

**Teachers' Manual for the  
*80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing***

**Dr. Scott W. Kunkel  
University of San Diego**

## *Table of Contents*

|  | <b>Page</b> |
|--|-------------|
| Purpose of This Manual .....   | 1           |
| The “Bad Writing Conundrum” .....  | 1           |
| How to Give Your Students Access to the 80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing ..... | 3           |
| Coaching Versus Co-authoring .....   | 3           |
| Evaluating Papers and Projects – The Process .....                             | 4           |
| Reviewing in Word for Electronic Submissions .....                             | 5           |
| Summary .....  | 6           |

# Teachers' Manual to the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing*

## *Purpose of This Manual*

This manual is being written for the high school teacher or college professor who is planning to use the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* in evaluating student projects or papers. I will share my experience teaching writing-intensive courses and some excellent coaching and advice I received in some “Writing Across the Curriculum” training early in my development of writing-intensive teaching methodologies.

By the completion of this manual you should find it relatively easy to include much larger amount of student writing in your classes than you ever thought possible with little or no increase in your grading workload.

## *The “Bad Writing Conundrum”*

One problem with grading students in professional courses (non-English courses) is what I call the “Bad Writing Conundrum.” When a student turns in a project that contains numerous grammar, punctuation, referencing, etc., errors – bad writing – what do you do as a teacher? If you accept the paper and grade it solely on how it handles the content that is relevant to your course, you are telling the student that bad writing doesn't matter.

However, we all know that bad writing DOES matter, both to the student's career and to the company for which they will work. U.S. businesses lose \$255 billion annually due to poor writing and math skills. According to a survey of Fortune 1000 companies, 76% of top executives believe that good writing is critical to business success, yet only 26% offer any kind of help to their employees who struggle with poor writing skills.

Corporate America spends in excess of \$3.1 billion per year on remedial writing training, yet poor business writing is a growing epidemic. We can't ignore this need and allow students to graduate from our programs not knowing how to write and/or how to find resources that will help them produce professional quality letters, memos and reports.

On the other hand, if you are not an English teacher, where do you find time to correct writing problems when you haven't enough time to cover and assess the material in your own course, much less time to build the writing skills of your students?

As a business professor for over 25 years, I developed a simple tool that significantly improves the writing skills of your students and, in addition, can take hours off your project/paper evaluating time compared to writing notes to the students in the margin. This tool is called the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing*.

The name of the book comes from the “80/20 rule.” The 80/20 rule states that 80% of your results come from 20% of your efforts. For example:

- 80% of sales will be made to 20% of your customers;
- 80% of your problems will come from 20% of your employees (or students);
- 80% of outcomes can generally be attributed to 20% of the inputs;
- The world is not linear – there are a few really important variables and then a whole lot of trivia.

The *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* concentrates on the most important grammar, word choice, punctuation, referencing, and style issues so that the critical points don’t get buried in the trivia of seldom-used grammatical rules. The *80/20 Guide to Business Writing* doesn’t try to be comprehensive, or to include all grammatical, punctuation, style and referencing rules. Instead, in less than 80 pages, this guide puts the most frequently used, most vital writing information and fixes for the most common writing errors at your students’ fingertips in an easy-to-find, simple-to-use form.

The *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* is arranged in section number order. Therefore, when you see a run-on sentence, you no longer have to write in the margin:

This is a run-on sentence. A run-on sentence is when you separate two independent clauses with a comma. You need to break this into two sentences, use a semicolon or use a conjunction such as “and” or “or.”

Now all you have to do when you see a run-on sentence is write “See §2.10” in the margin. The student then goes to section 2.10 in the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* where they will find an explanation of this error, how to fix it, and how to never make that error again.

Many students tell me that they learned more about good business writing in my class than in any English class they ever had, and I never discuss writing in the class – my classes are business classes. All the learning comes from being referred to the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* when they have made a mistake and learning exactly how to fix that specific mistake – just-in-time learning.

To use the very powerful tool of the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* all you need to do is spend an hour or so becoming familiar with and comfortable with the guide yourself so that you know the rules yourself and know how to quickly find the appropriate section in the table of contents of the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing*.

## ***How to Give Your Students Access to the 80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing***

Unfortunately, the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* is not free – it is a book that is being sold to university students, school districts, and even companies to help develop their executives' writing skills.

If you are a college professor, all you need to do is to add the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* to your required books for the course and have the students buy it along with the text for the course. Contact me for an examination copy. If you decide to implement the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing*, let me know and I will contact your bookstore to make sure they know how to order the book for your students.

If you are a high school teacher and you decide you want to use this tool, you do not need to buy one for every student. Many of the high school teachers keep a set of 20 or 30 *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* books in their classroom for students to refer to and the books last for several years.

Some high school teachers have found sponsor companies in their communities that will help them buy a particular resource such as *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing*. Contact me at <scott.kunkel@gmail.com> and let me know if you want an examination copy that you can show to company owners or executives in your community and request their help in buying some copies of the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* for your classroom. Perhaps the company managers may decide to buy some copies for their own junior executives and will purchase an extra 25 or 30 copies to donate to your classroom at the same time.

## ***Coaching Versus Co-authoring***

When I first started doing this I found that I spent an inordinate amount of time correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammar problems in my students' projects. An English professor colleague leading a "Writing Across the Curriculum" workshop helped me to learn how to cut the load down to being manageable.

She explained to me that correcting every error in a report wasn't teaching, it was co-authoring the report. It was like tying a four-year-old's shoes instead of teaching him how to do it for himself. She reminded me that I should be teaching the student how to do excellent work independently, not correcting every error for the student or editing their work for them.

You must remember that you will not be there the first time the student has to write a memo, letter or report on the job. Therefore, the student must develop other resources to help with their editing.

I tell students early in the semester that I can not be their editor. They will need to use the writing center, friends, spouse, parents, fellow students, or someone other than me to help them edit their projects since I won't be there when they do their first report or memo on the job.

I will point out when a project needs editing, but they will need to get it edited before they resubmit it to me.

## ***The “Bad Writing Letter Exercise”***

To bring the message of the importance of good writing home, I have the students do a simple in-class exercise early in the semester. There is a PowerPoint exercise on the <ConsultantLearning.com> website on the Teacher Resources tab, Other Teacher Resources link, called the “Bad Writing Exercise” and it is available for you to use for FREE.

The Bad Writing Exercise is a PowerPoint presentation showing a real business letter that was received by my wife, Cindy Jones, from a car dealership here in San Diego several years ago. The letter contains 40 grammatical, spelling, punctuation, wording, spacing, and style errors in a one-page letter!

I put the letter up on the screen in PowerPoint and have the students spend 5 minutes identifying the errors. I tell the students that I will pay them \$100 (i.e., give bonus points) if they can find at least 20 errors in 5 minutes, but when the exercise is over I usually give credit to everyone who tried regardless of how many errors they found. Then we spend a few minutes going through the errors in the letter, showing how ridiculous and incompetent this carelessness makes the writer look.

Then I ask the students what they think of the writer. When they rant about how stupid and incompetent he is, I help them see that is how they will be perceived by others if they send out badly written reports, letters and memos.

I explain that nobody is good at everything. The letter writer’s mistake was not that the letter had so many errors. The real mistake was sending out a letter that had so many errors in it without bothering to get someone else to help him edit it. If professional writing is one of the skills that the writer knew he was short on, he should have gotten help. Most of the students get the point.

The Bad Writing Letter PowerPoint presentation is available for you to use for FREE on the website <[www.ConsultantLearning.com/Teacher/OtherTeacherResources](http://www.ConsultantLearning.com/Teacher/OtherTeacherResources)>.

Writing errors are like static in music. These can so distract the reader/listener that they are totally unable to appreciate the content of the report/music.

## ***Evaluating Papers and Projects – The Process***

When I evaluate projects I keep the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* open to the table of contents on my desk, so I can quickly refer to the section number that describes that error when I see one. When I get a four-page report with lots of writing errors in it, I do not correct or even comment on every error in the entire report. I make comments on the errors on the first page only.

Then I give it back with a note saying, “You can see by the number of errors on the first page that this needs careful editing. Get it edited and resubmit.” This places the responsibility on the student to get it edited.

When a project is resubmitted, I require that the original version be submitted along with the rewrite. In just a few moments I can check the first page of the resubmission to see if the student has corrected all the errors that I pointed out in the original on page one. Then I go on to page two.

If I find several errors on page two, I again send it back to the student to resubmit. I tell them that it must be grammatically correct before I (or any reader) will pay the slightest attention to the content. In addition to distracting the reader, having lots of errors in a letter is a very bad reflection on the writer, and after having seen the “Bad Writing Letter” Exercise, most of the students understand this.

It doesn’t take but a time or two of having to resubmit because of writing errors to make most students begin to edit their own work more carefully and utilize other resources such as the *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing*, the writing center, and colleagues before submitting. If you are using Consultant Learning®, the student is losing fees when he has to resubmit because as time goes by they earn less and less in Early Submission Bonus fees (see the section on Early Submission Bonuses in the *Student Guide to Consultant Learning®*). Only after the report is professional quality in writing style will I evaluate the project for content.

If you are not using Consultant Learning®, you might consider having some limit to the number of times that a student is allowed to resubmit a project before editing errors are counted against them, or some point penalty for each time that project must be resubmitted because of writing errors.

If you will follow this process, you will find that you spend no more time evaluating project reports than you used to spend making up and grading exams.

## ***Reviewing in Word for Electronic Submissions***

My students submit everything to me as Word documents attached to emails. I use the “reviewing” function in Word to tell them what needs to be done to resubmit. I have them number every submission with the course number, their name, and the project number and the version number so I can keep versions straight. For example, project 1 version 1 in Management 302 submitted by William Jones would be file-named M302-JonesW-p1v1.

When I return p1v1 to the student for a rewrite, I name it p1v1r. When the student resubmits the project to me he names it p1v2. When I evaluate p1v2 of this project, I have p1v1 on my computer to refer to. I just check what comments I made in version 1 as I evaluate version 2. This resubmission process continues until the project is excellent quality. The student is losing fees (or points) each time the project has to be resubmitted, and each time they learn how to write better.

## *Summary*

This manual is in a state of development. It is intended to make it easier for you to set up use *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* and to increase the use of writing assignments without increasing your grading load. If you have questions or things you feel you need to talk to someone about, email me at <scott.kunkel@gmail.com> or call me at 619-276-2376 and I will do everything I can to get you the resources, teacher contact, and information that you need to be successful at implementing *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing* into your teaching.

Using this system, with a teaching load of 70 students a semester I have been able to promise 48 hour turnaround of student projects and very seldom have I failed to meet that 48 hour goal. This process is doable and much more fulfilling than having to choose between only using multiple choice or short answer exams as your assessment methods or having to spend hundreds of hours correcting bad writing.

If you have questions that you feel were not answered in this manual please you can contact me at <scott.kunkel@gmail.com> or call me at 619-276-2376 and I will try to answer you questions. I will also try to correct that shortcoming in this manual for future users of this Teachers' Manual.

If you are like most of the teachers who have tried *80/20 Guide™ to Business Writing*, you will find it offers a wonderful way for you to help your students to significantly improve their professional business writing skills while at the same time having a very small impact on your grading load.

If you have not done so yet, I suggest that you look at the Consultant Learning methodology at <www.ConsultantLearning.com>. You may find that it is a wonderful tool for vastly improving your teaching experience and the learning experience of your students.