

Hughes Program Writing Tips

Tip #1 Prewriting

Effective writing is the result of careful planning and singular purpose. For that reason, the more work you put into considering the position you are taking and the audience for which you are writing, the more likely you are to create an effective message. This planning could take the form of outlines, lists, cluster diagrams, or another exercise or combination of exercises. The important thing is that you start developing a process that yields the results you need to successfully communicate your ideas.

Tip #2 Audience

Remember that the main purpose of writing is to convey a message to a particular audience and align them to your cause. For this reason, it is always a good idea to consider the recipient with whom you would like to communicate during every stage of crafting the message. Consider your tone, word choice, the content of your message, and how all of these components are likely to impact your reader, and you will be more likely to present a persuasive message that achieves your desired results.

Tip #3 Word Choice

When you are conveying ideas to an audience, it is more important to communicate with that audience than it is to impress it. For this reason, if you find yourself reaching for a larger, more complicated word that you do not fully understand, consider using comfortable vocabulary that clearly expresses the message you intend to express instead. To use words you do not fully understand is to risk using them incorrectly, which is essentially betting that your reader does not understand the word either, and this is not a game you can win over the long term.

Tip #4 Write What's in Your Heart

Over 700 years ago, an Italian poet, Francesco Petrarco, better known as Petrarch, fell madly in love with a woman identified in his sonnets only as "Laura." While all his pining and unrequited passion never actually won the favor of the idealized Laura, it left us with a means by which to discuss romantic love in terms that did not really mean much before then. In a world of arranged political marriages, ideas that would have been dismissed as frivolous and impractical beforehand had a weight and meaning that they never enjoyed before: Ideas like love at first sight and obsessive, unrequited yearning were suddenly worthy of consideration. Use writing to tell someone special how you really feel, and while you are at it, thank Petrarch that you will not be writing a lengthy discourse on how your union will benefit the empire.

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Tip #5 Organization

Most paragraphs are composed of a main idea, evidence that supports the main idea, analysis that explains how the evidence relates to the main idea, and a link that connects the paragraph to the next one and reinforces the purpose of the communication. This structure is called the "MEAL Plan" because the first letters of Main idea, Evidence, Analysis, and Link spell "MEAL." Most articles are written according to this structure because it is a really simple and effective way to deliver messages to an audience.

Tip #6 Proofreading

Do not forget to take the time to read your writing aloud. You will be surprised how hearing something for the first time changes the reading of something you have been looking at since you started the process. The human brain is always looking for ways to make shortcuts to reduce fatigue, and unfortunately, this means that the eye often sees what one meant to write rather than what one actually wrote. Reading aloud can make your work just a little less familiar to you, thereby making errors easier to spot.