

Dear Students in Professor Nelson's Auditing class:

As you know by now and as Professor Nelson has made clear, writing has gained a new and most important role in the field of accounting. Writing skills are essential to the work of the present-day accountant and auditor, and so the CPA exam folks have instituted a writing portion that they review very carefully. Hence, given that we are invested in your success, we must begin to think about how to make sure you are ready!

The criteria for evaluating your writing in this course mirror those of the CPA exam. Keeping those criteria in mind, we can begin by indentifying some common writing weaknesses to be on the lookout for:

1. Clarity and sentence-level problems: sometimes ideas are not stated clearly because of problems with the construction of the sentence, usually syntax (word order in a sentence) but even run-ons and fragments.
2. Style and language: Sometimes language is unclear for a variety of reasons, word choice and tone or style among them. For the purposes of wiring in Accounting, you will find that the style that is called for is less conversational and more concerned with precise meaning and a certain level of formality.
3. Some students have ESL issues to work on; these are fairly predictable areas such as articles, verb tenses, etc. They are generally considered major errors, and so I encourage those of you who have such issues to begin work on them in earnest right away and to set aside substantial amounts of time for them.
4. Focus and development: This is usually a question of balance in the document and fall into a number of categories:
  - More space needs to be allocated to writing about the essentials of the case and your document lacks detail (poor development)
  - Not enough attention has been paid to the essentials of the case and too much to discussing loosely-related details (poor focus).

One other general comment: If you are not already expert at editing your own work, it is a skill worth developing. We all write under pressure and make many natural mistakes; editing and proofreading save the day. I am working with the Reading and Writing Center on developing and offering such a workshop for you in the near future, but you should also pursue this area in your grammar work.

In the files posted in this area of your course you will find many resources to help you on your way to CPA-worthy writing! Please make the most of these tools and do not forget to seek additional help from the Writing and Reading Centers on all campuses!

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

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