THE COMPLETE LEADER

COACHING GUIDE

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

The ability to articulate a message in a clear and compelling manner.



LEADERS LEAD OTHERS

One of the 25 leadership competencies

SECTION 01

WHY WRITTEN COMMUNICATION MATTERS

Written Communication is one of the 25 core competencies that define a complete leader. As you grow this capability, you'll notice real shifts in how you lead yourself and influence others.

This guide is built for a 90-day journey. You'll explore the foundations, assess where you stand today, practice new behaviors, sidestep common traps, and track your progress, at your own pace or alongside a coach.

WHAT STRONG WRITTEN COMMUNICATION LOOKS LIKE

- You make any information, concept, or issue understandable and clear
- You organize material so readers reach the natural conclusion themselves
- You can inspire people to action and guide others to greater productivity

> **REFLECT**
>
> *Why does Written Communication matter to you personally? How might developing it change your effectiveness as a leader?*

SECTION 02

FOUNDATIONS OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

THE DEFINITION

The ability to articulate a message in a clear and compelling manner.

Like any skill worth mastering, Written Communication rests on a few core building blocks. Understanding them gives you a vocabulary for your own growth.

THE CORE ELEMENTS

1 **Knowing your message**

Business writers often struggle to figure out what they're going to say before how to say it. Be clear about your goals and communicate them succinctly.

2 **Logical sequence**

Organizing information so it leads the reader to a natural conclusion. Poorly written messages create confusion or simply fail to achieve their purpose.

3 **Fitting the reader**

Adjusting style, format, and content to the level of the reader, and choosing the right method. Know when an email works and when a composed letter is more appropriate.

REFLECT

Which element feels most familiar? Which one feels like a stretch right now?

SECTION 03

YOUR STARTING POINT

Before you move forward, take an honest look at where you are today. Read each statement and mark how often it's true of your leadership.

I proofread everything I write, including text messages, social posts, and email, before sending or publishing it.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I wait one day before sending written messages that are complex or emotional.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I avoid using jargon or colloquialisms unless I'm sure my audience is familiar with them.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I regularly write in a variety of mediums to improve my written communication, including journaling, essays, reports, and articles.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

Before I write, I am clear on my main message and what I want the reader to do.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I adjust length, format, and tone to fit the reader, and choose the right method for the message.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

> **REFLECT**
>
> *Looking at your answers, where is your greatest opportunity for growth? What patterns do you notice?*

SECTION 04

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE

Competencies grow through deliberate practice. Work through the activities below in order, or choose the ones most relevant to your context.

ACTIVITY 01 25 min

Define the Message

Five questions that settle what you're writing and why before you draft it.

TRY IT

1. Write down the situation, problem, or issue prompting you to write, and why you're writing.
2. Note who will read it and what they need to know.
3. Define the specific action you want readers to take.

ACTIVITY 02 30 min

Gain Insight

Your spoken version is usually clearer than your written one. Borrow from it.

TRY IT

1. Read a document you wrote in the past six months.
2. Imagine you had 30 seconds to explain its key message to a colleague on the phone, say it out loud.
3. Notice whether you got to the point faster out loud, then rewrite the document with that insight.

ACTIVITY 03 40 min

Identify Compelling Language

Business writing can engage the reader without flowery words.

TRY IT

1. Read a magazine article, blog post, or industry publication and notice how compelling words are used.
2. Write down the phrases that worked, and why they made your list.
3. Use two of those patterns in your next piece of business writing.

ACTIVITY 04 20 min

Cut It Short

Keep sentences short: the simplest lever on clarity.

TRY IT

1. Take a document you've written and cut every sentence over about 25 words in two.
2. Remove any jargon your audience might not know.
3. Read it aloud; anything you stumble over needs rewriting.

ACTIVITY 05 30 min

Get a Second Reader

Ask for help from others in reviewing important documents.

TRY IT

1. Before sending an important document, ask a colleague to review it.
2. Ask them specifically whether the action you want is obvious.

3. Check that every person and company name is spelled correctly.

ACTIVITY 06 15 min

Write Regularly

Writing improves with volume across different forms. Write daily for two weeks.

TRY IT

1. Choose a medium you don’t usually write in: journaling, essays, short reports.
2. Write in it for fifteen minutes a day for two weeks.
3. Review what you produced and note what got clearer.

SECTION 05

COMMON WRITTEN COMMUNICATION TRAPS

As you practice, watch for these common pitfalls. Naming them now makes them easier to catch in the moment.

01 **Trusting the spell-checker**

Today's tools catch a great deal, but they are not fail-proof. Your own knowledge is what makes them reliable.

02 **Sending complex or emotional messages immediately**

Waiting one day on a difficult message costs almost nothing and prevents most of the damage.

03 **Writing at your level, not the reader's**

Style, format, and content should match the reader. A document written for yourself will not move them.

04 **Choosing the wrong medium**

Some messages need a composed letter, not an email, and some need a conversation. Match the method to the message.

REFLECT

Which trap feels most familiar? How will you stay aware of it as you practice?

SECTION 06

YOUR 90-DAY PRACTICE

Lasting change comes from a few focused habits, practiced consistently and tracked honestly. Build your plan below, on your own or with your coach.

CHOOSE YOUR THREE HABITS

Based on everything above, which three habits will make the biggest difference in growing your Written Communication over the next 90 days?

1

2

3

BUILD IN WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

Write questions you can answer each week to measure progress and surface obstacles. The best ones are answered with “yes,” “no,” or a number.

Q1

Q2

Q3

Accountability partner: who will you share these with?

Completion date: when will you evaluate & celebrate?

Measurements of success

How will you celebrate?

SECTION 07

GO DEEPER

Keep building your Written Communication with these resources. Explore them, then capture what stands out to you.

BOOK	**The Complete Leader, Ch. 3.4: Written Communication**	The full framework and examples behind written communication.
PODCAST	**The Complete Leader Podcast**	Episodes 13, 36 & 71 explore written communication.
ONLINE	**Written Communication competency library**	Videos, articles, and podcasts at TheCompleteLeader.org.

> **CAPTURE YOUR INSIGHTS**
>
> *As you work through these resources, which ideas most apply to your own growth in Written Communication?*

KEEP GOING

YOU'VE GOT THIS

Developing Written Communication is an investment in yourself and everyone you lead. Return to this guide often: revisit the activities, reread the traps, and celebrate small wins along the way.

Every complete leader started exactly where you are now.