

**COS Rubric for Effective Business Writing**  
**(Content, Organization, and Style)**

Effective business writing “gets work done.” An effective business writer accommodates the reading style of busy, working readers and facilitates their reading purposes (generally and specifically). Business readers read to gather information for evaluation and decision making. They skim and scan documents to identify and “harvest” information they need. Well-written documents make this kind of reading easy for their audiences.

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Marginal</b>
<b>Content</b> “What is said.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates thorough and focused understanding of context and audience.</li> <li>• Clearly expresses and carries out the document’s purpose.</li> <li>• Employs sound logic supported by complete, accurate, and useful data, definitions, examples, and illustrations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates adequate understanding of context and audience.</li> <li>• Adequately expresses and executes the document’s purpose.</li> <li>• Employs good logic, using some relevant data, examples, and illustrations supportive of the audience and purpose.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates minimal understanding of context and audience.</li> <li>• Has unclear expression and execution of the document’s purpose.</li> <li>• Has weaknesses in logic; is vague and unclear</li> <li>• Uses few effective and appropriate examples and illustrations.</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b> “When and where it is said.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly states the document’s organization and purpose in an appropriate location.</li> <li>• Uses effective and appropriately ordered headings and subheadings as needed to guide readers through the document.</li> <li>• Applies emphasis techniques, topic sentences, and reader cues to lead readers quickly and easily to critical ideas and data.</li> <li>• Employs carefully organized sentences and paragraphs; uses transitions effectively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequately states the document’s purpose and organization, but may not do so in the most-appropriate location or sequence.</li> <li>• Uses some headings to help readers find their way through the document.</li> <li>• Applies some emphasis techniques to help important ideas and data stand out to some degree for the reader.</li> <li>• Uses adequately organized paragraphs and some transitions between paragraphs and sections.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn’t adequately present the document’s purpose and organization in an appropriate location.</li> <li>• Uses no headings when needed.</li> <li>• Doesn’t emphasize important information and fails to subordinate lesser ideas in sentences or paragraphs.</li> <li>• Presents ideas and information in a confusing order; ideas are not tied together well in paragraphs or in the overall document.</li> </ul>
<b>Style (language usage, mechanics, and formatting)</b> “How it is said.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses language that is unbiased and concise, creates an appropriate tone, and draws the reader into the message.</li> <li>• Uses the most appropriate words for the context and audience.</li> <li>• Has no errors or only very minor errors in grammar and punctuation and in capitalization, number usage, spelling, and other mechanics.</li> <li>• Has a consistent point of view and mood.</li> <li>• Is formatted appropriately for the audience and for the document’s purpose.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses only some biased, wordy language or ineffective language; generally has appropriate tone.</li> <li>• Has some errors in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, number usage, and spelling.</li> <li>• Is generally formatted appropriately for the audience and the document’s purpose.</li> <li>• Has some inconsistencies in point of view and mood.</li> <li>• Has some formatting errors that don’t significantly distract the reader.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequently uses wordy, ineffective or biased language, including clichés and idioms.</li> <li>• Lacks reader focus and appropriate tone; has inconsistent point of view and mood.</li> <li>• Demonstrates only a little mastery of or concern for appropriate parallelism, number usage, and capitalization.</li> <li>• Misspells and misuses words and has frequent errors in punctuation and grammar.</li> <li>• Has errors in formatting that decrease the effectiveness of the document.</li> </ul>