
REVISION ASSIGNMENT: 10%

THE TASK

The document below is in need of revision. It has four sentences (just four *full* sentences) in which the tone or diction are totally off base. Fix it! You will want to consider issues related to “impartiality” (because this letter is about your *client*, not you or your feelings), as well as general tone and diction.

SCENARIO

- You are Joey Gibbs. You’re reviewing a document that “Jimmy Human” has sent you.
- Jimmy Human and you are at exactly the same seniority level at work. He is an employee working at the same office as you, which has just undergone some institutional changes. In the process of making these changes, the person responsible (Jonathan Resource) has made an error in calculating a revised workload for his staff.
- Staff at this office are expected to work a total of 37.5 hours each week. These hours are clearly explained on the workload form, but the new workload form actually adds up to 39 hours. This was not done on purpose; it was an oversight on Jonathan’s part.
- Jimmy Human, the letter writer, wrote an email in early January hoping to fix this mistake, but in all the commotion of the change-up at the office, Jonathan forgot to respond to his 5 August 2020 email.
- Jimmy, now frustrated and annoyed, has drafted the email below. Jimmy has asked you, Joey, to review the letter, because he is concerned the letter may not be very professional.
- Your task is below, and it tests your ability to (1) spot and revise issues of tone/language and (2) draft a basic, professional email to a colleague.

This assignment has three parts that are equally weighted, and you are encouraged to work in partners to complete this lab, but you do not have to. If you decide to work in partners, please email me asap so that I can appropriately set up your dropbox.

Part I: Students must clearly explain why these four sentences should be revised. What is wrong with them? Please separate the four sentences clearly in a Word document so I can easily read your explanations. **Use the attached WORD DOCUMENT to complete both Part I and Part II.**

Part II: Drawing on lessons from Week 3’s class, students must re-write these four sentences of the document to make it more polite and professional. You should modify the tone and diction of the sentence to create a more effective letter. You do not need to rewrite the entire letter or add anything new beyond these four revisions; just revise the specific sentences you’ve noted. You may not “cut” sentences. This is a *tone* and *diction* exercise, so please do not comment on things such as style or grammar (there are, though, no grammar errors).

PART III: In a separate document, draft a short email (the **content** of the email should be approximately 200-300 words or so) and arrange it in a proper email format (see Week 2’s lessons). This is the email you, Joey, are sending to Jimmy in order to explain to him in a tactful, kind, supportive way that his email needs work. Use the lessons I’ve taught regarding a basic email structure, and reply to Jimmy’s request. Your reply must be professional and supportive, and it must adopt a tone/style that shows a

good understanding of how to speak to people professionally, even if you believe they have made serious mistakes or are about to make serious mistakes. That means keep negative language to an absolute minimum and focus on *forward*-looking language that is encouraging, positive, and (as noted above) professional. You may offer some specific advice, general advice, or any other information you think would be helpful; and remember that a good email always invites feedback/response, as outlined in Week 2.

Some brief advice on writing emails, especially those of a critical nature:

- Always use neutral subject lines in your emails and letters. For instance, "Email Edit." This makes the purpose of the letter clear, which is all a subject line should do.
- Do not "compliment" your audience excessively. Not only is this misleading in a letter that is meant to be somewhat critical, but an excess of compliments can sometimes sound very disingenuous (even if you mean them!). Keep focused on the **purpose** of your messages, which is rarely "to compliment." People will appreciate a straightforward, clear email much more than an unclear one with a lot of misleading / confusing compliments!
- I suggest reviewing my notes on topic sentences/concluding sentences in paragraphs. This is about structuring paragraphs well. I'm happy to help guide you further if this is an issue you're having in your writing.
- Your email **must be helpful**. An email that says too little or says too much or that says nothing constructive and concrete will be of little use in a workplace. You're trying to show me that you know how to help people, speak to people, and analyze the needs of your audience when you are confronted with difficult situations.

GRADING

Here are the questions I will be asking as I grade your assignment:

1. Have students revised the note so that it is professional? Have students maintained the essential content of Jimmy's note?
2. Did students follow all instructions? Did they use learning from class (including the 1-hour BONGO class) to improve their understanding of communication?
3. Have students meaningfully and tactfully communicated the central point of the email? And do the revisions *keep the original meaning* of each sentence?
4. Have students been attentive to connotation and denotation, as well as language and tone?
5. Does the response offer detailed explanations of creative decisions that students made?
6. Are both the response and revisions written in full, coherent sentences?
7. Did students properly incorporate lessons and terminology from the first several weeks of class?

Please note that Jimmy's email is on the next page.

To: Joey <joe@HR.org>
From: Jimmy Human <jh@humanland.net>
Subject: Follow-Up Request Regarding Workload Increase
CC:
Attached:

1 September 2020

Dear Joey,

Thanks for offering to read over this document. Here is the letter I've drafted to Jonathan. Please let me know what you think.

Dear Jonathan,

I am writing this email as a follow-up to my email of 5 August 2020, in which I very reasonably requested a fuller explanation of the workload increase indicated on our team's contract renewal. As you know, our office's weekly workload should add up to 37.5 hours; however, our new contract adds up to 39 hours. Many members of our department are unsure of whether or not this discrepancy represents a change in policy or an error in drafting the contract.

The office would like you to explain yourself. In light of the fact that the new contract takes effect 1 October 2020, we are hoping to receive a response before that date. Sorry I sound impatient with you in this note, but our office needs you to write a response so that they can anticipate and manage their work-related duties effectively.

I insist that you get back to me as soon as possible on this matter. If you have any questions or concerns, you can reach me at 519-111-3333. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours,

Jimmy Human

What do you think, Joey? Can I send this as it is?

Cheers!
Jimmy

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR PART I & II WORD DOC.

SENTENCE: [Insert the sentence that you wish to revise here].

EXPLANATION: [Provide an explanation of the need for revision].

REVISED SENTENCE: [Provide the revised sentence].

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EXPLANATION: [Provide an explanation of the need for revision].

REVISED SENTENCE: [Provide the revised sentence].

SENTENCE: [Insert the sentence that you wish to revise here].

EXPLANATION: [Provide an explanation of the need for revision].

REVISED SENTENCE: [Provide the revised sentence].

SENTENCE: [Insert the sentence that you wish to revise here].

EXPLANATION: [Provide an explanation of the need for revision].

REVISED SENTENCE: [Provide the revised sentence].