

# Writing Guide

## General Tips

- **Get** is a lazy word – find a better one! (*e.g. receive an email, obtain permission, catch the train*)
- Keep your sentences short and simple. A sentence that takes up more than two lines is **too long!**
- Read your document aloud to find any sentences that do not ‘flow’ and discover grammatical errors.
- Remember to capitalise language, nationality, religion, days, months.
- Be consistent with spelling.
- To avoid using his/her throughout a document, use their (*Each visitor to Sweden must be prepared to show their passport upon arrival*)
- Ask someone else to proofread your document.
- Use your grammar and spelling checker. Make sure to set it to UK/British English.
- if you are writing a speech, write co-ordinate and co-operate with a hyphen (-) to stress that it has two separate syllables.
- Do not use fancy fonts if you are emailing a document. The person you are sending your document to may not have the font and their computer will use another one, perhaps changing your layout.

## Formal emails and letters

- Dear Sir/Madam.....Yours faithfully (*formal. You don't know their name*)
- Dear Mr Last Name.....Yours sincerely (*formal. You do know their name*)
- Dear Ms Last Name .....Yours sincerely (*Use Ms instead of Mrs or Miss*)
- Dear Firstname .....Regards, Best regards, Best wishes, All the best, Kind regards
- Dear Title Lastname..... (*as for Dear Firstname*)
- Useful introductory phrases - thank you for your email, with reference to....., we acknowledge receipt of....

## Writing the Date

- 30 July 2007 (no the, no th, no of, no comma. The simpler the better and the less chance of errors)
- Be consistent. Write the date the same way throughout.

## Well vs. Good

- Well is an adverb and follows a verb (sing well, run well, cook well)
- Good is an adjective and follows a noun (good song, good race, good food)

## Apostrophes

- show genitive (possession) the cat's tail, the cats' tails
- show contractions – it's, won't, isn't. Do not use contractions in formal letters.
- do NOT show plurals (~~banana's, apple's~~)
- Acronyms do **not** have apostrophes unless they are possessive (NGOs)

## Abbreviations

- am (ante meridian) – before 12.00 (*e.g. 8.30am*)
- asap – as soon as possible
- btw – by the way
- b/w - between
- e.g. (exempli gratia) – for example (t.ex)
- fao – for the attention of
- fyi – for your information
- hth – hope this helps
- i.e (id est) – that is (d.v.s.)
- n/a – not applicable
- pm – (post meridian) – after 12.00 (*e.g. 6.30pm*)
- ia (inter alia). Not that common in most English writing
- vs. - versus

(let your spellchecker decide where to use punctuation in abbreviations)

### Subject-Verb Agreement

- In the present simple use the +s –s rule (if the subject has s the verb does not, if the verb has s the subject does not.  
*e.g. the dogs play, the dog plays; the court decides, the courts decide*)
- if a subject is singular, its verb must be singular. If a subject is plural, its verb must be plural (*the boy is in the classroom*  
*the boys are in the classroom*)
- each, each one, either, neither, everyone, everybody, anyone, anybody, nobody, someone, somebody, no one – are all singular and all take a singular verb (e.g. everyone is here)

### -ing forms

- *Would you mind* and *Looking forward to* and *I am used to* are followed by –ing form
- use –ing if something is temporary or happening right now (I am working with your application)
- no -ing if something is permanent, regular, habit, fact, generally true (I work at the Ministry)

## Swenglish

- don't use the word black to describe something illegal (an unauthorised taxi, an off the books worker, an off the books job, to pay someone off the books or under the table is better). Black market and black economy is, however, acceptable.
- vd means venereal disease, leg is what you stand on, fart is speed, pricks are dots, we don't use fuck in English.
- *how long* instead of *how long time*
- one person two people.
- *during* the Presidency (not under)

## Common False Friends

- akademiker in English is a graduate
- examen in English is a degree
- gymnasium is upper secondary school
- a house in English is where you live. A building is where you work
- private school in the UK is called public school. (use state school for a government school)
- bransch is usually sector or industry
- feber is usually temperature

## Prepositions of Place

- arrive + at/in NOT to (in Sweden, at Arlanda, in Stockholm, at Centralen)
- at + address with a number (at 7 Rock Road)
- at a conference or a meeting NOT on
- in + street (in Rock Road)

### **Prepositions of Time**

- at + exact time (at 10pm, at the weekend, at night – NOT in the night)
- at + special times of year (at Christmas, at Easter)
- in + times of day, months, years, seasons (in the morning, in February, in spring)
- on + days of the week, dates, special days of the year (on Christmas Day)

### **Political Correctness**

- use people after certain 'sensitive' terms – black people, disabled people, Jewish people.
- the opposite of disabled is able-bodied, not normal.
- Native American (not Red Indian), Inuit (not Eskimo), Hispanic, Asian, Roma (not gypsy), visually impaired (not blind), hearing impaired (not deaf), developmentally disabled, developmentally challenged (not retarded or mentally handicapped)

- avoid pikey, chav, scally, negro, handicapped

### Since, for and ago

- **since** refers to specified time (*since I was small, since 3pm, since 1999*)
- **for** refers to duration (*for five years, for a long time, for an hour*)
- we never use since and for with ago.

### UN, WTO, EU, UK, US, NATO media, internet etc

- if used as a noun it has a definite article (the WTO, the UN, the EU)
- if used as an adjective it has no article (EU law, internet policy, media coverage)
- arbetslösheten takes no article in English. We say *unemployment*.

### Being diplomatic

- avoid harsh consonants (get, must, can't, stupid, mistake)
- use softer words (receive, should, unable, unwise, error)
- require is a softer word than demand.

### Useful Websites

- <http://lexin2.nada.kth.se/swe-eng.html> - Swedish/English dictionary
- <http://tyda.se> – Swedish/English dictionary
- <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/> - English dictionary
- <http://onelook.com/> - English dictionary.

## Notes