

Daily Correspondence Expectations

Ecology Managers and Employees

All Program Managers:

- Will establish a correspondence review process for their program.
- Are accountable for the quality and timeliness of their program's correspondence.

All Employees will:

- Use the six writing rules in their letters, memos, and e-mail messages.
- Use their program's review process before sending any correspondence.

Six Writing Rules

1. Answer the question that's been asked.

After you write your response, read the incoming letter again to make sure you answered the question(s).

2. Use clear language.

- Write in the active voice.
- Use words the reader knows.
- Avoid in-house jargon and acronyms.
- Take out unnecessary words.

3. Summarize the background information.

Don't include every date and decision when you describe a problem or long-standing issue. A summary is better, unless you need documentation for legal reasons.

4. Organize your message.

- Present information in a logical order.
- Decide where to put the most important information.
- Put details in an attachment or use a hyperlink to give the reader more information.

5. Use a professional, yet empathetic tone.

When you need to deliver bad news, comment on a sore subject, or clear up a misunderstanding, be firm, but polite and empathetic. Do not answer, point-by-point, every criticism the writer has leveled at you, the project, or the agency.

6. Write short sentences.

Aim for a maximum of 17 to 20 words in a sentence.

How To Set Up Your Page

All agency letters and memos should appear in a consistent style:

- One inch margins on the left and right
- Right margin not justified
- Single space
- Font: 12 pt. Times New Roman or 11 pt. Arial

Follow the Washington State Correspondence Guidelines at <http://sww.wa.gov/correspondence/wastate/> and the Gregg's Reference Manual – Tenth Edition.

Need help? Contact your Section Secretary or a Plain Talk Team Member.