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Setting Goals

Setting personal goals for learning helps you take control of the process. Goals are most useful if they are:

- Specific—setting out exactly what you hope to achieve
- Measurable—describing something that can be observed
- Realistic—describing something that you can accomplish during the weeks you spend on the second module.

Setting a goal does not need to be complicated, though. To set your goals, think about the writing you do at work and what would improve it the most. Think about your tutor's feedback, and especially anything your tutor has mentioned several times.

Here are some examples of goals based on the aspects of writing discussed in Module 1:

- I hope to make my writing more precise. I will eliminate the use of words like "some" and "most," and use statistics where appropriate;
- I will use the active voice unless there is a good reason not to;
- I will stop using the phrases "make a decision" and "conduct an analysis" and use the verbs "decide" and "analyse" instead;
- I will watch for other examples of noun-based writing and substitute verb-based writing.

RESOURCES

Assignment documents

- [Reader analysis](#)
- [Portfolio analysis](#)
- [Sample assignment](#)

Reference works

- [UN Editorial Style Manual](#)
- [Oxford Dictionary Online](#)
- [Chicago Manual of Style](#)

WHO Style Guide

Check the WHO intranet for the latest version of the *WHO Style Guide*, which is the most useful and authoritative guide on various writing issues, including the the following:

- WHO house style
- Easily confused and troublesome words
- Non-discriminatory language
- WHO spelling list
- Words ending in -ize, -ise and –yse
- Abbreviations
- Member States and Associate Members of WHO
- Place names
- Useful reference books

SUMMARY

In this module, you considered the nature of effective writing from a variety of perspectives, using the writing process as a way to examine examples of effective and ineffective writing. Because your work at WHO involves all types of written communication, it is important to bear in mind a few key assumptions about what makes writing effective.

- Assumption 1: Effective writers recognize their readers' needs and develop strategies for overcoming barriers that can block understanding.
- Assumption 2: Effective writing is well organized around a central purpose.
- Assumption 3: Effective writing is the result of a deliberate process of planning, drafting, and revising.

Using these assumptions as the foundation of your writing will not only improve your writing skills, but will contribute to the success of WHO programmes. This success depends on your ability to communicate effectively.