

Effective Writing: plain English at work – second edition

by Elizabeth Manning Murphy with Hilary Cadman, published by Lacuna Publishing, Sydney, 2014, 188 pages including index.

The main author, Elizabeth Manning Murphy BAHons FCES FSBT AFAIM DE, is a former President of the Commercial Education Society of Australia.

Reviewed by Kathleen McKenzie MAA FCES FRSA FIPS, President Commercial Education Society of Australia



Elizabeth Manning Murphy
(Photo by Edwin Briggs)

The second edition of this book is welcome as we adjust our written English to accommodate the needs of ever-changing technologies. The writer encourages you to organise the material and space available to get your message across so that there is only one clear meaning. Otherwise, the receiver may interpret it based on their mood and expectations or think that it does not fit their world view and may dismiss the information as deceptive, misguided or simply wrong.

In the Preface, the author, Elizabeth Manning Murphy, notes that the aim of the book is to provide tools for:

- improving writing skills
- understanding how to make writing easily understood
- getting rid of gobbledegook in all official writing

In short, the book aims at putting together messages/documents using plain, effective English words. This applies to all documents or messages whether they are composed on a computer or on a smart phone.

I was looking forward to reading through this book because I have used a number of Business English and English for Journalists texts which usually fall into two categories—too basic or not very readable, or comprehensive. *Effective Writing* keeps things simple enough with many examples and activities with an answer key.

This book would suit a range of people—from the English language learner who needs to improve language skills, especially writing skills, to the journalist/creative writing student, whose target audience is the wider public. It is also useful for teachers, trainers or business people who might want to check or reinforce their knowledge of grammar and writing in general and to make sure that they are using the right language to get their message across in order to elicit an accurate response.

It is designed to be used as a self-study book, as a classroom text, or as an addition to the set text. As a self-study book it is extremely user-friendly. The pages are set out with explanations, examples and practice exercises.

The text is written in a no-nonsense manner and can feel a bit like being helped by a friend who is more familiar with English language skills. The use of activities and answers gives the learner a feeling of being led through the lessons while, at the same time, being supported via a very conversational approach.

Throughout this book, the author emphasises that the writer should consider the target audience at all times.

As the world of work is multi-skilled, with a diversified work force, global trade and global interaction, all of us still need the underpinning basics of acceptable, simple English grammar and good sentence structure. Most importantly, we need to be able to convey our message in simple, but accurate, English language terms without fear of misinterpretation, ambiguity or offence.

In short, the book aims at improving your ability to successfully transfer information clearly and simply so that it can be decoded correctly at the other end and eliminate sources of confusion.

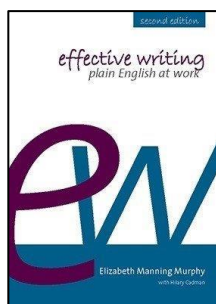
The book is split into three sections:

- Part A The Basics
- Part B Writing effectively
- Part C Creating effective documents

Part A sets out basic grammar and sentence structure so that the user can simply select the area of basic grammar she or he wants to review. At the end of Part A there is a Grammar reassessment so that the user can do an overall grammar check.

Part B is designed to put you in place of the reader. This section encourages and helps the writer to convey the message with clarity, precision and purpose using straight-forward language—in short, to communicate succinctly without losing vital information and meaning.

Part C discusses the principles of effective writing and document design. The author notes that English needs to be flexible and efficient and should be written in a style that the reader can understand in one reading. It combines clear, concise expression, and effective structure and document design.



Cover design:
Carina Manning

The book can be used as a revision for students wanting to check certain points of grammar and style or for business people for reference purposes. In short, the message is that the language we use should be clear, simple and accessible out of courtesy to the reader.

I can recommend this book to anyone who wants to communicate effectively by getting their message across with correct spelling, punctuation, grammar and sentence structure and style.

Kathleen

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Recommended retail price if purchased from Elizabeth Manning Murphy is \$35.00 (GST not applicable). **Contact:** emmurphy.words@gmail.com.

Purchased from the publisher, Lacuna, **an imprint of Golden Orb Creative**, the cost is \$38.50 (which includes GST). **Contact:** general@goldenorbcreative.com.

Postage and packing is extra.

To learn more, see the author's website: www.emwords.info > Books