

EFFECTIVE WRITING GUIDELINES

A major aspect of procedural fairness is the right to a decision and the reasons for that decision. It could be grounds for an appeal if a decision does not include reasons.

This tip sheet gives you an overview for writing effective decisions and the information to help you recognize a good decision letter.

CLEAR

Readers need the clarity to understand why a decision was made.

- Think about who your most important reader is and write for them
- Write so that it's easy to understand by using short, simple words and sentences
- Ensure you are clearly getting your point across

CONCISE

Decisions should be concise, but complete.

- Only write as much as necessary
- Don't be too repetitive
- Too much detail can undermine clarity by making the analysis unclear
- Concise does not necessarily mean short

PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS REQUIRES REASONS

The decision should include a clear explanation as to why you made the decision. Show your work:



- Show the link between the decision and the reasons for the decision
- Explain the “what” and the “why” and don't be afraid to use “because”
- The more complex the case, the more details required in your reasons

COMMON MISTAKES

- What we think is clear, may not be clear for our intended audience
- Summarizing the evidence instead of making an analysis
- Re-stating the policy or regulation followed by a conclusion

*Information has been adapted from: *The Certification in Adjudication for Administrative Agencies, Boards & Tribunals* (Osgoode Professional Development and SOAR August 2019), *Clarity in Decision Writing* (COBA November 2010), *Decision Writing: Making Your Decision Appeal Proof* (SOAR), *A Manual for Ontario Adjudicators* (Society of Ontario Adjudicators and Regulators)