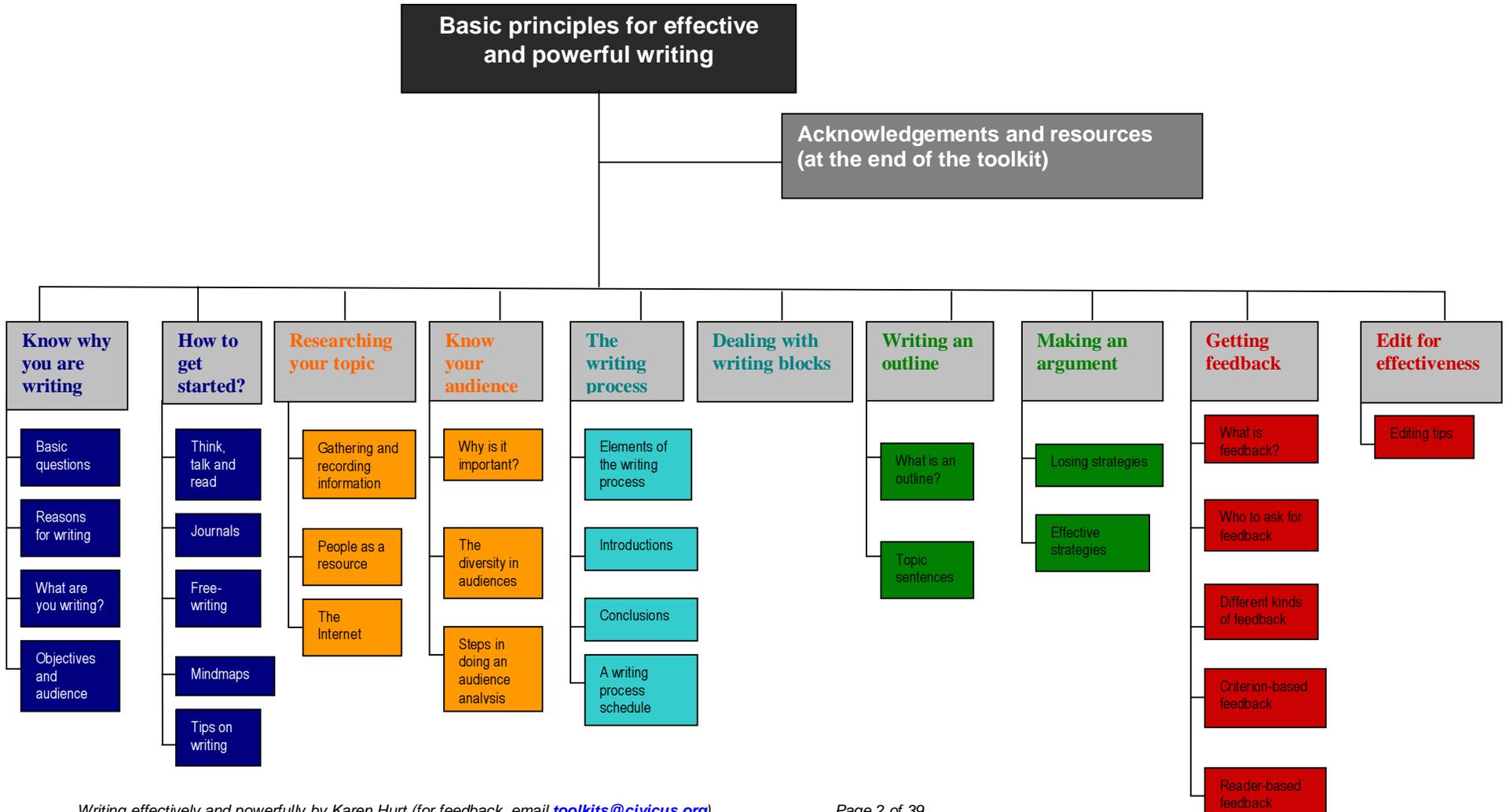## Overview

Welcome to the basics for writing effectively and powerfully. We hope you will pick up many useful tips and tools, as well as affirm the techniques you already use in your writing. We hope in this way that the toolkit will help you to write more effectively for your organisations, and in your personal lives.

Our aim is to help civil society organisations build their capacity and communication skills. We hope in some way this toolkit will help your organisation achieve its goals for greater justice nationally, regionally and globally.

Writing Effectively and Powerfully

Toolkit map: Toolkit for effective and powerful writing

Basic principles for effective and powerful writing

Acknowledgements and resources (at the end of the toolkit)

Know why you are writing
- Basic questions
- Reasons for writing
- What are you writing?
- Objectives and audience

How to get started?
- Think, talk and read
- Journals
- Free-writing
- Mindmaps
- Tips on writing

Researching your topic
- Gathering and recording information
- People as a resource
- The Internet

Know your audience
- Why is it important?
- The diversity in audiences
- Steps in doing an audience analysis

The writing process
- Elements of the writing process
- Introductions
- Conclusions
- A writing process schedule

Dealing with writing blocks

Writing an outline
- What is an outline?
- Topic sentences

Making an argument
- Losing strategies
- Effective strategies

Getting feedback
- What is feedback?
- Who to ask for feedback
- Different kinds of feedback
- Criterion-based feedback
- Reader-based feedback

Edit for effectiveness
- Editing tips

Who will find this toolkit useful?
This site offers valuable tips and tools for both inexperienced and experienced writers. Anyone who is interested in strengthening the effectiveness and power of their writing should find this site useful. Our focus is on writing in and for civil society organisations so that people working for such organisations will hopefully benefit, and their organisational work will be strengthened through using the tools on offer.

A brief description of the toolkit
This site is rich in tips, tools and examples for effective writing.

Its intention is to take you on a writing process journey from originating ideas through writing drafts and finally to editing your document.

On this site you will find:

- **Know why you are writing**
This part invites you to ask some basic questions about your writing task before you start. It encourages you to think about your reasons for writing, and what you are going to produce.

- **How to get started**
People often stare at a blank page or screen for ages before they start writing. There can be a feeling that you have to write it "properly" straightaway. But this is a very sterile way of starting. This section offers tools for getting started that tap into and unlock your creativity and powerful ideas. We look at the value of thinking, talking and reading before writing. And at journal writing, freewriting, and mindmaps. We offer you some thoughts and tips on writing.

- **Researching your topic**
It is important to be well informed about your topic, and to gather information for what you are doing. This section offers you some thoughts on gathering information, using people as a resource, using the Internet, checking facts, and acknowledgements and copyright.

- **Your audience**
The people who will read what you have written (or listen to your presentation or speech) are probably the most important part of your pre-writing thinking. If you do not tune into them your message may miss its mark. We offer you some questions to think about to do with your audience, and then an audience analysis tool to use.

- **The writing process**
We often write something without thinking about all the elements that make up the task. Being aware of the writing process keeps you on track, and goes together with a schedule to follow. We offer you a planning tool. In this section we also look at introductions and conclusions.

- **Dealing with blocks**
It is common to panic and feel unable to write. There are some techniques that can help you overcome these hurdles.

- **Writing an outline**

When you have become clear about what you want to write about, and have organised your thoughts, it is time to write an outline.

- **Making an argument**

A fair amount of our writing in civil society organisations involves writing to change something – attitudes, behaviour, policies or laws. Here we look at tips on making an argument to win it.

- **Getting feedback**

Getting feedback during the early stages of the writing process is something many of us do not think of doing. Yet it can strengthen your piece of writing so vitally. This section looks at criterion-based feedback and reader-based feedback.

- **Editing for effectiveness**

Many of us pass our work onto someone else to edit when we feel we have finished writing it. But editing is something a writer should do for him or herself before handing over to someone else. This way, you have more control over your writing. This section looks at the writer becoming an editor of his or her own work, and at simple techniques for editing to make your work more powerful.

Know why you are writing

Before you start the actual formal writing, it helps to think about and identify why you are writing something, and what you are writing.

Answer some basic questions first

Before you start writing a draft, think and scribble around answering these questions:
- o *Why am I writing this?*
- o *What do I want to achieve?*
- o *Who am I writing for?*
- o *What do I want people to think, feel, know or do after they have read it?*
- o *What would be the best form for it to be written in? An article, pamphlet, poster, etc?*

You can use the freewriting tool included in this toolkit during your thinking time.

Answering these questions will help you to be clearer, more confident and quicker in your writing process.

Reasons for writing

What is your objective with your writing? What do you want to achieve? What do you hope your audience or reader will think, feel, know or do afterwards?

We write for many reasons. It is good to identify a main objective. Sometimes we have additional objectives. But if you have too many, you may weaken your piece of writing by trying to achieve too many things at once. Your audience can end up feeling overloaded and confused if your objective is not clear, or there are too many.

Be able to let go of some secondary objectives – you can tell yourself to hold them for another publication or piece of writing so you can come back to them another time.

So why do people write?

People write, amongst other reasons, to:
- advocate
- agitate
- educate
- entertain
- evoke certain emotions
- debate
- inform
- lobby
- mobilise
- persuade
- plan
- promote particular action
- strategise
- raise awareness
- train
- win an argument

What are you writing?

What have your written in your organisation? You can probably think of many different types of writing. They could include:

- Short pieces of writing, like:
  o applications
  o badges (See our toolkit *Producing your own media*)
  o banners (See our toolkit *Producing your own media*)
  o conditions of service
  o e-mail messages (See our toolkit *Writings within your organisation*)
  o fax messages (See our toolkit *Writings within your organisation*)
  o graffiti (See our toolkit *Producing your own media*)
  o letters (See our toolkit *Writings within your organisation*)
  o lists
  o memos (See our toolkit *Writings within your organisation*)
  o minutes (See our toolkit *Writings within your organisation*)
  o notices
  o opinion pieces
  o pamphlets (See our toolkit *Producing your own media*)
  o posters (See our toolkit *Producing your own media*)
  o presentations (See our toolkit *Producing your own media*)
  o press statements (See our toolkit *Handling the media*)
  o responses
  o stickers (See our toolkit *Producing your own media*)
  o summaries
  o web site information

- Longer pieces of writing, like:
  o appraisals
  o arguments
  o articles
  o booklets
  o case studies
  o evaluations
  o funding proposals (See our toolkit *Writing a funding proposal*)
  o newsletters (See our toolkit *Producing your own media*)
  o planning documents (See our toolkits *Overview of planning*, *Strategic planning*, *Action planning*, and *Monitoring and Evaluation*)
  o policy
  o reports of different kinds (See our toolkit *Writings within your organisation*)
  o reviews
  o speeches (See our toolkit *Promoting your organisation*)
  o stories (See our toolkit *Producing your own media*)
  o strategy documents
  o training materials

What is your objective? And who is your audience?

Your objective, what your writing is finally produced as, and who you are writing for go hand in hand. For example, a slogan from your policy recommendations like *give us back our land!* could fit on a T-shirt that members of the community wear. But your slogan on a T-shirt cannot replace your detailed and considered policy recommendations from indigenous people reclaiming ancestral land. This probably needs to be produced as a policy paper or booklet aimed at government.

How to get started?

Too often we sit down to write and stare at a blank page or computer screen. Or we try to start writing a first draft straightaway. It takes us ages because we try to make it perfect before we have even planned it.

Starting off with some thinking tools encourages and unlocks your creative and original ideas, helps with planning your piece of writing.

Here are some ideas:
- o Think, talk and read about your topic before you even attempt a first draft.
- o Keep a journal for jotting down thoughts.
- o Use freewriting, especially to get you started. It is a thinking tool. You can use it throughout the writing process too.
- o Use mindmaps. A mindmap is a thinking tool. It helps to generate ideas, prioritise and lay the foundation for the rest of your writing process.
- o Read through the thoughts and tips on writing that come later in this toolkit.

Think, talk and read

It helps to focus your thoughts and to speed up the writing process if you allocate time before you start writing to think about it, read on your topic (if necessary, see Researching your topic in latter section of this toolkit), and talk to other people about what you have to write. It is an important part of the writing process because it creates fertile ground for when you come to write your first draft. You will find ideas come faster, stronger, and with more confidence.

Journals

A journal is a book. You could buy one or make one by binding paper together. A good handy size is an A5 because it is easy to carry around.

Like any other skill, the more you write the better you get at it. A journal is a good thing to have on hand because it gives you an on-going place to write. It does not matter what you write about so long as you keep practising writing.

Some people like to keep their journals private. Some people like to share some of their pieces of writing. But the most important thing about a journal is that it is your place for reflecting. So it is important that you use it to express yourself freely.

Journals can be:
- ▪ Completely private reflections, used for freewriting, mindmaps and other kinds of writing.
- ▪ Like scrapbooks where you write your thoughts – personal and political. You can stick in photos, newspaper cuttings, poems, or anything that helps stimulate your writing.
- ▪ Introduced into your organisation as a way of encouraging people to write and reflect regularly on organisational developments.

Freewriting: What is freewriting?

Freewriting is a tool to use at the beginning of your writing process, and at points where you have blocks, or need to think out something. Freewriting is private writing. You write only for yourself.

When you follow the freewriting rules you use the "right side" of your brain. This is the hemisphere that is predominantly spontaneous, that dreams, is creative, and asks the kind of question *what if…?*

It can give you a sense of relief to use a writing and thinking tool that offers space for this.

When you freewrite you throw away the grammar book and dictionary. You concentrate on writing without boundaries. You reap original and powerful thoughts unhindered by editing concerns because you forge the link between thinking and writing.

Freewriting has many uses. Because you write only for yourself, it helps you to build confidence, unlock creativity, get rid of your internal censor and editor, capture your first thoughts, get a flow going, and remove writing blocks. It offers your genius a chance to visit. Surprisingly however, to use freewriting to its best effect, you need to follow some rules!

The freewriting rules

1. *Keep your hand moving.* (Don't pause to reread the line you have just written. That's stalling and trying to get control of what you're saying.)
2. *Don't cross out.* (That is editing as you write. Even if you write something you didn't mean to write, leave it.)
3. *Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar.* (Don't even care about staying within the margins and lines on the page.)
4. *Lose control.*
5. *Don't think. Don't get logical.*
6. *Go for the jugular.* (If something comes up in your writing that is scary or naked, dive right into it. It probably has lots of energy.)

From Natalie Goldberg's book Writing Down the Bones, Page 8. Published by Shambhala, 1986.

How to go about freewriting

You need:
- paper to write on and a good smooth pencil or pen (a journal is even better to do all your freewriting and other thinking in)
- to set yourself a topic for your freewrite
- to set yourself a specific writing time goal, like 20 minutes
- to write without stopping
- to re-write your topic over and over if you go blank – you do this until a new thought comes
- to follow whatever thought comes next, even if you think it is "off" your topic – your brain is making a connection to it
- to be relaxed and embrace the space freewriting gives you to reflect in a private way

An example of a freewrite process

Let's say you are a member of a women's co-operative and you have to write an evaluation of how it did last year.

You could use the topic *last year the women's co-operative did well because ….* And write on that for fifteen minutes (or more).

Then you could turn the topic over and write about *last year the women's co-operative did poorly because ….* And write on that for fifteen minutes.

By the end of this freewriting you probably would have captured a lot of ideas and reflections that can later be reworked into drafts and your final evaluation.

You might then talk with women at the co-operative about some of the thoughts that came up with your freewriting. And you could read previous years' reports. From this time of planting idea seeds and reaping new thoughts and ideas, you could go on to writing a first draft.

More uses of freewriting

The freewriting tool can be used in your organisation to think through all kinds of issues. At the beginning of a meeting you can suggest a five or ten minute freewrite to help people reflect on an organisational problem you have to solve. Because freewriting is private writing you would not ask people to read out what they have written. You could ask people to share the most important thoughts that freewriting prompted for them.

Using freewriting in your organisation

Let us say that your organisation needs to hire a director. You want staff to think about what kind of person you need, and what kind of skills the person should have.

Your freewriting topic for staff at a meeting to discuss the issue could be: *we need a director who is…*(write for ten minutes)
You could follow that up with *our director needs to be skilled at…*(write for ten minutes)
Then, even *but the most important skills are…* (three minutes)

Mindmaps

How do mindmaps help?

Mindmaps are an important way to get started on a writing project. When you do a mindmap, you are promoting radiant and spontaneous thinking. Mindmaps help you generate connections around your topic, so that your writing is fresh, and has depth and originality.

Mindmaps help you to prioritise, organise and structure your writing. After you have drawn a mindmap, your draft writing should come quickly and smoothly. This is because you can use it in a relaxed, creative and fruitful way to generate lots of connections to your topic before attempting to write a first draft.
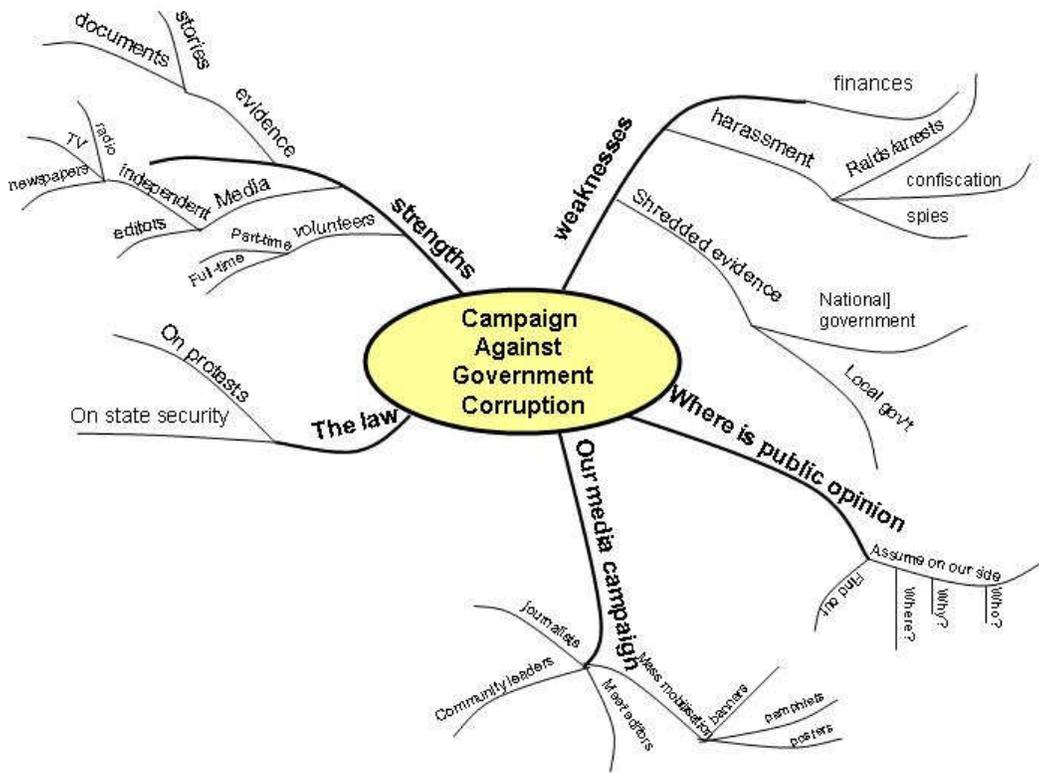
The mindmap technique

The technique is very simple. Start off with putting your topic in the middle of a bubble or egg-shape, and then work from there. Here is an example of starting off.

Campaign against government corruption

And then create as many connections as you can to the topic.

You can use your mindmap in a work-in-progress way. If you do it on a large sheet of paper (you can always join a few smaller bits together) then you can stick it up on the wall of a room and keep adding ideas throughout your writing project.

Along with many other people, Tony and Barry Buzan have published valuable work around mindmaps. You will find their reference in the acknowledgements and resources part of this toolkit. They recommend that you use different colours and draw when you create your mindmap. You can use colour as a way of distinguishing connections, prioritising and ordering your thoughts. The visual is very powerful.

To find out more about mindmapping, you can go onto the Internet, and use a search engine and your key word *mindmaps* to find a vast reservoir of links to further readings.

What is a mindmap? And how do you use it?
A mindmap is a thinking tool. It helps you to come up with wide and rich connections to your topic. The technique is nonjudgemental, so you don't reject or censor ideas that come. This allows your mind to be creative and make both obvious and powerful new and original connections to your topic, and enhances participation and teamwork.

You can do a mindmap on your own or in a group. Both ways are very fruitful and help you complete your writing project more quickly. A group mindmap usually throws up a wider range of connections to your topic.

Remember
Whichever way you work, on your own or in a group, remember:
- Do not judge connections that are made – the purpose is to get all ideas down. An idea that may seem silly or not "politically correct" at first response may have a lot of potential.
- Be relaxed.
- Be encouraging.
- Prompt deeper connections by asking questions.

Asking questions
As a connection to the topic in the middle of your mindmap comes up, ask questions to both expand, radiate from, and deepen the connection. Once your mindmap is completed you can then decide what to prioritise, what to put on hold, and what to trash.

Use the basic journalist questions to grow your mindmap:
- Why?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Which?
- Who?
- How?

Other questions extend from these, like:
- What are the implications of this?
- Where can I get more information?
- What resources do I need to achieve this?
- Who can help?

Come up with your own questions as you go.

Your mindmap will help you to prioritise, organise and structure your ideas and your piece of writing.

So, using the example on setting up a campaign on government corruption, the writer would:
- Decide what needs to be explored in more detail – and maybe put *our media campaign* into a new bubble and work at it in more detail. Very often, one needs to do this for a big piece of writing, or a large project, like a media campaign, strategic planning, or book.
- Prioritise the ideas. Decide what is the most important connection, and which connections, if any, could be put on hold or trashed.
- Start to organise ideas into a structure.
- Write an outline, if you feel ready.
- Write a first draft.

Now you try
Think of something that you need to work on. It could be anything from a report, an article, or letter, to your organisational restructuring. Put your topic into a bubble, and start making the connections. Work from your mindmap, prioritise, organise into a structure, and write a first draft.

How else could you use mindmaps?
Think about the different situations in your organisation where you could suggest using mindmaps. For example:
- when doing strategic planning
- finding solutions to a problem
- planning a campaign
- writing a response to a newspaper article
- recruitment strategy

What else can you think of?

Tips on writing

- Each time you sit down to write is different.
- Remember that sometimes you will probably write better than at other times.
- Don't get stuck in a style – use different styles of writing for different projects.
- You get good at writing by practising.
- Writing every day or often, like in your journal, gives you practice.
- Create an environment around you to help you think freely.
- Try to be in control of your environment when you write.
- Spoil yourself when you write - choose a favourite pen or pencil. Sit in your favourite place.
- Relax into writing. Stress causes all kinds of health problems, like headaches and stomach aches.

- Your thoughts run faster than you write - choose a 'fast' pen.
- If you have one, don't let your computer control you.
- If you 'write' using a computer, it removes a barrier if you can touch type. Looking at computer keys will inhibit your flow of ideas.
- Creative, rough and wild ideas first, grammar later.
- Write first. 'Internal censor' later.
- Write first. Design your document later.
- Talk is the exercise ground for writing, says *Natalie Goldberg*. It is a way we learn about communication - what makes people interested, and what makes them bored. So talk about your topic and ideas around it.
- Try to read a lot --- newspapers, magazines, novels, non-fiction, and research papers. Pick up on writing styles you like, following a particular writer's articles/papers. This helps you to develop your own style.
- Read in the form you write in. Look for writing you find interesting in other articles, reports, research, and speeches, for example.
- If you have a favourite hat or outfit that makes you feel more like a writer, wear it when you write. This is part of expressing your personality when you write.
- Plan your time carefully and set deadlines. If you want other people in your organisation to read your work and give feedback, book their time ahead. This way, they focus properly and you get the maximum benefit.
- If people give you positive feedback on your writing, and they can back up what they say with examples from your work, believe them.
- When you have to write, you have to write. Don't start moving your office around or re-arranging your books and photographs, and doing all your filing, when it is your time to write. You can write with chaos around you by creating your own peaceful oasis in your mind.
- Don't wait for everything to be perfect before you feel 'ready to write.'

Writing and computers
- If you use a typewriter or computer when you write and you cannot touch type (that is, you look at the keys when you type), you are putting an extra obstacle in the way of your thinking. You not only have to get your thoughts *down*, but you also have to think about every letter you use, and constantly look back and forwards to your paper/screen and keyboard.

- Invest in a touch-typing course. You can probably do two hours a day for a month and then, with practice, you are liberated from having to think thought-by-thought and key-by-key. You will become more productive to yourself and your organisation.

- Some computer programmes highlight in red and green underlining what they consider to be your spelling and grammar errors. It can be very distracting – making you aware of being an editor at a time when you need to be a writer. At a time when you need to concentrate on your ideas, not on your grammar. You can switch off that grammar and spelling whilst you are writing. You put it on again for when you need to edit.

- ▪ Choose whether you want to follow the US English, or the UK dictionary. Then be consistent with it. It depends on which computer programme you use as to how to do this. If you are unsure, ask for help.

Researching your topic

When you are writing about a topic you know well you will probably be able to write fairly quickly and easily. But whether you know your topic well or not, it is always important to ask whether you need to do some research to strengthen the quality of your work. Research can be quick and easy to do – and stimulating and fun.

Gathering information

First, develop a plan before you start gathering information. This makes your task quicker and more effective. When you plan you decide what you are doing, why you are doing it, what you need to know, how you will do it, and when you have to do it by.

Then you are ready to start gathering information because you have a clear plan with deadlines to guide you. Even if you do know your subject well, it is always good to ask yourself whether there is something you should read as part of your writing preparation. Do you need to do some research?

There is usually something new on most subjects – especially with the Internet. Up-to-date information strengthens a piece of writing, offering your reader something new, interesting and challenging to think about.

Do your homework by reading and using other ways to deepen your understanding of the context around your topic. First develop a broad understanding, and then later go into depth.

Where can you find information? Well, it depends where you live, what is available, and what technology you have access to. Here is a list just to remind you of the range of places and resources you can use to strengthen and enrich your final piece of writing.

- yourself
- other people
- books
- magazines
- newspapers
- programmes – on radio, television
- resource centres
- libraries
- videos
- organisations
- networks
- the Internet

…amongst others.

Acknowledgement and referencing

As you do your research, make detailed, accurate notes of where you get your information. You may find that you need to acknowledge the source of an idea or information, by referencing it.

Depending on your source, and what kind of publication you are writing for, this could include needing to note:

- author
- title of book, article, policy, etc.
- name of publication, e.g. book, magazine, journal
- name of publisher
- date of publication
- country of publication
- page number
- title of a chapter in an edited book
- web site address, and the date you visited it

Obviously academic work has its own very formal referencing requirements. But popular campaign pamphlets would be off-putting if they were heavily referenced. But if you are writing a policy paper, then referencing is very important.

If you quote someone, you should acknowledge the source of the quote.

If you present someone else's ideas, words, facts or opinions as if they were yours, then you are guilty of plagiarism. It is seen as stealing. You need to acknowledge the source. But if something is common knowledge or general information, then it is not plagiarism. Create a piece of writing that has your original thinking – and refer to and acknowledge when you are drawing on the ideas of others.

When you reference, you are acknowledging the ideas and work of others. And you are letting the reader know where they can find out more, if they want to follow up a reference.

Fact checking
If you give inaccurate information, you will lose credibility. So, do not always take at face value facts that people, or other sources offer. Try and find a way of cross-checking important facts. Do this by finding another source of information, using institutions that store statistical or other information, newspaper libraries, and experts, amongst others. If you find different sources give different facts, then work out a way of reflecting this.

For example, if one source says 5 million adults in a particular country are unemployed and another says 10 million adults are unemployed, you have a problem. Reflect on the reliability (and motives perhaps) of your different sources. They both can't be right. Try and find another source of information. You may end up having to say "there are between 5 and 10 million unemployed adults". Or say that, "The government says there are 5 million unemployed adults. But the trade union movement says the figure is closer to 10 million."

Copyright
When you use information or images directly from another source, like from a book, it is important to see whether that book (or whatever it is) is copyrighted. Most are. If there is a copyright, you can find out from the source who holds the copyright, and get permission to use what it is you want to copy. If there is no copyright, you can use it directly without having to ask. Just acknowledge the source.

People as a resource

People can be invaluable in helping to make what you write lively, interesting and relevant. Sometimes you may not even think it necessary to talk with people about your topic. But be creative. Listen to what others have to say on it. Everyone has their own perspective on things.

Network and grow your contacts. For example, you may be able to draw on people in your community and organisation, experts in the field you are writing about. Find people who have resources or ideas about your topic. Find people who have been through an experience related to your topic. Talk to children and youth affected in some way, or other people who are marginalised. There are lots of possibilities. Have a brainstorm and think creatively about it.

Tips on using people as a resource

- Before you contact anybody, be clear about what you want to find out. This should be written into a brief that includes your objective, your focus, what you are writing, for whom you are writing, where it will be written, and when it will be published.

- Prepare your questions beforehand.

- Know why you are contacting a particular person. Also, know their title, for example chairperson of an organisation.

- Remember whoever you talk to will have a particular perspective and viewpoint on your topic. Depending on what you are writing about and for, you may need to talk to people from different perspectives.

- It is important to cross-check information, and to separate opinion from fact. Even the same facts, like statistics, can be interpreted in different ways, depending on what people want to do with them!

- Ask people if they know of any other contacts for your topic, and about other resources, like people, books, journals, articles, non-governmental – and other institutions or organisations, resource centres, web sites – and any source for more information. Be like a detective!

- Take detailed and accurate notes when people offer you information. This can help when you are introducing yourself to a new contact. And it is a vital way of building up your information on your topic. So, for example, keep accurate notes about who said what on your topic.

- If you want to quote a person in an interview for a story, then tell the person that is what you want to do. This means you have to take accurate notes of exactly what the person said, and use his or her exact words in quotes, or summarise accurately what they said in paraphrasing.

The Internet
The Internet is an electronic source of information and communication, and a very exciting tool for us to use. It works using a computer with a modem and a telephone line to link to the Internet. You can communicate with people via electronic mail (e-mail) and you can use the World Wide Web to connect to Web sites. A Web site address starts with www which comes from the full name World Wide Web. So, for example, Civicus' web site address is www.civicus.org

You can access a phenomenal variety, quantity and quality of information through the Internet. You can find out more about organisations, institutions, companies, and government departments that have put up Web sites on the Internet. There are search engines on the Internet you can use to find sources of information on your topic. The search engine Google is highly recommended because it works extremely well. When you use a search engine, try to narrow down what you ask it to look for. For example, if you want to write a speech about child abuse in schools in a particular country, then use key words to narrow down the search. If you were just to put in the words *child abuse* you would have literally thousands of sources to choose from. Key words could be "child abuse" "schools" or "Australia."

Along with all its value however, has come the danger of being overwhelmed by the volume of options and information you can pursue on the Internet. You can end up spending many more hours than you need to surf the Internet.

Tips on using the Internet
- Go on a short course to help you to understand the Internet world, and how to navigate it.
- Remember you can use the Internet at any time of day or night.
- If money is a constraint for your organisation, try to use the Internet during low rate telecommunication time.
- Be aware that in as much as there are excellent Web sites, there are also ones that are of a poor quality.
- Be clear about what you are looking for – define it.
- Be disciplined in keeping to your objective – it can even help to give yourself a set time for your Internet work.
- Don't get drowned in all the information – keep to your focus and search for what will help you achieve your objective.
- Make an accurate note of which Web sites you use so that you can acknowledge them if you quote directly from them. It also makes it easier to find them again when you need to.
- Add sites that are very useful to you to your "favourites" file, so that you can easily get back to them another time.

Know your audience

A mistake many of us make is to write without analysing who we are writing for. It is almost as if we write in a one-sided way. Writing is two-sided, the writer and the reader, or readers.

Why is it important to know and analyse your audience?

You usually have different readers – audiences – for different pieces of writing. A letter, for example, could be for one reader. A pamphlet mobilising masses of people around anti-war or anti-globalisation protests, on the other hand, would have a vast range of readers. There would be great diversity within the audience. It is important to unpack this diversity so you write effectively and reach your objective in your writing.

Knowing whom you are going to write for is vitally important. It helps you to decide:

- what to keep in
- what to leave out
- what style to write in
- what language to write in
- what tone to write in
- what form to produce your writing in

The diversity in audiences

Think of your community. Jot down a list of what different members of your community have in common and what makes them different.

This helps you to tune into the idea of pitching your writing to reach your objective. If, for example, you are writing a pamphlet that has as its objective to raise awareness around rape you may need to write differently for teenagers and older people. You may also need to write differently for girls and boys, women and men.

Diversity could include:

- age
- class
- disability
- gender
- race
- ethnicity
- education
- attitudes
- beliefs and values
- culture
- traditions
- language
- power of different kinds
- ideology
- faith
- where people live
- knowledge about your subject

Steps in doing an audience analysis

Here are some basic steps leading up to using an audience analysis tool.

Step One: Distinguish between your various audiences

Make a list of which categories of people, including individuals, are part of your audience.

For example, you could be writing a pamphlet to mobilise a poor community around boycotting a local shop that adds far too much of a mark-up onto its items. Your audience list might include:

- members of the community
- shop owners
- shoppers
- leadership – religious, schools, organisations, local government
- youth

Step Two: Prioritise within your audience

Ask yourself which of all the categories and individuals you are mainly writing for. You need to be firm when you do this. From the boycott example above, you might decide that shoppers are your main (your primary) audience for this pamphlet.

Then you can decide who your secondary audience is, and who your tertiary (third most important) audience is.

Step Three: Picture your audience

Once you have chosen your primary audience, it is useful to look at it again. In the example we are using, *who* are the shoppers? Is it mainly women, for example? Keep asking questions about your primary audience until you feel you have created a picture of them in your mind, including questions around diversity. Then do this for your secondary and tertiary audience. All of this lays the basis for Step Four.

Step Four: Use the audience analysis matrix

Next is an audience analysis matrix for you to fill in about your audience. It helps you to think through your audience very carefully. You put yourself in your audience's shoes, and understand them better. The better you understand your audience, the more effective your piece of writing. Remember to keep your objective in mind all the way along.

We have drawn this matrix very small. We suggest you make yourself a copy of it on a large piece of paper and work through it when you do yours for your piece of writing.

Audience	What does my audience know about my topic? What do they not know?	What do I know about my topic that they do not know? What research do I need to do, if any?	What are my audience's attitudes, values and beliefs about my topic	What does my audience expect and need from my piece of writing?
Primary				
Secondary				
Tertiary				

This audience analysis matrix is adapted from Louise Dunlap's work, in turn from Linda Flower's "Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing"

An example of an audience analysis
The local Catholic priest has asked me to come and talk to the parents of his congregation about HIV/AIDS one evening. The church is in one of the poorer sections of Umlazi, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The example addresses this request.

Audience	Audience knowledge level What do they know about my topic? What do they not know?	Your knowledge level What do I know that they don't? What research do I need to do?	Audience's attitudes, values, beliefs around my topic?	My audience's needs and expectations What are they going to expect from me?
Primary Parents Working class Poor black people KwaZulu-Natal	**They know** ▪ They have been to a funeral of someone who they suspect died of HIV/AIDS, and that many young people are very sick and dying. ▪ Of children who could well be orphaned soon. ▪ They know it's spreading fast, and mainly through sex. ▪ Have some myths. ▪ That the president caused some controversy with his views on the link between HIV/AIDS. **They don't know** ▪ Or understand what the substance of the controversy was about. ▪ About antiviral drugs. Some may have heard of AZT. ▪ About government AIDS policy. ▪ Where to go for help.	**I know** ▪ How HIV spreads, statistics, prevention. ▪ About latest research on HIV/AIDS, e.g. pregnancy, breastfeeding, etc. ▪ Know about anti retroviral drugs. ▪ About debates around government policy. ▪ Am familiar with education campaigns. ▪ The NGO and government HIV/AIDS support organisations. **Need to research:** ▪ More information about my audience and their needs. ▪ HIV prevalence in this area & how it is being taken up. ▪ What support facilities there are for people in Umlazi, specifically around home-based care and AIDS orphans. ▪ Experiences from other countries around HIV/AIDS orphans.	▪ People die from AIDS. ▪ Catholic church does not condone condom use. ▪ Although married, fidelity may not be the norm. ▪ Patriarchal attitudes and behaviour from men. ▪ Some denial, especially from men. ▪ Some may be disgusted at people who are HIV+, and want them isolated. ▪ May want to blame a particular grouping for the disease. ▪ Some in audience who are HIV+ may fear disclosing their status.	▪ Want to know about latest statistics, medicines and possibility of cure. ▪ HIV and pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding. ▪ How to prevent transmission. ▪ How to best protect and educate their children. ▪ What can rape survivors do? ▪ How to plan for HIV AIDS orphans. ▪ What the future holds.
Secondary Teachers in the congregation The priest	**They know** ▪ A lot about what teenagers are thinking about HIV/AIDS. ▪ Students who are HIV+. ▪ About HIV/AIDS for curriculum. **They don't know** ▪ Much about the controversy, government policy or support organisations.	As above. **Need to research:** ▪ What's in school curricula. ▪ Student's attitudes towards HIV/AIDS are. ▪ Find out more about outcomes based education in schools.	▪ Believe children engaged in sexual activity should protect themselves. ▪ Important to integrate HIV/AIDS education in curriculum. ▪ Concern about their students and their families. ▪ Believe everything possible should be done to develop drugs and a vaccine.	▪ Want advice on the best teaching methods around HIV/AIDS. ▪ How to handle HIV positive students – counselling skills, etc. ▪ Information about legislation, and government policy. ▪ Ideas on HIV/AIDS awareness activities.
Tertiary Health workers, e.g. nurses	**They know** ▪ Medical details and protocol around nursing HIV+ people and people with AIDS. ▪ How serious the disease is. ▪ They might not know latest studies, policy debates, etc.	As above. **Need to research** ▪ Home-based care and its implications. ▪ Successful behaviour change campaigns in other countries, e.g. Uganda	▪ Believe we must do what we can to prevent its spread. ▪ Need to promote home-based care & peer counselling.	▪ May want to offer own inputs from their experiences. ▪ May want to find out how effective HIV/AIDS campaigns have been. ▪ What lessons can we learn from other countries?

By the time you have thought about and analysed your audience, you should feel a lot more certain about what to include in your writing. You should also be clear about the kind of language, style and tone to use. Your writing will be more effective.

Language, style and tone

The kind of language, writing style, and tone you use when you write will be guided by your objective, your audience, what you are writing, and where your piece of writing will go.

You would adopt a different style, for example in a:
- memo
- progress report
- mass media news story
- opinion piece
- poem
- song
- pamphlet

But you do not have to stick to traditional ways of writing, so long as your style is appropriate and will help you to achieve your objective.

One of the best ways to reflect on different writing styles is to specifically gather and read different kinds of writings and the range of styles that people have chosen to write in. Reflect on what you think works well and what doesn't.

Being sensitive to your audience is of vital importance. There is no point in writing in an abstract, academic way for a popular readership. You will bore, and probably even alienate them.

What is language, writing style and tone?
As you begin to write, and then again when you edit your work, remind yourself of your audience and your objective. Make sure that your language, writing style and tone suit your audience. You can do this by testing it out first.

"By *language* we mean the words and sentences you use in your material, e.g. uncomplicated sentences, familiar words or unfamiliar words which are explained, etc. We would include jargon here.

By *style* we mean your approach, e.g. the use of humour, being conversational, using stories, examples, etc.

By *tone* we mean how your material 'sounds' to the reader, e.g. is it too simplistic? or patronising? talking comrade to comrade? etc."

Adapted from Barbara Hutton's "A manual for writers of learning materials."

Different styles of writing
Two writers may write about the same event in completely different styles. One might describe poverty using lots of statistics and government and economists' comments. Another may describe poverty by writing about a day in the life of a very poor family.

Use an interesting and appropriate style
Your job as a writer is to keep your reader interested. Think about what style will do this, whilst at the same time meeting your objective.

Just because you are writing a report, it does not mean that you have to use a dusty, formal style that prompts more yawning than interest. You can write a report in a modern, engaging style, using interesting examples, quotes, and illustrations.

Very often the most powerful and effective development writers are those that write in a simple, evocative way, using stories about people and their lives to make their point. They do not tell their readers what to think. They do not state the obvious. They leave it up to the reader to draw their own conclusions. This reflects a respect for the reader.

The writing process

The writing process
To reap the benefit of your creativity and help you plan, we offer this method of a writing process.

1 Get started using tools like thinking, talking and reading, freewriting, and mindmaps. Basically, brainstorming. Stay loose and relaxed. You can use these tools throughout the rest of your writing process.

2 Work out why you are writing and what are you writing. Keep loose and relaxed.

3 Do an audience analysis. This helps you prioritise what you want to write about, your content.

4 Start to plan your writing from your mindmap. Organise your thoughts into an outline. Include what further work you need to do, for example, research. Include a writing process schedule. And a rough introductory statement.

5 Start writing your first draft. Let it flow. Don't edit. Concentrate on getting your ideas down. Complete your first draft and then take a break from it. Let it breathe. Let your mind work on it unconsciously for a bit.

6 Go back to your first draft. Revise it. Look back at your audience analysis. Remind yourself of your objective. Has it stayed the same? Will you achieve it if you follow the route you are going?

7 Rework your drafts into stronger drafts. Cut out what you do not need. Add in what's missing. Work at it until you feel ready for feedback. Scan for correcting grammar and spelling. Do necessary changes.

8 Get feedback on your writing. Strengthen your writing through revising into new drafts. Write the introduction and conclusion. Read it aloud to yourself, and or others. Write your final draft before editing.

9 Edit your writing. This means standing away from it and changing hats from writer to editor. This is a different mode. Put yourself in your readers' shoes. Make it powerful and easy to read by using editing techniques. Check your language, style and tone.

10 The final polish. Make sure your writing is proofread, looks good and is easy to read.

12 If necessary, follow on with design and layout; another proofreading and checking, and distribution.

Introductions and conclusions
Remember from the writing process that you should write your *final* introduction and conclusion near the end of your writing process. This is because your piece of writing may take a new shape and orientation, as your ideas change and grow. Of course you would have written an introduction along the way. But revisit it at the end.

Introductions
Check the rough introduction you wrote earlier. Your piece of writing may have changed in some way so your introduction no longer mirrors what your reader can expect to find. For most organisational writing, introductions should:
▪ be short and to the point
▪ tell the reader what to expect in the piece of writing
▪ stimulate and interest the reader to read further
▪ use a technique, like a question, quote, statistic, anecdote or story to attract the reader. A human interest angle always works well.

Conclusions
Many of us were trained at school to use a conclusion to repeat what we have said in the piece of writing. Sometimes this works. But sometimes it is boring for the reader. Feel free to use your concluding section, amongst others, to:
▪ challenge
▪ look at the way forward
▪ make recommendations

A writing process schedule
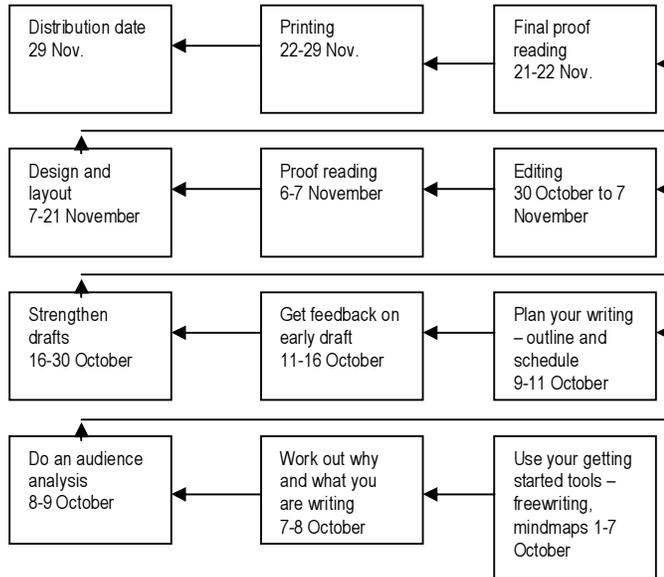A schedule helps you to keep disciplined as a writer.
You can aim for short-term goals in the bigger drive to complete your writing project.

We suggest you use a backward planning technique.
It works like this:
1. Establish the distribution date for your writing project. That is, the day on which it goes out to the reader or readers.
2. Using the elements of the writing process in this section of the toolkit, plan what you need to do when by working backwards from that distribution date.
3. Here is a very simple example where you start working out from your distribution date how much time you need for each aspect of the writing process:

Distribution date 29 Nov.	← Printing 22-29 Nov.	← Final proof reading 21-22 Nov.
Design and layout 7-21 November	← Proof reading 6-7 November	← Editing 30 October to 7 November
Strengthen drafts 16-30 October	← Get feedback on early draft 11-16 October	← Plan your writing – outline and schedule 9-11 October
Do an audience analysis 8-9 October	← Work out why and what you are writing 7-8 October	← Use your getting started tools – freewriting, mindmaps 1-7 October

1 October: date need to start project

Dealing with writing blocks

Many people complain about having times when they feel blocked and could not write. This has probably happened to you too. Sometimes you may not be in the mood for writing but you have a deadline to meet. Other times you may be frustrated and that blocks you. Blocks can also be caused when you do not feel clear enough about what you are writing. Here are some ideas for dealing with them:

- Make writing your friend. Create positive associations with it. (*from Natalie Goldberg, "Writing Down the Bones"*)

- "Blocked writers suffer from too many ideas more often than from too few." (*from Peter Elbow, "Writing with Power"*)

- Writing in a language that is not your mother tongue can cause frustration. Try to work out a way whereby in the thinking-writing part of the process you can use languages interchangeably.

- Your work environment can work against you if it is highly disruptive. It is hard (if not impossible) to get your concentration and flow going if you allow yourself to be interrupted. Block off time to concentrate on particular writing work, you may be able to shift the culture of your organisation towards allowing people to work in a more productive environment.

- If you are constantly interrupted your writing will take much longer. This may begin to depress you and make you feel as if you can't write.

- Plan your work.

- Set yourself mini-targets. This can make a writing project much more manageable.

- Set yourself targets in advance of the official deadline. Don't leave it to the last minute when *real* panic sets in, and you have no time to improve your work. This can make you feel bad because you didn't get to present your best possible piece.

- Plan backwards from your deadline and have a proper schedule, including all the steps in the writing process.

- Ask someone who works in a similar field if you can meet to discuss your writing task. You could even have a wild draft to show her or him. Talking helps to crack a block, as new thoughts surface.

- Promise yourself treats when you've completed certain parts of the work. A treat could be a 15-minute walk, a cup of tea with a biscuit, a short telephone call (work or friend).

- Read on the topic – magazines, the Internet, books.

- Go for a walk and talk to yourself.

- Don't wallow in self-pity: know you have the job to do, set aside the time, and discipline yourself to begin. Set targets, for example by 10h30 I will have covered X aspect of the paper/report/article/minutes I am writing. When I have finished I am allowed a treat of some kind!

- Don't allow yourself to start on other little tasks to avoid your writing - you'll only get more depressed as your deadline looms. Then you probably get all guilty, stressed out and your mind finds many other small distractions.

- The more often you put your writing aside, the harder it is to come back to it.

- Do freewriting. It gets you started. It should give you confidence and help unblock.

- If your internal editor is saying you are boring, and this is causing a block, try to ignore it. *Natalie Goldberg* says: hear 'you are boring' as distant laundry flapping in the breeze. Eventually it will dry up and someone miles away will fold it and take it in. Meanwhile you will continue to write.

- If your mind won't give up on thoughts and worries that keep interrupting your effort to get down to work, then freewrite about them. This is a way of 'giving them a voice' and then expelling them from this distraction. --- *Louise Dunlap*

- Don't wait for the perfect time to write --- you may never feel that time has arrived!

- Be disciplined.

- Take deep inhaling yoga breaths – in through your nose and out through your mouth.

- Do exercises to get your brain alert again. Yoga exercises are good for this.

Writing an outline

You could think of an outline being like a map of how you organise and structure your piece of writing.

We do not advise you to start your writing process with trying to write an outline. You can only really do this if you know from the outset exactly what is going into your piece of writing, which is unusual.

Freewriting, mindmaps and talking, are the best way to start. These thinking tools help you to get far with your thinking and warm you up before you write your first draft.

What is an outline?
An outline is like a skeleton for your final piece. It could include ideas for:
- your topic sentence (or some other way) to indicate what your main message, point, argument, or idea is
- your introduction, which will include the topic sentence
- relevant sub-headings organised in a logical order
- main points and information (under each sub-heading) needed in each paragraph to back up your main argument
- conclusion

Topic sentences
A topic sentence is the sentence that expresses the main idea or message that you are promoting. That main idea or message is the *topic*. The sentence is what you phrase it in. Hence topic sentence.

Your introduction should contain a topic sentence. In this case you could regard it as an opening topic sentence. Each paragraph should also have a topic sentence.

Topic sentences:
- help guide your reader logically through your piece of writing
- help your reader understand clearly what you are saying
- help the busy reader who needs to skim read. Which is why it usually works best if your topic sentences are at the beginnings of paragraphs.

Making an argument

Much of the work we do in civil society organisations involves making an argument. We want to convince people of the importance of our struggles for justice and development. These could be from the right to piped water in a village to the right to protest the ill effects of globalisation at an international rally. We write because we want something to change for the better.

But the people we want to convince do not necessarily agree with us. They often have different values, beliefs, attitudes, perspectives and established opinions. How can you get them to see things from your side?

Losing strategies
If you use the following strategies you will not win people willingly onto your side:
- Hit them over the head with your argument.
- Make people feel they are wrong and you are right.
- Make them feel guilty, defensive, or anxious.

Effective strategies
These reader-orientated strategies can help you to shift people's opinion in favour of your argument:
- Respect the other person's point of view so you do not set each other up as the opposition.
- Put yourself in their shoes and try to see things through their eyes. This will help you to understand them.
- Consider the attitudes and perspectives your reader already holds.
- Listen to their side of the argument and their point of view. Show that you can appreciate their perceptions and feelings. Then offer your perspective.
- Offer correct factual information.
- Do an audience analysis to help you work out how to do all the above.
- Be honest.

Getting feedback

What is feedback?
We have to try and distance ourselves from our piece of writing when we ask for feedback. This is because we are asking people what our writing made them think and feel. We do not want them to say "it is nice" or something vague and plain like that. It does not help us to strengthen our writing. It does not help us to know whether the writing has achieved its objective.

Feedback helps us re-think and strengthen our piece of writing. This is why it is best to ask for feedback when you have written an early draft. If you ask for feedback when you consider your piece of writing complete, it can set you back time-wise, especially if you are on a deadline. The purpose of feedback is to use it to revise what you have written.

Writing teacher, *Peter Elbow* has done a great deal of work around asking for and understanding for feedback. If you want to go more into depth around this side of the writing process, try to read his book we refer to in the resources section of this toolkit. We have used his work in this section on feedback.

Who to ask for feedback?
It is useful to ask a range of people for feedback. But you will know what you are after, so you will know what works best for any particular piece of writing. You can ask:
- colleagues
- members of your organisation
- members of your audience, especially the primary audience
- experts on your topic
- friends, comrades

Different kinds of feedback
When you have an early draft that is ready for feedback, you can ask for the feedback in two main ways. The one has to do more with whether the writing met certain criteria. The other has more to do with what your piece of writing made the reader feel. *Peter Elbow* calls the first kind of feedback criterion-based feedback and the second reader-based feedback.

We offer you some questions that you can think of using for both kinds of feedback. You will think of your own as you develop a feedback tool further.

Criterion-based feedback guide
Here are some questions you could ask to get feedback. But do remember to think of your own requirements when you devise your own guide and add your own questions:

When you read my piece of writing (call it by its name, for example, pamphlet) were there:
1. Any parts that you had to re-read? If yes, please identify them for me and tell me why you had to re-read them.
2. Any parts that you did not understand easily?
3. Any places that didn't seem to flow logically? If yes, please identify them for me.
4. Any words that needed to be explained more? If yes, please underline them for me.
5. Did you pick up any mistakes in my content? If yes, please show me where.

6. Is my writing concrete? Are there any parts that seem too abstract? If yes, please show me where.
7. Is the language, style and tone appropriate for my primary audience?
8. Have I given enough examples to illustrate my points? If no, where do you think I need more? Please show me.
9. Are my sentences generally too long or just right? If they are too long please show me where.
10. Did my piece of writing keep you interested? If there are parts where your interest faded, please show me where.
11. My objective is to……………. (say what your objective is). Do you think this piece of writing has achieved it?

If you are making an argument in your piece of writing, you could also ask:
- Is it clear what I am arguing for? If yes, what do you think it is? Please tell me.
- Have I backed up my different argument points enough? If you think not, please tell me where I need more back up.
- Do you feel convinced by my argument? If not, what more do you need to be convinced?

Reader-based feedback
"Reader-based feedback gives you the main thing you need to improve your writing: the experience of what it felt like for readers as they were reading your words. In the long run you get more out of taking a ride inside your reader's skin than you get from a precise diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of your writing." – Peter Elbow, *Writing with Power*

Here are some questions to ask to get useful reader-based feedback. The question about the reader's suggestions for your piece must come at the end as it helps deal with any defensiveness you may feel as the writer.
1. What main message did you get from my piece of writing?
2. What words and phrases stood out for you?
3. What thoughts came to your mind as you read through this piece of writing?
4. What feelings did the writing bring up for you? Are any of them connected to values and beliefs that you have?
5. What ideas do you have for strengthening my piece of writing? For example, around gaps, examples, research, or facts.

Feedback is vital to strengthening your piece of writing. Take a deep breath and ask for it! But people need guidance in the kind of feedback you want. It is your job to guide them. The criterion-based and reader-based feedback methods should help you. Good luck!

Edit for effectiveness

A time comes when your draft is ready to be edited. Most of us get ready to hand it over to someone else to check and edit. Do you? Yes? Yet with a few techniques in hand you can edit your own work and strengthen it enormously before handing it over. This gives you more control over your writing, and more satisfaction.

It is a matter of changing hats. Take off your writer's hat. Put on your editor's hat. There is a global move towards writing in a simple (but not simplistic) way. Simple is very powerful. The tips we offer you for when you do a final check and edit are in this new tradition.

Editing tips
Here are some tips to use when you edit to make your writing effective and powerful.

- Use everyday language so you reach more people. Read your piece of writing and highlight words not all your readers may understand. Find everyday words to replace academic words.

> For example, instead of *in relation to* write *about*.
> The election observers were worried *in relation to* cheating.
> The election observers were worried *about* cheating.

- Jargonistic, academic, abstract language and styles can push your reader away. We can even be guilty of making our readers feel inadequate, stupid.

- If your reader needs to know particular jargon then explain it using clear, everyday words and examples.

> Jargon could include words and phrases like *mass-based umbrella body*, *mass democratic movement*, *globalisation*, and *means of production*. These are abstract words and can turn a reader off. What image, for example, might a reader get in his or her mind when he or she reads "mass-based umbrella body"? Most people need jargon explained. Put yourself in your reader's shoes. Use examples to help people understand.

- Explain difficult concepts.

- Use short, uncomplicated sentences. One sentence for one idea.

- Check that you have an appropriate language, style and tone.

- Write simply, not simplistically.

- Use examples, stories and voices of people that your reader will identify with.

- Try not to mix up your tenses in a sentence because it can be confusing to the reader.

- Try to use the first (I, we, us) and second person (you) but not the third person (one).

For example, not *"One can get frustrated if…"*
Rather, *"You can get frustrated if…"*

- o Positive, not negative sentences.
  For example, the negative is: *The committee cannot discipline a member unless it has given him or her a chance to be represented.*
  The positive is: *The committee can discipline a member after it has given him or her a chance to be represented.*

- So long as it makes sense, put the main point to the beginning of the sentence. This is called a topic sentence. And also put the main point at the top of a paragraph.

- Try to have one topic in each paragraph.

- Use the active voice.
  For example: *The decision to form a gender committee was taken by the shopstewards. (passive)*
  Shopstewards decided to form a gender committee. (active)

- Avoid sexist and offensive language.
  For example: *chairman --- chairperson*
  manning the jumble sale stand – running the jumble sale stand

  Instead of *"he is lame as a duck" – "he has a walking disability"*

- Avoid foreign words and phrases. For example, *vis-à-vis – about/to do with*

- Avoid over-used expressions.
  For example: *the bottom line is…*
  At this conjuncture…
  A stitch in time saves nine…

- Avoid old-fashioned words.
  For example *do you know his whereabouts?* Rather *do you know where he is?*

- Cut overlapping words.
  For example: *I've told you time and time again.*
  Rather: *I've told you repeatedly.*

- Use single verbs, instead of several words
  For example: *take into consideration – consider*
  Make a decision - decide

- Use single adverbs, not longer phrases
  For example: *in close proximity – near*

- Use simple connecting words
  For example: *nevertheless – but*
  provided that – if
  on the grounds that – because

- Design and layout. Some guidelines:
    - Use a friendly typeface (serif for main text, e.g. Times New Roman; sans serif for headings, e.g. Arial). The serif typeface has little feet on the bottom of the letters and this helps the eye to travel from letter to letter, word to word.
    - Avoid THE USE OF CAPITAL LETTERS EXCEPT FOR PROPER NOUNS. Capital letters are harder to read and "shout".
    - *Use italics as little as possible, it is harder to read.*
    - Use underlining as little as possible because it can dazzle
    - **Use bold as little as possible because it is also rather dazzling**
    - Keep the size of the lettering comfortable to read.
    - Use lots of headings and subheadings.
    - Use uncomplicated numbering.
    - Allow for uncluttered space, have wide margins, let the text breathe.
    - Use boxes to highlight something.
    - Use photos, graphics, cartoons.

- Write the name of an organisation out in full the first time you use it, and the acronym after. For example, International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Proofreading

Okay, so you have the most fantastic piece of writing, well-edited and ready to roll. But have you done a final check that there are no mistakes. Have you proofread?

Even the most wonderful piece of writing loses value if it has mistakes. People *do* notice.

It is best to get someone else to proofread your piece of writing. The objective eye will pick up small mistakes that you as the writer will miss because you are so immersed in your piece of writing.

Tips for the proofreader

- Do the proofreading right at the end – after all changes have been made.
- If you are publishing it, proofread after the design and layout person has made final amendments. Mistakes, both narrative and design, can slip in, and you need to detect them.
- Proofread the text, headings, subheadings and captions separately, so you do a good job when you focus on them.
- Make a check-list of the different parts of the piece that need proofreading, and work through them systematically.
- Never take anything for granted. Mistakes have a habit of sneaking in, and in the most mysterious ways!
- Read the piece aloud. You will be amazed how you pick up mistakes.
- Use a ruler to read each word and line at a time, otherwise you may be tempted to skim the writing. If you skim, you will let mistakes through.
- Be relaxed and wide awake when you proofread.
- Do not make any content changes. That is not your job – although of course you can make suggestions to the writer if you want to.

Acknowledgements and resources

In writing this toolkit we made use of these valuable resources, and recommend them to you.

A manual for writers of learning materials written by Barbara Hutton. Published by Buchu Books

Accidental Genius – revolutionize your thinking through private writing written by Mark Levy. Published by Berret Koehler (2000)

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