FOUR KEYS TO EFFECTIVE WRITING

1. Identify your audience—who will read what I write?
   Am I writing to a specific individual? A diverse group?
   How much do they know about my subject?
   What is their reason for reading my work?
   What is their attitude toward me and my work?

2. Establish your purpose—why should they read what I write?
   What do I want my readers to do after reading my work?
   Am I trying to explain? Convince? Entertain?

3. Formulate your message—what do I have to say to them?
   What is my main idea?
   What important points do I want to include?
   What specific details should I include to illustrate my points?

4. Select style and tone—how can I best communicate to them?
   Is formal or informal language appropriate?
   Do I want to sound passionate? Matter-of-fact?
   Persuasive? Unbiased? Authoritative? Funny?

Adapted from Kolin, Philip C. Successful Writing at Work. Second Edition.