Syllabus

Skills Workshop: Writing for Decision Makers
[PBAF 598]

Meeting dates, times, and place
Saturday, October 10 and October 24, 9:00 a.m.-2:20 p.m. (includes 30-minute lunch break)
Both sessions are in Savery Hall, Room 132

Workshop description
This skills workshop is designed to give you more confidence in shaping documents that communicate effectively in the workplace. You will learn how to analyze your audience, choose appropriate presentation strategies, and produce documents that are clear, coherent, and unified. The workshop is predicated on these main points: (1) writing for a decision-making audience often involves different strategies than those used in an academic setting; (2) understanding how readers absorb new, often complex information is key to making good choices; and (3) applying certain review and revision techniques can increase the likelihood of successfully communicating your message.

Workshop leaders
Tim Schindler is an Assistant Director and the Seattle Field Office Manager for the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). As a senior analyst at GAO he led teams that conducted audits on a variety of issues.

Kate van Gelder leads a team of communications analyst at GAO where they help engagement teams think through their audit objectives, synthesize their data, and write reports.

Tim’s contact information:
   Cell phone: (206) 380-0652
   UW e-mail: SchinT@u.washington.edu (send assignments and questions to this address)

Kate’s contact information:
   Home phone: (253) 267-5146       Cell phone: (253) 820-0388
   UW e-mail: katevg@uw.edu (send assignments and questions to this address)

Workshop requirements

Attendance. Attending both Saturday sessions is mandatory. There is no text you can read to learn the content of this workshop. The content springs from what we do, face to face, as a group. If a session must be cancelled, it will be rescheduled.

Assignments. During each Saturday session, you will receive a take-home assignment. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for the workshop.

Texts. There are no books or course packs to buy. Handouts will be distributed at each Saturday session.
Workshop outline

Session 1: Saturday, October 10

Topics covered: (1) understanding audiences and (2) strategies for unity

Assignment: Rewrite two items, each about one page in length, and e-mail them to Tim and Kate at least two days before Session 2.

Session 2: Saturday, October 24

Topics covered: (1) strategies for clarity, (2) strategies for coherence, and (3) strategies for reviewing your work

Assignment: Rewrite two items, each about one page in length, and e-mail them to Tim and Kate no later than November 11.

Final project: Apply the principles you will have learned to analyze a report or publication and prepare a summary in 1-2 pages. You will need to submit this assignment to Tim and Kate no later than November 10.