Allison Horak, Instructor

Writing that Works:
Helping HR Pros Communicate with Clarity and Credibility

CPS HR CONSULTING

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Why this matters

Writing is one of HR's most-used tools.

But we're often juggling legal accuracy, clarity, tone, and human connection—
and that's a lot!

A well-written message …

| saves time | → | reduces confusion | → | builds trust |

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What we'll cover today

3 — 3 principles of clear, credible writing

Before-and-after examples
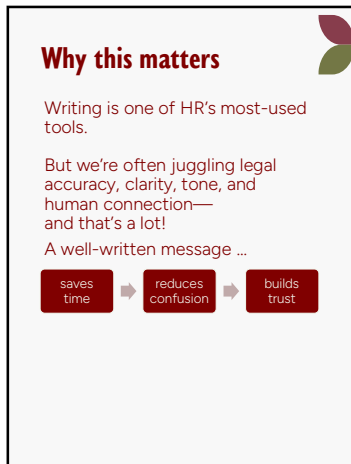
A few quick wins you can use right away

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Principle #1 – Write for the Reader, Not the Writer

Think: *What does my reader need to know or do?*

Cut the fluff. Get to the point.

Before

We are reaching out to inform you that in accordance with our annual performance appraisal timeline, the next cycle will commence... } 21

After

Our next performance review cycle starts October 1. Here's what you need to know.

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Now you try…

How would you rephrase this to be clearer and more reader-friendly?

This memo is to inform staff of the updated employee leave policy effective immediately.

Sample rewrites:

Our updated employee leave policy takes effect today.

We've updated the employee leave policy. Here's what's new, starting now.

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Principle #2 – Say It Simply and Specifically

Avoid vague, bloated language.

Don't say "make an adjustment to" when you can say "change."

Specific is always better than general.

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Example

Before:

It has come to our attention that employees have not been consistently adhering to the timekeeping protocol.

After:

We've noticed missed time entries. Please submit hours daily to stay compliant.

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Tip — Use Shorter Words and Sentences

Instead of "commence," write "start"

Instead of "utilize," write "use"

Instead of "terminate employment," write "let go" (unless legal context requires otherwise)

Allow no more than **25** words per sentence—and vary your sentence length for interest

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Principle #3 — Sound Human, Not Robotic

Even professional messages can be people-centered.

Check your tone: friendly or formal?

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Tone Example—Vacation Request Denial

Before:
Your vacation request has been denied due to operational demands.

After:
Thanks for your vacation request. Unfortunately, we're short-staffed that week and can't approve it this time.

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Make It Sound Like a Human Wrote It

Use contractions: "You're eligible," not "You are eligible"

Write "we" and "you" often

Use everyday phrasing:

Let's walk through the steps. **>** *Below is a procedural outline.*

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Common Pitfalls in HR Writing

Passive voice

Too much jargon

Abstract or overly formal phrases

Which of these do you see the most in your org?

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Jargon Translation:
HR Speak vs. Plain Language

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Jargon Translation:
HR Speak vs. Plain Language

HR Jargon	Plain Language
At this juncture	
In the event that	
Engage in outreach efforts	
On a go-forward basis	
Employee resource allocation	

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Jargon Translation:
HR Speak vs. Plain Language

HR Jargon	Plain Language
At this juncture	Now
In the event that	
Engage in outreach efforts	
On a go-forward basis	
Employee resource allocation	

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Jargon Translation:
HR Speak vs. Plain Language

HR Jargon	Plain Language
At this juncture	Now
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Jargon Translation:
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HR Jargon	Plain Language
At this juncture	Now
In the event that	If
Engage in outreach efforts	Reach out
On a go-forward basis	
Employee resource allocation	

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Jargon Translation:
HR Speak vs. Plain Language

HR Jargon	Plain Language
At this juncture	Now
In the event that	If
Engage in outreach efforts	Reach out
On a go-forward basis	From now on
Employee resource allocation	

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Jargon Translation:
HR Speak vs. Plain Language

HR Jargon	Plain Language
At this juncture	Now
In the event that	If
Engage in outreach efforts	Reach out
On a go-forward basis	From now on
Employee resource allocation	Staffing

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3 Things
You Can Do Today

1. Put the bottom line first—Don't bury the important stuff.

2. Use formatting to help readers scan—bullets, bold, short paragraphs

3. Read it aloud before sending—catch tone and clarity issues.

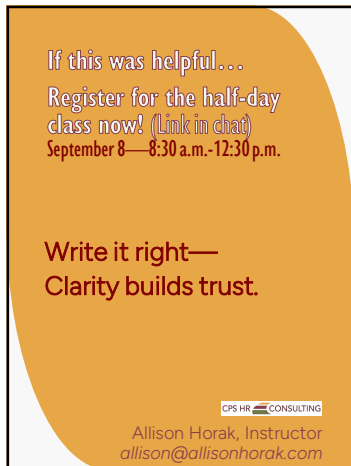Review

A))
Read Aloud

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Your writing is a trust tool

HR writing is about more than just accuracy—it's a reflection of your credibility and care.

Small changes go a long way.

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Application

What's **one change** you'll try in your next email or policy?

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If this was helpful…

Register for the half-day class now! (Link in chat)
September 8—8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Write it right—
Clarity builds trust.

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Allison Horak, Instructor
allison@allisonhorak.com

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