

A WRITING SURVIVAL KIT

BUSINESS ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS



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acco

Business English Writing Skills

A Writing Survival Kit

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Introduction

So far, not a single book has been published grouping the various written genres that businesspeople need in their jobs on a daily basis. This book tries to fill this niche.

It is aimed at university and graduate school students with a B2-C1 level, eager to improve their business English writing skills. It is essentially a survival kit. The various units have been selected on the basis of information from interns who have done placements in company settings and have been asked by their supervisors to produce the kinds of genres appearing in the book.

The book can be used in class, as self-study, as well as by professionals already on the job market who need quick reference and tips on how to produce a particular genre used on a daily basis in the business world.

The user will first be shown a model that will be analysed and commented on. He or she will then be invited to imitate it, in the form of an assignment. Model answers have been provided on the website. The indefinite article in the phrase ‘a model’ is important. ‘The model’ does not really exist at all. There may be several excellent job application letter templates available on the Internet that vary widely in style, register, format, etc. The model presented for each genre in this book is but one among many. But experience has taught us that they work. It should also be said that there are no hard and fast rules as far as written production is concerned. There are certain grammar points that are either right or wrong. There are other stylistic and organisational principles that are just that. Principles, no more, no less. That makes writing so challenging, its openness.

Don’t forget the cliché, *practice makes perfect*. It is only through writing, and writing a lot, i.e. exposing oneself to the medium, that one will make progress. Also, there is a semi-automatic transfer from reading skills to writing skills, just as there is one from listening skills to speaking skills. The more you read authentic English, the better you will write; the more you listen, the better you will speak.

1.

Writing a Speech Introducing a Person

Imagine you are a PR attaché working for an international company. You have invited Duco Sickinghe to address an audience at your company premises this evening. Your boss has asked you to prepare a short speech introducing the former Telenet CEO. How do you go about writing this speech?



You will find a model that can be followed in the box below.

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming. It gives me great pleasure to introduce our guest speaker for this evening, Duco Sickinghe, the former CEO of Telenet, who is going to address us on the subject of managing a media empire – a topic he knows a great deal about.

Mr Sickinghe studied Law at Utrecht University and got an MBA from Columbia University. He began his highly successful career at such renowned companies as HP, NeXT Computer, Software Direct and Kluwer Publishing. In 2001, he became a partner at Callahan Associates, a Telenet stakeholder. In the same year, he took up the post of CEO of Telenet, which increased its customer base to one million. Eleven years later, he was elected Manager of the Year 2011. Mr Sickinghe resigned from his post at Telenet in 2013 and set up a consultancy company called Fortino. Later that year, he became a consultant at CVC Capital Partners, the post which he currently occupies.

Mr Sickinghe is an expert in media consultancy, and a particular interest of his is the highly topical issue of telecom providers taking over TV stations. He has been directly involved in the delicate discussions that take place at ministerial level over takeovers of this kind, and his talk will concentrate on his role in resolving the allegation of dominating the Belgian media landscape after Telenet's takeover of *Vier TV* and *Vijf TV*.

May I take the opportunity of thanking you, Mr Sickinghe, for giving up your valuable time to be here with us this evening and for agreeing to give us the benefit of your long experience.

I understand Mr Sickinghe is going to speak for about one hour, and will leave about half an hour for questions and comments. So, would you please welcome tonight's speaker, Mr Duco Sickinghe.

Tasks:

1. Give the **organization** of this speech:

Para 1 _____

Para 2 _____

Para 3 _____

Para 4 _____

Para 5 _____

2. Underline or highlight all parts of this text that indicate that the speaker is **worth listening to**.

3. Look for three **synonymous constructions** for “*It gives me great pleasure to...*”:
- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
4. Look for **three synonymous constructions** for “*..., a topic he knows a great deal about*”:
- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
5. Using the phrases from exercises 3 and 4, now try to improve the following sentence, by preceding it and following it with phrases that make the speaker more worth listening to:

“This is Mr Jan Peter Balkenende, who is going to talk to us about the role of morality in domestic and international politics.”

6. Underline all **verbs and verb forms** in paragraphs 2 and 3 and then group them into four categories according to verb tense:

	Name of tense	Example	Use
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

7. In the speech above, where exactly is the guest speaker's first name used?
-

8. Think carefully about how you are going to avoid creating list-like and boring sentences, all starting with "In 1982, ...". What are the alternatives?

Assignment:

Write a speech introducing Mr Jan Peter Balkenende. Use the information provided (add articles where necessary because the notes have been written in telegram style).

Name: Jan Peter Balkenende

Topic: The role of morality in domestic and international politics

Career details: 1982: started career /Amstelveen county council
1992: got PhD in Law and became university professor
(Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)
1998: elected to the Tweede Kamer
2002: Prime Minister Balkenende I
2003: Prime Minister Balkenende II
2006: Prime Minister Balkenende III
2007: Prime Minister Balkenende IV
2010: university professor in Governance, Institutions and
Internationalization (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam)

Expertise: Expert on "Christian social thought on society and economics"
The role of Holland in the 2003 invasion of Iraq



So far, not a single book has been published grouping the various written genres that businesspeople need in their jobs on a daily basis. Students of business English writing skills are often provided with a rather unsystematic compilation of information from heterogeneous sources. The result has been unsatisfactory, both for lecturers and learners. This book tries to fill that niche. The units have been selected on the basis of real feedback from students doing placements in companies. Genuine information from student error analysis has been added. The book can be used in class, as self-study, but also as quick reference for businesspeople, when they have to produce a particular genre and wonder, “How is this done again?” For each unit, a sample is shown and analyzed; the user is then asked to emulate the model in the form of a number of applications and exercises. Sample answers are provided on the website.

The level aimed at is B2-C1.

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spent two years teaching Dutch to asylum seekers in Brussels prior to working overseas for four years – first as an English teacher in Gabon and then as an English lecturer in China. He is currently working at the *Institut des Langues Vivantes* (ILV) of UCL (*Université catholique de Louvain*), in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, where he has three on-going projects: *English through Film*, an e-learning writing platform for business students and a development programme in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He has published on online writing assessment in the journal *CALL*.

