

Tips for formal business writing

Things is a vague word. Try to be more specific.

Use *one* or *he, they, it* (3rd person)
instead of *I* (1st person) or *you* (2nd person) for formal reports.

Signposts such as minor headings, bold type, or words such as *first, second, third* help your reader understand a long report. Consider using bullets or short paragraphs to take advantage of white space: Big blobs of gray type look uninviting and may not be read.

cannot / can't

While contractions are perfect for many casual messages such as e-mail, avoid contractions in formal business writing, such as long reports and proposals.

Business Vocabulary

accept / except

accept = *to receive*

Please accept my apology.

except = *to exclude; other than; if it were not for*

The admission fee is \$10, but children are excepted.

It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried. (Winston Churchill)

affect / effect

affect = *to influence or to touch the emotions* (verb)

The weather will affect our picnic plans.

effect = *a result* (noun); *to produce or to cause* (verb)

Hate and force cannot be in just a part of the world without having an effect on the rest of it.
(Eleanor Roosevelt)

The committee vote will effect true change in the company.

cite / sight / site

cite = *to mention*

We always cite our sources when we write reports.

sight = *to see or a view*

Have you ever seen a more beautiful sight?

site = *a location*

The construction crew visited the site for the new administration building.

envelop / envelope

envelop = *to cover completely or to surround*

The smoke will envelop the room quickly if a fire starts in the kitchen.

envelope = *a folded paper container for a letter; a covering*

We need to order more envelopes before we begin our new mail campaign.

incite / insight

incite = *to urge to action*

His speech almost incited a riot in London last week.

insight = *an understanding of the true nature of something; an instance of understanding*

A moment's insight is sometimes worth a life's experience. (Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.)

loose / lose

loose = *relaxed, free, not exact*

I had enough loose change in my pocket to purchase the ticket.

lose = *to fail to find, win, keep*

Please do not lose the keys to the conference room.

moral / morale

moral = *refers to ethical conduct; also the lesson of a story*

It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.

(Mark Twain)

morale = *refers to a mood or spirit*

Morale was low after the layoffs.

sale / sell

sale = *act of selling; market; transfer of property for a price; to be sold (for sale)*

Who will oversee the sale of our old office furniture?

sell = *to exchange goods, services, etc., for money; to deceive*

The superior man understands what is right; the inferior man understands what will sell.

(Confucius)

stationary / stationery

stationary = *not moving*

The chairs were stationary, so we could not rearrange the seating in the room.

Stationery = *writing paper and envelopes*

We printed green and yellow company logos on our stationery.

their / there / they're

their = *possessive form of they*

They will deliver their papers at the conference in San Diego next month.

there = *refers to location or signals that the subject will follow the verb*

Our office was there for 32 years.

There were several reasons for our hiring a new advertising agency.

they're = *contraction of they are*

They're ready to give the presentation this afternoon.

Some quotes from <http://www.brainyquote.com/>