

Correspondence

s t a n d a r d s



A p r i l 2 0 0 3

sfwmd.gov



The Importance of Correctness

Correctness is the most important part of each and every correspondence that is created at the South Florida Water Management District (District). From spelling to content, it is imperative that your letter, memo, or e-mail be accurate.

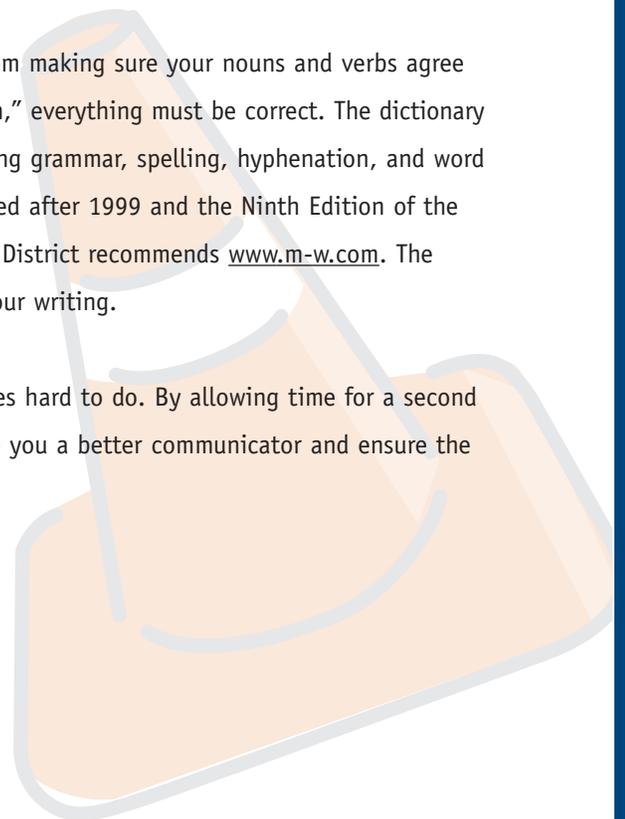
The easiest way to achieve correctness in correspondence involves two things – time and an “extra set of eyes.” Time is the challenging issue. Often, each of us is asked to generate letters, memos, presentations, and e-mail with an immediate turnaround. This situation is not likely to change. However, having a co-worker read your work after you finish a draft is almost always possible.

The benefit of a review by someone other than yourself is clear. The following is an example: You have typed the word *though* and you thought you typed the word *through*. Spell check will give you an “OK” and you will print the letter, have it signed and then mail. A second person reading your letter probably could have caught the improper word usage.

Another example of the benefit of the “extra set of eyes” is ensuring your content is correct. If the document is scientific in nature, another reader can help ensure that you have said what you intended. A concept that is clear in the mind of the writer might not have translated to paper as the writer wished, thus the letter has little communication value.

Finally, using proper grammar and spelling cannot be overlooked. From making sure your nouns and verbs agree to ensuring the proper spelling of “photosynthetically active radiation,” everything must be correct. The dictionary and the Gregg Reference Manual are two excellent sources for checking grammar, spelling, hyphenation, and word usage. Please make sure that you have a desk-top dictionary published after 1999 and the Ninth Edition of the Gregg Reference Manual. On-line tools are also at your disposal. The District recommends www.m-w.com. The Merriam-Webster On-line Web pages offer countless tools to aid in your writing.

As stated earlier, making time to ensure accurate writing is sometimes hard to do. By allowing time for a second review, ensuring accurate content, and using solid tools, it will make you a better communicator and ensure the District’s message is clear, concise, and accurate.





Standards for Correspondence

- ◆ Only use 12 point Arial font in all correspondence.
- ◆ Use 1 inch margins with full justification.
- ◆ Two spaces always follow a period.
- ◆ Filing codes are OPTIONAL AT THIS TIME – revised codes are in development to be released next year.
- ◆ No memos leave the District, ONLY LETTERS LEAVE THE DISTRICT.
- ◆ Board members always get memos and are always printed on letterhead.
- ◆ All Governing Board correspondence goes through the appropriate Deputy Executive Director (DED) and the District Clerk.
- ◆ ALL Executive Office correspondence goes through the appropriate DED.
- ◆ Executive Office Correspondence assignment reference numbers are to appear on the letter.
- ◆ Letters drafted from a public inquiry always go through the appropriate DED, please use the blue routing slip.
- ◆ On the second page of a letter, type South Florida Water Management District below the title of the sender.
- ◆ Use a colon in your salutation.
- ◆ Do not use a first name in a salutation.
- ◆ Use “Sincerely” when closing a letter.
- ◆ When listing names to be copied, be sure to include all names copied in the original correspondence and any other individual in the response and list them alphabetically.
- ◆ Blind Copies: use “bc” to indicate a blind copy and blind copy staff members in the correspondence that need to be made aware of the document. Discretion is to be used in determining the appropriateness of blind copies.
- ◆ Spell check all documents.
- ◆ Bold face type in a subject line of a letter.
- ◆ When copying a Governing Board Member on a letter, indicate the full title of the Board Member, an example: Pamela Brooks-Thomas, Governing Board Member.
- ◆ In a letter, when copying someone who doesn't work at the District, identify the organization that the person works with.
- ◆ If you still have questions, please refer to the index of the Gregg Reference Manual – Ninth Edition.
- ◆ Never use acronyms in a subject line.



Electronic Messages

Although e-mail messages are often prepared quickly and without editing or proofreading, you should always spell check and re-read your message prior to sending.

When writing e-mail or bulletin board messages, keep the following ideas in mind:

- ◆ *Keep your message brief – 25 lines fit on a computer screen and approximately 80 characters fit on each line.*
- ◆ *Be concise in your response.*
- ◆ *Keep e-mail to a single topic.*
- ◆ *Align your paragraphs to the left.*
- ◆ *Use black type for the body of your message.*
- ◆ *Follow standard capitalization rules. Do not use all capital letters or all lower case letters.*
- ◆ *Check your spelling.*

When responding to e-mail, it is imperative that you respond within 24 hours of the e-mail's delivery. Also include the message that was originally sent to you.

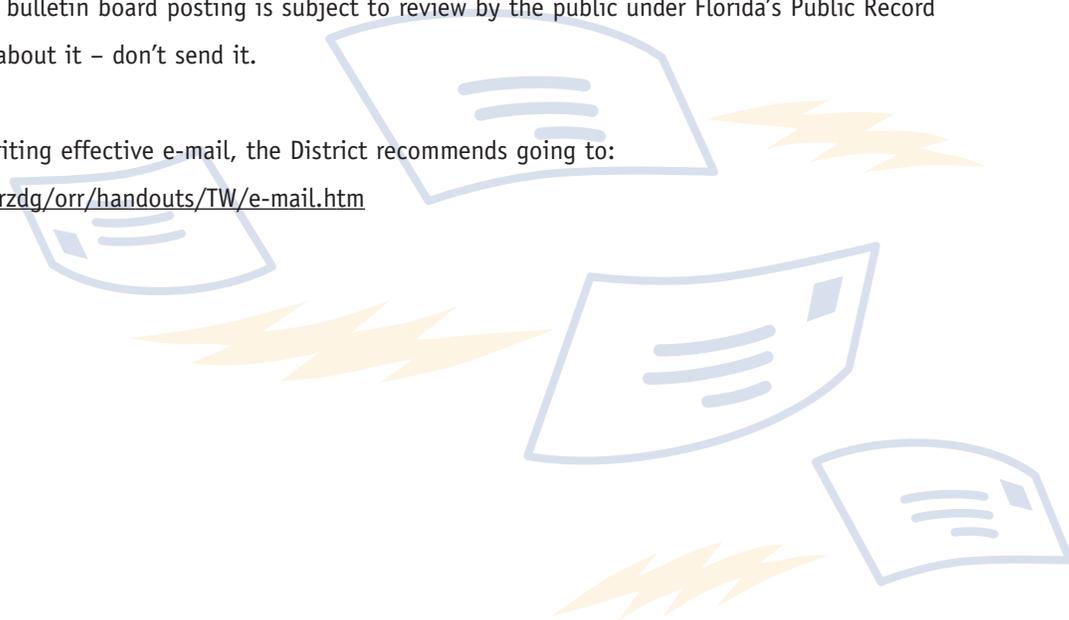
When responding to a member of the public, remember that the person asking questions may not have all the knowledge. Craft your response with the audience in mind. Refer to the "Writing for your Reader" section of the District Correspondence Standards for more tips.

Keep your use of acronyms to a minimum, particularly when responding to e-mail from our constituents. If you must use acronyms, always spell out the complete title the first time you use it followed by the acronym in parenthesis.

Finally, every e-mail and bulletin board posting is subject to review by the public under Florida's Public Record Laws. If you are unsure about it – don't send it.

For additional tips on writing effective e-mail, the District recommends going to:

<http://www.uwec.edu/jerzdg/orr/handouts/TW/e-mail.htm>





Writing for Your Reader

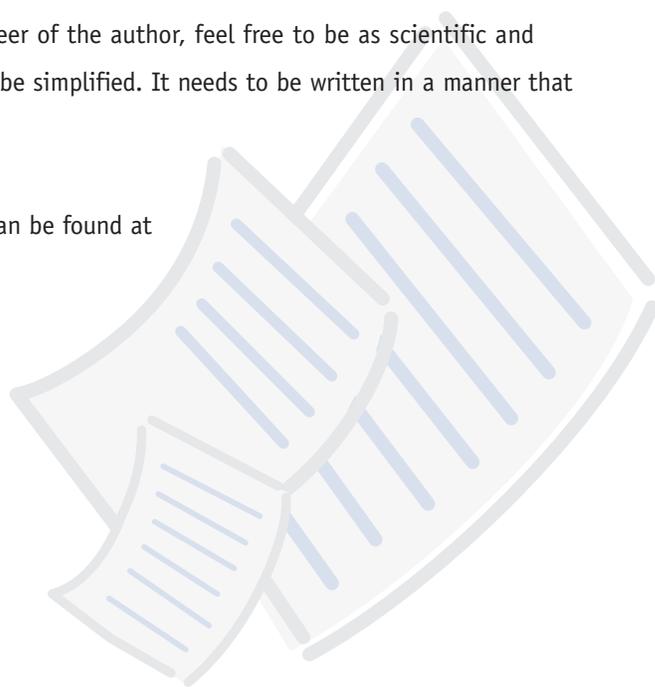
When creating correspondence at the District, we must remember that we are writing for a very diverse audience. It is important to keep that diversity in mind for all letters and memoranda that are written. Writing a letter with the reader in mind assures comprehension of the document's content.

If you consider the uniqueness of each letter as a communications challenge, you will be successful in your communications. For example, if a member of the public has requested information regarding a very complex scientific process underway at the District, your letter should be written to ensure that the reader understands the science. To this end, scientific jargon should not be used nor should scientific terms be used that are not known to the average eighth grader. As a rule, most newspapers are written so that a person with an eighth grade education will comprehend the news story. Keeping that in mind, make sure your reader knows exactly what you are communicating. If you approach the scientific communication as if you were explaining the process to your mother or father, who have no scientific background, you will be successful with your letter.

One factor that is very important to keep in mind is the use of acronyms in District correspondence. If you have to use acronyms in your letter or memo, make sure that you state the name of the entity or process on the first reference in the correspondence and then place the acronym in parenthesis immediately after its full name. Then use the acronym throughout the document. For example, not everyone knows what FDEP means. To ensure comprehension use: Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). The use of acronyms that are never spelled out are a tremendous comprehension hurdle for a reader to overcome.

Finally, if the correspondence is directed or addressed to a peer of the author, feel free to be as scientific and specific as is required. By no means does every letter need to be simplified. It needs to be written in a manner that best serves the reader.

A good on-line tool to aid you in writing for comprehension can be found at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_revisebus.html



sample memo

Example of a
multiple page
memo/letter.

Staff Member
September 26, 2002
Page 2

From my research, a reduced number of items are planned for the December meetings. In light of the pending holidays, a one-day meeting might be helpful for the Board Members.

In my continuing efforts to streamline the facilitation of our Governing Board meetings, I would like to gain your permission to host a one-day Governing Board Meeting in the month of December.

From my research, a reduced number of items are planned for the December meetings. In light of the pending holidays, a one-day meeting might be helpful for the Board Members.

GWW/pm
Enclosure

c: Rena Sandhaus

MEMORANDUM

TO: Staff Member, Title, Department or Division
FROM: Staff Member, Title, Department or Division
DATE: September 26, 2002
SUBJECT: Correspondence Standards

From my research, a reduced number of items are planned for the December meetings. In light of the pending holidays, a one-day meeting might be helpful for the Board Members.

In my continuing efforts to streamline the facilitation of our Governing Board meetings, I would like to gain your permission to host a one-day Governing Board Meeting during the month of December.

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sample memo

Example of a memo sent through a superior(s) for approval.

Staff Member
September 26, 2002
Page 2

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GWW/pm
Enclosure

c: Hugh English

MEMORANDUM

TO: Staff Member, Title, Department or Division
THROUGH: Pamela S. Mac'Kie, Deputy Executive Director, Land Resources
Chip Merriam, Deputy Executive Director, Water Resources
FROM: Staff Member, Title, Department or Division
DATE: September 26, 2002
SUBJECT: Correspondence Standards

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SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

3001 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, Florida 33406 • (561) 686-8800 • FL WATS 1-800-432-2045 • TDD (561) 697-2574
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 24680, West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680 • www.sfwmd.gov

September 26, 2002

CONFIDENTIAL (IF NEEDED)

FACSIMILE (561) 682-6010

Mr. John Q. Public
JQP Title
Business Name
Street Address
City, State 33333

Dear Mr. Public:

Subject: December Governing Board Meeting

From my research, a reduced number of items are planned for the December meetings. In light of the pending holidays, a one-day meeting might be helpful for the Board Members.

In my continuing efforts to streamline the facilitation of our Governing Board meetings, I would like to gain your permission to host a one-day Governing Board Meeting during the month of December.

Sincerely,

Garrett Wallace
District Clerk

GW/ab

c: Henry Dean
Alvin Jackson

(Note: For blind copy notation, follow the example in section 1378, page 384 of the Gregg Reference Manual Ninth Edition)
(Note: For copies with and without enclosures, follow the example in section 1379, page 384 of the Gregg Reference Manual Ninth Edition)

GOVERNING BOARD

Nicolas J. Gutierrez, Jr., Esq., Chair
Fernanda Brooks-Thomas, Vice-Chair
Irela M. Dague

Michael Collins
Hugh M. English
Lennart E. Lindahl, P.E.

Kevin McCarty
Harkley R. Thornton
Trudi K. Williams, P.E.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Henry Dean, Executive Director

Governing Board Members
September 26, 2002
Page 2

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GWW/pm

c: Garrett Wallace



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, Florida 33406 • (561) 686-8800 • FL WAITS 1-800-432-2015 • TDD (561) 697-2571
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 24680, West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680 • www.sfwmd.gov

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

THROUGH: George Horne, Deputy Executive Director, Operations and Maintenance
Alvin Jackson, Deputy Executive Director, Corporate Resources

FROM: Staff Member, Title, Department or Division

DATE: September 26, 2002

SUBJECT: Correspondence Standards

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GOVERNING BOARD

Nicholas J. Gutierrez, Jr., Esq., *Chair*
Pamela Brooks-Hannas, *Vice-Chair*
Irela M. Rague

Michael Collins
Hugh M. English
Lennart E. Lindahl, P.E.

Kevin McCarty
Harkley R. Thornton
Trudi K. Williams, P.E.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Henry Dean, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

TO: Staff Member, Title, Division or Department Name

FROM: Staff Member, Title, Division or Department Name

DATE: September 26, 2002

SUBJECT: Correspondence Standards

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GWW/pm
Enclosure

c: Nicolas Gutierrez

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Distribution List
THROUGH: Henry Dean, Executive Director
FROM: Staff Member, Title, Department or Division
DATE: September 26, 2002
SUBJECT: Correspondence Standards

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In my continuing efforts to streamline the facilitation of our Governing Board meetings, I would like to gain your permission to host a one-day Governing Board Meeting during the month of December.

ACC/pm

c: Lourdes Elias

Distribution:
Ken Ammon
Aaron Basinger
Christine Bergeron
Rosie Byrd
Diana Longhurst
Rena Sandhaus
Sandra Turnquest
Doris Urban
Allen Vann
Garrett Wallace
Holly Walter
Tish Zody