

Writing Tip: The Productivity Checklist

Adapted from *Writing to Get Things Done*® seminar

The Productivity Problem

Poorly written emails create confusion, hinder progress, and derail projects. Most people ramble as they type in the hope that something will get done.

The Productivity Solution

Well-written emails, on the other hand, help people solve problems, meet important deadlines, and keep projects on target. When you write, remember: clear writing is clear thinking, framed for the reader, in plain language.



Stan Berry

The Productivity Checklist

Clear communication drives productivity. To improve the productivity of those around you, follow this simple checklist. And watch your effectiveness reverberate through your readers, like a pebble dropped into water.

Clear writing is clear thinking

- Keep a business perspective—use writing as a tool for getting things done.
- Write for the reader—and lose yourself in the process.
- Take yourself—not your reader—on your journey of discovery.
- Find your list of key points—so your readers don't have to.

Frame your thoughts for the reader

- Forecast your bottom line in the subject line—it's the first and often last thing people read.
- Put what you want to get done in paragraph one—and jump-start everyone's productivity.
- Organize your list under a forecasting sentence— hidden lists are like hidden treasure, they don't help anyone.
- Give readers a deadline—that's what they're waiting for.

Use plain language

- Give business speak the boot—use the same language with your colleagues as you do with your family.
- Use simple words— they bring complex ideas to life.
- Use active voice for those who aren't content experts.
- Sweeten the tone to encourage cooperation.

This checklist is a powerful tool to enhance your productivity and the productivity of your work teams. Keep it handy. Use it to write well-written emails and reports that get things done. And watch your effectiveness grow, like a pebble dropped into water.

Stan Berry has devoted the past 34 years to improving the writing skills of over 55,000 business and government professionals. After completing his Master's degree from Yale University, he co-authored five books on writing that he uses in his seminars. He's been a member of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) since 1975 when he served as the newsletter editor and on the Board of Directors for the Twin Cities Chapter. Stan can be reached at www.BerryWritingGroup.com or 612-578-1487.

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