



Top tips for improving your written communication skills

When trying to get your point across to others in writing, here are some key things to bear in mind:

- **Vocabulary, spelling and grammar:** These things do matter. A written document with a lot of spelling mistakes or grammatical errors loses credibility. It can look as if the writer doesn't care about the quality of his or her work. If you find it difficult to spell correctly or to structure your written work, it may be worth your while to be screened for dyslexia and/or to learn to use assistive technology to improve these skills. See the Disability Support Service website for more.
- **Proof-reading and editing:** Few pieces of written work are born perfectly formed. Usually you will need to read over a piece of writing a few times, making changes every time, to obtain a good quality finished product. If you can, it's often a good idea to go away from a piece of writing for a few hours, days, or even weeks, so that you come back to it again with 'fresh' eyes.
- **Brevity and simplicity:** Try to get your written points across as simply and concisely as possible. As you gain writing experience and confidence, you can experiment with making your sentences and paragraphs more complex, but if in doubt, do keep it simple. For some useful resources on using plain English for everyday writing, see <http://www.plainenglish.ie/writing-tips/>.
- **Logical progression of ideas:** Most pieces of good writing – from the shortest email to the longest thesis – follow a very simple rule. This is that your written work should have a clear beginning or introduction, middle or main body, and end or conclusion.
- **Authenticity:** Don't pass other people's written work or ideas off as your own – learn how to cite and reference other people's work appropriately. Work on developing a fluid, personal writing style, and on finding your own voice.



For more information on academic writing skills (including citations and referencing), see the **Academic Writing** section of the Academic Skills Hub.

Remember that while writing is a key communication skill, so too is reading the written work of others. You will do a lot of reading at NUI Galway. Here are some basic tips for effective reading (you can learn more about reading for academic purposes under the **Reading and research skills** section of the Academic Skills Hub):

- Reading improves with practice. If you are out of practice, it might take a little time to adjust to the amount of reading you are now expected to get through.
- Depending on what you are reading, it is often worth reading over any piece of written work a couple of times, just to make sure that you have understood it correctly.
- If there is something that you don't understand, think about how you might get clarification. Is there someone you can ask – a friend, classmate, relative, lecturer or tutor, maybe?
- If you struggle with reading because the language is difficult, try rewriting or summarising what you read in your own words. Or visit www.rewordify.com, an online tool for simplifying difficult English.
- Consider your response to what you have read. Do you agree or disagree? Do you believe what the person has written? What gives them the authority to write what they have written? These kinds of questions are the foundations of critical thinking (for more on this, see the **Critical thinking** section of the Academic Skills Hub).