

“Andrew does an excellent job in tailoring his workshop to the needs and habits of those of us who write or edit for impact.”

– Katharina Nachbar,
Global Public Policy
Institute



Writing for change • Workshops by Andrew Johnston

I train people in international organizations to write more powerfully.

My in-house writing and editing

workshops are aimed at everyone who writes for a wider public. They include hands-on writing and editing practice. I adapt each workshop to the needs of your organization and your staff.

Core workshops cover a wide range of writing situations, from reports and policy briefs to press releases and blogs. Participants learn to:

- identify audiences, goals and contexts
- structure texts logically and convincingly
- build clear, concise paragraphs and sentences
- select the best words; identify words to omit
- avoid, explain or replace jargon

Advanced workshops include longer practical exercises and focus on:

- designing documents for different readers
- finding angles and building narratives
- humanizing your language
- using critical thinking
- writing prose that flows.

I also offer workshops or modules on:

- using data to tell a story
- making powerful presentations.

I can tailor workshops for teams: policy, research, communications, donor relations.

“Out of all the courses I have done, Andrew’s has had the highest impact on my career as a policy-oriented researcher.”

– Alice Obrecht,
Overseas Development Institute

All workshops

use individual, paired and group activities and exercises, interspersed with mini-lectures, videos, and group analysis of sample texts.

Each participant receives a 40-page workbook. A Prezi presentation supports key points. We sketch key ideas on a flip chart.

One-day workshop fee:

EUR 325 per person
(minimum 8 people)

ANDREW JOHNSTON HAS TRAINED, EDITED AND CONSULTED FOR MORE THAN 100 INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES IN 13 COUNTRIES. A FORMER JOURNALIST FOR THE INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, HE IS BASED IN PARIS.

Typical core workshop outline

9:00–9:15	Introductions, expectations and objectives.
9:15–10:00	Goals, audiences, contexts.
10:00–10:45	Planning and structuring. Making an outline. Key messages. Models that work. Introductions. Logical sequence. Paragraphs and transitions; sub-headings; lists; conclusions.
10:45–11:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:00–11:45	Writing style Strong sentences; writing with verbs; active vs. passive; positive vs. negative; avoiding alphabet soup.
11:45–12:30	Using the best words Using the simplest, most specific language; omitting unnecessary words; avoiding repetition. Activity: Editing for clarity.
12:30–13:30	<i>LUNCH</i>
13:30–15:00	Writing for the world: I Avoiding jargon and buzzwords. Metaphors and framing. The politics of clear language.
15:00–15:15	<i>Coffee break</i>
15:15–16:45	Writing for the world: II Press releases, news and opinion articles, blogs, web pages (depending on participants' needs). Revising and reworking.
16:45–17:00	Recap and evaluation.

Making powerful presentations (workshop or modules)

Brainstorming: Sticky notes and mind maps: getting away from the screen.

Refining your message: Identifying your audience, formulating your message, writing text, critique and revision.

Storytelling: Clear structure and narrative shape (conflict to resolution).

Exercise: Ordering the elements of a presentation

Telling a visual story

Visual thinking and storyboarding: Arranging text, pictures and diagrams.

Graphic design: Choosing type, colours, images and background.

Motion design: Defining purpose, speed, direction, fluidity.

Exercise: Critiquing some presentations

Slides you can get in 3 seconds: Limiting text, coordinate visual elements.

Turning a document into a presentation: From document to “slideument/teleprompter text” to powerful presentation

Exercise: Transform a short text and images into a presentation.

Conveying data clearly: Contrast, flow, hierarchy, unity, proximity.

Turning words into diagrams

Abstract concepts: flow, structure, cluster, radiate.

Pictorial concepts: process, direction, location, influence.

Displaying data: comparisons, trends, distributions.

Exercise: From paragraphs to pictures

Presenting and delivering

Using data to tell a story (workshop or modules)

Identifying your goals, your audiences and readers' needs

Who are you writing for? What do they want?

Using critical thinking to break down your topic: How to ask the questions that turn research findings into recommendations.

Identifying and highlighting key messages

Designing a structure that uses data to build a compelling narrative

Why documents need a coherent shape and how to settle on one

Using signposting to cater for different audiences: From decision-makers and donors to technical experts, the media and the public

Writing compelling headlines and sub-headings

Put the message first, justify it with the data Lead with the theme, follow up with the data – paragraph by paragraph, section by section

Designing charts, graphs and figures that tell the story powerfully

Choosing the right type of figure, keeping it clear and logical

Making tables that are effective and easy to read

Data visualization: Information is Beautiful

A look at the pros and cons of the latest data visualization trends

Writing powerful executive summaries

Telling a story that grabs the reader with clear, convincing language

Revising and reworking

The three waves of revision: structure, language and detail

What participants say

Helen Swain, World Trade Organization: “I would whole-heartedly recommend that professionals whose work involves writing and/or editing for international organizations consider taking part in this workshop. The skills studied are extremely relevant.”

Alexandre Munafò, Interpeace: “Andrew’s workshop allowed me to change the way I write at work. Through concrete examples and with humour and tact, Andrew helped us get away from ‘traps’ in which we fall when we use jargon, buzzwords or unnecessary words. Thanks to the well-structured outline of the course and Andrew’s rich experience in working for international organizations, we have received practical tools to improve our writing and editing skills immediately.”

Susanna Pak, International Trade Centre: “Andrew’s course covers the essentials of journalism – such as writing in the active voice and reducing jargon – while keeping in mind the requirements of writing for an international audience. The most helpful part is that he not only shares tips and examples of clear and effective writing and editing, but you have the opportunity to practise what you learned on the spot.”

Rachel Quick, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: “Working in international organizations, we all fall into the (bad) habit of using technical jargon and clichés. In this workshop, Andrew gives you an opportunity to take a fresh look at your writing, encouraging you to break bad habits and convey messages simply and concisely.”

Paulette Jones, World Food Programme: “Andrew Johnston’s writing and editing workshop demystifies the art of writing. Andrew takes you carefully through the rubrics of good writing, providing plenty of practical exercises along the way. His course helps you identify your writing style and explains how to refine it in simple, yet effective language. For anyone interested in the crafting narratives and communicating in a compelling and convincing way, I highly recommend this course.”