

# On the Job **WRITING**



## BASIC EDITION

### Lesson 5

*In this lesson, you will discover how to:*

- Focus on the reader
- Replacing the personal pronouns “I,” “me,” “our” and others with “you” pronouns

## WRITE WITH A “YOU” VIEWPOINT

Chandra, a respiratory therapist, recently simplified the directions for locating oxygen masks and tanks, as directed by her department manager at St. Luke’s Hospital. Several new therapists have been employed and are currently being introduced to the hospital through a two-week training program. The director will use Chandra’s instructions during training for the new therapists.

In the directions Chandra (1) provided directions to the disposable masks storage unit, (2) identified where the oxygen tanks are located and (3) listed the names of individuals who can help with mask problems.

She started the memo by saying, *“I have prepared directions and other information about the hospital’s oxygen masks and storage tanks. I will direct you to the equipment’s location. Please ask questions if I can help.”*

In rereading what she has written, Chandra is embarrassed that the memo uses the word “I” so much. After revising several times, she has developed what she thinks is a better beginning, one that focuses on the new respiratory therapists.

*“Thank you for joining the respiratory therapy staff of St. Luke’s Hospital. Your expertise will help save lives. Attached is a set of instructions, policies and procedures developed for your use. Welcome to our unit. Please ask questions if we may assist you.”*



## DEFINE IT! Focus

To focus is to place special and careful attention on a specific person, place, thing or event.

## FOCUS ON THE READER

When writing with a “you” attitude, the emphasis is on the reader, “you,” not on the writer, “me.” The goal is to make the reader the most important part of the message.

A “you” attitude is fairly uncomplicated to achieve. At its simplest level, it means substituting the word “you” when you are inclined to write “I” and then following up with information centered on the reader.

Be cautious, however, not to overuse the word “you.” Doing so can be viewed as manipulative and insincere.

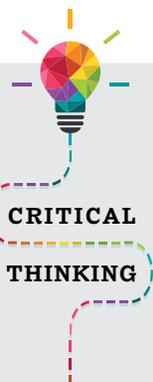
Other personal pronouns such as “I,” “we,” “me,” “our” and “us” can cause problems also, because they focus on you or your company.

While using personal pronouns that point to yourself can play an important role in some messages, they should be used sparingly. Striking the right balance between “You” and “I” is important.

### DID YOU KNOW



One of the most serious problems in workplace writing is not grammatical spelling mistakes, not poor proofreading and not spelling, but writing that ignores the reader. Writers often forget they are writing to real people.



**Remember an email, text and other message you have written recently. Did it focus more on the reader or on you? If you were rewriting the message now, how could you change it to be less self-centered?**

The following guidelines can ensure that your messages center on the reader’s needs and not your own.

1. Use “you” instead of “I” when possible, but don’t overdo it. You can check yourself by making certain that “you” and “your” words outnumber “I,” “we” and “my” words by at least 4 to 1.

Look at how the second example in each set below focuses on the reader.

I have enclosed an invoice for you.

*Your invoice is enclosed.*

I am happy to email a copy of our new vacation policy.

*Your copy of our new vacation policy is attached.*

Our company is pleased to announce the opening of our new store at a gala on March 9.

*You are invited to attend the gala opening of our new store on March 9.*

I ordered the software you asked me to buy.

I’ll have it for you in a week.

*The software you requested will arrive in a week.*

2. Begin messages with words other than “I” or “we.”  
*Item 78230 from the summer catalog will be delivered to your door on Wednesday, May 7.*
3. Avoid **negative** “you” words and phrases, such as *you neglected to* or *you failed to*.



## GET SERIOUS ABOUT REDUCING “I”

Cameron Saleski, a human resources assistant at Gray’s Sports Equipment Manufacturing, received several job applications for a position in the children’s equipment division. The application form required a short paragraph describing the applicant’s skills and qualifications. Here are two application cover letters she received.

### APPLICANT 1 - JASON

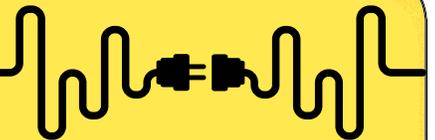
I am looking for a job to save money for a car. I know I would enjoy working in your company because I like your sports equipment. Another reason I would like to work for your company is that it would help me toward my career goal in marketing. I can come for an interview next week. The following week I’m going on a trip with my friends so next week would be better.

### APPLICANT 2 - DEIDRE

The position you advertised requires skills I have developed in school and in part-time jobs. Working as a camp counselor for two summers provided me with experience communicating with both children and their parents. I learned a great deal about the sports children like to play and the parents’ thoughts on sports equipment. Gray’s Sports Equipment Manufacturing is an outstanding firm that offers many opportunities. May I come for an interview?

Cameron chose Deidre for an interview because Jason’s paragraph is all about him and does not show how he can benefit the company. Even though Deidre used “I” and “me” in her paragraph, she used them appropriately to show how she can benefit Gray’s Sports Equipment Manufacturing.

## TECHNOLOGY CONNECTION



You can use the Search feature of Word to examine documents for overuse of personal pronouns like “I”, “we”, “me” and “us.” While replacing each of these automatically with a “you,” “your” or “they” would not be acceptable, the search feature is a fast way to find “I” words that you can replace with words you choose.

## LESSON 5 ACTIVITY



**Analyze and rewrite the following message to focus on the reader. Use what you have learned in this lesson and previous lessons to create a strong business document.**

Last week I brought three out-of-clients to your restaurant. My dinner was excellent and my clients said they enjoyed their meals also. I congratulate your chef on the creative use of spices and sauces. I will be sure to give business from my company to your restaurant again.