

1 UNIT 1

Communicating in Today's Workplace



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Chapter 1 Career Success Begins With Communication Skills

CHAPTER 1



Career Success Begins With Communication Skills

OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

- Understand the importance of education and especially the value of communication skills in relation to your income and success in today's changing workplace.
- Clarify the process of communication.
- Discuss techniques for becoming an effective listener.
- Analyze nonverbal communication and explain techniques for improving nonverbal communication skills.
- Explain how culture affects communication and describe methods to improve intercultural communication.
- Identify specific techniques that improve effective communication among diverse workplace audiences.

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Communication Skills: Your Ticket to Work or Your Ticket Out the Door

Whether you are already working or are about to enter today's workplace, one of the fastest ways to ensure your career success is to develop excellent communication skills. Today's workplace revolves around communication. How good are your skills? If your communication skills are top notch, they can be your ticket to work. If not, they can be your ticket out the door. This textbook and this course can immediately help you improve your communication skills. Because the skills you are learning will make a huge difference in your ability to find a job and to be promoted, this will be one of the most important courses in your entire college career.

The Importance of Communication Skills to Your Career

Surveys of employers consistently show that communication skills are critical to effective job placement, performance, career advancement, and organizational success.¹ In making hiring decisions, employers often rank communication skills among the most requested competencies. Many job advertisements specifically ask for excellent oral and written communication skills. In a poll of recruiters, oral and

Communication skills are critical to your job placement, performance, career advancement, and organizational success.



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WORKPLACE IN FOCUS

Today's graduates are light-years ahead when it comes to computer know-how. However, the long hours they spend instant messaging and "twittering" could be hampering important career skills. Nearly two thirds of employers say that college students are not prepared to work in the global economy, and communication is the skill that professionals find most lacking among new recruits. Tech-savvy youth are certainly expert at sending cryptic text messages at rapid-fire speed; however, analysts spot a correlation between prolonged use of electronic communication and the erosion of solid writing and speaking abilities. *What specific communication skills are essential for career success?*

written communication skills were by a large margin the top skill set sought.² In another poll, executives were asked what they looked for in a job candidate. The top choices were teamwork skills, critical thinking, analytical reasoning skills, and oral and written communication skills.³

When we discuss communication skills, we generally mean reading, listening, nonverbal, speaking, and writing skills. In this book we focus on listening, nonverbal, speaking, and writing skills. We devote special attention to writing skills because they are difficult to develop and increasingly significant.

Why Are Writing Skills Increasingly Important?

Writing skills are particularly important on the job today because people are writing more than ever before. Technology enables us to transmit messages faster, farther, and more easily than in the past. You will probably be writing many e-mail messages, such as that shown in Figure 1.1. In fact, e-mail is "today's version of the business letter or interoffice memo."⁴ Because electronic mail has become the primary channel of communication in today's workplace, business e-mail messages must be clear, concise, and professional. Notice that the message in Figure 1.1 is more businesslike and more professional than the quick e-mail messages you might send to friends. Learning to write professional e-mail messages will be an important part of this course.

Writing skills are also increasingly significant today because many people work together but are not physically together. They stay connected through spoken and written messages. Writing skills, which were always a career advantage, are now a necessity.⁵ A survey of American corporations revealed that two thirds of salaried employees have some writing responsibility. About one third of them, however, do not meet the writing requirements for their positions.⁶

"Businesses are crying out—they need to have people who write better," said Gaston Caperton, business executive and College Board president.⁷ The ability to write opens doors to professional employment. People who cannot write and communicate clearly will not be hired. If already working, they are unlikely to last long enough to be considered for promotion. Writing is a marker of high-skill, high-wage, professional work, according to Bob Kerrey, president of New School University in New York and chair of the National Commission on Writing. If you can't express yourself clearly, he says, you limit your opportunities for many positions.⁸

Note: Small superscript numbers in the text announce information sources. Full citations begin on page N-1 near the end of the book. This edition uses a modified American Psychological Association (APA) format.

Advancements in technology mean that writing skills are increasingly important because more messages are being transmitted.

FIGURE 1.1 Businesslike, Professional E-Mail Message

Because e-mail messages are rapidly replacing business letters and interoffice memos, they must be written carefully, provide complete information, and sound businesslike and professional. Notice that this message is more formal in tone than e-mail messages you might send to friends.

The screenshot shows an email client window with a menu bar (File, Edit, Mailbox, Message, Transfer, Special, Tools, Window, Help) and a toolbar with icons for bold, italic, underline, text color, background color, and a Send button. The email content is as follows:

To: Customer Service Improvement Team
From: Christopher A. Lopez <christopher.lopez@teradyne.com>
Subject: E-Mail and Web Site Strategy Meeting: Wednesday, February 15
Cc:
Attached:

Hi, Team,

As recommended at our last meeting, I have scheduled a customer service specialist to speak to us regarding techniques for improving our e-mail and Web site responses. Consultant Michelle Love, founder of Multimedia Solutions, has agreed to discuss ways to turn our e-mail responses into a competitive advantage. Mark your calendars for the following:

E-Mail and Web Site Strategy Meeting
Wednesday, February 15, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Conference Room

In previous meetings our team acknowledged that customers are increasingly turning to our Web site to locate information, seek support, and conduct purchasing transactions. However, we are experiencing problems in responding quickly and effectively. Ms. Love promises to address these concerns. To make this meeting most productive, she asks that each team member submit at least three questions or problem areas for discussion.

Action Requests:

- Please send three discussion questions to Tyler (tyler.lee@teradyne.com) by February 12 at 5 p.m. so that he can relay them to Ms. Love.
- Because we will be ordering box lunches for this meeting, please make your selection on the intranet before February 12.

If you have any questions, drop by my office or send a note. Thanks for your continued efforts to improve our customer service!

Chris

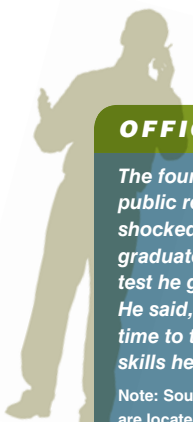
Christopher A. Lopez
Director, Customer Service, Teradyne, Inc.
E-mail: christopher.lopez@teradyne.com
Phone: (213) 468-3290
Cell: (420) 329-5581

Annotations on the right side of the email:

- Uses precise subject line to convey key information quickly
- Announces most important idea first with minimal background information
- Provides details about meeting with transition to action requests
- Closes by telling where to find additional information; also expresses appreciation

Annotations on the left side of the email:

- Starts with casual greeting to express friendliness
- Sets off meeting information for easy recognition and retrieval
- Bullets action requests and places them near message end where readers expect to find them
- Provides contact information similar to that in business letterheads



OFFICE INSIDER

The founder of a New York public relations firm was shocked at how many college graduates failed the writing test he gives job applicants. He said, "We don't have the time to teach basic writing skills here."

Note: Sources for "Office Insider" are located in the Acknowledgments at the end of the book.

You may be thinking that jobs in technical fields do not require communication skills. For example, communication has traditionally NOT been a necessary skill for finance and accounting professionals. However, times are changing. A recent poll of 1,400 chief financial officers sponsored by Accountemps revealed that 75 percent said that verbal, written, and interpersonal skills are more important today than they were in the past.⁹ Even technical specialists must be able to communicate with others and explain their work clearly. A survey of Web professionals showed that those with writing and copyediting skills were far less likely to have their jobs sent offshore.¹⁰ Another survey conducted by the Society for Information Management revealed that network professionals ranked written and oral communication skills among the top five most desired skills for new-hires.¹¹

Professionalism Counts With Employers

In addition to expecting employees to write clearly, businesses expect employees to act in a businesslike and professional manner on the job. One employer was surprised that many of her new-hires had no idea that excessive absenteeism or tardiness

was grounds for termination. The new employees also didn't seem to know that they were expected to devote their full energy to duties when on the job. One young man wanted to read Harry Potter novels when things got slow.¹²

Projecting and maintaining a professional image can make a real difference in helping you obtain the job of your dreams. Once you get that job, you are more likely to be taken seriously and promoted if you look and sound professional. New-hires can sabotage their careers when they carry poor college habits into the business world. Banish the flip-flops, sloppy clothes, and IM abbreviations. Think twice about sprinkling your conversation with *like, you know*, and uptalk (making declarative sentences sound like questions). You don't want to send the wrong message with unwitting and unprofessional behavior. Figure 1.2 reviews areas you will want to check to be sure you are projecting professionalism.

Looking and sounding professional gains you credibility on the job.

How Does Your Education Affect Your Income?

Because the U.S. economy is increasingly knowledge based, education is extremely important. Two thirds of all new jobs require some kind of postsecondary education. The more education you have, the more you can expect to earn and the less likely you will be unemployed, as shown in Figure 1.3. Notice that graduates with bachelor's degrees can expect to earn nearly three times as much as high school dropouts.

Those with four-year degrees will earn nearly three times as much as high school dropouts.

Writing is one aspect of education that is particularly well rewarded. A *Fortune* magazine article reported this finding: "Among people with a two- or four-year

FIGURE 1.2 Projecting Professionalism When You Communicate

| | Unprofessional | Professional |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Speech habits | Speaking in <i>uptalk</i> , a singsong speech pattern that has a rising inflection making sentences sound like questions, using <i>like</i> to fill in mindless chatter, substituting <i>go</i> for <i>said</i> , relying on slang, or letting profanity slip into your conversation. | Recognizing that your credibility can be seriously damaged by sounding uneducated, crude, or adolescent. |
| E-mail | Writing messages with incomplete sentences, misspelled words, exclamation points, IM slang, and senseless chatting. Sloppy, careless messages send a nonverbal message that you don't care, don't know, or aren't smart enough to know what is correct. | Including subjects, verbs, and punctuation marks. Employers don't recognize IM abbreviations. Call it crazy, but they value conciseness and correct spelling, even in brief e-mail messages. |
| Internet | Using an e-mail address such as <i>hotbabe@hotmail.com</i> , <i>supasnugglykitty@yahoo.com</i> , or <i>buffedguy@aol.com</i> . | An e-mail address should include your name or a relevant, positive, businesslike expression. It should not sound cute or like a chat room nickname. |
| Voice mail | An outgoing message with strident background music, weird sounds, or a joke message. | An outgoing message that states your name or phone number and provides instructions for leaving a message. |
| Telephone | Soap operas, thunderous music, or a TV football game playing noisily in the background when you answer the phone. | A quiet background when you answer the telephone, especially if you are expecting a prospective employer's call. |
| Cell and smart phones | Taking or placing calls during business meetings or during conversations with fellow employees; raising your voice (cell yell) or engaging in cell calls when others must reluctantly overhear; using a PDA during meetings. | Turning off phone and message notification, both audible and vibrate, during meetings; using your cell only when conversations can be private. |

FIGURE 1.3 Income and Unemployment in Relation to Education

| Education | Weekly Salary | Unemployment Rate |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| High school dropout | \$ 522 | 7.1% |
| High school diploma | 704 | 4.4% |
| Associate's degree | 846 | 3.5% |
| Bachelor's degree or higher | 1,393 | 2.1% |

Source: E. L. Chao (2007, September 3). Knowledge fuels U.S. work force. Santa Barbara News-Press, p. A9.

college degree, those in the highest 20 percent in writing ability earn, on average, more than three times what those with the worst writing skills make.”¹³ One corporate president explained that many people climbing the corporate ladder are good. When he faced a hard choice between candidates, he used writing ability as the deciding factor. He said that sometimes writing is the only skill that separates a candidate from the competition.

Using This Book to Build Your Career Communication Skills

This book focuses on developing basic writing skills. You will also learn to improve your listening, nonverbal, and speaking skills. The abilities to read, listen, speak, and write effectively, of course, are not inborn. When it comes to communication, it is more *nurture* than *nature*. Good communicators are not born; they are made. Thriving in the dynamic and demanding new world of work will depend on many factors, some of which you cannot control. One factor that you *DO* control, however, is how well you communicate.

The goal of this book is to teach you basic business communication skills. These include learning how to write an e-mail, letter, or report and how to make a presentation. Anyone can learn these skills with the help of instructional materials and good model documents, all of which you will find in this book. You also need practice—with meaningful feedback. You need someone such as your instructor to tell you how to modify your responses so that you can improve.

We have designed this book, its supplements, and a new companion Web site at www.meguffey.com to provide you and your instructor with everything necessary to make you a successful business communicator in today's dynamic but demanding workplace. Given the increasing emphasis on communication, many businesses are paying large amounts to communication coaches and trainers to teach employees the very skills that you are learning in this course. Your instructor is your coach. So, get your money's worth! Pick your instructor's brains.

To get started, this first chapter presents an overview. You will take a quick look at the changing workplace, the communication process, listening, nonverbal communication, culture and communication, and workplace diversity. The remainder of the book is devoted to developing specific writing and speaking skills.

Succeeding in the Changing World of Work

The world of work is changing dramatically. The kind of work you will do, the tools you will use, the form of management you will work under, the environment in which you will be employed, the people with whom you will interact—all are undergoing a pronounced transformation. Many of the changes in this dynamic workplace revolve around processing and communicating information. As a result, the most successful players in this new world of work will be those with highly developed communication skills. The following business trends illustrate the importance of excellent communication skills:

Because communication skills are learned, you control how well you communicate.

Developing career-boosting communication skills requires instruction, practice, and feedback from a specialist.

Trends in the new world of work emphasize the importance of communication skills.

- **Flattened management hierarchies.** To better compete and to reduce expenses, businesses have for years been trimming layers of management. This means that as a frontline employee, you will have fewer managers. You will be making decisions and communicating them to customers, to fellow employees, and to executives.
- **More participatory management.** Gone are the days of command-and-control management. Now, even new employees like you will be expected to understand and contribute to the big picture. Improving productivity and profitability will be everyone's job, not just management's.
- **Increased emphasis on self-directed work groups and virtual teams.** Businesses today are often run by cross-functional teams of peers. You can expect to work with a team in gathering information, finding and sharing solutions, implementing decisions, and managing conflict. You may even become part of a virtual team whose members are in remote locations and who communicate almost exclusively electronically. Good communication skills are extremely important in working together successfully in all team environments, especially if members do not meet face-to-face.
- **Heightened global competition.** Because American companies are moving beyond local markets, you may be interacting with people from many cultures. As a successful business communicator, you will want to learn about other cultures. You will also need to develop intercultural skills including sensitivity, flexibility, patience, and tolerance.
- **Innovative communication technologies.** E-mail, fax, instant messaging, text messaging, the Web, company intranets, audio- and videoconferencing, wikis, voice recognition—all these innovative technologies are reshaping the way we communicate at work, as illustrated in Figure 1.4. You can expect to be communicating more often and more rapidly than ever before. Your writing and speaking skills will be showcased as never before.
- **New work environments.** Mobile technologies and the desire for a better balance between work and family have resulted in flexible working arrangements. You may become part of an increasing number of workers who are telecommuters or virtual team members. Working as a telecommuter or virtual team member requires even more communication, because staying connected with the office or with one another means exchanging many messages. Another work environment trend is the movement toward open offices divided into small work cubicles. Working in cubicles requires new rules of office etiquette and civility.
- **Focus on information and knowledge as corporate assets.** Corporate America is increasingly aware that information is the key to better products and increased profitability. You will be expected to gather, sort, store, and disseminate data in a timely and accurate fashion. This is the new way of business life.

Today's employees must contribute to improving productivity and profitability.

Increasing global competition and revolutionary technologies demand intercultural communication skills.

Understanding the Communication Process

As you can see, you can expect to be communicating more rapidly, more often, and with greater numbers of people than ever before. The most successful players in this new world of work will be those with highly developed communication skills. Because good communication skills are essential to your success, we need to take a closer look at the communication process.

Just what is communication? For our purposes *communication* is “the transmission of information and meaning from one individual or group to another.” The crucial element in this definition is *meaning*. Communication has as its central objective the transmission of meaning. The process of communication is successful only when the receiver understands an idea as the sender intended it. This process generally involves five steps, discussed here and shown in Figure 1.5 on page 10.

Communication is the transmission of information and meaning from one individual or group to another.

FIGURE 1.4 Communication and Collaborative Technologies



Communication Technologies: Reshaping the World of Work

Today's workplace is changing dramatically as a result of innovative software, superfast wireless networks, and numerous technologies that allow workers to share information, work from remote locations, and be more productive in or away from the office. We are seeing a gradual progression from basic capabilities, such as e-mail, instant messaging, and calendaring, to deeper functionality, such as remote database access, multifunctional devices, and Web-based collaborative applications. Becoming familiar with modern office and collaboration technologies can help you be successful in today's digital workplace.

Telephony: VoIP

Savvy businesses are switching from traditional phone service to voice over internet protocol (VoIP). This technology allows callers to communicate using a broadband Internet connection, thus eliminating long-distance and local telephone charges. Higher-end VoIP systems now support unified voice mail, e-mail, click-to-call capabilities, and softphones (phones using computer networking). Free or low-cost Internet telephony sites, such as the popular Skype, are also increasingly used by businesses.



Open Offices

Widespread use of laptop computers, wireless technology, and VoIP have led to more fluid, flexible, and open workspaces. Smaller computers and flat-screen monitors enable designers to save space with boomerang-shaped workstations and cockpit-style work surfaces rather than space-hogging corner work areas. Smaller breakout areas for impromptu meetings are taking over some cubicle space, and digital databases are replacing file cabinets.

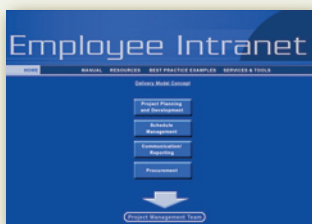


Multifunction Printers

Stand-alone copiers, fax machines, scanners, and printers have been replaced with multifunctional devices. Offices are transitioning from a "print and distribute" environment to a "distribute and print" environment. Security measures include pass codes and even biometric thumbprint scanning to make sure data streams are not captured, interrupted, or edited.

Handheld Wireless Devices

A new generation of lightweight, handheld smartphones provide phone, e-mail, Web browsing, and calendar options anywhere there is a wireless network. Devices such as the BlackBerry, the iPhone, and the Palm Treo now allow you to tap into corporate databases and intranets from remote locations. You can check customers' files, complete orders, and send out receipts without returning to the office.



Company Intranets

To share insider information, many companies provide their own protected Web sites called intranets. An intranet may handle company e-mail, announcements, an employee directory,

a policy handbook, frequently asked questions, personnel forms and data, employee discussion forums, shared documents, and other employee information.

Voice Recognition

Computers equipped with voice recognition software enable users to dictate up to 160 words a minute with accurate transcription. Voice recognition is particularly helpful to disabled workers and to professionals with heavy dictation loads, such as physicians and attorneys. Users can create documents, enter data, compose and send e-mails, browse the Web, and control the desktop—all by voice.



Electronic Presentations

Business presentations in PowerPoint can be projected from a laptop or PDA or posted online. Sophisticated presentations may include animations, sound effects, digital photos, video clips, or hyperlinks to Internet sites. In some industries, PowerPoint slides ("decks") are replacing or supplementing traditional hard-copy reports.



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Collaboration Technologies: Rethinking the Way We Work Together

Global competition, expanding markets, and the ever-increasing pace of business accelerate the development of exciting collaboration tools. New tools make it possible to work together without being together. Your colleagues may be down the hall, across the country, or around the world. With today's tools, you can exchange ideas, solve problems, develop products, forecast future performance, and complete team projects any time of the day or night and anywhere in the world. Blogs and wikis, part of the so-called Web 2.0 era, are social tools that create multidirectional conversations among customers and employees. Web 2.0 moves Web applications from "read only" to "read-write," thus enabling greater participation and collaboration.



Blogs, Podcasts, and Wikis

A *blog* is a Web site with journal entries usually written by one person and comments by others. Businesses use blogs to keep customers and employees

informed and to receive feedback. Company developments can be posted, updated, and categorized for easy cross-referencing. *Podcasts* are usually short audio or video clips that users can either watch on a company Web site or download and view or listen to on their computers or MP3 players on the go. A *wiki* is a Web site that allows multiple users to collaboratively create and edit pages. Information gets lost in e-mails, but blogs and wikis provide an easy way to communicate and keep track of what is said. *RSS* (really simple syndication) *feeds* allow businesspeople and customers to receive updates automatically whenever podcasts, news stories, or blog entries become available on their favorite Web sites.



Voice Conferencing

Telephone "bridges" allow two or more callers from any location to share the same call. *Voice conferencing* (also called *audioconferencing*, *teleconferencing*, or just plain *conference calling*) enables people to collaborate by telephone.

Communicators at both ends use enhanced speakerphones to talk and be heard simultaneously.



Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing allows participants to meet in special conference rooms equipped with cameras and television screens. Groups see each other and interact in real time although they may be continents apart. Faster computers, rapid Internet connections, and better cameras now enable 2 to 200 participants to sit at their own PCs and share applications, spreadsheets, presentations, and photos.

Web Conferencing

With services such as GoToMeeting, WebEx, Microsoft LiveMeeting, or the free Skype, all you need are a PC and an Internet connection to hold a meeting (*webinar*) with customers or colleagues in real time. Although the functions are constantly evolving, Web conferencing currently incorporates screen sharing, chats, slide presentations, text messaging, and application sharing.



Presence Technology

Presence technology makes it possible to locate and identify a computing device as soon as users connect to the network. This technology is an integral part of communication devices including cell phones, laptop computers, PDAs, pagers, and GPS devices. Collaboration is possible wherever and whenever users are online.

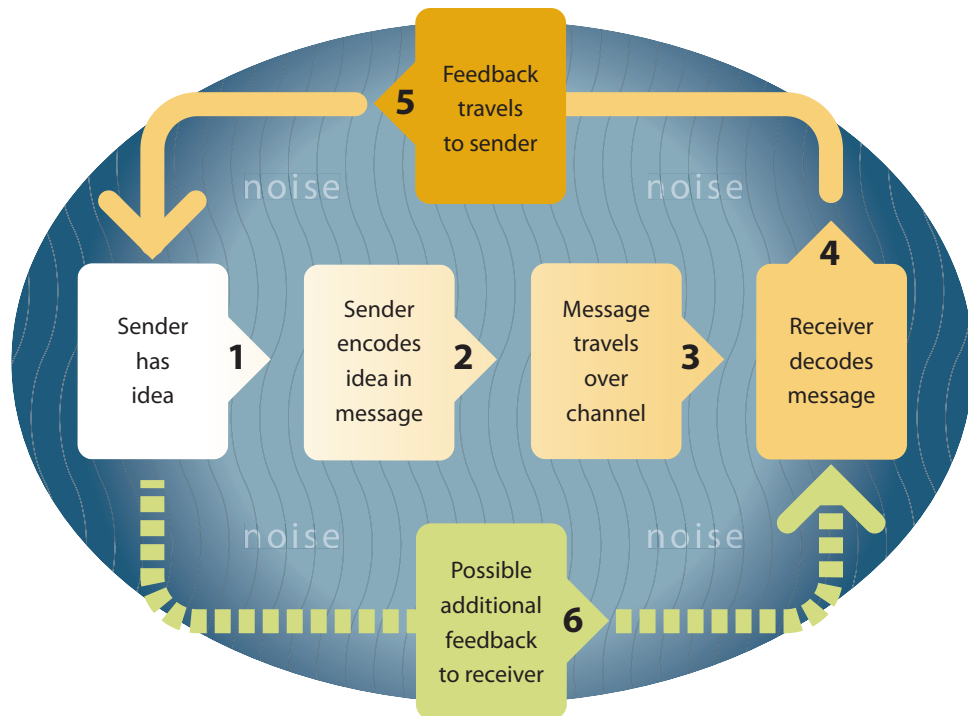
Video Phones

Using advanced video compression technology, video phones transmit real-time audio and video so that communicators can see each other as they collaborate. With a video phone, people can videoconference anywhere in the world over a broadband IP (Internet Protocol) connection without a computer or a television screen.



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FIGURE 1.5 The Communication Process



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1. **Sender has an idea.** The form of the idea may be influenced by the sender's mood, frame of reference, background, culture, and physical makeup, as well as the context of the situation.
2. **Sender encodes the idea in a message.** *Encoding* means converting the idea into words or gestures that will convey meaning. A major problem in communicating any message verbally is that words have different meanings for different people. That's why skilled communicators try to choose familiar words with concrete meanings on which both senders and receivers agree.
3. **Message travels over a channel.** The medium over which the message is transmitted is the *channel*. Messages may be sent by computer, telephone, letter, or memorandum. They may also be sent by means of a report, announcement, picture, spoken word, fax, or other channel. Because both verbal and nonverbal messages are carried, senders must choose channels carefully. Anything that disrupts the transmission of a message in the communication process is called *noise*. Channel noise ranges from static that disrupts a telephone conversation to spelling errors in an e-mail message. Such errors damage the credibility of the sender.
4. **Receiver decodes message.** The person for whom a message is intended is the *receiver*. Translating the message from its symbol form into meaning involves *decoding*. Successful communication takes place only when a receiver understands the meaning intended by the sender. Such success is often hard to achieve because no two people share the same background. Success is further limited because barriers and noise may disrupt the process.
5. **Feedback travels to sender.** The verbal and nonverbal responses of the receiver create *feedback*, a vital part of the entire communication process. Feedback helps the sender know that the message was received and understood. Senders can encourage feedback by asking questions such as, "Am I making myself clear?" and, "Is there anything you don't understand?" Senders can further

The communication process has five steps: idea formation, message encoding, message transmission, message decoding, and feedback.

improve feedback by delivering the message at a time when receivers can respond. Senders should provide only as much information as a receiver can handle. Receivers can improve the process by paraphrasing the sender's message. They might say, "Let me try to explain that in my own words," or, "My understanding of your comment is . . ."

Improving Listening Skills

An important part of the communication process is listening. By all accounts, however, most of us are not very good listeners. Do you ever pretend to be listening when you are not? Do you know how to look attentive in class when your mind wanders far away? How about "tuning out" people when their ideas are boring or complex? Do you find it hard to focus on ideas when a speaker's clothing or mannerisms are unusual?

You probably answered *yes* to one or more of these questions because many of us have developed poor listening habits. In fact, some researchers suggest that we listen at only 25 percent efficiency. Such poor listening habits are costly in business. Messages must be rewritten, shipments reshipped, appointments rescheduled, contracts renegotiated, and directions restated.

To improve listening skills, we must first recognize barriers that prevent effective listening. Then we need to focus on specific techniques that are effective in improving listening skills.

Barriers to Effective Listening

As you learned earlier, barriers and noise can interfere with the communication process. Have any of the following barriers and distractions prevented you from hearing what has been said?

- **Physical barriers.** You cannot listen if you cannot hear what is being said. Physical impediments include hearing disabilities, poor acoustics, and noisy surroundings. It is also difficult to listen if you are ill, tired, uncomfortable, or worried.
- **Psychological barriers.** Everyone brings to the communication process a unique set of cultural, ethical, and personal values. Each of us has an idea of what is right and what is important. If other ideas run counter to our preconceived thoughts, we tend to "tune out" the speaker and thus fail to receive them.
- **Language problems.** Unfamiliar words can destroy the communication process because they lack meaning for the receiver. In addition, emotion-laden or "charged" words can adversely affect listening. If the mention of words such as *abortion* or *overdose* has an intense emotional impact, a listener may be unable to think about the words that follow.
- **Nonverbal distractions.** Many of us find it hard to listen if a speaker is different from what we view as normal. Unusual clothing, speech mannerisms, body twitches, or a radical hairstyle can cause enough distraction to prevent us from hearing what the speaker has to say.
- **Thought speed.** Because we can process thoughts at least three times faster than speakers can say them, we can become bored and allow our minds to wander.
- **Faking attention.** Most of us have learned to look as if we are listening even when we are not. Such behavior was perhaps necessary as part of our socialization. Faked attention, however, seriously threatens effective listening because it encourages the mind to engage in flights of unchecked fancy. Those who practice faked attention often find it hard to concentrate even when they want to.
- **Grandstanding.** Would you rather talk or listen? Naturally, most of us would rather talk. Because our own experiences and thoughts are most important to us, we grab the limelight in conversations. We sometimes fail to listen carefully because we are just waiting politely for the next pause so that we can have our turn to speak.

Most individuals listen at only 25 percent efficiency.

Barriers to listening may be physical, psychological, verbal, or nonverbal.

Most North Americans speak at about 125 words per minute. The human brain can process information at least three times as fast.

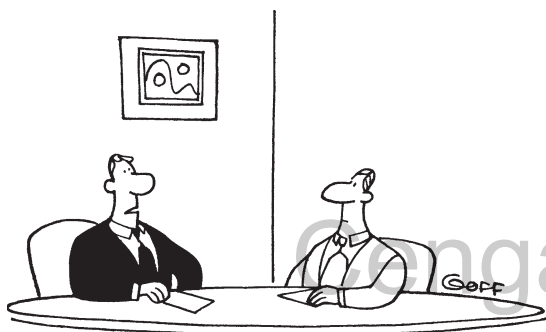
Keys to Building Powerful Listening Skills

You can reverse the harmful effects of poor habits by making a conscious effort to become an active listener. This means becoming involved. You can't sit back and hear whatever a lazy mind happens to receive. The following keys will help you become an active and effective listener:

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Listening is hard work. Unlike hearing, it demands total concentration. It is an active search for meaning, while hearing is passive.

- **Stop talking.** The first step to becoming a good listener is to stop talking. Let others explain their views. Learn to concentrate on what the speaker is saying, not on what your next comment will be.
- **Control your surroundings.** Whenever possible, remove competing sounds. Close windows or doors, turn off TVs and iPods, and move away from loud people, noisy appliances, or engines. Choose a quiet time and place for listening.
- **Establish a receptive mind-set.** Expect to learn something by listening. Strive for a positive and receptive frame of mind. If the message is complex, think of it as mental gymnastics. It is hard work but good exercise to stretch and expand the limits of your mind.
- **Keep an open mind.** We all sift and filter information through our own biases and values. For improved listening, discipline yourself to listen objectively. Be fair to the speaker. Hear what is really being said, not what you want to hear.
- **Listen for main points.** Heighten your concentration and satisfaction by looking for the speaker's central themes. Congratulate yourself when you find them!
 - **Capitalize on lag time.** Make use of the quickness of your mind by reviewing the speaker's points. Anticipate what is coming next. Evaluate evidence the speaker has presented. Don't allow yourself to daydream. Try to guess what the speaker's next point will be.
 - **Listen between the lines.** Focus both on what is spoken and what is unspoken. Listen for feelings as well as for facts.
 - **Judge ideas, not appearances.** Concentrate on the content of the message, not on its delivery. Avoid being distracted by the speaker's looks, voice, or mannerisms.
 - **Hold your fire.** Force yourself to listen to the speaker's entire argument or message before reacting. Such restraint may enable you to understand the speaker's reasons and logic before you jump to false conclusions.
- **Take selective notes.** In some situations thoughtful notetaking may be necessary to record important facts that must be recalled later. Select only the most important points so that the notetaking process does not interfere with your concentration on the speaker's total message.
- **Provide feedback.** Let the speaker know that you are listening. Nod your head and maintain eye contact. Ask relevant questions at appropriate times. Getting involved improves the communication process for both the speaker and the listener.



"How can I listen to you if you don't say the things I want to hear?"

Enhancing Your Nonverbal Communication Skills

Understanding messages often involves more than merely listening to spoken words. Nonverbal cues, in fact, can speak louder than words. These cues include eye contact, facial expression, body movements, space, time, territory, and appearance. All these nonverbal cues affect how a message is interpreted, or decoded, by the receiver.

Just what is nonverbal communication? It includes all unwritten and unspoken messages, whether intended or not. These silent signals have a strong effect on receivers. But understanding them is not simple. Does a downward glance indicate modesty? Fatigue? Does a constant stare reflect coldness? Dullness? Aggression? Do crossed arms mean defensiveness? Withdrawal? Or do crossed arms just mean that a person is shivering?

Nonverbal communication includes all unwritten and unspoken messages, intended or not.

Messages are even harder to decipher when the verbal codes and nonverbal cues do not agree. What will you think if Scott says he is not angry, but he slams the door when he leaves? What if Alicia assures the hostess that the meal is excellent, but she eats very little? The nonverbal messages in these situations speak more loudly than the words.

When verbal and nonverbal messages conflict, receivers put more faith in nonverbal cues. In one study speakers sent a positive message but averted their eyes as they spoke. Listeners perceived the total message to be negative. Moreover, they thought that averted eyes suggested lack of affection, superficiality, lack of trust, and nonreceptivity.¹⁴

Successful communicators recognize the power of nonverbal messages. Although it is unwise to attach specific meanings to gestures or actions, some cues broadcast by body language are helpful in understanding the feelings and attitudes of senders.

How the Eyes, Face, and Body Send Silent Messages

Words seldom tell the whole story. Indeed, some messages are sent with no words at all. The eyes, face, and body can convey a world of meaning without a single syllable being spoken.

Eye Contact. The eyes have been called the windows to the soul. Even if they don't reveal the soul, the eyes are often the best predictor of a speaker's true feelings. Most of us cannot look another person straight in the eyes and lie. As a result, in American culture we tend to believe people who look directly at us. Sustained eye contact suggests trust and admiration; brief eye contact signals fear or stress. Good eye contact enables the message sender to see whether a receiver is paying attention, showing respect, responding favorably, or feeling distress. From the receiver's viewpoint, good eye contact, in North American culture, reveals the speaker's sincerity, confidence, and truthfulness.

Facial Expression. The expression on a person's face can be almost as revealing of emotion as the eyes. Experts estimate that the human face can display over 250,000 expressions.¹⁵ To hide their feelings, some people can control these expressions and maintain "poker faces." Most of us, however, display our emotions openly. Raising or lowering the eyebrows, squinting the eyes, swallowing nervously, clenching the jaw, smiling broadly—these voluntary and involuntary facial expressions can add to or entirely replace verbal messages.

Posture and Gestures. A person's posture can convey anything from high status and self-confidence to shyness and submissiveness. Leaning toward a speaker suggests attraction and interest; pulling away or shrinking back denotes fear, distrust, anxiety, or disgust. Similarly, gestures can communicate entire thoughts via simple movements. However, the meanings of some of these movements differ in other cultures. Unless you know local customs, they can get you into trouble. In the United States and Canada, for example, forming the thumb and forefinger in a circle means everything is OK. But in Germany and parts of South America, the OK sign is obscene.

When verbal and nonverbal messages clash, listeners tend to believe the nonverbal message.

The eyes are thought to be the best predictor of a speaker's true feelings.

Nonverbal messages often have different meanings in different cultures.

DILBERT

By Scott Adams





“Sorry, Ridgely, but this area is my personal space.”

What does your own body language say about you? To take stock of the kinds of messages being sent by your body, ask a classmate to critique your use of eye contact, facial expression, and body movements. Another way to analyze your nonverbal style is to videotape yourself making a presentation. Then study your performance. This way you can make sure your nonverbal cues send the same message as your words.

How Time, Space, and Territory Send Silent Messages

In addition to nonverbal messages transmitted by your body, three external elements convey information in the communication process: time, space, and territory.

Time. How we structure and use time tells observers about our personalities and attitudes. For example, when Donald Trump, multimillionaire real estate developer, gives a visitor a prolonged interview, he signals his respect for, interest in, and approval of the visitor or the topic to be discussed.

Space. How we order the space around us tells something about ourselves and our objectives. Whether the space is a bedroom, a dorm room, an office, or a department, people reveal themselves in the design and grouping of their furniture. Generally, the more formal the arrangement, the more formal and closed the communication style. The way office furniture is arranged sends cues about how communication is to take place. Former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover used to make his visitors sit at a small table below his large, elevated desk. Clearly, he did not want office visitors to feel equal to him.¹⁶

Territory. Each of us has a certain area that we feel is our own territory, whether it is a specific spot or just the space around us. Your father may have a favorite chair in which he is most comfortable, a cook might not tolerate intruders in the kitchen, and veteran employees may feel that certain work areas and tools belong to them. We all maintain zones of privacy in which we feel comfortable. Figure 1.6 illustrates the four zones of social interaction among Americans, as formulated by anthropologist Edward T. Hall.¹⁷ Notice that Americans are a bit standoffish; only intimate friends and family may stand closer than about 1½ feet. If someone violates that territory, Americans feel uncomfortable and defensive and may step back to reestablish their space.

The distance required for comfortable social interaction is controlled by culture.

FIGURE 1.6 Four Space Zones for Social Interaction

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Intimate Zone
(1 to 1½ feet)



Personal Zone
(1½ to 4 feet)



Social Zone
(4 to 12 feet)



Public Zone
(12 or more feet)

How Appearance Sends Silent Messages

The physical appearance of a business document, as well as the personal appearance of an individual, transmits immediate and important nonverbal messages.

Appearance of Business Documents. The way a letter, memo, or report looks can have either a positive or a negative effect on the receiver. Sloppy e-mail messages send a nonverbal message that you are in a terrific hurry or that you do not care about the receiver. Envelopes—through their postage, stationery, and printing—can suggest routine, important, or junk mail. Letters and reports can look neat, professional, well organized, and attractive—or just the opposite. In succeeding chapters you will learn how to create business documents that send positive nonverbal messages through their appearance, format, organization, readability, and correctness.

Personal Appearance. The way you look—your clothing, grooming, and posture—telegraphs an instant nonverbal message about you. Based on what they see, viewers make quick judgments about your status, credibility, personality, and potential. If you want to be considered professional, think about how you present yourself. One marketing manager said, “I’m young and pretty. It’s hard enough to be taken seriously, and if I show up in jeans and a teeshirt, I don’t stand a chance.”¹⁸ As a businessperson, you will want to think about what your appearance says about you. Although the rules of business attire have loosened up, some workers show poor judgment. You will learn more about professional attire and behavior in later chapters.

Keys to Building Strong Nonverbal Skills

Nonverbal communication can outweigh words in the way it influences how others perceive us. You can harness the power of silent messages by reviewing the following tips for improving nonverbal communication skills:

- **Establish and maintain eye contact.** Remember that in the United States and Canada, appropriate eye contact signals interest, attentiveness, strength, and credibility.
- **Use posture to show interest.** Encourage communication interaction by leaning forward, sitting or standing erect, and looking alert.
- **Improve your decoding skills.** Watch facial expressions and body language to understand the complete verbal and nonverbal messages being communicated.
- **Probe for more information.** When you perceive nonverbal cues that contradict verbal meanings, politely seek additional cues (“I’m not sure I understand,” “Please tell me more about . . .,” or “Do you mean that . . .”).
- **Avoid assigning nonverbal meanings out of context.** Don’t interpret nonverbal behavior unless you understand a situation or a culture.
- **Associate with people from diverse cultures.** Learn about other cultures to widen your knowledge and tolerance of intercultural nonverbal messages.
- **Appreciate the power of appearance.** Keep in mind that the appearance of your business documents, your business space, and yourself sends immediate positive or negative messages to receivers.
- **Observe yourself on video.** Ensure that your verbal and nonverbal messages are in sync by recording and evaluating yourself making a presentation.
- **Enlist friends and family.** Ask friends and family to monitor your conscious and unconscious body movements and gestures to help you become an effective communicator.

The appearance of a message and of an individual can convey positive or negative nonverbal messages.

Because nonverbal cues can mean more than spoken words, learn to use nonverbal communication positively.

How Culture Affects Communication

Comprehending the verbal and nonverbal meanings of a message is difficult even when communicators are from the same culture. When they come from different cultures, special sensitivity and skills are necessary.

Verbal and nonverbal messages are even more difficult to interpret when people come from different cultures.

WORKPLACE IN FOCUS

With more than 1 billion people and a growing reputation as the second-largest English-speaking country, India has become a hot market for outsourced call center jobs. To accommodate the high demand for international customer support professionals in India, the city of Delhi offers more than 300,000 English and communication skills classes—and that is in addition to call center training offered locally through multinational corporations such as IBM and Wipro. *What challenges do India's call center professionals face when communicating with customers from across the globe?*



Negotiators for a North American company learned this lesson when they were in Japan looking for a trading partner. The North Americans were pleased after their first meeting with representatives of a major Japanese firm. The Japanese had nodded assent throughout the meeting and had not objected to a single proposal. The next day, however, the North Americans were stunned to learn that the Japanese had rejected the entire plan. In interpreting the nonverbal behavioral messages, the North Americans made a typical mistake. They assumed the Japanese were nodding in agreement as fellow North Americans would. In this case, however, the nods of assent indicated comprehension—not approval.

Every country has a unique culture of common heritage, joint experience, and shared learning that produce its culture. Their common experience gives members of that culture a complex system of shared values and customs. It teaches them how to behave; it conditions their reactions. Global business, new communication technologies, the Internet, and even Hollywood are spreading Western values throughout the world. However, cultural differences can still cause significant misunderstandings.

The more you know about culture in general and your own culture in particular, the better able you will be to adopt an intercultural perspective. In this book it is impossible to cover fully the infinite facets of culture. However, we can outline some key dimensions of culture and look at them from various points of view.

So that you will better understand your culture and how it contrasts with other cultures, we will describe five key dimensions of culture: context, individualism, formality, communication style, and time orientation.

Context

Context is one of the most important cultural dimensions, yet it is among the most difficult to define. In a model developed by cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall, context refers to the stimuli, environment, or ambience surrounding an event. Hall arranged cultures on a continuum, shown in Figure 1.7, from low to high in relation to context. Our figure also summarizes key comparisons for today's business communicators.

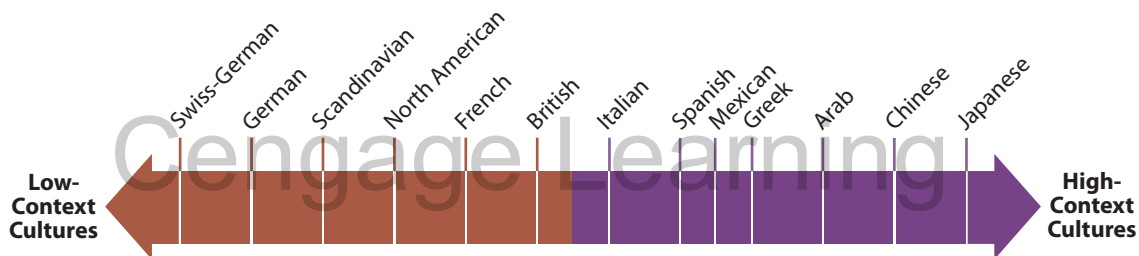
Communicators in low-context cultures (such as those in North America, Scandinavia, and Germany) depend little on the context of a situation to convey their meaning. They assume that listeners know very little and must be told practically everything. Low-context cultures tend to be logical, analytical, and action oriented. Business communicators stress clearly articulated messages that they consider to be objective, professional, and efficient. Words are taken literally.

Low-context cultures (such as those in North America and Western Europe) depend less on the environment of a situation to convey meaning than do high-context cultures (such as those in China, Japan, and Arab countries).

FIGURE 1.7 Comparing High- and Low-Context Business Communicators

Culture has a powerful effect on business communicators. The following observations point out selected differences. Remember, however, that these are simplifications and that practices within a given culture vary considerably. Moreover, as globalization expands, low- and high-context cultures are experiencing change, and differences may be less pronounced.

| Business Communicators in Low-Context Cultures | Business Communicators in High-Context Cultures |
|--|--|
| Assume listeners know little and must be told everything directly. | Assume listeners are highly “contexted” and require little background. |
| Value independence, initiative, self-assertion. | Value consensus, group decisions. |
| Rely on facts, data, and logic. | Rely on relationships rather than objective data. |
| Value getting down to business and achieving results. | Value relationships, harmony, status, and saving face. |
| Keep business and social relationships separate. | Intermix business and social relationships. |
| Expect negotiated decisions to be final and ironclad. | Expect to reopen discussions of decisions previously made. |
| Hold relaxed view toward wealth and power. | Defer to others based on wealth, position, seniority, and age. |
| Value competence regardless of position or status. | May value position and status over competence. |
| Have little problem confronting, showing anger, or making demands. | Avoid confrontation, anger, and emotion in business transactions. |
| Analyze meanings and attach face value to words. | May not take words literally; may infer meanings. |



Communicators in high-context cultures (such as those in China, Japan, and Arab countries) assume that the listener is already “contexted” and does not need much background information.¹⁹ Communicators in high-context cultures are more likely to be intuitive and contemplative. They may not take words literally. Instead, the meaning of a message may be implied from the social or physical setting, the relationship of the communicators, or nonverbal cues. For example, a Japanese communicator might say *yes* when he really means *no*. From the context of the situation, the Japanese speaker would indicate whether *yes* really meant *yes* or whether it meant *no*. The context, tone, time taken to answer, facial expression, and body cues would convey the meaning of *yes*.²⁰ Communication cues are transmitted by posture, voice inflection, gestures, and facial expression.

Individualism

An attitude of independence and freedom from control characterizes individualism. Members of low-context cultures, particularly Americans, tend to value individualism. They believe that initiative, self-assertion, and competence result in personal achievement. They believe in individual action and personal responsibility, and they desire a large degree of freedom in their personal lives.

Members of high-context cultures are more collectivist. They emphasize membership in organizations, groups, and teams; they encourage acceptance of group values, duties, and decisions. They typically resist independence because it fosters

Members of many low-context cultures value independence and freedom from control.

competition and confrontation instead of consensus. In group-oriented cultures such as those in many Asian societies, for example, self-assertion and individual decision making are discouraged. “The nail that sticks up gets pounded down” is a common Japanese saying.²¹ Business decisions are often made by all who have competence in the matter under discussion. Similarly, in China managers also focus on the group rather than on the individual, preferring a “consultative” management style over an autocratic style.²²

Many cultures, of course, are quite complex and cannot be characterized as totally individualistic or group oriented. For example, European Americans are generally quite individualistic, whereas African Americans are less so, and Latin Americans are closer to the group-centered dimension.²³

Formality

People in some cultures place less emphasis on tradition, ceremony, and social rules than do members of other cultures. Americans, for example, dress casually and are soon on a first-name basis with others. Their lack of formality is often characterized by directness. In business dealings Americans come to the point immediately; indirectness, they feel, wastes time, a valuable commodity in American culture.

This informality and directness may be confusing abroad. In Mexico, for instance, a typical business meeting begins with handshakes, coffee, and an expansive conversation about the weather, sports, and other light topics. An invitation to “get down to business” might offend a Mexican executive.²⁴ In Japan signing documents and exchanging business cards are important rituals. In Europe first names are used only after long acquaintance and by invitation. In Arab, South American, and Asian cultures, a feeling of friendship and kinship must be established before business can be transacted.

In Western cultures people are more relaxed about social status and the appearance of power.²⁵ Deference is not generally paid to individuals merely because of their wealth, position, seniority, or age. In many Asian cultures, however, these characteristics are important and must be respected. Deference and respect are paid to authority and power. Recognizing this cultural pattern, Marriott Hotel managers learned to avoid placing a lower-level Japanese employee on a floor above a higher-level executive from the same company.

Communication Style

People in low- and high-context cultures tend to communicate differently with words. To Americans and Germans, words are very important, especially in contracts and negotiations. People in high-context cultures, on the other hand, place more emphasis on the surrounding context than on the words describing a negotiation. A Greek may see a contract as a formal statement announcing the intention to build a business for the future. The Japanese may treat contracts as statements of intention, and they assume changes will be made as a project develops. Mexicans may treat contracts as artistic exercises of what might be accomplished in an ideal world. They do not necessarily expect contracts to apply consistently in the real world. An Arab may be insulted by merely mentioning a contract; a person’s word is more binding.²⁶

In communication style North Americans value straightforwardness, are suspicious of evasiveness, and distrust people who might have a “hidden agenda” or who “play their cards too close to the chest.”²⁷ North Americans also tend to be uncomfortable with silence and impatient with delays. Some Asian businesspeople have learned that the longer they drag out negotiations, the more concessions impatient North Americans are likely to make.

Time Orientation

North Americans consider time a precious commodity. They correlate time with productivity, efficiency, and money. Keeping people waiting for business appointments wastes time and is also rude.

Tradition, ceremony, and social rules are more important in some cultures than in others.

Words are used differently by people in low- and high-context cultures.

North Americans value a direct, straightforward communication style.

In other cultures time may be perceived as an unlimited and never-ending resource to be enjoyed. A North American businessperson, for example, was kept waiting two hours past a scheduled appointment time in South America. She wasn't offended, though, because she was familiar with Hispanics' more relaxed concept of time.

The perception of time and how it is used are culturally learned. In some cultures time is perceived analytically. People account for every minute of the day. In other cultures, time is holistic and viewed in larger chunks. Western cultures tend to be more analytical, scheduling appointments at 15- to 30-minute intervals. Eastern cultures tend to be more holistic, planning fewer but longer meetings. People in one culture may look at time as formal and task oriented. In another culture, time is seen as an opportunity to develop an interpersonal relationship. In the announcements of some international meetings, a qualifier may be inserted after the meeting time. For example, "The meeting starts at 10 A.M. Malaysian time." This tells participants whether to expect fixed or fluid scheduling.

Controlling Ethnocentrism and Stereotyping

The process of understanding and interacting successfully with people from other cultures is often hampered by two barriers: ethnocentrism and stereotyping. These two barriers, however, can be overcome by developing tolerance, a powerful and effective aid to communication.

Ethnocentrism. The belief in the superiority of one's own culture is known as *ethnocentrism*. This natural attitude is found in all cultures. Ethnocentrism causes us to judge others by our own values. If you were raised in North America, the values described in the preceding sections probably seem "right" to you, and you may wonder why the rest of the world doesn't function in the same sensible fashion. A North American businessperson in an Arab or Asian country might be upset at time spent over coffee or other social rituals before any "real" business is transacted. In these cultures, however, personal relationships must be established and nurtured before earnest talks may proceed.

Ethnocentrism is the belief in the superiority of one's own culture and group.

Stereotypes. Our perceptions of other cultures sometimes cause us to form stereotypes about groups of people. A *stereotype* is an oversimplified perception of a behavioral pattern or characteristic applied to entire groups. For example, the Swiss are hard-working, efficient, and neat; Germans are formal, reserved, and blunt; Americans are loud, friendly, and impatient; Canadians are polite, trusting, and tolerant; Asians are gracious, humble, and inscrutable. These attitudes may or may not accurately describe cultural norms. But when applied to individual business communicators, such stereotypes may create misconceptions and misunderstandings. Look beneath surface stereotypes and labels to discover individual personal qualities.

A stereotype is an oversimplified behavioral pattern applied to entire groups.

Tolerance. Working with people from other cultures demands tolerance and flexible attitudes. As global markets expand and as our society becomes increasingly multiethnic, tolerance becomes critical. *Tolerance*, here, does not mean "putting up with" or "enduring," which is one part of its definition. Instead, we use *tolerance* in a broader sense. It means learning about beliefs and practices different from our own and appreciating them. One of the best ways to develop tolerance is to practice *empathy*. This means trying to see the world through another's eyes. It means being nonjudgmental, recognizing things as they are rather than as they "should be."

Developing intercultural tolerance means practicing empathy, being nonjudgmental, and being patient.

For example, in China, the American snack foods manufacturer Frito-Lay had to accommodate yin and yang, the Chinese philosophy that nature and life must balance opposing elements. Chinese consider fried foods to be hot and avoid them in summer because two "hots" don't balance. They prefer "cool" snacks in summer; therefore, Frito-Lay created "cool lemon" potato chips dotted with lime specks and mint. The yellow, lemon-scented chips are delivered in a package showing breezy-blue skies and

rolling green grass.²⁸ Instead of imposing the American view that potato chips are fine as a summer snack, Frito-Lay looked at its product through the eyes of its Chinese consumers and adjusted accordingly.

The following suggestions can help you prevent miscommunication in oral and written transactions across cultures.

How to Minimize Oral Miscommunication Among Intercultural Audiences

When you have a conversation with someone from another culture, you can reduce misunderstandings by following these tips:

- **Use simple English.** Speak in short sentences (under 20 words) with familiar, short words. Eliminate puns, sports and military references, slang, and jargon (special business terms). Be especially alert to idiomatic expressions that can't be translated, such as *burn the midnight oil* and *under the weather*.
- **Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.** Avoid fast speech, but don't raise your voice. Overpunctuate with pauses and full stops. Always write numbers for all to see.
- **Encourage accurate feedback.** Ask probing questions, and encourage the listener to paraphrase what you say. Don't assume that a *yes*, a nod, or a smile indicates comprehension or assent.
- **Check frequently for comprehension.** Avoid waiting until you finish a long explanation to request feedback. Instead, make one point at a time, pausing to check for comprehension. Don't proceed to B until A has been grasped.
 - **Observe eye messages.** Be alert to a glazed expression or wandering eyes. These tell you the listener is lost.
 - **Accept blame.** If a misunderstanding results, graciously accept the blame for not making your meaning clear.
 - **Listen without interrupting.** Curb your desire to finish sentences or to fill out ideas for the speaker. Keep in mind that North Americans abroad are often accused of listening too little and talking too much.
 - **Smile when appropriate.** Roger Axtell, international behavior expert, calls the smile the single most understood and most useful form of communication in either personal or business transactions. In some cultures, however, excessive smiling may seem insincere.²⁹
 - **Follow up in writing.** After conversations or oral negotiations, confirm the results and agreements with follow-up letters. For proposals and contracts, engage a qualified translator to prepare copies in the local language.



"He doesn't understand you. Try shouting a little louder."

How to Minimize Written Miscommunication Among Intercultural Audiences

When you write to someone from a different culture, you can improve your chances of being understood by following these suggestions:

- **Consider local styles.** Learn how documents are formatted and how letters are addressed and developed in the intended reader's country. Decide whether to use your organization's preferred format or adjust to local styles.
- **Consider hiring a translator.** Engage a professional translator if (a) your document is important, (b) your document will be distributed to many readers, or (c) you must be persuasive.
- **Use short sentences and short paragraphs.** Sentences with fewer than 20 words and paragraphs with fewer than 8 lines are most readable.
- **Avoid ambiguous wording.** Include relative pronouns (*that, which, who*) for clarity in introducing clauses. Stay away from contractions (especially ones such as *Here's the problem*). Avoid idioms (*once in a blue moon*), slang (*my presentation really bombed*), acronyms (*ASAP for as soon as possible*), abbreviations (*DBA for doing business as*), and jargon (*input, output, clickstream*). Use action-specific verbs (*purchase a printer* rather than *get a printer*).

- **Cite numbers carefully.** For international trade it is a good idea to learn and use the metric system. In citing numbers, use figures (*15*) instead of spelling them out (*fifteen*). Always convert dollar figures into local currency. Avoid using figures to express the month of the year. In North America, for example, *March 5, 2009*, might be written as *3/5/09*, while in Europe the same date might appear as *5.3.09*. For clarity, always spell out the month.

Capitalizing on Workforce Diversity

As global competition opens world markets, North American businesspeople will increasingly interact with customers and colleagues from around the world. At the same time, the North American workforce is also becoming more diverse—in race, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, physical ability, and countless other characteristics. No longer, say the experts, will the workplace be predominantly male or Anglo-oriented. By 2020 many groups now considered minorities (African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans) are projected to become 36 percent of the U.S. population. By 2050 these same groups are expected to surge to 47 percent of the U.S. population.³⁰ Women will become nearly 50 percent of the workforce. Moreover, it is estimated that the share of the population over 65 will jump dramatically from 13 percent now to 20 percent in 2050. Trends suggest that many of these older people will remain in the workforce.

While the workforce is becoming more diverse, the structure of businesses in North America is also changing. As you learned earlier, many workers are now organized by teams. Organizations are flatter, and rank-and-file workers are increasingly making decisions among themselves. What does all this mean for you as a future business communicator? Simply put, your job may require you to interact with colleagues and customers from around the world. Your work environment will probably demand that you cooperate effectively with small groups of coworkers. What's more, these coworkers may differ from you in race, ethnicity, gender, age, and other ways.

Benefits of a Diverse Workforce

A diverse work environment offers many benefits. Consumers want to deal with companies that respect their values and create products and services tailored to their needs. Organizations that hire employees with various experiences and backgrounds are better able to create the products these consumers desire.

At Procter & Gamble a senior marketing executive hit the nail on the head when he said, “I don’t know how you can effectively market to the melting pot that this country represents without a workforce and vendors who have a gut-level understanding of the needs and wants of all of these market segments. . . . When we started getting a more diverse workforce, we started getting richer [marketing] plans, because they came up with things that white males were simply not going to come up with on their own.”³¹ At PepsiCo, work teams created new products inspired by diversity efforts. Those products included guacamole-flavored Doritos chips and Gatorade Xtremo aimed at Hispanics, as well as Mountain Dew Code Red, which appeals to African Americans. One Pepsi executive said that companies that “figure out the diversity challenge first will clearly have a competitive advantage.”³²

In addition, organizations that set aside time and resources to cultivate and capitalize on diversity will suffer fewer discrimination lawsuits, fewer union clashes, and less government regulatory action. Most important, though, is the growing realization among organizations that diversity is a critical bottom-line business strategy to improve employee relationships and to increase productivity. Developing a diverse staff that can work together cooperatively is one of the biggest challenges facing business organizations today.

You can expect to be interacting with customers and colleagues who may differ from you in race, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, physical ability, and many other characteristics.



—GLASBERGEN

“We need to focus on diversity. Your goal is to hire people who all look different, but think just like me.”

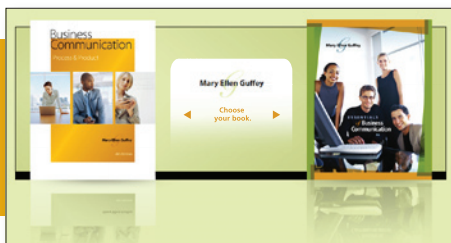
Improving Communication Among Diverse Workplace Audiences

Integrating all this diversity into one seamless workforce is a formidable but vital task. Harnessed effectively, diversity can enhance productivity and propel a company to success well into the twenty-first century. Mismanaged, it can become a tremendous drain on a company's time and resources. How companies deal with diversity will make all the difference in how they compete in an increasingly global environment. This means that organizations must do more than just pay lip service to these issues. Harmony and acceptance do not happen automatically when people who are dissimilar work together. The following suggestions can help you and your organization find ways to improve communication and interaction:

Successful communicators understand the value of differences, seek training, learn about their own cultures, make fewer assumptions, and build on similarities.

- **Understand the value of differences.** Diversity makes an organization innovative and creative. Sameness fosters an absence of critical thinking called “groupthink.” Case studies, for example, of the *Challenger* shuttle disaster suggest that groupthink prevented alternatives from being considered. Even smart people working collectively can make dumb decisions if they do not see different perspectives.³³ Diversity in problem-solving groups encourages independent and creative thinking.
- **Seek training.** Especially if an organization is experiencing diversity problems, awareness-raising sessions may be helpful. Spend time reading and learning about workforce diversity and how it can benefit organizations. Look upon diversity as an opportunity, not a threat. Intercultural communication, team building, and conflict resolution are skills that can be learned in diversity training programs.
- **Learn about your cultural self.** Begin to think of yourself as a product of your culture, and understand that your culture is just one among many. Try to stand outside and look at yourself. Do you see any reflex reactions and automatic thought patterns that are a result of your upbringing? These may be invisible to you until challenged by people who are different from you. Remember, your culture was designed to help you succeed and survive in a certain environment. Be sure to keep what works and yet be ready to adapt as your environment changes.
- **Make fewer assumptions.** Be careful of seemingly insignificant, innocent workplace assumptions. For example, don't assume that everyone wants to observe the holidays with a Christmas party and a decorated tree. Celebrating only Christian holidays in December and January excludes those who honor Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and the Lunar New Year. Moreover, in workplace discussions don't assume that everyone is married or wants to be or is even heterosexual, for that matter. For invitations, avoid phrases such as *managers and their wives*. *Spouses* or *partners* is more inclusive. Valuing diversity means making fewer assumptions that everyone is like you or wants to be like you.
- **Build on similarities.** Look for areas in which you and others not like you can agree or at least share opinions. Be prepared to consider issues from many perspectives, all of which may be valid. Accept that there is room for various points of view to coexist peacefully. Although you can always find differences, it is much harder to find similarities. Look for common ground in shared experiences, mutual goals, and similar values. Concentrate on your objective even when you may disagree on how to reach it.³⁴

In times of conflict, look for areas of agreement and build on similarities.



Visit www.meguffey.com

- Chapter Review Quiz
- Flash Cards
- Grammar Practice
- PowerPoint Slides
- Personal Language Trainer
- Beat the Clock Quiz

Summing Up and Looking Forward

This chapter described the importance of communication skills in today's information economy. Writing skills are particularly important because businesspeople are doing more writing than ever before. In addition, many of the changes in today's dynamic workplace revolve around processing and communicating information. Flattened management hierarchies, participatory management, increased emphasis on work teams, heightened global competition, and innovative communication technologies are all trends that increase the need for good communication skills. To improve your skills, you should understand the communication process. Communication doesn't take place unless senders encode meaningful messages that can be decoded and understood by receivers.

One important part of the communication process is listening. You can become a more active listener by keeping an open mind, listening for main points, capitalizing on lag time, judging ideas and not appearances, taking selective

notes, and providing feedback. The chapter also described ways to help you improve your nonverbal communication skills.

You learned about the powerful effect that culture has on communication, and you became more aware of the cultural dimensions of context, individualism, formality, communication style, and time orientation. Finally, the chapter discussed ways that businesses and individuals can capitalize on workforce diversity.

The following chapters present the writing process. You will learn specific techniques to help you improve your written and oral expression. Remember, communication skills are not inherited. They are learned, and anyone can learn to be a good communicator. Writing skills are critical because they function as a gatekeeper. Poor skills keep you in low-wage, dead-end work. Good skills open the door to high wages and career advancement.³⁵

Critical Thinking

1. Why is it important for business and professional students to develop good communication skills, and why are writing skills especially essential?
2. Recall a time when you experienced a problem as a result of poor communication. What were the causes of and possible remedies for the problem?
3. How are listening skills important to employees, supervisors, and executives? Who should have the best listening skills?
4. What arguments could you give for or against the idea that body language is a science with principles that can be interpreted accurately by specialists?
5. Because English is becoming the international language of business and because the United States is a dominant military and trading force, why should Americans bother to learn about other cultures?

Chapter Review

6. What percentage of new jobs require postsecondary education?
7. Are communication skills acquired by *nature* or by *nurture*? Explain.
8. List seven trends in the workplace that affect business communicators. Be prepared to discuss how they might affect you in your future career.

9. Give a brief definition of the following words:
 - a. Encode
 - b. Channel
 - c. Decode
10. List 11 techniques for improving your listening skills. Be prepared to discuss each.

11. When verbal and nonverbal messages conflict, which are receivers more likely to believe? Give an original example.

12. Would your culture be classified as high- or low-context? Why?

Cengage Learning

13. What is ethnocentrism, and how can it be reduced?

14. List seven or more suggestions for enhancing comprehension when you are talking with nonnative speakers of English. Be prepared to discuss each.

15. List five suggestions for improving communication among diverse workplace audiences. Be prepared to discuss each.

Activities and Cases

1.1 Pumping Up Your Basic Language Muscles

You can enlist the aid of your author to help you pump up your basic language skills. As your personal trainer, Dr. Guffey provides a three-step workout plan and hundreds of interactive questions to help you brush up on your grammar and mechanics skills. You receive immediate feedback in the warm-up sessions, and when you finish a complete workout, you can take a short test to assess what you learned. These workouts are completely self-taught, which means you can review at your own pace and repeat as often as you need. *Your Personal Language Trainer* is available at your premium Web site, www.meguffey.com. In addition to pumping up your basic language muscles, you can also use *Spell Right!* and *Speak Right!* to improve your spelling and pronunciation skills.

Your Task. Begin using *Your Personal Language Trainer* to brush up on your basic grammar and mechanics skills by completing one to three workouts per week or as many as your instructor advises. Be prepared to submit a printout of your “fitness” (completion) certificate when you finish a workout module. If your instructor directs, complete the spelling exercises in *Spell Right!* and submit a certificate of completion for the spelling final exam.

E-MAIL

1.2 Getting to Know You

Your instructor wants to know more about you, your motivation for taking this course, your career goals, and your writing skills.

Your Task. Send an e-mail or write a memo of introduction to your instructor. See Chapter 5 for formats and tips on preparing e-mail messages. In your message include the following:

- a. Your reasons for taking this class
- b. Your career goals (both temporary and long-term)
- c. A brief description of your employment, if any, and your favorite activities
- d. An assessment and discussion of your current communication skills, including your strengths and weaknesses

For online classes, write a letter of introduction about yourself with the preceding information. Post your letter to your discussion board. Read and comment on the letters of other students. Think about how people in virtual teams must learn about each other through online messages.

TEAM

1.3 Small-Group Presentation: Getting to Know Each Other

Many business organizations today use teams to accomplish their goals. To help you develop speaking, listening, and team-work skills, your instructor may assign team projects. One of the first jobs in any team is selecting members and becoming acquainted.

Your Task. Your instructor will divide your class into small groups or teams. At your instructor’s direction, either (a) interview another group member and introduce that person to the group or (b) introduce yourself to the group. Think of this as an informal interview for a team assignment or for a job. You will want to make notes from which to speak. Your introduction should include information such as the following:

- a. Where did you grow up?
- b. What work and extracurricular activities have you engaged in?
- c. What are your interests and talents? What are you good at doing?
- d. What have you achieved?
- e. How familiar are you with various computer technologies?
- f. What are your professional and personal goals? Where do you expect to be five years from now?

To develop listening skills, team members should practice the good listening techniques discussed in this chapter and take notes. They should be prepared to discuss three important facts as well as remember details about each speaker.

1.4 Class Listening

Have you ever consciously observed the listening habits of others?

Your Task. In one of your classes, study student listening habits for a week. What barriers to effective listening did you observe? How many of the suggestions described in this chapter are being implemented by listeners in the class? Write a memo or an e-mail message to your instructor briefly describing your observations. (See Chapter 5 to learn more about e-mail messages and memos.)

1.5 How Good Are Your Listening Skills? Self-Checked Rating Quiz

You can learn whether your listening skills are excellent or deficient by completing a brief quiz.

Your Task. Take Dr. Guffey's Listening Quiz at www.meguffey.com. What two listening behaviors do you think you need to work on the most?

1.6 Silent Messages

Becoming more aware of the silent messages you send helps you make them more accurate.

Your Task. Analyze the kinds of silent messages you send your instructor, your classmates, and your employer. How do you send these messages? Group them into categories, as suggested by what you learned in this chapter. What do these messages mean? Be prepared to discuss them in small groups or in a memo to your instructor.

1.7 Body Language

Can body language be accurately interpreted?

Your Task. What attitudes do the following body movements suggest to you? Do these movements always mean the same thing? What part does context play in your interpretations?

- Wringing hands, tugging ears
- Bowed posture, twiddling thumbs
- Steepled hands, sprawling sitting position
- Rubbing hand through hair
- Open hands, unbuttoned coat

1.8 Universal Sign for "I Goofed"

In an effort to promote peace and tranquillity on the highways, motorists submitted the following suggestions to a newspaper columnist.³⁶

Your Task. In small groups consider the pros and cons of each of the following gestures intended as an apology when a driver makes a mistake. Why would some fail?

- Lower your head slightly and bonk yourself on the forehead with the side of your closed fist. The message is clear: "I'm stupid. I shouldn't have done that."
- Make a temple with your hands, as if you were praying.
- Move the index finger of your right hand back and forth across your neck—as if you were cutting your throat.
- Flash the well-known peace sign. Hold up the index and middle fingers of one hand, making a V, as in Victory.
- Place the flat of your hands against your cheeks, as children do when they have made a mistake.
- Clasp your hand over your mouth, raise your brows, and shrug your shoulders.
- Use your knuckles to knock on the side of your head. Translation: "Oops! Engage brain."
- Place your right hand high on your chest and pat a few times, like a basketball player who drops a pass or a football player who makes a bad throw. This says, "I'll take the blame."
- Place your right fist over the middle of your chest and move it in a circular motion. This is universal sign language for "I'm sorry."
- Open your window and tap the top of your car roof with your hand.
- Smile and raise both arms, palms outward, which is a universal gesture for surrender or forgiveness.
- Use the military salute, which is simple and shows respect.
- Flash your biggest smile, point at yourself with your right thumb and move your head from left to right, as if to say, "I can't believe I did that."

1.9 Workplace Writing: Separating Myths From Facts

Today's knowledge workers are doing more writing on the job than ever before. Flattened management hierarchies, heightened global competition, expanded team-based management, and heavy reliance on e-mail have all contributed to more written messages.

Your Task. In teams or in class, discuss the following statements. Are they myths or facts?

- Because I'm in a technical field, I will work with numbers, not words.
- Secretaries will clean up my writing problems.
- Technical writers do most of the real writing on the job.
- Computers can fix any of my writing mistakes.
- I can use form letters for most messages.

1.10 Translating Idioms

Many languages have idiomatic expressions that do not always make sense to outsiders.

Your Task. Explain in simple English what the following idiomatic expressions mean. Assume that you are explaining them to nonnative speakers of English.

- a. can't hold a candle
- b. class act
- c. grey area
- d. cold shoulder
- e. early bird
- f. get your act together
- g. go ape
- h. soldier on
- i. the bottom of the barrel

E-MAIL

1.11 Analyzing Diversity at Reebok

Reebok grew from a \$12 million a year sport shoe company into a \$3 billion footwear and apparel powerhouse without giving much thought to the hiring of employees. "When we were growing very, very fast, all we did was bring another friend into work the next day," recalled Sharon Cohen, Reebok vice president. "Everybody hired nine of their friends. Well, it happened that nine white people hired nine of their friends, so guess what? They were white, all about the same age. And then we looked up and said, 'Wait a minute. We don't like the way it looks here.' That's the kind of thing that can happen when you are growing very fast and thoughtlessly."³⁷

Your Task. In what ways would Reebok benefit by diversifying its staff? What competitive advantages might it gain? Outline your reasoning in an e-mail message to your instructor.

Video Resources

Two video libraries accompany Guffey's *Essentials of Business Communication*, 8e. These videos take you beyond the classroom to build the communication skills you will need to succeed in today's rapidly changing workplace.

Video Library 1, Building Workplace Skills, includes seven videos that introduce and reinforce concepts in selected chapters. These excellent tools ease the learning load by demonstrating chapter-specific material to strengthen your comprehension and retention of key ideas.

The recommended video for this chapter is **Communication Foundations**, which illustrates how strong communication skills can help you advance your career in today's challenging world of work. Be prepared to discuss critical-thinking questions your instructor may provide.

Video Library 2, Bridging the Gap, presents six videos transporting you inside high-profile companies such as Cold Stone Creamery, Ben & Jerry's, and Hard Rock Cafe. You will be able to apply your new skills in structured applications aimed at bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world of work.

We recommend three videos for this chapter:

Video Library 1: Career Success Starts With Communication Foundations. Made especially for Guffey books, this film illustrates the changing business world, flattened management

hierarchies, the communication process, communication flow, ethics, listening, nonverbal communication, and other topics to prepare you for today's workplace. The film is unique in that many concepts are demonstrated through role-playing. Be prepared to discuss critical-thinking questions at the film's conclusion.

Video Library 1: Intercultural Communication at Work. This film illustrates intercultural misunderstandings when a Japanese businessman visits an American advertising agency that seeks his business. The agency owners, Rob and Ella, as well as the receptionist, Stephanie, make numerous cultural blunders because they are unaware of the differences between high- and low-context cultures. At the film's conclusion you will have an opportunity to make suggestions for improving Rob and Ella's cultural competence.

Video Library 2: Understanding Teamwork: Cold Stone Creamery. This video highlights teamwork at Cold Stone Creamery, a fast-growing ice cream specialty chain. It shows team members behind the counter but also provides the inside scoop through the insights of Kevin Myers, vice president, marketing. Viewers see how teamwork permeates every facet of Cold Stone's corporate culture. Look for a definition of *team*, as well as six kinds of teams and the characteristics of successful teams.

Grammar/Mechanics Checkup 1

These checkups are designed to improve your control of grammar and mechanics. They systematically review all sections of the Grammar/Mechanics Handbook. Answers are provided near the end of the book. You will find Advanced Grammar/Mechanics Checkups with immediate feedback at your premium Web site, www.meguffey.com.

Nouns

Review Sections 1.02–1.06 in the Grammar/Mechanics Handbook. Then study each of the following statements. Underscore any inappropriate form, and write a correction in the space provided. Also record the appropriate G/M section and letter to illustrate the principle involved. If a sentence is correct, write *C*. When you finish, compare your responses with those provided. If your answers differ, study carefully the principles shown in parentheses.

Attorneys (1.05d)

Example Attornies seem to be the only ones who benefit from class action suits.

1. A huge number of inquirys overwhelmed their two Web sites.
2. Banks are installing multilingual ATMs to serve customers.
3. Some companys are giving up land lines for cell phones.
4. Business is better on Saturday's than on Sundays.
5. Frozen turkies fill the grocery's lockers at Thanksgiving.
6. Only the Bushs and the Sanchezes brought their entire families.
7. During the 2000's stock prices fluctuated extremely.
8. Both editor in chiefs instituted strict proofreading policies.
9. Luxury residential complexs are part of the architect's plan.
10. Voters in three countys are likely to approve new school taxes.
11. The instructor was surprised to find two Cassidy's in one class.
12. André sent digital photos of two valleys in France before we planned our trip.
13. Most companies have copies of statements showing their assets and liabilitys.
14. My flat-screen monitor makes it difficult to distinguish between o's and a's.
15. Both of her sisters-in-law were woman with high principles.

Grammar/Mechanics Challenge 1

The following letter has intentional errors in spelling, proofreading, noun plurals, and sentence structure. You may either (a) use standard proofreading marks (see Appendix B) to correct the errors here or (b) download the document from your companion Web site and revise at your computer. Study the guidelines in the Grammar/Mechanics Handbook to sharpen your skills.

FOREST COMMUNICATION SERVICES

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(617) 830-2871
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April 12, 200x

Ms. Rachel M. Fisher
Workplace Monthly Magazine
302 Northland Boulevard
Cincinnati, OH 45246

Dear Ms. Fletcher:

Thank you for giving Forest Communication Services opportunity to contribute to the magazine article that you are writing about Web conferencing for *Workplace Monthly Magazine*. My specialty here at Forest Communication is conferencing services for North America.

Online meetings are definitely becoming more frequent. Web conferencing began in the 1990s, but it has grown rapidly in the 2000s. Many companies find that such meetings save time and money. Participants can hold live, interactive meetings and share documents and presentations without ever leaving their offices or homes. Web conferencing is simply more convenient than having to attend meetings in person. Let me summarize a few Web conferencing features:

- **Participant ID.** This feature displays on your screen the name of all attendees and indicates who is talking over the phone line.
- **PowerPoints/Document Sharing.** Presenters can show batches of Web-based visuals and describe them by talking on the telephone.
- **Polling/Surveys.** A virtual "show of hands" can speed consensus and shorten a meeting. Many users consider this feature one of the real luxuries of Web conferencing.

Businessmen and businesswomen from countries around the world are turning to Web conferences because of the many pluses and few minuses. Do you plan to discuss the pros and cons of conferencing in your article? Our Web site has a list of FAQs that you might find interesting. I would be happy to provide more information if you call me at (617) 830-8701.

Cordially,

Tamara Lippman
Director, Conferencing Services

Using Job Boards to Learn About Employment Possibilities in Your Field

Nearly everyone looking for a job today starts with the Web. This communication workshop will help you use the Web to study job openings in your field. Looking for jobs or internships on the Web has distinct advantages. For a few job seekers, the Web leads to bigger salaries, wider opportunities, and faster hiring. The Web, however, can devour huge chunks of time and produce slim results.

In terms of actually finding a job, the Web does not always result in success. Web searching seems to work best for professionals looking for similar work in their current fields and for those who are totally flexible about location. However, the Web is an excellent place for any job seeker to learn what is available, what qualifications are necessary, and what salaries are being offered. Thousands of job boards with many job listings from employers across the United States and abroad are available on the Web.

Career Application. Assume that you are about to finish your degree or certification program and you are now looking for a job. At the direction of your instructor, conduct a survey of electronic job advertisements in your field. What's available? How much is the salary? What are the requirements?

Your Task

- **Visit Monster.com (<http://www.monster.com>)**, one of the most popular job boards.
- **Study the opening page.** Ignore the clutter and banner ads or pop-ups. Close any pop-up boxes.
- **Select keyword, category, city, and state.** Decide whether you want to search by a job title (such as *nurse, accountant, project manager*) or a category (such as *Accounting/Finance, Administrative/Clerical, Advertising/Marketing*). Enter your keyword job title or select a category—or do both. Enter a city, state, or region. Click **Search**.
- **Study the job listings.** Click **Expand** to read more about a job opening. Click **More** to see a full description of the job.
- **Read job search tips.** For many helpful hints on precise searching, click **Job search tips**. Browsing this information may take a few minutes, but it is well worth the effort to learn how to refine your search. Close the box by clicking the X in the upper right corner.
- **Select best ads.** In your career and geographical area, select the three best ads and print them. If you cannot print, make notes on what you find.
- **Visit another site.** Try <http://www.collegerecruiter.com>, which claims to be the highest-traffic entry-level job site for students and graduates, or <http://www.careerbuilder.com>, which says it is the nation's largest employment network. Become familiar with the site's searching tools, and look for jobs in your field. Select and print three ads.
- **Analyze the skills required.** How often do the ads you printed mention communication, teamwork, computer skills, or professionalism? What tasks do the ads mention? What is the salary range identified in these ads for this position? Your instructor may ask you to submit your findings and/or report to the class.

Communication Workshops (such as the one on this page) provide insight into special business communication topics and skills not discussed in the chapters. These topics cover ethics, technology, career skills, and collaboration. Each workshop includes a career application to extend your learning and help you develop skills relevant to the workshop topic.

2 UNIT 2

The Writing Process



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Chapter 2
Planning Business Messages

Chapter 3
Composing Business Messages

Chapter 4
Revising Business Messages



Planning Business Messages

OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

- Understand that business messages should be purposeful, persuasive, economical, and audience oriented.
- Identify and implement the three phases of the writing process.
- Appreciate the importance of analyzing the task and profiling the audience for business messages.
- Create messages that spotlight audience benefits and cultivate a “you” view.
- Develop a conversational tone and use positive, courteous language.
- Create messages that include inclusive language, plain expression, and familiar words.

Cengage Learning

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The Basics of Business Writing

Business writing differs from other writing you may have done. In preparing high school or college compositions and term papers, you probably focused on discussing your feelings or displaying your knowledge. Your instructors wanted to see your thought processes, and they wanted assurance that you had internalized the subject matter. You may have had to meet a minimum word count. Business writers, however, have different goals. For business messages and oral presentations, your writing should be:

- **Purposeful.** You will be writing to solve problems and convey information. You will have a definite purpose to fulfill in each message.
- **Persuasive.** You want your audience to believe and accept your message.
- **Economical.** You will try to present ideas clearly but concisely. Length is not rewarded.
- **Audience oriented.** You will concentrate on looking at a problem from the perspective of the audience instead of seeing it from your own.

These distinctions actually ease the writer’s task. You will not be searching your imagination for creative topic ideas. You won’t be stretching your ideas to make them appear longer. Writing consultants and businesspeople complain that many college graduates entering industry have at least an unconscious perception that quantity enhances quality. Wrong! Get over the notion that longer is better. Conciseness and clarity are what counts in business.

OFFICE INSIDER

When asked what communication skills employees needed, one recruiter said that new-hires “need the ability to take something that is awkwardly written and make it flow smoothly—to express business ideas in writing that is 180 degrees [different] from writing for English classes.”

The ability to prepare concise, audience-centered, persuasive, and purposeful messages does not come naturally. Very few people, especially beginners, can sit down and compose a terrific letter or report without training. However, following a systematic process, studying model messages, and practicing the craft can make nearly anyone a successful business writer or speaker.

The Writing Process for Business Messages and Oral Presentations

Whether you are preparing an e-mail message, memo, letter, or oral presentation, the process will be easier if you follow a systematic plan. Our plan breaks the entire task into three phases: prewriting, writing, and revising. As you can see in Figure 2.1, however, the process is not always linear. It does not always proceed from Step 1 to Step 2; often the writer must circle back and repeat an earlier step.

To illustrate the writing process, let's say that you own a popular local McDonald's franchise. At rush times, you face a problem. Customers complain about the chaotic multiple waiting lines to approach the service counter. You once saw two customers nearly get into a fistfight over cutting into a line. What's more, customers often are so intent on looking for ways to improve their positions in line that they fail to examine the menu. Then they are undecided when their turn arrives. You want to convince other franchise owners that a single-line (serpentine) system would work better. You could telephone the other owners. But you want to present a serious argument with good points that they will remember and be willing to act on when they gather for their next district meeting. You decide to write a letter that you hope will win their support.

Prewriting

The first phase of the writing process prepares you to write. It involves *analyzing* the audience and your purpose for writing. The audience for your letter will be other franchise owners, some highly educated and others not. Your purpose in writing is to convince them that a change in policy would improve customer service. You are convinced that a single-line system, such as that used in banks, would reduce chaos and make customers happier because they would not have to worry about where they are in line.

Prewriting also involves *anticipating* how your audience will react to your message. You are sure that some of the other owners will agree with you, but others might fear that customers seeing a long single line might go elsewhere. In *adapting* your message to the audience, you try to think of the right words and the right tone that will win approval.

The writing process has three parts: prewriting, writing, and revising.

The first phase of the writing process involves analyzing and anticipating the audience and then adapting to that audience.

FIGURE 2.1 The Writing Process



Writing

The second phase involves researching, organizing, and then composing the message. In *researching* information for this letter, you would probably investigate other kinds of businesses that use single lines for customers. You might check out your competitors. What are Wendy's and Burger King doing? You might do some calling to see whether other franchise owners are concerned about chaotic lines. Before writing to the entire group, you might brainstorm with a few owners to see what ideas they have for solving the problem.

Once you have collected enough information, you would focus on *organizing* your letter. Should you start out by offering your solution? Or should you work up to it slowly, describing the problem, presenting your evidence, and then ending with the solution? The final step in the second phase of the writing process is actually *composing* the letter. Naturally, you will do it at your computer so that you can make revisions easily.

Revising

The third phase of the process involves revising, proofreading, and evaluating your message. After writing the first draft, you will spend a lot of time *revising* the message for clarity, conciseness, tone, and readability. Could parts of it be rearranged to make your point more effectively? This is the time when you look for ways to improve the organization and sound of your message. Next, you will spend time *proofreading* carefully to ensure correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, and format. The final phase involves *evaluating* your message to decide whether it accomplishes your goal.

Scheduling the Writing Process

Although Figure 2.1 shows the three phases of the writing process equally, the time you spend on each varies depending on the complexity of the problem, the purpose, the audience, and your schedule. One expert gives these rough estimates for scheduling a project:

- Prewriting—25 percent (planning and worrying)
- Writing—25 percent (organizing and composing)
- Revising—50 percent (45 percent revising and 5 percent proofreading)

These are rough guides, yet you can see that good writers spend most of their time on the final phase of revising and proofreading. Much depends, of course, on your project, its importance, and your familiarity with it. What's critical to remember, though, is that revising is a major component of the writing process.

It may appear that you perform one step and progress to the next, always following the same order. Most business writing, however, is not that rigid. Although writers perform the tasks described, the steps may be rearranged, abbreviated, or repeated. Some writers revise every sentence and paragraph as they go. Many find that new ideas occur after they have begun to write, causing them to back up, alter the organization, and rethink their plan.

Analyzing the Purpose and the Audience

We have just taken a look at the total writing process. As you begin to develop your business writing skills, you should expect to follow this process closely. With experience, though, you will become like other good writers and presenters who alter, compress, and rearrange the steps as needed. At first, however, following a plan is very helpful. The remainder of this chapter covers the first phase of the writing process. You will learn to analyze the purpose for writing, anticipate how your audience will react, and adapt your message to the audience.

OFFICE INSIDER

"There is such a heavy emphasis on effective communication in the workplace that college students who master these skills can set themselves apart from the pack when searching for employment."

Because revising is the most important part of the writing process, it takes the most time.



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WORKPLACE IN FOCUS

With energy independence at the forefront of international concerns, many leaders have high expectations for Suncor Energy, a Canadian firm with a high-tech process for extracting oil from Alberta's bitumen-rich sands. The company recently rolled out "Oil Sands: The Next Generation," a communications blitz conveying Suncor's forward-looking vision to more than 3,000 employees. The campaign included keynote speeches, newsletter inserts, offsite breakout meetings, and a *Star Trek* parody to motivate workers to double Suncor's oil sands production. Employee feedback surveys provided managers with a gauge of the campaign's effectiveness. *Why might organizations use multiple communication channels to transmit messages?*

Identifying Your Purpose

As you begin to compose a message, ask yourself two important questions: (a) Why am I sending this message? and (b) What do I hope to achieve? Your responses will determine how you organize and present your information.

Your message may have primary and secondary purposes. For college work your primary purpose may be merely to complete the assignment; secondary purposes might be to make yourself look good and to get a good grade. The primary purposes for sending business messages are typically to inform and to persuade. A secondary purpose is to promote goodwill: you and your organization want to look good in the eyes of your audience.

Selecting the Best Channel

After identifying the purpose of your message, you need to select the most appropriate communication channel. Some information is most efficiently and effectively delivered orally. Other messages should be written, and still others are best delivered electronically. Whether to set up a meeting, send a message by e-mail, or write a report depends on some of the following factors:

- Importance of the message
- Amount and speed of feedback and interactivity required
- Necessity of a permanent record
- Cost of the channel
- Degree of formality desired
- Confidentiality and sensitivity of the message

An interesting theory, called media richness, describes the extent to which a channel or medium recreates or represents all the information available in the original message. A richer medium, such as face-to-face conversation, permits more interactivity and feedback. A leaner medium, such as a report or proposal, presents a flat, one-dimensional message. Richer media enable the sender to provide more verbal and visual cues, as well as allow the sender to tailor the message to the audience.

Many factors help you decide which of the channels shown in Figure 2.2 is most appropriate for delivering a workplace message.

The primary purpose of most business messages is to inform or to persuade; the secondary purpose is to promote goodwill.

Choosing an appropriate channel depends on the importance of the message, the feedback required, the need for a permanent record, the cost, and the degree of formality, confidentiality, and sensitivity needed.

FIGURE 2.2 Choosing Communication Channels

| Channel | Best Use |
|----------------------------|--|
| Blog | When one person needs to present digital information easily so that it is available to others. |
| E-mail | When you need feedback but not immediately. Lack of security makes it problematic for personal, emotional, or private messages. |
| Face-to-face conversation | When you need a rich, interactive medium. Useful for persuasive, bad-news, and personal messages. |
| Face-to-face group meeting | When group decisions and consensus are important. Inefficient for merely distributing information. |
| Fax | When your message must cross time zones or international boundaries, when a written record is significant, or when speed is important. |
| Instant message | When you are online and need a quick response. Useful for learning whether someone is available for a phone conversation. |
| Letter | When a written record or formality is required, especially with customers, the government, suppliers, or others outside an organization. |
| Memo | When you want a written record to clearly explain policies, discuss procedures, or collect information within an organization. |
| Phone call | When you need to deliver or gather information quickly, when nonverbal cues are unimportant, and when you cannot meet in person. |
| Report or proposal | When you are delivering considerable data internally or externally. |
| Voice mail message | When you wish to leave important or routine information that the receiver can respond to when convenient. |
| Video- or teleconference | When group consensus and interaction are important but members are geographically dispersed. |
| Wiki | When digital information must be made available to others. Useful for collaboration because participants can easily add, remove, and edit content. |

Cengage Learning



"I sent you an e-mail and forwarded a copy to your PDA, cell phone, and home computer. I also faxed a copy to your office, your assistant, and laptop. Then I snail-mailed hard copies to you on paper, floppy, and CD. But in case you don't receive it, I'll just tell you what it said..."

Switching to Faster Channels

Technology and competition continue to accelerate the pace of business today. As a result, communicators are switching to ever-faster means of exchanging information. In the past business messages within organizations were delivered largely by hard-copy memos. Responses would typically take a couple of days. However, that's too slow for today's communicators. They want answers and action now! Cell phones, instant messaging, faxes, Web sites, and especially e-mail can deliver that information much faster than can traditional channels of communication.

Within many organizations, hard-copy memos are still written, especially for messages that require persuasion, permanence, or formality. They are also prepared as attachments to e-mail messages. Clearly, the channel of choice for corporate communicators today is e-mail. It's fast, inexpensive, and easy. Thus, fewer hard-copy memos are being written. Fewer letters to customers are also being written. That's because many customer service functions can now be served through Web sites or by e-mail.

Whether your channel choice is e-mail, a hard-copy memo, or a report, you will be a more effective writer if you spend sufficient time in the prewriting phase.

Anticipating the Audience

A good writer anticipates the audience for a message: What is the reader or listener like? How will that person react to the message? Although you can't always know

exactly who the receiver is, you can imagine some of that person’s characteristics. Even writers of direct-mail sales letters have a general idea of the audience they wish to target. Picturing a typical reader is important in guiding what you write. One copywriter at Lands’ End, the catalog company, pictures his sister-in-law whenever he writes product descriptions for the catalog. By profiling your audience and shaping a message to respond to that profile, you are more likely to achieve your communication goals.

Profiling the Audience

Visualizing your audience is a pivotal step in the writing process. The questions in Figure 2.3 will help you profile your audience. How much time you devote to answering these questions depends greatly on your message and its context. An analytical report that you compose for management or an oral presentation before a big group would, of course, demand considerable audience anticipation. On the other hand, an e-mail message to a coworker or a letter to a familiar supplier might require only a few moments of planning. No matter how short your message, though, spend some time thinking about the audience so that you can tailor your words to your readers or listeners. Remember that most readers or listeners will be thinking, “What’s in it for me?” or, “What am I supposed to do with this information?”

Responding to the Profile

Profiling your audience helps you make decisions about shaping the message. You will discover what kind of language is appropriate, whether you are free to use specialized technical terms, whether you should explain everything, and so on. You will decide whether your tone should be formal or informal, and you will select the most desirable channel. Imagining whether the receiver is likely to be neutral, positive, or negative will help you determine how to organize your message.

Another advantage of profiling your audience is considering the possibility of a secondary audience. For example, let’s say you start to write an e-mail message to your supervisor, Sheila, describing a problem you are having. Halfway through the message you realize that Sheila will probably forward this message to her boss, the vice president. Sheila will not want to summarize what you said; instead she will take the easy route and merely forward your e-mail. When you realize that the vice president will probably see this message, you decide to back up and use a more formal tone. You remove your inquiry about Sheila’s family, you reduce your complaints, and you tone down your language about why things went wrong. Instead, you provide more background information, and you are more specific in identifying items the vice president might not recognize. Analyzing the task and anticipating the audience help you adapt your message so that you can create an efficient and effective message.

By profiling your audience before you write, you can identify the appropriate tone, language, and channel for your message.

After profiling the audience, you can decide whether the receiver will be neutral, positive, or hostile toward your message.

FIGURE 2.3 Asking the Right Questions to Profile Your Audience

| Primary Audience | Secondary Audience |
|--|---|
| Who is my primary reader or listener? | Who might see or hear this message in addition to the primary audience? |
| What are my personal and professional relationships with that person? | How do these people differ from the primary audience? |
| What position does the person hold in the organization? | Do I need to include more background information? |
| How much does that person know about the subject? | How must I reshape my message to make it understandable and acceptable to others to whom it might be forwarded? |
| What do I know about that person's education, beliefs, culture, and attitudes? | |
| Should I expect a neutral, positive, or negative response to my message? | |

Adapting to the Task and Audience

After analyzing your purpose and anticipating your audience, you must convey your purpose to that audience. Adaptation is the process of creating a message that suits your audience.

One important aspect of adaptation is *tone*. Conveyed largely by the words in a message, tone affects how a receiver feels upon reading or hearing a message. Skilled communicators create a positive tone in their messages by using a number of adaptive techniques, some of which are unconscious. These include spotlighting audience benefits, cultivating a “you” attitude, sounding conversational, and using positive, courteous expression. Additional adaptive techniques include using inclusive language and preferring plain language with familiar words.



“You haven’t been listening. I keep telling you that I don’t want a product fit for a king.”

Audience Benefits

Focusing on the audience sounds like a modern idea, but actually one of America’s early statesmen and authors recognized this fundamental writing principle over 200 years ago. In describing effective writing, Ben Franklin observed, “To be good, it ought to have a tendency to benefit the reader.”¹ These wise words have become a fundamental guideline for today’s business communicators. Expanding on Franklin’s counsel, a contemporary communication consultant gives this solid advice to his business clients: “Always stress the benefit to the audience of whatever it is you are trying to get them to do. If you can show them how you are going to save them frustration or help them meet their goals, you have the makings of a powerful message.”²

Adapting your message to the receiver’s needs means putting yourself in that person’s shoes. It’s called *empathy*. Empathic senders think about how a receiver will decode a message. They try to give something to the receiver, solve the receiver’s problems, save the receiver’s money, or just understand the feelings and position of that person. Which version of the following messages is more appealing to the audience?

Empathy involves shaping a message that appeals to the receiver.

Sender Focus

The Human Resources Department requires that the enclosed questionnaire be completed immediately so that we can allocate our training resource funds to employees.

Our warranty becomes effective only when we receive an owner’s registration.

We are proud to announce our new software virus checker that we think is the best on the market!

Audience Focus

By filling out the enclosed questionnaires, you can be one of the first employees to sign up for our training resource funds.

Your warranty begins working for you as soon as you return your owner’s registration.

Now you can be sure that all your computers will be protected with our real-time virus scanning.

Because receivers are most interested in themselves, emphasize the word *you* to promote audience benefits.

“You” View

Notice that many of the previous audience-focused messages included the word *you*. In concentrating on receiver benefits, skilled communicators naturally develop the “you” view. They emphasize second-person pronouns (*you, your*) instead of first-person pronouns (*I/we, us, our*). Whether your goal is to inform, persuade, or promote goodwill, the catchiest words you can use are *you* and *your*. Compare the following examples.



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WORKPLACE IN FOCUS

Employers are working hard to attract and retain Generation Y graduates for their organizations. Now reaching their mid-twenties, Gen Y-ers are generally optimistic, entrepreneurial, team oriented, and tech savvy. But they also have high workplace expectations and short attention spans—traits linked to the gotta-have-it-now digital culture. Accounting firms have begun using rap videos, online chat, and alternative work arrangements to recruit these young graduates before they lose interest and go elsewhere. *When creating a message for a Generation Y audience, what benefits would you stress?*

“I/We” View

I’m asking all employees to respond to the attached survey about working conditions.

I have granted you permission to attend the communication seminar.

We have shipped your order by UPS, and we are sure it will arrive in time for your sales promotion December 1.

“You” View

Because your ideas count, please complete the attached survey about working conditions.

You may attend the seminar to improve your communication skills.

Your order will be delivered by UPS in time for your sales promotion December 1.

Although you want to focus on the reader or listener, don’t overuse or misuse the second-person pronoun *you*. Readers and listeners appreciate genuine interest; on the other hand, they resent obvious attempts at manipulation. Some sales messages, for example, are guilty of overkill when they include *you* dozens of times in a direct-mail promotion. What’s more, the word can sometimes create the wrong impression. Consider this statement: *You cannot return merchandise until you receive written approval*. The word *you* appears twice, but the reader feels singled out for criticism. In the following version the message is less personal and more positive: *Customers may return merchandise with written approval*.

Another difficulty in emphasizing the “you” view and de-emphasizing *we/I* is that it may result in overuse of the passive voice. For example, to avoid *We will give you* (active voice), you might write *You will be given* (passive voice). The active voice in writing is generally preferred because it identifies who is doing the acting. You will learn more about active and passive voice in Chapter 3.

In recognizing the value of the “you” attitude, writers do not have to sterilize their writing and totally avoid any first-person pronouns or words that show their feelings. Skilled communicators are able to convey sincerity, warmth, and enthusiasm by the words they choose. Don’t be afraid to use phrases such as *I’m happy* or *We’re delighted*, if you truly are. When speaking face-to-face, communicators show sincerity and warmth with nonverbal cues such as a smile and a pleasant voice tone. In letters, memos, and e-mail messages, however, only expressive words and phrases can show these feelings. These phrases suggest hidden messages that say *You are important*, *I hear you*, and *I’m honestly trying to please you*.

Emphasize you but don’t eliminate all I and we statements.

Strive for conversational expression, but also remember to be professional.

Conversational but Professional

Most instant messages, e-mail messages, business letters, memos, and reports replace conversation. Thus, they are most effective when they convey an informal, conversational tone instead of a formal, pretentious tone. Workplace messages should not, however, become so casual that they sound low-level and unprofessional.

Instant messaging (IM) enables coworkers to have informal, spontaneous conversations. Some companies have accepted IM as a serious workplace tool. With the increasing use of instant messaging and e-mail, however, a major problem has developed. Sloppy, unprofessional expression appears in many workplace messages. You will learn more about the dangers of e-mail in Chapter 5. At this point, though, we focus on the tone of the language.

To project a professional image, you must sound educated and mature. Overuse of expressions such as *totally awesome*, *you know*, and *like*, as well as reliance on needless abbreviations (*BTW* for *by the way*), make a businessperson sound like a teenager. Professional messages do not include IM abbreviations, slang, sentence fragments, and chitchat. We urge you to strive for a warm, conversational tone that avoids low-level diction. Levels of diction, as shown in Figure 2.4, range from unprofessional to formal.

Your goal is a warm, friendly tone that sounds professional. Although some writers are too casual, others are overly formal. To impress readers and listeners, they use big words, long sentences, legal terminology, and third-person constructions. Stay away from expressions such as *the undersigned*, *the writer*, and *the affected party*. You will sound friendlier with familiar pronouns such as *I*, *we*, and *you*. Study the following examples to see how to achieve a professional, yet conversational tone:

Unprofessional

Hey, boss, Gr8 news! Firewall now installed!! BTW, check with me b4 announcing it.

Look, dude, this report is totally bogus. And the figures don't look kosher. Show me some real stats. Got sources?

Professional

Mr. Smith, our new firewall software is now installed. Please check with me before announcing it.

Because the figures in this report seem inaccurate, please submit the source statistics.

FIGURE 2.4 Levels of Diction

| Unprofessional (low-level diction) | Conversational (midlevel diction) | Formal (high-level diction) |
|--|--|--|
| badmouth | criticize | denigrate |
| guts | nerve | courage |
| pecking order | line of command | dominance hierarchy |
| ticked off | upset | provoked |
| rat on | inform | betray |
| rip off | steal | expropriate |
| Sentence example: If we just hang in there, we can snag the contract. | Sentence example: If we don't get discouraged, we can win the contract. | Sentence example: If the principals persevere, they can secure the contract. |

Overly Formal

All employees are herewith instructed to return the appropriately designated contracts to the undersigned.

Pertaining to your order, we must verify the sizes that your organization requires prior to consignment of your order to our shipper.

Conversational

Please return your contracts to me.

We will send your order as soon as we confirm the sizes you need.

Positive Language

The clarity and tone of a message are considerably improved if you use positive rather than negative language. Positive language generally conveys more information than negative language does. Moreover, positive messages are uplifting and pleasant to read. Positive wording tells what *is* and what *can be done* rather than what *isn't* and what *can't be done*. For example, *Your order cannot be shipped by January 10* is not nearly as informative as *Your order will be shipped January 20*. Notice in the following examples how you can revise the negative tone to reflect a more positive impression.

Negative

You failed to include your credit card number, so we can't mail your order.

Your letter of May 2 claims that you returned a defective headset.

You cannot park in Lot H until April 1.

You won't be sorry that . . .

Positive

We look forward to completing your order as soon as we receive your credit card number.

Your May 2 letter describes a headset you returned.

You may park in Lot H starting April 1.

You will be happy that . . .

Courteous Language

Maintaining a courteous tone involves not just guarding against rudeness but also avoiding words that sound demanding or preachy. Expressions such as *you should*, *you must*, and *you have to* cause people to instinctively react with *Oh, yeah?* One remedy is to turn these demands into rhetorical questions that begin with *Will you please . . .*. Giving reasons for a request also softens the tone.

Even when you feel justified in displaying anger, remember that losing your temper or being sarcastic will seldom accomplish your goals as a business communicator: to inform, to persuade, and to create goodwill. When you are irritated, frustrated, or infuriated, keep cool and try to defuse the situation. In dealing with customers in telephone conversations, use polite phrases such as *It was a pleasure speaking with you*, *I would be happy to assist you with that*, and *Thank you for being so patient*.

Less Courteous

You must complete the report before Friday.

You should organize a car pool in this department

This is the second time I've written. Can't you get anything right?

Am I the only one who can read the operating manual?

More Courteous and Helpful

Will you please complete the report by Friday.

Organizing a car pool will reduce your transportation costs and help preserve the environment.

Please credit my account for \$450. My latest statement shows that the error noted in my letter of April 2 has not been corrected.

Let's review the operating manual together so that you can get your documents to print correctly next time.

Positive language creates goodwill and gives more options to receivers.

OFFICE INSIDER

"Negative tone can hurt your company in many ways. It can lose customers, it can generate lawsuits and, if inflammatory rhetoric is found in a discoverable e-mail or log notes, a few words might cost your company a whopping settlement and punitive damages in a bad-faith lawsuit."

Sensitive communicators avoid language that excludes people.

Inclusive Language

A business writer who is alert and empathic will strive to use words that include rather than exclude people. Some words have been called *sexist* because they seem to exclude females. Notice the use of the masculine pronouns *he* and *his* in the following sentences:

If a physician is needed, *he* will be called.

Every renter must read *his* rental agreement carefully.

These sentences illustrate an age-old grammatical rule called “common gender.” When a speaker or writer did not know the gender (sex) of an individual, masculine pronouns (such as *he* or *his*) were used. Masculine pronouns were understood to indicate both men and women. Today, however, sensitive writers and speakers replace common-gender pronouns with alternate inclusive constructions. You can use any of four alternatives.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Sexist/Noninclusive | Every attorney has ten minutes for <i>his</i> summation. |
| Alternative 1 | All attorneys have ten minutes for their summations. (Use a plural noun and plural pronoun.) |
| Alternative 2 | Attorneys have ten minutes for summations. (Omit the pronoun entirely.) |
| Alternative 3 | Every attorney has ten minutes for <i>a</i> summation. (Use an article instead of a pronoun.) |
| Alternative 4 | Every attorney has ten minutes for <i>his</i> or <i>her</i> summation. (Use both a masculine and a feminine pronoun.) |

Note that the last alternative, which includes a masculine and a feminine pronoun, is wordy and awkward. Try not to use it frequently.

Other words are considered sexist because they suggest stereotypes. For example, the nouns *fireman* and *mailman* suggest that only men hold these positions. You can avoid offending your listener or reader by using neutral job titles, such as those shown here:

| Noninclusive Job Titles | | Inclusive, Neutral Job Titles | |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| chairman | stewardess | department head | flight attendant |
| fireman | waiter, waitress | firefighter | server |
| mailman | workman | letter carrier | worker |
| policeman | | police officer | |

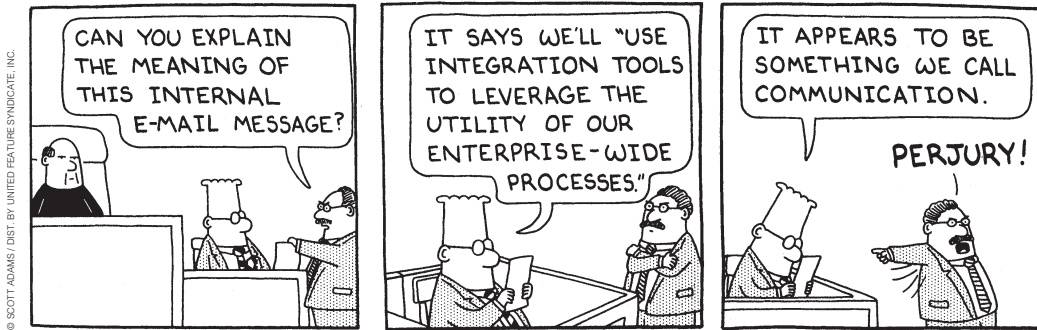
Plain English

Business communicators who are conscious of their audience try to use plain language that expresses clear meaning. They avoid showy words, long sentences, and confusing expressions. Some business, legal, and government documents, however, are written in an inflated and confusing style that obscures meaning. This style of writing has been given various terms such as *legalese*, *federalese*, *bureaucratic gobbledeygook*, *doublespeak*, and the *official style*.

Over the past 30 years, consumer groups and the government have joined forces in the Plain English movement. It encourages businesses, professional organizations, and government bodies to write any official document—such as a contract, warranty, insurance policy, or lease—in clear, concise language.³ As a result of the Plain English movement, numerous states have passed laws requiring that business contracts and public documents be written in plain language. The nonprofit Center for Plain Language in Washington, D.C., urges government and business officials to use clear, understandable language in laws and business documents so that people can “find what they need, understand what they find, and act on that understanding.”⁴ That’s exactly what business writers should do.

OFFICE INSIDER

“Simple changes can have profound results. . . . Plain talk isn’t only rewriting. It’s rethinking your approach and really personalizing your message to the audience and to the reader.”



One branch of the government, the Securities and Exchange Commission, has even written “A Plain English Handbook.” This booklet illustrates many of the principles of good writing, some of which are shown in Figure 2.5. Throughout this textbook we will be practicing these principles to help you improve your writing skills.

Don’t be impressed by high-sounding language and legalese such as *aforementioned*, *herein*, *thereafter*, *hereinafter*, and similar expressions. Your writing will be better understood if you use plain English.

Familiar Words

Clear messages contain words that are familiar and meaningful to the receiver. How can we know what is meaningful to a given receiver? Although we can’t know with certainty, we can avoid long or unfamiliar words that have simpler synonyms. Whenever possible in business communication, substitute short, common, simple words. Don’t, however, give up a precise word if it says exactly what you mean.

Although you yourself may not use some of the words in the following list of unfamiliar words, you may see them in business documents. Remember that the simple alternatives shown here will make messages more readable for most people.

Familiar words are more meaningful to readers and listeners.

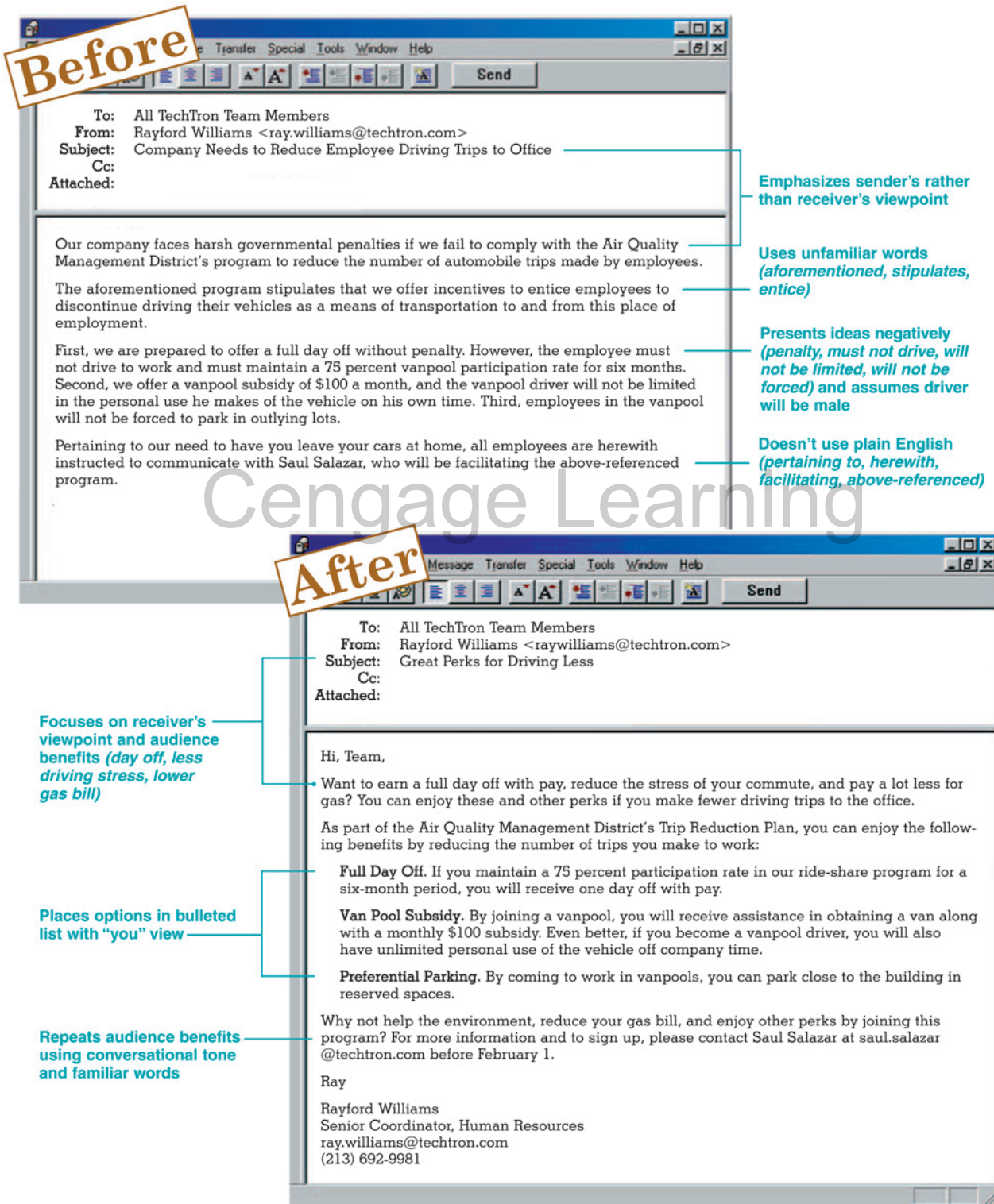
| Less Familiar Words | Simple Alternatives | Less Familiar Words | Simple Alternatives |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| ascertain | learn | perpetuate | continue |
| compensate | pay | perplexing | troubling |
| conceptualize | see | reciprocate | return |
| encompass | include | remuneration | salary |
| hypothesize | guess | stipulate | require |
| monitor | check | terminate | end |
| operational | working | vis-à-vis | in relation to, about |

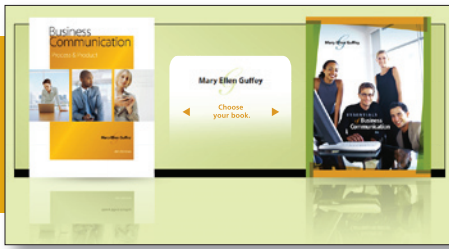
FIGURE 2.5 Plain English Pointers

- Use the active voice with strong verbs (instead of *the stock was acquired by the investor*, write *the investor bought the stock*).
- Don’t be afraid of personal pronouns (e.g., *I*, *we*, and *you*).
- Bring abstractions down to earth (instead of *asset*, write *one share of IBM common stock*).
- Omit superfluous words (instead of *in the event that*, write *if*).
- Use positive expression (instead of *it is not unlike*, write *it is similar*).
- Prefer short sentences.
- Remove jargon and legalese.
- Keep the subject, verb, and object close together.
- Keep sentence structure parallel.

As you revise a message, you will have a chance to correct any writing problems. Notice in Figure 2.6 what a difference revision makes. Before revision, the message failed to use familiar language. Many negative ideas could have been expressed positively. After revision, the message is shorter, is more conversational, and emphasizes audience benefits.

FIGURE 2.6 Improving the Tone in an E-Mail Message





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Summing Up and Looking Forward

In this chapter you learned that good business writing is audience centered, purposeful, persuasive, and economical. To achieve these results, business communicators typically follow a systematic writing process. This process includes three phases: prewriting, writing, and revising. In the prewriting phase, communicators analyze the task and the audience. They select an appropriate channel to deliver the message, and they consider ways to adapt their message to the task and the audience. Effective techniques include spotlighting audience benefits, cultivating the “you” view, striving to use

conversational language, and expressing ideas positively. Good communicators also use courteous and inclusive language, plain English, and familiar words.

The next chapter continues to examine the writing process. It presents additional techniques to help you become a better writer. You will learn how to eliminate repetitious and redundant wording, as well as how to avoid wordy prepositional phrases, long lead-ins, needless adverbs, and misplaced modifiers.

Critical Thinking

1. Why do you think employers prefer messages that are not written like high school and college essays?
2. How can the three-phase writing process help the writer of a business report as well as the writer of an oral presentation?
3. Discuss the following statement: “The English language is a land mine—it is filled with terms that are easily misinterpreted as derogatory and others that are blatantly insulting. . . . Being fair and objective is not enough; employers must also appear to be so.”⁵
4. Why is writing in a natural, conversational tone difficult for many people?
5. If computer software is increasingly able to detect writing errors, can business communicators stop studying writing techniques? Why or why not?

Chapter Review

6. How can a writer make a message audience oriented and develop audience benefits? Provide an original example.
7. List the three phases of the writing process and summarize what happens in each phase. Which phase requires the most time?

8. What six factors are important in selecting an appropriate channel to deliver a message? What makes one channel richer than another?

9. How does profiling the audience help a business communicator prepare a message?

10. List three specific techniques for developing a warm, friendly, and conversational tone in business messages.

11. Why is it OK to use instant messaging abbreviations (such as *BTW*) and happy faces in messages to friends but not OK in business messages?

Cengage Learning

12. Why does positive language usually tell more than negative language? Give an original example.

13. List five examples of sexist pronouns and nouns.

14. List at least five principles of the Plain English movement.

15. Why should business writers strive to use short, common, simple words? Does this “dumb down” business messages?

Activities

Selecting Communication Channels

Your Task. Using Figure 2.2, suggest the best communication channels for the following messages. Assume that all channels are available. Be prepared to explain your choices.

16. You want to know what team members are available immediately for a quick teleconference meeting. They are all workaholics and stuck to their computers.

17. As a manager during a company reorganization, you must tell nine workers that their employment is being terminated.

18. You need to know whether Thomas in Reprographics can produce a rush job for you in two days.

19. A prospective client in Italy wants price quotes for a number of your products—pronto!

20. As assistant to the vice president, you are to investigate the possibility of developing internship programs with several nearby colleges and universities.

21. You must respond to a notice from the Internal Revenue Service insisting that you did not pay the correct amount for last quarter's employer's taxes.

Writing Improvement Exercises

Audience Benefits and the “You” View

Your Task. Revise the following sentences to emphasize the perspective of the audience and the “you” view.

22. We regret to announce that the bookstore will distribute free iPods only to students in classes in which the instructor has requested these devices as learning tools.

23. Our safety policy forbids us from renting power equipment to anyone who cannot demonstrate proficiency in its use.

24. To prevent us from possibly losing large sums of money in stolen identity schemes, our bank now requires verification of any large check presented for immediate payment.

25. So that we may bring our customer records up-to-date and eliminate the expense of duplicate mailings, we are asking you to complete and return the enclosed card.

26. For just \$219 per person, we have arranged a four-day, three-night getaway package to Orlando that includes hotel accommodations, theme park tickets, and complimentary breakfasts.
27. We find it necessary to request that all employees complete the enclosed questionnaire so that we may develop a master schedule for summer vacations.
28. To enable us to continue our policy of selling name brands at discount prices, we can give store credit but we cannot give cash refunds on returned merchandise

Conversational, Professional Tone

Your Task. Revise the following sentences to make the tone conversational yet professional.

29. Per your recent e-mail, the undersigned takes pride in informing you that we are pleased to be able to participate in the Toys for Tots drive.
30. Pursuant to your message of the 15th, please be advised that your shipment was sent August 14.
31. Yo, Jeff! Look, dude, I need you to pound on Ramona so we can drop this budget thingy in her lap.
32. BTW, Danika was totally ticked off when the manager accused her of ripping off office supplies. She may split.
33. He didn't have the guts to badmouth her 2 her face.
34. The undersigned respectfully reminds affected individuals that employees desirous of changing their health plans must do so before November 1.

Positive and Courteous Language

Your Task. Revise the following statements to make them more positive and courteous.

35. Employees are not allowed to use instant messaging until a company policy is established.
36. We must withhold authorizing payment of your consultant's fees because our CPA claims that your work is incomplete.
37. Plans for the new health center cannot move forward without full community support.

38. This is the last time I'm writing to try to get you to record my October 3 payment of \$359.50 to my account! Anyone who can read can see from the attached documents that I've tried to explain this to you before.
39. Although you apparently failed to read the operator's manual, we are sending you a replacement blade for your food processor. Next time read page 18 carefully so that you will know how to attach this blade.
40. Everyone in this department must begin using new passwords as of midnight June 15. Because of flagrant password misuse, we find it necessary to impose this new rule so that we can protect your personal information and company records.

Inclusive Language

Your Task. Revise the following sentences to eliminate terms that are considered sexist or that suggest stereotypes.

41. Every employee must wear his photo ID on the job.
42. Media Moguls hired Sheena Love, an African American, for the position of project manager.
43. A skilled assistant proofreads her boss's documents and catches any errors he makes.
44. The conference will include special excursions for the wives of executives.
45. Serving on the panel are a lady veterinarian, a female doctor, two businessmen, and an Indian CPA.

Plain English and Familiar Words

Your Task. Revise the following sentences to use plain expression and more familiar words.

46. The salary we are offering is commensurate with remuneration for other managers.
47. To expedite ratification of this agreement, we urge you to vote in the affirmative.
48. In a dialogue with the manager, I learned that you plan to terminate our contract.
49. Did the braking problem materialize subsequent to our recall effort?
50. Pursuant to your invitation, we will interrogate our agent.

V

Video Resource

Video Library 1, Building Workplace Communication Skills. Your instructor may show you a video titled **Guffey's 3-x-3 Writing Process Develops Fluent Workplace Skills.** It shows three phases of the writing process including pre-

writing, writing, and revising. You will see how the writing process guides the development of a complete message. This video illustrates concepts in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

G

Grammar/Mechanics Checkup 2

Pronouns

Review Sections 1.07–1.09 in the Grammar Review section of the Grammar/Mechanics Handbook. Then study each of the following statements. In the space provided, write the word that completes the statement correctly and the number of the G/M principle illustrated. When you finish, compare your responses with those provided near the end of the book. If your responses differ, study carefully the principles in parentheses.

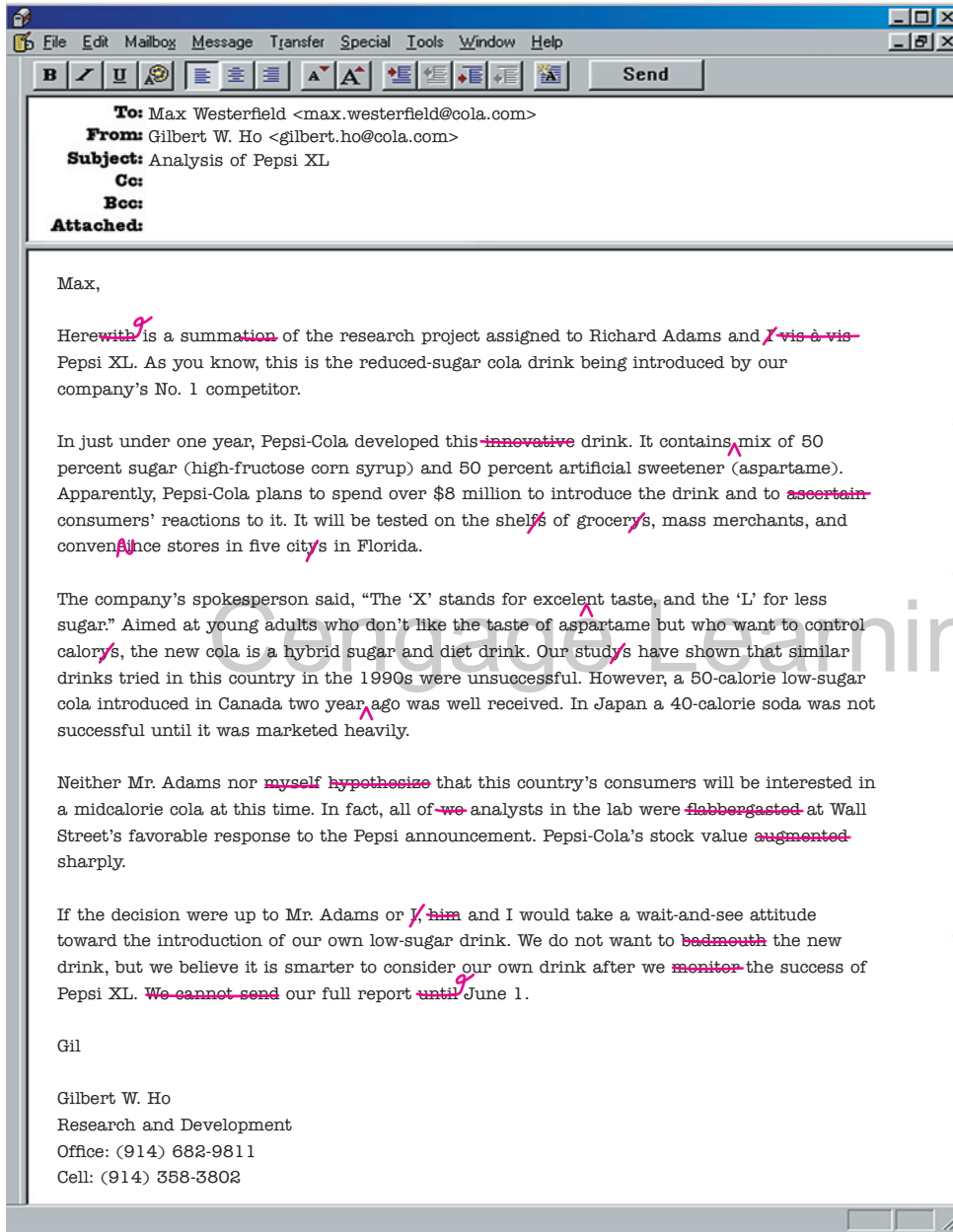
its _____ (1.09d)

Example The Employee Development Committee will make (its, their) recommendation soon.

1. I hoped Rhonda would call. Was it (she, her) who left the message?
2. Everyone on the men's soccer team must be fitted for (his, their) uniform.
3. Even instant messages sent between the manager and (he, him) will be revealed in the court case.
4. Does anyone in the office know for (who, whom) these DVDs were ordered?
5. It looks as if (her's, hers) is the only report that cites electronic sources correctly.
6. Thomas asked Matt and (I, me, myself) to help him complete his report.
7. My friend and (I, me, myself) were also asked to work on Saturdays.
8. Both printers were sent for repairs, but (yours, your's) will be returned shortly.
9. Give the budget figures to (whoever, whomever) asked for them.
10. Everyone except the broker and (I, me, myself) claimed a share of the commission.
11. No one knows that problem better than (he, him, himself).
12. Investment brochures and information were sent to (we, us) shareholders.
13. If any one of the female tourists has lost (their, her) scarf, she should see the driver.
14. Neither the glamour nor the excitement of the position had lost (its, it's, their) appeal.
15. Any new subscriber may cancel (their, his or her) subscription within the first month.

Grammar/Mechanics Challenge 2

The following e-mail message has errors in spelling, proofreading, noun plurals, conversational tone, unfamiliar words, and other writing techniques studied in this chapter. You may either (a) use standard proofreading marks (see Appendix B) to correct the errors here or (b) download the document from your companion Web site and revise at your computer. Study the guidelines in the Grammar/Mechanics Handbook to sharpen your skills.



Sharpening Your Skills for Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

Gone are the days when management expected workers to check their brains at the door and do only as told. Today, you will be expected to use your brains when thinking critically. You will be solving problems and making decisions. Much of this book is devoted to helping you solve problems and communicate those decisions to management, fellow workers, clients, the government, and the public. Faced with a problem or an issue, most of us do a lot of worrying before separating the issues or making a decision. You can change all that worrying to directed thinking by channeling it into the following procedure:

- **Identify and clarify the problem.** Your first task is to recognize that a problem exists. Some problems are big and unmistakable, such as failure of an air-freight delivery service to get packages to customers on time. Other problems may be continuing annoyances, such as regularly running out of toner for an office copy machine. The first step in reaching a solution is pinpointing the problem area.
- **Gather information.** Learn more about the problem situation. Look for possible causes and solutions. This step may mean checking files, calling suppliers, or brainstorming with fellow workers. For example, the air-freight delivery service would investigate the tracking systems of the commercial airlines carrying its packages to determine what is going wrong.
- **Evaluate the evidence.** Where did the information come from? Does it represent various points of view? What biases could be expected from each source? How accurate is the information gathered? Is it fact or opinion? For example, it is a fact that packages are missing; it is an opinion that they are merely lost and will turn up eventually.
- **Consider alternatives and implications.** Draw conclusions from the gathered evidence and pose solutions. Then weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative. What are the costs, benefits, and consequences? What are the obstacles, and how can they be handled? Most important, what solution best serves your goals and those of your organization? Here is where your creativity is especially important.
- **Choose the best alternative and test it.** Select an alternative, and try it out to see if it meets your expectations. If it does, implement your decision and put it into action. If it doesn't, rethink your alternatives. The freight company decided to give its unhappy customers free delivery service to make up for the lost packages and downtime. Be sure to continue monitoring and adjusting the solution to ensure its effectiveness over time.

Career Application. Let's return to the McDonald's problem (discussed on page 33) in which some franchise owners are unhappy with the multiple lines for service. Customers don't seem to know where to stand to be the next served. Tempers flare when aggressive customers cut in line, and other customers spend so much time protecting their places in line that they are not ready to order. As a franchise owner, you want to solve this problem. Any new procedures, however, must be approved by a majority of McDonald's owners in a district. You know that McDonald's management feels that the multiline system accommodates higher volumes of customers more quickly than a single-line system. In addition, customers are turned off when they see a long line.

Your Task

- Individually or with a team, use the critical-thinking steps outlined here. Begin by clarifying the problem.
- Where could you gather information? Would it be wise to see what your competitors are doing? How do banks handle customer lines? Airlines?
- Evaluate your findings and consider alternatives. What are the pros and cons of each alternative?
- Within your team choose the best alternative. Present your recommendation to your class and give your reasons for choosing it.



Composing Business Messages

OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

- Contrast formal and informal methods of researching data and generating ideas for messages.
- Organize information into outlines.
- Compare direct and indirect patterns for organizing ideas.
- Write effective sentences using four sentence types while avoiding three common sentence faults.
- Understand how to emphasize ideas, use active and passive voice effectively, achieve parallelism, and avoid dangling and misplaced modifiers.
- Draft powerful paragraphs that incorporate topic sentences, support sentences, and transitional expressions to build coherence.

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Collecting Information to Compose Messages

Because all business and professional people—even those in technical positions—are exchanging more messages than ever before, you can expect to be doing your share of writing on the job. The more quickly you can put your ideas down and the more clearly you can explain what needs to be said, the more successful and happy you will be in your career. Being able to write is also critical to promotions. That's why we devote three chapters to teaching you a writing process, summarized in Figure 3.1. This process guides you through the steps necessary to write rapidly but, more important, clearly. Instead of struggling with a writing assignment and not knowing where to begin or what to say, you are learning an effective process that you can use in school and on the job.

The previous chapter focused on the prewriting stage of the writing process. You studied the importance of using a conversational tone, positive language, plain and courteous expression, and familiar words. This chapter addresses the second stage of the process: gathering information, organizing it into outlines, and composing messages.

No smart businessperson would begin writing a message before collecting the needed information. We call this collection process *research*, a rather formal-sounding term. For simple documents, though, the process can be quite informal. Research is

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"You can't move up without writing skills."



FIGURE 3.1 The Writing Process



necessary before beginning to write because the information you collect helps shape the message. Discovering significant data after a message is completed often means starting over and reorganizing. To avoid frustration and inaccurate messages, collect information that answers these questions:

- What does the receiver need to know about this topic?
- What is the receiver to do?
- How is the receiver to do it and when?
- What will happen if the receiver doesn't do it?

Whenever your communication problem requires more information than you have in your head or at your fingertips, you must conduct research. This research may be formal or informal.

Formal Research Methods

Long reports and complex business problems generally require some use of formal research methods. Let's say you are a market specialist for Coca-Cola, and your boss asks you to evaluate the impact on Coke sales of private-label or generic soft drinks (the bargain-basement-brand knockoffs sold at Kmart and other outlets). Or, assume you must write a term paper for a college class. Both tasks require more data than you have in your head or at your fingertips. To conduct formal research, you could:

Formal research may include searching libraries and electronic databases or investigating primary sources (interviews, surveys, and experiments).

WORKPLACE IN FOCUS

International product teams at PepsiCo recently introduced a new cola with a unique name: Pepsi Ice Cucumber. This is definitely not your garden-variety soda. With its emerald green color, vegetable flavor, and ice crystal packaging, Ice Cucumber is formulated to keep consumers feeling cool and refreshed in the summer heat. If cucumber-flavored cola doesn't sound very refreshing, you are probably not living in Japan. Pepsi's limited edition veggie drink was developed specifically for Japanese tastes. *What role does research play in creating new products and their brand-promotion messages?*



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- **Search manually.** You will find helpful background and supplementary information through manual searching of resources in public and college libraries. These traditional sources include books and newspaper, magazine, and journal articles. Other sources are encyclopedias, reference books, handbooks, dictionaries, directories, and almanacs.
- **Access electronically.** Much of the printed material just described is now available from the Internet, databases, CDs, or DVDs that can be accessed by computer. College and public libraries subscribe to retrieval services that permit you to access most periodic literature. You can also find extraordinary amounts of information by searching the Web. You will learn more about using electronic sources in Chapters 9 and 10.
- **Go to the source.** For firsthand information, go directly to the source. For the Coca-Cola report, for example, you could find out what consumers really think by conducting interviews or surveys, by putting together questionnaires, or by organizing focus groups. Formal research includes structured sampling and controls that enable investigators to make accurate judgments and valid predictions.
- **Conduct scientific experiments.** Instead of merely asking for the target audience's opinion, scientific researchers present choices with controlled variables. Let's say, for example, that Coca-Cola wants to determine at what price and under what circumstances consumers would switch from Coca-Cola to a generic brand. The results of experimentation would provide valuable data for managerial decision making.

Because formal research techniques are particularly necessary for reports, you will study resources and techniques more extensively in Chapters 9 and 10.

Informal Research and Idea Generation

Most routine tasks—such as composing e-mail messages, memos, letters, informational reports, and oral presentations—require data that you can collect informally. Here are some techniques for collecting informal data and for generating ideas:

- **Look in the files.** If you are responding to an inquiry, you often can find the answer to the inquiry by investigating the company files or by consulting colleagues.
- **Talk with your boss.** Get information from the individual making the assignment. What does that person know about the topic? What slant should be taken? What other sources would he or she suggest?
- **Interview the target audience.** Consider talking with individuals at whom the message is aimed. They can provide clarifying information that tells you what they want to know and how you should shape your remarks.
- **Conduct an informal survey.** Gather unscientific but helpful information by using questionnaires or telephone surveys. In preparing a memo report predicting the success of a proposed fitness center, for example, circulate a questionnaire asking for employee reactions.
- **Brainstorm for ideas.** Alone or with others, discuss ideas for the writing task at hand, and record at least a dozen ideas without judging them. Small groups are especially fruitful in brainstorming because people spin ideas off one another.

Good sources of primary information are interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and focus groups.

Informal research may include looking in the files, talking with your boss, interviewing the target audience, conducting an informal survey, and brainstorming.

Organizing to Show Relationships

Once you have collected data, you must find some way to organize it. Organizing includes two processes: grouping and patterning. Well-organized messages group similar items together; ideas follow a sequence that helps the reader understand relationships and accept the writer's views. Unorganized messages proceed free-form, jumping from one thought to another. Such messages fail to emphasize important points. Puzzled readers can't see how the pieces fit together, and they become frustrated and irritated. Many communication experts regard poor organization as the greatest failing of business writers. Two simple techniques can help you organize data: the scratch list and the outline.

Writers of well-organized messages group similar ideas together so that readers can see relationships and follow arguments.

FIGURE 3.2 Format for an Outline

- Title: Major Idea or Purpose
- I. First major component
 - A. First subpoint
 - 1. Detail, illustration, evidence
 - 2. Detail, illustration, evidence
 - 3. Detail, illustration, evidence
 - B. Second subpoint
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - II. Second major component
 - A. First subpoint
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - B. Second subpoint
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Tips for Making Outlines

- Define the main topic in the title.
- Divide the topic into main points, preferably three to five.
- Break the components into subpoints.
- Don't put a single item under a major component if you have only one subpoint; integrate it with the main item above it or reorganize.
- Strive to make each component exclusive (no overlapping).
- Use details, illustrations, and evidence to support subpoints.

OFFICE INSIDER

"Writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many."

In developing simple messages, some writers make a quick scratch list of the topics they wish to cover. They then compose a message at their computers directly from the scratch list. Most writers, though, need to organize their ideas—especially if the project is complex—into a hierarchy, such as an outline. The beauty of preparing an outline is that it gives you a chance to organize your thinking before you get bogged down in word choice and sentence structure. Figure 3.2 above shows a format for an outline.

The Direct Pattern

After developing an outline, you will need to decide where in the message to place the main idea. Placing the main idea at the beginning of the message is called the *direct pattern*. In the direct pattern the main idea comes first, followed by details, an explanation, or evidence. Placing the main idea later in the message (after the details, explanation, or evidence) is called the *indirect pattern*. The pattern you select is determined by how you expect the audience to react to the message, as shown in Figure 3.3.

In preparing to write any message, you need to anticipate the audience's reaction to your ideas and frame your message accordingly. When you expect the reader to be pleased, mildly interested, or, at worst, neutral—use the direct pattern. That is, put your main point—the purpose of your message—in the first or second sentence. Compare the direct and indirect patterns in the following memo openings. Notice how long it takes to get to the main idea in the indirect opening.

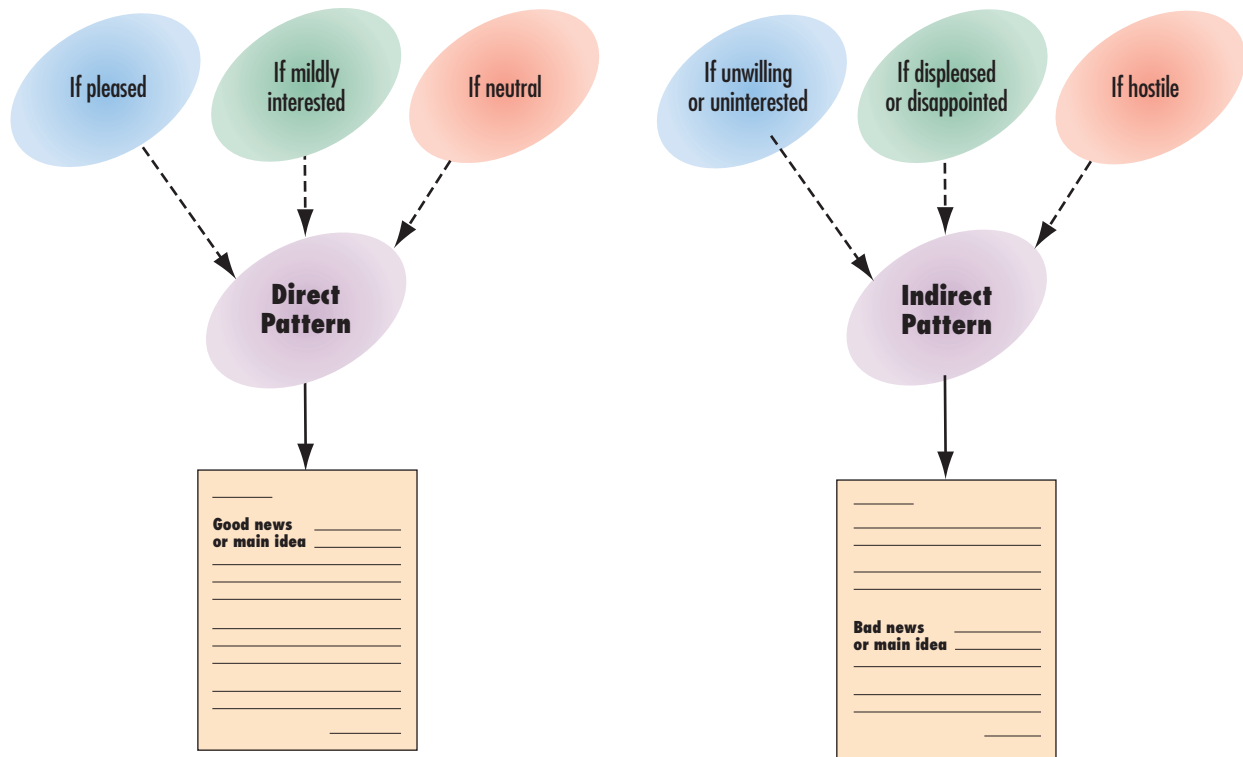
Indirect Opening

For the past several years, we have had a continuing problem scheduling vacations, personal days, and sick time. Our Human Resources people struggle with unscheduled absences. After considerable investigation, the Management Council has decided to try a centralized paid time-off program starting January 1. This memo will describe its benefits and procedures.

Direct Opening

To improve the scheduling of absences, a new paid time-off program will begin January 1. The procedures and benefits are as follows.

FIGURE 3.3 Audience Response Determines Pattern of Organization



Explanations, background, and details should follow the direct opening. What's important is getting to the main idea quickly. This direct method, also called *frontloading*, has at least three advantages:

- **Saves the reader's time.** Many of today's businesspeople can devote only a few moments to each message. Messages that take too long to get to the point may lose their readers along the way.
- **Sets a proper frame of mind.** Learning the purpose up front helps the reader put the subsequent details and explanations in perspective. Without a clear opening, the reader may be thinking, *Why am I being told this?*
- **Prevents frustration.** Readers forced to struggle through excessive verbiage before reaching the main idea become frustrated. They resent the writer. Poorly organized messages create a negative impression of the writer.

This frontloading technique works best with audiences who are likely to be receptive to or at least not likely to disagree with what you have to say. Typical business messages that follow the direct pattern include routine requests and responses, orders and acknowledgments, nonsensitive memos, e-mail messages, informational reports, and informational oral presentations. All these tasks have one element in common: none has a sensitive subject that will upset the reader.

The Indirect Pattern

When you expect the audience to be uninterested, unwilling, displeased, or perhaps even hostile, the indirect pattern is more appropriate. In this pattern you don't reveal the main idea until after you have offered an explanation and evidence. This approach works well with three kinds of messages: (a) bad news, (b) ideas that require persuasion, and (c) sensitive news, especially when being transmitted to superiors. The indirect pattern has these benefits:

Frontloading saves the reader's time, establishes the proper frame of mind, and prevents frustration.

The indirect pattern works best when the audience may be uninterested, unwilling, displeased, or even hostile.

WORKPLACE IN FOCUS

Home mortgage giant Fannie Mae recently issued a warning to “walkaway” borrowers who return keys to lenders and stop making house payments. The announcement opened with Fannie’s mission to “provide stability and affordability to the mortgage finance system in good times and turbulent times.”

Then it delivered some tough news: foreclosed borrowers are not eligible to obtain another mortgage through the company for up to five years. *In what circumstances is it necessary for communicators to delay the delivery of a message’s main idea?*



JOE RAEDLE / GETTY IMAGES

- **Respects the feelings of the audience.** Bad news is always painful, but the trauma can be lessened when the receiver is prepared for it.
- **Encourages a fair hearing.** Messages that may upset the reader are more likely to be read when the main idea is delayed. Beginning immediately with a piece of bad news or a persuasive request, for example, may cause the receiver to stop reading or listening.
- **Minimizes a negative reaction.** A reader’s overall reaction to a negative message is generally improved if the news is delivered gently.

Typical business messages that could be developed indirectly include letters and memos that refuse requests, reject claims, and deny credit. Persuasive requests, sales letters, sensitive messages, and some reports and oral presentations also benefit from the indirect strategy. You will learn more about how to use the indirect pattern in Chapters 7 and 8.

In summary, business messages may be organized directly, with the main idea first, or indirectly, with the main idea delayed. Although these two patterns cover many communication problems, they should be considered neither universal nor unquestionable. Every business transaction is distinct. Some messages are mixed: part good news, part bad; part goodwill, part persuasion. In upcoming chapters you will practice applying the direct and indirect patterns in typical situations. Eventually, you will have the skills and confidence to evaluate communication problems and choose a pattern based on your goals.

Composing Effective Sentences

Vary your sentences to make your messages interesting and readable.

The most compelling and effective messages contain a variety of sentences rather than just one repeated pattern. Effective messages also avoid common sentence faults, and they achieve emphasis and parallelism with special sentence-writing techniques.

Achieving Variety With Four Sentence Types

Messages that repeat the same sentence pattern soon become boring. The way you construct your sentences can make your messages interesting and readable. To avoid monotony and to add spark to your writing, use a variety of sentence types. You have four sentence types from which to choose: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex.

A **simple sentence**, shown in the following example, contains one complete thought (an independent clause) with a subject (underlined once) and predicate verb (underlined twice):

Our team completed the project.

A **compound sentence** contains two complete but related thoughts. The two thoughts (independent clauses) may be joined (a) by a conjunction such as *and*, *but*, or *or*; (b) by a semicolon; or (c) by a conjunctive adverb such as *however*, *consequently*, and *therefore*. Notice the punctuation in these examples:

The team project was challenging, and we were happy with the results.

The team project was challenging; we were happy with the results.

The team project was challenging; however, we were happy with the results.

A **complex sentence** contains an independent clause (a complete thought) and a dependent clause (a thought that cannot stand by itself). Dependent clauses are often introduced by words such as *although*, *since*, *because*, *when*, and *if*. When dependent clauses precede independent clauses, they always are followed by a comma.

When we finished the team project, we held a team party.

A **compound-complex sentence** contains at least two independent clauses and one dependent clause. Because these sentences are usually long, use them sparingly.

Although this team project is completed, soon we will begin work on another; however, it will be less challenging.

Controlling Sentence Length

Regardless of the type of sentence, remember that sentence length can influence readability. Because your goal is to communicate clearly, try to limit your sentences to about 20 or fewer words. The American Press Institute reports that reader comprehension drops off markedly as sentences become longer:

| Sentence Length | Comprehension Rate |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 8 words | 100% |
| 15 words | 90% |
| 19 words | 80% |
| 28 words | 50% |

Avoiding Three Common Sentence Faults

As you craft your sentences, beware of three common traps: fragments, run-on (fused) sentences, and comma-splice sentences. If any of these faults appears in a business message, the writer immediately loses credibility.

Fragments. One of the most serious errors a writer can make is punctuating a fragment as if it were a complete sentence. A fragment is usually a broken-off part of a complex sentence.

Fragment

Because most transactions require a permanent record. Good writing skills are critical.

The recruiter requested a writing sample. Even though the candidate seemed to communicate well.

Revision

Because most transactions require a permanent record, good writing skills are critical.

The recruiter requested a writing sample even though the candidate seemed to communicate well.

Sentences of 20 or fewer words have the most impact.

Fragments are broken-off parts of sentences and should not be punctuated as sentences.

Fragments often can be identified by the words that introduce them—words such as *although, as, because, even, except, for example, if, instead of, since, such as, that, which, and when*. These words introduce dependent clauses. Make sure such clauses always connect to independent clauses.

When two independent clauses are run together without punctuation or a conjunction, a run-on (fused) sentence results.

Run-On (Fused) Sentences. A sentence with two independent clauses must be joined by a coordinating conjunction (*and, or, nor, but*) or by a semicolon (;). Without a conjunction or a semicolon, a run-on sentence results.

Run-On

Most job seekers present a printed résumé some are also using Web sites as electronic portfolios

One candidate sent an e-mail résumé another sent a traditional résumé.

Revision

Most job seekers present a printed résumé. Some are also using Web sites as electronic portfolios.

One candidate sent an e-mail résumé; another sent a traditional résumé.

When two independent clauses are joined by a comma without a conjunction, a comma splice results.

Comma-Splice Sentences. A comma splice results when a writer joins (splices together) two independent clauses with a comma. Independent clauses may be joined with a coordinating conjunction (*and, or, nor, but*) or a conjunctive adverb (*however, consequently, therefore, and others*). Notice that clauses joined by coordinating conjunctions require only a comma. Clauses joined by a coordinating adverb require a semicolon. Here are three ways to rectify a comma splice:

Comma Splice

Some employees responded by e-mail, others picked up the telephone.

Possible Revisions

Some employees responded by e-mail, and others picked up the telephone.

Some employees responded by e-mail; however, others picked up the telephone.

Some employees responded by e-mail; others picked up the telephone.



“Sentence fragments, comma splices, run-ons — who cares? I know what I meant!”

Improving Writing Techniques

Writers can significantly improve their messages by working on a few writing techniques. In this section we focus on emphasizing and de-emphasizing ideas, using active and passive voice strategically, developing parallelism, and avoiding dangling and misplaced modifiers.

Developing Emphasis

When you are talking with someone, you can emphasize your main ideas by saying them loudly or by repeating them slowly. You could even pound the table if you want to show real emphasis! Another way you could signal the relative importance of an idea is by raising your eyebrows or by shaking your head or whispering in a low voice. But when you write, you must rely on other means to tell your readers which ideas are more important than others. Emphasis in writing can be achieved primarily in two ways: mechanically or stylistically.

Achieving Emphasis Through Mechanics. To emphasize an idea in print, a writer may use any of the following devices:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Underlining | <u>Underlining</u> draws the eye to a word. |
| Italics and boldface | Using <i>italics</i> or boldface conveys special meaning. |
| Font changes | Selecting a large , <small>, or <i>different</i> font draws interest.</small> |
| All caps | Printing words in ALL CAPS is like shouting them. |
| Dashes | Dashes—used sparingly—can be effective. |
| Tabulation | Listing items vertically makes them stand out: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First item 2. Second item 3. Third item |

You can emphasize an idea mechanically by using underlining, italics, boldface, font changes, all caps, dashes, and tabulation.

Other means of achieving mechanical emphasis include the arrangement of space, color, lines, boxes, columns, titles, headings, and subheadings. Today's software and color printers provide a wonderful array of capabilities for setting off ideas. More tips on achieving emphasis are coming in Chapter 4, where we cover document design.

Achieving Emphasis Through Style. Although mechanical means are occasionally appropriate, more often a writer achieves emphasis stylistically. That is, the writer chooses words carefully and constructs sentences skillfully to emphasize main ideas and de-emphasize minor or negative ideas. Here are four suggestions for emphasizing ideas stylistically:

- **Use vivid words.** Vivid words are emphatic because the reader can picture ideas clearly.

General

One business uses *personal* selling techniques
Someone will *contact* you *as soon as possible*.

Vivid

Avon uses *face-to-face* selling techniques.
Ms. Stevens will *telephone* you *before 5 P.M. tomorrow, May 3*.

You can emphasize ideas stylistically by using vivid words, labeling the main idea, and positioning the main idea strategically.

- **Label the main idea.** If an idea is significant, tell the reader.

Unlabeled

Consider looking for a job online, but also focus on networking.

We shop here because of the customer service and low prices.

Labeled

Consider looking for a job online; but, *most important*, focus on networking.

We like the customer service, but the *primary reason* for shopping here is low prices.

- **Place the important idea first or last in the sentence.** Ideas have less competition from surrounding words when they appear first or last in a sentence. Observe how the concept of *productivity* can be emphasized by its position in the sentence:

Unemphatic

Profit-sharing plans are more effective in increasing *productivity* when they are linked to individual performance rather than to group performance.

Emphatic

Productivity is more likely to be increased when profit-sharing plans are linked to individual performance rather than to group performance.

Profit-sharing plans linked to individual performance rather than to group performance are more effective in increasing *productivity*.

- **Place the important idea in a simple sentence or in an independent clause.** Don't dilute the effect of the idea by making it share the spotlight with other words and clauses.

Unemphatic

Although you are the first trainee we have hired for this program, we had many candidates and expect to expand the program in the future. (Main idea is lost in a dependent clause.)

Emphatic

You are the first trainee we have hired for this program. (Simple sentence)

Although we considered many candidates, you are the first trainee we have hired for this program. (Independent clause contains main idea.)

You can de-emphasize ideas by using general words and placing the ideas in dependent clauses.

De-emphasizing When Necessary. To de-emphasize an idea, such as bad news, try one of the following stylistic devices:

- **Use general words.**

De-emphasizes Harsh Statement

Our records indicate that *your employment status has recently changed.*

Emphasizes Harsh Statement

Our records indicate that *you were recently fired.*

- **Place the bad news in a dependent clause connected to an independent clause with something positive.** In sentences with dependent clauses, the main emphasis is always on the independent clause.

De-emphasizes Bad News

Although credit cannot be issued at this time, you can fill your immediate needs on a cash basis with our special plan.

Emphasizes Bad News

We cannot issue you credit at this time, but we have a special plan that will allow you to fill your immediate needs on a cash basis.

Active-voice sentences are preferred because the subject is the doer of the action.

Using Active and Passive Voice

In composing messages, you may use active or passive voice to express your meaning. In active voice, the subject is the doer of the action (*The manager hired Jim*). In passive voice, the subject is acted upon (*Jim was hired [by the manager]*). Notice that in the passive voice the attention shifts from the doer to the receiver of the action. You don't even have to reveal the doer if you choose not to. Writers generally prefer active voice because it is more direct, clear, and concise. Nevertheless, passive voice is useful in certain instances, such as the following:

- **To emphasize an action or the recipient of the action.** *An investigation was launched.*
- **To de-emphasize negative news.** *Cash refunds cannot be made.*
- **To conceal the doer of an action.** *An error was made in our sales figures.*

How can you tell whether a verb is active or passive? Identify the subject of the sentence and decide whether the subject is doing the acting or is being acted upon. For example, in the sentence *An appointment was made for January 1*, the subject is *appointment*. The subject is being acted upon; therefore, the verb (*was made*) is passive. Another clue in identifying passive-voice verbs is that they generally include a *to be* helping verb, such as *is, are, was, were, be, being, or been*. Figure 3.4 summarizes effective uses for active and passive voice.

Achieving Parallelism

Parallelism is a skillful writing technique that involves balanced writing. Sentences written so that their parts are balanced or parallel are easy to read and understand. To achieve

FIGURE 3.4 Using Active and Passive Voice Effectively

Use active voice for directness, vigor, and clarity.

| Direct and Clear in Active Voice | Indirect and Less Clear in Passive Voice |
|--|---|
| The manager completed performance reviews for all employees. | Performance reviews were completed for all employees by the manager. |
| Evelyn initiated a customer service blog last year. | A customer service blog was initiated last year. |
| IBM will accept applications after January 1. | Applications will be accepted after January 1 by IBM. |
| Coca-Cola created a Sprite page in Facebook to advertise its beverage. | A Sprite page was created in Facebook by Coca-Cola to advertise its beverage. |

Use passive voice to be tactful or to emphasize the action rather than the doer.

| Less Tactful or Effective in Active Voice | More Tactful or Effective in Passive Voice |
|---|---|
| We cannot grant you credit. | Credit cannot be granted. |
| The CEO made a huge error in projecting profits. | A huge error was made in projecting profits. |
| I launched a successful fitness program for our company last year. | A successful fitness program was launched for our company last year. |
| We are studying the effects of the Sarbanes/Oxley Act on our accounting procedures. | The effects of the Sarbanes/Oxley Act on our accounting procedures are being studied. |

parallel construction, use similar structures to express similar ideas. For example, the words *computing*, *coding*, *recording*, and *storing* are parallel because the words all end in *-ing*. To express the list as *computing*, *coding*, *recording*, and *storage* is disturbing because the last item is not what the reader expects. Try to match nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, and clauses with clauses. Avoid mixing active-voice verbs with passive-voice verbs. Your goal is to keep the wording balanced when expressing similar ideas.

Balanced wording helps the reader anticipate and comprehend your meaning.

Lacks Parallelism

The policy affected all vendors, suppliers, and *those involved with consulting*.

Our primary goals are to increase productivity, reduce costs, and *the improvement of product quality*.

We are scheduled to meet in Dallas on January 5, *we are meeting in Montreal on the 15th of March*, and in Chicago on June 3.

Shelby audits all accounts lettered A through L; accounts lettered M through Z are audited by Andrew.

Our Super Bowl ads have three objectives:

1. We want to increase product use.
2. Introduce complementary products.
3. Our corporate image will be enhanced.

Improved

The policy affected all vendors, suppliers, and *consultants*. (Matches nouns)

Our primary goals are to increase productivity, reduce costs, and *improve product quality*. (Matches verbs)

We are scheduled to meet in Dallas on January 5, *in Montreal on March 15*, and in Chicago on June 3. (Matches phrases)

Shelby audits all accounts lettered A through L; Andrew audits accounts lettered M through Z. (Matches clauses)

Our Super Bowl ads have three objectives:

1. Increase product use
2. Introduce complementary products
3. Enhance our corporate image (Matches verbs in listed items)



"To make this easy to read, I have divided it into three parts: A, B, and 3."

Modifiers must be close to the words they describe or limit.

Avoiding Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

For clarity, modifiers must be close to the words they describe or limit. A modifier dangles when the word or phrase it describes is missing from its sentence (*After working overtime, the report was finally finished*). This sentence says the report was working overtime. Revised, the sentence contains a logical subject: *After working overtime, we finally finished the report*.

A modifier is misplaced when the word or phrase it describes is not close enough to be clear (*Firefighters rescued a dog from a burning car that had a broken leg*). Obviously, the car did not have a broken leg. The solution is to position the modifier closer to the word(s) it describes or limits: *Firefighters rescued a dog with a broken leg from a burning car*.

Introductory verbal phrases are particularly dangerous; be sure to follow them immediately with the words they logically describe or modify. Try this trick for detecting and remedying many dangling modifiers. Ask the question *Who?* or *What?* after any introductory phrase. The words immediately following should tell the reader who or what is performing the action. Try the *who?* test on the first three dangles here:

Dangling or Misplaced Modifier

Revision

Skilled at graphic design, the contract went to DesignOne.

Skilled at graphic design, DesignOne won the contract.

Working together as a team, the project was finally completed.

Working together as a team, we finally completed the project.

To meet the deadline, your Excel figures must be received by May 1.

To meet the deadline, you must send us your Excel figures by May 1.

The recruiter interviewed candidates who had excellent computer skills in the morning.

In the morning the recruiter interviewed candidates with excellent computer skills.

As an important customer to us, we invite you to our spring open house.

As you are an important customer to us, we invite you to our spring open house. *OR:* As an important customer to us, you are invited to our spring open house.

The most readable paragraphs contain a topic sentence, support sentences, and techniques to build coherence.

Drafting Powerful Paragraphs

A paragraph is a group of sentences about one idea. Paragraphs are most effective when they contain (a) a topic sentence, (b) support sentences that expand and explain only the main idea, and (c) techniques to build coherence.

Crafting Topic Sentences

A topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. Business writers generally place the topic sentence first in the paragraph. It tells readers what to expect and helps them understand the paragraph's central thought immediately. In the revision stage, you will check to be sure each paragraph has a topic sentence. Notice in the following examples how the topic sentence summarizes the main idea, which will be followed by support sentences explaining the topic sentence:

Flexible work scheduling could immediately increase productivity and enhance employee satisfaction in our entire organization. [Support sentences explaining flex scheduling would expand the paragraph.]

The chat function at our main Web site is not functioning as well as we had expected. [Support sentences would describe existing problems in the Web chat function.]

Developing Support Sentences

Topic sentences summarize the main idea of a paragraph. Support sentences illustrate, explain, or strengthen the topic sentence. One of the hardest things for beginning writers to remember is that all support sentences in the paragraph must relate to the topic sentence. Any other topics should be treated separately. Support sentences provide specific details, explanations, and evidence:

Flexible work scheduling could immediately increase productivity and enhance employee satisfaction in our entire organization. Managers would be required to maintain their regular hours. For many other employees, though, flexible scheduling permits extra time to manage family responsibilities. Feeling less stress, employees are able to focus their attention better at work; therefore, they become more relaxed and more productive.

Building Paragraph Coherence

Paragraphs are coherent when ideas are linked—that is, when one idea leads logically to the next. Well-written paragraphs take the reader through a number of steps. When the author skips from Step 1 to Step 3 and forgets Step 2, the reader is lost. Several techniques allow the reader to follow your ideas:

- **Repeat a key idea by using the same expression or a similar one:** *Employees treat guests as VIPs. These VIPs are never told what they can or cannot do.*
- **Use pronouns to refer to previous nouns:** *All new employees receive a two-week orientation. They learn that every staffer has a vital role.*
- **Show connections with transitional expressions:** *however, as a result, consequently, and meanwhile.* For a complete list, see Figure 3.5.

Controlling Paragraph Length

Although no rule regulates the length of paragraphs, business writers recognize the value of short paragraphs. Paragraphs with eight or fewer printed lines look inviting and readable. Long, solid chunks of print appear formidable. If a topic can't be covered in eight or fewer printed lines (not sentences), consider breaking it into smaller segments.

The most readable paragraphs contain eight or fewer printed lines.

FIGURE 3.5 Transitional Expressions to Build Coherence

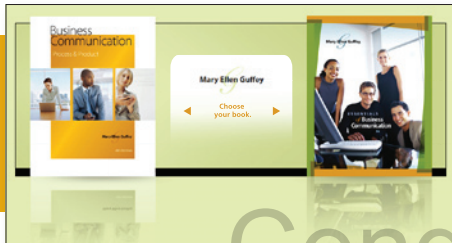
| To Add or Strengthen | To Show Time or Order | To Clarify | To Show Cause and Effect | To Contradict | To Contrast |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| additionally | after | for example | accordingly | actually | as opposed to |
| accordingly | before | for instance | as a result | but | at the same time |
| again | earlier | I mean | consequently | however | by contrast |
| also | finally | in other words | for this reason | in fact | conversely |
| beside | first | put another way | hence | instead | on the contrary |
| indeed | meanwhile | that is | so | rather | on the other hand |
| likewise | next | this means | therefore | still | previously |
| moreover | now | thus | thus | yet | similarly |

Composing the First Draft

Create a quiet place in which to write. Experts recommend freewriting for first drafts.

Once you have researched your topic, organized the data, and selected a pattern of organization, you are ready to begin composing. Communicators who haven't completed the preparatory work often suffer from "writer's block" and sit staring at a piece of paper or at the computer screen. Getting started is easier if you have organized your ideas and established a plan. Composition is also easier if you have a quiet environment in which to concentrate. Businesspeople with messages to compose set aside a given time and allow no calls, visitors, or other interruptions. This is a good technique for students as well.

As you begin composing, keep in mind that you are writing the first draft, not the final copy. Some experts suggest that you write quickly (*freewriting*). If you get your thoughts down quickly, you can refine them in later versions. Other writers, such as your author, prefer to polish sentences as they go. Different writers have different styles. Whether you are a freewriter or a polisher, learn to compose your thoughts at your keyboard. You might be tempted to write a first draft by hand and then transfer it to the computer. This wastes time and develops poor habits. Businesspeople must be able to compose at their keyboards, and now is the time to develop that confidence and skill.



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Summing Up and Looking Forward

This chapter explained the second phase of the writing process, which includes researching, organizing, and composing. Before beginning a message, every writer collects data, either formally or informally. For most simple messages, you would look in the files, talk with your boss, interview the target audience, or possibly conduct an informal survey. Information for a message is then organized into a list or an outline. Depending on the expected reaction of the receiver, the message can be organized directly (for positive reactions) or indirectly (for negative reactions or when persuasion is necessary).

In composing the first draft, writers should use a variety of sentence types and avoid fragments, run-ons, and comma

splices. Emphasis can be achieved through mechanics (underlining, italics, font changes, all caps, and so forth) or through style (using vivid words, labeling the main idea, and positioning the important ideas). Important writing techniques include skillfully using active- and passive-voice verbs, developing parallelism, and avoiding dangling or misplaced modifiers. Powerful paragraphs result from crafting a topic sentence, developing support sentences, and building coherence with the planned repetition of key ideas, proper use of pronouns, and inclusion of transitional expressions.

In the next chapter you will learn helpful techniques for the third phase of the writing process, which includes revising and proofreading.

Critical Thinking

1. "Writing is both a 'marker' of high-skill, high-wage, professional work and a 'gatekeeper' with clear equity implications," said Bob Kerry, chair of the Commission on Writing.¹ What does this statement mean in relation to your career field?
2. Why is audience analysis so important in choosing the direct or indirect pattern of organization for a business message?
3. How are speakers different from writers in the way they emphasize ideas?
4. Why are short sentences and short paragraphs appropriate for business communication?
5. When might it be unethical to use the indirect method of organizing a message?

Chapter Review

6. Compare the first phase of the writing process with the second phase.

7. For routine writing tasks, what are some techniques for collecting informal data and generating ideas?

8. What is the difference between a list and an outline?

9. Why do many readers prefer the direct method for organizing messages?

10. When is the indirect method appropriate, and what are the benefits of using it?

11. List four techniques for achieving emphasis through style.

12. What is parallelism? Give an original example.

13. What are the four sentence types, and what do they consist of?

14. What is a topic sentence, and where is it usually found in business messages?

15. List three techniques for developing paragraph coherence.



Writing Improvement Exercises

Sentence Type

For each of the numbered sentences, select the letter that identifies its type:

- a Simple
- b Compound
- c Complex
- d Compound-complex

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
16. Many companies are now doing business in international circles.
 17. If you travel abroad on business, you may bring gifts for business partners.
 18. In Latin America a knife is not a proper gift; it signifies cutting off a relationship.
 19. When Arabs, Middle Easterners, and Latin Americans talk, they stand close to each other.
 20. Unless they are old friends, Europeans do not address each other by first names; consequently, businesspeople should not expect to do so.
 21. In the Philippines men wear a long embroidered shirt called a *barong*, and women wear a dress called a *terno*.

Sentence Faults

In the following, identify the sentence fault (fragment, run-on, comma splice). Then revise to remedy the fault.

22. Because 90 percent of all business transactions involve written messages. Good writing skills are critical.
23. The recruiter requested a writing sample. Even though the candidate seemed to communicate well orally.
24. Major soft-drink companies considered a new pricing strategy, they tested vending machines that raise prices in hot weather.
25. Thirsty consumers may think that variable pricing is unfair they may also refuse to use the machine.
26. About half of Pizza Hut's 7,600 outlets make deliveries, the others concentrate on walk-in customers.
27. McDonald's sold its chain of Chipotle Mexican Grill restaurants the chain's share price doubled on the next day of trading.

Emphasis

For each of the following sentences, circle (a) or (b). Be prepared to justify your choice.

28. Which is more emphatic?
 - a. Our dress code is good.
 - b. Our dress code reflects common sense and good taste.

29. Which is more emphatic?
- a. A budget increase would certainly improve hiring.
 - b. A budget increase of \$70,000 would enable us to hire two new people.
30. Which is more emphatic?
- a. The committee was powerless to act.
 - b. The committee was unable to take action.
31. Which de-emphasizes the refusal?
- a. Although our resources are committed to other projects this year, we hope to be able to contribute to your worthy cause next year.
 - b. We can't contribute to your charity this year.
32. Which sentence places more emphasis on the date?
- a. The deadline is November 30 for health benefit changes.
 - b. November 30 is the deadline for health benefit changes.
33. Which is *less* emphatic?
- a. One division's profits decreased last quarter.
 - b. Profits in beauty care products dropped 15 percent last quarter.
34. Which sentence *de-emphasizes* the credit refusal?
- a. We are unable to grant you credit at this time, but we welcome your cash business and encourage you to reapply in the future.
 - b. Although credit cannot be granted at this time, we welcome your cash business and encourage you to reapply in the future.
35. Which sentence gives more emphasis to *leadership*?
- a. Jason has many admirable qualities, but most important is his leadership skill.
 - b. Jason has many admirable qualities, including leadership skill, good judgment, and patience.
36. Which is more emphatic?
- a. We notified three departments: (1) Marketing, (2) Accounting, and (3) Distribution.
 - b. We notified three departments:
 - 1. Marketing
 - 2. Accounting
 - 3. Distribution

Active Voice

Business writing is more forceful if it uses active-voice verbs. Revise the following sentences so that verbs are in the active voice. Put the emphasis on the doer of the action.

Passive Antivirus software was installed by Craig on his computer.

Active Craig installed antivirus software on his computer.

37. Employees were given their checks at 4 P.M. every Friday by the manager.
38. New spices and cooking techniques were tried by McDonald's to improve its hamburgers.
39. Our new company logo was designed by my boss.
40. The managers with the most productive departments were commended by the CEO.

Passive Voice

Revise the following sentences so that they are in the passive voice.

41. The auditor discovered a computational error in the company's tax figures.

42. We cannot ship your order for ten monitors until June 15.
43. Stacy did not submit the accounting statement on time.
44. The Federal Trade Commission targeted deceptive diet advertisements by weight-loss marketers.

Parallelism

Revise the following sentences so that their parts are balanced.

45. (Hint: Match adjectives.) To be hired, an applicant must be reliable, creative, and show enthusiasm.
46. (Hint: Match active voice.) If you have decided to cancel our service, please cut your credit card in half and the pieces should be returned to us.
47. (Hint: Match verbs.) Guidelines for improving security at food facilities include inspecting incoming and outgoing vehicles, restriction of access to laboratories, preventing workers from bringing personal items into food-handling areas, and inspection of packaging for signs of tampering.
48. (Hint: Match adjective-noun expressions.) The committee will continue to monitor merchandise design, product quality, and check the feedback of customers.
49. (Hint: Match verb clauses.) To use the fax copier, insert your meter, the paper trays must be loaded, indicate the number of copies needed, and your original sheet should be inserted through the feeder.
50. (Hint: Match *ing* verbs.) Sending an e-mail establishes a more permanent record than to make a telephone call.

Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

Revise the following to avoid dangling and misplaced modifiers.

51. After leaving the midtown meeting, Angela's car would not start.
52. Walking up the driveway, the Hummer parked in the garage was immediately spotted by the detectives.
53. To complete the project on time, a new deadline was established by the team.

54. Acting as manager, several new employees were hired by Mr. Lopez.
55. Michelle Mitchell presented a talk about workplace drug problems in our boardroom.

Organizing Paragraph Sentences

In a memo to the college president, the athletic director argues for a new stadium scoreboard. One paragraph will describe the old scoreboard and why it needs to be replaced. Study the following list of ideas for that paragraph.

1. *The old scoreboard is a tired warhorse that was originally constructed in the 1970s.*
2. *It is now hard to find replacement parts when something breaks.*
3. *The old scoreboard is not energy efficient.*
4. *Coca-Cola has offered to buy a new sports scoreboard in return for exclusive rights to sell soda pop on campus.*
5. *The old scoreboard should be replaced for many reasons.*
6. *It shows only scores for football games.*
7. *When we have soccer games or track meets, we are without any functioning scoreboard.*

56. Which sentence should be the topic sentence?
57. Which sentence(s) should be developed in a separate paragraph?
58. Which sentences should become support sentences?

Building Coherent Paragraphs

59. Use the information from the preceding sentences to write a coherent paragraph about replacing the sports scoreboard. Strive to use three devices to build coherence: (a) repetition of key words, (b) pronouns that clearly refer to previous nouns, and (c) transitional expressions.

Cengage Learning

60. Revise the following paragraph. Add a topic sentence and improve the organization. Correct problems with pronouns, parallelism, wordiness, and misplaced or dangling modifiers. Add transitional expressions if appropriate.

You may be interested in applying for a new position within the company. The Human Resources Department has a number of jobs available immediately. The positions are at a high level. Current employees may apply immediately for open positions in production, for some in marketing, and jobs in administrative support are also available. To make application, these positions require immediate action. Come to the Human Resources Department. We have a list showing the open positions, what the qualifications are, and job descriptions are shown. Many of the jobs are now open. That's why we are sending this now. To be hired, an interview must be scheduled within the next two weeks.

61. Revise the following paragraph. Add a topic sentence and improve the organization. Correct problems with pronouns, parallelism, wordiness, and misplaced or dangling modifiers.

As you probably already know, this company (Lasertronics) will be installing new computer software shortly. There will be a demonstration April 18, which is a Tuesday. You are invited. We felt this was necessary because this new software is so different from our previous software. It will be from 9 to 12 a.m. in the morning. This will show employees how the software programs work. They will learn about the operating system, and this should be helpful to nearly everyone. There will be information about the new word processing program, which should be helpful to administrative assistants and product managers. For all you people who work with payroll, there will be information about the new database program. We can't show everything the software will do at this one demo, but for these three areas there will be some help at the Tuesday demo. Presenting the software, the demo will feature Paula Roddy. She is the representative from Quantum Software.

Grammar/Mechanics Checkup 3

Verbs

Review Sections 1.10–1.15 in the Grammar Review section of the Grammar/Mechanics Handbook. Then study each of the following statements. Underline any verbs that are used incorrectly. In the space provided write the correct form (or *C* if correct) and the number of the G/M principle illustrated. When you finish, compare your responses with those provided near the end of the book. If your responses differ, study carefully the principles in parentheses.

has for have (1.10c)

Example Not one of our customers have ever complained about lost e-mail messages.

1. A large group of our e-mail messages were recently blocked by spam filters.
2. Although Mark acts as if he was the manager, he doesn't know what to do about the e-mail disruption dilemma.
3. If even one of my e-mail messages are blocked by spam controls, I am unhappy.
4. Verizon, together with many other large ISPs, were singled out for using overzealous spam blockers.
5. Neither the sender nor the receiver of blocked messages know what has happened.
6. A typical e-mail user has wrote several messages that were never delivered.
7. Time and energy is required to follow up on e-mail messages.
8. Either the message or its attachment has triggered the spam-blocking software.
9. After many of its customers had began to complain about lost messages, one company sued.
10. If you could have saw the number of nondelivery error messages, you would have been upset also.
11. Ramon discovered that a lot of his legitimate e-mail had went to junk folders that he never checked.

In the space provided write the letter of the sentence that illustrates consistency in subject, voice, and verb form.

12. a. When Mason sent an e-mail message, its delivery was expected.
b. When Mason sent an e-mail message, he expected it to be delivered.
13. a. All employees must wear photo identification; only then will you be admitted.
b. All employees must wear photo identification; only then will they be admitted.
14. a. First, check all computers for viruses; then, install a firewall.
b. First, check all computers for viruses; then, a firewall must be installed.
15. a. When Tina examined the computers, the spyware was discovered.
b. When Tina examined the computers, she discovered the spyware.

Grammar/Mechanics Challenge 3

The following letter has errors in spelling, proofreading, verbs, sentence structure, parallelism, and other writing techniques studied in this chapter. You may either (a) use standard proofreading marks (see Appendix B) to correct the errors here or (b) download the document from your companion Web site and revise at your computer. Study the guidelines in the Grammar/Mechanics Handbook to sharpen your skills.

Body Fitness

Training Massage Wellness

3392 Econlockhatchee Trail • Orlando, FL 32822 • (407) 551-8791

June 4, 200x

Mr. Allen C. Fineberg
3250 Ponciana Way
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410

Dear Mr. Fineberg:

You probably choose Body Fitness because it has become one of the top-rated gyms in the Palm Beach area. Making your workout enjoyable has always been our principal goal. To continue to provide you with the best equipment and programs, your feedback is needed by my partner and myself.

We have build an outstanding program with quality equipment, excellent training programs, and our support staff is very helpful. We feel, however, that we could have a more positive affect and give more individual attention if we could extend our peak usage time. You have probably noticed that attendance at the gym raises from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. We wish it was possible to accommodate all our customers on their favorite equipment during those hours. Although we can't stretch an hour, we would like to make better use of the time between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. With more members coming later, we would have less crush from 4 to 8 p.m. Our exercise machines and strength-training equipment is lying idle later in the evening.

To encourage you to stay later, security cameras for our parking area are being considered by us. Cameras for some inside facilities may also be added. We have gave this matter a great deal of thought. Although Body Fitness have never had an incident that endangered a member, we have went to considerable trouble to learn about security cameras. Because we think that you will feel more comfortable with them in action.

Please tell us what you think, fill out the enclosed questionnaire, and drop it the ballot box during your next visit at the desk. We are asking for your feedback about scheduling your workouts, selecting your equipment, and if you would consider coming later in the evening. If you have any other suggestions for reducing the crush at peak times, please tell us on the enclosed form.

Cordially,

Nicolas Barajas, Manager

Enclosure

Using Ethical Tools to Help You Do the Right Thing

In your career you will no doubt face times when you are torn by ethical dilemmas. Should you tell the truth and risk your job? Should you be loyal to your friends even if it means bending the rules? Should you be tactful or totally honest? Is it your duty to help your company make a profit, or should you be socially responsible?

Being ethical, according to the experts, means doing the right thing *given the circumstances*. Each set of circumstances requires analyzing issues, evaluating choices, and acting responsibly. Resolving ethical issues is never easy, but the task can be made less difficult if you know how to identify key issues. The following questions may be helpful.

- **Is the action you are considering legal?** No matter who asks you to do it or how important you feel the result will be, avoid anything that is prohibited by law. Giving a kickback to a buyer for a large order is illegal, even if you suspect that others in your field do it and you know that without the kickback you will lose the sale.
- **How would you see the problem if you were on the opposite side?** Looking at both sides of an issue helps you gain perspective. By weighing both sides of an issue, you can arrive at a more equitable solution.
- **What are the alternative solutions? Consider all dimensions of other options.** Would the alternative be more ethical? Under the circumstances, is the alternative feasible?
- **Can you discuss the problem with someone whose opinion you value?** Suppose you feel ethically bound to report accurate information to a client—even though your boss has ordered you not to do so. Talking about your dilemma with a coworker or with a colleague in your field might give you helpful insights and lead to possible alternatives.
- **How would you feel if your family, friends, employer, or coworkers learned of your action?** If the thought of revealing your action publicly produces cold sweats, your choice is probably not a wise one. Losing the faith of your friends or the confidence of your customers is not worth whatever short-term gains might be realized.

Career Application. One of the biggest accounting firms uses an ethical awareness survey that includes some of the following situations. You may face similar situations with ethical issues on the job or in employment testing.

Your Task

In teams or individually, decide whether each of the following ethical issues is (a) very important, (b) moderately important, or (c) unimportant. Then decide whether you (a) strongly approve, (b) are undecided, or (c) strongly disapprove of the action taken.² Apply the ethical tools presented here to determine whether the course of action is ethical. What alternatives might you suggest?

- **Recruiting.** You are a recruiter for your company. Although you know company morale is low, the turnover rate is high, and the work environment in many departments is deplorable, you tell job candidates that it is “a great place to work.”
- **Training program.** Your company is offering an exciting training program in Hawaii. Although you haven’t told anyone, you plan to get another job shortly. You decide to participate in the program anyway because you have never been to Hawaii. One of the program requirements is that participants must have “long-term career potential” with the firm.
- **Thievery.** As a supervisor, you suspect that one of your employees is stealing. You check with a company attorney and find that a lie detector test cannot be legally used. Then you decide to scrutinize the employee’s records. Finally, you find an inconsistency in the employee’s records. You decide to fire the employee, although this inconsistency would not normally have been discovered.
- **Downsizing.** As part of the management team of a company that makes potato chips, you are faced with the rising prices of potatoes. Rather than increase the cost of your chips, you decide to decrease slightly the size of the bag. Consumers are less likely to notice a smaller bag than a higher price.