Good writing is essential to effective social work practice, however. Consider the many ways in which social workers use writing skills every day:

- Documentation
- Presentations
- Program reports and evaluations
- Grant applications
- Communication with colleagues
- Policy advocacy
- Media engagement
- Consumer outreach
- Web communication
- Research
- Professional education

Strong writing enables you to communicate your message succinctly and persuasively. Similar to other social work skills, writing can be improved through the integration of theory and practice. The following strategies may be useful for enhancing your writing:

- LEARN AND ADHERE TO THE WRITING PROTOCOL OR STYLE GUIDE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION. Many organizations have guidelines for use of language. These guidelines may address topics such as grammar, formatting, preferred terminology, and acceptable acronym usage. Consistent application of such guidelines enhances the professional image of both your individual work and your organization.

If your organization doesn’t have a written style guide, be aware that organizational style preferences may
Specialty dictionaries. Use of legal, medical, and other specialty dictionaries can ensure clear, accurate communication. If you work with people who speak languages other than English, you may also need access to a phrase book or dictionary specific to those languages.

Your organization may prefer a specific dictionary, style manual, or other reference book. Check before investing in such resources, and be aware that these publications occasionally undergo revision.

Make use of academic writing centers. Many colleges and universities have writing centers. Some are specific to social work programs; others are available to the entire student body and even alumni. A number of these writing centers offer online resources to the public.

Take a workshop or class. Community colleges, municipalities, governmental programs, and community-based writing centers are but a few of the entities that offer workshops and classes in writing and editing. An increasing number of distance education options also abound. Think about the type of writing you do most frequently and consider the resources available in your community. If you don’t know where to start, look for a basic course in the fundamentals of writing. Whether you invest a few hours, a day, or a semester, you are likely to pick up tips that will improve your writing.

Social work reference books. No need to dig through old class notes—reference books such as the Social Work Dictionary (Baker, 2003) and Encyclopedia of Social Work (Muniz & Davis, 2008) can provide current information. Other valuable resources include Professional Writing for the Human Services (Beebe, 1993) and Social Work Documentation (Skall, 2011).

Study and adhere to the writing protocol or style guide of your organization.

Keep track of the writing tips you learn—and apply them consistently. No matter how many writing resources you may have at your disposal, it is easy to get tripped up by annoying style and grammatical details. Ironically, even after you find an answer to your question, you probably won’t remember that information the next time you need it. Each time you check a reference book to determine how to cite a work with eight authors, the difference between affect and effect, or whether to use a serial comma, make a note of what you learned or, at least, where you found the information. The more you write, the less you may need those reminders—but even professional writers and editors maintain and rely on personal style sheets to ensure accuracy and consistency in their writing.

Save writing samples. You never know when you will need writing samples for a job application. Your favorite term paper may be appropriate to use in some circumstances, but having a couple other options available is a good idea. Brochures, reports, newsletter and portions of grant application reports may be appropriate.

Be aware that everything you write reflects on you professionally. The growth of media and technology has accompanied by the increase in communication shortcuts, such as text messaging and texting. Although you don’t approach every email as a formal letter, you should be aware that your colleagues perceive extensive use of abbreviations and contractions as unprofessional.

Read, read, and read about your targets. Babies and children absorb information through exposure. We may be granted, however, the many meetings with which this learning continues throughout the lifespan. One of the best ways to improve your writing is by reading well-written texts by other professionals. The more you write, the more you can improve. Even casual an email message or a colleague whose writing you can be instructive.
such conventions may be
specialized to your situation or occupation. It may be a bit of a task to do these things, but the time and effort will be worth it.

2) Stylebooks. Your organization may have a style manual or style guide. Check with your supervisor or department head to see what style manual or guide is used. There are also style guides for writing in specific fields, such as the Chicago Style for historians and the APA Style for psychologists.

3) Editorial and reference books. These books come in a variety of forms, such as dictionaries, thesauri, and style manuals. They can help you with spelling, grammar, and style. For example, a dictionary can help you find the correct spelling of a word, while a style manual can help you determine the correct format for a citation.

4) Cooperative writing. Collaborative writing can be helpful because it can help you overcome writer's block and improve your writing. If you are writing a paper, you can talk to your colleagues or classmates to get their input. If you are writing a report, you can give it to someone else to review and provide feedback. Trends in writing are also based on the contributions of others. If you are writing a report, you can give it to someone else to review and provide feedback.

5) Writing centers. Many universities and colleges have writing centers where you can get help with your writing. These centers are typically staffed by graduate or professional students who have training in writing. They can help you with a wide range of issues, from grammar and style to organization and editing.

6) Peer review. Peer review is a process where you give your paper to someone else to read and provide feedback. This can be a very useful tool, as it can help you identify areas where you need to improve. It can also help you get a fresh perspective on your writing.

Be aware that everything you write reflects on you as a professional.
One of the best ways to improve your writing is by reading well-written texts by other people.