

Helpful Hints

Good program description helps sell a class. Writing copy is a very important aspect of developing your course. The program description is your selling copy. This is what must convince our readers that your program is sufficiently valuable that they should commit their time and money to take it.

Avoid Incomplete Sentences

Complete sentences communicate in a personal, friendly and understandable way. Remember that your catalog is not a university line schedule. Every program has to succeed on its own merits to your readers.

Use the Second Person Voice

Writing the program description in third person has a “distancing” effect. “The participants will have an opportunity to...” refers to “them”. When you write the same idea as “You will have an opportunity to...” you are using welcoming language. This kind of language can be just the subtle motivator you need to convince a prospective participant to sign up.

Boring Introductory Sentences

This is probably the most common mistake in writing program descriptions. Writing good copy is not easy. We see frequent descriptions beginning with the same language: “In this program...”, “Students will...”, “You will learn...”, “This program is ...” After reading these phrases a few hundred times, our readers may just fall asleep.

The way to keep interest is to vary the opening sentences of your descriptions. There are at least five different techniques you can use to keep your program descriptions lively and varied:

- Use an impressive fact: “Lighting is the key to good photography.”
- Use humor: “Since choking is not an option for dealing with difficult people...”
- Use a benefit of participation: “There are at least ten ways to increase your retirement savings, and you can put all of them to work for you in one week.”
- Use a definition: “Batik is the age old art of dying cloth using wax and dye.”
- Ask a question. This will immediately engage the reader, who will inevitably want to find out the answer. “Why does my car go ‘ping, ping?’”

Flowery and Overcooked Prose

Since space for course descriptions is limited to 50 words for each course, you will not want to wax poetic for too long in any one description. One brief flight of fancy is more than enough. Get to the point; sell the benefit; omit unnecessary words.

If you avoid these common mistakes and use these helpful techniques, you will have more powerful, effective selling copy.

Adapted and reprinted from [Learning Resources Network](#).