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# Introduction

## How to Use the Writing Workbook

E-commerce has changed the way you hear from your customers. Increasingly, customers e-mail their questions and complaints and expect (quick!) e-mail responses. That means that writing is now an even more important skill for customer service agents. But your writing skills may be rusty. It's probably been a long time since your last English class. Or this may be the first time you've been required to write on the job. The **Writing Workbook** is designed to help you polish your writing skills and to give you guidance and practice in writing good customer service e-mails.

### What Is the **Writing Workbook**?

For customer service agents, this **Workbook** is an ideal way to address different needs and writing skill levels. You can proceed at your own pace. Take the **Pre-Test** in **Chapter 2** to identify your strengths and weaknesses, then spend your time on those areas in which you need the most help.

If the word "grammar" takes you back to unpleasant memories of eighth grade English, don't despair. This **Workbook** is short on rules and long on practice. Do the e-mails in the **Practices** look like ones you answer every day? We hope so! All of the examples and **Practices** are adapted from actual customer service e-mails. (We've changed the names of companies, customers, and customer service agents. We've substituted fake URLs, phone numbers, and other contact information.)

You may be looking at this **Workbook** because your supervisor has advised you to strengthen your writing skills. Or perhaps your company is using the **Pre-Test** or **Competency Test** (a supplement to the **Workbook**) to assess your writing skills. You may be completing the **Workbook** to qualify for a new job. Whatever the reason, you'll find the **Workbook** an efficient way to refresh the writing skills you need as a customer service agent.

## For Customer Service Agents— How to Use the *Writing Workbook*

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Use the *Workbook* to review **basic writing skills**. If you lack confidence in your writing skills, you may want to read all the guidance and do all the practices in the *Workbook*.

Use the *Workbook* to focus on **particular writing problems**. Perhaps your grammar skills are strong, but you've never really understood how to use a comma correctly. You should go straight to **Chapter 6—Punctuate Correctly** and read the guidance and complete the comma-use practices in that chapter.

### What's in the *Writing Workbook*?

We take the word *Workbook* seriously. That means this *Workbook* is **meant to be worked in**. The *Workbook* is full of **practices**. We've provided room for you to write and lots of white space where you can scribble notes. Neatness doesn't count. Building strong writing skills does!

### Writing Skills Review and Practice

**Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6, and Chapter 7** focus on specific writing skills. Each chapter contains guidance, examples, and practice. Many of the chapters also contain lists, checklists, and other writing tools.

### Skills Tests and a Summary Chapter

**Chapter 2—Pre-Test: Assess Your Writing Skills** will help you identify your writing strengths and the areas in which you need help.

**Chapter 8—Put It All Together** gives you the opportunity to practice the writing skills you've learned by writing or editing complete messages.

Your manager may use the **Competency Test** to assess whether you've mastered the skills in the *Workbook* or to certify you for a job as a customer service agent.

### Writing Resources

We're often asked for suggestions on writing resources, so we've listed our favorite print and online writing resources to answer your grammar, style, and usage questions. We've also listed some resources that will give you additional writing practice.

## How Long Will It Take You to Complete This *Workbook*?

How long it takes to complete the *Workbook* depends on how much of the *Workbook* you do. No chapter should take more than XX minutes. All told, you should be able to complete the entire *Workbook* in XX hours. You say you don't have 15 uninterrupted hours to complete this *Workbook*? Don't worry. The *Workbook* is structured so that you can do it in short chunks—while commuting to work (assuming you're not driving!), during your lunch break, or during your kid's soccer practice. Just pick up a pencil and work on your chosen chapter whenever you have time.

You may want to organize a group of friends or colleagues and do the *Workbook* together. Working in a group is fun, and you're more apt to do the practices if you know your "group" is meeting.

## For Managers—How to Use the *Writing Workbook*

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This *Workbook* came about because we began hearing from companies about the difficulty of finding customer service agents with the writing skills needed to answer customers' e-mail. Some companies who shifted telephone agents to e-mail found that the agents' writing skills didn't match their product knowledge and phone skills. Other companies found that the agents they'd hired to write e-mail had rusty writing skills or were not experienced in business writing. Regardless of the situation, the *Writing Workbook* offers the solution for getting customer service agents up to speed in the essential skills they'll need to write e-mail.

You'll find this *Workbook* equally useful to

- Train agents who have the product knowledge but lack the writing skills to compose effective customer service e-mails.
- Help agents with writing skills improve their English grammar and usage.
- Assess writing skills. Managers can use the **Pre-Test** to assess writing skills and the **Competency Test** (a supplement to the *Workbook*) to certify agents in essential writing skills.

This *Workbook* is a flexible training tool that can suit almost any training situation:

- **For self-paced instruction.** Agents can complete the entire *Workbook* as a self-paced writing course. Or agents can take the Pre-Test in Chapter 2 to identify the skills they need to improve, and then complete only the relevant chapters and practices. Agents can use the *Workbook* during work hours or at home.

- **As the basis for instructor-led training.** E-mail E-WRITE at [info@ewriteonline.com](mailto:info@ewriteonline.com) or call 877-481-1869 for information about our customized training programs for customer service agents.
- **For a group of agents working together to improve writing skills.** Groups provide peer support in completing the *Workbook*.

This *Workbook* is a perfect solution to the logistical problem managers face: freeing all of their agents to attend a course on the same day (and leaving no one to respond to customers!).