

# MAKE IT PLAIN

## FOUR ITEMS TO CHECK BEFORE YOU HIT SEND



### 1. IS IT CLEAR?

#### DON'T BURY THE LEAD

**Put the most important piece of information first.** The average marketing email is 434 words and takes 3 1/2 minutes to read—the average person only reads an email for 51 seconds.

**People don't read—they skim.**

#### CLEAN UP YOUR FORMAT

Organize with negative space (use paragraph breaks). Use bulleted lists and numbers.

Emphasize with **bold** and *italics*.

#### WRITE IN ACTIVE VOICE

In active voice the subject performs the action. In passive voice the subject is acted upon.

**Active: Children ate the cake.**

**Passive: The cake was eaten by children.**

Passive voice is often longer and less direct. Use *I*, *we*, *you*, and *they* as much as possible.



### 2. IS IT CONCISE?

#### CUT SENTENCES

Are any of your sentences redundant or unnecessary? Can they be combined with another sentence? **You can cut more than you think.**

#### CUT WORDS

Find every time you use the word "that." If the sentence still makes sense without it, delete the word "that."

Find bloated, business-speak phrases and reduce them to one word.

- are required to = must
- be of assistance = help
- reach out to = contact (or email/call)

#### CUT LETTERS

The more prefixes and suffixes your words have, the harder they are to read. Try to rewrite noun-heavy phrases with strong verbs.

- I am in alignment with = I align with
- He made the determination to = He determined to
- It is applicable to = It applies to
- In violation of = violate

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### 3. IS IT CORRECT?

#### CHECK YOUR GRAMMAR

**Misspelled words and misplaced commas can be costly mistakes depending on the client you're emailing.**

Apps like Grammarly and ProWritingAid are fantastic tools for polishing your writing. It only takes a few extra minutes to use built-in grammar and spell-check features available in most software programs and email clients.

#### KNOW YOUR PUNCTUATION

Learning to use commas, semicolons, and colons properly can help make you a communication guru.

Clauses having common dependence should be separated by semicolons.

**I have a big test tomorrow; I can't go out tonight.**

Use a colon after a complete thought to introduce an explanation, example, list, or completion.

**She had one goal in mind: to travel the world.**

**He faced a tough decision: stay at his job or pursue his passion.**



### 4. IS IT CONSISTENT?

#### BE CONSISTENT WITH YOUR BRAND AND TONE

What words and phrases can you use to express your brand to your customers?

As a hotel manager, instead of simply calling a customer a guest, what if you called them an honored guest?

Is your tone appropriate for the content you are sending? Be mindful of how many exclamation marks you use—our personal texting conversations have made an impact on us! If you are dealing with conflict, remember to answer truthfully with grace. Be humble but not a doormat. Admit fault where you need to but not where you don't.

#### BE CONSISTENT WHEN USING AI

AI can be a great tool to help you jump-start your content, but it's not a human.

No matter how refined you make your prompts, you will need to edit its output to match your voice and brand.

