10 Keys to Quality Writing

#1 Answer these questions before you get started:

- What is my purpose (message to be delivered)?
- Who is my reader?
- What information belongs in the document?
- What is the best format?

#2 Know your audience.

- Who is your reader?
- What are the needs and interests of your reader?
- What is their knowledge, attitude, or relationship to the subject?

#3 Start strong. A strong first sentence establishes the framework of your message.

#4 Organize logically. Choose a pattern and stick with it (Chronological, Order of Importance, Categories, Pros-Cons, Cause-Effect, or Problem-Analysis-Solution). Make sure your information is complete and transitions are smooth.

#5 Sound professional and concise. Lose words or phrases that are trite, formal, wordy, or redundant.

#6 Be specific. Use concrete facts to illustrate points precisely.

#7 Adopt neutral or positive tone. Avoid negative words (no, not, never). Focus on describing what you can do (not what you can’t do).

#8 Format attractively. Enhance visual appeal and clarify your points by using bullets, boldface, italics, tables, and charts.

#9 Be correct. Follow the rules of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Always double check facts, figures, and source citations.

#10 Read aloud. Hearing your words spoken helps you to know if what you’ve written sounds correct, effortless, and natural. If you run out of breath or stumble as you read, you probably need to revise.