

A refreshing resource
to help you develop
better business writing

[COPY CAFÉ]

Resource Library: Guide

How to write a writing brief (for yourself or anyone else)



Photo by Florian Klauer on Unsplash

How to write a writing brief

With any writing requirement, it pays to set out expectations in advance

A good brief is the bedrock of any good piece of business writing. It provides the essential direction, structure and base information needed for a writer to craft effective copy.

If you skimp on this essential upfront communication, the resulting work will suffer. It's as simple as that.

Importantly, the briefing requirement applies for every writing project and in every situation – whether you're tackling the writing yourself or bringing in someone else to do that for you.

A half-decent brief gives the writer a healthy head start

If you're handling the writing yourself and you're already familiar with the business and the particular writing requirement, the chances are that you already have most of the brief in your head. But you can still benefit from jotting down your objectives and any key points to cover. It's a good discipline to get into the habit of and it will also give you something tangible to check your work against.

If you're briefing someone else, the act of creating a writing brief will help, just for starters, to get that information out of your head and into theirs. It will also provide a whole host of other valuable information that they'll actually need to be able to complete the job to your satisfaction.

Find out more
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The briefing process helps clarify everyone's expectations

A writing brief doesn't have to be overly formal or complicated. Depending on the writing task in hand and the writer's familiarity with the business, it could be as little as a sentence or two to set the scene and outline the primary objective, plus a handful of bullet points listing the messages to convey.

For any new writing project, for larger writing tasks or for occasions when you're working with a writer for the first time, a more extensive brief will be required.

It should explain the motivation for producing the piece of communication in the first place, detail any perceived challenges and mandatory content, clarify the call to action and also provide the framework for the entire structure and flow.

In short, it should give the writer everything they need to get started – *before* they actually get started.

So what makes for a good brief?

A good brief is the roadmap for your writing, showing you the general way, giving you specific directions where required and offering helpful signposting throughout.

It will typically provide more background information than will actually appear within the resulting copy, but that's all part of the process of understanding both the actual requirement and the ultimate objective of the work.

When creating a writing brief for yourself or anyone else, you need to be absolutely clear about three key requirements: what you want, how you want it and when you want it.

The nature of the rest of the brief may then depend on the type and extent of the task. Typically, however, you would want to be considering and providing detail for each of the sections on the following page.

Discover the 15 key points to include in your brief >>>

15 key points to cover in your writing brief

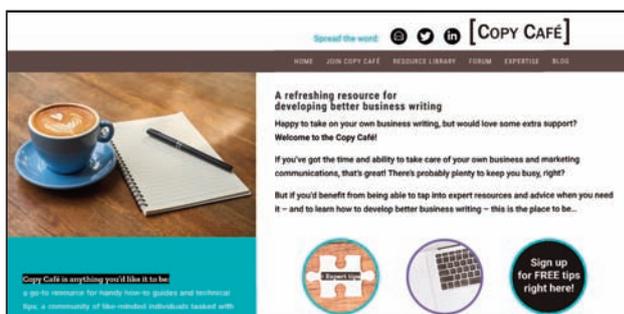
1. Title and short description of job
2. Deadline
3. Media and format
4. Length of copy required
5. Target audience
6. Key objectives
7. Any perceived barriers
8. The main challenge
9. The key message to communicate
10. Primary support information
11. Other pertinent background information
12. Required tone of voice and style
13. Any mandatory content
14. Outline of desired structure
15. Required call to action

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