*The Writing Skills Café is a short blended learning experience oriented around the concepts and skills found in the Harvard ManageMentor Writing Skills topic. The Writing Skills topic will help managers:*

**Writing Skills Café Overview**

* *Clarify their purpose, audience, scope, and initial ideas before writing*
* *Organize content in a logical flow for readers*
* *Write a first draft that represents their key ideas and structure*
* *Edit their writing for content, structure, style, and design*
* *Use sound grammatical and editorial skills when writing*

The learning experience has three components:

*60 to 90 minutes 60 minutes Ongoing*

Part 1: Pre-work (self-paced, individual)

Before the live Café session, participants are expected to complete the following assignments:

* Review the following online lessons from the Harvard ManageMentor Writing Skills topic:
  + Plan Your Writing Project
  + Organize Your Content
  + Write Your First Draft
  + Revise Your Draft
  + Strengthen Your Writing Skills
* Complete the online assessment from the Harvard ManageMentor Writing Skills topic
* Complete the practice activity “Write a Rough Draft” in the “Write Your First Draft” lesson of the Harvard ManageMentor Writing Skills topic
* Review the tool “Common Usage Mistakes” in the “Strengthen Your Writing Skills” lesson of the Harvard ManageMentor Writing Skills topic
* Review the tool “Business Writing Checklist” in the “Strengthen Your Writing Skills” lesson of the Harvard ManageMentor Writing Skills topic

Part 2: Café session (live, group)

The Café session represents the core element of the learning experience. The session provides an opportunity for managers to:

* Exchange ideas and questions with others
* Discuss the context of how concepts and skills apply in the workplace
* Practice and begin application of those concepts and skills
* Build momentum and support for applying the concepts and skills in the workplace

The Café session focuses specifically on the following concepts and tasks from the Writing Skills topic:

* Target your message
* Write a draft
* Polish your writing

Facilitating the Café session as outlined should take approximately 60 minutes. If the facilitator prefers a shorter session or wishes to spend more time on a specific concept or activity, he or she may want to cover only those concepts and activities that are most relevant to the group.

| SECTION | ACTIVITY | TIME |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction** | Show icebreaker question while participants are arriving to the session. **(*“Writing is hard work. A clear sentence is no accident. Very few sentences come out right the first time, or even the third time. Remember this in moments of despair. If you find that writing is hard, it's because it* is *hard.” —*William K. Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, 7th ed., Collins, 2006.)**  **QUESTION: WHAT’S THE HARDEST PART OF WRITING FOR A BUSINESS AUDIENCE? (Please chat in your response.)**   * Introduce facilitators. * Review tips for using technology during the session. * Debrief icebreaker question. * Set context: *Do you read every document, email, or text you receive? Few of us can answer “yes.” Yet when you are the writer, you want your words to inform, influence, and inspire your reader. Your writing represents who you are and what you have to offer. That’s why we all want to do it well and why it sometimes feels so challenging. It’s true that good writing isn’t always easy, but if you plan your process, understand your audience, craft your words, and polish your message, you can convey your meaning with real power. In today’s session, we will practice key tools and techniques to help you do just that.* * Review session objectives. | 10 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Target your message** | * Facilitate discussion activity related to ensuring your writing communicates with purpose and impact. Participants:   + Review common business purposes for writing.   + Discuss strategies for appealing to diverse audiences, sharing examples.   + Practice a clustering technique to home in on a key message, and brainstorm supporting points to strengthen your argument. | 12 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Write a draft** | * Debrief the practice activity “Write a Rough Draft.” Participants:   + Review the key questions addressed in the practice activity as a group:     - How long did your draft take? Did you keep to your time limit?     - Did you stop to edit as you wrote? Or did you write quickly, getting your ideas down on paper without making corrections?     - What, if anything, might you do differently in the future when writing a similar draft?     - How beneficial do you think your draft will be in ensuring the quality of your final product?   + Discuss the challenges and benefits of the rough draft process as compared with the more common “edit as you go” approach; consider ways to force yourself to write without editing. | 15 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Polish your writing** | * Facilitate discussion to debrief the tool “Common Usage Mistakes.” Participants:   + Review the chart of common usage mistakes.   + Brainstorm additional “worst practices” to avoid, specific to key types of business writing (memos, presentations, and email). * Facilitate discussion activity on a writing skills scenario. Participants:   + Review a short "What would you do?" scenario, critiquing a colleague’s draft email.   + Discuss applying key skills to improve the draft and communicate the feedback appropriately to your colleague.   + Review the “Business Writing Checklist” tool.   + Apply insights to their own business and roles. | 18 minutes |
| **Applying what you’ve learned** | * Review session objectives and skill areas discussed. * Review directions for completing the On-the-Job section of the online Harvard ManageMentor topic, including the action plan. * Close the session. | 5 minutes |

Part 3: Application (self-paced, individual)

After the live Café session, participants are expected to complete the following assignments:

* Complete the online On-the-Job section in the Harvard ManageMentor Writing Skills topic. The section provides learners with an opportunity to choose a skill to focus on and create an action plan for applying and developing the skill. *Note:* If your organization does not include the On-the-Job section in your configuration of Harvard ManageMentor, ask participants to think of two things they can do over the next 90 days to further apply and develop their skills in this area.
* Execute their action plan over a specified time frame (e.g., 60 or 90 days).
* After the specified time frame (e.g., 60 or 90 days), access the online On-the-Job section in the Harvard ManageMentor Writing Skills topic to update the action plan and reflect on the experience.