



# The Digital Skills Your Students Need to Succeed

# The Digital Communication Skills Your Students Need to Succeed

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The goal of educators is to prepare students with the fundamental knowledge and skills they need to do well in school and beyond. Success in the classroom, although not a given, is easier than attaining success in the workplace. This is, in no small part, thanks to teachers' willingness to work with students who fall short until they understand a lesson and get it right.

Such optimal levels of support and the opportunities to continue trying are seldom the reality for employees that fail in the workplace. Therefore, teachers need to prepare students as thoroughly as possible to face the highly competitive nature of today's workforce.

However, what exactly do students need in order to be in demand and appreciated in the professional world? What are the rudiments and skills that, when included in their formal education, can give them an edge later on?

Taking a look at a recent poll, sent to employers by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, these are the abilities hiring managers seek out when assessing new recruits:

Problem-solving skills	82.9%
Ability to work in a team	82.9%
<b>Communication skills (written)</b>	<b>80.3%</b>
Leadership	72.6%
Strong work ethic	68.4%

Out of these, the importance of written communication skills cannot be overstated since, in contrast to the other capacities, it's a "hard" skill that can be learned (as opposed to somewhat abstract talents or subjective character attributes).



With the advent of technology and computers, the way in which we communicate has clearly changed to the point that written communication is increasingly important.

So, how can teachers best prepare students for the future now that written communication needs to be a priority? How can they make sure students have a handle on what will be expected of them?

There are **four essential skills** students must learn to master written communication:

- 1 Touch Typing
- 2 Document Formatting
- 3 Context Awareness
- 4 Proofreading and Editing

We'll walk through these skills, explaining the importance of each one. We will also provide real-world examples of how teachers can incorporate activities into their lessons on written communication using word processing programs.

## 1 FIRST THINGS FIRST; TOUCH TYPING



Everyone can agree with the adage about learning to walk before trying to run. The same progression applies to communication technologies: students should learn proper touch-typing and be confident using a keyboard before delving into any other area dealing with software and technology.

By “comfortable with the keyboard” we mean students can type without looking down at the keyboard to find a key. The goal is for their train of thought to continue uninterrupted while they write. There’s no need for them to break WPM records; they should just be able to type at the right speed for their thoughts to take shape through their fingers.

### FOR TYPING.COM TEACHERS

*We recommend that your students have basic computer skills (e.g. know how to use a mouse, how to access applications, etc.) before you introduce the written communication, word-processing, and document-formatting curriculum. They should also be familiar with the keyboard, including all the keys, capitalization, basic symbols, punctuation, and typing short paragraphs before moving on to anything more complex.*

*These basic skills can be learned by completing the beginning and intermediate sections of Typing.com. They will ensure that your students are able to follow along with more advanced communication lessons and understand the parts of different word processing programs.*

Once students are comfortable using the keyboard, they can then move on to the next level in written communication, Document Formatting.



## 2 DOCUMENT FORMATTING

The business world operates based upon a general set of standard practices when it comes to written communication and document formatting. Students need to know what these are in order to succeed in their future careers.



Just looking at how an applicant formats an email, an employer can get a sense of their attention to detail, their understanding of business norms, and even their level of education.

So what do they need to know?

Here are the **7 document formats** every student should know by the time they graduate:

1

### BLOCK STYLE LETTER

This is your standard business letter used by organizations for almost all official, professional communication, both internally and externally.

2

### BUSINESS ENVELOPE

Appropriately addressed and formatted business envelopes are crucial for business correspondence to arrive at its intended destination and to display professionalism.

3

### PERSONAL BUSINESS LETTER

This is a must-know document for expanding one's professional network and maintaining healthy relations with colleagues, clients, and prospects.

4

## PERSONAL ENVELOPE

While many people send emails more regularly than letters, letters can give the recipient a stronger feeling of personal connection with the sender. Learning to address these envelopes properly is an indispensable part of building these relationships.

5

## EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

Students should understand the different components of a well-written email, including how to use attachments, and the difference between Cc and Bcc.

6

## FORMAL REPORT

Knowing how to format a formal report is critical throughout a student's academic and professional careers. Beyond the standard aesthetics, students should also be capable of narrowing down the purpose, planning their work, and conducting research.

7

## PRESENTATIONS

Also crucial for both college and the workplace, students should know the basics of creating and delivering effective presentations with engaging visual elements.

This provides students with the foundation they need to land a job, excel in it, and advance in their careers.

## FOR TYPING.COM TEACHERS

*Documents are written to be read by others. Formatting a document properly provides its audience a clear understanding of the message being conveyed.*

*By working through the Word Processing module in Typing.com, your students will learn the basic formatting rules for each of the items above. In addition, all of the communications content in Typing.com is designed for use with any word processing software. Not only does this enable you to use any word processing software to teach these skills, but it also encourages students to become more adaptable and troubleshoot problems themselves*

### 3 CONTEXT AWARENESS

Now comes the hard part... knowing when to use the different letter formats and the appropriate language in business communication. Context awareness is a skill that will help students build meaning and interest for their audience.

This is undoubtedly the toughest part of teaching the nuances of written communication as it's not something that can be learned from a textbook or a formula alone. Instead, it is more of an art, requiring genuine understanding of context, feeling empathy, and using tact.

#### FOR TYPING.COM TEACHERS

*Each lesson in the Typing.com Word Processing module includes key concepts and scenarios related to that document format. Students can read this information independently, or you can go over it with the class as a whole.*

*After reviewing, we recommend that you analyze each document format introduced and engage your students in discussion. Try role playing workplace scenarios to help them understand the context and relevance of each situation as it relates to document formatting and writing in general.*

### 4 PROOFREADING AND EDITING



Last but not least, here is the step that can make or break it all for a student as they enter the professional world.

None of us are immune to typos and nothing spoils a great document faster than a spelling error.

Someone can have the perfectly crafted email cover letter for a job application, but then overlook a misplaced "their" instead of "they're." All of a sudden, they go from an excellent potential candidate to the bottom of the pile.

We live in a society fixated on mistakes. A reviewer can read a 500-page book and if there is a typo, that's what they take away from it.

In order for students to take this part of the process seriously, it helps to illustrate to them just how devastating and costly a typo can be.

## SOME OF HISTORY'S MOST COSTLY TYPOS



### NASA's Missing Hyphen: **Total Cost: \$80 million**

In 1962, a single missing hyphen in the code used for an interplanetary probe launch caused the probe to explode a few minutes after takeoff.



### Japanese Stock Mixup: **Total Cost: \$340 million**

In 2005, on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, a careless typing error led to shares of a stock valued at 610,000 yen apiece to be sold at 1 yen for 610,000 shares.



### Alitalia Airline Blunder: **Total cost: \$7.2 million**

In 2006, Alitalia Airlines mistakenly posted \$3,900 tickets from Toronto to Cyprus at 1 percent of their cost. Thousands of travelers took advantage of the mistake.

## FOR TYPING.COM TEACHERS

*To begin learning how to proofread and edit, students need to know **the five Ws and the H**, shared in the *Typing.com Proofreading and Editing* curriculum.*

**Who?**

**What?**

**When?**

**Where?**

**Why?**

**How?**

*Have your students work in groups to answer the five Ws and the H for short reading passages and present their answers to the class. Once students are able to understand the context of the content they are reading, they are ready to begin basic proofreading. We recommend downloading and printing the **Proofreaders' Marks Document** in *Typing.com* for discussion.*



# CONCLUSION: WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS+DIGITAL LITERACY ARE KEY!

Learning to type and word processing are just the beginning. Getting students ready for the realities of the world is a changing and challenging landscape.

Educators need to be well-versed to be able to prepare their charges with crucial 21st century abilities. Among other things, their efforts should include giving them basic hands-on experience working with computer hardware and software, as well as instruction on the soft people skills that will open doors. In general, it's important to stress that the winning combination involves both hard and soft skills.

Being good communicators (both written and verbal) and having a well-rounded digital literacy education will be their passport to digital citizenship. This will enable students to participate more fully in their communities, whether those are online or in the regular world.

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For other useful tips and strategies, be sure to check out our social media.

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 Twitter: [@Typing\\_com](https://twitter.com/Typing_com)

Our blog also has a number of ideas to give students more variety. Our free program provides many digital literacy exercises geared towards building skills, plus we offer an expanded digital learning curriculum to make sure students acquire 21st century skills.

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[www.typing.com](http://www.typing.com)