

# Writing Persuasively

Just what IS “persuasive writing” and how does it differ from any other kind of writing? If you ever have to use the written word to convince someone of something, then you will need to know how to write persuasively.

There are three techniques you can use to achieve the results you want.

1. You make it easy for the person to give you what you want if you point out the **Benefits** of your approach.
2. Writing in the **Active Voice** makes your writing more personal.
3. Writing shorter sentences and shorter words makes your writing more **Readable**.

# Features and Their Associated Benefits

A **feature** is a characteristic of your product or service.

*A telecommuting strategy will cut down on employees' driving time to work.*

A **benefit** is what your product or service does for the customer.

*A telecommuting strategy will cut down on employees' driving time to work, freeing that time for work-related projects.*

Whenever you state a feature, you should include a bottom-line benefit for your customer.

**Name the possible benefits that could be associated with these features.** (Click below each sentence to see an answer.)

Consistent training will be delivered to all field offices, resulting in homogeneous practices.

With uniform methods in place, communication between offices improves and productivity is increased.

Acme Corporation adheres to industry accepted standards.

Customers are assured of investing in proven technology.

## **Here are two more examples for you to try:**

Local piloting allows members of the development team to go on-site at short notice.

This leads to increased productivity through improved communication, faster issue resolution, and process improvements.

The software will enable Acme Corporation to track NSF (insufficient funds) checks.

By improving the identification and tracking of these checks, Acme can reduce the significant NSF costs it absorbs.

# Active vs. Passive

Choosing between the active or passive voice is a matter of style, not correctness. Most handbooks, however, recommend using active voice, which they describe as more **natural**, **direct**, **lively**, and **succinct**. (These are important characteristics in persuasive writing.) What's the difference? The active voice states *what the subject will do*. The passive voice states *what will be done* by the subject.

Try the following exercises to see which voice has a greater impact. (Click below each sentence to see an answer.)

Regular upgrades will be supplied.

We will supply regular upgrades.

These exclusion rules can be defined by the Agency.

The Agency can define these exclusion rules.

Menus can be customized to omit specific forms and functions as required by the Agency.

In addition, the Agency can customize the menus to omit specific forms and functions.

# Writing for Readability

We sometimes think that we need to impress our readers with our extensive vocabulary and knowledge of arcane grammar rules. The opposite is true for persuasive writing. We want to make the proposal **easy to read** and **easy to understand**. Use shorter sentences, shorter paragraphs, and shorter words. Get rid of *incumbent upon*, *in the event that*, and *remuneration*. Replace them with *must*, *if*, and *pay*. Your document will be shorter and easier to read.

See if you can make the following sentences more “readable.”  
(Click below each sentence to see an answer.)

The teaching medium utilizes a satellite broadcast of instructors familiar with the requirements of Acme's needs and desires, as well as their specific situations.

The satellite broadcast uses instructors familiar with Acme's specific needs.

The model is designed as a multi-component assembly whose effectiveness is limited solely by the manufacturing system.

The model is a multi-component assembly limited only by the manufacturing system.

It is requested that the revision be given implementation upon your receipt of the enclosures.

When you get these, please make the revisions.

# Writing Persuasively

Writing to persuade can be very different from *writing to instruct* or *writing to entertain*. Using just three techniques will make your writing **easier to read and understand**. When your readers understand you and grasp the benefits, you have a much greater chance of getting them to give you exactly what you want. Whether you need money for your product or services, grant money for a project, or a job, you have a greater chance of success if you use these techniques