
Creating a Purpose Statement

A purpose statement is similar to a thesis statement. Purpose statements perform the following functions:

- *Provide direction for your writing*—when you identify what you are going to do and for whom and why, you will know exactly what information you will need to provide for support
- *Provide your audience with the reason for the document*—business people are too busy to read your entire document before determining if it is something they are interested in. If they don't see the purpose statement in the first paragraph, they will not read any further
- *Provide your audience with an expectation or contract about why you are engaging their attention*—if you put in your purpose statement that you are going to propose a new computer system and it is for the purpose of saving a company money, time, and effort, the audience will be expecting a comparison between existing and future costs, time, and effort. They won't be expecting you to write about graphics unless the graphics will relate to saving money, time, or effort

The purpose statement generally should be the first thing that your audience reads in a report, an executive summary, a proposal, a memo, or any other business document that you create. The audience should neither be required to search for the purpose statement, nor should they be required to try to understand poorly written statements.

To develop an effective purpose statement, you may use the following template:

My primary purpose is to _____, so that (audience member) will_____.

By writing your primary purpose and the effect you want to have on your audience, you have directed the scope of your writing project for yourself and given your audience certain expectations about the rest of the document.

You may need to refine the language of your purpose statement to fit your specific audience and purpose. You might consider the following:

1. In this report, I will
2. The purpose of this proposal is to request funding for, so that our department will....
3. In this memo, we will describe four causes of conflict in the workplace and how to avoid conflict
4. The purpose of this email is to provide....



Remember when you revise, you may want to refine your purpose statement but explicit is always the best way to present your purpose.