SECOND EDITION

Rules *of* Thumb *for* Business Writers

INCLUDES 100s OF TIPS AND EXAMPLES!

QUICK ANSWERS TO ALL YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT:

- **WRITING LETTERS, EMAILS, RÉSUMÉS, MEMOS, AND REPORTS THAT STAND OUT**
- **PROPER GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION, STYLE, AND FORMATTING**
- **USING MICROSOFT WORD, POWERPOINT, AND OTHER TOOLS TO SAVE TIME AND ENHANCE YOUR WRITING**

NA ROBERTS WIENBROER, ELAINE HUGHES, AND JAY SILVERMAN

thors of the Bestselling *Rules of Thumb: A Guide for Writers*

RULES OF THUMB FOR BUSINESS WRITERS

Second Edition

DIANA ROBERTS WIENBROER

ELAINE HUGHES

JAY SILVERMAN

McGRAW-HILL

New York Chicago San Francisco Lisbon London
Madrid Mexico City Milan New Delhi San Juan Seoul
Singapore Sydney Toronto

The McGraw-Hill Companies

Copyright © 2005, 2000 by Diana Roberts Wienbroer, Elaine Hughes, and Jay Silverman. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC/DOC 0 9 8 7

ISBN 0-07-145757-7

McGraw-Hill books are available at special quantity discounts to use as premiums and sales promotions, or for use in corporate training programs. For more information, please write to the Director of Special Sales, McGraw-Hill, Professional Publishing, Two Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10121. Or contact your local bookstore.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wienbroer, Diana Roberts.
Rules of thumb for business writers / Diana Roberts Wienbroer, Elaine Hughes, and Jay Silverman.—2nd ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-07-145757-7 (alk. paper)
1. Business writing. I. Hughes, Elaine. II. Silverman, Jay. III. Title.
HF5718.3.W54 2005
651.7'4—dc22 2004030767

RULES OF THUMB FOR BUSINESS WRITERS

Second Edition

Also by Jay Silverman, Elaine Hughes, and Diana Roberts Wienbroer:

Rules of Thumb: A Guide for Writers, 6th ed.
Good Measures: A Practice Book to Accompany Rules of Thumb, 6th ed.
Rules of Thumb for Research
Shortcuts for the Student Writer

By Diana Roberts Wienbroer:

Rules of Thumb for Online Research

By Elaine Hughes:

Writing from the Inner Self

By Elaine Hughes, Jay Silverman, and Diana Roberts Wienbroer:

Finding Answers: A Guide to Conducting and Reporting Research

此为试读，需要完整PDF请访问：www.ertongbook.com

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many friends and colleagues have contributed to this book.

Our late coauthor, Elaine Hughes, provided much of the pizzazz and wisdom in the first edition of *Rules of Thumb for Business Writers*. This revision preserves most of what she wrote, and we trust that she would applaud our additions.

We continue to be grateful for the support we have found at McGraw-Hill. Mary Glenn, Melissa Scuereb, and Jane Palmieri, our editors at McGraw-Hill's Professional Book Group, have been on top of every detail that produced this revision. Lisa Moore, our editor at McGraw-Hill's College Division, has been a special friend to all our books, including this one. North Market Street Graphics created the original design, and MMDesign added a fresh look and some clever enhancements to this revised edition.

Rules of Thumb for Business Writers was written in response to friends in the business world who encouraged us to adapt our college textbook, *Rules of Thumb: A Guide for Writers*, for a larger professional audience. Over the years, their suggestions and questions shaped the concept of this book. In particular, we benefited from the advice of Russell Bosworth, Evelyn Brooks, Joylene Carlson, Leanna B. Fisher, Judy Kelly, and Carolyn Roughsedge.

Special thanks go to Noah Silverman, who gave us the idea and some of the details for the section "Shortcuts for 'Word'"; to Michel Eckersley, for his information on the section "Websites"; and to Emily Hegarty, for advice on key chapters.

A number of colleagues have thoughtfully reviewed *Rules of Thumb for Business Writers*: Anne Gervasi, North Lake College; Gary Christenson, Elgin Community College; Robert Cason, University of Texas at El Paso; Rebecca Fraser, Empire College of the State University of New York; Rebecca Jackson, University of Illinois at

Urbana-Champaign; Caryl Lynn Segal, University of Texas at Arlington; and professional writers Jerry Hill and Gordon Tappar. Our gratitude goes to each of them for careful attention to every aspect of the book.

As always, we want to thank our families—Lance, Noah, and Hannah Silverman, for many suggestions; Carl and Kirtley Wienbroer, for advice on a number of different perspectives.

Finally, we note with great sadness the passing of Jay Silverman's wife, Beverly Jensen. This is the first book in the *Rules of Thumb* series to be written without the benefit of her fine editing eye, her advice on details, and her loving support of the project.

Portions of *Rules of Thumb for Business Writers* have appeared in different forms in *Rules of Thumb: A Guide for Writers*, *Rules of Thumb for Research*, *Rules of Thumb for Online Research* (all from McGraw-Hill), and *Finding Answers: A Guide to Conducting and Reporting Research* (HarperCollins).

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

The phrase "rule of thumb" refers to a handy guideline: The top part of your thumb is roughly an inch long. For some jobs you need a ruler marked in millimeters, but often you can do fine by measuring with just your thumb. Your thumb takes only a second to use, and it's always with you.

We've tried to make *Rules of Thumb for Business Writers* just as easy to use—brief and readable, covering the main writing problems that give trouble to most businesspeople. You can read it out of order, in small doses, to find what you want when you need to solve a specific writing problem, whether in the office, on the job, or at home. In this second edition, we have added guidelines for creating websites, evaluating material on the Internet, using PowerPoint and Microsoft Word, and controlling paper flow.

In this book you will find some points that have to be exactly right, and in those cases we've given the complete details. But where we could, we've given you a rule of thumb—a brief guide that you can use quickly any time you need to compose an effective piece of business writing.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix
A Note from the Authors xi

PART ONE: THE WRITING PROCESS

Writing in the Business World 3
Finding Your Focus 5
Sizing Up Your Work Style 7
What to Do When You're Stuck 10
Organizing Your Ideas 13
Paragraphing 17
Continuity: Using Transitions 20
Adding Visual Interest: Layout, Illustrations, and PowerPoint Presentations 22
Revising 25
Proofreading 28
Staying on Top of the Paper Flow 30

PART TWO: WRITING WITH POWER

Steps Toward a Clear Style 35
Writing to Persuade 37
Writing with Energy 41
Trimming Wordiness 44
Varying Your Sentences 46
Avoiding Tangled Sentences 51
Eliminating Biased Language 54

PART THREE: SPECIFIC BUSINESS WRITING

Email and Fax Messages 59
Memos 64
Letters 67
Agendas and Minutes 72
Instructions and Directions 74
Reports 76
Websites 81
Newsletters and Press Releases 85
Proposals 88
Résumés 91

PART FOUR: SPECIAL PROJECTS

Research on the Internet 99
Crediting Outside Sources 107
Recurring Projects 111
Long-Term Projects 113
Collaborative Projects 117
The Spoken Word 119
Editing Other People's Drafts 121
Writing for Others 123

PART FIVE: CORRECTNESS—USAGE

Commonly Confused Words 127
One Word or Two? 136
Spelling 140
Capitalization 143
Abbreviations and Numbers 146
Correct Pronouns 148
Consistent Pronouns 150
Pronouns: Avoiding Vagueness 154
Verbs: Agreement with Subjects 156
Verbs: Consistent Tenses 158
Word Endings: *s* and *ed* 160

PART SIX: CORRECTNESS—PUNCTUATION

Periods: Avoiding Sentence Fragments and Run-on Sentences 165
Commas 171
Semicolons and Colons 175
Dashes and Parentheses 177
Hyphens 179
Apostrophes 180
Quotation Marks 181
Italicizing (Underlining) or Quoting Titles 185

APPENDIX

SAMPLE BUSINESS DOCUMENTS 189
Memo 189
Bad News Memo 190
Detailed Email 191
Email Templates 192
Letter of Recommendation 193
Meeting Agenda 194
Press Release 195
Cover Letter for Résumé 196
Résumé (Emphasis on Accomplishments) 197
Résumé (Emphasis on Skills) 199
Résumé (Limited Experience—Concealing Current Employer) 201
Résumé (Significant Experience) 202

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING DOCUMENTS 203
Basic Formatting for Business Documents 203
Shortcuts for "Word" 206
Grammar Review: Common Sentence Patterns 212
Anatomy of a Sentence: How to Diagram 217

A LIST OF IMPORTANT REFERENCES 220

Index 233

此为试读，需要完整PDF请访问： www.ertongbook.com

PART
ONE

THE WRITING PROCESS

1 WRITING IN THE BUSINESS WORLD

Most of the time, you must grab the attention of your reader immediately, or your carefully written material might end up in the recycling bin.

Writing in the business world is not like the writing that succeeds with teachers. In school, you write to demonstrate what you have learned. Teachers usually give you a chance to prove yourself. Remember the math teacher who gave you partial credit for a wrong answer if you had followed the correct procedure? In the business world, however, you can't assume that your audience will be so lenient. You need to put your best effort into every single document you write.

Know what you're talking about. You can't fake it. Everything you write must be grounded in your sure knowledge of what is true.

Take care of errors in punctuation and word usage. Errors in spelling and grammar—even in emails and informal memos—will always work against you.

Follow the basic business forms and protocols. Each professional field follows standard presentation formats. Your office may have a "style sheet"—rules and formats your company has adopted—or there may be sample documents that you can use as guidelines.

Be positive. Most business writing attempts to solve a problem. Always try to be constructive, to praise others where praise is merited, and to offer criticism in terms that are helpful.

► IDENTIFY THE KINDS OF WRITING YOU MUST DO

Whether new to the business world or a seasoned veteran, you can benefit from analyzing the kinds of writing required at your office. Examine the current files or seek out a senior colleague who does a lot of writing on the job and who is willing to serve as a mentor.

Categorize the types of documents you regularly must produce both by content and by the types of audience. Take a look at the Table of Contents of this book to see what chapters can best help you become a better writer.

KEEP YOUR READER IN MIND

In many cases, you know who will be reading your memo or report—a specific person or group—and can tailor your style and information accordingly. Knowing your reader allows you to

- Adopt an appropriate style—formal or friendly.
- Stress points your reader will care about.
- Explain points your reader may not know about.
- Address questions and concerns you expect this reader to raise.

Often, however, you do not know the specific person—for example, when writing a letter to a customer. Even when you do know the reader, someone else may see what you write—either now or in the future. For these reasons, it's best to

- Strike a balance between being too informal or too formal.
- Avoid being unnecessarily negative or accusatory of others.
- Make each separate point clear and concise.
- Give credit to the work of others.

Writing is a form of office politics. Be aware of what you put into writing and of who may see it.

2 FINDING YOUR FOCUS

Time spent before you start writing saves time and energy later.

Before you begin any writing project, take a few moments to assess the following characteristics.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROJECT

Who is the intended audience? A report intended for potential customers obviously warrants far more time and psychic energy than a summary of a meeting to be distributed to colleagues.

What is the expected life span of the document? An evaluation that will be part of an employee's personnel file requires more care than a thank-you note. You may want to save a well-written report to present as a justification for your promotion.

THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROJECT

What is the purpose? Will you be writing to inform or to persuade? The latter requires more effort.

What is the appropriate tone? Your audience and purpose determine whether you will need to use a formal or informal tone, and whether you will need to spend great care on your phrasing.

How long will it be? Keep in mind that often a short piece of writing requires more effort than a long one. Readers prefer short documents; however, when given an assigned word- or page-count, you should conform. For tips on how to adjust length, see Chapter 9, "Revising."

Is creativity required? In some organizations, originality or style may be primary considerations.

Is collaboration required? If so, you will need to consider the schedules and personalities of the people involved. See Chapter 33, "Collaborative Projects."

How polished does it have to be? Keep your perspective. Don't allow a low-level but urgent project to take time from a more important one with a later deadline.

Remember that your writing reflects on you; errors, even in an email, indicate to some readers that you don't care enough—that you do not bother to get details right.

► THE DEADLINE

Allow extra time for drafting, revising, and editing. The length of the product does not determine the production time.

此为试读，需要完整PDF请访问：www.ertongbook.com