



VIRAL

Writing texts and Labels

Task

Elderberry



Erasmus+



DORNBIRN



STADT WUPPERTAL



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Cultural Projects



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Learners are to choose one significant object and write a story about the object, the following are some simple guidance on the task:

1. Stop!

Before you start planning or writing, ask yourself if text is really the best way to tell your story and engage your visitors. Text and labels are only one way of communicating and not always the best. Make a positive decision to write.

2. Have confidence in confidence...

The trick to writing well is to be confident about what you are saying and who you are writing for. But you need to be equally confident about what you are not saying.

Planning your writing is critical. It makes the job of writing much easier and faster. If you don't plan, you will probably write text that doesn't meet your needs and you'll need more rewrites. Planning also helps with confidence - as you plan, you'll be deciding (and hopefully accepting) what you are and aren't going to say.

Try making a list of points before you write, being realistic about what you can fit in – a rough guide is about one or two points in a 30-word label, or four or five points in a 50-word text.

As you make your list, remember the interpretive plan for this piece of text. Think about where it is going to be. What is it next to? What comes before and after? And never forget your visitors. Who is likely to be reading it? What do they know already?

3. Start

The blank page can be terrifying but, if you are going to write text, you will have to start at some point. If you leave it too late, there will be less time for editing.

4. Keep writing and let it flow

A good tip is to tell yourself that your first version won't be the final one. This should free you up to start. Once you've written one, write the next one below. Don't write over the first one. This avoids the 'my first version was a work of genius but I deleted it' syndrome. It is also good for commitment-phobics.

Think about the nouns, verbs and adjectives that you are using. Engaging writing will engage visitors.

Be careful about assumed knowledge. Be conscious of your perspective – cultural, social, racial, gender and generational, to name a few.



5. Edit

Editing takes time. Print out your writing and read it. Read it aloud. Put it on the fridge door.

If you are over the word count, look for extra words lurking about – for example, “The people would have camped by the river” is easily shortened to “The people camped by the river”.

Sometimes you will need to remove a whole point. Sadly, the world will be denied your incisive prose but there simply may not be enough room (and be very careful if you’re using sarcasm and irony; it doesn’t always work in museums).

6. Share with others

Let other people see your work. One day your words will be in the public domain, so you need to show other people. There are plenty of other compelling arguments for overcoming any reluctance to share.

Other people may:

- Spot factual mistakes and inconsistencies.
- Tell you when your text doesn’t say what you meant to say.
- Spot unnecessary words, assumed knowledge or jargon.
- Suggest corrections that are patently worse than your draft and so make you feel more confident about your writing.
- Be better at spelling and grammar than you.

Writing Museum Text and Labels

<https://www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice/guides/16112015-writing-museum-text>

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