

COMPOSING EFFECTIVE COPY

Whether you're creating a property flier, a classified ad, or an e-mail to a potential client, how you lay out your information in writing can matter as much as the information itself. You don't have to be a wonderful writer to compose effective communications. You do, however, need to pay attention to a few elements of your prose.

Lose the lingo. If you've ever tried to read a physics text book, you may have some idea how your ads look to many readers. You can assume that anyone trolling the classifieds knows that a 3/2 means three bedrooms and two bathrooms. But what's a 3/2/2? Two-car garage? Two living rooms? And watch your abbreviations. BR? Bedroom. BA? Bathroom. DWD? Um

Add some emotion. Any communication promoting a listing should do more than list the number of bedrooms and bathrooms. Appeal to the reader's heart. Play off the property's style, view, or other unique feature to create an image in the buyer's mind: Enjoy Hill Country sunsets from your spacious, covered patio. An easy way to do this is to ask the current owner what he enjoys most about his property. Chances are the same features that the seller will miss about the listing will attract a buyer.

Check your adjectives. Paint a picture when writing about a property, but don't oversell it. Is it really a charmer with gorgeous touches and spectacular views, or is it just a well-kept home that doesn't overlook a freeway? Avoid embellishing the facts.

Link to it. Few people enjoy reading long ads or e-mails. If you've filled your allotted space in an ad or on a listing flier but want to provide more information, don't use a smaller font or abbreviate every third word. Include a URL that brings visitors to a page on your Web site that lists the full specs of a listing as well as interior and exterior photos. The same strategy works for e-mail messages. Provide a sentence or two that conveys your message and add a link if the reader wants more information on a topic.

It only takes a second. When you're done writing something, go back and read it. Automatic grammar and spelling checkers in e-mail and word-processing programs are great, and you should use them. However, they don't catch everything. If taking this extra step sounds ridiculous—But I write e-mails from my Blackberry. People today don't care about spelling and grammar—then feel free to look unprofessional and unconcerned with details.