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# A Brief Guide to Professional Writing

Revised Fall 2002 by J. Haggaman and S. Denney  
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If you are like most DeVry Addison students, you'll take Professional Writing (English 227) in your 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> term. But you may be asked to write in the business context long before that. This brief guide is intended to get you through those assignments.

In this document, we can only introduce you to some of the fundamental concepts of professional writing—concepts you'll work on in more depth in your courses. Therefore, **TAKE THE ADVICE OFFERED ONLY AS GUIDELINES.** When you get to your English 227 class or to your workplace, your instructor or supervisor may give you more specific suggestions about how they want you to write.

## What is professional writing?

Professional writing is writing done in a workplace context to enable and support the work of a company (i.e., buying, selling, producing goods and providing services, making profits, etc.). To facilitate that work, professionals have to communicate with each other, and they have developed a number of formats and conventions to make the exchange of ideas go more smoothly.

Professional people typically write to

- inform—share information with—their audience; and/or
- persuade—build goodwill with or enlist the help of—their audience.

They typically communicate through the following formats:

- Forms (e.g., time cards, billing invoices, inventory tracking forms, etc.)
- E-mail messages and memos (typically to an audience inside the business)
- Letters (typically to an audience outside the business)
- Reports
- Proposals

**How is professional writing similar to / different from the kind of writing you have done before?**

Whenever you encounter a new situation, your brain recalls relevant past experiences to give you some idea of what to do in the new situation. However, it usually happens that some aspects of the past experiences transfer to the new, but not all. The trick is to

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**JR Anderson**



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