



# WRITING WITHIN THE DISCIPLINE: COMMUNICATION



**LOYOLA**  
UNIVERSITY MARYLAND



THE LOYOLA WRITING CENTER



# WRITING WITHIN THE DISCIPLINE: COMMUNICATION

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# INTRODUCTION

The following guide provides specific instructions for writing within the disciplines Advertising, Multimedia, Journalism, and Public Relations. This guide features advice from experts in their respective fields: Professor John Stack, Dr. Russell Cook, Dr. Sara Magee, and Professor Veronica Gunnerson.

While the advice was collected specifically for Communication students, it can be used by students in a variety of majors. Each section includes an explanation of how the discipline relates to other forms of writing as well as how it will improve the overall writing of any and every student.

The last two sections of this guide are general tips from the Communication experts. The first is a set of guidelines for effective academic and professional presentations, featuring information gathered from the Communication experts. The second is a citations style guide for the four disciplines as well as an explanation of the importance of citations in the Communication field.



# ADVERTISING

Writing for advertising may seem daunting, but Professor John Stack insists that it is not as difficult as it appears. When writing in advertising, students learn the importance of tone, keeping the audience engaged, and establishing a genuine connection with the audience. This form of writing focuses entirely on how the writer and reader interact. Therefore, these skills are necessary for students of all disciplines when writing persuasive or argumentative essays

Professor Stack’s background as an advertising copywriter for over twenty years and an advertising professor at Loyola University of Maryland for fifteen years mean that his advice for writing in advertising has turned into direct, concise tips that reflect exactly what he expects from his students.

## 1. Stay simple

Use short, declarative sentences. Communicate your message as clearly as possible. In long, winding sentences, readers easily lose the message you want to convey.

*Draft: If you want to experience the fantastical wizarding world, you should go to Universal Studios!*

*Revision: Love Harry Potter? Visit Universal Studios!*

## 2. Write conversationally to your target audience

Advertisements create dialogue between the advertiser and the consumer. The writing should be “informal [and] conversational” to develop a trusting connection between you and your audience. Adjust to the dialect and vocabulary of your particular audience. For instance, if your goal is to reach college students, you should write how they would speak to each other, instead of using formal diction.

*Draft: When you are in this restaurant, you are one of us.*

*Revision: When you’re here, you’re family.*





### 3. Keep it interesting

Because there are so many outlets to turn to, advertisers don't have a lot of time to make genuine connections with their viewers. So writers for advertisements need to quickly engage the target audience in an interesting way.

*Draft: Starbursts are solid and juicy: try them!*

*Revision: A screaming mime: makes no sense! Just like Starbursts. They're solid and juicy!*

The main focus of advertising is to speak directly to the consumer and convince them that your message is the most important that they will hear, read, or see that day. By using the above techniques, you will be able to establish a connection with your audience and inspire them to action.

# JOURNALISM

Much like advertising, journalism focuses on the audience. Journalists craft a story specific to their readers. Writing journalistically, students learn to construct compelling and creative stories.

After years of experience as a news anchor and producer, Dr. Sara Magee now teaches journalism at Loyola University Maryland.

## 1. Only include the most important facts

“Students tend to get bogged down in facts,” Dr. Magee says. “They’ll write every detail of a story even though they don’t have the room to do so.” The most basic, necessary facts must be included before anything else. Readers need these facts to be informed and understand the purpose of your writing.

*Draft: The police officer, whose salt and pepper mustache does not match his completely dark head of hair, said that the suspect is currently in questioning down at the police station*

*Revision: The officer said the suspect is being questioned.*

## 2. Make it interesting

You are competing for your readers’ attention, so you need to entice them and make them want to read your story. Choose interesting angles and include compelling details that will engage your reader in your writing.

*Draft: In a national poll, 12.4% of people wanted to listen to The Rolling Stones, 25% wanted to listen to Nirvana, 42% Rihanna, 18% Selena, and 2% other.*

*Revision: In a national poll, nearly half of Americans preferred Rihanna’s music to other artists.*



### 3. Be clear

When people read journalistic pieces, they are looking for the basic storyline and a collection of information. They want to read short, simple reports. So write simply, and make the context of the story evident.

*Draft: On a chilly Monday morning in the middle of October, the students of Loyola University Maryland resumed their classes.*

*Revision: On Monday, October 16, students returned to class.*

### 4. Objectivity is key

You are a researcher for your readers, translating lots of information into understandable statements. Unless you are writing an opinion piece, advice column, or personal blog post, you should stay as objective as possible. Your opinion is not fact and your readers are only looking for facts.

*Draft: Mayor Rodriguez is the best mayor we have ever had.*

*Revision: Under Mayor Rodriguez, the city has seen a decrease in obesity, crime, and higher literacy rates.*

### 5. Use an ethical approach

Journalistic writing speaks directly to the common citizen. The writer has all of the information and shapes it to what the people need to know. Write the truth as it is. Always cite the proper sources. Continuously fact-check your work.

Journalistic writing forces students to limit their writing to only the necessary, important, and interesting aspects. These skills will help writers make a connection with their audience more quickly, and form clearer arguments, reports, and stories for their audience.

# MULTIMEDIA

Studying Multimedia means to observe, analyze, and critique each element of a medium. The medium could be a sound-clip, video, or animation. To write the most accurately about media, students use phenomenology. Phenomenology is a philosophy based in the belief that there are only objects and events. The way that we perceive them leads to their significance. As a phenomenological writer, your job is to present all the objects and events of a work, completely describe them, and make a thoughtful conclusion about each of their significances within the work. Once you have mastered thorough and objective descriptions, you will be able to understand and explain the world around you more clearly than ever before.

The following advice comes from Dr. Russell Cook, an experienced professor of Multimedia and video in Loyola University Maryland's Communication Department. It is based on the most common issues students have when analyzing multimedia experiences.

## 1. Place yourself outside of the work

Avoid naming your role as the viewer or listener. Separate yourself from the work to analyze it objectively and more thoroughly.

*Draft: "I hear the music in the background, indicating a change of tone."*

*Revision: "The music in the background indicates the change of tone."*



## 2. Describe the work; don't explain it

By explaining the relevance or importance of an object or event without describing the actual object or event, the argument fails to address its significance within a work. It also limits the variety of interpretations that readers can make about the events and objects within a work. Explanations include naming the objects or events of a work. Words such as “person”, “table”, or “party” give certain connotations to objects and events that corrupt the potential interpretation of readers. Dr. Cook emphasized this particular tip, saying, “If you focus on the explanation, you’ll lose the experience.”

*Draft: “The person on the table represents the party.”*

*Revision: “Subject one’s placement above object one defines the energy of the scene.”*

## 3. Avoid judgmental words

When using words such as “good” or “bad”, you lend your own opinions to the objects and events of a work and emphasize them beyond their face value. Instead, provide details that are expressly objective and simply describe the objects and events.

*Draft: “The lighting is really good in this scene.”*

*Revision: “The lighting in this scene expands over all of the objects.”*

Phenomenology benefits all students because it teaches concentration on one subject at a time, and promotes critical analysis of the thousands of media we consume daily. It also helps the development of writing thorough explanations, and aids students writing fiction, non-fiction, and research essays in any field.



# PUBLIC RELATIONS

The benefits of learning how to write like a public relations representative stretch far beyond one's writing classes. These representatives' jobs are to consistently write accurate, positive facts about their client. With these skills, students will not only be able to defend any point of view with affirmative statements, but also effectively explain the position they hold.

Professor Veronica Gunnerson's advice for writing in public relations is based on the assignments that her public relations students struggle with the most: a news release. According to Professor Gunnerson, this is "the staple of writing in public relations." The most difficult aspect of public relations writing is the style, which is a unique combination of advertising and journalistic writing.

## 1. Stay positive

With public relations, it is not just what you say but how you say it. The goal is to make the client look their best. Never mention negative facts or mistakes of the client. Focus on the progress, potential, and future of the client.

*Situation: The client has ordered too many units of a product.*

*Response: The client is fully stocked and ready to take orders.*

## 2. Be persuasive

In news releases specifically, the purpose is to either address a public issue with a client or an announcement on behalf of the client. Therefore you need to persuade your audience that your positive reasoning outweighs the public issue or that your announcement is worth their time and inspires them to act of their own accord.

*Situation: Joe's Diner has its grand opening on Saturday*

*Response: If you want home-cooked food and a friendly atmosphere, come to Joe's Diner for its grand opening on Saturday.*



### 3. Conciseness is key

“When writing for PR, you need to think as reporters do,” Professor Gunnerson claims. Use short sentences (no more than 20 words) and limited details. “Make sure you budget your words,” Professor Gunnerson suggests.

*Situation: A client is launching a non-profit to benefit literacy development in elementary-age children.*

*Response: We are proud to support this non-profit, which will help elementary-age children with their reading.*

### 4. Be flexible in a variety of writing

A public relations representative must be trained to write media releases, feature stories, letters to the editor, speeches, public service announcements, and more. Therefore you must be flexible in your writing and understand the rhetorical situation at hand. Each task has a different set of rules that you will need to follow to write most effectively.

Ideally your writing in public relations will prepare you for how to present yourself as well. These skills will transfer to writing cover letters, social media posts, and performing well in interviews.



# PRESENTATIONS

Presentations are one of the most nerve-wracking assignments that students receive. Now that more and more courses are incorporating in-class presentations into their curriculum, a student could easily have at least one per semester.

In order to make your presentations more successful, enjoyable, and effective, four Communication professors have given this advice.

1. “Nonverbal communication speaks louder than words.”  
–Dr. Russell Cook

Body language and eye contact are incredibly important in order to establish connections with your audience, as well as to communicate sincerity, confidence, and passion about your presentation.

2. “Limit ticks and verbal patterns.”  
–Prof. John Stack

Since public speaking can be an anxiety inducing activity, people often fall back on certain actions or verbal patterns in order to cope. For instance, someone might rub their hands on their pants while speaking, or say “um” every few words. By being aware of these ticks and patterns and finding ways to present without using them, you will create more coherent and comprehensive presentations.

3. “Stay focused.”  
–Prof. Veronica Gunnerson

If you seem bored or uncomfortable while presenting, you will not accurately convey the material. You will also make your audience feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. So completely devote your attention to the task at hand in order to convince your audience that they need to do the same.





4. “Be confident in yourself...you are the expert.”

–Dr. Sara Magee

When people are reading text directly from a paper, note-card, or an overhead slide, they aren't engaging with the audience and seem less confident that they know the material, and that leads to less engaged and meaningful presentations. You know what you are talking about. Confidently present what you know.

5. “Do not read directly from your presentation.”

–All four experts

The professors unanimously agreed that the most common mistake students make during presentations is reading directly from the text on their presentations. “When people are reading from your presentation, they are not paying attention to you—and they should be!” Dr. Magee concluded.

6. “Do not overload your presentation with text.”

–All four experts

A presentation is a conversation with your audience. So you need to be the one speaking to them, not your presentation. Include brief highlights of important facts on which you will elaborate. Use graphs, pictures, and short videos to your advantage. Tell your audience what it is important for them to know, instead of making them find it.

With these helpful tips, your presentations will be simpler, smoother, and ultimately more professional.



# CITATIONS

Citing sources indicates your reliability, transparency, and responsibility as an author. For each particular field, citations can vary depending on what information your audience needs to evaluate your statements.

Citations increase your credibility as a communicator. Credibility is crucial to your work because most of it will be subjective analysis or working towards a specific goal. Your audience must believe everything you say in order to properly get your point across. Therefore, cite your information correctly so that your audience has no reason to believe that you are not credible.

For most papers in Communication, it is best to use APA style, unless your professor says otherwise.

# ADVERTISING

In writing for ads, your audience will hardly ever see your research. However, if you are using statistics or facts that are not widely known, cite the organization that is supplying the information and the year in which they published the information.

*Example: Loyola University Maryland Writing Center, 2018*

# MULTIMEDIA

Mostly your citations will involve the media you are directly dealing with. If you are analyzing a video, cite the precise time in seconds of the part you are focusing on.

*Example: At 0:04, a bright light enters from the left.*



## JOURNALISM

Attributing sources appropriately and accurately is increasingly important in journalism. Use full names, the person's title, and their relation to the story *unless the person requests anonymity*. Additionally, list the years of data that you are using to assure your audience you are using the most accurate information you have available, not just the information that supports your point.

Refer to the APA Style Guide for more specific instructions on using sources.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

Writers will rarely use citations in documents like press releases or event descriptions. However, in the event that you cite statistics about the business, corporation, or organization you are promoting, you must list the method of obtaining the information and the year that it was obtained.

*Example: Interview, 2015*





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