



CONSULTING GROUP<sup>SM</sup>  
the people side of business strategy

# TiDbits on writing<sup>®</sup> part 3

## LETTER FROM TD

We hope you enjoy Part 3 of our series, *TiDbits on Writing*<sup>®</sup>.

These practical tips will help you tackle some of the major stumbling blocks in writing on the job – whether preparing reports, proposals, or even e-mails. We'll cover issues like how to write with clarity, how to write compelling leads, and even how to use proper punctuation.

Enjoy! And happy writing!

— Laura Winterroth  
Managing Director



For back issues of *TiDbits on Writing*<sup>®</sup> or to invite others to subscribe free of charge, please go to [www.tdgroupusa.com/Publications](http://www.tdgroupusa.com/Publications).

## TiDbits

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## Commas, please

Some writing gurus will point you to the *Chicago Manual of Style* to learn the intricacies of proper punctuation – how to dot those *i*'s and cross those *t*'s. And that's a great resource. But because we're not writing a book today, we'd rather highlight one pet peeve: how today's business writers fail to use the noble comma.

### With Abbreviations

When you spot common abbreviations – *i.e.*, *e.g.*, and *etc.* – in the middle of a sentence, not only do they require periods, they must be

#### Common Abbreviations and Their Meanings

<i>i.e.</i>	that is	specifies
<i>e.g.</i>	for example	illustrates
<i>etc.</i>	et cetera	and so on

surrounded on all sides by commas. These abbreviations may be shortcuts, but don't skimp on the commas.

*Abigail arrived at her favorite museum in New York City, i.e., The Frick.*

*As a manager, Brian had a lot going for him, e.g., patience.*

*Owen brought manuals, slides, business cards, etc., to the sales meeting.*

### With Dates

Most of us know that a date requires a comma after the month and day, and before the year: *April 14, 1865*.

But, when that same date appears mid-sentence, you need to add another comma before continuing.

*The goal of Reconstruction was further complicated when, on April 14, 1865, a lone gunman entered Ford's Theater.*

### Using Serial Commas

Perhaps back in grammar school you were told to omit a comma before the word "and." Not so! That may work for journalists – NOT for business writers, who insert all of the commas that are appropriate for a "series" of items, what we call "serial" commas.

*Leaders expand their influence by networking, coaching, and mentoring.*

Try your hand at this paragraph. How many commas would you use?

*Our seminar i.e. Dynamic Presentations<sup>®</sup> scheduled for October 2 can help you overcome the jitters the stammering and the plain old dread of having all eyes upon you.*

Remember: read your text aloud; listen for natural pauses; and grant commas their rightful place!

*Answer: 6 commas. Our seminar, i.e., Dynamic Presentations<sup>®</sup>, scheduled for October 2, can help you overcome the jitters, the stammering, and the plain old dread of having all eyes upon you.*