

You-Attitude

"You-attitude," a phrase used by Kitty O. Locker in *Business and Administrative Communication*, refers to a style of writing that puts readers' needs first. Specifically, you-attitude "emphasiz[es] what the reader wants to know, respecting the reader's intelligence, and protecting the reader's ego" (Locker 36). Locker details five strategies for achieving you-attitude in your writing:

1. Talk about the reader, not about yourself.

Without you-attitude: We at the Meijer Center for Writing believe our services can help students become better writers.

You-attitude: You'll improve as a writer by working with a trained peer consultant at the Meijer Center for Writing.

2. Refer to the reader's request or order specifically.

Without you-attitude: Your order has arrived.

You-attitude: Your tables and chairs (invoice #42250) have arrived.

3. Don't talk about feelings, except to congratulate or offer sympathy. In most professional settings and situations, your feelings are irrelevant.

Without you-attitude: We are pleased to offer students writing consultations on Sunday evenings.

You-attitude: You can now visit the Meijer Center for Writing on Sunday evenings, 5 p.m. – 8 p.m.

You-attitude: Congratulations on your promotion to Assistant Manager! I was pleased to read about it in the company newsletter.

4. Use *you* more often than *I* in positive situations. Doing so accentuates the good news associated with the reader.

Without you-attitude: I will make every effort to ensure you get an appointment.

You-attitude: You will be notified of your appointment time within 24 hours.

5. Avoid the word *you* in delivering bad news, as it can be interpreted as accusatory and over-accentuate the negative.

Without you-attitude: Because you did not proofread your paper, you will earn an F.

You-attitude: A number of proofreading errors have been made in the paper.

You-attitude: The paper includes a number of proofreading errors.

Note: One strategy for avoiding *you* in negative situations is to use passive verbs; another strategy is to place emphasis on things, not people.

For more information about you-attitude, see the following text, which is available in the Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors, LOH 120:

Locker, Kitty O. *Business and Administrative Communication*. 7th Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006.