

Knowing the basics is not good enough anymore

Issued by [Wits Language School](#)

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Being able to confidently speak and write in English has never been so important. Using the right words in the right way can make a massive difference to any company.



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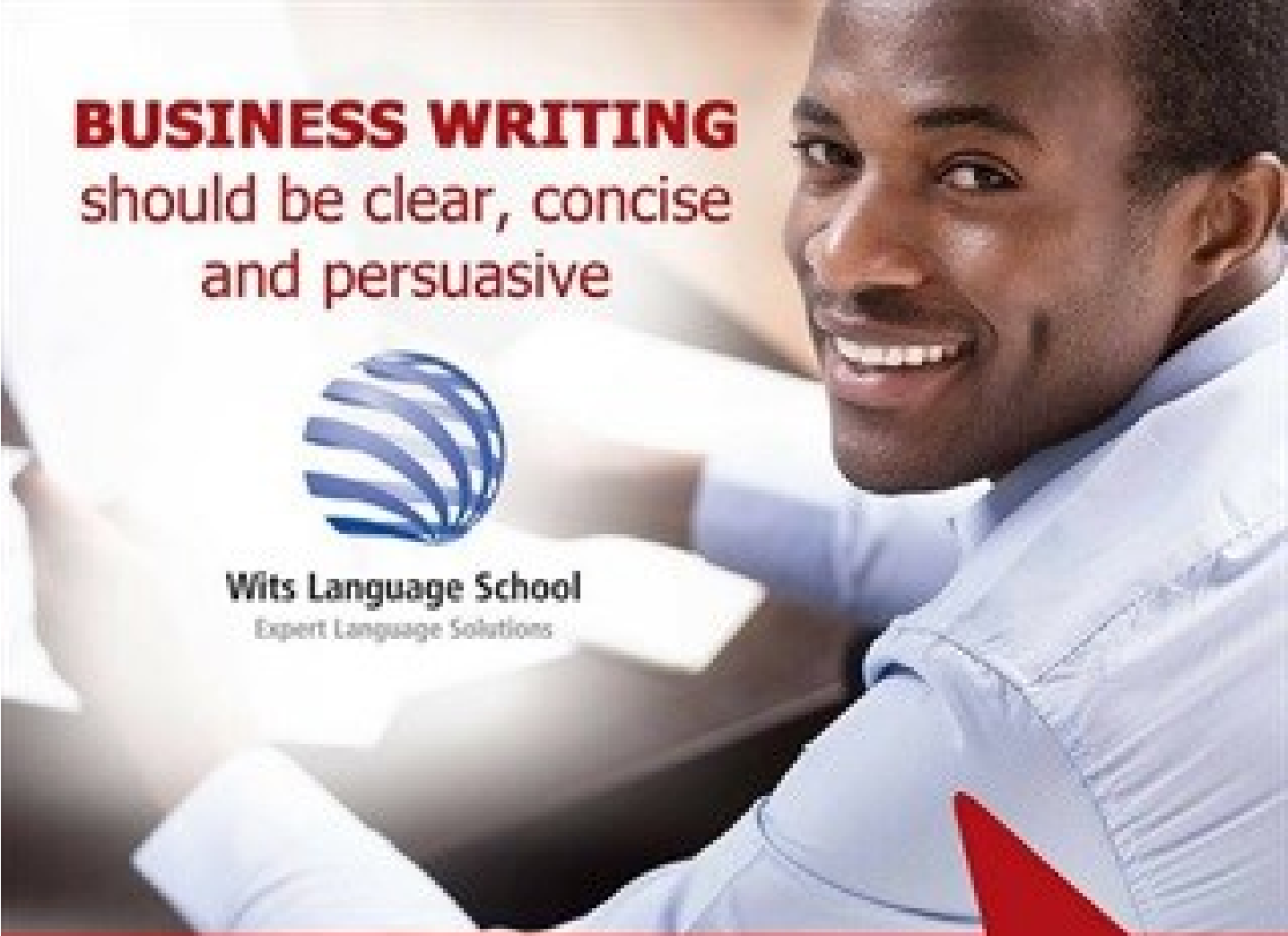
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Do you know the difference between “organize” and “organise”? Do you believe “device” and “devise” are the same thing? Do you think a comma and a semicolon could be used interchangeably? Why is “talk about” considered informal language? How does one create cohesion in your writing?

Few people in the business sector ask these questions; it could be because they do not focus on the language they use in business correspondence or, as second language speakers of English they do not know the answers. With many pupils in South Africa receiving basic education in their mother tongue, many enter the business sector not knowing the basic rules of how to articulate an idea coherently or cohesively. It is often when they are asked to compile a formal business report or prepare a presentation that few realise the importance of upskilling their English proficiency.

At the Wits Language School’s [English Communication for Professional Development](#) unit, that is the main focus: enhancing participants’ English language skills for the business environment in an interactive manner. Whether you need to go back to the basics; learn how to write and edit emails, proposals, memos, minutes or reports; enhancing your speaking

and pronunciation skills in order to deliver confident presentations; or practise your critical thinking skills when using English in your everyday life, there is the right course to fit your needs and help you climb that corporate ladder by focusing on what many regard as a “soft skill”.

Business English students can generally be classified into two sections: those who recognise the need to address their language skills, and those who believe they do not need any language training. The first group often walks into a class not knowing what to expect and leave with more confidence in their English spoken and written forms. The second group leaves the class understanding language structures better and rely more on grammar and writing rules than on what “sounds right”. Regardless of the group you might fall in, participants who successfully complete the courses gain knowledge, understanding, confidence, a higher aptitude in English and critical analysis of the language they are expected to converse in.

Take for example the following sentences – “I write reports”, “I am writing a report”, “I wrote a report”, “I have written a report”, “I have been writing a report” and “I had written a report”. Although all of these sentences are grammatically correct, they are very different in meaning and intention. “We could invest”, “We must invest”, “We might invest” and “We should invest” indicate different intensities and degrees, and “Please see attached” is better than writing “Kindly see attached”. One should avoid using a colon after a verb or preposition when you list things, and “U.S.A.” and “USA” refer to two different writing styles (one of which is preferable in South Africa).

Today, many companies are recognising the importance of English in the workplace as a way to create better internal and external communication, as well as creating uniformity in general forms of correspondence and business documents. While some companies offer their staff financial assistance in upskilling themselves, other companies opt to complete training as a group. With classes being presented in a communicative and fun way, English training has never before been made more accessible and exciting. Public classes run every Saturday over a 10-week period, while more customised corporate training takes place during the week at a time and place convenient for the client. Participants often comment that they start to analyse, question and edit their writing more critically and that their superiors at work see a marked change once they start a short course from Wits Language School.

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