

Guideline 5: Use personal pronouns

The personal pronouns "you" and "we" can take the place of nouns, such as "all citizens" and "the department." When the writer is an "I" or a "we" and the reader is a "you," the reader understands quickly who the message is for, and who is delivering it.

How do I do this?

- Establish the agency or person sending the letter, in the opening or on the letterhead. Then use "I" or "we."
- Assume the reader is the intended recipient and refer to him or her as "you."

Why do this?

- The reader will be more committed to reading the message.
- The reader can more quickly understand how they fit into the message.

Do	Don't
We, I	the agency, the department
You	the worker, applicant, employee
We accept applications Monday through Thursday.	Applications are accepted Monday through Thursday.
I will send you the documents by Wednesday.	The department sends documents to applicants every Wednesday.