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/