

May 11, 2021



Public Affairs
Council

Persuasive Writing Workshop

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Expertise



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Community

Why is this important?

- Your writing can always improve
- Written communication is pervasive and essential
- Attention spans are extremely low
- Your message is useless if it's not understood or powerfully persuasive
- Op-eds are particularly helpful in public affairs and can be used to hone your skills

Which one would you want to read?

Leprosy, a disease often associated with ancient times, is one of 17 “neglected tropical diseases.” These are conditions that traditionally receive little attention and funding. Fortunately, the private sector is making great progress in treating these conditions.

Jesus isn't the only one with a cure for leprosy.

Effective Messaging

Neuroscience:

For our purposes, we know two things about how the brain processes messages:

1. The brain likes things it instantly understands
2. We know the stuff it understands best is short (short words, short phrases, short sentences).



Effective Messaging

Be Concise

- Don't use a three-syllable word when a one- or two-syllable word works just as well
- Never (ever) send a reader scrambling to dictionary.com to figure out a meaning; it's not going to happen.
 - However, vary your word usage.
- Don't use a sentence when a phrase or fragment makes the same point. Don't use a seven- or eight-word fragment when a five-word fragment will do. And if you must use a paragraph, keep it as brief as humanly possible.

Effective Messaging

Refine Your Argument

- Can you reduce your entire argument to four two-word fragments?

“I can describe, and I've always been able to describe, what Republicans stand for in eight words, and the eight words are lower taxes, less government, strong defense and family values. We Democrats, if you ask us about one piece of that, we can meander for 5 or 10 minutes in order to describe who we are and what we stand for. And frankly, it just doesn't compete very well. I'm not talking about the policies. I'm talking about the language.”

-- **U.S. Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D.**, *The New York Times Magazine*

Effective Messaging

Be Specific

Don't fall back on the obvious.

- Effective messaging goes a step or two deeper, moving away from the general and toward the specific. So “great service” can become “always available” or “total accountability”; “quality products” translates to “reliable computers”
- The aim here is to be descriptive while still communicating a benefit that resonates with the target audience.
- The reader doesn't need to know that a person is unique, but how they are unique

Effective Messaging: Clear and Concise

Message #1

Regulatory issue are growing more complex every day, with government agencies cracking down on compliance, making it imperative for companies to have a plan in place for meeting specific requirements

Message #2

Regulatory issues grow more complex by the day, and government agencies are cracking down on compliance. So it's vital that companies have a plan to meet the requirements

Effective Messaging: Clear and Concise

Message #1

- Sentences: 1
- Words: 30
- Words/sentence: 30
- Complex words: 6

Message #2

- Sentences: 3
- Words: 28
- Words/sentence: 9.3
- Complex words: 6

Effective Messaging

Refine Your Message

Message #1

Same sex couples are proud and patriotic Americans who contribute to the American economy and society.

Message #2

Legalized same-sex marriage promotes fairness and equality.

Effective Messaging:

Refine Your Message

Message #1

- Sentences: 1
- Words: 16
- Complex words: 1

Message #2

- Sentences: 1
- Words: 7
- Complex words: 2

Additional Tactics

Unity

- First person vs. second person
- Mood, tone, formality, enthusiasm
- Use active voice

Clarity

- Eliminate adverbs
- Remove partial qualifiers
- Signposting
- Alert the reader to mood changes

Style

Identify your own style after stripping it down

Additional Tactics

Clutter

- Remove unnecessary phrases
- Being professional doesn't mean being indirect

Structure

- Make your point as soon as possible
- Intrigue readers at the beginning, nudge their curiosity
- Know when to end
 - Don't end with "in summary" or "in all"
- Try to end with referencing to the beginning

Exercise: Brevity

Exercise: Brevity

The director of FEMA gave a briefing to reporters on the status of Hurricane Florence.

The legislation is designed to replace a dozen current laws that are old and outdated.

Our primary goal and overriding objective is to register 200,000 new voters by the time of the midterm elections.

Our association is responsible for accumulating, gathering, assessing, and analyzing data of critical importance to members of state legislatures.

Exercise: Brevity

We often provide encouragement to new members at the commencement of their duties.

The EPA has taken notice of this impressive reduction in incidents, accidents, and events.

With healthcare costs on the rise, members of Congress in Washington are coming to the conclusion that they need to take action.

The report said there were three objectives that needed by be accomplished by the strategy.

Exercise: Brevity

There is no bill currently under consideration in Congress that would transform the ways that insurance exchanges are operated.

If changes in efforts to reform taxes ever come under consideration, we will communicate updates directly to our membership.

Approximately 80 percent of respondents said they employ a consultant before undertaking any project of a large and broad scope.

We have asked the committee to offer us an explanation of their legislative proposal.

Structuring Advocacy Emails

Advocacy Emails

- The subject line is critical
- Front load the email
- Use short paragraphs
- Keep background to minimum
- Bullets - break up the space for **SCANABILITY** and easy visual digestion.
- Clear call to action



Advocacy Emails

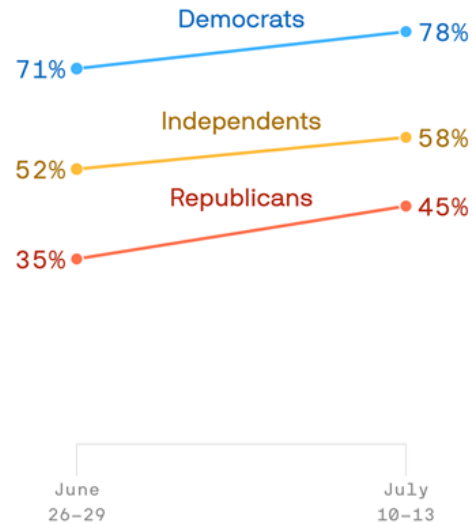
- Each email should have a singular message and call to action
- Test everything
- Use personalized information
- Talk directly to your advocates
- Establish a messenger and authentically communicate in their voice
- Hyperbole, scarcity, false deadlines, and highly partisan content

Emails for Advocacy

2. More Republicans back masks

Percent who say they wear masks at all times when leaving their home

Survey of U.S. adults by political party



Data: Axios/Ipsos poll of 1,063 U.S. adults ($\pm 3.1\%$ margin of error). Chart: Andrew Witherspoon/Axios

Nearly two-thirds of Americans — and a noticeably increasing number of Republicans — say they're wearing a face mask whenever they leave the house, Axios' Sam Baker writes from the new Axios-Ipsos Coronavirus Index.

62% of those surveyed said they're wearing a mask "all the time" when they leave the house — up from 53% when we asked the same question two weeks ago.

- **The biggest jump** was among Republicans: 45% say they're wearing a mask all the time, up from 35% at the end of June.
- **Even though it's narrowing**, there's still a big partisan divide: 95% of Democrats say they wear a mask some or all of the time outside the house, compared with 74% of Republicans.

Between the lines: These numbers may seem high — do two-thirds of the people you pass on the street have a mask on?

- **But the fact** that more people are claiming to wear them is a sign that masks are increasingly seen as important.

My favorite stat: 15% said they've told someone else to put on a mask.

- *Share this graphic.*

Subject line

Time to Return to the office |

Untitled newsletter

By Nicholas DeSarno • Sep 03 2020

Smart Brevity™ count: 0 mins...0 words

Type your intro here...

Write your headline...

Add featured image +



Emails for Advocacy

Nicholas's 2018
year in review



Your choices speak for themselves—2018 has been a blast. So before we say hello to 2019, let's take a look back at a few of your personal highlights and some highlights from around the world.

You joined

2352

days ago. It's been real.

Rider rating

4.79★

Thanks for being such a great passenger.



AAMC Association of
American Medical Colleges

Tell Congress:

Sign on to forgive student loans for frontline health workers

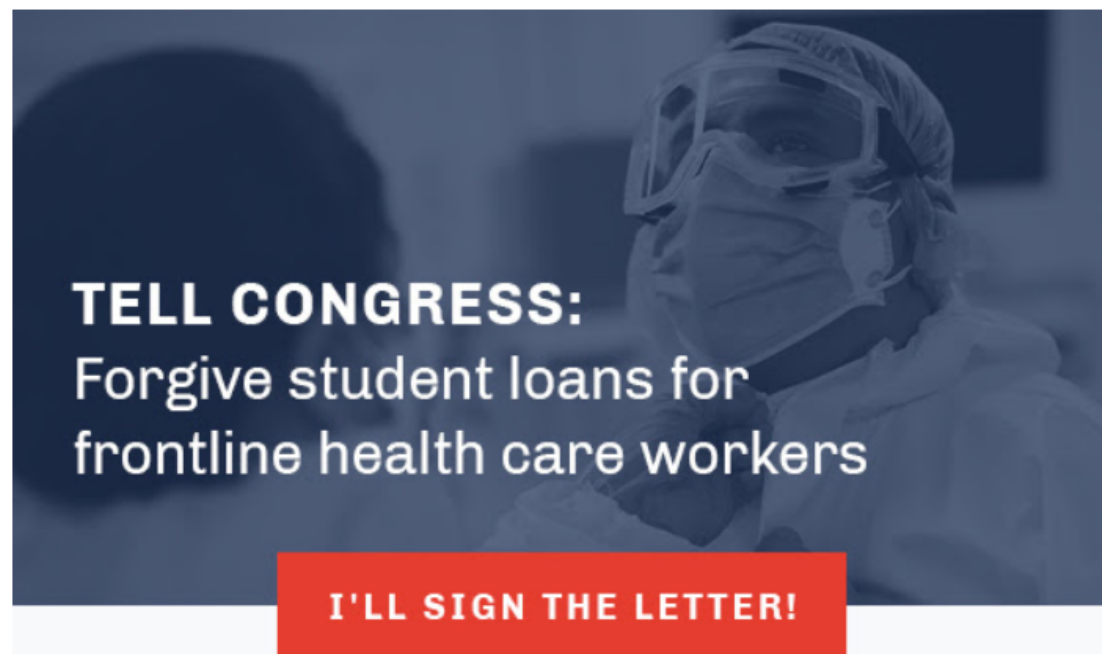
It's undeniable, Nicholas:

During the last year, medical professionals have stepped up when asked. Some medical students and other students in the health professions graduated early to enter the workforce. Other health professionals voluntarily took up calls to travel halfway around the U.S. to care for communities facing the worst COVID-19 outbreaks.

Many have risked their lives daily for people across this country, and sadly, thousands of health care professionals have died from the pandemic.

We need to show our support for our frontline heroes. And that's why we're asking you to urge your member of Congress to cosponsor the Student Loan Forgiveness for Frontline Health Workers Act (H.R. 2418). This bill would forgive all public and private student loans for health care workers who have made significant contributions to patient care, medical research, and testing during the COVID-19 national emergency.

Can you reach out to your members of Congress to cosponsor this bill? Send your letter now to thank those who have cosponsored this important legislation — and encourage those who have not to become cosponsors themselves >>



Nicholas, healthcare workers are absolutely critical to our nation's health care infrastructure.

Whether they're treating a surge in COVID-19 patients or conducting critical research in a lab, frontline workers keep us safe and healthy during these unprecedented times. We can show our appreciation for their efforts through student loan forgiveness.

Ask your members of Congress to cosponsor this bill and support student loan forgiveness for health workers on the front lines of COVID-19 — it's easy and it only takes a minute >>

With gratitude,

AAMC Action

Next Presenter



Mary C. Curtis, an award-winning multimedia journalist based in Charlotte, N.C.

- Columnist, Roll Call Host, 'Equal Time' podcast
- Contributor: NPR/WCCB News Rising Charlotte
- Senior Facilitator/Public Voices Fellowship Program | The OpEd Project