



# Communication Culture

## PREPARATION POWER FOR WORD WIMPS

By Helena Kaufman, *The Afro News Vancouver*

“WHY DO I HAVE such a hard time when called to speak or write about things? Shouldn’t it be easy? After all I’m hearing and reading messages all around me, all the time.” We have this thought as we stare at a blank page, or at an audience of one or 100 and hope we’ll somehow be instantly inspired.

It may look simple to speak and write. It is not always easy.

### Art or science?

Summoning the right words to deliver a message is a delicious and sometimes daunting art. Today it’s pretty scientific too as we know so much about how messages can be delivered for maximum impact on our modern brain. In my 30 years of working with words to create ‘message magic’, I’ve found it’s most useful to think of communication success as craft. Anyone can therefore learn to communicate effectively.

### Mastery in layers

What’s the pro’s secret? Preparation. Managing information can prepare you for success and tame the fears, doubts and pitfalls that come naturally with communicating, especially when we attach extra importance to it. We may want to sell, persuade or influence. We may simply want to connect with people and be accepted or liked. Our messages are best delivered if they move through

these distinct stages of preparation towards our reading, or listening audience:

1. Planning
2. Writing
3. Refining
4. Evaluating

These steps will help you to check the effectiveness of your message and to enhance your communication power with practice, over time.

Maximize your effort in completing your project by dividing your time as follows:

1. **Plan - 20%** of your time spent in organizing your concept. Ask: Who am I writing to? What is my purpose? At the end of this, what do I want to achieve?
2. **Write -30%** of your time Outline: your most important message and write it out as clearly and to the point as you can, without over thinking.
3. **Revise - 45%** of your time spent on rewriting and refining. Are the facts correct? Do your grammar, sentences and paragraphs help or detract from the message. Check for clarity and if possible have another person read over your message, or listen to your speech to make sure it makes sense on the paper, or out loud.

4. **Evaluate - 5%** of your time. Did you hit the message mark? Identify any missing skill or step in your logic and resolve it for next time!

Repeat Step #3 until you feel satisfied that your message is interesting, makes sense, is complete for the purpose you have decided it will serve and that it flows well. It is in the editing and refining stage that ‘the magic’ happens.

Often, the time you dedicate to write and revise your work will lead you to an interesting breakthroughs or new understanding, of even your own message. Try it! Tell me what you discovered.

**VIP: Your very important point** is that preparation ensures clarity, precision and being concise. Use the writers’ 5Ws:

Know WHO you are talking to (in speech or text), WHY you are doing it, WHAT you need to say, WHERE you are most effective and WHEN to release your message for maximum benefit. Stumped on the HOW? Plan to hire or acquire the experience and skills you need to get it right.

---

*Helena is a business writing and conversation trainer and coach. [www.hospitalityambassador.com](http://www.hospitalityambassador.com), [www.helenakaufman.com](http://www.helenakaufman.com), Twitter, Facebook @HelenaKaufman. [www.theafronews.ca](http://www.theafronews.ca)*