

7 Steps to Better Written Policies and Procedures

Exercises and Suggestions to Improve your
Writing Skills for Policies and Procedures



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Introduction

I started writing policy and procedure books in 1983. Up to this time, I had worked in various positions on business processes, policies, and procedures. Being a researcher, I was frustrated with the lack of books in my career field. My mother had just written a book so I decided it was time to write my first book based on my current experiences. The first book was called "*Handbook of Business Policies and Procedures*." This book focused on setting up a system of policies and procedures for printed manuals only.

I continued working in the policies and procedures field and greatly increased my experience through projects like ISO 9000 Quality Standards, Capability Maturity Model, Malcolm Baldrige Award, Six Sigma, or Value Engineering. Around 1997, I decided to rewrite my first book to include network and web formats. I did extensive research and added two chapters; the book was renamed, "[Establishing a System of Policies and Procedures](#)."

In 2000, I had been working at a telecommunications company and our department set up a quality department that focused on measuring every process and procedure for a software engineering department. This job inspired me to write "[Achieving 100% Compliance of Policies and Procedures](#)." This book uses a real life case study (based on a labor-intensive procedure from an earlier job) to show how a procedure is written, published, communicated, trained, and measured to make substantial improvements to publish a new procedure.

In 2001, I wrote this book, "[7 Steps to Better Written Policies and Procedures](#)." My readers had been pestering me to write an entire book on the writing format, a method of writing that has become central to any system of policies and procedures. This book is an extension of Chapter 4 from my first book, "[Establishing a System of Policies and Procedures](#)."

In 2002, I wrote, "[Best Practices in Policies and Procedures](#)," a book that focuses on an important element missing from my existing books, namely, a proven method for determining **content**, one of the most difficult tasks in the policies and procedures field.

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ORDERING INFORMATION

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Although I have extensively researched all sources to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information contained in this book, I assume no responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, omissions, or other inconsistencies. Any slights against people or organizations are unintentional.



About the Author

Stephen B. Page is the author of six books, five of which focus on process improvement, business processes, policies, and procedures. Stephen holds a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) in Management from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). He is certified as a project manager (PMP), software engineer (CSQE), records manager (CRM), and forms consultant (CFC).

His employment record contains an impressive list of multinational companies including Nationwide Insurance, Atos Origin, Compuware, Qwest Communications, Boeing Aircraft, Eastman Kodak, and Litton Industries. Stephen has more than 30 years experience in researching, writing, editing, publishing, communicating, training, measuring, and improving business processes, policies, procedures, and forms. He has written more than 250 company manuals in both printed and electronic formats and 6000 policies and procedures. He has designed 4000 forms and has set up manual and electronic form management systems. He has delivered policies and procedures in printed, network, web, CD-ROM, and video formats. He has first hand experience with the application of ISO Quality Standards, the Capability Maturity Model (CMM), Six Sigma, and the Malcolm Baldrige Award. Stephen has trained thousands of people in the art of writing effective policies and procedures.

Stephen has written many trade journal articles. His three most recent articles included two articles in 2001 on ISO 9000:2000 Quality Standards published in [American Society of Quality's](#) (ASQ's) *Quality Progress Journal* and in the [QualityWorld](#) magazine; and one article in 2000 published in ASQ's *Quality Progress Journal* on "Research: The Key to Quality Policies and Procedures." Stephen is a skilled presenter, facilitator, and team leader. He has participated on hundreds of team projects. He has presented seminars on the subject of printed and electronic policies and procedures, business processes, process improvement, and forms management.

Stephen has worked in various industries including consulting, manufacturing, telecommunications, financial banking, and retail. He has received dozens of awards for Total Quality Management (TQM) suggestions.



Books by Stephen B. Page

PRINTED BOOKS			
Title	Publisher	©	URL (http://)
Best Practices in Policies and Procedures ISBN: 1929065-07-8	Process Improvement Publishing	2002	http://www.companymanuals.com/bestpractices/index.htm
7 Steps to Better Written Policies and Procedures ISBN: 1929065-24-8	Process Improvement Publishing	2001	http://www.companymanuals.com/writingformat/index.htm
Achieving 100% Compliance of Policies and Procedures ISBN: 1929065-49-3	Process Improvement Publishing	2000	http://www.companymanuals.com/compliance/index.htm
Establishing a System of Policies and Procedures ISBN: 1929065-00-0	Process Improvement Publishing	1998	http://www.companymanuals.com/index.htm
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Type	Document Title
Procedure	Ordering “Maintenance, Operating, Repair” (MRO) Supplies (Case Study)
Procedure	Organization Charts and Announcements
Policy	Bank Accounts



Preface

The focus of this book is to show you how to use a structured writing method (called the WRITING FORMAT) for writing policies and procedures. Through exercises, suggested answers, and explanations of possible answers, you will learn how to transform ideas and concepts (generated from business processes) into structured, consistent, logical, and well written, sentences, and paragraphs (policies and procedures). Your policies and procedures will be easy-to-read, easy to apply, and comprehensive. Exercises, checklists, suggested answers, detailed explanations, and sample policies and procedures will ease you into this writing process. With this proven and tested WRITING FORMAT, you will have the opportunity to develop and improve your writing style. Your readers will thank you.

My goal is for you to learn how to effectively use the **Writing Format and to teach it to others.**

For the purposes of this book, I am your teacher. I will give you enough information to make sound decisions when using the WRITING FORMAT and when teaching others how to use this writing method. I will give you ways you can succeed and become a better writer. I will give you exercises with “good” and “not so good” suggested answers to your responses. Each section of the WRITING FORMAT is methodically analyzed and explained to ensure you receive the best training possible. Two checklists are presented in Chapters 2 and 11 that will help you improve your editing abilities and help you write consistent and well laid-out policies and procedures. You will enhance your writing skills as a result of reading and doing the exercises in this book. With each chapter, you will gain valuable insight into ways that you can improve your writing style.

A key requirement of this book is that you must do the exercises to improve; and the more times you repeat the exercises, the better chance you will have in developing a writing style that matches or exceeds the suggested answers outlined in this book. Invaluable experience can be gained from these exercises. This book is a necessary addition for every person who owns one of my current books ([“Establishing a System of Policies and Procedures,”](#) [“Achieving 100% Compliance of Policies and Procedures,”](#) and [“Best](#)

[Practices in Policies and Procedures](#)”) because the WRITING FORMAT is the heart of any system of policies and procedures. The focus of any book on policies and procedures should be the WRITING FORMAT because without it, you would not have any way to record your thoughts.

This book emerged as the result of reader requests for real-life exercises using my recommended seven-step WRITING FORMAT (introduced in 1984) and sample written policies and procedures. This WRITING FORMAT has been successfully applied to thousands of companies in more than 25 countries. You will find the layout is easy to use once you have written several policies and procedures.

“I have often said that writing easy-to-read and comprehensive quality policies and procedures is an art that does not just happen. Sure, you can write the details of a policy or procedure, but to write quality documents that can be quickly understood and applied, is an art that comes only from experience, skill, and patience.”

While this book has been designed to accompany my two current books, any writer with a structured writing method (i.e., a writing format) for documenting policies and procedures, can use the concepts and principles contained in this book. The book has been set up so you can apply its principles, guidelines, and exercises to your daily work, team meetings, or training classes. Sample policies and procedures taken from companies where I have previously worked, have been included in Part 3.

This book does more than other books that try to teach how to write policies and procedures. Few authors cover the mechanics of transforming concepts into a structured outline of paragraphs, sentences, and words. Procedure authors often take the “writing” part of a policy or procedure system for granted. They fail to recognize that the WRITING FORMAT is the heart of a policies and procedures system.

The Writing Format is the heart of a policies and procedures system.

Writing policies and procedures is not free flowing writing like business letters or research papers. The writing skill for policies and procedures must be taught. Skills and techniques must be developed, trained, and mentored.

Without a method of documenting policies and procedures, you could not achieve the consistency and standardization that management demands. Your system of policies and procedures is doomed to a slow death if writers are permitted to publish unstructured policies and procedures that change from one time to the next. The quality and effectiveness of your policies and procedures will have a major influence on your reputation as a procedure writer, and possibly, your continued career at your current place of work.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

This book is laid out in three parts:

- **Part 1** – You are introduced to the writing format, the writing process, and an “Editing Checklist” for improving your writing style for policies and procedures.
- **Part 2** – You are introduced to the case study that is the focus of the scenarios used for Chapters 4 to 10. Exercises, suggested answers, and explanations of these answers, are included for each of the seven sections of the WRITING FORMAT
- **Part 3** – Three sample policies and procedures are presented for reference and comparison purposes.

While both printed and electronic formats exist, the focus of this book is on the WRITING FORMAT for printed policies and procedures. As is shown in my third book, [“Establishing a System of Policies and Procedures,”](#) you can use the principles of the WRITING FORMAT for network and/or web formats. Many companies use a combination of printed, network, and web policies and procedures. Statistics show that few companies use network and/or web formats exclusively for company policy and procedure manuals. In each of the companies where I worked, we had both printed and electronic manuals (network and/or web). Providing different delivery formats (e.g., printed, network, web, CD, video, or other media yet identified or discovered) can be beneficial to readers who learn in different ways.

The goal of this book is for you to improve your writing skills for policies and procedures and to write policies and procedures that are consistent, well written, and easily applied by your readers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book emerged from the experience I gained from writing my two current books on policies and procedures. Backed by multinational companies, I wrote these books while working in policy and procedure departments in large, and small companies in the manufacturing, banking, retail, telecommunications, and consulting industries. I have been using the same WRITING FORMAT for the past 30 years. From current book sales and reviews, it is apparent that my books have been well received. As a part of a series of books on policies and procedures, this new book will add value to the other two books because the WRITING FORMAT is the heart of any system of policies and procedures.

I owe many thanks to my readers who encouraged me to write this book through their emails, and kind letters. After reviewing sample policies and procedures from procedure writers that have adopted my WRITING FORMAT, I concluded that a book was needed to teach readers how to use and understand the mechanics of the WRITING FORMAT.

I thank the consulting team at the Columbus, Ohio branch of Atos Origin for encouraging me to write more books about my passion – helping others write effective policies and procedures.

I wish to thank Lisa Page, my daughter, for editing this book. She has a superb command of the language and I respect her comments. I also wish to thank Rhonda Myers, a current employee of American Electric Power in Columbus, Ohio, for taking time away from her busy personal life to carefully read this book. I consider her a peer in process improvement and I thought her comments would enhance this book.

I owe special thanks to my wife and family for allowing me to spend countless days, nights, and weekends to write, publish, and advertise this book. Without my wife's help and support with my book business, I could never have written this book.

Part 1

Introduction to the Writing Process

Chapter 1	Importance of a Writing Format
Chapter 2	The Writing Process





Chapter 1

Importance of a Writing Format

Objectives for this Chapter

- Establish importance of using a structured format for writing policies and procedures
- Demonstrate reasons for writing effective policies and procedures that readers can easily comprehend and apply
- Introduce a proven and tested WRITING FORMAT

Topics Include:

Purpose of a WRITING FORMAT

Plan of Action for Writing Policies and Procedures

WRITING FORMAT – The Layout

Frequently Asked Questions about the WRITING FORMAT

PURPOSE OF GOOD WRITING

Writing well is never easy. Most people, even professional writers, would agree that writing is a skill that does not come naturally. Writing requires great effort to combine creativity and attention to detail in a way that results in a product that people can read and understand with little effort. Whenever a writer puts pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, as is more likely the case today, the potential exists for misunderstanding. Good writing means many things to different people. I believe the phrase, “I will know it when I see it,” applies. If a writer has not defined the audience, purpose, or a focus, or if a document appears disorganized and hastily put together, the reader will be frustrated and confused. With good writing, your chance of reader comprehension and compliance increases.

You need to give the reader a roadmap and make it a smooth journey. The WRITING FORMAT is your roadmap; it will help the reader quickly understand the goals and objectives of a policy or procedure and lead him through the document from start to finish. Good writing is concise, clear, organized, and reader-specific. The purpose of any written document is to communicate thoughts or information. If readers cannot understand a document, communication is lost.

An editing checklist is introduced in Chapter 2, “The Writing Process,” to provide you with some important questions to help you arrange your words, and sentences into well-written and logical paragraphs. A second checklist is introduced in Chapter 11, “Writing Format Checklist,” to give you finality to your policy and procedure documents. With the writing process and these two checklists, you will achieve the goals of this book:

GOALS FOR THIS BOOK	
1	Improve your writing skills for policies and procedures
2	Document policies and procedures that are structured, consistent, accurate, well written, and easy to understand and apply
3	Teach you how to use the writing format for printed and electronic policies and procedures
4	Give you access to sample policies and procedures for reference purposes