Business writing differs from the academic format in key ways

- Structure
- Audience
- Format

But many of the key pillars of academic writing are still critical

- Grammar and syntax
- Clarity of presentation
- Critical thinking and analysis
Selected Grammar and Syntax Tips

- **Singular – plural:**
  - Make sure you are consistent with subject – verb and with subject – pronoun referencing that subject
  - **Examples of inconsistency:**
    - “They made sure to keep its promise”
    - “The company made sure to keep their promise”
    - “The companies focuses on environmental protection”

- **Hyphenating words: multi-word adjectives**
  - The award winner was an award-winning actress

- **Write out “percent” and numbers that are:**
  - At the beginning of a sentence (Twenty-two people attended)
  - Or less than 10 (Of the 22 attendees, eight were in favor)
Commas

- Commas are used to separate clauses (or asides)
- They are intended to be positioned where you would take a breath / pause in speaking a sentence
- When you have a leading dependent clause, you should end it with a comma.
- Likewise, you can have the dependent clause at the end, as is the case here.
- You should also separate two independent clauses with a comma and a conjunction, but you could also separate them with a semicolon and no conjunction.
- Interjections, such as this, are surrounded by commas.
Keys to Good Business Writing

- Avoid personal pronouns
  - I, my, me
  - We, our, us
- Avoid contractions
  - Do not use don’t
  - You should not use shouldn’t
- Avoid informal language
  - “Volkswagen is doing pretty well”
  - “Southwest has kind of cheap fares”
Avoid lengthy sentences, lengthy paragraphs, lengthy sections, and lengthy reports

At some point, especially after myriad dependent clauses and side notes, a business audience, as well as perhaps any audience, tires of reading, loses focus, drifts away, falls asleep, or starts daydreaming, unless your sentence – or paragraph, section, or report – mercifully closes and wraps up within their attention span...

The components of a list should be like terms (and the best lists have three items)

Do not list two nouns and an adjective: “He is a worker, a husband, and strong.”
Keys to Good Business Writing

- Structure!
  - Most common options:
    - Intro, Body, Conclusion
    - Intro, Conclusion, Body
  - Use headers
  - Create bridges and ensure flow
- Cite and include statistics and figures
  - Even if you only cite a prepared case study, note where your information is coming from
  - Do not reference ‘Exhibit 1 in the case study.’ Include a condensed table with the numbers you reference and include a footer to that table that cites the sources.
What to do with the Introduction?

- Be brief
  - Brevity is the soul of wit. And business writing. (Yes, that is not a complete sentence)

- Review key facts that are relevant to the subsequent analysis. It is important to know what brands or business lines a company engages in, but if you are not going to analyze marketing strategies, do not bring up marketing.

- For the case analysis: synthesize and recap the key points of the firm's strategy before moving on to address key strengths and weaknesses in its strategy
What to do with the Body?

- This may not be the second section of your report, but you need to do the analysis before you can make conclusions and recommendations, so do this next.
- Assess the industry conditions
- Use the tools we have learned to examine industry competitiveness (five forces) and the company’s position within it (SWOT)
- A solid analysis will weave a storyline through assessments
- Cite statistics and quote the company’s strategy or an industry assessment as necessary, but then analyze those statistics or the quotes you use
What to do with the Conclusion?

- This depends on what the specific aim of the report is. The main point here is to create a condensed summary of your findings from your analysis. Depending on the aim of the report, this should lead to recommendations somewhere on the following spectrum of tone:
  - Direct and explicit: “Company A should do this in response to X / to take advantage of Y”
  - Indirect and suggestive: “Company A could do this in response to X / to take advantage of Y”
  - Passive: “Companies in the industry have done this in response to X / to take advantage of Y”
  - Purely not action-oriented (if instructed to give no recommendations or suggestions): “This analysis found that X / Y is occurring and this could present challenges / opportunities.”