

## 7 writing tips from RHETORICA® — a toolkit of 21 everyday writing techniques

### TOP TIP #3: Set time aside to plan

Poor or non-existent planning is the single biggest problem I see in business writing. Under deadline pressure, writers leap into drafting.

I call this an ‘action-illusion’: it makes them feel busy, but in the long run it’s neither efficient nor effective. They get halfway through their draft only to realise they’re going in the wrong direction, haven’t done their research or aren’t clear about their goal. They delete the draft and start again. That’s a ‘re-write’ and, in terms of writing efficiency, a disaster. Resist that ‘let’s-just-wing-it’ instinct and set time aside to plan.

Work out realistically the total amount of time you can spend on your document, from start to finish. Then apportion your time roughly like this:

Planning: 25%; Drafting: 50%; Editing: 25%.

Setting time aside to plan should be your very first step in the writing process.

So, if you often write under pressure of deadline and *speed* is an issue for you, paradoxically you need to spend time planning.

Make planning a deliberate, conscious, structured activity by ring-fencing a specific amount of time to do it properly. Treat it as an immovable commitment. It will pay off in the form of better first drafts, less editing and no (disastrous) re-writes.