Advanced Professional Communication

ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

A Principled Approach to Workplace Writing

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About this Textbook

This open textbook has been compiled, edited and partially adapted by Andrew Stracuzzi and Christina Ionica from the School of Language and Liberal Studies in partnership with the OER Design Studio and the Library Learning Commons at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario.

If sections of this resource appear to contain several styles of writing and/or voice, then that's intentional! As a compilation, we have attempted to gather sources that not only reflect and reinforce the core teaching and learning methodologies we use in our professional communications curriculum but also mirror the often collaborative nature of professional communication itself.

Attribution

We would like to acknowledge and thank the following authors/entities who have graciously made their work available for the remixing, reusing, and adapting of this text:

- Ashman, M. (2018). Introduction to Professional Communications. eCampus Ontario/Pressbooks.
- Communication in the Real World (2016). University of Minnesota Libraries. Minnesota: Pressbooks.
- Cruthers, A. (2019). Business Writing For Everyone. Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Surrey: Pressbooks.
- Ecampus Ontario. (2019). Communication for Business Professionals: Canadian Edition. Toronto: eCampus Ontario/Pressbooks.
- Smith, J. (2019). Communication At Work: A College-to-Career Guide to Success (Algonquin College). eCampus Ontario/Pressbooks.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT

Advanced Professional Communications

A Principled Approach to Workplace Writing

Welcome to the Fanshawe College Advanced Communications textbook! Some of you are graduates of one of our Fanshawe College diploma/ degree programs, and others may have completed an undergraduate degree/ diploma elsewhere (in another Canadian institution or abroad). Some of you may have also completed a Master's and perhaps also a doctoral degree. At some point during your studies, you may have taken an introductory or intermediate-level Professional Communications course. Whether or not that is the case, you must be wondering what to expect from COMM 6019: Advanced Professional Communications – what, specifically, you will learn in this course and what makes it *advanced*.

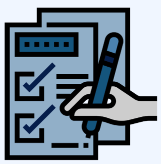
Since you are now enrolled in a Fanshawe College graduate certificate program, your post-graduation aim must be to gain a management position in a professional organization (a business or another type of institution) – or, perhaps, a *higher* management position, if you are already employed as a manager. In either of those roles, you'll have to act as a communication nexus between employees working under you, management employees from other departments, upper-management employees, and (depending on the profile of your organization) clients, shareholders, stakeholders, etc. This means that you will have to switch between different types of audiences all the time and be prepared to respond effectively to their different needs – a challenging task that requires critical thinking, tact, and versatility in terms of general approach and tone. On top of that, you will have to perform your communication tasks *quickly*, given the current economic context of increasing expectations and workloads across professional sectors.

COMM 6019 was specifically designed to prepare you for the many challenging communication tasks you will have to perform as a team leader/ manager. Like any communication course, COMM 6019 will teach you strategies you can use to ensure you always communicate in clear, concise, and specific terms, and that you always select the best approach for any given situation/ audience. However, since it is an *advanced* course, both the content taught and the assignments will take you beyond the basics on all these fronts and help you enhance your communication abilities so as to get you *noticed* as an *exceptionally skilled* communicator – an essential requirement for a manager and a sure way to gain promotions faster than other employees.

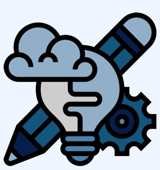
In compiling and writing the content provided to you in this textbook, in addition to our communication expertise as professors in the School of Language and Liberal Studies at Fanshawe College, we were able to draw on feedback from local employers, as expressed in focus group meetings organized by Fanshawe graduate certificate program managers each year. These members of the local business community are typically asked to tell us what they expect the recent Fanshawe graduates they hire to be able to do – and, obviously, what they wish these graduates could do *better*.

Let us review some of the most common concerns expressed by these employers and then examine the learning outcomes we defined for this course, so you can see that there is a direct correspondence involved.

Writing/ speaking problems: According to local employers, some recent graduates find it difficult to communicate at the right level of formality depending on the audience (they may be awkwardly formal in situations requiring a semi-casual tone and style, or on the contrary, inappropriately casual in situations requiring a more formal attitude). In addition, some tend to write in a wordy and vague style, causing their readers to lose time and to ask for additional clarifications. Finally, in some cases, they do not edit their messages carefully to eliminate any grammatical and spelling errors – a carelessness typically perceived as unprofessional and disrespectful by readers.



Formatting problems: Some local employers told us that some recent graduates have insufficient knowledge of basic *formats* for business documents (such as memos, letters, reports of various kinds, etc.). Many companies have document templates you can use, but the issue isn't limited to, say, using a well-formatted "memo top" or "letter top." There are specific requirements in terms of paragraph sequence, structure, and graphic highlighting for each type of document, as well as specific requirements in terms of content and style – and local employers continue to insist that we should cover these aspects thoroughly in our Advanced Professional Communications course, since managers need to use a wider variety of document types and formats than other employees.



Research and information-processing problems: Local employers always insist on the importance of being up to date with new trends in their industry/ field, because new information can typically be easily monetized – taking advantage of a new trend or technology before anyone else does can obviously lead to financial benefits and reputation growth. They would love to hire recent graduates who can do effective research and communicate the results of their findings effectively to the rest of the organization. However, they say that some recent graduates have a difficult time identifying relevant sources for specific contexts (they might select sources that are not at a sophisticated enough level for the needs of the organization, or even unreliable sources), and that they sometimes find texts written in formal language (academic journal articles, long formal reports, etc.) difficult to understand and to summarize. Finally, some local employers even complain that some recent graduates find reading policy documents and following instructions written in formal language somewhat challenging.

Two important points should be retained here. First, that *any* of the issues mentioned by these employers can lead to serious problems:

- **lost time** (poorly written messages take longer to read and understand; in addition, the reader may have to contact the writer to ask for additional clarifications before being able to proceed with a related task)
- **costly misunderstandings** (unclear messages can be misunderstood; those who act on them might do something they weren't supposed to do as a consequence – place the wrong order, relay the wrong message to a client, etc.)
- **loss of lucrative business relations** (poorly written messages can upset and alienate clients and other business contacts)
- **reputation loss** (poorly written press releases or company blog posts can damage a company's public image)

Second, that employers have high expectations and would not be satisfied with a *basic* knowledge of *some* of the issues they mentioned. The job seekers they would like to hire and promote would, ideally, be able to perform *all* these tasks *excellently* and *in a timely fashion*. In short, employers would like to hire recent graduates who can write and communicate at an A+ level – and this is what this course aims to help you achieve.

Think about it: as managers, how would you be perceived by your subordinates, colleagues on the same level, and superiors if *they didn't think you were A-level writers*? Unsurprisingly, Human Resources employees who select job applicants to be interviewed examine their technical/ field-related skills as listed in their employment package but also *draw conclusions concerning their communication skills* based on those documents. Next, during the interview, the hiring committee focuses even more on communication matters, both by observing each candidate's oral communication skills in general and through specific questions aimed at finding out more about the candidate's communication, interpersonal, and leadership abilities.

Now let's examine our course description and our course learning outcomes (CLOs), so you can see how closely they relate to these workplace communication requirements, especially as they apply to management employees:

COMM 6019 Course Description:

This course focuses on refining and advancing students workplace communication abilities. The advanced communication documents and strategies covered include presentation skills, research skills, business document writing, meeting and management team strategies, business etiquette, and advanced employment communications. Additionally, students learn about interpersonal and intercultural communication (high/low and monochromic/polychromic context) concepts and strategies.

COMM 6019 Course Learning Outcomes:

1. **Prepare and evaluate** professional business documents in common formats, using appropriate tone,

structure/format (including headings and graphics) and patterns of development (direct/indirect);
2. **Prepare** advanced-level proposals and research reports (informational/analytical) on program-related topics; summarize and integrate effective research sources;
3. **Analyze, assess, summarize and/or critique** business-related case studies, articles and/or topics to demonstrate skills in evaluation, editing and revision;
4. **Describe, demonstrate, and evaluate** effective team, group and meeting management strategies based on audience; increase awareness and identify cultural differences;
5. **Deliver** professional presentations, live and/or virtually, using effective techniques and strategies;
6. **Assess** various employment communications and create effective employment communication documents (print, digital, and oral).

You should think of these CLOs as a set of measurable goals for success in this course and in a management position at work. All the chapters/ sections included in this textbook will start with a (shorter) list of outcomes you can expect that chapter/ section to primarily focus on. To make the most of this course, you should practice self-monitoring and self-assessment activities each week – specifically, you should try to monitor and assess your individual progress in acquiring the skills listed as you study course materials, ask relevant questions, consult relevant research sources, and complete assignments.

What You Need to Succeed

This resource is suited best to students who use:

- Microsoft Word (MS Word) as their word processor program, which is available to most Fanshawe College students via the Fanshawe Connected website (you can also contact IT Services for additional assistance).
- The Google Chrome browser for internet activity
- A laptop or desktop computer with the Windows operating system, though some considerations are made for Mac users.

A Note on Style

This textbook uses a combination of formal and semi-formal (standard level) language to imitate the style and tone expected of management employees in routine messaging while also familiarizing you with the more formal tone/style expected of workplace documents like formal letters and reports. The language you use at work should never be overly casual or informal (it is very easy, especially for new hires, to be judged as *unprofessional* if they speak and behave that way), and it should never be overly formal, either (avoid pretentious language, an excessive use of jargon, overly reverential expressions that may sound awkward to most people, etc.). Never sacrifice *clarity, concision, and being specific* in an attempt to sound more "folksy" or more authoritative. Any miscalibrations can be costly – you can develop a reputation that might prevent you from being promoted. While avoiding these undesirable extremes, you should vary your level of formality depending on the situation/ audience/ type of message/ etc.

See the discussion of the formality spectrum in professional writing in § (section symbol) 2.1: The Formality Spectrum for more details.

Organization

This textbook is divided into five major units designed to guide graduate students whose basic writing skills are good but who may need to assimilate more sophisticated writing and communication strategies in order to be able to communicate effectively in a leadership/ managerial position at work.

- **Unit 1:** Foundational Principles of Business Messaging
- **Unit 2:** The Principles of Business Style, Format, and Composition
- **Unit 3:** The Principals of Social, Cultural and Employment Communication
- **Unit 4:** The Principles of Report and Research Writing
- **Unit 5**: The Principles of Management Communication

From the above units, you can further explore the full range of topics in the textbook's chapters, sections, and subsections.

In addition, the appendices below are designed to support the various topics within the textbooks' units and chapters. Please note that these appendices appear in the web version of this textbook for ease of access. However, to limit the size of downloadable versions of this text (i.e. Print PDF, Digital PDF, and eReader versions), they have been removed.

- **Appendix A:** Visual Communication
- **Appendix B:** Work-integrated Learning Resources
- **Appendix C:** Writing Supports for EAP/ESL Learners
- **Appendix D:** Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling and Mechanics Support
- **Appendix E:** Documentation and APA Style

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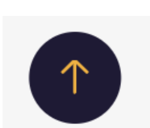

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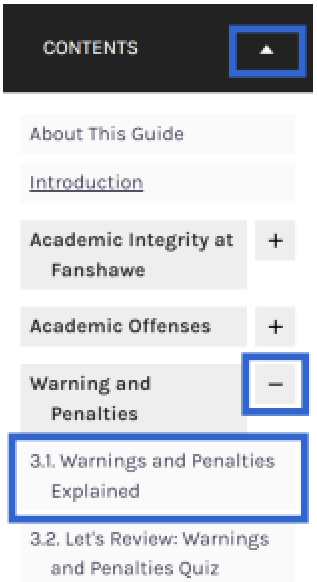

UNIT 1: FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF BUSINESS MESSAGING

6019 Course Learning Outcomes

This unit supports the following course learning outcomes (CLOs):

- **Prepare and evaluate** professional business documents in common formats, using appropriate tone, structure/format (including headings and graphics) and patterns of development (direct/indirect).

Unit 1 Chapters

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Distinguish between varying language registers.
2. Identify the needs of a variety of professional audiences.
3. Select the right tone and diction for specific audiences and professional situations.
4. Use positive/neutral, objective, and specific diction to respond to readers' needs.

As most of you already know, the origins of communication studies are traced back thousands of years to ancient Greek philosophers and teachers like Plato and Aristotle, who were the first to systematically study and write about effective public speaking. However, there is much more to the field of communication. Communication students and scholars also study basic communication processes like nonverbal communication, perception, and listening, as well as communication in various contexts, including interpersonal, group, intercultural, and media communication. Our textbook attempts to cover all of these aspects of communication with a focus on managerial and leadership aspects.

Our approach will be audience-focused — that is, we will try to learn the best communication strategies to use with specific audiences in specific professional contexts. In addition, in order to stimulate your development of managerial/leadership skills, we will integrate a series of metacognitive aspects into our learning — that is, we will prioritize learning aspects such asplanning, monitoring, and assessing one's understanding and performance. Specifically, we will focus on understanding *why* certain strategies may work better than others and we will practice applying them repeatedly, while using *self-monitoring* to track progress.

Developing an awareness of these processes and engaging in them conscientiously can make your selection and use of the best communication strategies in any professional situation *almost automatic*. That is because in time, the elements and structures involved will become embedded into your ways of thinking and acting as patterns and pathways that are always available to use. The best communicators are those who *train* until such best practices become *second nature* to them and through this course you have the chance to train in this manner. As this and the following chapters show, the professional and life benefits of acquiring such skills are enormous.

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following texts:

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1.1: COMMUNICATION: HISTORY AND FORMS

Learning Objectives

1. Define communication.
2. Discuss the history of communication from ancient to modern times.
3. List the five forms of communication.
4. Distinguish among the five forms of communication.
5. Review the various career options for students who study communication.

Since the systematic study of communication began in colleges and universities a little over one hundred years ago, there have been more than 126 published definitions of communication (Dance & Larson, 1976, 23). For our purposes, we will define communication as the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal symbols and signs that are influenced by multiple contexts. As even this basic definition reveals, a *successful* communication act involves careful crafting and monitoring of our messages on multiple levels.

Let us start with a brief discussion of the history of the field and of the types of communication on which we'll be focusing in this textbook and course.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMMUNICATION

All animals communicate and it is possible, for instance, to teach a gorilla to use signs to designate words like *food* and *baby*. However, humans' ability to use symbols to communicate about things outside their immediate temporal and spatial reality is unique (Dance & Larson, 23).

How did this ability evolve? Humans' first words may have been strictly onomatopoetic (= words that sound like the objects/phenomena to which they refer, such as *boing*, *drip*, *gurgle*, *swoosh*, and *whack)*. A prehistoric human being might have used *gurgle* to alert others to the presence of water or *swoosh* and *whack* to recount what happened on a hunt. This primitive ability to communicate provided an evolutionary advantage. Humans who could talk were able to cooperate, share information, make better tools, impress mates, or warn others of danger, which led them to have more offspring who were also more predisposed to communicate (Poe, 2011, 27). This eventually led to the development of a "Talking Culture" during the "Talking Era" — a 150,000-year period of human existence ranging from 180,000 BCE to 3500 BCE (Poe, 2011).

The beginning of the "Manuscript Era" (around 3500 BCE) marked the turn from oral to written culture and paralleled a shift to a more settled, agrarian way of life (Poe, 2011, 27). As hunter-gatherers settled into small villages and began to plan ahead for how to plant, store, protect, and trade or sell their food, they needed accounting systems to keep track of their materials and record transactions. While such transactions were initially tracked with actual objects that symbolized an amount — for example, five pebbles represented five measures of grain — symbols, likely carved into clay, later served as the primary method of record keeping. In this case, five dots might equal five measures of grain.

During this period, villages also developed class systems as more successful farmers prospered and took leadership positions. Religion also became more complex and a new class of spiritual leaders emerged. Soon, armies were needed to protect the stockpiled resources from others who might want to steal it. The emergence of elite classes and the rise of armies required records and bookkeeping which furthered the spread of written symbols and required them to become more complex. Still, literacy (the ability to read and write) didn't spread far beyond the most privileged in society. In fact, it wasn't until the 1800s that widespread literacy existed in the world.

The end of the "Manuscript Era" marked a shift toward a rapid increase in communication technologies. The "Print Era" extended from 1450 to 1850 and was marked by the invention of the printing press and the ability to mass-produce written texts. This 400-year period gave way to the "Audiovisual Era," which only lasted 140 years, from 1850 to 1990, and was marked by the invention of radio, telegraph, telephone, and television. Our current period, the "Internet Era," has only lasted from 1990 until the present. This period has featured the most rapid dispersion of a new method of communication, as the spread of the Internet and the expansion of digital and personal media signaled the beginning of the digital age.

How about our understanding of communication? How did that evolve, in relation to the evolution of communication media, from speaking to digital technology?

Ancient Greek philosophers and scholars defined rhetoric as the art of speaking well and persuasively. Today, we hear the word *rhetoric* used in negative ways — politicians may dismiss opponents' statements as "pure rhetoric" — but the primary meaning of the word is unrelated to making misleading, false, or unethical statements. Rhetorical strategies are not *in themselves* substantial or not, ethical or not. It all depends on the speaker's purpose and use of those strategies.

Much of the public speaking in ancient Greece took place in courtrooms or in political contexts. *Karen Neoh – Courtroom – CC BY 2.0.*

The study of rhetoric initially focused on public communication, primarily oratory, used in discussions or debates regarding laws and policy, speeches delivered in courts, and speeches intended to praise or blame a public personality. The connections among rhetoric, policy making, and legal proceedings show that communication and citizenship have been connected since the study of communication began. Throughout this book, we will continue to make connections between communication, ethics, and civic engagement.

Throughout the Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Age of Enlightenment, oratory and clear written communication remained in focus primarily in connection with public speaking, civic engagement, and academic development. However, distinct communication studies departments began to be established very late —

communication studies as a distinct academic discipline with departments at universities and colleges has only existed for a little over one hundred years (Keith, 2008, p. 240). The formalization of speech departments led to an expanded view of the role of communication. Even though Aristotle and other ancient rhetoricians and philosophers had theorized the connection between rhetoric and citizenship, the role of the communicator became the focus, instead of solely focusing on the message. James A. Winans, one of the first modern speech teachers and an advocate for teaching communication in higher education, said there were "two motives for learning to speak. Increasing one's chance to succeed and increasing one's power to serve" (as cited in Keith, 2008, p. 253). Later, as social psychology began to expand in academic institutions, speech communication scholars saw places for connection to further expand definitions of communication to include social and psychological contexts.

What do scholars in communication departments study today? Let's use former U.S. President Obama as a case study. Fairly traditional rhetoricians might study his public speeches in comparison with other presidential rhetoric. Others may study debates between presidential candidates, dissecting the rhetorical strategies used, for example, by Barack Obama and his opponent, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney. Expanding from messages to channels of communication, scholars may study how different media outlets cover presidential politics. At an interpersonal level, scholars may study what sorts of conflicts emerge within families between liberal and conservative family members. At a cultural level, communication scholars could study how the election of an African American president may influence our perception of race and of racial relations.

How about our focus in this course? We will touch on such larger socio-cultural issues insofar as they allow us to become better communicators in specific professional situations. As you will see, a broader understanding of various socio-cultural phenomena may substantially improve our communication skills in multiple ways — from allowing us to use a positive and motivating tone even in the most challenging professional situations to enhancing our intercultural communication and social media expertise.

To further answer the last question, let us now move to a brief discussion of the five main forms of communication, as they are typically categorized in communication studies, so we can understand *to what extent* and *why* we will focus more on some than on others.

FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

Forms of communication vary in terms of participants, channels used, and contexts. The five main forms of communication are intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and mass communication. Let us quickly define them and discuss relevant similarities and differences between them, especially in terms of level of intentionality, goals, and contexts.

1. Intrapersonal communication is communication with oneself using internal vocalization or reflective thinking. Like other forms of communication, intrapersonal communication is triggered by some internal or external stimulus. We may, for example, communicate with ourselves about what we want to eat due to the internal stimulus of hunger, or we may react intrapersonally to events we witness. Intrapersonal communication takes place only inside our heads — others do not perceive it — yet it has multiple significant social functions:

- **achieving or maintaining social adjustment** (Dance & Larson, 1972, Part II) — e.g. using self-talk (internal vocalization) to calm ourselves or to remind ourselves to smile at key moments during a presentation.
- **building and maintaining our self-concept** — e.g. internalizing certain qualities as part of our self-concept because we noticed that we tend to be perceived that way (this could be beneficial or not — we could, for instance, become more confident this way or bring ourselves down…).
- **processing emotions, thinking through something, or rehearsing what we plan to say or do in the future** — e.g. processing feelings of anger in order to avoid expressing them out loud, or planning what to say as we are waiting for an important meeting to start.

Intrapersonal communication is communication with ourselves that takes place in our heads. *Sarah – Pondering – CC BY 2.0.*

As with the other forms of communication, competent intrapersonal communication helps facilitate social interaction and can enhance our well-being. Conversely, the breakdown in the ability of a person to intrapersonally communicate is associated with mental illness (Dance & Larson, 1972, p. 67).

Sometimes we intrapersonally communicate for the fun of it such as when we think of something funny. Such communication is typically unplanned and doesn't include a clearly defined goal (Dance & Larson, 1972, 99). We can, however, engage in more intentional intrapersonal communication. In fact, deliberate self-reflection can help us become more competent communicators as we become more mindful of our own behaviors. In your everyday experiences, your internal voice may praise or scold you based on a thought or action. In our course, you are encouraged to use intrapersonal communication to do the following:

- **monitor and assess your communication acts** based on the way you would like to be treated by others in similar situations;
- **shift strategy** if this monitoring and assessment work tells you that you may have taken an ineffective approach; and
- **reflect on any communication act** in this way after the fact, so you can learn from the experience.

The main distinction between intrapersonal communication and the other four types is that it is not created with the intention that another person will perceive it. For all the other types, the fact that the communicator anticipates consumption of their message is very important.

2. Interpersonal communication is communication between people whose lives influence one another. Interpersonal communication builds, maintains, and ends our relationships, and we spend more time engaged in interpersonal communication than the other forms of communication. Accordingly, it should come as no surprise that this is the form of communication we will focus on the most in this textbook and course.

Interpersonal communication occurs in various contexts and is addressed in subfields of study within communication studies such as intercultural communication, organizational communication, social media communication, health communication, etc.

Since this form of communication plays a major role in building and maintaining personal relationships and is the most common form of communication, instances of miscommunication and communication conflict most frequently occur here. Couples, family members, and bosses and employees all have to engage in complex interpersonal communication, and it doesn't always go well. A competent interpersonal communicator may need conflict management skills and listening skills, among others, to maintain positive relationships.

3. Group communication is communication among three or more people interacting to achieve a shared goal. You have likely worked in groups in high school and college, and if you're like most students, you didn't always enjoy it. Although sometimes frustrating, group work in an academic setting provides useful experience and critical preparation for group work in professional settings.

Since many businesses and organizations are embracing team models, learning about group communication can help these groups be more effective. *RSNY – Team – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.*

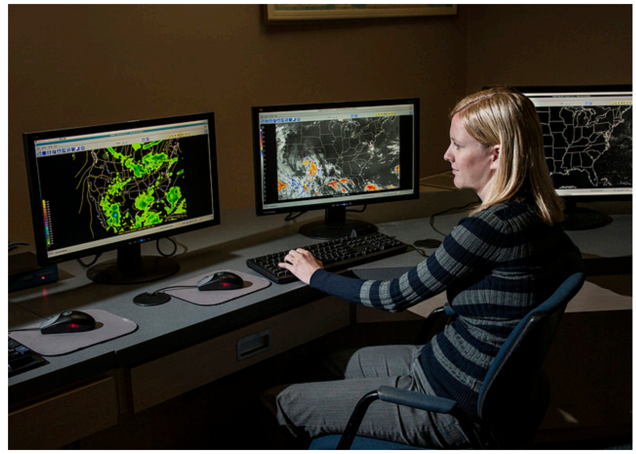
Group communication is more intentional and formal than interpersonal communication because group members are typically placed within a group (they do not make that choice themselves and might not know each other well) and because group communication is often task-focused (members of the group work together for an explicit purpose or goal that affects each member of the group).

Working with several other communicators usually leads to more complicated interactions. Some challenges of group communication relate to task-oriented interactions (e.g., deciding who will complete each part of a larger project) but many stem from interpersonal conflict or misunderstandings among group members. Since group members also communicate with and relate to each other interpersonally and may have pre-existing relationships or develop them during the course of group interaction, elements of interpersonal communication also occur within group communication.

4. Public communication is a sender-focused form of communication in which one person is typically responsible for conveying information to an audience. Public speaking is something that many people fear, or at least don't enjoy. But, just like group communication, public speaking is an important part of our academic, professional, and civic lives. When compared to interpersonal and group communication, public communication is the most consistently intentional, formal, and goal-oriented form of communication discussed so far.

Although public speakers don't necessarily develop individual relationships with audience members, they are face-to-face with them and can receive verbal and nonverbal feedback. In the part of this textbook and course dedicated to presentations and interviews, you will learn some strategies for managing potential speaking anxiety. Public speaking is an important aspect of professional communication because as you will engage in it in multiple contexts at work — from routine meetings to more formal presentations in front of colleagues, upper-management employees, shareholders, clients, etc.

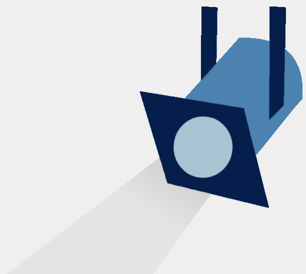
5. Mass communication is a form of public communication that is transmitted to many people through print or electronic media. While print media such as newspapers and magazines continue to be an important channel for mass communication, television, websites, blogs, and social media are dominant mass communication channels today. Additionally, radio, podcasts, and books are other examples of mass media. The technology required to send mass communication messages distinguishes it from the other forms of communication. A certain amount of intentionality goes into transmitting a mass communication message since it usually requires one or more extra steps to convey the message. This may involve pressing "Enter" to send a Facebook message or involve an entire crew of camera people, sound engineers, and production assistants to produce a television show. Even though the messages must be intentionally transmitted through technology, the intentionality and goals of the person actually creating the message, such as the writer, television host, or talk show guest, vary greatly. A Prime Minister's various speeches are mass communication messages that are very formal, goal oriented, and intentional, but a Prime Minister's verbal gaffe during a news interview is not.



Technological advances such as the printing press, television, and the more recent digital revolution have made mass communication a prominent feature of our daily lives. *Savannah River Site – Atmospheric Technology – CC BY 2.0.*

Even though creating the illusion of a personal connection is often a goal of those who create mass communication messages, in some contexts there is no immediate verbal and nonverbal feedback loop in mass communication. For instance, readers could write letters to the editor of a newspaper or send e-mails to a television or radio broadcaster in response to a story where the immediate feedback available in face-to-face interactions is not present. However, with new media technologies such as Twitter, blogs, and Facebook, feedback is becoming more immediate. Individuals can now tweet directly "at" (@) someone and use hashtags (#) to direct feedback to mass communication sources. Many radio and television hosts and news organizations specifically invite feedback from viewers/listeners via social media and may even share the feedback on the air.

While there is potential for unethical communication with all forms, the potential consequences of unethical mass communication can be massive. Communication scholars who focus on mass communication and media often take a critical approach in order to examine how media shapes our culture and who is included and excluded in various mediated messages.



SPOTLIGHT: “GETTING REAL”

What Can You Do with a Diploma or Degree in Communication Studies?

You’re hopefully already beginning to see that communication studies is a diverse and vibrant field of study in itself, as well as a component of great importance for a wide variety of technical and business fields. Communication courses offered in various graduate certificate programs at Fanshawe may focus on aspects of communication such as public relations, rhetoric, interpersonal communication, electronic media production, corporate communication, etc.

This textbook takes a broader approach to enhance your communication competence and skills in interpersonal communication, intercultural communication, group communication, employment communication, and public speaking, among others.

Exercises

The main career areas that communication majors go into are business, public relations/advertising, media, nonprofit, government/law, and education. Within each of these areas there are multiple career paths, potential employers, and useful strategies for success:

- **Business.** Sales, customer service, management, real estate, human resources, training and development.
- **Public relations/advertising.** Public relations, advertising/marketing, public opinion research, development,

event coordination.

- **Media.** Editing, copywriting, publishing, producing, directing, media sales, broadcasting.
- **Nonprofit.** Administration, grant writing, fund-raising, public relations, volunteer coordination.
- **Government/law.** City or town management, community affairs, lobbying, conflict negotiation/mediation.
- **Education.** High school speech teacher, forensics/debate coach, administration and student support services, graduate school to further communication study.

1. In which of the areas listed above are you most interested in studying in school or pursuing as a career? Why?
2. In what aspect(s) of communication studies does your graduate certificate program specialize? What concentrations/courses are offered?
3. Whether or not you plan to pursue a career as a communication expert, how do you think you could use what you have learned and will learn in this class to "sell" yourself on the job market, or to get promoted faster at work?

Source: What Can I Do with This Major? "Communication Studies," accessed May 18, 2012, http://whatcanidowiththismajor.com/major/communication-studies.

Key Takeaways

- Communication is a broad field that draws from many academic disciplines. This interdisciplinary perspective provides useful training and experience for students that can translate into many career fields.
- Communication is the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving symbolic cues that are influenced by multiple contexts.
- Ancient Greeks like Aristotle and Plato started a rich tradition of the study of rhetoric in the Western world more than two thousand years ago. Communication did not become a distinct field of study with academic departments until the 1900s, but it is now a thriving discipline with many subfields of study.
- There are five forms of communication: intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and mass communication.
    - **Intrapersonal communication** is with oneself and occurs only inside our heads.
    - **Interpersonal communication** is between people, typically pairs, whose lives mutually influence one another.
    - **Group communication** is among three or more people to achieve a shared goal.
    - **Public communication** is sender-focused and typically occurs when one person conveys information to an audience.
    - **Mass communication** is when messages are sent to large audiences using print or electronic media.

Exercises

1. Come up with your own definition of communication. How does it differ from the definition in the book? Why did you choose to define communication the way you did?
2. Over the course of a day, keep track of the forms of communication that you use. Make a pie chart of how much time you think you spend, on an average day, engaging in each form of communication (intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and mass).

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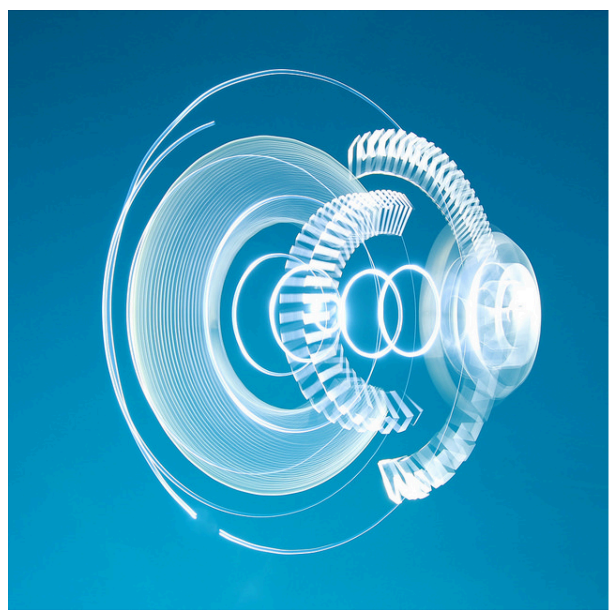
1.2: THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Learning Objectives

1. Identify and define the components of the transmission model of communication.
2. Identify and define the components of the interaction model of communication.
3. Identify and define the components of the transaction model of communication.
4. Compare and contrast the three models of communication.
5. Use the transaction model of communication to analyze a recent communication encounter.

Models of communication simplify the process by providing a visual representation of the various aspects of a communication encounter. In so doing, while somewhat limiting, models allow us to see specific aspects and steps of the process of communication, define communication, and apply communication concepts. When you become aware of how communication functions, you can think more deliberately through your communication encounters, which can help you better prepare for future communication and learn from your previous communication (something we previously defined as engaging in metacognitive learning practices). The three models of communication we will briefly discuss are the transmission, interaction, and transaction models.

The **transmission** model and the **interaction** model include the following parts: **participants** (senders and/or receivers), **messages** (verbal or nonverbal content being conveyed), **encoding**, **decoding**, and **channels**. The internal cognitive process that allows participants to send, receive, and understand messages is the encoding and decoding process. Encoding is the process of turning thoughts into communication. As we will learn later, the level of conscious thought that goes into encoding messages varies. Decoding is the process of turning communication into thoughts ("understanding" the message — but, again, the level of awareness and insight involved varies). Of course, we don't just communicate verbally—we have various options, or channels for communication. Encoded messages are sent through a channel, or a sensory route on which a message travels, to the receiver for decoding. While communication can be sent and received using any sensory route (sight, smell, touch, taste, or sound), most communication occurs through visual (sight) and/or auditory (sound) channels.



Although models of communication provide a useful blueprint to see how the communication process works, they are not complex enough to capture what communication is like as it is experienced. *Chris Searle – Blueprint – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.*

TRANSMISSION MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

The **transmission model** of communication describes **communication as a linear**, **one-way process in which a sender intentionally transmits a message to a receiver** (Ellis & McClintock, 1990, p. 71). This model focuses on the sender and the message within a communication encounter. Although the receiver is included in the model, this role is viewed as more of a target or end point rather than part of an ongoing process. We are left to presume that the receiver either successfully receives and understands the message or does not. The scholars who designed this model extended on a linear model proposed by Aristotle that included a speaker, a message, and a hearer. They were also influenced by the advent and spread of new communication technologies of the time such as telegraphy and radio, and you can probably see these technical influences within the model (Shannon & Weaver, 1949, p. 16). Think of how a radio message is sent from a person in the radio studio to you listening in your car. The sender is the radio announcer who encodes a verbal message that is transmitted by a radio tower through electromagnetic waves (the channel) and eventually reaches your (the receiver's) ears via an antenna and speakers in order to be decoded. Radio announcers do not know with certainty if you received their message, but if the equipment is working and the channel is free of static, the message was (likely) successfully received.

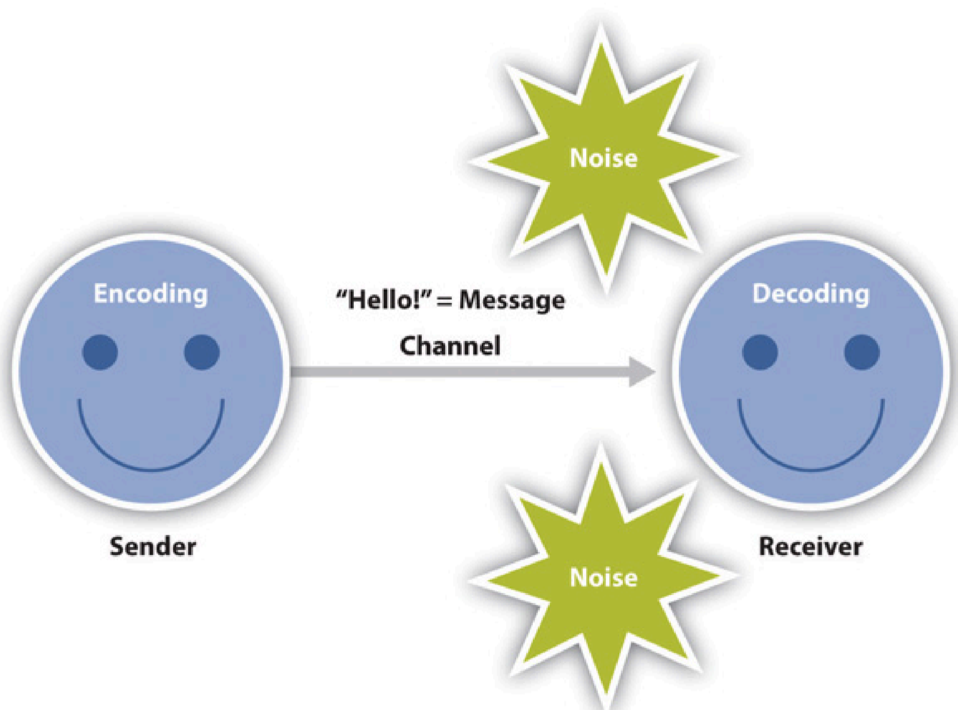


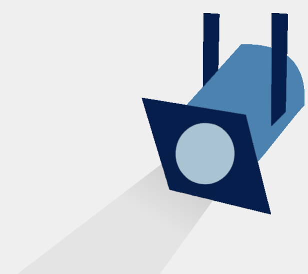
Figure 1.1 The Transmission Model of Communication

Since this model is sender and message focused, responsibility is put on the sender to ensure the message is successfully conveyed. This model emphasizes clarity and effectiveness, but it also acknowledges that there are barriers to effective communication, including noise. Noise is anything that interferes with a message being sent between participants in a communication encounter. Even if a speaker sends a clear message, noise may interfere with a message being accurately received and decoded.

The transmission model of communication accounts for environmental and semantic noise:

- **Environmental noise** is any physical noise present in a communication encounter. Other people talking in a crowded diner could interfere with your ability to transmit a message and have it successfully decoded.
- **Semantic noise** is any noise that occurs in the encoding and decoding process when participants do not understand a symbol. To use a technical example, FM antennae can't decode AM radio signals and vice versa. Likewise, most French speakers can't decode Swedish and vice versa. Semantic noise can also interfere in communication between people speaking the same language because many words have multiple or unfamiliar meanings.

Although the transmission model may seem simple or even underdeveloped to us today, the creation of this model allowed scholars to examine the communication process in new ways, which eventually led to more complex models and theories of communication that we will discuss more later. This model is not rich enough to fully capture dynamic face-to-face interactions, but there are instances in which communication is one-way and linear — especially computer-mediated communication (CMC). As the following "Getting Plugged In" box explains, CMC is integrated into many aspects of our lives. It has opened up new ways of communicating and brought some new challenges. Think of text messaging for example. The transmission model of communication is well suited for describing the act of text messaging since the sender isn't sure that the meaning was effectively conveyed or that the message was received. Noise can also interfere with the transmission of a text. If you use an abbreviation the receiver doesn't know or the phone autocorrects to something completely different than what you meant, then semantic noise has interfered with the message transmission.



SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING PLUGGED IN"

Computer-Mediated Communication

Many of you reading this textbook probably can't remember a time without CMC. If that's the case, then you're what some scholars have called “the digital generation.” CMC has changed the way we teach and learn, communicate at work, stay in touch with friends, initiate romantic relationships, search for jobs, manage our money, get our news, and participate in our democracy. But the increasing use of CMC has also raised some questions and concerns, even among those of you who are of the digital generation.

In all Professional Communication courses we teach, many of our students choose to do their final research projects on social media use in their industry/field. Many are interested in studying the effects of CMC on employees' personal and professional lives and relationships.

This desire to study and question CMC may stem from a perception regarding the seeming loss or devaluing of face-to-face (FtF) communication. Additionally, CMC also raises concerns about privacy, cyberbullying, and lack of civility in online interactions. We will continue to explore such issues in the “Getting Plugged In” feature box in each chapter. The following questions emphasize the influence CMC has in your daily communication:

1. In a typical day, what types of CMC do you use?
2. What are some ways that CMC reduces stress in your life? What are some ways that CMC increases stress in your life? Overall, which of these do you experience more?
3. Do you think that today's society sees less value in FtF communication than we used to? Why/ why not?

Exercises

Getting integrated: Let us examine the following message from a first-year student to a professor:

> **“Hi there,**
>
> **I won't be able to make it to class today. Could you let me know if I'll be missing anything important?**
>
> **Kimmie”**

The student probably wants to show concern for the missed class. (Otherwise, the students wouldn't email the professor.) Is that what the message expresses, though?

- Analyze the message and identify any aspects that should be revised.
- Rewrite the message to make it more effective as an expression of the sender's true intentions.

INTERACTION MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

The **interaction model** of communication describes communication as **a process in which participants**

alternate positions as sender and receiver and generate meaning by sending messages and receiving feedback within physical and psychological contexts (Schramm, 1997). Rather than illustrating communication as a linear, one-way process, the interaction model incorporates feedback, which makes communication a more interactive, two-way process. Feedback includes messages sent in response to other messages. For example, your instructor may respond to a point you raise during class discussion or you may point to the filing cabinet when your coworker asks you where the client file is. The inclusion of a feedback loop also leads to a more complex understanding of the roles of participants in a communication encounter. Rather than having one sender, one message, and one receiver, this model has two sender-receivers who exchange messages. Each participant alternates roles as sender and receiver — sometimes in a deliberate and fully conscious manner, but often very quickly and without full conscious control.

The interaction model is less message-focused and more interaction-focused. While the transmission model focused on how a message was transmitted and whether or not it was received, the interaction model is more concerned with the communication process itself. This model acknowledges that some messages may not be received due to overload (several messages received simultaneously), that some messages are unintentionally sent, etc. Communication isn't judged effective or ineffective based on whether or not *one* message was successfully transmitted and received.

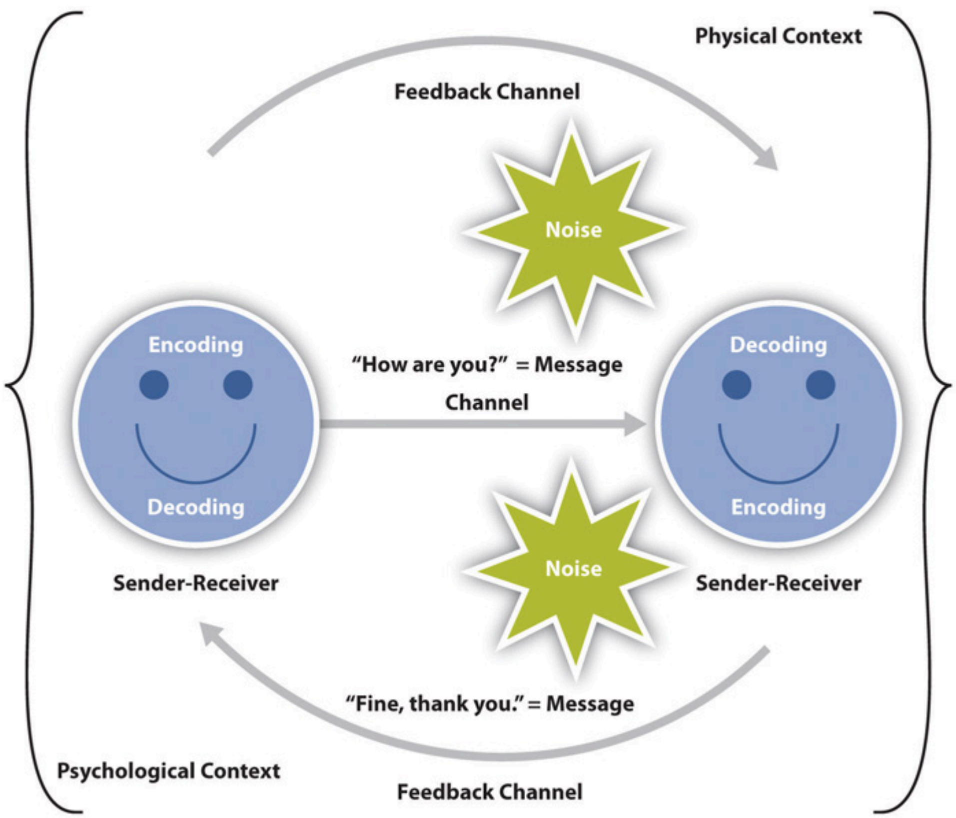


Figure 1.2 The Interaction Model of Communication

The interaction model takes physical and psychological context into account.

- **Physical context** includes the environmental factors in a communication encounter. The size, layout, temperature, and lighting of a space influence our communication. Imagine being interviewed in a comfortable office by three people *vs.* in a cold room with uncomfortable chairs by 10 people; having optimal lighting or a source of light in your face; being on a stage as opposed to being in a relatively small meeting room; etc.

- **Psychological context** includes the mental and emotional factors in a communication encounter. Stress, anxiety, and emotions are just some examples of psychological influences that can affect our communication. Consider contexts such as having to deliver a presentation an hour after receiving some troubling personal news — or how likely you are to disregard a person's otherwise unacceptable behaviours when you are "love struck."

Feedback and context help make the interaction model a more useful illustration of the communication process, whereas the next model, the transaction model, views communication as a powerful tool that shapes our realities beyond individual communication encounters.

TRANSACTION MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

The **transaction model** differs from the transmission and interaction models in significant ways, including the conceptualization of communication, the role of sender and receiver, and the role of context (Barnlund, 1970). This model describes **communication as a process in which communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts**. In this model, we don't just communicate to exchange messages; we communicate to create relationships, form intercultural alliances, shape our self-concepts, and engage with others in dialogue to create communities. In short, we don't communicate *about* our realities; communication helps to *construct* our realities.

Instead of labeling participants as senders and receivers, the people in a communication encounter are referred to as *communicators*. Unlike the interaction model, which suggests that participants alternate positions as sender and receiver, the transaction model suggests that *we are simultaneously senders and receivers*. For example, on an interview, as you send verbal messages about your interests and background, the employer reacts nonverbally. You don't wait until you are done sending your verbal message to start receiving and decoding the nonverbal messages of the employer. Instead, you are simultaneously sending your verbal message and receiving the employer's nonverbal messages. This is an important addition to the model because it allows us to understand how we are able to *adapt our communication*—for example, a verbal message—*in the middle of sending it* based on the communication we are simultaneously receiving from our communication partner.

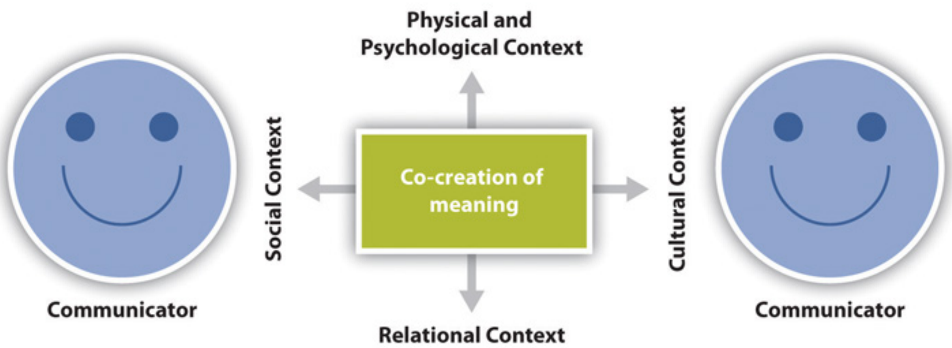


Figure 1.3 The Transaction Model of Communication

The transaction model also includes a more complex understanding of *context.* The interaction model portrays context as physical and psychological influences that enhance or impede communication. While these contexts are important, they focus on message transmission and reception. The transaction model considers how social, relational, and cultural contexts frame and influence our communication encounters.

1. **Social context** refers to the **stated rules or unstated norms that guide communication**. As we are socialized into our various communities, we learn **rules** and implicitly pick up on norms for communicating (e.g., don't lie to people, don't interrupt people, don't pass people in line, greet people when they greet you, thank people when they pay you a compliment, etc.). Parents and teachers often explicitly convey these rules to their children or students. Rules may be stated over and over, and there may be punishment for not following them.

Norms are social conventions that we internalize (or at least learn to recognize) through observation, practice, and trial and error. We may not even know we are breaking a social norm until we notice people looking at us strangely or someone corrects or teases us. For example, as a new employee you may over- or underdress for the company's holiday party because you don't know the norm for formality. Although there probably isn't a stated rule about how to dress at the holiday party, you will notice your error without someone having to point it out, and you will likely not deviate from the norm again in order to save yourself any further embarrassment.

Even though breaking social norms doesn't result in the formal punishment that might be a consequence of breaking a social rule, the social awkwardness we feel when we violate social norms is usually enough to teach us that these norms are powerful even though they aren't made explicit like rules. Norms even have the power to override social rules in some situations. To go back to the examples of common social rules mentioned before, we may break the rule about not lying if the lie is meant to save someone from feeling hurt. We often interrupt close friends when we're having an exciting conversation, but we wouldn't be as likely to interrupt a professor while they are lecturing. Since norms and rules vary among people and cultures, relational and cultural contexts are also included in the transaction model in order to help us understand the multiple contexts that influence our communication.

2. **Relational context** includes the **previous interpersonal history and type of relationship we have with a person**. We communicate differently with someone we just met versus someone we've known for a long time. Initial interactions with people tend to be more highly scripted and governed by established norms and rules, but when we have an established relational context, we may be able to bend or break social norms and rules more easily. For example, you would likely follow social norms of politeness and attentiveness and might spend the whole day cleaning the house for the first time you invite your new neighbors to visit. Once the neighbors are in your house, you may also make them the center of your attention during their visit. If you end up

becoming friends with your neighbors and establishing a relational context, you might not think as much about having everything cleaned and prepared or even giving them your whole attention during later visits.

Communication norms and rules also vary based on the **type of relationship** people have. For example, there are certain communication rules and norms that apply to a supervisor-supervisee relationship that don't apply to a brother-sister relationship and vice versa. (Given the managerial/ leadership focus of our textbook and course, such considerations will be explored in detail in several future chapters.)

3. **Cultural context** includes various **aspects of identities such as race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and ability**. It is important for us to understand that whether we are aware of it or not, we all have multiple cultural identities that influence our communication. Typically, people whose identities have been historically marginalized are regularly aware of how their cultural identities influence their communication and how others communicate with them. Conversely, people with identities that are dominant or in the majority may rarely, if ever, think about the role their cultural identities play in their communication.

Cultural context is influenced by numerous aspects of our identities and is not limited to race or ethnicity. *Wikimedia Commons – public domain.*

When cultural context comes to the forefront of a communication encounter, it can be difficult to manage. Since intercultural communication creates uncertainty, it can deter people from communicating across cultures or lead people to view intercultural communication as negative. But if you avoid communicating across cultural identities, you will likely not get more comfortable or competent as a communicator. Intercultural communication has the potential to enrich various aspects of our lives. In order to communicate well within various cultural contexts, it is important to keep an open mind and avoid making assumptions about others' cultural identities. While you may be able to identify some aspects of the cultural context within a communication encounter, there may also be cultural influences that you can't see. A competent communicator shouldn't assume to know all the cultural contexts a person brings to an encounter, since not all cultural identities are visible. As with the other contexts, it requires skills to adapt to shifting contexts, and the best way to develop these skills is through practice and reflection.

Key Takeaways

- **Communication models are not complex enough to truly capture all that takes place in a communication encounter**, but they can help us examine the various steps in the process in order to better understand our communication and the communication of others.
- **The transmission model of communication describes communication as a one-way, linear process** in which a sender encodes a message and transmits it through a channel to a receiver who decodes it. The transmission of the message many be disrupted by environmental or semantic noise. This model is usually too simple to capture FtF interactions but can be usefully applied to computer-mediated communication.

- **The interaction model of communication describes communication as a two-way process** in which participants alternate positions as sender and receiver and generate meaning by sending and receiving feedback within physical and psychological contexts. This model captures the interactive aspects of communication but still doesn't account for how communication constructs our realities and is influenced by social and cultural contexts.
- **The transaction model of communication describes communication as a process in which communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts**. This model includes participants who are simultaneously senders and receivers and accounts for how communication constructs our realities, relationships, and communities.

Exercises

1. **Getting integrated:** How might knowing the various components of the communication process help you in your academic life, your professional life, and your civic life?
2. What communication situations does the transmission model best represent? The interaction model? The transaction model?
3. Use the transaction model of communication to analyze a recent communication encounter you had. Sketch out the communication encounter and make sure to label each part of the model (communicators; message; channel; feedback; and physical, psychological, social, relational, and cultural contexts).

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1.3: COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss how communication is integrated in various aspects of modern life.
2. Explain how communication meets physical, instrumental, relational, and identity needs.
3. Explain how the notion of a "process" fits into communication.
4. Discuss the ways in which communication is guided by culture and context.

Becoming more aware of how you communicate can be informative and have many positive effects in your personal and professional life. Your main purpose in taking this course is, obviously, to enhance your *professional* communication skills and this is will be our main focus in our course content and assignments. However, personal relationships have much to gain from effective communication, too, as you must be aware and the two categories are not necessarily fully disjunctive. For instance, a friend who is aware of our skills could recommend us for a job, and at work, employees who are well-liked tend to be promoted faster. As we examine several important principles of communication in this section, I encourage you to take note of aspects of communication that you haven't thought about before and begin to apply the principles of communication to as many parts of your personal and professional life as possible

COMMUNICATION IS INTEGRATED INTO ALL PARTS OF OUR LIVES

To facilitate our exploration of the ways in which communication is integrated into all parts of our lives, let us divide our experiential space into four areas: academic, professional, personal, and civic. Of course, there is significant overlap between these areas. For instance, many of your classroom experiences directly correlate to workplace situations, and the classroom has long been seen as a place to prepare students to become active and responsible citizens in their civic lives. The philosophy behind this approach is called **integrative learning**, which encourages students to reflect on how the content they are learning connects to their other classes they have taken or are taking, their professional goals, and their civic responsibilities.

1. ACADEMIC

Improving your communication skills by studying the content presented here can help you maximize your grades in this class and there are other academic advantages of achieving this.

Good communication skills can help you succeed in academic settings and set you up for success post-graduation. *Benjamin Darfler – Graduation – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.*

- Better communicators typically prepare better written documents and presentations in other courses.
- As better communicators, you will likely be able to enhance your relationships with colleagues and professors — that is, to network more effectively while in school. This may lead to employment opportunities or opportunities for advancement in the future.
- Students who take communication courses typically have higher grade point averages and are less likely to drop out of school. This significant correlation is one of the main reasons that most college and university programs make taking at least one communication course a requirement for graduation.

2. PROFESSIONAL

The National Association of Colleges and Employers has found that employers most desire good communication skills in the college graduates they may hire (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2010, p. 25). Countless studies and articles published since confirm this, as do the focus group meetings organized each year at Fanshawe College (see the Introduction to this textbook for more information on the latter). Desired communication skills vary from career to career and this textbook provides a foundation onto which you can build communication skills specific to your industry/field.

Employers appreciate good listening skills and the ability to communicate concisely because efficiency and clarity are often directly tied to productivity and success in terms of profit or task/project completion. In our competitive job market, being able to document that you have received advanced communication instruction and training from communication professionals can give you the edge needed to stand out from other applicants or employees.

Examples

Other articles on employers' view of communication skills

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3. PERSONAL

While many students know, from personal experience and from the prevalence of communication counseling on television talk shows and in self-help books, that communication forms, maintains, and ends our interpersonal relationships, they do not know the extent to which that occurs. They may lack the tools to examine that phenomenon analytically and to make sure they apply what they discover to future interactions.

Those tools can be acquired by developing a foundational knowledge of communication concepts and theories, so we can master the vocabulary needed to name the communication phenomena we experience, to then note their prevalence, and to take a systematic approach to improving them. This is, again, part of engaging in metacognitive learning which is an approach to these phenomena that increases our ability to consciously alter our communication to achieve our goals, avoid miscommunication, and analyze and learn from our inevitable mistakes. Once we get further into our course content, the personal implications of advanced communication strategies and techniques will become increasingly clear.

4. CIVIC

Voting is one way to stay civically engaged, but you can also participate in decision making in nonpolitical contexts. *Government of Canada Website – Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. 2020-10-27.*

Civic engagement refers to working to make a difference in our communities by improving the quality of life of community members, by raising awareness about social, cultural, or political issues or by participating in a wide variety of political and nonpolitical processes (Ehrlich, 2000, vi). The civic part of our lives is developed through engagement with the decision making that goes on in our society at the small-group, local, state, regional, national, or international levels. Such involvement ranges from serving on a neighborhood advisory board to sending an e-mail to our MP, to the Premier of our province, or to the Prime Minister. Discussions and decisions that affect our communities happen around us all the time, but it takes time and effort to become a part of that process. Doing so, however, allows us to become a part of groups or causes that are meaningful to us, which enables us to work for the common good. This type of civic engagement is crucial to the functioning of a democratic society.

Although younger people have tended not to be as politically engaged in terms of voting as other age groups, the current generation of sixteen to twenty-nine-year-olds, known as the millennial generation, is known to be very engaged in volunteerism and community service. In addition, some research has indicated that college students are eager for civic engagement but do not always find the resources they need on their campuses (Jaschik, 2012). The American Association of Colleges and Universities has launched several initiatives and compiled many resources for students and faculty regarding civic engagement. Whether you are part of the millennial generation or you are over thirty, I encourage you to explore their website and try to identify some ways in which you can productively integrate what you are learning in this class into a civic context.

COMMUNICATION MEETS NEEDS

As this discussion shows, communication is far more than the transmission of information — it can also help us achieve certain physical and instrumental needs while also also feeding into our identities and relationships in complex ways. How does that work?

1. PHYSICAL NEEDS

Physical needs include needs that keep our bodies and minds functioning; communication has substantial effects on our physical body and well-being:

- At the most basic level, communication can alert others that our physical needs are not being met (e.g., babies cry when they are hungry or sick to alert their caregiver of these physical needs; we might ask our friends if we can stay at their house if something happens and our former residence can no longer meet our physical needs for shelter).
- There are strong ties between the social function of communication and our physical and psychological health. Human beings are social creatures, which makes communication important for our survival. In fact, prolonged isolation has been shown to severely damage a human (Williams & Zadro, 2001). The social isolation rules we all had to follow as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic have made this need for communication much more obvious.
- People with good interpersonal communication skills are better able to adapt to stress and have less depression and anxiety (Hargie, 2011, p. 2).
- Communication can also be therapeutic, which can lessen or prevent physical problems. A research study found that spouses of suicide or accidental death victims who did not communicate about the death with their friends were more likely to have health problems such as weight change and headaches than those who did talk with friends (Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2006, p. 421).

Satisfying physical needs is essential for our physical functioning and survival. But, in order to socially function and thrive, we must also meet instrumental, relational, and identity needs.

2. INSTRUMENTAL NEEDS

Instrumental needs include needs that help us get things done in our day-to-day lives and achieve short- and long-term goals. Common instrumental needs include influencing others, getting information we need, or getting support (Burleson, Metts, & Kirch, 2000, p. 247).

Communicating for instrumental needs helps us get things done. Think about how much instrumental communication is required to build a house. Sandia Labs – *Habitat for Humanity Build-A-Thon – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.*

To meet instrumental needs, we often use communication strategically. Politicians, parents, bosses, and friends use communication to influence others in order to accomplish goals and meet needs. There is a research area within communication that examines c**ompliance-gaining communication**, or communication aimed at getting people to do something or act in a particular way (Gass & Seiter, 1999, p. 205). Compliance gaining and communicating for instrumental needs is different from coercion, which *forces* or *manipulates* people into doing what you want. Open communication, free from constraint and pressure, is an important part of an ethical society. Compliance-gaining communication is different from persuasion, however. While research on persuasion typically focuses on public speaking and how a speaker persuades a group, compliance-gaining research focuses on our daily interpersonal interactions. Researchers have identified many tactics that people typically use in compliance-gaining communication (Gass & Seiter, 1999, p. 205). As you read through the following list, I am sure many of these tactics will be familiar to you.

Common Tactics Used for Compliance Gaining

- **Offering rewards.** Seeks compliance in a positive way by promising returns, rewards, or generally positive outcomes.
- **Threatening punishment.** Seeks compliance in a negative way by threatening negative consequences such as loss of privileges, grounding, or legal action.
- **Using expertise.** Seeks compliance by implying that one person "knows better" than the other based on experience, age, education, or intelligence.
- **Liking.** Seeks compliance by acting friendly and helpful to get the other person into a good mood before asking them to do something.
- **Debt.** Seeks compliance by calling in past favors and indicating that one person "owes" the other.
- **Altruism.** Seeks compliance by claiming that one person only wants "what is best" for the other and he or she is looking out for the other person's "best interests."
- **Esteem.** Seeks compliance by claiming that other people will think more highly of the person if they comply or thinks less of the person if they do not comply.

3. RELATIONAL NEEDS

Relational needs include needs that help us build, maintain, and (if needed) end social bonds and interpersonal relationships:

- To develop a relationship, we may use nonverbal communication to assess whether someone is interested in talking to us or not, then use verbal communication to strike up a conversation.
- Next, through the mutual process of self-disclosure, a relationship forms over time.
- Once relationships form, they need to be maintain through positive communication and behaviors that communicate our investment in the relationship (spending time together, frequent engagement through texts, celebrating accomplishments, etc.).
- Finally, communication or the lack of it helps us end relationships. We may communicate our deteriorating commitment to a relationship by avoiding communication with others, verbally criticizing them, or explicitly ending a relationship.

Communicating for relational needs isn't always positive, though. Some people's "relational needs" are negative, unethical, or even illegal. Although we may feel the "need" to be passive aggressive or controlling, these communicative patterns are not positive and can hurt our relationships.

4. IDENTITY NEEDS

Identity needs include our need to present ourselves to others and be thought of in particular and desired ways. What adjectives would you use to describe yourself? Are you funny, smart, loyal, or quirky? Your answer isn't just based on who you think you are as much of how we think of ourselves is based on our communication with other people.

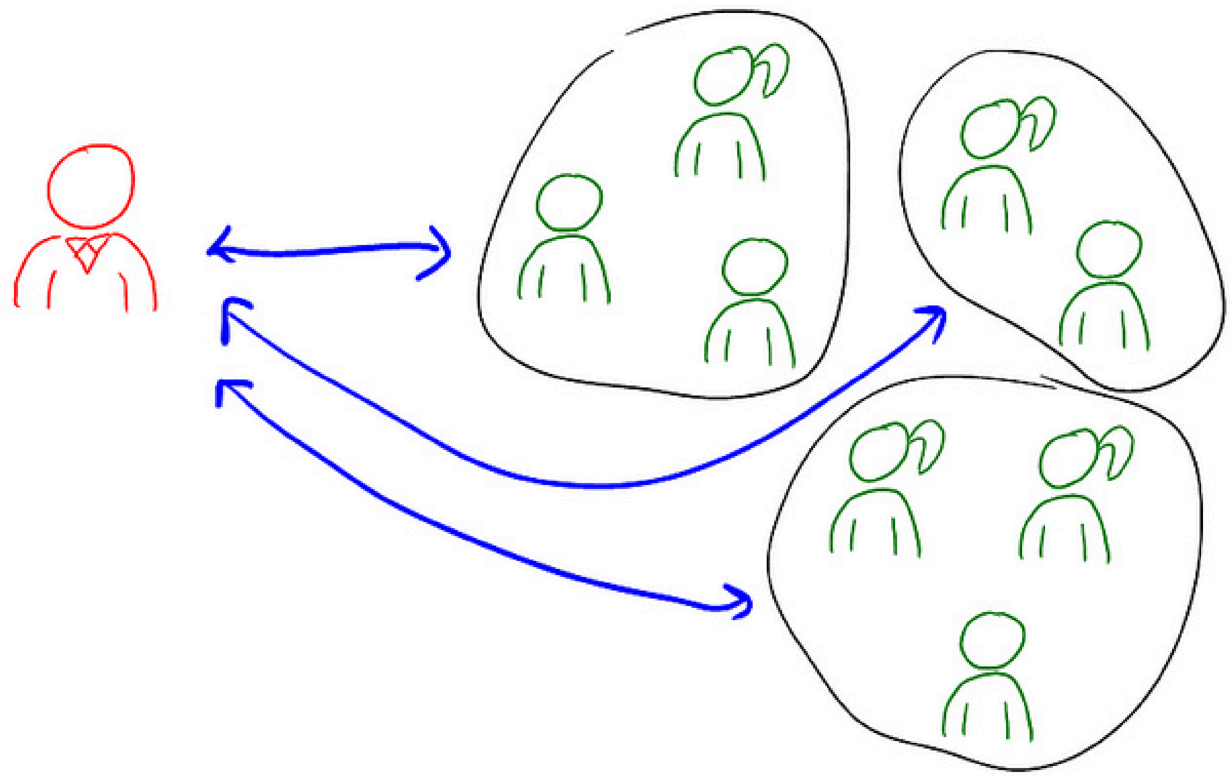
Just as many companies, celebrities, and politicians create a public image, we desire to present different faces in different contexts. Goffman compared self-presentation to a performance and suggested we all perform different roles in different contexts (Goffman, 1959). Indeed, competent communicators can successfully manage how others perceive them by adapting to situations and contexts. A parent may perform the role of stern head of household, supportive shoulder to cry on, or hip and culturally aware friend based on the situation they are in with their child. A newly hired employee may initially perform the role of motivated and agreeable coworker but later perform more leadership behaviors after being promoted.

COMMUNICATION IS A PROCESS

Communication is a process that involves an interchange of verbal and/or nonverbal messages within a continuous and dynamic sequence of events (Hargie, 2011, p. 2). When we refer to communication as a process, we imply that it doesn't have a distinct beginning and end or follow a predetermined sequence of events.

It can be difficult to trace the origin of a communication encounter, since communication doesn't always follow a neat and discernible format, which makes studying communication interactions or phenomena difficult. Any time we pull one part of the process out for study or closer examination, we artificially "freeze" the process in order to examine it, which is not something that is possible when communicating in real life. Sometimes scholars want to isolate a particular stage in the process in order to gain insight by studying, for example, feedback or eye contact. Doing that changes the very process itself, and by the time you have examined a particular stage or component of the process, the entire process may have changed. However, these snapshots are useful for scholarly interrogation of the communication process, and they can also help us evaluate our own communication practices, troubleshoot a problematic encounter we had, or slow things down to account for various contexts before we engage in communication (Dance & Larson, 1976, 28).

We have already learned, in the transaction model of communication, that we communicate using multiple channels and send and receive messages simultaneously. There are also messages and other stimuli around us that we never actually perceive because we can only attend to so much information at one time. The dynamic nature of communication allows us to examine some principles of communication that are related to its processual nature. Next, we will learn that communication messages vary in terms of their level of conscious thought and intention, that communication is irreversible, and that communication is unrepeatable.



Since communication is such a dynamic process, it is difficult to determine where communication begins and ends. *Mathieu Plourde – Instructor to Groups – CC BY 2.0.*

Intention. Some scholars have put forth definitions of communication stating that messages must be intended for others to perceive them in order for a message to "count" as communication. This narrow definition only includes messages that are tailored or at least targeted to a particular person or group and excludes any communication that is involuntary (Dance & Larson, 1976, 28). Involuntary intention may occur when we "read into" involuntary gestures others might make, or mistake intrapersonal communication as being always intentionally; communication occurs in both instances, yet not always intentionally.

Degree of conscious thought. Communication messages also vary in terms of the amount of conscious thought that goes into their creation. In general, we can say that intentional communication usually includes more conscious thought and unintentional communication usually includes less. For example, some communication is reactionary and almost completely involuntary. We often scream when we are frightened, say "ouch!" when we stub our toe, and stare blankly when we are bored. This isn't the richest type of communication, but it *is* communication. Some of our interactions are slightly more substantial and include more conscious thought but are still very routine. For example, we say "excuse me" when we need to get past someone, say "thank you" when someone holds the door for us, or say "what's up?" to our neighbor we pass every day in the hall.

While these types of communication just discussed are common, the messages most studied by communication scholars and the messages this course focuses on the most, are considered **constructed communication**. These messages include more conscious thought and often go beyond information exchange to meet relational and identity needs. As we will learn later, **a higher degree of conscious thought and intention doesn't necessarily mean the communication will be effective, understood, or ethical**. In addition, ethical communicators cannot avoid responsibility for the effects of what they say by claiming they didn't "intend" for their communication to cause an undesired effect. Communication has short- and long-term effects, which illustrates the next principle we will discuss—communication is irreversible.

The irreversible character of communication. The dynamic nature of the communication process also means that communication is irreversible. Once an initial interaction has gone wrong, it is impossible to turn the clock back and "redo" it. Miscommunication can occur regardless of the degree of conscious thought and intention put into a message. For example, if David tells a joke that offends his coworker Beth, then he can't just say, "Oh, forget I said that," or "I didn't intend for it to be offensive." The message has been sent and it can't be taken back.

The unrepeatable character of communication. We have already learned the influence that contexts have on communication. Contexts change quickly and frequently — so, even if our words and actions stay the same between Situation A and Situation B, the physical, psychological, social, relational, and cultural contexts will vary and ultimately change the communication encounter. For instance, if you try to recreate a good job interview experience by asking the same questions and telling the same stories about yourself, you can't expect the same results. Have you ever tried to recount a funny or interesting experience to a friend who doesn't really seem that impressed? These "I guess you had to be there" moments illustrate the fact that communication is unrepeatable.

COMMUNICATION IS GUIDED BY CULTURE AND CONTEXT

Western culture tends to put more value on senders than receivers and on the content rather the context of a message. These cultural values are reflected in our definitions and models of communication. As we will learn in later chapters, cultures vary in terms of having a more individualistic or more collectivistic cultural orientation. Canada is considered an individualistic culture, where emphasis is put on individual expression and success. Japan is considered a collectivistic culture, where emphasis is put on group cohesion and harmony. These are strong cultural values that are embedded in how we learn to communicate. In many collectivistic cultures, there is more emphasis placed on silence and nonverbal context.

Whether in Canada, Japan, or another country, people are socialized from birth to communication in culturally specific ways that vary by context. In this section, we will discuss how communication is learned, the rules and norms that influence how we communicate, and the ethical implications of communication.

1. COMMUNICATION IS LEARNED

Communication patterns are relative to the context and culture in which one is communicating, and many cultures have distinct languages consisting of symbols, all of which are *learnt* (from caregivers, starting in infancy, and then through school, social interactions, work experiences, etc.).

Communication is *symbolic* — that is, the words that make up our language systems do not *directly* and *inherently* correspond to something in reality; they point to something that is part of our reality *as a matter of convention*.

- The existence of different languages is obvious proof of this. For instance, "fish" translates into French as "poisson." The words are not similar, and neither has any inherent relation to what we think of as fish. We know what the word refers to if we know the language.
- We also speak different "languages" based on the situation we are in. For example, in some cultures, it is considered inappropriate to talk about family or health issues in public, while in others it's common to do so. At another level, an astronomer and someone who does not specialize in the field would connect the word "star" to pools of knowledge of very different dimensions and levels of depth — and many words used by astronomers might be entirely unknown to most people. Finally, close friends often have their own inside terminology and expressions that would not make sense to anyone else.

2. RULES AND NORMS

As discussed earlier, whether verbal or nonverbal, mediated or interpersonal, our communication is guided by rules and norms.

Phatic communion is an instructive example of how we communicate under the influence of rules and norms (Senft, 2009). Phatic communion refers to scripted and routine verbal interactions that are intended to establish social bonds rather than to exchange meaning.

Here's an example:

When you pass your professor in the hall, the exchange may go as follows:

Student: "Hello, how are you?"

Professor: "Fine, how are you?"

Student: "Fine, thank you."

What is the point of this interaction? It surely isn't to actually inquire as to each other's well-being. We have similar phatic interactions when we make comments on the weather or the fact that it's Monday. We often joke about phatic communion because we see that is pointless, at least on the surface.

The student and professor might as well just pass each other in the hall and say the following to each other:

Student: "Generic greeting question."

Professor: "Generic greeting response and question."

Student: "Generic response."

This is an example of communication messages that don't really require a high level of conscious thought or convey much actual content or generate much meaning. So if phatic communion is so "pointless," why do we do it?

The term phatic communion derives from the Greek word phatos, which means "spoken," and the word communion, which means "connection or bond." These exchanges are common in North American communication contexts and serve strictly to confirm a connection. Everyone knows not to start discussing specific personal or professional issues when someone asks, "How are you?" and not to go through his/her "to do" list when someone asks, "What's up?" Instead, we conform to social norms through routine verbal exchanges.

Rules and norms guide much of our communication. Think of all the unspoken norms for behavior in a crowded elevator. Dangerismycat – *crowded elevator* – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Phatic communion, like most aspects of communication we will learn about, is culturally relative. While most cultures engage in phatic communion, the topics of and occasions for phatic communion vary. Scripts for greetings in Canada are common, but scripts for leaving may be more common in other cultures. Asking about someone's well-being may be acceptable phatic communion in one culture, and asking about the health of someone's family may be more common in another.

COMMUNICATION HAS ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

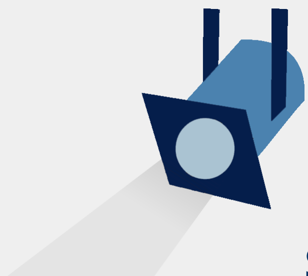
Communication ethics deals with the process of negotiating and reflecting on our actions and communication regarding what we believe to be right and wrong.

Communication has broad ethical implications. Later in this book, we will discuss the importance of ethical listening, how to avoid plagiarism, how to present evidence ethically, and how to apply ethical standards to mass media and social media. These are just a few examples of how communication and ethics will be discussed in this book, but hopefully, you can already see that communication ethics is integrated into academic, professional, personal, and civic contexts.

While many behaviors can be more easily labelled as ethical or unethical, communication acts are not always easy to judge. Physically hurting someone is generally thought of as unethical and illegal, but many instances of hurtful speech, or even what some would consider hate speech, have been protected as free speech. This reveals a complicated relationship between protected speech, ethical speech, and the law. In some cases, people see it as their ethical duty to communicate information that they feel is in the public's best interest. The people behind WikiLeaks, for example, have released thousands of classified documents related to wars, intelligence gathering, and diplomatic communication. WikiLeaks claims that exposing this information keeps politicians and leaders accountable and keeps the public informed, but government officials claim the release of the information should be considered a criminal act. Both parties consider the other's communication unethical and their own communication ethical. Who is right?

Ethics deals with our beliefs about what is right and wrong, but the choice is often not as clear-cut. Justin Baeder – *That Way* – CC BY 2.0,

Since many of the choices we make when it comes to ethics are situational, contextual, and personal, various professional fields have developed codes of ethics to help guide members through areas that might otherwise seem uncertain. Doctors take oaths to do no harm to their patients, and journalists follow ethical guidelines that promote objectivity and provide for the protection of sources. Although businesses and corporations have gotten much attention for high-profile cases of unethical behavior, business ethics has become an important part of the curriculum in many business schools, and more companies are adopting ethical guidelines for their employees. The following "Getting Critical" box includes information about the National Communication Association's Ethical Credo and the International Association of Business Communicators' Code of Ethics.



SPOTLIGHT: “GETTING CRITICAL”

We all have to consider and sometimes struggle with questions of right and wrong. Since communication is central to the creation of our relationships and communities, ethical communication should be a priority of every person who wants to make a positive contribution to society.

The **National Communication Association’s “Credo for Ethical Communication”** reminds us that communication ethics are relevant across contexts and apply to every channel of communication, including media, and that human worth and dignity are fostered through ethical communication practices such as truthfulness, fairness, integrity, and respect for self and others (National Communication Association, 2012). **The emphasis in the credo and in the study of communication ethics is on practices and actions rather than thoughts and philosophies**. Many people claim high ethical standards but do not live up to them in practice. While the credo advocates for, endorses, and promotes certain ideals, it is up to each one of us to put them into practice. The following are some of the principles stated in the credo:

- We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision making fundamental to civil society.
- We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through the expression of intolerance and hatred.
- We are committed to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.
- We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences of our own communication and expect the same of others.

1. What are some examples of unethical communication that you have witnessed?
2. Read through the whole credo. Of the nine principles listed, which do you think is most important and why?

Let us also examine the principles promoted by the **International Association of Business Communicators** through their **Code of Ethics**:

- **I am honest.** My actions bring respect for and trust in the communication profession.
- **I communicate accurate information** and promptly correct any errors.
- **I obey laws and public policies**; if I violate any law or public policy, I act promptly to correct the situation.
- **I protect confidential information** while acting within the law.
- **I support the ideals of free speech**, freedom of assembly, and access to an open marketplace of ideas.

- **I am sensitive to others'** cultural values and beliefs.
- **I give credit to others for their work** and cite my sources**.**
- **I do not use confidential information** for personal benefit.
- **I do not represent conflicting or competing interests** without full disclosure and the written consent of those involved.
- **I do not accept undisclosed gifts or payments** for professional services from anyone other than a client or employer.
- **I do not guarantee results** that are beyond my power to deliver

You can find this code and read more about this association at this link: https://www.iabc.com/about-us/purpose/code-of-ethics/

In upcoming chapters, we will link these principles of ethical communication to essential requirements of workplace communication such as clarity, cultural sensitivity, objectivity, accuracy in citing sources, honesty in describing our contribution, etc.

Key Takeaways

- Increasing your knowledge of communication and improving your communication skills can positively affect your academic, professional, personal, and civic lives.
- In terms of academics, research shows that students who study communication and improve their communication skills are less likely to drop out of school and are more likely to have high grade point averages.
- Professionally, employers desire employees with good communication skills, and employees who have good listening skills are more likely to get promoted.
- Personally, communication skills help us maintain satisfying relationships.
- Communication intensifies our civic engagement and allows us to participate in and contribute to our communities.
- Communication meets our physical needs by helping us maintain physical and psychological well-being; our instrumental needs by helping us achieve short- and long-term goals; our relational needs by helping us initiate, maintain, and terminate relationships; and our identity needs by allowing us to present ourselves to others in particular ways.
- Communication is a process that includes messages that vary in terms of conscious thought and intention. Communication is also irreversible and unrepeatable.
- Communication is guided by culture and context.
- We learn to communicate using systems that vary based on culture and language.
- Rules and norms influence the routines and rituals within our communication.
- Communication ethics vary by culture and context and involve the negotiation of and reflection on our actions regarding what we think is right and wrong.

Exercises

1. **Getting integrated:** The concepts of integrative learning and communication ethics are introduced in this section. How do you see communication ethics playing a role in academic, professional, personal, and civic aspects of your life?
2. Identify some physical, instrumental, relational, and identity needs that communication helps you meet in a given day.
3. We learned in this section that communication is irreversible and unrepeatable. Identify a situation in which you wished you could reverse communication. Identify a situation in which you wished you could repeat communication. Even though it's impossible to reverse or repeat communication, what lessons can be learned from these two situations you identified that you can apply to future communication?
4. In what types of phatic communion do you engage? How are they connected to context and/or social rules and norms?

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1.4: COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Learning Objectives

1. Define communication competence.
2. Explain each part of the definition of communication competence.
3. Discuss strategies for developing communication competence.
4. Discuss communication apprehension and public speaking anxiety and employ strategies to manage them.

Communication competence has become a focus in higher education over the past couple of decades as educational policy makers and advocates have stressed a "back to basics" mentality (McCroskey, 1984, p. 259). The ability to communicate effectively is often included as a primary undergraduate learning goal along with other key skills like writing, critical thinking, and problem solving. In advanced communication courses, students are expected to move beyond the *basic* communication competence expected of any college and university graduate by engaging with challenging communication scenarios related to specific business/professional contexts and by enhancing their abilities of engaging in reflexive, metacognitive processes of self-monitoring and self-assessment.

In addition to supporting you directly in your future managerial/ leadership roles at work, the advanced communication skills taught in this course are meant to foster your development of the seven "Job Skills for the Future" Fanshawe College plans to prioritize in future years. Here is the list:

Fanshawe College: Job Skills for the Future

- FANSHAWE **Novel and adaptive thinking**: Find innovative, creative and unconventional relationships between things or concepts.
- **Resilience**: Succeed through adversity.
- **Social intelligence**: Build and nurture mutually beneficial relationships.
- **Self-directed learning**: Identify and achieve personal learning goals.
- **Global citizenship**: Create an awareness of the wider world and our place in it.
- **Complex problem solving**: Find solutions to real-world problems.
- **Implementation skills**: Manage projects to achieve key milestones and outcomes.

You can read more about these skills here: https://www.fanshawec.ca/about-fanshawe/choose-fanshawe/innovation-village/silex-and-job-skills-future#

Since this book focuses on advanced professional communication in terms of workplace managerial/ leadership applications, you will see connections to the higher-order cognitive skills referenced here in all chapters. A "Getting Competent" feature box is included in each chapter specifically to emphasize aspects of communication competence of high impact on your development of higher-order cognitive skills.

DEFINING COMPETENCE

Communication competence refers to the knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts (Cooley & Roach, 1984, p. 25).

Developing communication competence can bring many rewards, but it also requires time and effort. *Paul Shanks – Communication – CC BY-NC 2.0.*

Knowledge of communication patterns. The cognitive elements of competence include knowing how to do something and understanding why things are done the way they are (Hargie, 2011, p. 9). Since you are currently taking a communication class, try to observe the communication concepts you are learning in the communication practices of others and yourself. This will help bring the concepts to life and also help you evaluate how communication in the real world matches up with communication concepts. As you build a repertoire of communication knowledge based on your experiential and classroom knowledge, you will also be developing behavioral competence.

The ability to use communication. At the individual level, a person's physiological and psychological characteristics affect competence. In terms of physiology, age, maturity, and ability to communicate affect competence. In terms of psychology, a person's mood, stress level, personality, and level of communication apprehension (level of anxiety regarding communication) affect competence (Cooley & Roach, 1984, p. 25). All these factors will either help or hinder you when you try to apply the knowledge you have learned to actual communication behaviors. For example, you might know strategies for being an effective speaker, but public speaking anxiety that kicks in when you get in front of the audience may prevent you from fully putting that knowledge into practice.

The ability to adapt to various contexts. What is defined as competence varies based on social and cultural context (Cooley & Roach, 1984, p. 25). Social variables such as status and power affect competence. In a social situation where one person has more power than another (e.g. supervisor *vs.* employee), the person in the higher position in the hierarchy is typically the one who sets the standard for competence. Cultural variables such as race and nationality also affect competence. A Taiwanese woman who speaks English as her second language may be praised for her competence in the English language in her home country but be viewed as less competent in the United States because of her accent. In summary, although we have a clear definition of communication competence, there are not definitions for how to be competent in any given situation, since competence varies at the individual, social, and cultural level.

The National Communication Association (NCA) has identified the following aspects of competence — with a focus on speaking and listening, and noting that developing communication competence in these areas will help people in academic, professional, and civic contexts (Morreale, Rubin, & Jones, 1998):

1. State ideas clearly.
2. Communicate ethically.
3. Recognize when it is appropriate to communicate.
4. Identify their communication goals.
5. Select the most appropriate and effective medium for communicating.
6. Demonstrate credibility.
7. Identify and manage misunderstandings.
8. Manage conflict.
9. Be open-minded about another's point of view.
10. Listen attentively.

These are just some of the competencies the NCA identified as important for college graduates. While these are skill focused rather than interpersonally or culturally focused, they provide a concrete way to assess your own speaking competencies at the start of this class and to then track your progress throughout the term, as we study and attempt to assimilate a large variety of advanced communication strategies and techniques.

DEVELOPING COMPETENCE

We all have areas where we are skilled and areas where we have deficiencies. In most cases, we can consciously decide to work on our deficiencies, which may take considerable effort. There are multiple stages of competence you should try to assess as you communicate in your daily life: unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, and unconscious competence (Hargie, 2011, p. 9).

- Before acquiring a rich cognitive knowledge base of communication concepts and before practicing and reflecting on skills in a particular area, you may not be aware that you are communicating in an incompetent manner — that is, you may exhibit **unconscious incompetence**.
- Once you learn more about communication and have a vocabulary to identify concepts, you may find yourself exhibiting **conscious incompetence**: you know what you should be doing, and you realize that you're not doing it as well as you could.
- As your skills increase, you may advance to c**onscious competence**: you know you are communicating well in the moment, which will add to your bank of experiences to draw from in future interactions.

When you reach the stage of **unconscious competence**, you can communicate successfully without straining to be competent. Just because you reach the stage of unconscious competence in one area or with one person does not mean you will always stay there. We are faced with new communication encounters regularly, and although we may be able to draw on the communication skills we have learned about and developed, it may take a few instances of conscious incompetence before you can advance to later stages.

Becoming more mindful of your communication and the communication of others can contribute to your communication competence. *Free Stock Photos – public domain.*

Obviously, becoming a more mindful communicator can speed up your progress toward communication competence. A mindful communicator actively and fluidly processes information, is sensitive to communication contexts and multiple perspectives, and is able to adapt to novel communication situations (Burgoon, Berger, & Waldron, 2000, p. 105). Becoming a more mindful communicator has many benefits, including achieving communication goals, detecting deception, avoiding stereotypes, and reducing conflict.

Whether or not we achieve our day-to-day communication goals depends on our communication competence. Various communication behaviors can signal that we are communicating mindfully — such as asking employees to paraphrase their understanding of the instructions given (showing that you are aware that verbal messages are not always clear, that people do not always listen actively, and that people often do not speak up when they are unsure of instructions for fear of appearing incompetent or embarrassing themselves). Some communication behaviors indicate that we are not communicating mindfully — such as withdrawing from a romantic partner or engaging in passive-aggressive behavior during a period of interpersonal conflict. Most of us know that such behaviors lead to predictable and avoidable conflict cycles, yet we are all guilty of them. Our tendency to assume that people are telling us the truth can also lead to negative results. Some tentativeness and mindful monitoring of a person's nonverbal and verbal communication can help us detect deception. However, this is not the same thing as chronic suspicion, which would *not* indicate communication competence.

SPOTLIGHT: “GETTING COMPETENT”

Getting Started on Your Road to Communication Competence

The “Getting Competent” boxes throughout this book are meant to help you become a more confident and skilled communicator. While each box will focus on a specific aspect of communication competence, this box addresses communication competence more generally.

A common communication pitfall that is an obstacle on many students’ roads to communication competence is viewing communication as “common sense.” In fact, this can be accurate in some cases but not in others. For instance, many of us are aware that conflict avoidance can lead to built-up tensions that eventually hurt an interpersonal relationship — it may be “common sense” to expect that. Still, in order to put that “commonsense” knowledge to competent use, we must have a more nuanced understanding of how conflict and interpersonal communication relate and know some conflict management strategies.

Communication is common in that it is something that we spend most of our time doing, but the ability to make sense of and improve our communication takes competence that is learned through deliberate study and personal reflection. Throughout this term, try to systematically engage in the following:

- Challenge yourselves to apply the concepts we are learning to your personal and professional life and goals.
- Commit to sharing the knowledge you gain in this class with those around you.
- Practice self-monitoring (start to notice your communication habits and abilities more; notice both strengths and areas in need of improvement).
- Be prepared to put in the time to improve (it takes effort to become a better listener, give better feedback, etc.).

If you start these things now you will be primed to take on more communication challenges that will be presented throughout this book.

1. What aspects of communication do you think are “common sense?” What aspects of communication do you think require more formal instruction and/or study?
2. What communication concept has appealed to you most so far? How can you see this concept applying to your life?
3. Do a communication self-assessment. What are your strengths as a communicator? What are your weaknesses? What can you do to start improving your communication competence?

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

Decades of research conducted by communication scholars shows that **communication apprehension** is common among college students (Priem & Solomon, 2009, p. 260). Communication apprehension (CA) is fear or anxiety experienced by a person due to actual or imagined communication with another person or persons. CA includes multiple forms of communication, not just public speaking: 15 to 20 percent of college students experience *high trait CA* (they are generally anxious about communication) and 70 percent experience *some* trait CA — which means that addressing communication anxiety in a class like the one you're taking now stands to benefit the majority of students (Priem & Solomon, 2009, p. 260).

Communication apprehension and public speaking anxiety are common but can be managed productively. *Ana C. – day 339 butterflies – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.*

Public speaking anxiety is type of CA that produces physiological, cognitive, and behavioral reactions in people when faced with a real or imagined presentation (Bodie, 2010, p. 72). Research on public speaking anxiety has focused on three key ways to address this common issue: systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, and skills training (Bodie, 2010, p. 72).

Communication departments are typically the only departments that address communication apprehension explicitly, which is important as CA is "related to negative academic consequences such as negative attitudes toward school, lower over-all classroom achievement, lower final course grades, and higher college attrition rates" (Allen, Hunter, & Donohue, 2009). Additionally, CA can lead others to make assumptions about your communication competence that may be unfavorable. Even if you are intelligent, prepared, and motivated, CA and public speaking anxiety can detract from your communication and lead others to perceive you in ways you did not intend.

Top Ten Ways to Reduce Speaking Anxiety

We will discuss this more in later chapters, but for now, here are a few basic tips that can help you manage your anxiety:

1. You are not alone. Public speaking anxiety is common, so don't ignore it—confront it.
2. You can't literally "die of embarrassment." Audiences are forgiving and understanding.
3. It always feels worse than it looks.
4. Take deep breaths to release endorphins, which naturally fight the adrenaline that causes anxiety.
5. Look the part. Dress professionally to enhance confidence.
6. Channel your nervousness into positive energy and motivation.
7. Start your outline and research early. Better knowledge = higher confidence.
8. Practice and get feedback from a trusted source (such as a friend or colleague).
9. Visualize success through positive thinking.
10. Rehearse as much as possible. Practice is a speaker's best friend.

Key Takeaways

- Communication competence refers to the knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts.
- To be a competent communicator, you should have cognitive knowledge about communication based on observation and instruction; understand that individual, social, and cultural contexts affect competence; and be able to adapt to those various contexts.
- **Getting integrated:** The NCA notes that developing communication competence in speaking and listening will help college students in academic, professional, and civic contexts.
- Levels of communication competence include unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, and unconscious competence.
- In order to develop communication competence, you must become a more mindful communicator and a higher self-monitor.
- Communication apprehension (CA) refers to fear or anxiety experienced by a person due to real or imagined communication with another person or persons. Public speaking anxiety is a form of CA that more specifically focuses on anxiety about giving a public presentation. Both are commonly experienced by most people and can be managed using various strategies.

Exercises

1. **Getting integrated:** Evaluate your speaking and listening competencies based on the list generated by the NCA. Out of the skills listed, which ones are you more competent in and less competent in? Which skill will be most useful for you in academic contexts? Professional contexts? Personal contexts? Civic contexts?
2. Think of a person you know who you think possesses a high level of communication competence. What makes you think this? What communication characteristics do they have that you might want to have yourself?
3. What anxieties do you have regarding communication and/or public speaking? Since communication and speaking are a necessary part of life, identify some strategies you can use to manage those anxieties.

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1.5: EIGHT ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the communication process
2. Define the components of communication

The communication process can be broken down into a series of eight essential components, each of which serves an integral function in the overall process:

1. Source
2. Message
3. Channel
4. Receiver
5. Feedback
6. Environment
7. Context
8. Interference

Source

The source imagines, creates, and sends the message. The source encodes the message by choosing just the right order or the best words to convey the intended meaning, and presents or sends the information to the audience (receiver). By watching for the audience's reaction, the source perceives how well they received the message and responds with clarification or supporting information.

Message

"The message is the stimulus or meaning produced by the source for the receiver or audience" (McLean, 2005, p. 10). The message brings together words to convey meaning, but nonverbal cues, organization, grammar, style, and other elements also contribute to the way it is conceived, conveyed, and received.

Channel

"The channel is the way in which a message or messages travel between source and receiver." (McLean, 2005, p. 10). Spoken channels include face-to-face conversations, speeches, phone conversations and voicemail messages, radio, public address systems, and Skype. Written channels include letters, memorandums, purchase orders, invoices, newspaper and magazine articles, blogs, emails, text messages, tweets, and so forth.

Receiver

"The receiver receives the message from the source, analyzing and interpreting the message in ways both intended and unintended by the source" (McLean, 2005, p. 10).

Feedback

When you respond to the source, intentionally or unintentionally, you are giving feedback. Feedback is composed of messages the receiver sends back to the source. Verbal or nonverbal, all these feedback signals allow the source to see how well and how accurately (or how poorly and inaccurately) the message was received (Leavitt & Mueller, 1951).

Environment

"The environment is the atmosphere, physical and psychological, where you send and receive messages" (McLean, 2005, p. 10). Surroundings, people, animals, technology, can all influence your communication.

Context

"The context of the communication interaction involves the setting, scene, and expectations of the individuals involved" (McLean, 2005, p. 10). A professional communication context may involve business suits (environmental cues) that directly or indirectly influence expectations of language and behaviour among the participants.

Interference

Interference, also called noise, can come from any source. "Interference is anything that blocks or changes the source's intended meaning of the message" (McLean, 2005, p. 10). This can be external or internal/psychological. Noise interferes with normal encoding and decoding of the message carried by the channel between source and receiver.

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1.6: PRINCIPLES OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the principles of verbal communication
2. Define the basic aspects that govern the use of words.

Verbal communication is based on several basic principles. In this section, you'll examine each principle and explore how it influences everyday communication. Whether it's a simple conversation with a coworker or a formal sales presentation to a board of directors, these principles apply to all contexts of communication.

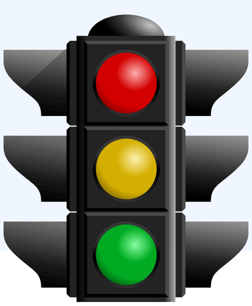
Language Has Rules

Language is a system of symbols, words, and/or gestures used to communicate meaning. The words themselves have meaning within their specific context or language community. Words only carry meaning if you know the understood meaning and have a grasp of their context to interpret them correctly.

There are three types of rules that govern or control your use of words.

- **Syntactic Rules** – govern the order of words in a sentence.
- **Semantic Rules** – govern the meaning of words and how to interpret them (Martinich, 1996).
- **Contextual Rules** – govern meaning and word choice according to context and social custom.

Consider the example of a traffic light as follows:



Semantics : Green means Go, and Red means Stop

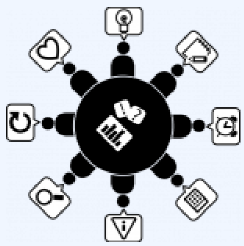
Syntax: Green is on the bottom, yellow in the middle, and red on top.

Even when you follow these linguistic rules, miscommunication is possible. Your cultural context or community may hold different meanings for the words used – different from the meanings that the source communicator intended. Words *attempt* to represent the ideas you want to communicate, but they are sometimes limited by factors beyond your control. Words often require you to negotiate meaning, or to explain what you mean in more than one way, in order to create a common vocabulary. You may need to state a word, define it, and provide an example in order to come to an understanding with your audience about the meaning of your message.

Words have two types of meanings: denotative and connotative.

Denotative: The common meaning, often found in the dictionary.

Example: “home” = your place of residence



Connotative: Meaning that is not found in the dictionary but in the community of users itself. It can involve an emotional association with a word, positive or negative, and can be individual or collective, but is not universal.

Example: “home” generally carries positive connotations (we associate it with family, emotional support, feeling nourished and protected, etc.)

With a common vocabulary in both denotative and connotative terms, effective communication becomes a more distinct possibility. But what if you have to transfer meaning from one vocabulary to another? That is essentially what you are doing when you translate a message. For example, HSBC Bank was forced to rebrand its entire global private banking operations after bringing a U.S. campaign overseas. In 2009, the worldwide bank spent millions of dollars to scrap its 5-year-old “Assume Nothing” campaign. Problems arose when the message was brought overseas, where it was translated in many countries as “Do Nothing.” In the end, the bank spent $10 million to change its tagline to “The world’s private bank,” which has a much friendlier translation.

Exercises

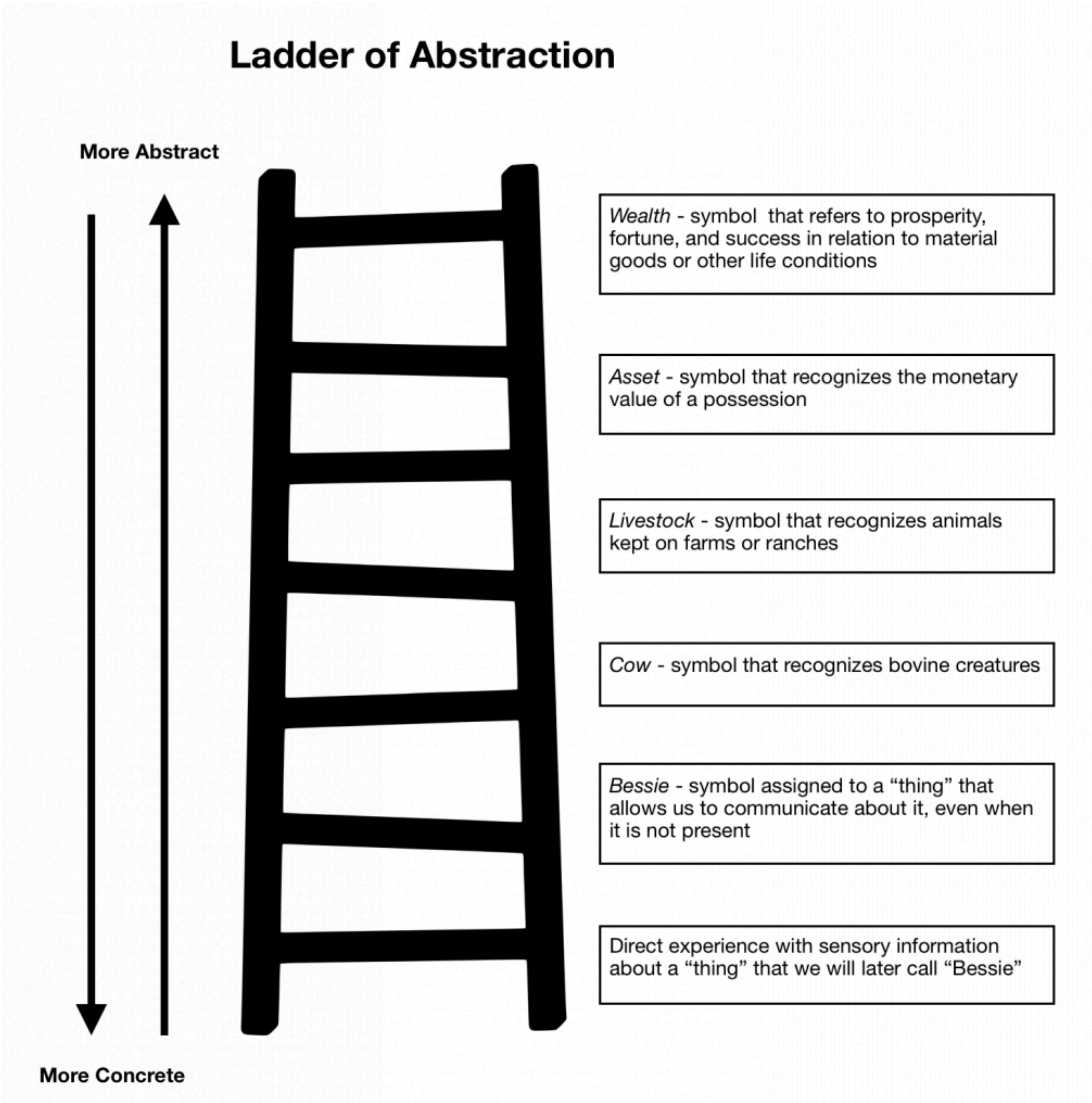
Read the following article for a few more examples of organizational messaging challenges: Lost in Translation: 10 International Marketing Fails by Skye Schooley from *Business News Daily* (2019).

Language is Abstract

Some words are more directly related to a concept or idea than others. If you were asked to go and take a picture of a book, it might seem like a simple task. If you were asked to go and take a picture of “work,” you’d be puzzled — work is an abstract word that was developed to refer to any number of possibilities (writing a book, repairing an air conditioner, fertilizing an organic garden, etc.). You could take a picture of any of those things, but you would be challenged to take a picture of “work.”

Consider the example of a cow. If you were in a barn with this cow, you would actually be experiencing stimuli that would be coming in through your senses. You would hear the cow, likely smell the cow, and be able to touch the cow. You would perceive the actual 'thing,' which is the 'cow' in front of you. This would be considered concrete, and it would be unmediated, meaning it was actually the moment of experience. As represented in the image below, the ladder of abstraction begins to move away from experience to language and description.

The ladder of abstraction is a model used to illustrate how language can range from concrete to abstract. If you follow a concept up the ladder of abstraction, more and more of the "essence" of the original object is lost or left out, which leaves more room for interpretation, potentially leading to misunderstanding. However, this process of abstracting, of leaving things out, may allow you to communicate more effectively — it may serve as a shorthand that keeps you from having to use an unmanageable list of words, each referring to one specific thing, when you want to express a certain idea (Hayakawa & Hayakawa, 1990, pp. 85-86)



A ladder depicting increasing abstraction of observation and language. (Hayakawa & Hayakawa, 1990, pp. 85-86).

As you move up a level on the ladder of abstraction, you might give your experience a name — you are looking at 'Bessie.' So now, instead of the direct experience with the 'thing' in front of you, you have given the thing a name, which takes you one step away from the direct experience toward the use of a more abstract symbol. Now you can talk and think about Bessie even when you aren't directly experiencing her.

At the next level, the word cow now lumps Bessie in with other bovine creatures that share similar characteristics. As you go up the ladder, cow becomes livestock, livestock becomes an asset, and then an asset becomes wealth.

Note that it becomes increasingly difficult to define the meaning of the symbol as you go up the ladder and how with each step you lose more of the characteristics of the original concrete experience. The more abstractthe words you use, the more careful you would have to be to provide enough context and enough connections with other ideas expressed in order to make sure that your message can be decoded.

Language Organizes and Classifies Reality

Humans use language to create and express some sense of order in their world. You often group words that represent concepts by their physical proximity or their similarity to one another. For example, in biology, animals with similar traits are classified together. An ostrich may be said to be related to an emu and a nandu, but you wouldn't group an ostrich with an elephant or a salamander. Your ability to organize is useful, but artificial and a matter of convention. The systems of organization you use are not part of the natural world but an expression of your views about the natural world.

What is a doctor? A nurse? A teacher? If a male came to your mind in the case of the word 'doctor' and a female came to mind in reference to 'nurse' or 'teacher', then your habits of mind include a gender bias. In many cultures, there was a time where gender stereotypes were more than just a stereotypes — they were the general rule, the social custom, the norm. But now, in many places in the world, this is no longer true. More and more men are training to serve as nurses. In 2019, for example, data from the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) indicated that 43% of practising physicians in Canada were women (Canadian Medical Association, 2019).

We use systems of classification to navigate the world. Imagine how confusing life would be if we had no categories such as male/female, young/old, tall/short, doctor/nurse/teacher. While these categories are mentally useful, they can become problematic when used to uphold biases and ingrained assumptions that are no longer valid. Biases can make us assume that certain elements are related when they have no relationship at all. As a result, our thinking may become limited and our grasp of reality impaired. It is often easier to spot these biases in others, but it is important, as effective communicators, to become aware of them *in ourselves*. Holding biases unconsciously would limit our thinking, our grasp of reality, and our ability to communicate successfully.

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CHAPTER 1: REVIEW

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Communication is a broad field that draws from many academic disciplines.
- Communication is the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving symbolic cues that are influenced by multiple contexts.
- There are five forms of communication: intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and mass communication.
- Communication models are not complex enough to truly capture all that takes place in a communication encounter.
- The transmission model of communication describes communication as a one-way, linear process in which a sender encodes a message and transmits it through a channel to a receiver who decodes it.
- The interaction model of communication describes communication as a two-way process in which participants alternate positions as sender and receiver and generate meaning by sending and receiving feedback within physical and psychological contexts.
- The transaction model of communication describes communication as a process in which communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts.
- Increasing your knowledge of communication and improving your communication skills can positively affect your academic, professional, personal, and civic lives.
- Professionally, employers desire employees with good communication skills, and employees who have good listening skills are more likely to get promoted.
- Personally, communication skills help us maintain satisfying relationships.
- Communication is a process that includes messages that vary in terms of conscious thought and intention. Communication is also irreversible and unrepeatable.
- Communication is guided by culture and context.
- Rules and norms influence the routines and rituals within our communication.
- Communication ethics varies by culture and context and involves the negotiation of and reflection on our actions regarding what we think is right and wrong.
- Communication competence refers to the knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts.
- Levels of communication competence include unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, and unconscious competence.
- Communication apprehension (CA) refers to fear or anxiety experienced by a person due to real or imagined communication with another person or persons.
- Verbal communication is based on several basic principles. Language is a system of symbols, words, and/or gestures used to communicate meaning. Language is abstract , so we try iour best to organize and classifies reality

UNIT 2: THE PRINCIPLES OF BUSINESS STYLE, FORMAT, AND COMPOSITION

6019 Course Learning Outcomes

This unit supports the following course learning outcomes (CLOs):

- **Prepare and evaluate** professional business documents in common formats, using appropriate tone, structure/format (including headings and graphics) and patterns of development (direct/indirect);
- **Analyze, assess, summarize and/or critique** business-related case studies, articles and/or topics to demonstrate skills in evaluation, editing and revision;

Unit 2 Chapters

CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION TO FORM AND STYLE

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Identify patterns of communication for routine messaging
2. Analyze elements of business writing style
3. Describe effective document design

Among the most important skills in communication is to adjust your style according to the audience to meet their needs as well as your own. You would speak differently to a customer or manager compared with how you would to a long-time co-worker who has also become a friend. In each case, these audiences have certain expectations about your style of communication, and you must meet those expectations to be respected and maintain good relations.

This chapter reviews those style choices and focuses especially on the six major characteristics of good writing common to both formal and casual writing. We'll also review the importance of the direct and indirect approach to business communication (most of you are probably familiar with these patterns if you took a lower-level Professional Communication course in your previous college/university program) and try to understand a little better how these patterns, with their specific style and formatting requirements, can help us to produce reader-friendly documents.

The Audience: Basic Considerations

If we know a few things about our potential reader, it is fairly easy to adapt the message to our audience. Things can get a little more complicated if

- we haven't had any prior contacts with the potential reader;
- the reader is not an individual, but a group of people (say, a number of people who hold different positions within our organization and might have different needs in terms of the type of information they need, the level of detail, etc.);
- we have a primary audience (one person or group), but we can expect the message to be read by a secondary audience, as well (a larger group).

The more complex the situation, the more planning we will have to do before we start writing. Let us examine some basic examples of situations in which we would have to vary the type and amount of content depending on the audience.

Examples

Context: You are part of a team working on a project for a client. Your immediate superior is your team leader; next in line is the department manager. Let us discuss a few types of messages you might have to write:

1. When you write a request to another member of the team who might be working on a different part of the project, you would have to
   - provide as many details as possible so that your co-worker can get you exactly what you need
   - motivate your request (explaining why you need what you need by a certain deadline).
   - cc your team leader on the message you send to the other team member, or send another (briefer) message to the team leader notifying him/her of your request.
2. When your team leader has to prepare a progress report for the department manager, you would have to send your team leader a message detailing your progress on your part of the project. You would have to cover the entire period required and provide detailed information on what has been accomplished & what is left to do. Your team leader will then decide if he/she should include everything or just the main points of your message in the report.
3. If your team leader asks you to examine the possibility of adding something to the project/ research a certain aspect of the project, you would have to write a fairly detailed message in response, explaining each point by referring to reliable sources of information, etc. If your team leader then asks you to provide that information to the client, too, you would have to write that message in a different way – you might decide to skip technical details the client might not understand and spend more time explaining the benefits of the changes/ additions you recommend. (Aspects that might seem obvious to your team leader might not seem as obvious to the client, depending on his/her knowledge of your field. A client who knows a lot about your field would probably prefer to hear more about the technical details. A client who has little knowledge of the field would probably expect you to focus more on benefits.)

In short, the type of information needed and the level of detail required are always main concerns in terms of content. We need to make the right choice each time, because our position in the organization depends on it:

- If a team leader expects a detailed message and receives a very short and vague one instead, he/she might conclude that the sender of the message is incompetent, careless, or both.
- If a client expects a detailed discussion of benefits so he/she can see that the project is worth it and the sender of the message does not explain the benefits persuasively, the client might decide to avoid working with the sender's organization in the future.

Once we make a decision concerning the type of information needed and the level of detail, we need to decide how to organize that information, and how to phrase our points in the most effective manner.

Tone and Style: Basic Considerations

Because a formal style of writing shows respect for the reader, use standard business English, especially your goal is to curry favour with your audience, such as anyone outside your organization, higher than you within your organization, and those on or around your level with whom you have never communicated before. These audiences include managers, customers, clients, B2B suppliers and vendors, regulators, and other interested stakeholders such as government agencies. A cover letter, for instance, will be read by a future potential manager probably unfamiliar to you, so it is a very real test of your ability to write formally—a test that is crucial to your career success. Many common professional document types also require formality, such as other letters, memos, reports, proposals, agreements, and contracts. In such cases, you are expected to follow grammatical rules more strictly and make slightly elevated word choices, but not so elevated that you force your reader to look up rarely used words (they will not; they will just make up their mind about you being pretentious and a slight pain to deal with).

Since most of you are fairly young and many employers complain in focus groups that their younger employees tend to be inappropriately informal, we would recommend extra caution in assessing the level of formality required in each situation. If you are slightly more formal than you should have been, you won't upset anyone — you'd just be perceived as a little inexperienced. However, if you write or act a way that is judged insufficiently formal for the context, you risk being perceived as unprofessional — and that can have major consequences on your future within the organization (you might not be fired, but you certainly won't be put in charge of any important projects or considered for promotions).

Formatting: Basic Considerations

Depending on how likely the receiver is to accept what you have to say or propose, you have two main options:

- convey the main idea and the purpose of our message upfront (this would be a direct pattern message) **OR**
- provide some explanations first, and then reveal the main idea and the purpose of our message (this would be an indirect pattern message)

Let us discuss these aspects in detail.

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following text:

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2.1: THE FORMALITY SPECTRUM

Learning Objectives

1. Apply the key elements of business writing style to routine workplace communication scenarios.

The Formality Spectrum

In order to decide how formal our messages should be, we would have to first assess the context and profile our audience. In terms of context, a 5-minute presentation in front of a small group of colleagues in a routine weekly meeting would be far less formal than a 15-minute presentation at an year-end meeting with upper management employees. In terms of audience, we wouldn't speak or write at the same level of formality when we address colleagues, interns recently hired, upper-management employees, clients, shareholders, etc.

Formal Style in Writing

Writing in such a style requires effort because your grammar must be tighter and the vocabulary advanced. Sometimes a more elevated word choice—one with more syllables than perhaps the first word that comes to mind—will elude you, requiring you to use a thesaurus (such as that built into MS Word in the Proofing section under the Review menu tab, or the Synonyms option in the drop-down menu that appears when you highlight and right-click a word). At the drafting stage you should, in the interests of speed-writing to get your ideas down nearly as fast as they come, go with the word that comes to mind and leave the synonym-finding efforts for the editing stage.

General-Level Writing

Your ability to use a general-level style is necessary in any situation where you communicate with familiar people on your level and when a personable, more conversational tone is appreciated, such as when writing to someone with basic reading skills (e.g., an EAL learner). In a routine email to a colleague, for instance, you would use a general-level vocabulary. You would also use contractions such as *it's* for *it is* or *it has*, *would've* for *would have*, and *you're* for *you are* . While not a sign of disrespect, the more relaxed approach says to the reader, "We're all friends, so let's not try too hard to impress each other." Upper-level managers who want to be liked rather than feared permit a more casual style of communication in their employees' interactions with them, assuming that doing so achieves collegiality rather than disrespect.

Informal Style and Slang in Writing

As the furthest extreme on the formality spectrum, slang and other informal means of communication such as emojis are generally unacceptable in business contexts. Slang is common in teen texting and social media, so it appears immature, frivolous, out of place, confusing, and possibly even offensive in serious adult professional situations. Say someone emailed a car cleaning company with questions about their detailing service and received a reply that looks like it was texted out by a barely literate 14-year-old, such as:

> *So yeah, well get yr car cleen top 2 bottom – inside + out 30 min 150 bucks deluxe serv. – when can u come?*

The inquiring customer would have serious concerns about the quality and educational level of the personnel staffing the company, and thus about the quality of work they do. The customer will probably just give the company a pass and continue looking for one with a more formal or even casual style that suggests greater attention to detail and awareness of professional communication standards. A company rep that comes back with a response more like the following would likely assure the customer that their car is in good hands:

> *Absolutely, we can do that for you. Our White Glove service thoroughly vacuums and wet-vacs all upholstery, plus scrubs all hard surfaces with pro-grade cleaners, then does a thorough wash and wax outside. Your autobody will be like a mirror when you pick it up. Please let us know if you are interested in our $150 White Glove service.*

As a deviation from accepted standards of "proper" vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, syntax, etc., slang has specific functions in adolescent and subculture communication — it is meant to score points with an in-group that sets itself apart from the rest of polite society. Its set of codewords and nonstandard grammar is meant to confuse anyone not part of that in-group and would sound ridiculous if anyone else even tried to speak it, as when parents try to level with their teens in teen vernacular. Obviously, if slang is used in professional contexts, audiences would find that offensive and they might also not understand some expressions used.

Obviously, most of you do not write that way, but Fanshawe professors who teach Professional Communication courses to graduate certificate students *do* receive, on occasion, messages that look like this:

> *hey so can u tell me where to find yr stuff on research like which folder*

> *i need 3 day ext. for report prof plz*

Those students clearly do not master even the basic communication principles needed to function in a workplace and would have to spend much more time than the rest of the students in their program studying for this course.

While most students would never use slang or any other inappropriately informal phrasing in a message to a professor or to a superior at work, some do use a more colourful style in email exchanges with trusted colleagues with whom they are also friends. That is, however, a dangerous habit: when using company channels, *any* message may be seen by unintended audiences. Say you have a back-and-forth exchange about a report you are collaborating on and you need to CC your manager at some point to provide an update on your project (or someone else involved does this for you, leaving you no opportunity to clean up the thread of past emails). If your manager looks back at the atrocious language and sees offensive statements, your employment could be in jeopardy.

There may be situations where slang style might be advantageous, such as marketing to teens — although the success of this type of language with that age group is, in large part, an ageist assumption rather than a reflection of reality. In any case, in professional exchanges, slang should be avoided because it tends to deviate from the typical characteristics of good writing.

Emojis in Professional Writing?

Though emojis' typical appearance in social media and texting places them at the informal end of the formality spectrum, their advantages in certain situations require special consideration along with some clarity about their current place in professional communication. Besides being easy to access on mobile device keyboards and favoured in social media communication especially among millennials, emojis are useful for helping clarify the emotional state of the message sender in a way that plain text can't. They offer a visual cue in lieu of in-person nonverbals. A simple "thumbs up" emoji even works well as an "Okay, got it" reply in lieu of any words at all, so they can help save time for the busy professional. Interestingly, 2,500 years after Egyptian hieroglyphics fell out of use, pictographs are making a comeback! Emojis also go partway toward providing something of a universal language that allows people who speak different languages to communicate in a way that wouldn't have been possible otherwise.

Public Domain Image

However, the lack of precision in emojis can also cause confusion as they may be interpreted differently if the social and cultural context of the receiver differs enough from that of the sender (Pringle, 2018), not to mention differences in their emotional states. This means that emojis aren't as universal as some claim they are, especially when used by correspondents who speak different languages (Caramela, 2018). Even between those who speak the same language, a smiley-face emoji added to a lightly insulting text message might be intended as a light-hearted jab at the receiver by the sender, but might be read as a deeply cutting passive-aggressive dig by the receiver. The same text message said in person, however, comes with a multitude of nonverbal cues (facial expressions, eye movements, body movements, timing, voice intonation, volume, speed, etc.) that help the listener determine the exact intentions of the speaker—meanings that can't possibly be covered by a little 2D cartoon character.

You can imagine plenty of other scenarios where emojis could backfire with dire consequences. A red heart emoji added to a business message sent by a male to a female colleague, though perhaps meant in the casual sense of the word "love" when we say, "I love what you did there," might be taken as signalling unwanted romantic intentions. This is inappropriate and can ruin professional partnerships and even careers. Be careful with emojis also in any situation involving buying or selling, since commercial messages can end up in court if meanings, intentions, and actions part ways. In one case, emojis were used in a text message signalling intent to rent an apartment by someone who reneged and was judged to be nonetheless on the hook for the $3,000 commitment (Pringle, 2017). As with any new means of communication, some caution and good judgment, as well as attention to notable uses and abuses that show up in the news or company policy directives, can help you avoid making potentially disastrous mistakes.

Though emojis may be meaningfully and understandably added to text/instant messages or even emails between familiar colleagues who have developed a light-hearted rapport featuring their use, there are several situations where they should be avoided at all cost because of their juvenile or frivolous social media reputation. It's a good idea to avoid using emojis in business contexts when communicating with:

- **Customers** or clients
- **Managers** who don't use emojis themselves
- **Colleagues** you don't know very well
- **Anyone outside** your organization
- **College instructors**
- **Older** people who tend to avoid the latest technology

However, in any of the above cases, you would probably be safe to mirror the use of emojis after your correspondent gives you the greenlight by using them first (Caramela, 2018). Yes, emojis lighten the mood and help with bonding among workplace colleagues. If used excessively as part of a larger breakdown of decorum, as mocked in the accompanying Baroness von Sketch Show video short (CBC Comedy, 2017), they suggest a troubling lack of professionalism. Managers especially should refrain from emoji use to set an example of impeccable decorum in communications to the employees they supervise.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=745#oembed-1

Video: "Work Emails | Baroness von Sketch Show" by CBC Comedy [3:17] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.*Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Avoiding Inappropriately Informal Language: Clichés,

Professional writers should not just avoid slang in their workplace speaking and writing. They should avoid many other elements of language that are either informal or contribute to making the tone and style of a message seem more informal. Many communicators use these elements of language because they do not realize to what extent they are informal and how seriously they can affect the clarity and quality of their communication act.

Again, while the colloquial (informal) level of language might be acceptable in some workplace conversations with co-workers you've known for a while, it is generally not recommended in any business context, and anyone who writes professional emails or memos at this level can get into serious trouble. Readers usually perceive this kind of language as unprofessional and imprecise. As a rule,

- Routine emails and memos should be written at the general level.
- Longer reports, messages to upper-management employees, and some letters to clients should be written

at the formal level, or somewhere in between the general and the formal levels.

Also, keep in mind that research articles (articles published in academic journals) are usually written in formal language. According to many local employers, their employees have serious difficulties in reading such materials and selecting relevant information the company could use. Many local employers see this as a major problem – and they seek employees with advanced-level reading, writing, information-processing, and communication skills.

Finally, some elements of informal language might be necessary in promotional materials, but a careful assessment of the target audience is required in such situations.

- If your organization offers products/ services mostly to professionals, overly informal messages might backfire.
- Different age groups might react differently to certain elements of informal language.
- Men and women might perceive certain informal expressions differently.

Avoid Clichés

Here are a few examples of sentences that use clichés. We provided a "translation" for the first one. Note that all three sound too informal for professional purposes.

Examples

"Last but not least, you should keep your nose to the grindstone so, at the end of the day, we can deliver the project on time."

[Finally, you should work diligently to ensure the project is finished on time.]

Note that the initial version sounds too informal for professional purposes. Some people might consider the tone overly familiar and be offended. Another problem with informal language is that it tends to be wordy and, sometimes, confusing. The initial version is about half a line longer than the "translation," and it is harder to read (pointless expressions make it harder for the reader to connect the main elements of the sentence). Perhaps *one* such sentence won't frustrate and confuse the reader, but *an entire message written like this* certainly will.
Rephrase the following two examples yourselves.

1. "We have reached the end of our rope with the so-called tried and true approach."
2. "He came up with that idea out of the blue."

Here is a link to a "cliché song." It's not really entertaining, but please listen to the first 30 seconds of it for pedagogical purposes — so you can notice that, even though you probably know the meaning of most, if not all the clichés used by the singer, about 15 seconds into the song you'll be struggling to keep track of what he is trying to say.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=745#oembed-2

Video: "Cliché Bingo: a song with 86 business buzzwords and clichés" by Don't Quit Your Day Job [3:02] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.*Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Some of the clichés you heard in this piece are actually not informal but rather *formal* business clichés — but they are clichés nonetheless, and whenever we use clichés we force our readers to "translate" those expressions into meaningful language. This can significantly slow down reading/ information-processing (it affects *listeners* perhaps to an even larger extent than *readers*, since listeners cannot re-read portions of a talk to make sense of it), and receivers of messages composed in this style would not be pleased with the sender's performance.

Here are a few more examples of wordy, vague, and informal clichés — with the general-level "translation" in the second column:

at the end of the day, after all is said and done, etc.	ultimately, finally, etc
few and far between	rare (ideally, provide more precise information: how rare?)
this day and age, at this point in time,etc.	today, now, etc. [or: since 2000, since 2010, etc.]

Avoid Informal Word Choice

Consistently choosing words from the informal register over standard/ formal words would render your messages not just inappropriately casual in terms of tone and style but also, in some cases, *vague* — which would affect the clarity of the message. Let us examine a few examples:

guy	man, colleague, specialist, manager, business partner, etc.
headache	problem, concern, delay, etc
stuff	?? [name whatever you have in mind; the receiver shouldn't have to guess]
huge	"large" is more formal; ideally, provide exact figures (how large?)

Avoid the Informal "You"

Use the word "you" only if you are speaking directly to your audience. Do not use "you" to mean "people in general," "customers," etc. If you have a group of people in mind, use a precise word to refer to that group.

Avoid Exuberant Words/ Expressions

Generally speaking, avoid exclamation marks in professional writing (or use them sporadically). Also avoid informal expressions of exuberance ("I am writing this letter to apply for an Operations Manager position in your super amazing organization!"). While your messages should not be devoid of emotion, anything that may give your messages an immature tone or might suggest an overly casual attitude should be avoided.

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2.2: THE 6 CS OF STYLE

Learning Objectives

1. Identify and define the key elements of business writing style to routine workplace communication scenarios.

The 6 Cs of Style

Whether you're writing in a formal or casual style, all good writing is characterized by the "6 Cs":

- Clear
- Concise
- Coherent
- Correct
- Courteous
- Convincing

Six-C writing is good for business because it fulfills the author's purpose and meets the needs of the audience by making communication understandable and impactful. Such audience-oriented writing is clearly understood by busy readers on the first pass; it doesn't confuse them with ambiguities and require them to come back with questions for clarification. It gets the point across in as few words as possible so that it doesn't waste readers' time with wordcount-extending filler. Good writing flows logically by being organized according to recognizable patterns with its sub-points connected by well-marked transitions. Six-C writing avoids confusing readers with grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors, as well as avoids embarrassing its author and the company they represent, because it is flawlessly correct. It leaves the reader with a good feeling because it is polite, positive, and focuses on the reader's needs. Six-C writing is persuasive because, with all the above going for it, it exudes confidence. The following sections explain these characteristics in greater detail with an emphasis on how to achieve Six-C writing at the drafting stage.

1. Clarity

Clarity in writing means that the words on the page are like a perfectly transparent window to the author's meaning. Business or technical writing has no time for anything that requires the reader to interpret the author's meaning or ask for clarification. To the busy reader scanning quickly, bad writing opens the door for wrong guesses that, acted upon, result in mistakes that must be corrected later; the later the miscommunication is discovered and the further the mistakes spread, the greater the damage control required. Vague writing draws out the communication exchange unnecessarily with back-and-forth requests for clarification and details that should have been clear the first time. Either way, a lack of clarity in writing costs businesses by hindering personal and organizational productivity. Every operation stands to gain if its personnel's writing is clear in the first place.

SPOTLIGHT: "AVOIDING VAGUE EXPRESSIONS"

So much confusion from vague expressions can be avoided if you use hard facts, precise values, and concrete, visualizable images. For example:

- Instead of saying "a change in the budget," "a 10% budget cut" makes clear to the reader that they'll have to make do with nine of what they had ten of before.
- Instead of saying that a home's annual average basement radon level is a cause for concern, be specific in saying that it is 220 Bq/m3 (for becquerels per cubic metre) so that the reader knows how far above Health Canada's guideline level the home is and therefore the extent of remedial action required.
- Instead of saying that you're rescheduling it to Thursday, be clear on what's being rescheduled, what the old and new calendar dates and times are, and if the location is changing, too. If you say that it's the 3pm Friday meeting on May 25th being moved to 9am Thursday, May 31st, in room B349, participants know exactly which meeting to move where in their email program's calendar feature.
- Always spell out months so that you don't confuse your reader with dates in the "dd/mm/yy" or "mm/dd/yy" style; for instance, "4/5/18," could be read as either April 5th or May 4th, 2018, depending on whether the author personally prefers one date form over the other or follows a company style in lieu of any universally accepted date style.
- Instead of saying at the end of an email, "Let's meet to discuss" and leaving the ball in your correspondent's court to figure out a time and place, prevent the inevitable time-consuming back-and-forth by giving your available meeting time options (e.g., "9-10am Thursday, May 31st; 2-3pm Friday, June 1st; etc.) in a bulleted list and suggesting a familiar place so that all your correspondent needs to do is reply once with their preferred meeting time from among those menu options and confirmation on the location.
- Instead of saying "You've got a message," being clear that Tia Sherman from the Canada Revenue Agency left a voicemail message at 12:48pm on Thursday, February 8th, gives the receiver the precise details needed to act on that information.

The same is true of vague pronouns/ pronominal adjectives such as *its*, *this*, *that*, *these*, *they*, *their*, *there*, etc. when it is unclear what they might be referring to (which person/ phenomenon/ object mentioned earlier in a sentence or paragraph). Such pronoun-antecedent ambiguity, as it is called (with *antecedent* meaning the noun that the pronoun/ pronominal adjective represents), can be avoided if you can spot the ambiguity that the reader would be confused by and use other words to connect them to their antecedents. If you say, for instance,

> *The union reps criticized the employer council for putting their latest offer to a membership vote.*

Whether the offer is coming from the union, the employer, or possibly (but unlikely) both is unclear because *their* could go either way. You can resolve the ambiguity by using words like *the former*, *the latter*, or a shortened version of one of the names:

> *The union reps criticized the employer council for putting the council's latest offer to a membership vote.*

When pronouns aren't preceded by the noun to which they refer, the good writer must simply define them. Though these additions extend the wordcount a little, the gains in clarity justify the expense.

2. Conciseness

Because the goal of professional writing, especially when sharing expertise, is to make complex concepts sound simple but not simplistic, such writing should communicate ideas in as few words as possible without compromising clarity. The worst writing predictably does the opposite, making simple things sound complicated or confusing by adding unnecessary words to sentences that should be much shorter and straightforward.

In the previous section of this chapter, we examined several cliches that are both informal and wordy and should always be replaced with general-level/ formal single-word equivalents. Let us now examine some wordy expressions that should always be rephrased. As you can see, some are just **unnecessarily long**, while others are ***redundant*** (they repeat information because two or more of the words used express the same idea)

a large number of	many [ideally, offer an estimate]
at that point in time	then [if clarity requires it, mention the date]
actual fact	fact

Other elements of language that should be avoided in professional writing are **empty intensifiers** (such as really, very, incredibly, totally, etc.). Such words do not add anything to your argument, and using them consistently can make our writing sound less formal. If you need to express degrees for certain values, look for appropriate words you could use instead: "excellent" instead of "very good," etc. (You are probably aware that former U.S. President Donald Trump used such phrasing consistently, both in writing and in interviews, and that he was consistently mocked by journalists for it — for instance, he would vaguely define someone accused of something as a "good man" and then add, "a very good man, a really good man." *Repeating* an idea does not clarify it or make it more convincing. Providing precise — not vague and repetitive — information does.)

Also for the sake of concision, avoid **empty lead-ins and false transitions** that do not add anything to your the content of your message and just make your writing more wordy. Here are some examples:

That being said, …	[You've just said it — so why would you tell people that? They know you've just said it.]
It has come to my attention …	[You are talking about it, so clearly it has come to your attention. Why state the obvious?
I would like to inform you …	[Again, you are clearly doing that, so why would you state the obvious?"
To tell you the truth …	[Shouldn't we always tell the truth in professional exchanges? Are you lying in the sentences that do not start that way?]

Some of these expressions do not just make your writing less concise; they also draw attention to yourselves as a speakers/ writers — which may suggest self-centredness and self-importance. Using such phrasing can be an even more uninspired move when you have to discuss negative topics (such as bad news) and you don't want your audience to associate you with that negativity.

The use of **passive voice verbs** can also make your writing wordy. Passive voice verbs are useful in situations when you don't know the doer of an action or you want to de-emphasize the doer and focus on the object/ situation instead — such as when you want to avoid assigning blame. However, the passive voice can be confusing and wordy when there is no reason to use it. Let us examine these examples (with the passive voice versions in the first column and the active voice versions in the second):

Two of our company cars were stolen from the parking lot at…	[I don't know who stole the cars. I could say "Car thieves stole two of our company cars…" but it makes more sense to use the passive voice.]
A mistake was made in the execution of this project, and now we'll have to work together to find a solution.	X made a mistake in the execution of this project, and … [Publicly naming the people responsible may be both harsh and inappropriate. Using the passive voice allows us to avoid that.]
The project was completed on time. The poster was completed by the graphic design team that was hired for this purpose.	We completed the project on time. [In this case, both versions are fine. We would use the active voice version if we wanted to draw attention to our role.] Graphic design team X completed the project … [Using the active voice allows for a more concise and more natural formulation.]

After the drafting stage, always take the time to **"clean up" your writing** in this way. Use active voice verbs whenever there is no specific reason to use the passive voice. Eliminate any wordy expressions (replace them with single-word equivalents if possible, or just delete them if they don't add anything to the content). Also, eliminate any sentences that seem to be stating the obvious or repeat points already made. At first, editing will seem time-consuming and perhaps also difficult. However, in time, you'll find yourselves avoiding wordy phrasing even in the drafting stage. This is a natural effect of *training* — your brains will internalize the more concise and straightforward patterns you've been trying to us,e and you will no longer need to spend as much time editing your work.

3. Coherence and Completeness

Coherence means that your writing flows logically and makes sense because it says everything it needs to say to meet your audience's needs. Pronouns and transitions help to connect the distinct points that make up your bare-bones outline structure as you flesh them out into meaningful sentences and paragraphs, just as ligaments and tendons connect bones and tissues throughout your body.

Express each of your points fully before you move on to the next point. Write in full sentences and provide enough details. Also, use effective transitions between your points — from basic transitions such as "therefore," which indicates a cause-and-effect relation, to more elaborate transitions: "Another important aspect of … is… " OR "Now that we've clarify X, let us move to Y." Such transitions provide your readers/listeners with "signposts" that indicate the structure and direction of your argumentation.

In the next section of this chapter, we will also examine some ways to enhance the cohesiveness of our messages through specific formatting and graphic highlighting techniques (such as effective headings for the main sections of the message). Such elements help readers to see the logic of a message as soon as they have a first look at it – which would likely speed up the reader's cognitive processing of the content.

4. Correctness

Correct spelling, grammar, mechanics, etc. might not be a concern at the drafting stage of the writing process, but they certainly must be at the end of the editing stage. One technique that can help you avoid most errors is to always use a *direct, straightforward* sentence structure. Especially in routine, shorter messages — which should be written in shorter sentences and in a general-level style — try to start each sentence with the main clause and to keep the subject and main verb of the main clause as close as possible. Let us examine two examples:

The reason they are so eager to see their property makeover finished by September 1st **is because** they want to hold their daughter's engagement party at the house.	**They are eager** to see their property makeover finished by September 1st **because** they want to hold their daughter's engagement party at the house.
With this wide variety of information, **it allows** us to make clear projections for next year's expenses and profit margin. // **With** this software, **it allows** you to track your page visits per day and make monthly assessments and projections.	**This information allows** for clear projections concerning next year's expenses and profit margin. // **This software allows** users to track page visits per day and make monthly assessments and projections.

Note that the examples in the second column express the idea more straightforwardly and without using "mixed constructions" (a type of grammatical error that involves starting a sentence with one syntactic structure in mind and then switching to another halfway through).

Since this is an advanced communication course, we won't dedicate any of our weekly classes to basic grammar — you are expected to have a good grasp of grammatical rules at this stage in your education and career. However, some of the exercises we complete together may have a grammatical component. In addition, an Appendix dedicated to grammar is provided at the end of this textbook.

You can also use the online resource below if you need a grammar refresher:

This is a Lynda.com resource provided by Judy Steiner-Williams. The video is called "Advanced Grammar," but the explanations provided are mostly intermediate-level. The lesson is two hours long, but you can watch just the sections on types of errors you think you might have in your writing

5. Courtesy

No matter what kind of document you may be writing and what you can expect your audience's reaction to it to be, writing courteously so that your reader feels respected is fundamental to reader-friendly messages. Whether you are simply sharing information, making a sales pitch, explaining a procedure, or doing damage control, using polite language helps ensure your intended effects—that your reader will be receptive to that information, will buy what you're selling, will want to perform that procedure, or will be ready to help you to fix an error. The cornerstone of polite language is obviously saying "please" and "thank you," but there is much more to politeness and respect than just that.

Much of courtesy in writing involves using inclusive language (and avoiding discriminatory language, sometimes referred to as "bias") and choosing words that focus on the positive, on improvement, and on what *can* be done rather than using words that seem negative, critical, or pushy and seem to emphasize what can't be done.

Use Inclusive Language

The Canadian Human Rights Act lists the following prohibited grounds of discrimination: race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, disability and conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered" (R.S.C., 1985, c. H-6, 3(1)). In order to be courteous *and follow the law*, our communication acts should be *inclusive* — that is, they should avoid discriminatory language of any kind.

Let us examine the following examples:

(1) All CEOs who spoke at the conference and their wives are invited to the banquet.

(2) In spite of her young age, Jessica is an excellent branch manager.

(3) We have just hired two hard-working Asian immigrants.

The first sentence is an obvious instance of gender bias. The sentence suggests that the writer considers male, heterosexual, married CEOs to be the norm and does not find it necessary to even acknowledge other possibilities. Sentence (2) expresses age bias — it is phrased in the manner of a compliment but, in fact, reveals that the speaker/ writer has a poor opinion of young employees (that he/she expects them to be incompetent or at the very least to lack leadership skills). Sentence (3) also poses as a compliment — while making, in this case, a racist comment, suggesting that 1. immigrants are generally not hard-working (and the company somehow managed to find two who are) OR 2. Asians are generally hard-working but not as creative and independent-minded as, say, white West-Europeans or North Americans. (Racists often use such so-called compliments to implicitly suggest that the group in question lacks other qualities. Consider the emphasis placed by some speakers/ writers on African Americans' athletic abilities.)

Organizations frequently accused of a lack of diversity sometimes eagerly attempt to publicize their attempts to engage in more inclusive hiring practices — but they don't always get the desired results. In July 2013, the Harper Government hired four women to join the Cabinet, and the Prime Minister's office announced this on X (formally known as Twitter) as "Proud to be naming four new strong, capable women to the Ministry." Responses on X quickly emphasized the fact that the initial tweet seems to imply that women are usually not strong and capable: "With respect, Prime Minister, please use the 'insert man for woman' rule – if it doesn't fit with a man, don't use it for a woman" (Hamilton, 2013).

What can we learn from all these examples? As a rule, **avoid using descriptors you would not use for heterosexual, non-disabled white men of average age**. For example, avoid descriptors that might suggest that intelligent, capable women (or representatives of any other group routinely subjected to discrimination) are an exception. Also avoid physical descriptions for women (or members of any of those other groups) if you would not use them for men.

In terms of the third-person pronouns/ pronominal adjectives we use to refer to various people in our messages, try to use "he/she" for singular-number nouns — or, better yet, express your ideas in the plural whenever possible. The use of plural forms allows us to account for individuals who may not self-identify in a binary fashion. Here are some examples:

> **Every nurse** who participated in the workshop received **his/her** certificate. [Agreement in the singular]

> **Most** of the **interns** interviewed impressed us through **their** excellent communication skills. [Agreement in the plural]

Using plural forms whenever possible is also less wordy. (Repeating "he/she" and "his/her" several times within a paragraph can look and sound awkward.)

Use Positive Phrasing

If you are processing a contract and the client forgot to sign and date it, for instance, the first thought that occurs to you when emailing to inform them of the error may go something like the following:

> *You forgot to sign and date our contract, so you've got to do that and send it to me a.s.a.p. because I can't process it till I receive it signed.*

Now, if you were the client reading this slightly angry-sounding, accusatory order, you would likely feel a little embarrassed and maybe even a little upset by the edgy, pushy tone coming through in negative words like *forgot*, *do that*, *a.s.a.p.*, and *can't*. That feeling wouldn't sit well with you, and you will begin to build an aversion to that person and the organization they represent. (If this isn't the first time you forgot to sign a contract for them, however, the demanding tone would be more justified or at least more understandable.) Now imagine you read instead a message that says, with reference to the same situation, the following:

> *For your contract to be processed and services initiated, please sign, date, and return it as soon as possible.*

You would probably feel much better about coming through with the signed contract in short order. You may think that this is a small, almost insignificant shift in meaning, but the difference in psychological impact can be substantial, even if it operates subconsciously. This example clearly illustrates the following three characteristics of courteous writing.

a. Use the "You" View

Audience-oriented messages that address the reader directly using the pronouns/pronominal adjectives "you," "your," or "yours" have a much greater impact when the message is positive or even neutral. Writing this way is a little counterintuitive, however, because when we begin to encode any message into words, we do so naturally from our own perspective. The sender-oriented messages that result from our perspective don't register as well with readers because they use first-person personal and possessive pronouns/pronominal adjectives (I, me, my, we, us, and our) that tend to come off as being self-involved. In the above case, the contract is shared by both parties, but saying "our contract" is a little ambiguous because it may be read as saying "the employer's contract" rather than "your and my contract." Saying "your contract," however, entitles the reader with a sense of ownership over the contract, which the reader would likely appreciate.

The trick to achieving audience-oriented messages is to catch yourself whenever you begin writing from your perspective, making excessive use of first-person personal pronouns and pronominal adjectives like I and my, and immediately flip the sentence around to say you and your instead. Simply changing the pronouns isn't enough, though; in the above case, we changing the wording so that the contract is *sent by you* rather than *received by me*. Switching to the audience perspective takes constant vigilance and practice even from seasoned professionals, but soon leads to an audience-oriented habit of writing that endears you more to your readers and leads to positive results. An added benefit to habitually considering your audience's perspective is that it makes you more considerate, sympathetic, and even empathetic, improving your sense of humanity in general.

This stylistic practice involves using first-person pronouns (I, we, etc.) as seldom as possible, but obviously you can't do without these entirely—not in all situations. When it's necessary to say what you did, especially when it comes to negative situations where representing your perspective and accepting responsibility is the right thing to do, not using first-person pronouns will result in awkward stylistic acrobatics. Simply use the audience-oriented "you" view and sender-oriented first-person personal pronouns when appropriate.

b. Prioritize Audience Benefits

Whenever you need to convince someone to do something, leading with the positive result—what the reader will get out of it—followed by the instruction has a much better chance of getting the reader on board. Notice in the two example sentences above that the reader-hostile version places the demand before the result, whereas the improved, reader-friendly version places the result before the (kindly worded) demand. This simple organizational technique of leading with the audience benefit works because people are usually more motivated by the carrot (reward) than the stick (consequence), and dangling the carrot attracts the initial interest necessary to make the action seem worthwhile. It's effective because it answers what we can always assume the reader is wondering: "What's in it for me?"

Carrot and Sick Management. Gray, D. (2011, November 27).

Messages that don't immediately answer that question and instead lead with the action, however, come from a sender-oriented perspective that initially turns off the reader because it is perceived as demanding in tone. Obviously, some situations require a demanding tone, as when being nice gets no results and necessity forces you to switch to the stick. Again, leading with the demand may be what occurs to you first because it addresses your immediate needs rather than your reader's, but making a habit of flipping it around will give your writing greater impact whenever you give direction or issue instructions.

c. Focus on Future Positive Outcomes

Focusing on what can be done and improvement sits better with readers than focusing on what can't be done and criticism. In the above case, the initial rendering of the problem focused on blaming the reader for what they did wrong and on the impasse of the situation with the contract. The improved version corrects this because it skips the fault-finding criticism and instead moves directly to what good things will happen if the reader does what needs to be done. The reader of the second sentence will associate you with the feeling of being pleased by the taste of the carrot rather than smarting from the whack of the stick.

The flipside of this stylistic preference involves replacing negative words with positive words unless you have an important reason for not being nice. Being vigilantly kind in this way takes some practice, not because you're a bad person but because your writing habits may not reflect your kindness in writing. Vigilance here means being on the lookout whenever you're tempted to use the following words or their like in situations that aren't too dire:

- awful
- bad / badly
- can't / cannot
- crappy
- deny
- disappointing
- don't
- dumb
- fail / failure
- fault / faulty
- hate
- hopeless
- horrible
- impossible
- lose / loser
- never
- no / nope
- nobody
- not
- poor / poorly
- reject
- sorry
- stupid
- substandard
- terrible
- unfortunate / unfortunately
- won't
- worthless

Rather than shaming the author of a report by saying that their document is terrible, for instance, calling it "improvable" and pointing out what exactly they can do to fix it respects the author's feelings and motivates them to improve the report better than what you really want to say in a passing moment of disappointment. Of course, taking this advice to its extreme by considering it a hard-and-fast rule will obviously destroy good writing by hindering your range of expression. You'll notice that this textbook uses many of the above words when necessary. In any case, make it a habit to use positive words instead of negative if it's clear that doing so will result in a more positive outcome.

On its own, translating a single sentence like the one exemplified above will likely not have a lasting effect; over time, however, an habitual focus on negative outcomes and use of negative language will result in people developing a dislike for dealing with you and, by association, the company you represent. If you make a habit of writing in positive words most of the time and use negative words only in situations where they're necessary, on the other hand, you stand a good chance of being well liked. People will enjoy working with or for you, which ensures continued positive relations as well as opens the door to other opportunities.

6. Convincing and Confident

When all the other aspects of style described above are working in concert, and when the information your writing presents comes from sound sources, it naturally acquires an air of confidence that is highly convincing to readers. That confidence is contagious if you are rightfully confident in your information or argument, decisive in your diction, and avoid lapsing into wishy-washy, noncommittal indecision by overusing weak words and expressions like:

- almost
- approximately
- basically
- blah
- close to
- could (have)
- -esque
- -ish
- may / maybe
- meh
- might
- probably
- roundabout
- somewhat
- sort of / sorta
- should (have)
- thereabouts
- usually
- we'll see
- whatever
- whenever
- whichever
- -y (e.g., orange-y)

These timid, vapid words are death to any sales message especially. This is not to say that your writing can't err toward overconfidence through lapses in judgment or haughtiness. If you apply the same rigour in argument and persuasion that you do in selecting for quality research sources that are themselves well reasoned, however, by considering a topic holistically rather than simplistically for the sake of advancing a narrow-minded position, it's easy to get readers to comprehend your information share, follow your instruction, buy what you're selling, and so on.

Key Takeaways

- Drafting involves writing consistently in a formal, casual, or informal style characterized by the "Six Cs": clarity, conciseness, coherence, correctness, courtesy, and conviction.

Exercises

1. Assemble a Six-Cs scoring rubric for assessing professional writing using the descriptions throughout The 6 Cs of Style above. In the highest-achievement column, list in point-form the attributes of each characteristic. In the columns describing lesser and lesser levels of achievement, identify how those expectations can fall apart. For help with the rubric form, you may wish to use Rubistar's writing rubric template.
2. Find examples of past emails or other documents you've written that make you cringe, perhaps even high school essays or reports. Identify instances where they are unclear, unnecessarily longwinded, incoherent (lacking both a clear organizational pattern and transitions that drive the argument along), rife with writing errors, rude or even discriminatory, and/or unconvincing. Assess and score those specimens using your Six-Cs rubric from Exercise 1 above. Begin to think of how you would improve them.
3. Find a professionally written document, perhaps from a case study in another class. Assess it using the same Six-Cs scoring rubric.

References

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2.3: EFFECTIVE DOCUMENT DESIGN

Learning Objectives

1. Support message content with visual elements.
2. Apply the principles of reader-friendly document design to various written formats.

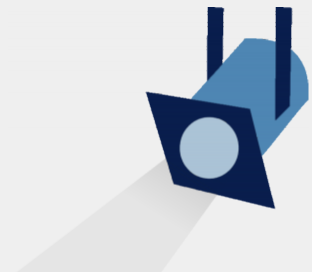
The responsibility of a writer to produce reader-friendly documents extends to layout, design, and organizational elements surrounding the words themselves. If an email or report were simply a wall of undifferentiated text running for several screens or pages, any reader would be daunted by the prospect of having to scale that wall. Fortunately, writers can use document templates that make those design choices for them with established styles so that writing a document becomes a matter of just filling in the blanks; if you work for a company that uses templates for certain documents, of course you will use them also for consistency and your own convenience. Even without templates, however, you can use several techniques to help guide your readers' eyes across the page or screen to easily find what they're looking for. Rather than being optional nice-to-haves, such techniques are crucially important to how well your document is received.

This section will explore the following document design techniques:

2.4.1 Formatting Titles

Almost every document that exists as a standalone unit must have a title that accurately represents its contents in a nutshell. It's the first thing a reader looks for to understand what a document is all about and should thus be easily found centred at the top of the first page of any small document, and prominently placed on the cover of larger documents. Though some documents represent exceptions to this rule (e.g., business letters lack titles, and many lack subject lines), any document that brings with it the expectation of a title but omits it is incomplete, and readers might not know what to make of it (or would waste time figuring that out). Even emails and memos have titles in the form of subject lines.

SPOTLIGHT: "CRAFTING TITLES"



In whatever document you find it, a title should have the following characteristics so that it can serve your reader's understanding of the whole:

- **Topic summary:** A title is the most concise summary possible of a topic while still making sense. If you glance at a news website or newspaper, for instance, you can get a reasonably good sense of what's going on in the world just by reading the headlines because they are titles that, in as few words as possible, summarize the narratives told in the articles that follow.
- **Conciseness:** Aim for a length in the 2- to 7-word range—something that can be said repeatedly in one short breath. One-word titles are appropriate only for art (e.g., for books, films, songs, albums, etc.), but most other professional documents use a reasonable number of words to give a sense of the topic, albeit streamlined to the point of having no words that don't absolutely need to be there. In scientific papers, titles can be quite long and carry plenty of detail, though you can expect that their audiences will rarely pronounce the full title.
- **Capitalization:** Capitalize the first word no matter what, as well as all major words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, etc.) thereafter.
    - Don't capitalize prepositions (e.g., *on*, *to*, *from*, *in*, *out*, *of*), conjunctions (*and*, *but*, *or*, *for*, *nor*, *so*, *yet*), nor articles (*the*, *a*, *an*) unless they're the first word of the main title or subtitle (Darling, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c).
    - When including a hyphenated word (i.e., with a compound-modifier hyphen), leave the second word, the one immediately following the hyphen, lowercase (see the first two examples in the titles listed at the end of this subsection).
- **Structure:** Use a noun, verb, or adjective phrase rather than a complete sentence.
    - **Main title:** If your title comes in two parts with a main title and subtitle, the main title establishes the general context of the topic, perhaps with catchy or clever phrasing, and ends with a colon (:) with a single space after it but none before.
    - **Subtitle:** The subtitle follows the main title with a more specific and detailed summary of the document topic.
- **Position:** Centre the title at the top of the page and include 1-2 empty lines below it to separate it from the opening text.
- **Typeface:** Use bold typeface to help draw the eye towards the title, as well as colour if appropriate.

Title Examples

For examples of titles that are near at hand, see the References sections at the end of most chapter sections throughout this textbook. The following collects a small selection of them:

- "Consensus on Consensus: A Synthesis of Consensus Estimates on Human-caused Global Warming" (Cook et al., 2016)
- "Fake News: Facebook and Matters of Fact in the Post-truth Era" (White, 2017)
- "Instagram Ranked Worst for Young People's Mental Health" (RSPH, 2017)
- "Gray Matters: Too Much Screen Time Damages the Brain" (Dunckley, 2014)
- "Higgs Boson Researchers Mocked for Using Comic Sans Font" (CBC, 2012)
- "Ottawa Severs Ties with Plasco as Company Files for Creditor Protection" (Chianello & Pearson, 2015)
- "Problematic Technology Use: The Impact of Capital Enhancing Activity" (Phillips, 2015)
- *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* (Schramm, 1954)
- "Understand How Consumers Use Messaging: Global Mobile Messaging Consumer Report 2016" (Twilio, 2016)
- "Who Multi-tasks and Why? Multi-tasking Ability, Perceived Multi-tasking Ability, Impulsivity, and Sensation Seeking" (Sanbonmatsu et al., 2013)

2.4.2: Creating Headings and Subheadings

After the main title of a document, using headings and subheadings as titles for sections and subsections helps guide the reader around a document's breakdown of topics. Especially in reports, headings and subheadings that stand out in bold typeface flush (or close) to the left margin and follow a consistent numbering system, exactly as you see in this textbook, help a busy reader quickly locate any specific content they seek. Even a routine email that covers a topic in so much detail that it could be internally divided—without being so big that its content should just go into a document attachment—would benefit from bolded headings. Just like titles, headings and subheadings must be properly phrased and capitalized like main titles (see 2.4.1 above).

When using a word processor such as Microsoft Word, you can achieve additional functionality by using "true headings." From the Home menu tool ribbon, heading styles are available as options in the Styles section. If you prefer to design your own styles of headings, you can click on the downward triangle at the bottom right of the style examples field and select "Create a Style." Doing this allows you to see your entire document at a glance on the left and quickly jump to any section you wish by clicking on the Navigation Pane checkbox in the Show section of the View menu tool ribbon (or Alt + w, k), then clicking on the heading for the section you want. This is especially useful in larger documents like reports. Additionally, using such headings makes your document accessible to audiences with assistive technologies such as screen readers (see §2.4.9 below on AODA compliance).

2.4.3: Choosing Fonts

Font selection is an important consideration because it determines how the audience will receive a document. Font involves decisions concerning the style of type, size, and even colour. Consider the following:

Font Type

Writers considering typeface must choose between two major style categories depending on how they would like to accommodate their reader. **Serif fonts** like **Times New Roman** and **Garamond** have little perpendicular crossline "feet" or "hands" at the ends of letter strokes, as well as variable thickness in the strokes themselves depending on their horizontal/vertical or curving position, which altogether help readers distinguish between similar letters or combinations of letters, such as *m* and *rn*, which almost look like the same letter in a non-serif font. Serif fonts are ideal for printed documents, especially those with smallish font sizes such as newspapers. Without serifs, **sans-serif fonts** like **Arial** (the one used in this textbook) or **Verdana** achieve a more clean and modern look, especially on computer screens where serif fonts appear to whither away at the thin part of the stroke and are thus harder to read. In the appropriate format, all the fonts mentioned above make a document look respectable. **Comic Sans**, on the other hand, is appropriate for documents aimed at children, but undermines the credibility of any professional document, such as when the unfortunate choice to use it when reporting CERN particle physics discoveries became more newsworthy than the discoveries themselves (CBC, 2012).

A list of font styles including: Arial, Garamond, Times New Roman, Verdana and Comic Sans

Anticipate that audiences might care about font choices, especially if the font clashes with the content like the example above. To anyone who considers the effects that fonts have on an audience, even going with the Microsoft Word default font of **Calibri** has its dangers because it comes off looking lazy, being the non-choice of those who never consider the importance of font. At the other extreme, digging around for and using exotic fonts for a document is risky because they can look flakey, such as **Papyrus** or Copperplate (Butterick, 2013). Even if they look nice, however, the receiver opening the document on the other end may not have that font in their word processor program, requiring that program to substitute it with another font, which may look worse or mangle layouts arranged around that font. The safe bet, then, is always to go with familiar, respectable-looking serif or sans serif fonts like those identified at the top of this subsection.

Font Size

Size is another important consideration because readers depend on text being an ideal size for readability and are frustrated by font sizes that are bigger or smaller than that. In a standard written document, for instance, a 12-point Arial or Times New Roman is ideal. If the MS Word default size when you open a blank document is 11-point, it's worth increasing it for the sake of those who have slight visual impairment. Increasing the size much past 12-point has a similar effect as using the Comic Sans font type: it makes your document appear to be targeting an audience of children. Of course, situations where you want to increase the font size abound, such as for titles on title pages so that the eye is drawn immediately to them, and any time readers are required to read at a distance, such as posters on a notice board or presentation slides. The ideal font size for bullet points in a PowerPoint is in the 30- to 35-point range, whereas a 12-point font will appear microscopic on a projector screen, if not invisible, from across the room.

Occasions for going smaller with your font size include footnotes in a report or source credits under images in a document or PowerPoint presentation. Decreasing font size to 8-point merely to get all your text to fit into a one-page résumé, however, would undermine the document's purpose because, by frustrating the hiring manager trying to read it, it runs the risk of prompting them to just dump it in the shredder and move on to the next (hopefully reader-friendly) résumé. In such cases, choosing the right font size becomes a major life decision. Whatever the situation, strike a balance between meeting the needs of the reader to see the text and design considerations.

Font Colour

A choice of colour may also enter into document design considerations, in which case, again, the needs of the reader must be accommodated. Used appropriately, a touch of colour can draw the eye to important text. Colouring your name red at the top of your résumé is effective if few or no other elements in the document are so coloured because your name is essentially the title of your document. Likewise, colouring the title of other documents is effective if there are no expectations of doing otherwise (some style guidelines forbid colour).

Any use of colour for text must be high-contrast enough to be readable. The gold standard for high-contrast readability is black text on a white background. Grey-on-white, on the other hand, sacrifices readability for stylishness depending on how light the shade of grey is. A light-yellow text on a white background is nearly impossible to read. In all cases, the readability of the text should be considered not just for those with perfect vision, but especially for those who find themselves anywhere on the spectrum of visual impairment (see §2.4.9 on accessibility below). For this reason, colour should always be used to enhance a document that is already perfectly organized without it; never use colour-coding alone as an organizing principle in a document read by anyone other than you because you can never be sure if some readers will be colour blind or have other visual impairments that render that colour coding useless as a cause for confusion.

Boldface, Italics, and Underlining

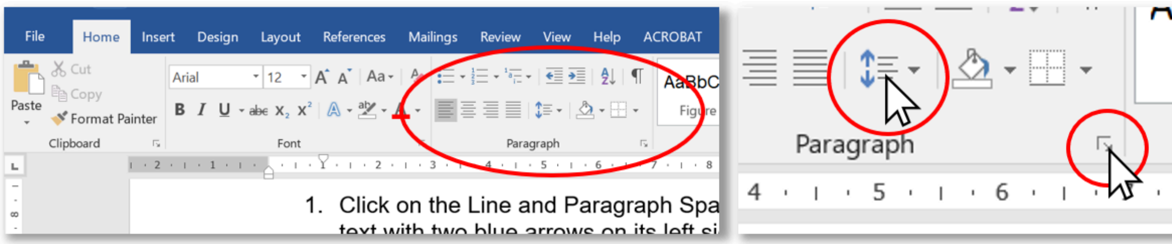
Boldface, *italics*, and underlining serve various purposes in focusing audience attention on certain words. Boldface type is especially helpful in directing audience eyes towards titles, headings, and keywords as you can see at the beginning of this paragraph and throughout this textbook. Highlighting in this way is especially helpful to anyone who is visually impaired in any degree. Of course, overusing boldface undermines its impact, so it should be used sparingly and strategically. Likewise, italics and underlining have very specific purposes as well.

2.4.4: Line Spacing Considerations

Single-spaced lines are common to most documents because they accommodate the reader's need to dart quickly to the next line to continue reading a sentence. The gap between 1.0-spaced lines is just enough to clearly separate one line from another so the hanging elements at the bottom of letters like *j* and *g* don't interfere with the tops of uppercase letters on the line below. Some documents such as academic manuscripts are double-spaced to give readers, who are usually the instructors or teaching assistants grading them, enough space to write comments and editorial marks between the lines. Because doubling the line spacing also doubles the number of pages in a print version, avoid double-spacing documents for audiences who don't explicitly require it.

Frustratingly, some word processors, such as Microsoft Word, open blank pages with line spacing values other than single (1.0) spacing as their default setting, such as 1.08 or 1.15. In such cases, a couple of adjustments are necessary if you want to single-space a document you're writing from scratch. Make these adjustments as soon as you open a blank page or by highlighting all (ctrl. + a) if you've already started. In MS Word's Home menu:

1. Click on the Line and Paragraph Spacing icon that has four lines representing text with two blue arrows on its left side, one pointing up and one down, in the Paragraph section of the Home menu ribbon (or just type the *Alt* + *h*, *k* keys).



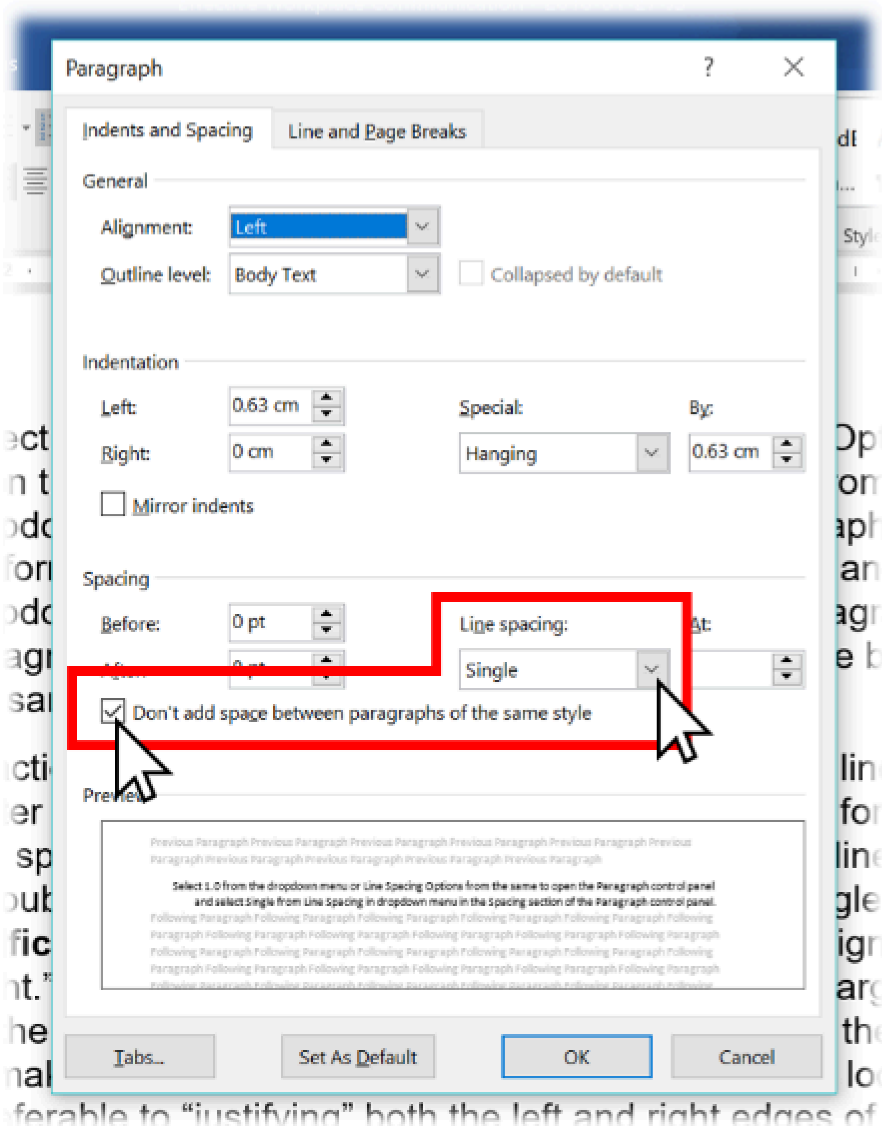


Figure 2.2.4.a: In Microsoft Word,, you can [locate a dropdown menu](#) where line spacing can be changed.

2. Select 1.0 from the dropdown menu or Line Spacing Options from the same to open the Paragraph control panel and select Single from the Line Spacing dropdown menu in the Spacing section.
3. Perform the same two steps as above to get the Line and Paragraph Spacing dropdown menu and select Remove Space After Paragraph or, from the Paragraph control panel, click on the “Don’t add space between paragraphs of the same style” checkbox and the Okay button at the bottom to apply the style.

The third action above prevents MS Word from adding a full line of space every time you hit Enter at the end of a line. When typing address lines for a letter without the “Don’t add space” checkbox ticked, for instance, the default line spacing will continue to look like double spacing even if you set the line spacing to single.

Need More Help with Microsoft Word?

For the most up-to-date options within Microsoft Word, please refer to the Microsoft Office website for help and support on the most recent version of the company's software.

Justification should ideally be left as the default left-aligned or "Left-justified / ragged right." This means that all lines are flush to the left margin, and the lines end wherever the last full word fits before the right margin sends (or "wraps") the next word down to the next line, making each line vary in length so the right margin looks "ragged," as you can see throughout this textbook. This is usually preferable to "justifying" both the left and right edges of the text so that they align perfectly along both the left and right margins, as in the example below. While this may look clean, like the columns in newspapers, this look is achieved by adding space between the words within each line, and since every line varies in length without justification, every line with it will vary in the amount of space added between words. Some lines that would be short without justification look awkward with it because the space between some words is greater than the span of small words.

While this may look clean, like the columns in newspapers, this look is achieved by adding space between the words within each line, and since every line varies in length without justification, every line with it will vary in the amount of space added between words. Some lines that would be short without justification look awkward with it because the space between some words is greater than the span of small words.

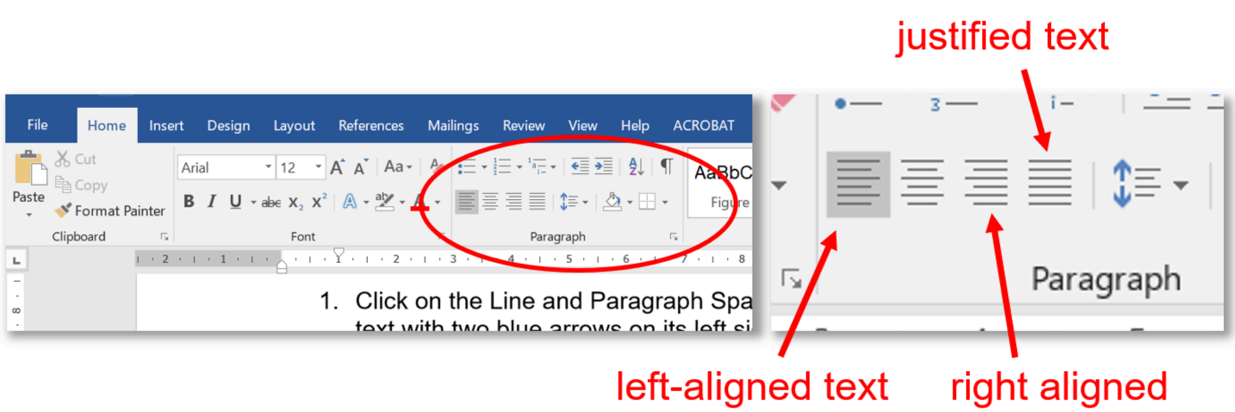


Figure 2.2.4.b: Where to click to select text justification or left-aligned ("ragged right") text in the MS Word Home menu tool ribbon.

To fix the "hockey teeth" gaps that can result from justification, such as what you see in the example above, turn on hyphenation in MS Word via the Layout tool ribbon: select Automatic in the Hyphenation dropdown menu in the Page Setup section. This automatically adds hyphens between syllables of long words whose size and position at the end of a line would otherwise send them entirely to the beginning of the next line, decreasing the number of words in the line above and increasing the gap between each. If working in a company document template with justification, keep the justification throughout to be stylistically consistent with other documents produced in that template and ensure that the hyphenation is turned on (unlike this paragraph). Otherwise, left-aligned text is perfectly fine and may even help readers find their place if they lose it momentarily compared with the uniform brick-wall effect of justified text seen here.

2.4.5: Using Lists

Another technique that helps the reader skim and easily find sought-after content is numbered or bulleted lists for a series of discreet but related items. Whether you use numbered or bulleted lists depends on your organizing principle:

Use Bulleted Lists for :	Use Numbered Lists for:
• an unprioritized collection of related points • points under a heading in an email or note-form points on a presentation slide (e.g., PowerPoint) for easier readability	• a step-by-step **procedure** such as a set of instructions • description of a **chronological sequence** — a series of events unfolding in time • **rankings** that arrange items in priority order

You've seen numbered and bulleted lists used throughout this textbook (e.g., the two bulleted lists immediately above). Whichever list type you use, ensure each has the following:

- A **sentence or phrase** introducing and explaining the list and ending with a colon before delivering the list immediately below it, as you can see in the sentence that introduces this list;
- **Capitalization** of the first letter in each point **OR** no capitalization for any of the items (except if they are proper names);
- **Periods** ending each point only if it is a complete sentence on its own, whether it be in the declarative, imperative, or any other mood; a list of nouns or noun phrases, on the other hand, doesn't end in periods (semicolons can be used in this case — as in the list you are reading right now — for all list items except the last one, which should end in a period);
- **Parallelism** in the sense that each point in a list follows the same grammatical pattern, such as only full sentences, only noun phrases, or only verb phrases (or imperative sentences); for instance, each point in the three bulleted lists in this section (including the present one) is a noun phrase (i.e., it begins with a noun) and the numbered list in §2.4.5 above, as a step-by-step procedure, is a sequence of imperative sentences (i.e., each begins with a verb: "Click," "Select," "Perform"). The need for parallelism extends also to lists within a sentence.

2.4.6: Choosing Visual Aids

The cliché that a picture is worth a thousand words holds true because images are excellent aids to understanding when placed near the messages they illustrate. Just as the visual elements in this textbook support and reinforce the content, so photos, graphics, charts, and graphs provide readers something that can be understood and remembered at a glance—as long as those visuals are used appropriately. Of course, the main criterion for usability is if the image helps the reader understand the text better. If the image is complementary, it can only help. If it is unnecessary, confusing, or contradicts the text, however, the image isn't worth the time and effort it takes to add it to your document.

When considering using an image, ask yourself:

- **Aesthetic considerations:**
  - Does the image look good?
  - Are the colours complementary?
- **Technical considerations:**
  - Is the image resolution of sufficiently high quality or is it too pixelated to use?
- **Legal considerations:**
  - Does the image's copyright licence permit or forbid use by others?
  - Am I using the image for educational or commercial purposes?
- **Design considerations:**
  - Is it big enough to see?
  - Is it placed appropriately?

The ideal size depends on the resolution, detail of the content, relative importance, and the use to which the document will be put. The following guidelines help ensure that the images you use will meet aesthetic, design, technical, and legal expectations:

- **Aesthetic guidelines:**
  - Choose images that look like they were produced by professional photographers, illustrators, or graphic designers—the sort you would see in a magazine or professional industry website.
  - Professionals usually produce images with a limited palette of colours that work well together.
  - Use images that are in focus and well-framed with the central image clearly visible rather than too far in the background or so close that important aspects are cropped out.
- **Design guidelines:**
  - An image or graphic that is crucial to the reader's understanding and is highly detailed really deserves to stretch across the text block from margin to margin.
  - An image that is more ornamental and relatively simple can be inset within the text either on the left or right margin, or centred on the page without text on either side.
  - Important images, especially those labelled as figures, must be placed as near as possible to the text they support and even referred to in the text ("See Figure 2 for an illustration of . . .")
  - Ensure that the text and corresponding image aren't separated by a page break if the text is close to the top or bottom of the page. The reader's eye must be able to move between the image and corresponding text in the same field of view to seal their understanding.
- **Technical guidelines:**
  - Screen resolution must be at least 72dpi (dots per inch), the internet standard; anything less than 72 may appear pixelated even on the screen, especially if maximized in size across the page.
  - Images in documents that will be printed should be 300dpi to avoid appearing pixelated on paper.
  - Preferred image file types include JPEG (.jpg) and PNG (.png). The latter includes the possibility of

contouring so that the image doesn't necessarily have to be a square or rectangle. You can make a PNG image file of your handwritten and scanned signature, for instance, by erasing the white background around the pen strokes in Photoshop and saving the image as a PNG. That way, you can drag and drop your signature onto a signature line in an electronic document and it won't block out the line underneath if your signature typically sprawls out over lines.

- **Legal guidelines:**
  - To stay on the right side of copyright legislation, searching online for images that are free to use is easy by including licensing status in an advanced Google Image search. From the Google Images search screen:

    1. Click on the Settings spring-up menu at the bottom right.
    2. Select Advanced Search.
    3. Scroll down and click on the "usage rights" dropdown menu at the bottom.
    4. Select "free to use or share" or whatever licensing status suits your purposes.

  - Otherwise, you can acquire the right to use images for commercial purposes by purchasing them from stock photo vendors such as Getty Images, Adobe Stock, or Shutterstock.

With modern word processors, placing an image is as easy as dragging and dropping the image file from a folder into a document (or copying and pasting). Sometimes you will need to be a little craftier with capturing images, however. For instance, if you need to capture a still from a YouTube video to use as an image, you can pause the video at the moment you want to capture and use your computer's screen-capturing program to get the image.

- On a Windows-based computer:

  1. Open the included Snipping Tool (Microsoft Support, 2021) to turn the cursor into crosshairs.
     - **Note:** in Windows 10 , the Snipping Tool may be replaced with the *Snip & Sketch* app. Please see Microsoft's help and support site for how to take and annotate additional screenshots on Windows 10.
  2. Click and drag the crosshairs to select the desired portion of the screen for capturing; when you release the cursor, the captured image will open immediately in the clipboard. Ensure that you've included only the elements necessary, rather than the whole screen, plus a short span of margin on each side.
  3. Save the image in a folder from the clipboard or add it directly to the document by switching immediately to the document window (Alt + tab) and pasting it (ctrl. + v) wherever you've placed your cursor.

- On a Mac, use Shift + Command + 4 and use the crosshairs to select the desired portion of the screen (Apple Support, 2020).

Once your image is in your document, use the layout options to place it where appropriate. Clicking on it may produce a layout icon near the top right that you can click on to open the dropdown menu (alternatively, you can right-click on the image and select the Wrap Text option from the dropdown menu). The default setting left-justifies the image and displaces the text around where you put it, but other layout options allow you to place it elsewhere on the page so that your text wraps around it ("Square," "Tight," or "Through") or so that text doesn't move around it at all ("Behind" or "In front of text"), which gives you the freedom to move the image anywhere.

2.4.7: Using Interactive Elements

Another aid to understanding that can benefit readers of an online or electronic document is a weblink that provides them with the option of accessing other online media. Hyperlinking is easy in modern word processors and online applications such as websites and email simply by highlighting text or clicking on an image and activating the hyperlinking feature. Press the control and k keys simultaneously (Ctrl + k), paste the web address into the URL field (copy it by clicking on the web address bar or keying Alt + d, then Ctrl + c), and hit the Okay button (Microsoft Office Support, 2021). Users prefer links that open new tabs in their browser rather than take them away entirely, so seek out that option when hyperlinking. By doing this for an image of a YouTube video screenshot, for instance, you enable readers of a document (including a PowerPoint presentation) to link directly to that video in YouTube rather than embed a large video file in your document. You can additionally link to other areas within a document, as the document version of this textbook does with links to various sections like the one in the previous sentence.

2.4.8: Balancing Text and Whitespace

Another consideration that helps readers find their way around a page is the balance of text and whitespace, which is simply a gap unoccupied by text or graphic elements. The enemy of readability is a wall of text that squeezes out any whitespace, whereas a well-designed document uses whitespace to usher the reader's eyes towards units of text. Whitespace margins frame the text in a document, for instance, as well as give readers something to hold on to so that they don't cover up any text with their thumbs. Margins should be 3 cm or 1" (2.54 cm), which are the default margin sizes in most word processors' (e.g., Microsoft Word's) blank 8.5"x11" document. Margins also focus attention on the text itself, which makes any crowding of the margins an offense to good design. An attempt to cram more information into a one-page résumé by edging further and further into the margins, for instance, might bother the hiring manager, who might take your sacrifice of the document's readability as a sign of selfishness—that you place your own needs above that of your audience, which suggests you would do the same to the customers and management if it suited you. Reducing the document margins to, say, 2.2 cm might not be noticeable, but generally avoid reducing the margins below 2 cm for any type of workplace document.

2.4.9: Making Accessible, AODA-compliant Documents

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) sets out guidelines for how workplaces can help people with disabilities, including accommodations that extend to document design. Many of the recommendations covered in the sections throughout §2.4 above, such as font size and colour, are justified as accommodations to people with even mild visual impairment. Someone with colour blindness, for instance, may be confused if you use coloured text alone as an organizing principle, which is why you should use colour only to enhance text readability while using other means of organization, such as boldface type (see §2.4.3 above). Not only must you accommodate such individuals, but also those whose severity of impairment requires that they use assistive technologies such as screen readers that convert text to automated voice. The more straightforward your text is presented, as well as formatted with "true headings" that a screen reader can identify as headings, the easier a person with a disability can hear and understand your message when it's read out by a screen reader.

Once you are done drafting your document, you can begin to check for any accessibility issues and act on them right away. In MS Word, just go to File and, in the Info tab, select the "Check for Issues" button in the Inspect

Document section. It will identify accessibility problems in your document as well as suggest fixes (watch the video below for a demonstration). For instance, if you have a photo without alt text, it will prompt you to write a caption by right-clicking on the image, selecting "Edit Alt Text…" from the dropdown menu, and writing a one- or two-sentence description of the image so that users with screen readers will be able to hear a description of the image they can't see very well or at all.

HOW TO USE THE OFFICE 365 ACCESSIBILITY CHECKER

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=726#oembed-1

Video: "How to use the Office 365 Accessibility Checker | Microsoft" by Microsoft Helps [1:08] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.*Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Need More Help with Microsoft Word?

For the most up-to-date options within Microsoft Word, please refer to the Microsoft Office website for help and support on the most recent version of the company's software.

Key Takeaways

- Make your document easy to follow at a glance and accessible by using a variety of document design features such as titles, headings/subheadings, lists, visual aids, interactive elements, line spacing, and appropriate font types, sizes, and colours.

Exercises

1. Collect a variety of professional documents, such as reports, memos, and letters. If you have perfect vision, impair your vision perhaps by dimming the lights at night or using a friend's or family member's prescription glasses. What do you notice about the readability of those documents when you've limited your eyesight? What organizational elements do you especially appreciate when trying to make sense of the document when you've otherwise hindered your ability to read?
2. Take any multi-page assignment you've done in MS Word that also includes non-text elements like photos. Run an accessibility check on it using the procedure described in §2.4.9 above and fix the issues identified.
3. Produce a dummy document that follows guidelines in each of the §2.4 subsections above. The content doesn't much matter so much as the inclusion of features. Ensure that it has:

    i. A proper title
    ii. Some headings and subheadings
    iii. A well-chosen font
    iv. Single-spacing (1.0 with the "Don't add space" checkbox checked)
    v. A numbered and bulleted list
    vi. A properly labelled image
    vii. A hyperlink
    viii. A nice balance between text and whitespace
    ix. An accessibility check that you act upon by following the recommended fixes for AODA compliance

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CHAPTER 2: REVIEW

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Formal writing requires effort because your grammar must be tighter and the vocabulary advanced.
- Your ability to use a general-level style is necessary in any situation where you communicate with familiar people on your level and when a personable, more conversational tone is appreciated, such as when writing to someone with basic reading skills (e.g., an EAL learner).
- In professional exchanges, slang should be avoided because it tends to deviate from the typical characteristics of good writing.
- Emojis can lighten the mood and help with bonding among workplace colleagues; however, if used excessively, they can be seen as part of a larger breakdown of decorum.
- Professional writers should not just avoid slang in their workplace speaking and writing. They should avoid many other elements of language that are either informal or contribute to making the tone and style of a message seem more informal.
- Drafting involves writing consistently in a formal, casual, or informal style characterized by the "Six Cs": clarity, conciseness, coherence, correctness, courtesy, and conviction.
- Make your document easy to follow at a glance and accessible by using a variety of document design features such as titles, headings/subheadings, lists, visual aids, interactive elements, line spacing, and appropriate font types, sizes, and colours.

CHAPTER 3: INTRODUCTION TO PATTERNS OF COMMUNICATION

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Identify patterns of communication for routine messaging

The shape of your message depends on the purpose you set out to achieve, which is why a clearly formulated purpose must be kept in mind throughout the writing process. Whether your purpose is to inform, instruct, persuade, or entertain, structuring your message according to set patterns associated with each purpose helps achieve those goals. Without those familiar structures guiding your reader toward the intended effect, your reader can get lost and confused, perhaps reflecting the confusion in your own mind if your thoughts aren't clearly focused and organized enough themselves. Or perhaps your message is crystal clear in your own mind, but you articulate it in an unstructured way that assumes your reader sees what you think is an obvious main point. Either way, miscommunication results because your point gets lost in the noise. Lucky for us, we have standard patterns of organization to structure our thoughts and messages to make them understandable to our audiences. We'll review the importance of the direct and indirect approach to business communication, and how these patterns will influence formatting in order to produce reader-friendly documents.

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following text:

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3.1: CHOOSING AN ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the organizational structure of a variety of written messages
2. Apply standard patterns of organization

The Three-part Structure

From paragraphs to essays to long reports, most messages follow a three-part structure that accommodates the three-part division of our attention spans and memory:

1. Attention-grabbing **opening**

- The job of the opening is to hook the reader in to keep reading, capturing their attention with a major personal takeaway (answering the reader's question "What's in it for me?") or the main point (thesis) of the message. In longer messages, the opening includes an introduction that establishes the frame in which the reader can understand everything that follows.
- This accommodates the **primacy effect** in psychology, which is that first impressions tend to stick in our long-term memory more than what follows (Baddeley, 2000, p. 79), whether those impressions are of the people we meet or the things we read. You probably remember what a recently made friend at college looked like and said the first time you met them, for instance, despite that happening weeks or even months ago. Likewise, you will recall the first few items you read in a list of words better than those in the middle. This effect makes the first sentence you write in a paragraph or the first paragraph you write in a longer message crucial because it will be what your reader remembers most and the anchor for their understanding of the rest. Because of the way our minds work, your first sentence and paragraph must represent the overall message clearly.

2. Detail-packed **body**

- The message body supports the opening with further detail supporting the main point. Depending on the type of message and organizational structure that suits it best, the body may involve:
  - Evidence in support of a thesis
  - Background for better understanding
  - Detailed explanations and instructions
  - Convincing rationale in a persuasive message
  - Plot and character development in an entertaining story

This information is crucial to the audience's understanding of and commitment to the message, so it cannot be neglected despite the primacy and recency effects.

- Our memory typically blurs these details, however, so having them written down for future reference is important. You don't recall the specifics of *every* interaction with your closest friend in the days, months, and years between the strong first impression they made on you and your most recent memory of them, but those interactions were all important for keeping that relationship going, and certainly some highlight memories from throughout that intervening time come to mind. Likewise, the message body is a collection of important subpoints in support of the main point, as well as transitional elements that keep the message coherent and plot a course towards its completion.

3. Wrap-up and transitional **closing**

- The closing completes the coverage of the topic and may also point to what's next, either by bridging to the next message unit (e.g., the concluding sentence of a paragraph establishes a connection to the topic of the next paragraph) or offering cues to what action should follow the message (e.g., what the reader is supposed to do in response to a letter, such as reply by a certain date).
- Depending on the size, type, and organizational structure of the message, the closing may also offer a concluding summary of the major subpoints made in the body to ensure that the purpose of the message has been achieved. In a persuasive message, for instance, this summary helps prove the opening thesis by confirming that the body of evidence and argument supported it convincingly.
- The closing appeals to what psychologists call the **recency effect**, which is that, after first impressions, last impressions stick out because, after the message concludes, we carry them in our short-term memory more clearly than what came before (Baddeley, 2000, p. 79). Just as you probably remember your most recent interaction with your best friend—what they were wearing, saying, feeling, etc.—so you remember well how a message ends.

The effective writer therefore loads the message with important points both at the opening and closing because the reader will focus on and remember what they read there best, as well as organizes the body in a manner that is engaging and easy to follow. In the next section, we will explore some of the possibilities for different message patterns while bearing in mind that they all follow this general three-part structure. Learning these patterns is valuable beyond merely being able to write better. Though a confused and scattered mind produces confusing and disorganized messages, anyone can become a more clear and coherent *thinker* by learning to organize messages consistently according to well-established patterns.

3.1.1: Direct Messages

Because employees' workloads are constantly increasing and life is short, most messages do their reader a solid favour by taking the direct approach or frontloading the main point, which means getting right to the point and not wasting precious time. In college and in professional situations, no one wants to read or write more than they have to when figuring out a message's meaning, so everybody wins when you open with the main point or thesis and follow with details in the message body. If it takes you a while before you find your own point in the process of writing, leaving it at the end where you finally discovered what your point was, or burying it somewhere in the middle, will frustrate your reader, who will be forced to spend additional time looking for it. If you don't move that main point by copying, cutting, and pasting it at the very beginning, you risk annoying your busy reader because it's uncomfortable for them to start off in the weeds and linger in a state of confusion until they finally find that main point later. Leaving out the main point because it's obvious to you—though it isn't at all to the reader coming to the topic for the first time—is another common writing error. Writers who frontload their message, on the other hand, find themselves in their readers' good graces right away for making their meaning clear upfront, freeing up readers to move quickly through the rest and on to other important tasks in their busy lives.

Whether or not you take the direct approach depends on the effect your message will have on readers. If you anticipate your readers being interested in the message or their attitude to it being anywhere from neutral to positive, the direct approach is the only appropriate organizational pattern. Except in rare cases where your message delivers bad news, is on a sensitive topic, or when your goal is to be persuasive, all messages should take the direct approach. Since most business messages have a positive or neutral effect, all writers should frontload their messages as a matter of habit unless they have good reason to do otherwise. The three-part message organization outlined in the §3.1 introduction above helps explain the psychological reasons that make frontloading necessary: it accommodates the reader's highly tuned capacity for remembering what they see first, as well as respects their time in achieving the goal of communication, which is understanding the writer's point.

Let's say, for instance, that you send an email to a client with e-transfer payment instructions so that you can be paid for work you did. Because you send this same message so often, the objective and context of this procedure is so well understood by you that you may fall into the trap of thinking that it goes without saying, so your version of "getting to the point" is just to open with the payment instructions. Perhaps you may have even said in a previous email that you'd be sending payment instructions in a later email, so you think that the reader knows what it's about, or you may get around to saying that this is about paying for the job you did at the end of the email, effectively burying it under a pile of details. Either way, to the reader who opens the email to see a list of instructions for a procedure they've never done before with no explanation as to why they need to do this and what it's all for exactly, confusion abounds. At best the client will email you back asking for clarification; at worst they will just ignore it, thinking that it was sent in error and was supposed to go to someone who would know what to do with it. You'll have to follow up either way, but you have better things to do. If you properly anticipated your audience's reaction and level of knowledge, however, you would know that opening with a main point like the following would put your client in the proper frame of mind for following the instructions and paying you on time:

Please follow the instructions below to send us an e-transfer payment for the installation work completed at your residence on July 22.

In the above case, the opening's main point or central idea is a polite request to follow instructions, but in other messages it may be a **thesis** statement, which is a summary of the whole argument; in others it may be a question or request for action. The **main point** of any message, no matter what type or how long, should be an idea that you can state clearly and concisely in one complete sentence if someone came up to you and asked you what it's all about in a nutshell. Some people don't know what their point is exactly when they start writing, in which case writing is an exploratory exercise through the evidence assembled in the research stage. As they move toward such a statement in their conclusion, however, it's crucial that they copy, cut, and paste that main point so that it is among the first—if not *the* first—sentence the reader sees at the top of the document, despite being among the last written.

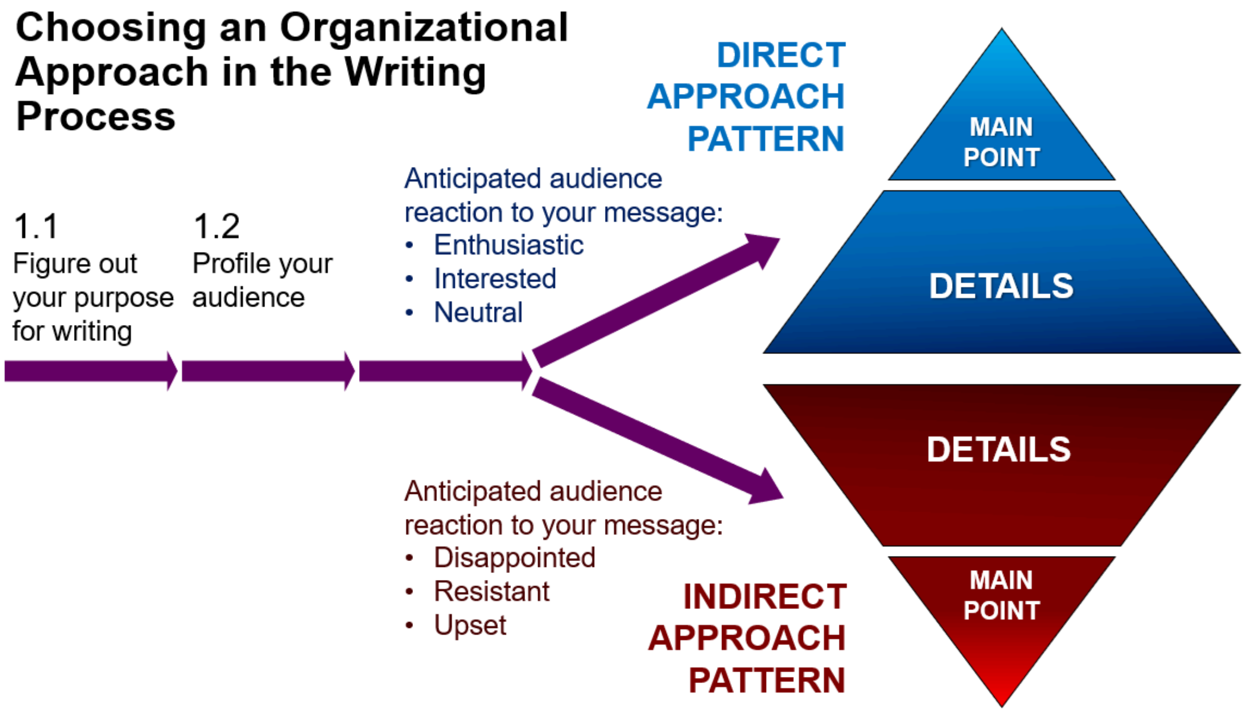

Figure 3.1.1

The above graphic illustrates the necessary steps in the message composition process:

- 1.1: Figure out your purpose for writing
- 1.2: Profile your audience
- **Direct Approach Pattern:** Anticipated audience reaction to your message is enthusiastic, interested or neutral
    1. Main Point
    2. Details
- **Indirect Approach Pattern:** Anticipated audience reaction to your message is disappointed, resistant or upset
    1. Details
    2. Main Point

3.1.2: Indirect Messages

While the direct approach leads with the main point, the indirect approach strategically buries it deeper in the message when you expect that your reader will be resistant to it, displeased with it, upset or shocked by it, or even hostile towards it. In such cases, the direct approach would come off as overly blunt, tactless, and even cruel by hitting the reader over the head with it in the opening. The goal of indirect messages is not to deceive the reader nor make a game of finding the main point, but instead to use the opening and some of the message body to ease the reader towards an unwanted or upsetting message by framing it in such a way that the reader becomes interested enough to read the whole message and is in the proper mindset for following through on it. This organizational pattern is ideal for two main types of messages: those delivering bad news or addressing a sensitive subject, and those requiring persuasion such as marketing messages pitching a product, service, or even an idea.

For now, however, all we need to know is that the organization of a persuasive message follows the so-called **AIDA** approach, which divides the message body in the traditional three-part organization into two parts, making for a four-part structure:

1. **Attention**-grabbing opener
2. **Interest**-generating follow-up
3. **Desire**-building details
4. **Action** cue

Nearly every commercial you've ever seen follows this general structure, which is designed to keep you interested while enticing you towards a certain action such as buying a product or service. If a commercial took the direct approach, it would say upfront "Give us $19.99 and we'll give you this turkey," but you never see that. Instead you see all manner of techniques used to grab your attention in the opening, keep you tuned in through the follow-up, pique your desire in the third part, and get you to act on it with purchasing information at the end. Marketing relies on this structure because it effectively accommodates our attention spans' need to be hooked in with a strong first impression and told what to do at the end so that we remember those details best, while working on our desires—even subconsciously—in the two-part middle body.

Likewise, a bad-news message divides the message body into two parts with the main point buried in the second of them (the third part overall), with the opening used as a hook that delays delivery of the main point and the closing giving action instructions as in persuasive AIDA messages. The typical organization of a bad-news message is:

1. **Buffer** offering some good news, positives, or any other reason to keep reading
2. **Reasons** for the bad news about to come
3. **Bad news** buried and quickly deflected towards further positives or alternatives
4. **Action** cue

Delaying the bad news till the third part of the message manages to soften the blow by surrounding it with positive or agreeable information that keeps the audience reading so that they miss neither the bad news nor the rest of the information they need to understand it. If doctors opened by saying, "You've got cancer and probably have six months to live," patients hearing that would probably be reeling so much in hopelessness from the death-sentence blow that they wouldn't be in the proper frame of mind to hear important follow-up information about life-extending treatment options. If an explanation of those options preceded the bad news, however, the patient would probably walk away with a more hopeful feeling of being able to beat the disease and survive. Framing is everything when delivering bad news.

Consider these two concise statements of the same information taking both the direct and indirect approach:

Table 3.1.2: Comparison of Direct and Indirect Messages

Direct Message	Indirect Message
Global Media is cutting costs in its print division by eliminating the print version for several local newspapers.	Global Media is seeking to increase profitability across its divisions. To this end, it is streamlining its local newspaper holdings by strengthening those in robust markets while redirecting resources away from those that have suffered in the economic downturn and trend towards fully online content.

Here we can see at first glance that the indirect message is longer because it takes more care to frame and justify the bad news, starting with an opening that attempts to win over the reader's agreement by appealing to their sense of reason. In the direct approach, the bad news is delivered concisely in blunt words such as "cutting" and "eliminating," which get the point across economically but suggest cruel aggression with violent imagery. The indirect approach, however, makes the bad news sound a little better to shareholders and less aggressive to the community members affected—with positive words like "increase profitability," "streamlining," and "strengthening." The good news that frames the bad news makes the action sound more like a remedial action than an aggressive attack. The combination of careful word choices and the order in which the message unfolds determines how well it is received, understood, and remembered, as we shall see when we consider further examples of persuasive and bad-news messages later. In some cases (as when companies announce layoffs and/or cuts to services) making the message truly positive is impossible, but even then the amount of negativity expressed can be *reduced* by using more neutral words rather than strictly negative words. In fact, in such situations, trying too hard to put a positive spin on things can backfire, whereas a measured, neutral message is more likely to be found acceptable by wider audiences under the circumstances.

3.1.3: Organizing Principles

Several message patterns are available to suit your purposes for writing in both direct and indirect-approach message bodies, so choosing one before writing is essential for staying on track. Their formulaic structures make the job of writing as easy and routine as filling out a form—just so long as you know which form to grab and have familiarized yourself with what they look like when they're filled out. Examples you can follow are your best friends through this process. By using such organizing principles as chronology (a linear narrative from past to present to future), comparison-contrast, or problem-solution, you arrange your content in a logical order that makes it easy for the reader to follow your message and buy what you're selling.

If you undertake a large marketing project like a website for a small business, it's likely that you'll need to write pieces based on many of the available organizing principles identified, explained, and exemplified in Table 3.1.3 below. For instance, you might:

- Introduce the product or service with a **problem-solution** argument on the homepage
- Include a history of the company told using the **chronological** form as well as the journalistic **5W+H** (who, what, where, when, why, and how) breakdown on the *About* page; you may also include short biographies of key staff
- Use technical descriptions and a **comparison-contrast** structure for product or service explanations that distinguish what you offer from your competitors
- Provide short research articles or essays on newsworthy topics related to your business in the **general-to-specific** pattern on the *Blog* page
- Provide point-pattern questions and answers on the *FAQ* page, such as the **pros and cons** of getting a

snow-removal service in answer to the question of whether to pay someone to do it for you
- Provide **instructions** for setting up service on the *Contact* page

Checking out a variety of websites to see how they use these principles effectively will provide a helpful guide for how to write them yourself. So long as you don't plagiarize their actual wording, copying their basic structure so you don't have to reinvent the wheel means that you can provide readers with a recognizable form that will enable them to find the information they need.

Table 3.1.3: Ten Common Organizing Principles

Organizing Principle	**Structure & Use**	**Example**
1. Chronology & 5W+H	• Linear narrative from beginning to end, including past, present, and possibly future, as well as the who, what, where, when, and how of the story • For historical accounts, incident reports, and biographies	Wolfe Landscaping & Snowblowing began when founder Robert Wolfe realized in 1993 that there was a huge demand for <u>reliable</u> summer lawncare and winter snow removal when it seemed that the few other available services were letting their customers down. Wolfe began operations with three snow-blowing vehicles in the Bridlewood community of Kanata and expanded to include the rest of Kanata and Stittsville throughout the 1990s. WLS continued its eastward expansion throughout the 2000s and now covers the entire capital region as far east as Orleans, plus Barrhaven in the south, with 64 snow-blowing vehicles out on the road at any one time. WLS recently added real-time GPS tracking to its app service and plans to continue expanding its service area to the rural west, south, and east of Ottawa throughout the 2020s.
2. Comparison & Contrast	• Point-by-point account of the similarities between two or more things, followed by a similarly structured account of their differences • For descriptive analysis of two or more somehow related things	Wolfe Snowblowing goes above and beyond what its competitors offer. While all snowblowing services will send a loader-mount snow blower (LMSB) to your house to clear your driveway after a big snowfall, Wolfe's LMSBs closely follow the city plow to clear your driveway and the snow bank made by the city plow in front of it, as well as the curbside area in front of your house so you still have street parking. If you go with the "Don't Lift a Finger This Winter" deluxe package, Wolfe will additionally clear and salt your walkway, stairs, and doorstep. With base service pricing 10% cheaper than other companies, going with Wolfe for your snow-removal needs is a no-brainer.
3. Pros & Cons	• Account of advantages followed by disadvantages • For an analysis of something's value as a basis for a recommendation to either adopt it or not	Why would you want a snow-removal service? Advantages include: • Worry-free driveway clearing following the city plow • Round-the-clock service clearing your driveway before you leave for work and before you return • Time saved from shoveling your driveway yourself • Avoiding the injuries incurred from shoveling yourself The disadvantages of other snow-removal services include: • 10% more expensive than our base price • Potential damage to your driveway or adjoining lawn (WLS will fix any damage free of charge) As you can see, the advantages of WLS outweigh the disadvantages for any busy household.

4. Problem & Solution	• Description of a problem scenario followed by a solution that directly solves that problem • For marketing products or services and scientific reporting of breakthroughs	Are you fed up with getting all geared up in -40 degree weather at 6am to shovel your driveway before leaving for work? Fed up with finishing shoveling the driveway in a hurry, late for work in the morning, and then the city plow comes by and snow-banks you in just as you're about to leave? Fed up with coming home after a long, hard day at work only to find that the city plow snow-banked you out? Well, worry no more! Wolfe Landscaping & Snowblowing has got you covered with its 24-hour snow removal service that follows the city plow to ensure that you always have driveway access throughout the winter months.
5. Cause & Effect	• Detailed description of the connection between two or more events, actions, or things to show how they work • For an analysis of the causal connection between things	As soon as snow appears in the weather forecast, Wolfe Landscaping & Snowblowing reserves its crew of dedicated snow blowers for 24-hour snow removal. When accumulation reaches 5cm in your area, our fleet deploys to remove snow from the driveways of all registered customers before the city plows get there. Once the city plow clears your street, a WLS snow blower returns shortly after to clear the snow bank formed by the city plow at the end of your driveway.
6. Process & Procedure	• Numbered list describing steps in a chronological sequence of actions towards a goal • For an analysis of how something works, or instructions for performing a certain task	Ordering our snow removal service is as easy as 1 2 3: 1. Call 1-800-555-SNOW or email us at info@wolfelandscaping&snow 2. Let us know your address and driveway size (can it fit only one parked car, two end-to-end or side-by-side, four, etc.?) 3. Pay by credit card over the phone or via our secure website, and we will come by to plant driveway markers within the week. That way, our snow blowers will be able to respect your driveway boundaries throughout the winter clearing season.
7. General to Specific	• Starts with the bigger picture as context before narrowing the focus to something very specific • For an in-depth analysis or explanation of a topic	Wolfe Landscaping & Snowblowing provides a reliable snow-removal service throughout the winter. We got you covered for any snowfall of 5cm or more between November 1st and April 15th. Once accumulation reaches 5cm at any time day or night, weekday or weekend, holiday or not, we send out our fleet of snow blowers to cover neighbourhood routes, going house-by-house to service registered customers. At each house, a loader-mount snow blower scrapes your driveway and redistributes the snow evenly across your front yard in less than five minutes.
8. Definition & Example	• Starts with a definition and provides specific examples for illustration • For explaining concepts to people coming to the topic for the first time	A loader-mount snow blower (LMSB) is a heavy-equipment vehicle that removes snow from a surface by pulling it into a front-mounted impeller with an auger and propelling it out of a top-mounted discharge chute. Our fleet consists of green John Deere SB21 Series and red M-B HD-SNB LMSBs.

9. Point Pattern	• A bullet-point listing of various connected but unprioritized points supporting a main point preceding them • For breaking down an explanation in a reader-friendly point-by-point presentation such as an FAQ page	Wolfe Landscaping & Snowblowing's "Don't Lift a Finger This Winter" deluxe package ensures that you will always find your walkway and driveway clear when you exit your home after a snowfall this winter! It includes: • Clearing and salting your driveway with every 3cm or more of snow accumulation • Clearing the snowbank at the end of your driveway within minutes of it being formed by the city plow • Shoveling and salting your walkway all the way to your front door after a 3cm+ snowfall or freezing rain • Shoveling by request any other walkways on your property
10. Testimonial	• First-person account of an experience • For offering a perspective that the reader can relate to as if they were to experience it themselves	According to Linda Sinclair in the Katimavik neighbourhood, "Wolfe did a great job clearing our snow this past winter. We didn't see them much because they were always there and gone in a flash, but the laneway was always scraped clear by the time we left for work in the morning if it snowed in the night. We never had a problem when we got home either, unlike when we used Sherman Snowblowing the year before and we always had to stop, park on the street, and shovel the snow bank made by the city plow whenever it snowed while we were at work. Wolfe was the better service by far."

Though shorter documents may contain only one such organizing principle, longer ones typically involve a mix of different organizational patterns used as necessary to support the document's overall purpose.

Key Takeaways

- Before beginning to draft a document, let your purpose for writing and anticipated audience reaction determine whether to take a direct or indirect approach, and choose an appropriate organizing principle to help structure your message.

Exercises

1. Consider some good news you've received recently (or would like to receive if you haven't). Assuming the role of the one who delivered it (or who you would like to deliver it), write a three-part direct-approach message explaining it to yourself in as much detail as necessary.
2. Consider some bad news you've received recently (or fear receiving if you haven't). Write a four-part indirect-approach message explaining it to yourself as if you were the one delivering it.

3. Draft a three-paragraph email to your boss (actual or imagined) where you recommend purchasing a new piece of equipment or tool needed in your unit (the one whose team leader or manager you are). Use the following organizational structure:
    1. **Frontload** your message by stating your purpose for writing directly in the first sentence or two.
    2. **Describe** the problem that the tool is meant to address in the follow-up paragraph.
    3. **Provide a detailed solution** describing the equipment/tool and its action in the third paragraph.
4. Picture yourself a few years from now as a professional in your chosen field. You've been working as a manager in this industry for a while and have a good grasp of how things work. An opportunity to branch out on your own presents itself. To minimize start-up costs, you do as much of the work as you can manage yourself, including the marketing and promotion. To this end, you figure out how to put together a website and write the content yourself. For this exercise, write a piece for each of the ten organizing principles explained and exemplified in Table 3.1.3 above and about the same length as each, but tailored to suit the products and/or services you will be offering in your chosen profession.

References

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3.2: STANDARD BUSINESS STYLE - THE DIRECT PATTERN

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the characteristics of the direct pattern of delivering information
2. Determine when it is appropriate to be direct and when it is not based on a careful analysis of your audience and purpose
3. Apply the key elements of business writing style to routine workplace communication scenarios.

Introducing the Direct Pattern

One of the most important decisions you will make as a professional writer is whether or not you should address an issue directly or indirectly with your reader. This decision requires careful thought because **the choice you make will determine how your reader responds to your message**. This may, in turn, affect not only the success of your message but your future relationship with your reader.

- For example, if you choose to be indirect when you should be direct, your reader may **grow impatient or miss the point of your message** altogether.
- On the other hand, if you choose to be direct when you should be indirect, **you may receive an angry or emotional reply** from a reader who stopped reading after the first line. (We will look at the indirect pattern in more detail in a separate lesson.)

In either case, you make your job more difficult by creating tension between yourself and your reader, which means you will have to work twice as hard to get your message across later — that is, in case your reader does not block that second attempt altogether…

When to Use the Direct Pattern

The direct pattern provides an efficient structure that ensures the **most important information is quickly transmitted to a reader who may or may not have time to read a lengthy message**. The direct pattern assumes that

- You already know how your audience will react to your message;
- You don't need to take particular care to be persuasive or diplomatic.

Thus, the direct pattern is used when the writer knows that the reader will appreciate a message that **gets straight to the point** and **highlights the most important information** in a format that is easily read, easily understood, and easily acted upon.

Among the most important skills in communication is to adjust your style according to the audience to meet their needs as well as your own. You would speak differently to a customer or manager compared with how you would to a long-time co-worker who has also become a friend. In each case, these audiences have certain expectations about your style of communication, and you must meet those expectations to be respected and maintain good relations. This section reviews those style choices and focuses especially on the six major characteristics of good writing common to both formal and general-level writing.

Informative Messages

Informative messages require little from the reader: **they do not contain calls to action or requests** that require persuasion. They may not even require acknowledgement from the reader. However, if the information is important enough to share, then you want to make sure that it is received. Otherwise, why send it at all?

To ensure that the most important information is received by your (potentially busy) reader, informative direct messages conform to the following structure:

Opening

- Focuses on **what you want your reader** *to know*;
- Does not include unnecessary preamble or information;
- Ensures that the reader **receives the most important information** even without reading further.

Body

- Contains background information, explanations and rationales, and other details;
- May explore pros and cons or reader benefits;
- May contain multiple short paragraphs to ensure readability.

Closing

- May summarize the message (for longer messages);
- May stress important upcoming deadlines;
- May ask for feedback by a certain date and explain that deadline;
- Ends with a positive closing statement.

Persuasive Messages

Persuasive messages are a little more demanding for the writer because **they require something** from the reader. For example, you may be requesting information or a favour that requires effort or agreement from the person to whom you are writing. Alternatively, you might be making a request for funding or competing against others for an opportunity. In any of these cases, **even if you are confident that your reader will respond positively** to your message, it is important that you put some effort into persuasion by thinking about your reader's needs.

You will notice that persuasive direct messages follow a structure that is very similar to that used for informative messages. However, it is essential to **note the differences** because they will have a significant impact on how your message is received:

Opening

- Focuses on **what you want your reader to do**
- Again, it avoids unnecessary preamble and information
- Ensures that your reader **understands exactly what you are expecting** from him/her even if he/she reads no further

Body

- Contains background information, explanations and rationales, and other details
- May explore pros and cons or **reader benefits**
- May contain multiple short paragraphs to ensure readability

Closing

- Ends with a positive closing statement **with steps for action**
- Remember, you want to **make it easy** for your reader to acquiesce to your request: tell him/her what they need to know and what they need to do
- If you don't, you may receive a response that is not as positive as you had hoped!

Key Takeaways

- **When should you use the direct pattern of delivering information?**
  The best times to use the direct pattern of delivering information are when you know that your reader is anxious for the information you are providing, will be pleased by or indifferent to the information, or is at least mildly interested in what you have to say. When you analyze your audience correctly, you increase the chances that your message will be received in a positive way.
- **What are the key characteristics of the direct pattern?**
  A message that uses the direct pattern effectively will frontload the essential information, ensuring that the most important information comes first. All supporting information comes after. You can test the effectiveness of your message by asking yourself, "if my reader only reads the first sentence or two, will he/she still understand the purpose of my message?" If the answer is "no," you may need to take an even more direct approach.
- **What are the benefits of the direct pattern?**
  One of the most important benefits of the direct pattern is that it saves time for the reader. This has the additional benefit of reducing frustration for readers who are anxious for the main point, which in turn helps to establish the right frame of mind. This benefits you as the writer because it means your reader will be more receptive to the information you are providing, as well as to any requests you might make.
- **What are the drawbacks of the direct pattern?**

The successful use of the direct pattern depends on reader receptivity. If you are too hasty in delivering sensitive or unwelcome information, it is very possible that your reader will respond in a negative way. Remember, strong emotional responses distract readers from what is being said and can cause them to misinterpret your message or even stop reading. They might also respond with equal haste in a manner that causes communication to break down even further.

Exercises

Discussion Activity

Please read through the following scenario. Once you are familiar with the expectations and requirements of your employer, create your own post by answering the following questions:

- What information is necessary?
- What information is superfluous?
- What factors must be taken into consideration when choosing a theme? Why?
- Which statements need to be phrased more tactfully? Why?

You are the events coordinator at the **Crossroads Marketers Group**, and your manager has asked you to draft an e-mail to the staff about the upcoming "**Fall Fling**" party.

This party to celebrate the end of summer always has a themed costume element, and you must come up with the theme. The party will be held off-site at The Barking Frog in London, ON. The address is 209 John Street, which most people should be familiar with.

Dinner and dancing are the main activities, and the event will be catered with a BBQ Buffet. Dinner is included in the price of the ticket. The venue has a cash bar because the company doesn't want to pay for everyone's alcohol all night, but attendees will also receive two free drinks with the price of the ticket. Although **no** children are allowed (the event is strictly 19+), employees are allowed to bring guests. Tickets are $15 dollars for staff and $20 for guests, and must be purchased in advance by contacting the events coordinator (i.e. you) to make reservations.

The party will begin at 7pm on October 5, 2020 and finish at 1am. Your manager wants you to make that sure no one is drinking and driving. Reservations **must** be made by September 25th.

3.3: STANDARD BUSINESS STYLE - THE INDIRECT PATTERN

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the characteristics of the indirect pattern of delivering information
2. Recognize the differences between the direct and indirect pattern of delivering information
3. Identify the structural elements of the indirect pattern
4. Identify, based on context, whether a situation calls for the direct or indirect mode of delivery

Recall our discussion about organizational patterns of communication introduced in Chapter 3.1: Choosing an Organizational Pattern.In Chapter 3.2, we looked more closely at the direct pattern of delivering information, which gets straight to the point of your message, without any preamble or contextualization. The direct pattern works best when:

- You already know how the reader will react;
- You know that he/she is anxious to get the information you are sending;
- You don't need to be diplomatic or tactful in order to maintain the professional relationship.

Sometimes, however, you might be uncertain about how the reader will react to your message, or you might know that he/she will be upset or even angered by it. You might be required to deliver **bad news or sensitive information that the reader may not want to hear but needs to know**. In these cases, particularly if you are interested in **maintaining a professional relationship with the reader**, it is best to slow down and approach the task in a more indirect way. This week, we will focus on ways of delivering bad or unwanted news in a tactful, empathetic way that is reader-centered and as positive as possible.

Introducing the Indirect Pattern

The indirect pattern is particularly challenging because it requires that writers **think deeply about what it means to create genuinely reader-centered texts.** This focus on the reader is often absent from academic writing, as well as from everyday professional messages and conversations. Ordinarily, **we tend to think more about what we want to say than how our reader will react** (unless the reader is someone with whom we are closely acquainted, and whose feelings we want to protect). Most of the time, **we don't face serious consequences** if we forget to think about our reader(s).

For example, Harvard University can get away with sending a bad news message that begins, “We regret to inform that your application has been rejected” because

1. **They aren’t interested in maintaining a relationship** with applicants whom they’ve rejected, so it doesn’t really matter to them if an upset applicant decides never to apply to Harvard again.
2. It is safe to assume that applicants are **more interested in the final decision than the decision-making process**.

Sometimes, however, the consequences of not taking our reader’s potential reactions into consideration can be severe. A **poorly judged or insensitively written message** can result unwanted consequences, including:

- An **angry response** sent directly to you, or over your head to your boss or manager;
- **Tension and conflict** in your workplace or professional relationships;
- The **loss of a client** or customer;
- **Poor reviews and loss of reputation** through word of mouth, social media, etc.

For example, unlike Harvard University, a small business owner who offers private tutoring for individuals may need to **approach even his/her least favourite clients with sensitivity and tact**. Can you imagine how parents/guardians might respond to a message that begins, “I regret to inform you that I am done tutoring your badly-behaved child until you teach him some discipline”? Even if the message goes on to explain very clearly why the tutor feels this way, i**t’s unlikely that the parents/guardians will respond in a positive way** to that reasoning (assuming they read beyond that first line). Instead of solving the problem of an unruly student, the tutor may have unintentionally created more problems—some of which might go beyond the loss of a client:

- He/he might be **embroiled in angry conversations with the parents/guardians** (particularly if they have paid for tutoring sessions in advance);
- He/she might become the **target of hostile messages and reviews;**
- He/she may **experience a loss of reputation** with the parents/guardians of other students;
- He/she may **lose income** if people hear about the dispute and choose to go elsewhere for tutoring, etc.

Clearly, **understanding not only *how* to use the indirect pattern but *when* to use it** is of vital importance if you want to communicate confidently, professionally, and successfully in all situations.

When to Use the Indirect Pattern

The indirect pattern is the most effective way to transmit information to an audience that is

- Unwilling or uninterested;
- Displeased or disappointed;
- Hostile or offended;
- In need of persuasion.

By **delaying the delivery of the bad or sensitive news** and providing a **positive opening** that is **immediately followed by reasoning and explanations,** you give your reader a chance to **connect with you in a positive**

way, **understand your position,** and begin to **anticipate the bad news**. In an ideal bad news scenario, the reader will anticipate and accept the bad news before you even deliver it.

Using the Indirect Pattern

When using the indirect pattern, there is important work that needs to be done *before* you start writing your message. Take a few moments to **analyse the situation and the needs/likely response** of your reader:

- Identify your **strongest and safest points**
  - What common ground can you find with your reader?
  - What points can you and your reader likely agree on?
- Identify the most **inflammatory or unwelcome points**
- Identify likely **questions, objections, and concerns** that the reader will have
- Organize your ideas into the **four-part indirect pattern** for bad news:
  - Intro & Buffer
  - Explanation
  - Bad news
  - Closing

Part 1: Intro & Buffer

A "buffer" is a person or thing that stands between other people/things in order to prevent conflict. In your indirect letter, you buffer is a neutral or pleasant statement that creates common ground or connection with your reader. However, it is important that the buffer is also relevant: don't begin your letter by saying something inane like "I hope you are having a good day" or "Happy Monday!" (particularly since your message will likely ruin their day). Instead, you might begin with the best news, a compliment, a statement of appreciation, or a point of agreement or mutual understanding. When used effectively, a buffer

- Lessens or delays the negative impact;
- Makes a neutral, yet relevant and sincere statement;
- Optional: Compliments the reader for something (without exaggerating and without using cliches);
- Does not reveal the bad news, nor does it mislead;
- Provides a meaningful transition to the explanation;

Part 2: The Explanation

Once you have established a connection or common ground with your reader, it is important that you take time to develop this section of your message as well. The explanation **presents your reasoning <u>before</u> disclosing the bad news**.

Again, it is important that you don't rush this part of your message. Be sure to provide careful explanations, possible reader or third party benefits, or policy information. Edit your explanation carefully and make sure it is accurate and credible. Use positive language whenever possible. Show sincerity and fairness without resorting to apologies (which may sound insincere) or emotionally charged words like "unfortunately," "devastating," "with regret," etc.

When written effectively, the explanation will help you to

- Justify the decision;
- Improve the chances for reader acceptance of the bad news;
- Reduce negative feelings and mitigate potential conflict.
    - By the time your reader has read your explanation, they should anticipate the bad news so it isn't a shock to them.

Part 3: Delivering the bad news

Once you've written your explanation, **you still have to deliver the bad news.** Be sure that there is a clear statement of the details or decision: otherwise, your reader might misunderstand your message. Take care not to create false hope or delay the bad news until another occasion; eventually, you will have to deliver the bad news and your reader may interpret your earlier communications as deceptive.

Although you want your message to be clear, there are a number of cushioning techniques you can use to soften the blow of the bad news:

1. Splice the news with a **reason, a reader benefit, or a demonstration of concern** to move away from the bad news a bit:
    - E.g. We cannot refund your purchase price. We do understand your concern, but this practice allows us to offer great everyday savings to our consumers. [Note that this example creates some positivity but may have to be revised further to de-emphasize the bad news more. Examine the following recommendations carefully.]
2. Use a **subordinate clause** to diminish bad news
    - E.g. Although we cannot refund your purchase price, we are sending you two coupons toward your next purchase. [Note that the bad news is in the subordinate clause. The main clause should contain better news, a reader benefit, or a demonstration of concern.]
3. Suggest a **compromise or alternative**
    - Although we cannot refund your purchase price, we can give you credit for the full purchase amount to be used at a location convenient to you.
4. **Imply** the bad news
    - Refunds are only granted within 14 days of purchase. We can, however, give you credit for the full purchase amount to be used at a location convenient to you. [The consumer should know by this point that his/her situation does not warrant a refund. Take care when using this approach: **don't leave room for misinterpretation**.]

Be careful to express/ imply the bad news **only one time**. Don't repeat it, express deep regret, allude to it again, etc. That would **emphasize** the bad news and **upset the reader** even more.

After you have cushioned the bad news in a tactful way, you might want to conclude this section of your message with additional information, such as actions that the reader can take, alternative solutions to the problem, or possible opportunities for the future.

Part 4: The Closing

Once you have finished your explanation and delivered the bad news, there is one final step that must be taken. Be sure to end your message with a **thoughtful, forward-looking statement**. The purpose of this section is to leave your reader feeling as good as possible in the circumstances. **Don't ruin all your hard work by dwelling on/going back to the bad news – move on!**

You can move on and stay focused on the positive by

- Promoting goodwill and further relations;
- Looking forward to future business;
- Offering incentives to continued business;
- Providing follow-up information for alternatives or compromises;
- Showing appreciation and sincerity.

Don't try to take the easy way out by saying, "Have a great day!" or something equally cheerful. As we saw in the beginning, this is both inappropriate and insincere since you have, likely, ruined their day (or at least the next few hours).

By following these steps, you can minimize negative consequences and potentially create a positive opportunity. This kind of diplomacy and reader-focused writing will make you stand out from your peers, and will enhance your reputation with employers and clients.

Key Takeaways

Also review the key takeaways from the Direct Pattern explained in Chapter 3.

- **When should you use the indirect pattern of delivering information?**
  The best time to use the indirect pattern of delivering information is when you want your reader to understand the reasons behind your message in order to avoid tension or conflict that may be caused by the purpose of your message (which is to deliver unwanted, unexpected, or sensitive information).
- **What are the key characteristics of the indirect pattern?**
  A message that uses the indirect pattern effectively will begin with a buffer that creates positive feelings but does not allude to the bad news, goes on to provide reasons and explanations for the bad news, then uses cushioning techniques to soften the blow of the bad news. The indirect pattern ends with a positive closing that looks forward and does not allude to the bad news. This creates a feeling of good will in the beginning, provides an explanation or a context for the bad/sensitive news, then ends on a positive note that focuses on the future.
- **What are the benefits of the indirect pattern?**
  The most important benefits of the indirect pattern is that it prepares the reader for the information that you are about to impart. In doing so, you soften the impact of bad news, capture and maintain the reader's attention, persuade the reader to keep reading, and explain the reasoning/expectations behind the information to promote reader acceptance.
- **What are the drawbacks of the indirect pattern?**
  The successful use of the indirect pattern depends on appropriate audience analysis. If you send a message to a busy reader who is only interested in the main point, it is possible that your reader will respond in a negative

way. Remember, people consider their time to be very valuable, and sending unnecessarily indirect or wordy messages that contain irrelevant information can demonstrate a lack of respect for your reader's time. Readers who feels that you are wasting their time are unlikely to continue to read your message. At best, they might skim through it; the danger is that they could miss the main point of your message entirely!

Exercises

Discussion Activity

Please read through the following scenario. Once you are familiar with the situation, create your own post/discussion response by answering the following questions:

- What are your strongest and safest points?
- What are the most inflammatory or unwelcome points?
- What questions, objections, and concerns will the reader likely have?
- How could you organize these points into the four-part indirect pattern for bad news?

Imagine that you are a full-time college student who tutors high school students to help pay for your tuition. One of your students has refused to do his homework for the past month and is rude and disruptive while you work with him/her. In addition to being incredibly frustrated, you feel that you are wasting time that could be better spent working with a student who genuinely wants your help.

Write an outline for a letter to the student's parents or guardians, who have paid for 3 months of tutoring in advance, telling them that you no longer wish to work with their child*. Be sure to follow the indirect pattern: these parents/guardians are extremely sensitive when it comes to their child, whom they feel has been misjudged and mistreated by teachers in the past. Further, they have gotten to know the parents of other students, so you don't want them turning other parents against you!

***** *Feel free to use your imagination to fill in the blanks (e.g. student's name, age, and gender; parents/guardians' names and situation; your past relationship with them; etc.).*

CHAPTER 3: REVIEW

Key Takeaway

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Before beginning to draft a document, let your purpose for writing and anticipated audience reaction determine whether to take a direct or indirect approach, and choose an appropriate organizing principle to help structure your message.
- The best times to use the direct pattern of delivering information are when you know that your reader is anxious for the information you are providing, will be pleased by or indifferent to the information, or is at least mildly interested in what you have to say.
- A message that uses the direct pattern effectively will frontload the essential information, ensuring that the most important information comes first.
- One of the most important benefits of the direct pattern is that it saves time for the reader.
- The successful use of the direct pattern depends on reader receptivity. If you are too hasty in delivering sensitive or unwelcome information, it is very possible that your reader will respond in a negative way.
- The best time to use the indirect pattern of delivering information is when you want your reader to understand the reasons behind your message in order to avoid tension or conflict that may be caused by the purpose of your message (which is to deliver unwanted, unexpected, or sensitive information).
- A message that uses the indirect pattern effectively will begin with a buffer that creates positive feelings but does not allude to the bad news, goes on to provide reasons and explanations for the bad news, then uses cushioning techniques to soften the blow of the bad news.
- The most important benefits of the indirect pattern is that it prepares the reader for the information that you are about to impart.
- The successful use of the indirect pattern depends on appropriate audience analysis. If you send a message to a busy reader who is only interested in the main point, it is possible that your reader will respond in a negative way.

CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS MESSAGE FORMATS

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Identify characteristics of effective professional emails.
2. Determine the appropriate pattern of communication needed for various audiences
3. Describe the the components of a well-written message body
4. Identify the purpose for successful memo writing
5. List the parts of an effective memo.
6. Identify the parts of effective letters.
7. Plan, write, revise, and edit letters that are organized, complete, and tailored to specific audiences.

Chapter Sections

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4.1: SENDING EMAIL MESSAGES

Learning Objectives

1. Identify characteristics of effective professional emails.
2. Determine the appropriate pattern of communication needed for various audiences
3. Describe the components of a well-written message body

Electronic mail, widely known as "e-mail" or just "email," is by volume the most popular written communication channel in the history of human civilization. With emails being so cheap and easy to send on desktop and laptop computers, as well as on mobile phones and tablets, a staggering 280 *billion* emails are sent globally per *day* (Radicati, 2017)—that's over a hundred trillion per year. Most are for business purposes because email is a flexible channel ideal for anything from short, routine information shares, requests, and responses the length of a text, to important formal messages delivering the content that letters and memos used to handle. The ability to send a message to one person or as many people as you have addresses for, integrate with calendars for scheduling meetings and events, send document attachments, and send automatic replies makes email the most versatile communication channel in the workplace.

The fact that 3.2 million emails are typically sent every second doesn't mean that quality is a non-issue for email. Because it has, to some extent, replaced mailed letters for formal correspondence, emails related to important occasions, such as applying for and maintaining employment, must be impeccably well written. Your email represents you in your physical absence, as well as the company you work for, if that's the case, so it must **provide the needed content and be appropriately structured and well-written**.

First, ensure that you really need an email to represent you because emailing merely to avoid speaking in person or calling by phone can do more harm than good. If an email is necessary, however, then it must display the qualities listed in the previous paragraph. As people who make decisions about your livelihood, the employers and clients you email can be highly judgmental about the quality of your writing — to them, it's an indication of your professionalism, attention to detail, education, and even intelligence. The writing quality in a single important email can be the difference between getting hired and getting fired or remaining unemployed.

Let's say, for instance, that you get an email from a customer who has been looking for a company to do a custom job. This means he/she has been emailing other companies with the same inquiry. Let's also say that your competitors offer similar services at similar prices and are similarly reviewed positively online. With everything else being equal, the quality of the email responses received may be the deciding factor for that customer. Responding to the customer quickly gives you an advantage because you show that you can get things done promptly. If your email is also well written in a professional style (see §2.3 for the 6 Cs) and error-free in every way due to effective editing and proofreading, you stand a much better chance of getting the contract.

Comparing this with another company's email that came a few days later, with multiple writing errors in it, the customer will likely go with the company that wrote the better email. Even though the quality of communication doesn't necessarily guarantee quality of work in the product or service a company provides, customers will assume a connection. Indeed, the quality of communication does speak to work ethic and attention to detail.

The customer's basis for judgment here is that if a company's communications are good, it must be because they've hired a customer service rep dedicated to responding to people. This means they have the money to do so, which means they're successful, which must be because they do a good job, which means they'll do a good job on what the customer wants them to do. We must all try to make a similarly strong impression in any situation where the quality of email matters. Let's turn our attention, then, to the ten aspects you must consider when sending an important email — in the order they appear in the email (from top to bottom) — and then consider a few more points of caution.

Email Parts

- 4.1.1: Email Address
- 4.1.2: Timestamp & Punctuality
- 4.1.3: Subject Line Title
- 4.1.4: Opening Salutation & Recipient Selection
- 4.1.5: Message Opening
- 4.1.6: Message Body
- 4.1.7: Message Closing
- 4.1.8: Closing Salutation
- 4.1.9: E-signature
- 4.1.10: Attachments
- 4.1.11: Before Sending your Email

Before delving into this in detail, however, let's review the advantages, disadvantages, and occasions for using email on channel selection.

Table 4.1 Excerpt: Email Pros, Cons, and Proper Use

Advantages	Disadvantages	Expectations	Appropriate Use
• Delivers messages instantly anywhere in the world to anyone with an internet connection and email address you have • Sends to one or many people at once, including secondary audiences (CC, BCC) • Allows you to attach documents up to several megabytes in size or links to any internet webpages • Allows for a back-and-forth thread on the topic in the subject line • Archives written correspondence for review even decades later • Can be done on any mobile device with an internet connection • Is free (beyond your subscription fees to an internet or phone provider) • Is somewhat permanent in that emails exist somewhere on a server even if deleted by both sender and receiver	• Gives the illusion of privacy: your messages can be forwarded to anyone, monitored by your company or an outside security agency, retrieved with a warrant, or hacked even if both you and receiver delete them • Can be slow when used for back-and-forth dialogue • Tone may be misread (e.g., jokes misunderstood) due to the absence of nonverbal cues • May be sent automatically to the recipient's spam folder or otherwise overlooked or deleted without being read given the volume of emails some people get in a day • Subject to errors such as hitting "send" prematurely or replying to all when only the sender should be replied to • Subject to limits on document attachment size • Subject to spam (unsolicited emails) • Regretted emails can't be taken back or edited • Requires a working internet connection on a computing device, which isn't available everywhere in the world	• Reply within 24 hours, or sooner if company policy requires it • Follow conventions for writing a clear subject line; salutation; message opening, body, and closing; closing salutation, and e-signature • Netiquette: be as kind as you should be in person; don't write emails angrily • Edit to ensure coverage of the subject indicated in the subject line with no more or less information than the recipient needs to do their job • Proofread to ensure correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling because errors compromise your credibility • Avoid confusion due to vagueness that requires that the recipient respond asking for clarification	• Quickly deliver a message that doesn't need an immediate response • Send a message and receive a response in writing as evidence for future review (lay down a paper trail) • Use when confidentiality isn't necessary • Send electronic documents as attachments • Send the same message to several people at once, including perhaps people whose email address you need to hide from the others (using BCC) to respect their confidentiality

4.1.1: Email Address

Just as with physical (paper) mail, the first thing you see when an email arrives in your inbox is the identity of the sender. The address determines immediately how you feel about that email—excited, uninterested, curious, angry, hopeful, scared, or just obliged to read it. Your email address will create similar impressions on those you email, depending on your relationship to them. It's therefore important that you send from the right email address.

If you work for a company, obviously, you must use your company email address for company business. Customers expect it. Bear in mind that in a legal and right-to-privacy sense, you don't own these emails. If they exist on a company server, company administrators can read any of them if they are investigating a breach of company policy or criminal activity (Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, 2010). This means that you must be careful not to write anything in an email that could compromise your employability.

If you are writing on your own behalf for any business or job application purposes, it's vital that you have a respectable-looking email address. Using a college or university email is a good idea because it proves that you indeed are attending or attended a post-secondary institution when you've made that claim in your application. If your school email address has expired, however, it's worth starting an account that has a straightforward address showing your name. If your name is Justin Trudeau, for instance, your ideal email address would simply be justin.trudeau@ with one of the major email providers like Gmail or Outlook/Hotmail. Of course, everybody knows that all of the straightforward firstname.lastname@ addresses have been taken, so there's nothing wrong with variations that include middle names or initials and small numbers as long as they don't get too big, such as more than 25 characters.

What's fundamentally important, however, is that you do not use your teenage joke email address. If you have one of these, it may have scored some points with friends back in high school, but now that you're an adult, it will only do irreparable harm to your employability prospects if you're using it for job applications. Any potential employer or other professional who gets an email from star6969@whatever.com, speedball.playa@hotmail.com, or crazy.unicorn.girl@yahoo.com is going to delete it without even opening it.

Also, forget about clinging to the fantasy of having only one email address to deal with. Just as your demeanour and language style changes in social, family, and professional contexts, you must likewise hold multiple email accounts—one for work, one for school, and one for personal matters. Each of the 3.8 billion email users in the world has an average of 1.7 email accounts (Radicati, 2017). It's likely that you will have more than three throughout your life and retire accounts as you move on from school and various workplaces. If you can manage it, you can set up forwarding so that you can run multiple accounts out of one, except where company or institutional policy requires that you work entirely within a designated email provider or client.

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4.1.2: Timestamp & Punctuality

The timestamp that comes with each email means that punctuality matters and raises the question of what the expectations are for acceptable lag time between you receiving an email and returning an expected response. Of course, you can reply as soon as possible as you would when texting and have a back-and-forth recorded in a thread. What if you need more time, however?

Though common wisdom used to be that the business standard is to reply within 24 hours, the availability of email on the smartphones that almost everyone carries in their pockets has reduced that expectation to a few hours. Recent research shows that half of email responses in business environments, in fact, come within two hours (Vanderkam, 2016). Some businesses have internal policies that demand even quicker responses because business moves fast. If you can get someone's business sooner than the competition because you reply sooner, then, of course, you're going to make every effort to reply right away. Of course, the actual work you do can delay your email responses, but you must prioritize incoming work in order to stay in business.

What if you can't reply within the expected number of hours? The courteous course of action is to reply as soon as possible with a brief message saying that you'll be turning your attention to this matter as soon as you can. You don't have to go into detail about what's delaying you unless it's relevant to the topic at hand, but courtesy requires that you at least give a timeline for a fuller response and stick to it.

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4.1.3: Subject Line Title

The next most important piece of information you see when scanning your inbox is the email's subject line. Busy professionals who receive dozens of emails each day prioritize their workload and response efforts based largely on the content of the subject lines appearing in their inboxes. Because it acts as a title for the email, the subject line should accurately summarize its topic in 3-7 words. (This is the ideal length, but never sacrifice clarity to make the subject line short.)

The word count range here is important because your subject line shouldn't be so vague that its one or two words will be misleading, nor so long and detailed that its eight-plus words will be cut off by your inbox layout. Most details about specific times and places, for instance, should really be in the message itself rather than in the subject line (see Table 4.1.3 below). Also, avoid using words in your subject line that might make your email look like spam. A subject line such as *Hello* or *Interesting offer* might appear to be a hook to get you to open an email that contains a malware virus. This may prompt the recipient to delete it to be on the safe side, or their email provider may automatically send it to the junk mail box, which people rarely check.

Table 4.1.3: Subject Line Length

Too Short	Just Right	Too Long and Detailed
Problem	Problem with your product order	Problem with your order for an LG washer and dryer submitted on April 29 at 11:31pm
Meeting	Rescheduling Nov. 6 meeting	Rescheduling our 3pm November 6 meeting for 11am November 8
Parking Permits	Summer parking permit pickup	When to pick up your summer parking permits from security

Stylistically, notice that appropriately sized subject lines typically abbreviate where they can and avoid articles (*the, a, an)*, and capitalization beyond the first word (except for proper nouns).

Whatever you do, don't leave your subject line blank! Even if you're just sending a quick email with an attachment to yourself and do not include other content in the message, the subject line text will be essential to your ability to retrieve that file later. You might find yourself desperately needing that file months or even years later because the laptop it was saved on was stolen or damaged beyond repair, which you couldn't have predicted at the time you sent it. A search in your email provider for words matching those you used in the subject line will quickly help you find the email in question. Without words in the subject line or message, however, you'll have no choice but to guess at when you sent the email and waste time going through page after page of sent-folder messages looking for it. A few seconds spent writing a good subject line can save you hours of frustrating searches later.

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4.1.4: Opening Salutation & Recipient Selection

The opening salutation of an email indicates the name of the receiver but also reveals the level of formality of the email in question. As you can see in Table 6.1.4 below, opening with *Dear [Full Name]* or Greetings, *[Full Name]:* strikes an appropriately respectful tone when writing to someone for the first time in a professional context. When greeting someone you've emailed before, *Hello, [First name]:* maintains a semiformal tone. When you're more casually addressing a familiar colleague, a simple *Hi [First name],* is just fine.

Table 4.1.4: Opening Salutation Examples

First-time Formality	Ongoing Semiformal	Informal
Dear Ms. Melody Nelson: *Dear Ms. Nelson:* *Greetings, Ms. Melody Nelson:* *Greetings, Ms. Nelson:*	*Hello, Melody:* *Hello again, Melody:* *Thanks, Melody.* (in response to something given)	*Hi Mel,* *Hey Mel,* *Mel,*

Notice that the punctuation includes a comma after the greeting word and a colon after their name for formal and semiformal occasions following. Informal greetings, however, relax these rules by omitting the comma after the greeting word and replacing the colon with a comma. Don't use two commas, though — *Hi, Jeremy,* appears too crowded with commas.

Depending on the nature of the message, you can use alternative greeting possibilities. If you're thanking someone for information they've sent you, you can do so right away in the greeting; e.g., *Many thanks for the contact list, Maggie*. When your email exchange turns into a back-and-forth thread involving several emails, it's customary to drop the salutation altogether and treat each message as if it were a text message even in formal situations.

Formality also dictates whether you use the recipient's first name or full name in your salutation. If you're writing to someone you know well or responding to an email where the sender signed off at the bottom using their first name, that means you may address the sender by the first name in your response. If you're addressing someone formally for the first time, however, you may want to strike an appropriately respectful tone by using the receiver's full name. If you're addressing a group, a simple *Hello, all: or Hello, team:* will do.

Be careful when selecting recipients, however. First, spell their name correctly because email addresses often have non-standard combinations of name fragments and numbers; any typos will result in the server bouncing your email back to you as being unsent. Waiting before entering their name in the recipient or "To" field is also wise in case you accidentally hit the Send button before you finish drafting your email. If you prematurely send an email, a quick follow-up apologizing for the confusion and the completed message is the best damage control you can do, but it requires immediate action. Another preventative measure is to compose a message offline, such as in an MS Word or simple Notepad document devoid of formatting, then copy and paste it into the email field when you're ready to send.

If you have a primary recipient in mind but want others to see the message, you can include them in the CC (carbon copy) line. If confidentiality requires that recipients shouldn't see one another's addresses, BCC [blind carbon copy] them instead. Be selective with whom you CC, however. It's good to keep your manager in the loop, of course, but you may want to do this only at the beginning and the end of a project's many email exchanges. Your manager will appreciate that things are underway and wrapping up but may get annoyed to receive a copy of every little mundane back-and-forth throughout the process. If in doubt, speak with your manager about their preferences.

Never "reply all" so that everyone included in the "To" and "CC" lines can see your reply unless your response includes information that everyone absolutely must see. If your manager sends some information to all 80 people in your department, for instance, your reply-all response that just acknowledges receipt with an "OK, thanks!" — which is unnecessary in the first place — will anger 79 people who expected to see valuable information. If the first email was about a departmental meeting time though the location was yet to be determined, but you now have that information because you did the booking, of course, you would reply all to provide that necessary follow-up.

Concerning **email security:** No matter whom you select as the primary or secondary (CC) recipients of your email, always assume that your email may be forwarded to other people, including some people you might not have wanted to show it to. Just because you've selected recipients doesn't necessarily make your email a private channel. You have no control over whether the recipients forward it to others, what the server administrators do with it (legally or not), or if your account or the server is hacked. If your email contains any legally sensitive content, it can even be retrieved from the server storing it with a warrant from law enforcement. A good rule to follow is to **never send an email that you would be embarrassed by if it were read by your boss, your family, or a jury**. No technical barriers can truly prevent it from falling into their hands.

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4.1.5: Message Opening

Most emails will be direct-approach messages where you get right to the point in the opening sentence immediately below the opening salutation. As we saw in §3.1 on message organization, the **direct-approach** pattern does the reader a favour by not burying the main point under a pile of contextual background. If you send a busy professional on a treasure hunt for your main point — a request for information, for example–don't blame them if they don't find it and don't provide the information you asked for. They might have given up before they got there or missed it when skimming, as busy people tend to do. By stating in the opening exactly what you want the recipient to do, however, you increase your chances of achieving that goal.

Table 4.1.5: Direct- vs. Indirect-approach Email Openings

Sample Direct Opening	Sample Indirect Opening
We have reviewed your application and are pleased to offer you the position of retail sales manager at the East 32nd and 4th Street location of Swansong Clothing.	Thank you very much for your application to the retail sales manager position at the East 32nd and 4th Street location of Swansong Clothing. Though we received a large volume of high-quality applications for this position, we were impressed by your experience and qualifications.

Indirect-approach emails should be rare and only sent in extenuating circumstances. Using email to deliver bad news or address a sensitive topic can be seen as a cowardly way of avoiding difficult situations that should be dealt with in person or, if the people involved are too far distant, at least by phone. Other circumstances that might force you to use the indirect approach for emails include the following:

- Needing to use persuasive techniques
- Having no other means of contacting the recipient
- Needing to get the email exchange in writing in case the situation escalates and must be handled as evidence by higher authorities
- Needing to deliver a large number of bad-news messages without having the time or resources to individually customize each, such as when you are sending rejection notices to job applicants (see the sample indirect opening in Table 4.1.5 above); out of expedience, it's understandable if these are boiler-plate responses

In such cases, the indirect approach means that the opening should use buffer strategies to ease the recipient into the bad news or set the proper context for discussing the sensitive topic.

Otherwise, your email must pass the **first-screen test**, which is that everything the recipient needs to see is visible in the opening without forcing them to scroll further down for it. Before pressing the Send button, put yourself in your reader's shoes and consider whether your message passes the first-screen test. If not, and if you have no good reason to take the indirect approach, then re-organize your email message by moving (copying, cutting, and pasting, or ctrl. + C, ctrl. + X, ctrl. + v) its main point up to make it the opening of your message.

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4.1.6: Message Body

Emails long enough to divide into paragraphs follow the three-part message organization (outlined in §3.1) where the message body supports the opening main point with explanatory details such as background information justifying an information request. With brevity being so important in emails, keeping the message body concise, with no more information than recipients need to do their job, is extremely important to the message's success. The message body therefore doesn't always need fully developed three-part paragraphs. In fact, one-sentence paragraphs (single spaced with a line of space between each) and bullet-point lists are fine. If your message grows in length beyond the first screen, document design features such as bold headings help direct readers to the information they need. If your message gets any larger, moving it into an attached document is better than writing several screens of large paragraphs.

Also, keep email messages brief by sticking to one topic per email. If you have a second topic you must cover with the same recipient(s), sending a separate email about it can potentially save you time if you need to retrieve that topic content later. If the subject line doesn't describe the topic you're looking for because it was a second or third topic you added after the one summarized in the subject line, finding that hidden message content will probably involve opening several emails. A subject line must perfectly summarize all of an email's contents to be useful for archiving and retrieval, so sticking to one topic per email will ensure both brevity and archive retrieval efficiency.

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4.1.7: Message Closing

An email closing usually includes **action information** such as direction on what to do with the information in the message and deadlines for action and response. If your email message requests that its nine recipients each fill out a linked Doodle.com survey to determine a good meeting time, for instance, you would end by saying, *Please fill out the Doodle survey by 4pm Friday, May 18, so I can email everyone the meeting time by 10 a.m. on Monday, May 21*. If the message doesn't call for action details, some closing thought (e.g., *I'm happy to help. Please drop me a line if you have any questions*) ends it without giving the impression of being rudely abrupt. Goodwill statements, such as *Thanks again for your feedback on our customer service*, are necessary, especially in emails involving gratitude.

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4.1.8: Closing Salutation

A courteous closing to an email involves a combination of a pleasant sign-off word or phrase and your first name. As with the opening salutation, closing salutation possibilities depend on the nature of the message and where you want to position it on the formality spectrum, as shown in Table 6.1.8 below.

Table 4.1.8: Closing Salutation Examples

Formal	Semiformal	More casual
Best wishes, *Kind regards,* *Much appreciated,* *Sincerely,* *Warm regards,*	*Best,* *Get better soon,* *Good luck,* *Take care,* *Many thanks,*	*All good things,* *Be well,* *Bye for now,* *Cheers,*

Your first email to someone in a professional context should end with a more formal closing salutation. Later emails to the same person can use the appropriate semiformal closing salutation for the occasion. If you're on friendly, familiar terms with the person but still want to include email formalities, an informal closing salutation can work as a confirmation of that friendly rapport. Notice in Table 6.1.8 that you capitalize only the first word in the closing salutation and add a comma at the end.

Including your first name after the closing salutation ends in a friendly way, as if to say, "Let's be on a first-name basis" if you weren't already, greenlighting your recipients to address you by your first name in their reply. In your physical absence, your name at the end is also a way of saying, like politicians chiming in at the end of campaign ads, "I'm [name] and I approve this message." It's a stamp of authorship. Omitting it gives the impression of being abrupt and too busy or important to take a second for formal niceties.

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4.1.9: E-signature

Not to be confused with an electronic version of your handwritten signature, the e-signature that automatically appears at the very bottom of your email is like the business card you would hand to someone when networking. Every professional should have one. Like a business card, the e-signature includes all relevant contact information. At the very least, the e-signature should include the details given in Table 4.1.9 below.

Table 4.1.9: E-signature Part

E-signature Parts	Examples
Full Name, Professional Role Company Name Company address Phone Number(s) Company website, Email address	**Jessica Day**, Graphic Designer UXB Designs 492 Atwater Street Toronto, ON M4M 2H4 416-555-2297 (c) uxb.com | jessica.day@uxb.com
Full Name, Credentials Professional Role Company Name Company Address Phone Number(s) Company website, email address	**Winston Schmidt**, MBA Senior Marketing Consultant Tectonic Global Solutions Inc. 7819 Cambie Street, Vancouver, BC V5K 1A4 604.555.2388 (w) | 604.555.9375 (c) tectonicglobal.com | m.bennington@tgs.com

Depending on the individual's situation, variations on the e-signature include putting your educational credentials after your name (e.g., MBA) on the same line and professional role on the second line, especially if it's a long one, and the company address on one line or two. Also, those working for a company usually include the company logo to the left of their e-signature. Some instead (or additionally) add their profile picture, especially if they work independently, though this isn't always advisable because it may open you to biased reactions. Other professionals add links to their social media profiles, such as LinkedIn and the company's Facebook and Twitter pages. For some ideas on what your e-signature could look like, image-search "email e-signature" in your internet browser's search engine.

If you haven't already, set up your e-signature in your email provider's settings or options page. In Gmail, for instance, click on the settings cog icon at the top right, select *Settings* from the dropdown menu, scroll down the *General* tab, and type your e-signature in the Signature field. Make absolutely sure that all of the details are correct and words are spelled correctly. You don't want someone to point out that you've spelled your professional role incorrectly after months of it appearing in hundreds of emails.

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4.1.10: Attachments

Email's ability to help you send and receive documents makes it an indispensable tool for any business. Bear in mind a few best practices when attaching documents:

- Always **announce an attachment** in an email message with a very brief description of its contents. For instance, *Please find attached the minutes from today's departmental meeting* might be all you write between the opening and closing salutations.
- **Never leave a message blank** when attaching a document in an email to someone else. Your message should at least be like the one given above. Of course, including a message is up to you if you're sending yourself an attachment as an alternative to using a dedicated cloud storage service like Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive. Even if it's just for yourself, however, at least including a subject line identifying the nature of the attachment will make locating the file easier months or even years later.
- Ensure that your **attachment size**, if it's many megabytes (MB), is still less than your email provider's maximum allowable for sending and receiving. Gmail and Yahoo, for instance, allow attachments up to

25MB, whereas Outlook/Hotmail allow only 10MB attachments. However, files that are gigabytes (GB) large can be shared by using email to permit access to them where they're hosted in cloud storage services such as Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, Dropbox, and many others that have varying limits from 5GB free storage to 10TB for paid storage (Khanna, 2017).

- Always **check to ensure that you've attached a document** as part of your editing process. It shows that you lack attention to detail if your recipient responds to remind you to attach the document. Some of the more sophisticated email providers will remind you to do this as soon as you hit the Send button if you've mentioned an attachment in your message but haven't actually attached it. If you get into the habit of relying on this feature in one of your email providers (e.g., your personal Gmail account) but are on your own in others (e.g., your work or school email provider), the false sense of security can hurt you at some point when using the latter.

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4.1.11: Before Sending Your Email

Before hitting the Send button, follow through on the entire writing and editing process by using evaluation, revision, and proofreading. Put yourself in your reader's position and assess whether you've achieved the purpose you set out to achieve. Evaluate also if you've struck the appropriate tone and formality. If you're aware that your tone is too angry, for instance, cool down by focusing on other business for a while. When you come back to your email draft the next day, you will usually find that you don't feel as strongly about what you wrote the day before. Review the advice about netiquette in §6.2, then replace the angry words with more carefully chosen expressions to craft a more mature response before hitting the Send button. You'll feel much better about this in the end than receiving the threat-heavy response your angry email would have prompted had you gone through with sending it.

After revising the message, **always proofread** it. In any professional situation, but especially in important ones related to gaining and keeping employment, any typo or error related to spelling, grammar, or punctuation can cost you dearly. A poorly written email is insulting because it effectively says to the recipient, "You weren't important enough for me to take the time to ensure that this email was properly written." Worse, poor writing can cause miscommunication if it is unclear, and it forces the reader to struggle to figure out what the writer meant to say. If the recipient acts on misinterpretations, and others base their actions on that action, you can soon find that even small errors can have damaging ripple effects that infuriate everyone involved.

Table 4.1.11: Editing a Poorly Written Information Request Email

Poorly Written Email Example	Improved Email Draft
hey, think you made a mistake marking my last assinement i did what is supposed to do if its cuz i didnt get it in by the 5th its cuz i had a bad breakup it was so bad i had to see a councilor thats why i havnt bin around hope you understand. should of said that earlier maybe. oh and whens the next thing due. let me know as soon as u get this ok thanks bye	Hello, Professor Morgan: Could you please clarify why I failed the previous assignment?I believe I followed the instructions but may have been confused about the due date while dealing with some personal issues. If so, I apologize for my late submission and understand if that's the reason for the fail. I just wanted to confirm that that's the reason and whether there's anything I can do to make up for it. I assure you it won't happen again, and I'll pay closer attention to the syllabus deadlines from now on. Much appreciated, Taylor

The poorly written draft has the look of a hastily and angrily written text to a "frenemy." An email to a superior, however, calls for a much more formal, tactful, courteous, and apologetic approach. The undifferentiated wall of text that omits or botches standard email parts such as opening and closing salutations is the first sign of trouble. The lack of capitalization, poor spelling (e.g., *councilor* instead of *counsellor*), run-on sentences and lack of other punctuation such as apostrophes for contractions, as well as the inappropriate personal detail all suggest that the writer doesn't take his/her studies seriously enough to deserve any favours. Besides tacking on a question at the end, one that could be easily answered by reading the syllabus, the writer is ultimately unclear about the purpose of the email. If the writer wants an explanation for the failing grade, that should be stated upfront. The rudeness of the closing is more likely to enrage the recipient than to ensure a quick and detailed response.

The improved version stands a much better chance of a sympathetic response. It corrects the problems of the first draft, starting with properly framing the message with expected formal email parts. It benefits from a more courteous tone in a message that frontloads a clear and polite request for information in the opening. The supporting detail in the message body and apologetic closing suggest that the student is well aware of how to communicate like a professional to achieve a particular goal.

After running such a quality-assurance check on your email, your final step before sending it should involve protecting yourself against losing it to a technical glitch. Get in the habit of copying your email message text (ctrl. + A, ctrl. + C) just before hitting the Send button, then checking your Sent folder immediately to confirm that the email sent properly. If your message vanished due to some random malfunction, as can happen occasionally, immediately open a blank MS Word or Notepad document and paste the text there (ctrl. + V) to save it. That way, you don't have to waste five minutes rewriting the entire message after you solve the connectivity issues or whatever else caused the glitch.

For similar views on email best practices, see Guffey, Loewy, and Almonte (2016, pp. 90-97), which furnished some of the information given above.

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Key Takeaway

- Follow standard conventions for writing each part of a professional or academic email, making strategic choices about the content and level of formality appropriate for the audience and occasion.

Exercises

1. Take one of the worst emails you've ever seen. It could be from a friend, colleague, family member, professional, or other and do the following:
    1. Copy and paste it into a blank document, but change the name of its author and don't include their real email address (protect their confidentiality).
    2. Use MS Word's Track Changes comment feature to identify as many organizational errors as you can.
    3. Again using Track Changes, correct all of the stylistic and writing errors.
2. Let's say you just graduated from your program and have been putting your name out there, applying to job postings, networking, and letting friends and colleagues know that you're on the job market. You get an out-of-the-blue email from someone named Dr. Emily Conway, the friend of a friend, who needs someone to put together some marketing brochures for her start-up medical clinic in time for a conference in a week. It's not entirely what you've been training to do, but you've done something like it for a course assignment once, and you need rent money, so you decide to accept the offer. Dr. Conway's email asks you five questions in the message body:
    1. Our mutual friend mentioned you just graduated from college. What program? How'd you do?
    2. Can you send a sample of your marketing work?
    3. How much would you charge for designing a double-sided 8½x11" tri-fold brochure?
    4. When you've completed your design, would you be okay with sending me the ready-to-print PDF and original Adobe Illustrator file?
    5. If I already have all the text and pictures, how soon can you do this? Can you handle the printing as well?

Dr. Conway closes her email asking if you'd like to meet to discuss the opportunity in more detail and signs off as Emily. Draft a formal response email that abides by the conventions of a formal email.

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4.2: COMPOSING WORKPLACE MEMOS

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the purpose for successful memo writing
2. List the parts of an effective memo.

A memo (or memorandum, meaning "reminder") communicates policies, procedures, short reports, or related official business within an organization. It assumes a one-to-all perspective, broadcasting a message to a group audience rather than to individuals, like email or letters often do. Memos are objective in tone and avoid all personal bias or subjective preference, especially because they may have legal standing when reflecting policies or procedures. Accuracy is therefore paramount in memos lest ambiguities result in mistakes that then become legal matters (Business Communication for Success, 2015, 9.2).

Memo Topics

- 4.2.1: Memo Purpose
- 4.2.2: Memo Formats

Before exploring memos in more detail, let's review the advantages, disadvantages, and occasions for choosing memos during channel selection.

Table 4.2 Excerpt: Memo Pros, Cons, and Proper Use

Channel	Advantages	Disadvantages	Expectations	Appropriate Use
Memo	• Provides a written record of group decisions, announcements, policies, and procedures within an organization • Can also be a format for delivering small reports (e.g., conference report) and recording negotiating terms in agreements between organizations (e.g., memo of understanding) • Can be posted on a physical bulletin board and/or emailed	• Requires a good archiving system to make memos easily accessible for those (especially new employees) needing to review a record of company policies, procedures, etc.	• Use template with company letterhead • Follow the same conventions as email, except omit the opening and closing salutations and e-signature	• For a written record for decisions, announcements, policies, procedures, and small reports shared within an organization • Post a printed version on an office bulletin board and email to all involved

4.2.1: Memo Purpose

A memo's purpose is often to inform, but it occasionally includes an element of persuasion or call to action. All organizations have informal and formal communication networks. The unofficial, informal communication network within an organization, the "grapevine," is often a way for employees to relate and share useful, reliable information, but can also be a channel for rumour, gossip, and innuendo. On the grapevine, one person may hear that someone else is going to be laid off and start passing the news around. Rumours can distort the truth more and more the further along they are passed — and, before you know it, the word might be that the company is shutting down an entire department.

One effective way to address informal, unofficial speculation is to spell out clearly for all employees what is going on with a particular issue. If budget cuts are a concern, then it may be wise to send a memo explaining the imminent changes. If a company wants employees to take action, they may also issue a memorandum. For example, a company memo may announce a new program incentivizing employees to use public transit or other alternatives to driving to work and filling up the parking lot with their single-occupant vehicles. In this way, memos often represent the business or organization's interests. They may also include statements that align business and employee interest, underscoring common ground and benefit (Business Communication for Success, 2015, 9.2).

Return to the Memo Topics menu

4.2.2: Memo Format

A memo often has a letterhead with "MEMO" and the company name and logo at the top of the page. Below this are the header fields identifying the recipient, author, date, and subject — much like you would see in an email. In fact, the header fields of an email are based on those traditionally found in memos, so the same principles for what to include here, such as how to title the document in the subject line, hold for both (see (Business Communication for Success, 2015, 9.2)).

Unlike emails, memos omit the opening salutation. However, from there, they are similar in their three-part message organization, being made up of an opening, body, and closing. Always direct-approach, the memo message opening states the main point, the body supports this with details, and the closing gives action information or a summary.

Let's examine a sample memo in **Figure 4.2.2** below.

To: All Employees
From: Larry Ogawa, President, University of State
Date: February 14, 2009
Subject: Future Expenditure Guidelines

After careful deliberation, I have determined it is necessary to begin the initial steps of a financial stewardship program that carries UState through what appears to be a two-year cycle of a severe state shortfall in revenue and subsequent necessary legislative budget reductions.

Beginning February 9, 2009, the following actions are being implemented for the General Fund, Auxiliary Fund, and Capital Fund in order to address the projected reductions in our state aid for the remainder of this year (2008-09) and next year (2009-10).

1. Only purchases needed to operate the university should be made so that we can begin saving to reduce the impact of 2009-10 budget reductions.
2. Requests for out-of-state travel will require approval from the Executive Committee to ensure that only necessary institutional travel occurs.
3. Purchases, including in-state travel and budget transfers, will require the appropriate vice president's approval.

Please understand that we are taking these prudent steps to create savings that will allow UState to reduce the impact of projected cuts in expected 2009-10 legislative reductions. Thank you for your cooperation, and please direct any questions to my office.

Reproduced from Business Communication for Success, 2015, 9.2

Return to the Memo Topics menu

For more on memos, see the following resource:

- *Purdue OWL's four Memos modules, starting with Audience and Purpose (Perkins & Brizee, 2018)*

Key Takeaways

- Memos communicate policies, procedures, short reports, or related official business within an organization. They broadcast a message to a group audience rather than to individuals, like emails or letters often do. They are objective in tone and avoid all personal bias or subjective preference, especially because they may have legal standing when reflecting policies or procedures.
- Memos lack the opening salutation provided in emails and letters but are otherwise structured similarly to emails (opening, body, closing).

Exercises

1. Let's say a new bylaw affects the way you do business in the career you are training for. Assuming you've risen to the position of manager at your workplace, write a memo that explains the new bylaw and how you will adjust the way you conduct business there. Be creative with both the bylaw and your policy or procedure with respect to it.
2. Imagine that your company is about to adopt a new technology (e.g., new software, new laptops, mobile phones, etc.). Inform the employees and discuss the benefits of the new tool in a memo. Explain in point-form, as in the example above, how this development will impact their work.
3. Write a short summary of a class lecture in one of your other courses this week. Use a one-page memo to summarize the lecture as if you were preparing it for classmates who could not attend. Summarize the lecture topic accurately and concisely.

References

Perkins, C., & Brizee, A. (2018, March 23). Memos: Audience and Purpose. *Purdue OWL*. Retrieved from https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/1/

4.3: WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the parts of effective letters.
2. Plan, write, revise, and edit letters that are organized, complete, and tailored to specific audiences.

As one of the most formal documents you can send, a letter conveys a high degree of respect to its recipient. Sending a letter is your way of saying that the recipient matters. Letters are usually one- to two-page documents sent to people or organizations outside of the organization from which they're sent, whereas memos are equivalent documents for formal communications within an organization (see §4.2).

Choosing the Letter Format

Though we use email for many of the occasions that we used to send letters for before the twenty-first century, letters (rather than emails) are still sent for several purposes:

- Cover letters to employers in job applications
- Thank-you letters and other goodwill expressions
- Letters of recommendation (a.k.a. reference letters)
- Letters of transmittal to introduce reports or proposals
- Campaign initiatives, such as for fundraising or political advocacy
- Official announcements of products, services, and promotions to customers
- Claims and other complaints sent to companies to create a formal paper-trail record as evidence in case matters escalate into the court system
- Formal rejection notices to job or program applicants
- Collection notices to people with overdue payments

In these cases, letters offer the advantage of formality, confidentiality (it's illegal to open someone else's mail), and a record of evidence.

There are two main types of letters: block-style letters and modified-block style. The block style used by organizations has a company letterhead at the top, whereas modified-block letters are typically written independently by individuals. Though you may see minor format variations from company to company, letters have 10-12 major parts, each of which we'll examine for the conventions that, if followed, show that you are able to write to a high standard of formality should the occasion call for it.

Letter Parts

Before delving into this in detail, however, let's review the advantages, disadvantages, and occasions for choosing letters during the channel selection process.

Table 4.3 Excerpt: Letter Pros, Cons, and Proper Use

Channel	Advantages	Disadvantages	Expectations	Appropriate Use
Letter	• Shows respect through formality and effort • Ensures confidentiality when sealed in an envelope and delivered to the recipient's physical address (it is illegal to open someone else's mail) • Can introduce other physical documents (enclosures)	• Slow to arrive at the recipient's address depending on how far away they are from the sender • Can be intercepted or tampered with in transit (albeit illegally) • Can be overlooked as junk mail • Time consuming to print, sign, seal, and send for delivery • Mail postage is costlier than email	• Follow conventions for different types of letters (e.g., block for company letters, modified block for personal letters) and provide the sender's and recipient's address, date, recipient salutation, closing salutation, and author's signature • Use company letterhead template when writing on behalf of your organization	• For providing a formal, permanent, confidential written message to a single important person or organization • Ideal for job applications (cover letter), persuasive messages (e.g., fundraising campaigns), bad-news messages, matters with possible legal implications (e.g., claims), and responses to letters • For non-urgent matters

4.3.1: Return Address or Company Letterhead

The first piece of information in a letter is usually the sender's address. In block-style letters, the address appears as part of the company letterhead in the header, under or beside the prominently displayed and brand-stylized company name and logo. Use a company letterhead template whenever writing on behalf of the company you work for; never use it for personal messages (e.g., reference letters for a relative) not authorized by the company. The company letterhead address usually appears in the one-line style following the format given below:

[Street number] [Street name] [Street type], [City or town], [Provincial abbreviation] [two spaces] [Postal code with a single space in the middle]

Example: 1385 Woodroffe Avenue, Ottawa, ON K2G 1V8

See §4.1.3 below for more on address styles. The letterhead also includes other contact information such as phone and fax numbers, as well as the company web address. Some company letterhead templates move some or all of these parts, besides the company name and logo, to the footer so that the whole page is framed with company branding. For dozens of letter template examples, go to open a blank new document in MS Word and type "letter" into the document type or go to Letters (Microsoft Office, 2021).

Figure 4.3.1: Selection of Microsoft Word business letter templates

Because **modified-block-style letters** are sent by individuals unaffiliated with a company, they typically include only the sender's two-line address at the top, which divides the above address style in half so that the street number, name, and type go on the first line (with no comma at the end), and the city/town, provincial abbreviation, and postal code go on the second, as shown below:

Example:

1385 Woodroffe Avenue
Ottawa, ON   K2G 1V8

In both styles of address, strike a formal tone by fully spelling out the street type rather than abbreviating it (e.g., *Street*, not *St.*; *Avenue*, not *Ave.*; *Road*, not *Rd.*; *Crescent*, not *Cres.*; *Boulevard*, not *Blvd.*; *Court*, not *Crt.*; etc.). However, using those abbreviations is fine in informal, personal letters.

A distinguishing feature of the modified-block style is that the sender address is justified (flush) to the vertical middle of the page (i.e., the left edge of its text lines up with it) rather than the left margin. Do this by highlighting the two address lines, then clicking and dragging the base of the left-margin tab in your word processor's ruler right to the vertical midpoint of the page. If your page has 2.5cm margins, that would be at around the 8.25cm mark. Note that modified-block-style letters place the sender's address on the first line below the header (i.e., about an inch or 2.5cm from the top edge of the page) and don't include the sender's name at the top of this address block. The reader can find the sender's name by darting their eyes down to the signature block at the bottom.

In some circumstances, you may want to use block-style letters with a letterhead when writing on your own behalf rather than for a company. When writing a cover letter, for instance, you can stylize your name prominently as if it were the name of a company so that it stands out in a larger font in bold typeface, possibly in an eye-catching colour. Because this appears in the header margin, adopting the block style has the additional advantage of placing your name and contact information automatically on every page so that consistent personal branding extends to the one- to two-page résumé that follows, including the references page that would be separated out for confidentiality reasons (*see the chapter on employment communication for more information*).

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4.3.2: Date Line

In a formal letter, the date must follow the unambiguous style that fully spells out the month, gives the calendar date, a comma, and the full year (e.g., April 25, 2020). In block-style letters, this appears left-justified (its left edge lines up with the left margin) often with 2-3 lines of space between it and the company letterhead above it and, for symmetry, as much between it and the recipient address below.

In modified-block-style letters, however, the date often appears as the third line of the sender address block. Its left edge therefore lines up with the vertical middle of the page. Only one line of space should separate the date line from the recipient address below. After this, block-style and modified-block letters are formatted in the same way until you get to the signature block at the bottom.

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4.3.3: Recipient Address

No matter what style of letter you use, the recipient address is left-justified, begins with the recipient's full name on the top line, and follows with their mailing address on the lines below in the format options given in Table 7.1.3 below.

Table 4.3.3: Standard Letter Address Format for Company and Personal Recipients

Address Format	Examples
Title Full Name, Professional Role Company Name # Street Type Town/City, PA A1B 2C3	Dr. Michelle Masterton, Geriatrician Tidal Healthcare Clinic 6519 Maynard Street Halifax, NS B4L 6C9
Title Full Name, Credentials Professional Role (if long) # Street Type Town/City, PA A1B 2C3	Mr. Jonathan Carruthers, MBA Freelance Marketing Consultant 3489 Cook Street Victoria, BC V9G 4B2

Notice that commas follow only (1) the recipient's name if followed by a professional role (capitalized) or credentials abbreviation and (2) the city or town. Two spaces separate the provincial abbreviation (PA) from the postal code, which has a single space in the middle dividing the six alpha-numeric characters into two groups of three for readability. Though you sometimes see addresses that fully spell out the province, rather than abbreviate it, and have only one space between the province and postal code, the style given above is dominant and has the advantage of being more concise and clearly distinguishing the province from the postal code without crowding the line with commas. Keep the end of each line free of any punctuation.

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4.3.4: Subject Reference

Like a subject line in an email, letters can have subject lines that indicate the topic or purpose. The same titling principles as email apply (see §4.1.3), only the letter's subject reference begins with "**Re:**" or "RE:" and is entirely in either bold typeface or all-caps, but not both. You might also see it positioned above or below the opening salutation, but usually above. Like all the text blocks besides the date line, a blank line of space separates this from the other parts above and below.

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4.3.5: Opening Salutation

The most common opening salutation for a letter is given in Table 7.1.5 below:

Table 4.3.5: Opening Salutation

Opening Salutation Form	Examples
Dear [Title] [Full or Last Name]:	Dear Ms. Françoise Hardy: Dear Mr. Serge Gainsbourg: Dear Mrs. Pattie Boyd: Dear Dr. Landy: Dear Ms. Vartan: Dear Dana Dortmund:

The Dear, title, full name, and colon all signal formality. Variations in formal letters include omitting the title or the first name, but not both at once. Omit the title if you're at all concerned about its accuracy. For instance, if the recipient's first name is a unisex name and you're not sure it the recipient is male or female, skip the gender title to avoid offending the recipient by assuming the wrong gender. Unless you're sure that the recipient prefers *Mrs.* (indicating that she is married) over *Ms.* because she's used it herself, *Ms.* might be the safer option. Avoid the title *Miss* because it's no longer commonly used and appears outdated. If you're addressing someone who identifies as non-binary, then *Mx.* might be best if you must use a title, or just no title at all. Other considerations in the opening salutation include the following:

- Using the recipient's first name only is appropriate only if you know the recipient well and you are on a friendly, first-name basis.
- Using a comma instead of a colon is appropriate only for very informal letters.
- *To whom it may concern:* is an appropriate opening salutation only if you really intend for the letter to be read by whomever it is given to, as in the case of a reference letter that an applicant gives copies of to potential employers. Otherwise, every effort should be made to direct the letter to a particular person, especially cover letters. If an employer has deliberately omitted any mention of who is responsible for hiring an applied-for position, addressing the person by professional role (e.g., *Dear Hiring Manager:*) is acceptable (*see the chapter on employment communication for more information*).

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4.3.6: Message Opening

Letters can be used for both direct- and indirect-approach messages depending on the occasion for writing them. Consistent with what we saw in §3.1, direct-approach letters get right to the point by stating their main point or request in a paragraph of no more than a sentence or two. Letters organized with openings like this lend themselves to positive or neutral messages. Ideal for formally delivering bad-news or persuasive messages, indirect-approach letters begin with a buffer paragraph—again, this may only be a sentence or two—just to say some nice things before getting to the bad news or difficult request in the body of the message. (See §3.1.2 for more on the indirect approach).

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4.3.7: Message Body

Whether the opening takes the direct or indirect approach, the body supports this with explanatory detail (see §3.1 above on message bodies). Ensure that your message body abides by the 6 Cs of style (see §2.3), especially conciseness, because a letter should only be a page or two. If appropriate for the content, use effective document design features such as numbered or bulleted lists to improve readability (see §2.4.5 above). For instance, if your letter contains a series of questions, use a numbered list so that the reader can respond to each with a corresponding numbered list of his/her own.

Message body paragraphs should be proper three-part paragraphs. Like all other text blocks throughout (except for the return address above and signature block below in a modified-block letter), every line in the message body must be flush to the left margin, including the first. In other words, rather than indent a paragraph's first line as novels do to mark where one paragraph ends and another begins, separate them with a blank line. Brevity in formal letters limits the number of paragraphs to what you can fit in a page or two.

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4.3.8: Message Closing

The closing mirrors the opening with a sentence or two meant to wrap up the letter with something relevant to the topic at hand (see §3.1 on message closings). Because of their formality, letters almost always end with a goodwill statement, such as an expression of gratitude thanking readers for their attention or consideration. For instance, cover letters thank readers for their consideration, invite them to read the enclosed résumé, and express interest in meeting to discuss the applicant's fit with the company in person, since getting an interview is the entire point of an application. A thank-you letter will thank the recipient again, and a recommendation letter will emphatically endorse the applicant. Even letters delivering bad news or addressing contentious situations should end with pleasant statements rather than hostile or passive-aggressive jabs.

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4.3.9: Closing Salutation

A simple *Sincerely* or *Cordially* are standard business letter closing salutations that signal the formal end of the message, much like the opening salutation signaled the beginning of the message proper. A more personal letter sent to someone you know well may end with *Yours truly* (with the second word all lowercase), but don't use this with someone you've never met or with anyone you want to maintain a strictly professional relationship with. Always place a "hanging comma" at the end of the line, as you can see in Table 4.3.10 below.

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4.3.10: Signature

Your signature is a guarantee of authorship that carries legal weight. In a printed letter, leave enough space—usually about three single-spaced lines—to autograph your signature by hand. When sending a letter that you write and submit completely electronically, you have two options for an electronic signature, as explained in Table 4.3.10 below. Of the two, an image of your hand-written signature looks much more professional than a typed-out version using a simulated handwriting font. The hand-written image gives the impression that you are adept at technology.

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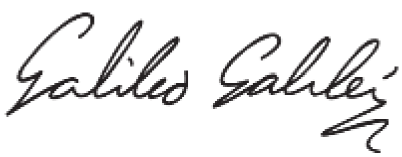
Table 4.3.10: How to Make Signatures for Electronically Written and Sent Letters

Signature Image	Simulated Signature
Sincerely,  Galileo Galilei, Astronomer Image source: Connormah (2009)	Sincerely, Galileo Galilei Galileo Galilei, Astronomer
1. Write your signature several times on a piece of blank, white paper. 2. Scan the document. 3. Crop the best image into a close-fitting jpeg image file. If the scanner makes a PDF file of the scanned image, make a jpeg file of the best signature by using the Snipping Tool (Microsoft Support, 2021) with the file type set to jpeg and saving the captured image. 4. Drag and drop the signature image from the folder where you saved it to the space between your closing salutation and your full printed name in the signature block. 5. Adjust the signature size so that it occupies the equivalent of about 2-3 single-spaced lines and delete any blanks lines of space above and below it so that it fits snugly between the closing salutation and your full printed name.	1. Type your name on the line between your closing salutation and full printed name in the signature block. 2. Highlight it. 3. Go to the font selection dropdown menu and select a simulated handwriting signature that is common to most computers such as Freestyle Script. 4. Adjust the font size so that your simulated signature occupies the equivalent of 2-3 single-spaced lines.

Don't cut corners when assembling an image of your handwritten signature. For instance, taking a smartphone photo of your signature rather than scanning it will look amateurish because the background will probably be greyish or another off-white shade that will clash with the pure white of your page background. Also, drawing your signature with your computer's mouse or touchpad will look shaky like it was signed by a seven year-old. The inserted signature image must be seamlessly integrated and smoothly drawn for it to look professionally done.

Besides giving the impression that you're adept at technology, making an image file of your handwritten signature for electronic letters also sets you up for using it repeatedly to sign contracts and other documents electronically. If current labour trends take us to a predominant gig economy (Nazareth, 2017), having a shortcut for signing emailed contracts will save you time. Unless you're sent a contract via DocuSign or an equivalent technology solution to legally sign documents in a secure manner, a PDF contract sent to you would otherwise require printing it out, signing it, scanning it, and emailing it back. With a signature image, you can just drag and drop your signature into the document after downloading it, re-save it as a PDF, and email it back to the employer in a minute or two.

Though the simulated signature is certainly easier to put together, it carries with it several problems: it looks lazy and even tacky, carries no legal authority, and may not appear as a simulated signature font when it's opened by the recipient on another computer. If it's opened on, say, a Mac computer when you wrote it on a Windows-based PC, the signature might be converted into 25-pt. Arial font, making the recipient wonder why you chose a font that looks nothing like handwriting for your signature. The reason is that the recipient's computer didn't have the signature font you chose, or something was lost in translation, and your signature was rendered into a different font. For these reasons, using an image of your actual signature is better.

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4.3.11: Signature Block

The signature block clarifies the sender's name in full, since handwritten signatures are rarely legible enough. The sender's professional role follows the full name either on the same line (with a comma in between), if both the name and role are short enough, or on the second line if they are too long together. On the line below the sender's name and role can appear the name of the company, followed on the next line by the sender's work email address. All these lines are single-spaced. If you are writing independently, putting your email address and phone number on the line(s) after your printed name depends on whether or not you used a simple modified-block style address at the top. If you did, you should add your contact info to the signature block. If you used a personal letterhead, perhaps for a job application cover letter, then you need not include anything more than your full printed name in your signature block.

Sometimes letters are written on someone else's behalf, perhaps by an administrative assistant. In such cases, the signature and typed-out name of the person responsible for the letter is given at the bottom, then the initials of the person who typed it appear after a line of space below the last line of the signature block.

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4.3.12: Enclosure Notice

Just as emails can include attachments, letters are often sent along with other documents. Cover letters introduce résumés, for instance, and letters of transmittal introduce reports to their intended recipients. In such cases, an enclosure notice on the very last line of the page (above the footer margin) tells the reader that another document or other documents are included with the letter. This would look like the following:

Enclosures (2): Résumé, Portfolio

For other documents included with the letter, simple, brief titles such as *Brochure* or *Thank-you Card* would suffice. Separate each with a comma if you have more than one.

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4.3.13: Before Sending Your Letter

Given the importance of the letter you're writing, especially if it has to do with employment, editing is crucial to your career success. Even a single writing error in a cover letter, for instance, is enough to prompt the reader to dump it in the shredder without even glancing at the enclosed résumé, making the applicant's efforts useless. Apply revising and proofreading techniques to ensure that the letter fulfills its purpose and represents you well through its flawlessness.

Ensure also that your letter meets all expectations for standard business letter format. In North America, the page must be 8.5" x 11" (21.6 x 27.9cm) with one-inch (2.5cm) or 3cm margins all around. Though letterhead and graphic elements may go in the header and footer for company branding purposes, the side margins must remain blank. Make the font 12-point Times New Roman or a similar serif font, or alternatively a sans-serif font such as Arial, but definitely not something exotic like Papyrus (see §2.4.3 on font). Single-space the text by ensuring that the line spacing is 1.0 in your word processor, which may be different from your word processor's default (the MS Word default is 1.08). Adjusting the default setting that adds additional line spaces every time you hit the Enter or Return key is essential to avoiding the effect of the line spacing looking like it's double even when you indeed set it to single (see §2.4.4 for more on line spacing).

Though letters sent electronically can be attached in emails or uploaded to a website, hard-copy letters must be printed out and signed. Those mailed on their own or perhaps with one or two enclosed pages can be folded twice to make three horizontal panels of equal height so that the letter fits in a standard 4 1/8" x 9 1/2" envelope. When a hard-copy letter covers extremely important documents (e.g., a mailed job application or report), consider sending them pristinely unfolded in a 9" x 11.5" envelope.

Finally, ensure that you leave enough time for your letter to arrive at its destination if punctuality is a factor. Though letters sent to a destination within your city may take only a couple of days to get there, those sent across the country may take a week or longer depending on weekend and holiday slow-downs (e.g., letters sent during the Christmas holiday season take longer to arrive). Email has largely replaced hard-copy letters because it ensures that a message gets to its destination the instant you press *Send*, so send letters when urgency isn't an issue.

Additional Resources

For more perspectives on business letters, including slight format variations, see the following resources:

- How to Format a Business Letter (Doyle, 2018)
- Writing the Basic Business Letter (Purdue OWL, n.d.)

Key Takeaway

- If you need to send a highly formal message to show respect to your recipient and ensure confidentiality, follow standard business letter conventions.

Exercises

1. Put together a letterhead template for a fictional company that you might work for, or even start yourself, in the career you're training for. There's no need to go overboard with a fancy logo design; many companies' trademark is just their company name in an interesting font (e.g. Google or the fictional Dunder Mifflin in the TV show *The Office*). Include fictional contact information either at the top or bottom.
2. Using the company letterhead template you designed for Exercise #1, write a letter that you would send to everyone in your customer contact database advertising a new product or service that you would offer in the career you're training for.
3. If you did the email assignment at the end of §4.1.11, revise it in the form of a personal modified-block-style letter (invent details as necessary, including Dr. Emily Conway's company name and address for the recipient address block). Ensure that it is perfectly written in a formal style.

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CHAPTER 4: REVIEW

Key Takeaway

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Emails are used to quickly deliver a message that doesn't need an immediate response
- Emails are used to send a message and receive a response in writing as evidence for future review (lay down a paper trail)
- Emails are used when confidentiality isn't necessary
- Emails are used to send the same message to several people at once, including perhaps people whose email address you need to hide from the others (using BCC) to respect their confidentiality
- Follow standard conventions for writing each part of a professional or academic email, making strategic choices about the content and level of formality appropriate for the audience and occasion.
- Memos communicate policies, procedures, short reports, or related official business within an organization.
- Memos broadcast a message to a group audience rather than to individuals, like email or letters often do.
- Memos are objective in tone and avoid all personal bias or subjective preference, especially because they may have legal standing when reflecting policies or procedures.
- Memos lack the opening salutation provided in emails and letters but are otherwise structured similarly to emails (opening, body, closing).
- Letters are used for providing a formal, permanent, confidential written message to a single important person or organization
- Letters are Ideal for job applications (cover letter), persuasive messages (e.g., fundraising campaigns), bad-news messages, matters with possible legal implications (e.g., claims), and responses to letters
- Letters are used for non-urgent matters
- If you need to send a highly formal message to show respect to your recipient and ensure confidentiality, follow standard business letter conventions.

CHAPTER 5: INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDIES AND COMMON TYPES OF BUSINESS MESSAGES

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Define case study learning
2. Identify the use of case studies in learning scenarios
3. Describe the types of case studies available for learning use
4. Format short documents such as routine correspondence
5. Write routine message types such as information shares, instructions, requests, and replies
6. Identify successful patterns for responding to complaints and claims
7. Describe the organizational structure of complaint and claim responses
8. Organize and write negative messages
9. Outline the structure of an indirect-approach bad-news message
10. Explain the importance of communicating bad news carefully in professional contexts

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following text:

- Communication at Work by Jordan Smith is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.
- Additional material in this section has been reproduced from Carleton University's Educational Development Center and is published on the Experiential Learning support page entitled "Case Studies"

(https://carleton.ca/experientialeducation/?p=245). Retrieved: April 2021.

5.1: PREFACE: LEARNING WITH CASE STUDIES

Learning Objectives

1. Define case study learning
2. Identify the use of case studies in learning scenarios
3. Describe the types of case studies available for learning use

NB: *The material in this section has been prepared by Fanshawe College faculty with a specific focus on the use of case studies in the COMM 6019 curriculum.*

Case Studies: Definition and Uses

Case studies are detailed "stories" about a business situation that allow us to consider a number of aspects of the business world:

- the diversity of everyday business situations we might encounter;
- the seriousness of some of the dilemmas business professionals routinely deal with;
- the consequences involved if a difficult situation is mishandled (if those involved do or say the wrong thing);
- the difficulty to choose the best response in a complicated business situation (sometimes, there is no ideal solution, and we might have to choose the least damaging solution instead).

These "stories" typically provide detailed information about the business situation in question, the problem encountered, how it was approached, and to what results. They can be shorter or longer, and strictly descriptive (most cases used for training purposes in college tend to be descriptive, and students are asked to analyze them) or analytical (some academic case studies provide analysis, too, and they might also make suggestions regarding better ways to address similar situations in the future). For instance, an academic article tracing Target's failure to operate in Canada (2013-2015) would summarize in detail the facts of the case and analyze where the company went wrong; it might also suggest what the company should have done instead to secure a place on the Canadian market.

Professionals in different fields often use case studies as part of their research into various issues of interest for their organization (for instance, when they decide to launch a new product and/or service and want to learn from other companies' success/failure before they plan their course of action). In college/university courses, case studies are used in order to connect the course material more effectively to the types of tasks the students will have to perform at work once they graduate.

Main advantages of learning with case studies — in general and in COMM 6019:

- Case studies allow us to apply the theoretical knowledge we have acquired, so we can see how we can take advantage of our knowledge in everyday business situations.
- Case studies encourage critical thinking and collaborative learning.
- Based on what we know about professional business communication, we can use case studies to assess situations, examine options, trace a course of action for each option, and decide which might be the best. In so doing, we have to keep our focus on our goal.
- For each case study, we should try to make suggestions that would allow those involved to reach their goal, if possible, or get as close to their initial expectations as possible.
- Case studies allow us to gain a better understanding of workplace dynamics. For example, they might allow us to understand that:
    - people who are equally valuable in an organization might have very different leadership, management, or communication styles – and they might fail to appreciate each other for these reasons;
    - depending on our boss and coworkers' personality, background, and preferences, different approaches must be taken to ensure success (a direct approach might work with some of them, whereas others might prefer an indirect approach; there might also be situations when certain issues should not be brought up at all in order to avoid making a bad situation worse;
    - choosing the wrong words in expressing an idea might have serious consequences for our career, even if we had the best of intentions in initiating contact with the other person(s) involved and did not mean to offend anyone.

Approaching Case Studies Analytically and Making Suggestions

Understanding the Situation

Whenever we work with a case study, we should take an analytical approach. First, we should make sure we understand the situation clearly. That includes identifying the following:

1. The problem/ issue:

What is the problem, exactly? In complex business situations, this question might not be as easy to answer as it seems. For example, there might be several problems involved, and trying to solve them all or treating them all as equally important might cause us to get lost in details and give insufficient attention to the one issue that might have the most damaging effect on our organization. In identifying the problem, we need to clearly distinguish between major concerns and peripheral aspects.

2. The context/background:

What caused the problem? Again, the answer might not be easy to formulate. There might be multiple causes, and some might have had more impact than others. Some of these causes might be out of anyone's control: unpredictable market fluctuations due to natural disasters, etc. Others might be mistakes people made: lack of foresight in analyzing the market, communication problems, etc.

We also need to analyze the context in terms of the options available in addressing the problem. For example, the context might not allow for a certain type of approach (some obvious examples would be differences in legislation or in cultural norms between different countries).

3. The key aspects/facts of the situation:

Again, distinguishing between major and minor aspects might not be an easy task. Making this distinction might be particularly difficult for people who are directly involved in the situation. This may seem counterintuitive, but if, say, a project leader is more invested in some parts of a project than others for whatever reason, he/she might not be able to judge the key facts correctly in a crisis.

4. The decision-maker's priorities and goal:

We need to understand exactly what the decision-maker is hoping to achieve, as well as what he/she can – realistically – achieve. We also need to understand the decision-maker's and the company's priorities. Caution is recommended here: the decision-maker might not be aware that there is a mismatch between the goal he/she has set and the company's priorities. If that is the case, our recommendations may have to include cautious explanations that might help the decision-maker redefine his/her goal.

Analyzing Options

Next, we should try to see how many options the decision-maker might have. The key question at this stage is the following: Can the problem be **solved** (can all negative aspects or effects be completely eliminated) or is **reducing the negative effects** the best we can hope for?

Many professionals sometimes make a situation worse because they naïvely assume that every conflict or problem can be completely eliminated, in all its overt and hidden implications/ consequences. Thus, they set the wrong goal (an **unreachable goal**) and choose their strategies based on that goal. In such situations, the results can be disastrous – financial losses, loss of reputation, etc. — because resources will be wasted on aspects that were hopeless to begin with. Setting a more **realistic goal** (say, to improve specific aspects of the situation in a limited, achievable way) would allow decision-makers to select the right strategies to reduce losses as much as possible, and to get the most out of the resources available.

Presenting Persuasive Suggestions

Finally, after analyzing the situation and the available options, case studies allow us to present and motivate our recommendation as we would at work. To make our recommendation persuasive, we should offer several options (typically, at least two or three) and discuss them in detail, to show that the one we recommend is the most likely to lead to a positive outcome.

Here are some aspects to consider in choosing the solutions we should discuss and then selecting the best one:

- If other decision-makers involved seem to favour an approach with which we disagree, we need to include that approach as one of the options, analyze it, and show that it will have limited success or that it comports serious risks.
- Potential improvements, as well as potential risks need to be discussed in detail for the solution we want to recommend, too. If we do not mention some obvious drawbacks of the solution we support, we can lose

our credibility.
- The idea is to show that we have carefully weighed all relevant options and that we chosen the option that seems to be the most advantageous.

Case Study Work in COMM 6019 and Workplace Applications

Depending on your course section and professor, you might have to do more or less case study-related work in this course, but you are likely going to be asked to complete at least two case study-related assignments. Specifically, your professors might use information from case studies to create scenarios for your written assignments, or they may ask you to find and/or analyze case studies specific to your field, always with a focus on communication aspects. Case study elements can also be used in the Research Report, although they are not mandatory.

Our work with case studies in COMM 6019 is meant to help you assimilate the necessary strategies in analyzing any business situation (from a communication perspective, as well as in general). This experience will prove particularly useful when you are asked to complete analytical reports and recommendation reports at work. Any routine business situation, as well as any crisis, can be analyzed in this manner to make sure we arrive at the best decision.

Whenever you are assigned this type of task in the workplace, make sure you understand what you are expected to do and that you do just that:

- In some cases, you might be asked for a recommendation, whereas in others you might just be asked to analyze options.
- If you are asked to analyze options, you can still explain which option you think is best, to show initiative – but only if you think your reader(s) would be open to accepting a recommendation. (Some upper-management employees might think that you are overstepping your mandate if you do that. Always consider your primary audience carefully when you make such decisions.)

In courses focused on field-specific skills, professors usually use complex case studies, and the students are expected to produce lengthy case study-related assignments (reports). Thus, the case studies provided to students would be at least 4 pages long (usually much longer), and the reports the students would be expected to write might be 2000-word reports that include information from several research sources.

In COMM 6019, our focus is on teaching students how to **analyze situations and make recommendations in objective language and without saying anything that might be perceived as unnecessarily negative, insensitive, or offensive**. To this end, we typically use short case studies and short articles reporting various real-life business/professional incidents *as "prompts"* for assignments – to help you understand what kinds of problems professionals have to deal with in the business/professional world and what might be the best approach *from a communication perspective*. Your professors might also ask you to read a longer, more complex case study but focus on just *one* particular aspect of the situation instead of providing a full-length case study analysis (a long report). This is meant to stimulate your critical thinking skills while maintaining the focus on the main objective of this course – helping students to acquire the writing and communication techniques they need in order to make their case effectively in any business situation, however difficult/ sensitive.

A Sample Case Study

Here is an example of a case study we might use in a Professional Communication class:

This is a tricky case study – as case studies usually are. In class discussions, some students rush to suggest that the two business people involved should set up a meeting and solve their financial disagreements immediately, so that they can work together on the new task they have been assigned. However, a more careful analysis of the case study would show that this is a naïve approach. The details provided about the two individuals' educational background, personality, work history, and history of business conflict (including a lawsuit!) clearly indicate that they won't be able to "solve the problem" in a meeting (or two, or ten). Therefore, what they need to do is agree to focus on the new task and never mention their previous problems in meetings related to the new task, allowing the old conflict to be solved in court.

Once this aspect of the situation is clarified, a good way to use this case study for an assignment in COMM 6019 would be to ask students to pick one of the two business professionals and write a short recommendation report from a Communication perspective, advising the person of their choice that the best way to approach the situation is to keep the old conflict and the new task separate. To be persuasive and useful, the report would have to include the following sections:

- an analysis of the situation, explaining why this is the best option;
- a section of detailed suggestions concerning exactly how the person they are advising should behave, exactly what he should say, etc.

In order to help you to understand a little better the relevance of the content studied in this course for the work you will do as professionals, your professors may relate case studies or media coverage of business/ professional/ corporate incidents to any number of themes covered in this course, from effective social media use to workplace diversity and intercultural communication to employment interviews.

Case Studies and Workplace Communication: Quick Example

Here is an example of a costly communication mistake concerning the *channel of communication* chosen by the sender of the initial message and the *role* the receiver decided to assume — a mistake with serious international consequences, as you are about to see.

You might have heard that Hillary Clinton is assumed to have lost quite a few votes in the US election in 2016 after some emails exchanged between individuals in high-ranking positions in her campaign were "leaked" as a result of hacking. According to a December 2016 New York Times article, FBI agent Adrian Hawkins called the Democratic National Committee in September 2015 to warn them that their computers are being hacked by "The Dukes," a cyberespionage team linked to the Russian Government. He was transferred to the Help Desk and spoke to Yared Tamene, a tech-support contractor working for the DNC, who did a routine check of the DNC computer system logs to look for evidence of a cyberattack and did not find any.

Tamene was not an expert in cyberattacks, and "The Dukes" appear to be a sophisticated group – they are suspected of having hacked the unclassified email systems of the White House and the State Department, among other cybercrimes. Apparently, Tamene was not sure if Hawkins was a real FBI agent or an impostor – sohe did not conduct a more thorough search for signs of hacking and did not transmit the information to higher-ranking DNC officials, although Special Agent Hawkins called repeatedly, over several weeks.

You can read a New York Times article on this topic here if you are not familiar with the incident:

- *The Perfect Weapon: How Russian Cyberpower Invaded the U.S*. (https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/13/us/politics/russia-hack-election-dnc.html?_r=0)

It is easy to see that several communication mistakes are to blame for the fact that the cyberattack was not stopped right away. Most importantly,

- The FBI agent spoke on the phone with a tech desk employee instead of setting up an official face-to-face meeting with a top DNC official (he made a serious error in choosing the channel of communication and the person to contact).
- The tech desk employee acted as a gatekeeper for the message although he was not competent to assess the validity of the warning (he made a serious error in judgement).

Since Hillary Clinton won the popular vote (by 2.8 million votes) and was narrowly defeated in several key states, many political commentators have argued that if even *one* mistake of this type had been avoided, she could have been the President of the U.S. instead of Donald Trump. Imagine what this public perception might mean for the future career of the F.B.I. agent or for that of the tech desk employee involved. Even communication mistakes of a much lower magnitude can get employees into serious trouble. At the very least, they would lose any chance at promotions. Consequences might also include being fired and, perhaps, becoming unemployable in their field. (Who would take a chance on a potential employee with this kind of work history?)

Additional Case Study Examples

- QUBES: A Bioquest Project: A list of case studies in Astronomy, Biochemistry, Bioinformatics, Chemistry, Ethics, Evolution, Genetics, Behavior, Biology, Botany, Ecology, Epidemiology, Health Sciences, Microbiology, Phylogenetics, Physiology, Physics, and other disciplines:
- National Centre for Case Study Teaching in Science: The purpose of this center is to "promote a nationwide application of active learning techniques to the teaching of science, with a particular emphasis on case studies and problem-based learning" (quotation from front page of the official website). This resource contains many cases in all areas of science:
- MERLOT II: Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching: You can have access to many cases in various disciplines by doing a search with the key phrase: "case studies".
- Stanley, E., (n.d.). Investigative case-based learning examples, SERC Pedagogic Service Project: Several cases are provided and some of the Earth Systems topics are in atmosphere, biosphere, climate, Earth's cycles, human dimensions, hydrology and surface processes.
- Toronto Metropolitan University – The Teaching and Learning Office – Teaching Methods for Case Studies: This

is a pdf file with information on how to pick a case study, how to prepare students for it, the importance of knowing students' abilities and needs, how to lead the discussion, what types of questions to be asked, and the evaluation process.

- Boston University – Center for Teaching and Learning – Using Case Studies to Teach: This website has a brief introduction on case study use to teach: common elements in case studies, advantages in using them in class, guidelines for using them, how to lead a case discussion and how to evaluate performance.
- The case directory of Western University's Ivey Business School.

Key Takeaways

- Case studies prepare students for the workplace by engaging them in active forms of learning in asking them to analyze and address situations similar to what they would encounter at work
- Case studies allow for complex learning activities that stimulate the development of higher-order cognitive skills such as critical thinking in students
- Analyzing a case study (and any business situation) involved understanding the problem/ issue, the context of the problem, the key aspects of the situation, and the decision-maker's priorities and goal.
- In making suggestions, we should always start by carefully assessing what is achievable and what is not — to avoid directing resources at issues that can't be solved. We should also make our suggestions in clear, objective language, being careful to avoid careless and unnecessarily negative comments.

Additional Resources for Case Study-based Learning:

- Brown University, (n.d.). Case Studies. Retrieved April 13, 2017 from: https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/sheridan-center/teaching-learning/effective-classroom-practices/case-studies
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5.2: INFORMATION SHARES, ACTION REQUESTS, AND REPLIES

Learning Objectives

1. Format short documents such as routine correspondence
2. Write routine message types such as information shares, instructions, requests, and replies

Ask any professional what kinds of messages they spend the majority of their sit-down time at a computer writing and responding to. They will likely tell you that they're requesting information or action and replying to those with answers or acknowledgements. Though you've probably written many of these yourself, you may need to polish your style and organization to meet a professional standard. After all, the quality of the responses you get or can give crucially depends on the quality of the questions you ask or are asked. Let's look at several such scenarios in detail.

Information Shares, Action Requests, and Replies Topics

5.2.1: Information Shares

Perhaps the simplest and most common routine message type is where the sender offers up information that helps the receiver. These may not be official memos, but they follow the same structure, as shown in Table 8.1.1 below.

Table 5.2.1: Outline for Information Shares

Outline	Content	Example Message
1. Opening	Main point of information	Hi Karin, I just saw a CFP for a new funding opportunity you can apply for via the Ministry of Agriculture.
2. Body	Information context and further details	Find it on the Greenbelt Fund's Local Food Literacy Grant Stream page. If you haven't already been doing this, you should also check out the Ministry's general page on Funding Programs and Support to connect with any other grants etc. relevant to the good work you do.
3. Closing	Action regarding the information	It looks like the deadline for proposals is at the end of the week, though, so you might want to get on it right away. Good luck! Shradha

Notice here how the writer made the reader's job especially easy by providing links to the recommended webpages using the hyperlinking feature (*Ctrl.* + K) in their email.

Replies to such information shares involve either a quick and concise thank-you message or carry the conversation on if it's part of an ongoing project, initiative, or conversation. Recall that you should change the email subject line as the topic evolves (see §4.1.3 above). Information shares to a large group, such as a departmental memo to 60 employees, don't usually require acknowledgement. If everyone wrote the sender just to say thanks, the barrage of reply notifications would frustrate the sender, who would be forced to sort through replies and differentiate between messages with valuable information and mere acknowledgments. Only respond if you have valuable information to share with all the recipients or just the sender.

Return to the Information Shares, Action Requests, and Replies Topics menu

5.2.2: Information or Action Requests

Managers, clients, and coworkers alike send and receive requests for information and action all day. Because these provide the recipient with direction on what to do, the information that comes back or action that results from such requests can only be as good as the instructions given. Such messages must therefore be well organized and clear about expectations, opening directly with a clearly stated general request (see §3.1.1 on direct-approach messages)—unless you anticipate resistance to the request (see §3.1.2 on indirect-approach messages)—and proceeding with background and more detailed instruction if necessary as we see in Table 8.1.2 below.

Table 5.2.2: Outline for Direct Information or Action Requests

Outline	Content	Example Message
Subject Line	3- to 7-word title	Website update needed by Monday
1. Opening	Main question or action request	Hello, Mohamed: Please update the website by adding the new hires to the Personnel page.
2. Body	Information or action request context, plus further details	We've hired three new associates in the past few weeks. Using the contents of the attached folder that contains their bios and hi-res pics, please do the following: 1. Proof the bios using Track Changes and send them to me. 2. Post the proofed bios on the site right away and call me as soon as they're up. I'm sure your edits will be fine, but I'd like to just quickly read them and suggest further edits over the phone if need be, since time is of the essence. 3. Downsize the pics to 72dpi and crop them so they're the same dimensions as the other portraits on that page before posting them along with the bios.
3. Closing	Deadlines and/or submission details	Sorry for the short notice, but could we have this update all wrapped up by Monday? We're meeting with some investors early next week and we'd like the site to be fully up to date by then. Much appreciated! Sylvia

Never forget the importance of saying "please" when asking someone to do something (see §2.3 for more on courteous language). Notice also that lists in the message body help break up dense detail so that request messages are more reader-friendly (see §2.4). All of the efforts that the writer of the above message made to deliver a reader-friendly message will pay off when the recipient performs the requested procedure according to these clearly worded expectations.

Return to the Information Shares, Action Requests, and Replies Topics menu

5.2.3: Instructional Messages

Effective organization and style are critical in requests for action that contain detailed instructions. Whether you're explaining how to operate equipment, apply for funding, renew a membership, or submit a payment, the recipient's success depends on the quality of the instruction. Vagueness and a lack of detail can result in confusion, mistakes, and requests for clarification. Too much detail can result in frustration, skimming, and possibly missing key information. Profiling the audience and gauging their level of knowledge is key to providing the appropriate level of detail for the desired results.

Look at any assembly manual and you'll see that the quality of its readability depends on the instructions being organized in a numbered list of parallel imperative sentences. As opposed to the indicative sentences that have a grammatical subject and predicate (like most sentences you see here), imperative sentences drop the subject (the doer of the action, which is assumed to be the reader in the case of instructions). This omission leaves just the predicate, which means that the sentence starts with a verb. In Table 5.2.3 below, for instance, the reader can easily follow the directions by seeing each of the six main steps open with a simple verb describing a common computer operation: Copy, Open, Type, Paste (twice), and Find.

If you begin any imperative sentence with a prepositional (or other) phrase to establish some context for the action first (such as this imperative sentence does), move the adverb after the verb and the phrase to the end of the sentence. (If the previous sentence followed its own advice, it would look like this: “Move the adverb after the verb and the phrase to the end of the imperative sentence if you begin it with a prepositional (or other) phrase to establish some context for the action first.”) Finally, surround the list with a proper introduction and closing as shown in Table 5.2.3 below.

Table 5.2.3: Outline for Instructional Messages

Outline	Content	Example Email Message
Subject Line	Procedure name	How to find an undated webpage date
1. Opening	Reader benefits	Hi team, Please find below instructions for how to discover the date that a webpage was posted or last updated if it doesn’t say so itself.
2. Context	Context for the procedure	Sometimes you need to know when exactly a webpage was posted or updated, but it either doesn’t say or has a copyright notice at the bottom with the present year, and you know it was posted years ago, so that’s not accurate. Rather than indicate “n.d.” (for “no date”) when citing and referencing a source in APA style, there is a way to find out the exact date when the webpage was posted or last updated.
3. Instructions	Introductory clause and numbered list, each with an imperative sentence (beginning with a verb)	Please follow the procedure below in your Google Chrome browser: 1. Copy the entire URL (web address) of the webpage you would like to find the date for by keying *Alt.* + *D* and *Ctrl.* + *C*. 2. Open up a new tab in the Google Chrome browser. 3. Type “inurl:” in the “Search Google or type URL” field in the middle of the page. 4. Paste (Ctrl. + V) the webpage URL immediately after “inurl:” (with no space between them) and hit the *Enter* (or *Return*) key; the web address will move up into the address bar and, after hitting *Enter*, you will see a list of search results, the top result of which should be the webpage you’re looking for. 5. Paste &as_qdr=y15 at the very end of the search results page web address with no space between the URL and the above code, then hit the *Enter* key again. 6. Find the date in grey text on the third line of the first result of the new search results page, just below the title of the page in purple on the first line and URL in green on the second. 7. Adjust the controls (e.g., the date range so that it starts at a date earlier than 15 years ago) above if the results page says “Your search – [URL] – did not match any documents.”
4. Closing	Specific action request, closing thought, summary, or deadline with a reason	If you encounter a webpage where this hack doesn’t work at all, go with the year given in the copyright notice at the bottom or “n.d.” in your citation and reference if it doesn’t even have a copyright year. Good luck, Nolan

Though helpful on its own, the above message would be much improved if it included illustrative screenshots at each step. Making a short video of the procedure, posting it to YouTube, and adding the link to the message would be even more effective.

Combining DOs and DON'Ts is an effective way to help your audience complete the instructed task without making common rookie mistakes. Always begin with the DOs after explaining the benefits or rewards of following a procedure, not with threats and heavy-handed DON'Ts. Most people are better motivated by chasing the carrot than fleeing the stick (see §3.3). You can certainly follow up with helpful DON'Ts and consequences if necessary, but phrased in courteous language, such as "For your safety, please avoid operating the machinery when not 100% alert, or you may risk dismemberment."

Return to the Information Shares, Action Requests, and Replies Topics menu

5.2.4: Indirect Information or Action Requests

If you expect resistance to your request because you're asking a lot of someone, perhaps because you know what you're asking goes against company policy, an indirect approach is more effective (see §3.1.2 on indirect message organization). Ideally, you'll make such persuasive pitches in person or on the phone so that you can use a full range of verbal and non-verbal cues. When it's important to have them in writing, however, such requests should be clear and easy to spot, but buffered by goodwill statements and reasonable justifications, as shown in Table 5.2.4 below.

Table 5.2.4: Outline for Indirect Information or Action Requests

Outline	Content	Example Message
Subject Line	Strategically vague	Furnace repair needed
1. Opening	Buffer pleasantries	Hello Mike, We've been really pleased with the furnace and air conditioner installed by Redmond Heating & Air five years ago, and we've recommended you to several friends because of your exceptional customer service.
2. Context	Background justification	A few days ago, however, our furnace suddenly stopped working. It's a bit of a mystery because we've been changing the filter regularly every month for the past five years and had you in here for regular check-ups every year, following the terms of the warranty. When we checked the warranty, however, we saw that it expired a week ago. Talk about bad timing!
3. Main point	Information or action request, to which you will expect some resistance	Given that we've been such responsible and loyal customers, and that we've sent business your way a few times, we're wondering if we can still get you out here to repair the furnace under the terms of the warranty. Can we pretend that it's expiring next week instead of last week?
4. Closing	Deadlines and/or implementation details	I know this must be a busy time for you and we're asking a lot already, but since it's starting to drop below zero outside and probably won't take long to do the same inside here, we would appreciate it if you could come as soon as possible. We'd be forever in your debt if you could help us out! Many thanks, Belinda

Return to the Information Shares, Action Requests, and Replies Topics menu

5.2.5: Replies to Information or Action Requests

When responding to information or action requests, simply deliver the needed information or confirm that the action has been or will be completed unless you have good reasons for refusing (see §5.4 on negative messages). Stylistically, such responses should follow the 6 Cs of effective business style (see §2.3), especially courtesies such as prioritizing the "you" view, audience benefits, and saying "please" for follow-up action requests. Such messages are opportunities to promote your company's products and services. Ensure the accuracy of all details, however, because courts will consider them legally binding, even in an email, if disputes arise—as the Vancouver Canucks organization discovered in a battle with Canon (Smith, 2015). Manager approval may therefore be necessary before sending. Organizationally, a positive response to an information request delivers the main answer in the opening, proceeds to give more detail in the body if necessary, and ends politely with appreciation and goodwill statements, as shown in Table 8.1.3 below.

Table 5.2.5: Outline for Positive Replies to Information or Action Requests

Outline	Content	Example Message
Subject Line	3- to 7-word title	Re: Accommodation and conference rooms for 250 guests
1. Opening	Main information or action confirmation	Greetings, Mr. Prendergast: Thank you so much for choosing the Vancouver Marriott for your spring 2020 sales conference. We would be thrilled to accommodate 250 guests and set aside four conference rooms next May 25 through 29.
2. Body	Further details	In answer to your other questions: • Yes, all 250 of your guests can dine together in our Nootka Banquet Hall in a variety of table configurations to suit your needs. • Certainly, you can choose from among six conference rooms with 100-seat capacities, as well as a variety of other smaller rooms. Each has a large screen with a podium equipped with an audio-visual presentation console; presenters can either plug their USBs into the Windows-based console computer or connect their laptops with the HDMI cable. • Every guest suite has wifi and each of our hotel's 30 floors has a business lounge equipped with 10 computer work stations (5 PCs and 5 Macs), multifunctional phone/faxes, and printer/copiers. • Yes, we have a fleet of five shuttles that can transport 10 guests (plus luggage) at a time from the airport as flights arrive and back as they depart.
3. Closing	Deadlines and/or action details	You can visit our website at www.vancouvermarriott.com for additional information about our facilities such as gyms, a spa, and both indoor and outdoor swimming pools. Call us at 1-604-555-8400 if you have additional questions. Please book online as soon as possible to ensure that all 250 guests can be accommodated during your preferred date range. For such a large booking, we encourage you to call also during the booking process. Again, we are very grateful that you are considering the Vancouver Marriott for your conference. We look forward to making your stay memorable. Rufus Killarney, Booking Manager Vancouver Hilton

Return to the Information Shares, Action Requests, and Replies Topics menu

Key Takeaway

- Follow best practices when sharing information, requesting information or action, and replying to such messages.

Exercises

Pick a partner and email him/her a set of instructions following the message outline template and example given in Table 5.1.2.1. It must be a procedure with at least five steps that is familiar to you (e.g., how to prepare your favourite drink) but unfamiliar to your partner. Can your partner follow your procedure and get the results you desire?

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5.3: COMPLAINTS AND CLAIMS

Learning Objectives

1. Identify successful patterns for responding to complaints and claims
2. Describe the organizational structure of complaint and claim responses

Business doesn't always go smoothly. Customers can be disappointed with a faulty product or poor service; shipments might get damaged on route, lost, or arrive late; or one business might infringe on the rights and freedoms of another. In all such cases, the offended party's responsibility is to make the offending party aware of what went wrong and what they want done about it. Indeed, it's their consumer right to do so and the business or organization receiving such a message should take it as valuable intelligence on customer expectations that must be met for the operation to be viable.

A **claim** explains what went wrong and demands compensation from the offending party, whereas a **complaint** explains what went wrong and merely demands correction or apology. Minor complaints are best communicated in person, on the phone, or by email (if it's important to have them in writing) so they can be dealt with quickly. More serious complaints or claims are delivered as formal letters to create a paper trail in case they need to be used as evidence in a lawsuit.

Though some believe that a strongly worded complaint or claim is an effective way of getting what they want, a softer approach is more likely to work best (Michael, 2007, #3). In other words, if you are nice about communicating your problem with a situation or business transaction, the customer service representative (CSR) or manager dealing with it is more likely to give you what you want. Some customers may have found success bullying people who are merely doing their jobs, but not all such attempts will succeed, nor is it right from a moral standpoint, especially when the abused CSR had nothing to do with the cause of the complaint.

Ineffective complaints or claims often merely vent frustrations, issue threats, don't say what they want or only vaguely imply it, or demand unreasonable compensation. Demanding a lifetime supply of milk from your grocery store because one carton happened to be rotten will result in nothing because the manager or CSR will dismiss it as being ridiculous opportunism. Threatening to shop elsewhere makes you sound like a lost cause and, therefore, not worth losing any more time or money on. Since such messages are usually aggressive (or passive-aggressive) in tone and therefore rude and offensive, the recipient may respond aggressively in turn, give the complainant much less than what they asked for (e.g., a mere apology rather than compensation or a replacement), or ignore the complaint altogether. Often the reader of such messages is not the one at fault, so a hostile message would be especially ineffective and possibly even actionable in extreme cases—i.e., liable to cause damages that the recipient could pursue compensation for in court.

Assume that a business will take your complaint or claim seriously if it's done right — since companies in all industries are rightly afraid of losing business to negative online reviews. According to one study, even one negative review can cost a business 22% of customers and three negative reviews 59% (Arevalo, 2017). One mother's endorsement or warning to others about a local store in a local moms group on Facebook could make or break that business. Even worse, complaints aired on Facebook or Twitter, shared widely to the point of going viral and picked up by news outlets can destroy all but the too-big-to-fail companies or at least majorly damage their brand. In the age of social media, good customer service is crucial to business survivability. A complaint provides a business with valuable information about customer expectations and an opportunity to win back a customer—as well as their social network if a good endorsement comes of it from the now-satisfied customer. Conversely, in responding poorly to a complaint, companies risk losing much more than just one customer.

Effective complaints or claims are politely worded and motivated by a desire to right wrongs and save the business relationship. They're best if they remind the business that you've been a loyal customer (if that's true) and want to keep coming back, but you need them to prove that they value your business after whatever setback prompted the complaint. Writers of such messages can end up getting more than they originally hoped to get.

Complaints and Claims Topics

5.3.1: Complaint or Claim Message Organization

Complaints and claims take the direct approach of message organization even though they arise from dissatisfaction. They follow the usual three-part message organization we've seen before (see §3.1 and §4.1.5 – §4.1.7):

1. **Opening:** To be effective at writing a complaint or claim, be clear, precise, and polite about what you want. If you want financial compensation or a replacement product in the case of a claim, be clear about the amount or model. You could also suggest equivalent or alternative compensation if you are unlikely to get exactly what you want. If you want an error corrected or an apology in response to your complaint, be upfront about it.
2. **Body:** The message body justifies the request with a narrative account of what should have happened versus what happened instead. Be objective in writing the account. An angry tone coming through in negative words, accusations, and exaggerations will undermine the validity of your complaint or claim. Be precise in such details as names, dates and times, locations (addresses), and product names and numbers. Wherever possible, provide and refer to evidence. For instance, you may include scans/ paper copies (not originals) of documentation such as receipts, invoices, work orders, bills of lading; emails (PDF/ printed); phone records, photographic evidence, and even video (e.g., of a damaged product).
3. **Closing:** No matter what prompted the complaint or claim, the closing must be politely worded with action requests (e.g., a deadline) and goodwill statements. Nasty parting shots, even if merely passive-aggressive, may lower your chances of getting what you're asking for. By complimenting the recipient's company, however, you up your chances of getting not only what you wanted, but perhaps a little extra. In damage-control mode, the business wants you to feel compelled to tell your friends that the company really turned it around.

Table 5.3.1: Outline for Complaints or Claims

Outline	Content	Example Message
Subject Line	3- to 7-word title	Refund for unwanted warranty purchase
1. Opening	Main action request	Greetings: Please refund me for the $89.99 extended warranty that was charged to my Visa despite being declined at the point of sale.
2. Body	Narrative of events justifying the claim or complaint	This past Tuesday (June 12), I purchased an Acer laptop at the Belleville location of Future Shock Computers and was asked by the sales rep if I would like to add a 3-year extended warranty to the purchase. I declined and we proceeded with the sale, which included some other accessories. When I got home and reviewed the receipt (please find the PDF scan attached), I noticed the warranty that I had declined was added to the bill after all.
3. Closing	Deadlines and/or submission details	Please refund the cost of the warranty to the Visa account associated with the purchase by the end of the week and let me know when you've done so. I have enjoyed shopping at Future Shock for the great prices and customer service. I would sincerely like to return to purchase a printer soon. Much appreciated! Samantha

Notice that the final point in the closing suggests to the store manager that they have an opportunity to continue the business relationship if all goes well with the correction. The implication is that a special deal on the printer will smooth things over.

5.3.2: Replying to Complaints or Claims

If a company grants what the complainant or claimant has asked for, communicating this is called an **adjustment** message. An adjustment letter or email is heavy on courtesy in letting the disappointed customer know that they are valued and will be (or have already been) awarded what they were asking for, and possibly even a little extra. In the case of coupons for discounts on future purchases, the little extras help win back customers' confidence, hopefully so they will tell their friends that the store or company is worthy of their business after all.

5.3.2.1: Adjustment Message Organization

An adjustment message takes the direct approach by immediately delivering the good news about granting the claimant's request. Though you would probably start with an apology if this situation arose in person, starting on a purely positive note is more effective in a written message. Tone is also important here; resist the urge to shame the customer—even if they're partly to blame or if part of you still suspects that the claim is fraudulent—with begrudging, passive-aggressive shade. If you're going to grant the claim, write it whole-heartedly, as if others will be able to see it and judge whether your company has good customer service.

Though a routine adjustment letter might skip a message body, a more serious one may need to go into more detail about how you are complying with the request or take the time to explain what your company is doing to prevent the error again. Doing this makes the reader (customer, claimant) feel as though making the effort to write will have made a positive impact in the world, however small, because it will benefit not only the claimant but also everyone else who won't have to go through what he/she did. Even if you have to explain how the reader can avoid this situation in the future (e.g., by using the product or service as it was intended), do so in entirely positive terms. An apology might also be appropriate in the message body (see §5.3.2.2 below).

Table 5.3.2: Outline for Adjustment Messages Replying to Complaints and Claims

Outline	Content	Example Message
Subject Line	Identify the previous subject line	Re: Refund for unwanted warranty purchase
1. Opening	Main point about granting the request	Hello, Samantha: Absolutely, we would be happy to refund you for the $90 warranty mistakenly charged along with your purchase of the Acer laptop. For your inconvenience, we will also offer you a $20 gift card for future purchases at our store.
2. Body	Details of compliance and/or assurances of improved process	To receive your refund and gift card, please return to our Belleville location with your receipt and the credit card you purchased the computer with so that we can credit the same card $90. (For consumer protection reasons, we are unable to complete any transactions without the card.) We are sorry for inconveniencing you and will speak with all sales staff about the importance of carefully checking the accuracy of any bill of sale before sending the order for payment. To ensure that this doesn't happen again, we will also instruct sales staff to confirm with customers whether an extended warranty appearing on the sales bill is there with consent before completing any transaction.
3. Closing	Courteous statements expressing confidence in future business relations	We appreciate your choosing Future Shock for your personal electronics and look forward to seeing you soon to credit your Visa card and provide you with the best deal in town on the printer you were looking to purchase. Have a great day! Melissa

Of course, not all complaints or claims deserve an adjustment, so we will examine how to write those effectively in §5.4.

Return to the Complaints and Claims Topics menu

5.3.2.2: Apologizing

Apologizing is tricky because it is essential to winning back customer confidence in some situations, but also leaves you or your company open to legal action in others. For minor matters, admitting fault with an apology usually helps vindicate or validate the customer. In more serious matters, especially involving injury or damage to property or even someone's reputation (and earning potential), a written apology might be read as admitting fault and be used as evidence in court. For this reason, it's best to ask a manager or legal department for guidance on apologizing to a customer or other stakeholder in writing.

If apologizing is appropriate because you genuinely erred, no legal repercussions are expected, and it's the right thing to do when trying to soothe an angry response and mend a damaged business relationship, ensure that the apology has the following four characteristics:

- **Sincere:** Saying "We are genuinely sorry that you were disappointed with your customer service experience" is a good first step but requires some additional assurances to prove it.
- **Responsible:** Own the error by admitting fault (again, only if it doesn't open you to litigation). Say what should have happened versus what actually happened and acknowledge that you were wrong. When former Toronto mayor Rob Ford apologized for his behaviour in November 2013, for instance, it sounded like this: "That was pure stupidity. I shouldn't have got hammered down at the Danforth. If you're going to have a couple drinks you stay home, and that's it. You don't make a public spectacle of yourself" ("Some memorable Rob Ford quotes," 2016).
- **Specific:** To be sincere, an apology must refer to a specific error by briefly describing it, possibly including dates, locations (see the Ford example above), and the names of people responsible or affected, if appropriate. The worst apologies are blanket, generic statements such as "We're sorry if anyone was offended by our actions."
- **Improvement-focused:** An apology is useless unless it includes some assurances that the error won't happen again. Simply saying it won't happen again isn't as convincing as describing what will be done to ensure that it won't, as well as following through on it. When Starbucks apologized for a racist incident at one of its locations in 2018, for instance, it followed through on a plan for improving customer service by shutting down all of its stores for a half-day so that employees could receive racial sensitivity training (Dangerfield, 2018).

Apologizing may even be necessary when you're not really in the wrong, but the customer's or public's perception is that you are. In crisis communications, effective apologies show that you care enough about your existing and potential clientele to say and do what it takes to win back their trust and confidence in you. You can do this without falsely claiming that you made an error (if you genuinely didn't) by saying that you apologize for the misunderstanding. Dismissing complaints and doubling down on an error, on the other hand, shows a brazen disrespect for the people your success depends on.

Return to the Complaints and Claims Topics menu

Key Takeaway

- When something goes wrong in a commercial situation, courteous communication is essential when both asking for and responding to complaints and claims.

Exercises

1. If you've ever felt mistreated or taken advantage in a business transaction but did nothing about it, write a complaint or claim letter asking that the company correct the wrong, following the guidance in §5.3.1 above. You don't need to actually send it, but do so if you feel strongly about it and feel as though you have a reasonable chance at success.
2. Put yourself in the shoes of the company that you wrote to in the previous exercise. Write a response to your message following the advice in §5.3.2 above.

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5.4: NEGATIVE MESSAGES

Learning Objectives

1. Organize and write negative messages
2. Outline the structure of an indirect-approach bad-news message
3. Explain the importance of communicating bad news carefully in professional contexts

Just as in life, in the workplace things don't always go according to plan, and it's your job to communicate about them in a way that doesn't ruin your relationships with customers, coworkers, managers, the public, and other stakeholders. When doing damage control, bad-news messages require care and skillful language because your main point will meet resistance. Rarely are people okay being told that they're laid off, their application has been rejected, their shipment got lost en route, prices or rates are increasing, their appointment has to be moved back several months, or they're losing their benefits. Though some people prefer that the messenger be blunt about it, in most cases you can assume that the receiver will appreciate or even benefit by a more tactful, indirect approach. Keep in mind the following advice whenever required to deliver unwelcome news.

Negative Messages Topics

5.4.1: The Seven Goals of Bad-news Messages

Your ability to manage, clarify, and guide understanding is key to addressing challenging situations while maintaining trust and integrity with customers, coworkers, managers, the public, and other stakeholders. Keep in mind these seven goals when delivering bad news in person or in writing:

1. Be clear and concise to avoid being asked for additional clarification.
2. Help the receiver understand and accept the news.
3. Reduce the anxiety associated with the bad news as much as possible by expressing sympathy or empathy.
4. Maintain trust and respect between you and your audience to ensure the possibility of good future relations.
5. Deliver the bad news in a timely fashion in the appropriate channel(s).

6. Avoid the legal liability that comes with admitting negligence or guilt.
7. Achieve the designated business outcome.

Let's look at how we can achieve these goals in examples of the tricky situations in which we might find ourselves in the workplace.

Let's say you are a supervisor and your manager has tasked you with getting Chris, an employee who is usually late for work and has been arriving even later recently, to start arriving on time. Chris's tardiness is impairing not only his performance but also that of the entire team that depends on his work. You figure there are four ways you can handle this:

1. Stop by Chris's cubicle and simply say, "Get to work on time or you're out"
2. Invite Chris out to lunch and thoroughly criticize his behaviour
3. Write Chris a stern email
4. Ask Chris to come to your office and discuss the behaviour with him in private

Let's see how each of these alternatives meets our seven goals in delivering bad news.

First, if you approach Chris with a blunt ultimatum at his desk, you can get right to the point there but risk straining the supervisor-employee relationship by putting him in his place in front of everyone. The aggressive approach might prompt Chris to demand clarification, make defensive excuses, or throw hostile counter-offensives right back—none of which are desired outcomes. For that matter, the disrespectful approach doesn't formally confirm that the tardiness will end. The lack of tact in the approach may reflect poorly on you as the supervisor, not only with Chris but with your manager as well.

When you need to speak to an employee about a personnel concern, it is always best to do so in private. Give thought and concern to the conversation before it occurs and make a list of points to cover with specific information, including grievances. Like any other speech, you may need to rehearse, particularly if this type of meeting is new to you. When it comes time to have the discussion, issue the warning, back it up in writing with documentation, and don't give the impression that you might change your decision. Whether the issue at hand is a simple caution about tardiness or a more serious conversation, you need to be fair and respectful, even if the other person has been less than professional. Let's examine the next alternative.

Let's say you invite Chris to lunch at a nice restaurant. He sees the fine linen on the table, silverware for more than the main course, and water glasses with stems. The luxurious environment says "good job," but your serious talk will contradict this nonverbal signage, which will probably be an obstacle to Chris's ability to listen. If Chris doesn't understand and accept the message, requiring him to seek clarification, your approach has failed. Furthermore, the ambush fails to build trust, so you don't know whether Chris is going to make the extra effort to arrive early or just put in his time there doing the bare minimum while looking for another job.

Let's say instead that you've written Chris a stern email. You've included a list of all the recent dates when he was late and made several statements about the quality of his work. You clearly say he needs to improve and stop being late, or else. But was your email harassment? Could it be considered beyond the scope of supervision and interpreted as mean or cruel? And do you even know if Chris has received it? If there was no reply, do you know whether it achieved its desired business outcome? A written message may certainly be part of the desired approach, but how it is presented and delivered is as important as what it says. Let's examine our fourth approach to this scenario.

You ask Chris to join you in a private conversation. You start by expressing concern and asking an open-ended question: "Chris, I've been concerned about your work lately. Is everything all right?" As Chris answers, you may demonstrate that you are listening by nodding your head and possibly taking notes. You may learn that Chris has been having problems sleeping or that his living situation has changed. Or Chris may decline to share any issues, deny that anything is wrong, and ask why you are concerned. You may then state that you've noticed the chronic tardiness and name one or more specific mistakes you have found in Chris's work, ending by repeating your concern. Because showing your concern makes Chris feel valued, he opens up about his situation so that you understand where he's coming from. It may turn out that he has to drop his kids off for school at 8am and then contend with Queensway traffic for the next hour to get to the office, consistently making him a half hour late. You can then both agree that he'll stay a little later or put in the missing hours at home, then write up that agreement in an email and CC your manager.

Regardless of how well or poorly the conversation goes, if Chris tells other employees about it, they will take note of how you handled the situation, and it will contribute to their perception of you. It guides their expectations of how you operate and how to communicate with you as this interaction is not only about you and Chris. You represent the company and its reputation, and your professional display of concern as you try to learn more sends a positive message. While the private, respectful meeting may not be the perfect solution, it is preferable to the other approaches considered above.

One additional point to consider as you document this interaction is the need to present the warning in writing. You may elect to prepare a memo that outlines the information concerning Chris's performance and tardiness and have it ready should you want to present it. If the session goes well, and you have the discretion to make a judgment call, you may elect to give him another week to resolve the issue. Even if it goes well, you may want to present the memo, as it documents the interaction and serves as evidence of due process should Chris's behaviour fail to change, eventually resulting in the need for termination. This combined approach of a verbal and written message is increasingly the norm in business communication (Business Communication for Success, 2015, 17.1).

Return to the Negative Messages Topics menu

5.4.2: Indirect Bad-news Message Organization

Key to achieving Goal #2 of delivering bad news—i.e., helping the receiver understand and accept information they don't want to hear or read—is organizing the message using the indirect approach described in §5.4.1. If you tactlessly hit your audience over the head with really bad news, you run the risk of them rejecting or misunderstanding it because they may be reeling from the blow and be too distracted with anger or sadness to rationally process the explanation or instructions for what to do about the bad news. Doctors never deliver a really serious diagnosis by mentioning it upfront. Instead, they try to present it in perspective ("It could be worse"), discuss test results in detail, talk about treatment options, and only then come around to telling the patient the worst part of the diagnosis. At that point, being clear about the bad news ensures that the receiver understands the gravity of the situation and is therefore motivated to follow through on the therapeutic recommendations given earlier. Key to avoiding misunderstandings when delivering bad news, then, is the following four-part organization:

1. Buffer
2. Justification
3. Bad news + redirection
4. Positive action closing

This is much like the three-part structure we've seen before in §3.1, only the body is now divided into two distinct parts where the order really matters, as we see in Table 5.4.2 and the explanation for each part below it.

Table 5.4.2: Bad News Message Outline and Example Message

Part	Example Message
1. Buffer	Thank you for your order. We appreciate your interest in our product and are confident you will love it.
2. Explanation	We are writing to let you know that this product has been unexpectedly popular with over 10,000 orders submitted on the day you placed yours.
3. Bad news + redirect	This unexpected increase in demand has resulted in a temporary out-of-stock/ backorder situation. Despite a delay of 2-3 weeks, we will definitely fulfill your order as it was received at 11:57pm on October 9, 2018, as well as gift you a $5 coupon towards your next purchase.
4. Positive action closing	While you wait for your product to ship, we encourage you to use the enclosed $5 coupon toward the purchase of any product in our online catalog. We appreciate your continued business and want you to know that our highest priority is your satisfaction.

(Business Communication for Success, 2015, 17.1)

5.4.2.1: Bad-news Message Buffer

Begin with neutral or positive statements that set a welcoming tone and serve as a **buffer** for the information to come. Following are some possible buffer strategies. Depending on the situation, choose two or three (some won't fit, and using too many would immediately signal to the reader that something is wrong).

- **Good news**: If there's good news and bad news, start with the good news. Present the good news in relatively neutral phrasing, though. A really upbeat tone would create false expectations.
- **Compliment**: If you're rejecting someone's application, for instance, start by complimenting them on their efforts and other specific accomplishments you were impressed by in the application. Again, keep the tone positive but not too upbeat, to avoid creating false expectations.
- **Gratitude**: Say thanks for whatever positive things the recipient has done in your dealings with him/her. If the recipient has submitted a claim that doesn't qualify for an adjustment, for instance, thank the receiver for choosing your company.
- **Agreement**: Before delivering bad news that you're sure the recipient is going to disagree with/ oppose, start with something you're sure you both agree on. Start on common ground by saying, "We can all agree that . . ."
- **Facts**: If positives are hard to come by in a situation, getting started on the next section's explanation, starting with cold, hard facts, is the next best thing.
- **Understanding**: Again, if there are no silver linings to point to, showing you care by expressing sympathy and understanding is a possible alternative (Guffey et al. 2016, p. 194)
- **Apology**: If you're at fault for any aspect of a bad news message, an apology is appropriate as long as it won't leave you at a disadvantage in legal proceedings that may follow as a result of admitting wrongdoing. (See §5.3.2.2 for more on effective strategies for apologizing.)

The idea here is not to fool the audience into thinking that only good news is coming but to put them in a receptive frame of mind for understanding the explanation that follows. If you create false expectations, they're going to be even more disappointed and angry for being led on. If you hit them over the head with bad news right away, however, they may become too emotional to rationally process the explanation or instructions for what to do about the bad news.

5.4.2.2: Bad News Justification

The **justification** explains the background or context for the bad news before delivering the bad news itself. Let's say that you must reject an application, claim for a refund, or request for information. In such cases, the explanation could describe the strict acceptance criteria and high quality of applications received in the competition, the company policy on refunds, or its policy on allowable disclosures and the legalities of contractually obligated confidentiality, respectively. Your goal with the explanation is to be convincing, leading the reader to conclude that your explanation is reasonable and accept the bad news as inevitable given the situation you describe. On the other hand, if you make the bad news seem like mysterious and arbitrary decision-making, your readers will probably feel like they've been treated unfairly and might even escalate further with legal action or "yelptribution"—avenging the wrong in social media. While an explanation is ethically necessary, never admit or imply responsibility without written authorization from your company cleared by legal counsel if there's any way that the justification might be seen as actionable (i.e., the offended party can sue for damages).

Use additional strategies to make the justification more agreeable, such as focusing on benefits. If you're informing employees that they will have to pay double for parking passes next year in an attempt to reduce the number of cars filling up the parking lot, you could emphasize the health benefits of cycling to work or the environmental benefit of fewer cars polluting the atmosphere. If you're informing a customer asking why a product or service can't include additional features, you could say that adding those features would drive the cost up and you would rather respect your customer's pocketbooks by keeping the product or service more affordable. In any case, try to pitch an agreeable, pro-social or progressive benefit rather than saying that you're merely trying to maximize company or shareholder profits.

5.4.2.3: The Bad News Itself and Redirection

Burying the bad news itself in the message is a defining characteristic of the indirect approach. It's akin to constructive criticism in the way it sandwiches negative comments between statements of praise. Far from intending to hide the bad news, the indirect approach *frames* the bad news so that it can be properly understood and its negative (depressing or anger-arousing) impact minimized.

The goal is also to be clear in expressing the bad news so that it isn't misunderstood, while also being sensitive to your reader's feelings. If you're rejecting a job applicant, for instance, you can be clear that they didn't get the job without bluntly saying "You failed to meet our criteria" or "You won't be working for us anytime soon." Instead, you can clearly imply it by putting the bad news in a subordinate clause in the passive voice:

> *Though another candidate was hired for the position, . . .*

The passive voice enables you to draw attention away from your own role in rejecting the applicant, as well as away from the rejected applicant in the context of the competition itself. Instead, you focus on the positive of someone getting hired. While the rejected applicant probably won't be throwing a celebration party for the winning candidate, the subordinate clause here allows for speedy redirection to a consolation prize.

Redirection is key to the effectiveness of this method of communicating bad news because it quickly shifts the readers' attention to an alternative to what they were seeking in the first place. Some kind of consolation prize (e.g., a coupon or store credit) will be appreciated as being better than nothing, at least. Even if you're not able to offer the reader anything of value, you could at least say something nice. In that case, completing the sentence in the previous paragraph with an active-voice main clause could go as follows:

> *. . . we wish you success in your continued search for employment.*

This way, you avoid saying anything negative while still clearly rejecting the applicant.

5.4.2.4: Positive Action Closing

As we've seen in previous explorations of message organization (e.g., §4.1.7 on email), the closing here involves action information. If your redirection involves some alternative, such as a recommendation to apply elsewhere, some follow-up details here would help the reader focus on a future elsewhere rather than getting hung up on you and your company's decision. Your goals here are the following:

- Ensure that the reader understands the bad news without rehashing it
- Remain courteous, positive, and forward-looking
- End the conversation in such a way that you don't invite further correspondence

The first and last goals are important because you don't want the reader to respond asking you to clarify anything. The second goal is important because you ultimately want to appear respectable and avoid giving the reader a reason to smear your reputation in social media or proceed with legal action against you.

Return to the Negative Messages Topics menu

5.4.3: Avoiding Disaster in Bad News Messages

Delivering bad news can be dangerous if it angers the reader so much that they are motivated to fight back. If you're not careful with what you say, that message can be used as evidence in a court case that, when read by a judge or jury, could compromise your position. You can lower the risk of being litigated against by following the general principles given below when delivering bad news.

5.4.3.1: Avoid Negative or Abusive Language

Sarcasm, profanity, harsh accusations, and abusive or insulting language may feel good to write in a fit of anger but, in the end, make everyone's lives more difficult. When someone sends an inflammatory message and it's interpreted by readers as harmful to their reputation, it could legally qualify as libel that is legitimately actionable. Even if you write critically about a rival company's product or service by stating (as if factually) that it's dangerous, whereas your version of the product or service is safer and better, this can be considered defamation or libel. If said aloud and recorded, perhaps on a smart phone's voice recorder, it is slander and can likewise be litigated. It's much better to always write courteously and maturely, even under difficult circumstances, to avoid fallout that involves expensive court proceedings.

5.4.3.2: Avoid Oversharing but Tell the Truth

When your job is to provide a convincing rationale that might make the recipient of bad news accept it as reasonable, be careful with what details you disclose. When rejecting a job applicant, for instance, you must be especially careful not to reveal all your cards by sharing the scoring sheets of the winning and rejected candidates, nor even summarize them. Though that would give them the full picture, it would open you up to a flood of complaints and legal or human-rights challenges picking apart every little note. Instead, you would simply wish the rejected candidate luck in their ongoing job search. When you must provide detail, avoid saying anything bad about anyone so that you can't be accused of libel and taken to court for it. Provide only as much information as is necessary to provide a convincing rationale.

At the same, it's important that you tell the truth so that you can't be challenged on the details. If you are inconsistent or contradictory in your explanation, it may invite scrutiny and accusations of lying. Even making false claims by exaggerating may give the reader the wrong impression, which can lead to serious consequences if acted upon. Though some might say that omitting the truth is a form of lying, telling the truth selectively is the necessary compromise for professionals constrained by competing obligations to both the organization they represent and the reader they don't want to anger or severely disappoint.

5.4.3.3: Respect the Recipient's Privacy

Criticizing an employee in a group email or memo—even if the criticism is fair—is mean, unprofessional, and an excellent way of opening yourself to a world of trouble. People who call out others in front of a group create a chilly climate in the workplace, one that leads to fear, loathing, and a loss of productivity among employees, not to mention legal challenges for possible libel. Called-out employees may even resort to sabotaging the office with misbehaviour such as vandalism, cyberattacks, or theft to get even. Always maintain respect and privacy when communicating bad news as a matter of proper professionalism (Business Communication for Success, 2015, 17.1).

Return to the Negative Messages Topics menu

5.4.4: Crisis Communications

A rumour that the CEO is ill pulls down the stock price. A plant explosion kills several workers and requires evacuating residents in several surrounding city blocks. Risk management seeks to address such risks in termsof prevention as well as liability, but emergencies and crises happen anyway. Employees also make errors in judgment that can damage the public perception of a company. The mainstream media does not lack stories involving infidelity, addiction, or abuse that require a clear response from a company's standpoint. In this subsection we address the basics of a crisis communication plan, focusing on key types of information during an emergency:

- What is happening?
- Is anyone in danger?
- How big is the problem?
- Who reported the problem?
- Where is the problem?
- Has a response started?
- What resources are on-scene?

- Who is responding so far?
- Is everyone's location known? (Mallet, Vaught, & Brinch, 1999)

You will be receiving information from the moment you know a crisis has occurred, but without a framework or communication plan to guide you, valuable information may be ignored or lost. These questions help you quickly focus on the basics of "who, what, and where" in the crisis situation.

A crisis communication plan is the prepared scenario document that organizes information into responsibilities and lines of communication prior to an event. If an emergency arises when you already have a plan in place, each person knows his or her role and responsibilities from a common reference document. Overall effectiveness can be enhanced with a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities for an effective and swift response. The plan should include four elements:

- Crisis communication team members with contact information
- Designated spokesperson
- Meeting place/location
- Media plan with procedures

A crisis communication team includes people who can decide what actions to take, carry out those actions, and offer expertise or education in the relevant areas.

By designating a spokesperson prior to an actual emergency, your team addresses the inevitable need for information in a proactive manner. People will want to know what happened and where to get further details about the crisis. Lack of information breeds rumours that can make a bad situation worse. The designated spokesperson should be knowledgeable about the organization and its values; be comfortable in front of a microphone, camera, and media lights; and be able to stay calm under pressure.

Part of your communication crisis plan should focus on where you will meet to coordinate communicate and activities. In case of a fire in your house, you might meet in the front yard. In an organization, a designated contingency building or office some distance away from your usual place of business might serve as a central place for communication in an emergency that requires evacuating your building. Depending on the size of your organization and its facilities, the emergency plan may include exit routes, hazardous materials procedures (WHMIS), and policies for handling bomb threats, for example. Safety is of course the priority, but in terms of communication, the goal is to eliminate confusion about where people are, where they need to be, and where information is coming from.

Whether or not evacuation is necessary when a crisis occurs, your designated spokesperson will gather information and carry out your media plan. The spokesperson will need to make quick judgments about which information to share, how to phrase it, and whether certain individuals need to be notified of facts before they become public. The media and public will want to get reliable information, which is preferable to mere spin or speculation. Official responses help clarify the situation for the public, but an unofficial interview can make the tragedy personal and attract unwanted attention. Remind employees to direct all inquiries to the official spokesperson and to never speak anonymously or "off the record."

Enable your spokesperson to have access to the place you indicated as your crisis contingency location to coordinate communication and activities, and allow him/her to prepare and respond to inquiries. When crisis communication is handled in a professional manner, it seeks not to withhold information or mislead but to minimize the "spin damage" from the incident by providing necessary facts even if they are unpleasant or even tragic (Business Communication for Success, 2015, 17.3).

Return to the Negative Messages Topics menu

5.4.5: Direct-approach Bad News Messages

We've so far looked at expressing bad news through the indirect approach, but is it ever right to deliver bad news using the direct approach? Are there occasions where you can or should be upfront about the bad news? In the following situations, yes, it's certainly appropriate to deliver bad news by getting right to the point:

- **When the bad news isn't *that* bad:**
  - In the case of small price or rate increases, customers won't be devastated by having to pay more. Indeed, inflation makes such increases an expected fact of life.
  - If your job involves routinely delivering criticism because you're a Quality Assurance specialist, the people who are used to receiving recommendations to improve their work will appreciate the direct approach. Some organizations even require direct-approach communications for bad news as a policy because it is more time-efficient.
- **When you know that the recipient prefers or requires the direct approach:** Though the indirect approach is intended as a nice way to deliver bad news, some people would rather you be blunt. "Give it to me straight — I'm a grown-up; I can take it," they might say. Since a message must always be tailored to the audience, getting permission for taking the direct approach is your cue to follow through with exactly that. Not doing so will arouse the angry response you would have expected otherwise.
- **When you're short on time or space:** One of the hallmarks of the indirect approach is that it takes more words than a direct-approach message (see Table 4.1.5 for comparative examples). If time is limited or you're constrained in how much space you have to write, taking the direct approach is justifiable.
- **When the indirect approach hasn't worked:** If this is the third time you've had to tell a client to pay their invoice and the first two were nicely-worded indirect messages that the recipient ignored, issue a stern warning of the consequences of not paying. You may need to threaten legal action or say you'll refer the account to a collection agency, and you may need to put it in bold so that you're sure the reader won't miss it.
- **When the reader may miss the bad news:** You may determine from profiling your audience and their literacy level that they might not understand indirect-approach bad news. If your reader doesn't have a strong command of English vocabulary and misses words here and there, they may not pick up on the bad news buried past the mid-point of a challenging message.

In the above situations, structure your message following the same three-part organization we've seen elsewhere (e.g., §4.1.5 – §4.1.7 on email parts):

1. **Opening:** State the bad news right up front.
2. **Body:** Briefly explain why the bad news happened.
3. **Closing:** Express confidence in continued business relations with a goodwill statement and provide any action information such as contact instructions should the recipient require further information.

Of course, clarity and brevity in such messages is vital to maintaining friendly relations with your audiences (Guffey et al., 2016, p. 190).

Return to the Negative Messages Topics menu

Key Takeaway

- Write carefully when addressing negative situations, such as delivering bad news, usually by burying the bad news after a buffer and rationale, and following it with redirection to minimize the harm that the message might cause.

Exercises

1. Think of a time when you were given bad news by email or letter, such as when you were told that a warranty couldn't be honoured for the type of damage inflicted on your product or your application was rejected. How well did it fulfill or fail to fulfill the goals of delivering bad news discussed above (see §5.4.1 and §5.4.3)?
2. Sales have decreased for two consecutive quarters at your business. You must inform your sales team that their hours and base pay will be reduced by 20 percent if the company is to break even this quarter. While you may have a few members of your sales team that are underperforming, you can't afford to be short-staffed now, so you must keep the entire team for the time being. Write negative news messages in both the direct and indirect approach informing your sales team of the news, following the advice in §5.4.2 and §5.4.5.
3. Research a crisis in your area of training or career field. What communication issues were present and how did they affect the response to the crisis? If the situation was handled well, what are the major takeaways? If handled poorly, what do you think you would have done differently, following the general guidelines in §5.4.4 above?

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CHAPTER 5: REVIEW

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Case studies prepare students for the workplace by engaging them in active forms of learning in asking them to analyze and address situations similar to what they would encounter at work
- Case studies allow for complex learning activities that stimulate the development of higher-order cognitive skills in students.
- Follow best practices when sharing information, requesting information or action, and replying to such messages.
- When something goes wrong in a commercial situation, courteous communication is essential when both asking for and responding to complaints and claims.
- Write carefully when addressing negative situations, such as delivering bad news, usually by burying the bad news after a buffer and rationale, and following it with redirection to minimize the harm that the message might cause.

UNIT 3: THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND EMPLOYMENT COMMUNICATION

6019 Course Learning Outcomes

This unit supports the following course learning outcomes (CLOs):

- **Prepare and evaluate** professional business documents in common formats, using appropriate tone, structure/format (including headings and graphics) and patterns of development (direct/indirect);
- **Describe, demonstrate, and evaluate** effective team, group and meeting management strategies based on audience; increase awareness and identify cultural differences;
- **Assess** various employment communications and **create** effective employment communication documents (print, digital, and oral).

Unit 3 Chapters

CHAPTER 6: INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Define Culture
2. Define intercultural communication
3. Discuss the effects of ethnocentrism.
4. List several examples of common cultural characteristics.
5. Describe international communication and the global marketplace
6. Give examples of various styles of management, including Theory X, Y, and Z.

Culture is difficult to define, as there are several ways that culture is used in business contexts. For the purposes of this chapter, **culture** is defined as the ongoing negotiation of learned and patterned beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviours. Unpacking the definition, we can see that culture shouldn't be conceptualized as stable and unchanging. Culture is "negotiated," and as you will learn later in this chapter, culture is dynamic, and cultural changes can be traced and analyzed to better understand why our society is the way it is. The definition also points out that culture is learned, which accounts for the importance of socializing institutions like family, school, peers, and the media. Culture is patterned in that there are recognizable widespread similarities among people within a cultural group. There is also deviation from and resistance to those patterns by individuals and subgroups within a culture, which is why cultural patterns change over time. Last, the definition acknowledges that culture influences your beliefs about what is true and false, your attitudes including your likes and dislikes, your values regarding what is right and wrong, and your behaviours. It is from these cultural influences that your identities are formed.

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

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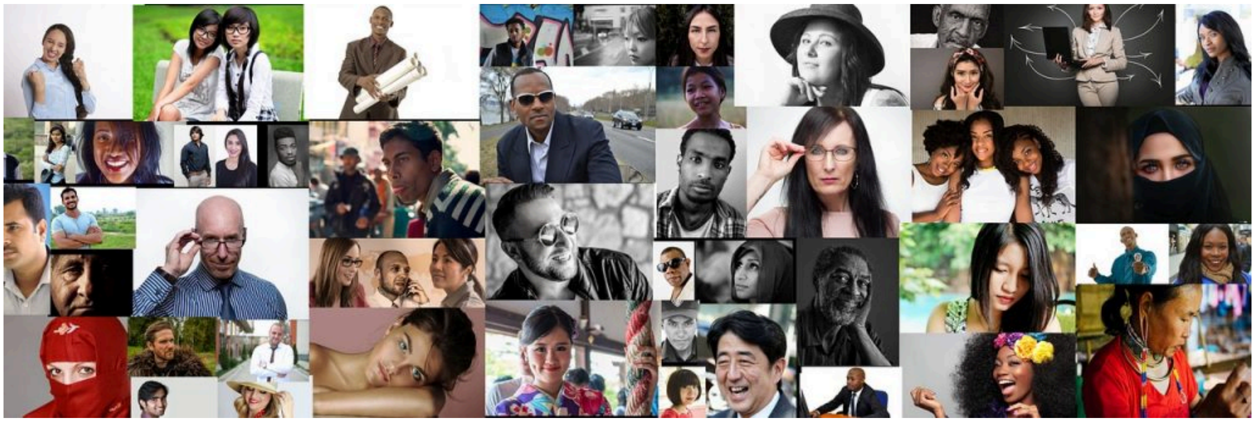
6.1: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION



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Culture involves beliefs, attitudes, values, and traditions that are shared by a group of people. Thus, you must consider more than the clothes you wear, the movies you watch, or the video games you play, all representations of the environment, as culture. Culture also involves the psychological aspects of your expectations of the communication context. From the choice of words (message), to how you communicate (in person, or by email), to how you acknowledge understanding with a nod or a glance (nonverbal feedback), to internal and external interference, all aspects of communication are influenced by culture.

Watch the following 1 minute video *What is Culture?*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=1603#oembed-1

Video: "What is Culture?" by Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs [1:17] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.*Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

It is through intercultural communication that you come to create, understand, and transform culture and identity. Intercultural communication is communication between people with differing cultural identities. One reason you should study intercultural communication is to foster greater self-awareness (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 14). Your thought process regarding culture is often "other focused," meaning that the culture of the other person or group is what stands out in your perception. However, the old adage "know thyself" is appropriate, as you become more aware of your own culture by better understanding other cultures and perspectives. Intercultural communication can allow you to step outside of your comfortable, usual frame of reference and see your culture through a different lens. Additionally, as you become more self-aware, you may also become more ethical communicators as you challenge your ethnocentrism, or your tendency to view your own culture as superior to other cultures.

Ethnocentrism makes you far less likely to be able to bridge the gap with others and often increases intolerance of difference. Business and industry are no longer regional, and in your career, you will necessarily cross borders, languages, and cultures. You will need tolerance, understanding, patience, and openness to difference. A skilled business communicator knows that the process of learning is never complete, and being open to new ideas is a key strategy for success.

Communication with yourself is called **intrapersonal** communication, which may also be intracultural, as you may only represent one culture. But most people belong to multiple groups, each with their own culture. Does a conversation with yourself ever involve competing goals, objectives, needs, wants, or values? How did you learn of those goals, or values? Through communication within and between individuals many cultures are represented. You may struggle with the demands of each group and their expectations and could consider this internal struggle intercultural conflict or simply intercultural communication.

Culture is part of the very fabric of our thought, and you cannot separate yourself from it, even as you leave home, defining yourself anew in work and achievements. Every business or organization has a culture, and within what may be considered a global culture, there are many subcultures or co-cultures. For example, consider the difference between the sales and accounting departments in a corporation. You can quickly see two distinct groups with their own symbols, vocabulary, and values. Within each group, there may also be smaller groups, and each member of each department comes from a distinct background that in itself influences behavior and interaction.

Intercultural communication is a fascinating area of study within business communication, and it is essential to your success. One idea to keep in mind as you examine this topic is the importance of considering multiple points of view. If you tend to dismiss ideas or views that are "culturally different," you will find it challenging to learn about diverse cultures. If you cannot learn, how can you grow and be successful?

To summarize, intercultural communication is an aspect of all communicative interactions, and attention to what drives your perspective is key to your effectiveness. Ethnocentrism is a major obstacle to intercultural communication.

How to Understand Intercultural Communication

The American anthropologist Edward T. Hall is often cited as a pioneer in the field of intercultural communication (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Born in 1914, Hall spent much of his early adulthood in the multicultural setting of the American Southwest, where Native Americans, Spanish speakers, and descendents of pioneers came together from diverse cultural perspectives. He then traveled the globe during World War II and later served as a U.S. State Department official. Where culture had once been viewed by anthropologists as a single, distinct way of living, Hall saw how the perspective of the individual influences interaction. By focusing on interactions rather than cultures as separate from individuals, he asked people to evaluate the many cultures they belong to or are influenced by, as well as those with whom they interacted. While his view makes the study of intercultural communication far more complex, it also brings a healthy dose of reality to the discussion.

Hall is generally credited with eight contributions to the study of intercultural communication as follows:

1. Compare cultures. Focus on the interactions versus general observations of culture.

2. Shift to local perspective (local level *vs.* global perspective).
3. You don't have to know everything to know something. Time, space, gestures, and gender roles can be studied, even if we lack a larger understanding of the entire culture.
4. There are rules we can learn. People create rules for themselves in each community that we can learn from, compare, and contrast.
5. Experience counts. Personal experience has value in addition to more comprehensive studies of interaction and culture.
6. Perspectives can differ. Descriptive linguistics serves as a model to understand cultures, and the U.S. Foreign Service adopted it as a base for training.
7. Intercultural communication can be applied to international business. U.S. Foreign Service training yielded applications for trade and commerce and became a point of study for business majors.
8. Intercultural communication integrates the disciplines (culture and communication are intertwined and bring together many academic disciplines). (Chen & Starosta, 2000; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990; McLean, 2005).

Hall indicated that emphasis on a culture as a whole, and how it operated, might lead people to neglect individual differences. Individuals may hold beliefs or practice customs that do not follow their own cultural norm. When you resort to the mental shortcut of a stereotype, you lose these unique differences. **Stereotypes** can be defined as a generalization about a group of people that oversimplifies their culture (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999).

The American psychologist Gordon Allport explored how, when, and why people formulate or use stereotypes to characterize distinct groups. When you do not have enough contact with people or their cultures to understand them well, you tend to resort to stereotypes (Allport, 1958).

As Hall notes, experience has value. If you do not know a culture, you should consider learning more about it firsthand if possible. The people you interact with may not be representative of the culture as a whole, but that is not to say that what you learn lacks validity. Quite the contrary; Hall asserts that you can, in fact, learn something without understanding everything, and given the dynamic nature of communication and culture, who is to say that your lessons will not serve you well? Consider studying abroad for a term if that is an option for you, or learn from a classmate who comes from a foreign country or an unfamiliar culture. Be open to new ideas and experiences, and start investigating. Today, unlike in generations past, more information is accessible. Your experiences will allow you to learn about another culture and yourself, and thus help you to avoid prejudice.

Prejudice involves a negative preconceived judgment or opinion that guides conduct or social behaviour (McLean., 2005). As an example, imagine two people walking into a room for a job interview. You are tasked to interview both, and having read the previous section, you know that Allport (1958) rings true when he says we rely on stereotypes when encountering people or cultures with which we have had little contact. Will the candidates' dress, age, or gender influence your opinion of them? Will their race or ethnicity be a conscious or subconscious factor in your thinking process? Allport's work would indicate that those factors and more will make you likely to use stereotypes to guide your expectations of them and your subsequent interactions with them.

People who treat others with prejudice often make assumptions (preconceived ideas taken for granted, without question) about a group or community. As Allport illustrated, we often assume various characteristics about groups with which we have little contact. Sometimes we assume differences that are not there, and we might perceive cultural distance where there is none. Other times we assume similarity, thinking that people are all basically the same — which denies cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and many other valuable, insightful differences.

Watch the following 4-minute video: How Cultural Differences Affect Business

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=1603#oembed-2

Video: "Business Speaker Erin Meyer: How Cultural Differences Affect Business" by The Lavin Agency [4:10] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.*Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Key Takeaway

- In summary, ethnocentric tendencies, stereotyping, and assumptions of similarity can make it difficult to learn about cultural differences.

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6.2: COMMON CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Groups come together, form cultures, and grow apart across time. How do you become a member of a community, and how do you know when you are full member? What aspects of culture do people have in common and how do they relate to business communication? Researchers who have studied cultures around the world have identified certain characteristics that define a culture. These characteristics are expressed in different ways, but they tend to be present in nearly all cultures.

Rites of Initiation

Cultures tend to have a ritual for becoming a new member. A newcomer starts out as a nonentity, a stranger, an unaffiliated person with no connection or even possibly awareness of the community. Newcomers who stay around and learn about the culture become members. Most cultures have a rite of initiation that marks the passage of the individual within the community; some of these rituals may be so informal as to be hardly noticed (e.g., the first time a coworker asks you to join the group to eat lunch together), while others may be highly formalized (e.g., the ordination of clergy in a religion). The nonmember becomes a member, the new member becomes a full member, and individuals rise in terms of responsibility and influence.

Across the course of your life, you have no doubt passed several rites of initiation but may not have taken notice of them. Did you earn a driver's license, register to vote, or acquire the permission to purchase alcohol? In North American culture, these three common markers indicate the passing from a previous stage of life to a new one, with new rights and responsibilities.

Rites of initiation mark the transition of the role or status of the individual within the group. Your first day on the job may have been a challenge as you learned your way around the physical space, but the true challenge was to learn how the group members communicate with each other. If you graduate from college with a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, you will already have passed a series of tests, learned terms and theories, and possess a symbol of accomplishment in your diploma, but that only grants you the opportunity to look for a job—to seek access to a new culture.

In every business, there are groups, power struggles, and unspoken ways that members earn their way from the role of a "newbie" to that of a full member. The newbie may get the tough account, the office without a window, or the cubicle next to the bathroom, denoting low status. As the new member learns to navigate through the community—establishing a track record and being promoted—he passes the rite of initiation and acquires new rights and responsibilities.

Over time, the person comes to be an important part of the business, a "keeper of the flame." The "flame" may not exist in physical space or time, but it does exist in the minds of those members in the community who have invested time and effort in the business. It is not a flame to be trusted to a new person, as it can only be earned with time. Along the way, there may be personality conflicts and power struggles over resources and perceived scarcity (e.g., there is only one promotion and everyone wants it). All these challenges are to be expected in any culture.

Common History and Traditions

Traditions form as organizations grow and expand, and stories are told and retold to educate new members on how business should be conducted. The history of every culture, of every corporation, influences the present. There are times when the phrase "we've tried that before" can become a stumbling block for members of the organization as it grows and adapts to new market forces. There may be struggles between members who have weathered many storms and new members, who come armed with new educational perspectives, technological tools, or experiences that may contribute to growth.

Common Values and Principles

Cultures all hold values and principles that are commonly shared and communicated from older members to younger (or newer) ones. Time and length of commitment are associated with an awareness of these values and principles, so that new members, whether they are socialized at home, in school, or at work, may not have a thorough understanding of their importance.

Common Purpose and Sense of Mission

Cultures share a common sense of purpose and mission. Why are we here and whom do we serve? These are fundamental questions of the human condition that philosophers and theologians all over the world have pondered for centuries. In business, the answers to these questions often address purpose and mission, and they can be found in mission and vision statements of almost every organization. Individual members will be expected to acknowledge and share the mission and vision, actualize them, or make them real through action. Without action, the mission and vision statements are simply an arrangement of words. As a guide to individual and group behavioural norms, they can serve as a powerful motivator and a call to action. For example, Boeing Canada's Purpose and Mission, and Aspiration statements are as follows:

Purpose and Mission: Connect, Protect, Explore and Inspire the World through Aerospace Innovation

Aspiration: Best in Aerospace and Enduring Global Industrial Champion

Based on these two statements, employees might expect a culture of innovation, quality, and safety as core to their work. What might those concepts mean in your everyday work if you were part of Boeing "culture?"

Common Symbols, Boundaries, Status, Language, and Rituals

Many people learn early in life what a stop sign represents, but not everyone knows what a ten-year service pin on a lapel, or a corner office with two windows means. Cultures have common symbols that mark them as a group; the knowledge of what a symbol stands for helps to reinforce who is a group member and who is not. Cultural symbols include dress, such as the Western business suit and tie. Symbols also include slogans or sayings, which may serve a marketing purpose but may also embrace a mission or purpose within the culture. Family crests and clan tartan patterns serve as symbols of affiliation. Symbols can also be used to communicate rank and status within a group.

Space is another common cultural characteristic; it may be a nonverbal symbol that represents status and power. In most of the world's cultures, a person occupying superior status is entitled to a physically elevated position—a throne, a dais, a podium from which to address subordinates. Subordinates may be expected to bow, curtsy, or lower their eyes as a sign of respect. In business, the corner office may offer the best view with the most space. Movement from a cubicle to a private office may also be a symbol of transition within an organization, involving increased responsibility as well as power. Parking spaces, the kind of vehicle you drive, and the transportation allowance you have may also serve to communicate symbolic meaning within an organization.

The office serves our discussion on the second point concerning boundaries. Would you sit on your boss's desk or sit in his chair with your feet up on the desk in his presence? Most people indicate they would not, because doing so would communicate a lack of respect, violate normative space expectations, and invite retaliation. Still, subtle challenges to authority may arise in the workplace. A less than flattering photograph of the boss at the office party posted to the recreational room bulletin board communicates more than a lack of respect for authority. By placing the image anonymously in a public place, the prankster clearly communicates a challenge, even if it is a juvenile one. Movement from the cubicle to the broom closet may be the result for someone who is found responsible for the prank. Again, there are no words used to communicate meaning, only symbols, but those symbols represent significant issues.

Communities have their own vocabulary and way in which they communicate. Consider the person who uses a sewing machine to create a dress and the accountant behind the desk; both are professionals and both have specialized jargon used in their field. If they were to change places, the lack of skills would present an obstacle, but the lack of understanding of terms, how they are used, and what they mean would also severely limit their effectiveness. Those terms and how they are used are learned over time and through interaction. While a textbook can help, it cannot demonstrate use in live interactions. Cultures are dynamic systems that reflect the communication process itself.

Cultures celebrate heroes, denigrate villains, and have specific ways of completing jobs and tasks. In business and industry, the emphasis may be on effectiveness and efficiency, but the practice can often be "because that is the way we have always done it." Rituals serve to guide our performance and behaviour and may be limited to small groups or celebrated across the entire company.

Rituals can serve to bind a group together, or to constrain it. Institutions tend to formalize processes and then have a hard time adapting to new circumstances. While the core values or mission statement may hold true, the method of doing things that worked in the past may not be as successful as it once was. Adaptation and change can be difficult for individuals and companies, and yet all communities, cultures, and communication contexts are dynamic, or always changing. As much as we might like things to stay the same, they will always change—and we will change with (and be changed by) them.

Read the following web article: Culture at Work: The Tyranny of 'Unwritten Rules'

Key Takeaway

- To summarize, all cultures have characteristics such as initiations, traditions, history, values and principles, purpose, symbols, and boundaries.

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6.3: DIVERGENT CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

We are not created equal. Cultures reflect this inequality, this diversity, and the divergent range of values, symbols, and meanings across communities. People have viewpoints, and they are shaped by their interactions with communities. Let's examine several points of divergence across cultures.

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Individualistic versus Collectivist Cultures

The Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede explored the concepts of individualism and collectivism across diverse cultures (Hofstede, 2005). He found that in individualistic cultures like the United States and Canada, people value individual freedom and personal independence, and perceive their world primarily from their own viewpoint. They perceive themselves as empowered individuals, capable of making their own decisions, and able to make an impact on their own lives.

Cultural viewpoints are not restricted to either/or dichotomies but are rather distributed across a continuum or range. You may belong to some communities that express individualistic cultural values, while others place the focus on a collective viewpoint. Collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 1982), including many in Asia and South America, focus on the needs of the nation, community, family, or group of workers. Ownership and private property is one way to examine this difference. In some cultures, property is almost exclusively private, while others tend toward community ownership. The collectively owned resource returns benefits to the community. Water, for example, has long been viewed as a community resource, much like air, but that has been changing as business and organizations have purchased water rights and gained control over resources. How does someone raised in a culture that emphasizes the community interact with someone raised in a primarily individualistic culture? How could tensions be expressed and how might interactions be influenced by this point of divergence? In the following sections these viewpoints will be examined.

Explicit-Rule Cultures versus Implicit-Rule Cultures

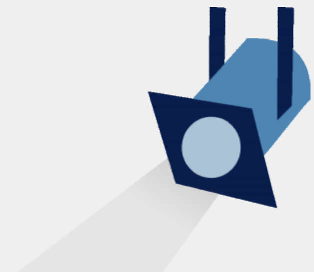
Do you know the rules of your business or organization? Did you learn them from an employee manual or by observing the conduct of others? Your response may include both options, but not all cultures communicate rules in the same way. In an explicit-rule culture, where rules are clearly communicated so that everyone is aware of them, the guidelines and agenda for a meeting are announced prior to the gathering. In an implicit-rule culture, where rules are often understood and communicated nonverbally, there may be no agenda. Everyone knows why they are gathered and what role each member plays, even though the expectations may not be clearly stated. Power, status, and behavioural expectations may all be understood, and to the person from outside this culture, it may prove a challenge to understand the rules of the context.

Outsiders often communicate their “otherness” by not knowing where to stand, when to sit, or how to initiate a conversation if the rules are not clearly stated. While it may help to know that implicit-rule cultures are often more tolerant of deviation from the understood rules, the newcomer will be wise to learn by observing quietly—and to do as much research ahead of the event as possible.

Uncertainty-Accepting Cultures versus Uncertainty-Rejecting Cultures

When people meet each other for the first time, they often use what they have previously learned to understand their current context. People also do this to reduce uncertainty. Some cultures, such as the United States and Britain, are highly tolerant of uncertainty, while others go to great lengths to reduce the element of surprise. Cultures in the Arab world, for example, are high in uncertainty avoidance; they tend to be resistant to change and reluctant to take risks. Whereas a U.S. business negotiator might enthusiastically agree to try a new procedure, the Egyptian counterpart would likely refuse to get involved until all the details are worked out.

SPOTLIGHT: "UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION THEORY"



Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese (1975) developed **Uncertainty Reduction theory** to examine this dynamic aspect of communication. Here are seven axioms of uncertainty:

1. There is a high level of uncertainty at first. As we get to know one another, our verbal communication increases and our uncertainty begins to decrease.
2. Following verbal communication, nonverbal communication increases, uncertainty continues to decrease, and more nonverbal displays of affiliation, like nodding one's head to indicate agreement, will start to be expressed.
3. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, we tend to increase our information-seeking behaviour, perhaps asking questions to gain more insight. As our understanding increases, uncertainty decreases, as does the information-seeking behaviour.
4. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, the communication interaction is not as personal or intimate. As uncertainty is reduced, intimacy increases.
5. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, communication will feature more reciprocity, or displays of respect. As uncertainty decreases, reciprocity may diminish.
6. Differences between people increase uncertainty, while similarities decrease it.
7. Higher levels of uncertainty are associated with a decrease in the indication of liking the other person, while reductions in uncertainty are associated with liking the other person more.

Time Orientation

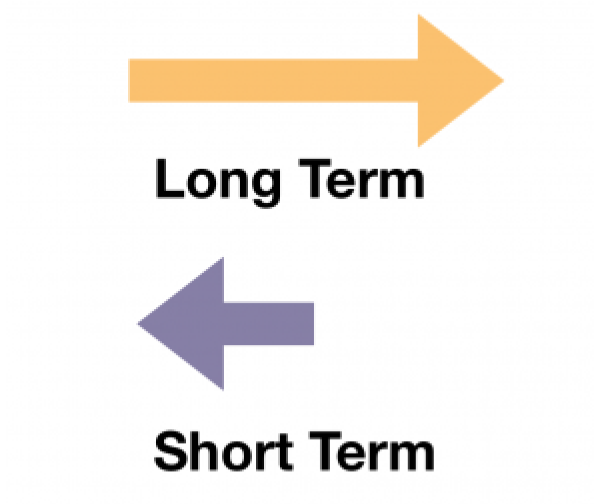
Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall (1987) state that monochronic time-oriented cultures consider one thing at a time, whereas polychronic time-oriented cultures schedule many things at one time, and time is considered in a more fluid sense. In monochromatic time, interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time. Even the multitasker from a monochromatic culture will, for example, recognize the value of work first before play or personal time. Canada, Germany, and Switzerland are often noted as countries that value a monochromatic time orientation.

Polychromatic time looks a little more complicated, with business and family mixing with dinner and dancing. Greece, Italy, Chile, and Saudi Arabia are countries where one can observe this perception of time; business meetings may be scheduled at a fixed time, but when they actually begin may be another story. Also note that the dinner invitation for 8 p.m. may in reality be more like 9 p.m. If you were to show up on time, you might be the first person to arrive and find that the hosts are not quite ready to receive you.

When in doubt, always ask before the event; many people from polychromatic cultures will be used to foreigner's tendency to be punctual, even compulsive, about respecting established times for events. The skilled business communicator is aware of this difference and takes steps to anticipate it. The value of time in different cultures is expressed in many ways, and your understanding can help you communicate more effectively.

Short-Term versus Long-Term Orientation

Do you want your reward right now or can you dedicate yourself to a long-term goal? You may work in a culture whose people value immediate results and grow impatient when those results do not materialize. Geert Hofstede discusses this relationship of time orientation to a culture as a "time horizon," and it underscores the perspective of the individual within a cultural context. Many countries in Asia, influenced by the teachings of Confucius, value a long-term orientation, whereas other countries, including Canada, have a more short-term approach to life and results. Indigenous peoples are known for holding a long-term orientation driven by values of deep, long-term reflection and community consultation.



Source: ecampusontario

If you work within a culture that has a short-term orientation, you may need to place greater emphasis on reciprocation of greetings, gifts, and rewards. For example, if you send a thank-you note the morning after being treated to a business dinner, your host will appreciate your promptness. While there may be a respect for tradition, there is also an emphasis on personal representation and honour, a reflection of identity and integrity. Personal stability and consistency are also valued in a short-term oriented culture, contributing to an overall sense of predictability and familiarity.

Long-term orientation is often marked by persistence, thrift and frugality, and an order to relationships based on age and status. A sense of shame for the family and community is also observed across generations. What an individual does reflects on the family and is carried by immediate and extended family members.

Masculine versus Feminine Orientation

Another distinction Hofstede (2009) makes concerns the extent to which specific cultures value traits that may traditionally be considered masculine or feminine. Accordingly, he defines culture as having a "masculine vs. feminine orientation." As you will see, many of Hofstede's observations are relevant, but his use of "feminine" and "masculine" in this context can easily become questionable and confusing.

Traditionally, Hofstede explains, "the assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine.' The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values" (Hofstede, 2009). The difference he points out can manifest itself in the way people choose where to gather, in the way they interact, and in the way they dress. You can see it during business negotiations, where it may make an important difference in the success of the organizations involved. Cultural expectations precede the interaction, so someone who doesn't match those expectations may experience tension. Business in Canada still has a masculine orientation—assertiveness and competition are highly valued. In other cultures, such as Sweden, business values are more attuned to modesty (lack of self-promotion) and taking care of society's underserved members. This range of difference is one aspect of intercultural communication that requires significant attention when the business communicator enters a new environment.

Again, while these differences in focus do exist, phrases like "feminine countries" and "masculine countries" carry questionable connotations that cannot be entirely erased by reference to the specific meanings Hofstede had in mind. Again, he wanted to examine the extent to which specific cultures value traits that may traditionally be considered masculine or feminine. However, phrases like "feminine countries" and "masculine countries" don't inherently contain that definition and in fact have primary meanings that could be considered derogatory. In addition, describing countries/ cultural groups as masculine *vs.* feminine comes with implicit suggestions of specific *power relations* **between** such communities. Hofstede does not mean to suggest that "masculine" US or Canada are "stronger" than Sweden, but we shouldn't pretend that this connotation isn't there on some level. Perhaps a better way to sum up this distinction would be in terms of *various countries' privileging of values related to **self-assertion** vs. values related to **care (of/for others)***.

The following web article problematically uses the dichotomy "masculine vs. feminine" to discuss specific types of strengths, but otherwise offers a persuasive argument in favour of deriving business strength from both traditionally "feminine" and traditionally "masculine" attitudes:

- A Balance of Both Masculine and Feminine Strengths: The Bottom-Line Benefit

Direct versus Indirect

In Canada, business correspondence is expected to be short and to the point. "What can I do for you?" is a common question when a business person receives a call from a stranger; it is an accepted way of asking the caller to state his or her business. In some cultures it is appropriate to make a direct personal observation such as "You've changed your hairstyle," while for others such details would never be mentioned in conversations between colleagues/ acquaintances. In indirect cultures, such as those in Latin America, business conversations may start with discussions of the weather, or family, or topics other than business as the partners gain a sense of each other, long before the topic of business is raised. Again, the skilled business communicator researches the new environment before entering it, as a social faux pas, or error, can have a significant impact.

Materialism versus Relationships

Members of a materialistic culture place emphasis on external goods and services as a representation of self, power, and social rank. If you consider the plate of food before you, and consider the labour required to harvest the grain, butcher the animal, and cook the meal, you are focusing more on the relationships involved with its production than the foods themselves. Caviar may be a luxury, and it may communicate your ability to acquire and offer a delicacy, but it also represents an effort. Cultures differ in how they view material objects and their relationship to them, and some value people and relationships more than the objects themselves. The United States and Japan are often noted as materialistic cultures, while many Scandinavian nations feature cultures that place more emphasis on relationships.

Low-Power versus High-Power Distance

In low-power distance cultures, according to Hofstede (2009), people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant or subordinate roles, regardless of their actual formal roles as employee and manager, for example. In a high-power distance culture, you would probably be much less likely to challenge a decision, to provide an alternative, or to give input to upper management. If you are working with people from a high-power distance culture, you may need to take extra care to elicit feedback and involve them in the discussion because their cultural framework may preclude their participation. They may have learned that less powerful people must accept decisions without comment, even if they have a concern or know there is a significant problem. Unless you are sensitive to cultural orientation and power distance, you may lose valuable information.

Read the following Harvard Business Review article: Research: The Biggest Culture Gaps Are Within Countries, Not Between Them

Key Takeaway

- To summarize, cultures have distinct orientations when it comes to rules, uncertainty, time and time horizon, self-assertion, directness, materialism, and power distance.

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6.4: INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

In this section, we'll examine intercultural communication from the standpoint of international communication. International communication can be defined as communication between nations, but we recognize that nations do not exist independent of people. International communication is typically government to government or, more accurately, governmental representatives to governmental representatives. It often involves topics and issues that relate to the nations as entities, broad issues of trade, and conflict resolution. People use political, legal, and economic systems to guide and regulate behaviour, and diverse cultural viewpoints necessarily give rise to many variations. Ethical systems also guide behaviour, but often in less formal, institutional ways. Together these areas form much of the basis of international communication, and warrant closer examination, as seen in Figure 6.4.1 above.

Figure 6.4.1. Global village and influences.

Political Systems

You may be familiar with democracy, or rule by the people; and theocracy, or rule of God by his/her designates; but the world presents a diverse range of how people are governed. It is also important to note, as we examine political systems, that they are created, maintained, and changed by people. Just as people change over time, so do all systems that humans create. A political climate that was once closed to market forces, including direct and indirect investment, may change over time.

Political systems are often framed in terms of how people are governed, and the extent to which they may participate. Democracy is one form of government that promotes the involvement of the individual, but even here we can observe stark differences. In Canada, people are encouraged to vote, but it is not mandatory. When voter turn out is low, voting minorities might have greater influence on the larger political systems. In Chile, voting is mandatory, so that all individuals are expected to participate, with adverse consequences if they do not. This doesn't mean there are not still voting minorities or groups with disproportionate levels of influence and power, but it does underscore cultural values and their many representations.

Centralized rule of the people also comes in many forms. In a dictatorship, the dictator establishes and enforces the rules with few checks and balances, if any. In a totalitarian system, one party makes the rules. The Communist states of the twentieth century (although egalitarian in theory) were ruled in practice by a small central committee. In a theocracy, one religion makes the rules based on its primary documents or interpretation of them, and religious leaders hold positions of political power. In each case, political power is centralized to a small group over the many.

A third type of political system is anarchy, in which there is no government. A few places in the world, notably Somalia, may be said to exist in a state of anarchy. But even in a state of anarchy, the lack of a central government means that local warlords, elders, and others exercise a certain amount of political, military, and economic power. The lack of an established governing system itself creates the need for informal power structures that regulate behaviour and conduct, set and promote ideals, and engage in commerce and trade, even if that engagement involves nonstandard strategies such as the appropriation of ships via piracy. In the absence of appointed or elected leaders, emergent leaders will rise as people attempt to meet their basic needs.

Legal Systems

Legal systems also vary across the planet and come in many forms. Some legal systems promote the rule of law while others promote the rule of culture, including customs, traditions, and religions. The two most common systems are civil and common law. In civil law the rules are spelled out in detail, and judges are responsible for applying the law to the given case. In common law, the judge interprets the law and considers the concept of precedent, or previous decisions. Common law naturally adapts to changes in technology and modern contexts as precedents accumulate, while civil law requires new rules to be written out to reflect the new context even as the context transforms and changes. Civil law is more predictable and is practised in the majority of countries, while common law involves more interpretation that can produce conflict with multiple views on the application of the law in question. The third type of law draws its rules from a theological base rooted in religion. This system presents unique challenges to the outsider, and warrants thorough research.

Economic Systems

Economic systems also vary across cultures, and again reflect the norms and customs of people. Economies are often described based on the relationship between businesses and the government. An economy with a high degree of government intervention may prove challenging for both internal and external businesses. An economy with relatively little government oversight may be said to be less restrictive in relation to business interests, but that may not necessarily be a good thing for some categories of employees. Government's role as a representative of the common good, tasked to protect individual consumers and to prevent fraud and exploitation, can be exerted in a wide variety of ways across countries, in terms of level of involvement as well as specific legislation.

In capitalist regimes, governments tend to conceive of their role as giving everyone access to the market, with little supervision, in the hope that people will regulate transactions based on their own needs, wants, and desires (in essence, their own self-interest). If everyone operates in one's self-interest and word gets out that one business produces a product that fails to work as advertised, it is often believed that the market will naturally gravitate away from this faulty product to a competing product that works properly. Individual consumers, however, may have a hard time knowing which product to have faith in and may look to government to provide that measure of safety. In addition, increasingly powerful corporations may acquire unhealthy levels of political and economic power that governments may have to address in order to curb increasing income/ wealth inequality. It is important to retain that government regulations differ between countries and that new regulations and measures can be introduced all the time to address new challenges. Business professionals have to keep up with such differences and changes.

Government certification of food, for example, attempts to reduce disease. Meat from unknown sources would lack the seal of certification, alerting the consumer to evaluate the product closely or choose another product.

From meat to financial products, we can see both the dangers and positive attributes of intervention and can also acknowledge that its application may be less than consistent. Cultures that value the community may naturally look to their government for leadership in economic areas, while those that represent an individualistic tendency may take a more "hands off" approach.

Ethical Systems

Ethical systems, unlike political, legal, and economic systems, are generally not formally institutionalized. This does not imply, however, that they are less influential in interactions, trade, and commerce. Ethics refers to a set of norms and principles that relate to individual and group behaviour, including businesses and organizations. They may be explicit, in the form of an organization's code of conduct; or may reflect cultural values in law. What is legal and what is ethical are at times distinct, but both should be carefully considered by business professionals as the analyze situations and make decisions.

Examine the Canadian Certified Professional Accountant (CPA) Code of Professional Conduct

Some cultures have systems of respect and honor that require tribute and compensation for service, while others may view payment as a form of bribe. It may be legal in one country to make a donation or support a public official in order to gain influence over a decision, but it may be unethical. In some countries, it may be both illegal and unethical. Given the complexity of human values and their expression across behaviours, it is wise to research the legal and ethical norms of the place or community where you want to do business.

Global Village

International trade has advantages and disadvantages, again based on your viewpoint and cultural reference. If you come from a traditional culture, with strong gender norms and codes of conduct, you may not appreciate the importation of some Western television programs that promote what you consider to be content that contradicts your cultural values. You may also take the viewpoint that basic goods and services that can only be obtained through trade pose a security risk. If you cannot obtain the product or service, it may put you, your business, or your community at risk.

Furthermore, "just in time" delivery methods may produce shortages when the systems break down due to weather, transportation delays, or conflict. People come to know each other through interactions (and transactions are fundamental to global trade), but cultural viewpoints may come into conflict. Some cultures may want to maintain a traditional framework and may promote their traditional cultural values and norms at the expense of innovation and trade. Other cultures may come to embrace diverse cultures and trade, only to find that they have welcomed some who wish to do harm. Economic transactions have a cultural dynamic that cannot be ignored.

Intercultural communication and business have been related since the first exchange of value. People, even from the same community, had to arrive at a common understanding of value. Symbols, gestures, and even language reflect these values. Attention to this central concept will enable skilled business communicators to look beyond their own viewpoint.

It was once the privilege of the wealthy to travel, and the merchant or explorer knew firsthand what many could only read about. Now we can take virtual tours of locations we may never travel to, and as the cost of travel decreases, we can increasingly see the world for ourselves. As global trade has developed, and time-to-market has decreased, the world has effectively grown smaller. While the size has not changed, our ability to navigate has dramatically increased. Time and distance are no longer the obstacles they once were. The Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan, a pioneer in the field of communication, predicted what we now know as the "global village." The global village is characterized by information and transportation technologies that reduce the time and space required to interact (McLuhan, 1964).

Key Takeaway

- In summary, people create political, legal, economic, and ethical systems to guide them in transacting business domestically and internationally.

References

McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. McGraw-Hill.

CHAPTER 6: EXERCISE AND KEY TERMS

Exercise

Before coming to Canada, Abe worked in Ethiopia. In her studies in Canada she learned about how different countries can be categorized based on their cultural dimensions. She is concerned that business etiquette in her home country is different from that of Canada. For instance, recently she was in a situation where she felt that it was expected of her to shake hands with a male co-worker. This is not an accepted practice in her home cultural context. She worries that there may be many differences between Canadian and Ethiopian cultures and hopes she can navigate the differences and adapt to her new environment.

After learning more about cultural differences in business contexts by studying the content provided in this chapter, what advice do you have for Abe? Should she assimilate and just shake hands with male colleagues? If it's important for her to maintain some of her customs, how might she communicate about that with her new colleagues?

Key Terms to Know

- **Culture** – the ongoing negotiation of learned and patterned beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviours.
- **Direct cultures** – business conversations can move directly to business without informal conversation.
- **Feminine orientation** – a cultural value of modest, caring values.
- **High-power distance culture** – there are clear hierarchies of power, especially in manager-subordinate organizational roles. You may need to take extra care to elicit feedback and involve senior administrators in discussion because their cultural framework may preclude their participation.
- **Indirect cultures** – business conversations may start with discussions of the weather, or family, or topics other than business as the partners gain a sense of each other, long before the topic of business is raised.
- **International communication** – communication between nations, or two or more people from different nations.
- **Long-term orientation** – relationships often marked by persistence, thrift and frugality, and an order to relationships based on age and status.
- **Low-power distance culture** – people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant or subordinate roles.
- **Masculine orientation** – a cultural value of assertive and competitive behaviour.
- **Materialistic culture** – members place emphasis on external goods and services as a representation of self, power, and social rank.
- **Monochromatic time** – interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time.

- **Polychromatic time** – more complicated, with business and family mixing with dinner and dancing, events do not necessarily start on time.
- **Political systems** – framed in terms of how people are governed, and the extent to which they may participate.
- **Relationship cultures** – value people and relationships more than material objects.
- **Rites of Initiation** – marks the passage of the individual to become part of the community.
- **Short-term orientation** – a culture whose people value immediate results and grow impatient when those results do not materialize.

Additional Resources

- Global Affairs Canada. (2020). Cultural Information: Answers to your intercultural questions from a Canadian and a local point of view https://www.international.gc.ca/cil-cai/country_insights-apercus_pays/ci-ic_ca.aspx?lang=eng
- Fantino, A.M. (2006). Cultures at work: Intercultural communication in the Canadian workplace. http://volunteeralberta.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Cultures-at-Work-Ana-Maria-Fantino-2006.pdf
- Conestoga College: Welcome to Intercultural Communication https://www.conestogac.on.ca/intercultural-communication=

CHAPTER 7: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION AND PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Trace the evolution of online and digital media.
2. Discuss how digital and online media are more personal and social than traditional media.
3. Identify social media engagement behaviour types.
4. Explore ways to use digital communication as a business professional.
5. Discuss emerging netiquette standards in social media used for professional purposes.

In the last 20 years, online and digital media have grown to become fixtures in the daily life of most people in Canada. Prior to the turn of the century, traditional media, which consisted of mainly print, radio, and television/movies, was limited to a few places and had a somewhat limited presence in lives and societies. For example, in the 20th century, radio and television grew to become features in the home. Movies were primarily enjoyed in theaters until VCRs and DVD players brought them into homes. The closest thing to a portable mass medium in the 20th century was reading a book or paper on a commute to and from work.

Digital media in the 21st century are both more personal and more social than traditional media. Electronic devices (some small enough to fit into a pocket) have changed the way we communicate, including the way we approach communication in business. In this chapter, you will learn more about the evolution of digital media, as well as consider how people engage with digital media and how you can begin to use digital media as a business professional.

To open this chapter, watch the following 16 minute video from Helen Morris-Brown on *The Psychology of Communicating Effectively in a Digital World.*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=114#oembed-1

Video: "The psychology of communicating effectively in a digital world | Helen Morris-Brown | TEDxSquareMile" by TEDx Talks [16:04] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.*Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

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7.1: DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Digital media, as described in this chapter, couldn't exist without the move from analog to digital technology, as all the types of new media you will learn about are digitally based (Siapera, 2012). Digital media are composed of and/or are designed to read numerical codes (hence the root word 'digit'). The most commonly used system of numbers is binary code, which converts information into a series of 0s and 1s. This shared code system means that any machine that can decode (read) binary code can make sense of, store, and replay the information. Analog media are created by encoding information onto a physical object that must then be paired with another device capable of reading that specific code. In terms of physicality, analog media are a combination of mechanical and physical parts, while digital media can be completely electronic and have no physicality (think of an MP3 music file, for example). For instance, to make recordings using traditional media technology, grooves were carved into vinyl to make records or changes were made in the electromagnetic signature of ribbon or tape to make cassette tapes. Each of these physical objects must be paired with a specific device, such as a record player or a cassette deck, to be able to decode and listen to the music. Digital media changed how most people collect and listen to music. Now music files are stored electronically and can be played on many platforms, including tablets, computers, and smartphones. Many people who came of age in the digital revolution are now so used to having digital music that the notion of a physical music collection is foreign to them.

In news coverage and academic scholarship, you will see different terms used when discussing digital media, such as "new media," "online media," "social media," and "personal media." In this chapter, these items will be combined and referred to as **digital media**.

VCR Detail is in the public domain

Digital media and technology are now changing faster than ever before — what is new today may no longer be considered new in a week. However, the multiplatform compatibility of much of digital media paradoxically allows for some stability.

Key to digital media is the notion of **technological convergence**. The ongoing digitalization of traditional media allows digital materials to circulate freely and be read/accessed/played by many digital media platforms without the need for conversion (Siapera, 2012). This multi-platform compatibility is relatively new. In the past, each type of media had a corresponding platform. For example, you couldn't play records in an eight-track cassette tape player or a VHS tape in a DVD player. In the past, you'd have been able to access this book only in print. Today, you can read it in print, on a computer, or on an e-reader, tablet, smartphone, or other handheld device. Another characteristic of new media is the blurring of lines between producers and consumers, as individual users now have a more personal relationship with their media.

Social Media

Media and mass media have long been discussed as a unifying force. For instance, the shared experiences of the Russia-Canada hockey series in 1972 were facilitated through mass media. Digital media, in particular, is characterized by its connectivity. In the past, a large audience was connected to the same radio or television broadcast, newspaper story, book, or movie via a one-way communication channel sent from one place to many. Today, digital media connects mass media outlets to people and allows people to connect back to them via the internet. Technology has allowed for mediated social interaction since the days of the telegraph, but these connections were not at the mass level they are today. Personalities such as Drake and organizations like the Toronto Blue Jays or the CBC can reach millions of people with just one tweet. Social media doesn't just allow for connection; it allows us more control over the quality and degree of connection that we maintain with others (Siapera, 2012).

Read the following web article on Social Media Use in Canada

The most influential part of the new web is represented by **social networking sites (SNSs)**, which allow users to build a public or semipublic profile, create a network of connections to other people, and view other people's profiles and networks of connections (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Although SNSs have existed for over a decade, earlier iterations such as Friendster and MySpace have given way to the giant that is Facebook. Facebook, as of April 2018, had more than 2.23 billion users worldwide (Statista, 2018). More specific SNSs, like LinkedIn, focus on professional networking. The ability to self-publish information, likes/dislikes, status updates, profiles, and links allows people to craft their own life narrative and share it with other people. Likewise, users can follow the narratives of others in their network as they are constructed. The degree to which we engage with others' narratives varies based on the closeness of the relationship and situational factors, but SNSs are used to sustain strong, moderate, and weak ties with others (Richardson & Hessey, 2009).

Social media enable interactivity between individuals that share a social network and also allow people to broadcast or 'narrowcast' their activities and interests.

You might conceptualize social media in another way—through the idea of collaboration and sharing rather than just through interpersonal connection and interaction. The growth of open source publishing and Creative Commons licensing also presents a challenge to traditional media outlets and corporations and copyrights. Open source publishing first appeared most notably with software programs. The idea was that the users could improve on openly available computer programs and codes and then the new versions, sometimes called derivatives, would be made available again to the community. Crowdsourcing refers more to the idea stage of development, where people from various perspectives and positions offer proposals or information to solve a problem or create something new (Brabham, 2008). This type of open access and free collaboration helps encourage participation and improve creativity through the synergy created by bringing together different perspectives, and it has been referred to as the biggest shift in innovation since the Industrial Revolution (Kaufman, 2008).

Watch the following 1 minute video: *Stone Age to Modern Age – Evolution Of Communication*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=1668#oembed-1

Video: "1.1 – EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION – STONE AGE TO MODERN AGE" by LTE [6:45] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.*Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

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7.2: ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

The key differentiating factor between traditional and digital media is the communicator's ability to interact or engage with others in a community. Think back to the basic process of communication: the messenger (encoder) sends a message through a medium, which is received and decoded by an audience. In traditional media, the process was primarily one-way. In digital media, users have the ability to interact and respond to the message — in other words, they can 'engage' with the message and messenger.

But why are people drawn to digital communication? For the answers to this question, you might consider Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which provides you with an understanding of the motivation that might be behind online engagement. Although engaging online doesn't really satisfy physiological or safety needs, it certainly speaks to the other categories in the hierarchy as see in Figure 7.2.1 below:

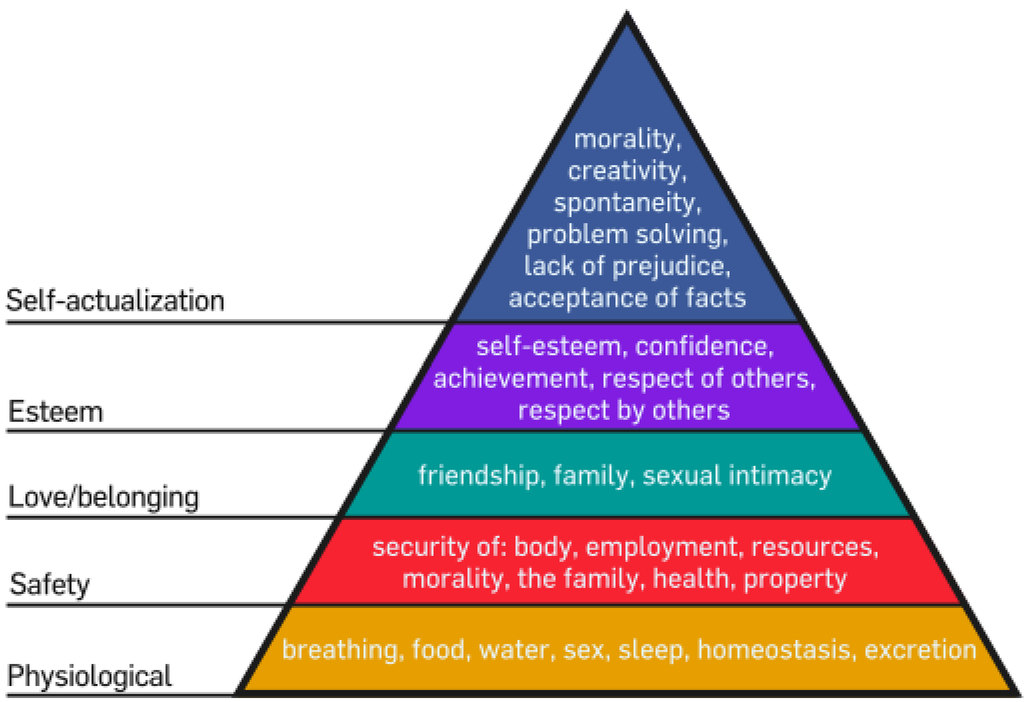


Figure 7.2.1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Illustration by Factoryjoe is shared with a CC BY-SA 3.0 license

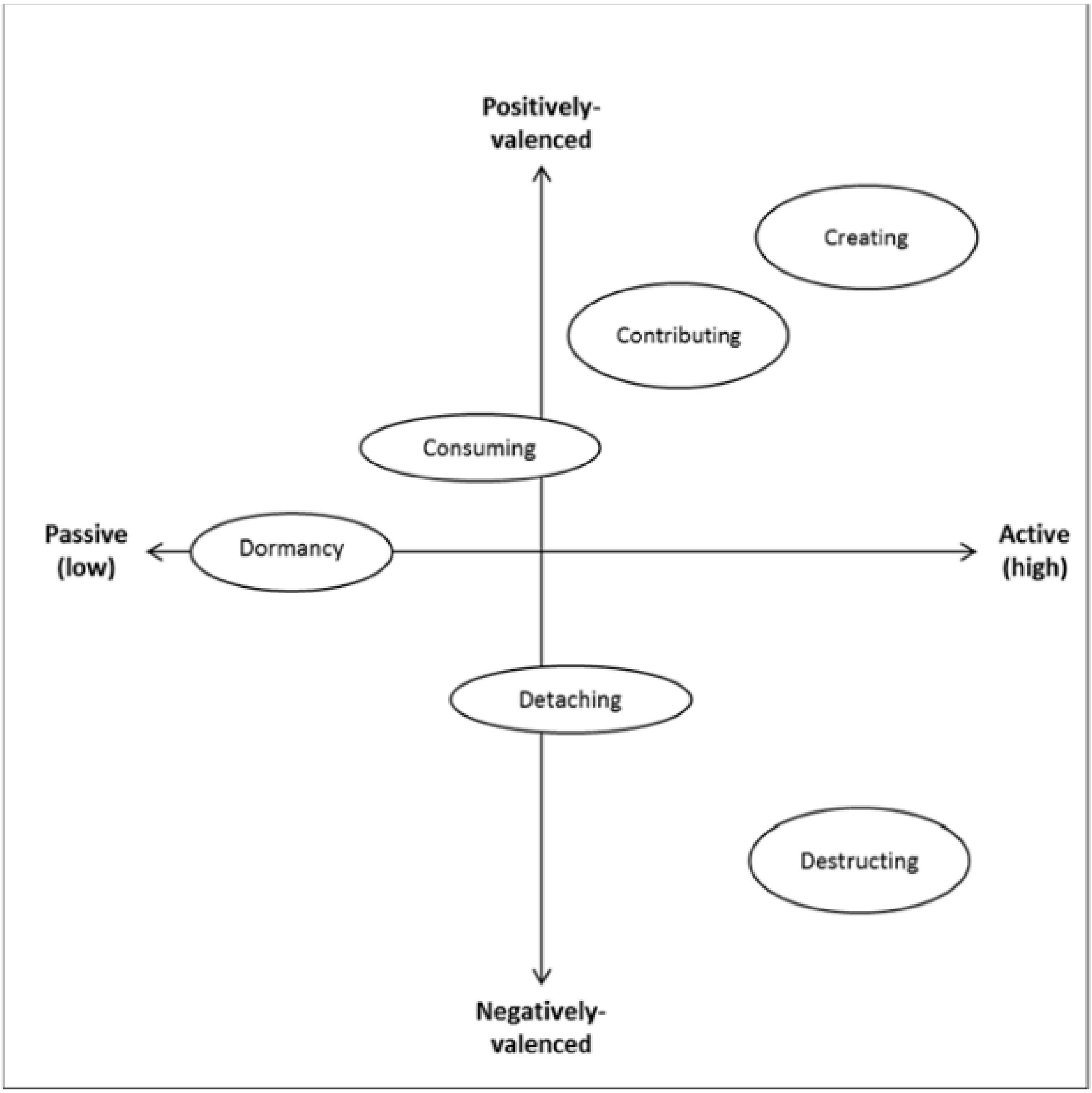
Examples from social and digital media paradigms:

- Love and belongingness needs: engaging online can provide feelings of being accepted. Online communities grow friendships, intimacy and a feeling of affiliation.
- Esteem needs: Engagement from friends, colleagues and even strangers can feed the desire to improve one's reputation or gain respect.
- Self-actualization needs: Digital media is full of examples of people who are working to realize their personal potential, "to become everything one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1987, p. 64).

Read the following web article that provides a deeper exploration of social media and Maslow's hierarchy of needs: The Hierarchy of Needs for an Engaged Social Media Audience.

Social Media Engagement Behaviour Typologies

New research is emerging to explore how and why users engage online, particularly in business. A study by Dolan, Conduit, Fahy and Goodman (2015) broke down customer (user) experiences with social media, based on intensity of activity (low/passive to high/active), and the valence, or emotional force, of the contributions (negative to positive). Figure 1 from the authors' work below provides a visual demonstration.



Social Media Engagement Behaviour Construct

Co-creation: this is the highest level on the matrix, in which users are earning, sharing, advocating, socializing and co-developing. They are actively collaborating and developing content and engaging with others.

Positive contribution: users are engaging with content and others, but not necessarily adding content. They may 'like' posts, repost, mark as a 'favourite' or post a positive comments.

Consumption: this is a passive form on engagement, where users are reading and watching, primarily using social media as a source of information.

Dormancy: these users may have previously been engaged online, but may occasionally be described as 'lurkers'. They make no contributions, nor do they engage online. They have passively disengaged.

Detachment: detached users have actively disengaged with a social media platform, person or brand. They will 'unlike' or adjust settings so they do not see information or content.

Negative Contribution: users will make negative active comments to try and influence others to change their feelings or opinions about a brand, subject, person or platform. Negative contributors are often seen posting comments on news articles that will contradict or slander the author (known as 'trolls').

Co-Destruction: users will create new negative content with the aim of diminishing the reputation, trust or value of a person/brand/platform. For example, videos or posts created to highlight negative attributes of a politician would be considered co-destructive.

You may notice your own behaviour patterns listed here — and you may have noted that your behaviours change based on multiple factors. As a business professional, you will have to consider your own behaviour type(s), and how you might encourage others to actively and positively contribute to your own brand, organization or company.

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7.3: YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

It used to be that applying for a job was fairly simple: send in a résumé, write a cover letter, and call a few references to make sure they will say positive things. However, there is a new step that is now a common part of this application process—hiding (or at least cleaning up) your virtual self, or your "digital footprint."

The ubiquity of digital media allows anyone to easily start developing an online persona early on. Although this footprint may not accurately reflect the individual, it may be one of the first things a stranger sees. Some photos may not look bad to friends and family, but your online digital footprint may be a hiring manager's first impression of you as a prospective employee. Someone in charge of hiring could search the internet for information on you even before calling references.

First impressions are an important thing to keep in mind when making an online persona professionally acceptable. Your presence online can be the equivalent of your first words to a brand-new acquaintance.

While it's possible to deactivate your social media accounts, once something is online, it's impossible to delete it completely. Photos, videos and posts will likely outlive you. As a business professional, you'll need to begin to carefully curate what you post online, and what has already been posted.

This doesn't mean you should delete everything: in fact, employers and clients want to see that you have interests and connections outside of work. However, be aware that their first impression of you may be digital, and consider consider carefully what you'd like them to see.

5 Ways to Improve your Digital Footprint

1. Google yourself. This is the best way to see what a potential employer or contact will see first, if they decide to do a search on you.
2. Edit you own posts, including photos, video and multimedia. Content that involves drugs, alcohol, illegal activities, strong political views, or any other controversial activity should be removed.
3. Ask friends and family who have posted controversial content to take it down.
4. Set up professional accounts on one or more platforms, such as LinkedIn. This will increase the chances of employers/clients seeing your professional side first, and is an inexpensive way to build your professional network.
5. Keep it positive with future posts and contributions. That will greatly reduce the chances that you will post something that could get you into trouble down the road.

Read the full article: [How To Develop A Digital Presence For Professional Success]

7.4: NETIQUETTE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

We create and curate personal profiles, post content and comments, and interact via social media as a normal part of both our personal and professional lives. How we conduct ourselves on the open internet can leave a lasting impression, one not so easily undone if it's regrettable. The hilarious but compromising selfie you posted on Instagram five years ago is still there for your potential employer to find, judge for what it says about your professionalism, and speculate about what customers might think if they saw it too. That sarcastic but not-so-PC reply to a public post on Facebook or Twitter in a heated moment a decade ago can come back to haunt you. We're all learning as we go in this new media environment, but any mistakes we make along the way, no matter how much we've matured since, are still there for all to see and can have lasting impacts on our careers. Many candidates for political office have been taken down by their past social-media posts and the agents tasked with digging them up (Harris, 2015), and you can be sure that untold numbers of job applicants have similarly scuppered their chances with similar cavalier shares. Some guidance about what can be done about those mistakes, as well as how to conduct ourselves properly moving forward, can help improve your employability (adapted from *Business Communication for Success*, 2015, 9.1).

Consider This: "Shea's Netiquette"

Virginia Shea's Rules of Netiquette

- Remember the human on the other side of the electronic communication.
- Adhere to the same standards of behaviour online that you follow in real life.
- Know where you are in cyberspace.
- Respect other people's time and bandwidth.
- Make yourself look good online.
- Share expert knowledge.
- Keep flame wars under control.
- Respect other people's privacy.
- Don't abuse your power.
- Be forgiving of other people's mistakes (Shea, 1994).

Her rules speak for themselves and remind us that the golden rule (treat others as you would like to be treated) is relevant wherever there is human interaction (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015, 9.1).

Legal Responsibilities

Your writing in a business context means that you represent yourself and your company. What you write and how you write it can be part of your company's success but can also expose it to unintended consequences and legal responsibility. When you write, keep in mind that your words will keep on existing long after you have moved on to other projects. They can become an issue if they exaggerate, state false claims, or defame a person or legal entity such as a competing company. Another issue is plagiarism — using someone else's writing without giving credit to the source. Whether the "cribbed" material is taken from a printed book, a website, or a blog, plagiarism is a violation of copyright law and may also violate your company policies. Industry standards often have legal aspects that must be respected and cannot be ignored. For the writer this can be a challenge, but it can be a fun challenge with rewarding results.

The rapid pace of technology means that the law cannot always stay current with the realities of business communication. Computers had been in use for a couple of decades before the Copyright Act of 1985 was amended in 1997 to deal with internet-enabled copyright infringement. Technology advanced even further before the next major amendment came with the *Copyright Modernization Act* of 2012. Developments since then will continue to demand new laws to clarify what is fair and ethical, what should be prohibited, and who owns the rights to what.

For example, suppose your supervisor asks you to use your Facebook page or Twitter account to give an occasional "plug" to your company's products. Are you obligated to comply? If you later change jobs, who owns your posts or tweets—are they yours, or does your now-former employer have a right to them? And what about your network of "friends"? Can your employer use their contact information to send marketing messages? These and many other questions remain to be answered as technology, industry practices, and legislation evolve (Tahmincioglu, 2009).

> Our product is better than X company's product. Their product is dangerous and you would be a wise customer to choose us for your product solutions.

What's wrong with the two sentences above? They may land you and your company in court. The first sentence makes a subjective and vague claim of one product being better than another, stating it as if it were a fact. The next sentence claims that the competitor's product is dangerous. Even if this is true, the writer's ability to prove that claim beyond a reasonable doubt may be limited, yet the claim is — again — stated as fact. From the other company's perspective, the second sentence may be considered libel or defamation.

Libel is the written form of defamation (= a false statement that damages a reputation). If a false statement of fact that concerns and harms the person defamed is published—including publication in a digital or online environment—the author of that statement may be sued for libel. If the person defamed is a public figure, he/she must prove malice or the intention to do harm, but if the victim is a private person, libel applies even if the offence cannot be proven to be malicious. You have a Charter right to express your opinion (section 2[b]), but the words you use and how you use them, including the context, are relevant to their interpretation as opinion versus fact. Always be careful to qualify what you write and to do no harm (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015, 4.5).

Using Social Media Professionally

Review sites, blogs, tweets, and online community forums are some of the continually developing means of social media being harnessed by business and industry to reach customers and other stakeholders. People's comfort in the online environment forces businesses to market and interact there or risk a massive loss in sales and interest. Though most users learn how to use social media as an extension or facilitator of their social lives, using the same platforms for professional purposes requires some change in behaviour.

First, recognize that every modern business or organization should have a social media presence in the sites they expect their customer base to frequent, especially popular sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Messaging here must be consistent across the platforms when alerting the customer base of important information such as special events, deals, and other news.

Next, follow expert advice on how to properly take advantage of social media to promote your operation and reach people. Large companies dedicate personnel to running their social media presence, but small businesses can do much of it themselves if they follow some reasonable online advice. Companies should stay on trend by continually searching out and implementing the latest advice.

Finally, always consider how the sites you access and what you post represent you and your employer, even if you think others don't know where you work or who you are. Internet service providers (ISPs) are required by law to archive information concerning the use and traffic of information that can become available under subpoena. Any move you make leaves digital footprints, so you will have to answer for any misstep that brings shame upon you or your company (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015, 19.4).

Exercises

1. Recount how you have experienced a breach of netiquette such as online bullying. Were you a perpetrator, enabler, victim, or combination? What did you learn from it?
2. Identify and explain three ways that you can professionalize your online presence using social media.

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7.5: SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE

This chapter is designed to provide you with an opportunity to reflect on various aspects of professional communication in the digital age. Each curated "Spotlight" section, while not exhaustive, provides some background into an aspect of digital communication followed by a "Getting Plugged In", "Getting Real", or a "Getting Competent" section, which asks you to apply your own insight to a series of guided questions.

Chapter Sections

SELF-PRESENTATION AND PUBLIC IMAGE

In general, we strive to present a public image that matches up with our self-concept, but we can also use self-presentation strategies to enhance our self-concept (Hargie, 2011). When we present ourselves in order to evoke a positive evaluative response, we are engaging in self-enhancement. In the pursuit of self-enhancement, a person might try to be as appealing as possible in a particular area or with a particular person to gain feedback that will enhance one's self-esteem. For example, a singer might train and practice for weeks before singing in front of a well-respected vocal coach but not invest as much effort in preparing to sing in front of friends. Although positive feedback from friends is beneficial, positive feedback from an experienced singer could enhance a person's self-concept. Self-enhancement can be productive and achieved competently, or it can be used inappropriately. Using self-enhancement behaviors just to gain the approval of others or out of self-centeredness may lead people to communicate in ways that are perceived as phony or overbearing and end up making an unfavorable impression (Sosik, Avolio, & Jung, 2002, p. 217).

SPOTLIGHT: “GETTING PLUGGED IN”

Self-Presentation Online: Social Media, Digital Trails, and Your Reputation

Although social networking has long been a way to keep in touch with friends and colleagues, the advent of social media has made the process of making connections and those all-important first impressions much more complex. Just looking at Facebook as an example, we can clearly see that the very acts of constructing a profile, posting status updates, “liking” certain things, and sharing various information via Facebook features and apps is self-presentation (Kim & Lee, 2011, p. 360). People also form impressions based on the number of friends we have and the photos and posts that other people tag us in. All this information floating around can be difficult to manage. So how do we manage the impressions we make digitally given that there is a permanent record?

Research shows that people overall engage in positive and honest self-presentation on Facebook (Kim & Lee, 2011, p. 360). Since people know how visible the information they post is, they may choose to only reveal things they think will form favorable impressions. But the mediated nature of Facebook also leads some people to disclose more personal information than they might otherwise disclose in a public/ semipublic forum. These hyperpersonal disclosures may result in negative impressions/ reactions from other users. In general, the ease of digital communication, not just on Facebook, has presented new challenges for our self-control and information management. Sending someone a sexually provocative image used to take some effort before the age of digital cameras, but now “sexting” (sending an explicit photo) takes a few seconds. Some people who would have likely not engaged in such behavior before are more tempted to do that now, and it is the desire to present oneself as desirable or cool that leads people to send photos they may later regret having sent (DiBlasio, 2012). New technology in the form of apps is trying to give people a little more control over the exchange of digital information. An iPhone app called “Snapchat” allows users to send photos that will only be visible for a few seconds. Although this isn’t a guaranteed safety net, the demand for such apps is increasing.This confirms the point that we all now leave digital trails of information that can be useful in terms of our self-presentation but can also create new challenges in terms of managing the information floating around from which others may form impressions of us.

1. What impressions do you want people to form of you based on the information they can see on your Facebook page?
2. Have you ever used social media or the Internet to do “research” on a person? What things would you find favorable and unfavorable?
3. Do you have any guidelines you follow regarding what information about yourself you will put online or not? If so, what are they? If not, why?

Return to the Chapter Section menu

Self-Disclosure and Interpersonal Communication

THEORIES OF SELF-DISCLOSURE

Social penetration theory states that as we get to know someone, we engage in a reciprocal process of self-disclosure that changes in breadth and depth and affects how a relationship develops. *Depth* refers to how personal or sensitive the information is, and *breadth* refers to the range of topics discussed (Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2006, pp. 412-13). You may recall Shrek's declaration that ogres are like onions in the movie *Shrek*. While certain circumstances can lead to a rapid increase in the depth and/or breadth of self-disclosure, the theory states that in most relationships people gradually penetrate through the layers of each other's personality like we peel layers from an onion.

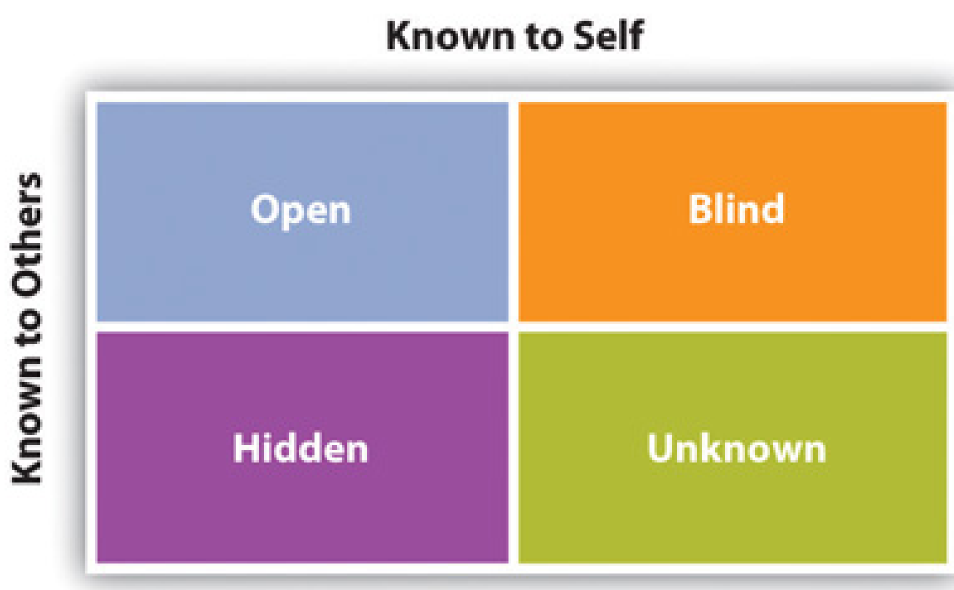
Social penetration theory compares the process of self-disclosure to peeling back the layers of an onion. Helena Jacoba – Red Onion close up – CC BY 2.0.

The theory also argues that people in a relationship balance needs that are sometimes in tension, which is a dialectic. This could be compared to walking a tightrope: we have to lean to one side and eventually lean to another side to keep ourselves balanced and avoid falling. The constant back and forth allows us to stay balanced, even though we may not always be even, or standing straight up. One of the key dialectics that must be negotiated is the tension between openness and closedness (Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2006, pp. 412-13). We want to make ourselves open to others through self-disclosure, but we also want to maintain a sense of privacy.

We may also engage in self-disclosure for the purposes of social comparison. Social comparison theory states that we evaluate ourselves based on how we compare with others (Hargie, 2011). We may disclose information about our intellectual aptitude or athletic abilities to see how we relate to others. This type of comparison helps us decide whether we are superior or inferior to others in a particular area. Disclosures about abilities or talents can also lead to self-validation if the person to whom we disclose reacts positively. By disclosing information about our beliefs and values, we can determine if they are the same as or different from those of others. Last, we may disclose fantasies or thoughts to another to determine whether they are acceptable or unacceptable. We can engage in social comparison as the discloser or the receiver of disclosures, which may allow us to determine whether or not we are interested in pursuing a relationship with another person.

The final theory of self-disclosure that we will discuss is the Johari window, which is named after its creators Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham (Luft, 1969). The Johari window can be applied to a variety of interpersonal interactions in order to help us understand what parts of ourselves are open, hidden, blind, and unknown. To understand the concept, think of a window with four panes. As you can see in Figure 7.5.1 "Johari Window", one axis of the window represents things that are known to us, and the other axis represents things that are known to others. The upper left pane contains open information that is known to us and to others. The amount of information that is openly known to others varies based on relational context. When you are with close friends, there is probably a lot of information already in the open pane, and when you are with close family, there is also probably a lot of information in the open pane. The information could differ, though, as your family might know much more about your past and your friends more about your present. Conversely, there isn't much information in the open pane when we meet someone for the first time, aside from what the other person can guess based on our nonverbal communication and appearance.

Figure 7.5.1 Johari Window

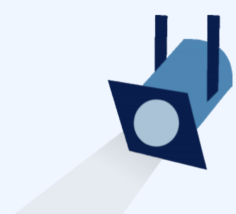


Source: Joseph Luft, Of Human Interaction (Palo Alto, CA: National Press Books, 1969).

The bottom left pane contains hidden information that is known to us but not to others. As we are getting to know someone, we engage in self-disclosure and move information from the "hidden" to the "open" pane. By doing this, we decrease the size of our hidden area and increase the size of our open area, which increases our shared reality. The reactions that we get from people as we open up to them help us form our self-concepts and also help determine the trajectory of the relationship. If the person reacts favorably to our disclosures and reciprocates disclosure, then the cycle of disclosure continues and a deeper relationship may be forged.

The upper right pane contains information that is known to others but not to us. For example, we may be unaware of the fact that others see us as pushy or as a leader. We can see that people who have a disconnect between how they see themselves and how others see them may have more information in their blind pane. Engaging in perception checking and soliciting feedback from others can help us learn more about our blind area.

The bottom right pane represents our unknown area, as it contains information not known to ourselves or others. To become more self-aware, we must solicit feedback from others to learn more about our blind pane, but we must also explore the unknown pane. To discover the unknown, we have to get out of our comfort zones and try new things. We have to pay attention to the things that excite or scare us and investigate them more to see if we can learn something new about ourselves. By being more aware of what is contained in each of these panes and how we can learn more about each one, we can more competently engage in self-disclosure and use this process to enhance our interpersonal relationships.



SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING PLUGGED IN"

Self-Disclosure and Social Media

Facebook and Twitter are undoubtedly dominating the world of online social networking, and the willingness of many users to self-disclose personal information ranging from moods to religious affiliation, relationship status, and personal contact information has led to an increase in privacy concerns. Facebook and Twitter offer convenient opportunities to stay in touch with friends, family, and coworkers, but are people using them responsibly? Some argue that there are fundamental differences between today's digital natives, whose private and public selves are intertwined through these technologies, and older generations (Kornblum, 2007). Even though some colleges are offering seminars on managing privacy online, we still hear stories of self-disclosure gone wrong, such as the football player from the University of Texas who was kicked off the team for posting racist comments about President Obama or the student who was kicked out of a private Christian college after a picture of him dressed in drag surfaced on Facebook. However, social media experts say these cases are rare and that most students are aware of who can see what they're posting and the potential consequences (Nealy, 2009, p. 13). The issue of privacy management on Facebook is affecting parent-child relationships, too, and as the website "Oh Crap. My Parents Joined Facebook." shows, the results can sometimes be embarrassing for the college student and the parent as they balance the dialectic between openness and closedness once the child has moved away.

1. How do you manage your privacy and self-disclosures online?
2. Do you think it's ethical for school officials or potential employers to make admission or hiring decisions based on what they can learn about you online? Why or why not?
3. Are you or would you be friends with a parent on Facebook? Why or why not? If you already are friends with a parent, did you change your posting habits or privacy settings once they joined? Why or why not?

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CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Crisis communication is a fast-growing field of study within communication studies as many businesses and organizations realize the value in finding someone to prepare for potential crises, interact with stakeholders during a crisis, and assess crisis responses after they have occurred. Crisis communication occurs as a result of a major event outside of normal expectations that has potential negative results, runs the risk of escalating in intensity, may result in close media or government scrutiny, and creates pressure for a timely and effective response (Zaremba, 2010, pp. 20-22) Some examples of crises include natural disasters, management/employee misconduct, product tampering or failure, and workplace violence.

The need for crisis communication professionals is increasing, as various developments have made organizations more susceptible to crises (Coombs, 2012, p. 14). Since the 1990s, organizations have increasingly viewed their reputations as assets that must be protected. Whereas reputations used to be built on word-of-mouth communication and one-on-one relationships, technology, mass media, and now social media have made it easier for stakeholders to praise or question an organization's reputation. A Facebook post or a Tweet can now turn into widespread consumer activism that organizations must be able to respond to quickly and effectively. In addition, organizations are being held liable for "negligent failure to plan," which means that an organization didn't take "reasonable action to reduce or eliminate known or reasonably foreseeable risks that could result in harm" (Coombs, 2012, p. 14). Look around your classroom and the academic building you are in. You will likely see emergency plans posted that may include instructions on what to do in situations ranging from a tornado, to a power outage, to an active shooter. As a response to the mass shooting that took place at Virginia Tech in 2006, most colleges and universities now have emergency notification systems and actively train campus police, faculty, and staff on what to do in the case of an active shooter on campus. Post–Virginia Tech, a campus's failure to institute such procedures could be deemed as negligent failure to plan if a similar incident were to occur on that campus.

Crisis communicators don't just interact with the media; they communicate with a variety of stakeholders. Stakeholders are the various audiences that have been identified as needing information during a crisis. These people and groups have a "stake" in the organization or the public interest or as a user of a product or service. Internal stakeholders are people within an organization or focal area, such as employees and management. External stakeholders are people outside the organization or focal area such as customers, clients, media, regulators, and the general public (Zaremba, 2010, pp. 20-22).

Four main areas of crisis communication research are relationships, reputation, responsibility, and response (Zaremba, 2010, pp. 20-22). Relationships and reputation are built and maintained before a crisis occurs. Organizations create relationships with their stakeholders, and their track record of quality, customer service, dependability, and communication determines their reputation. *Responsibility* refers to the degree to which stakeholders hold an organization responsible for the crisis at hand. Judgments about responsibility vary depending on the circumstances of a crisis. An unpreventable natural disaster will be interpreted differently than a product failure resulting from cutting corners on maintenance work to save money. *Response* refers to how an organization reacts to a crisis in terms of its communication and behaviors.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING REAL"

Crisis Communication Professionals

Crisis communication professionals create crisis communication plans that identify internal and external audiences that need information during crisis events. Effective crisis communication plans can lessen the impact of or even prevent crises. Aside from that, communicators also construct the messages to be communicated to the stakeholders and select the channels through which those messages will be sent. The crisis communicator or another representative could deliver a speech or press conference, send messages through social media, send e-mail or text message blasts out, or buy ad space in newspapers or on television (Zaremba, 2010, , pp. 20-22).

Crisis communicators must have good public speaking skills. Communicating during a crisis naturally increases anxiety, so it's important that speakers have advanced skills at managing anxiety and apprehension. In terms of delivery, while there are times when impromptu responses are necessary—for example, during a question-and-answer period—manuscript or extemporaneous delivery are the best options. It is also important that a crisis communicator be skilled at developing ethos, or credibility as a speaker. This is an important part of the preparatory stages of crisis communication, when relationships are formed and reputations are established. The importance of ethos is related to the emphasis on honesty and disclosure over stonewalling and denial.

A myth regarding crisis communicators is that their goal is to "spin" a message to adjust reality or create an illusion that makes their organization look better. While some crisis communicators undoubtedly do this, it is not the best practice in terms of effectiveness, competence, or ethics. Crisis communication research and case studies show that honesty is the best policy. A quick and complete disclosure may create more scrutiny or damage in the short term, but it can minimize reputational damage in the long term (Zaremba, 2010, pp. 20-22). Denying a problem, blaming others instead of taking responsibility, or ignoring a problem in hopes that it will go away may prolong media coverage, invite more investigation, and permanently damage an organization's image.

1. Why do you think extemporaneous and manuscript delivery are the preferred delivery methods for crisis communicators? What do these delivery styles offer that memorized and impromptu do not? In what situations would it be better to have a manuscript? To deliver extemporaneously?
2. How do social media sources of information impact companies and public institutions' ability to "spin" a message?

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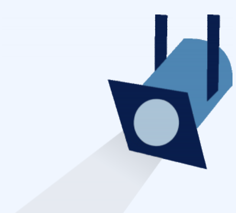
MONETIZING THE INTERNET AND DIGITAL MEDIA

The birth of the Internet can be traced back to when government scientists were tasked with creating a means of sharing information over a network that could not be interrupted, accidentally or intentionally. More than thirty years ago, those government scientists created an Internet that was much different from what we think of as the Internet today. The original Internet was used as a means of sharing information among researchers, educators, and government officials. That remained its main purpose until the Cold War began to fade and the closely guarded information network was opened up to others. At this time, only a small group of computer enthusiasts and amateur hackers made use of the Internet, because it was still not accessible to most people. Some more technological advances had to occur for the Internet to become the mass medium that it is today.

Tim Berners-Lee is the man who made the Internet functional for the masses. In 1989, Berners-Lee created new computer-programming codes that fixed some problems that were limiting the growth of the Internet as a mass medium (Biagi, 2007, p. 173-74). The main problem was that there wasn't a common language that all computers could recognize and use to communicate and connect. He solved this problem with the creation of the hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP), which allows people to make electronic connections or links to information on other computers or servers. He also invented hypertext markup language (HTML), which gave users a common language with which to create and design online content. Berners-Lee also invented the first browser, which allowed people to search out information and navigate the growing number of interconnections among computers. Berners-Lee named his new network the "World Wide Web," and he put all his inventions into the public domain so that anyone could use and adapt them for free, which undoubtedly contributed to the web's exploding size. The growing web was navigable using available browsers, but it was sometimes like navigating in the ocean with no compass, a problem that led to the creation of search engines.

A major source of revenue generated by the Internet goes to Internet service providers (ISPs), who charge customers for Internet access. The more reliable and fast the connection, the more expensive the service. Unsurprisingly, old media providers like cable companies (who were competing against satellite companies) and phone companies (who were also struggling after the growth of cell phone and e-mail communication) are the largest providers of high-speed Internet access. In the late 2000s, these companies were bringing in more than $30 billion a year from these services (Biagi, 2007, p. 173-74).

Many others make money from the web through traditional exchanges of goods or services for money or by selling space to advertisers. These methods of commerce are not new, as they were used in print, radio, and television. Online auction sites like eBay and online stores like Amazon simply moved a traditional commercial exchange to cyberspace. Advertising online, however, is different in some ways from advertising in other media. Old media advertisers measure their success with ads based on a corresponding increase or decrease in sales—a method that is not very precise or immediate. Online advertisers, on the other hand, can know exactly how many people see their ads based on the number of site visitors, and they can measure how effective their ad is by how many people click on it. This allows them to revise, pull, or buy more of an ad quickly based on the feedback. Additionally, certain online environments provide even more user data to advertisers, which allows them to target ads. If you, for example, search for "vacation rentals on Lake Michigan" using a search engine, ads for lake houses or vacation spots may also show up. The social networks that people create on the Internet also create potential for revenue generation. In fact, many people have started to take advantage of this potential by monetizing their personal or social media sites, which you can read more about in the "Getting Real" box.



SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING REAL"

Monetizing the Web: Entrepreneurship and Digital/Social Media

People have been making money off the web for decades now, but sites like eBay really opened their eyes, for the first time, to the possibility of spinning something they already have/ already do into extra cash. Anyone can establish a web presence through starting a website, building a profile on an existing website like a blog-hosting service, or using an already existing space like a Facebook or Twitter account they already have. If you are interested in trying to make money that way, you'd have to think about what you can offer and who might want that. For example, if you have a blog that attracts a regular stream of readers because they like your posts about the weekend party scene in your city, you might be able to utilize a service like Google's AdSense to advertise on your page and hope that some of your readers click the ads. In this case, you're offering content that attracts readers to advertisers. This is a pretty traditional way of making money through advertising, just as with newspapers and billboards.

Less conventional means of monetizing the web involve harnessing the power of social media. In this capacity, you can extend your brand or the brand of something/someone else. To extend your brand, you first have to brand yourself. Determine what you can offer people—consulting in your area of expertise such as voice lessons, entertainment such as singing at weddings, delivering speeches or writing about your area of expertise, and so on. Then create a web presence that you can direct people back to through your social media promotion. If you have a large number of followers on Twitter, for example, other brands may want to tap into your ability to access that audience to have you promote their product or service. If you follow any celebrities on Twitter, you are well aware that many of their tweets link to a product that they say they love or a website that's offering a special deal. The marketing agency Adly works with celebrities and others who have a large Twitter audience to send out sponsored tweets from more than 150 different advertisers (Friel, 2011). Some movie studios now include in actors' contracts terms that require them to make a certain number of social mentions of the project on all their social media sites. Another online company, MyLikes, works with regular people, too, not just celebrities, to help them monetize their social media accounts (Davila, 2012).

1. How do you think your friends would react if you started posting messages that were meant to make you money rather than connect with them?
2. Do you have a talent, service, or area of expertise that you think you could spin into some sort of profit using social or digital media?
3. What are some potential ethical challenges that might arise from celebrities using their social media sites for monetary gain? What about for people in general?

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NEW MEDIA AND SOCIETY

Media studies pioneer Marshall McLuhan emphasized, long before what we now call "new media" existed, that studying media and technology can help us understand our society. He didn't believe that we could study media without studying society, as the two are bound together (Siapera, 2012). The ongoing switch from analogue to digital, impersonal to personal/social, and one-way to dialogic media is affecting our society in multiple ways.

The days of analogue media are coming to an end — indeed, they are over in many places. Digital television conversion is complete in North America and the European Union, and many old media formats are being digitalized—for example, books and documents scanned into PDFs, old home movies being turned into DVDs, and record players with USB outputs digitizing people's vinyl collections.

These technological changes haven't solved some problems carried over from old media. Some of the same problems with representation and access for which the mass media were criticized are still present in new media, despite its democratizing potential. As discussed earlier, new media increase participation and interactivity, giving audience members and users more control over content and influence over media decisions. However, as media critics point out, participants are not equally distributed (Jenkins, 2006). Research shows that new media users, especially heavy users who are more actively engaged, tend to be male, middle class, and white.

Still, many scholars and reporters have noted the democratizing effect of new media — the ways in which new media distribute power to the people through their personal and social characteristics. This is, at least in part, a positive and more active and participative alternative to passive media consumption (Siapera, 2012). Instead of the powerful media outlets exclusively having control over what is communicated to audiences and serving as the sole gatekeeper, media-audience interactions are now more like a dialogue. The personal access to media and growing control over media discourses by users allows people to more freely express opinions, offer criticisms, and question others—communicative acts that are all important for a functioning democracy.

A recent national survey found that people in the fifteen to twenty-five age group are using new media to engage with peers on political issues.[1] The survey found that young people are defying traditional notions of youthful political apathy by using new media platforms to do things like start online political groups, share political videos using social media, or circulate news stories about political issues.

New media are being used to engage with political causes and participate in the democratic process by sharing news stories and "liking" and commenting on other people's postings. Sean MacEntee – Facebook like button – CC BY 2.0.

These activities were not included in previous research done on the political habits of young people because those surveys typically focused on more traditional forms of political engagement like voting, joining a political party, or offline campaigning. Political engagement using new media is viewed as more participatory, since people can interact with their peers without having to go through official channels or institutions. But the research also found that this type of participatory political engagement also led to traditional engagement, as those people were twice as likely to vote in the actual election.[2]

In addition, although the digital divide is a continuing ethical issue, new media have had a more positive effect on places that are often left out of such technological development. For example, although many people in developing countries still do not have access to dependable electricity or water, they may have access to a cell phone or the Internet through NGO programs or Internet cafés. Many people, especially North Americans, may think the days of Internet cafés (also called cyber cafés) are over. Although Internet cafés were never as popular or numerous on our continent, communal and public Internet access is still an important part of providing access to the Internet all around the world (Liff & Lægran, 2003).

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING PLUGGED IN"

Social Media and the 2012 Presidential Election

The US presidential election of 2012 has been called the "social media election." For the first time, many people took to their Facebook timelines and/or Twitter feeds to announce who they planned on voting for or to encourage others to vote for a particular candidate. In fact, about 25 percent of registered voters told their Facebook friends and Twitter followers who they would vote for (Byers, 2012). Candidates are aware of the growing political power of social media, as evidenced by the fact that, for the first time, major campaigns now include a "digital director" as one of their top-level campaign staffers (Friess, 2012). These "social media gurus" are responsible for securing targeted advertising on outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, and Reddit (among others), which now have the capability to narrowcast to specific geographical areas and user demographics. Digital directors are also responsible for developing strategies to secure Facebook "likes," Twitter followers, and retweets. Smartphones also present new options for targeted messaging, as some ads on mobile apps were "geotargeted" to people riding a certain bus or attending a specific public event (Friess, 2012).

Aside from new methods of advertising, social media also helped capture the much-anticipated 2012 Election Day, including some of the barriers or problems people experienced. People used YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook to document and make public their voting experience. One voter in Pennsylvania recorded a video of a voting machine that kept switching to Romney/Ryan every time the person tried to choose Obama/Biden, and before the day was over, the video already had more than two million views (Balke, 2012). People also used social media to document long lines at polling places and to share the incoming election results. 20 million tweets were posted on election night and the hashtag "#election2012" was used more than 11 million times. When Obama's campaign tweeted "Four more years" after he had been declared the winner, it was retweeted more than 225,000 times (Bello, 2012).

1. How did you and/or your friends and family use social media during recent election events at the local or federal level?
2. What are some of the positives and negatives of the increasingly central role that social media play in politics?

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NEW MEDIA AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

New media have been the primary communication change of the past few generations. Some scholars in sociology have decried the negative effects of new technology on society and relationships in particular, saying that the quality of relationships is deteriorating and the strength of connections is weakening (Richardson & Hessey, 2009, p. 29).

Facebook greatly influenced our use of the word *friend*, although people's conceptions of the word may not have changed as much. When someone "friends you" on Facebook, it doesn't automatically mean that you now have the closeness and intimacy that you have with some offline friends — and research shows that people don't regularly accept friend requests from or send them to people they haven't met, preferring instead to have met a person at least once (Richardson & Hessey, 2009, p. 29). Some users, though, especially adolescents, engage in what is called "friend-collecting behavior," which entails users friending people they don't know personally or that they wouldn't talk to in person in order to increase the size of their online network (Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2012). As we will discuss later, this could be an impression management strategy, as the user may assume that a large number of Facebook friends will make him or her appear more popular to others.

Although many have critiqued the watering down of the term *friend* when applied to SNSs, specifically Facebook, some scholars have explored how the creation of these networks affects our interpersonal relationships and may even restructure how we think about our relationships. Even though a person may have hundreds of Facebook friends that he or she doesn't regularly interact with on- or offline, just knowing that the network exists in a somewhat tangible form (catalogued on Facebook) can be comforting. Even the people who are distant acquaintances but are "friends" on Facebook can serve important functions. A dormant network is a network of people with whom users may not feel obligated to explicitly interact, but whose existence is still perceived as comforting by users. Such networks can be beneficial, because when needed, a person may be able to more easily tap into that dormant network than they would an offline extended network. It's almost like being friends on Facebook keeps the communication line open, because both people can view the other's profile and keep up with their lives even without directly communicating. This can help sustain tenuous friendships or past friendships and prevent them from fading away, which is a common occurrence as we go through various life changes.

A key part of interpersonal communication is impression management, and some forms of new media allow us more tools for presenting ourselves than others. Social networking sites (SNSs) in many ways are platforms for self-presentation. Even more than blogs, web pages, and smartphones, the environment on an SNS like Facebook or Twitter facilitates self-disclosure in a directed way and allows others who have access to our profile to see our other "friends." This convergence of different groups of people (close friends, family, acquaintances, friends of friends, colleagues, and strangers) can present challenges for self-presentation. Although Facebook is often thought of as a social media outlet for teens and young adults, research shows half of all US adults have a profile on Facebook or another SNS (Vitak & Ellison, 2012). The fact that Facebook is expanding to different generations of users has coined a new phrase—"the graying of Facebook." This is due to a large increase in users over the age of fifty-five. In fact, it has been stated the fastest-growing Facebook user group is women fifty-five and older — which, for instance, went up more than 175 percent between 2008-2009 (Gates, 2009). So now we likely have people from personal, professional, and academic contexts in our Facebook network, and those people are now more likely than ever to be from multiple generations. The growing diversity of our social media networks creates new challenges as we try to engage in impression management.

People fifty-five and older are using new media in increasing numbers. Marg O'Connell – Grandma kicks it with the iPad 🙂 –

We should be aware that people form impressions of us based not just on what we post on our profiles but also on our friends and the content that they post on our profiles. In short, as in our offline lives, we are judged online by the company we keep (Walther et al., 2008, p. 29). The difference is, though, that via Facebook a person (unless blocked or limited by privacy settings) can see our entire online social network and friends, which doesn't happen offline. The information on our Facebook profiles is also archived, meaning there is a record that doesn't exist for offline interactions. Recent research found that a person's perception of a profile owner's attractiveness is influenced by the attractiveness of the friends shown on the profile. In short, a profile owner is judged more physically attractive when his or her friends are judged as physically attractive, and vice versa. The profile owner is also judged as more socially attractive (likable, friendly) when his or her friends are judged as physically attractive. The study also found that complimentary and friendly statements made about profile owners on their wall or on profile comments increased perceptions of the profile owner's social attractiveness and credibility. An interesting, but not surprising, gender double standard also emerged. When statements containing sexual remarks or references to the profile owner's excessive drinking were posted on the profile, perceptions of attractiveness increased if the profile owner was male and decreased if female (Walther et al., 2008, p. 29).

Self-disclosure is a fundamental building block of interpersonal relationships, and new media make self-disclosures easier for many people because of the lack of immediacy, meaning the fact that a message is sent through electronic means arouses less anxiety or inhibition than would a face-to-face exchange. SNSs provide opportunities for social support. Research has found that Facebook communication behaviors such as "friending" someone or responding to a request posted on someone's wall lead people to feel a sense of attachment and perceive that others are reliable and helpful (Vitak & Ellison, 2012). Much of the research on Facebook, though, has focused on the less intimate alliances that we maintain through social media. Since most people maintain offline contact with their close friends and family, Facebook is more of a supplement to interpersonal communication. Since most people's Facebook "friend" networks are composed primarily of people with whom they have less face-to-face contact in their daily lives, Facebook provides an alternative space for interaction that can more easily fit into a person's busy schedule or interest area. For example, to stay connected, both people don't have to look at each other's profiles simultaneously.

The space provided by SNSs can also help reduce some of the stress we feel in regards to relational maintenance or staying in touch by allowing for more convenient contact. The expectations for regular contact with our Facebook friends who are in our extended network are minimal. An occasional comment on a photo or status update or an even easier click on the "like" button can help maintain those relationships. However, when we post something asking for information, help, social support, or advice, those in the extended network may play a more important role and allow us to access resources and viewpoints beyond those in our closer circles. Research shows that many people ask for informational help through their status updates (Vitak & Ellison, 2012).

These extended networks serve important purposes, one of which is to provide access to new information and different perspectives than those we may get from close friends and family. For example, since we tend to have significant others that are more similar to than different from us, the people that we are closest to are likely to share many or most of our beliefs, attitudes, and values. Extended contacts, however, may expose us to different political views or new sources of information, which can help broaden our perspectives.

The content in this section hopefully captures what I'm sure you have already experienced in your own engagement with new media—that new media have important implications for our interpersonal relationships, and that some professional aspects relate to that, too.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING COMPETENT"

Using Social Media Competently

While we can't control all the information about ourselves online or the impressions people form, we can more competently engage with social media so that we are getting the most out of it in both personal and professional contexts.

A quick search on Google for "social media dos and don'ts" will yield over 100,000 results, which shows that there's no shortage of advice about how to competently use social media. Let's go over a few (source: Doyle, 2012).

Be consistent. Given that most people have multiple social media accounts, it's important to have some degree of consistency. At the top level of your profile (the part that isn't limited by privacy settings), include information that you don't mind anyone seeing.

Know what's out there. The top level of many social media sites is visible in Google search results. About once a month, do a Google search using your full name between quotation marks. Make sure you're logged out of all your accounts and then click on the various results to see what others can see.

Think carefully before you post. Software enabling people to take "screen shots"/ download videos and tools that archive web pages can be used without your knowledge to create records of what you post. While it is still a good idea to go through your online content and "clean up" materials that may form unfavorable impressions, it is even a better idea to not post that information in the first place. Posting something about how you hate school or your job or a specific person may be done in the heat of the moment and forgotten, but a potential employer might find that information and form a negative impression even if it's months or years old.

Be familiar with privacy settings. If you are trying to expand your social network, it may be counterproductive to put your Facebook or Twitter account on "lockdown," but it is beneficial to know what levels of control you have and to take advantage of them. For example, you can use a "Limited Profile" list on Facebook for new contacts or people with whom you are not very close. You can also create groups of contacts on various social media sites so that only certain people see certain information.

Be a gatekeeper for your network. Do not accept friend requests or followers that you do not know. Not only could these requests be sent from "bots" that might skim your personal info or monitor your activity; they could be from people who might make you look bad. Remember, we learned earlier that people form impressions based on those with whom we are connected. You can always send a private message asking the person making the request how he/she knows you, or look up his/her name or username on Google or another search engine.

1. Identify information that you might want to limit for each of the following audiences: friends, family, and employers.
2. Google your name (use multiple forms and put them in quotation marks). Do the same with any usernames that are associated with your name (e.g., you can Google your Twitter handle or an e-mail address). What information came up? Were you surprised by anything?
3. What strategies can you use to help manage the impressions you form on social media?

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CHAPTER 7: EXERCISE AND KEY TERMS

Exercise

David has been asked by his boss to prepare a report about ways to use online and digital media communication tools and what digital strategies the institution might use to promote job opportunities. He has not used social media so far other than for personal use and is uncertain about business contexts and website design.

- What tools or ideas could David suggest to his boss to help promote job opportunities at his organization?
- What factors should David consider when designing his message to build engagement?
- What kind of approaches should David steer clear of?
- What might David do with his own digital footprint as an established (but not very digital) business professional?

Key Takeaways and Terms to Know

Whether in the public or private corners of the internet, conduct yourself online in a manner that is always conducive to your professional success, following established netiquette principles, as well as using social media effectively and responsibly.

- **Analog media** – created by encoding information onto a physical object that must then be paired with another device capable of reading that specific code.
- **Co-creation** – this is the highest level on the matrix, in which users are earning, sharing, advocating, socialising and co-developing.
- **Co-Destruction** – users will create new negative content with the aim of diminishing the reputation, trust or value of a person/brand/platform.
- **Consumption** – this is a passive form on engagement, where users are reading and watching, primarily using social media as a source of information.
- **Crowdsourcing** – refers to the idea stage of development where people from various perspectives and positions offer proposals or information to solve a problem or create something new.
- **Detachment** – detached users have actively disengaged with a social media platform, person or brand. They will "unlike" or adjust settings so they do not see information or content.
- **Digital media** – composed of and/or are designed to read numerical codes (hence the root word digit).
- **Digital footprint** – how you are represented on the internet. May include images and a variety of social media networks if you participate in them.

- **Dormancy** – these users may have previously been engaged online, but may occasionally be described as 'lurkers'. They make no contributions nor do they engage online.
- **Negative contribution** – users will make negative active comments to try and influence others to change their feelings or opinions about a brand, subject, person or platform.
- **Positive contribution** – users are engaging with content and others, but not necessarily adding content.
- **Social networking sites (SNSs)** – allow users to build a public or semipublic profile, create a network of connections to other people, and view other people's profiles and networks of connections.
- **Technological convergence** – the digitalization of traditional media that allows them to circulate freely and be read/accessed/played by many digital media platforms without the need for conversion.

Additional Resources

- Social Media Etiquette Rules for Business
- The State of Digital Literacy in Canada (2017). The Brookfield Institute report

CHAPTER 8: INTRODUCTION TO EMPLOYMENT COMMUNICATION

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Identify and assess individual skills, strengths, and experiences to identify career and professional development goals
2. Research the job market to identify career opportunities and requirements
3. Prepare a targeted and persuasive cover letter and resume
4. Review the strategies for job interview success

If you devote a portion of your life to training for a career, nothing is more important at the end of that program than getting a job where you can apply your training. The job application process requires advanced communication skills typically not taught in your core program courses, and the competition for the best jobs is fierce.

Hiring competitions involve two components comparable to a written and oral exam. You must pass the written component (the cover letter and résumé) before you move on to the oral (the interview), and you must out-perform the competition in the written component to get the interview, and in the oral component to get the job. Representing you in your physical absence, your cover letter and résumé mainly assure employers that you have the experience and skills required to be successful in the job. They also prove whether you are literate and conscientious enough to represent the company respectably when writing on their behalf to customers and other stakeholders. The oral component proves that you can carry a sophisticated conversation, represent the company successfully in face-to-face interactions with customers, and communicate clearly and in a personable manner with managers and co-workers while conducting day-to-day operations.

This chapter covers both components of the hiring process. We begin with the research work you should do in order to prepare effective cover letters and résumés. The advice given here represents a fairly broad consensus of employer expectations, but it can't apply to all because each employer is unique. Doing research and networking are great ways of identifying the company and position that is right for you and increasing your chances of being hired. After examining strategies for job hunting, we'll cover the résumé and cover letter-writing process with the goal of producing job application materials that will considerably increase your chances of getting an interview. Next, we will discuss interview expectations and strategies.

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following text:

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8.1: STARTING YOUR JOB SEARCH

The job search is more than finding a job posting for which you fulfill the requirements. This planning phase allows you to gather the information and understand what is the right language to use in order to be perceived as a strong applicant.

Know Yourself

As you begin the process of applying for employment in your chosen field, it is important to reflect on your education, technical skills, and the experiences and characteristics that make you an ideal employee and co-worker. This self-assessment is the foundation for building a strong application package.

Beyond evaluating your skill set, this is also an opportunity to reflect on the types of environments you will thrive in:

- Do you work better independently or in groups?
- Have you always imagined working for a large company, with the structure and perks that offers? Or do you see yourself working on a smaller team, perhaps taking risks for a project you believe in personally?
- Do you like developing new ideas and planning? Do you like seeing through a complex project to the finish?

Use this information as you search for potential jobs and evaluate employers. Seeking out a work environment and job that suits your strengths and preferences will give you an advantage in the job search and in your career.

Know your Field

Use the resources available to you (such as career services, job websites, networking events) to find positions. Go to career fairs and make connections. Career fairs and networking events — organized each year by our college both for undergraduate students and for students taking graduate certificate programs — are great ways to build your confidence and become comfortable in professional environments.

Keep yourself informed and up-to-date on the projects and initiatives happening within your chosen field and especially of those employers that most interest you. This is not something you only do the night before a career fair or an interview – expose yourself to these ideas and discussions over a long period of time. These types of resources are a great place to get started:

- **Organizations and conferences.** Connecting with and simply being aware of any relevant national organizations will expose you to current ideas and developments in your field. Most such organizations host conferences on a regular basis. Even just reading the call for presentations or the titles and abstracts from a recent conference will introduce you to new terms and concepts, laying groundwork for future learning or research.
- **Company blogs or white papers.** Most companies "talk to" the public or the industry in some way to manage public perception, promote accomplishments, and (often) recruit employees. These communications might be highly technical or more casual or promotional in tone, depending on the

company culture, industry, and their goals – so they can provide valuable insights into all these aspects.

- **Social media.** Following both companies and individual professionals will introduce you to their work, concerns, and developments in the industry. It would also help you to develop healthy online habits (more oriented towards professionalization).
- **Local networking or meetup groups.** Professionals often hold events at a local level to meet each other and learn about what other companies in the area are doing. These might be purely social or they might include learning opportunities in the form of talks and presentations. On campus, you will also find a variety of discipline-specific groups and students organizations that can also expose you to new ideas and resources, not to mention great professional connections.

Learn your Industry Language

Part of what you are doing as you prepare yourself for your career is learning a language – you are developing vocabulary and learning the language of your profession in addition to developing the required technical skills. Work on building a broad field-related vocabulary so you can impress any prospective employer.

Soft skills

In the process of completing your self-assessment, you probably discovered that you have lots of skills and strengths seemingly unrelated to your field. It's important to remember that even unrelated experiences have taught you "transferable skills" – skills that may not be strictly related to a specific field but are considered important to any field or profession.

These "soft" skills are consistently ranked high on employer lists of desired attributes and include organizational skills, leadership abilities, teamwork experience, communication skills, problem solving, meeting deadlines, and so on. In the job search process, it is important to be able to describe your previous experiences in language that employers recognize as valuable. Table 4.8.1 lists some common skill attributes and ways to describe them.

Table 8.1.1 Phrasing for common skill attributes

Organization management & leadership	Research & planning	Communication	Interpersonal	Other
Initiating new ideas Coordinating tasks Being detail-oriented Managing or directing teams or groups Coaching Selling ideas or products Decision-making Managing conflicts or problems Managing budgets	Forecasting Coming up with ideas Identifying problems Developing solutions Solving problems Imagining alternatives Gathering information Analyzing and evaluating information Setting goals Defining needs and requirements	Speaking effectively Writing concisely Listening attentively Facilitating group discussion Providing appropriate feedback Being tactful Negotiating Persuading Interviewing Editing	Being sensitive to feelings and moods of others Listening Developing rapport Providing support Motivating Negotiating Sharing credit Teaching/training Delegating Cooperating; working with a team	Managing time effectively Setting and meeting goals Being a self-starter; self-motivated Working independently Enlisting help when needed Meeting deadlines Being diligent; tenacity to get the job done; follow-through Being responsible and reliable

Know the Job

Job advertisements typically describe the "perfect" candidate through a long list of every possible skill, attribute, and set of experiences a company wants in a potential employee. However, realistically, very few people possess all those qualifications. Employers will likely have in the backs of their minds the skills they consider transferable or learnable, and it is in your best interest to figure out where the employer may be willing to make skill and/or experiential trade-offs.

When you've found a job advertisement, you should read it several times and highlight key words and skills. Note what specific qualifications are required for the position and *the language used to describe these qualifications* (such as "must have," "needs," "should be," and "ideally"). Compare this to the qualifications you have that are the same or transferable. Consider how you can effectively and specifically describe your qualifications to address the needs and wants outlined in the job description. In your cover letter and resume, try to persuade the employer you should be interviewed (and then hired) based on your qualifications and transferable skills.

Attribution

8.2: RESUMES

A resume is a document that summarizes your education, skills, talents, employment history, and experiences in a clear and concise format for potential employers. The resume serves three distinct purposes that define its format, design, and presentation:

1. To represent your relevant professional information in writing
2. To demonstrate the relationship between your professional information and the problem or challenge the potential employer hopes to solve or address, often represented in the form of a job description or duties
3. To get you an interview by clearly demonstrating you meet the minimum qualifications and have the professional background needed to help the organization meet its goals

Regardless of the format, employers have expectations for your resume. They expect it to be clear, accurate, and up to date. This document represents you in your absence, and you want it to do the best job possible. You don't want to be represented by spelling or grammatical errors, as they may raise questions about your education and attention to detail. Avoid providing potential employers with an easy excuse to toss your resume at the start of the process. Do your best work the first time. Table 4.9.1 highlights some common types of resumes.

Table 8.2.1 Common Types of Resumes

Type	Function	Advantage	Disadvantage
Chronological	Chronological resumes (which list items in reverse time order) focus on work history.	Demonstrates a consistent work history	It may be difficult to highlight skills and experience.
Functional	Functional resumes (also called competency-based resumes) focus on skills.	Demonstrates skills that can clearly link to job functions or duties	It is often associated with people who have gaps in their employment history.
Combination	A combination resume lists your skills and experience first, then employment history and education.	Highlights the skills you have that are relevant to the job and provides a reverse chronological work history	Some employers prefer a reverse chronological order.
Scannable	A scannable resume is specifically formatted to be read by a scanner and converted to digital information.	Increasingly used to facilitate search and retrieval, and to reduce physical storage costs	Scanners may not read the resume correctly.

Main Parts of a Resume

Resumes have several basic elements that employers look for, including your contact information, profile and objective/ goal, education and work experience, and so on. Each resume format may organize the information in distinct ways based on the overall design strategy, but all information should be clear, concise, and accurate. The content in your resume should be carefully selected to present the best, most applicable qualifications for a particular employer (the company and position for which you are applying) or purpose (attending a career fair).

CONTACT INFORMATION

This section is often located at the top of the document. The first element of the contact information is your name. You should use your full, legal name even if you go by your middle name or use a nickname. There will plenty of time later to clarify what you prefer to be called, but all your application documents, including those that relate to payroll, your social insurance number, background checks, transcripts, certificates, or degrees, should feature your legal name. Other necessary information includes your phone number and email address. For business purposes, do not use an unprofessional email address like teddybears@….com. Create a new e-mail account if needed, with an address suitable for professional use. If you have more than one phone number at which you can be reached, list the one you're most likely or most easily able to answer. (Don't make it confusing for an employer to guess at which number to call you.)

PROFILE AND OBJECTIVE

This is one part of your resume that is relatively simple to customize for an individual application.

Your Profile should highlight your most relevant qualifications for the job (based on the job ad and your education, prior work experience, etc.). Your profile should be carefully adapted to the job ad and not a random list of skills.

Your objective should reflect the audience's need to quickly understand how you will help the organization achieve its goals. An example of an objective is shown in Figure 8.2.1. Please note that you should name the company, the position, and specify what you could do for them. Don't say something vague and self-centred such as "To gain a well-paying job in a respectable bank." Doing that would show them, among other things, that you don't understand the rules of the game — and it might eliminate you from the competition immediately.


Objective: To contribute to an increase in sales at ABC Corporation as a sales representative.

Figure 8.2.1 Sample objective statement on a resume

EDUCATION

You should list your education in reverse chronological order, with your most recent degree/ diploma/ certificate first. List the school, credential type (e.g., diploma, certificate, degree), and the full credential name. Don't use abbreviations for your university/college or program. For example, if you're completing a BBA-Accounting, spell it out in full (Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting). If you went to a college or university that may not be known in the area where your potential employer is located, include the city and country alongside the name of the school. List your GPA or your average for the last year if high. (You might have to convert your average into percentages if your school used a different grading system than that used in the country/ area where you are applying for a job.)

If you have a degree/ diploma/ certificate in progress, start with that and provide the projected graduation date.

WORK EXPERIENCE

List, in reverse chronological order, your employment history, including the positions, companies, locations, dates, duties, and skills demonstrated or acquired. You may choose to use active, descriptive sentences or bullet lists, but be consistent. Emphasize responsibilities that are relevant to the specific job for which you're applying, but don't let emphasis become exaggeration. This document represents you in your absence, and if any information is false, at a minimum you could lose your job. Be specific, be precise, and quantify details whenever possible. For example, instead of saying "managed employees during the night shift," you could quantify that statement by saying "supervised 8 employees during 9-hour overnight shifts." Ideally, start each item with an action verb. Use the present tense to describe tasks and accomplishments for positions you currently hold and the past tense to describe positions you no longer hold.

Other Relevant Qualifications

If you have received awards or honours; given presentations; published papers or other materials; or have other qualifications of note and relevance to the position for which you're applying, you can list these in an appropriately named section on your resume. Don't include a list of your personal interests or hobbies unless they relate directly to the field or it could be argued that they bolster your transferable skills. If you are wondering whether or not to include a piece of information, focus on the audience's needs. Will they find this information valuable in making a decision about you as a candidate? Does it reveal something important about your skills, interests, and qualifications? Does it reveal something new about you that is not already revealed in your resume?

References

You may choose to include references at the end of your resume. If you do, provide individuals' full names, the company name, the position, and full contact information. If you are invited to an interview, three references are typically expected. They can be former professors, managers, etc. (ideally, people with whom you worked in a variety of roles).

ADDITIONAL RESUME STRATEGIES

Length

Your resume should be 1-2 pages long. Since you are pursuing a graduate certificate at Fanshawe and must have prior degrees/ diplomas and probably also some work experience, a 2-page resume would be reasonable. Don't artificially extend your resume (through wordy statements, larger than necessary font size, unnecessary spacing). Also, don't exceed two pages unless you have a really long work history and you need to provide specific, relevant information directly related to the position sought. The person reading your resume may be sifting through many applications and will not spend time reading several extra pages if the content is not directly relevant.

USE KEY WORDS

Just as there are common search terms and common words in relation to each position, job description, or description of duties, your resume should mirror these common terms when and where appropriate.

FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

If a job description uses specific terms, refers to computer programs, skills, or previous experience, make sure you incorporate that language in your resume (assuming you have those skills or experience). By mirroring the employer's language and submitting your application documents in accord with their instructions, you convey a spirit of cooperation and an understanding of how to follow instructions.

MAKE IT EASY TO READ

Make sure your resume is easy to read. Use white space between sections. Use emphasis (such as bolding, italicizing, underlining, or all caps) consistently to draw attention to headings or things of note, but avoid using multiple types of emphasis at one. For example, don't bold, underline, and italicize the heading for your work experience section. Choose an easy-to-read font that is typically used in business documents, such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri. Avoid using less common font types, which may be difficult to read. A font size of 11 or 12 is easier to read for most people. Be consistent and purposeful in the visual design of your resume. Align bullet points consistently. Use the same types of bullet points in your resume. Align your resume content consistently. Remember that whoever will be reviewing resumes will likely be looking at many documents in a row and may have to work quickly!

Resume Templates

A template of a chronological resume is shown in Figure 8.2.2. *Remember to add a Profile to your Objective (based on the job ad and your skills).*

Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Cell Phone
Home Phone/Office Phone
E-mail Address

Objective or Statement of Interest

Clear and concise statement of professional goal that may include job or position and may also indicate a field (financial services, human resources).

Employment Experience

- List in reverse chronological order (i.e., put the most recent position first).
- Note the job title, the company, and dates of employment.
- Include clear statements of work performed as part of your job responsibilities, using language similar to the job announcement.
- If the job announcement emphasizes supervisory experience, for example, this should be an area of emphasis in your descriptions of tasks performed.
- Indicate the most important or relevant job responsibilities or skills involved with those tasks first in priority order.
- Include awards, citations, or commendations that relate to your objective or statement of interest.

Education

List earned degrees and incomplete education if applicable:

- Undergraduate Studies, 86 credits, University of State
- Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Computer Information Systems, Community College of State, 2005
- High School Diploma, City High School, GPA or class rank
- Include technical certificates and completed trainings if they directly relate to your objective or statement of interest.

Community Service

List activities, your role, and, if applicable and space is available, your accomplishments:

- Eagle Scout, Troop #12345, 1998–2001
- Youth Choir Leader, Community Interfaith Church, 1995–2001
- Students in Free Enterprise Team, City High School, 1998–2001

References

List names of references, their positions, and their contact information or include "references upon request."

Figure 8.2.2 A template of a chronological resume

Whereas the chronological resume focuses on employment history, a functional resume, as shown in Figure 8.2.3 below, highlights skills. (Again, preface your Objective with a short Profile.)

Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Cell Phone
Home Phone/Office Phone
E-mail Address

Objective
Clear and concise statement of professional goal (job or position)

Qualification Highlights
Experience that directly relates to job description
- You may choose to highlight a specific skill that relates to the position (e.g., bilingual, computer and technology proficient, certified diesel technician).
- Only highlight specific skills, certifications, or license(s) that indicate you meet (or exceed) the minimum qualifications.
- Only highlight personal traits if they clearly meet the position description (e.g., if a sales position requires an outgoing personality, highlight theater experience and previous sales experience).

Professional Skills
- You may want to list skills with clear "because" statements, demonstrating your mastery of a skill because of your volunteer work, internship, previous employment, or similar accomplishment.

Sales
You may also want to use a key skill as the focal point (e.g., sales) and include a series of brief statements that demonstrate range or depth of experience in that skill:
- Fundraising for your youth group (name of organization, date)
- Customer service call experience
- Voter recruitment initiative participation
- Census bureau work

Skill 2

Employment History
You may not need this category if you covered it in the skill summaries above.

Education
List earned degrees and incomplete education if applicable:
- Undergraduate Studies, 86 credits, University of State

References
List names of references, their positions, and their contact information or include "references upon request."

Figure 8.2.3 A functional resume template

Attributions

8.3: COVER LETTERS

Traditionally, the application letter or cover letter is a formal letter that accompanies your resume when you apply for a position. Its purpose is to support your resume, providing more specific details, and to explain in writing why you are a strong candidate for the specific position to which you are applying. It should not simply reiterate your resume; it's an opportunity for you to make a case for your candidacy in complete sentences and phrases, which gives the reader a better sense of your "voice."

It can be helpful to start by first thinking about the audience and purpose for the application letter. What information does your reader need to glean from your letter? At what point in the hiring process will they be reading it?

As you draft the letter, consider what you would want to say if you were sitting across the desk from your reader. It should be written in a formal, professional tone, but you still want it to flow like natural speech—this will make it easier for your reader to absorb the information quickly.

What to Include

Write your application letter in sections or "blocks." This provides a basic structure for the letter; once you have an understanding of this foundation, you can customize, update, and personalize the letter for different applications and employers.

Introductory Paragraph

Open your letter with a concise, functional, and personable introduction to you as a job candidate. This is your chance to establish the essential basics of your qualifications and to set the themes and tone for the rest of the letter.

- Name the position you're interested in (by exact name and number, if available)
- Clearly state that you are applying for the position—remember that you are requesting (not demanding) that they consider you as a candidate for the position
- Summarize your best qualifications relevant to the position
- Indicate you've enclosed your resume for additional information
- Mention how you heard about the job (job ad, networking, etc.)

Optionally, you might also take the opportunity at the beginning of the letter to express your interest in working for this particular company and/or your passion for and interest in the field—I am particularly interested in this position because… This sets a nice tone and shows that you are engaged and enthusiastic. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge about the company (developed through your research).

Education & Academics Paragraph(s)

The purpose of this paragraph is to paint a detailed picture of your training and credentials and how this is relevant to the position. Your opportunity in this paragraph is to explain the activities and knowledge you have gained and/or are developing that most matter for this position and employer. Carefully consider what the employer will value most about your educational experiences. If you have a lot of project experience or several key experiences that you want to highlight, this information may be written in multiple paragraphs.

This content should NOT be a laundry list of course titles. Instead, describe how your academics/training have shaped your understanding of the field you are entering and significant skills you are developing, but always tie it back to what the employer is looking for—stay focused on the information your audience members need and what they will care about.

Employment Paragraph (*if applicable*)

It is important for employers to feel that they are hiring responsible, reliable people who know how to hold down a job. If you do have work experience in this field such as a previous internship, this is a perfect time to discuss that. If you have previous work experience, even if it's not related to your field, this is your opportunity to describe the value of that experience—the value for you, but, more importantly, to your reader. Describe your previous work experience that shows you are a good employee and explain how this is relevant to the position. Be specific about the company, the time frame, your responsibilities, and the outcomes/results. Focus on your relevant and transferable skills.

Other Qualifications (*if applicable*)

Awards you've received; publications you've achieved; and your activities and involvement in things outside of your coursework and work experiences, such as student organizations, clubs, and volunteer work, are great pieces of information to include that show you are a well-rounded, motivated person with good time management skills. Personal, human connections are an important part of the job application process, and describing some of these activities and interests can help your reader start to feel a more personal connection. Describe your specific actions and involvement honestly, while still trying to connect to transferable skills and the keywords in the job posting.

Concluding Paragraph

As you conclude the letter, tie everything together, politely express interest in an interview, and end on a positive note. Don't ask for the job here; you're requesting–and not demanding–an interview.

Letter Formatting

Your application letter should use formal letter formatting.

In today's job market, where many applications are online, the letter might be delivered in a variety of formats. For example, it might be a PDF file uploaded to an online application system or if might be simply sent in the body of an email. Make sure you submit your cover letter in the file format and way the job advertisement specifies.

Attribution

8.4: EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWING

Source: Photo by Dylan Gillis on Unsplash

In order to make the transition from an outsider to an insider in the business world, you'll have to pass a series of tests, both informal and formal. One of the most common tests is known as an employment interview. An employment interview is an exchange between a candidate and a prospective employer (or their representative). It is a formal process with several consistent elements that you can use to guide your preparation.

Employment interviews may not be limited to only one exchange/ interaction. A potential employee may very well be screened by a computer (as the résumé is scanned) and interviewed online or via the telephone before the applicant meets a representative or panel of representatives. The screening process may include formal tests that include personality tests, background investigations, and consultations with previous employers.

Depending on the type of job you are seeking, you can anticipate answering questions, often more than once, to a series of people as you progress through a formal interview process. Just as you have the advantage of preparing for a speech with anticipation, you can apply your research and public speaking skills to the employment interview.

The invitation to interview means you have been identified as a candidate who meets the minimum qualifications and demonstrates potential as a viable candidate. Your cover letter, résumé, or related application materials may demonstrate the connection between your preparation and the job duties, but now comes the moment where you will need to articulate those points out loud.

Use the communication skills gained to date with the knowledge of interpersonal communication to maximize your performance. There is no one right or wrong way to prepare and present at your interview, just as each audience is unique, but we can prepare and anticipate several common elements.

Preparation

Would you prepare yourself before writing for publication or speaking in public? Of course. The same preparation applies to the employment interview. Briefly, the employment interview is a conversational exchange (even if it is in writing at first) where the participants try to learn more about each other. Both conversational partners will have goals in terms of content, and explicitly or implicitly across the conversational exchange will be relational messages. Attending to both points will strengthen your performance.

On the content side, if you have been invited for an interview, you can rest assured that you have met the basic qualifications the employer is looking for. Presumably you have already researched the organization to prepare your application package. Perhaps you have involved colleagues and current employees of the organization in your research process and learned about several of the organization's attractive qualities, as well as some of the challenges experienced by the people working there. Research the organization more at this stage and try to learn as much as possible about them before your face-to-face meeting.

Businesses hire people to solve problems, so you will want to focus on how your talents, expertise, and experience can contribute to the organization's need to solve specific problems. The more detailed your analysis of their current challenges, the better. You need to be prepared for standard questions about your education and background, but also see the opening in the conversation to discuss the job duties, the challenges inherent in the job, and the ways in which you believe you can meet these challenges. Take the opportunity to demonstrate the fact that you have "done your homework" in researching the company. Table 9.1 "Interview Preparation Checklist" presents a checklist of what you should try to know before you consider yourself prepared for an interview.

Table 8.4.1 Interview Preparation Checklist

What to Know	Examples
Type of Interview	Will it be a behavioural interview, where the employer watches what you do in a given situation? Will you be asked technical questions or given a work sample? Or will you be interviewed over lunch or coffee, where your table manners and social skills will be assessed?
Type of Dress	Office attire varies by industry, so stop by the workplace and observe what workers are wearing if you can. If this isn't possible, call and ask the human resources office what to wear—they will appreciate your wish to be prepared.
Company or Organization	Do a thorough exploration of the company's website. If it doesn't have one, look for business listings in the community online and in the phone directory. Contact the local chamber of commerce. At your library, you may have access to subscription sites such as Hoover's Online (http://www.hoovers.com).
Job	Carefully read the ad you answered that got you the interview, and memorize what it says about the job and the qualifications the employer is seeking. Use the internet to find sample job descriptions for your target job title. Make a written list of the job tasks and annotate the list with your skills, knowledge, and other attributes that will enable you to perform the job tasks with excellence.
Employer's Needs	Check for any items in the news in the past couple of years involving the company name. If it is a small company, the local town newspaper will be your best source. In addition, look for any advertisements the company has placed, as these can give a good indication of the company's goals.

Performance

You may want to know how to prepare for an employment interview, and we're going to take it for granted that you have researched the company, market, and even individuals in your effort to learn more about the opportunity. From this solid base of preparation, you need to begin to prepare your responses. Would you like some of the test questions before the test? Luckily for you, employment interviews involve a degree of uniformity across their many representations.

Here are eleven common questions you are likely to be asked in an employment interview (McLean, 2005):

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Have you ever done this type of work before?
3. Why should we hire you?
4. What are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
5. Give me an example of a time when you worked under pressure.
6. Tell me about a time you encountered (X) type of problem at work. How did you solve the problem?
7. Why did you leave your last job?
8. How has your education and/or experience prepared you for this job?
9. Why do you want to work here?
10. What are your long-range goals? Where do you see yourself three years from now?
11. Do you have any questions?

When you are asked a question in the interview, look for its purpose as well as its literal meaning. "Tell me about yourself" may sound like an invitation for you to share your text message win in last year's competition, but it is not. The employer is looking for someone who can address their needs. Answer this question by addressing your core qualifications for the job.

In the same way, responses about your strengths are not an invitation to brag, and questions about your weaknesses are not an invitation to confess. If your weakness is a tendency toward perfectionism, and the job you are applying for involves a detail orientation, you can highlight how your weaknesses may serve you well in the position (although this type of claim might be perceived as a little contrived). If asked about strengths, choose one/ a few that are core competencies for the job. If asked about weaknesses, choose something that is *not a core competency* and *discuss how you are working on overcoming it*. For these questions as for most of the others, the best way to answer is by following the so-called "STAR" method (situation – task – action – result): accompany your answer with a *story* detailing a relevant work/ school situation, and briefly describe the situation, what your task was, what you did, and what the result was. For each question, provide a response that takes about 2 minutes to deliver. Your responses should be neither too long nor too short, and they should be substantial. Make every sentence count.

Questions such as "Why did you leave your last job?" or "How do you handle conflict at work?" can be challenging. Be diplomatic in the way you answer. Even if you harbour resentment, make your answers all about trying to reach your full potential (first example) and working to find common ground (second example). Do not use accusatory language in describing work experiences, and control your tone and facial expression (avoid sounding or looking angry). You want to be perceived as a personable individual with a positive and constructive attitude.

You may be invited to participate in a conference call, and be told to expect it will last around twenty minutes. The telephone carries your voice and your words but doesn't carry your nonverbal gestures. If you remember to speak directly into the telephone, look up and smile, your voice will come through clearly and you will sound competent and pleasant. If you know that a twenty-minute call is scheduled for a certain time, you can anticipate that your phone may ring may be a minute or two late, as interviews are often scheduled in a series while the committee is all together at one time. Even if you have only one interview, your interviewers will have a schedule and your sensitivity to it can help improve your performance.

You can also anticipate that the last few minutes will be set aside for you to ask your questions. This is your opportunity to learn more about the problems or challenges that the position will be addressing, allowing you a final opportunity to reinforce a positive message with the audience. Keep your questions simple, your attitude positive, and communicate your interest.

At the same time as you are being interviewed, know that you, too, are interviewing the prospective employer. If you have done your homework, you may already know what the organization is all about, but you may still be unsure whether it is the right fit for you. Listen and learn from what is said, as well as what is not said, and you will add to your knowledge base for wise decision-making in the future.

Above all, be honest, positive, and brief. You may have heard that the world is small and it is true. As you develop professionally, you will come to see how fields, organizations, and companies are interconnected in ways that you cannot anticipate. Your name and reputation are yours to protect and promote.

Post Performance

Remember that feedback is part of the communication process: follow up promptly with a thank-you note or email, expressing your appreciation for the interviewer's time and interest. You may also indicate that you will call or email next week to see if they have any further questions for you.

You may receive a letter, note, or voicemail explaining that another candidate's combination of experience and education better matched the job description. If this happens, it is only natural for you to feel disappointed. It is also only natural to want to know why you were not chosen, but be aware that for legal reasons most rejection notifications do not go into detail about why one candidate was hired and another was not. Contacting the company with a request for an explanation can be counterproductive, as it may be interpreted as a "sore loser" response. If there is any possibility that they will keep your name on file for future opportunities, you want to preserve your positive relationship.

Although you feel disappointed, don't focus on the loss or all the hard work you've done that was not rewarded. Instead, focus your energies where they will serve you best. Review the process and learn from the experience, knowing that each audience is unique and even the most prepared candidate may not have been the right "fit." Stay positive and connect with people who support you. Prepare, practice, and perform. Know that you as a person are far more than just a list of job duties and qualifications. Focus on your skill sets: if they need improvement, consider additional education that will enhance your knowledge and skills. Seek out local resources and keep networking. Have your professional interview attire clean and ready, and focus on what you can control—your preparation and performance.

To summarize, conversations have universal aspects we can predict and improve. We can use the dynamics of the ritual of conversation to learn to prepare for employment interviews and evaluations, both common contexts of communication in the work environment. Employment interviews involve preparation, performance, and feedback.

CHAPTER 8: REVIEW AND EXERCISE

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- As you begin the process of finding and applying for employment in your chosen field, it is important to take stock of your education, technical skills, and the experiences and characteristics that make you an ideal employee and co-worker.
- "Soft" skills are consistently ranked high on employer lists of desired attributes and include organizational skills, leadership abilities, teamwork experience, communication skills, problem solving, meeting deadlines, and so on.
- A resume is a document that summarizes your education, skills, talents, employment history, and experiences in a clear and concise format for potential employers.
- A resume represents your relevant professional information in writing.
- A resume demonstrates the relationship between your professional information and the problem or challenge the potential employer hopes to solve or address, often represented in the form of a job description or duties.
- A resume is used to get you an interview by clearly demonstrating you meet the minimum qualifications and have the professional background help the organization meet its goals.
- A cover letter is a formal letter that accompanies your resume when you apply for a position.
- It can be helpful to think about writing your cover letter in sections or "blocks." This provides a basic structure for the letter
- A cover letter should contain an introductory paragraph, education & academics paragraph(s), employment paragraph (if applicable), other qualifications (if applicable), and a concluding paragraph.
- Employment interviews come in all shapes and sizes, and may not be limited to only one exchange but one interaction.
- There is no one right or wrong way to prepare and present at your interview, just as each audience is unique, but you can prepare and anticipate several common elements.
- We can use the dynamics of the ritual of conversation to learn to prepare for employment interviews and evaluations, both common contexts of communication in the work environment.
- Employment interviews involve preparation, performance, and feedback

Exercises

1.  Think about an application package you have recently submitted that didn't get you the desired result (you were not invited to an interview). Based on the information presented in this chapter, what do you think you could have done better to secure an interview?
2. Type "weird interview questions" in your internet browser and see what comes up. You might find questions such as, "If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be?" (Or: if you were an animal, a fruit, etc.), or, "If you came across a genie who could grant you any wish, what would you ask for?" Why do you think potential employers might ask such questions? How do you think you should approach them?

UNIT 4: PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH AND REPORT WRITING

6019 Course Learning Outcomes

This unit supports the following course learning outcomes (CLOs):

- **Prepare and evaluate** professional business documents in common formats, using appropriate tone, structure/format (including headings and graphics) and patterns of development (direct/indirect);
- **Prepare** advanced-level proposals and research reports (informational/analytical) on program-related topics; **summarize and integrate** effective research sources;

Unit 4 Chapters

CHAPTER 9: INTRODUCTION TO REPORT WRITING

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Describe how audience analysis impacts report writing
2. Identify different types of reports.
3. Distinguish between different organization styles for reports.
4. Apply required features to formal reports.

Workplace Context

As with any other workplace document, reports have to be prepared depending on the needs of the audience and on the purpose of the document. Some audiences may need more information than others, some may be more technical than others, some confidential workplace data may be fine to share with some groups but not with others, etc. Whenever tasked with writing a report, take some time to understand what your audience's needs might be — and if you are not sure, talk to a few relevant people to make sure you start with the right idea. Consider, for instance, how a monthly progress report on a project might differ if it is prepared for the entire team working on a project or for the board of directors. In terms of purpose, consider how a progress report might differ from a proposal to invest in a new technology. The latter would obviously require significantly more research, whereas the former would mostly consist of factual information gathered from the departments involved and briefly analyzed.

Generally speaking, workplace reports do not involve presenting information on certain topics at an elementary level and in vague terms — they require presenting specific information, and often research data and analytical commentary.

Let us start our discussion of reports by considering the following questions:

1. Have you ever written a report in the workplace? (Incident report, progress report, etc.?) How did you compose the report? Did you encounter any challenges? If so, what were they?
2. Have you ever written a report as part of a course? What was the purpose of the report? How did you write it? Did you encounter any challenges? If so, what were they?
3. Select one or more concepts that we've studied so far this semester. How do you think it will be useful when writing reports?
4. How do you think a report differs from an essay?

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following text:

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9.1: AUDIENCE ANALYSIS IN REPORTS

Reports are a flexible genre. A report can be anything from a one-page accident report when someone gets a minor injury on the job to a 500+ page report created by a government commission, such as The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report. Your report could be internal or external, and it could be a printed document, a PDF, or even an email.

The type of report is often identified by its primary purpose, as in an accident report, a laboratory report, or a sales report. Reports are often analytical or involve the rational analysis of information. Sometimes they report the facts with no analysis at all. Other reports summarize past events, present current data, and forecast future trends. This section will introduce you to the basics of report writing.

Audience Analysis in Formal Reports

Many business professionals need to write a formal report at some point during their career, and some professionals write them on a regular basis. Key decision makers in business, education, and government use formal reports to make important decisions. Although writing a formal report can seem like a daunting task, the final product enables you to contribute directly to your company's success.

There are several organizational patterns that may be used for formal reports, but all formal reports contain front matter material, a body, and back matter (supplementary) items. The body of a formal report discusses the findings that lead to the recommendations. The prefatory material is therefore critical to providing the audience with an overview and roadmap of the report. The following section will explain how to write a formal report with an audience in mind.

Analyzing your Audience

If your audience is familiar with the background information related to your project, you don't want to cover that in detail. Instead, you will want to inform your audience about the aspects of your topic that they're unfamiliar with or have limited knowledge of. In contrast, if your audience is relatively unfamiliar with your project, you will want to give them all of the necessary information for them to understand. Age and educational level are also important to consider when you write. You don't want to use technical jargon when writing to an audience of non-specialists. One of the trickier parts of report writing is understanding what your audience expects. Why is your audience reading the report? Do different parts of the report serve different purposes? Will you be expected to follow a specific template? Make sure that you have specifically responded to the expectations of your boss, manager, or client. If your audience expects you to have conducted research, make sure you know what type of research they expect. Do they want research from scholarly journal articles? Do they want you to conduct experiments or surveys? No matter what type of research you do, make sure that it is properly documented using whatever format the audience prefers (MLA, APA, and Chicago Manual of Style are some of the most commonly-used formats). Research will contribute to your persuasiveness and reliability.

For further information about what types of research you may want to include, see this article about research methods and methodologies.

Here are some questions to consider about your audience as you write:

- What does your audience expect to learn from your report?
- Do you have only one audience or multiple audiences? Do they have different levels of knowledge about the topic?
- How much research does your audience expect you to have done?
- How current does your research need to be?
- What types of sources does your audience expect you to have?
- What is the educational level of your audience?
- How much background information does your audience need?
- What technical terms will your audience need defined? What terms will they already be familiar with?
- Is there a template or style guide that you should use for your report?
- What is the cultural background of your audience?

References:

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. (2015). *Reports*. https://nctr.ca/records/reports/

9.2: TYPES OF REPORTS

Reports vary by function, style, and tradition. Within your organization, you may need to address specific expectations. This section discusses reports in general terms, focusing on common elements and points of distinction. Reference to similar documents at your workplace may serve you well as you prepare your own report. While there are many types of reports, we will examine just a few, as shown in Table 9.2.1.

Table 9.2.1. Types of Reports

Report type	Purpose/ Description
Progress report	Monitor and control production, sales, shipping, service, or related business process.
Recommendation report	Make recommendations to management and provide tools to solve problems or make decisions.
Summary report	Present summaries of the information available on a given subject.
Research Report Proposal	Get approval to spend time preparing a research report on a topic responding to an identified need of the organization.

Progress Reports

A progress report is used to give management an update on the status of a project. It is generated at timed intervals (for example, once a month) or on completion of key stages. It records accomplishments to date and identifies any challenges or concerns. It is usually written by the project lead and is one to two pages long.

When you write a progress report, begin by stating why you are writing the report:

- Identify what you've accomplished
- List any problems you have encountered
- Outline what work still remains
- Conclude by providing an overview of the project's status and what should be done next.

It's helpful to think about a report not just in terms of what should be included, but **why** certain elements are included. Most reports have a persuasive element, so when reporting your progress you are trying to:

- Demonstrate that you have taken appropriate, competent action so far.
- Assure readers that they can trust you to finish the remainder of the work effectively and that your plan remains a good one.
- Convince the reader that the project has been successful so far.
- If the project hasn't been successful, then you will want to explain why and suggest ways to improve. Never downplay or lie about challenges you are experiencing. Not only will this damage your reputation when the truth comes out, but you'll also be defeating the purpose of the progress report: which is to evaluate the project and address issues as they happen.

Having a clear strategy will help you organize and write your progress report.

Recommendation Reports

A recommendation report is used to help management make decisions. The goal of this report is to identify a solution to a problem or suggest a course of action. In it, the writer might suggest that a procedure be adopted or rejected, assess an unsatisfactory situation, or persuade decision makers to make a change that will benefit the organization. For example, the report might suggest ways to enhance the quality of a product, increase profit, reduce cost, or improve workplace conditions. The intention of a recommendation report is not to assign blame or be overly critical but to suggest improvements in a positive manner.

Most recommendation reports try to demonstrate one or more of the following:

- That a problem or opportunity exists and the organization should take it seriously. Why should your organization devote its resources to this issue? Why now?
- That you have done the necessary research and have the expertise to solve the problem.
- That your research and expertise has led you to the best of all possible solutions.
- That your solution offers benefits to the company and has minimal risks. If there are risks, you are aware of them and have a plan to mitigate them.

The importance and expense of what you're recommending will dictate the form, amount of detail, length and use of visual aids like charts and graphs. It will also dictate how you lay out your argument.

As you craft a persuasive strategy for your recommendation report, let's take a look at the example of an argument.

Example: A Very Short Report

To: Ralph Niblet, CEO
From: Hannah Vuong, Communications Manager
Subject: Migrating to MailChimp
Date: Sept. 1st, 2021

Hi Ralph,

Last week, you asked me to research whether we should switch our email marketing software from Constant Contact to MailChimp. I think that we should go with MailChimp for the following reasons:

1. MailChimp is free for a business of our size, while Constant Contact costs us $57 a month.
2. MailChimp integrates with Salesforce and would allow us to use our database more effectively. I spoke to Sam Cho, who currently administers our Salesforce account, and he shared many exciting ways that we could integrate the two platforms without much effort. He also offered to host a webinar to train our staff.
3. MailChimp allows us to segment audiences more effectively. I've included some links to a few blog posts that illustrate what we could do. A lot of our current unsubscribes happen because we can't target emails to specific groups of customers effectively. Our email marketing report from last quarter showed that 70% unsubscribed because of emails that were "not relevant."

Some colleagues have voiced the objection that they already know how to use Constant Contact and they find

MailChimp less intuitive. We will also have to migrate our existing data and clean it. I believe, however, that these barriers can easily be overcome with employee training and good data migration practices.

I am happy to show you a demo of MailChimp this week if you are free.

Thanks,

Hannah

If Hannah wanted to turn this email into a report, she would likely find that the major elements are there. She's done some research, she has used that research to come up with a solution, and she's anticipated some potential risks or downsides to her plan. As you read about the parts of the report, think about how Hannah might turn her email into a longer, formal recommendation report.

Summary Reports

A summary report is used to give management information. For example, if you work in the marketing department, your boss might ask you to find out about your competitors' online activities so that your company can effectively compete with them. To do this, you would research your competitors' websites, social media profiles, digital advertising campaigns, and so on. You would then distill what you find down to the key points so that your boss can get the essential information in a short time and then decide how to act on it. Unlike the recommendation report, the summary report focuses on the facts, leaving it to management to decide on a course of action.

In general, the main persuasive point that you are making in summary reports is that you have done enough research and have used appropriate sources, and that you have organized this information in a logical and useful manner. Because summary reports give a general overview, it's important to think about how your reader can skim through the document. Remember: your goal is to save your audience time, so part of the challenge of the report is determining what information your audience needs, and what is irrelevant. You will also have to condense material.

Research Report Proposals

A research report proposal is a short report asking for management approval to spend time writing a research report in response to a specific company need. (It could be a need everyone is aware of or one you yourself have identified.) In writing your proposal, you would have to convince your audience that writing the full report would be worthwhile and that you are the best person to write it.

Obviously, to convince your audience that writing the full report would be worthwhile, you'd have to be clear concerning what specific issue you will approach and what exactly you will provide.

- For which specific problem would the research project offer a solution? Why is it essential to deal with that problem right away? Would your ideas *eliminate* or *reduce* the problem?
- What exactly will you provide? (A short report? A long report? A short-term solution? A long-term solution? A way to limit losses? A way to increase profits? A new policy or strategy? Etc.)

Next, you will have to convince your audience that you can deliver what you promise. Do you have the authority, credentials, knowledge, problem-solving skills, etc. to offer a viable solution?

Finally, you'd be expected to provide a timeline (specify how long the completion of the report will take). If you are not an employee of the company and are pitching a research report proposal as an independent consultant, you would also have to clarify how much you will charge.

Your research report proposal should include the following sections:

- Introductory paragraph: no heading, brief presentation of the topic and purpose of the document (a few sentences)
- Problem/ opportunity statement: short description of the problem that needs to be solved/ the opportunity available. Make sure you explain the importance of that problem/ opportunity (avoiding risks, making profits, etc.)
- Topic(s) to investigate: list any specific questions the report will answer (for complex questions, you might want to list "sub-questions," too)
- Methods: specify what research methods you will use, what types of sources you will use for your findings, how you plan to analyze those findings (your criteria), and how you plan to select the best course of action. **Note:** At work, you may be able to do *primary research* in preparation for your report (interviews, surveys, etc.). You won't have the time to do anything of that nature in our course — you have a few weeks to prepare both the proposal and the report. For this reason, you'll have to do *secondary research* only (use information from published paper/ online sources). Make sure you keep this in mind as you select your topic and write your research report proposal for our class.
- Qualifications/ facilities/ resources: provide some details concerning your qualifications (degrees, certifications, work experience, etc.) to prove that you have the knowledge needed to write the report; mention if you have access to relevant sources of information, and how.
- Work schedule: this part can take the form of a table with tasks (steps), brief explanations, and time frames (time required and completion date). Here are some examples of tasks: gathering information; analyzing information; organizing information; drafting the report; revising the draft; preparing visuals; editing the draft; proofreading the report. You can group related tasks together in your table.

Don't be vague in any of the sections. Your reader should have a clear, specific idea of what your report will provide by the time he/she finishes reading the research report proposal. Otherwise, your proposal won't be accepted.

9.3: ORGANIZING REPORTS

Report Organization

Reports vary by size, format, and function. You need to be flexible and adjust your report to the needs of the audience. Reports are typically organized around six key elements:

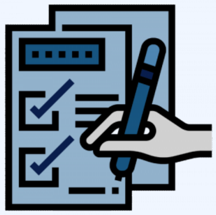
1. **Who** the report is about and/or prepared for
2. **What** was done, what problems were addressed, and the results, including conclusions and/or recommendations
3. **Where** the subject studied occurred
4. **When** the subject studied occurred
5. **Why** the report was written (function), including under what authority, for what reason, or by whose request
6. **How** the subject operated, functioned, or was used

Pay attention to these essential elements when you consider your stakeholders. That may include the person(s) the report is about, whom it is for, and the larger audience of the organization. Ask yourself who the key decision makers are, who the experts will be, and how your words and images may be interpreted. While there is no universal format for a report, there is a common order to the information. Each element supports the main purpose or function, playing an important role in the transmission of information. Some common elements in a report are shown in Table 9.3.1.

Table 9.3..1 Parts of a Report

Page	Description
Title Page	• Report title; date of submission; name, title, and organization of the person who prepared the report; name, title, and organization of the person receiving the report. • If your report contains sensitive information or if it is going to be exposed to the elements, it might also contain a cover page. • No page number.
Table of Contents	• A list of the sections in the report and their respective page numbers. • All headings/sub-headings in the report should be listed on this page. • This page is not labelled with a page number.
Executive Summary	• The executive summary is a one-page overview of the entire report aimed at managers or people in a position of power. It discusses the managerial implications of your report: basically what managers or other people who have the authority to approve your report need to know. Summarize the topic, methods, data/evidence, results, and conclusions/recommendations. • On its own page. • Labelled as page iii.
Introduction	• Introduces the topic of the report, states the purpose of the report, and previews the structure of the report. This section often contains similar information to the Executive Summary, but in a clear, factual manner. It may spend more time discussing the purpose, scope, and methods used, and offer just a brief outline of the conclusion reached. • Begins on a new page. • Labelled as page 1.
Body	• Key elements of the report body may include the background, methods, results, and analysis or discussion. • Uses descriptive or functional headings and sub-headings (is not labelled "Body"). • Pagination continues from the introduction.
Conclusion and/or Recommendations	• Concise summary of findings; detailed recommendations (for recommendation reports). Indicate the main results and their relation to the recommended action(s) or outcome(s). • Pagination continues from the body of the report.
References	• A list of all references used in the report. • All in-text citations included in the report should have an accompanying entry in the reference list. • Begins on a new page. • Pagination continues from the conclusions and/or recommendations.
Appendix or Appendices (if needed)	• Related supporting materials. • All materials in the appendix (or appendices) must be referred to in the body of the report. • Only one item per appendix. • Each appendix begins on a new page, is labelled as Appendix A, B, C, etc, and is given a title. • Pagination continues from the reference list.

Here is a checklist for ensuring that a report fulfills its goals:

-  Report considers the audience's needs
- Form follows function of report
- Format reflects institutional norms and expectations
- Information is accurate, complete, and documented
- Information is easy to read
- Terms are clearly defined
- Figures, tables, and art support written content
- Figures, tables, and art are clear and correctly labelled
- Figures, tables, and art are easily understood without text support
- Words are easy to read (font, arrangement, organization)
- Results are clear and concise
- Recommendations are reasonable and well-supported
- Report represents your best effort
- Report speaks for itself without your clarification or explanation

9.4: WRITING FORMAL REPORTS

While you may write much shorter, more casual reports, it's helpful to go into a bit of detail about formal reports. Formal reports are modular, which means that they have many pieces. Most audience members will not read every piece, so these pieces should stand on their own. That means that you will sometimes repeat yourself. That's okay. Your audience should be able to find exactly what they need in a particular section, even if that information has already been introduced elsewhere.

For example, the Executive Summary is aimed at managers. It's a short, persuasive overview of everything in the report. The Introduction may contain very similar information, but it focuses on giving a short, technical overview of everything in the report. Its goal is to inform, not to persuade.

Let's take a look at some of the parts of the report in greater detail.

Title Page

The title page may be formatted in different ways depending on company-specific requirements, but it generally provides the audience with the following information:

- **Title of the report**
  - This should appear 2 inches from the top margin in uppercase letters.
- **Name, title, and organization of the individual receiving the report**
  - Type "Prepared for" on one line, followed by two separate lines that provide the receiving organization's name and then the city and state. Some reports may include an additional line that presents the name of a specific person.
- **Name of the author and any necessary identifying information**
  - Type "prepared by" on one line, followed by the name(s) of the author(s) and their organization, all on separate lines.
- **Date of submission**
  - This date may differ from the date the report was written. It should appear 2 inches above the bottom margin.

The items on the title page should be equally spaced apart from each other.

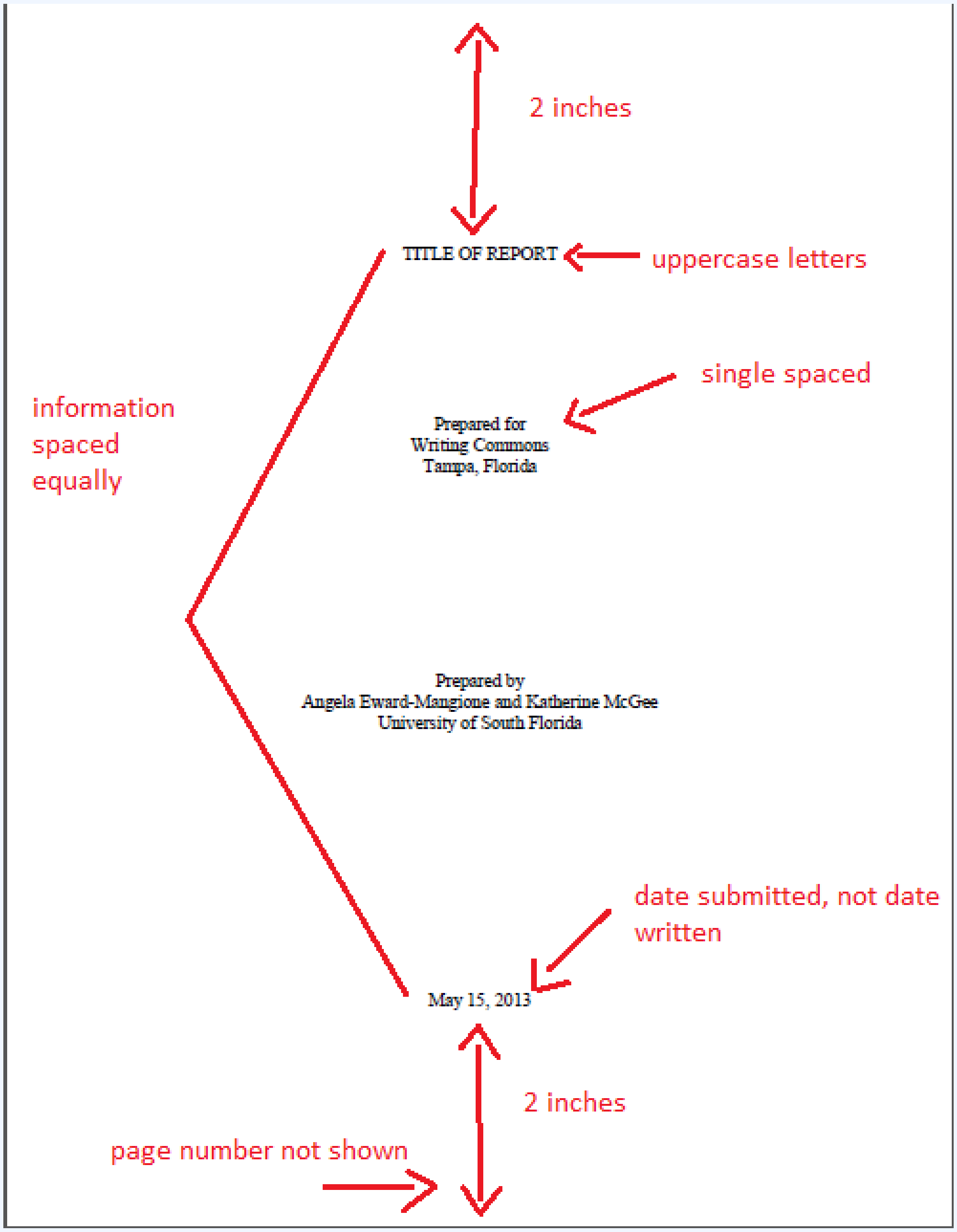


Figure 9.4.1 Report Title Page Components

A Note on Page Numbers:

The title page should not include a page number, but this page is counted as page "i." Use software features to create two sections for your report. You can then utilize two different types of numbering schemes. When numbering the pages (i.e., i, ii, iii, etc.) for a formal report, use lowercase roman numerals for all front matter components. Use arabic numbers for the other pages that follow. Additionally, if you intend to bind the report on the left, move the left margin and center 0.25 inches to the right.

Letter of Transmittal

A letter of transmittal announces the report topic to the recipient(s).

If applicable, the first paragraph should identify who authorized the report and why the report is significant. Provide the purpose of the report in the first paragraph as well. The next paragraph should briefly identify, categorize, and describe the primary and secondary research of the report. Use the concluding paragraph to offer to discuss the report; it is also customary to conclude by thanking the reader for their time and consideration.

The letter of transmittal should be formatted as a business letter (*please see 4.3: Writing Business Letters for more details*). Some report writers prefer to send a memo of transmittal instead.

When considering your audience for the letter or memo of transmittal, make sure that you use a level of formality appropriate for your relationship with the reader. While all letters should contain professional and respectful language, a letter to someone you do not know should pay closer attention to the formality of the word choice and tone.

Table of Contents

The table of contents page features the headings and secondary headings of the report and their page numbers, enabling audience members to quickly locate specific parts of the report. Leaders (i.e. spaced or unspaced dots) are used to guide the reader's eye from the headings to their page numbers.

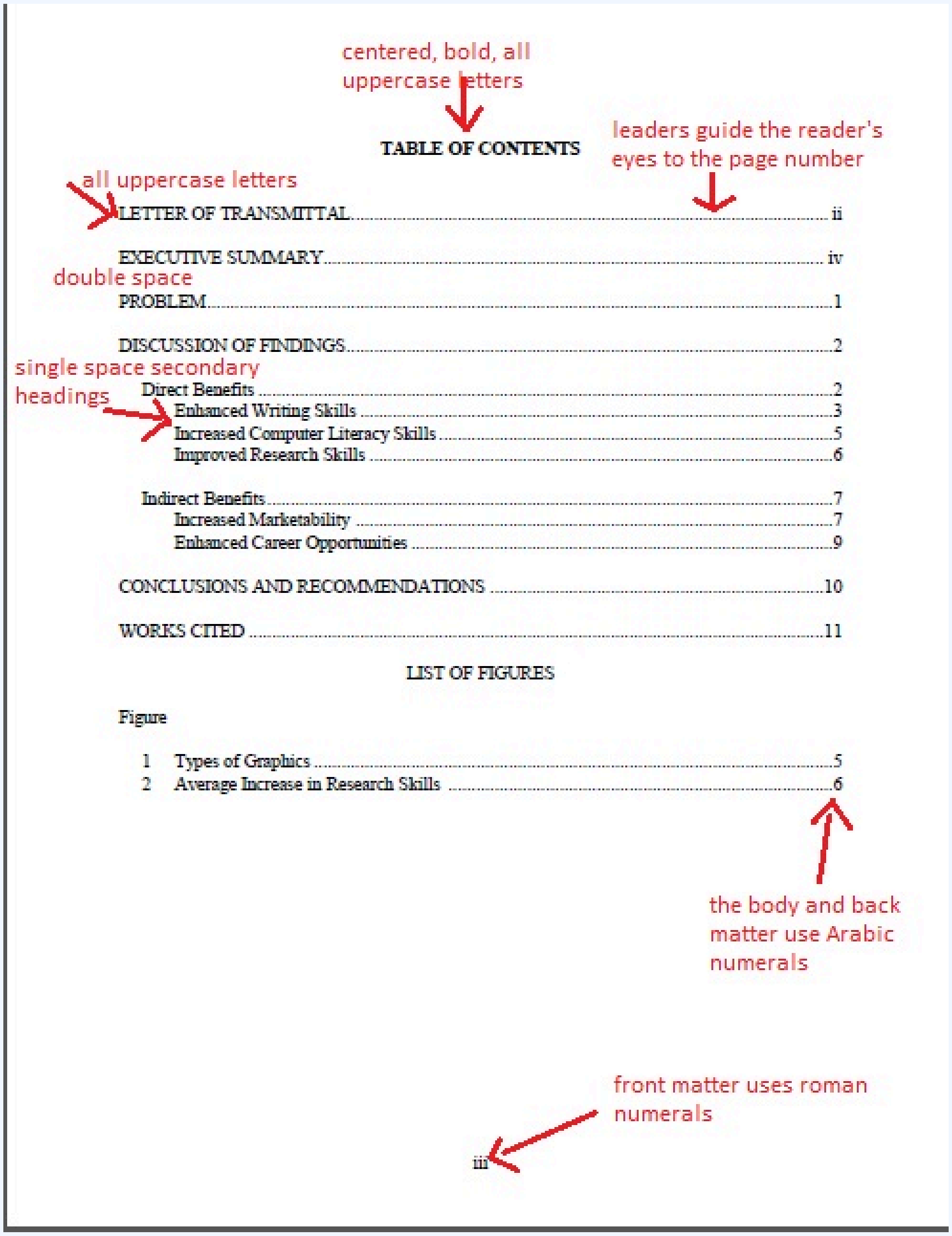


TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

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Figure 9.4.2 Table of Contents and List of Figures components

The words "TABLE OF CONTENTS" should appear at the top of the page in all uppercase and bolded letters. You can type the titles of major report parts in all uppercase letters as well, double spacing between them. Secondary headings should be indented and single spaced, using a combination of upper- and lowercase letters.

Executive Summary

An executive summary presents an overview of the report that can be used as a time-saving device by recipients who do not have time to read the entire report.

The executive summary should include a:

- Summary of purpose
- Overview of key findings
- Identification of conclusions
- Overview of recommendations

To begin, type "EXECUTIVE SUMMARY" in all uppercase letters and centered. Follow this functional head with paragraphs that include the above information, but do not use first-level headings to separate each item. Each paragraph of information should be single-spaced with double spacing between paragraphs. Everything except for the title should be left-aligned.

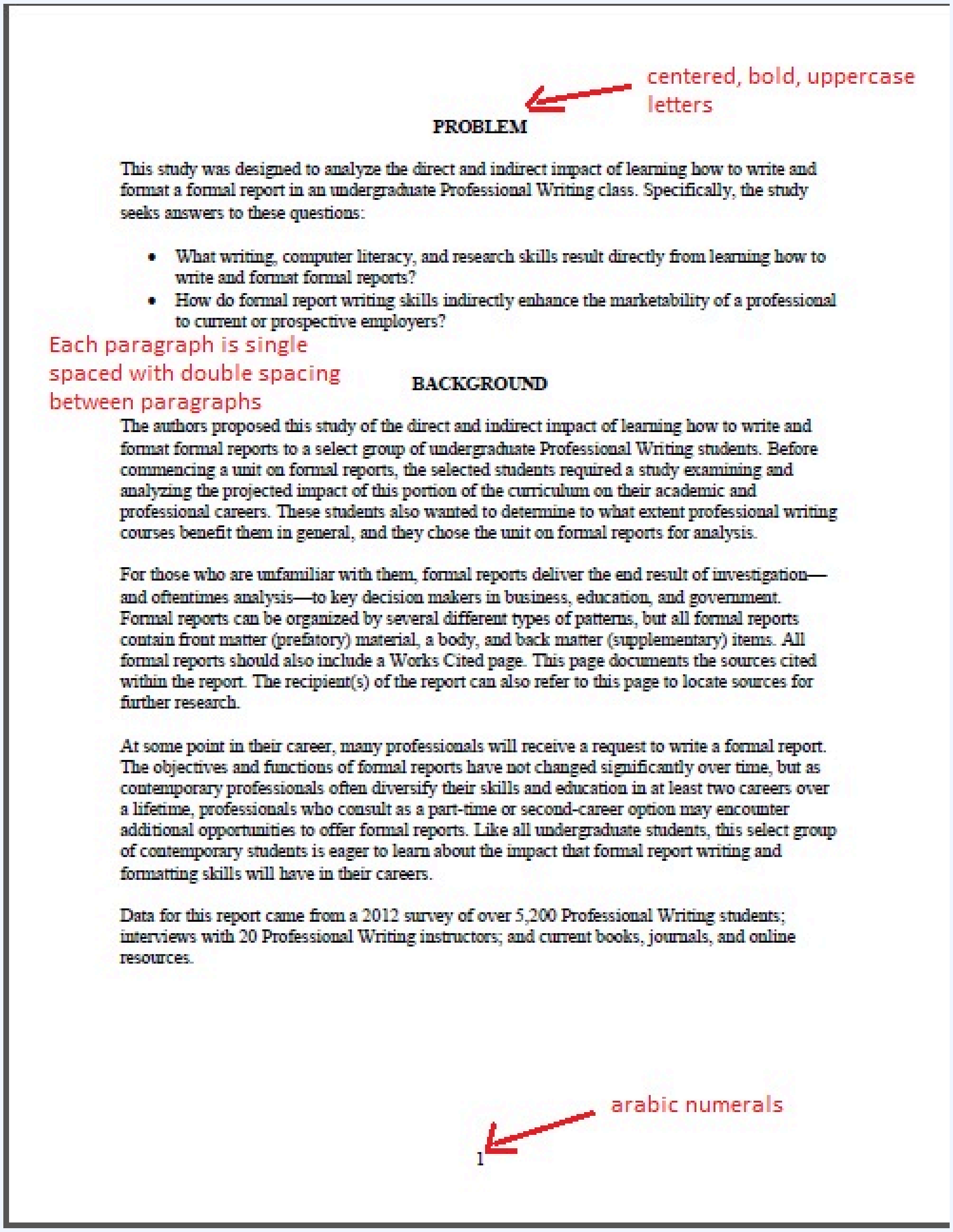
An executive summary is usually ten percent of the length of the report. For example, a ten-page report should offer a one-page summary. A 100-page report should feature a summary that is approximately ten pages.

The executive summary is usually seen as the most important part of the report, and it should be written last. When you're writing the executive summary, imagine sitting across from your most important audience members. If you have just a few minutes to talk to them, what do you want them to know? What would be most persuasive?

Introduction

The main text of a formal report begins with an introduction. The introduction sets the stage for the report, clarifies what need(s) motivated it, and helps the reader understand what structure the report will follow.

Most report introductions address the following elements: background information, problem or purpose, significance, scope, methods, organization, and sources. As you may have noticed, some parts of a formal report fulfill similar purposes. Information from the letter of transmittal and the executive summary may be repeated in the introduction. Reword the information in order to avoid sounding repetitive.



PROBLEM

This study was designed to analyze the direct and indirect impact of learning how to write and format a formal report in an undergraduate Professional Writing class. Specifically, the study seeks answers to these questions:

- What writing, computer literacy, and research skills result directly from learning how to write and format formal reports?
- How do formal report writing skills indirectly enhance the marketability of a professional to current or prospective employers?

BACKGROUND

The authors proposed this study of the direct and indirect impact of learning how to write and format formal reports to a select group of undergraduate Professional Writing students. Before commencing a unit on formal reports, the selected students required a study examining and analyzing the projected impact of this portion of the curriculum on their academic and professional careers. These students also wanted to determine to what extent professional writing courses benefit them in general, and they chose the unit on formal reports for analysis.

For those who are unfamiliar with them, formal reports deliver the end result of investigation—and oftentimes analysis—to key decision makers in business, education, and government. Formal reports can be organized by several different types of patterns, but all formal reports contain front matter (prefatory) material, a body, and back matter (supplementary) items. All formal reports should also include a Works Cited page. This page documents the sources cited within the report. The recipient(s) of the report can also refer to this page to locate sources for further research.

At some point in their career, many professionals will receive a request to write a formal report. The objectives and functions of formal reports have not changed significantly over time, but as contemporary professionals often diversify their skills and education in at least two careers over a lifetime, professionals who consult as a part-time or second-career option may encounter additional opportunities to offer formal reports. Like all undergraduate students, this select group of contemporary students is eager to learn about the impact that formal report writing and formatting skills will have in their careers.

Data for this report came from a 2012 survey of over 5,200 Professional Writing students; interviews with 20 Professional Writing instructors; and current books, journals, and online resources.

1

Figure 9.4.3 Introduction Page

To begin this section, type “BACKGROUND” or “INTRODUCTION” in all uppercase letters. This functional head should be followed by the information specified above (i.e., background information, problem or purpose, etc.). You do not need to utilize any first-level headings in this section. Because this section includes background information, it would be the appropriate place to provide information for audiences that may need additional knowledge about the topic. Provide definitions of technical terms and instruction about the overall project if necessary. If you are uncertain if your audience needs a particular piece of information, go ahead and include it; it's better to give your reader too much background than not enough.

Discussion of Findings

The Discussion of Findings section presents the evidence for your conclusions.

This key section should be carefully organized to enhance readability.

Useful organizational patterns for report findings include but are not limited to:

- Best Case/Worst Case
- Compare/Contrast
- Chronology
- Geography
- Importance
- Journalistic Pattern

Use a Best Case/Worst Case organizational pattern when you think that the audience may lack interest in the topic. When examining a topic with clear alternatives to your proposed solution, consider using a Compare/Contrast pattern. Geographical patterns work effectively for topics that are discussed by location.

When describing the organization of the report in the first paragraph, broadly identify how the material in the report is organized rather than state that the report uses a specific pattern (e.g. Chronology, Geography). For example, write, "The research findings address curriculum trends in three provinces: (a) British Columbia, (b) Alberta, and (c) Ontario," not, "This report uses a geographical organizational pattern."

Follow the first paragraph with a first-level heading. Use first-level headings for all other major parts of this section. First-level headings should appear in bold font. Center first-level headings, but align any second-level headings with the left margin. Type any second-level headings in bold, upper- and lowercase letters.

Using numbers to distinguish between first-level and second-level headings might be a good idea if you have a lot of sections (example: 1. First-level Heading *vs.* 1.1. Second-level Heading).

As you present, interpret, and analyze evidence, consider using both text and graphics. Take into account what will be easiest for your audience to understand.

Include citations for all quoted or paraphrased material from sources as well; check with your organization as to whether they prefer parenthetical citations or footnotes.

Integrating Graphics

Formal report authors use graphics to present data in different forms. Paragraphs of text and complex or numerical data tend to bog readers down, making graphics a beneficial enhancement. Graphics also make data easier to understand, so they sometimes make a stronger impact on the audience.

Knowing when—and how—to effectively employ graphics is key to successfully integrating them. Keeping the audience in mind is also critical (*for more information about creating charts and graphs, see 2.3: Effective Document Design and Appendix A: Visual Communication*.)

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations section conveys the key results from the analysis in the discussion of findings section. Up to this point, readers have carefully reviewed the data in the report; they are now logically prepared to read the report's conclusions and recommendations.

Type "CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS" in all uppercase letters. Follow this functional heading with the conclusions of the report. The conclusions should answer any research questions that were posed earlier in the report. Present the conclusions in an enumerated or bulleted list to enhance readability.

Recommendations offer a course of action, and they should answer any problem or research questions as well. Think back to the expectations of your audience. Have all of their requirements been addressed?

Works Cited/ Reference Page

All formal reports should include a works cited page; his page documents the sources cited within the report. The recipient(s) of the report can also refer to this page to locate sources for further research.

It is acceptable to follow MLA (Modern Language Association), CMS (Chicago Manual of Style), or APA (American Psychological Association) documentation style for entries on this page. Arrange all sources alphabetically. Refer to the latest edition of the appropriate style handbook for more information about how to format entries for print and electronic sources.

For coursework in COMM 6019 at Fanshawe College, the standard style is APA format. This is because most North American business organizations require the use of APA rather than MLA or another style. Please review Appendix E: Documentation and APA Style for details about APA citation.

Conclusion

While some formatting rules may seem tedious at first, they are necessary in order for your audience to better understand the report and to be able to locate and examine your sources if needed. Using a regulated format allows for an organization and citation style that everyone can follow. Being aware of your audience's needs and expectations will allow for a strong report that will satisfy your employee and demonstrate your competence in your field.

CHAPTER 9: REVIEW AND EXERCISES

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Audience analysis is key to reports. Most reports are modular, which means that they are organized into parts that stand on their own. This helps the reader to look for just the information that's relevant to them.
- Reports have a wide variety of purposes and styles. The three major types are progress reports, recommendation reports and summary reports.
- In a progress report, identify what you've accomplished, listed any problems you've encountered, outline what work still remains and conclude by providing an overview of the project's status and what should be done next.
- A recommendation report is used to help management make decisions. You should identify that a problem or opportunity exists and your organization should take it seriously, that you've done the research necessary to solve the problem, that your research and expertise has led you to a solution, and that this solution is the best one, and that you're aware of any risks and have a plan for them.
- A summary report gives management information. The main point is that you've done enough research, have used enough sources and have organized them in an appropriate manner.
- Formal reports usually have an executive summary, an introduction, a body (which might be separated into background, methods, results, and analysis), a conclusions/recommendations section, references, and an appendix.

Exercises

1. Find a report online. See if you can identify the parts of the report that we've discussed. If it's organized in a different way, why do you think that is? What is the author trying to accomplish?
2. Choose an essay or project that you've done in another class. Try writing a short Executive Summary for it. How did writing an Executive Summary change the way you looked at the material? How did you decide what to put in the Executive Summary?
3. Find a famous report online, such as The Mueller Report or the Final Report of the National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. How would you describe the tone of the report? How does it try to persuade its audience? How does it use evidence?

Attribution

CHAPTER 10: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Describe the role that sources play in persuasion.
2. Develop a research question.
3. Narrow your research focus.
4. Explore the types of sources you can use and where to find them.
5. Identify effective survey and interview questions.
6. Make a source plan.
7. Evaluate sources for trustworthiness.

Workplace Context:

Using research in your reports always increases their persuasiveness, but the more important the decision to be made/ the higher the financial costs, the more substantial a research component you'd be expected to include. The same goes for situations in which you can anticipate some resistance to your ideas: providing evidence from a variety of sophisticated research sources (including academic studies) would increase your chances of presenting a persuasive argument.

In some situations, you'll have a limited amount of time for your research — and prior knowledge of *where to look* for certain types of information would allow you to cover much more ground in the time you have. In other situations, some of the information you need might not be readily available, and you might have to use your critical thinking skills to find data directly relevant to *similar* contexts and use that information to make projections for your own context.

It's also possible that, in some cases, you'll start with an idea and keep finding evidence that seems to go *against* your initial intuition/ hypothesis. This can be discouraging, but there is value to this experience, too: your research might prevent you from pursuing a dead end and put you on the right track instead.

Finally, as far as *student research projects* are concerned, the most common research challenges we, as professors, routinely see are the following:

1. Choosing a topic that is too broad for a relatively short research report and simply couldn't be discussed effectively in, say, 10-12 pages. (Students who insist on working with an overly broad topic typically end up producing an elementary-level discussion that would be of no use to anyone in a business/ professional situation).
2. Using the first 5-10 results the students get through a Google search as "research materials" for a report. (If

your readers needed basic information from random online sources, they would spend half an hour doing the same search rather than have someone write a research report on company time.)

Before we begin, consider the following questions:

1. Think about the last time that you did research. What kind of research did you do? Were you able to find all the sources you needed? If not, what kind of sources did you struggle to find?
2. How do you use the internet when you research? What kind of sites do you visit? Why?
3. What does academic integrity mean to you?
4. How do you determine what sources to trust online?
5. If you've also attended school in a different country, how does that school system teach source use?

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following text: Business Writing For Everyone by Arley Cruthers is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

10.1: WHY USE SOURCES?

We all look for information on various topics on a daily basis (we do"basic research") — whenever we need the perfect recipe for a birthday cake, the best new laptop to fit our professional or academic needs, the best deal on a plane ticket, etc. You'll notice that the word "best" was used in all three examples, but the definition of "best" in each case would, of course, vary depending on our specific needs and priorities — that is, our *criteria*. Cost might be a criterion in all three cases. For the cake, for instance, dietary restrictions or personal preferences for one type of texture over another might play a part. For the laptop, we might care more or less about aspects like the battery, speed, video quality, etc., depending on what we'll be using it for (a journalist and a software developer wouldn't have the same needs and priorities). Higher-level research involves defining needs and criteria and serves the same general purpose: to address a situation/ solve a problem in a way that would be found most advantageous ("best") by our readers.

Research in the workplace runs the gamut from basic searches for information such as looking up Yelp reviews to find a restaurant to host a holiday party to writing reports of several hundred pages that require both extensive primary and secondary research. Being able to find the most useful sources quickly will help you streamline your work. To find the most useful source, you should ask yourself why you are using sources in the first place — what do you need to know/ what would your readers need to know?

In the workplace, research can help you with the following:

- Provide a deep look into a narrow topic;
- Provide a broad overview of something you're just learning about;
- Show you up-to-date information on a topic that changes quickly;
- Save you time by allowing you to build off of someone else's work;
- Offer a perspective you haven't considered yet;
- Test your ideas to see if they're sound;
- Help you solve a problem by showing how someone else solved it;
- Bring together different perspectives so you can consider a problem from all sides;
- Allow you to analyze the opinions of many different people, so you can find trends;
- Show how someone in a different industry, company or location solved a problem.

In this chapter, we'll learn how to narrow a research question, and then find sources that will help you achieve your purpose.

10.2: ASKING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Whether you're writing a paper for a graduate certificate class or doing workplace research, you'll be more efficient if you begin with a clear research question. That's because research questions are more than handy tools; they are essential to the research process. By defining exactly what the researcher is trying to find out, these questions influence most of the rest of the steps taken to conduct the research.

For instance, if you're seeking information about a health problem in order to learn whether you have anything to worry about, research questions will make it possible for you to more effectively decide whether to seek medical help–and how quickly. Or, if you're researching a potential employer, having developed and used research questions will mean you're able to more confidently decide whether to apply for an internship or job there.

The confidence you'll have when making such decisions will come from knowing that the information they're based on was gathered by conscious thought rather than luck.

Most of us look for information to answer questions every day, and we often act on the answers to those questions. Are research questions any different from most of the questions for which we seek information? Yes.

Regular Question: What time is my movie showing at Silver City Richmond on Friday?
Research Question: How do "sleeper" films end up having outstanding attendance figures?
Regular Question: What can I do about my insomnia?
Research Question: How do flights more than 16 hours long affect the reflexes of commercial jet pilots?
Regular Question: How many children in Canada have allergies?
Research Question: How does his or her country of birth affect a child's chances of developing asthma?

Research questions cannot be answered by a quick web search. Answering them involves using more critical thinking than answering regular questions because they seem more debatable. Research questions require more sources of information to answer and, consequently, take more time to answer. They, more often than regular questions, start with the word "How" or "Why."

That's why research questions are so key to workplace research. If the answer is easy to find, **no one would pay you to find it.**

10.3: TYPES OF SOURCES

Once you have your research question, you'll need information sources to answer it. In today's complex information landscape, just about anything that contains information can be considered a source.

Here are a few examples:

- books and encyclopedias
- websites, web pages, and blogs
- magazine, journal, and newspaper articles
- research reports and conference papers
- interviews and surveys
- photographs, paintings, cartoons, and other art works
- TV and radio programs, podcasts, movies, and videos
- illuminated manuscripts and artifacts
- bones, minerals, and fossils
- pamphlets and government documents

With so many sources available, the question usually is not whether sources exist for your project but which ones will best meet your information needs. Being able to categorize a source helps you understand the kind of information it contains, which is a big clue to (1) whether it might meet one or more of your information needs and (2) where to look for it and similar sources.

A source can be categorized by asking the following questions:

- Why was the source created?
- How will you use the source?
- Who was the original audience of the source?
- What format is the source in?

As you may already be able to tell, sources can be in more than one category at the same time because the categories are not mutually exclusive.

The Purpose of the Source

When you encounter a source, you should ask yourself, "Why does this source exist?" Thinking about the reason an author produced a source can be helpful to you because that reason was what dictated the kind of information included. Depending on that purpose, the author may have chosen to include factual and/or analytical information — or, instead, information that was meant to be entertaining. The author's reason for producing the source also determined whether more perspectives were included or just the author's own.

Authors typically want to achieve one or more of the following:

- Inform and educate
- Persuade
- Sell services or products
- Entertain

Sometimes authors have a combination of purposes, as when marketers decide they can sell more smart phones with an informative sales video that also entertains us.

Why Intent Matters

Authors' intent matters because their goal will impact what information they include and how they present that information. For instance, when you're looking for sources that will help you find the best answer to your research question or evidence for your answer that you will share with your audience, you will want the author's main purpose to have been to inform or educate their audience. That's because, with that intent, authors are likely to have used the following:

- Facts where possible
- Multiple perspectives instead of just their own
- Little subjective information
- Unbiased, objective language that cites other sources of information

Those characteristics will lend credibility to the argument you are making in your project. Both you and your audience will simply find it easier to believe—will have more confidence in the argument being made—when you include those types of sources.

Sources whose authors intend only to persuade others won't meet your information need for an answer to your research question or evidence with which to convince your audience. That's because they don't always confine themselves to facts. Instead, they often tell us their opinions without backing them up with evidence.

It's especially important to verify the purpose in the case of *online sources*. Let's say that you find a social media infographic about the health benefits of elderberry syrup. An individual user or an organization took the time to create the post. Why did they do that work? Are they trying to sell you elderberry syrup or are they from a government health organization trying to combat misinformation about health supplements? The difference will tell you whether you can trust the source.

How Will You Use the Source?

Another way to categorize information is by the type of information it offers and, implicitly, the role it will play in your argument.

Primary research is a **research** approach that involves gathering data directly while **secondary research** is a **research** approach that involves relying on already existing data when carrying out a systematic investigation

Primary Sources present data collected by their authors (who performed **primary research**). Some examples are:

- Survey data
- A novel
- Breaking news
- An advertisement
- An eyewitness account
- A painting
- An interview

When you work with primary sources, you are expected to provide the interpretation/ analysis of the data provided in the source.

Secondary Sources interpret/ analyze information from primary sources. Use secondary sources when you're interested in the analysis of others. Here are some examples:

- A book about marketing.
- A scholarly journal article that uses data from several primary sources to present a complex argument about a certain economic trend
- An article that critiques a new piece of software.
- An article/ blog post that summarizes and synthesizes several eyewitness accounts for a new understanding of an event.
- An informational podcast on a topic of public interest
- A magazine article that reviews a film

Tertiary Sources consist of indexes or other types of texts that condense, summarize, organize, compile, or digest information:

- Almanacs
- Guide books
- Survey articles
- Timelines
- User guides
- Encyclopedias

The difference between primary, secondary and tertiary sources can be a little confusing. Think of a primary source as raw materials that you will use to build an argument. You're the one doing the analysis. For example, let's say that your company wants to know how to increase the open rates of its email marketing campaign. The data of all of the email open rates from the past year are a primary source. You'll use this data to look for trends about which emails are most and least popular. If you read a blog post by an expert in email marketing, however, you're examining secondary research. You've chosen the blog posts because you want someone else's expert opinion. A tertiary source is a source that you use to find other sources. For example, you might examine a survey article to identify several useful and reliable sources.

What type of research will *you* most likely produce/ perform at work? If you conduct interviews, surveys, etc., you'd be doing primary research. Most often, however, you'll probably have to write shorter or longer analytical/

recommendation reports, which can be best described as secondary research (even is you use primary research you yourself have previously performed in order to be able to write them).

Who Is the Intended Audience?

We can also categorize information by the expertise of its intended audience. Considering the intended audience—how much expertise one has to have to understand the information—can indicate whether the source has sufficient credibility and thoroughness to meet your needs. When you are writing papers for a university course, academic articles (peer-reviewed) are usually the best source. In the workplace, however, you may be researching something that doesn't have many peer-reviewed articles about it yet or you may only need a basic understanding of the topic. The reports and other assignments you prepare for courses in your graduate certificate here at Fanshawe will typically require you to use a combination of peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed sources, depending on the context/ scenario.

There are varying degrees of expertise:

Popular – Popular newspaper and magazine articles (such as The National Post, Maclean's Magazine, and Rolling Stone) are meant for a large general audience, generally affordable, easy to purchase or available free of charge. They are written by staff writers or reporters for the general public.

Professional – Professional magazine articles (such as Plastic Surgical Nursing and Music Teacher) are meant for people in a particular profession, often accessible through a professional organization. Staff writers or other professionals in the targeted field write these articles at a level and with the language to be understood by everyone in the profession. Here are some general characteristics of these articles:

- About trends and news from the targeted field, book reviews, and case studies.
- Often less than 10 pages, some of which may contain footnotes and references.
- Usually published by professional associations and commercial publishers
- Published after approval from an editor

Scholarly – Scholarly journal articles (such as Plant Science and Education and Child Psychology) are meant for scholars, students, or the general public who want a deep understanding of a problem or issue. Researchers and scholars write these articles to present new knowledge and further understanding of their field of study. Main characteristics of such sources:

- This is where research project findings, data and analytics, and case studies usually appear first.
- Often long (usually over 10 pages) and always include footnotes and references.
- Usually published by universities, professional associations, and commercial publishers.
- Published after approval by peer review or from the journal's editor.

The most respected scholarly journals are peer-reviewed, which means that other experts in their field check out each article before it can be published. It's their responsibility to help guarantee that new material is presented in the context of what is already known, that the methods the researcher used are the right ones, and that the articles contribute to the field.

Peer-reviewed articles are more likely to be credible. Peer-reviewed journal articles are the official scholarly record, which means that if there is an important development in research, it will appear in a journal article eventually.

You might ask yourselves, since peer-reviewed sources are the most reliable, why should we not just limit ourselves to such sources all the time? The answer has to do with *how long it takes* for a peer-reviewed source to be published. For an academic article, one to two years may pass from the moment the author submits a paper for publication to the moment it becomes available in print/ online (some journals have a lengthier peer-review and publication process than others). For books, it can be even longer. This means that, if you are writing about an issue that has just emerged on the market of ideas, you might not find anything peer-reviewed available *yet*. This is one of the reasons that you should work hard to develop your ability to *assess* the credibility and value of *any* type of source, so you can always use the best research sources available for your topic.

10.4: NARROWING YOUR FOCUS

For many students, having to start with a research question is the biggest difference between how they did research in high school and how they are expected to do research in college/university and in the workplace. Let's look at a scenario.

Ravneet's Story

Ravneet is doing an internship at a small press. Authors and agents submit children's books for potential publication and Ravneet is responsible for reading them all and passing on the most promising ones to the editorial team. One day, the head editor says that she is frustrated by the lack of diversity in the children's book manuscripts that she is receiving. She asks Ravneet to do some research on this issue.

Ravneet isn't sure where to start. The topic of diversity in children's book publishing is huge. She begins by doing some background research. A Twitter thread leads her to an article about how 50% of main characters in children's books are white, 27% are animals, and only 23% are BIPOC characters.[1] Then, she looks at the submission history for her press for the last few months and realizes that the breakdown is pretty similar.

Ravneet narrows her research question from "diversity in publishing" to "How can our small press encourage more diverse submissions?" If she had found that the press received diverse submissions but only accepted books with white main characters, her research focus would have been different. Her question is now both more manageable (which will save her time) and more useful given her company's situation.

From there, Ravneet does the following research:

- Reads articles about how other presses have managed to get more diverse applications.
- Follows some popular BIPOC authors on Twitter, learns about some of the challenges they've faced in the publishing industry, and interviews several of them to gather even more information.
- Discovers that authors with a disability face additional barriers and identifies this as an untapped market.
- Interviews a few agents to get their perspective.
- Looks at the website copy for different presses and realizes that her company's website copy could be more inclusive.
- Writes a short report outlining her findings.

As you can see, a specific research question allowed Ravneet to save time, as well as ask the right questions. Ravneet also kept an open mind throughout the process. She didn't start with a preconceived idea of her own that she

1. https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=an-updated-look-at-diversity-in-childrens-books

wanted to prove — she went where the evidence took her. She hadn't thought about disability, but her research led her to this area. As a result, her editor was able to use her research to make positive changes within the press.

Why Narrow a Topic?

In college/ university, instructors often give you assignments that require you to *narrow down* a topic. This is a reflection of the type of research you will be expected to do at work.

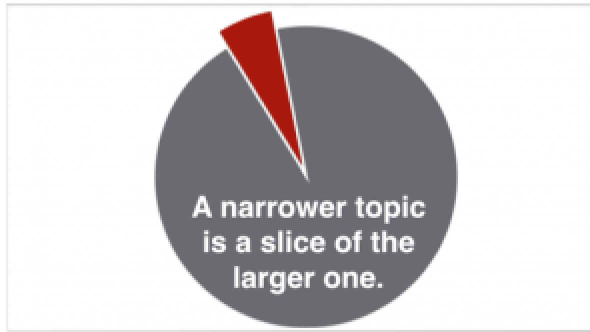


Figure 10.4.1

For instance, your assignment might be to develop a poster about "spring" for an introductory horticulture course. The instructor expects you to narrow that topic to something you are interested in and that is related to your class. In this case, a narrower topic boils down to deciding what is interesting or attractive to you about "spring" and also related to what you are learning in your horticulture class and small enough to manage in the time you have.

If you are not sure where to start, you can get some preliminary ideas through a basic internet search, looking for things that seem interesting and relevant to your class, and then letting one thing lead to another as you keep reading and thinking. At this stage, Wikipedia is one source you could use — but, if you do, be sure to pay attention to the references at the bottom of most Wikipedia pages and pursue any that look interesting. Your instructor is not likely to let you use Wikipedia as one of your research sources because it's not a fully reliable source, but those references may be citable scholarly sources that you could eventually decide to use.

Background Reading

For college/university projects, always do some more reading about that narrower topic once you have it, so you can learn more about it and assimilate some terms used by experts who have studied your narrower topic. Those terms will prove helpful when you start looking for research sources later, so write them down.

For instance, if you were going to do research about the treatment for humans with bird flu, this background reading would teach you that professionals and scholars usually use the term avian influenza instead of bird flu when they write about it. (They also often use H1N1 or H1N9 to identify the strain.) If you didn't learn that, you would miss the kinds of sources you'll eventually need for your assignment.

This initial reading could cause you to narrow your topic further, which is *highly advisable* because narrower topics lead to greater specificity and a more in-depth perspective — which is what both your college instructors and your workplace managers would want to see. After this preliminary work, you are ready to start developing the research question(s) you will try to answer.

In the workplace, you may have varying degrees of control over your research question. As you progress in your career, you may spend less time hunting for background information because you are more familiar with the industry and because you know where to look for relevant information.

Fuel Your Inspiration

It's worth remembering that reading, scanning, looking at, and listening to information resources is very useful during any step of the process of developing research questions. Doing so can jog our memories, give us details that will help us focus, and help us connect disparate information — all of which will help us come up with relevant research questions.

Many new communicators are surprised by how much background or preliminary exploration goes into workplace research. For example, a graphic designer asked to create some social media content might read graphic design blogs and magazines, look at Instagram and Twitter posts by well-known graphic designers, and examine what several other companies are doing. This may seem like just browsing for fun, but the process is likely to help our graphic designer to come up with more creative, interesting, and useful ideas.

10.5: CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS

In the next section, we'll learn how to locate secondary sources. Often, however, your workplace research will ask you to create original research, such as conducting interviews and surveys. The quality of the data you get will depend on the questions you ask and the planning you do.

Note that we will **not** be engaging in this type of research for our Research Proposal and Research Report for COMM 6019, though. You simply won't have enough time to conduct your own surveys and interviews *and* write your assignments in the time you have. However, if you find surveys relevant to your topic in the research articles you read, you can use the data — just make sure you explain to what extent that information applies to your specific topic/ scenario/ situation.

Conducting Ethical Research

If you conduct scholarly research, such as research that will be published in a peer-reviewed journal, you'll first have to get approval from a Research Ethics Board. This board will ensure that your research will be beneficial and won't harm anyone. Unless you are a specialized researcher, you likely won't need research ethics board approval in the workplace. That doesn't mean, however, that you shouldn't consider ethics.

To conduct research ethically, you should consider the risk you're placing your participants under. Specifically, you can consider the following aspects:

- How might my research cause harm?
- How can I limit this harm?

Harm doesn't just mean that the person will be physically injured. Even seemingly innocuous survey and interview questions can expose people to risk. For example, say you work in H.R. and you are designing a survey to solicit feedback from a team about their manager. If your survey isn't carefully designed to preserve anonymity and circulated with care, the manager could figure out who submitted a particular piece of negative feedback and retaliate against that person.

Minimizing harm also extends to emotional harm. If you are going to ask sensitive questions that might upset someone, you should notify them in advance so that they can decide if they want to answer these questions. Survey and interview participants should also be able to opt-out from answering questions.

You should also take care to store survey data safely. For example, if your workplace receives government funding, you may not be allowed to store client data on servers outside of Canada.

Surveys vs. Interviews

When deciding what type of primary research to do, you should consider your purpose. In general, interviews give you **qualitative** data (data that can't be measured and is often descriptive). For example, you might interview someone whose career you admire to get career advice about how to become a business analyst. Surveys give you **quantitative** data (that can be measured). For example, you might do a survey of 100 business analysts to find out what percentage of them are happy with their jobs and what are their top five reasons for job satisfaction/ dissatisfaction.

Asking Useful Questions

Whether you are doing a survey or an interview, think carefully about the questions you ask. When you design your questions, ensure the following:

- **Have a clear purpose:** For example, if you want to confirm what you already know or sort survey participants into categories, you would ask a closed question, such as "Have you shopped at our store in the past month?" Closed questions can be answered with a yes or no. If you want a detailed answer, you should use an open-ended question. These are questions that begin with Who, What, Where, When, How, or Why and require more detailed responses.
- **Research in advance:** Knowing what questions to ask usually takes experience or research. For example, if you have an informational interview with a business analyst to get career advice and you've got only 30 minutes, you'll want to make those count. Read this person's bio on the company website or checking out his/her LinkedIn profile or social media presence in order to be able to ask more useful, specific questions. Instead of asking, "What university did you go to?" you could ask, "What was your experience with UBC's program? Would you recommend this program to others?"
- **Keep it simple:** Especially if you are doing a survey, ask clear, simple questions. Also, ask only one question at a time. Show your questions to a colleague and revise them to make sure that they can be easily understood. If some participants misunderstand your question, your data will be skewed.
- **Word your questions neutrally:** Remember that you are researching to find out something new, not to confirm what you want to hear. Neutral questions don't make assumptions and are open to a wide range of answers. For example, in 2019, The White House released a survey that asked the question "Do you believe that the media is engaging in a witch hunt to take down President Trump?" It's clear which way the people who wrote the survey question wanted participants to answer.

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TNW News. (2019, January 17). Trump's media bias poll might be the most biased thing I've read in 2019. https://thenextweb.com/news/trumps-media-bias-poll-might-be-the-most-biased-thing-ive-read-in-2019

10.6: FANTASTIC SOURCES AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Once you have settled on a narrowed down research question and have a clear idea of the types of information you need, you will have to locate relevant and reliable sources. This section discusses some effective strategies to locate such sources.

Conducting Effective Online Searches

The Internet is filled with sources — some useful, some not. Watch this short video to learn how to effectively find information on a search engine such as Google by using boolean operators, quotation marks, and the asterisk. (These ways of defining your research terms can be used on any library database, too — including in your searches on the databases accessible through the Fanshawe Virtual Library).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=1884#oembed-1

Video: "Online Research: Tips for Effective Search Strategies" by Sarah Clark [3:05] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.*Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Finding Scholarly Articles

Most scholarly articles are housed in specialized databases. Libraries (public, school, or company) often provide access to scholarly databases by paying a subscription fee for patrons. For instance, Fanshawe's Library and Media Services provides access to several databases available free of charge to people affiliated with the College. You can search for a journal title or view a list of databases by subject in these databases.

Databases that aren't subject-specific are called general databases. Google Scholar is a free general scholarly database available to all who have access to the Internet.

Searching Databases

Sometimes, a little knowledge about how to do precise searches can save you a lot of time. To find relevant sources when searching Google or a research database you should.

1. **Identify the main concepts in your research question.** Stick to nouns. For example, if your research question is, "How are students affected by the Vancouver Housing Crisis?" your main concepts would be 'housing crisis' and 'students.'

2. **Find related search terms.** You might choose to use a thesaurus for this. For example, you might search for "affordability crisis" or (if you discovered that some students faced homelessness because they were unable to afford a place to live) "homelessness" or "housing vulnerability."
3. **Try using subject headings instead of keywords.** When you visit the Fanshawe library, you will see subject guides for different topics. You can also search for subject headings within databases.
4. **When searching in databases (or Google) us quotation marks around phrases to make your search more specific.** For example, you would search for "common cold" so you don't get info on the cold war or cold weather.
5. **Use wildcard and truncation symbols to broaden your search.** For example, if you type "wom?n" into a search engine, it will show results for "woman" and "women." If you type "mathemat*" into a search engine, it will show results for both "mathematician" and "mathematics."
6. **Use phrases like "and" and "not" to make your search more specific.** For example, if you were searching a job board to try to find a job as a network administrator, but you kept finding positions as a network manager, you might search for "network administrator NOT manager."

News as a Source

News sources can provide insights that scholarly sources may not or that will take a long time to get into scholarly sources. For instance, news sources are excellent for finding out people's reactions, opinions, and prevailing attitudes around the time of an event.

When Are News Sources Helpful?

- You need breaking news or historical perspectives on a topic (what people were saying at the time).
- You need to learn more about a culture, place, or time period from its own sources.
- You want to keep up with what is going in the world today.

When Are News Sources of Limited Use?

- You need very detailed analysis by experts.
- You need sources that must be scholarly or modern views on a historical topic.

Other Types of Sources

News articles are typically written by journalists who are experts in investigating and get paid for their work. Usually, journalists work with an editor to make sure that their work is accurate and fair. Depending on your topic, however, you might seek sources that are not peer-reviewed and didn't benefit from the input and verification of an editor, either:

- **Social media posts:** Sometimes, experts in a subject engage in public scholarship over Twitter or other social media platforms. For example, professional historians will often share their work with the public on Twitter by relating current events to historical moments. The benefit of this type of scholarship is that it can be very current, and you can often see different scholars interact with one another. The downside is, however, that this information hasn't been vetted by anyone. You may be witnessing an expert's "rough draft" thoughts, and experts sometimes change their mind based on new information or the peer review process. To know if you should trust social media posts, you would also have to know a lot about their authors (credentials, credibility, etc.).

- **Blog posts:** Though blogging is less popular now than it once was, blogs are still a great way to find out current information about a topic in a format that is more detailed than what most social media platforms allow. For example, cybersecurity experts might tweet about a new threat, but also write blog posts that outline their concerns more explicitly and provide extensive proof. However, you should remember that blogs are not vetted by an editor, and that bloggers often have a motivation to sell products or services.
- **Archives:** If your topic involves the past, you might check out an archive. Many museums make their collections available online through archives. The B.C. Archives, for instance, offers maps, photographs, letters and much more.

10.7: MAKING A SOURCE PLAN

Your Source Plan

If you are an inexperienced researcher, making a source plan may help you ensure that you have covered all your information needs in your search. Once more, thinking about categories can help.

You will probably use some popular sources, some professional sources, and some academic sources. Sources in the first category might be the easiest to access but might not provide sophisticated enough information for your needs. Use such sources with caution. Professional sources might be freely accessible on the internet, accessible at a fee, or inaccessible in this manner — for instance, if you want to access a specific company's sales data and they are not publicly accessible, you can try to write to them and see if they might agree to provide them to you. In other cases, if the information should be publicly accessible and it's not, you might decide to file a lawsuit to get it (for instance, if you are a journalist researching some corporations' unethical practices). Academic sources are usually accessible free of charge only through institutional databases (the Fanshawe Library, for instance, pays subscription to a variety of academic journals; you can download articles free of charge, but the college does pay for your access).

Once again, while you can *start* your research work with a Google search, basing a research report on information from a few sources picked from the first few pages of Google results is a bad idea — in school, you will likely get a poor grade, and at work, you might be fired. Nobody needs to read a report that compiles information anyone could easily locate in a few minutes. In addition, as many of you know, the order in which Google lists results has very little to do with professional reliability or relevance and a lot to do with popularity and money.

Before you start looking, try the Plan for Sources table below along with the suggestions made in this section to think through what sources you'll need for specific aspects/ sections of your research project.

PLAN FOR SOURCES				
Course:		Due Date:	Type of Final Product:	
Research Question:				
Information Needs		Kinds of Sources (Popular, Professional, or Scholarly) That Should Meet Each Need	Publication Formats Likely to be Helpful in Meeting Each Need	Where to Look
To learn more background information	(check)			
To answer your research question and convince your audience				
To report what others have said				
To describe the situation and why it's important				

From *Choosing & Using Sources: A Guide for Academic Research* by Ohio State University Libraries

Figure 10.7.1 Plan For Sources.

You can download this table (in MS Word) then fill it out. Using this table doesn't mean you can't change your mind if you later find another kind of resource that looks promising, but it might help you avoid making poor choices as you start your selection of sources for your research.

Image Description

Figure 10.7.1. image description: This plan for sources allows students to identify their information needs, the kind of sources they'll need, the publication formats and where to look. This will make a source plan. [Return to Figure 10.7.1.]

10.8: WHAT IF YOU CAN'T FIND SOURCES?

Are There No Sources for My Topic?

As a college librarian, Patricia Knapp worked with many students who were new to academic research and writing. She noticed that such inexperienced researchers often "have a basic misconception of the function" of research: "they look for and expect to find 'the answer to the question' instead of evidence to be examined" (as cited in Kuhlthau, 2004, p. 10 10).

What should researchers do instead? The so-called "divide and conquer" strategy works in most contexts: dividing the research question/ problem into components aspects and looking for sources on each of those aspects.

Here's an example:

Our research question is, **"How can virtual teams be implemented at Pixar Animation Studios?"**

An inexperienced researcher might want to dive right into a library database to find "the answer" to the question, with a search like this: "virtual teams" AND Pixar

This attitude derives from the assumption that there is a ready-made answer to the research question, as represented in this Venn diagram, and one just has to quickly search for it and locate it:

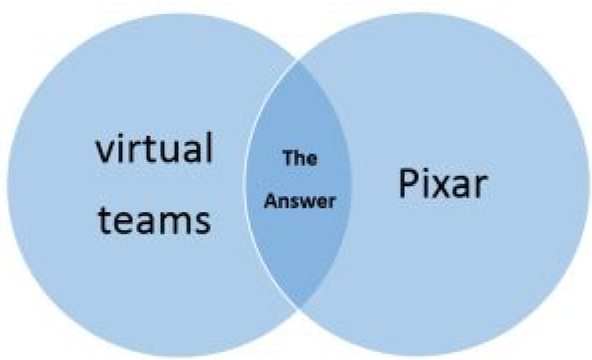

Figure 10.8.1

However, a) chances are no one has ever published an article about virtual teams at Pixar, so the search would yield zero results, and b) research isn't about finding "the answer"—it's about finding ideas and facts you can use to create your own answer. So, how should you proceed?

You should divide the question into two parts you can "conquer":

1. First, you should research virtual teams (challenges, best practices, etc.).
2. Next, you should research Pixar (its mission, corporate culture, etc.).

Accordingly, your two separate database searches might look like this:

1. "virtual teams" AND (challenges OR "best practices")
2. Pixar AND "corporate culture"

A journal article that you might choose from the first search is by Soo Jeoung Han *et al.*, "How Virtual Team Leaders Cope with Creativity Challenges," in which the authors study ways that creativity can be fostered in virtual teams. From your second search, you might use an article from *Harvard Business Review* by Pixar cofounder Ed Catmull, "How Pixar Fosters Collective Creativity."

By putting these two texts—Han *et al.* (2017) and Catmull (2008)—into conversation, you can begin to develop your own argument on implementing virtual teams at Pixar. You might begin with the observation that, according to Han *et al.*, the qualities of an effective creative team are the same, whether it is virtual or in-person. Because, as Catmull (2008) notes, Pixar already has such a strong team culture, the company would be well positioned to implement virtual teams: they have formed close relationships, strive to create a space where it's safe to bring up new ideas or critique others' ideas, and group members at all levels of the company support one another and take on leadership roles. You could emphasize some promising parallels between the key findings from Han *et al.* (2017) and the vibrant group culture at Pixar.

Once you've started putting the two texts into dialogue, you would probably see more connections. For instance, an interesting claim from Han *et al.* (2017) is that using state-of-the-art technology to communicate can be a motivating factor in itself. Catmull (2008) tells us that, at Pixar, "Technology inspires art, and art challenges the technology" (p. 71). Given the fascination with technology at Pixar, members of virtual teams would likely be motivated to participate because of the opportunity to experiment with the newest forms of digital communication.

By orchestrating an interplay between your two sources, putting them in dialogue with each other and with your own ideas, you can offer an original analysis. "Conquering" your research question means offering this analysis—your thinking, visible on the page. This is what professors—and all genuinely interested readers—want to see.

The rhetorician Kenneth Burke famously described academic writing as a conversation that has been taking place among various authors, across time, on a given topic. Your task, as an academic writer, is to add something new to this conversation. You may think of academic writing and creative writing as separate, especially if you've been taught to exclude your own voice and opinions from school papers. But when you "divide and conquer," gathering evidence you then use to contribute an original idea, academic writing *is* creative.

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10.9: EVALUATING SOURCES

Once you've located several sources that seem promising, you have to determine whether or not they truly are relevant are reliable. The wrong sources can weaken your argument.

In this section, we discuss two models: The CRAAP test, and the SIFT test. You can choose the one you feel is most helpful. The CRAAP test shows you a series of questions you can ask yourself to determine whether a piece of information is trustworthy and useful. The SIFT test is a series of "moves" you will make to evaluate information.

The CRAAP Test

Sarah Blakeslee and the librarians at California State University, Chico, came up with the CRAAP Test to help researchers easily determine whether a source is trustworthy. You can download a handout that explains this test.

There are five parts to the **CRAAP** Test:

- **CURRENCY:** When was the information published? For some topics, it is acceptable (or even necessary) to use an older source. For example, if you want to provide a definition of DNA, you can use a source that was published five or ten years ago, whereas in a paper on the latest DNA discoveries, a five-year-old source might be too old. Another example: if you are writing about a politician's shifting public statements on a certain issue, you would have to cite some of those statements from sources that may be decades old, depending on how long of a career that politician had — whereas in a paper on effective political statements you should use the latest publications on public communication, reaching specific audiences, etc.
- **RELEVANCE:** Does this information meet your needs? For example, an article aimed at educating young children about DNA would probably not be a relevant source if you work for a tech firm and are writing a report about whether to acquire some DNA technology. On the other hand, it is acceptable to use a source that isn't fully relevant to your research question, but only if you can make it more relevant through added analysis. For example, if you were researching the Housing Crisis in Vancouver, you might read about the ways in which other expensive cities like San Francisco and Hong Kong have been dealing with their own housing crises, and then explain which strategies used by those cities could be successfully implemented in Vancouver, as well.
- **AUTHORITY:** Who wrote the research material? Your source should have been written by someone who has the authority to speak on the matter. For example, you might come across a blog that offers natural health remedies for cancer or depression written by someone claiming to be a doctor. Check that person's credentials to see if he/she is a medical doctor, has a solid research background in that specific field, etc. To determine how trustworthy an online source is, you can also look at the URL. If it comes from a .gov or .edu website, you can probably trust it, but even such sources should be verified. For instance, some universities, as well as a number of individual academics have been involved in scandals in the last decade — on issues that go from discrimination and harassment to suspicious funding practices. Check to make

sure you are not citing from a compromised source (such as a paper on environmental matters produced in a university department funded by the oil industry, for instance,).

- **ACCURACY:** How reliable or trustworthy is the information? Specifically, you should examine how the source uses evidence. Does the source link to other trustworthy sources? Does the source support its claims with evidence? How reliable is that evidence? If you are not sure whether a source is reliable, try Googling the source's claim plus "criticism" or "hoax." For example, if you read that baking soda cures cancer, you should Google "baking soda cancer cure hoax." Sometimes, untrustworthy websites take up the top spots in Google, so if you simply Google "baking soda cancer cure," you'll find other untrustworthy websites telling the same lies.
- **PURPOSE:** Why was this information published? You should be able to identify if/how the author/ publisher benefited from publishing this information. Sources that make money aren't necessarily untrustworthy, but they might not provide sophisticated enough content for your needs. Sources that claim to be of a certain type but are not exactly so might not be reliable. For instance, there are many so-called "academic journals" easily accessible on the internet that claim to be peer-reviewed but engage in suspicious practices and should not be trusted. If you read their instructions for authors, you'll see that they charge authors hundreds or thousands of dollars — supposedly so they can pay the people who review submissions. No serious academic journal would ask for money from authors. Such journals are predatory enterprises that make money and provide their authors with questionable credentials (anyone who lists an article published in such a venue on his/her academic resume would not be hired by any respectable educational institution).

The SIFT Test

The SIFT test was developed by Mike Caulfield, Director of Blended and Networked Learning at WSU Vancouver. It provides a list of practical steps to take in order to figure out if you can trust a source.

- **STOP:** As you find a link/ page/ post, STOP and ask yourself whether you know the website or source of information. What is its reputation? If you don't have that information, use the next moves to get more clarity. Don't read or share anything until you know what it is.As you start applying the next steps, don't forget your purpose. If you just want to repost, read an interesting story, or get a high-level explanation of a concept, it's probably good enough to find out whether the publication is reputable. If you are doing deep research of your own, you may want verify each individual claim made in the text from other sources to independently verify them. Both sorts of investigations are useful, and for both, stopping periodically and reevaluating our purpose and search strategy is key.
- **INVESTIGATE the Source:** Make sure you know *what* you are reading *before* you read it. For instance, if you are reading a piece on economics by a Nobel prize-winning economist, you should know that before you read it; if you are watching a video on the many benefits of milk consumption that was put out by the dairy industry, you should know that as well. This doesn't mean the Nobel economist is always be right and that the dairy

industry can't be trusted. But knowing the expertise and agenda of the source is crucial to your interpretation of what they say. Taking a minute to investigate the source before reading will help you decide if it is worth your time, and if it is, help you to better understand its significance and trustworthiness.

- **FIND Trusted Coverage:** Sometimes you might not be concerned about the source as much as the *claim* being made. You want to know if it is true or false. You want to know if it represents a consensus viewpoint, or if it is the subject of much disagreement. In this case, your best strategy may be to ignore the source you had initially found and look for trusted reporting or analysis on the claim. If you get an article that says koalas have just been declared extinct from the Save the Koalas Foundation, your best bet might be not to investigate the source but to find the *best* source you can on this topic, or, just as importantly, to scan multiple sources and see what, the expert consensus seems to be. In other words, *find other coverage*that better suits your needs — more trusted, more in-depth, etc.Do you have to agree with the consensus once you find it? Not necessarily. Still, understanding the context and history of a claim will help you better evaluate it and better define your starting point for future investigation.
- **TRACE Claims, Quotes, and Media Back to the Original Context:** Much of what we find on the internet has been stripped of context. Maybe there is a video of a fight between two people with Person A as the aggressor. But what happened before that? What was clipped out of the video and what stayed in? Maybe there is a picture that seems real but the caption could be misleading. Maybe a claim is made about a new medical treatment based on a research finding, but you are not sure if the cited research paper really said that. In these cases, you will have you trace the claim, quote, or media back to the source, so you can see it in its original context and ascertain if the version you saw was accurately presented.

It's All About Restoring Context

As you can see, there is a theme that runs through all of these moves: they are about *reconstructing the necessary context* to read, view, or listen to digital content effectively.

One piece of context is who the speaker or publisher is. What's their expertise? What's their agenda? What's their record of fairness or accuracy? When you hear a rumor, you want to know who the source is before reacting. Investigate web sources in the same way.

When it comes to claims, a key piece of context includes whether they are broadly accepted or rejected or something in between. By scanning for other coverage, you can see what the expert consensus is, learn the history around it, and ultimately find a better source.

Finally, when evidence is presented with a certain frame — whether a quote or a video or a scientific finding — sometimes it helps to reconstruct the original context in which the photo was taken or the research claim was made. It can look quite different in context!

In some cases, these techniques will show you that certain claims are outright wrong or that some sources are "bad actors" trying to deceive you. But in the vast majority of cases, they do something just as important: they reestablish the context that the web so often strips away, allowing for more fruitful engagement with all digital information.

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CHAPTER 10: REVIEW AND EXERCISES

A Final Note

In college, as well as in the workplace, research is a complex and sometimes challenging process. Do not lose your confidence if you encounter some stumbling blocks, if your research doesn't tell you what you want to hear, or if you initially struggle to find sources. To get a sense of just how frustrating research can be, try this episode of the podcast Reply All, which follows a journalist trying to figure out why a woman in New Jersey is getting strange calls to her office phone number. It's a great example of formulating a specific research question, and then using multiple methods to answer it.

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- In the workplace, the amount of research you do depends on the amount of time you have and the importance of the topic.
- Having a clear research question will save you time. You may have to do some background research before you find your actual research question.
- Being aware of the role the source will play in your argument will help you find appropriate sources. You can create a source plan to organize your research.
- To do an effective online search, identify the main concepts in your research. Stick to nouns. Next, find related search terms. Use quotation marks around phrases to make your search more specific. You can also use wildcard symbols and boolean operators like 'AND' and 'NOT' to refine your search.
- If you can't find sources on your topic, try the "divide and conquer" approach.
- To determine how useful a source is, you can evaluate it according to the CRAAP test. When evaluating online sources, it's especially important to determine whether the author has the authority to speak on the topic and whether the ideas have been supported with evidence.
- Research is a complex process and sometimes you might change your mind based on new research.

Exercises for Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete the following exercises:

1. Log in to Facebook or Twitter and try to find a political or health-related claim. Evaluate this claim according to the CRAAP test. Write a paragraph about your findings.
2. If you're taking more than one class, see if you can blend what you're studying this week in two different classes into one thesis by using the "divide and conquer" method. For example, if you're studying

psychographic targeting in your marketing class and corporate social responsibility in your public relations class, you might write a research question that asks, "Is all psychographic targeting ethical?"

Attributions

CHAPTER 11: USING SOURCES: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH WORK

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Distinguish the difference between workplace and academic citation.
2. Define academic integrity.
3. Explain why we cite.
4. Apply strategies for citing, including in-text citation and references.

In any paper you write, in college or at work, you must clarify, for your reader, what **words** are yours and what words are taken verbatim from a source (through quotation marks and parenthetical references), as well as what **ideas** are yours and which come from the source (no quotation marks in this case, but the source must still be acknowledged).

Consider the following questions:

1. What kinds of sources have you used in the workplace so far? How has this differed from the kinds of sources you have used in school?
2. Why do you think the rules that we have around source use exist? Why do we cite sources?
3. How does your culture handle using other people's ideas and words? Who "owns" an idea? How do you respectfully use someone's words?
4. What questions do you have about citation?
5. What's your definition of "academic integrity"?
6. Do you think that the rules of "academic integrity" apply to the workplace?

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following text:

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11.1: WORKPLACE VS. ACADEMIC CITATION

In this chapter, we discuss how to use sources ethically, analyze them, and combine them into an effective argument — but let's start with a note about the difference between workplace citation and academic citation.

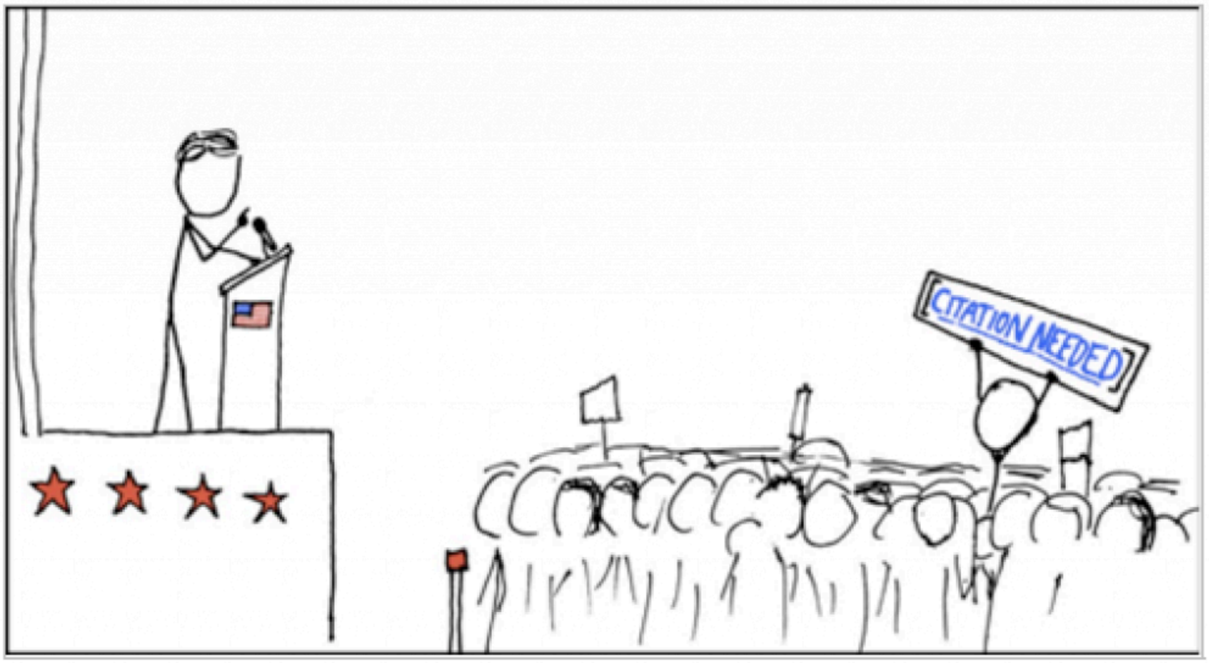
At work, you may often find yourself using your colleague's words without crediting them. For example, your boss might ask you to write a grant application using text from previous grant applications. Many people might work on the same document or you might update a document written by someone else.

At work, your employer usually owns the writing you produce, so workplace writing often doesn't cite individual authors (though contributors are usually named in an Acknowledgements section if it's a large project/report). That does not mean that you should take credit for someone else's work. However, generally speaking, a lot of sharing and remixing happens within an organization.

For example, say that you work in HR and have been asked to launch a search for a new IT manager. You might use a template to design the job posting or update copy of the ad you posted the last time you hired someone for this role. No one would expect you to come up with an entirely new job posting just because it was originally written by someone who has left the company, or to cite that former employee in the new job ad.

However, if you use research from, say, academic articles, interviews with experts, etc. in a workplace report, you are expected to cite such materials by using whatever formal citation style your company requires. Citation is not only an ethical practice but also a great persuasive strategy — you build your credibility and support the validity of your claims when you cite from reliable research sources. The citation practices you learn in school will therefore serve you well in the workplace.

In college, *every sequence of three or more words taken from a source has to appear between quotation marks*. If it does not, you risk being accused of plagiarism. Assimilating all the content taught in this chapter and following all the rules will help you to avoid any inaccurate unethical use of sources.



In everyday conversation and political speeches, evidence for arguments is often not provided. (Image source: XKDC)

Figure 11.1 XKCD comic

Image Description

Figure 11.1 image description: In this XKCD comic, a stick figure is talking into a podium that has an American flag on it and is decorated with stars. A stick figure in the crowd holds up a sign that says 'citation needed.' [Return to Figure 11.1]

11.2: WHAT IS ACADEMIC INTEGRITY?

Citation is an area where the stakes are high during your college/ university studies. Plagiarism or citation errors can have serious consequences for students who commit **academic integrity offences**.

Different educational institutions have different definitions. Here is the definition we use at Fanshawe College:

Academic Integrity is defined as the practice of holding oneself and others accountable for performing all academic work in an honest and ethical manner. Fanshawe College's mission is to provide pathways to success, an exceptional learning experience and a global outlook to meet student and employer needs. Academic integrity in all academic work is essential for the College to achieve this mission. Academic offences violate academic integrity. (see Policy A136: Academic Integrity for more details).

Faculty Responsibility

Academic integrity is the moral code of academia and is essential to the reputation of Fanshawe College credentials and its graduates. To maintain academic integrity, you must hold yourself and others accountable for consistently performing all academic work in an honest, truthful and ethical manner. Both faculty and students have responsibilities related to academic integrity, and students have the right to appeal any decision related to an academic offense (Teaching and Learning, 2021).

In other words, you must take full responsibility for your work, acknowledge your own efforts, and acknowledge others' contributions. Working/ writing with integrity requires accurately representing what you contributed, as well as acknowledging how others have influenced your work. When you are a student, an accurate representation of your knowledge is important because it will allow both you and your professors to know the extent to which you have developed as a scholar.

What Is Plagiarism?

Let us examine the definition of plagiarism provided in policy document A136: Academic Integrity in use at Fanshawe College:

Plagiarism "means taking credit for another person's work.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to, the following acts:

1. The student submits another person's work as his or her own academic work.
2. The student does not credit the original source of ideas, images, information, quotations, or other intellectual property.
3. The student submits electronic files or data created by another person without the instructor's permission.
4. The student submits academic work from another course without the instructor's permission."

Plagiarism can be intentional (knowingly using someone else's work and presenting it as your own) or unintentional (inaccurately or inadequately citing ideas and words from a source). It may be impossible for your professor to determine whether plagiarized work was intentional or unintentional. More importantly, under the policy, your professor is not expected to *prove that you intended* to plagiarize but to ascertain whether or not plagiarism occurred. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the rules and follow them. At work, if you break rules you were supposed to be aware of, you will be sanctioned or fired. Academic integrity rules are no different.

Given the topic of this chapter, we will focus, in the following sections, on **item b.** from the list above, which concerns information from research sources.

Both in college and at work, you are expected to learn new things from others AND come to new insights on your own. To do this in a way that meets academic integrity standards, you must acknowledge the part of your work that develops from others' efforts. You do this by citing the work of others. You plagiarize when you fail to acknowledge the work of others and do not follow appropriate citation guidelines.

11.3: WHAT IS CITING?

Consider this Scenario:

You have just arrived for a meeting about a group project. You and your classmate Chad are early, so you chat about the project.

"I think we should do our project on the way small businesses can take advantage of green technology tax incentives," you say.

"That's a great idea," Chad says.

The rest of your group members arrive, and you begin to brainstorm ideas for your project. Before you can share your idea, however, Chad speaks up:

"I've been thinking that we should write something about green technology tax incentives. Maybe we could write about the ways small businesses can benefit."

Everyone thinks it's a great idea and compliments Chad on coming up with it.

If this happened to you, you would probably feel angry that Chad presented your idea as his own, even if he didn't use your exact words. If, however, Chad had told the group that it was your idea, and that he supported it, you would have had no reason to be angry.

Citing is a form of giving credit. If your source is accurately cited, you will have told your audience/ readers whose ideas/words belong to whom and exactly where to go in order to find those words.

Scholars like Jesse Stommel and Pete Rorabaugh say that it's easier to understand citation when you think of it as a way of saying thank you to those who have given you great ideas. In a blog post, Stommel says no one has truly original ideas, but that we should practice "citation, generosity, connection, and collaboration" to work with sources ethically. [1] .

1. https://hybridpedagogy.org/the-four-noble-virtues-of-digital-media-citation/

Why Cite Sources?

There are many good reasons to cite sources:

To Avoid Plagiarism & Maintain Academic Integrity
Misrepresenting your academic achievements by not giving credit to others indicates a lack of academic integrity. This is not only looked down upon by the scholarly community, but it is also punished. When you are a student, this could mean a failing grade or even expulsion from your program.

To Acknowledge the Work of Others
One major purpose of citations is to provide credit where it is due. When you provide accurate citations, you are acknowledging both the hard work that has gone into producing research and the person(s) who performed that research.

To Provide Credibility to Your Work & Place Your Work in Context

Providing accurate citations puts your work and ideas into an academic context. Citing accurately tells your readers that you've done your research and know what others have said about your topic. Not only do citations provide context for your work, but they also lend credibility and authority to your claims.

For example, if you are researching and writing about sustainability and construction, you should cite experts in sustainability, construction, and sustainable construction in order to demonstrate that you have a good grasp of the most common ideas in these fields. Although you can make a claim about sustainable construction after doing research only in that particular field, your claim will carry more weight if you can demonstrate that it can be supported by the research of experts in closely related fields as well.

Citing sources about sustainability and construction as well as sustainable construction demonstrates your mastery of a diversity of views and approaches to the topic. Further, proper citation also demonstrates the ways in which research is social: no one researches in a vacuum—we all rely on the work of others to help us during the research process.

To Help Your Future Researching Self & Other Researchers to Easily Locate Sources

Having accurate citations will help you as a researcher and writer to keep track of the sources and information you find so that you can easily find the source again. Accurate citations may take some effort to produce, but they will save you time in the long run. Think of proper citation as a gift to your future researching self!

Ethical Citation Beyond Giving Credit

Citation is also a time to think about what kinds of sources you value and whom you cite. One way to ensure that you have a thorough view of the issue is to look intentionally for scholars from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Sometimes, when you are busy, it's easy to reach for the first few sources you find in a database. But if all of these scholars are of the same demographic (for example, if they are all white men in the 45-60 age range), you' would likely be missing some important perspectives. Taking this aspect into consideration will help you do more thorough analysis.

Other Potential Challenges in Citing Sources:

You Learned How to Cite in A Different School System.

Citation practices are not universal. Different countries and cultures approach using sources in different ways. If you're new to the Canadian school system, you might have learned a different way of citing. Try to familiarize yourself to the requirements of your current college program as soon as possible if that is the case.

Not Really Understanding the Material Used

If you are working in a new field or subject area, you might have difficulty understanding the information provided by other scholars, so you might find it challenging to paraphrase or summarize that work properly. It can be tempting to change just one or two words in a sentence, but this is still plagiarism.

Running Out of Time

When you are a student taking many classes, working and/or taking care of family members, it may be hard to devote the time needed to doing good scholarship and accurately representing the sources you have used. Research takes time. The sooner you can start and the more time you can devote to it, the better your work will be.

Shifting Cultural Expectations of Citation

Because of new technologies that make finding, using and sharing information easier, some of our cultural expectations around citing methods are changing as well. For example, blog posts often "reference" other articles or works by simply linking to them. It makes it easy for the reader to see where the author's ideas have come from and to view the source very quickly. In their more informal texts, blog authors do not have a list of citations (bibliographic entries). The links do the work for them. This is a great strategy for online digital mediums — initially, in any case. Over time, however, links might break, leaving readers with no hints (like an author, title, and date) to know how else to find the reference.

While in some areas of the non-academic world some citation rules may have "relaxed" in this manner, expectations around citing sources in academic research and in formal workplace reports have not changed much in the last decade. Whatever your future profession, whenever you have to produce a research report at work, you will most likely be expected to use a standard academic citation style such as APA.

11.4: HOW TO CITE SOURCES

In any research paper, try to strike the right balance between information from sources and comments of your own. If you don't use enough sources, you might struggle to make a thorough argument. If you cite too much, you won't leave room for your own voice in your piece.

To illustrate this point, think of a lawyer arguing a case in a trial. If the lawyer just talks to the jury and does not call any (expert) witnesses, that lawyer will likely lose the case. After all, a lawyer is not an expert in forensics or accident reconstruction or Internet fraud. The lawyer also wasn't there when the incident occurred. That's where witnesses come in. The witnesses have knowledge that the lawyer doesn't.

But if the lawyer just lets the witnesses talk and sits there quietly, that wouldn't help him/ her win the case, either. That is because the lawyer is the one making the overall argument. The lawyer asks the witnesses questions and shows how the testimony of different witnesses combines and coheres to prove the case.

To cite sources, you should make two things clear:

- The difference between your words and the source's words.
- The difference between your ideas and the source's ideas.

This diagram illustrates the difference:

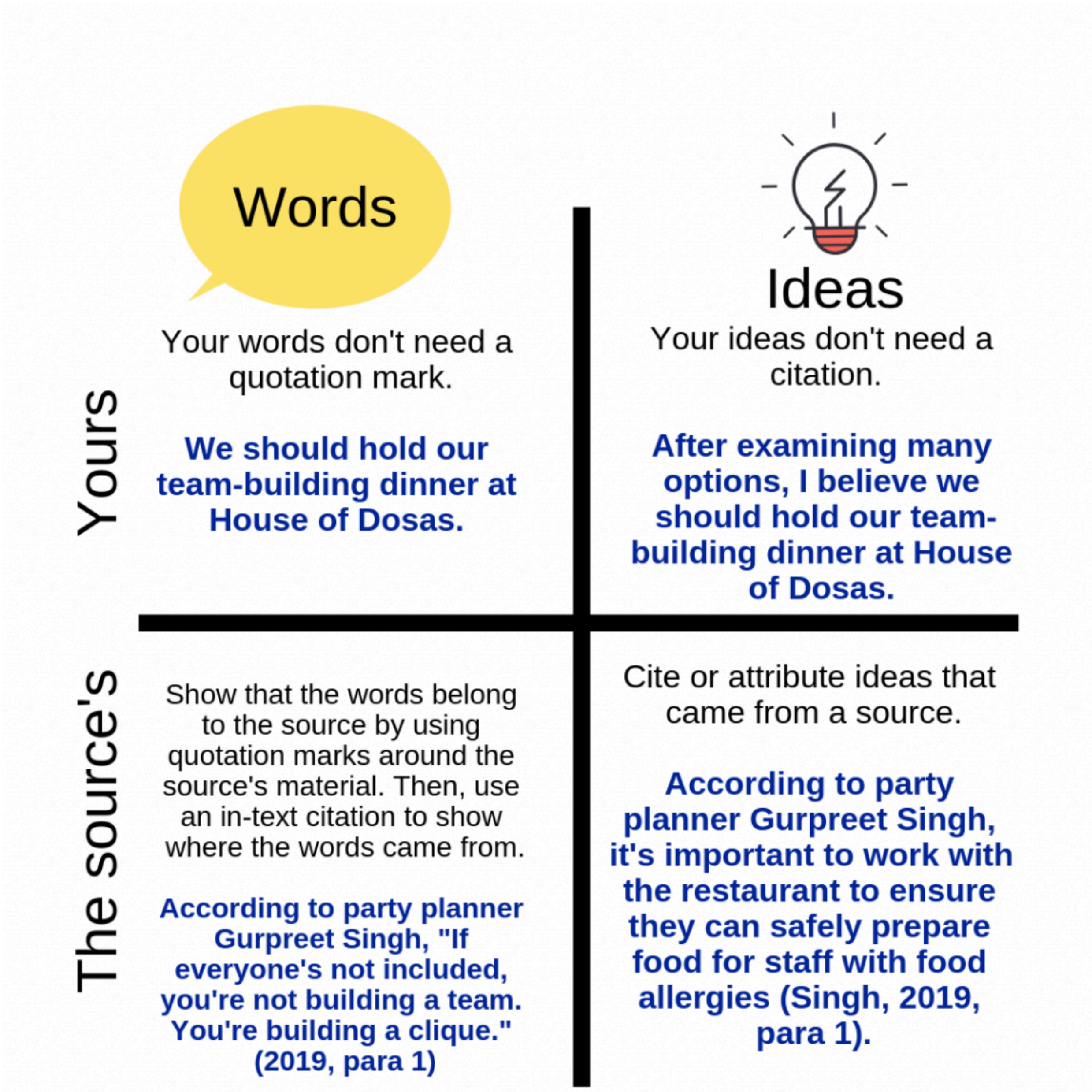


Figure 11.4.1 The distinction between your own words and a sources.

Attributing A Source's Words

When you quote someone in your document, you are inviting another voice into your piece means that the **way** that person said something is important. Maybe that person is an expert and their words are a persuasive piece of evidence. Maybe you're using the words as an example. Either way, you'll likely do some sort of analysis on the quote.

Cite a source by using the exact words used in the source if the way the idea is phrased in that source is important (it is exceptionally clear, it provides nuance and you want to keep that, etc.). If the way the idea was expressed is not that important and you just want to convey the idea, or if you want to be brief, **paraphrase** or **summarize**.

When you use the source's words, **put quotation marks around them**. This creates a visual separation between what you say and what your source says. Avoid dropping the quote into the document with no explanation. Instead, you should build a "frame" around the quote by explaining who said it and what makes it relevant. In short, you surround the other person's voice with your own voice, giving the reader some context and providing some analytical commentary.

Example

Here's an example of a way to integrate a quote within a paragraph.

According to Haudenosaunee writer Alicia Elliot, "We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages" (2019, p. 18) **Here, Elliot shows that when Indigenous people have the opportunity to learn Indigenous languages, which for generations were intentionally suppressed by the Canadian government, they can connect with their culture in a new way.**

Tip: The longer the source text, the more analysis you're likely going to have to do.

As you can see, Elliot's words are important. If you tried to paraphrase them, you'd lose some of the meaning. Elliot is also a well-known writer, so adding her voice into the document adds credibility. If you're writing about Indigenous people, it's also important to include the voices of Indigenous people in your work.

You can see that, in this example, the author doesn't just "pass the microphone" to Alicia Elliot but surrounds the quote with explanatory comments — starting by mentioning who the author is and ending with a brief discussion of the meaning and relevance of what was said.

Attributing the Source's Ideas

Elliot explains, in the same text, that when over half of Indigenous people in a community speak an Indigenous language, the suicide rate is lower (2019, p. 18). When the source's ideas are important but you don't think you need an exact quote, you should paraphrase or summarize, as you can see in the previous sentence.

What is paraphrasing? Paraphrasing consists of restating an idea in your own words. Let us briefly address what "in your own words" means, because many students struggle with that.

When paraphrasing, always ask yourself, "Have I restated this in a way that shows that I understand it?" If you simply replace a few words with synonyms, you haven't shown that you understand the idea. For example, let's go back to that Alicia Elliot quote: "We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages." Let's replace a few words and see what happens: "We know our cultures have **value** and **importance**, and that culture lives and **exhales** inside our languages." Does this demonstrate our understanding of the quote? No. Elliot composed that line with precision and thoughtfulness. Making some word replacements actually shows disrespect for the care she took in her use of language. Furthermore, "exhales" is a partial synonym for "breathes" and seems awkward in that context (does culture actually "breathe out" inside our languages? does it never "breathe in," then? and why use a more technical/ medical term?).

Instead, paraphrase by not looking at the source material. Put down the book or look away from your computer monitor, then describe the idea as if you were speaking to a friend.

Examples

Here's another example from Alicia Elliot's book *A Mind Spread Out On the Ground.* See if you can paraphrase it:

I've heard people say that when you learn a people's language, you learn their culture. It tells you how they think of the world, how they experience it. That's why translation is so difficult—you have to take one way of seeing the world and translate it to another, while still piecing the words together so they make sense. (2019, pg. 18)

Before you paraphrase it, think about what it means to you. Maybe you've had the experience of learning the slang or curse words in a new language and finding out what that culture sees as valuable or taboo. Maybe you've felt frustrated by not being able to make yourself clear in a different language. Maybe you've had to translate for a friend or family member, and haven't been able to exactly capture what was said.

Now, pretend that someone asked you what Alicia Elliot said. How would you restate her words?

Maybe you wrote, "According to Alicia Elliot, it's hard to translate from one language to another because a language is about more than just the words on a page." Maybe you wrote, "According to Alicia Elliot, knowing another language shows how other people see the world." Paraphrasing this way not only helps you analyze the quote, but also gives Alicia Elliot credit for her ideas. You can try to paraphrase in several different ways and see which one seems to be the **best** paraphrase — that is, the one that **captures the idea most effectively, without altering or oversimplifying it, and without using the exact words the author used**.

What's the Difference Between Paraphrasing and Summarizing?

When you paraphrase, you take a single point within a source and restate it (as in the example above). Usually, the paraphrased version is about the same length as the original fragment. The goal of paraphrasing is usually to take someone else's idea and restate it so that it fits the tone of whatever you're writing. For example, you might take a complicated sentence from an academic journal and restate it so that your classmates could more easily understand it.

When you summarize, you aim to **capture the main points of a larger source**. Your summary will be **shorter** than the original source. For example, an abstract summarizes the contents of an entire report or article. You might read a book and summarize it by telling friends the main points, and your summary might be longer or shorter, depending on how much you think they need to know.

What Information Do I Cite?

Here are some guidelines to help you navigate citation practices.

Cite when you are directly quoting. This is the easiest rule to understand. If you are stating word for word what someone else has already written, you must put quotes around those words and you must give credit to the original author. Not doing so would mean that you are letting your reader believe these words are your own and represent your own effort.

Reference the source when you are summarizing and paraphrasing. Always start by mentioning the author's name or the title (if no author is specified), and always end by providing any additional information required for the reader to easily locate what you are paraphrasing or summarizing. For paraphrases, always mention the page number if the source has page numbers (otherwise, you can mention the paragraph number). For summary statements, you don't have to mention page numbers if, say, you are summarizing an entire book/ article in a sentence or two. However, if you summarize one or two specific pages in one of your sentences, then you should mention the page number.

Reference the source when you are citing something that is highly debatable. For example, if you want to claim that an oil pipeline is necessary for economic development, you will have to contend with those who say that it produces few jobs and has a high risk of causing an oil spill that would be devastating to wildlife and tourism. To do so, you'll need experts on your side.

When Don't You Cite?

Don't cite when what you are saying is your own insight. Research involves forming opinions and insights around what you learn. You may be citing several sources that have helped you learn, but at some point you will integrate your own opinion, conclusion, or insight into the work. The fact that you are NOT citing it helps the reader understand that this portion of the work is your unique contribution, developed through your own research and critical thinking efforts.

Don't cite when you are stating common knowledge. What is common knowledge is sometimes difficult to discern. Generally, quick facts like historical dates or events are not cited because they are common knowledge.

Examples of information that would not need to be cited:

- Partition in India happened on August 15th, 1947.
- Vancouver is the 8th biggest city in Canada.

However, some quick facts, such as statistics, are trickier. For example, the number of gun- related deaths per year in a specific country/ province/ state should be cited, because there are a lot of ways this number could be determined (does the number include murder only, or suicides and accidents, as well?) and there might be different numbers provided by different organizations, each with an agenda around gun laws.

One way to determine whether or not to cite facts is to see whether the same data is repeated in multiple sources. If it is not, it is best to cite.

Another aspect that makes this determination difficult might be that what seems new and insightful to you might be common knowledge to an expert in the field. You have to use your best judgment, and probably err on the side of over-citing, as you are learning to do academic research. You can seek the advice of your instructor, a writing tutor, or a librarian. Knowing what is and is not common knowledge is a practiced skill that gets easier with time, as you accumulate more knowledge and experience.

Image Description

Figure 11.4.1 image description: This chart illustrates the concept that you should use quotation marks and in-text citation to distinguish between the words of the source and your own words. You should use paraphrasing and in-text citation to distinguish between your ideas and the source's ideas. [Return to Figure 11.4.1]

References

Elliott, Alicia. (2019). *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*. Penguin Random House.

11.5: CREATING IN-TEXT CITATIONS AND REFERENCES

Your instructor will tell you whether they prefer MLA, APA, Chicago or another style format. At Fanshawe College, we generally use APA in any business-related program, because this is the most commonly used style format in Canadian workplaces. However, specific departments at colleges/ universities might require a different style — as might specific companies. For instance, literature and arts departments typically require the use of MLA, some academic journals and publishing houses require Chicago, etc.

Luckily, the Fanshawe College librarians have come up with handy citation guides, which you can access the Citation Resources under the "Resources for Students" section of the Fanshawe Library website. In particular, review the APA 7th Edition Guide and MLA 8th Edition Guide, which are most relevant to your studies at Fanshawe College.

In addition, for a more substantial review of **APA** format (***the required citation method for COMM 6019***), please refer to Appendix E: Documentation and APA Style of this textbook.

Rather than covering every citation rule (which you can find in the guides), let's just discuss the purpose of each one.

Creating an In-Text Citation

An in-text citation tells the reader where the information in a particular sentence came from. If the in-text citation is done well, the reader will be able to use it to find the full reference in the bibliography, then easily find the exact spot where the idea/quote came from.

MLA Citation

In MLA citation, the in-text citation consists of the author's last name and the page number (or paragraph number for sources with no page numbers). If you've already used the author's name in the sentence, you don't have to repeat it in the in-text citation. It looks like this:

> According to Haudenosaunee writer Alicia Elliot, "We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages" (18).

or like this (if you have already cited from the same source earlier in the paper and are now returning to it):

> Furthermore, "We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages" (Elliot, 18).

APA Citation

If you're using APA citation, you add the date that the work was created. As with MLA, you don't have to repeat the name of the author if you've already said it in the sentence. It looks like this:

> According to Haudenosaunee writer Alicia Elliot, "We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages" (2019, p. 18).

or like this:

> Furthermore, "We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages" (Elliot, 2019, p. 18).

If you don't know the name of the author, use the first few words of the title. If you don't know the date, write "n.d." for No Date. If you don't know the page number, mention the paragraph number.

Creating a Reference

As with in-text citations, it's best to refer to Fanshawe's Citation Resources or the APA chapter in our text. The purpose of a reference, however, is to give enough information for the reader to find the original source.

Here's an example of an MLA reference:

> Elliot, Alicia. *A Mind Spread Out On the Ground.* Penguin Random House, 2019.

Here's an example of an APA reference:

> Elliot, A. (2019) *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground.* Penguin Random House.

This section covered basic citation methods. In the next section, you'll learn how to create an argument using your accurately cited sources.

CHAPTER 11: REVIEW AND EXERCISES

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- When you research, you'll need to build on the ideas of others. Citation is a way to give credit to the people whose ideas influenced you.
- At work, your employer usually owns the copyright to your work, so you'll end up building on the work of others and, in some workplace documents, you may not cite everything in the same way. In school, however, you are expected to formally give credit through citation to your sources. The same applies to any research reports you would produce at work.
- When it comes to citation, you have two tools: in-text citations (which go at the end of any sentences where the source was referenced) and bibliographical references (a longer citation at the end of the work that helps the reader locate the source). In the workplace, you may also use footnotes and links.
- If the words of the source are important, you should **quote.** Put quotation marks around the words and then provide an in-text citation. In general, you will include some sort of analysis that explains why the quote is meaningful to your topic.
- If the ideas of the source are important, you will reference and either **paraphrase** or **summarize** the source. This involves changing the language of the source so that it matches your document. Don't just replace a few words. Restate the author's point so that it matches the tone of your document. Put an in-text citation at the end of the sentence.
- Citation practices can be tricky in the age of the Internet. You can use citation generators, but only as long as you check to make sure they generate correct entries.

Exercises for Reflection

1. Create a quiz that tests your classmates' citation skills.
2. Come up with 10 questions that you still have about citation. Compare them to your partner's questions. See how many you can answer together. If you don't know the answer, ask your instructor or see if you can find the answer in Citation Resources under the "Resources for Students" section of the Fanshawe Library website or in Appendix E: Documentation and APA Style of this textbook.
3. Complete a Citation Scavenger Hunt. Using the Internet and the citation guidelines you assimilated so far, do the following:
    - Find a blog post about the rising costs of textbooks and cite it.

- Find an article by Alicia Elliot, then paraphrase a point she makes and create an in-text citation.
- Cite a scholarly article in APA.
- Create a block quote.
- Cite a tweet in APA.
- Answer the question, "If a student does a survey, should it go in an APA bibliography?"
- Cite a news article without an author in APA.

Attribution

CHAPTER 12: INTRODUCTION TO ARGUMENTATION AND RESEARCH IN SCHOOL AND AT WORK

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter, you will learn how to do the following:

1. Create a persuasive argument.
2. Synthesize source material into workplace documents and reports.

At work, you might find yourself in situations where you encounter resistance to your idea, especially if you try to persuade your company to purchase a high-cost item you consider necessary. Using solid research can be your only way of persuading upper management to approve that expense in such situations. Research can help you prove that the expense is justified and that it is likely to lead to substantial advantages short-term or long-term. Being able to assess, by using your critical thinking skills, what types of sources you should use to make your argumentation most compelling is essential. To this end, you'll have to analyze your audience and carefully consider their needs.

Before we begin, consider the following questions:

1. Have you ever argued with someone online? If so, how did you present your argument? Was your argument successful?
2. How do people create arguments in your area of study or career path? Are there certain ethical rules that people in your industry must follow?
3. How do people argue in your culture? Do you argue with everyone the same way (an elder vs. someone your age)?
4. Do you think it's possible to change someone's mind using logic?
5. Do you find it easier to create an argument in writing or orally? Why?

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following text:

12.1: MAKING AN ARGUMENT

Making an argument means trying to convince others that you are right or persuade them to take a particular action. Important not just in college/ university, this skill will be necessary for any professional position you hold.

Many of our assignments in COMM 6019 — our research report, blog post, oral presentation, etc. — are meant to make an argument. Let's learn a little more about the aspects that can make specific arguments more persuasive in general, as well as more persuasive for specific audiences.

Components of an Argument

Making an argument in a report, essay, or other piece of college/ university writing is somewhat like presenting a case in court: there are conventions to be followed, and one must make a persuasive case. Workplace reports are no different. In fact, even the the arguments you are used to hearing or participating in with friends about something that is uncertain or needs to be decided follow the same rules as a formal argument, and use the same main component—although the *strength* and *organization* typical or a formal argument may be missing.

For instance, typically a question starts the discussion. The claim, or **thesis**, tells people what you consider a true way of describing a thing, situation, or phenomenon or what action you think should be taken. The **reservations**, **alternatives**, and **objections** that someone else might bring up in your sources , or that you imagine your readers logically might have, allow you to demonstrate how your **reasons** and **evidence** (maybe) overcome that kind of thinking—and (you hope) your claim/ thesis comes out stronger for having withstood that test.

EXAMPLE: Argument as a Dialog

Here's a dialogue version of an argument, with the most important components labeled.

Marco: Where should we have my parents take us for dinner when they're here on Sunday? *[He asks the question about something that's unsettled.]*

Rupi: We should go to The Cascades! *[She makes her main claim to answer the question.]* It's the nicest place around. *[Another claim, which functions as a reason for the main claim.]*

Marco: How so? *[He asks for a reason to accept her claims.]*

Rupi: White table cloths. *[She gives a reason.]*

Marco: What's that have to do with how good the food is? *[He doesn't see how her reason is relevant to the claim.]*

Rupi: Table cloths make restaurants seem upscale. *[She relates her reason for the claims.]* And I've read a survey in Columbus Metro that says the Cascades is one of the most popular restaurants in town. *[She offers evidence.]*

Marco: I never read the Metro. And Dino's has table cloths. *[He offers a point that contradicts her reason.]*

Rupi: I know, but those are checkered! I'm talking about heavy white ones. *[She acknowledges his point and responds to it.]*

Marco: My dad loves Italian food. I guess he's kind of a checkered-table-cloth kind of guy? *[He raises another reservation or objection.]*

Rupi: Yeah, but… Well, I know The Cascades has some Italian things on the menu. I mean, it's not known for its Italian food, but you can order it there. Given how nice the place is, it will probably be gourmet Italian food. *[She acknowledges his point and responds to it. There's another claim in there.]*

Marco: Ha! My dad, the gourmet? Hey, maybe this place is too expensive. *[He raises another reservation.]*

Rupi: More than a place like Dino's. *[She concedes his point.]*

Marco: Yeah. *[He agrees.]*

Rupi: But everybody eats at The Cascades with their parents while they're students here, so it can't be outlandishly expensive. *[She now puts limits on how much she is conceding.]*

As you can see, we have claims, objections, refutations, etc. here, but some claims are somewhat vague/ subjective/insufficiently developed and the structure is loose. What makes a successful argument, then?

Order of the Components

The order in which the components should appear in your persuasive reports, presentations and other assignments may vary, but one common arrangement is to begin with an introduction that explains why the situation is important—why the reader should care about it. Your research **question** will probably not appear as such in the introduction, but your **answer** to it (your thesis, or claim) usually appears in the last sentence/ the last few sentences of the introduction.

The body of your paper follows and consists of:

- Your reasons the thesis is correct or at least reasonable.
- The evidence that supports each reason, often occurring right after the reason it supports.
- An acknowledgement that some people have/could have objections, reservations, counterarguments, or alternative solutions to your argument and a statement of each.
- A response to each acknowledgement that explains why that criticism is incorrect or not very important. Sometimes you might have to concede a point you think is unimportant if you can't fully refute it.

Let's see how this might work in a short persuasive email.

A Short Argument

To: Ralph Niblet, CEO
From: Hannah Vuong, Communications Manager
Subject: Migrating to MailChimp
Date: Sept. 1st, 2021

Hi Ralph,

Last week, you asked me to research whether we should switch our email marketing software from Constant Contact to MailChimp. I think that we should go with MailChimp for the following reasons:

1. MailChimp is free for a business of our size, while Constant Contact costs us $57 a month.
2. MailChimp integrates with Salesforce and would allow us to use our database more effectively. I spoke to Sam Cho, who currently administers our Salesforce account, and he shared many exciting ways that we could integrate the two platforms without much effort. He also offered to host a webinar to train our staff.
3. MailChimp allows us to segment audiences more effectively. I've included some links to a few blog posts that illustrate what we could do. A lot of our current unsubscribes happen because we can't target emails to specific groups of customers effectively. Our email marketing report from last quarter showed that 70% unsubscribed because of emails that were "not relevant."

Some colleagues have voiced the objection that they already know how to use Constant Contact and they find MailChimp less intuitive. We will also have to migrate our existing data and clean it. I believe, however, that these barriers can easily be overcome with employee training and good data migration practices.

I am happy to show you a demo of MailChimp this week if you are free.

Thanks,

Hannah

In this short text, Hannah uses a few sources:

- A price comparison done by using pricing information from MailChimp and Constant Contact's websites
- A discussion with Sam Cho.
- Blog posts
- The company's email marketing report.
- Interviews with colleagues.

She also uses all of the components of a good argument. First, she states her thesis. Then, she gives reasons and provides her evidence in support of those reasons. In her last paragraph, she acknowledges objections and responds to these objections.

Sometimes, when we engage in research, it can be tempting to limit ourselves to citing sources that support out points—especially if we have little time and/or we really want to convince our readers (coworkers, upper management, etc.) that our claims are correct. However, a crucial part of working with sources is that they should help us to reach the *right* decision. Finding a source that disagrees with some of our claims is actually a gift from this perspective:

1. **It allows you to think in advance about what objections your audience might have and prepare a response. You won't be surprised at a meeting**. For example, if you are considering buying a new piece of software, you should read some negative reviews. You might find out that the people who had a bad experience had a business context that you don't share. Maybe they are in a different industry or they tried to use the software for a different purpose.
2. **If you cannot come up with a response to potential objections (a refutation), you might have to change your initial plan/ claim.** It is better to make this discovery in the research phase rather than waste time and money doing something that is not a good idea. For example, if you find a lot of negative reviews of a piece of software, you might choose not to purchase it or ask the software representative for a longer

time to try it out.

Attribution

This section on making an argument was developed with the help of "Making Good Arguments" in The Craft of Research, by Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams, University of Chicago Press, 2003.

12.2: SYNTHESIZING SOURCES

A major barrier to research in the workplace is time. If you are asked to research something, it's because it's really important to your organization. Usually, you are expected not just to summarize sources but to provide your own analysis. Consider asking the following questions:

- What parts of them do you agree with?
- What parts of them do you disagree with?
- Did they leave anything out?

In addition to analyzing information from sources, try to engage in synthesis — perhaps by combining arguments from different sources or by combining arguments from sources with your own intuitions (based on your prior knowledge and experience). Bring ideas together to make something new or to find a new way of looking at something old. At work, you will often be asked to consider the way that your business has always done something and to suggest potential improvements. You might draw on your experience in a different company to provide a fresh perspective, or, you might remember a blog post you read and combine that with an idea from a conference presentation you watched to solve a unique problem your workplace has faced.

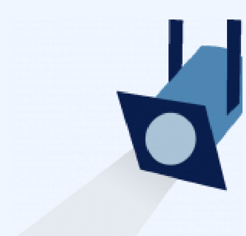
Getting Better at Synthesis

To practice synthesis, you should look for connections and patterns. One way to synthesize when writing an argument essay, paper, or other project is to look for reoccurring *themes* in your sources. Try to categorize ideas by *topic* rather than by resource—making associations across sources.

Synthesis can seem difficult, particularly if you are used to analyzing others' points but not used to making your own. Like most things, however, it gets easier as you gain experience.

At work, the more you advance in your job, the more you'll be engaging in synthesis. That is because your own insights will progressively form a larger part of what you use in your writing, planning, and decision-making tasks—insights that you built from your research and experience, over time. Let's examine an example of synthesis.

Spotlight: Synthesis in the Workplace



When you synthesize, you link different sources together to come up with new insights. Let's imagine that you work in Human Resources, and your CEO wants to do something to encourage employee wellness but hasn't settled on anything specific yet. The budget is $10,000. Initially, you think it could be fun to try a wellness challenge and give prizes to the people who go to the gym most. But then you read an article about the exclusion and potential shaming of people with disabilities when such programs are implemented at work. Not everyone can go to the gym. Also, would the company be liable if someone got injured while trying to win a prize?

You do more research and read some valid critiques of employee wellness initiatives, including an interesting article about fatphobia in the workplace. You ask yourself, what does it really mean to be well in the workplace? Some of the problems you see are outside of your control. You can't improve the benefit packages currently offered by the company, although you know that such benefits contribute to wellness. You go to a conference and find a few interesting examples of wellness programs organizations in other industries have tried. You reflect on your own experiences with wellness programs. You talk to a union representative to see what kind of ideas the union might support. Finally, you design a survey to find out what the employees want.

Combining all of these sources—everything from the academic article about fatphobia to the Instagram posts of fun employee activities at other companies—and then adding them to your own experience is challenging, but in the end you come up with an idea that is much better than your original one. Because you took the ideas from different sources and found the links and trends between them, you saved your company from doing something ineffective or even harmful, and you shielded yourself from the criticism you might have received if you had just gone with your initial idea.

CHAPTER 12: REVIEW AND EXERCISES

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Sources add to the ethos of your argument by providing knowledge and perspectives that you don't have.
- An argument usually has a thesis (what you're claiming), evidence, reasoning (how the evidence connects to the claim), acknowledgement (what someone who doesn't agree with you would say) and response (how you'd refute that).
- Crafting an argument can lead you to change your mind. If you can't find a response for an acknowledgement, you might have to alter your thesis.
- When you summarize sources, you restate their point. When you synthesize, you combine multiple ideas to turn them into something new.
- When you synthesize, look for patterns.

Exercises

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following exercises.

1. Find an online argument. You might check out the Reddit subreddit Change My View, where people post controversial viewpoints and others try to change their mind. Try to identify the elements of an argument you learned in this chapter. Write 1 – 2 paragraphs about your findings. Alternately, imagine that you were asked to contribute to the discussion. Write a response that uses the elements of an argument we learned in this chapter. You don't need to post it, but if you do post it, pay attention to the responses you get. How do people respond to your argument?
2. Find a report or another piece of writing where someone is making an argument in the workplace. Identify its thesis and main points. Do you agree with all of the points? If so, write 1-2 paragraphs explaining what made the argument persuasive. If not, write 1-2 paragraphs identifying weaknesses in the argument.
3. If you speak another language, find an example of an argument in that language. Does it use the elements of argumentation you learned in this chapter? Are there any differences in the way the argument is constructed?

Attribution

CHAPTER 13: MORE ON THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE RESEARCH WRITING PROCESS

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Determine the appropriate research methodology that meets the needs of the audience.
2. Distinguish between formal and informal research.
3. Quote source text directly with accuracy and correct punctuation.
4. Locate, select, and organize relevant and accurate information drawn from a variety of sources appropriate to the task.
5. Integrate and document information using commonly accepted citation guidelines.

From the shortest informative email to the sprawling analytical report, most professional messages involve relaying information that was looked up—that is, they involve research. Employers value employees who are resourceful, whose research skills go well beyond Google-searching on the internet and focusing on the top few results like anyone can do. Whether such in-demand employees get the needed information from a print book in a library, a manual from a database on a company intranet, an article from a subscription database on the internet, or simply by asking a reputable authority such as a veteran co-worker, they prove their value by knowing where to find valuable information, how to use it appropriately, and how to document it if necessary.

In the previous chapters, we learned a little more about research expectations and sources in school and at work. in this chapter, we focus more on research from the perspective of a research report writer, discussing in more details aspects such as responding to our readers' needs both in our choice of sources and in the way we work with them.

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following texts:

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13.1: CHOOSING A RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Learning Objectives

1. Determine the appropriate research methodology that meets the needs of the audience.
2. Distinguish between formal and informal research.
3. Locate, select, and organize relevant and accurate information drawn from a variety of sources appropriate to the task.

The first step in research is to know what the situation calls for in terms of the formality or rigour of research required. Although formal research carefully documents sources with citations and references, most messages relay informal research (such as when you quickly look up some information you have access to and email it to the person who requested it). Either way, you apply skills in retrieving and delivering the needed information to meet your audience's needs, often by paraphrasing or summarizing, which are valuable skills coveted by employers. Knowing what research type or "methodology" the situation calls for—formal or informal research, or primary or secondary research—in the first place will keep you on track in the preliminary stage of the writing process.

Looking up information and delivering it in an email answering someone's question without needing to formally cite your sources is **informal research**. It is by far the most common type of research: all professionals do it several times a day in their routine communication with the various audiences they serve.

For instance, your manager might ask you to recommend a new printer to replace the one that has just stopped working. You are no expert on printers, but you know whom you can ask. You go to Erika, the administrative assistant in your previous department, and she recommends the Ricoh printer. You trust what she says, so you end your research there and pass along this recommendation to your manager. Now, because your source of information (whom you don't necessarily need to identify in informal research) was relatively subjective and didn't explain in full why the Ricoh was better than all the other models available, you can't have 100% confidence in the recommendation you make. However, this type of research is acceptable when you don't have much time and your audience doesn't need to check your sources.

However, if your task is not to recommend *one* printer for your department/office but to recommend, say, what new printers Fanshawe should buy for all the computer labs on the main campus, you wouldn't just ask someone—you would do some focused formal research and write a report to support whatever recommendation(s) you might make.

Formal research takes a more systematic approach and documents the sources of information compiled using a conventional citation and reference system designed to make it easy for the audience to check out your sources themselves to verify their credibility. Formal research is more scientific in discovering needed information or solving a problem, beginning with a hypothesis (your main idea when you begin, which, in the case above, could be that the Ricoh *might* be the best printer), and then testing that hypothesis in a rigorous way. In this case, you would come up with a set of criteria including certain features and capabilities that you need your printer to have, cost, warranty and service plan, availability, etc. Next you would look at all the accessible literature on the printers available to you, including the product webpages and spec manuals, customer reviews from other vendors, and reviews from reputable sources such as *Consumer Reports*, which gets experts to test the various available models against a set of criteria. Finally, you could test the printers yourself, score them according to your assessment criteria, rank the best to worst, and report the results.

Formal research obviously requires more time, labour, practice, skill, and resources in following a rigorous procedure. In the case of the printer research above, having a subscription to *Consumer Reports* gives you access to valuable information that not everyone has. (If you simply Google-searched "best office printer," you may get a *Consumer Reports* ranking as one of your top results, but when you follow the links, you'll get to a subscription pricing page rather than the list you're looking for. A large part of the internet exists on the other side of paywalls.) If you are a college student, however, you can access *Consumer Reports* via your college library account if its journal and magazine databases include *Consumer Reports*, search for office printers, and get a handy ranking of the latest multifunctional printers. You can check their selection criteria to determine if their number one choice is the right printer for your needs, and if you are satisfied, you are ready to report the make and model number to your manager. Finally, to prove that the recommendation comes from a reputable source with authority in the matter, you cite the *Consumer Reports* article showing the author, year, title, and retrieval information so that your manager can verify that you used a reputable, authoritative, and current source.

Why go to so much trouble? Obviously, because institutions can't afford to waste money on equipment that might not meet their needs, and you don't want to cause problems for your institution. In this case, formal research ("doing your research homework") protects you and your organization against preventable losses.

For both formal and informal research, one methodological question you might ask yourselves is both if you should *conduct* primary or secondary research and if you should *use* primary or secondary research sources. As briefly discussed in a previous chapter, primary research *generates* new knowledge and secondary research *applies* it. In the above example, the authors of the *Consumer Reports* article conducted primary research because they came up with the assessment criteria, arranged for access to all the printers, tested and scored each according to how well they performed against each criterion, analyzed the data, determined the ranking of best to worst printer on the market, and reported it in a published article. If you can't conduct primary research yourself because you don't have easy access to all the printers worth considering, you are thankful someone else has and would be ready to pay to get that information.

Other forms of primary research include surveys of randomly sampled people to gauge general attitudes on certain subjects and lab experiments that follow the scientific method. If a pharmaceutical company is researching a new treatment option for a particular health condition, for instance, it starts in the chemistry lab, producing a compound that could be put in a pill, tests its safety on animal subjects, then runs human trials where it's given to as many test subjects as possible. Some are given a placebo without knowing it (making them "blind" — that is, unaware) by someone on the research team who also doesn't know whether it's the real pill or the placebo (making the study "double blind"). Close observations of the effects on people with the condition and without, having taken the new pill and the placebo, determines whether the new drug is actually effective and safe. Primary research is labour-intensive, typically expensive, and may include aspects of secondary research if referring to previous primary research.

Secondary research is what most people—especially students—do when they have academic or professional tasks, and it involves finding and using both primary and secondary research. To use the printer example above, accessing the *Consumer Reports* article and using its recommendation to make a case for office printer selection is secondary research. Depending on whether that secondary research is informal or formal, it may or may not cite and reference all sources.

The easiest, most common, and most expedient research, the kind that the vast majority of informative workplace communication involves, is **informal secondary research**. As when an employee sends company pricing and scheduling information in response to a request from a potential customer, informal secondary research involves quickly retrieving and relaying information without citing it—not out of laziness or intentional plagiarism but because formal citations are neither necessary nor expected by some readers.

However, when you do a school research assignment requiring you to document your sources or if your ,manager requires you to cite the sources you used as a basis for endorsing an office printer in a recommendation report (because it will be an expensive investment), you perform **formal secondary research.** In business, the latter type is best for ensuring that company resources are used appropriately and that any decisions made would likely be supported by all stakeholders. In other words, formal secondary research is a necessary part of a business's due diligence. In the following section(§13.2), we will break down the labour-intensive process of building a document around source material collected through formal secondary research.

Key Takeaway

Determine the most appropriate research methodology—informal or formal, primary or secondary—for your audience and purpose depending on the level of rigour required. For this purpose, carefully analyze the context and your audience's needs.

Exercise

1. Use your college library account to access *Consumer Reports* and find a report on a product type of interest to you. Assuming that your audience's needs are for informal secondary research only, write a pretend email making a recommendation based on the report's endorsement.
2. Next, for the sake of comparing sources, search for recommendation information on the same product type just by Googling it. What are the top search results? Going down the results list, did you find any unbiased sources that you could use in your recommendation email? Using the knowledge assimilated in this and the previous chapters, explain what makes these sources biased or unbiased.

13.2: LOCATING CREDIBLE SOURCES

Once you've selected the appropriate research methodology, your next task is to search for sources that can be taken seriously by your audiences and, in so doing, narrow down your topic.

In the following, we will focus mostly on **formal** research and report writing, but many of the aspects discussed in detail here apply to more informal documents, as well. In any piece of writing, appropriately using credible sources reflects well on your own credibility, whereas using suspicious sources—perhaps because they were the top results of a Google-search filtered by an algorithm informed by your search history, which may show that you haven't been much concerned with quality sources—undermines your own authority.

A research document full of dubious sources makes you look uneducated, lazy, superficial, or gullible at best, or at worst conniving and deceptive. We live in an age that some have dubbed the "post-truth era," where "fake news" spread by clickbait-driven edutainment outlets can be a major determining factor in the course of history (White, 2017). Building the critical-thinking skills needed to distinguish truth from lies, good ideas from bad, facts from propaganda, objective viewpoints from spin, and credible sources from dubious ones is not only an academic or civic duty but also key to our collective survival. Learning how to navigate this environment is one of the most important skills we can learn in school.

College or public libraries and their online databases are excellent places to find quality sources, and you should familiarize yourselves with their features, such as subject guides and advanced search filters. Even libraries are populated by sources outside the realm of respectability, however, because they cater to diverse stakeholders and interests by being comprehensive and including entertainment materials in their collections. They also have holdings that can be out of date and only of historical interest. Whether in the library or on the open internet, the only way to be sure that a source is worth using is to develop critical thinking skills and use them to vet your sources, to decide what to use, and to build on their arguments.

Let us build a little more on what we learned in the previous chapters concerning the *credibility* of research sources.

Sections

13.2.1: Assessing the Credibility of Print Sources

Developing a good sense of what sources are trustworthy takes time, often through seeing patterns of approval in how diligent professionals rely on certain **sources** for credible information. If you regularly see respected professionals cite articles from the *Scientific American* and *The Economist*, for instance, you can be reasonably assured of those sources' credibility. If you see few or no professionals cite *Popular Mechanics* or *Infowars* and you also see non-professionals cite fantastic, sensational, or shocking stories from them on social media, you have good reasons to doubt their reliability. The same goes for sources regarding certain **issues**: if 97% of relevant scientists confirm that global climate change results from human activity (Cook et al., 2016), for instance, sources representing or championing the 3% opposition will be seen as lacking credibility. Patterns of source approval take time to track, but you can count on many more immediate ways of assessing credibility in the meantime.

The following indicators are worth considering when assessing print sources (and some online sources, but we will deal with them separately after) because they usually all align in credible sources:

- **Author credentials:** If the author is identified by name and credentials, you can verify whether he/she has enough expertise on the topic to be a credible authority.
  - Generally, the higher the credential or industry position an author holds, the more credible you can expect that author to be. An author with a PhD (doctoral credential) in psychology will be a credible authority on matters of psychology. Talk-show hosts, on the other hand, lack credibility and expertise on such topics since they don't have the same years of focused study, training, and clinical practice in the field. The PhD is a more advanced credential than a master's degree, which is more advanced than an undergraduate (four-year bachelor's) degree, which is more advanced than a college diploma or certificate, which is more advanced than a high school diploma. In the absence of more detailed information, you can roughly gauge how credible authors are in their field based on where they fall on that spectrum of education.
  - Years of successful industry experience is also a trustworthy credential. If the author of a trade journal article has 35 years of experience in the industry, and 20 of those as an owner of a thriving business, you can expect expert knowledge from that article if the topic is directly related to the author's profession.
  - Likewise, bloggers can be taken seriously only if they are working professionals writing about their work, and they shouldn't be relied on outside of their area of expertise. Blogging hobbyists might have some interesting things to say, but without expert training and credentials, their word doesn't carry much weight. If a backyard astronomer discovers something major in the night sky, for instance, it takes verification and systematic cataloguing from credentialed astronomers employed by renowned institutions before the discovery can be validated.
- **Currency:** Depending on the topic, how recently the source was published can be a key indicator of credibility.
  - A book on communications technology from 1959 is no longer a relevant authority on communications because technology has changed tremendously since then. A 1959 writing guide such as Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, however, is still relevant because we still value its advice on writing concisely and because language hasn't changed drastically since then. (More recent editions have dispensed with outdated advice like using masculine pronouns exclusively when referring to writers, however, since we now value writing that is not gender-exclusive).
  - In technology fields, generally, a source may be considered current if it was published in the past 5-10 years; in some sub-disciplines, especially in computing, currency may be reduced to more like 1-2 years depending on how fast the technology is advancing. Disciplines that advance at a slower pace may have major sources still current even after 15-20 years because nothing has come along to replace them. For disciplines like literary or film studies, critical studies published decades ago may still be relevant in some ways but we might find their interpretive perspectives outdated, or they might express discriminatory viewpoints.
- **Author objectivity:** If the author argues entirely on one side of a debate on which experts disagree, be suspicious of the source's credibility.
  - If the author identifies the other sides of a debate and convincingly challenges them with strong evidence and sound reasoning, then that author's work is worth considering.

    - If the author ignores the controversy altogether, summarily dismisses alternative points of view out of hand, offers dubious arguments driven by logical fallacies, simplifies complex issues by eliminating nuance, or appears to be driven more by profit motives than by a dedication to the truth, then "buyer beware." Using a slanted source would undermine your own credibility.
    - Company websites, especially for smaller businesses, are generally suspect because their main goal is to attract customers and ultimately profit, so they are not going to focus too much on information that may give potential customers reason to think twice, no matter how legitimate it is. A home security alarm company, for instance, is probably not going to post crime statistics in an area that has record-low criminal activity because people will conclude that home security is a non-issue and therefore not worth spending money on. The company is more likely to sidestep rational appeal and prey instead on fears and anxieties by dramatizing scenarios in which your home and loved ones are at risk. If the company website focuses on education, however, by explaining what to look for to assess the credibility of the professional you're seeking, then you are probably looking at a successful operation that does quality work and doesn't need to treat customers in a manipulative manner in order to survive.
- **Publisher quality:** If the source publisher is an established, long-running, big-city (e.g., New York or Toronto), or university press with a large catalogue, you can be reasonably assured that the source underwent an editorial process that helped improve its validity.
    - Run a quick background check on the publishing company by looking up its website, reading about it from sources such as the *Wikipedia* List of English-language book publishing companies (2018) and List of university presses (2018), etc. Since this is quick, informal secondary research, you need not document this research unless you were writing a report specifically on that publishing company's credibility.
    - An editorial process means that more people besides the author reviewed the work for quality assurance prior to publishing.
    - A self-published ("vanity press") book lacking that constructive criticism, however, wouldn't necessarily have had the benefit of other people moderating the author's ideas and pushing them towards expert consensus.
    - If the publisher isn't a university press or operates outside of a big city, that doesn't mean that it lacks credibility, but you may want to do a background check to ensure that it's not a publisher with a catalog of, say, white-supremacist, conspiracy theorist, or climate change-denying literature. Likewise, if you see that the source is sponsored and/or promoted by special interests like Big Oil or an extremist group, for instance, your suspicions should be raised about the validity of the content.
    - See Cornell University Library's Distinguishing Scholarly from Non-Scholarly Periodicals: A Checklist of Criteria (2017).
- **Peer review:** As discussed in the previous chapter, any source that undergoes the peer-review process requires the author to make changes suggested by credentialed experts in the field called upon by the publisher. This process ensures that author errors are corrected before the text is published and hence improves both its quality and credibility.
- **Writing quality:** The quality of the writing is another indicator of credibility because it also suggests that the source underwent an editorial process to ensure quality and respectability.
    - A poorly written document, on the other hand, suggests that the author was alone and isn't a strong enough writer to proofread properly, or that no one involved in its publication was educated enough or cared enough about details to bother to correct writing errors.
    - Consider the connection between the quality of one's writing and the quality of their thinking. If your writing is organized and well structured, abides by accepted conventions, and is error-free, your thinking tends towards all such qualities too. If someone's writing is messy and rife with errors, on the other hand, it often betrays a scattered and careless mind.

    - Notice that quality publications have very few, if any, writing errors.
- **References:** If a source identifies its sources and all of them meet the credibility standards outlined above, then you can be reasonably certain that the effort the source author made towards formal secondary research ensures the source's credibility.
    - If the source doesn't identify its research sources, however, or is vague about them (e.g., with expressions like "research shows that …," "studies have proven that …," or "experts say that …"), then you should question why the author hasn't bothered to cite those research studies or name those experts. The reason may be lack of time/space to cite sources properly in the platform used — but it may also be laziness or even deceitfulness.

13.2.2: Assessing the Credibility of Online Sources

Online sources pose special challenges to students and professionals conducting research, since most expediently conduct research entirely online, where some of the above indicators of credibility must be rethought a little.

Sometimes the author isn't revealed on a webpage, perhaps because it's a company or organization's website, in which case your scrutiny should shift to the organization, its potential biases, and its agenda. A research project on electronic surveillance, for instance, might turn up the websites of companies selling monitoring systems, in which case you must be wary of any facts or statistics (especially uncited ones, but even cited sources) they use because those sources will likely be cherry-picked to help sell products and services.

Instead of checking the publisher, as you would for a print source, you could consider the domain name; websites with .edu or .gov URL endings usually have higher standards of credibility for the information they publish than sites ending with .com or .org, which are typically the province of commercial enterprises (as in the monitoring systems example above) and special interest groups with unique agendas. However, even sources from university websites should be used cautiously. For instance, a student essay published on a university web page would not be a sophisticated enough source to use for a report — and a professor's preliminary research on a topic (not submitted to a journal for peer review yet) might contain problematic claims or errors.

Although successful in being a comprehensive repository of knowledge, *Wikipedia.org* is not generally considered credible and should therefore not appear as a source in a research document unless it's for a topic so new or niche that no other credible sources for it exist. By the organization's own admission, "*Wikipedia* cannot guarantee the validity of the information found [on their site]." The Web 2.0, user-generated nature of *Wikipedia* means that its articles are susceptible to vandalism or content changes inconsistent with expert opinion, and they aren't improved by any formal peer-review process (Wikipedia, 2015). *Wikipedia* sacrifices credibility for comprehensiveness. For these reasons, a *Wikipedia* article in a research report is a little laughable; few will take you seriously if they see it there because you will look lazy for stopping at the first available source and picking the lowest-hanging fruit.

A *Wikipedia* article can be a good place to *start* in a research task, but no more than that. If you are approaching a topic for the first time, use *Wikipedia* for a general introduction and a sense of the topic's scope and key subtopics. (*Wikimedia Commons* is also a reliable source of images provided you credit them properly.) But if you are going to cite any sources, don't stop there; use the credible ones that the *Wikipedia* article cites by scrolling down to the References section, checking them out, and assessing them for their credibility using the criteria outlined above in §13.2.1.

A final indicator of credibility for online sources, similar to the writing-quality check discussed above, is the overall design quality of the website. The attractiveness of a site may be subjective, but a user-friendly and modern design suggests that money was spent relatively recently on improving its quality. If the site looks like it was designed 10-15 years ago and hasn't had a facelift since, you can suspect that it has lost its currency. Some websites look dated despite their content still being relevant, however, because that content doesn't change drastically over time. Like Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* mentioned above, sites such as The Mayfield Handbook of Technical & Scientific Writing can still prove useful as free writing guides despite looking like they were designed when most of their current student users were in diapers.

Key Takeaway

Investigating and narrowing down a research topic involves using databases to locate reputable sources using criteria to assess for credibility such as the quality of the source author, writing, references, and publisher.

Exercises

1. Choose a research topic based on an aspect of your professional field that piqued your attention in your other courses in the program. Assemble credible sources using a rubric that ranks each relevant source based on the assessment criteria explained in §13.2.1 above (e.g., the criterion for the first line of the rubric may be Author Credibility, which you can score out of 10, with 10 being a bona fide expert in the field and 0 being a dilettante with no experience; the second may be Currency, with 10 points going to a source published last year and 0 for something a century or more out of date, etc.). Provide a brief explanation for each score.
2. Consider a recent controversy in the news that all news outlets have covered. Assemble articles from a variety of outlets throughout Canada, the United States, and even internationally, including those with major audience share like the CBC, CNN, FoxNews, and the Guardian, as well as some on the fringe. First compare the articles to identify information that is common to them all, then contrast them to identify the information and analysis that distinguishes them from one another. What conclusions can you draw about the way *bias* factors into the reporting of world events?

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13.3: COLLECTING SOURCES BY READING WITH A PURPOSE

Part of the process of identifying credible sources involves reading critically to find the best information available for your purposes—that is, for your audience's needs (your purpose is to inform or persuade them, so their needs should guide you). When collecting sources online by entering key terms into a search engine, examining the list of titles, and clicking on those that seem relevant, you begin the process of narrowing down your topic by what research materials are available. Of course, you don't have time to read *all* the thousands or even millions of webpages and articles that turn up in Google or library database search results to determine which fulfill your (and your audience's) purposes. Time constraints force you to skim.

Successful skim-reading depends on the effective organization of the sources you are sorting through, as well as your own time-management strategies. For articles, you would focus on the abstract or synopsis—a paragraph that summarizes the entire piece and helps determine if it contains (some of) what you are looking for. For webpages, you would read the very top and then skip down to see if the section headings indicate topics of interest; you can also do a word search (ctrl + f) if you are scanning for specific concepts. At the level of each paragraph, you rely on the first sentences representing the topic of the paragraph—and you can skim the topic sentences and perhaps the concluding sentences to capture the main points and get a sense of how the content flows (Freedman, 2012). Bolded key words and illustrations also help. (If your sources are effectively organized in this fashion, you can express your gratitude by paying it forward to your own readers. Organize your own writing so that you place main points strategically in topic sentences and highlight topics as subheadings. Your readers will be grateful if you help them to skim effectively.

When you find online sources relevant to your topic, best practice for preparing to document and use them properly is to collect them in an informal annotated bibliography. A *formal* **annotated bibliography** lists full bibliographical entries and a proper summary under each entry; as a set of notes, on the other hand, an informal annotated bibliography need only include the source titles, web addresses (URLs that allow you to get back to the sources and collect more information about them later if you end up using them), and some summary points about the sources under each URL. When you begin your research investigation, however, you may want to collect only titles and URLs until you've narrowed down a list of sources you think you'll use, then go back and confirm their relevance by writing some notes under each. (Getting some note-form points down on paper—or on your word processor screen—counts as your first step in the actual writing of your document, giving you a foundation to build on.)

The most relevant and useful sources are those that would best meet the needs of the audience for which you are preparing your document. To this end, you must choose sources with the right amount of detail. At the lower end of the range, you may find plenty of general sources that offer acceptable introductions (e.g., from *Wikipedia*) but fall short of providing appropriate detail. In such cases, you might be able to find more detailed coverage in the sources that they have used, if those introductory sources are credible and have properly documented their research. At the high end of the range, sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles might offer a level of detail that far exceeds what you need, along with content you might find difficult to understand. You may want to include such evidence in your reports because it is the most credible, but make sure you *paraphrase clearly* and that the evidence selected *clearly supports your points* (not something distantly related but not relevant enough to your topic).

During this process, you will encounter plenty of information in sources that may both confirm and contradict what you already know about your topic. Remember to keep an open mind and learn from the experience. Refrain from simply discarding contradictory information that will over-complicate your argument. If it turns out that a reputable source undermines your argument entirely, then *consider changing your argument* to avoid embarrassing yourself in the end with a fantasy-driven document. If you are preparing a research report into the viability of a waste-to-energy gasification facility, for instance, and you really want to say that it solves both your city's municipal garbage disposal and energy production needs, you don't want to find yourself too far down that road before addressing why no such facility has ever achieved profitable positive energy production. Ignoring such a record and the reasons that investors tend to avoid such opportunities—see, for instance, the case of the failed Plasco plant in Ottawa (Chianello & Pearson, 2015)—will undermine your credibility.

Finally, be careful with your collection of source content so that you don't *accidentally plagiarize* by the time you use the sources you've collected in your final document. If you copy and paste text from sources into your notes as a basis for quotations or paraphrases, ensure that you put quotation marks around those fragments and cite the page numbers (if the source has them) or paragraph numbers (if it doesn't have page numbers) in parentheses immediately following the closing quotation marks so you can properly cite them if you use them later. If you don't put quotation marks around copied text, you run the risk of committing plagiarism by rolling unmarked quotations into your final document; even if you cite them, *implying that you have paraphrased text from a source when in fact you are reproducing the source text verbatim still counts as a breach of academic integrity*. We will return to the problem of plagiarism in the next section, when we continue examining the process of building a document around research, but at this point it's worth reviewing your collection of research material to ensure that it meets the needs of the audience and works towards fulfilling the purpose you determined at the outset of the writing process.

Key Takeaways

Narrowing down a research topic involves skimming through database search results to select relevant sources, as well as skimming through source text to pull out main points that support your hypothesis by knowing where to find them.

Exercises

Building on Exercise #1 in the previous section (§13.2), develop the sources you found into an informal annotated bibliography with just titles and URLs for each source, as well as 2-3 main points in quotation marks pulled from the source text and bullet-listed under each URL.

References

Chianello, J., & Pearson, M. (2015, February 10). *Ottawa severs ties with Plasco as company files for creditor* *protection*. Ottawa Citizen. Retrieved from http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/plasco-energy-group-files-for-creditor-protection

Freedman, L. (2012). *Skimming and scanning*. Writing Advice. Retrieved from http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/researching/skim-and-scan/

13.4: USING SOURCE TEXT: QUOTING, PARAPHRASING, AND SUMMARIZING

Once you have a collection of credible sources as part of a formal secondary research project such as a report, your next step is to build that report around those sources, using them as anchors of evidence around your own arguments. If you began with an hypothesis and you're using the sources as evidence to support it, or if you realize that your hypothesis is wrong because all the credible sources you have found poked holes in it, you should at this point be able to draft a thesis—your whole point in a nutshell. From there, you can arrange your sources in an order that follows a logical sequence such as general to specific or advantages versus disadvantages.

You essentially have four ways of using source material available to you, three of them involving text (we have discussed them briefly in the previous chapter), and one media:

- **Quoting text:** copying the source's exact words and marking them off with quotation marks
- **Paraphrasing text:** representing the source's ideas in your own words (without quotation marks)
- **Summarizing text:** representing the source's main ideas in your own words (without quotation marks)
- **Reproducing media:** embedding pictures, videos, audio, graphic elements, etc. into your document

In each case, acknowledging your source with a citation at the point of use and follow-up bibliographical reference at the end of your document (see §13.5) is essential to avoid a charge of plagiarism. Let's now look at each of these in turn.

Chapter Sections

13.4.1: Quoting Sources

Quoting is the easiest way to use sources in a research document, but it also requires care in using it properly so that you don't accidentally plagiarize, misquote, or overquote. At its simplest, quoting takes source text exactly as it is and puts quotation marks (" ") around that text to set it off from your own words. The following points represent conventions and best practices when quoting:

- **Use double quotation marks:** In North America, we set off quoted words from our own words with double quotation marks (" "). Opening quotation marks look a little like a tiny superscript "66" and the closing marks like "99."
  - You may have seen single quotation marks and think that they're also acceptable to use, but that's only true in the UK and some other Commonwealth countries, not in Canada; some European countries use

« » to set off quotations instead.
  - Also use double quotation marks for putting a single word or two in "scare quotes" when you are drawing attention to the way people use certain words and phrases—again, not single quotation marks since there is no such thing as quotation marks "lite."
  - Use **single quotation marks** only for reported speech when you have a quotation within a quotation, as in, "The minister responded to say, 'No comment at this time' regarding the allegations of wrongdoing."
  - If no parenthetical citation follows immediately after the closing quotation marks, the sentence-ending period falls to the *left* of those closing quotation marks (between the final letter and the "99"); a common mistake is to place the period to the right of the closing quotation marks (. . . wrongdoing".).
- **Use a signal phrase to integrate a quotation:** Frame a quotation with a "signal phrase" that identifies the source author or speaker by name and/or role along with a verb relating how the quotation was delivered. The signal phrase can precede, follow, or even split the quotation, and you can choose from a variety of available signal phrase expressions suitable for your purposes (j):
  - According to researchers Tblisky and Darion (2003), ". . ."
  - As Vice President of Operations Rhonda Rendell has noted, ". . ."
  - John Rucker, the first responder who pulled Mr. Warren from the wreckage, said that ". . ."
  - Spokespersons Gloria and Tom Grady clarified the new regulations: ". . ."
  - ". . . ," confirmed the minister responsible for the initiative.
  - ". . . ," writes Eva Hess, ". . ."
- **Quote purposefully:** Quote only when the original wording is important. When we quote famous thinkers like Albert Einstein or Marshall McLuhan, we use their exact words because no one could say it better or more interestingly than they did. Also quote when you want your audience to see wording *exactly* as it appeared in the source text or as it was said in speech so that they can be sure that you are not distorting the words, as you might if you paraphrased instead. But if there is nothing special about the original wording, then it is better to paraphrase properly (see §13.4.2 below) than to quote.
- **Block-quote sparingly if at all:** In rare circumstances, you may want to quote a few sentences or even a paragraph at length, if it is important to represent every single word. If so, the convention is to tab the passage in on the left, not use quotation marks at all, set up the quotation with a signal phrase or sentence ending with a colon, and place the in-text citation following the final period of the block quotation. Here is an example:

> Students frequently overuse direct quotation [when] taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes. (Lester, 1976, pp. 46-47)

- **Don't overquote:** As the above source says, a good rule of thumb is that your completed document should contain no more than 10% quoted material. Much above that will look lazy, as if you are getting your sources to write your document for you. Quote no more than a sentence or two at a time if you quote at all.
- **Quote accurately:** Don't misquote by editing the source text on purpose or making transcription errors (skipping words, etc.). Quotation requires the *exact* transcription of the source text, which means writing the same words in the same order in your document as you found them in the original.
  - To avoid introducing spelling mistakes or other transcription errors, best practice (if your source is

electronic) is to highlight the text you want to quote, copy it (ctrl. + c), and paste it (ctrl. + v) into your document so that it matches the formatting of the rest of your document (i.e., with the same font type, size, etc.). To match the formatting, use the Paste Options drop-down menu that appears beside pasted text as soon as you drop it in and disappears as soon as you perform any operation other than clicking on the drop-down menu.

- **Use brackets and ellipses to indicate edits to quotations:** If you need to edit a quotation to be grammatically consistent with your own sentences framing the quotation (e.g., so that the tense is consistently past tense if it is present tense in the source text), add clarifying words, or delete words, do so using brackets for changed words and ellipses for deleted words as you can see in the Lester block quotation above.
  - Though many people mistakenly refer to parentheses ( ) as "brackets", brackets are squared [ ] and are used mainly to indicate changes to quoted words, whereas parentheses follow the quotation and mark off the citation. If you were to clarify and streamline the final sentence of the block quotation a few points above, for instance, you could say something like: Lester (1976) recommended "limit[ing] the amount of exact transcribing . . . while taking notes" (p. 47). Here, the verb "limit" in the source text needs to be converted into its participle form (having an *-ing* ending) to follow the past-tense verb in the sentence framing the quotation grammatically. Sneakily adding the "ing" to "limit" without using brackets would be an example of *misquotation* because "limiting" appears nowhere in the original.
  - Notice that the ellipsis above is three *spaced* periods (not three stuck together, as in "…") and that one doesn't appear at the beginning of the quotation to represent the words in the original prior to "limit" nor at the end to represent source text following the quoted words ("… limit …"). Use the ellipsis only to show that you are skipping over unnecessary words *within* a quotation.
  - Be careful not to use brackets and ellipses in a way that distorts or obscures the meaning of the original text. For instance, omitting "Probably" and changing "should" to "[can]" in the Lester quotation above will turn his soft guideline into a hard rule, which would change the meaning of the original.
  - If the quotation includes writing errors such as spelling mistakes, show that they are the author's (rather than yours) by adding "[*sic*]" immediately after each error ("*sic*" abbreviates *sic erat scriptum*, Latin for "thus it had been written"), as in:
    - When you said in the class discussion forum, "No one cares about grammer, [*sic*] it doesnt [*sic*] really matter," you undermined your credibility on the topic with poor spelling and a comma splice.
  - Capitalize as in the original, even if it seems strange to start a quotation with a capital (because it was the first word in the original) though it's no longer the first word because it follows a signal phrase in your sentence. See the example in the point above, for instance.
  - Quotation is a powerful tool in the arsenal of any writer needing to support a point with evidence. Capturing the source's words exactly as they were written or spoken is an honest way of presenting research. For more on quotation, consult *Purdue OWL*'s series of modules starting with the How to Use Quotation Marks page (Conrey, Pepper, & Brizee, 2021) and ending with their Exercise (2021).

References

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13.4.2: Paraphrasing Sources

As previously defined, paraphrasing is putting source text in your own words and altering the sentence structure to restate the original text in a different way. It does not involve using quotation marks, but it still has to be accompanied by an in-text parenthetical reference, and it should still (ideally) start with a signal phrase.

Paraphrasing is the preferred way of using a source when the original wording isn't important. This way, you can make the phrasing of the source's ideas stylistically consistent with the rest of your document, and thus better tailored to the needs of your audience (presuming the original was tailored for a different audience with different needs). Also, paraphrasing a source into your own words proves your advanced understanding of the source text.

A paraphrase must faithfully represent the source text by containing the same ideas as in the original. As a matter of good writing, however, you should try to streamline your paraphrase so that it tallies fewer words than the source passage while still preserving the original meaning. An accurate paraphrase of the Lester (1976) passage block-quoted in the section above, for instance, can reduce a five-line passage to three lines without losing or distorting any of the original points:

> Lester (1976) advises against exceeding 10% quotation in your written work. Since students writing research reports often quote excessively because of copy-cut-and-paste note-taking, try to minimize using sources word for word (pp. 46-47).

Notice that using a few isolated words from the original ("research," "students," "10%") is fine, but also that this paraphrase doesn't repeat any two-word sequence from the original because it changes the sentence structure along with most of the words. Properly paraphrasing without distorting, slanting, adding to, or deleting ideas from the source passage takes skill. The stylistic versatility required to paraphrase can be especially challenging to EAL learners and native English users whose general writing skills are still developing.

A common mistake that students make when paraphrasing is to go only part way towards paraphrasing by substituting major words (nouns, verbs, and adjectives) here and there while leaving the source passage's basic sentence structure intact. This inevitably leaves strings of words from the original untouched in the "paraphrased" version, which can be dangerous because including such direct quotation without quotation marks will be caught by any plagiarism checking software typically used by educational institutions (Fanshawe College uses Turnitin). Consider, for instance, the following botched attempt at a paraphrase of the Lester (1976) passage that substitutes words selectively (lazily):

Students often overuse quotations when taking notes, and thus overuse them in research reports. About 10% of your final paper should be direct quotation. You should thus attempt to reduce the exact copying of source materials while note taking (pp. 46-47).

Let's look at the same attempt, but **bold** the unchanged words to see how unsuccessful the paraphraser was in rephrasing the original:

Students often **overuse** quotations **when taking notes, and** thus **overuse** them **in research** reports. **About 10% of your final** paper **should** be direct quotation. **You should** thus attempt **to** reduce **the exact** copying **of source materials while** note **taking** (pp. 46-47).

As you can see, several strings of words from the original are left untouched because the writer didn't change the sentence structure of the original. The Originality Report from plagiarism-catching software such as Turnitin would indicate that the passage is 64% plagiarized because it retains 25 of the original words (out of 39 in this "paraphrase") but without quotation marks around them. Correcting this by simply adding quotation marks around passages like "when taking notes, and" would be unacceptable because those words are not important enough on their own to warrant direct quotation. The only way to paraphrase properly is to change the words *and the sentence structure*, as shown in the paraphrase a few paragraphs above.

How do we do that? Here is a more detailed version of the steps discussed in the previous chapters:

The Paraphrasing Process

Paraphrase easily by breaking down the task into these steps:

1. **Read and re-read the source-text passage so that you thoroughly understand each point it makes.** If it's a long passage, you might want to break it up into digestible chunks. Look up any words you don't know (look them up in a dictionary or just type the word into the Google search bar, hit *Enter*, and a definition will appear, along with results of other online dictionary pages that define the same word.
2. **Without looking back at the source text, repeat its main points as you understood them**—not from memorizing the exact words, but as you would explain the same ideas in different words out loud to a friend.
3. **Still without looking back at the source text, jot down that spoken wording and tailor the language so that it's stylistically appropriate for your audience**; edit and proofread your written version to make it grammatically correct in a way that perhaps your spoken-word version wasn't.
4. **Now compare your written paraphrase version** to the original to ensure that you've accurately represented the meaning of the original without:
    - Deleting any of the original points
    - Adding any points of your own
    - Distorting any of the ideas so they mean something substantially different from those in the original/

take on a different character because, say, your words put a positive spin on something neutral or negative in the original
    - Repeating any sequence of two or three words from the original in a row

5. **If any word sequences from the original remain, go further in changing *the sentence structure*. Do not be tempted to simply replace more words with synonyms from a thesaurus.**
    - When you enter a word into a thesaurus, it gives you a list of synonyms, which are different words that mean the same thing as the word you enter into it. Be careful, however; many of those words will mean the same thing *in certain contexts but not in others*, especially if you enter a homonym, which is a word that may have more than one meaning. For instance, the noun *party* can mean a group that is involved in something serious (e.g., a third-party software company in a data-collection process) or a fun celebration — and then there is the verb "to party," the adjective, as in "party trick," etc. There would be a separate series of (partial) synonyms in the thesaurus for all these different meanings, and you could easily pick one that doesn't fit in your context.
    - Whenever you see synonymous words listed in a thesaurus and they look like something you want to use but you don't know what they mean exactly, always look them up to ensure that they mean what you think they mean. Doing this can save your reader the confusion and you the embarrassment of obvious thesaurus-driven diction problems (poor word choices).
    - Still, for paraphrases, remember that replacing words with (partial) synonyms is **not** an acceptable way to paraphrase. In fact, it may look like an **attempt to mask plagiarism** (especially if you do not provide accurate parenthetical references and signal phrases).
6. **Cite your source.** Again, we do not use quotation marks for paraphrases, but we still need toprovide signal phrases and parenthetical references in-text, as well as a full bibliographical entry at the end of the document. For more on citing, see §13.5.2).

For more on paraphrasing, consult the *Purdue OWL* Paraphrasing learning module (Cimasko, 2021), Exercise, and Answer Key.

References

Cimasko, T. (2021, June 07). *Paraphrasing. Purdue OWL*. Retrieved from https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/976/02/

13.4.3: Summarizing Sources

Summarizing is one of the most important skills in communications because professionals of every kind must explain to non-expert customers, managers, and even co-workers the complex concepts on which they are experts, but in a way that those non-experts can understand. Adapting the message to such audiences requires brevity but also translating jargon-heavy technical details into plain, accessible language.

As already defined in previous chapters, summarizing consists of paraphrasing only the highlights of a source text or speech. Like paraphrasing, a summary re-casts the source in your own words; unlike a paraphrase, however, a summary is a fraction of the source length—anywhere from less than 1% to a quarter depending on the source length and length of the summary. A summary can reduce a whole novel or film to a single-sentence blurb, for instance, or it could reduce a 50-word paragraph to a 15-word sentence. It can be as casual as a spoken run-down of a meeting your colleague was absent from, so he can find out what he missed, or an elevator pitch selling a project idea to a manager. It can also be as formal as a report on a conference you attended on behalf of your organization so your coworkers can learn in a few minutes of reading the highlights of what you learned in a few days of attending the conference, saving them time and money.

The Summarizing Process

The procedure for summarizing is somewhat similar to that of paraphrasing and should follow these steps:

1. Determine how big your summary should be (according to your audience's needs) so that you have a sense of how much material you should collect from the source.
2. Read and re-read the source text so that you thoroughly understand it.
3. Pull out the main points, which usually come first at any level of direct-approach organization (i.e., the prologue or introduction at the beginning of a book, the abstract at the beginning of an article, or the topic sentence at the beginning of a paragraph); review §13.3 on reading for main points.
    - Disregard detail such as supporting evidence and examples.
    - If you have an electronic copy of the source, copy and paste the main points into your notes; for a print source that you can mark up, use a highlighter then transcribe those main points into your electronic notes.
    - How many points you collect depends on how big your summary should be (according to audience needs).
4. Paraphrase those main points following the procedure for paraphrasing outlined in §13.4.2 above.
5. Edit your draft to make it coherent, clear, and especially concise.
6. Ensure that your summary meets the needs of your audience and that your source is cited. Again, not having quotation marks around words doesn't mean that you don't have to clearly document your source(s).

Once you have a series of summarized, paraphrased, and quoted passages from research sources, building your document around them requires good organizational skills; this process involves arranging your integrated research material in a coherent fashion, with main points up front and supporting points below, proceeding in a logical sequence towards a convincing conclusion. Throughout this chapter, however, we've frequently encountered the requirement to document sources by citing and referencing, as in the last steps of both summarizing and paraphrasing indicated above. After reinforcing our quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing skills, we can turn our focus on how to document sources. In the following, we will, again, build on our preliminary discussion of these skills in the previous chapters.

Key Takeaway

Including research in your work typically involves properly quoting, paraphrasing, and/or summarizing source text, as well as citing it.

Exercises

Find an example of professional writing in your field of study, perhaps from a textbook, trade journal, or industry website that you collected as part of the previous section's informal annotated bibliography exercise.

1. If you've already pulled out the main points as part of the previous exercise, practice including them as properly punctuated **quotations** in your document with smooth signal phrases introducing them.
2. **Paraphrase** those same main-point sentences following the procedure outlined in §13.4.2 above.
3. Following the procedure outlined in §13.4.3 above, summarize the entire source article, webpage, or whatever document you chose by reducing it to a single coherent paragraph of no more than 10 lines on your page.

13.5: DOCUMENTING SOURCES IN APA STYLE

To prove formally that we've done research, we use a two-part system for documenting sources. The first part is a citation that gives a few brief pieces of information about the source right where that source is used in our document and points to the second part, the bibliographic reference at the end of the document. This second part gives further details about the source so that readers can easily retrieve it themselves.

Including research in a document without showing where you got it is called plagiarism. Before focusing further on how to document sources, it's worthwhile considering why we do it and what exactly is wrong with plagiarism.

Chapter Sections

13.5.1: Academic Integrity *vs*. Plagiarism

As introduced in Chapter 11.2, Academic integrity means performing the work expected of us ourselves and formally crediting our sources whenever we use research, whereas plagiarism is cheating. Students often plagiarize by stealing the work of others from the internet — copying and pasting text, or dragging and dropping images, into their assignments without quoting or citing; putting their names on those assignments means that they have dishonestly presented someone else's work as their own. Lesser violations involve not quoting or citing properly.

Here is what might happen if such dishonest academic practices were used at work. Let's say that the task is posting on the company website some information about a new service the company is offering. Instead of writing the text and setting up the web page themselves, the employees tasked with this do the following:

1. They Google-search to see what other companies offering the same service say about it on their websites.
2. They find a description that seems really clear and concise on the website of Company X, they can't think of a better way to explain things, so they copy and paste that description into their own website.
3. They also see that Company X has posted an attractive photo beside their description, so they download it and post it on their website.

The problem is that both the text and the photo were copyrighted, as indicated by the "All Rights Reserved" copyright notice at the bottom of Company X's webpage. The copyright owner (or their legal agents) find it through a simple Google search, Google Alerts notification, reverse image search, or digital watermarking notification (Rose, 2013). Company X's agents send a "cease & desist" order to the company that used their content, and if that warning is ignored, they can sue for damages.

Likewise, if someone working in hi-tech R&D (research and development) develops technology that uses already-patented technology without paying royalties to the patent owner, and takes it to market, the patent owner can sue for lost earnings (for being robbed of the ability to gain revenue from the intellectual property developed/ patented/ owned). Patent, copyright, and trademark violations are a major legal and financial concern in the professional world (SecureYourTrademark, 2015), and acts of plagiarism have indeed ruined perpetrators' careers when they have been caught, which is now easier than ever (Bailey, 2012).

Every college has its own plagiarism policy that helps students avoid the consequences of plagiarism, but in general students can be penalized for (1) sloppy research that results in *accidental* plagiarism such as copying text from the internet but not identifying the source, forgetting where the text came from, then putting it in the assignment anyway in the final rush to get it done; casually dragging and dropping a photo from the internet into a PowerPoint presentation without crediting the source; etc. and (2) plagiarizing a classmate's paper/ providing a classmate with your work for the purposes of plagiarizing.

Fanshawe's penalties for plagiarizing increase with each offense. Whether accidental or deliberate, students' first act of plagiarism might result in getting a grade of zero on the assignment. The instructor might allow the student to correct the plagiarized portion and resubmit the paper, but usually that would depend on the seriousness of the case (how much was plagiarized, to what extent there was an attempt to indicate the use of sources, etc.). Depending on the instructor and department, your instructor may submit the details to their manager so that a record of the offence is logged in case a second offence happens in that course or in another course in the program. That way, the manager can see a pattern of plagiarism across all of the student's courses, a pattern that the instructors in each individual course don't see.

Students' second offence could result in a grade of zero but without the opportunity to correct and resubmit the paper. When instructors report a "second offence" this to the department, the chair will likely put an "encumbrance" on the student's academic record. This means the student is force-registered into an Academic Integrity online course that takes a few hours to complete and won't be able to progress to the next semester or graduate without passing the course.

Subsequent plagiarism offences after this can get students expelled from a course, from the program, and from the College altogether. The internet may make cheating easier by offering easy access touseful material, but it also makes detection easier in the same way.

Students who think they are too clever to get caught plagiarizing may not realize that plagiarism in anything they submit electronically is easily exposed by sophisticated plagiarism-detection software and other techniques. Most instructors use apps like Turnitin (built into the BrightSpace LMS, also know as FanshaweOnline at Fanshawe College) that produce originality reports showing the percentage of assignment content copied from sources found either on the public internet or in a global database of student-submitted assignments. That way, assignments borrowed or bought from someone who has submitted the same assignment or a similar one will also be flagged.

How Turnitin Software Works

The software would alert the instructor of common plagiarism scenarios such as these:

- Two students in the same class submit substantially the same assignment work:
  - One of them started working on it the night before it was due and got a classmate to send him/her the assignment draft, which the cheating student changed slightly to make it look different; it will still be 90% the same, which is enough for the instructor to give both a zero and require that they meet after class to discuss who did what. Remember that supplying someone with materials for the purpose of plagiarism is also a punishable offense.
  - The two students worked on the assignment together, even though it was designated an individual assignment only, and then each changed a few details here and there in an attempt to make the submissions look different.
- A student submits an assignment that was previously submitted by another student in another class at the same time or in the past, at a different school, or even on the other side of the planet (in all these cases, the software finds a "match" because all these student assignments are uploaded to the same global database).

Other techniques allow instructors to track down uncited media just as professional photographers or stock photography vendors like Getty Images use digital watermarks or reverse image searches to find unpermitted uses of their copyrighted material.

Plagiarism is also easy to see in hardcopy assignments. Dramatic, isolated improvements in a student's quality of work either between assignments or within an assignment will trigger an instructor's suspicions. If a student's writing on an assignment is replete with writing errors throughout several paragraphs but then suddenly looks perfect and professional in one sentence without quotation marks or a citation, the instructor can quickly run a Google search on that sentence to find the source from which it was copied.

Cheaters' last resort to try to make plagiarism untraceable is to pay someone to complete customized assignments for them, but this still arouses suspicions for the same reasons as above. In addition, it can be expensive, and it might not result in very good work anyway. (The person paid to do the job might not deliver the quality promised.)

In short, cheating is not a good idea both because it won't work and because it results in a missed opportunity to make progress in learning useful skills.

Should you cite *everything* you research? Let's recall what we said in previous chapters and, again, add to that knowledge. Facts that are common knowledge (perhaps just not common to you yet, since you had to look them up), such as that the first Prime Minister of Canada Sir John A. MacDonald represented the riding of Victoria for his second term as PM even without setting foot there, you wouldn't need to cite them because any credible source you consulted would say the same. Such citations would merely look like attempts to pad an assignment with research.

However, anything quoted directly from a source (because the wording is important) must be cited, as well as anyone's original ideas, opinions, or theories that you paraphrase or summarize from a book, article, or webpage with an identifiable author, argument, and/or primary research producing new facts. You must also cite any media such as photos, videos, drawings/paintings, graphics, graphs, etc. If you are ever unsure about whether something should be cited, you can always ask a librarian your instructor. For more on plagiarism, you can also visit plagiarism.org and the *Purdue OWL* Avoiding Plagiarism series of modules (Elder, Pflugfelder, & Angeli, 2021).

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Return to the chapter section menu above.

13.5.2: Citing and Referencing Sources in APA Style

As mentioned above, a documentation system comes in two parts, the first of which briefly notes a few details about the source (author, year, and location) in parentheses immediately after you use the source, and this citation points the reader to more reference details (title and publication information) in a full bibliographical entry at the end of your document. Let's now focus on these in-text citations ("in-text" because the citation is placed at the point of use in your sentence rather than footnoted or referenced at the end) in the different documentation styles—APA, MLA, and IEEE—used by different disciplines across the college.

The American Psychological Association's documentation style is preferred by the social sciences and general disciplines such as business because it strips the essential elements of a citation down to a few pieces of information that briefly identify the source and cue the reader to further details in the References list at the back. The basic structure of the parenthetical in-text citation is as follows:

Signal phrase, quotation/ paraphrase/ summary statement (Smith, 2018, p. 66).

Its placement tells the reader that everything between the signal phrase and citation is content from the source, and everything after (until the next signal phrase) is your own writing and ideas. As you can see above, the three pieces of information in the citation are author, year, and location. Follow the conventions for each discussed below:

Author(s) last name(s)

- The author's last name (surname) and the year of publication (in that order) can appear either in the signal phrase or citation, but not in both. Table 13.5.2 below shows both options (e.g., Examples 1 and 3 versus 2 and 4, etc.).
- When two authors are credited with writing a source, their surnames are separated by "and" in the signal phrase and an ampersand (&) in the parenthetical citation (see Examples 3-4 in Table 13.5.2 below).
- When 3-5 authors are credited, a comma follows each surname (except the last in the signal phrase) and citation, and the above and/& rule applies between the second-to-last (penultimate) and last surname.
    - When a three-, four-, or five-author source is used again following the first use (i.e., the second, third, fourth time, etc.), "et al." (abbreviating *et alii* in Latin, meaning "and the others") replaces all but the first author surname.
    - See Examples 5-6 in Table 13.5.2 below.
- If two or more authors of the same work have the same surname, add first/middle initials in the citation as given in the References at the back.
- If no author name is given, either use the organization or company name (corporate author) or, if that's not an option, the title of the work in quotation marks.
    - If the organization is commonly referred to by an abbreviation (e.g., "CIHR" for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research), spell out the full name in the signal phrase and put the abbreviation in the parenthetical citation the first time you use it, or spell out the full name in the citation and add the abbreviation in brackets before the year of publication that first time, then use the abbreviation for all subsequent uses of the same source. See Examples 9-10 in Table 13.5.2 below).
    - If no author of any kind is available, the citation—e.g., ("APA Style," 2008)—and the bibliographical entry at the back would move the title "APA style" (ending with a period and not in quotation marks) into the author position with "(2008)" following rather than preceding it.
- If the source you are using quotes another source, try to find that other, original source yourself and use it instead. If it's important to show both, you can indicate the original source in the signal phrase and the source you accessed it through in the citation, as in:
    - Though kinematics is now as secular as science can possibly be, in its 1687 *Pincipia Mathematica* origins Sir Isaac Newton theorized that gravity was willed by God (as cited in Whaley, 1977, p. 64).

Year of Publication

- The publication year follows the author surname either in parentheses on its own if in the signal phrase (see the odd-numbered Examples in Table 13.5.2 below) or follows a comma if both are in the citation instead (even-numbered Examples).
- If the full reference also indicates a month and date following the year of publication (e.g., for news articles, blogs, etc.), the citation still shows just the year.
- If you cite two or more works by the same author published in the same year, follow the year with lowercase letters (e.g., 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) in the order that they appear alphabetically by title (which

follows the author and year) in both the in-text citations and full bibliographical entries in the References at the back.

Location of the quotation/ paraphrase/ summary within the work used

- Include the location if your quotation/ paraphrase/ summary comes from a precise location within a larger work because it will save the reader time knowing that a quotation from a 300-page book is on page 244, for instance, if they want to look it up themselves.
- Don't include the location if you've summarized the source in its entirety or referred to it only in passing, perhaps in support of a minor point, so that readers can find the source if they want to read further.
- For source text organized with page numbers, use "p." to abbreviate "page" or "pp." to abbreviate "pages." For instance, "p. 56," indicates that the direct or indirect quotation came from page 56 of the source text, "pp. 192-194" that it came from pages 192 through 194, inclusive, and "pp. 192, 194" from pages 192 and 194 (but not 193).
- For sources that have no pagination, such as webpages, use paragraph numbers (whether the paragraphs are numbered by the source text or not) preceded by the paragraph symbol "¶" (called a pilcrow) or the abbreviation "para." if the pilcrow isn't available (see Examples 1-2 and 5-6 in the table below).

Table 13.5.2 shows how these guidelines play out in sample citations with variables such as the placement of the author and year in either the signal phrase or parenthetical in-text citation, number of authors, and source types. Notice that, for punctuation:

- Parentheses ( ) are used for citations, not brackets [ ]. The second one, ")," is called the closing parenthesis.
- The sentence-ending period *follows* the citations, so if the original source text of a quotation ended with a period, you would move it to the *right* of the citation's closing parenthesis.
- If the quoted text ended with a question mark (?) or exclamation mark (!), the mark stays within the quotation marks (i.e., to the left of the closing quotation marks) and a period is still added to end the sentence; if you want to end your sentence and quotation with a period or exclamation mark, it would simply replace the period to the right of the closing parenthesis (see Example 8 in the table below).

Table 13.5.2: Example APA-style In-text Citations with Variations in Number of Authors and Source Types

Example	Signal Phrase	In-text Citation	Example Sentences Citing Sources
1.	Single author + year	Paragraph location on a webpage	According to CEO Kyle Wiens (2012), “Good grammar makes good business sense” (¶ 7).
2.	Generalization	Single author + year + location	Smart CEOs know that “Good grammar makes good business sense” (Wiens, 2012, ¶ 7).
3.	Two authors + year	Page number in a paginated book	Smart CEOs know that “Good grammar makes good business sense” (Wiens, 2012, ¶ 7). As Strunk and White (2000) put it, “A sentence should contain no unnecessary words . . . for the same reason that a . . . machine [should have] no unnecessary parts” (p. 32).
4.	Book title	Two authors + year + page number	As the popular *Elements of Style* authors put it, “A sentence should contain no unnecessary words” (Strunk & White, 2000, p. 32).
5.	Three authors + year for first and subsequent instances	Paragraph location on a webpage	Conrey, Pepper, and Brizee (2017) advise, “successful use of quotation marks is a practical defense against accidental plagiarism” (¶ 1). . . . Conrey et al. also warn, “indirect quotations still require proper citations, and you will be committing plagiarism if you fail to do so” (¶ 6).
6.	Website	Three authors + year + location for first and subsequent instances	The *Purdue OWL* advises that “successful use of quotation marks is a practical defense against accidental plagiarism” (Conrey, Pepper, & Brizee, 2017, ¶ 1). . . . The *OWL* also warns, “indirect quotations still require proper citations, and you will be committing plagiarism if you fail to do so” (Conrey et al., 2017, ¶ 6).
7.	More than five authors + year	Page number in an article	John Cook et al. (2016) prove that “Climate scientists overwhelmingly agree that humans are causing recent global warming” (p. 1).
8.	Generalization	More than four authors + year + page number	How can politicians still deny that “Climate scientists overwhelmingly agree that humans are causing recent global warming” (John Cook et al., 2016, p. 1)?
9.	Corporate author + year	Page number in a report	The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC, 2012) recommends that health care spending on mental wellness increase from 7% to 9% by 2022 (p. 13). . . . The MHCC (2012) estimates that “the total costs of mental health problems and illnesses to the Canadian economy are at least $50 billion per year” (p. 125).
10.	Paraphrase instead	Corporate author + year + page number	Spending on mental wellness should increase from 7% to 9% by 2022 (The Mental Health Commission of Canada [MHCC], p. 13). . . . Current estimates are that “the total costs of mental health problems and illnesses to the Canadian economy are at least $50 billion per year” (MHCC, 2012, p. 125).

Additional In-text Citation Examples

Below are a few additional examples of how to integrate source material in the body of your written work or verbally when presenting information orally, such as in a presentation or an online PowerPoint show[1]:

1. **Magazine article**
   - According to an article by Niall Ferguson in the January 23, 2012, issue of Newsweek, we can expect much discussion about 'class warfare' in the upcoming presidential and national election cycle. Ferguson reports that…
   - As reported by Niall Ferguson, in the January 23, 2012, issue of Newsweek, many candidates denounce talking points about economic inequality…
2. **Newspaper article**
   - On November 26, 2020, Eithne Farry of The Daily Telegraph of London reported that…
   - An article about the renewed popularity of selling products in people's own homes appeared in The Daily Telegraph on November 26, 2020. Eithne Farry explored a few of these 'blast-from-the-past' styled parties…
3. **Website**
   - According to information I found at ready.gov, the website of the US Department of Homeland Security, US businesses and citizens…
   - According to information posted on the US Department of Homeland Security's official website,…
   - Helpful information about business continuity planning can be found on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's official website, located at ready.gov…
4. **Journal article**
   - An article written by Dr. Nakamura and Dr. Kikuchi, at Meiji University in Tokyo, found that the Fukushima disaster was complicated by Japan's high nuclear consciousness. Their 2011 article published in the journal Public Administration Today reported that…
   - In a 2012 article published in Public Administration Review, Professors Nakamura and Kikuchi reported that the Fukushima disaster was embarrassing for a country with a long nuclear history…
   - Nakamura and Kikuchi, scholars in crisis management and public policy, authored a 2011 article about the failed crisis preparation at the now infamous Fukushima nuclear plant. Their Public Administration Review article reports that…
   - **Bad example (*doesn't say where the information came from*):** A 2011 study by Meiji

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1. . These examples are reproduced from *Communication in the Real World* by the University of Minnesota under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

University scholars found the crisis preparations at a Japanese nuclear plant to be inadequate…

5. **Book**
    - In their 2008 book At War with Metaphor, Steuter and Wills describe how we use metaphor to justify military conflict. They report…
    - Erin Steuter and Deborah Wills, experts in sociology and media studies, describe the connections between metaphor and warfare in their 2008 book At War with Metaphor. They both contend that…
    - In their 2008 book At War with Metaphor, Steuter and Wills reveal…
6. **Interview**
    - On February 20 I conducted a personal interview with Dr. Linda Scholz, a communication studies professor at Eastern Illinois University, to learn more about Latina/o Heritage Month. Dr. Scholz told me that…
    - I conducted an interview with Dr. Linda Scholz, a communication studies professor here at Eastern, and learned that there are more than a dozen events planned for Latina/o Heritage Month.
    - In a telephone interview I conducted with Dr. Linda Scholz, a communication studies professor, I learned…

For more on APA-style citations, see Purdue OWL's In-Text Citations: The Basics (Paiz et al., 2021) andc its follow-up page on authors or Appendix E: Documentation and APA Style of this textbook.

In combination, citations and references offer a reader-friendly means of enabling readers to find and retrieve research sources themselves, as each citation points them to the full bibliographical details in the References list at the end of the document. If the documentation system were reduced to just one part where citations were filled with the bibliographical details, the reader would be constantly impeded by 2-3 lines of bibliographical details following each use of a source. By providing the bibliographical entries at the end of the document, authors also enable readers to go to the References list to examine at a glance the extent to which a document is informed by credible sources as part of a due-diligence credibility check in the research process (see §13.2 above).

Each bibliographical entry making up the References list includes information about a source in a certain order. Consider the following bibliographical entry for a book in APA style, for instance:

Strunk, W., & White, E. B. (2000). *Elements of style* (4th ed.*)*. Allyn & Bacon. DOI

We see here a standard sequence including the authors, year of publication, title (italicized because it's a long work), and publication information. **(Note:** The 6th edition of APA required the city of publication, too: "Boston: Allyn & Bacon." The 7th edition no longer requires the city before the name of the publisher, but it requires the DOI at the end if available.) You can follow this closely for the punctuation and style for any book. Online sources follow much the same style, except that the publisher is replaced by the web address preceded by "Retrieved from," as in:

> Wiens, K. (2012, July 20). I won't hire people who use poor grammar. Here's why. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from http://blogs.hbr.org/2012/07/i-wont-hire-people-who-use-poo/

Note also that the title has been split into both a webpage title (the non-italicized title of the article) in sentence style and the title of the website (italicized because it's the larger work from which the smaller one came). The easiest way to remember the rule for whether to italicize the title is to ask yourself: *is the source I'm referencing the part or the whole?* The *whole* (a book, a website, a newspaper title) is always in italics, whereas the *part* (a book chapter, a webpage, a newspaper article title) is not; see the third point below on Titles for more on this). A magazine article reference follows a similar sequence of information pieces, albeit replacing the publication or web information with the volume number, issue number, and page range of the article within the magazine, as in:

> Dames, K. M. (2007, June). Understanding plagiarism and how it differs from copyright infringement. *Computers in Libraries*, *27*(6), 25-27.

With these three basic source types in mind, let's examine some of the guidelines for forming bibliographical entries with a view to variations for each part such as number and types of authors and titles:

- **Author(s):** The last name followed by a comma and the author's first initial (and middle initial[s] if given)
  - For two authors, add a comma and ampersand (&) after the first author's initials
  - For three or more authors, add a comma after each (except for the last one) and add an ampersand between the second-to-last (penultimate) and last author.
  - Follow the order of author names as listed in the source. If they are in alphabetical order already, it may be because equal weight is being given to each; if not, it likely means that the first author listed did most of the work and therefore deserves first mention.
  - If no personal name is given for the author, use the name of the organization (i.e., corporate author) or editor(s) (see the point on editors below).
  - If no corporate author name is given, skip the author (don't write "*Anon.*" or "N.A.") and move the title into the author position with the year in parentheses following the title rather than preceding it.

- **Year of publication:** In parentheses followed by a period
  - If an exact calendar date is given (e.g., for a news article or blog), start with the year followed by a comma, the month (fully spelled out) and date, such as "(2017, July 25)." Some webpages indicate the exact calendar date and time they were updated, in which case use that because you can assume that the authors checked to make sure all the content was current as of that date and time. Often, the only date given on a website is the copyright notice at the bottom, which is the current year you're in and common to all webpages on the site, even though the page you are on could have been posted long before; see the technique in the point below, however, for discovering the date that the page was last updated.
  - If no date is given, indicate "(n.d.)," meaning "no date." For electronic sources, however, you can

determine the date in the Google Chrome browser by typing “inurl:” and the URL of the page you want to find the date for into the Google search bar, hitting “Enter,” adding “&as_qdr=y15” to the end of the URL in the address bar of the results page, and hitting “Enter” again; the date will appear in grey below the title in the search list.
    - If listing multiple sources by the same author, the placement of the years of publication means that bibliographical entries must be listed chronologically from earliest to most recent.
    - If listing two or more sources by the same author in the same year (without month or date information), follow the year of publication with lowercase letters arranged alphabetically by the first letter in the title following the year of publication (e.g., 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).

- **Title(s):** Give the title in “sentence style”—i.e., the first letter is capitalized, but all subsequent words are lowercase except those that would be capitalized anyway (proper nouns like personal names, place names, days of the week, etc.) or those to the right of a colon dividing the main title and subtitle, and end it with a period.
    - If the source is a smaller work (usually contained in a larger one), like an article in a newspaper or scholarly journal, a webpage or video on a website, a chapter in a book, a short report (less than 50 pages), a song on an album, a short film, etc., make it plain style without quotation marks, and end it with a period.
    - If the source is a smaller work that is contained within a larger one, follow it with the title of the longer work capitalized as it is originally with all major words capitalized (i.e., don’t make the larger work sentence-style), italicized, and ending with a period.
    - If the source is a longer work like a book, website, magazine, journal, film, album, long report (more than 50 pages), italicize it. If it doesn’t follow the title of a shorter work that it contains, make it sentence-style (see the *Elements of Style* example above, which becomes “*Elements of style*”).
    - If the book is a later edition, add the edition number in parentheses and plain style following the title (again, see the *Elements of Style* example above).

- **Editor(s):** If a book identifies an editor or editors, include them between the title and publication information with their first-name initial (and middle initial if given) and last name (in that order), “(Ed.)” for a single editor or “(Eds.)” for multiple editors (separated by an ampersand if there are only two and commas plus an ampersand if there are three or more), followed by a period.
    - If the book is a collection of materials, put the editor(s) in the author position with their last name(s) first followed by “(Ed.)” or “(Eds.),” a period, then the year of publication, etc.

- **Publication information:** The city in which the publisher is no longer required.
    - Keep the publisher name to the bare essentials; delete corporate designations like “Inc.” or “Ltd.”
    - Add the DOI if available.

- **Web information:** If the source is entirely online, replace the publisher name with “Retrieved from” and the web address (URL).
    - If the online source is likely to change over time, add the date you viewed it in “Month DD, YYYY,” style after “Retrieved” so that a future reader who follows the web address to the source and finds something different from what you quoted understands that what you quoted has been altered since you viewed it.
    - If the source is a print edition (book, magazine article, journal article, etc.) that also has an online version, give the publication information as you would for the print source and follow it with the online retrieval information.
    - If all you’re doing is mentioning a website in your text, you can just give the root URL (e.g., APAStyle.org

without the "http://www" prefix) in your text rather than cite and reference it.

- **Magazine/Journal volume/issue information:** If the source is a magazine or journal article, replace the publisher information with the volume number, issue number, and page range.
  - Follow the italicized journal title with a comma, the volume number in italics, the issue number in non-italicized parentheses (with no space between the volume number and the opening parenthesis), a comma, the page range with a hyphen between article's first and last page numbers, and a period.
  - The Dames article given as an example above, for instance, spans pages 25-27 of the June issue (i.e., #6) of the monthly journal *Computers in Libraries*' 27th volume.

- **Other source types**: If you often encounter other source types such as government publications, brochures, presentations, etc., getting a copy of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2009) might be worth your while. If you're a more casual researcher, you can consult plenty of online tutorials for help with APA style such as:
  - Tutorials and Webinars
  - Reference List: Basic Rules (Paiz et al., 2021) and the pages following

Though reference generator applications are available online (simply Google-search for them) and as features within word processing applications like Microsoft Word to construct citations and references for you, putting them together on your own may save time if you're adept at APA. The following guidelines help you organize and format your References page(s) according to APA convention when doing it manually:

- **Title:** References
  - Center the title at the top of the page at the end of your document (though you may include appendices after it if you have a long report).
  - The title is not "Works Cited" (as in MLA) nor "Bibliography"; a bibliography is a list of sources not tied to another document, such as the annotated bibliography discussed in §13.3.

- **Listing order:** Alphabetically (unnumbered) by first author surname
  - If a corporate author (company name or institution) is used instead of a personal name and it starts with "The," alphabetize by the next word in the title (i.e., include "The" in the author position, but disregard it when alphabetizing).
  - If neither a personal nor corporate author is identified, alphabetize by the first letter in the source title moved into the author position.

- **Spacing:** Single-space within each bibliographical entry, double between them
  - "Double between" here means adding a blank line between each bibliographical entry, as seen in the References section at the end of each section in this textbook.
  - You may see some institutions, publishers, and employers vary this with all bibliographical entries being double spaced; just follow whatever style guide pertains to your situation and ask whomever is assessing your work if unsure.

- **Hanging indentation:** The left edge of the first line of each bibliographical entry is flush to the left margin and each subsequent line of the same reference is tabbed in by a half centimeter or so. To do this:

  1. Highlight all bibliographical entries (click and drag your cursor from the top left to the bottom right of your list)
  2. Make the ruler visible in your word processor (e.g., in MS Word, go to the View menu and check the

"Ruler" box).

3. Move the bottom triangle of the tab half a centimeter to the right; this requires surgically pinpointing the cursor tip on the bottom triangle (in the left tab that looks like an hourglass with the top triangle's apex pointing down, a bottom triangle with the apex pointing up, and a rectangular base below that) and dragging it to the right so that it detaches from the top triangle and base.

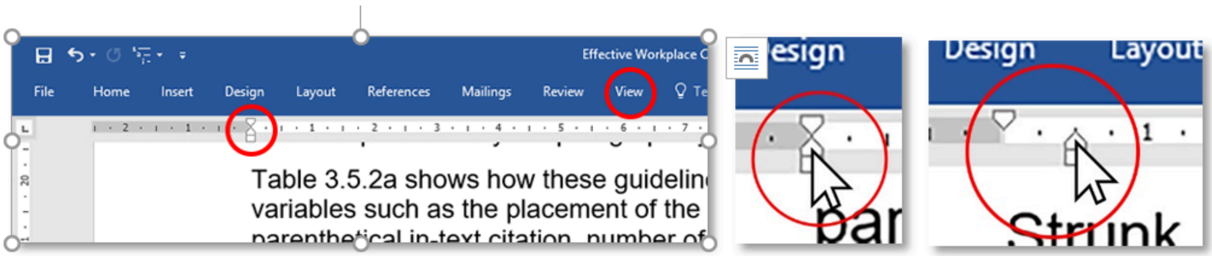

Figure 13.5.2: Tabbing a References list by making the left-margin tab visible, clicking on the bottom triangle, and dragging it a half-centimeter to the right

Examine the bibliographical entries below and throughout this textbook for examples of the variations discussed throughout.

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Key Takeaways

Cite and reference each source you use in a research document following the documentation style conventions adopted by your field of study, whether APA, MLA, or IEEE.

Exercises

Drawing from your quotation, paraphrase, and summary exercises at the end of §13.4, assemble of combination of each, as well as media such as a photograph and a YouTube video, into a short research report on your chosen topic with in-text citations and bibliographical entries in the documentation style (APA, MLA, or IEEE) adopted by your field of study.

CHAPTER 13: REVIEW

Key Takeaways

It's important to remember that performing effective research and using accurate documentation techniques will significantly improve your writing ability both in college and in your professional careers. While researching topics and using APA documentation can appear overwhelming at first to many students, following a few basic rules highlighted in this chapter will make things a lot easier. If you're ever unsure about how to conduct specific research on a topic, or how to document a particular source, you should always reach out to both your course professor and to your college's librarians — they are there to assist you. It's always better to seek guidance in advice rather than to ignore the support available to you either at your academic institution or through the many open resources available online.

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Determine the most appropriate research methodology—informal or formal, primary or secondary—for your audience and purpose depending on the level of rigour required.
- Investigating and narrowing down a research topic involves using databases to locate reputable sources using criteria to assess for credibility such as the quality of the source author, writing, references, and publisher.
- Narrowing down a research topic involves skimming through database search results to select relevant sources, as well as skimming through source texts to pull out main points that support your hypothesis by knowing where to find them.
- Including research in your work typically involves properly quoting, paraphrasing, and/or summarizing source text, as well as citing it.
- Cite and reference each source you use in a research document following the documentation style conventions adopted by your field of study, whether APA, MLA, or IEEE.

CHAPTER 14: INTRODUCTION TO VISUAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

- Learn how audience analysis impacts visual design.
- Explore types of graphics.
- Use Gestalt Theory to understand why some visuals are more effective than others.
- Learn how to choose a graphic to fit your purpose.
- Learn how to integrate your graphic into a document and cite it.
- Learn how to revise your graphic.

Before we begin, consider the following questions:

- What sort of visuals do you find persuasive?
- Have you ever encountered a chart or graph that's misleading or unethical? Why was it unethical?
- What does good document design look like to you?
- If you have experience with more than one culture, how does graphic design change between the cultures you've experienced?
- What colours do you feel are calming? What colours give you energy?
- Would you agree that people expect more visuals these days? Why or why not?

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following text:

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14.1: AUDIENCE ANALYSIS IN DOCUMENT DESIGN

All documents have a purpose—to persuade, to inform, to instruct, to entertain—but the first and foremost purpose of any document is to be ***read***. Choosing effective document design enhances the ***readability*** or ***usability*** of your document so that the target audience is more likely to get the message you want them to receive, and your document is more likely to achieve your intended purpose.

Choose document design elements that make your document "user friendly" for the target audience. Keep in mind that people do not read technical writing for pleasure; they read it because they have to—it's part of their job. And since "time is money," the longer it takes to read the document, the higher the "cost." Your job as the document designer is to make their reading process as easy, clear, useful and efficient as possible by using all the tools at your disposal.

Designing a document is like designing anything else: you must define your purpose (the goals and objectives you hope your document achieves, as well as the constraints—such as word count and format—that you must abide by), understand your audience (who will read this document and why), and choose design features that will best achieve your purpose and best suit the target audience. In essence, you must understand the **rhetorical situation** in which you find yourself: *Who is communicating with whom about what and why?* What kind of document design and formatting can help you most effectively convey the desired message to that audience? You want to use the most effective rhetorical strategies at your disposal; document design is one of those strategies.

We can think of document design in a couple of ways. In Chapter 2: Introduction to Form and Style, we discussed the best ways to organize our ideas through paragraphs, headings, lists and other organizational aids. Now, let's think about creating charts and graphs, and making overall strong design choices.

14.2: TYPES OF GRAPHICS

Before getting into details on creating, formatting, and incorporating graphics, consider the types and their functions.

You can use graphics to represent the following elements in your writing:

- **Objects** — If you are describing a fuel-injection system, you will probably need a drawing or diagram of it. If you are explaining how to graft a fruit tree, you'll need some illustrations of how that is done. Photographs, drawings, diagrams, maps, and schematics are the types of graphics that show objects.
- **Numbers —** If you are discussing the rising cost of housing in Vancouver, you could use a table with the columns being for five-year periods since 1970; the rows could be for different types of housing. You could show the same data in the form of bar charts, pie charts, or line graphs. Tables, bar charts, pie charts, and line graphs are some of the principal ways to show numerical data.
- **Concepts** — If you want to show how your company is organized, such as the relationships of the different departments and officials, you could set up an organization chart (boxes and circles connected with lines showing how everything is hierarchically arranged and related). This would be an example of a graphic for a concept; this type depicts nonphysical, conceptual things and their relationships.
- **Words** — Graphics can be used to depict words. You've probably noticed how some textbooks may put key definitions in a box, maybe with different colour in the background. The same can be done with key points or extended examples.

Creating Accessible Graphics

Graphics are a key way to persuade and inform your audience, so you'll want to make sure that everyone can benefit from them. If you haven't written accessible text for your photos, for example, someone using a screen reader couldn't understand them. Choosing the wrong colour palette would make it hard for someone who is colourblind (or who is viewing the material in black and white) to understand your graphics. Choosing a colour that has a negative association in another culture might also give readers a negative impression of your graphics.

Karwai Pun, who works for the U.K. Home Office, has created a series of posters to show how to design accessible graphics. You'll notice that a lot of the advice works for all users. Take a moment to scroll through these graphics and see how you can apply what you've learned when creating charts and graphs in the rest of the chapter.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=2146#h5p-27

This Dos And Don’ts Of Designing Accessible Services page also contains plain text versions of the posters.

14.3: GESTALT THEORY

Graphic design can be a source of conflict in some workplaces. People often have strong opinions about what they like and dislike when it comes to visuals, and their opinions can be highly subjective and based in individual context. This can make it hard to fairly evaluate graphics when we are not the target audience. It may prove useful to assimilate some technical language to talk about design choices.

Gestalt Theory is a framework that can help us understand how people look at visuals as a whole. It was developed in the 1920s by the German psychologists Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler, and Kurt Koffka (Pappas, 2014). The term Gestalt means *unified whole,* and there are six basic Gestalt principles: (1) similarity, (2) continuation, (3) closure, (4) proximity, (5) figure/ground, and (6) symmetry and order.

Similarity

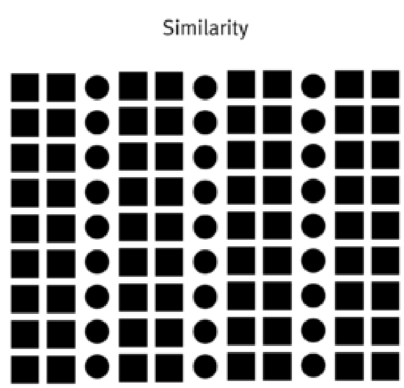


Figure 14.3.1 Similarity

When visual elements have a similar shape or look as one another, a viewer will often connect the discrete components and see a pattern. This effect can be used to create a single illustration, image, or message from a series of separate elements. Basically, if something has he same shape, colour, size or texture, humans will see them as linked. For example, every 'Questions for Reflection' section in this book has the same colour, shape and layout. If you start using a particular font and size for a heading, you should continue the pattern so that readers aren't confused.

Continuation

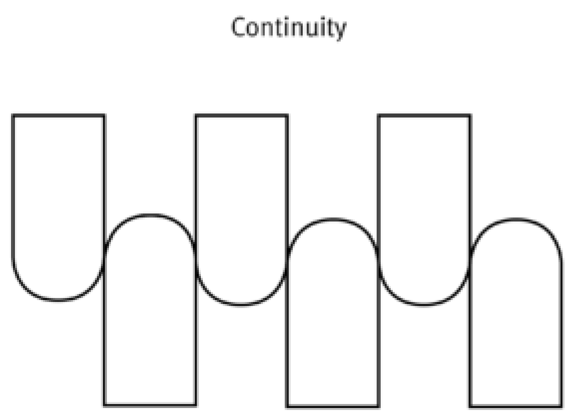


Figure 14.3.2 Continuity

Continuation is the tendency of the mind to see a single continuous line of connection rather than discrete components (see Figure 14.3.2). The eye is drawn along a path, line, or curve, as long as there is enough proximity between objects to do so. This tendency can be used to point toward another element in the composition, or to draw the eye around a composition. The eye will continue along the path or direction suggested by the composition even when the composition ends, continuing beyond the page dimensions.

To understand this principle, think about [this famous optical illusion](), which is a drawing of a tree that has several faces hidden in it. You're able to see the faces because your mind "continues" the lines to complete the shape of the face.

Closure

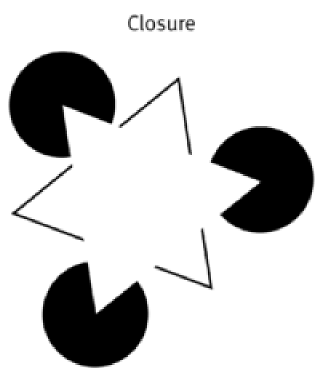


Figure 14.3.3 Closure

Closure is a design technique that uses the mind's tendency to complete incomplete shapes (see Figure 14.3.3). The principle works if the viewer is given enough visual information to perceive a complete shape in the negative space. In essence, the mind 'closes' a form, object, or composition. In the example above, the triangle is formed by the viewer's mind, which wants to close the shape formed by the gaps and spaces of the adjacent circles and lines. The partial triangle, outlined in black, also hints at the missing shape. The above optical illusion is also an example of closure, because your mind 'closes' the head shape.

Proximity

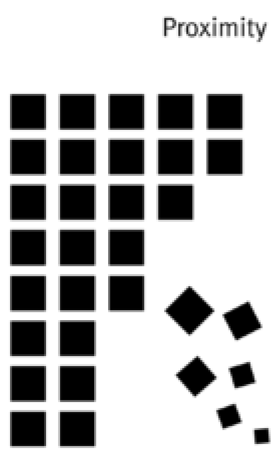


Figure 14.3.4 Proximity

Proximity is an arrangement of elements that creates an association or relationship between them (see Figure 14.3.4). If individual elements are similar, they will probably be perceived first as a whole and second as discrete components. If, like the example above, some of the components form to create a large 'whole,' similar elements positioned away from the main shape will also be associated with the large shape. In this case, the viewer interprets them as falling off or away from the main shape. The shapes used do not have to be geometric to create the effect of proximity. Any components that are similar in shape, colour, texture, size, or other visual attribute can achieve proximity.

Thinking about proximity helps you to think about how your audience is finding relationships between the parts of your document. For example, if a photo is under a headline in a newspaper, the audience will associate the two elements. Many of the headlines contained in this list of famous newspaper gaffes, for example, are proximity errors.

Figure/Ground

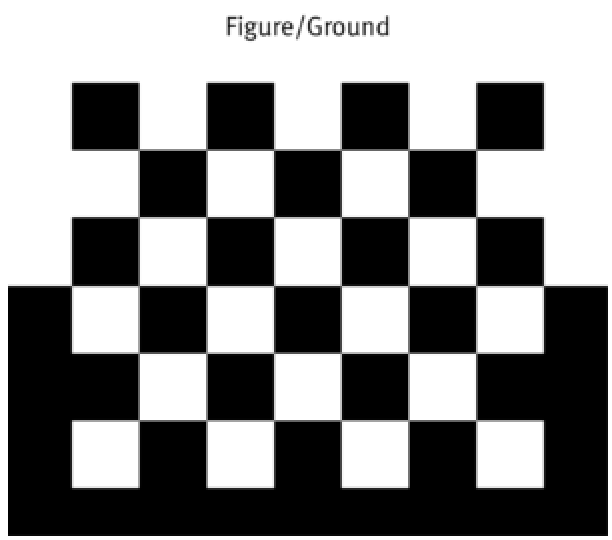


Figure 14.3.5 Figure/Ground

Figure/ground segregation refers to the contrast between the foreground and background of an image. Graphic designers often use this principle to design negative space around an object. The area where it's most commonly used is when laying text over an image. If there is not enough contrast between the figure and the ground, the reader will not be able to read the text.

Symmetry and Order

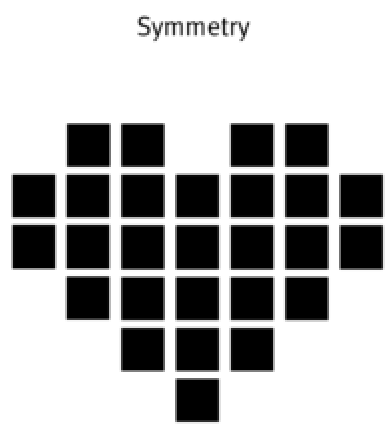


Figure 14.3.6 Symmetry

Symmetry and order follow the premise that a composition should not create a sense of disorder or imbalance (see Figure 14.3.6), because the viewer will waste time trying to mentally reorder it rather than focus on the embedded content. The photographic example in Figure 14.3.7 is composed symmetrically and allows the viewer to concentrate on the figure in the centre. Achieving symmetry in a composition also gives the composition balance and a feeling of harmony.

Figure 14.3.7 Example of symmetry and order

Image Description

Figure 14.3.2 image description: A series of rounded rectangles lined up to create a continuous curvy line across the shapes to illustrate the principle of continuity. [Return to Figure 14.3.2]

Figure 14.3.7 image description: A poster for the Chicago World's Fair, which has a strong sense of symmetry in its composition. There is a big tower stretching across the middle of the page and two smaller towers of equal lengths on each side of it. [Return to Figure 14.3.7]

References

Pappas, Christopher. (2014, January 7) Instructional design models and theories: Gestalt theory. https://elearningindustry.com/gestalt-theory

14.4: WORKING WITH GRAPHICS

Graphics should never be for decoration. Instead, they should have a clear purpose and help the reader to understand something in the document that would be difficult to show with text alone. For that reason, you should take some extra steps to help your audience use the graphic effectively.

Pick The Right Graphic For Your Purpose

Different graphics have different functions, so you should choose one that meets your needs. For example, let's say you have been asked to write a report recommending whether your company should voluntarily recall a product. You might insert a photo of the damaged product so that your readers can see proof that the damage is extensive. You might also include a diagram of the product to help the reader understand why the malfunction occurs. If you want your reader to understand that the product has been receiving a lot of customer complaints, you might create a bar chart that compares the number of complaints received by your product to those of similar products you sell.

When selecting a chart, graph or table, pick the one that fits the **relationship** you are trying to show. For example, if you wanted to show how something changed over time, you'd use a line graph. If you wanted to compare different numbers, you'd use a bar graph. If you wanted to show the percentages of a whole, you'd use a pie chart.

This collection of images will help you to see some popular types of charts and graphs. For a version that is accessible to print documents and screenreaders, the information is also repeated below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=2151#h5p-29

Types of Charts

- **Line Graph:** Shows how something changed over time. Shows trends.
- **Table:** Shows a large amount of numerical data, especially when there are many variables.
- **Bar Graph:** Helps your audience to compare numbers, shows how items relate to one another.
- **Pie chart:** Shows the parts of a whole. Note: only use this when your data adds up to 100%. For example, if you did a survey and allowed participants to choose more than one option, a pie chart wouldn't be appropriate.
- **Checklist:** Helps readers understand the steps in a process and keep track of what they have completed.
- **Flowchart:** Helps readers understand the steps in a process/procedure
- **Infographic:** Makes a lot of data accessible or entertaining to a general audience.

- **Venn Diagram:** Shows how different ideas or elements overlap.
- **Organizational tree:** Shows a hierarchy, such as the structure of an organization.
- **Gantt Chart:** Shows a project schedule, including what tasks must be completed and when.

Make Your Graphic

Once you understand your audience and the purpose of your graphic, it's time to create it. Many people create charts in Excel, Word, Google Docs, or a free chart generator. Make sure that you label your chart clearly.

Integrate Your Graphic

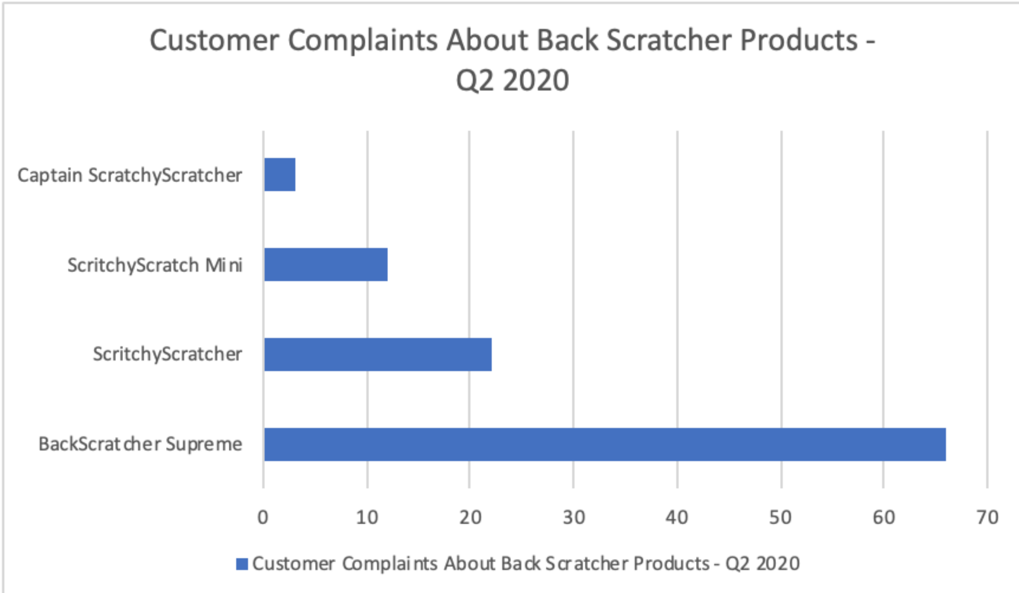
You chose your graphic because it shows a relationship, but without additional help your readers might not see the same connections you see. Insert your graphic close to the text that discusses it, though you should make sure that your graphic fits on one page. For example, if you have written a paragraph explaining that the defective product has three times more customer complaints than similar products, you would put the bar graph that shows this data directly below.

The first mention of a graphic is called a lead-in statement. It's also recommended to use a lead-out statement after the graphic. This is a statement that connects the figure to the material that follows.

Here's an example:

Our research shows that the BackScratcher Supreme received three times more complaints than our other backscratchers. This bar graph shows the number of customer complaints we received last quarter for each product.

Figure 14.4.1: Customer Complaints About Back Scratcher Products *[Image Description]*



As you can see, no other back scratcher comes close for the number of complaints. This suggests that the matter is systemic and that there haven't been just a few isolated incidents.

If we clearly prepare the reader for the graphic, then provide further details, the reader knows how to interpret the chart.

Label The Graphic

As you can see above, it is also important to clearly title the graphic so that your reader knows what to expect. The graphic above has a clear, precise title. It is also labeled 'Figure 11.1. This means that it is the first graphic in the 11th chapter of the report.

Add Alt Text for the Graphic

As we said above, your graphic should be accessible. If you're inserting your graphic as an image, you can add alt text. Describe the graphic so that someone who can't see it can have a similar experience. If your alt text is long, you might include an image description in the caption, as I've done above.

Cite the Graphic

Just as you would cite and reference a paraphrase or a direct quote, you must also cite and reference any graphics that you use that were created by someone else or that were based on someone else's data. Indicate the source of any graphic or data you have borrowed. Whenever you borrow a graphic or data from some other source, document that fact in the figure title using an in-text citation. You should also include the reference information in the reference list.

This reference guide from SFU tells you how to cite graphs, charts, photos and other images in a variety of settings.

For more information on using different types of graphics, please see Appendix A: Visual Communication of this textbook.

Image Description

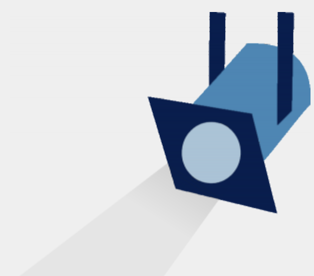
Figure 14.4.1 image description:

A horizontal bar graph that compares customer complaints about back scratcher products in Q2 of 2020. Showing that the BackScratcher Supreme had 66 complaints, compared to 22 for ScritchyScratcher, 12 for ScritchyScratch Mini and 3 for Captain ScritchyScratcher. [Return to Figure 14.4.1]

14.5: REVISING GRAPHICS AND TEXT

Just like written text, graphics have to be revised. The following checklist will help you revise your visual communication to make sure that it's as effective as possible, as well as revise your text both from a visual and a linguistic perspective to make it as reader-centred as possible.

SPOTLIGHT: "PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER"



Revision Checklist

1. First Pass: Document-level Review

- Review specifications to ensure that you have included all required content.
- Make sure your title, headings, subheading, and table/figure labels are clear and descriptive. Headings should clearly and efficiently indicate the content of that section; Figure and Table captions should clearly describe the content of the visual.
- Make sure visual elements have appropriate passive space around them.
- Make sure ideas flow in a logical order and explanations come in a timely manner. Make sure visuals illustrate your textual information.
- Write "reader-centred" prose: determine the relationship between your purpose in writing and your reader's purpose in reading. Give your readers the information they want and need to get from your document as efficiently as possible.
- Make sure you are using an appropriate tone (neutral, objective, constructive, formal)

2. Second Pass: Paragraph-level Review

- Make sure each paragraph begins with a topic sentence that previews and/or summarizes the content to come.
- Add coherent transitions to link one sentence logically to the next.
- Cut unnecessary or irrelevant information.
- Avoid overly long or short paragraphs (5-10 lines long is a reasonable guideline).

3. Third Pass: Sentence-level Review

- Watch sentence length; consider revising sentences longer than 25 words. Vary the length and structure of sentences.
- Look at the ratio of *verbs*: *number of words per sentence*. Generally, the more verbs in the sentence, the better

the sentence.

- Use concrete, strong, active verbs – avoid vague, passive, verbs and “is/are/was/were/being” whenever feasible (move the –*tion* and –*ment* words up the verb scale).
- Create a clear Actor/Action relationship (Subject-Verb).
- Verbs like “make” “do” ‘have” and “get” have many possible meanings. Try to find more precise ones.
- In general, keep subject and verb close together, and keep the subject and the main verb near the beginning of the sentence.

4. Fourth Pass: Word-level Review

- Use concrete, specific, precise words; avoid vague, abstract, generalizing words.
- Match your vocabulary to your audience: experts can tolerate complex information with a lot of terminology; general readers require simpler, less detailed descriptions/explanations.
- Use clear, plain language rather than pompous diction; write to **express**, not impress.
- Avoid “sound bite” phrases that have no real meaning; use a single word instead of a phrase whenever possible.
- Avoid clichés, colloquial expressions, and slang.
- Use second person (you) pronouns carefully and sparingly—and only if you want to address your readers directly (not to refer to “people in general”).
- Avoid “ad speak”—don’t sound like you are “selling” something; use objective, measurable descriptors.

CHAPTER 14: REVIEW AND EXERCISES

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Visual design is important because people don't read workplace documents for fun. They read them because they have to. Your job is to make documents as readable and usable as possible.
- Before you design your document, define your purpose and think about your audience.
- To make sure that everyone can benefit from your graphics, consider accessibility.
- Gestalt Theory helps us to think about how the document functions as a whole. The six principles of Gestalt Theory are: similarity, continuation, closure, proximity, figure/ground segregation and symmetry.
- When designing charts and graphs, think about what relationship you are trying to show.
- It is important to revise graphics and other document design elements, as well as to revise your text, and to make the entire document reader-centred.

Exercises For Reflection

1. Choose an assignment that you have created in this class or another class that does not currently have a chart or graph. Find some data that could benefit from being presented as a chart or graph. Create a chart or graph that illustrates the data, making sure to choose the correct relationship. For example, you might find a sentence in an essay you wrote that says that 10% of Millenials don't own a smart phone. You could show this visually using a pie chart.
2. Find an infographic online. Then, evaluate it according to what you have just learned. Write a short paragraph that answers the following questions: How does it present data? Is it easy to understand? Is it ethical? Can you understand where the data came from?
3. Find a poster in your campus or workplace, or out in the community. Take a photo of it, then evaluate it according to Gestalt Theory. Can you identify all of the principles?
4. Choose a website that you like to visit, then use what you learned about accessibility to evaluate how accessible the website's visuals are. Write a short email (you do not have to send it) to the website's owner suggesting three changes they could make to improve the accessibility of their visuals.

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UNIT 5: THE PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

6019 Course Learning Outcomes

This unit supports the following course learning outcomes (CLOs):

- **Describe, demonstrate, and evaluate** effective team, group and meeting management strategies based on audience; increase awareness and identify cultural differences.
- **Deliver** professional presentations, live and/or virtually, using effective techniques and strategies.
- **Assess** various employment communications and **create** effective employment communication documents (print, digital, and oral).

Unit 5 Chapters

- Chapter 15: Introduction to Public Speaking
- Chapter 16: Small Group Communication
- Chapter 17: Leadership, Roles, and Problem Solving in Groups
- Chapter 18: Preparing and Delivering a Speech

CHAPTER 15: INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC SPEAKING

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Employ audience analysis to adapt communication to the needs of supervisors, colleagues, employees, and clients.
2. Explain the role of intercultural communication competence in intercultural business communication contexts.
3. Identify strategies for handling question-and-answer periods.
4. Identify strategies for effectively planning and delivering common business presentations, including briefings, reports, training, and meetings.

Public speaking doesn't just occur in communication classes or in academic settings. Most communication instructors try to connect the content of their course to the real world and to other courses, but many students fail to follow up on that connection. To get the most out of this course, you should be able to see how communication skills in general, and speaking skills in particular, integrate into various parts of your lives. As you saw in each chapter so far, this textbook approaches communication from an integrative learning perspective that encourages teachers and students to apply the content of a class to other courses, personal contexts, and professional contexts and then reflect on those connections. Integrative and reflective thinking about communication helps us realize that the expectations for speaking are context specific. When we can draw on particular skills in order to adapt to our communication situation, we will be more successful in our classes, workplaces, and communities.

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

This chapter has been adapted from the following text:

15.1: SPEAKING IN BUSINESS SETTINGS

Most people's goal for a college degree is to work in a desired career field. Many of you are probably working while taking this graduate certificate and already have experience with speaking in business settings. As you advance in your career and (perhaps) change career paths, the nature of your communication and the contexts in which you speak will change. Today's workers must be able to adapt content, level of formality, and format to various audiences including the public, clients, and colleagues (Dannels, 2001, p. 144). What counts as a good communicator for one audience and in one field may not in another. This chapter briefly addresses some major aspects of public communication. The International Association of Business Communicators is a good resource for people interested in a career in this area:.

ADAPT TO YOUR AUDIENCE

Speaking in business settings requires adaptability as a communicator. The following suggestions for adapting to your audience are based on general characteristics, so you should expect to see variations and exceptions in your everyday professional experiences. A competent communicator can use categories and strategies like these as a starting point but must always monitor the communication taking place and adapt as needed. In many cases, you may have a diverse audience that includes supervisors, colleagues, and employees, in which case you would need to employ multiple strategies for effective business communication.

Even though much of the day-to-day communication within organizations is written in the form of e-mails and various types of formal and informal reports, oral communication has an important place. The increase in documentation is related to an epidemic of poor listening. Many people can't or don't try to retain information they receive aurally, while written communication provides a record and proof that all the required and detailed information was conveyed. An increase in written communication adds time and costs that oral communication doesn't require. Writing and reading are slower forms of communication than speaking, and face-to-face speaking uses more human senses, allows for feedback and clarification, and supports relationships (Nichols & Stevens, 1999).

Much communication in the workplace is written for the sake of documentation. Oral communication, however, is often more efficient if people practice good listening skills. Queen's University – Alumni Volunteer Summit – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

It's important to remember that many people do not practice good listening skills and that being understood contributes to effectiveness and success. You obviously can't make someone listen better or require him or her to listen actively, but you can strive to make your communication more listenable and digestible for various audiences.

SPEAKING TO EXECUTIVES/SUPERVISORS

Upward communication includes speeches, proposals, or briefings that are directed at audience members who hold higher positions in the organizational hierarchy than the sender. Upward communication is usually the most lacking within an organization, so it is important to take advantage of any opportunity and use it to your advantage (Nichols & Stevens, 1999). These messages usually function to inform supervisors about the status or results of projects and provide suggestions for improvement, which can help people feel included in the organizational process and lead to an increased understanding and acceptance of management decisions (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005). So how do we adapt messages for upward communication?

The “executive summary” emerged from the fact that executives have tightly scheduled days and prefer concise, directly relevant information. Executive summaries are usually produced in written form but must also be conveyed orally. You should build some repetition and redundancy into an oral presentation of an executive summary, but you do not need such repetition in the written version. This allows you to emphasize a main idea while leaving some of the supporting facts out of an oral presentation. If an executive or supervisor leaves a presentation with a clear understanding of the main idea, the supporting material and facts will be meaningful when they are reviewed later. However, leaving a presentation with facts but not the main idea may result in the need for another presentation or briefing, which costs an organization time and money. Even when such a misunderstanding is due to the executives’ poor listening skills, it will likely be the presenter who is blamed.

Employees want to be seen as competent, and demonstrating oral communication skills is a good way to draw attention to your technical and professional abilities (Bartolome, 1999). Presentations are “high-visibility tasks” that establish a person’s credibility when performed well (Weinholdt, 2006, p. 62). Don’t take advantage of this visibility to the point that you perform only for the boss at the expense of other people in the audience. Do, however, tailor your message to the “language of executives.” Executives and supervisors often have a more macro perspective of an organization and may be concerned with how day-to-day tasks match with the mission and vision of the organization. Making this connection explicit in your presentation can help make your presentation stand out.

Be aware of the organizational hierarchy and territory when speaking to executives and supervisors. Steering into terrain that is under someone else’s purview can get you in trouble if that person guards his/her territory (McCaskey, 1999, p. 128). For example, making a random suggestion about marketing during a presentation about human resources can upset the marketing manager and lead to negative consequences for you. (Conversely, suggesting that something you are doing in HR might benefit from input from the Marketing Manager would probably help you be perceived as open-minded and team-oriented.) Also be aware that it can be challenging to deliver bad news to a boss. When delivering bad news, frame it in a way that highlights your concern for the health of the organization. Employees’ reluctance to discuss problems with a boss leads to more risk for an organization (Bartolome, 1999). The sooner a problem is known, the better for the organization.

SPEAKING TO COLLEAGUES

Much of our day-to-day communication in business settings is **horizontal communication** with colleagues or people who are on the same approximate level in the organizational hierarchy. This communication may occur between colleagues working in the same area or between colleagues with different areas of expertise. Such horizontal communication usually functions to help people coordinate tasks, solve problems, and share information. When effective, this can lead to more cooperation among employees and a greater understanding of the “big picture” or larger function of an organization. When it is not effective, this can lead to territoriality, rivalry, and miscommunication when speaking across knowledge and task areas that require specialization (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005).

Many colleagues work collaboratively to share ideas and accomplish tasks together. In a sharing environment, it can be easy to forget where an idea started. This becomes an issue when it comes time for credit or recognition to be given. Make sure to give credit to people who worked with you on a project or an idea. If you can't remember where an idea came from, it may be better to note that it was a "group effort" than to claim it was yours and risk alienating a colleague.

SPEAKING TO SUPERVISEES/EMPLOYEES

Downward communication includes messages directed at audience members who hold a lower place on the organizational hierarchy than the sender. As a supervisor, you will also have to speak to people whom you manage or employ. Downward communication usually involves job instructions, explanations of organizational policies, providing feedback, and welcoming newcomers to an organization.

Supervisors can set a good example by keeping a good flow of information going to their employees. Wikimedia Commons – public domain.

This type of communication can have positive results in terms of preventing or correcting employee errors and increasing job satisfaction and morale. If the communication is not effective, it can lead to unclear messages that lead to misunderstandings and mistakes (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005).

During this type of "top-down" communication, employees may not ask valuable questions. So it is important to create an open atmosphere that encourages questions. Even though including an open discussion after a presentation takes more time, it helps prevent avoidable mistakes and wasted time and money. Let your audience know before a presentation that you will take questions, and then officially open the floor to questions when you are ready. Question-and-answer sessions are a good way to keep information flowing in an organization, and there is more information about handling these sessions in the "Getting Competent" box in this chapter.

Good supervisors should keep their employees informed, provide constructive feedback, explain the decisions and policies of the organization, be honest about challenges and problems, and facilitate the flow of information (Bartolome, 1999). Information should flow to and away from supervisors. Supervisors help set the tone for the communication climate of an organization and can serve as models of expectations of oral communication. Being prepared, consistent, open, and engaging helps sustain communication, which helps sustain morale. Supervisors also send messages, intentional or unintentional, based on where they deliver their presentations. For example, making people come to the executive conference room may be convenient for the boss but intimidating for other workers (Larkin & Larkin, 1999, p. 152).

SPEAKING TO CLIENTS / CUSTOMERS / FUNDING SOURCES

Communication to outside stakeholders includes messages sent from service providers to people who are not employed by the organization but conduct business with or support it. These stakeholders include clients, customers, and funding sources. Communication to stakeholders may be informative or persuasive. When first starting a relationship with one of these stakeholders, the communication is likely to be persuasive in nature, trying to convince either a client to take services, a customer to buy a product, or a funding source to provide financing. Once a relationship is established, communication may take the form of more informative progress reports and again turn persuasive when it comes time to renegotiate or renew a contract or agreement.

As with other types of workplace communication, information flow is important. Many people see a lack of information flow as a sign of trouble, so make sure to be consistent in your level of communication through progress reports or status briefings even if there isn't a major development to report. Strategic ambiguity may be useful in some situations, but too much ambiguity also leads to suspicions that can damage a provider-client relationship. Make sure your nonverbal communication doesn't contradict your verbal communication.

When preparing for a presentation to clients, customers, or funding sources, start to establish a relationship before actually presenting. This will help you understand what they want and need and will allow you to tailor your presentation to their needs. These interactions also help establish rapport, which can increase your credibility. Many people making a proposal mistakenly focus on themselves or their product or service. Focus instead on the needs of the client. Listen closely to what they say and then explain their needs as you see them, and be clear on how your product or service will satisfy those needs (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005). Focus on the positive consequences or benefits that will result from initiating a business relationship with you. This is similar to the concept of Monroe's Motivated Sequence organization pattern (*see link for additional information about this pattern*), which gets the audience's attention, establishes the existence of a need or problem, presents a solution to fill the need, asks the audience to visualize positive results of adopting the solution, and then calls the audience to action.

Use sophisticated and professional visual aids to help sell your idea, service, or product. You can use strategies from our earlier discussion of visual aids, but add a sales twist. Develop a “money slide” that gets the audience’s attention with compelling and hopefully selling content that makes audience members want to reach for their pen to sign a check or a contract (Morgan & Whitener, 2006, p. 18).

Include a “money slide” in your presentation to potential clients or customers that really sells your idea. Yair Aronshtam – [Slide projector](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Proposals and pitches may be cut short, so imagine what you would do if you arrived to present and were told that you had to cut it down to one minute. If you were prepared, you could pull out your money slide. The money slide could be the most important finding, a startling or compelling statistic, an instructive figure or chart, or some other combination of text and graphic that connects to the listener. Avoid the temptation to make a complicated money slide. The point isn’t to fit as much as you can onto one slide but to best communicate the most important idea or piece of information you have. A verbal version of the money slide is the “elevator speech.” This is your sales pitch that captures the highlights of what you have to offer that can be delivered in a short time frame. Try to develop a thirty-second, one-minute, and two-minute version of your elevator speech and having it on standby at all times.

SPEAKING IN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXTS

Today, business communication is increasingly occurring in intercultural contexts. Many companies and consulting firms offer cross-cultural training for business people, and college programs in cross-cultural training and international business also help prepare professionals to conduct business in intercultural contexts. For specific information about conducting business in more than thirty-two countries, you can visit the InternationalBusinessCenter.org website.

While these trainings and resources are beneficial, many people expect intercultural business communication training to be reduced to a series of checklists or rules for various intercultural interactions that may be conveyed in a two-hour, pre-departure "everything you need to know about Japanese business culture" training. This type of culture-specific approach to cross-cultural training does not really stand up to the complex situations in which international business communicators find themselves (Victor, 1993). Scholars trained more recently in culture and communication prefer a culture-general approach that focuses on "tools" rather than "rules." Remember that intercultural competence is relative to the native and host cultures of the people involved in an intercultural encounter, and therefore notions of what is interculturally competent change quickly (Ulijn et al., 2000, p. 301). To review some of our earlier discussion, elements of intercultural competence involve the ability to identify potential misunderstandings before they occur, be highly skilled in self-monitoring, and be aware of how you and others make judgments of value (Ulijn et al., 2000, p. 301).

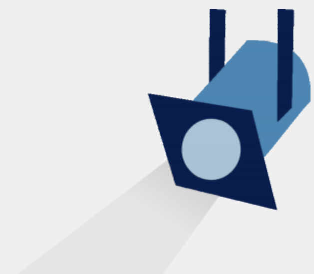
Let us briefly discuss some intercultural business communication tips that are more like rules, but remember there are always exceptions, so other competent communication skills should be on standby to help you adapt when the rules-based approach stops working (Thrush, 1993).

In terms of verbal communication, make sure to use good pronunciation and articulation. Avoid idiomatic expressions and acronyms, since the meanings of those types of verbal communication are usually known only to cultural insiders. Try to use geographically and culturally relevant examples—for instance, referencing the World Cup instead of the World Series. Be aware of differences in communication between high- and low-context cultures. Note that people from low-context cultures may feel frustrated by the ambiguity of speakers from high-context cultures, while speakers from high-context cultures may feel overwhelmed or even insulted by the level of detail used by low-context communicators. The long history of family businesses doing business with family businesses in France means that communication at meetings and in business letters operates at a high context. Dates and prices may not be mentioned at all, which could be very frustrating for an American businessperson used to highly detailed negotiations. The high level of detail used by US Americans may be seen as simplistic or childish to audience members from high-context cultures. Include some materials in the native language or include a glossary of terms if you're using specific or new vocabulary. Don't assume that the audience needs it, but have it just in case.

Also be aware that different cultures interpret graphics differently. Two well-known cases of differing interpretations of graphics involve computer icons. First, the "trash" icon first used on Mac desktops doesn't match what wastebaskets look like in many other countries. Second, the US-style "mailbox" used as an icon for many e-mail programs doesn't match with the mail experiences of people in most other countries and has since been replaced by the much more universally recognizable envelope icon. Nonelectronic symbols also have different cultural meanings. People in the United States often note that they are pursuing the "blue ribbon" prize or standard in their business, which is the color ribbon used to designate second place in the United Kingdom.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING COMPETENT"

Handling Question-and-Answer Periods



Question-and-answer (Q&A) periods allow for important interaction between speakers and audiences. Speakers should always be accountable for the content of their speech, whether informative or persuasive, and making yourself available for questions is a good way to demonstrate such accountability. Question-and-answer sessions can take many forms in many contexts. You may entertain questions after a classroom or conference presentation. Colleagues often have questions after a briefing or training. Your supervisor or customers may have questions after a demonstration. Some question-and-answer periods, like ones after sales pitches or after presentations to a supervisor, may be evaluative, meaning you are being judged in terms of your content and presentation. Others may be more information based, meaning that people ask follow-up questions or seek clarification or more detail. In any case, there are some guidelines that may help you more effectively handle question-and-answer periods (Toastmasters International, 2012; Morgan & Whitener, 2006, p. 18).

Setting the stage for Q&A. If you know you will have a Q&A period after your presentation, alert your audience ahead of time. This will prompt them to take note of questions as they arise, so they don't forget them by the end of the talk. Try to anticipate questions that the audience may have and try to proactively answer them in the presentation if possible; otherwise, be prepared to answer them at the end. At the end of your presentation, verbally and nonverbally indicate that the Q&A session is open. You can verbally invite questions and nonverbally shift your posture or position to indicate the change in format.

Reacting to questions. In evaluative or informative Q&A periods, speakers may feel defensive of their idea, position, or presentation style. Don't let this show to the audience. Remember, accountability is a good thing as a speaker, and audience members usually ask pertinent and valid questions, even if you initially think they are not. Repeating a question after it is asked serves several functions. It ensures that people further away from the person asking the question get to hear it. It allows speakers to start to formulate a response as they repeat the question. It also allows speakers to ensure they understood the question correctly by saying something like, "What I hear you asking is…" Once you've repeated the question, respond to the person who posed the question, but also address the whole audience. It is awkward when a speaker just talks to one person. Be cautious not to overuse the statement "That's a good question." Saying that more than once or twice lessens its sincerity and effect.

Keeping the Q&A on track. To help keep the Q&A period on track, tie a question to one of the main ideas from your presentation and make that connection explicit in your response. Having a clearly stated and repeated main idea for your presentation will help set useful parameters for which questions fall within the scope of the presentation and which do not. If someone poses a question that is irrelevant or off track, you can politely ask them to relate it to a main idea from the talk. If they can't, you can offer to talk to them individually about their question after the session. Don't engage with an irrelevant question, even if you know the answer. Answering one "off-track" question invites more, which veers the Q&A session further from the main idea.

Responding to multipart questions. People often ask more than one question at a time. For speakers, as well as for audience members, this can be frustrating. Some speakers address only the second question and then never get back to the first. By that point, the person who asked the question and the audience have also usually forgotten about the first part of the question. As a speaker, it is perfectly fine to take notes during a Q&A session, just so you can address multipart questions effectively. You can also verbally reiterate the question to make sure you know which parts need to be addressed, and then address the parts in order.

Managing "Uh-oh!" moments. If a person corrects something you said in error during your presentation, thank them for the correction. After the presentation, verify whether or not it was indeed a mistake, and if it was, make sure to correct your information so you don't repeat the mistake in future talks. Admit when you don't know the answer to a question. It's better to admit that you do not know the answer than to try to fake your way through it. An audience member may also "correct" you with what you know is incorrect information. In such cases, do not get into a back-and-forth argument with the person; instead, note that the information you have is different and say you will look into it.

Concluding the Q&A session. Finally, take control of your presentation again toward the end of the Q&A session. Stop taking questions in time to provide a brief wrap-up of the questions, reiterate the main idea, thank the audience for their questions, and conclude the presentation. This helps provide a sense of closure and completeness for the presentation.

1. Which of these tips could you have applied to previous question-and-answer sessions that you have participated in to make them more effective?
2. Imagine you are giving a presentation on diversity in organizations and someone asks a question about affirmative action, which was not a part of your presentation. What could you say to the person?
3. In what situations in academic, professional, or personal contexts of your life might you be engaged in an evaluative Q&A session? An information-based Q&A session?

COMMON BUSINESS PRESENTATIONS

Now you know how to consider your audience in terms of upward, downward, or horizontal communication. You also know some of the communication preferences of common career fields. Now we will turn our attention to some of the most frequent types of business presentations: briefings, short oral reports, training, and meetings.

BRIEFINGS

Briefings are short presentations that either update listeners about recent events or provide instructions for how to do something job related (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005). Briefings may occur as upward, downward, or horizontal communication. An industrial designer briefing project managers on the preliminary results of testing on a new product design is an example of upward briefing. A nurse who is the shift manager briefing an incoming shift of nurses on the events of the previous shift is an example of downward briefing. A representative from human resources briefing colleagues on how to use the new workplace identification badges is an example of horizontal briefing. Briefings that provide instructions such as how to use a new identification badge are called technical briefings, and they are the most common type of workplace presentation (Toastmasters International, 2012). For technical briefings, consider whether your audience is composed of insiders, outsiders, or a mixture of people with different levels of familiarity with the function, operation, and/or specifications of the focus of the briefing. As we have already discussed, technical speaking requires an ability to translate unfamiliar or complex information into content that is understandable and manageable for others.

Technical briefings, which explain how something functions or works, are the most common type of workplace presentations. Shamim Mohamed – Debrief – CC BY-SA 2.0.

As the name suggests, briefings are *brief*—usually two or three minutes. Since they are content focused, they do not require formal speech organization, complete with introduction and conclusion. Briefings are often delivered as a series of bullet points, organized topically or chronologically. The content of a briefing is usually a summary of information or a series of distilled facts, so there are rarely elements of persuasion in a briefing or much supporting information. A speaker may use simple visual aids, like an object or even a one-page handout, but more complex visual aids are usually not appropriate. In terms of delivery, briefings should be organized.

Since they are usually delivered under time constraints and contain important information, brief notes and extemporaneous delivery are effective (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005).

SHORT ORAL REPORTS

There are numerous types of oral reports. The line between a briefing and short oral report is fuzzy, but in general a report is a more substantial presentation on the progress or status of a task. Reports can focus on the past, present, or future. Reports on past events may result from some type of investigation. For example, a company may be interested in finding the cause of a 15 percent decline in revenue for a branch office. Investigative reports are also focused on past events and may include a follow-up on a customer or employee complaint.

Reports on the present are often status or progress reports. Various departments or teams that make up an organization, or committees that make up a governing board, are likely to give status reports. **Status reports** may focus on a specific project or task or simply report on the regular functioning of a group.

Components of a Status Report (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005)

1. State the group or committee's task or purpose.
2. Describe the current status, including work done by the group and/or individuals and the methods used.
3. Report on obstacles encountered and efforts to overcome them
4. Describe the next goal or milestone of the group and offer concrete action steps and a timeline for achieving the goal.

Final oral reports are presented at the conclusion of a task and are similar to a progress report but include a discussion and analysis of the results of an effort. While some progress reports may only be delivered verbally, with no written component, a final report almost always has an associated written document. The written final report usually contains much more detail than is included in the oral final report, and this detail is referenced for audience members to consult if they desire more information (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005).

A common future-focused report is the **feasibility report**, which explores potential actions or steps and then makes recommendations for future action based on methodical evaluation. The purpose of these reports is basically to determine if an action or step is a good idea for an organization. For instance, Facebook made a much-discussed move to go public in 2012, a decision that was no doubt made after analyzing many feasibility reports. Short oral feasibility reports are typically condensed versions of much longer and more detailed written reports that include large amounts of research data. Your presentation for our class will, in most cases, be a version of this type of oral report.

Components of a Feasibility Report (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005)

1. Introduction to a problem or situation and its potential consequences
2. Overview of the standards used for evaluating potential courses of action
3. Overview of process used to identify and evaluate courses of action
4. Details of potential courses of action
5. Evaluation of the potential courses of action
6. Recommendation of best course of action

TRAINING

People in supervisory or leadership positions often provide training, which includes presentations that prepare new employees for their jobs or provide instruction or development opportunities for existing employees. While some training is conducted by inside and outside consultants, the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics notes that about 75 percent of training is delivered informally while on the job (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005). As the training and development field expands, this informal training is likely to be replaced by more formalized training delivered by training professionals, many of whom will be employees of the company who have been certified to train specific areas. Organizations are investing more time and money in training because they recognize the value in having well-trained employees and then regularly adding to that training with continued development opportunities. Common focuses of training include the following:

- **Compliance with company policies.** Includes training and orienting new hires and ongoing training for existing employees related to new or changing company policies.
- **Changing workplace environments.** Diversity training and cross-cultural training for international business.
- **Compliance with legal policies.** Sexual harassment, equal employment, Americans with Disabilities Act, and ethics training.
- **Technical training.** Instructions for software, hardware, and machinery.

Companies are also investing money in training for recent college graduates who have degrees but lack the technical training needed to do a specific job. This upfront investment pays off in many situations, as this type of standardized training in field-specific communication skills and technology can lead to increased productivity.

Corporate trainers prepare new employees for their jobs and provide development opportunities for existing employees. Louisiana GOHSEP – Employees Attend Training Classes – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Trainers require specific skills and an ability to adapt to adult learners (Ray, 1993). Important training skills include technical skills specific to a discipline, interpersonal skills, organizational skills, and critical thinking skills. Trainers must also be able to adapt to adult learners, who may have more work experience than the trainer. Training formats usually include a mixture of information presentation formats such as minilecture and discussion, as well as experiential opportunities for trainees to demonstrate competence such as role-play, simulation, and case-study analysis and application. Trainers should remember that adult learners learn best by doing, have previous experience that trainers can and should draw on, have different motivations for learning than typical students, and have more competing thoughts and distractions. Adult learners often want information distilled down to the “bottom line”; demonstrating how content is relevant to a specific part of their work duties or personal success is important.

Steps in Developing a Training Curriculum (Beebe, Mottet, & Roach, 2004)

1. Do background research based on literature on and observations of the training context you will be in.
2. Conduct a needs assessment to see what sort of training is desired/needed.
3. Develop training objectives based on research, observations, and needs assessment. Objectives should be observable, measurable, attainable, and specific.

4. Develop content that connects to the needs assessment.
5. Determine the time frame for training; make the training as efficient as possible.
6. Determine methods for delivering content that connect with objectives developed earlier.
7. Select and/or create training materials.
8. Create a participant's guide that contains each activity and module of the training.
9. Include the following for each training activity: objectives, training content, time frame, method, and materials needed.
10. Test the training plan on a focus group or with experts in the field to evaluate and revise if necessary.

MEETINGS

The fundamental reason to hold meetings is to get a group of people with different experiences and viewpoints together to share their knowledge and/or solve a problem. Despite their frequency and our familiarity with them, meetings are often criticized for being worthless, a waste of time, and unnecessary. Before you call a meeting, ask yourself if it is necessary, since some issues are better resolved through a phone call, an e-mail, or a series of one-on-one meetings. Ask the following questions to make sure the meeting is necessary: What is the goal of the meeting? What would be the consequences of not having it? How will I judge whether the meeting was successful or not? (Jay, 1999, p. 34)

Meetings are important at the early stages of completing a task, as they help define a work team since the members share a space and interact with each other. Subsequent meetings should be called when people need to pool knowledge, refine ideas, consider new information, or deliberate over a decision. Most meetings are committee size, which ranges from three to ten people. The frequency of the meeting will help determine how the meeting should be run. Groups that meet daily will develop a higher level of cohesion and be able to work through an agenda quickly, with little review. Most groups meet less frequently, so there typically needs to be a structured meeting agenda that includes informational items, old business, and new business.

In determining the meeting agenda, define the objectives for various items. Some items will be informative, meaning they transmit information and don't require a decision or an action. Other items will be constructive, in that they require something new to be devised or decided, such as determining a new policy or procedure. Once a new policy or procedure has been determined, a group must decide on the executive components of their decision, such as how it will be implemented and who will have responsibilities in the process. As the items progress from informational, to constructive, to executive, the amount of time required for each item increases, which will have an effect on the planning of the agenda (Jay, 1999, p. 34).

After completing the agenda, continue to plan for the meeting by providing attendees with the agenda and any important supporting or supplementary materials such as meeting minutes or reports ahead of time. Consult with people who will attend a meeting beforehand to see if they have any questions about the meeting and to remind them to review the materials. You can also give people a "heads up" about any items for discussion that may be lengthy or controversial. Make sure the meeting room can accommodate the number of attendees and arrange the seating to a suitable structure, typically one where everyone can see each other. A meeting leader may also want to divide items up as "for information," "for discussion," or "for decision." Start the meeting by sharing the objective(s) that you determined in your planning. This will hold you and the other attendees accountable and give you something to assess to determine the value of the meeting.

People's attention spans wane after the first twenty minutes of a meeting, so it may be useful to put items that warrant the most attention early on the agenda. It is also a good idea to schedule items that the group can agree on and will unify around before more controversial items on which the group may be divided. Anything presented at the meeting that wasn't circulated ahead of time should be brief, so people aren't spending the meeting reading through documents. To help expedite the agenda, put the length of time you think will be needed for each item or category of items on the agenda. It is important to know when to move from one item to the next. Sometimes people continue to talk even after agreement has been reached, which is usually a waste of time. You want to manage the communication within the meeting but still encourage people to speak up and share ideas. Plan for an effective and friendly way to get people back on track if discussions related to one agenda item spill into the time that should be dedicated to the next item.

At the end of the meeting, make sure to recap what was accomplished. Return to the objective you shared at the beginning and assess whether or not you accomplished it. If people feel that they accomplished something during a meeting, they will think more positively about the next one. Compile the meeting minutes in a timely fashion, within a few days and no more than a week after the meeting (Jay, 1999, p. 34).

Tips for Running Effective Meetings

1. Distribute an agenda to attendees two to three days in advance of the meeting.
2. Divide items up on the agenda into "for information," "for discussion," and "for decision."
3. Schedule items that warrant close attention early on the agenda.
4. Since senior attendees' comments may influence or limit junior people's comments, ask for comments from junior attendees first.
5. People sometimes continue talking even after agreement has been reached, so it's important to know when to move on to the next item in the agenda.
6. At the end of a meeting, recap what was accomplished and set goals for the next meeting.
7. Compile meeting minutes within forty-eight hours and distribute them to the attendees.

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CHAPTER 15: REVIEW AND EXERCISE

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- What counts as being a good communicator in one business context doesn't in another, so being able to adapt to various business settings and audiences will help you be more successful in your career.
- Upward business communication involves communicating messages up the organizational hierarchy. This type of communication is usually the most lacking in organizations. However, since oral presentations are a "high-visibility" activity, taking advantage of these opportunities can help you get noticed by bosses and, if done well, can move you up the organizational ladder. Present information succinctly, in an executive summary format, building in repetition of main ideas in the oral delivery that aren't necessary for the written version. Don't just focus on the boss if there are other people present, but do connect to the vision and mission of the organization, since most managers and executives have a "big picture" view of the organization.
- Horizontal communication is communication among colleagues on the same level within an organizational hierarchy. This type of communication helps coordinate tasks and lets people from various parts of an organization get a better idea of how the whole organization functions. Many workplaces are becoming more collaborative and team oriented, but make sure you share credit for ideas and work accomplished collaboratively so as not to offend a colleague.
- Downward communication includes messages traveling down the organizational hierarchy. These messages usually focus on giving instructions, explaining company policies, or providing feedback. As a supervisor, make sure to encourage employees to ask questions following a presentation. Good information flow helps prevent employee errors and misunderstandings, which saves money.
- Initial communication with clients, customers, or funding sources is usually persuasive in nature, as you will be trying to secure their business. Later communication may take the form of more informative status reports. Connect your message to their needs rather than focusing on what you offer. Use persuasive strategies like positive motivation and always have a "money slide" prepared that gets across the essence of what you offer in one attractive message.
- When adapting business communication to intercultural contexts, take a "tools not rules" approach that focuses on broad and adaptable intercultural communication competence.
- There are various types of business presentations for which a speaker should be prepared:
    - Briefings are short, two- to three-minute "how-to" or "update" presentations that are similar to factual bullet points.
    - Short oral reports can be past, present, or future focused and include status, final, and feasibility reports.
    - Trainings are informal or formal presentations that help get new employees ready for their jobs and keep existing employees informed about changing policies, workplace climates, and legal issues.
- To have an effective meeting, first make sure it is necessary to have, then set a solid foundation by distributing an agenda in advance, manage the flow of communication during the meeting, and take note of accomplishments to promote a positive view of future meetings.

Exercises

1. Identify a recent instance when you engaged in upward, horizontal, downward, or intercultural communication in a business setting. Analyze that communication encounter based on the information in the corresponding section of this chapter. What was done well and what could have been improved?
2. Prepare a briefing presentation on how to prepare a briefing. Make sure to follow the suggestions in the chapter.
3. Think of a time when you received training in a business or academic setting. Was the communication of the trainer effective? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 16: SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Explore communication, characteristics and functions of small groups.
2. Explore group development formation and its various stages.
3. Explore group cohesion, climate, socialization, conformity and groupthink.
4. Explore the relationship between conflict and cohesion in the work environment.
5. Explore strategies for managing group conflict.
6. Explore styles of management.

When you think of small groups, you probably think of the much dreaded "group assignment" that you've endured in high school and college. You are less likely to think of the numerous other groups to which you belong that bring more positive experiences, such as your family and friendship groups or shared-interest groups. Group communication scholars are so aware of this common negative sentiment toward group communication that they coined the term *grouphate* to describe it (Sorensen, 1981). Small groups, however, have served a central purpose in human history and evolution. Groups make it easier for us to complete a wide variety of tasks; help us establish meaningful social bonds; and help us create, maintain, and change our sense of self (Hargie, 2011, p. 433). Negative group experiences are often exacerbated by a lack of knowledge about group communication processes. We are just expected to know how to work in groups without much instruction or practice. This lack of knowledge about group communication can lead to negative group interactions, which creates a negative cycle that perpetuates further negative experiences. Fortunately, as with other areas of communication, instruction in group communication can improve people's skills and increase people's satisfaction with their group experiences.

Chapter Sections

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Chapter Acknowledgements

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16.1: UNDERSTANDING SMALL GROUPS

Learning Objectives

1. Define small group communication.
2. Discuss the characteristics of small groups.
3. Explain the functions of small groups.
4. Compare and contrast different types of small groups.
5. Discuss advantages and disadvantages of small groups.

Most of the communication skills discussed in this book are directed toward dyadic communication, meaning that they are applied in two-person interactions. While many of these skills can be transferred to and used in small group contexts, the more complex nature of group interaction necessitates some adaptation and some additional skills. **Small group communication** refers to interactions among three or more people who are connected through a common purpose, mutual influence, and a shared identity. In this section, we will learn about the characteristics, functions, and types of small groups.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALL GROUPS

Different groups have different characteristics, serve different purposes, and can lead to positive, neutral, or negative experiences. While our interpersonal relationships primarily focus on relationship building, small groups usually focus on some sort of task completion or goal accomplishment. A college learning community focused on math and science, a campaign team for a state senator, and a group of local organic farmers are examples of small groups that would all have a different size, structure, identity, and interaction pattern.

SIZE OF SMALL GROUPS

There is no set number of members for the ideal small group. A small group requires a minimum of three people (because two people would be a pair or dyad), but the upper range of group size is contingent on the purpose of the group. When groups grow beyond fifteen to twenty members, it becomes difficult to consider them a small group based on the previous definition. An analysis of the number of unique connections between members of small groups shows that they are deceptively complex. For example, within a six-person group, there are fifteen separate potential dyadic connections, and a twelve-person group would have sixty-six potential dyadic connections (Hargie, 2011). As you can see, when we double the number of group members, we more than double the number of connections, which shows that network connection points in small groups grow exponentially as membership increases. So, while there is no set upper limit on the number of group members, it makes sense that the number of group members should be limited to those necessary to accomplish the goal or serve the purpose of the group. Small groups that add too many members increase the potential for group members to feel overwhelmed or disconnected.

STRUCTURE OF SMALL GROUPS

Internal and external influences affect a group's structure. In terms of internal influences, member characteristics play a role in initial group formation. For instance, a person who is well informed about the group's task and/or highly motivated as a group member may emerge as a leader and set into motion internal decision-making processes, such as recruiting new members or assigning group roles, that affect the structure of a group (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p. 57). Different members will also gravitate toward different roles within the group and will advocate for certain procedures and courses of action over others. External factors such as group size, task, and resources also affect group structure. Some groups will have more control over these external factors through decision making than others. For example, a commission that is put together by a legislative body to look into ethical violations in athletic organizations will likely have less control over its external factors than a self-created study group.

A self-formed study group likely has a more flexible structure than a city council committee. William Rotza – Group – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Group structure is also formed through formal and informal network connections. In terms of formal networks, groups may have clearly defined roles and responsibilities or a hierarchy that shows how members are connected. The group itself may also be a part of an organizational hierarchy that networks the group into a larger organizational structure. This type of formal network is especially important in groups that have to report to external stakeholders. These external stakeholders may influence the group's formal network, leaving the group little or no control over its structure. Conversely, groups have more control over their informal networks, which are connections among individuals within the group and among group members and people outside of the group that aren't official. For example, a group member's friend or relative may be able to secure a space to hold a fundraiser at a discounted rate, which helps the group achieve its task. Both types of networks are important because they may help facilitate information exchange within a group and extend a group's reach in order to access other resources.

Size and structure also affect communication within a group (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p. 57). In terms of size, the more people in a group, the more issues with scheduling and coordination of communication. Remember that time is an important resource in most group interactions and a resource that is usually strained. Structure can increase or decrease the flow of communication. Reachability refers to the way in which one member is or isn't connected to other group members. For example, the "Circle" group structure in Figure 16.1.1 "Small Group Structures" shows that each group member is connected to two other members. This can make coordination easy when only one or two people need to be brought in for a decision. In this case, Erik and Callie are very reachable by Winston, who could easily coordinate with them. However, if Winston needed to coordinate with Bill or Stephanie, he would have to wait on Erik or Callie to reach that person, which could create delays. The circle can be a good structure for groups who are passing along a task and in which each member is expected to progressively build on the others' work. A group of scholars coauthoring a research paper may work in such a manner, with each person adding to the paper and then passing it on to the next person in the circle. In this case, they can ask the previous person questions and write with the next person's area of expertise in mind. The "Wheel" group structure in Figure 16.1.1 "Small Group Structures" shows an alternative organization pattern. In this structure, Tara is very reachable by all members of the group. This can be a useful structure when Tara is the person with the most expertise in the task or the leader who needs to review and approve work at each step before it is passed along to other group members. But Phillip and Shadow, for example, wouldn't likely work together without Tara being involved.

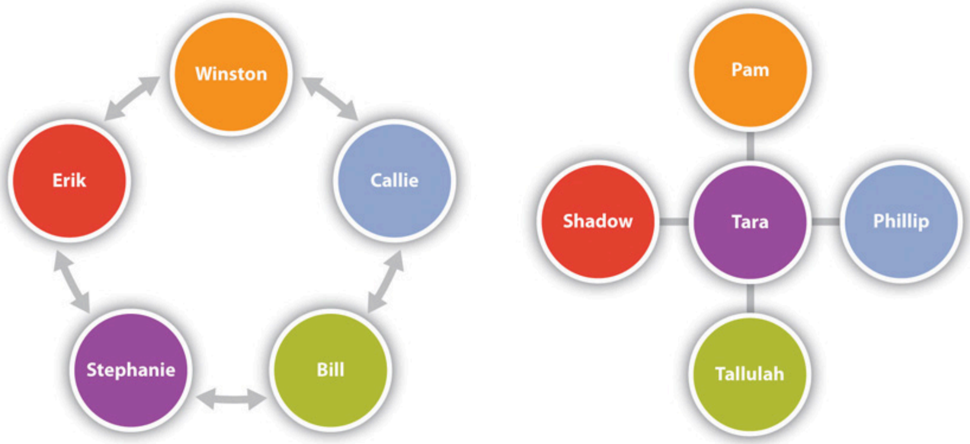

Figure 16.1.1 Small Group Structures

Looking at the group structures, we can make some assumptions about the communication that takes place in them. The wheel is an example of a centralized structure, while the circle is decentralized. Research has shown that centralized groups are better than decentralized groups in terms of speed and efficiency (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p. 57). But decentralized groups are more effective at solving complex problems. In centralized groups like the wheel, the person with the most connections is also more likely to be the leader of the group or at least have more status among group members, largely because that person has a broad perspective of what's going on in the group. The most central person can also act as a gatekeeper. Since this person has access to the most information, which is usually a sign of leadership or status, he/she could consciously decide to limit the flow of information. But in complex tasks, that person could become overwhelmed by the burden of processing and sharing information with all the other group members. The circle structure is more likely to emerge in groups where collaboration is the goal and a specific task and course of action isn't required under time constraints. While the person who initiated the group or has the most expertise in regards to the task may emerge as a leader in a decentralized group, the equal access to information lessens the hierarchy and potential for gatekeeping that is present in the more centralized groups.

INTERDEPENDENCE

Small groups exhibit **interdependence**, meaning they share a common purpose and a common fate. If the actions of one or two group members lead to a group deviating from or not achieving their purpose, then all members of the group are affected. Conversely, if the actions of only a few of the group members lead to success, then all members of the group benefit. This is a major contributor to many college students' dislike of group assignments, because they feel a loss of control and independence that they have when they complete an assignment alone. This concern is valid in that their grades might suffer because of the negative actions of someone else or their hard work may go to benefit group members who didn't contribute enough. Group meeting attendance is a clear example of the interdependent nature of group interaction. Many of us have arrived at a group meeting only to find half of the members present. In some cases, the group members who are present have to leave and reschedule because they can't accomplish their task without the other members present. Group members who attend meetings but withdraw or don't participate can also derail group progress. Although it can be frustrating to have your job, grade, or reputation partially dependent on the actions of others, the interdependent nature of groups can also lead to higher-quality performance and output, especially when group members are accountable for their actions.

SHARED IDENTITY

The shared identity of a group manifests in several ways. Groups may have official charters or mission and vision statements that lay out the identity of a group. For example, the Girl Scout mission states that "Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place" (Girl Scouts, 2012). The mission for this large organization influences the identities of the thousands of small groups called troops. Group identity is often formed around a shared goal and/or previous accomplishments, which adds dynamism to the group as it looks toward the future and back on the past to inform its present. Shared identity can also be exhibited through group names, slogans, songs, handshakes, clothing, or other symbols. For instance, colleges typically have T-shirts and other clothing items in the college's colours and carrying the college's symbols for sale in campus stores, but smaller groups within the college (sports teams, various college clubs, etc.) also have their own such clothing or symbols.

A key element of the formation of a shared identity within a group is the establishment of the in-group as opposed to the out-group. The degree to which members share in the in-group identity varies from person to person/ group to group. Shared identity also emerges as groups become cohesive, meaning they identify with and like the group's tasks and other members. The presence of cohesion and a shared identity leads to a building of trust, which can also positively influence productivity and members' satisfaction.

FUNCTIONS OF SMALL GROUPS

Why do we join groups? Even with the challenges of group membership that we have all faced, we still seek out and desire to be a part of numerous groups. In some cases, we join a group because we need a service or access to information. We may also be drawn to a group because we admire the group or its members. Whether we are conscious of it or not, our identities and self-concepts are built on the groups with which we identify. So, to answer the earlier question, we join groups because they function to help us meet instrumental, interpersonal, and identity needs.

GROUPS MEET INSTRUMENTAL NEEDS

Groups have long served the instrumental needs of humans, helping with the most basic elements of survival since ancient humans first evolved. Groups helped humans survive by providing security and protection through increased numbers and access to resources. Today, groups are rarely such a matter of life and death, but they still serve important instrumental functions. Labor unions, for example, pool efforts and resources to attain material security in the form of pay increases and health benefits for their members, which protects them by providing a stable and dependable livelihood. Individual group members must also work to secure the instrumental needs of the group, creating a reciprocal relationship. Members of labor unions pay dues that support the group's efforts. Some groups also meet our informational needs. Although they may not provide material resources, they enrich our knowledge or provide information that we can use to then meet our own instrumental needs. Many groups provide referrals to resources or offer advice. For example, several consumer protection and advocacy groups have been formed to offer referrals for people who have been the victim of fraudulent business practices.

GROUPS MEET INTERPERSONAL NEEDS

Group membership meets interpersonal needs by providing inclusion, control, and support.

In terms of inclusion, people have a fundamental drive to be a part of a group and to create and maintain social bonds (consider family and friendship groups, shared-interest groups, activity groups, etc.).

People also join groups because they want to have some control over a decision-making process or to influence the outcome of a group. Being a part of a group allows people to share opinions and influence others. Conversely, some people join a group to be controlled, because they don't want to be the sole decision maker or leader and prefer to be given a role to follow.

Groups also provide support for members in ways that supplement the support given by significant others in interpersonal relationships. Some groups, like therapy groups for survivors of sexual assault or support groups for people with cancer, exist primarily to provide emotional support. While these groups may also meet instrumental needs through connections and referrals to resources, they fulfill the interpersonal need for belonging that is a central human need.

GROUPS MEET IDENTITY NEEDS

Our affiliations are building blocks for our identities, because group membership allows us to use reference groups for social comparison—in short, identifying us with some groups and characteristics and separating us from others. Some people join groups to be affiliated with people who share similar or desirable characteristics in terms of beliefs, attitudes, values, or cultural identities. For example, in Canada, people may join the LeadNow organization as volunteers because they want to be affiliated with a progressive advocacy group that militates for a variety of social justice and climate protection issues, or perhaps join the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) organization as volunteers because they are specifically interested in supporting first-nations women.

Group membership helps meet our interpersonal needs by providing an opportunity for affection and inclusion. Lostintheredwoods – Spiral of Hands – CC BY-ND 2.0.

The prestige of a group can initially attract us because we want that group's identity to "rub off" on our own identity. Likewise, our achievements as group members can enhance our self-esteem, add to our reputation, and allow us to create or project certain identity characteristics to engage in impression management. For example, a person may take numerous tests to become a part of Mensa, which is an organization for people with high IQs, for no material gain but for the recognition or sense of achievement that the affiliation may bring. Likewise, people may join sports teams, professional organizations, and honor societies for the sense of achievement and affiliation. Such groups allow us opportunities to better ourselves by encouraging further development of skills or knowledge.

TYPES OF SMALL GROUPS

There are many types of small groups, but the most common distinction made between types of small groups is that of task-oriented and relational-oriented groups (Hargie, 2011). **Task-oriented groups** are formed to solve a problem, promote a cause, or generate ideas or information (McKay, Davis, & Fanning, 1995, p. 254). In such groups, like a committee or study group, interactions and decisions are primarily evaluated based on the quality of the final product or output. The three main types of tasks are production, discussion, and problem-solving tasks (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p. 57). Groups faced with production tasks are asked to produce something tangible from their group interactions such as a report, design for a playground, musical performance, or fundraiser event. Groups faced with discussion tasks are asked to talk through something without trying to come up with a right or wrong answer. Examples of this type of group include a support group for people with HIV/AIDS, a book club, or a group for new fathers. Groups faced with problem-solving tasks have to devise a course of action to meet a specific need. These groups also usually include a production and discussion component, but the end goal isn't necessarily a tangible product or a shared social reality through discussion. Instead, the end goal is a well-thought-out idea. Task-oriented groups require honed problem-solving skills to accomplish goals, and the structure of these groups is more rigid than that of relational-oriented groups.

Relational-oriented groups are formed to promote interpersonal connections and are more focused on quality interactions that contribute to the well-being of group members. Decision making is directed at strengthening or repairing relationships rather than completing discrete tasks or debating specific ideas or courses of action. All groups include task and relational elements, so it's best to think of these orientations as two ends of a continuum rather than as mutually exclusive.

In this chapter, we focus more on task-oriented groups and the dynamics that operate within these groups, since these are the types of groups you will most likely be involved in at work.

Teams are task-oriented groups in which members are especially loyal and dedicated to the task and other group members (Larson & LaFasto, 1989, p. 73). In professional and civic contexts, the word *team* has become popularized as a means of drawing on the positive connotations of the term—connotations such as "high-spirited," "cooperative," and "hardworking." Scholars who have spent years studying highly effective teams have identified several common factors related to their success. Thus, According to Adler and Elmhorst (2005, pp. 248-50), successful teams display the following:

- clear and inspiring shared goals,
- a results-driven structure,
- competent team members,
- a collaborative climate,
- high standards for performance,
- external support and recognition, and
- ethical and accountable leadership.

Increasingly, small groups and teams are engaging in more virtual interaction. **Virtual groups** take advantage of new technologies and meet exclusively or primarily online to achieve their purpose or goal. Some virtual groups may complete their task without ever being physically in the same room. Virtual groups bring with them distinct advantages and disadvantages that you can read more about in the "Getting Plugged In" feature next.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING PLUGGED IN"

Virtual Groups

Virtual groups are now common in academic, professional, and personal contexts, as classes meet entirely online, work teams interface using webinar or video-conferencing programs, and people connect around shared interests in a variety of online settings. Virtual groups are popular in professional contexts because they can bring together people who are geographically dispersed (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003, p. 163). Virtual groups also increase the possibility for the inclusion of diverse members. The ability to transcend distance means that people with diverse backgrounds and diverse perspectives are more easily accessed than in many offline groups.

One disadvantage of virtual groups stems from the difficulties that technological mediation presents for the relational and social dimensions of group interactions (Walther & Bunz, 2005, p. 830). An important part of coming together as a group is the socialization of group members into the desired norms of the group. Since norms are implicit, much of this information is learned through observation or conveyed informally from one group member to another. In fact, in traditional groups, group members *passively* acquire 50 percent or more of their knowledge about group norms and procedures, meaning they observe rather than directly ask (Comer, 1991). Virtual groups experience more difficulty with this part than copresent traditional groups do, since any form of electronic mediation takes away some of the richness present in face-to-face interaction.

To overcome these challenges, members of virtual groups should be prepared to put more time and effort into building the relational dimensions of their group. Members of virtual groups need to make the social cues that guide new members' socialization more explicit than they would in an offline group (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003, p. 163). Group members should also contribute often, even if just supporting someone else's contribution, because increased participation has been shown to increase liking among members of virtual groups (Walther & Bunz, 2005, p. 830). Virtual group members should also make an effort to put relational content that might otherwise be conveyed through nonverbal or contextual means into the verbal part of a message, as members who include little social content in their messages or communicate only about the group's task are more negatively evaluated. Virtual groups who do not overcome these challenges will likely struggle to meet deadlines, interact less frequently, and experience more absenteeism. Here are some guidelines to help optimize virtual groups (Walter & Bunz, 2005):

- Start interacting as a group as early as possible, since it takes longer to build social cohesion.
- Interact frequently to stay on task and avoid having work build up.
- Start working toward completing the task while initial communications about setup, organization, and procedures are taking place.
- Respond overtly to other people's messages and contributions.
- Be explicit about your reactions and thoughts, since typical nonverbal expressions may not be received as easily in virtual groups as they would be in colocated groups.
- Set deadlines and stick to them.

Test your understanding:

1. Make a list of some virtual groups to which you currently belong/ to which you have belonged in the past. What are some differences between your experiences in virtual groups versus traditional colocated groups?
2. What are some group tasks or purposes that you think lend themselves to being accomplished in a virtual setting? What are some group tasks or purposes that you think would be best handled in a traditional colocated setting? Explain your answers for each.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF SMALL GROUPS

Advantages of small groups include shared decision making, shared resources, synergy, and exposure to diversity.

It is within small groups that most of the decisions that guide our country, introduce local laws, and influence our family interactions are made. In a democratic society, participation in decision making is a key part of citizenship. Groups also help in making decisions involving judgment calls that have ethical implications or the potential to negatively affect people. Individuals making such high-stakes decisions in a vacuum could make serious, consequential mistakes given the lack of feedback, input, questioning, and proposals for alternatives that would come from group interaction. Group members also help expand our social networks, providing access to more resources. A local community-theater group may be able to put on a production with a limited budget by drawing on these connections to get set-building supplies, props, costumes, actors, and publicity in ways that an individual could not.

The increased knowledge, diverse perspectives, and access to resources that groups possess support group **synergy** — that is, the potential for gains in performance or heightened quality of interactions when complementary members or member characteristics are added to existing ones (Larson Jr., 2010). Because of synergy, the final group product can be better than what any individual could have produced alone.

Participating in groups can also increase our exposure to diversity and broaden our perspectives. Although groups vary in the diversity of their members, we can strategically choose groups that expand our diversity, or we can unintentionally end up in a diverse group. When we participate in small groups, we expand our social networks, which increase the possibility to interact with people who have different cultural identities than we do. Since group members work together toward a common goal, shared identification with the task or group can give people with diverse backgrounds a sense of commonality that they might not have otherwise. Even when group members share cultural identities, the diversity of experience and opinion within a group can lead to broadened perspectives as alternative ideas are presented and opinions are challenged and defended. People who are more introverted or just avoid group communication and voluntarily distance themselves from groups—or are rejected from groups—risk losing opportunities to learn more about others and themselves.

A social loafer is a dreaded group member who doesn't do his or her share of the work, expecting that others on the group won't notice or will pick up the slack. Henry Burrows – Sleeping On The Job – CC BY-SA 2.0.

There are also disadvantages to small group interaction. In some cases, one person can be just as or more effective than a group of people. Think about a situation in which a highly specialized skill or knowledge is needed to get something done. In this situation, one very knowledgeable person is probably a better fit for the task than a group of less knowledgeable people. Group interaction also has a tendency to slow down the decision-making process. Individuals connected through a hierarchy or chain of command often work better in situations where decisions must be made under time constraints. When group interaction does occur under time constraints, having one "point person" or leader who coordinates action and gives final approval or disapproval on ideas or suggestions for actions is best.

Group communication also presents interpersonal challenges. A common problem is coordinating and planning group meetings due to busy and conflicting schedules. Some people also have difficulty with the other-centeredness and self-sacrifice that some groups require. The interdependence of group members that we discussed earlier can also create some disadvantages. Group members may take advantage of the anonymity of a group and engage in **social loafing**, meaning they contribute less to the group than other members or than they would if working alone (Karau & Williams, 1993, p. 681). Social loafers expect that no one will notice their behaviors or that others will do their work. It is this potential for social loafing that makes many students and professionals dread group work, especially those who have a tendency to cover for other group members to prevent the social loafer from diminishing the group's productivity or output.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING COMPETENT"

Improving Your Group Experiences

Increasing your knowledge about group communication and group dynamics can help you improve your group communication experiences. Meeting often with your group helps, too (Myers & Goodboy, 2005, p. 385). Regular meetings allow members to interact with each other, which can increase social bonds, build a sense of interdependence that can help diminish social loafing, and establish other important rules and norms that will guide future group interaction. Instead of committing to frequent meetings, many student groups use their first meeting to equally divide up the group's tasks so they can then work alone (not as a group). While some group work can definitely be done independently, dividing up the work and assigning someone to put it all together doesn't allow group members to take advantage of one of the most powerful advantages of group work—synergy.

Always establish group expectations and follow through with them. For instance, come up with a group name and create a group contract with clear guidelines during the first meeting. The group name helps to establish a shared identity, which then contributes to interdependence and improves performance. The contract is even more important, as it makes explicit the group norms that might have otherwise been left implicit. Each group member should contribute to the contract and then all must sign it. Groups often make guidelines about how meetings will be run, what to do about lateness and attendance, the type of climate they'd like for discussion, timelines for answering messages from other group members, deadlines for deliverables, etc. If group members fail to meet these expectations, the other group members can remind the straying member of the contact and the fact that he/ she signed it. If the group encounters further issues, they can use the contract as a basis for evaluating the other group member or for communicating with the instructor/ supervisor.

1. Acknowledging that schedules are difficult to coordinate and that everyone is busy all the time, what are some strategies that you could use to overcome that challenge in order to get time together as a group?
2. What are some guidelines that you think you'd like to include in your contract with a future group?

Key Takeaways

Getting integrated: Small group communication refers to interactions among three or more people who are connected through a common purpose, mutual influence, and a shared identity. Small groups are important communication units in academic, professional, civic, and personal contexts.

- Several characteristics influence small groups, including size, structure, interdependence, and shared identity.
    - In terms of size, small groups must consist of at least three people, but there is no set upper limit on the number of group members. The ideal number of group members is the smallest number needed to competently complete the group's task or achieve the group's purpose.
    - Internal influences such as member characteristics and external factors such as the group's size, task, and access to resources affect a group's structure. A group's structure also affects how group members communicate, as some structures are more centralized and hierarchical and other structures are more decentralized and equal.
    - Groups are interdependent in that they have a shared purpose and a shared fate, meaning that each group member's actions affect every other group member.
    - Groups develop a shared identity based on their task or purpose, previous accomplishments, future goals, and an identity that sets their members apart from other groups.
- Small groups serve several functions as they meet instrumental, interpersonal, and identity needs.
    - Groups meet instrumental needs, as they allow us to pool resources and provide access to information to better help us survive and succeed.
    - Groups meet interpersonal needs, as they provide a sense of belonging (inclusion), an opportunity to participate in decision making and influence others (control), and emotional support.
    - Groups meet identity needs, as they offer us a chance to affiliate ourselves with others whom we perceive to be like us or whom we admire and would like to be associated with.
- There are various types of groups, including task-oriented and relational-oriented groups.
    - Task-oriented groups are formed to solve a problem, promote a cause, or generate ideas or information, while relational-oriented groups are formed to promote interpersonal connections. While there are elements of both in every group, the overall purpose of a group can usually be categorized as primarily task or relational oriented.
    - Teams are similar to task-oriented groups, but they are characterized by a high degree of loyalty and dedication to the group's task and to other group members (a typical characteristic of relational-oriented

groups).

- Advantages of group communication include shared decision making, shared resources, synergy, and exposure to diversity. Disadvantages of group communication include unnecessary group formation (when the task would be better performed by one person), difficulty coordinating schedules, and difficulties with accountability and social loafing.

Exercises

1. Getting integrated: For each of the follow examples of a small group context, indicate what you think would be the ideal size of the group and why. Also indicate who the ideal group members would be (in terms of their occupation/major, role, level of expertise, or other characteristics) and what structure would work best.
   - A study group for this class
   - A committee to decide on library renovation plans
   - An upper-level college class in your major
   - A group to advocate for more awareness of and support for abandoned animals
2. List some groups to which you have belonged that focused primarily on tasks and then list some that focused primarily on relationships. Compare and contrast your experiences in these groups.
3. Synergy is one of the main advantages of small group communication. Explain a time when a group you were in benefited from or failed to achieve synergy. What contributed to your success/failure?

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16.2: SMALL GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the process of group development.
2. Discuss the characteristics of each stage of group development.

In this section, we will learn about the stages of group development, which are forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). As with most models of communication phenomena, although we order the stages and discuss them separately, they are not always experienced in a linear fashion. Additionally, some groups don't experience all five stages, may experience stages multiple times, or may experience more than one stage at a time.

FORMING

During the **forming** stage, group members begin to reduce uncertainty associated with new relationships and/or new tasks through initial interactions that lay the foundation for later group dynamics. Groups return to the forming stage as group members come and go over the life span of a group. Although there may not be as much uncertainty when one or two new people join a group as there is when a group first forms, groups spend some time in the forming stage every time group membership changes.

Given that interpersonal bonds are likely not yet formed and people are unfamiliar with the purpose of the group or task at hand, there are high levels of uncertainty. Early stages of role negotiation begin and members begin to determine goals for the group and establish rules and norms. Group cohesion also begins to form during this stage. **Group cohesion** refers to the commitment of members to the purpose of the group and the degree of attraction among individuals within the group (Hargie, 2011, p. 445). The cohesion that begins in this stage sets the group on a trajectory influenced by group members' feelings about one another and their purpose or task. Groups with voluntary membership may exhibit high levels of optimism about what the group can accomplish. Although the optimism can be motivating, unrealistic expectations can lead to disappointment, making it important for group members to balance optimism with realism. Groups with assigned or mandatory membership may include members that carry some degree of resentment toward the group itself or the goals of the group. These members can lessen or make difficult group cohesiveness. Groups can still be successful if these members are balanced out by others who are more committed to and positive in regards to the purpose of the group.

The personalities of the individuals in the group, the skills that members bring, the resources available to the group, the group's size, and the group's charge all contribute to the creation of the early tone of and climate within a group (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p. 14). For example, more dominant personalities may take early leadership roles in the group that can affect subsequent decisions. Group members' diverse skill sets and access to resources can also influence the early stages of role differentiation. In terms of size, the bonding that begins in the forming stage becomes difficult when the number of people within the group prevents every person from having a one-on-one connection with every other member of the group. Also, in larger groups, more dominant members tend to assert themselves as leaders and build smaller coalitions within the group, which can start the group on a trajectory toward more conflict during the upcoming storming stage (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p. 14).

When a group receives an external charge, meaning that the goal or purpose of the group is decided by people outside the group, there may be less uncertainty related to the task dimensions of the group. Additionally, decisions about what roles people will play, including group leaders, and other decisions about the workings of the group may come from the outside, which reduces some of the uncertainty inherent in the forming stage. Relational uncertainty can also be diminished when group members have preexisting relationships or familiarity with each other. Although the decreased uncertainty may be beneficial at this stage, too much imposed structure from the outside can create resentment or a feeling of powerlessness among group members. A manageable amount of uncertainty can actually support group cohesion and productivity.

STORMING

During the **storming** stage of group development, conflict emerges as people begin to perform their roles, communicate ideas, and negotiate their place in the group's structure. The uncertainty present in the forming stage recedes as people begin to occupy specific roles and the purpose, rules, and norms of a group become clearer. Conflict develops when some group members are not satisfied with the role that they or others are playing or the decisions regarding the purpose or procedures of the group. For example, if a leader begins to emerge or is assigned during the forming stage, some members may feel that the leader is imposing his/her will on other members. As we will learn in our section on group leadership, leaders should expect some degree of resentment from others who wanted to be the leader, have interpersonal conflicts with the leader, or just dislike being led.

Although the word *storming* and the concept of conflict have negative connotations, conflict can be positive and productive. Conflict is inevitable and should be experienced by every group, but a group that gets stuck at the storming stage will likely not have much success in completing its task or achieving its purpose. Influences from outside the group can also affect the conflict in the storming stage. Interpersonal conflicts that predate the formation of the group may distract the group from the more productive idea- or task-oriented type of conflict that can be healthy for the group and increase the quality of ideas, decision making, and output.

Although we often have negative connotations of storming and conflict, the group conflict that happens in this stage can be productive. Benjamen Benson – Lightning Storm – CC BY 2.0.

NORMING

During the **norming** stage of group development, the practices and expectations of the group are solidified, which leads to more stability, productivity, and cohesion within the group. Group norms are behaviors that become routine but are not explicitly taught or stated. In short, group norms set the tone for what group members ought to do and how they ought to behave (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Many implicit norms are derived from social norms that people follow in their everyday life. Norms within the group about politeness, lateness, and communication patterns are typically similar to those in other contexts. Sometimes a norm needs to be challenged because it is not working for the group, which could lead a group back to the storming stage. Other times, group members challenge norms for no good reason, which can lead to punishment for the group member or create conflict within the group.

At this stage, there is a growing consensus among group members as to the roles that each person will play, the way group interactions will typically play out, and the direction of the group. Leaders that began to emerge have typically gained the support of other group members, and group identity begins to solidify. The group may now be recognizable by those on the outside, as slogans, branding, or patterns of interaction become associated with the group. This stage of group development is key for the smooth operation of the group. Norms bring a sense of predictability and stability that can allow a group to move on to the performing stage of group development. Norms can also bring with them conformity pressures that can be positive or negative. In general, people accept a certain amount of pressure to conform out of a drive to avoid being abnormal — a natural part of our social interaction (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p. 14). Too much pressure, however, can lead people to feel isolated and can create a negative group climate. We will learn more about pressure as a group dynamic later in this chapter.

Explicit rules may also guide group interaction. Rules are explicitly stated guidelines for members and may refer to expected performance levels or output, attitudes, or dress codes. Rules may be communicated through verbal instructions, employee handbooks, membership policies, or codes of conduct (Hargie, 2011, p. 445). Groups can even use procedures like Robert's Rules of Order to manage the flow of conversations and decision-making procedures. Group members can contest or subvert group rules just as they can norms. Violations of group rules, however, typically result in more explicit punishments than do violations of norms.

PERFORMING

During the **performing** stage of group development, group members work relatively smoothly toward the completion of a task or achievement of a purpose. Although interactions in the performing stage are task focused, the relational aspects of group interaction provide an underlying support for the group members. Socialization outside of official group time can serve as a needed relief from the group's task. During task-related interactions, group members ideally begin to develop a synergy that results from the pooling of skills, ideas, experiences, and resources. Synergy is positive in that it can lead group members to exceed their expectations and perform better than they could individually. Glitches in the group's performance can lead the group back to previous stages of group development. Changes in membership, member roles, or norms can necessitate a revisiting of aspects of the forming, storming, or norming stages.

One way to continue to build group cohesion during the performing stage is to set short-term attainable group goals. Accomplishing something, even if it's small, can boost group morale, which in turn boosts cohesion and productivity.

ADJOURNING

The **adjourning** stage of group development occurs when a group dissolves because it has completed its purpose or goal, membership is declining and support for the group no longer exists, or it is dissolved because of some other internal or external cause. Some groups may live on indefinitely and not experience the adjourning stage. Other groups may experience so much conflict in the storming stage that they skip norming and performing and dissolve before they can complete their task. For groups with high social cohesion, adjourning may be a difficult emotional experience. However, group members may continue interpersonal relationships that formed even after the group dissolves. For groups that had negative experiences, the adjourning stage may be welcomed.

To make the most out of the adjourning stage, it is important that there be some guided and purposeful reflection. Many groups celebrate their accomplishments with a party or ceremony. Even groups that had negative experiences or failed to achieve their purpose can still learn something through reflection in the adjourning stage that may prove beneficial for future group interactions. Often, group members leave a group experience with new or more developed skills that can be usefully applied in future group or individual contexts. Even groups that are relational rather than task focused can increase members' interpersonal, listening, or empathetic skills or increase cultural knowledge and introduce new perspectives.

Key Takeaways

- The five stages of group development include forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Some groups go through each stage of development in a progressive and linear fashion, while other groups may get stuck in a stage, skip a stage, or experience a stage multiple times.

  1. **During the forming stage**, group members engage in socially polite exchanges to help reduce uncertainty and gain familiarity with new members. Even though their early interactions may seem unproductive, they lay the groundwork for cohesion and other group dynamics that will play out more prominently in later stages.
  2. **During the storming stage**, conflict emerges as group members begin to perform their roles, have their ideas heard, and negotiate their place in the group's structure. Conflict is inevitable and important as a part of group development and can be productive if it is managed properly.
  3. **During the norming stage**, the practices and expectations (norms and rules) of the group are solidified, which leads to more stability, productivity, and cohesion within the group.
  4. **During the performing stage**, group members work relatively smoothly toward the completion of a task or the achievement of their purpose, ideally capitalizing on the synergy that comes from the diverse experiences group members bring to the decision-making process.
  5. **During the adjourning stage**, a group dissolves because its purpose has been met, because membership has declined or the group has lost support, or due to some other internal or external cause. It is important that groups reflect on the life of the group to learn any relevant lessons and celebrate accomplishments.

Exercise

1. Recall a previous or current small group to which you belonged/belong. Trace the group's development using the five stages discussed in this section. Did you experience all the stages? In what order? Did you stay in some stages more than others?
2. During the norming stage of group development, interaction patterns and group expectations solidify. Recall a current or former group. What were some of the norms for the group? What were some rules? How did you

become aware of each?
3. Many people don't think about the importance of the adjourning stage. What do you think is the best way to complete the adjourning stage for a group that was successful and cohesive? What about for a group that was unsuccessful and not cohesive?

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16.3: SMALL GROUP DYNAMICS

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the relationship between group cohesion and group climate.
2. Describe the process of group member socialization.
3. Explain the relationship between conformity and groupthink.
4. Define various types of group conflict and identify strategies for managing each type.

Any time a group of people come together, new dynamics are put into place that differ from the dynamics present in our typical dyadic interactions. The impressions we form about other people's likeability and the way we think about a group's purpose are affected by the climate within a group that is created by all members. Groups also develop norms, and new group members are socialized into a group's climate and norms just as we are socialized into larger social and cultural norms in our everyday life. The pressure to conform to norms becomes more powerful in group situations, and some groups take advantage of these forces, with positive and negative results. Last, the potential for productive and destructive conflict increases as multiple individuals come together to accomplish a task or achieve a purpose. This section explores the dynamics mentioned previously in order to better prepare you for future professional group interactions.

GROUP COHESION AND CLIMATE

Group climate refers to the relatively enduring tone and quality of group interaction that is experienced similarly by group members. To better understand cohesion and climate, we can examine two types of cohesion: task and social.

Task cohesion refers to the commitment of group members to the purpose and activities of the group. **Social cohesion** refers to the attraction and liking among group members. Ideally, groups would have an appropriate balance between these two types of cohesion relative to the group's purpose, with task-oriented groups having higher task cohesion and relational-oriented groups having higher social cohesion. Even the most task-focused groups need some degree of social cohesion, and vice versa, but the balance will be determined by the purpose of the group and the individual members. For example, a team of workers from the local car dealership may join a local summer softball league because they're good friends and love the game. They may end up beating the team of faculty members from the community college who joined the league just to get to know each other better and have an excuse to get together and drink beer in the afternoon. In this example, the players from the car dealership exhibit high social and task cohesion, while the faculty exhibit high social but low task cohesion.

Cohesion benefits a group in many ways and can be assessed through specific group behaviors and characteristics. Groups with an appropriate level of cohesiveness (Hargie, 2011, p. 445) have the following characteristics:

- set goals easily;
- exhibit a high commitment to achieving the purpose of the group;
- are more productive;
- experience fewer attendance issues;
- have group members who are willing to stick with the group during times of difficulty;
- have satisfied group members who identify with, promote, and defend the group;
- have members who are willing to listen to each other and offer support and constructive criticism; and
- experience less anger and tension.

Appropriate levels of group cohesion usually create a positive group climate, since group climate is affected by members' satisfaction with the group. Climate has also been described as group morale. Following are some qualities that contribute to a positive group climate and morale (Marston & Hecht, 1988):

- **Participation.** Group members feel better when they feel included in discussion and a part of the functioning of the group.
- **Messages.** Confirming messages help build relational dimensions within a group, and clear, organized, and relevant messages help build task dimensions within a group.
- **Feedback.** Positive, constructive, and relevant feedback contribute to group climate.
- **Equity.** Aside from individual participation, group members also like to feel as if participation is managed equally within the group and that appropriate turn taking is used.
- **Clear and accepted roles.** Group members like to know how status and hierarchy operate within a group. That is not enough to lead to satisfaction, though—members must also be comfortable with and accept those roles.
- **Motivation.** Member motivation is activated by the perceived connection to and relevance of the group's goals and purpose.

Group cohesion and climate is also demonstrated through symbolic convergence (Bormann, 1985). **Symbolic convergence** refers to the sense of community or group consciousness that develops in a group through non-task-related communication such as stories and jokes. The originator of symbolic convergence theory, Ernest Bormann, claims that the sharing of group fantasies creates symbolic convergence. *Fantasy*, in this sense, doesn't refer to fairy tales, sexual desire, or untrue things. In group communication, **group fantasies** are verbalized references to events outside the "here and now" of the group, including references to the group's past, predictions for the future, or other communication about people or events outside the group (Griffin, 2009, p. 28). These are "fantasies" in the sense that group members begin to perceive them in ways that may be group-specific and not entirely objective.

Cohesion and shared identity help create symbolic convergence as group members develop a group identity and shared social reality. Ram K – Watching the big game – CC BY-NC 2.0.

In any group, you can tell when symbolic convergence is occurring by observing how people sharestories and how group members react to them. If group members react positively and agree with or appreciate the teller's effort or other group members are triggered to tell their own related stories, then convergence is happening and cohesion and climate are being established. Over time, these fantasies build a shared vision of the group and what it means to be a member that creates a shared group consciousness. By reviewing and applying the concepts in this section, you can hopefully identify potential difficulties with group cohesion and work to enhance cohesion when needed in order to create more positive group climates and enhance your future group interactions.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING REAL"

Working in Teams

Although many college students hate working in groups, in the "real world" working in teams is a regular part of professional expectations. Following Japan's lead, corporations in the United States began adopting a more team-based approach for project management decades ago (Jain et al., 2008, p. 145). This model has become increasingly popular in various organizational settings since then as a means to increase productivity and reduce bureaucracy.

Teams in the workplace have horizontally expanded the traditional vertical hierarchy of organizations, as the aim of creating these teams was to produce smaller units within an organization that are small enough to be efficient and self-manageable but large enough to create the synergy that we discussed in the earlier part of the chapter.

Aside from efficiency, teams are also valued for the potential for innovation. The strategic pooling of people with diverse knowledge, experience, and skills can lead to synergistic collaborative thinking that produces new knowledge (du Chatenier et al., 2010, p. 271). This potential for innovation makes teams ideal in high-stakes situations where money, contracts, or lives are at stake. Large corporations are now putting together what has been termed *interorganizational high-performance research and development teams* consisting of highly trained technical and scientific experts from diverse backgrounds to work collectively and simultaneously on complex projects under very challenging conditions (Daniel & Davis, 2009). In markets where companies race to find the next generation of technological improvement, such research and development teams are critical for an organization's success. Research on such teams in real-world contexts has found that in order to be successful, high-performance teams should have a clear base such as a project mission, a leader who strategically assigns various tasks to members based on their specialized expertise, and shared leadership in which individual experts are trusted to make decisions relevant to their purview within the group. Although these high-performance teams are very task oriented, research has also found that the social element cannot be ignored, even under extreme internal and external pressures. In fact, cohesion and interdependence help create a shared reality that in turn improves productivity, because team members feel a sense of shared ownership over their charge (Solansky, 2011, p. 250).

Some challenges associated with working in teams include the potential for uncertainty or conflict due to the absence of traditional hierarchy, pressures that become overwhelming, lack of shared history since such teams are usually future oriented, and high expectations without resources necessary to complete the task (du Chatenier et al., 2010, p. 271). To overcome these challenges, team members can think positively but realistically about the team's end goal, exhibit trust in the expertise of other team members, be reliable and approachable to help build a good team spirit, take initiative with actions and ideas, ask critical questions, and provide critical but constructive feedback.

Self-reflection and critical thinking questions:

1. Given your career goals, what sorts of teamwork do you think you might engage in?
2. Would you welcome the opportunity to work on a high-performance team? Why or why not?
3. Members of teams are often under intense pressures to produce or perform at high levels. What is the line at which the pressure becomes too much? Ethically, how far should companies push teams and how far should team members go to complete a task?

SOCIALIZING GROUP MEMBERS

Group socialization refers to the process of teaching and learning the norms, rules, and expectations associated with group interaction and group member behaviors. Group norms, rules, and cohesion can only be created and maintained through socialization (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003). It is also through socialization that a shared identity and social reality develops among group members, but this development is dependent on several factors. For example, groups with higher levels of cohesion are more likely to have members that "buy into" rules and norms, which aids in socialization. The need for socialization also changes throughout a group's life span. If membership in a group is stable, long-term members should not need much socialization. However, when new members join a group, existing members must take time to engage in socialization. When a totally new group is formed, socialization will be an ongoing process as group members negotiate rules and procedures, develop norms, and create a shared history over time.

The information exchanged during socialization can be broken down into two general categories: technical and social knowledge (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003, p.163). Technical knowledge focuses on skills and information needed to complete a task, and social knowledge focuses on behavioral norms that guide interaction. Each type of information is usually conveyed through a combination of formal and informal means. Technical knowledge can be fairly easily passed along through orientations, trainings, manuals, and documents, because this content is often fairly straightforward. Social knowledge is more ambiguous and is usually conveyed through informal means or passively learned by new members through observation. To return to our earlier terminology, technical knowledge relates more to group rules and social knowledge relates more to group norms.

Companies and social organizations socialize new members in different ways. A new training cohort at an established company may be given technical rule-based information in the form of a manual and a history of the organization and an overview of the organizational culture to help convey social knowledge about group norms. Members of some small groups like fraternities or professional organizations have to take pledges or oaths that may convey a mixture of technical and social knowledge. Social knowledge may be conveyed in interactions that are separate from official group time. For example, literally socializing as a group is a good way to socialize group members. Many large and successful businesses encourage small groups within the company to socialize outside of work time in order to build cohesion and group solidarity. Those companies can thus reap productivity benefits from something employees do on their "free" time.

Socialization continues after initial membership through the enforcement of rules and norms. When someone deviates from the rules and norms and is corrected, it serves as a reminder for all other members and performs a follow-up socializing function. Since rules are explicitly stated and documented, deviation from the rules can have consequences ranging from verbal warnings, to temporary or permanent separation from the group, to fines or other sanctions. And although norms are implicit, deviating from them can still have consequences. Even though someone may not actually verbally correct the deviation, the self-consciousness, embarrassment, or awkwardness that can result from such deviations is often enough to initiate corrective actions. Group norms can be so implicit that they are taken for granted and operate under group members' awareness.

Group rules and norms provide members with a sense of predictability that helps reduce uncertainty and increase a sense of security for one's place within the group. They also guide group members' involvement with the group, help create a shared social reality, and allow the group to function in particular ways without having actual people constantly educating, monitoring, and then correcting member behaviors (Hargie, 2011, p. 445). Of course, the degree to which this is successful depends on the buy-in from group members.

GROUP PRESSURES

There must be some kind of motivating force present within groups in order for the rules and norms to help govern and guide a group. Without such pressure, group members would have no incentive to conform to group norms or buy into the group's identity and values. In this section, we discuss how rules and norms gain their power through internal and external pressures and how these pressures can have positive and negative effects.

Even though group members are different, failure to conform to the group's identity could create problems. Airwolfhound – Odd one out – CC BY-SA 2.0.

CONFORMITY

In general, some people are more likely to accept norms and rules than others, which can influence the interaction and potential for conflict within a group. While some people may feel a need for social acceptance that leads them to accept a norm or rule with minimal conformity pressure, others may actively resist because they have a valid disagreement or because they have an aggressive or argumentative personality (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p. 133). Such personality traits are examples of internal pressures that operate within the individual group member and act as a self-governing mechanism. When group members discipline themselves and monitor their own behavior, groups need not invest in as many external mechanisms to promote conformity. Deviating from the group's rules and norms that a member internalized during socialization can lead to self-imposed feelings of guilt or shame that can then initiate corrective behaviors and discourage the member from going against the group.

External pressures in the form of group policies, rewards or punishments, or other forces outside of individual group members also exert conformity pressure. In terms of group policies, groups that have an official admission process may have a probation period during which new members' membership is contingent on them conforming to group expectations. Deviation from expectations during this "trial period" could lead to expulsion from the group. Supervisors, mentors, and other types of group leaders are also agents that can impose external pressures toward conformity. These group members often have the ability to provide positive or negative reinforcement in the form of praise or punishment, which are clear attempts to influence behavior.

Conformity pressure can also stem from external forces when the whole group stands to receive a reward or punishment based on its performance, which ties back to the small group characteristic of interdependence. Although these pressures may seem negative, they also have positive results. Groups that exert an appropriate and ethical amount of conformity pressure typically have higher levels of group cohesion, which, as we learned, leads to increased satisfaction with group membership, better relationships, and better task performance. Groups with a strong but healthy level of conformity also project a strong group image to those outside the group, which can raise the group's profile or reputation (Hargie, 2011, p. 445). Pressures toward conformity, of course, can go too far, as is evidenced in tragic stories of people driven to suicide because they felt they couldn't live up to the conformity pressure of their group and people injured or killed enduring hazing rituals that take expectations for group conformity to unethical and criminal extremes.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING CRITICAL"

Hazing: Taking Conformity Pressures to the Extreme

Hazing can be defined as actions expected to be performed by aspiring or new members of a group that are irrelevant to the group's activities or mission and are humiliating, degrading, abusive, or dangerous (Richardson, Wang, & Hall, 2012). People who have participated in hazing or have been hazed often note that hazing activities are meant to build group identification and unity. Scholars note that hazing is rationalized because of high conformity pressures and that people who were hazed internalize the group's practices and are more likely to perpetuate hazing, creating a cycle of abuse (Campo, Poulos, & Sipple, 2005). Hazing is not new; it has been around in academic and athletic settings since ancient Greece, but it has gotten much attention lately on college campuses as the number of student deaths attributed to hazing behaviors has increased steadily over the past years. In general, it is believed that hazing incidents are underreported, because these activities are done in secret within tightly knit organizations such as fraternities, sororities, and athletic teams that have strong norms of conformity (Richardson, Wang, & Hall, 2012, p. 193).

The urge to belong is powerful, but where is the line when it comes to the actions people take or what people are willing to endure in order to be accepted? Hazing is meant to have aspiring group members prove their worth or commitment to the group. Examples of hazing include, but aren't limited to, being "kidnapped, transported, and abandoned"; drinking excessively in games or contests; sleep deprivation; engaging in or simulating sexual acts; being physically abused; being required to remain silent; wearing unusual clothes or costumes; or acting in a subservient manner to more senior group members (Campo, Poulos, & Supple, 2005, p. 138; Cimino, 2011, p. 235). Research has found that people in leadership roles, who are more likely to have strong group identification, are also more likely to engage in hazing activities (Campo, Poulos, & Sipple, 2005, p. 138). The same research also found that group members who have supportive friends outside of the organization are more likely to remove themselves from a hazing situation, which points to the fact that people who endure hazing may be doing so out of a strong drive to find the acceptance and belonging they do not have elsewhere.

Critical thinking questions:

1. What is your definition of hazing? When does something cross the line from a rite of passage or tradition to hazing?
2. What are some internal and external pressures that might lead to hazing activities?
3. Do some research on hazing incidents on college campuses. What concepts from this chapter do you think could be used in anti-hazing education campaigns to prevent incidents like the ones you researched?

GROUPTHINK

Groupthink is a negative group phenomenon characterized by a lack of critical evaluation of proposed ideas or courses of action that results from high levels of cohesion and/or high conformity pressures (Janis, 1972). We can better understand groupthink by examining its causes and effects. When group members fall victim to groupthink, the effect is uncritical acceptance of decisions or suggestions for plans of action to accomplish a task or goal. Group meetings that appear to go smoothly with only positive interaction among happy, friendly people may seem ideal, but these actions may be symptomatic of groupthink (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p.133). When people rush to agreement or fear argument, groupthink has a tendency to emerge. Decisions made as a result of groupthink may range from a poorly-thought-out presentation method that bores the audience to a mechanical failure resulting in death.

Two primary causes of groupthink are high levels of cohesion and excessive conformity pressures. When groups exhibit high levels of social cohesion, members may be reluctant to criticize or question another group member's ideas or suggestions for fear that it would damage the relationship. When group members have a high level of task cohesion, they may feel invincible and not critically evaluate ideas. High levels of cohesion may actually lessen conformity pressures since group members who identify strongly with the group's members and mission may not feel a need to question the decisions or suggestions made by others. For those who aren't blinded by the high levels of cohesion, internal conformity pressures may still lead them to withhold criticism of an idea because the norm is to defer to decisions made by organization leaders or a majority of group members. External conformity pressures because of impending reward or punishment, time pressures, or an aggressive leader are also factors that can lead to groupthink.

According to Hargie (2011, p. 445), to avoid groupthink, groups should do the following:

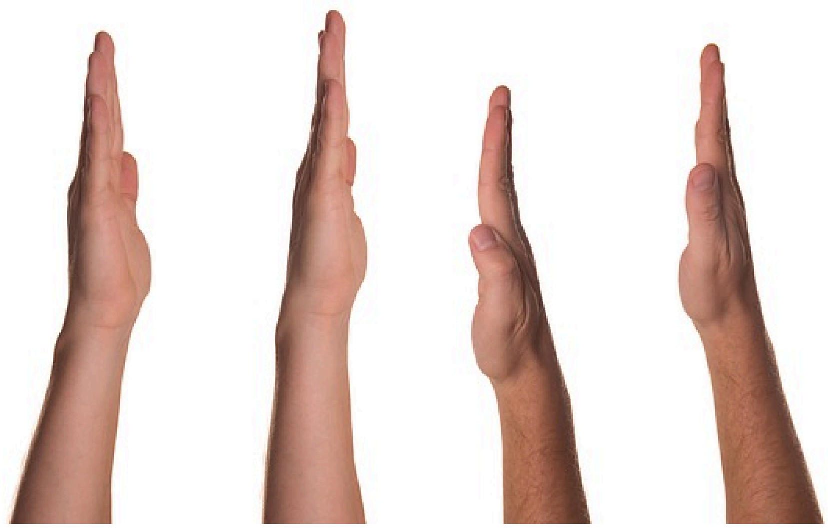
- Divvy up responsibilities between group members so decision-making power isn't in the hands of a few
- Track contributions of group members in such a way that each person's input and output is recorded so that it can be discussed
- Encourage and reward the expression of minority or dissenting opinions
- Allow members to submit ideas prior to a discussion so that opinions aren't swayed by members who propose ideas early in a discussion
- Question each major decision regarding its weaknesses and potential negative consequences relative to competing decisions (encourage members to play "devil's advocate")
- Have decisions reviewed by an outside party that wasn't involved in the decision-making process
- Have a "reflection period" after a decision is made and before it is implemented, during which group members can express reservations or second thoughts about the decision

GROUP CONFLICT

Conflict can appear in indirect or direct forms within group interaction, just as it can in interpersonal interactions. Group members may openly question each other's ideas or express anger toward or dislike for another person. Group members may also indirectly engage in conflict communication through innuendo, joking, or passive-aggressive behavior. Although we often view conflict negatively, conflict can be beneficial for many reasons. When groups get into a rut, lose creativity, or become complacent, conflict can help get a group out of a bad or mediocre routine. Conversely, conflict can lead to lower group productivity due to strain on the task and social dimensions of a group. There are three main types of conflict within groups: procedural, substantive, and interpersonal (Fujishin, 2001, pp. 160-61). Each of these types of conflict can vary in intensity, which can affect how much the conflict impacts the group and its members.

PROCEDURAL CONFLICT

Procedural conflict emerges from disagreements or trouble with the mechanics of group operations. In this type of conflict, group members differ in their beliefs about *how* something should be done. Procedural conflict can be handled by a group leader, especially if the leader put group procedures into place or has the individual power to change them. If there is no designated leader or the leader doesn't have sole power to change procedures (or just wants input from group members), proposals can be taken from the group on ways to address a procedural conflict to initiate a procedural change. A vote to reach a consensus or majority can also help resolve procedural conflict.



Procedural conflict can often be resolved with a group vote. Pixabay – CC0 Public Domain.

SUBSTANTIVE CONFLICT

Substantive conflict focuses on group members' differing beliefs, attitudes, values, or ideas related to the purpose or task of the group. Rather than focusing on questions of *how*, substantive conflicts focus on questions of *what*. Substantive conflicts may emerge as a group tries to determine its purpose or mission. As members figure out how to complete a task or debate which project to start on next, there will undoubtedly be differences of opinion on what something means, what is acceptable in terms of supporting evidence for a proposal, or what is acceptable for a goal or performance standard. Leaders and other group members shouldn't rush to close this type of conflict down. As we learned in our earlier discussion of groupthink, open discussion and debate regarding ideas and suggestions for group action can lead to higher-quality output and may prevent groupthink. Leaders who make final decisions about substantive conflict for the sake of moving on run the risk of creating a win/lose competitive climate in which people feel like their ideas may be shot down, which could lead to less participation. To resolve this type of conflict, group members may want to do research to see what other groups have done in similar situations, as additional information often provides needed context for conflict regarding information and ideas. Once the information is gathered, weigh all proposals and try to discover common ground among perspectives. Civil and open discussions that debate the merits of an idea are more desirable than a climate in which people feel personally judged for their ideas.

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

Interpersonal conflict emerges from conflict between individual members of the group. Whereas procedural conflict deals with *how* and substantive conflict deals with *what*, interpersonal conflict deals with *who*. Such conflict can be completely irrelevant to the functioning or purpose of the group, perhaps focusing instead on personality differences. Interpersonal conflict can be the result of avoided or improperly handled procedural or substantive conflict that festers and becomes personal rather than task focused. This type of conflict can also result from differences in beliefs, attitudes, and values (when such differences are taken personally rather than substantively); different personalities; or different communication styles. While procedural and substantive conflict may be more easily expressed because these types of conflict do not directly address a person, interpersonal conflict may slowly build as people avoid openly criticizing or confronting others. Passive-aggressive behavior is a sign that interpersonal conflict may be building under the surface, and other group members may want to intervene to avoid escalation and retaliation. Leaders can also meet with people involved in interpersonal conflict privately to help them engage in perception checking and act as mediators, if needed. While people who initiate procedural or substantive conflict may be perceived by other group members as concerned about the group's welfare and seen as competent in their ability to notice areas on which the group could improve, people who initiate interpersonal conflict are often held in ill-regard by other group members (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p. 133).

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY TENSIONS

Relevant to these types of conflict are primary and secondary tensions that emerge in every group (Bormann & Borman, 1988, p. 72). When the group first comes together, members experience **primary tension**, which is tension based on uncertainty that is a natural part of initial interactions. It is only after group members begin to "break the ice" and get to know each other that the tension can be addressed and group members can proceed with the forming stage of group development. Small talk and politeness help group members manage primary tensions, and there is a relatively high threshold for these conflicts because we have all had experiences with such uncertainty when meeting people for the first time and many of us are optimistic that a little time and effort will allow us to get through the tensions. Since some people are more comfortable initiating conversation than others, it's important for more extroverted group members to include less talkative members. Intentionally or unintentionally excluding people during the negotiation of primary tensions can lead to serious secondary tensions later on. During this stage, people are also less direct in their communication, using more hedges and vague language than they will later in the group process. The indirect communication and small talk that characterize this part of group development aren't a waste of time, as they help manage primary tensions and lay the foundation for future interactions that may involve more substantive conflict.

Secondary tension emerges after groups have passed the forming stage of group development and begin to have conflict over member roles, differing ideas, and personality conflicts. These tensions are typically evidenced by less reserved and less polite behavior than primary tensions. People also have a lower tolerance threshold for secondary tensions, because rather than being an expected part of initial interaction, these conflicts can be more negative and interfere with the group's task performance. Secondary tensions are inevitable and shouldn't be feared or eliminated. It's not the presence or absence of secondary tension that makes a group successful or not; it's how it handles the tensions when they emerge. A certain level of secondary tension is tolerable, not distracting, and can actually enhance group performance and avoid groupthink. When secondary tensions rise above the tolerance threshold and become distracting, they should be released through direct means such as diplomatic confrontation or indirect means such as appropriate humor or taking a break. While primary tensions eventually disappear (at least until a new member arrives), secondary tensions will come and go and may persist for longer periods of time. For that reason, we will now turn to a discussion of how to manage conflict in group interaction.

MANAGING CONFLICT IN SMALL GROUPS

Some common ways to manage conflict include clear decision-making procedures, third-party mediation, and leader facilitation (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Decision making is discussed in more detail in Chapter 17 "Leadership, Roles, and Problem Solving in Groups", but commonly used methods such as majority vote can help or hurt conflict management efforts. While an up-and-down vote can allow a group to finalize a decision and move on, members whose vote fell on the minority side may feel resentment toward other group members. This can create a win/lose climate that leads to further conflict. Having a leader who makes ultimate decisions can also help move a group toward completion of a task, but conflict may only be pushed to the side and left not fully addressed. Third-party mediation can help move a group past a conflict and may create less feelings of animosity, since the person mediating and perhaps making a decision isn't a member of the group. In some cases, the leader can act as an internal third-party mediator to help other group members work productively through their conflict.

Tips for Managing Group Conflict (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p.133)

- Clarify the issue at hand by getting to the historical roots of the problem. Keep in mind that perception leads us to punctuate interactions differently, so it may be useful to know each person's perspective of when, how, and why the conflict began.

- Create a positive discussion climate by encouraging and rewarding active listening.
- Discuss needs rather than solutions. Determine each person's needs to be met and goals for the outcome of the conflict before offering or acting on potential solutions.
- Set boundaries for discussion and engage in gatekeeping to prevent unproductive interactions like tangents and personal attacks.
- Use "we" language to maintain existing group cohesion and identity, and use "I" language to help reduce defensiveness.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF CONFLICT

Remember that a complete lack of conflict in a group is a bad sign, as it indicates either a lack of activity or a lack of commitment on the part of the members (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Conflict, when properly handled, can lead a group to have a better understanding of the issues they face. For example, substantive conflict gives voice to alternative perspectives that may not have been heard otherwise. Additionally, when people view conflict as healthy, necessary, and productive, they can enter into a conflict episode with an open mind and an aim to learn something. This is especially true when those who initiate substantive conflict are able to share and defend their views in a competent and civil manner. Group cohesion can also increase as a result of well-managed conflict. Occasional experiences of tension and unrest followed by resolutions makes groups feel like they have accomplished something, which can lead them to not dread conflict and give them the confidence to more productively deal with it the next time.

Conflict that goes on for too long or is poorly handled can lead to decreased cohesiveness. Group members who try to avoid a conflict can still feel anger or frustration when the conflict drags on. Members who consistently take task-oriented conflict personally and escalate procedural or substantive conflict to interpersonal conflict are especially unpopular with other group members. Mishandled or chronic conflict can eventually lead to the destruction of a group or to a loss in members as people weigh the costs and rewards of membership (Ellis & Fisher, 1994, p. 133). Hopefully a skilled leader or other group members can take on conflict resolution roles, which we will discuss more in Chapter 17 "Leadership, Roles, and Problem Solving in Groups" in order to prevent these disadvantages of conflict.

Key Takeaways

- *Task cohesion* refers to the degree of commitment of group members to the purpose and activities of the group, and *social cohesion* refers to the degree of attraction and liking among group members. *Group climate* refers to the relatively enduring tone and quality of group interaction that is experienced similarly by group members. The degree of each type of cohesion affects the group's climate. Groups can be very close socially but not perform well if they do not have an appropriate level of task cohesion. Groups that are too focused on the task can experience interpersonal conflict or a lack of motivation if the social cohesion, which helps enhance the feeling of interdependence, is lacking.
- *Group socialization* refers to the process of teaching and learning the norms, rules, and expectations associated with group interaction and group member behaviors. Group members are socialized by receiving technical and social information. Cohesion plays a role in socialization, as groups that have high levels of task and social cohesion are more likely to buy into the norms of the group. Socialization continues after a member has joined, as members are officially or unofficially rewarded or punished for adhering to or deviating from the group's norms.
- Conformity pressures are an important force behind group socialization. Internal pressures such as an internal drive to be seen as part of the group or to avoid feeling ashamed or guilty for deviating from the group can influence behavior and communication. Likewise, external pressures such as group policies and the potential for reward or punishment also play into group dynamics. The pressures toward conformity can manifest in *groupthink*, which is characterized by a lack of critical evaluation of proposed ideas, a high level of agreement, and a fear of argument.
- Groups experience different kinds of conflict, including procedural, substantive, and interpersonal conflict.
    - Procedural conflict emerges from disagreements or trouble with the mechanics of group operations and deal with questions about "how" a group should do something. A leader may be able to resolve this conflict by changing or explaining a procedure or taking, from group members, proposals for or votes on procedural revisions.
    - Substantive conflict focuses on group members' differing beliefs, attitudes, values, or ideas related to the purpose or task of the group. Leaders and other group members should avoid closing off this type of conflict before people have had a chance to be heard, as a lack of substantive conflict can lead to groupthink. Instead, listen to all viewpoints, try to find common ground, and then weigh and evaluate the information as a group.
    - Interpersonal conflict emerges from personal conflict between individual members of a group. Manage interpersonal conflict by getting to the root cause of the conflict. In some cases, interpersonal conflict may be disguised as procedural or substantive conflict, or it may develop as a result of poorly managed procedural or substantive conflict. Leaders, group members not directly involved in the conflict, or even outside third parties may also be able to effectively mediate interpersonal conflict.

Exercises

1. **Group cohesion** and climate are important dynamics within a small group. Identify and then compare and

contrast a current or former small group that was cohesive and one that was not cohesive, including a discussion of how the presence or lack of cohesion affected the group's climate.

2. **Groupthink** is a negative group dynamic that relates to cohesion and conformity pressures. Several historic events with far-reaching and devastating implications have been analyzed through the lens of groupthink. Choose one of the following examples, and do some Internet research on your own. Then explain how groupthink played a role in the event.
    - The Watergate scandal and cover-up (1972–74)
    - The space shuttle Challenger explosion (1986)
    - The rationale for the invasion of Iraq—specifically the supposed existence of weapons of mass destruction (2001–2002)
3. **Getting integrated:** How might you handle group conflict differently in an academic context versus a professional context? Why? Include a reference to a specific type of conflict discussed in this section and discuss which conflict management strategies discussed in the chapter might be best in each context.

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16.4: CONFLICT IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the relationship between conflict and group cohesion in the work environment.
2. Describe various conflict management strategies.

Photo by Chris Sabor on Unsplash

The word "conflict" produces a sense of anxiety for many people, but it is part of the human experience. Conflict is universal, but that does not mean that we cannot improve how we handle disagreements, misunderstandings, and struggles to understand or make ourselves understood.

Conflict is the physical or psychological struggle associated with the perception of opposing or incompatible goals, desires, demands, wants, or needs (McLean, 2005). When incompatible goals, scarce resources, or interference are present, conflict is a typical result, but the presence of conflict does not indicate that the relationship is poor or failing. All relationships progress through times of conflict and collaboration. How we navigate and negotiate these challenges influences, reinforces, or destroys the relationship. Conflict is universal, but how and when it occurs is open to influence and interpretation. Rather than viewing conflict from a negative frame of reference, we should view it as an opportunity for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship.

Conflict Management Strategies

As professional communicators, we can acknowledge and anticipate that conflict will be present in every context or environment where communication occurs. To that end, we can predict, anticipate, and formulate strategies to address conflict successfully. How you choose to approach conflict influences its resolution. Joseph DeVito (2003) offers several conflict management strategies that we might adapt and expand for our use.

Avoidance

We may choose to change the subject, leave the room, or not even enter the room in the first place, but the conflict will remain and resurface when we least expect it. Our reluctance to address the conflict directly is a normal response, and one which many cultures prize. In cultures where independence is highly valued, direct confrontation is more common. In cultures where the community is emphasized over the individual, indirect strategies may be more common. Avoidance allows for more time to resolve the problem, but can also increase costs associated with the problem. Your organization or business will have policies and protocols to follow regarding conflict and redress, but it is always wise to consider the position of your conversational partners or opponents and to give them, as well as yourself, time to explore alternatives.

Defensiveness versus Supportiveness

Defensive communication is characterized by control, evaluation, and judgments, while supportive communication focuses on the points and not personalities. When we feel judged or criticized, our ability to listen can be diminished, and we may only hear the negative message. By choosing to focus on the message instead of the messenger, we keep the discussion supportive and professional.

Face-Detracting and Face-Saving

Communication is not a competition. Communication is the sharing of understanding and meaning, but does everyone always share equally? People struggle for control, limit access to resources and information as part of territorial displays, and otherwise use the process of communication to engage in competition. People also use communication for collaboration. Both competition and collaboration can be observed in communication interactions, but there are two concepts central to both: face-detracting and face-saving strategies.

Face-detracting strategies involve messages or statements that take away from the respect, integrity, or credibility of a person. Face-saving strategies protect credibility and separate message from messenger. For example, you might say that "sales were down this quarter" without specifically noting who was responsible. Sales were simply down. If, however, you ask, "How does the sales manager explain the decline in sales?" you have specifically connected an individual with the negative news. While we may want to specifically connect tasks and job responsibilities to individuals and departments, in terms of language, each strategy has distinct results.

Face-detracting strategies often produce a defensive communication climate, inhibit listening, and allow for little room for collaboration. To save face is to raise the issue while preserving a supportive climate, allowing room in the conversation for constructive discussions and problem solving. By using a face-saving strategy to shift the emphasis from the individual to the issue, we avoid power struggles and personalities, providing each other space to save face (Donohue & Klot, 1992).

In collectivist cultures, where the community's well-being is promoted or valued above that of the individual, face-saving strategies are common communicative strategies. In Japan, for example, to confront someone directly is perceived as humiliation, a great insult. In the United States, greater emphasis is placed on individual performance, and responsibility may be more directly assessed. If our goal is to solve a problem and preserve the relationship, then consideration of a face-saving strategy should be one option a skilled business communicator considers when addressing negative news or information.

Empathy

Communication involves not only the words we write or speak, but how and when we write or say them. The way we communicate also carries meaning, and empathy for the individual involves attending to this aspect of interaction. Empathetic listening involves listening to both the literal and implied meanings within a message. By paying attention to feelings and emotions associated with content and information, we can build relationships and address conflict more constructively. In management, negotiating conflict is a common task and empathy is one strategy to consider when attempting to resolve issues.

Managing Your Emotions

There will be times in the work environment when emotions run high. Your awareness of them can help you clear your mind and choose to wait until the moment has passed to tackle the challenge.

Emotions can be contagious in the workplace, and fear of the unknown can influence people to act in irrational ways. The wise business communicator can recognize when emotions are on edge in themselves or others, and choose to wait to communicate, problem-solve, or negotiate until after the moment has passed.

Evaluations and Criticism in the Workplace

There may come a time, however, when evaluations involve criticism. Knowing how to approach this criticism can give you peace of mind to listen clearly, separating subjective, personal attacks from objective, constructive requests for improvement. Guffey offers us seven strategies for giving and receiving evaluations and criticism in the workplace that we have adapted here.

Listen without Interrupting

If you are on the receiving end of an evaluation, start by listening without interruption. Interruptions can be internal and external, and warrant further discussion. If your supervisor starts to discuss a point and you immediately start debating the point in your mind, you are paying attention to yourself and what you think they said or are going to say, and not to what is actually communicated. Let your supervisor speak while you listen, and if you need to take notes to focus your thoughts, take clear notes of what is said, also noting points to revisit later.

Determine the Speaker's Intent

We have discussed previews as a normal part of conversation, and in this context they play an important role. People want to know what is coming and generally dislike surprises, particularly when the context of an evaluation is present. If you are on the receiving end, you may need to ask a clarifying question if it doesn't count as an interruption. You may also need to take notes and write down questions that come to mind to address when it is your turn to speak. As a manager, be clear and positive in your opening and lead with praise. You can find one point, even if it is only that the employee consistently shows up to work on time, to highlight before transitioning to a performance issue.

Indicate You Are Listening

In many Western cultures, eye contact is a signal that you are listening and paying attention to the person speaking. Take notes, nod your head, or lean forward to display interest and listening. Regardless of whether you are the employee receiving the criticism or the supervisor delivering it, displaying listening behaviour engenders a positive climate that helps mitigate the challenge of negative news or constructive criticism.

Paraphrase

Restate the main points to paraphrase what has been discussed. This verbal display allows for clarification and acknowledges receipt of the message.

If you are the employee, summarize the main points and consider steps you will take to correct the situation. If none come to mind or you are nervous and are having a hard time thinking clearly, state out loud the main point and ask if you can provide solution steps and strategies at a later date. You can request a follow-up meeting if appropriate, or indicate you will respond in writing via email to provide the additional information.

If You Agree

If an apology is well deserved, offer it. Communicate clearly what will change or indicate when you will respond with specific strategies to address the concern. As a manager you will want to formulate a plan that addresses the issue and outlines responsibilities as well as time frames for corrective action. As an employee you will want specific steps you can both agree on that will serve to solve the problem. Clear communication and acceptance of responsibility demonstrates maturity and respect.

If You Disagree

If you disagree, focus on the points or issue and not personalities. Do not bring up past issues and keep the conversation focused on the task at hand. You may want to suggest, now that you better understand their position, a follow-up meeting to give you time to reflect on the issues. You may want to consider involving a third party, investigating to learn more about the issue, or taking time to cool off.

Do not respond in anger or frustration; instead, always display professionalism. If the criticism is unwarranted, consider that the information they have may be flawed or biased, and consider ways to learn more about the case to share with them, searching for a mutually beneficial solution.

If other strategies to resolve the conflict fail, consider contacting your human resources department to learn more about due process procedures at your workplace. Display respect and never say anything that would reflect poorly on yourself or your organization. Words spoken in anger can have a lasting impact and are impossible to retrieve or take back.

Learn from Experience

Every communication interaction provides an opportunity for learning if you choose to see it. Sometimes the lessons are situational and may not apply in future contexts. Other times the lessons learned may well serve you across your professional career. Taking notes for yourself to clarify your thoughts, much like a journal, serve to document and help you see the situation more clearly.

Recognize that some aspects of communication are intentional and may communicate meaning even if it is hard to understand. Also, know that some aspects of communication are unintentional, and may not imply meaning or design. People make mistakes. They say things they should not have said. Emotions are revealed that are not always rational, and not always associated with the current context. A challenging morning at home can spill over into the work day and someone’s bad mood may have nothing to do with you.

In summary, conflict is unavoidable, but it can also offer opportunities for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship. Try to distinguish between what you can control and what you cannot, and always choose professionalism.

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16.5: STYLES OF MANAGEMENT

People and their relationships to dominant and subordinate roles are a reflection of culture and cultural viewpoint. They are communicated through experience and create expectations for how and when managers interact with employees. The three most commonly discussed management theories are often called X, Y, and Z. As seen in Figure 6.5.1 below, the three theories and their influence on intercultural communication will be described.

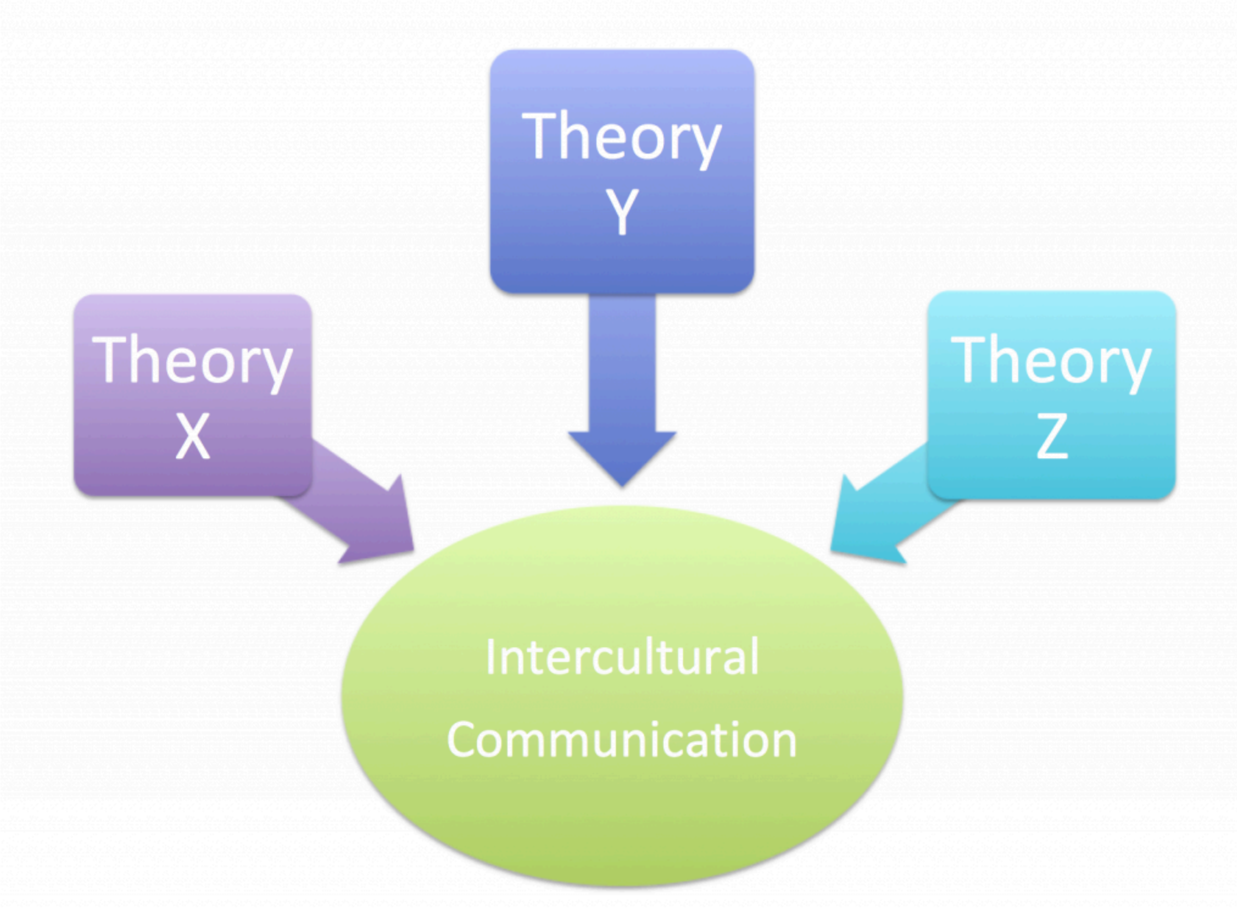

Figure 6.5.1 Intercultural communication and theories X, Y, and Z.

Theory X

In an influential book titled *The Human Side of Enterprise*, M. I. T. management professor Douglas McGregor described two contrasting perceptions on how and why people work, formulating Theory X and Theory Y; they are both based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, A., 1954; Maslow, A., 1970). According to this model, people are concerned first with physical needs (e.g., food, shelter) and second with safety. At the third level, people seek love, acceptance, and intimacy. Self-esteem, achievement, and respect are the fourth level. Finally, the fifth level embodies self-actualization.

Watch the following 5 minute video: *McGregor's Theory X and Y*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=1615#oembed-1

Video: "McGregor's Theory X & Y" by Jessica Blaisdell [5:06] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.*Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

Theory X asserts that workers are motivated by their basic (low-level) needs and have a general disposition against labour. In this viewpoint, workers are considered lazy and predicted to avoid work if they can, giving rise to the perceived need for constant, direct supervision.

A Theory X manager may be described as authoritarian or autocratic, and does not seek input or feedback from employees. He or she may use control and incentive programs to provide punishment and reward.

In **Theory Y** employees are described as ambitious, self-directed, and capable of self-motivation.

A Theory Y manager determines that a job well done is reward in and of itself, and the employee may be a valuable source of feedback. Collaboration is viewed as normal, and the worker may need little supervision.

Theory Z takes the view that workers are seen as having a high need for reinforcement, where belonging is emphasized.

In Theory Z management, workers are trusted to do their jobs with excellence and supervisors are trusted to support them (Massie & Douglas, 1992).

Each of these theories of management features a viewpoint with assumptions about people and why they do what they do. While each has been the subject of debate, and variations on each have been introduced across organizational communication and business, they serve as a foundation for understanding management in an intercultural context.

To sum up, Management Theories X, Y, and Z are examples of distinct and divergent views on worker motivation, need for supervision, and the possibility of collaboration.

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CHAPTER 16: REVIEW

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Small group communication refers to interactions among three or more people who are connected through a common purpose, mutual influence, and a shared identity. Small groups are important communication units in academic, professional, civic, and personal contexts.
- Several characteristics influence small groups, including size, structure, interdependence, and shared identity.
- Small groups serve several functions as they meet instrumental, interpersonal, and identity needs.
- There are various types of groups, including task-oriented, relational-oriented, primary, and secondary groups, as well as teams.
- Advantages of group communication include shared decision making, shared resources, synergy, and exposure to diversity. Disadvantages of group communication include unnecessary group formation (when the task would be better performed by one person), difficulty coordinating schedules, and difficulty with accountability and social loafing.
- Small groups' course of development varies after forming, based on many factors. Some groups go through each stage of development in a progressive and linear fashion, while other groups may get stuck in a stage, skip a stage, or experience a stage multiple times.
- The five stages of group development include forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.
- Task cohesion refers to the degree of commitment of group members to the purpose and activities of the group, and *social cohesion* refers to the degree of attraction and liking among group members. Group climate refers to the relatively enduring tone and quality of group interaction that is experienced similarly by group members.
- Group socialization refers to the process of teaching and learning the norms, rules, and expectations associated with group interaction and group member behaviors. Group members are socialized by receiving technical and social information.
- Conformity pressures are an important force behind group socialization. Internal pressures such as an internal drive to be seen as part of the group or to avoid feeling ashamed or guilty for deviating from the group influence behavior and communication. Likewise, external pressures such as group policies and the potential for reward or punishment also play into group dynamics. The pressures toward conformity can manifest in *groupthink*, which is characterized by a lack of critical evaluation of proposed ideas, a high level of agreement, and a fear of argument.
- Groups experience different kinds of conflict, including procedural, substantive, and interpersonal conflict.
- Conflict is the physical or psychological struggle associated with the perception of opposing or incompatible goals, desires, demands, wants, or needs,
- Conflict is unavoidable and can be opportunity for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship. Try to distinguish between what you can control and what you cannot, and always choose professionalism.

CHAPTER 17: LEADERSHIP, ROLES, AND PROBLEM SOLVING IN GROUPS

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Explore various perspectives on how and why people become leaders.
2. Explore group roles and behaviors.
3. Explore the group problem-solving process and decision-making techniques.

What makes a good leader? What are some positive and negative roles that people play in groups? How do groups solve problems and make decisions in order to accomplish their task? This chapter will begin to answer those questions, because leadership and group member roles influence the performance of small groups. Whether you consider yourself a leader or not, all members of a group can perform leadership functions, and being familiar with these behaviors can improve your group's performance. Likewise, knowing the various roles that typically emerge in a group can help you better understand a group's dynamics and hopefully improve your overall group experience.

Chapter Sections

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17.1: LEADERSHIP AND SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the various perspectives on how and why people become leaders.
2. Compare and contrast various leadership styles.
3. Discuss the types of power that a leader may tap into.

Leadership is one of the most studied aspects of group communication. Scholars in business, communication, psychology, and many other fields have written extensively about the qualities of leaders, theories of leadership, and how to build leadership skills. It's important to point out that although a group may have only one official leader, other group members play important leadership roles. Making this distinction also helps us differentiate between leaders and leadership (Hargie, 2011, p. 465). **The leader** is a group role that is associated with a high-status position and may be formally or informally recognized by group members. **Leadership** is a complex of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviors that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its task. A person in the role of leader may provide no or poor leadership. Likewise, a person who is not recognized as a "leader" in title can provide excellent leadership. In the remainder of this section, we will discuss some approaches to the study of leadership, leadership styles, and leadership and group dynamics.

WHY AND HOW PEOPLE BECOME LEADERS

Throughout human history, some people have grown into, taken, or been given positions as leaders. Many early leaders were believed to be divine in some way. In some indigenous cultures, shamans are considered leaders because they are believed to be bridges that can connect the spiritual and physical realms. Many early kings, queens, and military leaders were said to be approved by a god to lead the people. Today, many leaders are elected or appointed to positions of power, but most of them have already accumulated much experience in leadership roles. Some leaders are well respected, some are feared, some are hated, and many elicit some combination of these reactions. This brief overview illustrates the centrality of leadership throughout human history, but it wasn't until the last hundred years that leadership became an object of systematic study.

A group leader may be formally designated by someone inside or outside the group or may emerge naturally during early group meetings. New City Church – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Before we move onto specific approaches to studying leadership, let's distinguish between designated and emergent leaders. In general, some people gravitate more toward leadership roles than others, and some leaders are designated while other are emergent (Hargie, 2011, p. 465). **Designated leaders** are officially recognized in their leadership role and may be appointed or elected by people inside or outside the group. Designated leaders can be especially successful when they are sought out by others to fulfill and are then accepted in leadership roles. On the other hand, some people seek out leadership positions not because they possess leadership skills and have been successful leaders in the past but because they have a drive to hold and wield power. Many groups are initially leaderless and must either designate a leader or wait for one to emerge organically. Emergent leaders gain status and respect through engagement with the group and its task and are seen by others as a resource when leadership is needed. Emergent leaders may play an important role when a designated leader unexpectedly leaves. We will now turn our attention to three common perspectives on why some people are more likely to be designated leaders than others and how leaders emerge in the absence of or in addition to a designated leader.

LEADERS EMERGE BECAUSE OF THEIR TRAITS

The trait approach to studying leadership distinguishes leaders from followers based on traits, or personal characteristics (Pavitt, 1999, p. 313). Some traits that leaders, in general, share are related to physical appearance, communication ability, intelligence, and personality (Cragan & Wright, 1991, p. 120). In terms of physical appearance, designated leaders tend to be taller and more attractive than other group members. This could be because we consciously and/or subconsciously associate a larger size (in terms of height and build, but not body fat) with strength and strength with good leadership. As far as communication abilities, leaders speak more fluently, have a more confident tone, and communicate more often than other group members. Leaders are also moderately more intelligent than other group members, which is attractive because leaders need good problem-solving skills. Interestingly, group members are not as likely to designate or recognize an emergent leader that they perceive to be exceedingly more intelligent than them. Last, leaders are usually more extroverted, assertive, and persistent than other group members. These personality traits help get these group members noticed by others, and expressivity is often seen as attractive and as a sign of communication competence.

The trait approach to studying leaders has provided some useful information regarding how people view ideal leaders, but it has not provided much insight into why some people become and are more successful leaders than others. The list of ideal traits is not final, because excellent leaders can have few, if any, of these traits and poor leaders can possess many. Additionally, these traits are difficult to change or control without much time and effort. Because these traits are enduring, there isn't much room for people to learn and develop leadership skills, which makes this approach less desirable for communication scholars, who view leadership as a communication competence. Rather than viewing these traits as a guide for what to look for when choosing your next leader, view them as traits that are made meaningful through context and communication behaviors.

LEADERS EMERGE IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

The emergent approach to studying leadership considers how leaders emerge in groups that are initially leaderless and how situational contexts affect this process (Pavitt, 1999, p. 313). The situational context that surrounds a group influences what type of leader is best. Situations may be highly structured, highly unstructured, or anywhere in between (Cragan & Wright, 1991, p. 120). Research has found that leaders with a high task orientation are likely to emerge in both highly structured contexts like a group that works to maintain a completely automated factory unit and highly unstructured contexts like a group that is responding to a crisis. Relational-oriented leaders are more likely to emerge in semistructured contexts that are less formal and in groups composed of people who have specific knowledge and are therefore trusted to do much of their work independently (Fiedler, 1967). For example, a group of local business owners who form a group for professional networking would likely prefer a leader with a relational-oriented style, since these group members are likely already leaders in their own right and therefore might resent a person who takes a rigid task-oriented style over a more collegial style.

Leaders emerge differently in different groups, but there are two stages common to each scenario (Bormann & Bormann, 1988, pp. 130-33). The first stage only covers a brief period, perhaps no longer than a portion of one meeting. During this first stage, about half of the group's members are eliminated from the possibility of being the group's leader. Remember that this is an informal and implicit process—not like people being picked for a kickball team or intentionally vetted. But there are some communicative behaviors that influence who makes the cut to the next stage of informal leader consideration. People will likely be eliminated as leader candidates if they do not actively contribute to initial group interactions, if they contribute but communicate poorly, if they contribute but appear too rigid or inflexible in their beliefs, or if they seem uninformed about the task of the group.

The second stage of leader emergence is where a more or less pronounced struggle for leadership begins. In one scenario, a leader candidate picks up an ally in the group who acts as a supporter or lieutenant, reinforcing the ideas and contributions of the candidate. If there are no other leader candidates or the others fail to pick up a supporter, the candidate with the supporter will likely become the leader. In a second scenario, there are two leader candidates who both pick up supporters and who are both qualified leaders. This leads to a more intense and potentially prolonged struggle that can actually be uncomfortable for other group members. Although the two leader candidates don't overtly fight with each other or say, "I should be leader, not you!" they both take strong stances in regards to the group's purpose and try to influence the structure, procedures, and trajectory for the group. Group members not involved in this struggle may not know who to listen to, which can lead to low task and social cohesion and may cause a group to fail. In some cases, one candidate-supporter team will retreat, leaving a clear leader to step up. But the candidate who retreated will still enjoy a relatively high status in the group and be respected for vying for leadership. The second-place candidate may become a nuisance for the new emergent leader, questioning his/her decisions. Rather than excluding or punishing the second-place candidate, the new leader should give that person responsibilities within the group to make use of his/her respected status.

LEADERS EMERGE BASED ON COMMUNICATION SKILL AND COMPETENCE

This final approach to the study of leadership is considered a functional approach, because it focuses on how particular communication behaviors function to create the conditions of leadership. This last approach is the most useful for communication scholars and for people who want to improve their leadership skills, because leadership behaviors (which are learnable and adaptable) rather than traits or situations (which are often beyond our control) are the primary focus of study. As we've already learned, any group member can exhibit leadership behaviors, not just a designated or emergent leader. Therefore leadership behaviors are important for all of us to understand even if we don't anticipate serving in leadership positions (Cragan & Wright, 1991, p. 120).

A group leader with high communication competence can facilitate brainstorming and group discussion to enhance the creativity and quality of group members' ideas. Luca Mascaro – Brainstorming – CC BY-SA 2.0.

The communication behaviors that facilitate effective leadership encompass three main areas of group communication including task, procedural, and relational functions. Although any group member can perform leadership behaviors, groups usually have patterns of and expectations for behaviors once they get to the norming and performing stages of group development. Many groups meet only one or two times, and in these cases it is likely that a designated leader will perform many of the functions to get the group started and then step in to facilitate as needed.

Leadership behaviors that contribute to a group's task-related functions include providing, seeking, and evaluating information. Leaders may want to be cautious about contributing ideas before soliciting ideas from group members, since the leader's contribution may sway or influence others in the group, therefore discouraging others from expressing varying perspectives. Likewise, a leader may want to solicit evaluation of ideas from members before providing his/her own judgment. In group situations where creativity is needed to generate ideas or solutions to a problem, the task leader may be wise to facilitate brainstorming and discussion.

This can allow the leader to keep an eye on the "big picture" and challenge group members to make their ideas more concrete or discuss their implications beyond the group without adding his/her own opinion. To review, some of the key leadership behaviors that contribute to the task-related functions of a group include the following (Cragan & Wright, 1991, p. 120):

- Contributing ideas
- Seeking ideas
- Evaluating ideas
- Seeking idea evaluation
- Visualizing abstract ideas
- Generalizing from specific ideas

Leadership behaviors that contribute to a group's procedural-related functions help guide the group as it proceeds from idea generation to implementation. Some leaders are better at facilitating and managing ideas than they are at managing the administrative functions of a group. So, while a group leader may help establish the goals of the group and set the agenda, another group member with more experience in group operations may step in to periodically revisit and assess progress toward completion of goals and compare the group's performance against its agenda. It's also important to check in between idea-generating sessions to clarify, summarize, and gauge the agreement level of group members. A skilled and experienced leader may take primary responsibility for all these behaviors, but it's often beneficial to share them with group members to avoid becoming overburdened. To review, some of the key leadership behaviors that contribute to the procedural functions of a group include the following (Cragan & Wright, 1991, p. 120):

- Goal setting
- Agenda making
- Clarifying
- Summarizing
- Verbalizing consensus
- Generalizing from specific ideas

Leadership behaviors that contribute to a group's relational functions include creating a participative and inclusive climate, establishing norms of reflection and self-analysis, and managing conflict. By encouraging participation among group members, a leader can help quell people who try to monopolize discussion and create an overall climate of openness and equality. Leaders want to make sure that people don't feel personally judged for their ideas and that criticism remains idea centered, not person centered. A safe and positive climate typically leads to higher-quality idea generation and decision making. Leaders also encourage group members to metacommunicate, or talk about the group's communication. This can help the group identify and begin to address any interpersonal or communication issues before they escalate and divert the group away from accomplishing its goal. A group with a well-established participative and inclusive climate will be better prepared to handle conflict when it emerges. Remember that conflict when handled competently can enhance group performance. Leaders may even instigate productive conflict by playing devil's advocate or facilitating civil debate of ideas. To review, some of the key leadership behaviors that contribute to the relational functions of a group include the following (Cragan & Wright, 1991, p. 120):

- Regulating participation
- Climate making
- Instigating group self-analysis
- Resolving conflict
- Instigating productive conflict

LEADERSHIP STYLES

Given the large amount of research done on leadership, it is not surprising that there are several ways to define or categorize leadership styles. In general, effective leaders do not fit solely into one style in any of the following classifications. Instead, they are able to adapt their leadership style to fit the relational and situational context (Wood, 1977). One common way to study leadership style is to make a distinction among autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leaders (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939).

These leadership styles can be described as follows:

- Autocratic leaders set policies and make decisions primarily on their own, taking advantage of the power present in their title or status to set the agenda for the group.
- Democratic leaders facilitate group discussion and like to take input from all members before making a decision.
- Laissez-faire leaders take a "hands-off" approach, preferring to give group members freedom to reach and implement their own decisions.

While this is a frequently cited model of leadership styles, we will focus in more detail on a model that was developed a few years after this one. I choose to focus on this later model because it offers some more specifics in terms of the communicative elements of each leadership style. The four leadership styles used in this model are directive, participative, supportive, and achievement oriented (House & Mitchell, 1974).

DIRECTIVE LEADERS

Directive leaders help provide psychological structure for their group members by clearly communicating expectations, keeping a schedule and agenda, providing specific guidance as group members work toward the completion of their task, and taking the lead on setting and communicating group rules and procedures. Although this is most similar to the autocratic leadership style mentioned before, it is more nuanced and flexible. The originators of this model note that a leader can be directive without being seen as authoritarian. To do this, directive leaders must be good motivators who encourage productivity through positive reinforcement or reward rather than through the threat of punishment.

Directive leaders provide structure and clear expectations for their group. To be effective they must be skilled motivators. The Open University – Speaker – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

A directive leadership style is effective in groups that do not have a history and may require direction to get started on their task. It can also be the most appropriate method during crisis situations in which decisions must be made under time constraints or other extraordinary pressures. When groups have an established history and are composed of people with unique skills and expertise, a directive approach may be seen as "micromanaging." In these groups, a more participative style may be the best option.

PARTICIPATIVE LEADERS

Participative leaders work to include group members in the decision-making process by soliciting and considering their opinions and suggestions. When group members feel included, their personal goals are more likely to align with the group and organization's goals, which can help productivity. This style of leadership can also aid in group member socialization, as the members feel like they get to help establish group norms and rules, which affects cohesion and climate. When group members participate more, they buy into the group's norms and goals more, which can increase conformity pressures for incoming group members. As we learned earlier, this is good to a point, but it can become negative when the pressures lead to unethical group member behavior. In addition to consulting group members for help with decision making, participative leaders also grant group members more freedom to work independently. This can lead group members to feel trusted and respected for their skills, which can increase their effort and output.

The participative method of leadership is similar to the democratic style discussed earlier, and it is a style of leadership practiced in many organizations that have established work groups that meet consistently over long periods of time. US companies began to adopt a more participative and less directive style of management in the 1980s after organizational scholars researched teamwork and efficiency in Japanese corporations. Japanese managers included employees in decision making, which blurred the line between the leader and other group members and enhanced productivity. These small groups were called quality circles, because they focused on group interaction intended to improve quality and productivity (Cragan & Wright, 1991, p. 120).

SUPPORTIVE LEADERS

Supportive leaders show concern for their followers' needs and emotions. They want to support group members' welfare through a positive and friendly group climate. These leaders are good at reducing the stress and frustration of the group, which helps create a positive climate and can help increase group members' positive feelings about the task and other group members. As we will learn later, some group roles function to maintain the relational climate of the group, and several group members often perform these role behaviors. With a supportive leader as a model, such behaviors would likely be performed as part of established group norms, which can do much to enhance social cohesion. Supportive leaders do not provide unconditionally positive praise. They also competently provide constructive criticism in order to challenge and enhance group members' contributions.

A supportive leadership style is more likely in groups that are primarily relational rather than task focused. For example, support groups and therapy groups benefit from a supportive leader. While maintaining positive relationships is an important part of any group's functioning, most task-oriented groups need to spend more time on task than social functions in order to efficiently work toward the completion of their task. Skilled directive or participative leaders of task-oriented groups would be wise to employ supportive leadership behaviors when group members experience emotional stress to prevent relational stress from negatively impacting the group's climate and cohesion.

ACHIEVEMENT-ORIENTED LEADERS

Achievement-oriented leaders strive for excellence and set challenging goals, constantly seeking improvement and exhibiting confidence that group members can meet their high expectations. These leaders often engage in systematic social comparison, keeping tabs on other similar high-performing groups to assess their expectations and the group's progress. This type of leadership is similar to what other scholars call transformational or visionary leadership and is often associated with leaders like former Apple CEO Steve Jobs, talk show host and television network CEO Oprah Winfrey, former president Bill Clinton, and business magnate turned philanthropist Warren Buffett. Achievement-oriented leaders are likely less common than the other styles, as this style requires a high level of skill and commitment on the part of the leader and the group. Although rare, these leaders can be found at all levels of groups ranging from local school boards to *Fortune* 500 companies. Certain group dynamics must be in place in order to accommodate this leadership style. Groups for which an achievement-oriented leadership style would be effective are typically intentionally created and are made up of members who are skilled and competent in regards to the group's task. In many cases, the leader is specifically chosen because of his or her reputation and expertise, and even though the group members may not have a history of working with the leader, the members and leader must have a high degree of mutual respect.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING PLUGGED IN"

Steve Jobs as an Achievement-Oriented Leader

"Where can you find a leader with Jobs' willingness to fail, his sheer tenacity, persistence, and resiliency, his grandiose ego, his overwhelming belief in himself?" (Deutschman, 2012) This closing line of an article following the death of Steve Jobs clearly illustrates the larger-than-life personality and extraordinary drive of achievement-oriented leaders. Jobs, who founded Apple Computers, was widely recognized as a visionary with a brilliant mind during his early years at the helm of Apple (from 1976 to 1985), but he hadn't yet gained respect as a business leader. Jobs left the company and later returned in 1997. After his return, Apple reached its height under his leadership, which was now enhanced by business knowledge and skills he gained during his time away from the company. The fact that Jobs was able to largely teach himself the ins and outs of business practices is a quality of achievement-oriented leaders, who are constantly self-reflective and evaluate their skills and performance, making adaptations as necessary.

Achievement-oriented leaders also often possess good instincts, allowing them to make decisions quickly while acknowledging the potential for failure but also showing a resiliency that allows them to bounce back from mistakes and come back stronger. Rather than bringing in panels of experts, presenting ideas to focus groups for feedback, or putting a new product through market research and testing, Jobs relied on his instincts, which led to some embarrassing failures and some remarkable successes that overshadowed the failures. Although Jobs made unilateral decisions, he relied heavily on the creative and technical expertise of others who worked for him and were able to make his creative, innovative ideas reality. As do other achievement-oriented leaders, Jobs held his group members to exceptionally high standards and fostered a culture that mirrored his own perfectionism. Constant comparisons to other technological innovators like Bill Gates, CEO of Microsoft, pushed Jobs and those who worked for him to work tirelessly to produce the "next big thing." Achievement-oriented leaders like Jobs have been described as maniacal, intense, workaholics, perfectionists, risk takers, narcissists, innovative, and visionary. These descriptors carry positive and negative connotations but often yield amazing results when possessed by a leader.

Self-reflection and critical thinking questions:

1. Do you think Jobs could have been as successful had he employed one of the other leadership styles? Why or why not? How might the achievement-oriented leadership style be well suited for a technology company like Apple or the technology field in general?
2. In what circumstances would you like to work for an achievement-oriented leader, and why? In what circumstances would you prefer not to work with an achievement-oriented leader, and why?
3. Do some research on another achievement-oriented leader. Discuss how that leader's traits are similar to and/or different from those of Steve Jobs.

LEADERSHIP AND POWER

Leaders help move group members toward the completion of their goal using various motivational strategies. The types of power leaders draw on to motivate have long been a topic of small group study. A leader may possess or draw on any of the following five types of power to varying degrees: legitimate, expert, referent, information, and reward/coercive (French Jr. & Raven, 1959). Effective leaders do not need to possess all five types of power. Instead, competent leaders know how to draw on other group members who may be better able to exercise a type of power in a given situation.

LEGITIMATE POWER

The very title of *leader* brings with it **legitimate power**, which is power that flows from the officially recognized position, status, or title of a group member. For example, the leader of the "Social Media Relations Department" of a retail chain receives legitimate power through the title "director of social media relations." It is important to note though that being designated as someone with status or a position of power doesn't mean that the group members respect or recognize that power. Even with a title, leaders must still earn the ability to provide leadership. Of the five types of power, however, the leader alone is most likely to possess legitimate power.

EXPERT POWER

A group member with expertise in an area relevant to the group's task may draw on expert power to lead the group. For example, a transplant surgeon may lead a team of other doctors and nurses during the surgery while a critical care nurse may take the lead during postsurgery recovery. UCD School of Medicine – Surgery Image 2 – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Expert power comes from knowledge, skill, or expertise that a group member possesses and other group members do not. For example, even though all the workers in the Social Media Relations Department have experience with computers, the information technology (IT) officer has expert power when it comes to computer networking and programming. Because of this, even though the director may have a higher status, she or he must defer to the IT officer when the office network crashes. A leader who has legitimate and expert power may be able to take a central role in setting the group's direction, contributing to problem solving, and helping the group achieve its goal. In groups with a designated leader who relies primarily on legitimate power, a member with a significant amount of expert power may emerge as an unofficial secondary leader.

REFERENT POWER

Referent power comes from the attractiveness, likeability, and charisma of the group member. As we learned earlier, more physically attractive people and more outgoing people are often chosen as leaders. This could be due to their referent power. Referent power also derives from a person's reputation. A group member may have referent power if he or she is well respected outside of the group for previous accomplishments or even because he or she is known as a dependable and capable group member. Like legitimate power, the fact that a person possesses referent power doesn't mean he or she has the talent, skill, or other characteristic needed to actually lead the group. A person could just be likable but have no relevant knowledge about the group's task or leadership experience. Some groups actually desire this type of leader, especially if the person is meant to attract external attention and serve as more of a "figurehead" than a regularly functioning group member. For example, a group formed to raise funds for a science and nature museum may choose a former mayor, local celebrity, or NASA astronaut as their leader because of his/her referent power. In this situation it would probably be best for the group to have a secondary leader who attends to task and problem-solving functions within the group.

INFORMATION POWER

Information power comes from a person's ability to access information that comes through informal channels and well-established social and professional networks. We have already learned that information networks are an important part of a group's structure and can affect a group's access to various resources. Group members said to have "know how" possess information power. The knowledge may not always be official, but it helps the group solve problems and get things done. Individuals develop information power through years of interacting with others, making connections, and building and maintaining interpersonal and instrumental relationships. For example, the group formed to raise funds for the science and nature museum may need to draw on informal information networks to get leads on potential donors, to get information about what local science teachers would recommend for exhibits, or to book a band willing to perform free of charge at a fundraising concert.

REWARD AND COERCIVE POWER

The final two types of power, reward and coercive, are related. **Reward power** comes from the ability of a group member to provide a positive incentive as a compliance-gaining strategy, and **coercive power** comes from the ability of a group member to provide a negative incentive. These two types of power can be difficult for leaders and other group members to manage, because their use can lead to interpersonal conflict. Reward power can be used by nearly any group member if he or she gives another group member positive feedback on an idea, an appreciation card for hard work, or a pat on the back. Because of limited resources, many leaders are frustrated by their inability to give worthwhile tangible rewards to group members such as prizes, bonuses, or raises. Additionally, the use of reward power may seem corny or paternalistic to some or may arouse accusations of favoritism or jealousy among group members who don't receive the award.

Coercive power, since it entails punishment or negative incentive, can lead to interpersonal conflict and a negative group climate if it is overused or used improperly. While any leader or group member could make threats to others, leaders with legitimate power are typically in the best position to use coercive power. In such cases, coercive power may manifest in loss of pay and/or privileges, being excluded from the group, or being fired (if the group work is job related). In many volunteer groups or groups that lack formal rules and procedures, leaders have a more difficult time using coercive power, since they can't issue official punishments. Instead, coercive power will likely take the form of interpersonal punishments such as ignoring group members or excluding them from group activities.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING REAL"

Leadership as the Foundation of a Career

As we've already learned, leaders share traits, some more innate and naturally tapped into than others. Successful leaders also develop and refine leadership skills and behaviors that they are not "born with." Since much of leadership is skill and behavior based, it is never too early to start developing yourself as a leader. Whether you are planning to start your first career path fresh out of college, you've returned to college in order to switch career paths, or you're in college so you can advance more quickly in your current career path, you should have already been working on your leadership skills for years; it's not something you want to start on your first day on the new job.

Since leaders must be able to draw from a wealth of personal experience in order to solve problems, relate to others, and motivate others to achieve a task, you should start to seek out leadership positions in school and/or community groups. Since you may not yet be sure of your exact career path, try to get a variety of positions over a few years — positions easily transferrable to professional contexts. In these roles, work on building a reputation as an ethical leader and as a leader who takes responsibility rather than playing the "blame game." Leaders still have to be good team players and often have to take on roles and responsibilities that other group members do not want. Instead of complaining or expecting recognition for your "extra work," accept these responsibilities enthusiastically and be prepared for your hard work to go unnoticed. Much of what a good leader does occurs in the background and isn't publicly praised or acknowledged. Even when the group succeeds because of your hard work as the leader, you still have to be willing to share that praise with others who helped, because even though you may have worked the hardest, you didn't do it alone.

As you build up your experience and reputation as a leader, be prepared for your workload to grow and your interpersonal communication competence to become more important. Once on your career path, you can draw on this previous leadership experience and volunteer or step up when the need arises, which can help you get noticed. Of course, you have to be able to follow through on your commitment, which takes discipline and dedication. While you may be excited to prove your leadership qualities in your new career path, be careful about taking on too much too fast. It's easy for a young and/or new member of a work team to become overcommitted, as more experienced group members are excited to have a person with whom to share some of their work responsibilities. Hopefully, your previous leadership experience will give you confidence that your group members will notice. People are attracted to confidence and want to follow people who exhibit it. Aside from confidence, good leaders also develop dynamism, which is a set of communication behaviors that conveys enthusiasm and creates an energetic and positive climate. Once confidence and dynamism have attracted a good team of people, good leaders facilitate quality interaction among group members, build cohesion, and capitalize on the synergy of group communication in order to come up with forward-thinking solutions to problems.

Good leaders also continue to build skills in order to become better leaders. Leaders are excellent observers of human behavior and are able to assess situations using contextual clues and nonverbal communication. They can then use this knowledge to adapt their communication to the situation. Leaders also have a high degree of emotional intelligence, which allows them to better sense, understand, and respond to others' emotions and to have more control over their own displays of emotions. Last, good leaders further their careers by being reflexive and regularly evaluating their strengths and weaknesses as a leader. Since our perceptions are often skewed, it is also good to have colleagues and mentors/supervisors give you formal evaluations of your job performance, making explicit comments about leadership behaviors.

As you can see, the work of a leader only grows more complex as one moves further along a career path. But with the skills gained through many years of increasingly challenging leadership roles, a leader can adapt to and manage this increasing complexity.

Self-reflection and critical thinking questions:

1. What leadership positions have you had so far? In what ways might they prepare you for more complex and career-specific leadership positions you may have later?
2. What communication competencies do you think are most important for a leader to have and why? How do you rate in terms of the competencies you ranked as most important?
3. Who do you know who would be able to give you constructive feedback on your leadership skills? What do you think this person would say? (You may want to consider actually asking the person for feedback).

Key Takeaways

- Leaders fulfill a group role that is associated with status and power within the group that may be formally or informally recognized by people inside and/or outside of the group. While there are usually only one or two official leaders within a group, all group members can perform leadership functions, which are a complex of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviors that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its tasks.

- There are many perspectives on how and why people become leaders:
  - Designated leaders are officially recognized in their leadership role and may be appointed or elected.
  - Emergent leaders gain status and respect through engagement with the group and its task and are turned to by others as a resource when leadership is needed.
  - The trait approach to studying leadership distinguishes leaders from followers based on traits or personal characteristics, such as physical appearance, communication ability, intelligence, and personality. While this approach is useful for understanding how people conceptualize ideal leaders, it doesn't offer communication scholars much insight into how leadership can be studied and developed as a skill.
  - Situational context also influences the way leaders emerge. Different leadership styles and skills are needed based on the level of structure surrounding a group and on how group interactions play out in initial meetings and whether or not a leadership struggle occurs.
  - Leaders also emerge based on communication skill and competence, as certain communication behaviors function to create the conditions of leadership. This approach is most useful to communication scholars, because in it leadership is seen as a set of communication behaviors that are learnable and adaptable rather than traits or situational factors, which are often beyond our control.
- Leaders can adopt a directive, participative, supportive, or achievement-oriented style.
  - Directive leaders help provide psychological structure for their group members by clearly communicating expectations, keeping a schedule and agenda, providing specific guidance as group members work toward the completion of their task, and taking the lead on setting and communicating group rules and procedures.
  - Participative leaders work to include group members in the decision-making process by soliciting and considering their opinions and suggestions.
  - Supportive leaders show concern for their followers' needs and emotions.
  - Achievement-oriented leaders strive for excellence and set challenging goals, constantly seeking improvement and exhibiting confidence that group members can meet their high expectations.
- Leaders and other group members move their groups toward success and/or the completion of their task by tapping into various types of power.
  - Legitimate power flows from the officially recognized power, status, or title of a group member.
  - Expert power comes from knowledge, skill, or expertise that a group member possesses and other group members do not.
  - Referent power comes from the attractiveness, likeability, and charisma of the group member.
  - Information power comes from a person's ability to access information that comes through informal channels and well-established social and professional networks.
  - Reward power comes from the ability of a group member to provide a positive incentive as a compliance-gaining strategy, and coercive power comes from the ability of a group member to provide a negative incentive (punishment).

Exercises

1. In what situations would a designated leader be better than an emergent leader, and vice versa? Why?
2. Think of a leader that you currently work with or have worked with who made a strong (positive or negative) impression on you. Which leadership style did he or she use most frequently? Cite specific communication behaviors to back up your analysis.
3. Getting integrated: Teachers are often viewed as leaders in academic contexts along with bosses/managers in professional, politicians/elected officials in civic, and parents in personal contexts. For each of these leaders and contexts, identify some important leadership qualities that each should possess, and discuss some of the influences in each context that may affect the leader and his or her leadership style.

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17.2: GROUP MEMBER ROLES

Learning Objectives

1. Identify and discuss task-related group roles and behaviors.
2. Identify and discuss maintenance group roles and behaviors.
3. Identify and discuss negative group roles and behaviors.

Just as leaders have been long studied as a part of group communication research, so too have group member roles. Group roles are more dynamic than leadership roles in that a role can be formal or informal and played by more than one group member. Additionally, one group member may exhibit various role behaviors within a single group meeting or play a few consistent roles over the course of his or her involvement with a group. Some people's role behaviors result from their personality traits, while other people act out a certain role because of a short-term mood, as a reaction to another group member, or out of necessity. Group communication scholars have cautioned us to not always think of these roles as neatly bounded, all-inclusive categories. After all, we all play multiple roles within a group and must draw on multiple communication behaviors in order to successfully play them. When someone continually exhibits a particular behavior, it may be labeled as a role, but even isolated behaviors can impact group functioning. In this section, we will discuss the three categories of common group roles that were identified by early group communication scholars. These role categories include task-related roles, maintenance roles, and individual roles that are self-centered or unproductive for the group (Benne & Sheats, 1948).

TASK-RELATED ROLES AND BEHAVIORS

Task roles and their related behaviours contribute directly to the group's completion of a task or achievement of its goal or purpose. Task-related roles typically serve leadership, informational, or procedural functions. In this section we will discuss the following roles and behaviors: task leader, expediter, information provider, information seeker, gatekeeper, and recorder.

TASK LEADER

Within any group, there may be a task leader who has a high group status because of his or her maturity, problem-solving abilities, knowledge, and/or leadership experience and skills and functions primarily to help the group complete its task (Cragan & Wright, 1991). This person may be a designated or emergent leader, but in either case, task leaders tend to talk more during group interactions than other group members and also tend to do more work in the group. Depending on the number of tasks a group has, there may be more than one task leader, especially if the tasks require different sets of skills or knowledge. Because of the added responsibilities of being a task leader, people in these roles may experience higher levels of stress. A task leader's stresses, however, may be lessened through some of the maintenance role behaviors that we will discuss later.

Task-leader behaviors can be further divided into two types: substantive and procedural (Pavitt, 1999). The substantive leader is the "idea person" who communicates "big picture" thoughts and suggestions that feed group discussion. The procedural leader is the person who gives the most guidance, perhaps following up on the ideas generated by the substantive leader. A skilled and experienced task leader may be able to perform both of these roles, but when the roles are filled by two different people, the person considered the procedural leader is more likely than the substantive leader to be viewed by members as the overall group leader. This indicates that task-focused groups assign more status to the person who actually guides the group toward the completion of the task (a "doer") than the person who comes up with ideas (the "thinker").

EXPEDITER

The **expediter** is a task-related role that functions to keep the group on track toward completing its task by managing the agenda and setting and assessing goals in order to monitor the group's progress. An expediter doesn't push group members mindlessly along toward the completion of their task; an expediter must have a good sense of when a topic has been sufficiently discussed or when a group's extended focus on one area has led to diminishing returns. In such cases, the expediter may say, "Now that we've had a thorough discussion of the pros and cons of switching the office from PCs to Macs, which side do you think has more support?" or "We've spent half of this meeting looking for examples of what other libraries have done and haven't found anything useful. Maybe we should switch gears so we can get something concrete done tonight."

An expediter in a restaurant keeps the food flowing from the kitchen to the diners in a timely and orderly fashion, just as the expediter in a group keeps the group on an agenda. Lester Guijarro – chefs – CC BY-SA 2.0.

If you've ever worked in a restaurant, you're probably familiar with an expediter's role in the kitchen. The person working "expo" helps make sure that the timing on all the dishes for a meal works out and that each plate is correct before it goes out to the table. Since some entrées cook quicker than others, patrons don't all order their steak the same way, etc., the expeditor calls the food out to the kitchen in a particular order that logically works so that all the food for a table will come up at the same time, and then checks what is on the plate against what is on the ticket to make sure it matches. Expediting in a restaurant and in any small group requires flexible and creative thinking and an ability to stick to a time frame and assess progress. To avoid the perception that group members are being rushed, a skilled expediter also continually communicates with all group members and addresses any concerns, helping group members to see the need to move at a certain pace.

INFORMATION PROVIDER

The role of **information provider** includes behaviors that are more evenly shared than in other roles, as (ideally) all group members present new ideas, initiate discussions of new topics, and contribute their own relevant knowledge and experiences. When group members are brought together because they each have different types of information, early group meetings may consist of group members taking turns briefing each other on their area of expertise. In other situations, only one person in the group may be chosen because of his/her specialized knowledge and this person may be expected to be the primary information provider for all other group members.

INFORMATION SEEKER

The **information seeker** asks for more information, elaboration, or clarification on items relevant to the group's task. The information sought may include factual information or group member's opinions. In general, information seekers ask questions for clarification, but they can also ask questions that help provide an important evaluative function. Most groups could benefit from more critically oriented information-seeking behaviors. As our discussion of groupthink notes, critical questioning helps increase the quality of ideas and group outcomes. By asking for more information, people have to defend (in a nonadversarial way) and/or support their claims, ensuring that the information being discussed is credible, relevant, and thoroughly considered. However, when information seeking or questioning occurs as a result of poor listening skills, it risks negatively impacting the group. Skilled information providers and seekers must be good active listeners. They increase all group members' knowledge when they paraphrase and ask clarifying questions about the information presented.

GATEKEEPER

The **gatekeeper** manages the flow of conversation in a group in order to achieve an appropriate balance so that all group members participate in a meaningful way. S/he may prompt others to provide information by saying something like, "Let's each share one idea we have for a movie to show during Black History Month." S/he may also help correct an imbalance between members who have provided much information already and members who have been quiet by saying something like, "Aretha, thank you for your contributions today. I am hoping we can get more input from everyone else, as well. Beau, what are your thoughts on Aretha's suggestion?" However, gatekeepers should be cautious about making people feel they have been "called out." Instead of scolding someone for not participating, they should be invitational and ask a member to contribute to something specific instead of just asking if they have anything to add. Since gatekeepers make group members feel included, they also service the relational aspects of the group.

RECORDER

The **recorder** takes notes on the discussion and activities that occur during a group meeting. The recorder is the only role that is essentially limited to one person at a time, since in most cases it wouldn't be necessary or beneficial to have more than one person recording. At less formal meetings, there may be no recorder, while at formal meetings there is almost always a person who records meeting minutes, which are an overview of what occurred at the meeting. Each committee will have different rules or norms regarding the level of detail within and availability of the minutes. While some group's minutes are required by law to be public, others may be strictly confidential. Even though a record of a group meeting may be valuable, the role of recorder is often regarded as a low-status position, since the person in the role may feel or be viewed as subservient to the other members who are able to more actively contribute to the group's functioning. Because of this, it may be desirable to have the role of recorder rotate among members (Cragan & Wright, 1991).

The recorder writes and/or types notes during group meetings in order to document the discussion and other interactions. Chung Ho Leung – Note Taking – CC BY-ND 2.0.

MAINTENANCE ROLES AND BEHAVIORS

Maintenance roles and their corresponding behaviours function to create and maintain social cohesion and fulfill the interpersonal needs of group members. All these role behaviors require strong and sensitive interpersonal skills. The maintenance roles we will discuss in this section include social-emotional leader, supporter, tension releaser, harmonizer, and interpreter.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEADER

The social-emotional leader within a group may perform a variety of maintenance roles and is generally someone who is well liked by the other group members and whose role behaviours complement but don't compete with the task leader. The social-emotional leader may also reassure and support the task leader when he/she becomes stressed. In general, the social-emotional leader is a reflective thinker who has good perception skills and uses them to analyze the group dynamics and climate and then initiate the appropriate role behaviours to maintain a positive climate. Unlike the role of task leader, this isn't a role that typically shifts from one person to another. While all members of the group perform some maintenance role behaviours at various times, the socioemotional leader reliably functions to support group members and maintain a positive relational climate. Social-emotional leadership functions can actually become detrimental to the group and lead to less satisfaction among members when the maintenance behaviours being performed are seen as redundant or as too distracting from the task (Pavitt, 1999).

SUPPORTER

The role of **supporter** is characterized by communication behaviors that encourage other group members and provide emotional support as needed. The supporter's work primarily occurs in one-on-one exchanges that are more intimate and in-depth than the exchanges that take place during full group meetings. While many group members may make supporting comments publicly at group meetings, these comments are typically superficial and/or brief. A supporter uses active empathetic listening skills to connect with group members who may seem down or frustrated by saying something like, "Tayesha, you seemed kind of down today. Is there anything you'd like to talk about?" Supporters also follow up on previous conversations with group members to maintain the connections they've already established by saying things like, "Alan, I remember you said your mom is having surgery this weekend. I hope it goes well. Let me know if you need anything." The supporter's communication behaviours are probably the least noticeable of any of the other maintenance roles, which may make this group member's efforts seem overlooked. Leaders and other group members can help support the supporter by acknowledging his/her contributions.

TENSION RELEASER

The **tension releaser** is someone who is naturally funny and sensitive to the personalities of the group and the dynamics of any given situation and who uses these qualities to manage the frustration level of the group. Being funny is not enough to fulfill this role, as jokes or comments could indeed be humorous to other group members but be delivered at an inopportune time, which ultimately creates rather than releases tension. The healthy use of humor by the tension releaser performs the same maintenance function as the empathy employed by the harmonizer or the social-emotional leader, but it is less intimate and is typically directed toward the whole group instead of just one person. The tension releaser may start serving his/her function during the forming stage of group development, when primary tensions are present due to the typical uncertainties present during initial interactions. The tension releaser may help others feel at ease during the group's more socially awkward first meetings. However, failed attempts to release tension can cause the group member in question to be viewed as a joker (a self-centered role discussed later).

HARMONIZER

The **harmonizer** role is played by group members who help manage the various types of group conflict that emerge during group communication. They watch for signs of conflict among group members and ideally intervene before it escalates. For example, the harmonizer may sense that one group member's critique of another member's idea wasn't received positively, and he/she may be able to rephrase the critique in a more constructive way, which can help diminish the other group member's defensiveness. Harmonizers also deescalate conflict once it has already started—for example, by suggesting that the group take a break and then mediating between group members in side conversations. These actions can help prevent conflict from spilling over into other group interactions. In cases where the whole group experiences conflict, the

An interpreter is a group member who has cultural sensitivity and experience interacting with multiple cultures and can help facilitate intercultural interactions within a group. Laura – Estrenando cabina – CC BY 2.0.

harmonizer may lead the group in perception-checking discussions that help members see an issue from multiple perspectives. Harmonizer can be effective only if they are viewed as impartial and committed to the group as a whole rather than to one side of an issue/ one person or faction within the larger group. A special kind of harmonizer that helps manage cultural differences within the group is the interpreter.

INTERPRETER

An **interpreter** helps manage the diversity within a group by mediating intercultural conflict, articulating common ground between different people, and generally creating a climate where difference is seen as an opportunity rather than as something to be feared. Just as an interpreter at the United Nations acts as a bridge between different languages, the interpreter can bridge identity differences between group members. Interpreters can help perform the other maintenance roles discussed with a special awareness of and sensitivity toward cultural differences. While a literal interpreter would serve a task-related function within a group, this type of interpreter may help support a person who feels left out of the group because s/he has a different cultural identity than the majority of the group. Interpreters often act as allies to people who are different, even though the interpreter doesn't share the specific cultural identity. The interpreter may help manage conflict that arises as a result of diversity—in this case, acting like an ambassador or mediator. Due to their cultural sensitivity, interpreters may also take a proactive role to address conflict before it emerges—for example, by taking a group member aside and explaining why certain behaviours/comments may be perceived as offensive.

NEGATIVE ROLES AND BEHAVIORS

Group communication scholars began exploring the negative side of group member roles more than sixty years ago (Benne & Sheats, 1948). Studying these negative roles can help us analyze group interactions and better understand why some groups are more successful than others. It's important to acknowledge that we all perform some negative behaviors within groups but that those behaviors do not necessarily constitute a role. A person may temporarily monopolize a discussion to bring attention to his or her idea. If that behavior gets the attention of the group members and makes them realize they were misinformed or headed in a negative direction, then that behavior may have been warranted. Negative behaviors can be enacted with varying degrees of intensity and regularity, and their effects may range from mild annoyance to group failure. In general, the effects grow increasingly negative as they increase in intensity and frequency. While a single enactment of a negative role behavior may still harm the group, regular enactment of such behaviors would constitute a role, and playing that role is guaranteed to negatively impact the group. We will divide our discussion of negative roles into self-centered and unproductive roles.

SELF-CENTERED ROLES

The behaviors associated with all the **self-centered roles** divert attention from the task to the group member exhibiting the behavior, and they may do that in different ways and for different reasons. The self-centered roles we will discuss are the central negative, monopolizer, self-confessor, insecure compliment seeker, and joker (Cragan & Wright, 1991).

CENTRAL NEGATIVE

The **central negative** argues against most of the ideas and proposals discussed in the group and often emerges as a result of a leadership challenge during group formation. The failed attempt to lead the group can lead to feelings of resentment toward the leader and/or the purpose of the group, which then manifest in negative behaviours that delay, divert, or block the group's progress toward achieving its goal. This scenario is unfortunate because the central negative is typically a motivated and intelligent group member who can benefit the group if properly handled by the group leader or other members. Group communication scholars suggest that the group leader/leaders actively incorporate central negatives into group tasks and responsibilities to make them feel valued and to diminish any residual anger, disappointment, or hurt feelings from the leadership conflict (Bormann & Bormann, 1988). Otherwise the central negative will continue to argue against the proposals and decisions of the group, even while actually being in agreement. In some cases, the central negative may unintentionally serve a beneficial function if his/her criticisms prevent groupthink.

MONOPOLIZER

A monopolizer makes excessive verbal contributions and holds the floor without allowing others to speak. Kev-shine – Business man pointt – CC BY 2.0.

The **monopolizer** is a group member who makes excessive verbal contributions, preventing equal participation by other group members. There are some people who are well informed, charismatic, and competent communicators who can get away with impromptu lectures and long stories, but monopolizers do not possess the magnetic qualities of such people. A group member's excessive verbal contributions are more likely to be labeled as monopolizing when they are not related to the task or when they provide unnecessary or redundant elaboration. Some monopolizers do not intentionally speak for longer than they should. Instead, they think they are making a genuine contribution to the group. They may lack sensitivity to nonverbal cues and may not realize that other group members are tired of listening or annoyed. Other monopolizers just like to talk and do not care what others think. Some may be trying to make up for a lack of knowledge or experience. This type of monopolizer is best described as a dilettante, or an amateur posing as an expert.

There are some subgroups of behaviors that fall under the monopolizer's role. The "stage hog" monopolizes discussion with excessive verbal contributions and engages in one-upping and narcissistic listening. One-upping is a spotlight-stealing strategy in which people try to verbally "out-do" others by saying something like "You think that's bad? Listen to what happened to me!" They also listen to others in order to find something they can connect back to themselves, not to understand the message. The stage hog is like the diva that refuses to leave the stage to let the next performer begin. Unlike a monopolizer, who may engage in his or her behaviors unknowingly, stage hogs are usually aware of what they're doing.

The "egghead" monopolizes the discussion with excessive contributions that are based in actual knowledge but that exceed the level of understanding of other group members or the needs of the group (Cragan & Wright, 1999). The egghead is different from the dilettante monopolizer discussed earlier because this person has genuine knowledge and expertise on a subject, which may be useful to the group. However, like the monopolizer and stage hog, the egghead's excessive contributions draw attention away from the task, slow the group down, and may contribute to a negative group climate. The egghead may be like an absentminded professor who is smart but lacks the social sensitivity to tell when s/he has said enough and is starting to annoy other group members. This type of egghead naively believes that other group members care as much about the subject as s/he does. The second type of egghead is more pompous and monopolizes the discussion to flaunt his/her intellectual superiority. While the first type of egghead may be tolerated to a point by the group and seen as eccentric but valuable, the second type of egghead is perceived more negatively and more quickly hurts the group. In general, the egghead's advanced knowledge of a subject and excessive contributions can hurt the group's potential for synergy, since other group members may defer to the egghead expert, which can diminish the creativity that comes from outside and nonexpert perspectives.

SELF-CONFESSOR

The **self-confessor** is a group member who tries to use group meetings as therapy sessions for issues not related to the group's task. Self-confessors tend to make personal self-disclosures that are unnecessarily intimate. While it is reasonable to expect that someone experiencing a personal problem may want to consult with the group, especially if that person has formed close relationships with other group members, a self-confessor consistently comes to meetings with drama or a personal problem. A supporter or gatekeeper may be able to manage some degree of self-confessor behaviour, but a chronic self-confessor is likely to build frustration among other group members that can lead to interpersonal conflict and a lack of cohesion and productivity. Most groups develop a norm regarding how much personal information is discussed during group meetings, and some limit such disclosures to time before or after the meeting, which may help deter self-confessor behaviours.

INSECURE COMPLIMENT SEEKER

The **insecure compliment seeker** wants to know that s/he is valued by the group and seeks recognition that is often not task related. For example, compliment seekers do not want to be told they did a good job compiling a report; they want to know that they are good persons or attractive or smart—even though they might not be any of those things. In short, they try to get validation from their relationships with group members—validation that they may be lacking in relationships outside the group. They may also be continually seeks the approval of others or trying to overcompensate for insecurity through excessive behaviours aimed at eliciting compliments. For example, if a group member wears a tight-fitting t-shirt in hopes of drawing attention to his physique but doesn't receive any compliments from the group, he may say, "My girlfriend said she could tell I've been working out. What do you think?"

JOKER

The **joker** is a person who consistently uses sarcasm, plays pranks, or tells jokes, which distracts from the overall functioning of the group. In short, the joker is an incompetent tension releaser. Rather than being seen as the witty group member with good timing, the joker is seen as the "class clown." Like the insecure compliment seeker, the joker usually seeks attention and approval because of an underlying insecurity. A group's leader may have to intervene and privately meet with a person engaging in joker behavior to help prevent a toxic or unsafe climate from forming. This may be ineffective, though, if a joker's behaviours are targeted toward the group leader, which could indicate that the joker has a general problem with authority. In the worst-case scenario, a joker may have to be expelled from the group if his/her behavior becomes violent, offensive, illegal, or otherwise unethical.

UNPRODUCTIVE ROLES

There are some negative roles in group communication that do not primarily function to divert attention away from the group's task to a specific group member. Instead, these **unproductive roles** just prevent or make it more difficult for the group to make progress. These roles include the blocker, withdrawer, aggressor, and doormat.

BLOCKER

The **blocker** intentionally or unintentionally keeps things from getting done in the group. Intentionally, a person may suggest that the group look into a matter further or explore another option before making a final decision even though the group has already thoroughly considered the matter. They may cite a procedural rule or suggest that input be sought from additional people in order to delay progress. Behaviours that lead to more information gathering can be good for the group, but when they are unnecessary, they are blocking behaviors. Unintentionally, a group member may set blocking behaviours into motion by missing a meeting or not getting his/her work done on time. People can also block progress by playing the airhead role, which is the opposite of the egghead role discussed earlier. An airhead skirts his or her responsibilities by claiming ignorance when he or she actually understands or intentionally performs poorly on a task so the other group members question his or her intellectual abilities to handle other tasks (Cragan & Wright, 1999). Since exhibiting airhead behaviours gets a person out of performing tasks, this can also be a tactic used by the withdrawer, a role we will discuss next.

A blocker prevents the group from progressing toward task completion by creating barriers, suggesting unnecessary work, or avoiding group members. Kev-shine – Business man phone – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

WITHDRAWER

A **withdrawer** mentally and/or physically removes herself or himself from group activities and only participates when forced to. When groups exceed five members, the likelihood of having a member exhibit withdrawer behaviours increases. For example, a member may attend meetings and seemingly pay attention but not contribute to discussions or not volunteer to take on tasks, instead waiting on other members to volunteer first. Withdrawers are often responsible for the social loafing that makes other group members dread group work. A member may also avoid eye contact with other group members, sit apart from the group, or orient his or her body away from the group to avoid participation. Withdrawers generally do not exhibit active listening behaviors. At the extreme, a group member may stop attending group meetings completely. Adopting a problem-solving model that requires equal participation, starting to build social cohesion early, and choosing a meeting space and seating arrangement that encourages interactivity can help minimize withdrawing behaviors. Gatekeepers, supporters, and group leaders can also intervene after early signs of withdrawing to try to reengage the group member.

AGGRESSOR

An **aggressor** exhibits negative behaviors such as putting others' ideas down, attacking others personally when they feel confronted or insecure, competing unnecessarily to "win" at the expense of others within the group, and being outspoken to the point of distraction. An aggressor's behaviors can quickly cross the fine line between being abrasive or dominant and being unethical. For example, a person vigorously defending a position that is relevant and valid is different from a person who claims others' ideas are stupid but has nothing to contribute. As with most behaviours, the aggressor's fall into a continuum based on their intensity. On the more benign end of the continuum is assertive behavior, toward the middle is aggressive behaviour, and on the unethical side is bullying behaviour. At their worst, an aggressor's behaviors can lead to shouting matches or even physical violence within a group. Establishing group rules and norms that set up a safe climate for discussion and include mechanisms for temporarily or permanently removing a group member who violates that safe space may proactively prevent such behaviours.

DOORMAT

While we all need to compromise for the sake of the group, the **doormat** is a person who is chronically submissive to the point that it hurts the group's progress (Cragan & Wright, 1999). Doormat behaviours include quickly giving in when challenged, self-criticism, and claims of inadequacy. Some people who exhibit doormat behaviours may have difficulty being self-assured and assertive, may be conflict avoidant, or may even feel that their behaviours will make other group members like them. Other people play the martyr and make sure to publicly note their "sacrifices" for the group, hoping to elicit praise or attention. If their sacrifices are not recognized, they may engage in further negative behaviours such as whining and/or insecure compliment seeking.

Key Takeaways

- Task-related group roles and behaviours contribute directly to the group's completion of a task or the achievement of its goal. These roles typically serve leadership, informational, or procedural functions and include the following: task leader, expediter, information provider, information seeker, gatekeeper, and recorder.
- Maintenance group roles and behaviors function to create and maintain social cohesion and fulfill the interpersonal needs of the group members. To perform these roles, a person needs strong and sensitive interpersonal skills. These roles include social-emotional leader, supporter, tension releaser, harmonizer, and interpreter.
- Negative role behaviours delay or distract the group. Self-centered role behaviours are those that seek to divert the group's attention to the group member exhibiting the behaviour. These roles include central negative, monopolizer, stage hog, egghead, self-confessor, and insecure compliment seeker. Unproductive role behaviours prevent or make it difficult for the group to make progress. These roles include blocker, withdrawer, aggressor, and doormat.

Exercises

1. Which of the task-related roles do you think has the greatest potential of going wrong and causing conflict within the group and why?
2. Which maintenance role do you think you've performed the best in previous group experiences? How did your communication and behaviours help you perform the role's functions? Which maintenance role have you had the most difficulty or the least interest in performing? Why?
3. Describe a situation in which you have witnessed a person playing one of the self-centered roles in a group. How did the person communicate? What were the effects? Now describe a situation in which you have witnessed a person playing one of the unproductive roles in a group. How did the person communicate? What were the effects?

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17.3: PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING IN GROUPS

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the common components and characteristics of problems.
2. Explain the five steps of the group problem-solving process.
3. Describe the brainstorming and discussion that should take place before the group makes a decision.
4. Compare and contrast the different decision-making techniques.
5. Discuss the various influences on decision making.

Although the steps of problem solving and decision making that we will discuss next may seem obvious, we often don't think to or choose not to use them. Instead, we start working on a problem and later realize we are lost and have to backtrack. In this section, we will discuss the group problem-solving process, methods of decision making, and influences on these processes.

GROUP PROBLEM SOLVING

The problem-solving process involves thoughts, discussions, actions, and decisions that occur from the first consideration of a problematic situation to the goal. The problems that groups face are varied, but some common problems include budgeting funds, raising funds, planning events, addressing customer or citizen complaints, creating or adapting products or services to fit needs, supporting members, and raising awareness about issues or causes.

Problems have three common components (Adams & Galanes, 2009):

1. **An undesirable situation.** When conditions are desirable, there isn't a problem.
2. **A desired situation.** Even though it may only be a vague idea, there is a drive to better the undesirable situation. The vague idea may develop into a more precise, achievable goal, but solutions are not yet generated.

3. **Obstacles between undesirable and desirable situation.** These are things that stand in the way between the current situation and the group's goal of addressing it. This component of a problem requires the most work, and it is the part where decision making occurs. Some examples of obstacles include limited funding, resources, personnel, time, or information. Obstacles can also take the form of people who are working against the group, including people resistant to change or people who disagree.

Discussion of these three elements of a problem helps the group tailor its problem-solving process, as each problem will vary. While these three general elements are present in each problem, the group should also address specific characteristics of the problem. Five common and important characteristics to consider are task difficulty, number of possible solutions, group member interest in problem, group member familiarity with problem, and the need for solution acceptance (Adams & Galanes, 2009).

Group problem solving can be a confusing puzzle unless it is approached systematically. Muness Castle – Problem Solving – CC BY-SA 2.0.

1. **Task difficulty.** Difficult tasks are typically complex. Groups should be prepared to spend time researching and discussing a difficult and complex task in order to develop a shared foundational knowledge. This typically requires individual work outside of the group and frequent group meetings to share information.
2. **Number of possible solutions.** There are usually multiple ways to solve a problem or complete a task, but some problems have more potential solutions than others. Figuring out how to prepare a beach house for an approaching hurricane is fairly complex and difficult, but there are still a limited number of things to do—for example, taping and boarding up windows; turning off water, electricity, and gas; trimming trees; and securing loose outside objects. Other problems may be more creatively based: designing a new restaurant may entail using some standard solutions but also innovations in the layout and design.
3. **Group member interest in problem.** When group members are interested in the problem, they will be more engaged with the problem-solving process and invested in finding a quality solution. Groups with high interest in and knowledge about the problem may want more freedom to develop and implement solutions, while groups with low interest may prefer a leader who provides structure and direction.
4. **Group familiarity with problem.** Some groups encounter a problem regularly, while other problems are more unique or unexpected. A family who has lived in hurricane alley for decades probably has a better idea of how to prepare its house for a hurricane than does a family that just recently moved from the Midwest. Many groups that rely on funding have to revisit a budget every year, and in recent years, groups have had to get more creative with budgets as funding has been cut in nearly every sector. When group members are not familiar with a problem, they need to do background research on what similar groups have done and may also need to bring in outside experts.
5. **Need for solution acceptance.** In this step, groups must consider how many people the decision will affect and how much "buy-in" from others the group needs in order for their solution to be successfully

implemented. Some small groups have many stakeholders on whom the success of a solution depends. Other groups are answerable only to themselves. When a small group is planning on building a new park in a crowded neighborhood or implementing a new policy in a large business, it can be very difficult to develop solutions that will be accepted by all. In such cases, groups will want to poll those who will be affected by the solution and may want to do a pilot implementation to see how people react. Imposing an excellent solution that doesn't have buy-in from stakeholders can still lead to failure.

GROUP PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS

There are several variations of similar problem-solving models based on US American scholar John Dewey's reflective thinking process (Bormann & Bormann, 1988). Some of the following steps are straightforward, and they are things we would logically do when faced with a problem. However, taking a deliberate and systematic approach to problem solving has been shown to benefit group functioning and performance. A deliberate approach is especially beneficial for groups that do not have an established history of working together and will only be able to meet occasionally. Although a group should attend to each step of the process, group leaders or other group members who facilitate problem solving should be cautious not to dogmatically follow each element of the process or force a group along. Lack of flexibility could limit others' input and negatively affect the group's cohesion and climate.

STEP 1: DEFINE THE PROBLEM

Define the problem by considering the three elements shared by every problem: the current undesirable situation, the goal or more desirable situation, and obstacles in the way (Adams & Galanes, 2009). At this stage, group members share what they know about the current situation, without proposing solutions or evaluating the information. Here are some good questions to ask during this stage: What is the current difficulty? How did we come to know that the difficulty exists? Who/what is involved? Why is it meaningful/urgent/important? What have the effects been so far? What, if any, elements of the difficulty require clarification? At the end of this stage, the group should be able to compose a single sentence that summarizes the problem — a *problem statement*. As you prepare this statement, avoid wording that hints at potential solutions. A small group formed to investigate ethical violations by city officials could use the following problem statement: "Our state does not currently have a mechanism for citizens to report suspected ethical violations by city officials."

STEP 2: ANALYZE THE PROBLEM

During this step, groups should analyze the problem and their relationship to the problem. Whereas the first step involved exploring the “what” related to the problem, this step focuses on the “why.” At this stage, group members can discuss the potential causes of the difficulty. Group members may also want to begin setting out an agenda or timeline for the group’s problem-solving process, looking forward to the other steps. To fully analyze the problem, the group can discuss the five common problem variables discussed before. Here are two examples of questions that the group formed to address ethics violations might ask: Why doesn’t our city have an ethics reporting mechanism? Do other cities of similar size have such a mechanism? Once the problem has been analyzed, the group can pose a problem question that will guide the group as it generates possible solutions. “How can citizens report suspected ethical violations by city officials and how will such reports be processed and addressed?” The problem question is more complex than the problem statement, since the group has moved on to more in-depth discussion of the problem during step 2.

STEP 3: GENERATE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

During this step, group members generate possible solutions to the problem. Again, solutions should not be evaluated at this point, only proposed and clarified. The question should be what *could* we do to address this problem, not what *should* we do to address it. It is perfectly OK for a group member to question another’s idea by asking something like “What do you mean?” or “Could you explain your reasoning more?” Discussions at this stage may reveal a need to return to previous steps to better define or more fully analyze a problem. Since many problems are multifaceted, it is necessary for group members to generate solutions for each part of the problem separately, making sure to have multiple solutions for each part. Stopping the solution-generating process prematurely can lead to groupthink. For the problem question previously posed, the group would need to generate solutions for all three parts of the problem included in the question. Possible solutions for the first part of the problem (How can citizens report ethical violations?) may include “online reporting system, e-mail, in-person, anonymously, on-the-record,” and so on. Possible solutions for the second part of the problem (How will reports be processed?) may include “daily by a newly appointed ethics officer, weekly by a nonpartisan nongovernment employee,” and so on. Possible solutions for the third part of the problem (How will reports be addressed?) may include “by a newly appointed ethics commission, by the accused’s supervisor, by the city manager,” and so on.

STEP 4: EVALUATE SOLUTIONS

During this step, solutions can be critically evaluated based on their credibility, completeness, and worth. Once the potential solutions have been narrowed based on more obvious differences in relevance and/or merit, the group should analyze each solution based on its potential effects—especially negative effects. Groups that are required to report the rationale for their decision or whose decisions may be subject to public scrutiny would be wise to make a set list of criteria for evaluating each solution. Additionally, solutions can be evaluated based on how well they fit with the group's charge and the abilities of the group. To do this, group members may ask, "Does this solution live up to the original purpose or mission of the group?" and "Can the solution actually be implemented with our current resources and connections?" and "How will this solution be supported, funded, enforced, and assessed?" Secondary tensions and substantive conflict, two concepts discussed earlier, emerge during this step of problem solving, and group members will need to employ effective critical thinking and listening skills.

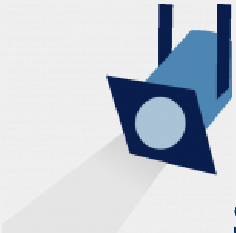
Decision making is part of the larger process of problem solving and it plays a prominent role in this step. While there are several fairly similar models for problem solving, there are many varied decision-making techniques that groups can use. For example, to narrow the list of proposed solutions, group members may decide by majority vote, by weighing the pros and cons, or by discussing them until a consensus is reached. There are also more complex decision-making models like the "six hats method," which we will discuss later. Once the final decision is reached, the group leader or facilitator should confirm that the group is in agreement. It may be beneficial to let the group break for a while or even to delay the final decision until a later meeting to allow people time to evaluate it outside of the group context.

STEP 5: IMPLEMENT AND ASSESS THE SOLUTION

Implementing the solution requires some advanced planning, and it should not be rushed unless the group is operating under strict time restraints or delay may lead to some kind of harm. Although some solutions can be implemented immediately, others may take days, months, or years. As was noted earlier, it may be beneficial for groups to poll those who will be affected by the solution as to their opinion of it or even to do a pilot test to observe the effectiveness of the solution and how people react to it. Before implementation, groups should also determine how and when they would assess the effectiveness of the solution by asking, "How will we know if the solution is working or not?" Since solution assessment will vary based on whether or not the group is disbanded, groups should also consider the following questions: If the group disbands after implementation, who will assessing the solution? If the solution fails, will the group reconvene or will a new group be formed?

Once a solution is reached and the group has the "green light" to implement it, it should proceed deliberately and cautiously, considering consequences and addressing them. Jocko Benoit – Prodigal Light – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Certain elements of the solution may need to be delegated to various people inside and outside the group. Group members may also be assigned to implement a particular part of the solution based on their role in the decision making or because it connects to their area of expertise. Likewise, group members may be tasked with publicizing the solution or "selling" it to a particular group of stakeholders. Last, the group should consider its future. In some cases, the group will get to decide if it will stay together and continue working on other tasks or if it will disband. In other cases, outside forces determine the group's fate.



SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING COMPETENT"

Problem Solving and Group Presentations

Giving a group presentation requires that individual group members and the group as a whole solve many problems and make many decisions. Although having more people involved in a presentation increases logistical difficulties and has the potential to create more conflict, a well-prepared and well-delivered group presentation can be more engaging and effective than a typical presentation. The main problems facing a group giving a presentation are (1) dividing responsibilities, (2) coordinating schedules and time management, and (3) working out the logistics of the presentation delivery.

In terms of dividing responsibilities, assigning individual work at the first meeting and then trying to fit it all together before the presentation (which is what many college students do when faced with a group project) is not the recommended method. Integrating content and visual aids created by several people into a seamless final product takes time and effort, and the person "stuck" with this job at the end usually develops some resentment toward the other group members. While it's OK for group members to do work independently outside of group meetings, they should also spend time working together to help set up some standards for content and formatting expectations that will help make later integration of work easier. Taking the time to complete one part of the presentation together can help set those standards for later individual work. Discuss the roles that various group members will play openly, so there is no role confusion. There could be one point person for keeping track of the group's progress and schedule, one point person for communication, one point person for content integration, one point person for visual aids, and so on. Each person shouldn't do all that work on his/her own but help focus the group's attention on his/her specific area during group meetings (Stanton, 2009).

Scheduling group meetings is one of the most challenging problems groups face, given people's busy lives. From the beginning, it should be clearly communicated that the group needs to spend considerable time in face-to-face meetings, and group members should know that they may have to make an occasional sacrifice to attend. Especially important is the commitment to scheduling time to rehearse the presentation. Consider creating a contract of group guidelines that includes expectations for meeting attendance to increase group members' commitment.

Group presentations require members to navigate many logistics of their presentation. While it may be easier for a group to assign each member to create a five-minute segment and then transition from one person to the next, this is not the most engaging method. Creating a master presentation and then assigning individual speakers creates a more fluid and dynamic presentation and allows everyone to become familiar with the content, which can help if a person doesn't show up to present and during the question-and-answer section. Once the content of the presentation is complete, figure out introductions, transitions, visual aids, and the use of time and space (Stanton, 2012). In terms of introductions, figure out if one person will introduce all the speakers at the beginning, if speakers will introduce themselves at the beginning, or if introductions will occur as the presentation progresses. In terms of transitions, make sure each person has included in his/her speaking notes when presentation duties switch from one person to the next. Visual aids have the potential to cause hiccups in a group presentation if they are not fluidly integrated. Practicing with visual aids and having one person control them may help prevent this. Know how long your presentation is and know how you are going to use the space. Presenters should know how long the whole presentation should be and how long each of their segments should be so that everyone can share the responsibility of keeping time. Also consider the size and layout of the presentation space. You don't want presenters huddled in a corner until it's their turn to speak or trapped behind furniture when their turn comes.

Critical thinking questions:

1. Of the three main problems facing group presenters, which do you think is the most challenging and why?
2. Why do you think people tasked with a group presentation (especially students) prefer to divide the parts up and have members work on them independently before coming back together and integrating each part? What problems emerge from this method? In what ways might developing a master presentation and then assigning parts to different speakers be better than the more divided method? What are the drawbacks to the master presentation method?

DECISION MAKING IN GROUPS

We all engage in personal decision making daily, and we all know that some decisions are more difficult than others. When we make decisions in groups, we face some challenges that we do not face in our personal decision making, but we also stand to benefit from some advantages of group decision making (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). Group decision making can appear fair and democratic but really only be a gesture that covers up the fact that certain group members or the group leader have already decided. Group decision making also takes more time than individual decisions and can be burdensome if some group members do not do their assigned work, divert the group with self-centered or unproductive role behaviours, or miss meetings. Conversely, though, group decisions are often more informed, since all group members develop a shared understanding of a problem through discussion and debate. The shared understanding may also be more complex and deep than what an individual would develop, because the group members are exposed to a variety of viewpoints that can broaden their own perspectives. Group decisions also benefit from synergy, one of the key advantages of group communication that we discussed earlier. Most groups do not use a specific method of decision making, perhaps thinking that they'll work things out as they go. This can lead to unequal participation, social loafing, premature decisions, prolonged discussion, and a host of other negative consequences. So in this section we will learn some practices that will prepare us for good decision making and some specific techniques we can use to help us reach a final decision.

BRAINSTORMING BEFORE DECISION MAKING

Before groups can make a decision, they need to generate possible solutions to their problem. The most commonly used method is brainstorming, although most people don't follow the recommended steps of brainstorming. As you'll recall, brainstorming refers to the quick generation of ideas free of evaluation. The originator of the term *brainstorming* said the following four rules must be followed for the technique to be effective (Osborn, 1959):

1. Evaluation of ideas is forbidden.
2. Wild and crazy ideas are encouraged.
3. Quantity of ideas, not quality, is the goal.
4. New combinations of ideas presented are encouraged.

To make brainstorming more of a decision-making method rather than an idea-generating method, group communication scholars have suggested additional steps that precede and follow brainstorming (Cragan & Wright, 1991).

1. **Do a warm-up brainstorming session.** Some people are more apprehensive about publicly communicating their ideas than others are, and a warm-up session can help ease apprehension and prime group members for task-related idea generation. The warm-up can be initiated by anyone in the group and should last a few minutes. To get things started, a person could ask, "If our group formed a band, what would we be called?" or "What other purposes could a mailbox serve?" In the previous examples, the first warm-up encourages the group's abstract creativity, while the second focuses more on practical and concrete ideas.
2. **Do the actual brainstorming session.** This session shouldn't last more than thirty minutes and should follow the four rules of brainstorming mentioned previously. To ensure that the fourth rule is realized, the facilitator could encourage people to build on each other's ideas.
3. **Eliminate duplicate ideas.** After the brainstorming session is over, group members can eliminate (without evaluating) ideas that are the same or very similar.
4. **Clarify, organize, and evaluate ideas.** Before evaluation, see if any ideas need clarification. Then try to theme or group ideas together in some orderly fashion. Since "wild and crazy" ideas are encouraged, some suggestions may need clarification. If it becomes clear that there isn't really a foundation to an idea and that it is too vague and can't be clarified, it may be eliminated. As a caution though, it may be wise to avoid throwing out off-the-wall ideas that are hard to categorize and to instead put them in a miscellaneous or "wild and crazy" category.

DISCUSSION BEFORE DECISION MAKING

The **nominal group technique** guides decision making through a four-step process that includes idea generation and evaluation and seeks to elicit equal contributions from all group members (Delbecq & Ven de Ven, 1971). This method is useful because the procedure involves all group members systematically, which fixes the problem of uneven participation during discussions. Since everyone contributes to the discussion, this method can also help reduce instances of social loafing. To use the nominal group technique, do the following:

1. Silently and individually list ideas.
2. Create a master list of ideas.
3. Clarify ideas as needed.
4. Take a secret vote to rank group members' acceptance of ideas.

During the first step, have group members work quietly, in the same space, to write down every idea they have to address the task or problem they face. This shouldn't take more than twenty minutes. Whoever is facilitating the discussion should remind group members to use brainstorming techniques, which means they shouldn't evaluate ideas as they are generated. Ask group members to remain silent once they've finished their list so they do not distract others.

During the second step, the facilitator goes around the group in a consistent order asking each person to share one idea at a time. As the idea is shared, the facilitator records it on a master list that everyone can see. Keep track of how many times each idea comes up, as that could be an idea that warrants more discussion. Continue this process until all the ideas have been shared. As a note to facilitators, some group members may begin to edit their list or self-censor when asked to provide one of their ideas. To limit a person's apprehension with sharing his or her ideas and to ensure that each idea is shared, you can ask group members to exchange lists with someone else so they can share ideas from the list they receive without fear of being personally judged.

During step three, the facilitator should note that group members can now ask for clarification on ideas on the master list. Do not let this discussion stray into evaluation of ideas. To help avoid an unnecessarily long discussion, it may be useful to go from one person to the next to ask which ideas need clarifying and then go to the originator(s) of the idea in question for clarification.

During the fourth step, members use a voting ballot to rank the acceptability of the ideas on the master list. If the list is long, you may ask group members to rank only their top five or so choices. The facilitator then takes up the secret ballots and reviews them in a random order, noting the rankings of each idea. Ideally, the highest ranked idea can then be discussed and decided on. The nominal group technique does not carry a group all the way through to the point of decision; rather, it sets the group up for a roundtable discussion or use of some other method to evaluate the merits of the top ideas.

SPECIFIC DECISION-MAKING TECHNIQUES

Some decision-making techniques involve determining a course of action based on the level of agreement among the group members. These methods include majority, expert, authority, and consensus rule. Table 17.1, "Pros and Cons of Agreement-Based Decision-Making Techniques" reviews the pros and cons of each of these methods.

Majority rule is a simple method of decision making based on voting. In most cases a majority is considered half plus one. Becky McCray – Voting – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Majority rule is a commonly used decision-making technique in which a majority (one-half plus one) must agree before a decision is made. A show-of-hands vote, a paper ballot, or an electronic voting system can determine the majority choice. Many decision-making bodies, including parliaments and superior courts, use majority rule to make decisions, which shows that it is often associated with democratic decision making, since each person gets one vote and each vote counts equally. Of course, other individuals and mediated messages can influence a person's vote, but since the voting power is spread out over all group members, it is not easy for one person or party to take control of the decision-making process. In some cases—for example, to override a presidential veto or to amend the constitution—a super majority of two-thirds may be required to make a decision.

Minority rule is a decision-making technique in which a designated authority or expert has final say over a decision and may or may not consider the input of other group members. When a designated expert makes a decision by minority rule, there may be buy-in from others in the group, especially if the members of the group didn't have relevant knowledge or expertise. When a designated authority makes decisions, buy-in will vary based on group members' level of respect for the authority. For example, decisions made by an elected authority may be more accepted by those who elected him/her than by those who didn't. As with majority rule, this technique can be time saving. Unlike majority rule, one person or party can have control over the decision-making process. This type of decision making is more similar to that used by monarchs and dictators. An obvious negative consequence of this method is that the needs or wants of one person can override the needs and wants of the majority. A minority deciding for the majority has led to negative consequences throughout history. The white Afrikaner minority that ruled South Africa for decades instituted apartheid, which was a system of racial segregation that disenfranchised and oppressed the majority population. The quality of the decision and its fairness really depends on the designated expert or authority.

Consensus rule is a decision-making technique in which all members of the group must agree on the same decision. On rare occasions, a decision may be ideal for all group members, which can lead to unanimous agreement without further debate and discussion. Although this can be positive, be cautious that this isn't a sign of groupthink. More typically, consensus is reached only after lengthy discussion. On the plus side, consensus often leads to high-quality decisions due to the time and effort it takes to get everyone in agreement. Group members are also more likely to be committed to the decision because of their investment in reaching it. On the negative side, the ultimate decision is often one that all group members can live with but not one that's ideal for all members. Additionally, the process of arriving at consensus also includes conflict, as people debate ideas and negotiate the interpersonal tensions that may result.

Table 17.1 Pros and Cons of Agreement-Based Decision-Making Techniques

Decision-Making Technique	Pros	Cons
Majority rule	• Quick • Efficient in large groups • Each vote counts equally	• Close decisions (5–4) may reduce internal and external "buy-in" • Doesn't take advantage of group synergy to develop alternatives that more members can support • Minority may feel alienated
Minority rule by expert	• Quick • Decision quality is better than what less knowledgeable people could produce • Experts are typically objective and less easy to influence	• Expertise must be verified • Experts can be difficult to find / pay for • Group members may feel useless
Minority rule by authority	• Quick • Buy-in could be high if authority is respected	• Authority may not be seen as legitimate, leading to less buy-in • Group members may try to sway the authority or compete for his or her attention • Unethical authorities could make decisions that benefit them and harm group members
Consensus rule	• High-quality decisions due to time invested • Higher level of commitment because of participation in decision • Satisfaction with decision because of shared agreement	• Time consuming • Difficult to manage idea and personal conflict that can emerge as ideas are debated • Decision may be OK but not ideal

SPOTLIGHT: “GETTING CRITICAL”

Six Hats Method of Decision Making

Edward de Bono developed the Six Hats method of thinking in the late 1980s, and it has since become a regular feature in decision-making training in business and professional contexts (de Bono, 1985). The method’s popularity lies in its ability to help people get out of habitual ways of thinking and to allow group members to play different roles and see a problem or decision from multiple points of view. The basic idea is that each of the six hats represents a different way of thinking, and when we figuratively switch hats, we switch the way we think. The hats and their style of thinking are as follows:

- **White hat.** Objective—focuses on seeking information such as data and facts and then processes that information in a neutral way.
- **Red hat.** Emotional—uses intuition, gut reactions, and feelings to judge information and suggestions.
- **Black hat.** Negative—focuses on potential risks, points out possibilities for failure, and evaluates information cautiously and defensively.
- **Yellow hat.** Positive—is optimistic about suggestions and future outcomes, gives constructive and positive feedback, points out benefits and advantages.
- **Green hat.** Creative—tries to generate new ideas and solutions, thinks “outside the box.”
- **Blue hat.** Philosophical—uses metacommunication to organize and reflect on the thinking and communication taking place in the group, facilitates who wears what hat and when group members change hats.

Specific sequences or combinations of hats can be used to encourage strategic thinking. For example, the group leader may start off wearing the Blue Hat and suggest that the group start their decision-making process with some “White Hat thinking” in order to process through facts and other available information. During this stage, the group could also process through what other groups have done when faced with a similar problem. Then the leader could begin an evaluation sequence starting with two minutes of “Yellow Hat thinking” to identify potential positive outcomes, then “Black Hat thinking” to allow group members to express reservations about ideas and point out potential problems, then “Red Hat thinking” to get people’s gut reactions to the previous discussion, then “Green Hat thinking” to identify other possible solutions that are more tailored to the group’s situation or completely new approaches. At the end of a sequence, the Blue Hat would want to summarize what was said and begin a new sequence. To successfully use this method, the person wearing the Blue Hat should be familiar with different sequences and plan some of the thinking patterns ahead of time based on the problem and the group members. Each round of thinking should be limited to a certain time frame (two to five minutes) to keep the discussion moving.

Self-reflection and critical thinking questions:

1. This decision-making method has been praised because it allows group members to "switch gears" in their thinking and allows for role playing, which lets people express ideas more freely. How can this help enhance critical thinking? Which combination of hats do you think would be best for a critical thinking sequence?
2. What combinations of hats might be useful if the leader wanted to break the larger group up into pairs and why? For example, what kind of thinking would result from putting Yellow and Red together, Black and White together, or Red and White together, and so on?
3. Based on your preferred ways of thinking and your personality, which hat would be the best fit for you? Which would be the most challenging? Why?

INFLUENCES ON DECISION MAKING

Many factors influence the decision-making process. For example, how might a group's independence or access to resources affect the decisions they make? What potential advantages and disadvantages come with decisions made by groups that are more or less similar in terms of personality and cultural identities? In this section, we will explore how situational, personality, and cultural influences affect decision making in groups.

SITUATIONAL INFLUENCES ON DECISION MAKING

A group's situational context affects decision making. One key situational element is the degree of freedom that the group has to make its own decisions, secure its own resources, and initiate its own actions. Some groups have to go through multiple approval processes before they can do anything, while others are self-directed, self-governing, and self-sustaining. Another situational influence is uncertainty. In general, groups deal with more uncertainty in decision making than do individuals because of the increased number of variables that comes with adding more people to a situation. Individual group members can't know what other group members are thinking, whether or not they are doing their work, and how committed they are to the group. So the size of a group is a powerful situational influence, as it adds to uncertainty and complicates communication.

Access to information also influences a group. First, the nature of the group's task or problem affects its ability to get information. Group members can more easily make decisions about a problem when other groups have similarly experienced it. Even if the problem is complex and serious, the group can learn from other situations and apply what it learns. Second, the group must have access to flows of information. Access to archives, electronic databases, and individuals with relevant experience is necessary to obtain any relevant information about similar problems or to do research on a new or unique problem. In this regard, group members' formal and information network connections also become important situational influences.

The origin and urgency of a problem are also situational factors that influence decision making. In terms of origin, problems usually occur in one of four ways:

1. **Something goes wrong.** Group members must decide how to fix or stop something. Example—a firehouse crew finds out that half of the building is contaminated with mold and must be closed down.
2. **Expectations change or increase.** Group members must innovate more efficient or effective ways of doing something. Example—a firehouse crew finds out that the district they are responsible for is being expanded.
3. **Something goes wrong and expectations change or increase.** Group members must fix/stop something *and* become more efficient/effective. Example—the firehouse crew has to close half the building and must start responding to more calls due to the expanding district.
4. **The problem existed from the beginning.** Group members must go back to the origins of the situation and walk through and analyze the steps again to decide what can be done differently. Example—a firehouse crew has consistently had to work with minimal resources in terms of building space and firefighting tools.

In each of the cases, the need for a decision may be more or less urgent depending on how badly something is going wrong, how much the expectations have been raised, or the degree to which people are fed up with a broken system. Decisions must be made in situations ranging from crisis level to mundane.

PERSONALITY INFLUENCES ON DECISION MAKING

A long-studied typology of value orientations that affect decision making consists of the following types of decision maker: the economic, the aesthetic, the theoretical, the social, the political, and the religious (Spranger, 1928).

- The *economic* decision maker makes decisions based on what is practical and useful.
- The *aesthetic* decision maker makes decisions based on form and harmony, desiring a solution that is elegant and in sync with the surroundings.
- The *theoretical* decision maker wants to discover the truth through rationality.
- The *social* decision maker emphasizes the personal impact of a decision and sympathizes with those who may be affected by it.

- The *political* decision maker is interested in power and influence and views people and/or property as divided into groups that have different value.
- The *religious* decision maker seeks to identify with a larger purpose, works to unify others under that goal, and commits to a viewpoint, often denying one side and being dedicated to the other.

In North America, economic, political, and theoretical decision making tend to be more prevalent decision-making orientations, which likely corresponds to the individualistic cultural orientation with its emphasis on competition and efficiency. But situational context, as we discussed before, can also influence our decision making.

The personalities of group members, especially leaders and other active members, affect the climate of the group. Group member personalities can be categorized based on where they fall on a continuum anchored by the following descriptors: dominant/submissive, friendly/unfriendly, and instrumental/emotional (Cragan & Wright, 1999). The more group members there are in any extreme of these categories, the more likely that the group climate will also shift to resemble those characteristics.

- **Dominant versus submissive.** Group members that are more dominant act more independently and directly, initiate conversations, take up more space, make more direct eye contact, seek leadership positions, and take control over decision-making processes. More submissive members are reserved, contribute to the group only when asked to, avoid eye contact, and leave their personal needs and thoughts unvoiced or give into the suggestions of others.
- **Friendly versus unfriendly.** Group members on the friendly side of the continuum find a balance between talking and listening, don't try to win at the expense of other group members, are flexible but not weak, and value democratic decision making. Unfriendly group members are disagreeable, indifferent, withdrawn, and selfish, which leads them to either not invest in decision making or direct it in their own interest rather than in the interest of the group.
- **Instrumental versus emotional.** Instrumental group members are emotionally neutral, objective, analytical, task-oriented, and committed followers, which leads them to work hard and contribute to the group's decision making as long as it is orderly and follows agreed-on rules. Emotional group members are creative, playful, independent, unpredictable, and expressive, which leads them to make rash decisions, resist group norms or decision-making structures, and switch often from relational to task focus.

CULTURAL CONTEXT AND DECISION MAKING

Just like neighborhoods, schools, and countries, small groups vary in terms of their degree of similarity and difference. Demographic changes and increases in technology that can bring different people together make it more likely that we will be interacting in more and more heterogeneous groups (Allen, 2011, p. 5). Some small groups are more homogenous, meaning the members are more similar, and some are more heterogeneous, meaning the members are more different. Diversity and difference within groups has advantages and disadvantages. In terms of advantages, in general, groups that are culturally heterogeneous have better overall performance than more homogenous groups (Haslett & Ruebush, 1999, p. 133). Additionally, when group members have time to get to know each other and competently communicate across their differences, the advantages of diversity include better decision making due to different perspectives (Thomas, 1999). Unfortunately, groups often operate under time constraints and other pressures that make the possibility for intercultural dialogue and understanding difficult. The main disadvantage of heterogeneous groups is the possibility for conflict, but given that all groups experience conflict, this isn't solely due to the presence of diversity. We will now look more specifically at how some of the cultural value orientations we've learned about already in this book can play out in groups with international diversity and how domestic diversity in terms of demographics can also influence group decision making.

INTERNATIONAL DIVERSITY IN GROUP INTERACTIONS

Cultural value orientations such as individualism/collectivism, power distance, and high-/low-context communication styles all manifest on a continuum of communication behaviours and can influence group decision making. Group members from individualistic cultures are more likely to value task-oriented, efficient, and direct communication. This could manifest in behaviors such as dividing up tasks into individual projects before collaboration begins and then openly debating ideas during discussion and decision making. Additionally, people from cultures that value individualism are more likely to openly express dissent from a decision, essentially expressing their disagreement with the group. Group members from collectivistic cultures are more likely to value relationships over the task at hand. Because of this, they also tend to value conformity and face-saving (often indirect) communication. This could manifest in behaviours such as establishing norms that include periods of socializing to build relationships before task-oriented communication like negotiations begin or norms that limit public disagreement in favor of more indirect communication that doesn't challenge other group members or the group's leader. In a group composed of people from a collectivistic culture, each member would likely play harmonizing roles, looking for signs of conflict and resolving them before they become public.

Power distance can also affect group interactions. Some cultures rank higher on power-distance scales, meaning they value hierarchy, make decisions based on status, and believe that people have a set place in society that is fairly unchangeable. Group members from high-power-distance cultures would likely appreciate a strong designated leader who exhibits a more directive leadership style and prefer groups in which members have clear and assigned roles. In a group that is homogenous in terms of having a high-power-distance orientation, members with higher status would be able to openly provide information, and those with lower status may not provide information unless a higher status member explicitly seeks it from them. Low-power-distance cultures do not place as much value and meaning on status and believe that all group members can participate in decision making. Group members from low-power-distance cultures would likely freely speak their mind during a group meeting and prefer a participative leadership style.

How much meaning is conveyed through the context surrounding verbal communication can also affect group communication. Some cultures have a high-context communication style in which much of the meaning in an interaction is conveyed through context such as nonverbal cues and silence. Group members from high-context cultures may avoid saying something directly, assuming that other group members will understand the intended meaning even if the message is indirect. So if someone disagrees with a proposed course of action, he or she may say, “Let’s discuss this tomorrow,” and mean, “I don’t think we should do this.” Such indirect communication is also a face-saving strategy that is common in collectivistic cultures. Other cultures have a low-context communication style that places more importance on the meaning conveyed through words than through context or nonverbal cues. Group members from low-context cultures often say what they mean and mean what they say. For example, if someone doesn’t like an idea, they might say, “I think we should consider more options. This one doesn’t seem like the best we can do.”

In any of these cases, an individual from one culture operating in a group with people of a different cultural orientation could adapt to the expectations of the host culture, especially if that person possesses a high degree of intercultural communication competence (ICC). Additionally, people with high ICC can also adapt to a group member with a different cultural orientation than the host culture. Even though these cultural orientations connect to values that affect our communication in fairly consistent ways, individuals may exhibit different communication behaviors depending on their own individual communication style and the situation.

DOMESTIC DIVERSITY AND GROUP COMMUNICATION

While it is becoming more likely that we will interact in small groups with international diversity, we are guaranteed to interact in groups that are diverse in terms of the cultural identities found within a single country or the subcultures found within a larger cultural group.

Gender stereotypes sometimes influence the roles that people play within a group. For example, the stereotype that women are more nurturing than men may lead group members (both male and female) to expect that women will play the role of supporters or harmonizers within the group. Since women have primarily performed secretarial work since the 1900s, it may also be expected that women will play the role of recorder. In both of these cases, stereotypical notions of gender place women in roles that are typically not as valued in group communication. The opposite is true for men. In terms of leadership, despite notable exceptions, research shows that men fill an overwhelmingly disproportionate amount of leadership positions. We are socialized to see certain behaviours by men as indicative of leadership abilities, even though they may not be. For example, men are often perceived to contribute more to a group because they tend to speak first when asked a question or to fill a silence and are perceived to talk more about task-related matters than relationally oriented matters. Both of these tendencies create a perception that men are more engaged with the task. Men are also socialized to be more competitive and self-congratulatory, meaning that their communication may be seen as dedicated and their behaviours seen as powerful, and that when their work isn’t noticed they will be more likely to make it known to the group rather than take silent credit. Even though we know that the relational elements of a group are crucial for success, even in high-performance teams, that work is not as valued in our society as the task-related work.

Despite the fact that some communication patterns and behaviors related to our typical (and stereotypical) gender socialization affect how we interact in and form perceptions of others in groups, the differences in group communication that used to be attributed to gender in early group communication research seem to be diminishing. This is likely due to the changing organizational cultures from which much group work emerges, which have now had more than sixty years to adjust to women in the workplace. It is also due to a more nuanced understanding of gender-based research, which doesn't take a stereotypical view from the beginning as many of the early male researchers did. Now, instead of biological sex being assumed as a factor that creates inherent communication differences, group communication scholars see that men and women both exhibit a range of behaviours that are more or less feminine or masculine. It is these gendered behaviours, and not a person's gender, that seem to have more of an influence on perceptions of group communication. Interestingly, group interactions are still masculinist in that male and female group members prefer a more traditionally masculine communication style for task leaders and that both males and females in this role are more likely to adapt to that communication style. Conversely, men who take on social-emotional leadership behaviors adopt a more "feminine" communication style. In short, it seems that although "masculine" communication traits are more often associated with high status positions in groups, both men and women adapt to this expectation and are evaluated similarly (Haslett & Ruebush, 1999, p. 133).

Other demographic categories are also influential in group communication and decision making. In general, group members have an easier time communicating when they are more similar than different in terms of race and age. This ease of communication can make group work more efficient, but the homogeneity may sacrifice some creativity. As we learned earlier, groups that are diverse (e.g., they have members of different races and generations) benefit from the diversity of perspectives in terms of the quality of decision making and creativity of output.

In terms of age, for the first time since industrialization began, it is common to have three generations of people (and sometimes more) working side by side in an organizational setting. Although four generations often worked together in early factories, they were segregated based on their age group, and a hierarchy existed with older workers at the top and younger workers at the bottom. Today, however, generations interact regularly, and it is not uncommon for an older person to have a leader or supervisor who is younger (Allen, 2011, p. 5). The current generations in the workplace and consequently in work-based groups include the following:

- **The Silent Generation.** Born between 1925 and 1942, this is the smallest generation in the workforce right now, as many have retired or left for other reasons, but they may still occupy high-ranking positions in some organizations. This generation includes people who were born during the Great Depression or the early part of World War II, many of whom later fought in the Korean War (Clarke, 1970).
- **The Baby Boomers.** Born between 1946 and 1964, this generation continues to be well-represented in the workforce. Baby boomers are the most populous generation in North American history, and they are working longer than previous generations (more years).
- **Generation X.** Born between 1965 and 1981, this generation was the first to see technology like cell phones and the Internet make its way into classrooms and our daily lives. Compared to previous

generations, "Gen-Xers" are more diverse in terms of race, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation and also have a greater appreciation for and understanding of diversity.

- **Generation Y.** Born between 1982 and 2000, "Millennials" as they are also called are not as likely to remember a time without technology such as computers and cell phones. They have been greatly affected by the economic crisis of the late 2000s, experiencing significantly high unemployment rates.
- **Generation Z**. Born after 2000, these individuals have only recently joined the work force. They are more technology-minded and more invested in diversity, social justice, and environmentalism than previous generations.

The benefits and challenges that come with diversity of group members are important to consider. Since we will all work in diverse groups, we should be prepared to address potential challenges in order to reap the benefits. Diverse groups may be wise to coordinate social interactions outside of group time in order to find common ground that can help facilitate interaction and increase group cohesion. We should be sensitive but not let sensitivity create fear of "doing something wrong" that then prevents us from having meaningful interactions. Reviewing Chapter 6: Introduction to Cultural Communication will give you useful knowledge to help you navigate both international and domestic diversity and increase your communication competence in small groups and elsewhere.

Key Takeaways

- Every problem has common components: an undesirable situation, a desired situation, and obstacles between the undesirable and desirable situations. Every problem also has a set of characteristics that vary among problems, including task difficulty, number of possible solutions, group member interest in the problem, group familiarity with the problem, and the need for solution acceptance.
- The group problem-solving process has five steps:

  1. Define the problem by creating a problem statement that summarizes it.
  2. Analyze the problem and create a problem question that can guide solution generation.
  3. Generate possible solutions. Possible solutions should be offered and listed without stopping to evaluate each one.
  4. Evaluate the solutions based on their credibility, completeness, and worth. Groups should also assess the potential effects of the narrowed list of solutions.
  5. Implement and assess the solution. Aside from enacting the solution, groups should determine how they will know the solution is working or not.

- Before a group makes a decision, it should brainstorm possible solutions. Group communication scholars suggest that groups (1) do a warm-up brainstorming session; (2) do an actual brainstorming session in which ideas are not evaluated, wild ideas are encouraged, quantity not quality of ideas is the goal, and new combinations of ideas are encouraged; (3) eliminate duplicate ideas; and (4) clarify, organize, and evaluate ideas. In order to guide the idea-generation process and invite equal participation from group members, the group may also elect to use the nominal group technique.
- Common decision-making techniques include majority rule, minority rule, and consensus rule. With majority

rule, only a majority, usually one-half plus one, must agree before a decision is made. With minority rule, a designated authority or expert has final say over a decision, and the input of group members may or may not be invited or considered. With consensus rule, all members of the group must agree on the same decision.

- Several factors influence the decision-making process:
  - Situational factors include the degree of freedom a group has to make its own decisions, the level of uncertainty facing the group and its task, the size of the group, the group's access to information, and the origin and urgency of the problem.
  - Personality influences on decision making include a person's value orientation (economic, aesthetic, theoretical, political, or religious), and personality traits (dominant/submissive, friendly/unfriendly, and instrumental/emotional).
  - Cultural influences on decision making include the heterogeneity or homogeneity of the group makeup; cultural values and characteristics such as individualism/collectivism, power distance, and high-/low-context communication styles; and gender and age differences.

Exercises

1. In terms of situational influences on group problem solving, task difficulty, number of possible solutions, group interest in problem, group familiarity with problem, and need for solution acceptance are five key variables discussed in this chapter. For each of the two following scenarios, discuss how the situational context created by these variables might affect the group's communication climate and the way it goes about addressing its problem.
   - **Scenario 1.** Task difficulty is high, number of possible solutions is high, group interest in problem is high, group familiarity with problem is low, and need for solution acceptance is high.
   - **Scenario 2.** Task difficulty is low, number of possible solutions is low, group interest in problem is low, group familiarity with problem is high, and need for solution acceptance is low.
2. Getting integrated: Certain decision-making techniques may work better than others in academic, professional, personal, or civic contexts. For each of the following scenarios, identify the decision-making technique that you think would be best and explain why.
   - **Scenario 1: Academic.** A professor asks his or her class to decide whether the final exam should be an in-class or take-home exam.
   - **Scenario 2: Professional.** A group of coworkers must decide which person from their department to nominate for a company-wide award.
   - **Scenario 3: Personal.** A family needs to decide how to divide the belongings and estate of a deceased family member who did not leave a will.
   - **Scenario 4: Civic.** A local branch of a political party needs to decide what five key issues it wants to include in the national party's platform.
3. Group communication researchers have found that heterogeneous groups (composed of diverse members) have advantages over homogenous (more similar) groups. Discuss a group situation you have been in where diversity enhanced your and/or the group's experience.

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CHAPTER 17: REVIEW

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Leaders fulfill a group role that is associated with status and power within the group that may be formally or informally recognized by people inside and/or outside of the group. While there are usually only one or two official leaders within a group, all group members can perform leadership functions, which are a complex of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviors that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its tasks.,
- There are many perspectives on how and why people become leaders whether designated or emergent leaders
- Leaders can adopt a directive, participative, supportive, or achievement-oriented style.
- Leaders and other group members move their groups toward success and/or the completion of their task by tapping into various types of power.
- Task-related group roles and behaviors contribute directly to the group's completion of a task or the achievement of its goal. These roles typically serve leadership, informational, or procedural functions and include the following: task leader, expediter, information provider, information seeker, gatekeeper, and recorder.
- Maintenance group roles and behaviors function to create and maintain social cohesion and fulfill the interpersonal needs of the group members. To perform these role behaviors, a person needs strong and sensitive interpersonal skills. These roles include social-emotional leader, supporter, tension releaser, harmonizer, and interpreter.
- Negative role behaviors delay or distract the group. Self-centered role behaviors are those that seek to divert the group's attention to the group member exhibiting the behaviour. These roles include central negative, monopolizer, stage hog, egghead, self-confessor, and insecure compliment seeker. Unproductive role behaviors prevent or make it difficult for the group to make progress. These roles include blocker, withdrawer, aggressor, and doormat.
- Every problem has common components: an undesirable situation, a desired situation, and obstacles between the undesirable and desirable situations. Every problem also has a set of characteristics that vary among problems, including task difficulty, number of possible solutions, group member interest in the problem, group familiarity with the problem, and the need for solution acceptance.
- The group problem-solving process has five steps:

    1. Define the problem by creating a problem statement that summarizes it.
    2. Analyze the problem and create a problem question that can guide solution generation.
    3. Generate possible solutions. Possible solutions should be offered and listed without stopping to evaluate each one.
    4. Evaluate the solutions based on their credibility, completeness, and worth. Groups should also assess the potential effects of the narrowed list of solutions.
    5. Implement and assess the solution. Aside from enacting the solution, groups should determine how

they will know the solution is working or not.

- Before a group makes a decision, it should brainstorm possible solutions.
- Common decision-making techniques include majority rule, minority rule, and consensus rule.
- Several factors influence the decision-making process: situational factors, personality, and cultural influences.

CHAPTER 18: PREPARING AND DELIVERING A SPEECH

Chapter Learning Outcomes

In this chapter you will:

1. Explore audience analysis and the components of the speech-design process.
2. Explore college-level research and finding supporting resources to aid in speech creation.
3. Explore organizational patterns for speech delivery.
4. Explore the principles of outlining.
5. Explore common sources of public speaking anxiety and strategies for addressing anxiety.
6. Explore methods of speech delivery.
7. Explore elements of vocal delivery.
8. Explore the role of physical presence in speech delivery.

Preparing for a Speech or Presentation

Ancient Greek educators and philosophers wrote the first public speaking texts about 2,400 years ago. Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* covers many of the same topics addressed in this unit of the book, including speech organization, audience analysis, and persuasive appeals. Even though these principles have been known for thousands of years and have been taught to millions of students, it's still a challenge for many people to become skilled public speakers. Oral communication and presentation skills are integral to professional and personal success, yet many students are anxious at the thought of speaking in front of an audience. Speaking anxiety is common and can be addressed. Learning about and practicing public speaking fosters transferable skills that will help you organize your thoughts, outline information, do research, adapt to various audiences, and utilize and understand persuasive techniques. These skills will be useful in other college classes, your career, your personal relationships, and your civic life.

Delivering a Speech

Think of a speech or presentation you have seen that was poorly delivered. How did that affect your view of the speaker and his/her topic? Is a poorly delivered speech more bearable if the information is solid and organized? In most cases, bad delivery distracts us so much from a message that we don't even evaluate or absorb the information being presented. In short, a well-researched and well-prepared speech is not much without effective delivery. This chapter covers important information about managing public speaking anxiety, choosing the appropriate delivery method, practicing your speech, and employing effective vocal and physical delivery to enhance speaker credibility.

Chapter Sections

Chapter Acknowledgements

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18.1: SELECTING AND NARROWING A TOPIC

Learning Objectives

1. Employ audience analysis.
2. Determine the general purpose of a speech.
3. List strategies for narrowing a speech topic.
4. Compose an audience-centered, specific purpose statement for a speech.
5. Compose a thesis statement that summarizes the central idea of a speech.

Many people do not approach speech preparation in an informed and systematic way, which results in poorly planned or executed speeches that are not pleasant to sit through as an audience member and don't reflect well on the speaker. Good speaking skills can help you stand out from the crowd in increasingly competitive environments. While a polished delivery is important and will be discussed later in this chapter, good speaking skills must be practiced much earlier in the speech-making process.

ANALYZE YOUR AUDIENCE

Good speakers should always assume a diversity of backgrounds and opinions among their audiences. TEDx UniversityofTulsa – Audience – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Audience analysis is key for a speaker to achieve his or her speech goal. While there are some generalizations you can make about an audience, a competent speaker always assumes there is a diversity of opinion and background among his or her listeners. You can't assume from looking that everyone in your audience is the same age, race, sexual orientation, religion, or many other factors. Even if you did have a fairly homogenous audience, with only one or two people who don't match up, you should still consider those one or two people. When I have a class with one or two second-career students, I still consider the different age demographics even though thirty or more other students are eighteen to twenty-two years old. In short, a good speaker shouldn't intentionally alienate even one audience member. Of course, a speaker could unintentionally alienate certain audience members, especially in persuasive speaking situations. While this may be unavoidable, speakers can still think critically about what content they include in the speech and the effects it may have.

Even though you should remain conscious of the differences among audience members, you can also focus on commonalities. When delivering a speech in a college classroom, you can rightfully assume that everyone in your audience is currently living in the general area of the school, is enrolled at the school, and is currently taking the same Advanced Professional Communication class. In professional speeches, you can often assume that everyone is part of the same professional organization if you present at a conference, employed at the same place or in the same field if you are giving a sales presentation, or experiencing the nervousness of starting a new job if you are leading an orientation or training. You may not be able to assume much more, but that's enough to add some tailored points to your speech that will make the content more relevant.

DEMOGRAPHIC AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Demographics are broad sociocultural categories, such as age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, education level, religion, ethnicity, and nationality that are used to segment a larger population. Since you are always going to have diverse demographics among your audience members, it would be unwise to focus solely on one group over another. As a speaker, being aware of diverse demographics is useful in that you can tailor and vary examples to appeal to different groups. As discussed in the "Getting Real" feature in this chapter, engaging in audience segmentation based on demographics is much more targeted in some careers.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Psychological audience analysis considers your audience's psychological dispositions toward the topic, speaker, and occasion and the ways in which their attitudes, beliefs, and values inform those dispositions. When considering your audience's disposition toward your topic, you want to assess your audience's knowledge of the subject. You wouldn't include a lesson on calculus in an introductory math course. You also wouldn't go into the intricacies of a heart transplant to an audience with no medical training. A speech on how to give a speech would be redundant in a public speaking class, but it could be useful for high school students or older adults who are going through a career transition.

The audience may or may not have preconceptions about you as a speaker. One way to positively engage your audience is to make sure you establish your **credibility.** You want the audience to see you as competent, trustworthy, and engaging. If the audience is already familiar with you, they may already see you as a credible speaker because they've seen you speak before, have heard other people evaluate you positively, or know that you have credentials and/or experience that make you competent. If you know you have a reputation that isn't as positive, work hard to overcome those perceptions. To establish your trustworthiness, incorporate good supporting material into your speech, verbally cite sources, and present information and arguments in a balanced, noncoercive, and nonmanipulative way. To establish yourself as engaging, have a well-delivered speech, which requires you to practice, get feedback, and practice some more. Your verbal and nonverbal delivery should be fluent and appropriate to the audience and occasion.

The circumstances that led your audience to attend your speech will affect their view of the occasion. A **captive audience** includes people who are required to attend your presentation. Mandatory meetings are common in workplace settings. Whether you are presenting for a group of your employees, coworkers, classmates, or even residents in your dorm if you are a resident advisor, you shouldn't let the fact that the meeting is required give you license to give a half-hearted speech. In fact, you should build common ground with your audience to overcome any potential resentment for the required gathering.

When you speak in a classroom or at a business meeting, you may have a captive audience. Presbyterian Women – Business Meeting – CC BY-NC 2.0.

In your Advanced Professional Communication class, your classmates are captive audience members. View having a captive classroom audience as a challenge, and use this space as a public speaking testing laboratory. You can try new things and push your boundaries more, because this audience is very forgiving and understanding, since they have to go through the same things you do. In general, you may have to work harder to maintain the attention of a captive audience. Since coworkers may expect to hear the same content they hear every time this particular meeting comes around, and classmates have to sit through dozens and dozens of speeches, use your speech as an opportunity to stand out from the crowd or from what's been done before.

A **voluntary audience** includes people who have decided to come to hear your speech. This is perhaps one of the best compliments a speaker can receive, even before they've delivered the speech. Speaking for a voluntary audience often makes speakers have more speaking anxiety, because they know the audience may have preconceived notions or expectations that they must live up to. This is something to be aware of if you are used to speaking in front of captive audiences. To help adapt to a voluntary audience, ask yourself what the audience members expect. Why are they here? If they've decided to come and see you, they must be interested in your topic or you as a speaker. Perhaps you have a reputation for being humorous, being able to translate complicated information into more digestible parts, or being interactive with the audience and responding to questions. Whatever the reason or reasons, it's important to make sure you deliver on those aspects. If people are voluntarily giving up their time to hear you, you want to make sure they get what they expected.

A final aspect of psychological audience analysis involves considering the audience's attitudes, beliefs, and values, as they will influence all the perceptions mentioned previously. As you can see in Figure 18.1.1 "Psychological Analysis: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values", we can think of our attitudes, beliefs, and values as layers that make up our perception and knowledge.

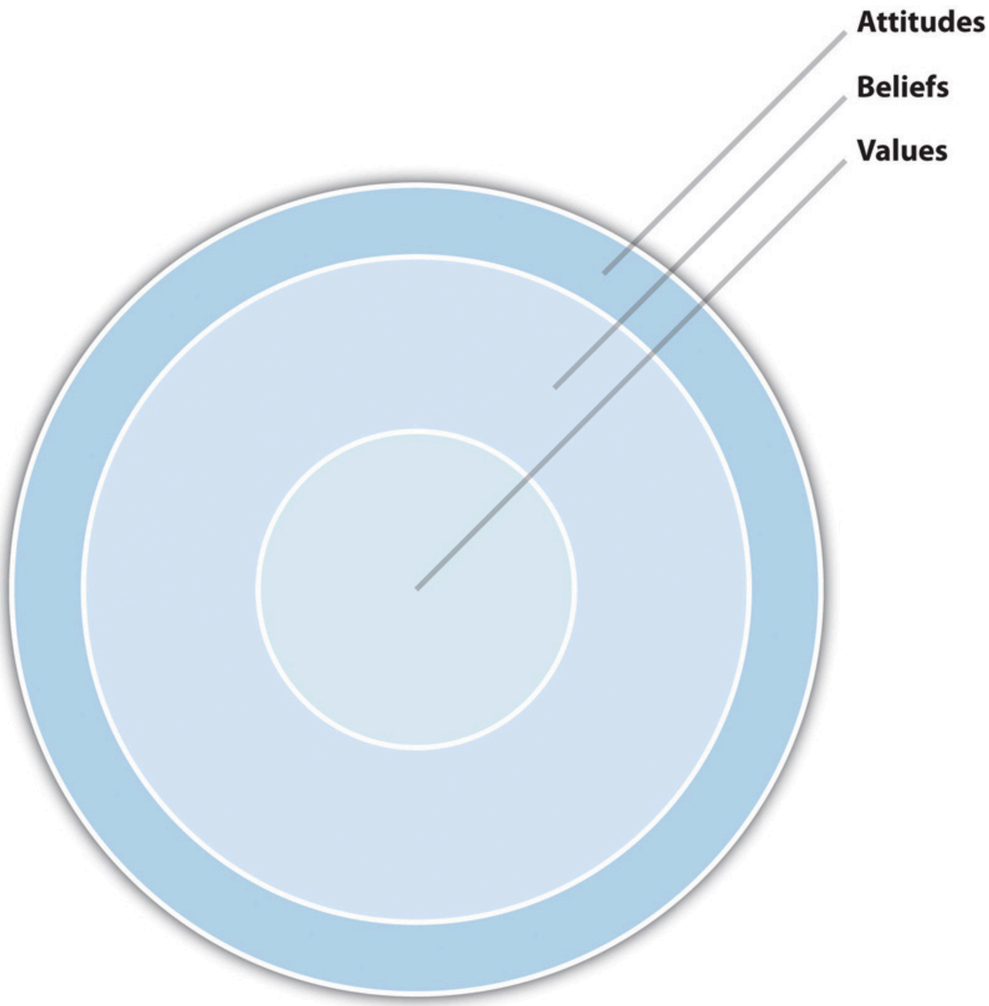

Figure 18.1.1 Psychological Analysis: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values

At the outermost level, attitudes are our likes and dislikes, and they are easier to influence than beliefs or values because they are often reactionary. If you've ever followed the approval rating of a politician, you know that people's likes and dislikes change frequently and can change dramatically based on recent developments. This seesaw of attitudes can be useful for a speaker to consider. If there is something going on in popular culture or current events that has captured people's attention and favor or disfavor, then you can tap into that as a speaker to better relate to your audience. Be careful if the issue is highly controversial, though.

When considering beliefs, we are dealing with what we believe "is or isn't" or "true or false." We come to hold our beliefs based on what we are taught, experience for ourselves, or have faith in. Our beliefs change if we encounter new information or experiences that counter previous ones. As people age and experience more, their beliefs are likely to change, which is natural. Being aware of your audience's beliefs can help you deliver your message in a way that wouldn't be found offensive and might help learn something, understand something better, or perhaps even question some of their beliefs.

SITUATIONAL AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Situational audience analysis considers the physical surroundings and setting of a speech. It's always a good idea to visit the place where you will be speaking ahead of time so you know what to expect. If you expect to have a lectern and arrive to find only a table at the front of the room, that little difference could increase your anxiety and diminish your speaking effectiveness. Take note of the seating arrangement, the presence of technology and its compatibility with what you plan on using, the layout of the room including windows and doors, and anything else that's relevant to your speech. Knowing your physical setting ahead of time allows you to alter the physical setting, when possible, or alter your message or speaking strategies if needed. For instance, you might open or close blinds, move seats around, plug your computer in to make sure it works, practice some or all of your presentation, revise a speech to be more interactive and informal if it turns out you will speak in a lounge rather than a lecture hall, etc.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING REAL"

Marketing Careers and Audience Segmentation

Advertisers and marketers use sophisticated people and programs to ensure that their message is targeted to particular audiences. These people are often called marketing specialists (Career Cruising, 2012). They research products and trends in markets and consumer behaviors and may work for advertising agencies, marketing firms, consulting firms, or other types of agencies or businesses. The pay range is varied, from $35,000 to $166,000 a year for most, and good communication, creativity, and analytic thinking skills are a must. If you stop to think about it, we are all targeted based on our demographics, psychographics, and life situations. Whereas advertisers used to engage in more mass marketing, to undifferentiated receivers, the categories are now much more refined and the target audiences more defined. We only need to look at the recent increase in marketing toward "tweens" or the eight-to-twelve age group. Although this group was once lumped in with younger kids or older teens, they are now targeted because they have "more of their own money to spend and more influence over familial decisions than ever before" (Siegel et al., 2004).

Whether it's Red Bull aggressively marketing to the college-aged group or gyms marketing to single, working, young adults, much thought and effort goes into crafting a message with a particular receiver in mind. Some companies even create an "ideal customer," going as far as to name representative audience members, create a psychological and behavioural profile for them, and talk about them as if they were real during message development (Solomon, 2006).

Facebook has revolutionized targeted marketing, which has led to some controversy and backlash (Greenwell, 2012). The "Like" button on Facebook that was introduced in 2010 is now popping up on news sites, company pages, and other websites. When you click the "Like" button, you are providing important information about your consumer behaviours that can then be fed into complicated algorithms that also incorporate demographic and psychographic data pulled from your Facebook profile and even information from your friends. All this is in an effort to more directly market to you, which became easier in January of 2012 when Facebook started allowing targeted advertisements to go directly into users' "newsfeeds."

Markets are obviously segmented based on demographics like gender and age, but here are some other categories and examples of market segments: geography (region, city size, climate), lifestyle (couch potato, economical/frugal, outdoorsy, status seeker), family life cycle (bachelors, newlyweds, full nesters, empty nesters), and perceived benefit of use (convenience, durability, value for the money, social acceptance), just to name a few (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000).

Self-reflection and critical thinking questions:

1. Make a list of the various segments you think marketers might put you in. Have you ever thought about these before? Why or why not?
2. Take note of the advertisements that catch your eye over a couple days. Do they match up with any of the segments you listed in the first question?
3. Are there any groups that you think it would be unethical to segment and target for marketing? Explain your answer.

DETERMINE YOUR PURPOSE, TOPIC, AND THESIS

General Purpose

Your speeches will usually fall into one of three categories. In some cases we speak to inform, meaning we attempt to teach our audience using factual, objective evidence. In other cases, we speak to persuade, as we try to influence an audience's beliefs, attitudes, values, or behaviors. Last, we may speak to entertain or amuse our audience. In summary, the **general purpose** of your speech will be to inform, to persuade, or to entertain.

You can see various topics that may fit into the three general purposes for speaking in Table 18.1.1 "General Purposes and Speech Topics". Some of the topics listed could fall into another general purpose category depending on how the speaker approached the topic, or they could contain elements of more than one general purpose. For example, you may have to inform your audience about your topic in one main point before you can persuade them, or you may include some entertaining elements in an informative or persuasive speech to make the content more engaging for the audience. There should not be elements of persuasion included in an informative speech, however, since persuading is contrary to the objective approach that defines an informative general purpose. In any case, while there may be some overlap between general purposes, most speeches can be placed into one of the categories based on the overall content of the speech.

TABLE 18.1.1 GENERAL PURPOSES AND SPEECH TOPICS

To Inform	To Persuade	To Entertain
Civil rights movement	Gun control	Comedic monologue
Renewable energy	Privacy rights	My craziest adventure
Reality television	Prison reform	A "roast"

CHOOSING A TOPIC

Once you have determined (or been assigned) your general purpose, you can begin the process of choosing a topic. In most academic, professional, and personal settings, there will be some parameters set that will help guide your topic selection. (In our class, you will be presenting the main findings and recommendations of your Research Report.) Speeches in a class will likely be organized around the content covered in the class. Speeches delivered at work will usually be directed toward a specific goal, such as welcoming new employees, informing about changes in workplace policies, or presenting quarterly sales figures. We are also usually compelled to speak about specific things in our personal lives, like addressing a problem at our child's school by speaking out at a school board meeting. In short, it's not often that you'll be starting from scratch when you begin to choose a topic.

Whether you've received parameters that narrow your topic range or not, the first step in choosing a topic is brainstorming. Brainstorming involves generating many potential topic ideas in a fast-paced and nonjudgmental manner. Brainstorming can take place multiple times as you narrow your topic. For example, you may begin by brainstorming a list of your personal interests that can then be narrowed down to a speech topic. It makes sense that you will enjoy speaking about something that you care about or find interesting. The research and writing will be more interesting, and the delivery will be easier since you won't have to fake enthusiasm for your topic. Speaking about something you're familiar with and interested in can also help you manage speaking anxiety.

Overall you can follow these tips as you select and narrow your topic:

1. Brainstorm topics that you are familiar with, interest you, and/or are currently topics of discussion.
2. Choose a topic appropriate for the assignment/occasion.
3. Choose a topic that you can make relevant to your audience.
4. Choose a topic that you have the resources to research (access to information, people to interview, etc.).

SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Once you have brainstormed, narrowed, and chosen your topic, you can begin to draft your specific purpose statement. Your **specific purpose** is a one-sentence statement that includes the objective you want to accomplish in your speech. You would not necessarily mention your specific purpose aloud during your speech use, but you should use it to guide your researching, organization, and writing. A good specific purpose statement is audience centred, agrees with the general purpose, addresses one main idea, and is realistic.

An audience-centred specific purpose statement usually contains an explicit reference to the audience—for example, “my audience” or “the audience.” Since a speaker may want to see if s/he effectively met a specific purpose, the objective should be written in such a way that it could be measured or assessed, and since a speaker actually wants to achieve his/her speech goal, the specific purpose should also be realistic. You won’t be able to teach the audience a foreign language or persuade an atheist to Christianity in a six- to nine-minute speech. The following is a good example of a good specific purpose statement for an informative speech: “By the end of my speech, the audience will be better informed about the effects the green movement has had on schools in our region.” The statement is audience centered and matches with the general purpose by stating, “the audience will be better informed.” The speaker could also test this specific purpose by asking the audience to write down, at the end of the speech, three effects the green movement has had on schools in your region.

THESIS STATEMENT

Your **thesis statement** is a one-sentence summary of the central idea of your speech that you either explain or defend. You would *explain* the thesis statement for an informative speech, since these speeches are based on factual, objective material. In fact, in the case of informative speeches, your “thesis” will be more of a summary statement, since you will be summarizing relevant information rather than generating an argument of your own. You would *defend* your thesis statement for a persuasive speech, because these speeches are argumentative, and your thesis should clearly indicate a stance on a particular issue. In order to make sure your thesis is argumentative and your stance clear, it is helpful to start your thesis with the words “My analysis shows that,” “My recommendation is to…,” etc. When starting to work on a persuasive speech, it can also be beneficial to write out a counterargument to your thesis to ensure that it is arguable.

The thesis statement is different from the specific purpose in two main ways. First, the thesis statement is content centred, while the specific purpose statement is audience centered. Second, the thesis statement is incorporated into the spoken portion of your speech, while the specific purpose serves as a guide for your research and writing and an objective that you can measure, and it isn’t always mentioned aloud. A good thesis statement is declarative, agrees with the general and specific purposes, and focuses and narrows your topic. Although you will likely end up revising and refining your thesis as you research and write, it is good to draft a thesis statement soon after drafting a specific purpose to help guide your progress. As with the specific purpose statement, your thesis helps ensure that your research, organizing, and writing are focused so you don’t end up wasting time with irrelevant materials. Keep your specific purpose and thesis statement handy (drafting them at the top of your working outline is a good idea) so you can reference them often.

For your presentation in COMM 6019, your purpose and thesis would be those established for your Research Report — that is, unless you decide to change your topic to some extent, either because you were not happy with your Report grade or because you have since been able to come up with additional ideas.

The following examples show how a general purpose, specific purpose, and thesis statement match up with a topic area:

1. **Topic:** My Craziest Adventure

   General purpose: To Entertain

   Specific purpose: By the end of my speech, the audience will appreciate the lasting memories that result from an eighteen-year-old visiting New Orleans for the first time.

   Thesis statement: New Orleans offers young tourists outstanding opportunities for fun and excitement — especially a, b, and c.

2. **Topic:** Renewable Energy

   General purpose: To Inform

   Specific purpose: By the end of my speech, the audience will be able to explain the basics of using biomass as fuel.

   Thesis/ summary statement: Biomass is a renewable resource that releases gases that can be used for fuel.

3. **Topic:** Privacy Rights

   General purpose: To Persuade

   Specific purpose: By the end of my speech, my audience will believe that parents should not be able to use tracking devices to monitor their teenage child's activities.

   Thesis statement: I believe that it is a violation of a child's privacy to be electronically monitored by the parents.

Key Takeaways

- Getting integrated: Public speaking training builds transferrable skills that are useful in your college classes, career, personal relationships, and civic life.
- Demographic, psychographic, and situational audience analysis help tailor your speech content to your audience.
- The general and specific purposes of your speech are based on the speaking occasion and include the objective you would like to accomplish by the end of your speech. Determining these early in the speech-making process will help focus your research and writing.
- Brainstorm to identify topics that fit within your interests, and then narrow your topic based on audience analysis and the guidelines provided.

- A thesis statement summarizes the central idea of your speech and will be explained or defended using supporting material. Referencing your thesis statement often will help ensure that your speech is coherent.

Exercises

1. **Getting integrated:** Why do some people dread public speaking or just want to avoid it? Identify some potential benefits of public speaking in academic, professional, personal, and civic contexts that might make people see public speaking in a different light.
2. Conduct some preliminary audience analysis of your class and your classroom. What are some demographics that might be useful for you to consider? What might be some attitudes, beliefs, and values people have that might be relevant to your speech topics? What situational factors might you want to consider before giving your speech?
3. Pay attention to the news (in the paper, on the Internet, television, or radio). Identify two informative and two persuasive speech topics that are based in current events.

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18.2: RESEARCHING AND SUPPORTING YOUR SPEECH

Learning Objectives

1. Identify appropriate methods for conducting college-level research.
2. Distinguish among various types of sources.
3. Evaluate the credibility of sources.
4. Identify various types of supporting material.
5. Employ visual aids that enhance a speaker's message.

Finding Supporting Material

As was noted in Section 18.1 "Selecting and Narrowing a Topic", it's good to speak about something you are already familiar with. So existing knowledge forms the first step of your research process. Depending on how familiar you are with a topic, you will need to do more or less background research before you actually start incorporating sources to support your speech. Background research is just a review of summaries available for your topic that helps refresh or create your knowledge about the subject. It is not the more focused and academic research that you will actually use to support and verbally cite in your speech. Figure 18.2.1 "Research Process" illustrates the research process. Note that you may go through some of these steps more than once.

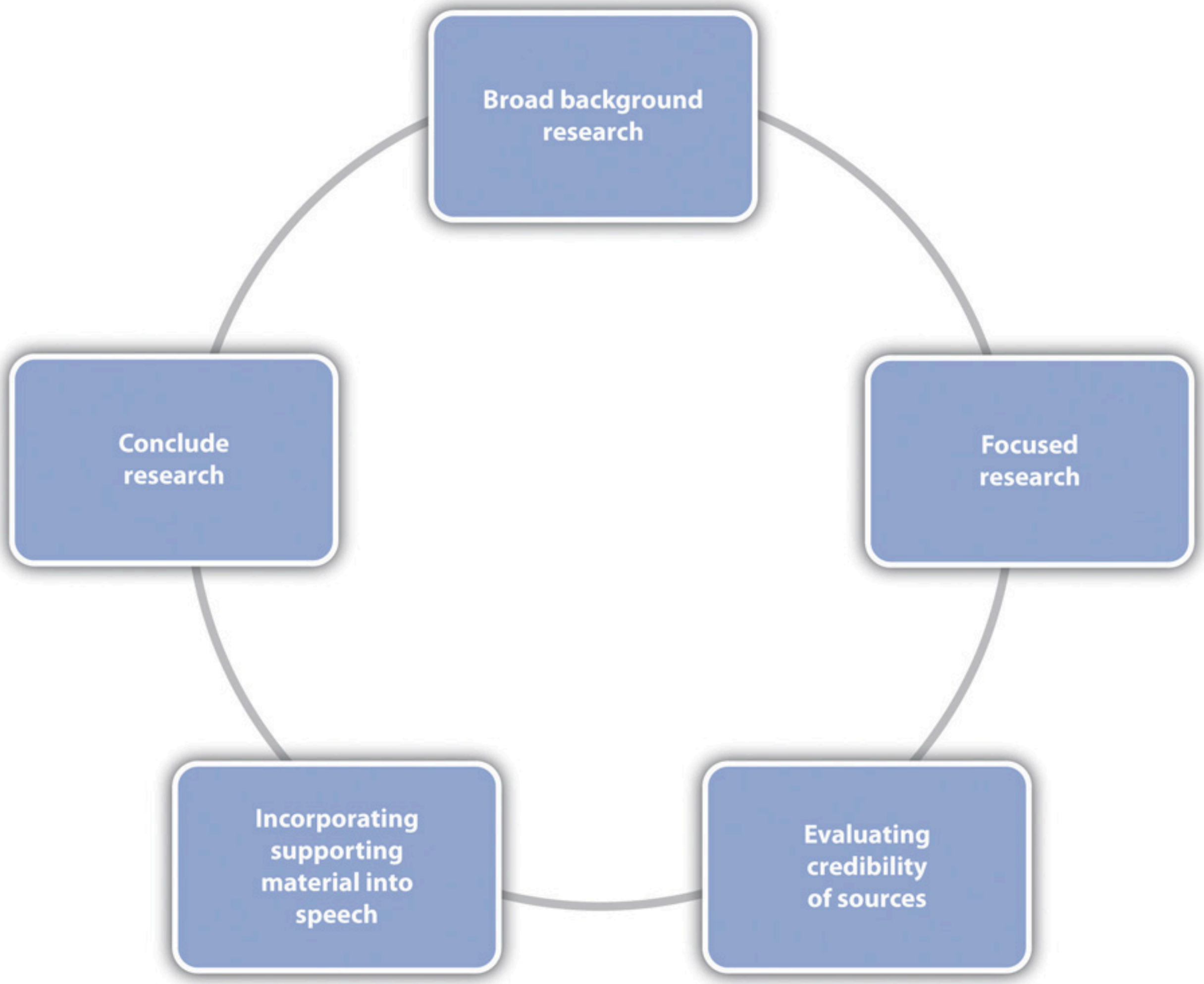


Figure 18.2.1 Research Process

As discussed in previous chapters, your first step for research in college should be library resources, not Google or Bing or other general search engines. In most cases, you can still do your library research from the comfort of a computer, which makes it as accessible as Google but gives you much better results. Excellent and underutilized resources at college and university libraries are reference librarians. **Reference librarians** are not like the people who likely staffed your high school library. They are information-retrieval experts. At most colleges and universities, you can find a reference librarian who has at least a master's degree in library and information sciences, and at some larger or specialized schools, reference librarians have doctoral degrees. In most cases, students who meet with reference librarians report that they came away with more information than they needed. This is great because you can then narrow that down to the best information. If you can't meet with a reference librarian face-to-face, many schools now offer the option to do a live chat with a reference librarian, and you can also contact them by e-mail or phone.

Aside from the human resources available in the library, you can also use electronic resources such as library databases. Finally, a trip to the library to browse is especially useful for books. Since most university libraries use the Library of Congress classification system, books are organized by topic. That means if you find a good book using the online catalog and go to the library to get it, you should take a moment to look around that book, because the other books in that area will be topically related.

College and university libraries are often at the cutting edge of information retrieval for academic research. Andre Vandal – The Morrin College Library – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Carefully review the information on identifying good sources provided in previous chapters (especially in Chapters 10-12) for more information on finding and working with research sources. Also, remember that in Chapter 14 we covered the use of visuals such as graphs in research documents — a very important component to include on presentation slides for any speech or presentation.

In the following, we cover some **types of material from sources that are especially useful for speeches and presentations**, although they can support your argumentation in any type of research or persuasive written document, as well.

ESPECIALLY USEFUL MATERIALS FOR PRESENTATIONS

The types of sources that may be relevant for your speech topic include periodicals, newspapers, books, reference tools, interviews, and websites. It is important that you evaluate the credibility of each type of source material, as discussed in previous chapters.

There are several types of supporting material that you can pull from the sources you find during the research process to add to your speech. They include examples, explanations, statistics, analogies, testimony, and visual aids. Try to have a balance of information and to include material that is most relevant to your audience and is most likely to engage them. When determining relevance, utilize some of the strategies mentioned in Section 18.1 "Selecting and Narrowing a Topic". Consider who your audience is and what they know and would like to know as you tailor your information. Also try to incorporate **proxemic information,** meaning information that is geographically relevant to your audience. For example, if delivering a speech grocery store supply chain issues to a group of professionals in Ontario, citing statistics about Texas would not be as proxemic as citing information directly related to Ontario. The closer you can get the information to the audience, the better.

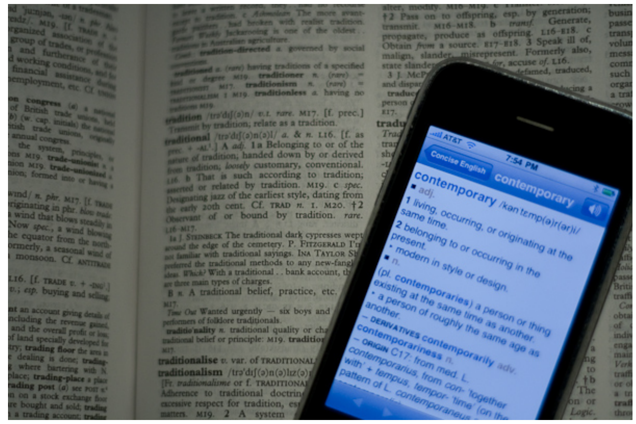
EXAMPLES

An **example** is a cited case that is representative of a larger whole. Examples are especially beneficial when presenting information that an audience may not be familiar with. They are also useful for repackaging or reviewing information that has already been presented. Examples can be used in many ways, so you should let your audience, purpose and thesis, and research materials guide your use. You may pull examples directly from your research materials, making sure to cite the source. The following is an example used in a speech about the negative effects of standardized testing: “Standardized testing makes many students anxious, and even ill. On March 14, 2002, the *Sacramento Bee* reported that some standardized tests now come with instructions indicating what teachers should do with a test booklet if a student throws up on it.” You may also cite examples from your personal experience, but only in more informal environments (not if a formal speech/ presentation is expected).

You may also use hypothetical examples, which can be useful when you need to provide an example that is extraordinary or goes beyond most people’s direct experience. Capitalize on this opportunity by incorporating vivid description into the example that appeals to the audience’s senses. Always make sure to indicate when you are using a hypothetical example, as it would be unethical to present an example as real when it is not. Including the word *imagine* or something similar in the first sentence of the example can easily do this.

Whether real or hypothetical, examples used as supporting material can be brief or extended. Brief examples are usually one or two sentences, whereas extended examples, sometimes called illustrations, are several sentences long and can be effective in introductions or conclusions to get the audience’s attention or leave a lasting impression. It is important to think about relevance and time limits when considering using an extended illustration. Since most speeches are given within time constraints, make sure the extended illustration is relevant to your speech purpose and thesis and that it doesn’t take up a disproportionate amount of the speech. If a brief example or series of brief examples would convey the same content and create the same tone as the extended example, opt for brevity.

EXPLANATIONS



Since quoting a dictionary definition during a speech is difficult, it's better to put a definition into your own words based on how it is defined in the original source in which it appeared. Julian Bucknall – Dictionaries – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Explanations clarify ideas by providing information about what something is, why something is the way it is, or how something works or came to be. One of the most common types of explanation is a definition. Definitions do not have to come from the dictionary. Many times, authors define their concepts as they use them in their writing, which is a good alternative to a dictionary definition.

You do not need to provide definitions when information is common knowledge. Anticipate audience confusion and define legal, medical, or other forms of jargon as well as slang and foreign words. Keep in mind that repeating a definition verbatim from a dictionary often leads to fluency hiccups, because definitions are not written to be read aloud. It's a good idea to put the definition into your own words (still remembering to cite the original source) to make it easier for you to deliver.

Other explanations focus on the "why" and "how" of a concept. We use explanations as verbal clarifications to support our claims in daily conversations, perhaps without even noticing it. Consciously incorporating clear explanations into your speech/ presentation can help you achieve your goals.

STATISTICS

Statistics are numerical representations of information. Most audiences find them highly credible and relevant, as evidenced by their frequent use by news agencies, government offices, politicians, and academics. Unfortunately, statistics are often misused by speakers who intentionally or unintentionally misconstrue the numbers to support their argument without examining the context from which the statistic emerged. All statistics are contextual, so plucking a number out of a news article or a research study and including it in your speech/ presentation without taking the time to understand the statistic is unethical.

Although statistics are popular as supporting evidence, they can also be boring. There will inevitably be people in your audience who are not good at processing numbers. Even people who are good with numbers have difficulty processing through a series of statistics presented orally. Remember that we have to adapt our information to listeners who don't have the luxury of pressing a pause or rewind button. For these reasons, it's a good idea to avoid using too many statistics and to use startling examples when you do use them. Startling statistics should defy our expectations. When you give the audience a large number that they would expect to be smaller, or vice versa, you will be more likely to engage them, as the following example shows: "Did you know that, until a decade ago, 1.3 billion people in the world did not have access to electricity? That's about 20 percent of the world's population according to a 2009 study on the International Energy Agency's official website. More recent statistics show a significant improvement. For instance, …"

You should also repeat key statistics at least once for emphasis. In the previous example, the first time we hear the statistic 1.3 billion, we don't have any context for the number. Translating that number into a percentage in the next sentence repeats the key statistic, which the audience now has context for, and repackages the information into a percentage, which some people may better understand. You should also round long numbers up or down to make them easier to speak. Make sure that rounding the number doesn't distort its significance. Rounding 1,298,791,943 to 1.3 billion, for example, makes the statistic more manageable and doesn't alter the basic meaning. It is also beneficial to translate numbers into something more concrete for visual or experiential learners by saying, for example, "That's four times the population of the Unites States." While it may seem easy to throw some numbers in your speech to add to your credibility, it takes work to make them impactful, memorable, and effective.

Tips for Using Statistics

1. Make sure you understand the context from which a statistic emerges.
2. Don't overuse statistics.
3. Use startling statistics that defy the audience's expectations.
4. Repeat key statistics at least once for emphasis.
5. Use a variety of numerical representations (whole numbers, percentages, ratios) to convey information.
6. Round long numbers to make them easier to speak.
7. Translate numbers into concrete ideas for more impact.

ANALOGIES

Analogies involve a comparison of ideas, items, or circumstances. When you compare two things that actually exist, you are using a literal analogy—for example, "Germany and Sweden are both European countries that have had nationalized health care for decades." Another type of literal comparison is a historical analogy. In a famous 1992 speech to the Republican National Convention, Mary Fisher compared the silence of many US political leaders regarding the HIV/AIDS crisis to that of many European leaders in the years before the Holocaust:

> My father has devoted much of his lifetime to guarding against another holocaust. He is part of the generation

who heard Pastor Niemöller come out of the Nazi death camps to say, "They came after the Jews and I was not a Jew, so I did not protest. They came after the Trade Unionists, and I was not a Trade Unionist, so I did not protest. They came after the Roman Catholics, and I was not a Roman Catholic, so I did not protest. Then they came after me, and there was no one left to protest." The lesson history teaches is this: If you believe you are safe, you are at risk.

A figurative analogy compares things that are not normally related, often relying on metaphor, simile, or other figurative language devices. In the following example, wind and revolution are compared: "Just as the wind brings changes in the weather, so does revolution bring change to countries."

When you compare differences, you are highlighting contrast—for example, "Although the United States is often thought of as the most medically advanced country in the world, other Western countries with nationalized health care have lower infant mortality rates and higher life expectancies." To use analogies effectively and ethically, you must choose ideas, items, or circumstances to compare that are similar enough to warrant the analogy. The more similar the two things you're comparing, the stronger your support. If an entire speech on nationalized health care was based on comparing the United States and Sweden, then the analogy isn't too strong, since Sweden has approximately the same population as the state of North Carolina. Using the analogy without noting this large difference would be misrepresenting your supporting material. You could disclose the discrepancy and use other forms of supporting evidence to show that despite the population difference the two countries are similar in other areas to strengthen your speech.

TESTIMONY

Testimony is quoted information from people with direct knowledge about a subject or situation. Expert testimony is from people who are credentialed or recognized experts in a given subject. Lay testimony is often a recounting of a person's experiences, which is more subjective. Both types of testimony are valuable as supporting material. We can see this in the testimonies of people in courtrooms and other types of hearings. Lawyers know that juries want to hear testimony from experts, eyewitnesses, and friends and family.

Congressional hearings often draw on expert and lay testimony to provide a detailed understanding of an event or issue. Wikimedia Commons – public domain.

When Toyota cars were malfunctioning and being recalled in 2010, mechanics and engineers were called to testify about the technical specifications of the car (expert testimony), and car drivers like the soccer mom who recounted the brakes on her Prius suddenly failing while she was driving her kids to practice were also called (lay testimony) (see Cole, 2011 for additional details on this scandal). When using testimony, make sure you indicate whether it is expert or lay by sharing with the audience the context of the quote. Share the credentials of experts (education background, job title, years of experience, etc.) to add to your credibility or give some personal context for the lay testimony (eyewitness, personal knowledge, etc.). Include lay testimony only if fully relevant to your topic.

VISUAL AIDS

Visual aids help a speaker reinforce speech content visually, which helps amplify the speaker's message. They can be used to present any of the types of supporting materials discussed previously. Speakers rely heavily on an audience's ability to learn by listening, which may not always be successful if audience members are visual or experiential learners. Even if audience members are good listeners, information overload or external or internal noise can be barriers to a speaker achieving his or her speech goals. Therefore, skillfully incorporating visual aids into a speech has many potential benefits:

- Helping your audience remember information because it is presented orally and visually

- Helping your audience understand information because it is made more digestible through diagrams, charts, and so on
- Helping your audience see something in action by demonstrating with an object, showing a video, and so on
- Engaging your audience by making your delivery more dynamic through demonstration, gesturing, and so on

There are several types of visual aids, and each has its strengths in terms of the type of information it lends itself to presenting. The types of visual aids we will discuss are objects; chalkboards, whiteboards, and flip charts; posters and handouts; pictures; diagrams; charts; graphs; videos; and presentation software. It's important to remember that supporting materials presented on visual aids should be properly cited. We will discuss proper incorporation of supporting materials into a speech in Section 18.3 "Organizing". While visual aids can help bring your supporting material to life, they can also add more opportunities for things to go wrong during your speech. Therefore we'll discuss some tips for effective creation and delivery as we discuss the various types of visual aids.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING COMPETENT"

Choosing the Right Supporting Material

As you sift through your research materials to find supporting material to incorporate into your speech, you should include a variety of information types. Choosing supporting material that is relevant to your audience will help make your speech more engaging. As was noted earlier, a speaker should consider the audience throughout the speech-making process. Imagine you were asked to deliver a speech about your college or university. To get some practice adapting supporting material to various audiences, provide an example of each type of supporting material that is tailored to the following specific audiences. Include an example, an explanation, a statistic, an analogy, some testimony, and a visual aid.

1. Incoming first-year students
2. Parents of incoming first-year students
3. Alumni of the college or university
4. Community members who live close to the school

OBJECTS

Three-dimensional objects that represent an idea can be useful as a visual aid for a speech. They offer the audience a direct, concrete way to understand what you are saying. For instance, a stethoscope or another object that is defining for a profession can be used to illustrate career goals. An older and a newer phone can be used to illustrate technological development. Models also fall into this category, as they are scaled versions of objects that may be too big (the International Space Station) or too small (a molecule) to actually show to your audience.

Tips for Using Objects Effectively

1. Make sure your objects are large enough for the audience to see.
2. Do not pass objects around, as it will be distracting.
3. Hold your objects up long enough for the audience to see them.
4. Do not talk to your object, wiggle or wave it around, tap on it, or obstruct the audience's view of your face with it.
5. Practice with your objects so your delivery will be fluent and there won't be any surprises.

CHALKBOARDS, WHITEBOARDS, AND FLIP CHARTS

Chalkboards, whiteboards, and flip charts can be useful for interactive speeches. If you are polling the audience or brainstorming, you can write down audience responses easily for everyone to see and for later reference. They can also be helpful for unexpected clarification. If audience members look confused, you can take a moment to expand on a point or concept using the board or flip chart. Since many people are uncomfortable writing on these things due to handwriting or spelling issues, it's good to anticipate things that you may have to expand on and have extra visual aids or slides that you can use if needed. You can also have audience members write things on boards or flip charts themselves, which helps get them engaged and takes some of the pressure off you as a speaker.

POSTERS AND HANDOUTS

Posters generally include text and graphics and often summarize an entire presentation or select main points. Posters are frequently used to present original research, as they can be broken down into the various steps to show how a process worked. Posters can be useful if you are going to have audience members circulating around the room before or after your presentation, so they can take the time to review the poster and ask questions. Posters are not often good visual aids *during* a speech, because it's difficult to make the text and graphics large enough for a room full of people to adequately see. The best posters are those created using computer software and professionally printed on large laminated paper.

Printing/copying businesses are now good at helping produce professional-looking posters. Although they can be costly, they add to the speaker's credibility. University of Fraser Valley – UFV – Student Research Day – CC BY 2.0.

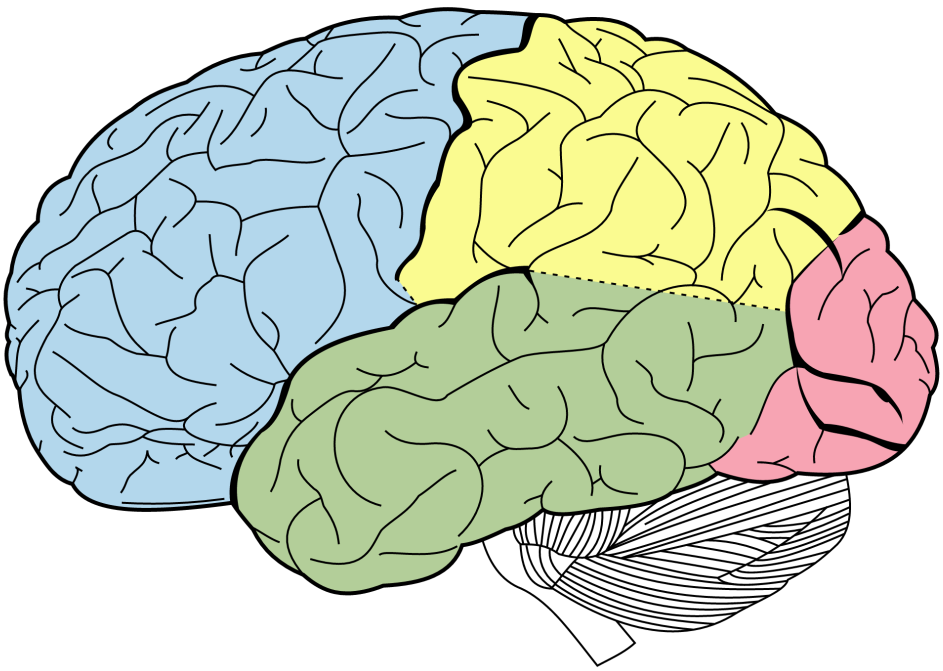
Handouts can be a useful alternative to posters. Think of them as miniposters that audience members can reference and take with them. Audience members will likely appreciate a handout that is limited to one page, is neatly laid out, and includes the speaker's contact information. It can be appropriate to give handouts to an audience before a long presentation where note taking is expected, complicated information is presented, or the audience will be tested on or have to respond to the information presented. In most regular speeches less than fifteen minutes long, it would not be wise to distribute handouts ahead of time, as they will distract the audience from the speaker. It's better to distribute the handouts after your speech or at the end of the program if there are others speaking after you.

PICTURES

Photographs, paintings, drawings, and sketches fall into the pictures category of visual aids. Pictures can be useful when you need to show an exact replication of what you're speaking about. Pictures can also connect to your audience on a personal level, especially if they evoke audience emotions. Think about the use of pictures in television commercials asking for donations or sponsorships. Organizations like Save the Children and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals successfully use pictures of malnourished children or abused animals to induce an emotional state in their viewers. A series of well-chosen and themed pictures can have a meaningful impact on an audience. Although some pictures can be effectively presented when printed out on standard 8 1/2" x 11" printer paper using a black and white printer, others will need to be enlarged and/or printed in color, which will cost some money. You can avoid this by incorporating a picture into a PowerPoint presentation, as the picture will be projected large enough for people to see. We will discuss PowerPoint in more detail later.

DIAGRAMS AND DRAWINGS

Diagrams are good for showing the inner workings of an object or pointing out the most important or relevant parts of something. Think about diagrams as blueprints that show the inside of something—for example, key bones in the human body in a speech about common skateboarding injuries. Diagrams are good alternatives to pictures when you only need to point out certain things that may be difficult to see in a photograph.



Wikimedia Commons – public domain.

You may even be able to draw a simple diagram yourself if you find it would be useful during your speech, but it is always better to anticipate what you might need and have professionally-designed diagrams available in case certain explanations are necessary.

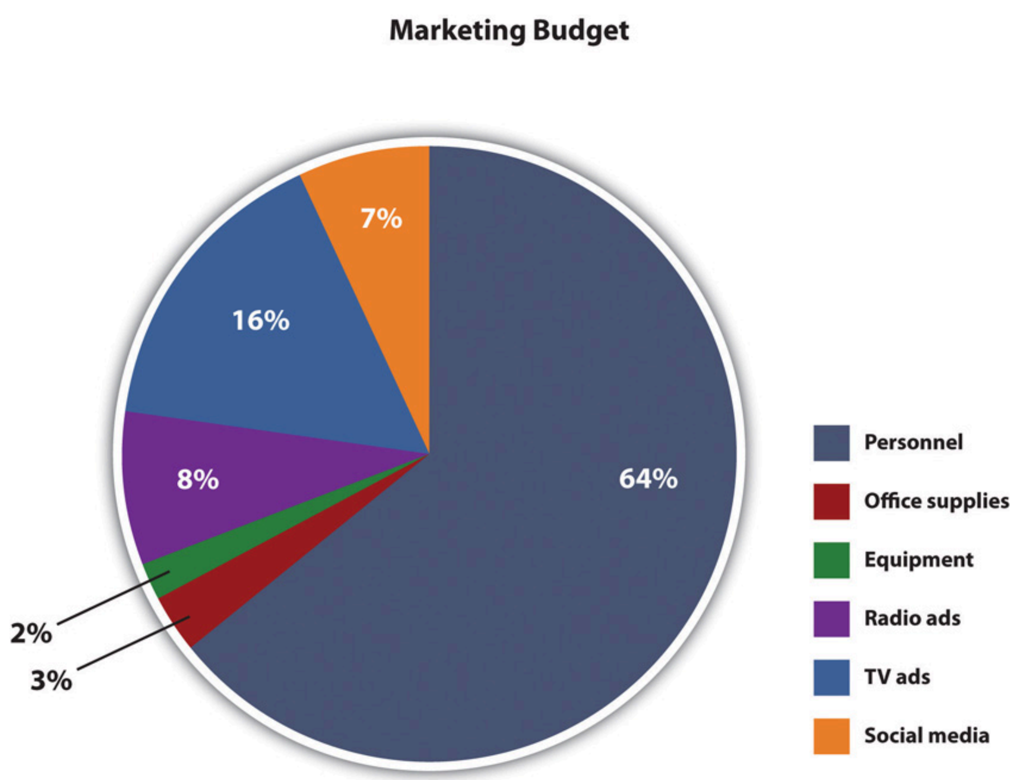
CHARTS AND TABLES

Charts and tables are useful for compiling and cross-referencing larger amounts of information. The combination of rows and columns allows you to create headers and then divide them up into units, categories, dates, and so on. Medical information is put into charts so that periods of recorded information, such as vital signs, can be updated and scanned by doctors and nurses. Charts and tables are also good for combining text and numbers, and they are easy to make with word processing software like Microsoft Word or spreadsheet software like Excel. Think of presenting your department's budget and spending at the end of a business quarter. You could have headers in the columns with the various categories and itemized deductions in the rows ending with a final total for each column.

Marketing Department Quarterly Budget

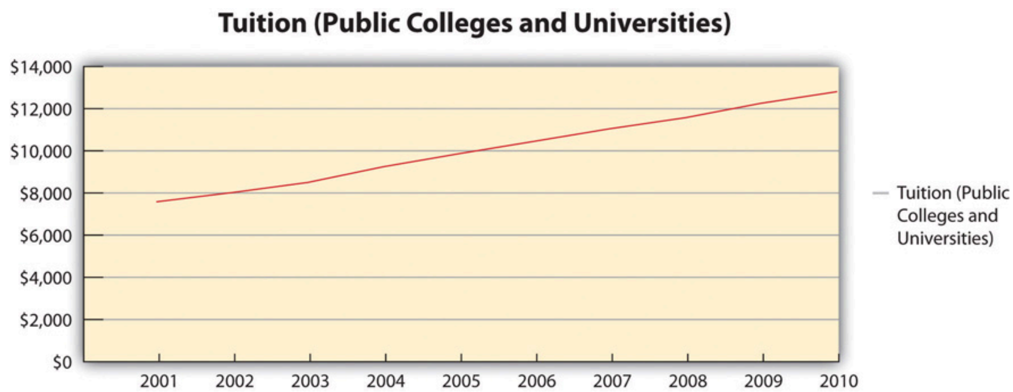
Category	Budgeted	Used	Quarter
Personnel	36,000	37,062	-1,062
Office supplies	2,000	1,890	110
Equipment/ Computers	1,500	1,338	162
Radio ad buy	5,000	4,500	500
TV ad buy	9,000	9,000	0
Social media ad buy	4,000	4,140	-140
Total	**57,500**	**57,930**	**-430**

A pie chart is an alternative representation of textual and numerical data that offers audience members a visual representation of the relative proportions of a whole. In a pie chart, each piece of the pie corresponds to a percentage of the whole, and the size of the pie varies with the size of the percentage. As with other charts and tables, most office software programs now easily make pie charts.

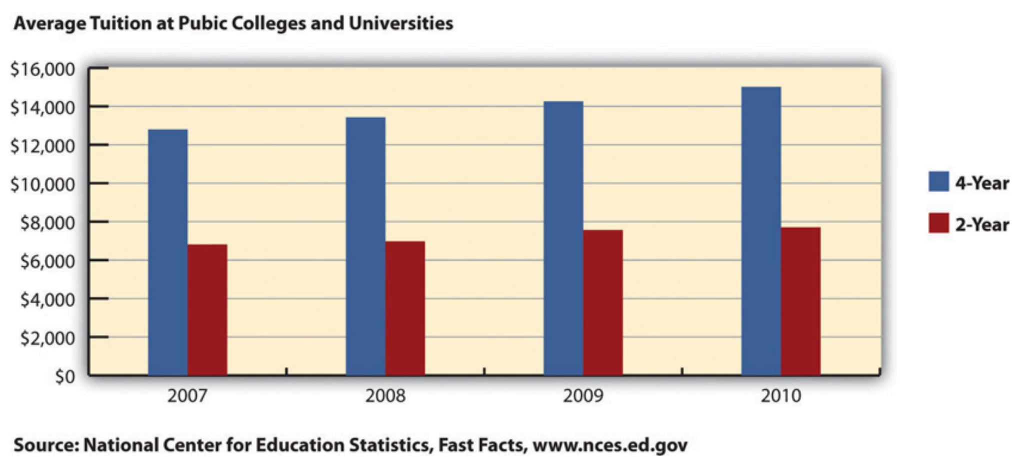


GRAPHS

Graphs are representations that point out numerical relationships or trends and include line graphs and bar graphs. Line graphs are useful for showing trends over time. For example, you could track the rising cost of tuition for colleges and universities in a persuasive speech about the need for more merit-based financial aid.



Bar graphs are good for comparing amounts. In the same speech, you could compare the tuition of two-year institutions to that of four-year institutions. Graphs help make numerical data more digestible for your audience and allow you to convey an important numerical trend visually and quickly without having to go into lengthy explanations. Remember to always clearly label your *x*-axis and *y*-axis and to explain the basics of your graph to your audience before you go into the specific data. If you use a graph that was created by someone else, make sure it is large and clear enough for the audience to read and that you cite the original source.



National Center for Education Statistics.

VIDEO

Video clips as visual aids can be powerful and engaging for an audience, but they can also be troublesome for speakers. Whether embedded in a PowerPoint presentation, accessed through YouTube, or played from a laptop or DVD player, video clips are notorious for tripping up speakers. They require more than one piece of electronics when they are hooked to a projector and speaker and sometimes also require an Internet connection. The more electronic connection points, the more chances for something to go wrong. Therefore, it is very important to test your technology before your speech, have a backup method of delivery if possible, and be prepared to go on without the video if all else fails. Although sometimes tempting, you should not let the video take over your speech (do not have more than 10 percent of your speech filled with video). Make sure your video is relevant and that it is cued to where it needs to be. One useful strategy for incorporating video is to play a video without audio and speak along with the video, acting as a narrator. This allows the speaker to have more control over the visual aid and to adapt it and make it more relevant to a specific topic and audience. Additionally, video editing software like Final Cut and iMovie are readily available to college students and relatively easy to use. Some simple editing to cut together various clips that are meaningful or adding an introductory title or transitions can make your video look more professional.

PRESENTATION SOFTWARE

PowerPoint is the most commonly used presentation software and has functionality ranging from the most simple text-based slide to complicated transitions, timing features, video/sound embedding, and even functionality with audience response systems like Turning Point that allow data to be collected live from audience members and incorporated quickly into the slideshow. Despite the fact that most college students have viewed and created numerous PowerPoint presentations, many are poorly executed and detract from the speaker's message. PowerPoint should be viewed as a speech amplifier — it should support but not take over the role of the speaker.

In longer presentations like college lectures or professional conference presentations, PowerPoint slides are more content-heavy — they include many key points and include more visual aids such as pictures and graphs. The constant running of the slideshow facilitates audience note taking, which is also common during presentations. Short presentations and speeches (up to 10 minutes), on the other hand, have more repetition and redundancy built in and carry less expectation that the audience will take detailed notes. In this case, your PowerPoint should be simpler and amplify particular components of the speech rather than run along with the speaker throughout the speech and include all the details.

Tips for Using PowerPoint as a Visual Aid for Short Presentations/ Speeches

1. Do not have more than two slides per main point.
2. Use a consistent theme with limited variation in font style and font size.
3. Incorporate text and relevant graphics into each slide.
4. Limit content to no more than six lines of text or six bullet points per slide.
5. Do not use complete sentences; be concise.
6. Avoid unnecessary animation or distracting slide transitions.
7. Have a slide displayed only when it is relevant to what you're discussing. Insert completely black slides to display when you are not explicitly referencing content in the speech so the audience doesn't get distracted.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING PLUGGED IN"

Alternatives to PowerPoint

Although PowerPoint is the most frequently used presentation software, there are alternatives that can also be engaging and effective if the speaker is willing to invest the time in learning something new. Keynote is Apple's alternative to Microsoft's PowerPoint and offers some themes and style choices that can set your presentation apart from the familiar look of PowerPoint. Keep in mind that you will need to make sure you have access to Mac-compatible presentation tools, since Keynote won't run or open on most PCs. Prezi is a web-based presentation tool that uses Flash animation, zooming, and motion to make a very different-looking computer-generated visual aid. If you have the time to play with Prezi and create a visual aid for your presentation, you will stand out. You can see Prezi in action in Video Clip 18.2.1. You can also see sample presentations on Prezi's website: http://prezi.com/explore.

1. What are some positives and negatives of using PowerPoint as a visual aid?
2. What are some other alternatives to using PowerPoint as a visual aid? Why?

VIDEO CLIP 18.2.1

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/llsadvcomm/?p=2537#oembed-1

Video: "James Geary, metaphorically speaking" by TED [10:45] is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.*Transcript and closed captions available on YouTube.*

In this video, James Geary presents on metaphor using Prezi as his visual aid.

Key Takeaways

- Library resources like databases and reference librarians are more suitable for college-level research than general search engines.
- Research sources include periodicals, newspapers and books, reference tools, interviews, and websites. The credibility of each type of supporting material should be evaluated.
- Speakers should include a variety of supporting material from their research sources in their speeches. The types of supporting material include examples, explanations, statistics, analogies, testimony, and visual aids.
- Visual aids help a speaker reinforce their content visually and have many potential benefits. Visual aids can also detract from a speech if not used properly. Visual aids include objects; chalkboards, whiteboards, and flip charts; posters and handouts; pictures; diagrams; charts; graphs; video; and presentation software.

Exercises

1. **Getting integrated:** Identify some ways that research skills are helpful in each of the following contexts: academic, professional, personal, and civic.
2. Go to the library webpage for your school. What are some resources that will be helpful for your research? Identify at least two library databases and at least one reference librarian. If you need help with research, what resources are available?
3. What are some websites that you think are credible for doing graduate certificate-level research? Why? What are some website that are not credible? Why?

References

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18.3: ORGANIZING

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the process of organizing a speech.
2. Identify common organizational patterns.
3. Incorporate supporting materials into a speech.
4. Employ verbal citations for various types of supporting material.
5. List key organizing signposts.
6. Identify the objectives of a speech introduction.
7. Identify the objectives of a speech conclusion.

When organizing your presentation/ speech, you might find it easier to start with the body. Even though most students want to start with the introduction, it can be difficult to introduce and preview something that you haven't yet developed. A well-structured presentation/ speech includes an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

In your case, as you prepare your Presentation for COMM 6019, you might find it easy to organize your presentation if you wrote a strong report — you would just follow the organization of your report (or of a portion of it) as you set up your PowerPoint and sections. The following information covers the way you would organize your content if you didn't already have a full report to draw from, and it is meant to teach you the process to follow for any short speeches/ presentations delivered at work.

ORGANIZING THE BODY OF YOUR SPEECH

Writing the body of your speech takes the most time in the speech-writing/ presentation preparation process. Your specific purpose and thesis statements should guide the initial development of the body, which will then be more informed by your research process. You will determine main points that help achieve your purpose and match your thesis. You will then fill information into your main points by incorporating the various types of supporting material discussed previously. Before you move on to your introduction and conclusion, you will connect the main points together with transitions and other signposts.

DETERMINING YOUR MAIN POINTS

Think of each main point as a miniature speech within your larger speech. Each main point will have a central idea, meet some part of your specific purpose, and include supporting material from your research that relates to your thesis. Reviewing the draft of your thesis and specific purpose statements can lead you to research materials. As you review your research, take notes on and/or highlight key ideas that stick out to you as useful, effective, relevant, and interesting. It is likely that these key ideas will become the central ideas of your main points, or at least subpoints. Once you've researched your topic enough to achieve your specific purpose, support your thesis, and meet the research guidelines set forth by your instructor or boss, you can distill the research down to a series of central ideas. As you draft these central ideas, use parallel wording, which is similar wording among key organizing signposts and main points that helps structure a speech. Using parallel wording in your central idea statement for each main point will also help you write parallel key signposts like the preview statement in the introduction, transitions between main points, and the review statement in the conclusion. The following example shows parallel wording in the central ideas of each main point in a speech about the green movement and Fanshawe College:

1. Fanshawe's green initiatives positively affect campus buildings and facilities.
2. Fanshawe's green initiatives positively affect students.
3. Fanshawe's green initiatives positively affect faculty and staff.

While writing each central idea using parallel wording is useful for organizing information at this stage, you should feel free to vary the wording a little more in your actual delivery. You should still keep some parallel key words that are woven throughout the speech/presentation, but sticking too close to parallel wording can make your content sound forced or artificial.

After evaluating and synthesizing your research materials, you may have several central idea statements. You will likely have two to five main points, depending on what your instructor prefers, time constraints, or the organizational pattern you choose. All the central ideas may not get converted into main points; some may end up becoming subpoints and some may be discarded. Once you get your series of central ideas drafted, consider how you might organize them, which will help you narrow your list down to what may actually become the body of your speech.

ORGANIZING YOUR MAIN POINTS

There are several ways you can organize your main points, and some patterns correspond well to a particular subject area or speech/ presentation type. Determining which pattern you will use helps filter through your list of central ideas generated from your research and allows you to move on to the next step of inserting supporting material into your speech. Here are some common organizational patterns.

TOPICAL PATTERN

When you use the topical pattern, you are breaking a large idea or category into smaller ideas or subcategories. In short, you are dividing a whole into logical units. While you may break something down into smaller topics that will make two, three, or more main points, people tend to like groups of three. In an informative presentation/ speech about the Woodstock Music and Art Fair, for example, you could break the main points down to (1) the musicians who performed, (2) the musicians who declined to perform, and (3) the audience. You could also break it down into three specific performances—(1) Santana, (2) The Grateful Dead, and (3) Creedence Clearwater Revival—or three genres of music—(1) folk, (2) funk, and (3) rock.

The topical pattern breaks a topic down into logical divisions but doesn't necessarily offer any guidance in ordering them. To help determine the order of topical main points, you may consider the primacy or recency effect. You prime an engine before you attempt to start it and prime a surface before you paint it. The **primacy effect** is similar in that you present your best information first in order to make a positive impression and engage your audience early in your speech. The **recency effect** is based on the idea that an audience will best remember the information they heard most recently—therefore you would include your best information last in your speech to leave a strong final impression. Both primacy and recency can be effective. Consider your topic and your audience to help determine which would work best for your speech/ presentation.

CHRONOLOGICAL PATTERN

A **chronological pattern** helps structure your speech based on time or sequence. If you order a speech/ presentation based on time, you may trace the development of an idea, product, or event. A speech on Woodstock could cover the following: (1) preparing for the event, (2) what happened during the event, and (3) the aftermath of the event. Ordering a speech based on sequence is also chronological and can be useful when providing directions on how to do something or how a process works. This could work well for a topic such as baking bread at home, refinishing furniture, or harvesting corn. The chronological pattern is often a good choice for topics related to history or that demonstrate a process.

SPATIAL PATTERN

The **spatial pattern** arranges main points based on their layout or proximity to each other. An informative speech/ presentation on Woodstock could focus on the layout of the venue, including (1) the camping area, (2) the stage area, and (3) the musician/crew area.

PROBLEM-SOLUTION PATTERN

The **problem-solution pattern** entails presenting a problem and offering a solution. This pattern can be useful for persuasive speeches/ presentations—especially if focused on a current societal/ business issue. This can also be coupled with a call to action asking an audience to take specific steps to implement a solution offered. This organizational pattern can be applied to a wide range of topics and can be easily organized into two or three main points. You can offer evidence to support your claim that a problem exists in one main point and then offer a specific solution in the second main point. To be more comprehensive, you could set up the problem, review multiple solutions that have been proposed, and then add a third main point that argues for a specific solution out of the ones reviewed in the second main point. Using this pattern, you could offer solutions to the problem of rising textbook costs or offer your audience guidance on how to solve conflicts with roommates or coworkers.

CAUSE-EFFECT PATTERN

The **cause-effect pattern** sets up a relationship between ideas that shows a progression from origin to result. You could also start with the current situation and trace back to the root causes. This pattern can be used for informative or persuasive speeches/presentations. For informative purposes, the speaker would explain an established relationship and cite evidence to support the claim—for example, accessing unsecured, untrusted websites or e-mails leads to computer viruses. For purposes of persuasion, the speaker would argue for a link that is not as well established and/or is controversial—for example, violent video games lead to violent thoughts and actions (or not). In a persuasive speech, a cause-effect argument is often paired with a proposed solution or call to action, such as advocating for stricter age restrictions on who can play violent video games. When organizing an *informative* speech using the cause-effect pattern, be careful not to advocate for a particular course of action.

MONROE'S MOTIVATED SEQUENCE

Monroe's Motivated Sequence is a five-step organization pattern that attempts to persuade an audience by making a topic relevant, using positive and/or negative motivation, and including a call to action. The five steps are (1) attention, (2) need, (3) satisfaction, (4) visualization, and (5) action (Monroe & Ehninger, 1964).

The attention step is accomplished in the introduction. Whether your entire speech/ presentation is organized using this pattern or not, any good speaker begins by getting the attention of the audience. We will discuss several related strategies in the section "Getting Your Audience's Attention". The next two steps set up a problem and solution.

After getting the audience's attention, establish that there is a need for your topic to be addressed. Cite credible research showing the seriousness or prevalence of an issue. In the attention and need steps, it is helpful to use supporting material that is relevant and proxemic to the audience.

Once you have set up the need for the problem to be addressed, you move on to the satisfaction step, where you present a solution to the problem. You may propose your own solution if it is informed by your research and reasonable. You may also propose a solution that you found in your research.

The visualization step is next and incorporates positive and/or negative motivation as a way to support the relationship you have set up between the need and your proposal to satisfy the need. You may ask your audience to visualize a world where things are better because they took your advice and addressed this problem. This capitalizes on positive motivation. You may also ask your audience to visualize a world where things are worse because they did not address the issue, which is a use of negative motivation.

Next, you can move to the action step, which includes a call to action: "Now that you see the seriousness of this problem, here's what we can do about it." The call to action should include concrete and specific steps to take. Your goal should be to facilitate the call to action, making it easy for the audience to complete. Instead of asking them to contact their elected officials, you could start an online petition and make the link available to everyone. You could also bring the contact information for officials that represent that region so the audience doesn't have to look them up on their own. Although this organizing pattern is more complicated than the others, it offers a proven structure that can help you organize your supporting materials and achieve your goals.

INCORPORATING SUPPORTING MATERIAL

So far, you have learned several key steps in the speech/ presentation creation process, which are reviewed in Figure 18.3.1 "From Research to Main Points". Now you will begin to incorporate more specific information from your supporting materials into the body of your speech/ presentation. You can place the central ideas that fit your organizational pattern at the beginning of each main point and then plug supporting material in as subpoints.

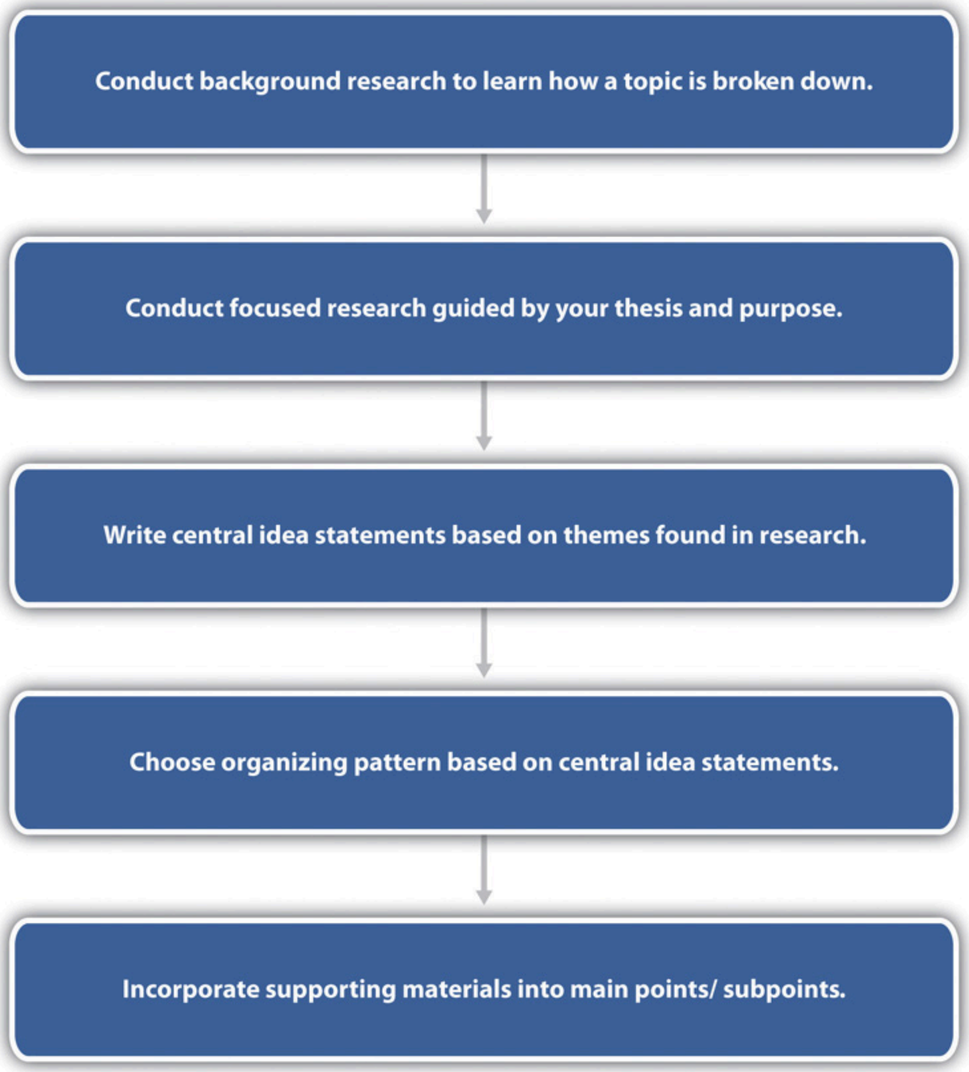

Figure 18.3.1 From Research to Main Points

This information will also make up the content of your formal and speaking outlines, which we will discuss more in Section 18.4 "Outlining". Remember that you want to include a variety of supporting material (examples, analogies, statistics, explanations, etc.) within your speech/ presentation. The information that you include as subpoints helps back up the central idea that started the main point. Depending on the length of your speech and the depth of your research, you may also have sub-subpoints that back up the claim you are making in the subpoint. Each piece of supporting material you include eventually links back to the specific purpose and thesis statement. This approach to supporting your speech/ presentation is systematic and organized and helps ensure that your content fits together logically and that your main points are clearly supported and balanced.

One of the key elements of academic and professional public speaking is verbally citing your supporting materials so your audience can evaluate your credibility and the credibility of your sources. You should include citation information in three places: verbally in your speech, on any paper or electronic information (outline, PowerPoint), and on a separate reference sheet. Since much of the supporting material you incorporate into your speech comes directly from your research, it's important that you include relevant citation information as you plug this information into your main points. Don't wait to include citation information once you've drafted the body of your speech/ presentation. At that point, it may be difficult to retrace your steps to locate the source of a specific sentence or statistic. As you paraphrase or quote your supporting material, work the citation information into the sentences; do not clump the information together at the end of a sentence, or try to cite more than one source at the end of a paragraph or main point. It's important that the audience *hear the citations as you use the respective information* so it's clear which supporting material matches up with which source.

What source information should you *mention out loud* during a speech/ presentation? At least the author, his/ her credentials, and the date — but in some cases more information should be emphasized. When citing a magazine, newspaper, or journal article, it is important to include the *name of the publication* (more important than mentioning the title of the article), since that name—for example, *The Globe and Mail*—is what the audience needs to evaluate the credibility of the material. For a book, make sure to cite the title and indicate that the source is a book. When verbally citing information retrieved from a website, do not recite the long and cumbersome URL; mention, instead, the sponsor/author of the site and the title of the web page, or section of the website, where you obtained their information. Use "official" organization websites or government websites rather than random websites or blogs. When you get information from an official site, make sure you state that in your citation to add to your credibility. For an interview, state the interviewee's name, credentials, and the date when the interview took place. Here are some examples of phrasing you could use in verbally citing sources and examples from specific types of sources:

1. **Magazine article**
    - "According to an article by Niall Ferguson in the January 23, 2012, issue of *Newsweek*, we can expect much discussion about 'class warfare' in the upcoming presidential and national election cycle. Ferguson reports that…"
    - "As reported by Niall Ferguson, in the January 23, 2012, issue of *Newsweek*, many candidates' talking points revolve around economic inequality…"
2. **Newspaper article**
    - "On November 26, 2011, Eithne Farry of *The Daily Telegraph* of London reported that…"
    - "An article about the renewed popularity of selling products in people's own homes appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on November 26, 2011. Eithne Farry explored a few of these 'blast-from-the-past' styled parties…"
3. **Website**
    - "According to information I found at ready.gov, the website of the US Department of Homeland Security, US businesses and citizens…"
    - "According to information posted on the US Department of Homeland Security's official website,…"
    - "Helpful information about business continuity planning can be found on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's official website, located at ready.gov…"
4. **Journal article**
    - "An article written by Dr. Nakamura and Dr. Kikuchi from the Meiji University in Tokyo found that the

Fukushima disaster was complicated by Japan's high nuclear consciousness. Their 2011 article published in the journal *Public Administration Today* reported that…"
    - "In a 2012 article published in *Public Administration Review*, Professors Nakamura and Kikuchi reported that the Fukushima disaster was embarrassing for a country with a long nuclear history…"
    - "Nakamura and Kikuchi, scholars in crisis management and public policy, authored a 2011 article about the failed crisis preparation at the now infamous Fukushima nuclear plant. Their *Public Administration Review* article reports that…"
    - **Bad example** (doesn't specify the names of the authors or the name of the journal). "A 2011 study by Meiji University scholars found the crisis preparations at a Japanese nuclear plant to be inadequate…"

5. **Book**
    - "In their 2008 book *At War with Metaphor*, Steuter and Wills describe how we use metaphor to justify military conflict. They report…"
    - "Erin Steuter and Deborah Wills, experts in sociology and media studies, describe the connections between metaphor and warfare in their 2008 book *At War with Metaphor*. They contend that…"
    - "In their 2008 book *At War with Metaphor*, Steuter and Wills reveal…"
6. **Interview**
    - "On February 20 I conducted a personal interview with Dr. Linda Scholz, a communication studies professor at the University of Toronto, to learn more about Latina/o Heritage Month. Dr. Scholz told me that…"
    - "I conducted an interview with Dr. Linda Scholz, a communication studies professor here at the University of Toronto, and learned that there are more than a dozen events planned for Latina/o Heritage Month."
    - "In a telephone interview I conducted with Dr. Linda Scholz, a communication studies professor at the University of Toronto, I learned…"

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING CRITICAL"

Plagiarism

During the process of locating and incorporating supporting material into your speech/ presentation, it is important to practice good research skills to avoid intentional or unintentional plagiarism. Plagiarism, as we have already learned, is the uncredited use of someone else's words or ideas. All the academic integrity rules discussed so far apply to speeches/ presentations, too.

As you might have heard, there have been several high-profile plagiarism scandals related to speeches recently, with serious consequences for the guilty parties. Here are a few examples:

- This one (from 2011) involves a University of Alberta medical school dean who resigned from his position after it was discovered that he had plagiarized parts of a speech to university graduates.
- This one (from 2018) concerns a World Medical Association President's inaugural speech — plagiarized after a Canadian professor's 2014 speech.
- This one (from 2021) concerns the President of the University of North Carolina's plagiarized inauguration speech.

If you search "plagiarized public speeches," you'll be able to find many more examples. In all these cases, the speakers plagiarized *other speeches* — a form of plagiarism supposedly more difficult to "catch" than plagiarized written text — and they were still caught. Please be careful to document your use of sources as instructed in this textbook *for presentations/ speeches as for any written text*.

As you locate sources, always record all the key bibliographic information. to avoid wasting time trying to find the source again later. Printing the source, downloading the PDF, or copying and pasting the URL as soon as you locate the source can help you retrace your steps if needed. (For library resources: copying the URL might not help, because that might be specific to your login session during which you initially locate the source. Save a copy of the text or save the full APA reference to be on the safe side.)

Self-reflection and critical thinking questions:

1. Why do you think instances of academic dishonesty have been steadily increasing over the past few years?
2. What is your school's policy in academic honesty? What is your instructor's policy? What are the potential consequences for violating this policy at the school and classroom levels?
3. Based on what you learned here, what are some strategies you can employ to make your research process more organized?

USING SIGNPOSTS

Signposts on highways help drivers and passengers navigate unfamiliar places and give us reminders and warnings about what to expect down the road. **Signposts** in speeches/ presentations are statements that help audience members navigate content, keeping in mind that they cannot "rewind" to check details they might have missed. The key signposts you should include are the preview statement; transitions between the intro and the body, between the main points, and between the body and the conclusion; and the review statement. While the preview and review statements are in the introduction and conclusion, respectively, the other signposts are all transitions that help move between sections.

TABLE 18.3.1 ORGANIZING SIGNPOSTS

Signpost	Example
Preview statement	"Today, I'd like to inform you about the history of Habitat for Humanity, the work they have done in our area, and my experiences as a volunteer."
Transition from introduction to body	"Let's begin with the history of Habitat for Humanity."
Transition from main point one to main point two	"Now that you know more about the history of Habitat for Humanity, let's look at the work they have done in our area."
Transition from main point two to main point three	"Habitat for Humanity has done a lot of good work in our area, and I was fortunate to be able to experience this as a volunteer."
Transition from body to conclusion	"In closing, I hope you now have a better idea of the impact this well-known group has had."
Review statement	"Habitat for Humanity is an organization with an inspiring history that has done much for our area while also providing an opportunity for volunteers, like myself, to learn and grow."

There are also signposts that can be useful *within* sections of your speech/ presentation. Words and phrases like *Aside from* and *While* are good ways to transition between thoughts within a main point or subpoint. Organizing signposts like *First*, *Second*, and *Third* can be used within a main point to help speaker and audience move through information. The preview in the introduction and review in the conclusion need not be the only such signposts in your speech/ presentation. You can also include internal previews and internal reviews in your main points to help make the content more digestible or memorable.

Try to remove unnecessary words from key signposts to make them more effective and easier to remember and deliver. Speech signposts should also be parallel. All stop signs are octagonal with a red background and white lettering, which makes them easily recognizable to drivers. If the wording in your preview statement matches with key wording in your main points, transitions between main points, and review statement, then your audience will be better able to follow your speech.

Signposts in your speech guide the way for your audience members like signposts on the highway guide drivers. Doug Kerr – [Minnesota State Highway 5] – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Being too vague or getting too creative with your speech signposts can make them disappear into the background of your speech/ presentation. Students sometimes worry that using parallel and obvious wording in signposts would make their speech boring or insult the intelligence of their audience. This is not the case. Most people struggle to be active listeners, so making a speech/presentation more listenable is usually appreciated. In addition, these transitions would amount to just a few sentences, so they would be spaced out enough to not sound repetitive, and they can serve as anchor points to secure the attention of the audience.

Your well-written signposts should also be well delivered. **Nonverbal signposts** include pauses and changes in rate, pitch, or volume that help emphasize transitions within your delivery. Here are some ways you can use nonverbal signposting: pause before and after your preview and review statements so they stand out, pause before and after your transitions between main points so they stand out, and slow your rate and lower your pitch on the closing line of your speech to provide closure.

INTRODUCTION

Because of the power of first impressions, a speaker who seems unprepared in the introduction will likely be negatively evaluated even if the speech improves. Nadine Dereza – 'Insider Secrets of Public Speaking'. – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

First impressions matter. For instance, according to Laws et al. (2010), students' impressions of instructors on the first day of class persist throughout the semester (Laws et al., 2010). First impressions are quickly formed, sometimes spontaneous, and involve little to no cognitive effort — yet they form the basis of inferences and judgments about someone's personality (Lass-Hennemann, et al., 2011). For example, a student who comes to the front of the class wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt, looks around blankly, and lets out a sigh before starting would not made a very good first impression. Even if the student is prepared for the speech/ presentation and delivers it well, the audience has likely already associated what they observed with negative personality traits (laziness, indifference), and those associations now have staying power in the face of contrary evidence that comes later.

Short as it is, the introduction is an essential segment because that is when audiences decide whether or not they are interested in listening to the rest. A good introduction gets your audience's attention, introduce your topic, establish credibility and relevance, and preview your main points.

GETTING YOUR AUDIENCE'S ATTENTION

A speaker can get an audience's attention negatively, so think carefully about your choice. If you start a presentation on Habitat for Humanity by banging on the table with a hammer, you'll definitely get your audience's attention but lose your credibility in that moment, because many in the audience will probably stop seeing you as a serious speaker. Choose an attention getter that is appropriate, meaning that it is unusual enough to get people interested, but not over the top, and relevant to your speech topic.

USE HUMOUR?

In a famous episode of the television show *The Office*, titled "Dwight's Speech," the boss, Michael Scott, takes the stage at a regional sales meeting for a very nervous Dwight, who has been called up to accept an award. In typical Michael Scott style, he attempts to win the crowd over with humor and fails miserably. Erring on the side of caution when it comes to humor tends to be the best option, especially for inexperienced speakers. An appropriate and well-executed joke can lighten the mood and reduce the speaker's anxiety, but even successful comedians can make mistakes, and many recount stories of excruciating instances in which they failed to connect with an audience. So the danger lies in the poorly executed joke, which has the reverse effect, heightening the speaker's anxiety and leading the audience to question the speaker's competence and credibility. In general, when a speech/presentation is supposed to be professional or formal, as many in-class speeches are, humor is more likely to be seen as incongruous with the occasion. But there are other situations where a humorous opening might fit perfectly. For example, a farewell speech to a longtime colleague could start with an inside joke. When considering humor, perhaps get feedback on your idea from a trusted colleague.

CITE A STARTLING FACT OR STATISTIC

As you research your topic, take note of any information that defies your expectations or surprises you. If you have a strong reaction to something you learn, your audience may, too. For instance, you could share more than one fact or statistic that builds up the audience's interest. When using numbers, it's also good to repeat and/or repackage the statistics so they stick in the audience's mind. Here is an example:

> In 1994, sixteen states reported that 15–19 percent of their population was considered obese. Every other state reported lower obesity rates. In 2010, no states reported obesity rates in that same category of 15–19 percent, because every single state had at least a 20 percent obesity rate. In just six years, we went from no states with an obesity rate higher than 19 percent, to fifty. Currently, the national obesity rate for adults is nearly 34 percent. This dramatic rise in obesity is charted on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website, and these rates are expected to continue to rise.

The speaker could have just started by stating that nearly 34 percent of the US adult population was obese in 2011. But statistics are not meaningful without context. So sharing how that number rose dramatically over six years helps the audience members see the trend and understand what the current number means. The fourth sentence repackages and summarizes the statistics mentioned in the first three sentences, which again sets up an interesting and informative contrast. Last, the speaker provides a verbal citation for the source of the statistic.

USE A QUOTATION

Some quotations are attention getting and some are boring. Some quotations are relevant and moving and some are abstract and stale. If you choose to open your speech with a quotation, choose one that is attention getting, relevant, and moving. The following example illustrates some tips for using a quote to start a speech: "'The most important question in the world is 'Why is the child crying?'' This quote from author Alice Walker is at the heart of my speech today. Too often, people see children suffering at the hands of bullies and do nothing about it until it's too late. That's why I believe that all public schools should adopt a zero-tolerance policy on bullying."

Notice that the quote is delivered first in the speech, then the source of the quote is cited. Since the quote, like a starting fact or statistic just discussed, is the attention-getting part, it's better to start with that rather than the citation. Next, the speaker explains why the quote is relevant to the speech. A quote that seems relevant to you might not automatically seem so to the audience, so it's best to make that explicit right after you use and cite the quote. Also evaluate the credibility of the source. Many websites that make quotations available care more about selling pop-up ads than the accuracy of their information. Students who do not double-check the accuracy of the quote may end up attributing the quote to the wrong person or citing a made-up quote.

ASK A QUESTION

Starting a speech with a question is a common attention getter, but in reality many speakers choose mundane and boring questions.

First, consider whether you want to use a rhetorical question (designed to elicit a mental response from the audience, not a verbal or nonverbal one) or a direct question (that actually requires a direct response form the audience). Asking a direct question of your audience is warranted only if you plan to do something with the information you get from the audience — and if you are not prepared for the response you get, your presentation might not start well. Let's say a student starts the speech with the direct question, "By a show of hands, how many people have taken public transportation in the past week?" — and sixteen out of twenty students raise their hands. If the speaker is arguing that more students should use public transportation and she expected fewer students to raise their hands, is she going to change her speech angle on the spot? Speaker who move on from their direct question without addressing the response they get from the audience have not made their attention getter relevant to their topic. So, if you use a direct question, make sure you have a point to it and some way to incorporate the responses into the speech.

A good rhetorical question primes the audience to think about the content of the speech. When asked as a series of question combined with startling statistics or facts, audience members can be hooked. The following is a series of rhetorical questions used in a speech against the testing of cosmetics on animals: "Was the toxicity of the shampoo you used this morning tested on the eyes of rabbits? Would you let someone put a cosmetic in your dog's eye to test its toxicity level? Have you ever thought about how many products that you use every day are tested on animals?" Make sure you pause after your rhetorical question to give the audience time to think.

Don't pause for too long, though, or some audience members may get restless, think that you are waiting for an actual response, and say something that might take you by surprise and break your concentration.

TELL A STORY

When you tell a story, whether in the introduction to your speech or not, you should aim to paint word pictures in the minds of your audience members. You might tell a story from your own life or recount a story you found in your research. You may also use a hypothetical story, which has the advantage of allowing you to use your creativity and help place your audience in unusual situations that neither you nor they have actually experienced. When using a hypothetical story, you should let your audience know it's not real, and you should present a story that the audience can relate to. Speakers often let the audience know a story is not real by starting with the word *imagine*. However, the circumstances you choose should not be so unusual that the audience can't relate to them –like this: "Imagine being held as a prisoner of war for seven years." If you want to speak about really unusual circumstances, make them relatable: "Think of someone you really care about. Now, imagine that weeks, months, and then years go by and you haven't heard from that person. You have no idea if that person is alive or dead." The speaker could go on to compare that scenario to the experiences of friends and family of prisoners of war. While we may not be able to imagine being held captive for years, we all know what it's like to experience uncertainty regarding the safety of a loved one.

INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

Introducing the topic of your speech is the most obvious objective of an introduction, but speakers sometimes forget to do this or do not do it clearly. As the author of your speech, you may think that your topic is obvious. However, that is not always so — and if your audience can't clearly see your topic in the first minute, they might lose interest and stop listening. Introduce your topic before the preview of your main points. You can try something like this: "Childhood obesity is a serious problem facing our country," or, "Today I'll persuade you that childhood obesity is a problem that can no longer be ignored."

ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY AND RELEVANCE

Take a moment in your introduction to explicitly set up your credibility in relation to your speech topic. If you have training, expertise, or credentials (e.g., a degree, certificate, etc.) relevant to your topic, you can share that with your audience. It may also be appropriate to mention firsthand experience, previous classes you have taken, or even a personal interest related to your topic.

In terms of relevance, consider preemptively answering the "so what?" question — why should your audience care about what you said? What makes it important? For best results, try to make the topic relevant to your specific audience rather than to humanity in general.

Imagine that your audience members will all ask, "Why should I care about your topic?" and work to proactively address relevance throughout your speech. U.S. Department of Agriculture – CC BY 2.0.

PREVIEWING YOUR MAIN POINTS

The preview of main points is usually the last sentence of your introduction and serves as a map of what's to come in the speech. The preview narrows your introduction of the topic down to the main ideas you will focus on in the speech. Your preview should include wording that is parallel to the key wording of your main points in the body of your speech/ presentation and should preview your main points in the same order you discuss them in the body. Make sure your wording is concise. The following example previews the main points for a speech on childhood obesity: "Today I'll convey the seriousness of the obesity epidemic among children by reviewing some of the causes of obesity, common health problems associated with it, and steps we can take to help ensure our children maintain a healthy weight."

CONCLUSION

How you conclude a speech leaves an impression on your audience. There are three important objectives to accomplish in your conclusion. They include summarizing the importance of your topic, reviewing your main points, and closing your speech.

SUMMARIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR TOPIC

After you transition from the body of your speech to the conclusion, you will summarize the importance of your topic. This is the "take-away" message, or another place where you can answer the "so what?" question. This can often be a rewording of your thesis statement. The speech about childhood obesity could be summarized by saying, "Whether you have children or not, childhood obesity is a national problem that needs to be addressed."

REVIEWING YOUR MAIN POINTS

Once you have summarized the overall importance of your speech, you review the main points. The review statement in the conclusion is very similar to the preview statement in your introduction. You don't have to use the exact same wording, but you still want to have recognizable parallelism that connects the key idea of each main point to the preview, review, and transitions. The review statement for the childhood obesity speech could be "In an effort to convince you of this, I cited statistics showing the rise of obesity, explained common health problems associated with obesity, and proposed steps that parents should take to ensure their children maintain a healthy weight."

CLOSING YOUR SPEECH

Like the attention getter, your closing statement is an opportunity for you to exercise your creativity as a speaker. Many students have difficulty wrapping up the speech with a sense of closure and completeness. In terms of closure, a well-written and well-delivered closing line signals to your audience that your speech/presentation is over, which cues their applause. You should not have to put an artificial end to your speech by saying "thank you" or "that's it" or "that's all I have." In terms of completeness, the closing line should relate to the overall speech and should provide some "take-away" message that may leave an audience thinking or propel them to action. A sample closing line could be "For your health, for our children's health, and for our country's health, we must take steps to address childhood obesity today." You can also create a "ribbon and bow" for your speech/presentation by referring back to the introduction in the closing of your speech. For example, you may finish an illustration or answer a rhetorical question you started in the introduction.

Even a well-written conclusion can be ineffective if the delivery is not good. If you practice your speech only by starting from the beginning, you may not get to your conclusion very often because you stop to fix something in one of the main points, get interrupted, or run out of time. Once you've started your speech, anxiety may increase as you near the end, so even a well-practiced conclusion can fall short. Practicing your conclusion by itself several times can prevent this.

Key Takeaways

- A short speech/ presentation consists of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. When organizing your content, it may be easier to start with the body.
- Determine the main points based on your research and supporting materials. The main points should support the thesis statement and help achieve the general and specific purposes.
- Some organizational patterns that can help arrange the main points of a speech/ presentation are topical, chronological, spatial, problem-solution, cause-effect, and Monroe's Motivated Sequence.
- Incorporating supporting material helps fill in the main points by creating subpoints. As supporting material is added to the speech, citation information should be included so you will have the information necessary to verbally cite your sources.
- Organizing signposts connect the introduction, body, and conclusion. Organizing signposts should be written using parallel wording to the central idea of each main point.
- A speaker should do the following in the introduction of a speech: get the audience's attention, introduce the topic, establish credibility and relevance, and preview the main points.
- A speaker should do the following in the conclusion of a speech: summarize the importance of the topic, review the main points, and provide closure.

Exercises

1. Identifying the main points of reference material you plan to use in your speech/ presentation can help you determine your main points/subpoints. Take one of your sources and list the main points and any subpoints from the article. Are any of them suitable main points for your speech/ presentation? Why/ why not?
2. Which organizational pattern listed do you think you will use for your speech/ presentation, and why?
3. Write out verbal citations for some of the sources you plan to use in your speech, using the examples cited in the chapter as a guide.
4. Draft the opening and closing lines of your speech. Remember to tap into your creativity to try to engage the audience. Is there any way you can tie the introduction and conclusion together to create a "ribbon and bow" for your speech?

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18.4: OUTLINING

Learning Objectives

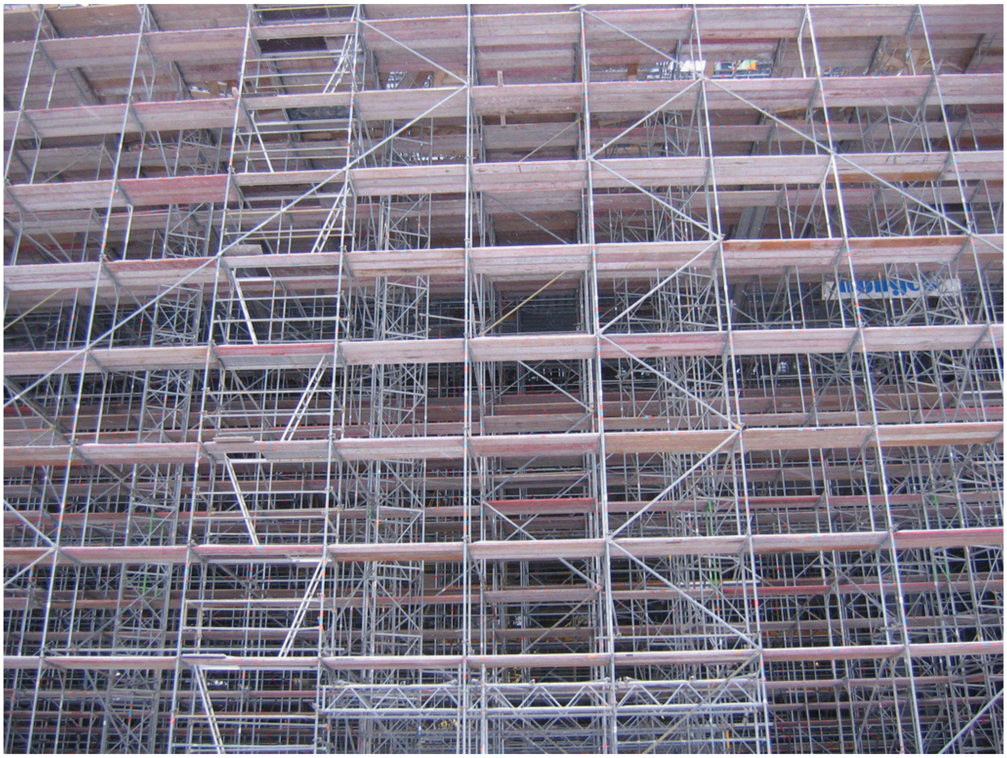
1. Explain the principles of outlining.
2. Create a formal outline.
3. Explain the importance of writing for speaking.
4. Create a speaking outline.

Think of your outline as a living document that grows and takes form throughout your composition process. When you first draft your general purpose, specific purpose, and thesis statement, you could create a new document on your computer and plug those in, essentially starting your outline. As you review your research and distill the information down into separate central ideas that support your specific purpose and thesis, type those statements into the document. Once you've chosen your organizational pattern and are ready to incorporate supporting material, you can quote and paraphrase your supporting material along with the bibliographic information needed for your verbal citations into the document. By this point, you have a good working outline, and you can easily cut and paste information to move it around and see how it fits into the main points, subpoints, and sub-subpoints. As your outline continues to take shape, follow established principles of outlining to ensure a quality speech/ presentation.

Again, if you wrote a very good Research Report for COMM 6019, you may be able to use the outline of the report (or of one of its main sections) as your outline for the presentation. However, at work, you will often have to prepare a presentation without having a fully developed document already prepared in advance. How should you prepare a formal outline in that case?

THE FORMAL OUTLINE

The **formal outline** is a full-sentence outline that helps you prepare for your speech/ presentation. It includes the introduction and conclusion, the main content of the body, key supporting materials, citation information written into the sentences in the outline, and a references page for your speech. The formal outline also includes a title, the general purpose, specific purpose, and thesis statement. It's important to note that an outline is different from a script. While a script contains everything that will be said, an outline includes the main content. Therefore you shouldn't include every word you're going to say on your outline. This allows you more freedom as a speaker to adapt to your audience during your speech. Students sometimes complain about having to outline speeches or papers, but it is a skill that will help you in other contexts. Being able to break a topic down into logical divisions and then connect the information together will prepare you for complicated tasks, as well as for routine meetings or interviews.



Outlining provides a scaffolding, or structure, that will help ensure your speech is logical, coherent, and organized. Wikimedia Commons – CC BY 2.0.

PRINCIPLES OF OUTLINING

Outlining should follow principles of consistency, unity, coherence, and emphasis.

Consistency: Follow a standard outlining format, with the main points indicated by capital roman numerals, subpoints indicated by capital letters, and sub-subpoints by Arabic numerals. Further divisions are indicated by either lowercase letters or lowercase roman numerals. Another way to number sections would be by using arab numerals throughout, with the subsections of section 1numbered as 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc. and sub-subsections as 1.1.1, 1.1.2, etc.

Unity: Make sure that each body section contains one main idea, each subsection contains one subpoint, etc. If you find that one subpoint consists of more than one idea, you can divide it into two subpoints. Limiting each component of your outline to one idea makes it easier to then plug in supporting material and helps ensure that your speech/ presentation is coherent. In the following example from a speech arguing that downloading music from peer-to-peer sites should be legal, two ideas are presented as part of a main point.

- Downloading music using peer-to-peer file-sharing programs helps market new music and does not hurt record sales.

The main point could be broken up into two distinct ideas that can be more fully supported.

1. Downloading music using peer-to-peer file-sharing programs helps market new music.
2. Downloading music using peer-to-peer file-sharing programs does not hurt record sales.

Coherence: There should be a logical and natural flow of ideas in your speech/ presentation, with main points, subpoints, and sub-subpoints connecting to each other. Shorter phrases and keywords can make up the speaking outline, but you should write complete sentences throughout your formal outline to ensure coherence. The principle of coherence can also be met by making sure that, when dividing a main point or subpoint, you include at least two subdivisions. If you can easily think of one subpoint but are having difficulty identifying another one, that subpoint may not be robust enough to stand on its own. Determining which ideas are coordinate with each other and which are subordinate to each other will help divide supporting information into the outline. **Coordinate points** are on the same level of importance in relation to the thesis or to the central idea of a main point. In the following example, the two main points (I, II) are coordinate with each other. The two subpoints (A, B) are also coordinate with each other. **Subordinate points** provide evidence or support for a main idea or thesis. In the following example, subpoint A and subpoint B are subordinate to main point II. You can look for specific words to help you determine any errors in distinguishing coordinate and subordinate points. Your points/subpoints are likely coordiate when you would connect the two statements using any of the following: *and*, *but*, *yet*, *or*, or *also*. In the example, the word *also* appears in B, which connects it, as a coordinate point, to A. The points/subpoints are likely subordinate if you would connect them using the following: *since*, *because*, *in order that*, *to explain*, or *to illustrate*. In the example, 1 and 2 are subordinate to A because they support that sentence.

I. Downloading music using peer-to-peer file-sharing programs helps market new music.

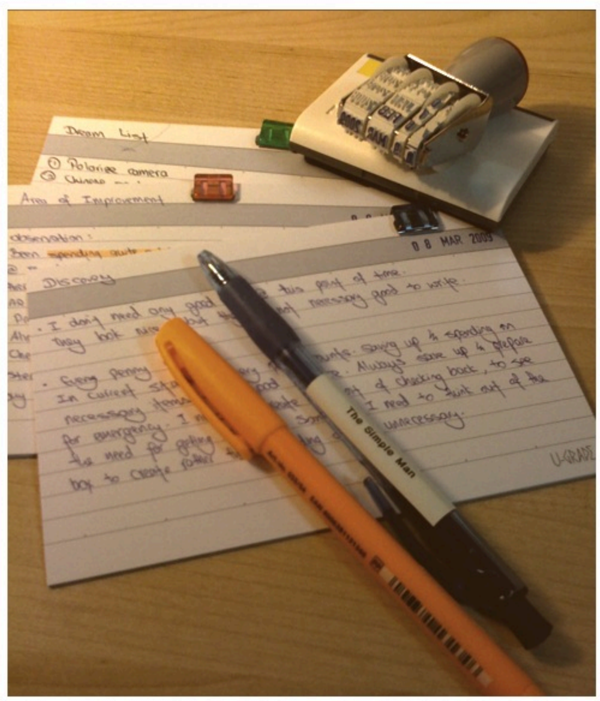
II. Downloading music using peer-to-peer file-sharing programs doesn't hurt record sales.

> A. John Borland, writing for CNET.com in 2004, cited research conducted by professors from Harvard and the University of North Carolina that observed 1.75 million downloads from two file-sharing programs.
>
> 1. They conclude that the rapid increase in music downloading over the past few years does not significantly contribute to declining record sales.
> 2. Their research even suggests that the practice of downloading music may even have a "slight positive effect on the sales of the top albums."
>
> B. A 2010 Government Accountability Office Report also states that sampling "pirated" goods could lead consumers to buy the "legitimate" goods.

Emphasis: The material included in your outline should be engaging and balanced. As you place supporting material into your outline, choose the information that will have the most impact on your audience. Choose information that is proxemic and relevant, meaning that it can be easily related to the audience's lives because it matches their interests or ties into current events or the local area. Remember primacy and recency as discussed earlier and place the most engaging information first or last in a main point depending on what kind of effect you want to have. Also make sure your information is balanced. The outline serves as a useful visual representation of the proportions of your speech/ presentation. You can tell by the amount of space a main point, subpoint, or sub-subpoint takes up in relation to other points of the same level whether or not your speech/ presentation is balanced. If one subpoint is a half a page, but a main point is only a quarter of a page, then you may want to consider making the subpoint a main point. Each part of your speech doesn't have to be equal. The first or last point may be more substantial than a middle point if you are following primacy or recency, but overall the speech should be relatively balanced.

THE SPEAKING OUTLINE

The formal outline is a full-sentence outline that helps as you prepare for your speech, and the **speaking outline** is a keyword and phrase outline that helps you deliver your speech. While the formal outline is important to ensure that your content is coherent and your ideas are balanced and expressed clearly, the speaking outline helps you get that information out to the audience. Make sure you budget time in your speech preparation to work on the speaking outline. Skimping on the speaking outline will show in your delivery.



Using note cards for your speaking outline will help you be able to move around and gesture more freely than using full sheets of paper. Justin See (coming back) – My Pile of Index Card – CC BY 2.0.

You may convert your formal outline into a speaking outline using a computer program — by resaving the file and then reformatting the text so it's more conducive to referencing while actually speaking to an audience. You may also choose, or be asked to, create a speaking outline on note cards. Note cards are a good option when you want to have more freedom to gesture or know you won't have a lectern on which to place notes printed on full sheets of paper. In either case, this entails converting the full-sentence outline to a keyword or key-phrase outline.

Speakers will need to find a balance between having too much or too little content on their speaking outlines. You want to have enough information to prevent fluency hiccups as you stop to mentally retrieve information, but you don't want to have so much information that you read your speech, which lessens your eye contact and engagement with the audience. Budgeting sufficient time to work on your speaking outline will allow you to practice your speech with different amounts of notes to find what works best for you. Since the introduction and conclusion are so important, it may be useful to include notes to ensure that you remember to accomplish all the objectives of each.

Aside from including important content on your speaking outline, you may want to include speaking cues. Speaking cues are reminders designed to help your delivery. You may write "(PAUSE)" before and after your preview statement to help you remember that important nonverbal signpost, or "(MAKE EYE CONTACT)" as a reminder not to read unnecessarily from your cards.

WRITING FOR SPEAKING

As you compose your outlines, write in a natural tone that is appropriate for the expectations of the occasion. Since we naturally speak with contractions, write them into your formal and speaking outlines. You should begin to read your speech aloud as you are writing the formal outline. As you read each section aloud, take note of places where you had difficulty saying a word or phrase or had a fluency hiccup, then go back to those places and edit them to make them easier for you to say. This will make you more comfortable with the words in front of you while you are speaking, which will improve your verbal and nonverbal delivery.

Tips for Note Cards

1. The 4 × 6 inch index cards provide more space and are easier to hold and move than 3.5 × 5 inch cards.
2. Find a balance between having so much information on your cards that you are tempted to read from them and so little information that you have fluency hiccups and verbal fillers while trying to remember what to say.
3. Use bullet points on the left-hand side rather than writing in paragraph form, so your eye can easily catch where you need to pick back up after you've made eye contact with the audience. Skipping a line between bullet points may also help.
4. Include all parts of the introduction/conclusion and signposts for backup.
5. Include key supporting material and wording for verbal citations.
6. Write only on the front of your cards.
7. Do not have a sentence that carries over from one card to the next (can lead to fluency hiccups).
8. If you have difficult-to-read handwriting, you may type your speech and tape or glue it to your cards. Use a font that's large enough for you to see and be neat with the glue or tape so your cards don't get stuck together.
9. Include cues that will help with your delivery. Highlight transitions, verbal citations, or other important information. Include reminders to pause, slow down, breathe, or make eye contact.

10. Your cards should be an extension of your body, not something to play with. Don't wiggle, wring, flip through, or slap your note cards.

Key Takeaways

- The formal outline is a full-sentence outline that helps you prepare for your speech/presentation and includes the introduction and conclusion, the main content of the body, citation information written into the sentences of the outline, and a references page.
- The principles of outlining include consistency, unity, coherence, and emphasis.
- Coordinate points in an outline are on the same level of importance in relation to the thesis of the speech or the central idea of a main point. Subordinate points provide evidence for a main idea or thesis.
- The speaking outline is a keyword and phrase outline that helps you deliver your speech and can include speaking cues like "pause," "make eye contact," and so on.
- Write your speech in a manner conducive to speaking. Use contractions, familiar words, and phrases that are easy for you to articulate. Reading your speech aloud as you write it can help you identify places that may need revision to help you more effectively deliver your speech.

Exercises

1. What are some practical uses for outlining outside of this class? Which of the principles of outlining do you think would be most important in the workplace and why?
2. Identify which pieces of information you may use in your speech are coordinate with each other and subordinate.
3. Read aloud what you've written of your speech/ presentation and identify places that can be reworded to make it easier for you to deliver.

18.5: MANAGING PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss common sources of public speaking anxiety.
2. Identify strategies for addressing public speaking anxiety.
3. Employ strategies for addressing public speaking anxiety.

If you feel fear, anxiety, or discomfort when confronted with the task of speaking in front of an audience, you are not alone. Polls consistently show that public speaking is among people's top fears (Bodie, 2010). Yet, since we all have to engage in some form of public speaking, this is a fear that many people must face regularly. Effectively managing speaking anxiety has many positive effects on your speech. One major area that can improve with less anxiety is delivery. Although speaking anxiety is natural and normal, it can interfere with verbal and nonverbal delivery and thus make a speech less effective. In this chapter, we explore some causes of speaking anxiety, ways to address it, and best practices of vocal and physical delivery.

SOURCES OF SPEAKING ANXIETY

Decades of research conducted by communication scholars shows that **communication apprehension** (towards multiple forms of communication, not just public speaking) is common among college students — in fact, about seventy percent of students report suffering from that (Priem & Solomon, 2009).

The root of public speaking anxiety is the fight or flight instinct that is triggered when we face a fear. While we can't completely eliminate anxiety, we can change how we cognitively process it. Practical Cures – Anxiety – CC BY 2.0.

Public speaking anxiety is a type of CA that produces physiological, cognitive, and behavioral reactions in people when faced with a real or imagined presentation (Bodie, 2010). Physiological responses to public speaking anxiety include increased heart rate, flushing of the skin or face, and sweaty palms — the result of natural chemical processes in the human body. The fight or flight instinct helped early humans survive threatening situations: when faced with a tiger, for instance, the body released adrenaline, cortisol, and other hormones that increased heart rate and blood pressure to get more energy to the brain, organs, and muscles in order to respond to the threat. Our physiology hasn't caught up with our new ways of life. Our body doesn't distinguish between the causes of stressful situations, so facing an audience may release the same hormones as facing a wild beast.

Cognitive reactions to public speaking anxiety often include intrusive thoughts that can increase anxiety: "People are judging me," "I'm not going to do well," and "I'm going to forget what to say." These thoughts are reactions to the physiological changes in the body but also bring in the social/public aspect of public speaking: speakers fear being negatively judged or evaluated because of their anxiety. Such thoughts may lead speakers to stop and return to their seat or leave the classroom. Anticipating these reactions can also lead to avoidance behavior, where people intentionally avoid situations where they will have to speak in public.

ADDRESSING PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY

While we can't stop the innate physiological reactions related to anxiety from occurring, we do have some control over how we cognitively process them and the behaviors that result. Research on public speaking anxiety has focused on three key ways to address this common issue: systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, and skills training (Bodie, 2010). In addition, it is important to address the physical manifestations of speaking anxiety.

SYSTEMATIC DESENSITIZATION

S**ystematic desensitization** refers to the fact that we become less anxious about something when we are exposed to it more often (Bodie, 2010). The novelty and uncertainty of public speaking causes anxiety in many people. Becoming more familiar with public speaking by doing it more often can logically reduce the novelty and uncertainty of it.

Systematic desensitization can result from imagined or real exposure to anxiety-inducing scenarios. In some cases, an instructor leads a person through a series of relaxation techniques. Once relaxed, the person is asked to imagine a series of scenarios, including speech/ presentation preparation and delivery. This is something you could also try to do on your own. Imagine yourself going through the process of preparing and practicing a speech/ presentation, then delivering it, and then returning to your seat, which concludes the scenario. Aside from this imagined exposure to speaking situations, taking a communication course like this one is a great way to directly engage in systematic desensitization. Most students report that they have less speaking anxiety at the end of a semester than when they started, which is at least partially due to the fact they were forced to engage with speaking more than they would have done if they weren't taking classes and didn't have to deliver a presentation at any point.

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

Thinking of public speaking as a conversation with an audience rather than a performance for an audience can help reduce speaking anxiety. The Open University – Speech – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Cognitive restructuring entails changing the way we think about something. A first step in restructuring how we deal with public speaking anxiety is to cognitively process through our fears to realize that many of the thoughts associated with public speaking anxiety are irrational (Allen, Hunter & Donohue, 2009). For example, people report a fear of public speaking over a fear of snakes, heights, financial ruin, or even death. It's irrational to think that the consequences of giving a speech in public are more dire than getting bitten by a rattlesnake, falling off a building, or dying. People fear being evaluated negatively, but most audiences in fact overlook or do not even notice many errors that we, as speakers, may dwell on. Once we realize that the potential negative consequences of giving a speech are not as dire as we think they are, we can move on to other cognitive restructuring strategies.

Communication-orientation modification therapy (COM therapy) is a type of cognitive restructuring that encourages people to think of public speaking as a conversation rather than a performance (Motley, 2009). Many people have a performance-based view of public speaking. This can easily be seen in the language that some students use to discuss public speaking. They say that they "rehearse" their speech/presentation, deal with "stage fright," then "perform" in front of an audience. There is, however, no stage at the front of our classroom — or in most workplaces. To move away from a performance orientation, we can reword the previous statements to say that we "practice" speeches/presentations, deal with "public speaking anxiety," then "deliver" speeches/presentations from the front of the room. Viewing public speaking as a conversation also helps with confidence. After all, you obviously have some conversation skills, or you wouldn't have made it to college. We engage in conversations every day. We don't have to write everything we are going to say on a note card, we don't usually get nervous or anxious in regular conversations, and we are usually successful when we try. Thinking of public speaking as a type of conversation helps you realize that you already have accumulated experiences and skills that you can draw from, so you aren't starting from scratch.

Last, **positive visualization** is another way to engage in cognitive restructuring. Speaking anxiety often leads people to view public speaking negatively. They are more likely to judge a speech they gave negatively, even if it was good. They are also likely to set up negative self-fulfilling prophecies that might hinder their performance in future speeches. To effectively use positive visualization, it's best to engage first in some relaxation exercises such as deep breathing or stretching, which we will discuss more later, and then play through vivid images in your mind of giving a successful speech. This should be done a few times before giving the actual speech. Students sometimes question the power of positive visualization, thinking that it sounds corny, but people such as Olympic athletes do it all the time. Try it to see if it works for you.

SKILLS TRAINING

Skills training is a strategy for managing public speaking anxiety that focuses on learning skills that will improve specific speaking behaviors. These skills may relate to any part of the speech-making process, including topic selection, research and organization, delivery, and self-evaluation. Skills training, like systematic desensitization, makes the public speaking process more familiar, which lessens uncertainty. In addition, targeting specific areas and then improving on them builds more confidence, which can in turn lead to more improvement. Feedback is important to initiate and maintain this positive cycle of improvement. You can use the constructive criticism that you get from your instructor and peers in this class to target specific areas of improvement. Self-evaluation is also an important part of skills training. Make sure to evaluate yourself within the context of your assignment or job and the expectations for the speech/ presentation. Don't get sidetracked by a small delivery error if the expectations for content far outweigh the expectations for delivery. Combine your self-evaluation with the feedback from your instructor, boss, and/or peers to set specific and measurable goals and then assess whether or not you meet them in subsequent experiences. Once you achieve a goal, mark it off your list and use it as a confidence booster. If you don't achieve a goal, figure out why and adjust your strategies to meet it in the future.

PHYSICAL RELAXATION EXERCISES

Suggestions for managing speaking anxiety typically address its cognitive and behavioral components, while the physical components are left unattended. As we learned earlier, we can't block these natural and instinctual responses. We can, however, engage in **physical relaxation exercises** to counteract the general physical signs of anxiety caused by cortisol and adrenaline release, which include increased heart rate, trembling, flushing, high blood pressure, and speech disfluency.

Discretely stretching your wrists and calf muscles is a good way to relieve anxiety and get your energy flowing while waiting to speak. Public Domain Pictures – public domain.

Some **breathing and stretching** exercises release endorphins, which are your body's natural antidote to stress hormones. Deep breathing is a proven way to release endorphins. It also provides a general sense of relaxation and can be done discretely, even while waiting to speak. In order to get the benefits of deep breathing, you must breathe into your diaphragm. The diaphragm is the muscle below your lungs that helps you breathe and stand up straight, which makes it a good muscle for a speaker to exercise. To start, breathe in slowly through your nose, filling the bottom parts of your lungs up with air. Hold the breath for three to five full seconds and then let it out slowly through your mouth. After doing this a few times, many students report that they can actually feel a flooding of endorphins, which creates a brief "light-headed" feeling. Once you have practiced and are comfortable with the technique, you can do this before you start your speech/ presentation, and no one sitting around you will even notice. You might also want to try this technique during other stressful situations. Deep breathing before dealing with an angry customer can help you relax and focus.

Stretching is another way to quickly and effectively release endorphins. Very old exercise traditions like yoga, tai chi, and Pilates teach the idea that stretching is a key component of having a healthy mind and spirit. Simple and discrete stretches can energize us and makeus feel more balanced and relaxed. Our blood and our energy/ stress have a tendency to pool in our legs, especially while sitting. The following stretch can help manage the physical manifestations of anxiety while waiting to speak. Start with both feet flat on the floor. Raise your heels off the floor and flex and release your calf muscles. You can flex and release your calves once before putting your heels back down and repeating, or you can flex a few times on each repetition. Doing this three to five times should sufficiently get your blood and energy moving around. Stretching your wrists can also help move energy around in your upper body, since our huge amounts of typing and using other electronic devices put a lot of stress on this intersection of muscles, tendons, and bones. Point one hand up at the wrist joint, like you're waving at someone. Then use your other hand to pull, gently, the hand that's pointing up back toward your elbow. Stop pulling once you feel some tension. Hold the hand there for a few seconds and release. Then point the hand down at the wrist joint like you're pointing at something on the floor, and use the other hand to push the hand back toward your elbow. Again, stop pushing when you feel the tension, hold the stretch for a few seconds, and release. You can often do this stretch discretely as well while waiting to speak.

VOCAL WARM-UP EXERCISES

Vocal warm-up exercises are a good way to warm up your face and mouth muscles, which can help prevent some of the fluency issues that occur when speaking. Newscasters, singers, and other professional speakers use vocal warm-ups. Below you can see a list of warm-ups with specific words and exercises meant for different muscles and different aspects of your voice. After going through just a few, you should be able to feel the blood circulating in your face muscles more. It's a surprisingly good workout! Such exercises can be difficult to do if you are not in a private space before your speech/presentation, but doing them at home before practicing your speech/presentation can still prove helpful.

Sample Vocal Warm-Ups

- Purse your lips together and make a motorboat sound. Hold it for ten seconds and repeat. "BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB."
- Clench your teeth and say, "N, N, N, N," to stretch your cheek muscles.
- Say "Mum" five times, and open your mouth and eyes wide each time you say it.
- Say "Puh" five times, making sure to use your diaphragm to enunciate the h.
- Say "Red Rover" ten times, overenunciating each r.
- Say "Wilbur" ten times, overenunciating the w and r.
- Say "Bumblebee" ten times, enunciating each b.
- Say "Red letter, yellow letter" five times, making sure to distinctly pronounce each word.
- Say "Selfish shellfish" five times, making sure to distinctly pronounce each word.
- Say "Unique New York" five times, enunciating the q and k.

CHECKLIST: REDUCING SPEAKING ANXIETY

1. You are not alone. Public speaking anxiety is common, so don't ignore it—confront it.
2. Audiences are forgiving and understanding.
3. It always feels worse than it looks.
4. Take deep breaths. That releases endorphins, which naturally fight the adrenaline that causes anxiety.
5. Look the part. Dress professionally to enhance confidence.
6. Channel your nervousness into positive energy and motivation.
7. Start your outline and research early. Better information = higher confidence.
8. Practice and get feedback from a trusted colleague.
9. Visualize success through positive thinking.
10. Practice as much as possible.

SPOTLIGHT: "GETTING CRITICAL"

How Much Emphasis Should We Place on Delivery?

Before you read the rest of the chapter, take some time to think about the balance between the value of content and delivery in a speech/presentation. We know it's important to have solid content and to have an engaging and smooth delivery to convey that content, but how should each category be weighted and evaluated? Most people who have made it to college can put the time and effort into following assignment guidelines to put together a well-researched and well-organized speech/presentation. But some people are naturally better at delivering speeches than others. Some people are more extroverted, experience less public speaking anxiety, and are naturally more charismatic than others. Sometimes a person's delivery and charisma might distract an audience away from critically evaluating the content of their speech. Charismatic and well-liked celebrities and athletes, for example, often endorse products and sell things to the public. We may follow their advice because we like them, instead of basing our choice on their facts or content. In today's celebrity culture, the bling or packaging is sometimes more valued than the contents. This leads us to some questions that might help us unpack the sometimes tricky relationship between content and delivery.

Self-reflection and critical thinking questions:

1. Do you think worries about content or delivery contribute more to speaking anxiety? Explain your choice.
2. How should someone be evaluated who works hard to research, organize, and write a speech but doesn't take the time to practice to ensure a good delivery? What if that person practices but still offers a poor delivery?
3. How should we evaluate a speaker who delivers an engaging speech that gets the audience laughing and earns a big round of applause but does not verbally cite sources or present well-organized ideas?
4. Is it ethical for speakers to use their natural charisma or speaking abilities to win over an audience rather than relying on the merit and strength of their speech content? In what speaking situations would this be more acceptable? Less acceptable?

Key Takeaways

- Getting integrated: Public speaking anxiety is a form of communication apprehension (CA) that is commonly experienced by many people and can be effectively managed using a variety of strategies. While we most often think of public speaking anxiety as an issue in the classroom and workplace, it can affect communication in personal and civic contexts as well.

- Systematic desensitization helps lessen public speaking anxiety through repeated exposure to real or imagined public speaking scenarios.
- Cognitive restructuring addresses public speaking by replacing negative thoughts with more positive thoughts, and COM therapy can help us view public speaking as a conversation rather than a performance.
- Skills training allows us to focus on improving specific skills related to public speaking, which can increase confidence and lead to further skill development.
- Physical relaxation exercises like deep breathing and stretching allow us to voluntarily use our bodies to address involuntary bodily reactions to anxiety.

Exercises

1. Test your speaking anxiety using McCroskey's "Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety" (PRPSA). Follow the instructions to determine your score. Do you agree with the result? Why/ why not?
2. Of the strategies for managing public speaking anxiety listed in the chapter (systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, skills training, physical relaxation exercises), which do you think would be most useful for you and why?
3. When you take a communication course like this one, you are automatically engaging in some skills training. What are some public speaking skills that you are already good at? What are some skills that you should work on? Write out three public speaking goals you would like to accomplish through your upcoming presentation.

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18.6: DELIVERY METHODS AND PRACTICE SESSIONS

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the four methods of speech delivery.
2. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each delivery method.
3. Discuss strategies for making speech practice sessions more effective.

Making informed decisions about delivery can boost your confidence and manage speaking anxiety. In this section, we will learn some strengths and weaknesses of various delivery methods and how to make the most of your practice sessions.

DELIVERY METHODS

While it may be acceptable to speak from memory in some situations, lengthy notes may be required in others. The four most common delivery methods are impromptu, manuscript, memorized, and extemporaneous.

IMPROMPTU DELIVERY

When using **impromptu delivery**, a speaker has little to no time to prepare for a speech. This means there is little time for research, audience analysis, organizing, and practice. For this reason, impromptu speaking often evokes higher degrees of speaking anxiety than other delivery types. Although impromptu speaking arouses anxiety, it is also a good way to build public speaking skills. Using some of the exercises for managing speaking anxiety that were discussed earlier in this chapter can help a speaker better manage the challenges of impromptu speaking. Only skilled public speakers with much experience are usually able to “pull off” an impromptu delivery without looking unprepared. Otherwise, a speaker who is very familiar with the subject matter can sometimes be a competent impromptu speaker (expertise can compensate for the lack of research and organizing time).

When speaking impromptu, be brief, stick to what you know, and avoid rambling. Quickly organize your thoughts into an introduction, body, and conclusion. Try to determine three key ideas that will serve as the basis of your main points.

Most of our day-to-day interactions involve impromptu speaking, but in what situations would impromptu speaking be required at work? If you participate in a meeting as the representative of the public relations department, a colleague may ask you to say a few words about a recent news story involving a public relations misstep of a competing company. In this case, you are expected to speak on the spot because of your expertise. A competent communicator should anticipate instances like this and be prepared. If, at any point, you are asked to comment on something entirely unfamiliar to you, do not pretend to know something you don't, as that may come back to hurt you later. You can usually mention that you do not have the necessary background information at that time but will follow up later with your comments.

Salespeople are generally good at impromptu speaking. They obviously have sales training and have built up a repertoire of adjectives and sayings that entice audiences to buy. Their ability to remain animated and fluent in their delivery with little time to prepare comes from much experience. Politicians, lawyers, teachers, journalists, and spokespeople also regularly engage in impromptu speaking.

Strengths of Impromptu Delivery

- Content and delivery are spontaneous, which can make the speech more engaging (if a speaker's anxiety is under control).
- It enhances public speaking skills because speakers have to "think on their feet."

Weaknesses of Impromptu Delivery

- It is typically the most anxiety-inducing delivery method, since speakers do not have time to prepare or practice the speech.
- Speakers may get off topic or ramble if they did not set up some structure to guide them.
- Speakers may be tempted to overstate or mislead an audience about the extent of their knowledge or expertise if asked to speak about something they aren't familiar with.

MANUSCRIPT DELIVERY

Speaking from a written or printed document that contains the entirety of a speech/ presentation is known as **manuscript delivery**. Manuscript delivery can be the best choice when a speech/ presentation has complicated information and/or the contents are going to be quoted or published. Despite the fact that most novice speakers are not going to find themselves in that situation, many are drawn to this delivery method because of the security they feel with having everything they are going to say in front of them. Unfortunately, the security of having every word you want to say at your disposal translates to a poorly delivered and unengaging speech/ presentation. Even with every word written out, speakers can still have fluency hiccups and verbal fillers as they lose their place in the manuscript or get tripped up over their words. The alternative, of course, is that a speaker reads the manuscript the whole time, effectively cutting himself or herself off from the audience. One way to make a manuscript delivery more engaging is through the use of a teleprompter. Almost all politicians who give televised addresses use teleprompters (see Figure 18.6.1 "President Obama's Teleprompter System").

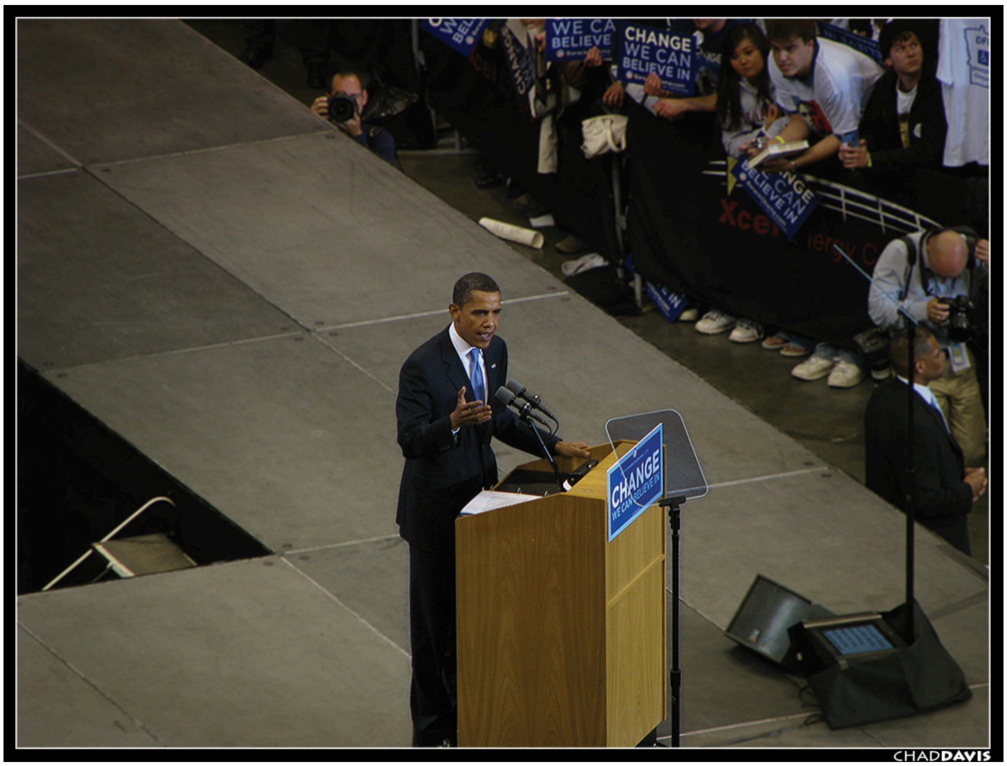

Figure 18.6.1 President Obama's Teleprompter System. Newscasters and politicians frequently use teleprompters so they can use manuscript delivery but still engage with the audience. [Wikimedia Commons]– CC BY-SA 2.0.

You may not even notice the presence of teleprompters, as the technology has improved to give the illusion that a speaker is engaged with the audience and delivering a speech from memory. The Plexiglas sheets on poles that surround the president during the inauguration and State of the Union addresses are cleverly hidden teleprompters. Even these useful devices can fail. A quick search for "teleprompter fail" on YouTube will yield many examples of politicians and newscasters who probably wish they had a paper backup of their speech. Since most of us will likely not have opportunities to speak using a teleprompter, great care should be taken to ensure that the delivery is effective. To make the delivery seem more natural, print the speech out in a larger-than-typical font, triple-space between lines so you can easily find your place, use heavier-than-normal paper so it's easy to pick up and turn the pages as needed, and use a portfolio so you can carry the manuscript securely. (This is recommended for, say, conference presentations, if you have to speak for 20 minutes or more — not for short presentations in college or at work.)

Strengths of Manuscript Delivery

- The speaker can include precise or complex information such as statistics or quotes.
- The entire content of the speech is available for reference during the delivery.
- The speech will be consistent in terms of content and time length, which is beneficial if a speech will be delivered multiple times.

Weaknesses of Manuscript Delivery

- Engagement with the audience is challenging, because the speaker must constantly reference the manuscript (unless a teleprompter is used).
- Speakers are unable to adapt information to audience reactions, since they are confined to the content of the manuscript.
- Speakers may be tempted to read the entire time because they didn't practice enough or because they get nervous.
- Speakers who are able to make eye contact with the audience may still sound like they are reading rather than presenting — unless they employ proper vocal variety, pacing, and pauses.

MEMORIZED DELIVERY

Completely memorizing a speech and delivering it without notes is known as **memorized delivery**. Some students attempt to memorize their speech because they think it will make them feel more confident to not have to look at their notes; however, when their anxiety level spikes at the beginning of their speech and their mind goes blank for a minute, many admit they should have chosen a different delivery method. When using any of the other delivery methods, speakers still need to rely on their memory. An impromptu speaker must recall facts or experiences related to their topic, and speakers using a manuscript have some of their content memorized so they do not read their entire time and miss the opportunity for eye contact. The problem with memorized delivery overall is that it puts too much responsibility on our memory, which we all know from experience is fallible.

When memorizing, most people use rote memorization techniques, which entail reading and then reciting something over and over until it is committed to memory. One major downfall of this technique is its effect on speaking rate. When we memorize this way, we end up going over the early parts of a speech many more times than the later parts. As you memorize one sentence, you add on another, and so on. By the time you're adding on later parts of your speech, you are likely speed talking through the earlier parts because you know them by heart. To prevent bad habits from practice from hurting our delivery, we should practice speeches/ presentations the exact way we want to deliver them to our audience. Fast-paced speaking during practice will likely make its way into the actual delivery. Delivery also suffers when speaking from memory if the speaker sounds like he/she is flatly "reciting." Rote memorization tasks that many of us had to do in school have left their mark on our memorized delivery.

Memorized delivery is a good option for people like tour guides, who need to move while speaking and be interactive with an audience. John Lambert Pearson – "listening" to adam – CC BY 2.0.

Memorized delivery may be a good idea only if the speech/presentation is short (only one to two minutes), is personal (like a brief toast), or will be repeated numerous times (like a tour guide's spiel) — and even in these cases, it may be perfectly fine to have notes. Many students think that their anxiety and/or delivery challenges will be fixed if they just memorize their speech only to find that they are more anxious and have more problems.

Strengths of Memorized Delivery

- Speakers can include precise or complex information such as statistics or quotes (if they have put the time into memorization).
- Speakers can directly engage with the audience without worrying about referencing notes.
- The speech will be consistent in terms of content and time-length, which is beneficial if a speech will be delivered multiple times.

Weaknesses of Memorized Delivery

- It is the most time-consuming in terms of preparation.
- Speakers are unable to adapt information to audience reactions, since they are confined to the content they memorized.
- If speakers lose their place in the speech, they will likely have to start over.
- Since everything is preplanned, it is difficult to make the speech content and delivery seem genuine (i.e.,

humor may seem “canned” or corny).
- The speech can sound like a recitation if the proper vocal variety and pacing are not used.

EXTEMPORANEOUS DELIVERY

Extemporaneous delivery entails memorizing the overall structure and main points of a speech/presentation and then speaking from keyword/key-phrase notes. This delivery mode brings together many of the strengths of the previous three methods. Since you internalize and memorize only the main structure, you don’t have to worry as much about the content and delivery seeming stale. Extemporaneous delivery brings in some of the spontaneity of impromptu delivery but still allows a speaker to carefully plan the overall structure and incorporate supporting materials that include key facts, quotations, and paraphrased information. You can also more freely adapt your speech/presentation to fit various audiences and occasions, since every word and sentence isn’t predetermined. This can be especially beneficial when a speech/presentation will be delivered multiple times. Your professors’ lectures are good examples of extemporaneous delivery. Even though they may have presented the basic content of each lesson dozens of times over the years, each presentation has been different, because they vary the examples and amount of elaboration added to the (memorized) core content. For instance, while COMM 6019 is offered in most graduate certificates at Fanshawe, professors teaching two or more sections in different programs would likely change the examples they use to illustrate certain points, so they can make the content more relevant for specific groups. They might also change the examples they use from one semester to the next, based on relevant local and global events and news coverage.

When preparing a speech/ presentation that you will deliver extemporaneously, start practicing early and then continue to practice as you revise your content. Investing quality time and effort into the outlining process helps with extemporaneous delivery. As you put together your outline, you are already doing the work of internalizing the key structure of your speech. Read parts of your outline aloud as you draft them to help ensure they are written in a way that makes sense and is easy for you to deliver. By the time you complete the formal, full-sentence outline, you should have already internalized much of the key information in your speech. Now, you can begin practicing with the full outline. As you become more comfortable with the content of your full outline, start to convert it into your speaking outline. Take out information that you know well and replace it with a keyword or key phrase that prompts your memory. Leave key quotes, facts, and other paraphrased information, including your verbal source citation information, on your delivery outline so you make sure to include it in your delivery. Once you’ve converted your full outline into your speaking outline, practice it a few more times, making sure to take some time between each practice session so you don’t inadvertently start to memorize everything word for word. The final product should be a confident delivery of a well-organized and structured speech/presentation that is conversational and adaptable to various audiences and occasions.

Strengths of Extemporaneous Delivery

- Speech content and delivery appear more spontaneous and natural, making it more conversational, since the speaker is using a keyword/key-phrase outline.
- Speakers can include quotes or complex information on their speaking outline for easy reference.
- Speakers can adapt information and delivery to specific audiences, occasions, and audience reactions, since they are not confined to the content of a manuscript or what they memorized.

Weaknesses of Extemporaneous Delivery

- Since the speech is so adaptable, it can be difficult to ensure the speech will be the exact same length each time.
- It is perhaps not the best option when exact wording is expected.
- Speakers must find a balance between having too much content on their speaking outline, which may cause them to read, and too little content, which may lead to fluency hiccups.

PRACTICING YOUR SPEECH

There are three primary phases to the practice process. In the first phase, you practice as you're working through your ideas and drafting your outline. In the second, you practice for someone and get feedback. In the third, you put the finishing touches on the delivery.

Start practicing early, as you are working through your ideas, by reading sections aloud as you draft them into your working outline. This will help ensure your speech is fluent and sounds good for the audience. Start to envision the audience while you practice and continue to think about them throughout the practicing process. This will minimize anxiety when you actually have them sitting in front of you. Once you have completed your research and finished a draft of your outline, you will have already practiced your speech/ presentation several times as you were putting it together. Now, you can get feedback on the speech/presentation as a whole.

Ask for feedback from a trusted source in the second phase of practicing your speech/ presentation. This will lower your anxiety concerning the moment when you will have to speak in front of a full audience. Choose someone who will give you constructive feedback, not just unconditional praise or criticism. Before you practice for this trusted person, explain the assignment or purpose of the speech/ presentation. Ask for feedback on content and delivery. (Almost anyone is good at evaluating delivery.) Also begin to time your speech/ presentation at this point, so you can determine if it meets any time limits that you have.

You can practice your speech in front of a mirror to gauge your use of facial expressions and gestures. In addition, practice in front of a couple people for feedback. Tschlunder – Mirror – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

You may also want to audio or video record one of your practice sessions. This can be useful because it provides an objective record that you can then compare with the feedback you got from your friend or colleague and to your own evaluation of your delivery.

Most importantly, incorporate the feedback you receive into your speech. Use the feedback to assess whether or not you met your speaking goals. Was your thesis supported? Was your specific purpose met? Did you stay within the time limits set? Based on your answers to these questions, you may need to make some changes to your content or delivery, before you move on to the next phase of practice.

During the third and final phase of practice, you are putting the finishing touches on your speech/presentation. Your practice sessions at this point should create, as much as possible, the conditions in which you will be giving your speech/presentation. You should have your speaking outline completed so you can practice with it. It's important to be familiar with the content on your note cards or speaking outline so you will not need to rely on it so much during the actual delivery. You may also want to practice in the type of clothing you will be wearing on speech day. This can be useful if you are wearing something you don't typically wear—a suit, for example—so you can see how it might affect your posture, gestures, and overall comfort level. If possible,do at least one practice session in the place you will be giving the speech/presentation, especially if it is a room you are not familiar with. Practice with any visual aids or technology you will use so you can be familiar with it and so it does not affect your speech fluency. Continue to time each practice round. If you are too short or too long, you will need to go back and adjust your content some more. Always adjust your content to fit the time limit; do not try to adjust your delivery. Trying to speed talk or stretch things out to make a speech shorter or longer is a mistake that will ultimately hurt your delivery, which will hurt your credibility. The overall purpose of this phase of practicing is to minimize surprises that might throw you off during your delivery in front of your audience.

Some "Dos" and "Don'ts" for Effective Speech Practice Sessions

- Start practicing sections of your speech early, as you draft your outline.
- Practice for someone for feedback.
- Time yourself once a draft of the speech is completed and adjust the speech as needed to conform to time limits.
- Deliver the speech the way you want it to be when you deliver it for your audience

(use the rate, volume, vocal variety, pauses, and emphasis you plan to use on speech day).

- **Don't** practice only in front of a mirror (practicing once in front of a mirror can help you gauge your facial expressions and other aspects of delivery, but that shouldn't be the only way you practice).
- **Don'**t practice only in your head (we have a tendency to go too fast when we practice in our head, and you need to get practice saying the words of your speech to help lessen fluency hiccups).
- **Don't** practice too much. It's best to practice a few times in the days leading up to the speech/presentation date, making sure to leave several hours between practice sessions. Practicing too much can lead you to become bored with your content, which could lead to delivery that sounds like a recitation.

Key Takeaways

- The four methods of delivering a speech are impromptu, manuscript, memorized, and extemporaneous delivery.
- Impromptu delivery evokes higher levels of speaking anxiety because a speaker has little to no time to prepare the speech/ presentation; however, this method can increase public speaking skills for people who enjoy thinking on their feet.
- Manuscript delivery entails speaking from a manuscript that contains a word-for-word transcript of your speech/presentation. This delivery method can be good for speeches/presentations that contain complex information that will be published or quoted but can be challenging because speakers may read all the time, which lessens engagement with the audience.
- Memorized delivery entails speaking from memory. Speakers with a reliable memory will be able to include specific information and engage the audience freely. This method is the most time-consuming option in terms of preparation, and the delivery may come across as a recitation instead of being engaging.
- Extemporaneous delivery entails memorizing the general structure of a speech/ presentation, not every word, and then delivering the speech from a keyword outline. Having the keyword outline allows a speaker to include specific information and references while remaining adaptable to the occasion and audience since every word isn't planned out.
- Practicing your speech/ presentation should occur in three phases. First, practice as you are drafting the outline to help you process through your main ideas. Second, practice for someone and get feedback, and perhaps record your speech/presentation for self-evaluation. Use this feedback to make appropriate changes to your speech. Third, put the finishing touches on the speech/presentation: make needed adjustments to the content to meet time limits, become familiar with your speaking outline, and create the conditions of your speech/presentation day for your final few practice sessions.

Exercises

1. Which delivery methods have you used before? Which did you like the best and why? Which delivery method would you most prefer a speaker to use if you were an audience member and why?
2. Have you ever had any "surprises" come up during a speech/presentation that you could have prevented with more effective practice sessions? If so, explain. If not, list some surprises that good practice sessions could help prevent.
3. Using the suggestions in the chapter, make a timeline for practicing your presentation for our class. Include specific dates and make a list of things you plan to do during each of the three phases of practice.

18.7: VOCAL DELIVERY

Learning Objectives

1. Identify elements of vocal delivery that make a speech more engaging.
2. Identify elements of vocal delivery that make a speech clearer.
3. Discuss the relationship between vocal delivery and speaker credibility.

Vocal delivery includes components of speech delivery that relate to your voice: rate, volume, pitch, articulation, pronunciation, and fluency. Our voice is important to consider when delivering our speech for two main reasons. First, vocal delivery can help us engage and interest the audience. Second, vocal delivery helps ensure that our ideas are communicated clearly.

SPEAKING FOR ENGAGEMENT

We have all had the displeasure of listening to unengaging speakers. Unengaging delivery that doesn't communicate enthusiasm translates into a lack of interest for most audience members, even if the speaker genuinely cares about the topic. Although a speaker can be visually engaging by incorporating movement and gestures, which we will discuss more later, a flat or monotone vocal delivery can be sedating or even annoying. Incorporating vocal variety in terms of rate, volume, and pitch is key to being a successful speaker.

RATE

Rate of speaking refers to how fast/slow your speech is. If you speak too fast, your audience will not be able to absorb the information you present. If you speak too slowly, the audience may lose interest. The key is to vary your rate of speaking in a middle range, staying away from either extreme, in order to keep your audience engaged.

In general, a higher rate of speaking signals that a speaker is enthusiastic about his or her topic — but speaking too fast might prevent your audience from following your argumentation and they might stop listening for that reason. If you find that you are a naturally fast speaker, make sure that you do not "speed talk" through your speech when practicing it. Even if you try to hold back when actually delivering your speech, you may fall back into your practice routine and speak too fast. You can also include reminders to "slow down" on your speaking outline.

Speaking too slowly may lead the audience to infer that the speaker is uninterested, uninformed, or unprepared to present the topic. These negative assumptions, whether they are true or not, are likely to hurt the credibility of the speaker.

VOLUME

Volume refers to how loud or soft your voice is. As with speaking rate, you want to avoid the extremes of being too loud or too soft, but still vary your volume within an acceptable middle range. When speaking in a typically sized classroom or office setting that seats about twenty-five people, using a volume a few steps above a typical conversational volume is usually sufficient. When speaking in larger rooms, you will need to project your voice. You may want to look for nonverbal cues from people in the back rows or corners, like leaning forward or straining to hear, to see if you need to adjust your volume more. Obviously, in some settings, a microphone will be necessary to be heard by the entire audience.

As with rate, audiences use volume to make a variety of judgments about a speaker. Softer speakers are sometimes judged as meek, which may lead to lowered expectations for the speech or less perceived credibility. Loud speakers may be seen as overbearing or annoying, which can lead audience members to disengage from the speaker and message. Be aware of the volume of your voice and, when in doubt, increase your volume a notch, since beginning speakers are more likely to speak too softly rather than too loudly.

Speak a couple steps above your regular volume for speeches/presentations that occur in typically sized classrooms or meeting rooms that seat twenty to forty people. A microphone may be necessary for larger groups or rooms. [Speaker at Podium](#) – CC BY 2.0.

PITCH

Pitch refers to how high or low a speaker's voice is. As with other vocal qualities, there are natural variations among people's vocal pitch. Unlike rate and volume, there are more physiological limitations on the control we have over pitch. For example, men generally have lower-pitched voices than women. Despite these limitations, we all have the capability to intentionally change our pitch across a range large enough to engage an audience. Changing pitch is a good way to communicate enthusiasm and indicate emphasis or closure. In general, our pitch goes up when we are discussing something exciting. Our pitch goes down slightly when we emphasize a serious or important point. Lowering pitch is also an effective way to signal transitions between sections of your speech or the end of your speech, which cues your audience to applaud and avoids an awkward ending.

Of the vocal components of delivery discussed so far, pitch seems to give beginning speakers the most difficulty. There is usually a stark difference between the way students speak before and after a class and the way they speak when they get in front of the class — as if giving a speech temporarily numbs their ability to vary their pitch. Record yourself practicing your speech/presentation to determine if the amount of pitch variety and enthusiasm you think you convey while speaking actually comes through. Speakers often assume that their pitch is more varied and their delivery more enthusiastic than the audience actually perceives it to be.

VOCAL VARIETY

Overall, the lesson to take away from this section on vocal delivery is that variety is key. **Vocal variety** includes changes in your rate, volume, and pitch that can make you look more prepared, seem more credible, and be able to engage your audience better. Employing vocal variety is not something that takes natural ability or advanced skills training. It is something that beginning speakers can start working on immediately and everyone can accomplish. The key is to become aware of how you use your voice when you speak, and the best way to do this is to record yourself. We all use vocal variety naturally without thinking about it during our regular conversations, and many of us think that this tendency will translate over to our speaking voices. This is definitely not the case for most beginning speakers. Unlike in your regular conversations, it will take some awareness and practice to use vocal variety in speeches/presentations, but improving in this area will add to your speaking confidence, which usually translates into better grades and better public speaking skills further on.

SPEAKING FOR CLARITY

In order to be an effective speaker, your audience should be able to understand your message and digest the information you present. Audience members will make assumptions about our competence and credibility based on the way we speak. As with other aspects of speech delivery, many people are not aware that they have habits of speech that interfere with their message clarity. Since public speaking is generally more formal than our conversations, we should be more concerned with the clarity of our speech.

ARTICULATION

Articulation refers to the clarity of sounds and words we produce, and speakers should strive to speak clearly, avoiding ooor articulation. For example, a person may say *dinnt* instead of *didn't*, *gonna* instead of *going to*, *wanna* instead of *want to*, or *hunnerd* instead of *hundred*. Unawareness and laziness are two common challenges to articulation. As with other aspects of our voice, many people are unaware that they regularly have errors in articulation. Recording yourself speaking and then becoming a higher self-monitor are effective ways to improve your articulation. Laziness, on the other hand, requires a little more motivation to address. Some people just get in the habit of not articulating their words well. We all know people who mumble when they speak or slur their words together. This problem tends to be displayed by men more than women — probably because overconfidence is more common among men. Both mumbling and slurring are examples of poor articulation. In more informal settings, this type of speaking may be acceptable, but in formal settings, it will be negatively evaluated, which will hurt a speaker's credibility. Perhaps the promise of being judged more favorably, which may help a person become more successful, is enough to motivate a mumbler to speak more clearly.

When combined with a low volume, poor articulation becomes an even greater problem. Doing vocal warm-ups like the ones listed in Section 18.5 "Managing Public Speaking Anxiety" or tongue twisters can help prime your mouth, lips, and tongue to articulate words more clearly. When you notice that you have trouble articulating a particular word, you can either choose a different word to include in your speech or you can repeat it a few times in a row in the days leading up to your speech to get used to saying it.

PRONUNCIATION

Unlike articulation, which focuses on the clarity of words, **pronunciation** refers to speaking words correctly, including the proper sounds of the letters and the proper emphasis. Mispronouncing words can damage a speaker's credibility, especially when the correct pronunciation of a word is commonly known.

On the other hand, we all commonly run into words that we are unfamiliar with and, therefore, may not know how to pronounce. In that case, we have three options. The first is to look the word up in an online dictionary. Many dictionaries have a speaker icon included, and when you click on it, you can hear the correct pronunciation of a word. Some words have more than one pronunciation, in which case choosing either of the accepted pronunciations is fine. Just remember to consistently use that pronunciation to avoid confusing your audience. If a word doesn't include an audio pronunciation, you can usually find the phonetic spelling of a word, which is the word spelled out the way it sounds. There will occasionally be words that you can't locate in a dictionary. These are typically proper nouns or foreign words. In this case, use the "phone-a-friend" strategy. Call up the people you know who have large vocabularies and ask them. If they know, and you find them credible, you're probably safe to take their suggestions. The third option is to "fake it 'til you make it" and should only be used as a last resort. If you can't find the word in a dictionary and your friends don't know how to pronounce it, it's likely that your audience will also be unfamiliar with the word. In that case, using your knowledge of how things are typically pronounced, decide on a pronunciation that makes sense and confidently use it during your speech. Most people will not question it. In the event that someone does correct you on your pronunciation, thank him or her for correcting you and adjust your pronunciation.

FLUENCY

Fluency refers to the flow of your speaking. To speak with fluency means that your speech flows well and that there are not many interruptions to that flow. There are two main disfluencies, or problems that affect the flow of a speech. **Fluency hiccups** are unintended pauses in a speech that usually result from forgetting what you were saying, being distracted, or losing your place in your speaking notes. Fluency hiccups are not the same as intended pauses, which are useful for adding emphasis or transitioning between parts of a speech. While speakers should try to minimize fluency hiccups, even experienced speakers need to take an unintended pause sometimes to get their bearings or to recover from an unexpected distraction. Fluency hiccups become a problem when they happen regularly enough to detract from the speaker's message.

Verbal fillers are words that speakers use to fill in a gap between what they were saying and what they say next. Common verbal fillers include *um*, *uh*, *ah*, *er*, *you know*, and *like*. The best way to minimize verbal fillers is to become a higher self-monitor and realize that you use them. Many students are surprised when they watch the video of their first speech and realize they said "um" thirty times in three minutes. Gaining that awareness is the first step in eliminating verbal fillers, and students make noticeable progress with this in time. If you do lose your train of thought, having a brief fluency hiccup is better than injecting a verbal filler, because the audience may not even notice the pause or may think it was intentional.

Common Causes of Fluency Hiccups

- **Lack of preparation.** Effective practice sessions are the best way to prevent fluency hiccups.
- **Not writing for speaking.** If you write your speech/ presentation outline/ presentation script the way you have been taught to write papers, you will have fluency hiccups. You must translate the written words into something easier for you to present orally. To do this, read your speech/presentation outline/ presentation script aloud and edit as you write to bring everything closer to spoken language.
- **A poorly prepared speaking outline.** Whether it is on paper or note cards, sloppy writing, unorganized bullet points, or incomplete/insufficient information on a speaking outline leads to fluency hiccups.
- **Distractions.** Audience members and the external environment are unpredictable. Hopefully, audience members will be polite and will silence their phones, avoid talking while the speaker is presenting, and avoid moving excessively. There could also be external noise that comes through a door or window. A speaker can also be distracted by internal noise such as thinking about other things.

SPOTLIGHT: “GETTING PLUGGED IN”

Delivering Presentations Online

As many people and organizations are trying to do more with smaller budgets, and new software becomes available, online presentations are becoming more common. Whether using a Webinar format, a WebEx, Skype, FaceTime, Elluminate Live, or some other application, the live, face-to-face audience is now mediated through a computer screen. Despite this change in format, many of the same basic principles of public speaking apply when speaking to people virtually — yet many business professionals seem to forget the best practices of public speaking when presenting online or don’t get that they apply in both settings. The website TheVirtualPresenter.com offers many tips for presenting online that we’ve covered in this textbook, including be audience focused, have engaging delivery, and use visual aids effectively (Courville, 2012). However speakers need to think about some of these things differently when presenting online.

We have natural ways to engage an audience when presenting face-to-face, but since many online presentations are only one-way in terms of video, speakers have to rely on technology like audience polls, live chat, or options for audience members to virtually raise their hand when they have a question to get feedback while speaking. Also, in some formats, the audience can only see the presenter’s computer desktop or slide show, which pulls attention away from physical delivery and makes vocal delivery and visual aids more important. Extemporaneous delivery and vocal variety are still key when presenting online. Reading from your slides or having a monotone voice will likely not make a favorable impression on your audience. The lesson to take away is that presenting online requires the same skills as presenting in person, so do not let the change in format lead you to make mistakes that will make you a less effective speaker.

Self-reflection and critical thinking questions:

1. Have you ever presented online or been an audience member for an online presentation? If so, describe your experience and compare it to face-to-face speaking.
2. What are some of the key differences between presenting online and presenting in person that a speaker should consider?
3. How might online presentations play into your future career goals? What types of presentations do you think you would give? What could you do to ensure the presentations are effective?

Key Takeaways

- Speakers should use vocal variety, which is changes in rate, volume, and pitch, to make a speech more engaging.
- Speakers should use proper articulation and pronunciation to make their message clear.
- Interruptions to the fluency of a speech, including fluency hiccups and verbal fillers, detract from the speaker's message and can lessen a speaker's credibility.

Exercises

1. Record yourself practicing your presentation for our class. How does it sound in terms of vocal variety? Cite specific examples.
2. Listen to your recorded presentation again. How would you evaluate your articulation and pronunciation? Cite specific examples.
3. Over the course of a day, take note of verbal fillers that you tend to use. List them here so you can be a higher self-monitor and begin to notice and lessen your use of them.

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18.8: PHYSICAL DELIVERY

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the role of facial expressions and eye contact in speech delivery.
2. Explain the role of posture, gestures, and movement in speech delivery.
3. Explain the connection between personal appearance and credibility in speech delivery.
4. Explain the connection between visual aids and speech delivery.

Many speakers are more nervous about physical delivery than vocal delivery, yet most audiences are not as fixated on our physical delivery as we think they are. Knowing this can relieve some anxiety, but we should still carefully plan our physical delivery. We should still practice for physical delivery that enhances our verbal message. Physical delivery involves nonverbal communication through the face and eyes, gestures, and body movements.

PHYSICAL DELIVERY AND THE FACE

We tend to look at people's face while listening to them. Again, this often makes people feel uncomfortable and contributes to their overall speaking anxiety. Many speakers don't like the feeling of having "all eyes" on them, even though having a room full of people avoiding eye contact with you would be much more awkward. Remember, it's a good thing for audience members to look at you, because it means they are paying attention and they are interested. Audiences look toward the face of the speaker for cues about the tone and content of the speech.

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Facial expressions are key for conveying emotions and enthusiasm in a speech. Jeff Wasson – Immutable Law Of The Universe #2 – CC BY 2.0.

Facial expressions enhance delivery when used by a speaker to communicate emotions and demonstrate enthusiasm for the topic. As with vocal variety, we tend to use facial expressions naturally and without conscious effort when engaging in day-to-day conversations, yet many speakers' expressive faces turn "deadpan" when they stand in front of an audience. Some people naturally have more expressive faces than others—think about the actor Jim Carey's ability to contort his face as an example. But we can also consciously control and improve on our facial expressions to be more effective speakers. As with other components of speech/ presentation delivery, becoming a higher self-monitor and increasing your awareness of your typical delivery habits can help you understand, control, and improve your delivery. Although you shouldn't practice your speech only in front of a mirror (you should always practice in front of a trusted colleague, as well), watching yourself in a mirror can help you get an idea of how expressive or unexpressive your face is while speaking. There is some more specific advice about assessing and improving your use of facial expressions in the "Getting Competent" box in this chapter.

Facial expressions help set the emotional tone for a speech, and it is important that your facial expressions stay consistent with your message. In order to set a positive tone before you start speaking, briefly look at the audience and smile. A smile is a simple but powerful facial expression that can communicate friendliness, openness, and confidence. Facial expressions communicate a range of emotions and are also associated with various moods or personality traits. For example, combinations of facial expressions can communicate that a speaker is tired, excited, angry, confused, frustrated, sad, confident, smug, shy, or bored, among other things. Even if you aren't bored, for example, a slack face with little animation may lead an audience to think that you are bored with your own speech, which isn't likely to motivate them to be interested. So make sure your facial expressions are communicating an emotion, mood, or personality trait that you think your audience will view favorably. Also make sure your facial expressions match with the content of your speech. When delivering something lighthearted or humorous, a smile, bright eyes, and slightly raised eyebrows will nonverbally enhance your verbal message. When delivering something serious or somber, a furrowed brow, a tighter mouth, and even a slight head nod can enhance that message. If your facial expressions and speech content are not consistent, your audience could become confused by the conflicting messages and even question your honesty and credibility.

SPOTLIGHT: “GETTING COMPETENT”

Improving Facial Expressions

The best way to get an idea of the facial expressions you use while speaking is to record your speech using a computer’s webcam, much like you would look at and talk to the computer when using Skype or another video-chat program. The first time you try this, minimize the video window once you’ve started recording so you don’t get distracted by watching yourself. Once you’ve recorded the video, watch the playback and take notes on your facial expressions.

Self-reflection and critical thinking questions:

1. Did anything surprise you? Were you as expressive as you thought you were?
2. What facial expressions did you use?
3. Where did your facial expressions match with the content of your speech/presentation? Where did your facial expressions not match with the content?
4. Where could you include more facial expressions to enhance your content and/or delivery?

You can also have a friend watch the video and give you feedback on your facial expressions to see if your assessments match. Once you’ve assessed your video, re-record your speech/presentation and try to improve your facial expressions and delivery. Revisit the previous questions to see if you improved.

EYE CONTACT

Eye contact is an important element of nonverbal communication in all communication settings. The power of eye contact can make people feel welcome/unwelcome, comfortable/uncomfortable, listened to/ignored, and so on. Eye contact can also be used to establish credibility and hold your audience’s attention. We often interpret a lack of eye contact to mean that someone is not credible or not competent; as a public speaker, you don’t want your audience thinking either of those things. Eye contact holds attention because an audience member who knows the speaker is making regular eye contact will want to reciprocate that eye contact. This will also help your audience remember the content of your speech better, because acting like we're paying attention actually leads us to pay attention and better retain information.

Eye contact is an aspect of delivery that beginning speakers can attend to and make noticeable progress on early in their speech training. Ideally, during speeches/ presentations, try to make eye contact with your audience for at least 75 percent of the duration of your presentation. This may seem intimidating, but with practice and deliberation, it is an achievable goal.

Norms for eye contact vary among cultures. It may be difficult for speakers from countries that have higher power distances or are more collectivistic to get used to the idea of making direct and sustained eye contact during a speech/ presentation. In these cases, it is important for speakers to challenge themselves to integrate some of the host culture's expectations and for the audience to be accommodating and understanding of cultural differences.

Tips for Having Effective Eye Contact

1. Once in front of the audience, establish eye contact before you speak.
2. Make slow and deliberate eye contact, sweeping through the whole audience from left to right.
3. Despite what high school speech teachers or others might have told you, do not look over the audience's heads, at the back wall, or the clock. Unless you are in a huge auditorium, it will just look to the audience like you are looking over their heads.
4. Do not make eye contact only with one or a few people whom you know or who look friendly. Also, avoid making eye contact only with your instructor or boss. Even if it's comforting for you as the speaker, it is usually awkward for audience members.
5. Try to memorize your opening and closing lines so you can make full eye contact with the audience. This will strengthen the opening and closing of your speech and help you make a connection with the audience.

PHYSICAL DELIVERY AND THE BODY

Have you ever gotten dizzy as an audience member because the speaker paced back and forth? Anxiety can lead us to do some strange things with our bodies, like pacing, that we don't normally do, so it's important to consider the important role that your body plays during your speech. Extra movements caused by anxiety are called **nonverbal adaptors**, and most of them manifest as distracting movements or gestures. These nonverbal adaptors, like tapping a foot, wringing hands, playing with a paper clip, twirling hair, jingling change in a pocket, scratching, and many more, can detract from a speaker's message and credibility. Conversely, a confident posture and purposeful gestures and movement can enhance both.

POSTURE

Government and military leaders use an erect posture to communicate confidence and professionalism during public appearances. Wikimedia Commons – public domain.

Posture is the position we assume with our bodies, either intentionally or out of habit. Although people, especially young women, used to be trained in posture, often by having them walk around with books stacked on their heads, you should use a posture that is appropriate for the occasion while still positioning yourself in a way that feels natural. In a formal speaking situation, it's important to have an erect posture that communicates professionalism and credibility. However, a military posture of standing at attention may feel and look unnatural in a typical school or business speech. In informal settings, it may be appropriate to lean on a table or lectern, or even sit among your audience members. Head position is also part of posture. In most speaking situations, it is best to keep your head up, facing your audience. A droopy head doesn't communicate confidence. An inappropriate posture can hurt your credibility.

GESTURES

Gestures include arm and hand movements. We all go through a process of internalizing our native culture from childhood. An obvious part of this process is becoming fluent in a language. Perhaps less obvious is the fact that we also become fluent in nonverbal communication, gestures in particular. We all use hand gestures while we speak, but we didn't take a class in matching verbal communication with the appropriate gestures; we just internalized these norms over time based on observation and put them into practice. By this point in your life, you have a whole vocabulary of hand movements and gestures that spontaneously come out while you're speaking. Some of these gestures are emphatic and some are descriptive (Koch, 2007, p. 105).

Emphatic gestures are the most common hand gestures we use, and they function to emphasize our verbal communication and often relate to the emotions we verbally communicate. Pointing with one finger or all the fingers straight out is an emphatic gesture. We can even bounce that gesture up and down to provide more emphasis. Moving the hand in a circular motion in front of our chest with the fingers spread apart is a common emphatic gesture that shows excitement and often accompanies an increased rate of verbal speaking. We make this gesture more emphatic by using both hands. **Descriptive gestures** function to illustrate or refer to objects rather than emotions. We use descriptive gestures to indicate numbers by counting with our fingers, or we may indicate the size, shape, or speed of something. Our hands and arms are often the most reliable and easy-to-use visual aids a speaker can have.

While it can be beneficial to plan a key gesture or two in advance, it is generally best to gesture spontaneously in a speech/presentation, just as you would during a regular conversation. However, many students are insecure about or uncomfortable with gesturing when they have an audience. Even after watching their speech/ presentation videos, many students say they think they "gestured too much" or nit-pick over a particular gesture. Don't overdo your gestures though, but don't try to hold back, either. Even holding back a little usually ends up nearly eliminating gestures. While the best beginning strategy is to gesture naturally, you also want to remain a high self-monitor and take note of your typical patterns of gesturing. If you notice that you naturally gravitate toward one particular gesture, make an effort to vary your gestures more. Also make sure that your gestures are purposeful, not limp or lifeless.

MOVEMENT

Sometimes movement of the whole body, instead of just gesturing with hands, is appropriate in a speech — but you should be careful to start integrating full body movements *after* you have addressed other aspects like intonation, eye contact, etc. When students are given the freedom to move around, they often engage in "floating" or pacing — movements that comfort a speaker by reducing nervous energy but distract the audience. *Floating* refers to wandering aimlessly around, and *pacing* refers to walking back and forth on the same path. To prevent floating or pacing, make sure that your movements are purposeful. Many speakers employ the triangle method of body movement where they start in the middle, take a couple of steps forward and to the right, then take a couple of steps to the left, then return back to the center. Obviously, you don't need to do this multiple times in a five- to ten-minute speech/ presentation, as doing so, just like floating or pacing, tends to make an audience dizzy. To make your movements appear more natural, time them to coincide with a key point you want to emphasize or a transition between key points. Minimize other movements from the waist down when you are not purposefully moving for emphasis. Speakers sometimes tap or shuffle their feet, rock, or shift their weight back and forth from one leg to the other. Keep both feet flat on the floor and still, so you can avoid these distracting movements.

CREDIBILITY AND PHYSICAL DELIVERY

Audience members primarily take in information through visual and auditory channels. Just as the information you present verbally in your speech can add to or subtract from your credibility, nonverbal communication that accompanies your verbal messages affects your credibility.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Looking like a credible and prepared public speaker will make you feel more like one and will make your audience more likely to perceive you as such. This applies to all speaking contexts: academic, professional, and personal. Although the standards for appropriate personal appearance vary between contexts, meeting them is key. You may have experienced a time when your vocal and physical delivery suffered because you were not “dressed the part.” Dressing the part makes you feel more confident, which will come through in your delivery. Ideally, you should also be comfortable in the clothes you’re wearing. If the clothes are dressy, professional, and nice but ill fitting, then the effect isn’t the same. Avoid clothes that are too tight or too loose. Looking the part is just as important as dressing the part, so make sure you are cleaned and groomed in a way that’s appropriate for the occasion. The “Getting Real” box in this chapter goes into more detail about professional dress in a variety of contexts.

SPOTLIGHT: “GETTING REAL”

Professional Dress and Appearance

No matter what professional field you go into, you will need to consider the importance of personal appearance. Although it may seem petty or shallow to put so much emphasis on dress and appearance, impressions matter, and people make judgments about our personality, competence, and credibility based on how we look. In some cases, you may work for an organization with a clearly laid out policy for personal dress and appearance. In many cases, the suggestion is to follow guidelines for “business casual.” Despite the increasing popularity of this notion over the past twenty years, people’s understanding of what business casual means is not consistent (Cullen, 2008). The formal dress codes of the mid-1900s, which required employees to wear suits and dresses, gave way to the trend of business casual dress, which seeks to allow employees to work comfortably while still appearing professional. While most people still dress more formally for job interviews or high-stakes presentations, the day-to-day dress of working professionals varies. Here are some tips for maintaining “business casual” dress and appearance:

- **Things to generally avoid.** Jeans, hats, flip-flops, exposed underwear, exposed stomachs, athletic wear, heavy cologne/perfume, and chewing gum.
- **General dress guidelines for men.** Dress pants or khaki pants, button-up shirt or collared polo/golf shirt tucked in with belt, and dress shoes; jacket and/or tie are optional.
- **General dress guidelines for women.** Dress pants or skirt, blouse or dress shirt, dress, and closed-toe dress shoes; jacket is optional.

- **Finishing touches.** Make sure shoes are neat and polished, not scuffed or dirty; clothes should be pressed, not wrinkled; make sure fingernails are clean and trimmed/groomed; and remove any lint, dog hair, and so on from clothing.

Obviously, these are general guidelines and there may be exceptions. It's always a good idea to see if your place of business has a dress code, or at least guidelines. If you are uncertain whether or not something is appropriate, most people recommend to err on the side of caution and choose something else. While consultants and professionals usually recommend sticking to dark colors such as black, navy, and charcoal and/or light colors such as white, khaki, and tan, it is OK to add something that expresses your identity and makes you stand out, like a splash of color or a nice accessory like a watch, eyeglasses, or a briefcase. In fact, in the current competitive job market, employers want to see that you are serious about the position, can fit in with the culture of the organization, and are confident (Verner, 2008).

Self-reflection and critical thinking questions:

1. What do you think is the best practice to follow when dressing for a job interview?
2. In what professional presentations would you want to dress formally? Business casual? Casual?
3. Aside from the examples listed previously, what are some other things to generally avoid, in terms of dress and appearance, when trying to present yourself as a credible and competent communicator/speaker?
4. In what ways do you think you can conform to business-casual expectations while still preserving your individuality?

VISUAL AIDS AND DELIVERY

Visual aids play an important role in conveying supporting material to your audience. They also tie to delivery since using visual aids during a speech usually requires some physical movements. It is important not to let your use of visual aids detract from your credibility. Videos with no sound or an uncooperative PowerPoint presentation can seriously affect your performance.

The following tips can help you ensure that your visual aids enhance, rather than detract, from your message and credibility:

1. Have your visual aid displayed only when it is relevant to what you are saying: you can insert black slides in PowerPoint, hide a model or object in a box, flip a poster board around, and so on.
2. Make sure to practice with your visual aids so there aren't any surprises on speech/presentation day.

3. Don't read from your visual aids. Put key information from your PowerPoint or Prezi on your speaking outline and only briefly glance at the screen to make sure you are on the right slide. You can also write information on the back of a poster or picture that you're going to display so you can reference it while holding the visual aid up, since it's difficult to hold a poster or picture and note cards at the same time.
4. Triple check your technology to make sure it's working: electricity, Internet connection, wireless clicker, sound, and so on.
5. Proofread all your visual aids to find spelling/grammar errors and typos.
6. Bring all the materials you may need to make your visual aid work: tape/tacks for posters and pictures, computer cables/adaptors, and so on. Don't assume these materials will be provided.
7. Have a backup plan in case your visual aid doesn't work properly.

Key Takeaways

- Facial expressions help communicate emotions and enthusiasm while speaking. Make sure that facial expressions are consistent with the content being presented. Record yourself practicing your speech/presentation in order to evaluate your use of facial expressions.
- Eye contact helps establish credibility and keep your audience's attention while you're speaking.
- Posture should be comfortable and appropriate for the speaking occasion.
- Emphatic and descriptive gestures enhance the verbal content of our speech/presentation. Gestures should appear spontaneous but be purposeful.
- Movements from the waist down should be purposefully used to emphasize a point or as a transition during a speech.
- Audience members will make assumptions about your competence and credibility based on dress and personal appearance. Make sure these aspects are appropriate for the occasion and for the impression you are trying to project.
- Visual aids can add to your delivery but can also interfere with your delivery and negatively affect your credibility if not used effectively.

Exercises

1. Identify three goals related to delivery that you would like to accomplish in this course. What strategies/tips can you use to achieve these goals?
2. What nonverbal adaptors have you noticed that others use while speaking? Are you aware of any nonverbal adaptors that you have used? If so, what are they?
3. Getting integrated: Identify some steps that speakers can take to ensure that their dress and physical appearance enhance their credibility. How might expectations for dress and physical appearance vary from

context to context (academic, professional, personal, and civic)?

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CHAPTER 18: REVIEW

Key Takeaways

Below is an abbreviated summary of the key takeaways for each section of this chapter:

- Public speaking training builds transferable skills that are useful in your college classes, career, personal relationships, and civic life.
- The general and specific purposes of your speech/presentation are based on the speaking occasion and include the objective you would like to accomplish by the end of your speech/presentation.
- Brainstorm to identify topics that fit within your interests, and then narrow your topic based on audience analysis and the guidelines provided.
- A thesis statement summarizes the central idea of your speech/presentation and will be explained or defended using supporting material.
- Library resources like databases and reference librarians are more suitable for college-level research than general search engines.
- Research sources include periodicals, newspapers and books, reference tools, interviews, and websites.
- Speakers should include a variety of supporting material from their research sources in their speeches/presentations.
- Visual aids help a speaker reinforce the content visually and have many potential benefits. Visual aids can also detract from a speech/presentation if not used properly.
- The speech/presentation consists of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.
- Determine your main points based on your research and supporting materials.
- The organizational patterns that can help arrange the main points are topical, chronological, spatial, problem-solution, cause-effect, and Monroe's Motivated Sequence.
- Incorporating supporting material helps fill in the main points by creating subpoints.
- Organizing signposts help connect the introduction, body, and conclusion.
- The formal outline is a full-sentence outline that helps you prepare for your speech/presentation and includes the introduction and conclusion, the main content of the body, citation information written into the sentences of the outline, and a references page.
- Coordinate points in an outline are on the same level of importance in relation to the thesis of the speech or the central idea of a main point.
- Write your speech/presentation in a manner conducive to speaking. Use contractions, familiar words, and phrases that are easy for you to articulate.
- Public speaking anxiety is a form of communication apprehension (CA) that is commonly experienced by many people and can be effectively managed using a variety of strategies.
- Systematic desensitization helps lessen public speaking anxiety through repeated exposure to real or imagined public speaking scenarios.
- Cognitive restructuring addresses public speaking anxiety by replacing negative thoughts with more positive thoughts.
- Physical relaxation exercises like deep breathing and stretching allow us to voluntarily use our bodies to address involuntary bodily reactions to anxiety.

- The four methods of delivering a speech are impromptu, manuscript, memorized, and extemporaneous delivery.
- Practicing your speech/presentation should occur in three phases. First, practice as you are drafting the outline to help you process through your speech ideas. Second, practice for someone and get feedback; also do a recording for self-evaluation. Third, put the finishing touches on the speech/presentation: make needed adjustments to the content to meet time limits, become familiar with your speaking outline, and create the conditions of your speech/presentation day for your final few practice sessions.
- Speakers should use vocal variety, i.e., changes in rate, volume, and pitch, to make their delivery more engaging.
- Speakers should use proper articulation and pronunciation to make their message clear.
- Facial expressions help communicate emotions and enthusiasm while speaking.
- Eye contact helps establish credibility and keep your audience's attention while you're speaking.
- Posture should be comfortable and appropriate for the speaking occasion.
- Emphatic and descriptive gestures enhance the verbal content of our speech/presentation.
- Movements from the waist down should be purposefully used to emphasize a point or as a transition.
- Visual aids can add to your delivery but can also interfere with your delivery and negatively affect your credibility if not used effectively.

APPENDIX A: VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Please note: This appendix appears in the web version of this textbook for ease of access. However, appendixes have been removed from downloadable versions of this text (i.e. Print PDF, Digital PDF, and eReader versions) to limit the file size.

Acknowledgments

Appendix A is reproduced from the following text:

Ashman, M. (2018). Introduction to Professional Communications. eCampus Ontario/Pressbooks.

APPENDIX B: WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING RESOURCES

Please note: this appendix appears in the web version of this textbook for ease of access. However, to limit the size of downloadable versions of this text (i.e. Print PDF, Digital PDF, and eReader versions), they have been removed.

Work Integrated Learning Open Module Initiative

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) has become a core element of post-secondary instruction and a crucial means by which applied and experiential learning is infused into curriculum in highly meaningful and professionally relevant ways. **This comprehensive set of open access, learner-centered modules supports WIL preparedness among post-secondary students and has been included in this OER to compliment existing units and chapters.**

These modules are grounded in The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario's (HEQCO) *A Practical Guide for Work Integrated Learning* and represent over 35 hours of rich content that can be used by students, faculty, career-services staff, and employers to support student learning in applied and work-integrated settings.

Please Note:

The following select modules from the WIL initiative have been included in this textbook:

- B.1: Workplace Communication Modules
- B.2: Employment Communication Modules
- B.3: Interpersonal and Group Communication Modules

For the full range of available WIL modules and/or for facilitator resources and files, please visit the Work Integrated Learning Open Module Initiative website from Niagara College.

APPENDIX C: WRITING SUPPORTS FOR EAP/ESL LEARNERS

Please note: this appendix appears in the web version of this textbook for ease of access. However, to limit the size of downloadable versions of this text (i.e. Print PDF, Digital PDF, and eReader versions), they have been removed.

Section Overview

The following appendix is intended to support learners whose first language may not be English or for those who need a review of key concepts in the English language for academic purposes.

Chapter Sections

Additional Writing Resources

Fundamentals of English Usage and Writing

- Guide to Writing: A Style Guide

This writing style guide covers the fundamentals of English usage and writing. It includes sections on grammar and mechanics, editing, formatting, academic citation and research documentation, including the latest MLA and APA style guidelines.

This guide is primarily based on material from Lumen Learning's English Composition I: Process-Based course and Joe Schall's Style for Students, with supplemental videos by David Rheinstrom from Khan Academy's Grammar.

Attribution

This section has been adapted from the following source:

APPENDIX D: GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION, SPELLING AND MECHANICS SUPPORT

Please note: this appendix appears in the web version of this textbook for ease of access. However, to limit the size of downloadable versions of this text (i.e. Print PDF, Digital PDF, and eReader versions), they have been removed.

Chapter Acknowledgements

This appendix has been adapted from the following text:

- Communication at Work by Jordan Smith is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

The Importance of Revision and Proofing in Business Communication

Self-correction is an essential part of the writing process, one that students or professionals skip at their peril. Say you've just dashed off a quick email. Glancing back to ensure that it's correct in terms of its grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics helps you avoid confusing your reader or embarrassing yourself. Those errors can be like stains on your shirt or rips in your uniform: they give the impression that you're incompetent or uncaring—qualities no employers respect because it suggests a lack of attention to detail.

Always keep in mind that people generalize to equate the quality of your writing with the quality of your work. Because readers tend to be judgmental, they may even draw bigger conclusions about your level of education, work ethic, and overall professionalism from even a small writing sample. Especially with résumés and cover letters where your words are the first impression employers have of you, employers are judgmental about your writing because customers can be. Employers don't want you to represent their company to customers in a way that makes it look like the whole organization does shoddy, amateur work.

The final stage of the writing process is thus managing your readers' impressions by editing your draft from beginning to end. This involves first returning to your headspace at the start of the writing process and assessing where your document is in relation to the purpose you set out to achieve for it (see Step 1.1 in §2.1 above). When you get a sense of how far your document is from achieving that primary purpose, you realize what needs to be done to close that gap—what you need to add, rewrite, delete, and improve. Your next move is a two-step editing process of substantial revisions and proof-editing. The order of these is crucial to avoid wasting time. You wouldn't proofread for minor grammatical errors before substantial revisions because you may end up just deleting altogether paragraphs that you meticulously proofread with a fine-tooth comb.

Section Topics

We'll divide the process into lessons you can apply to the editing process in the following order:

- D.1: Substantial Revisions
- D.2: Proofreading for Grammar
- D.3: Proofreading for Punctuation
- D.4: Proofreading for Spelling
- D.5: Proofreading for Mechanics

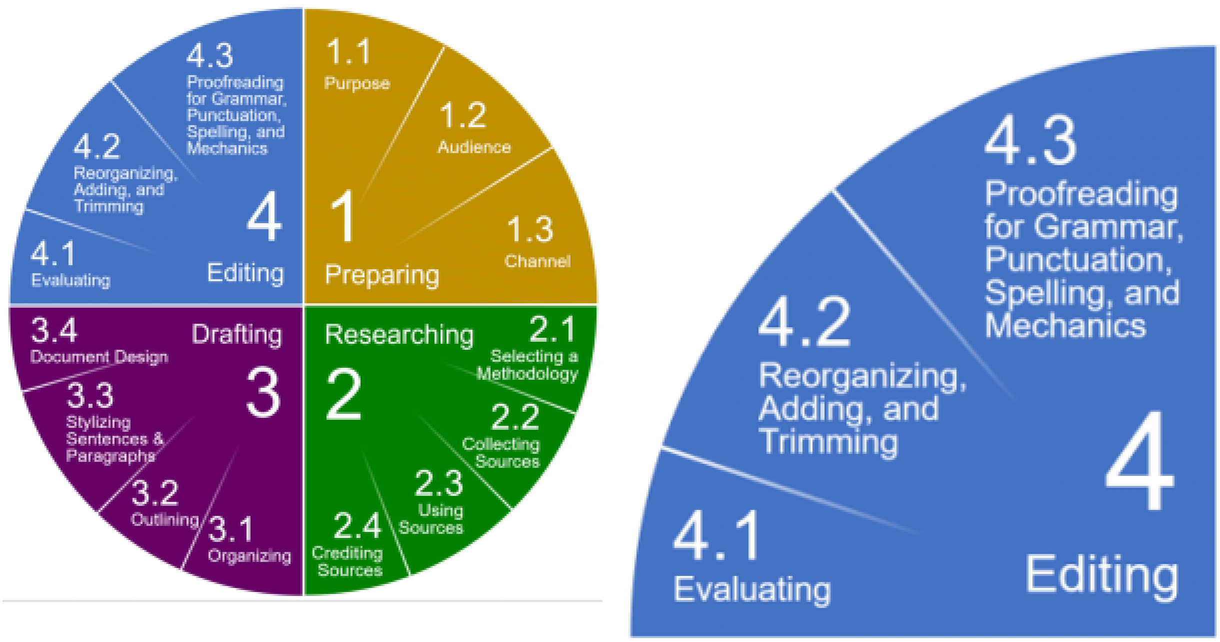

Figure 1: The four-stage writing process and Stage 4 Breakdown

APPENDIX E: DOCUMENTATION AND APA STYLE

Please note: this appendix appears in the web version of this textbook for ease of access. However, to limit the size of downloadable versions of this text (i.e. Print PDF, Digital PDF, and eReader versions), they have been removed.

The APA Style Citation Tutorial is created by staff at the University of Alberta Library to support students and faculty. The tutorial covers why it is important to use citations, elements of common source types, and how to create reference and in-text citations based on the 7th edition APA guidelines.

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VERSION HISTORY

This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.1. If the edits involve a number of changes, the version number increases to the next full number.

The files posted alongside this book always reflect the most recent version.

Version	Date	Change	Affected Web Page
1.0	01 September 2021	First publication	N/A
1.1	16 December 2024	• New cover image • Updated textboxes and styles • Updated chapter titles and permalinks • Removal of Appendices in print PDF	All