



# Manitoba 4-H Council Inc.

## Communication Tips

### The Write Way

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To exist in our society, you must communicate. You communicate every day to get and give information, to seek and give help, and to control and direct others. You communicate to function effectively. Most of the time you communicate face-to-face by talking, which is the oral form of verbal communication, and by gesturing, which is non-verbal communication. Communicating is a part of your life and you do it daily, constantly and almost without thought.

Often you must communicate when you can't be face-to-face or use the phone. Then, you must resort to writing. Most of this writing is in the form of school work, letters, and business such as reports, project proposals, agendas and meeting minutes.

Unlike spoken words, which you can reinforce in so many ways, written words must do the job by themselves. Used effectively, however, the written word can be a powerful tool. It has advantages that the spoken word lacks because it's precise, is less likely to be misunderstood if used correctly, and it's permanent so its effectiveness extends over time.

There are four general good writing habits that make up the core of all effective writing. These good habits will help you write to the point of eliminating useless words and sharpening the useful ones.

### **Be active**

You can write in the passive voice or the active voice. The passive voice is weak and impersonal. The active voice is strong, direct and clear. The active voice also uses fewer words than the passive voice. However, if diplomacy or tact is required, the passive voice is suggested:  
Passive: Our report was published in The Banner  
Active: The Banner published our report

### **Be brief**

Make every word count. Avoid unnecessary words. By being wordy, you bury your message. Take out words that give the reader neither the detail or information. However, in your effort to be brief, never leave out necessary facts.

### **Be clear**

Use every day words. They'll carry your message forcefully. Avoid unfamiliar words, jargon, and foreign words unless you're sure your reader will understand them.



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#### Be positive and specific

Use positive words. The positive form is usually shorter and more direct. Look for sentences with the word “not” in them. Rewrite your work to take it out. For example, use “forgot” instead of “did not remember” or “late” instead of “not on time.” Avoid vague words that don’t contain information for your reader.

Vague: Some project books remain in stock. Specific: Twenty project books remain in stock.

Writing to the point doesn’t require rare talent and extraordinary skills. Writing to communicate, not miscommunicate, is a function that involves a little thought and some common sense. Consider what you want to communicate, think of and involve the reader as you write, and develop these four good writing habits.