

## Quick Guide: Preparing to Write

To fail to prepare is to prepare to fail. How many times have you heard that? How true it is, and no more so than for when you are writing something. Whether you are writing an email, a letter, a proposal or a report, it is key that you do some preparation and give some thought to what you are about to write. It will make writing the document far easier and it will be a better piece of writing as you have given it some thought beforehand. So here are the **top ten tips** to help you prepare to write in a systematic way:

1. First, ask yourself **Why am I writing?** Two answers to consider here. One is: is writing the best method of communication for this? And secondly, what is the purpose of the document? What do I want to achieve? Write a purpose sentence: 'The purpose of this document is to ...' Agree the purpose with the originator if writing on behalf of somebody else.
2. Next ask yourself **Who is the reader?** Consider your reader or readers. Are they internal or external to the firm? What are their needs? What is their knowledge and level of expertise? What is my relationship to them?
3. Now you know the answers to why and who consider your third question: **How will I structure the document?** What order will I write in? How will I make it interesting?
4. Lots of 'what' questions now, so **What do I want to say? What tone shall I convey? What style shall I use?**
5. Time management is key when writing as you want to make sure you allow enough time for planning, writing and editing, and to have some time between the writing and editing stages. So ask yourself **When is the document needed by?** When shall I plan, write and check? When do I need a response?
6. Finally, ask 'where' questions: **Where is the document going? Where can I write?**
7. When you have asked and answered these six essential questions then **collate all the information** you wish to include. Decide what to include based on the purpose of the document and the reader.
8. **Plan and organise the content** by writing notes, writing a draft, brainstorming or doing a pattern diagram. Decide the order based on purpose and reader.
9. **Know what the ending is going to be.** For example, if it is a letter, know what action will be taken; if it's a report, know what your recommendations are going to be. By knowing your ending you will write with this in mind and towards it.
10. Now you can put your fingers on those keys!

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