

Unit 2: Choosing the right technical level

Quotation

Get your learners to look at the quotation and ask them if they agree. (Some may say that readers should make an effort too.)

Introduction

1. Tell your learners that they will be looking at advice on writing, and that they will relate it to their own contexts. Before asking them to read the advice, ask your learners what sort of technical expertise they need to communicate with their own audience in relation to their own context. (Again, if you have already done a learner needs analysis, use this discussion to confirm and supplement the information that you obtained from it.)
2. Ask your learners to read all the information in pairs. Circulate, monitor and assist if necessary. Explain any difficulties and ensure that the learners are relating what they read to their own context, but don't interrupt them if they are working well. (You may need to explain the meaning of the word *silo*.)
3. Get pairs to report on their 'findings' and discuss these with the whole class, relating the discussion to documents that they write and ones that they read.

Gobbledygook

Ask your learners if they know this expression. Do they have an equivalent expression in their own language? You could mention the plain English campaign, which helps organizations to improve the clarity of their documents. If they are interested, they can look on the Internet at www.plainenglish.co.uk.

Useful tips

1. Go through the 'Do's' and 'Don'ts' and explain any difficulties (e.g. *concrete*) as a preliminary to going through the example texts below.
2. If you haven't done so already, bring your learners' attention to the Glossary starting on page 102 of the book. This could lead into a homework task – see below.

Examples 1a, 2b, 3c

Explain that the three example texts exemplify problems mentioned in the 'Don'ts' list above. Go through the documents with the whole class and explain any difficulties. Your learners should be able to spot for themselves the problems in the example extracts. (You could point out that in 3c, *behaviours* is only used as a plural count noun rather than an uncount noun in technical contexts such as the one here.)

Exercise 1

Make an explicit link from the previous activity, and with the whole class, get learners to point out the problems in the text and then look at the model answer on page 110.

Exercises 2, 3 & 4

1. Explain to your learners that they will analyse and improve these texts in pairs. Allocate the texts to different pairs, ensuring that members of each pair know which text they are working on. Bring the learners' attention to the heading of each text, which shows what type of text it is.
2. If your learners have access to a computer network connected to a classroom projector, they could write their improved texts on a computer. Otherwise hand out OHP transparencies and pens. Learners write their texts ready to show and discuss them with the whole class.
3. Circulate, monitor and assist learners if necessary, but don't interrupt if they are working well. (They may need help with some of the vocabulary, especially in the legal text in Exercise 4.)
4. Call the class to order and get individual pairs to talk about the problems in the text that was allocated to them. Then get them to read out the text that they have rewritten or to project it onto a computer projector or OHP screen so that the whole class can see it. Each pair discusses their text with the whole class.
5. Finally, ask the learners to look at the model texts in the Answer key on pages 111 and 112. Discuss them with the whole class in relation to the rewritten texts that the learners produced.

Extension activity 1: learners' work documents

If possible, discuss further the points from Examples 1a, 2b and 3c in relation to the documents in English, both positive and negative, from your learners' own work contexts. If they have not brought examples to this class, you could ask learners to bring example documents to the next class in order to discuss them.

Extension activity 2: shall and will

1. You can get learners to work on *shall* and *will* in relation to Exercise 4. Ask them why the sender writes *shall* (line 1) and not *will*. (It's because they're using formal legal language.)
2. The use of *shall* in the email to express obligation is very formal. This is dealt with in section C5 of Unit 21 of *Collins Intermediate Business Grammar & Practice*. You could get them to look at this unit and to do the related exercises in order to explore this further.

Cultural note

With the whole class, discuss the idea of simplicity. Ask your learners how this is viewed in their own cultures. As in Unit 1, remind learners that cultures are not necessarily related to countries. Particular industries and professions have their own cultural norms. In some cultures, readers are expected to make more of an effort than others. (Legal language, for example, is often hard to understand. Ask why this is, and whether making it simpler would mean that there would be more possible *ambiguities* – teach this word.) This relates back to the quotation at the beginning of the unit.

Homework task

Get learners to do further research on the words in the Glossary. Tell them to look not only at the Glossary, but also at the entries in the online *COBUILD Advanced Dictionary* (www.collinsdictionary.com/COBUILD), from which the Glossary entries are taken, and to report back on the various senses and examples for the words in the next class. You could allocate different expressions to different learners.