Professional Communication (eTextbook)

Professional Communications OER

2. Writing in a Professional Context

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MODULE OVERVIEW

Module Chapters

The chapters in this module include:

- Grammar and Punctuation
- Writing Workplace Documents
- Revising Workplace Documents
- Ethical Guidelines for Writing
- Information Literacy

Module Summary

This module builds on the knowledge of plain language, communication channels, and audience analysis that you may already have or have learned in the Foundations Module. Here you will learn about the importance of writing clearly and with purpose. The focus will be on doing so within workplace contexts where the main challenges are to keep communication concise and not merely succinct; understandable yet professional in tone and language; and in accordance with workplace-related standards and conventions.

You may use common elements of grammar, punctuation, and writing style casually in everyday writing; however, this approach is not necessarily directly transferable to the workplace. Simple mistakes in spelling, sentence structure, and verb tense can alter meaning in communication and

can also have a negative outcome for the writer. A review of these common elements with a particular focus on workplace usage is included.

We will examine important steps in writing with purpose, such as formulating a plan, drafting a communication, and the process of reflection and revision. Unlike casual communication, workplace writing is more purposeful. The purpose may be to simply inform recipients, but oftentimes it is to intentionally cause them to take action. To do so, your writing needs to be clear and focused. It also needs to comply with structural norms and be formatted in a professional manner.

This module also examines characteristics that affect the quality of writing and the ability of a writer to communicate effectively, to communicate with authority, and to summarize ideas of others without plagiarizing. Some workplace settings today may favour dispensing with formality and instead shifting to a more relaxed writing style. However, such a shift may not be suitable in all cases, such as in legal, medical, and financial professions. Form, structure, and convention are important, but so too is writing in an ethical and informed way. Procedures and strategies on how to support your writings by integrating or referencing credible, evidence-based, and subject-related information is an important component of this module.

Relevance to Practice

One perception of workplace writing is that it is easy, given the types of tasks associated with it. The nature of workplace writing tasks seems to validate the notion of ease and lack of complexity. Things like memos, emails, letters, and even reports tend to be viewed as being simple and straightforward to create. The repetitive nature of workplace writing may also contribute to this perception.

In a broader context many occupations, other than perhaps in the field of journalism, place good writing skills below job-specific skills in order of importance. This, along with other factors, may contribute to the view by some that good writing is not a top priority when preparing for employment.

Writing in the workplace is more than just the techniques necessary to put together an email or an aesthetically pleasing report. The words, nuances in phrasing, structure, and other key writing characteristics together are the main ingredients of good workplace writing.

High expectations about communication skills in general are top of mind with today's employers. One of the most important of these skills is the ability to convey meaning accurately and effectively in writing. Other expectations include being able to compose written workplace communication using language that is appropriate and that conforms to professional standards and conventions; and distinguishing the structural elements of workplace documents in order to use them appropriately.

The stakes in responding effectively in writing can also raise challenges in today's culturally diverse workplaces. Gender, ethnicity, and culture, for example, can be important considerations when writing with purpose or to influence behaviour.

Learning Goals

An overarching theme in this eText is on developing abilities for effective planning, construction, and distribution of common workplace-related documents and publications. Learning goals will guide this development while learning outcomes serve as evidence of achievement. Key developmental attributes related to these learning goals are also listed here.

Learning Goals

The aim of this module is to help you develop the knowledge and skills necessary to:

1. express yourself clearly in written business communication and
2. prepare effective written communications that conform to professional workplace standards and expectations.

Developmental Attributes

Upon successfully completing this module, you should:

Understand the following:

- That poor grammar and writing habits can compromise the effectiveness of written communication
- That standards of writing for the workplace are different than in everyday life
- That differentiating between relevant and irrelevant information enables writers to develop a comprehensive and useful product
- That it is important to draw on several sources of information to add validity to writing products

Know the following:
- Proper punctuation, grammar, and vocabulary to make communication clear
- Key quality principles of effective workplace writing
- Layout and style techniques that maximize message impact
- Research techniques to source and evaluate information

Be able to do the following:
- Present information and ideas in a way that others can understand
- Prepare, review, and edit written communication while following rules of grammar and punctuation
- Write in context to express ideas clearly and concisely
- Format correspondence appropriately to conform to business standards
- Summarize information from sources of research

Learning Outcomes for this Module

Upon successfully completing this module, you should be able to:

1. apply principles of effective writing to produce professional workplace documents;
2. match the most appropriate styles of workplace correspondence to intended purpose or function, and;
3. apply rules of compliance and ethics in the development of written products.

Attribution Statement (Module Overview)

LEARNING MATERIALS

Grammar and Punctuation

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- rewrite grammatically incorrect sentences to clarify the meaning of messages,
- explain different ways that grammar might influence the meaning or reception of written workplace communications,
- demonstrate when to use different but appropriate punctuation marks in writing,
- explain the impact of using incorrect punctuation in workplace communication,
- rewrite sentences correcting punctuation errors, and
- apply proper punctuation to communicate the true meaning of messages.

Topics

- Parts of speech
- Types of sentences
- Elements of sentences
- Punctuation marks

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Introduction

To ensure you are able to craft your messages clearly and correctly, you have the option of refreshing and practising your grammar and punctuation.

If you are already a grammar guru (or, if you have become one since using the optional grammar package), you can immediately dive into the next chapter to learn about five common workplace documents: standard business letters, fax cover sheets, memos, short reports, and emails.

Chances are, if you have ever read or commented about anything in an online comments section, you have probably encountered the "**grammar** police." These are the folks who are quick to ignore the meaning of what you said and focus exclusively on whether or not you have done so in a grammatically correct way. For our purposes, the definition of grammar is "a set of actual or presumed prescriptive notions about correct use of a language."

People whose native language is English may make grammatical errors all the time. Often, conventions of speech do not adhere to grammar rules. As long as everyone else around them makes the same mistake, it does not sound wrong, and there is no problem until they encounter people who have learned otherwise. From region to region, and even from workplace to workplace, there may be small but perceptible differences in how people use grammar, as the English language continues to evolve. Generally speaking, the rules of grammar serve to help us all understand how to use the English language correctly. As irritating or pedantic as learning and implementing grammar may seem, grammatical norms are important for effective and clear communication.

Similarly, **punctuation** is defined as "the marks, such as period, comma, and parentheses, used in writing to separate sentences and their elements and to clarify meaning." Punctuation is sometimes taken for granted or used incorrectly, particularly in digital communication like text messaging and social media.

As a writer and communicator who intends to be clear and accurate, you may find a refresher on grammar and punctuation to be helpful, which is what this section will give you.

Grammar

Grammatical errors can disrupt an audience's ability to understand your message clearly, or can simply distract from your message. Further, grammatical missteps can often weaken the writer's credibility, potentially causing your audience to not take your message seriously.

In this section we will give an overview of the parts of speech, types of sentences, and modifier errors. As a refresher, here are some basics about grammar:

Parts of Speech

"**Parts of speech**" are the basic types of words in the English language. Most grammar books say that there are eight parts of speech: *nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions,* and *interjections*. We will add one more type: *articles*.

It is important to be able to recognize and identify the different types of words in English so that you can understand grammar explanations and use the right word form in the right place. Here is a brief explanation of the parts of speech:

Noun	A noun is a naming word. It names a person, place, thing, idea, living creature, quality, or action. **Examples:** *cowboy, theatre, box, thought, tree, kindness, arrival*
Verb	A verb is a word that describes an action (doing something) or a state (being something). **Examples:** *walk, talk, think, believe, live, like, want*
Adjective	An adjective is a word that describes a noun. It tells you something about the noun. **Examples:** *big, yellow, thin, amazing, beautiful, quick, important*

Adverb	An adverb is a word that usually describes a verb or adjective. It tells you how something is done or further modifies (specifies/describes) an adjective. It may also tell you when or where something happened. **Examples:** *slowly, intelligently, well, yesterday, tomorrow, here, everywhere*
Pronoun	A pronoun is used instead of a noun, to avoid repeating the noun. **Examples:** *I, you, he, she, it, we, they*
Conjunction	A conjunction joins two words, phrases, or sentences together. **Examples:** *but, so, and, because, or*
Preposition	A preposition usually comes before a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase. It joins the noun to some other part of the sentence. **Examples:** *on, in, by, with, under, through, at*
Interjection	An interjection is an unusual kind of word, because it often stands alone. Interjections are words that express emotion or surprise, and they are usually followed by exclamation marks. **Examples:** *Ouch!, Hello!, Hurray!, Oh no!, Ha!*
Article	An article is used to introduce a noun. **Examples:** *the, a, an*

Table 2.1.1 Parts of Speech

If you would like to practise identifying the various parts of speech, you can try this interactive matching exercise.

Types of Sentences

When we refer to grammar, we are generally speaking about how language is formed at the sentence level. Words are the foundation of sentences, and in the previous section we learned

about what types of words make up the main part of speech. Here we focus on how we put those words together to try to create meaning. In future chapters we will keep building on this to learn about paragraphs and how we then use those in various formats like letters, memos, and reports.

The first part of this review will focus on the three main types of sentences: simple, compound, and complex sentences.

Simple Sentences

Simple sentences contain one subject–verb pair and express a complete thought. They may contain more than one subject, as in the following example.

My *wife* and *I* got married in Japan.

Simple sentences may also contain more than one verb, as in the next example.

He *cut* the grass and *put* away the lawnmower.

Here are some other examples of simple sentences and their subject–verb patterns.

The movie wasn't very interesting. (subject, verb)

My friends and I disliked the movie. (subject, subject, verb)

My friends and I cooked and ate the meal together. (subject, subject, verb, verb)

I might watch TV or read a book after dinner. (subject, verb, verb)

Compound Sentences

The second type of sentence, the **compound sentence**, consists of two simple sentences joined by a **coordinating conjunction**.

There are seven coordinating conjunctions: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*. A comma precedes a coordinating conjunction, which joins two simple sentences.

Note: Do not be confused between a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence and a compound verb in a simple sentence. Study the following examples carefully.

My friend plays the guitar *and* writes music.
This is a simple sentence containing a subject (*friend*) and a compound verb (*plays/ writes*).

My friend plays the guitar, *and* he writes music.
This is a compound sentence—two simple sentences joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction. The subject of the first simple sentence is *friend*, and the verb is *plays*. The subject of the second simple sentence is *he*, and the verb is *writes*.

Complex Sentences
Clauses are groups of words that contain subjects and verbs. There are two types: **independent (main) clauses** and **dependent (subordinate) clauses**. An independent clause, in addition to containing a subject and verb, expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a simple sentence. A dependent clause on its own is just part of a sentence or fragment. It must be joined to an independent clause for it to make sense and present a complete thought to the reader.

There are three types of dependent clauses: adjective clauses, adverb clauses, and noun clauses. When you join dependent and independent clauses together, you create **complex sentences**. Study the examples below.

Complex sentence using a dependent adjective clause:

Example	Explanation
Vancouver has many interesting places to shop.	independent clause or simple sentence
which is the largest city in British	dependent adjective clause

Columbia	
Vancouver, which is the largest city in British Columbia, has many interesting places to shop.	complex sentence

Table 2.1.2 Complex Sentences with Dependent Adjectives

Complex sentence using a dependent adverb clause of time:

Example	Explanation
I will tell her the news.	independent clause or simple sentence
as soon as I see her	dependent adverb clause of time
As soon as I see her, I will tell her the news.	complex sentence

Table 2.1.3 Complex Sentences with Dependent Adverbs of Time

Complex sentence using a dependent adverb clause of reason:

Example	Explanation
I went to bed early.	independent clause or simple sentence
because I was tired	dependent adverb clause of reason
I went to bed early because I was tired.	complex sentence

Table 2.1.4 Complex Sentences with Dependent Adverbs of Reason

Complex sentence using a dependent noun clause:

Example	Explanation

I already know.	independent clause or simple sentence
what you said	dependent noun clause
I already know what you said.	complex sentence

Table 2.1.5 Complex Sentences with Dependent Nouns

Note: Comma with dependent adverb clause

If a dependent adverb clause is *before* an independent clause in a sentence, the two are separated by a comma. However, if the dependent adverb clause *follows* the independent (main) clause, no comma is used.

Use a comma when the dependent clause is first:

While we were eating dinner, someone rang the doorbell.

Do not use a comma when the main clause comes first:

Someone rang the doorbell *while we were eating dinner.*

When you are sure that you understand the lesson, you can continue with these exercises.

Agreement and Parallelism

You probably have a fairly well-developed sense of whether a sentence sounds right. In fact, that is one of the main reasons why you should get into the habit of reading your drafts aloud before you submit them for peer or instructor review. Or better yet, ask a friend to read your draft back to you. You will be surprised how many careless errors you catch just from hearing them.

One key aspect that can make a sentence sound incorrect is if the subject and verb do not agree. In properly written sentences, the subjects and verbs must agree in number and person. Agreeing in number means that a plural subject is matched up with the plural form of the verb. Although the plural of a noun often ends in -*s*, it is the singular of a verb that usually ends in -*s*.

> Examples:
>
> The *rabbit hops* all around the cage. (singular subject and verb)
>
> The *rabbits hop* all around the cage. (plural subject and verb)

Agreement in person means, for example, a third-person noun must be matched with the proper third-person verb. This chart shows first, second, and third person for a few present-tense verbs. As you can see, most of the verbs are the same in all columns except for the third-person singular. The verb *to be* at the bottom also varies in the first-person singular column. So to match subjects and verbs by person, you could choose, for example, to say "I am," but not "I are."

Present-Tense Verbs

1st Person Singular: I	1st Person Plural: We	2nd Person Singular: You	2nd Person Plural: You	3rd Person Singular: He, She, It	3rd Person Plural: They
walk	walk	walk	walk	walks	walk
laugh	laugh	laugh	laugh	laughs	laugh
rattle	rattle	rattle	rattle	rattles	rattle
fall	fall	fall	fall	falls	fall
think	think	think	think	thinks	think
am	are	are	are	is	are

Table 2.1.6 Present-Tense Verbs

> Examples
>
> It rattles when the wind blows. (third-person subject and verb)
> I think I am a funny person. (first-person subject and verb)

Each of the following sentences represents a common type of agreement error. An explanation and a correction of the error follow each example:

Pete and Tara is siblings.

Explanation: A subject that includes the word "and" usually takes a plural verb even if the two nouns are singular.

Correction: Pete and Tara are siblings.

Biscuits and gravy are my favourite breakfast.

Explanation: Sometimes the word "and" connects two words that form a subject and are actually one thing. In this case, "biscuits and gravy" is one dish. So even though there are two nouns connected by the word "and," it is a singular subject and should take a singular verb.

Correction: Biscuits and gravy is my favorite breakfast.

The women who works here are treated well.

Explanation: Relative pronouns (*that, who*, and *which*) can be singular or plural, depending on their antecedents (the words they stand for). The pronoun has the same number as the antecedent. In this case, "who" stands for "women" and "women" is plural, so the verb should be plural.

Correction: The women who work here are treated well.

One of the girls sing in the chorus.

Explanation: A singular subject is separated by a phrase that ends with a plural noun. This pattern leads people to think that the plural noun ("girls," in this case) is the subject to which they should match the verb. But in reality, the verb ("sing") must match the singular subject ("one").

Correction: One of the girls sings in the chorus.

The data is unclear.

Explanation: The words "data" and "media" are both considered plural at all times when used in academic writing. In more casual writing, some people use a singular version of the two words.

Correction: The data are unclear.

The basketball players with the most press this month is the college men playing in the Final Four tournament.

Explanation: In some sentences, like this one, the verb comes before the subject. The word order can cause confusion, so you have to find the subject and verb and make sure they match.

Correction: The basketball players with the most press this month are the college men playing in the Final Four tournament.

I is ready to go.

Explanation: A subject and verb must agree in person. In this case, "I" is a first-person noun, but "is" is a third-person verb.

Correction: I am ready to go.

What we think are that Clyde Delber should resign immediately.

Explanation: Words that begin with "what" can take either a singular or a plural verb depending on whether "what" is understood as singular or plural. In this case, "we" collectively think one thing, so the verb should be singular even though "we" is plural.

Correction: What we think is that Clyde Delber should resign immediately.

Either the dog or the cats spends time on this window seat when I'm gone.

Explanation: The word "or" usually indicates a singular subject even though you see two nouns. This sentence is an exception to this guideline because at least one of the subjects is plural. When this happens, the verb should agree with the subject to which it is closest.

Correction: Either the dog or the cats spend time on this window seat when I'm gone.

Molly or Huck keep the books for the club, so one of them will know.

Explanation: The word "or" usually indicates a singular subject even though you see two nouns. An exception to this guideline is that if one of the subjects is plural, the verb should agree with the subject to which it is closest.

Correction: Molly or Huck keeps the books for the club, so one of them will know.

The wilderness scare me when I think of going out alone.

Explanation: When a singular noun ends with an -s, you might get confused and think it is a plural noun.

Correction: The wilderness scares me when I think of going out alone.

Each of the girls are happy to be here.

Explanation: Indefinite pronouns (anyone, each, either, everybody, and everyone) are always singular. So they have to always be used with singular verbs.

Correction: Each of the girls is happy to be here.

Pronoun agreement is another important aspect when composing sentences. Matching a pronoun with its **antecedent** in terms of number (singular or plural) can be tricky, as evidenced in sentences like this one:

- Each student should do their own work.* (please see explanation on pg 19.)

Since student is singular, a singular pronoun must match with it. A correct, but rather clunky, version of the sentence is the following:

- Each student should do his or her own work.

To avoid pronoun and antecedent problems, you should take three steps:

1. Identify the antecedent.
2. Determine if the antecedent is singular or plural.
3. Make sure the antecedent and pronoun match, preferably by making both plural if possible.

Please note:

The use of the singular *they/their* is widely contested, and many writing style guides now consider it acceptable. The English language is always evolving, and we think that it's worth pointing out that this construction, though not parallel or grammatically correct from a traditional perspective (pronoun agreement), is arguably more efficient than using traditional gendered constructions of *he or she* and *his or her*. Sometimes context will dictate what is more preferable to work with. In this particular module, we use singular *they/their* because the context causes us

to refer to general designations of people, such as *boss*, *employer*, *employee*, *student*, *teacher*, *writer*, *reader*, etc.; using the traditional singular pronouns every time in sentences such as "Your boss may ask you to write a letter on his or her behalf" would have resulted in a tedious eText! So sometimes your writing context will affect the norms, conventions, and rules you adhere to—or bend!

Antecedent Identification

The antecedent is the noun that the pronoun represents in a sentence. When you see a pronoun, you should be able to understand its meaning by looking at the rest of the sentence. Look at the following sentence:

- The Smiths picked apples for hours, and they put them in large boxes.
- The antecedent for "they" is "the Smiths." The antecedent for "them" is "apples."

Read each of the following sentences and note the *antecedent* for each *pronoun*.

- Beth fell on the floor and found out *it* was harder than *she* thought.
- it—*floor*; she—*Beth*
- The women chatted as *they* jogged along with *their* pets.
- they—*the women*; their—*the women's*
- When Abe lost *his* gloves, *he* backtracked looking for *them*.
- his—Abe's; he—Abe; them—gloves

As sentences become more complicated or whole paragraphs are involved, identifying pronoun antecedents might also become more complicated. As long as pronouns and antecedents are used properly, however, you should be able to find the antecedent for each pronoun. Read the following sentences and note the antecedent for each pronoun.

Original: The ancient Mayans targeted December 12, 2012, as a momentous day that marks the end of a 5,126-year era. Today scholars speculate about what the Mayans expected to

happen on that day and if they saw it as a time for celebration or fear. Some say that the end of an era would have been a cause for celebration. Others view it as an impending ominous situation because of its unknown nature. At any rate, you can rest assured that many scholars will be paying attention as the upcoming date draws near.

With explanation: The ancient Mayans targeted December 12, 2012, as a momentous day that marks the end of a 5,126-year era. Today scholars speculate about what the Mayans expected to happen on that day and if they (*the Mayans*) saw it (*December 12, 2012*) as a time for celebration or fear. Some say that the end of an era would have been a cause for celebration. Others view it (*December 12, 2012*) as an impending ominous situation because of its (*December 12, 2012's*) unknown nature. At any rate, you (*the reader*) can rest assured that many scholars will be paying attention as the upcoming date draws near.

Singular versus Plural Antecedents

When you are writing and using pronouns and antecedents, begin by identifying whether the antecedent is singular or plural. As you can see by looking at the following table, making this determination is sometimes not as easy as it might seem.

Antecedent	Singular or Plural?	Explanation
dog	Singular	Common singular nouns function as singular antecedents.
singers	Plural	Common plural nouns function as plural antecedents.
everybody	Singular	Indefinite pronouns sometimes function as antecedents. Since they refer to nonspecific things or people, their number can be ambiguous. To solve this problem, indefinite pronouns are treated as singular. Other

		indefinite pronouns include *anyone*, *each, everyone*, *someone*, *nobody*, *no one*, *something*, and *nothing*.
team	Singular	Words that stand for one group are singular even though the group includes plural members.
team members	Plural	By very definition, the members in a group number more than one, so the term is plural.
coat and hat	Plural	When two or more nouns are joined by "and," they create a plural entity.
coat or hat	Singular	When two or more nouns are joined by "or," the singular or plural determination of such an antecedent is based on the last-mentioned noun. In this case, "hat" is mentioned last and is singular. So the antecedent is singular.
coat or hats	Plural	Since the last-mentioned noun in this set is plural, as an antecedent this set would be plural.
coats or hat	Singular	Since the last-mentioned noun in this set is singular, as an antecedent this set would be singular, even though the set includes a plural noun. (Note: as a matter of style, try to avoid this arrangement by using the "[singular] or [plural]" sequence for your antecedents.)

Table 2.1.7 Single vs Plural Antecedents

Antecedent and Pronoun Matches

Antecedents and pronouns need to match in terms of number (singular or plural) and gender. For purposes of clarity, try to keep a pronoun relatively close to its antecedent. When the antecedent is not immediately clear, make a change such as rearranging the words, changing from singular

to plural, or replacing the pronoun with a noun. Each of the following sentences has an antecedent–pronoun matching problem. Read each sentence and think about the problem. Then check below each example for a correction and an explanation.

The singer kept a bottle of water under their stool.

Explanation: Since "singer" is singular, the pronoun must be singular. In this situation, to say "his or her" sounds odd, so the best choice would be to revise the sentence to clarify the gender of the singer.

Correction: Angela, the singer, kept a bottle of water under *her* stool.

Each student should complete their registration for next semester by October 5.* (please also see explanation on pg. 19)

Explanation: Often, as in this situation, the best solution is to switch the subject from singular to plural so you can avoid having to use "his or her."

Correction: *Students* should complete *their* registration for next semester by October 5.

Everyone should do what they think is best.

Explanation: Indefinite pronouns are treated as singular in the English language even when they have an intended plural meaning. You have to either use a singular pronoun or revise the sentence to eliminate the indefinite pronoun as the antecedent.

Correction: *Everyone* should do what *he or she* thinks is best.

OR All *employees* should do what *they* think is best.

To compete in the holiday tournament, the team took their first airline flight as a group.

Explanation: Collective nouns are singular since they represent, for example, one team, one crowd, or one family. Although the pronoun "it" is used for nonhuman reference, it can also be used to reference a singular collective noun that involves humans.

Correction: To compete in the holiday tournament, the *team* took *its* first airline flight as a group.

Neither Cathy nor the Petersons wanted to give up her place in line.

Explanation: In situations involving "or" or "nor," the antecedent must match the noun closest to the pronoun, which in this case is Petersons. Since Petersons is plural, the pronoun must be plural.

Correction: *Neither Cathy nor the Petersons* wanted to give up *their* place in line.

The dogs and the cat ate all its food immediately.

Explanation: When joined by "and," compound antecedents are plural and, therefore, take a plural pronoun.

Correction: The *dogs and the cat* ate all *their* food immediately.

Each member is responsible for his own dues and registration.

Explanation: Using "he," "his," or "him" as a universal singular pronoun is no longer acceptable. Either use both a masculine and a feminine pronoun as in the first revision or change the noun to plural and use a plural pronoun as in the second revision. Stylistically, pluralizing is preferable.

Correction: Each *member* is responsible for *his or her* own dues and registration. OR *Members* are responsible for *their* own dues and registration.

Parallelism

Parallelism is the presentation of ideas of equal weight in the same grammatical fashion. This writing principle falls under the umbrella of grammar, style, rhetoric, and content. Parallelism is important in various types of sentences.

You may not realize it, but when we write, we often include lists. Lists need to be parallel in order for the sentence to be grammatically correct and for the reader to enjoy reading it. All the items in a list should be grammatically parallel. For instance, if your sentence lists a series of activities, all the items need to begin with verbs of the same tense and case.

Example:

After work, Logan bought groceries, made dinner, and watched TV.

Bought, *made*, and *watched* are all perfect past-tense verbs, resulting in a parallel list.

Remember, too, that when you join even two items with a conjunction, those two items need to be parallel. Parallel lists are especially important in well-written résumés. When you list your work duties under an employment entry, make sure that each item in your list begins with words that are parallel in *part of speech*, tense, and, if applicable, case.

However, achieving parallelism goes beyond the technicalities of a simple list. That congruence is something to keep in mind when your writing deals with deeper subjects or is designed to persuade an audience. Used well, parallelism can enhance your readers' (and even your own) understanding and appreciation of a topic. The most famous line from John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address provides another example (a specific kind of reversal of phrasing known as **antimetabole**): "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." You'll encounter parallelism not only in politics but also in advertising, religion, and poetry as well:

- "Strong enough for a man, but made for a woman."
- "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."
- "Some say the world will end in fire, / Some say in ice."

Parallelism is essential to well thought-out, well constructed, and easy-to-read sentences and paragraphs.

Indicate if the following sentences are parallel. In cases where they are not parallel, rewrite the sentence to make it parallel.

- You may respond to our survey on the phone, visit any one of our 10 locations, or write an email.
- This position is a fast-paced, challenge, dynamic, and customer-focused opportunity.
- The problem was in production, not in planning.
- Jeremy is receiving employee of the month because he is intelligent, cares, honest, and works hard.

Prepositions and Conjunctions

Prepositions

Prepositions are words that show the relationships between two or more other words. Choosing correct prepositions can be challenging, but the following examples will help clarify how to use some of the most common prepositions.

Types of Prepositions	Examples of Prepositions	How to Use	Prepositions Used in Sentences
Time	at	Use with hours of the day and these words that indicate time of day: *dawn*, *midnight*, *night*, and *noon.*	We will eat *at 11:30*.
			We will eat *at noon*.
	by	Use with time words to indicate a	I'll be there *by 5:00*.

		particular time.	I'll be finished *by October*.
	in	Use with *the* and these time-of-day words:*afternoon*, *evening*, and *morning.*	We'll start *in the morning*.
		Use on its own with months, seasons, and years.	The rainy season starts *in June*.
	on	Use with days of the week.	I'll see you *on Friday*.
Location	at	Use to indicate a particular place.	I'll stop *at the dry cleaners*.
	in	Use when indicating that an item or person is within given boundaries.	My ticket is *in my pocket*.
	by	Use to mean "near a particular place."	My desk is *by the back door*.
	on	Use when indicating a surface or site on which something rests or is located.	Place it *on the table*, please.
			My office is *on Lincoln*

			Boulevard.
Logical relationships	of	Use to indicate part of a whole.	I ate half *of the sandwich*.
		Use to indicate contents or makeup.	I brought a bag *of chips*.
	for	Use to show purpose.	Jake uses his apron *for grilling*.
State of being	in	Use to indicate a state of being.	I am afraid that I'm *in trouble*.

Table 2.1.8 Using Prepositions

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are known as "joiner" words. They join two words, phrases, or sentences together. This classic video illustrates the function of conjunctions, which are either coordinating conjunctions (*and*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so*, *yet*) or **correlative conjunctions** (*both…and*, *either…or*, *just as…so*, *neither…nor*, *not…but*, *not only…but also*, *whether…or*).

Check Your Understanding

Complete the following sentences using the appropriate preposition from the choices provided.
- **I'm off for two weeks _____ July.** (choices: *on*, *in*, *at*)
- **The workers have been _____ strike since October.** (choices: *on*, *in*, *about*)
- **There is no animosity _____ us.** (choices: *with*, *throughout*, *between*)

Complete each of the following sentences using the correct conjunction from the choices provided. Note that not all conjunctions may apply.

Conjunctions available: *so*, *unless*, *but*, *since*, *therefore*, *although*, *because*, *while*, *however*, *moreover*, *accordingly*

- **I haven't really prepared for this interview, _____ I feel a bit nervous.**
- **Do not do anything _____ you hear from me first.**
- **_____ he wasn't a good player, he had a great game.**

Modifier Errors and Split Infinitives

Consider this sentence: "For her birthday, Megan received an attractive woman's briefcase." The modifier "attractive" is in an awkward position. The person who wrote this sentence most likely intended to suggest that the briefcase was attractive. However, people reading it or listening to it might easily assume that the briefcase was intended for (or already belonged to) an attractive woman.

Three categories of modifier problems include **misplaced modifiers**, **dangling modifiers**, and **split infinitives**. These three categories, explained in the following subsections, are all similar because they all involve misplacing words or phrases. Understanding the differences between these categories should help you be on the lookout for such mistakes in your writing and that of your peers.

Misplaced Modifiers

The easiest way to clarify which word is being modified in a sentence is to place the modifier close to the word it modifies. Whenever possible, it is best to place a modifier immediately before or after the modified word.

Read the following example of a misplaced modifier, note the point of confusion, and review the *correction*.

> Example:
>
> The malfunctioning student's phone beeped during class.
>
> **Misplaced modifier:** "malfunctioning"
>
> **Modifying:** "phone" (not "student")
>
> **Point of confusion:** The writer wants to say that the student had a malfunctioning phone that beeped during class, not that the student was malfunctioning.
>
> **Correction:** *The student's malfunctioning phone beeped during class.*

Dangling Modifiers

Often a dangling modifier modifies the subject of a sentence, but the placement of the modifier makes it seem as though it modifies another noun in the sentence. Other times, a dangling modifier actually modifies someone or something other than the subject of the sentence, but the wording makes it appear as though the dangling modifier modifies the subject. The resulting image conveyed can often be rather confusing, humorous, or just embarrassing.

Read the following examples of dangling modifiers, note the point of confusion in each case, and review the possible corrections. Note that there is often more than one correct way to rewrite each sentence.

> Example 1
>
> The child was climbing the fence that always seemed adventuresome.

Misplaced modifier: "that always seemed adventuresome"

Modifying: "child" (not "fence")

Point of confusion: The wording makes it sound as if the fence is adventuresome, not the child.

Correction: The child, who always seemed adventuresome, was climbing the fence. *OR* The adventuresome child was climbing the fence.

Example 2

Reading in the porch swing, giant mosquitoes attacked me.

Misplaced modifier: "Reading in the porch swing"

Modifying: Implicit "I" (not "mosquitoes")

Point of confusion: The wording makes the sentence sound as if the mosquitoes are reading on the porch swing, not the speaker.

Correction: While I was reading on the porch swing, giant mosquitoes attacked me. *OR* Giant mosquitoes attacked me while I was reading on the porch swing.

Example 3

After being found in the washing machine, the dog eagerly played with his favourite chew toy.

Misplaced modifier: "After being found in the washing machine"

Modifying: "toy" (not "dog")

Point of confusion: This sentence is supposed to say that the toy, not the dog, was found in the washing machine.

Correction: After the dog's favourite chew toy was found in the washing machine, he eagerly played with it. *OR* The dog eagerly played with his favourite chew toy after it was found in the washing machine.

Split Infinitives

Splitting infinitives refers to placing a word between "to" and a verb, as in "Miss Clark set out to clearly define the problem." Technically, you should not place the word "clearly" between "to" and "define." This grammar rule came about in the eighteenth century when people held Latin up as the language standard. Since Latin did not have two-word infinitives, such as "to define," grammarians wanted to preserve the unity of the two-word infinitives in an effort to make English more Latin-like. The use of split infinitives, however, has become increasingly common over the decades (e.g., "*to boldly go* where no man has gone before"—*Star Trek*, 1966). In fact, split infinitives are gaining acceptance in professional and academic writing as well. For your purposes, knowing what split infinitives are will help you know your options as a writer.

Example 1

I'm going *to quickly run* to the store so I'll be back when you get home.

Infinitive link: "to run"

Splitter link: "quickly"

Correction: I'm going to run to the store quickly so I'll be back when you get home.

Example 2

Helen thought Mr. Beed said *to loudly sing*, but he actually said *to proudly sing*.

Infinitive link: "to sing" (twice)

Splitter link: "loudly"; "proudly"

Correction: Helen thought Mr. Beed said to sing loudly, but he actually said to sing proudly.

Check Your Understanding

Choose whether each of the following sentences is correct, or whether it has a dangling modifier.

Unlike many other students, the financial aid office did not approve his application.

a) Correct

b) Dangling modifier

Having learned French in just three months, Paul was as happy as he could be.

a) Correct

b) Dangling modifier

While watching a movie, people who talk loudly are really annoying.

a) Correct

b) Dangling modifier

For each of the following, indicate if "fewer" or "less" should be used to complete the sentence.

- **I have _____ patience for that behaviour than you.**
- **This time, you've made _____ mistakes.**
- **I'm going somewhere where I'll have _____ interruptions.**

Punctuation

Suppose you are presenting a speech. If you speak too quickly, your audience will not understand what you are saying. To avoid this, you stop and take a breath a few times as you read. But how do you know where to pause, where to change your voice, and where to stop? Punctuation, of course!

Punctuation marks provide visual clues to readers, telling them how they should read the sentence. Some punctuation marks tell you that you are reading a list of items, while other marks tell you that a sentence contains two independent ideas. Punctuation marks tell you not only when a sentence ends but also what kind of sentence you have read. This chapter covers different types of punctuation and their uses.

Let's begin with three punctuation marks you are probably already comfortable with.

Periods

The **period (.)** is a very common punctuation mark that indicates the end of a declarative sentence. The period can also be used at the end of an imperative sentence.

Examples:

The concert begins in two hours.

Watch for oncoming traffic.

Question Marks

The **question mark (?)** is used at the end of an interrogative sentence, indicating that the sentence is a question.

Example:

Is it snowing?

Exclamation Marks

The **exclamation mark (!)** is used at the end of an exclamatory sentence, indicating that the sentence is an exclamation. The mark could also be used at the end of an imperative sentence to indicate a command.

Example:

This is the best day of my life!

Stop what you're doing right now!

Commas

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the **comma (,)**. The comma indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. There are many ways to use a comma. Here are a few:

- **Introductory word (such as a sentence adverb):** Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- **Lists:** The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
- **Coordinating adjectives:** He was tired, hungry, and late.
- **Conjunctions in compound sentences:** The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- **Interrupting words:** I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters:** The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

> Example:
>
> Without spoiling the surprise**,** we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, "without spoiling the surprise" is an introductory phrase, while "we need to tell her to save the date" is the main sentence.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add *and* before the last item.

> Example:
>
> The pizza will be topped with olives**,** peppers**,** and pineapple chunks.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called **coordinating adjectives**. These come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. Unlike with a list of nouns, the word *and* does not always need to be before the last adjective.

Example:

It was a bright, windy, clear day.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as *for*, *and*, or *but*.

Example:

He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought to give more details. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with **interrupting words**. These can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

Example:

If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential.

Example:

An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and emails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

Examples:

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should be getting our tickets soon.

You also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the province and the postal code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

Examples:

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 6H2.

After moving to Ottawa, Ontario, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an email or a letter, you add a comma after the greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Example:

Hello,

I would like more information about your job posting.

Thank you,

Anita Al-Sayf

Semicolons

Another punctuation mark that you will encounter is the **semicolon (;)**. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this indicates a place to pause and take a breath.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses when relying on a period to separate them into two shorter sentences would make your writing choppy, and using a comma would create a comma splice, or run-on sentence (joining two independent clauses with merely a comma is an error).

Example:

Incorrect: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**,** appearances are important. (incorrect because of comma splice/run-on-sentence)

Choppy: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**.** Appearances are important.

Correct: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**;** appearances are important.

Here, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already have their own commas (called "internal punctuation"—at least one of the items is itself its own list). Semicolons help the reader distinguish between the groupings of items.

Example:

Incorrect: The colour combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

Correct: The colour combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey**;** green, brown, and black**;** or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colours.

Tip
Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating

conjunctions such as *and*, *or*, and *but*.

Colons

The **colon (:)** is used to introduce lists, quotations, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Examples:

Dear Hiring Manager**:**

To**:** Human Resources

From**:** Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

Example:

The team will tour three states**:** New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

I have to take four classes this semester**:** Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

<u>Colons to Introduce a Quotation</u>

You can use a colon to introduce a quotation.

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<u>Example:</u>

Mark Twain said it best**:** "When in doubt, tell the truth."

</div>

If a quote is longer than 40 words, skip a line after the colon and indent the left margin of the quote by five spaces. Because quotations longer than 40 words use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary.

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<u>Example:</u>

My father always loved Mark Twain's words**:**

There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

</div>

Tip
Long quotations, which are 40 words or more, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers.

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like *such as* or *for example*.

Example:

Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as**:** writing, editing, and reviewing.

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services**:** writing, editing, and reviewing.

Tip

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Examples:

Proper noun: We visited three countries**:** Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from *Hamlet***:** "To thine own self be true."

Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology**:** My brother's cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect: The recipe is simple**:** Tomato, basil, and avocado.

Check Your Understanding

For each of the following, choose whether a comma (,) or semicolon (;) is correct.

- He told me to wait ____ but I didn't.
- He couldn't afford the big house __ however, he was able to buy the smaller one.
- The guests were Tom, an architect __ Rachel, a doctor __ and Bill, a dentist.
- He wants to make a lot of money __ in fact, he wants to be a millionaire.
- The guests were German __ French __ and Italian.

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks (" ") set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use them to indicate direct quotations or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A **direct quotation** is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An **indirect quotation** is a

restatement of what someone said or wrote and does not use the person's exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Examples:

Direct quotation: Carly said, **"**I'm not ever going back there again.**"**

Indirect quotation: Carly said that she would never go back there.

Writing in the Workplace

Most word processing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this tool can be useful, it has major limitations. Being well acquainted with the rules of punctuation is far better than leaving the thinking to the computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentences:

Examples:

The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.

The client said, "He thought our manuscript was garbage."

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote in which the client does not like the manuscript. But did he actually use the word "garbage," or has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client's words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client. But who is "he" in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch or flag this, because the sentences are not grammatically incorrect. However, the meanings of the sentences are not the same, but grammar-check software cannot discern whether the words on the screen convey intended meaning. When you understand punctuation, you can write what you mean, and, in this case, save a lot of confusion around the office.

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person's exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

Examples:

Beginning: Madison said**, "L**et's stop at the farmers' market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.**"**

Middle: "Let's stop at the farmers' market**,"** Madison said**, "**to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.**"**

End: "Let's stop at the farmers' market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner**,"** Madison said.

Speaker not identified: "Let's stop at the farmers' market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.**"**

Always capitalize the first letter of a quotation that is a complete sentence, even if that first word is not the first word of the original sentence. When using your own clarifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Examples:

"Regular exercise," he added, "boosts your energy levels and improves your overall mood." (Identifying words break up the quotation.)

"You should start reading simple books to your child as early on as possible—preferably during infancy," the psychologist instructed, adding, "long before your child comprehends or speaks the language!"

When the quotation plays a grammatical role within the sentence (i.e., it is part of the grammatical structure of the rest of the sentence), the quoted part should begin with a lowercase letter. In other words, when the quoted material completes the grammatical makeup of the entire statement, including your own identifying or reporting words, do not capitalize that first letter. In *most* cases, that kind of quoted material is a sentence fragment (not a complete sentence).

Examples:

My friend said, "Luigi's serves the best lasagna in the whole city." (Quoted material is a full sentence and does not play a grammatical role.)

My friend said that Luigi's "serves the best lasagna in the whole city." (Quoted material is not a complete sentence but is essential to completing the grammatical structure of the rest of the

---

sentence.)

He told her, "Practise more, because practice makes perfect." (Quoted material does not contribute to the grammatical structure of the whole sentence.)

He told her to "practise more, because practice makes perfect." (Quoted material completes the grammatical structure of the rest of the sentence.)

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed *after* commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

Examples:

Question is part of quoted text: The new employee asked**, "**When is lunch**?"**

Question is not part of quoted text: Did you hear her say you were **"**the next Picasso**"?**

Exclamation is part of quoted text: My supervisor beamed**, "**Thanks for all of your hard work**!"**

Exclamation is not part of quoted text: He said I **"**single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars**"!**

Quotations within Quotations

Use **single quotation marks (' ')** to show a quotation within in a quotation.

> Examples:
>
> Theresa said, **"**I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, **'**No dogs allowed.**'"**
>
> **"**When you say, **'**I can't help it,**'** what exactly does that mean?**"**
>
> **"**The instructions say, **'**Tighten the screws one at a time.**'"**

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, articles, individual blog post titles, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, as well as titles of websites, are italicized.

> Examples:
>
> **"**Annabelle Lee**"** is one of my favourite romantic poems.
>
> The *New York Times* has been in publication since 1851.

Writing in the Workplace

In many businesses, the difference between exact wording and a paraphrase is extremely important. For legal purposes, or for the purposes of doing a job correctly, it is important to

know exactly what the client, customer, or supervisor said. Sometimes, details can be lost when instructions are paraphrased. Use quotes to indicate exact words where needed, and let your coworkers know the source of the quotation (client, customer, peer, etc.).

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Check Your Understanding

</div>

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and correct them by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write OK.

- Yasmin said, I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat.
- Where should we go? asked Russell.
- Yasmin said it didn't matter to her.
- I know, said Russell, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.
- Perfect! exclaimed Yasmin.

</div>

Apostrophes

An **apostrophe (')** is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter *s* indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add *'s*.

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Examples:

Jen*'s* dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

</div>

The dog*'s* leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess*'s* sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in *s* still take the apostrophe *s* (*'s*) ending to show possession. To show possession with a plural noun that ends in *s*, just add an apostrophe (*'*). If the plural noun does not end in *s*, add an apostrophe and an *s* (*'s*).

Examples:

Plural noun that ends in *s***:** The drummers**'** sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.

Plural noun that does not end in *s***:** The people*'s* votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A **contraction** is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

Examples:

Writing in a Professional Context
Professional Communications OER

I do not like ice cream.

I *don't* like ice cream.

Notice how the words *do* and *not* have been combined to form the contraction *don't*. The apostrophe shows where the *o* in *not* has been left out.

Examples:

We will see you later.

We'll see you later.

Look at the chart for some examples of commonly used contractions.

Contraction	Phrase
aren't	are not
can't	cannot
doesn't	does not

don't	do not
isn't	is not
he'll	he will
I'll	I will
she'll	she will
they'll	they will
you'll	you will
it's	it is, it has
let's	let us
she's	she is, she has
there's	there is, there has
who's	who is, who has

Table 2.1.9 Commonly Used Contractions

Tip
Be careful not to confuse *it's* with *its*. *It's* is a contraction of the words *it* and *is*. *Its* is a possessive pronoun. It's cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.) The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.) When in doubt, substitute the words *it is* in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction *it's*.

Check Your Understanding

Choose the correct response for each of the following.
_____ that person?
    a) Whos
    b) Who's
    c) Whose
Both of my _____ were born in Canada.
    a) parents'
    b) parents
I borrowed my _____ car yesterday.
    a) parents'
    b) parents
Why _____ you be nice to him?
    a) cant

b) can't

Parentheses

Parentheses ( ) are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should still make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses.

Examples:

Attack of the Killer Potatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen (so far).

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious (and nutritious) foods I have ever tasted!

Dashes

An **em-dash (—)** is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together, and the program automatically converts them into a dash. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

> Examples:
>
> Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.
>
> Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

An **en-dash (–)** is used to separate items in a range. These could be ranges of numbers, ranges of dates or ranges of school grades (e.g., Grades 4–7). You would also use an endash when displaying scores (e.g., a 5–0 win), comparisons or between two elements that have a relationship (U.S.–Canada relations).

Hyphens

A **hyphen (-)** looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in a different way.

Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

> Examples:
>
> The 55-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.
>
> My doctor recommended against taking any habit-forming medication.
>
> My study group focused on preparing for the mid-year review.
>
> *Note: Did you know that a noun+participle adjective before the noun it modifies should be

hyphenated but should be left "open" if it comes after the noun? Examples: The medication is

habit forming.

The habit-forming medication is too strong for over-the-counter use.

My doctor advised against taking taking medication that could be habit forming.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-

processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the

hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a

dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

Example:

My supervisor was concerned that the team meet-

ing would conflict with the client meeting.

Check Your Understanding

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding parentheses. If the

sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

● I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.

- Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.
- Has anyone other than me read the assignment?

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

- Guess what I got the job!
- I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.
- You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Conclusion

In this section you went back to basics with grammar and punctuation.

In the grammar section you reviewed the types of sentences, such as simple and complex sentences. You went on to look at things like subject–verb agreement and parallelism. You then reviewed prepositions and conjunctions and finished off the section with modifier errors and split infinitives.

The punctuation section first reviewed some of the more common and correctly used punctuation marks like periods, question marks, exclamation marks, and commas. Then you delved a bit deeper into more challenging punctuation marks like semicolons, colons, quotation marks, apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens.

Strengthening any weak areas in grammar or punctuation will put you on the path to becoming a better writer and communicator.

Learning Highlights

- Match pronouns and antecedents by number (singular or plural) and gender.

- Collective nouns and indefinite pronouns are both considered singular even when they appear to refer to multiple members or components.

- Turning a singular subject into a plural subject is often the best way to handle a number problem between a subject and a pronoun.

- Misplaced modifiers can cloud the meaning of a sentence due to poor placement of key phrases within the sentence.

- Dangling modifiers attribute a description to the wrong noun because of being placed in the wrong place in a sentence.

- Split infinitives are acceptable in many writing situations, but you should understand them so you can avoid them when you need to.

Check Your Understanding

Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed.

- My mothers garden is full of beautiful flowers.
- She has carefully planted several species of roses peonies and irises.
- She is especially proud of her thirty year old Japanese maple tree.
- I am especially proud of the sunflowers I planted them!
- You should see the birds that are attracted to the garden hummingbirds, finches, robins, and sparrows.

- I like to watch the hummingbirds they are my favourite.

- We spend a lot of time in the garden planting weeding and enjoying the view.

- Arent gardens wonderful?

- You should come visit sometime do you like to garden?

Read the following paragraph. Edit by adding apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens where needed. There may be more than one correct way to edit some sentences. Consider how the punctuation you choose affects the meaning of the sentence.

I was a little nervous about the interview it was my first in years. I had to borrow my roommates suit, but it fit me well. A few days ago, I started to research the companys history and mission. I felt like I was well qualified for the job. When I arrived, I shook hands with the interviewer she had a strong grip! It nearly caught me off guard, but I did my best to smile and relax. I was a little distracted by all the books in the womans office she must have had a hundred books in that tiny room. However, I think my responses to her questions were good. Ill send her an email to thank her for her time. Hopefully shell call me soon about the position.

Further Reading and Links

If you would like to read more about grammar and punctuation, see the following site:

- Study Zone, ELC University of Victoria

References

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Writing Workplace Documents

Learning Objectives
Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- describe the purposes of the workplace documents identified in the module;
- given a sample workplace document, identify if the formatting has been correctly applied, and if not, correct it;
- given a scenario, write a sample workplace document applying the correct formatting and following the FAST acronym for writing;

Topics

- Polishing your paragraphs

- Understanding the purposes of five types of written communications (documents) in the workplace: email, short reports, business letters, memoranda, and fax cover sheets
- Formatting and stylizing five types of written communications (documents) in the workplace
- Keeping your written communications FAST (format, audience, style, and tone) conscious

Introduction

Written business communication requires skill and expertise. From letters to reports, the way you use the written word counts. Written documents provide a record of a correspondence, which is key in situations where legal concerns may arise. In cases like this, it's important to be able to demonstrate that the message was sent and received and determine what dates this occurred.

The written communication you produce represents you and your company, so your goal is always to make it clear, concise, and professional, regardless of the type of message you are sending.

This chapter will introduce five key types of written business documents that you will encounter during your professional life. These are **email, memos, letters, fax cover sheets,** and **short reports**. You will also learn about the acronym **FAST**, which will help you stay mindful about the appropriate Format, Audience, Style, and Tone of your document.

Think back to what you learned in the Foundations module about the purpose of communication. You may recall that a message usually has one of three intentions: to inform, persuade, or entertain. When you are writing workplace documents, you'll usually be focusing on the first two intentions, inform and persuade, though you might choose to entertain when you have a lighthearted message, such as an email invitation to an office holiday party.

Most commonly, memos, fax cover sheets, and short reports are intended to inform. These deal with facts only, and their messages are usually neutral—they are not likely to create an emotional response, either positive or negative.

Emails and letters may be strictly informational, or they may be persuasive in some way. For example, you may write an email to ask a colleague to volunteer for an event the company is sponsoring. You'll need to persuade the receiver to give up a Saturday afternoon to help out the company, but perhaps you can persuade them by letting them know that the boss is taking everyone to dinner afterwards!

Whatever your message, remember that different types of workplace documents can align with different purposes. You'll use what you've learned about audience and communication channels to help you choose the right one; rely on your plain language writing, grammar, and punctuation skills to craft a clear message; then use the skills you develop in this chapter to format your document appropriately.

Writing Paragraphs

Before we dive into the types of documents and their uses, we'll need to consider an important part of writing that makes up your documents: the **paragraph**.

A strong paragraph contains three distinct components:

1. **Topic sentence.** The topic sentence is the main idea of the paragraph.
2. **Body.** The body is composed of the supporting sentences that develop the main point.
3. **Conclusion.** The conclusion is the final sentence that summarizes the main point.

The foundation of a good paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea of the paragraph. This guides the reader by signposting what the paragraph is about. All the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence.

Developing a Topic Sentence

Pick up any newspaper or magazine and read the first sentence of an article. Are you fairly confident that you know what the rest of the article is about? If so, you have likely read the topic sentence. An effective topic sentence combines a **main idea** with the writer's personal attitude or opinion; this is called the **controlling idea**. It orients the reader and provides an indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph. Read the following example.

Example:

Creating a national set of standards for math and English education will improve student learning in many provinces.

This topic sentence declares a favourable position for standardizing math and English education. After reading this sentence, a reader might reasonably expect the writer to provide supporting details and facts as to why standardizing math and English education might improve student learning in many provinces. If the purpose of the essay is actually to evaluate education in only one particular province, or to discuss math or English education specifically, then the topic sentence is misleading.

Five characteristics define a good topic sentence:

1. Provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.
2. Contains both a topic and the writer's position on it.
3. Is clear and easy to follow.
4. Does not include supporting details.
5. Engages the reader by using interesting vocabulary.

When creating a workplace document, use the "top-down" approach—keep the topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph so that readers immediately understand the gist of the message.

This method saves busy colleagues precious time and effort trying to figure out the main points and relevant details.

Headings are another helpful tool. In a text-heavy document, break up each paragraph with individual headings. These serve as useful navigation aids, enabling colleagues to skim through the document and locate paragraphs that are relevant to them.

Identifying Parts of a Paragraph

An effective paragraph contains three main parts: a topic sentence, the body, and the concluding sentence. A topic sentence is often the first sentence of a paragraph. It expresses a main idea combined with the writer's attitude about the subject. The body of the paragraph usually follows, containing supporting details. **Supporting sentences** help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. The **concluding sentence** is the last sentence in the paragraph. It reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words.

Read the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

Example:

After reading the new TV guide this week, I had just one thought—why are we still being bombarded with reality shows? This season, the plague of reality television continues to darken our airwaves. Along with the return of viewer favourites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. *Prisoner* follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season, but if any of them are reading this blog—stop it! We've had enough reality television to last us a lifetime!

The first sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It tells the reader that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer's distaste for these shows through the use of the word *bombarded*.

Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It reiterates the main point that viewers are bored with reality television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

Paragraphs that begin with the topic sentence move from the general to the specific. They open with a general statement about a subject (reality shows) and then discuss specific examples (the reality show *Prisoner*).

Now take a look at the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

> Example:
>
> Last year, a cat travelled 130 miles to reach its family, who had moved to another state and had left their pet behind. Even though it had never been to their new home, the cat was able to track down its former owners. A dog in my neighbourhood can predict when its master is about to have a seizure. It makes sure that he does not hurt himself during an epileptic fit. Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.

The last sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It draws on specific examples (a cat that tracked down its owners and a dog that can predict seizures) and then makes a general statement that draws a conclusion from these examples (animals' senses are better than humans'). In this case, the supporting sentences are placed before the topic sentence, and the concluding sentence is the same as the topic sentence.

This technique is frequently used in persuasive writing. The writer produces detailed examples as evidence to back up his or her point, preparing the reader to accept the concluding topic sentence as the truth.

Sometimes the topic sentence appears in the middle of a paragraph. Read the following example. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

Example:

For many years I suffered from severe anxiety every time I took an exam. Hours before the exam, my heart would begin pounding, my legs would shake, and sometimes I would become physically unable to move. Last year I was referred to a specialist and finally found a way to control my anxiety—breathing exercises. <u>It seems so simple, but by doing just a few breathing exercises a couple of hours before an exam, I gradually got my anxiety under control</u>. The exercises help slow my heart rate and make me feel less anxious. Better yet, they require no pills, no equipment, and very little time. It's amazing how just breathing correctly has helped me learn to manage my anxiety symptoms.

In this paragraph the underlined sentence is the topic sentence. It expresses the main idea: that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to his main point (breathing exercises can help control anxiety) by using a personal anecdote (how he used to suffer from anxiety). The supporting sentences then expand on how breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The last sentence is the concluding sentence and restates how breathing can help manage anxiety.

Implied Topic Sentences

Some well-organized paragraphs do not contain a topic sentence at all. Instead of being directly stated, the main idea is implied in the content of the paragraph. Read the following example:

Example:

Heaving herself up the stairs, Luella had to pause for breath several times. She let out a wheeze as she sat down heavily in the wooden rocking chair. Tao approached her cautiously, as if she might crumble at the slightest touch. He studied her face, like parchment; stretched across the bones so finely he could almost see right through the skin to the decaying muscle underneath. Luella smiled a toothless grin.

Although no single sentence in this paragraph states the main idea, the entire paragraph focuses on one concept—that Luella is extremely old. The topic sentence is thus implied rather than stated. This technique is often used in descriptive or narrative writing. Implied topic sentences work well if the writer has a firm idea of what he or she intends to say in the paragraph and sticks to it. However, a paragraph loses its effectiveness if an implied topic sentence is too subtle or the writer loses focus.

Supporting Sentences

If you think of a paragraph as a hamburger, the supporting sentences are the meat inside the bun. They make up the body of the paragraph by explaining, proving, or enhancing the controlling idea in the topic sentence. Most paragraphs contain three to six supporting sentences depending on the audience and purpose. A supporting sentence usually offers one of the following:

Reason

Sentence: The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.

Fact

Sentence: Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.

Statistic

Sentence: Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.

Quotation

Sentence: "We will not allow this situation to continue," stated Senator Johns.

Example

Sentence: Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of 55.

The type of supporting sentence you choose will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you are attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position, you should rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. Read the following example:

Example:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. (**Topic sentence**)

First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. (**Supporting sentence 1: statistic**)

Second, they produce very few emissions during low-speed city driving. (**Supporting sentence 2: fact**)

Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps

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lower prices at the pump. **(Supporting sentence 3: reason)**

Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. **(Supporting sentence 4: example)**

"It's the cheapest car I've ever had," she said. "The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I've owned." **(Supporting sentence 5: quotation)**

Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future. **(Concluding sentence)**

To find information for your supporting sentences, you might consider using one of the following sources:

- Reference book
- Encyclopedia
- Website
- Biography/autobiography
- Map
- Dictionary
- Newspaper/magazine
- Interview
- Previous experience
- Personal research

Concluding Sentences

An effective concluding sentence draws together all the ideas you have raised in your paragraph. It reminds readers of the main point—the topic sentence—without restating it in exactly the same words. Using the hamburger example, the top bun (the topic sentence) and the bottom bun (the

concluding sentence) are very similar. They frame the "meat" or body of the paragraph. Compare the topic sentence and concluding sentence from the previous example:

Example:

Topic sentence: There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.

Concluding sentence: Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

Notice the use of the synonyms *advantages* and *benefits*. The concluding sentence reiterates the idea that owning a hybrid is advantageous without using exactly the same words. It also summarizes two examples of the advantages covered in the supporting sentences: low running costs and environmental benefits.

You should avoid introducing any new ideas into your concluding sentence. A conclusion is intended to provide the reader with a sense of completion. Introducing a subject that is not covered in the paragraph will confuse the reader and weaken your writing.

A concluding sentence may do any of the following:

Example:

Purpose: Restate the main idea.
Sample: Childhood obesity is a growing problem in the United States.

Purpose: Summarize the key points in the paragraph.
Sample: A lack of healthy choices, poor parenting, and an addiction to video games are among

the many factors contributing to childhood obesity.

Purpose: Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.

Sample: These statistics indicate that unless we take action, childhood obesity rates will continue to rise.

Purpose: Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.

Sample: Based on this research, more than 60 percent of children in the United States will be morbidly obese by the year 2030, unless we take evasive action.

Purpose: Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.

Sample: Childhood obesity is an entirely preventable tragedy.

Transitions

A strong paragraph moves seamlessly from the topic sentence into the supporting sentences and on to the concluding sentence. To help organize a paragraph and ensure that ideas logically connect to one another, writers use transitional words and phrases. A **transition** is a connecting word that describes a relationship between ideas.

Example:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. Second, they produce very few emissions during low-speed city driving. Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. "It's the cheapest car I've ever had," she said. "The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I've owned." Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a

hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

Each of the underlined words is a transition word. Words such as *first* and *second* are transition words that show sequence or clarify order. They help organize the writer's ideas by showing that he or she has another point to make in support of the topic sentence. Other transition words that show order include *third*, *also*, *furthermore, initially,* and *subsequently*.

The transition word *because* is a transition word of consequence that continues a line of thought. It indicates that the writer will provide an explanation of a result. In this sentence the writer explains why hybrid cars will reduce dependency on fossil fuels (because they do not require gas). Other transition words of consequence include *as a result*, *so that*, *since*, *thus*, and *for this reason*.

To include a summarizing transition in her concluding sentence, the writer could rewrite the final sentence as follows:

Example:

In conclusion, given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

The following chart provides some useful transition words to connect supporting sentences and concluding sentences.

For Supporting Sentences

above all	but	for instance	in particular	moreover	subsequently
also	conversely	furthermore	later on	nevertheless	therefore
aside from	correspondingly	however	likewise	on one hand	to begin with
at the same time	for example	in addition	meanwhile	on the contrary	
For Concluding Sentences					
after all	all things considered	in brief	in summary	on the whole	to sum up
all in all	finally	in conclusion	on balance	thus	ultimately

Table 2.2.1 Transitions for Supporting and Concluding Sentences

Transitional words and phrases are useful tools to incorporate into workplace documents. They are used within paragraphs to connect one sentence to the next, and are also found at the beginning and end of each paragraph, so that each is seamlessly connected to the next. They guide the reader through the document, clarifying relationships between sentences and paragraphs so that the reader understands why they have been written in that particular order.

For example, when you are writing an instructional memo, it may be helpful to consider the following transitional words and phrases: *before you begin*, *first*, *next*, *then*, *finally*, *after you have completed*. Using these transitions as a template to write your memo will provide readers with clear, logical instructions about a particular process and the order in which steps are supposed to be completed.

Preparing a Workplace Document

When you sit down to write a document at work, you'll need to consider who the audience is and what the purpose of your message is (to inform, persuade, or entertain). With that information you can decide which document type (channel) to use.

A good approach is to outline the document first, marking out where each element belongs. For example, if you have chosen to write a letter, you might first identify the location of each address, the date, the salutation, the signature, and so on. This will help you to create the structure of your document and make the writing process (and, further, the editing process) much easier.

When you are writing a workplace document, you will choose whether to approach your topic **directly** or **indirectly**. A direct message gets to the point immediately within the document, whereas an indirect message sandwiches the key point (often bad news) between other information (positive or neutral detail) so as to "soften the blow" of an undesirable communication.

Email

Electronic mail, usually called *email*, is probably familiar to you. It may be used similarly to text messaging or synchronous chat, or as a quicker way to receive and send information that would traditionally be written in a letter. It can be delivered to a mobile device. In business, it has largely replaced printed letters for external (outside the company) correspondence, as well as

taking the place of memos for internal (within the company) communication (Guffey, 2008). Email is best for fairly brief messages.

Many businesses use automated emails to acknowledge communications from the public or to remind people that reports or payments are due. Your job might require you to populate a form email in which standard paragraphs are used, but you choose from a selection of sentences to make the wording suitable for a particular scenario, for example.

Emails are often informal when used for personal communication, but business communication requires attention to detail, awareness that your email reflects you and your company, and a professional tone so that it may be forwarded to any third-party if needed. Email often serves to exchange information within organizations. Although email may feel informal, remember that when used for business, it needs to convey professionalism and respect. Never write or send anything that you wouldn't want read in public or in front of your company president.

Tips for Effective Business Emails

- Proper salutations should demonstrate respect and avoid mix-ups in case a message is accidentally sent to the wrong recipient. For example, use a salutation like "Dear Ms. X" (external) or "Hi, Barry" (internal).
- Subject lines should be clear, brief, and specific. This helps the recipient understand the essence of the message. For example, "ABC Sales Proposal attached."
- Close with a signature. Identify yourself by creating a signature block that automatically contains your name and business contact information.
- Avoid abbreviations. An email is not a text message, and the audience may not find your wit cause to ROTFL (rolling on the floor laughing).
- Be brief.
- Format cleanly. Include line breaks between paragraphs for ease of reading.
- Do a three-stage review (including structural edit, copy edit, and proofread) before you press send. It will take more time and effort to undo the problems caused by a hasty, poorly written email than to get it right the first time.

- Reply promptly. Watch out for an emotional response—never reply in anger—but make a habit of replying to emails within 24 hours, even if only to say that you will provide the requested information within 48 hours.

- Use "Reply All" sparingly. Do not send your reply to everyone who received the initial email unless your message absolutely needs to be read by the entire group.

- Avoid using all caps. Capital letters are used online to communicate yelling and are considered rude.

- Test links.

- Email ahead of time if you are going to attach large files (audio and visual files are often quite large) to prevent exceeding the recipient's mailbox limit or triggering the spam filter.

- Give feedback or follow up. If you don't get a response in 24 hours, email or call. Spam filters may have intercepted your message, so your recipient may never have received it.

Let's look at two examples of business email. The first is an email form, and the second is a custom message written specifically for the situation and audience.

Example Email Form:

Subject: Welcome to the [our name] Store.

Dear [customer name],

Thank you for registering with the [our name] Store.

You can manage your personal information from the "My Account" section of the website when you sign in to the [our name] Store.

Here, you can change your contact details and password, track recent orders, add alternate shipping addresses, and manage your preferences and profile, all in this single convenient

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location.

Thank you for your interest in the [our name] Store!

We look forward to your next visit.

Example Custom Email:

To: Sean Carlson Physical Plant Manager, XYZ Corporation

From: Miles Nickel, Construction Site Manager, McCrady Construction

Sent: Monday, March 05, 2015, 2:47 p.m.

Subject: Construction Interruptions

Sean,

I know employees of XYZ Corporation are looking forward to moving into the new ABC Street building in June, but recently, groups of employees who do not have business here have been walking through the building. These visits create a safety hazard, interrupt the construction workers, and could put your occupancy date in jeopardy.

Please instruct your staff members who haven't already been moved to ABC Street to stay out of the building. If they need to meet with someone who has already moved, they should conduct their business and leave promptly via the nearest staircase.

We need to avoid further interruptions so our construction workers can get the building ready for occupancy on schedule. If you have any questions, please call me.

Thanks,

Miles

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Check Your Understanding

Your construction company is currently working on renovations in the main hall of an office building. The workers of the office building are still present in their offices every day and often walk through your company's construction zone, creating not only a safety hazard but also interfering with the renovation timelines. Which of the following subject lines is most appropriate in terms of length and content to send to the company(ies) still in the offices in the building?

    a) [No subject line is needed, as the recipient knows me personally.]

    b) Your employees keep walking through our construction site, which delays our project every time it happens

    c) Construction interruptions

    d) Stay out of the building until our job is done

You are working on a project team of seven (7) people. One day you receive an email from the client addressed to your entire team. The message only applies to your area of the project.You should

a) use the Reply-all function.

b) reply directly to the client and BCC the rest of your team.

c) reply directly to the client.

d) reply directly to the client and CC your supervisor.

You receive an email from a coworker from another department containing a message written in all caps that upsets you. You should

a) respond immediately.

b) draft a response but wait until you have calmed down before sending it.

c) forward it to a colleague or your boss.

d) do not dignify it with a response at all.

You receive an email from the client about a project your team is working on, but you do not know the answer to it. You should

a) respond immediately with any information you think you know about the inquiry.

b) try to find out the answer yourself, and only reply when you find out the information.

c) respond within 24 hours to say that you're searching for the answer to their question and will be contacting them again soon.

d) do not reply at all, because you don't know the answer, so it's not your concern.

Memos

Memos

A memo (or memorandum, meaning "reminder") is normally used for communicating policies, procedures, or related official business within an organization. It is often written from a one-to-all perspective, broadcasting a message to an audience, rather than a one-on-one, interpersonal communication. It may be used to update a team on activities for a given project or to inform a specific group within a company of an event, action, or observance.

Memo Purpose

A memo's purpose is often to inform, but it may occasionally include an element of persuasion or a **call-to-action**. All organizations have informal and formal communication networks. The unofficial, informal communication network within an organization is often referred to as the **grapevine**, and it is characterized by 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 change and transform as they are passed from person to person, and before you know it, the word is that they are shutting down your entire department!

One effective way to address 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 you could send a memo explaining the changes that are imminent. If a company wants employees to take action, they may issue a memo. For example, on February 13, 2009, upper management at the Panasonic Corporation issued a declaration that all employees should buy at least $1,600 worth of Panasonic products. The company president noted that if everyone supported the company with purchases, it would benefit all (Lewis, 2009). While memos do not normally include a call-to-action that requires personal spending, they do usually represent the organization's interests. They may also include statements that align business and employee interest.

Memo Format

A memo has a header that indicates who sent it and who the intended recipients are. Pay particular attention to the title of the individual(s) in this section. Date and subject lines are also present, followed by a message that contains a declaration, a discussion, and a summary.

In a standard writing **format**, we might expect to see an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. All these are present in a memo, and each part has a purpose. The introduction in the opening uses a declarative sentence to announce the main topic. The body elaborates or lists major points associated with the topic, and the conclusion serves as a summary. Let's examine a sample memo.

Example Memo:

To: All Employees

From: Maya James, President, Provincial University

Date: September 21, 2015

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 Provincial University through what appears to be a two-year cycle of a severe provincial shortfall in revenue and subsequent necessary legislative budget reductions.

Beginning September 24, 2015, the following actions are being implemented for the General Fund, Auxiliary Fund, and Capital Fund in order to address the projected reductions in our provincial aid for the remainder of this year, 2015/2016, and for the next year, 2016/2017.

1. Only purchases needed to operate the university should be made so that we can begin saving to reduce the impact of the 2016/2017 budget reductions.
2. Requests for out-of-province travel will require approval from the Executive Committee to ensure that only necessary institutional travel occurs.
3. Purchase, including tin-province 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 ProvU to reduce the impact of projected cuts in expected 2016/2017 legislative reductions. Thank you for your cooperation. please direct any questions to my office.

Five Tips for Effective Business Memos

Audience Orientation

Always consider the audience and their needs when preparing a memo. An acronym or abbreviation that is known to management may not be known by all the employees of the organization, so, if the memo is to be posted and distributed within the organization, your goal should be clear and concise communication at all levels with no ambiguity.

Professional, Formal Tone

Memos are often announcements, and the person sending the memo speaks for a part or all of the organization. While it may contain a request for feedback, the announcement itself is linear, from the organization to the employees. The memo may have legal standing, as it often reflects policies or procedures.

Subject Emphasis

The subject is normally declared in the subject line and should be clear and concise. If the memo is announcing the observance of a holiday, for example, the specific holiday should be named in the subject line—for example, use "Thanksgiving weekend schedule" rather than "holiday observance."

Direct Format

Memos are always direct, meaning they get to the point quickly and the purpose is clearly announced.

Objectivity

Memos are a place for just the facts and should have an objective tone without personal bias, preference, or interest on display. Avoid subjectivity.

Check Your Understanding

Instructions: Please review the memo below and then answer the multiple-choice questions

---

that follow.

MEMORANDUM

TO:　　　　All Account Supervisors

FROM:　　　Emilio Corona, Promotional Manager

SUBJECT: Federal Communication Commission

DATE:　　　July 7, 2011

This week the FCC met to discuss new ownership rules that might affect our sponsor and thus our ability to use the promotional items we've developed. Specifically, it may be necessary to discontinue using the monogrammed diaries we give to our anniversary honorees.

Please be aware that if our sponsor is forced to divest itself of some of its media holdings, we will be unable to show the diaries in our public service announcements or at least not until we locate a substitute or revamp our sponsorship contract.

Until we know how the FCC rules, we will continue to display the diaries, but we will not include any images of them in the direct mail campaign, because those materials will be printed before the ruling is announced.

What is the most problematic weakness in the memo shown above?

Select one:

     a) Its format is indirect.

     b) Its tone is informal.

     c) It does not emphasize the subject.

     e) It is not objective.

Rumours have been spreading through the department about extended hours to be worked this month. Which workplace document would best communicate information and address this situation?

     a) a direct email to the person who you think started the rumour

     b) individualized business letters printed and placed in each employee's mailbox

     c) a memo identifying the rumour and providing correct information to the entire department

     d) a memo identifying the rumour and providing correct information to the entire company.

Business Letters

Letters are brief messages sent to recipients that are usually outside the organization. They are often printed on **letterhead** and usually take up one or two pages.

While email may be used more frequently today, the business letter remains a common form of written communication. It can serve to introduce you to a potential employer, announce a product or service, or even to communicate emotions. We'll examine the basic outline of a letter and then focus on specific types.

Your organization may have its own letter format, but this chapter outlines common elements across business letters. There are many types of letters, and we'll look at two primary purposes— good news and bad news—in this chapter. We'll first discuss the elements of a block-style letter.

Letters may serve to introduce your skills and qualifications to prospective employers, deliver important or specific information, or serve as documentation of an event or decision. They may deliver information with a positive, negative, or neutral tone. Regardless of the type of letter you need to write, it can contain up to 16 elements in five areas. While you may not use all the elements in every case, they are listed in the following table.

Content	Guidelines
1. Return Address	The address where someone could send a reply to your letter. If your letter includes a letterhead that displays this information either in the header (across the top of the page) or the footer (along the bottom of the page), you do not need to include it before the date.
2. Date	Left-justify and place the date immediately below (or two lines below) a personal address, or two lines below a letterhead logo.
3. Recipient Note*	Here you can indicate if the letter is confidential.
4. Inside Address	This is the receiver's address.
5. Salutation	A common salutation may be "Dear Mr. [last name]." But if you are unsure about titles (i.e., Mrs., Ms., Dr.) or the gender of the receiver, you may simply write the recipient's name (e.g., "Dear Cameron Rai") followed by a colon. A comma after the salutation is correct for personal letters, but a colon should be used in business. The salutation "To whom it may concern" is appropriate for letters of recommendation or other letters that are intended to be read by any and all individuals. If this is not the case with your letter but you are unsure of how to address your recipient, make every effort to find out to whom the letter should be specifically addressed and make sure to spell the recipient's name

	correctly. Lastly, avoid the use of impersonal salutations like "Dear Prospective Customer," as the lack of personalization can alienate the reader.
6. Subject Line*	Like a subject line in an email, this is where you indicate what the letter is in reference to. Common subject lines include "Re:" or "Subject:" and while they are optional in shorter letters, they can help clarify the main point of longer letters.
7. Introduction	This is your opening paragraph and may include an attention statement, a reference to the purpose of the document, or an introduction of the person or topic, depending on the type of letter. An emphatic opening involves using the most significant or important element of the letter in the introduction. Outline the expectations for your reader up front. A clear opening in your introduction establishes context and helps with comprehension.
8. Body	If you have a list of points, a series of facts, or a number of questions, they belong in the body of your letter. You may choose organizational devices to draw attention, such as a bulleted list. Readers may skip over information in the body of your letter, so make sure you emphasize the key points clearly. This is your core content, where you can outline and support several key points. Brevity is important, but so is clear support for main point(s). Specific, meaningful information needs to be clear, concise, and accurate.

9. Conclusion	Your closing should mirror your introduction and tie the main points together. The conclusion reminds the reader but does not introduce new information. A clear summary sentence will strengthen your writing. If your letter requests action, the conclusion needs to make clear what your expectations are. It is courteous to conclude by thanking the recipient for his or her attention and inviting them to contact you if they have questions.
10. Close	"Sincerely" or "Cordially" are standard business closing statements. Closing statements are normally placed two lines under the conclusion and include a hanging comma (as in "Sincerely,").
11. Signature	Leave three or four blank lines after the close, then type your name and, on the line below it, your title (if applicable).
12. Reference Initials*	If someone other than the signatory (you) prepared, or word-processed the letter, then inclusion of initials is common.
13. Enclosure Notation*	Just like an email with an attachment, the letter sometimes has additional documents that are delivered with it. This line indicates what the reader should look for in terms of documents included with the letter, such as brochures, reports, or related business documents.
14. Copy Notation*	The abbreviation "CC" once stood for *carbon copies* but now refers to *courtesy copies*. Just like a "CC" option in an email, it indicates the relevant parties that will also receive a copy of the document.

15. Mailing Notation*	Sometimes you want to indicate the manner of delivery on the letter itself. This can make it clear to a third party that the letter was delivered via a specific method, such as certified mail (a legal requirement for some types of documents).
16. Logo/Contact Information	A formal business letter normally includes a logo or contact information for the organization in the header (top of page) or footer (bottom of page).

Table 2.2.2 Parts of a Business Letter

* item is optional

A letter has five main areas:

1. The heading, which establishes the sender, including address and date
2. The introduction, which establishes the purpose
3. The body, which articulates the message
4. The conclusion, which restates the main point and may include a call-to-action
5. The signature line, which sometimes includes the contact information

Tip
When formatting a full-block business letter, keep in mind the following guidelines: ● Apply single spacing throughout ● Use 1" – 1 ½" margins

- Left-justify all contents

A sample letter is shown below with guiding notations in bold. Rather than placing the return address at the top of your page, you could instead use company letterhead showing the logo and company address.

Example Letter (Guide)

Return Address (if not in letterhead logo):
123 Cockburn Road
Anytown, MB A1M 2P3

Date: September 14, 2015

Recipient Note (optional): CONFIDENTIAL

Inside Address:
Ms. Zoe Maeve
123 Arbuthnot Drive
Anytown, AB T1A 2B3

Salutation: Dear Ms. Maeve:

Subject Line (optional)**:** The myth of the paperless office

Introduction: This letter is to inform you that the myth of the paperless office, where you will not be required to produce hard copy letters on company letterhead, is just that: a myth.

Body: While email has largely replaced letter writing for many applications, several reasons for producing a hard copy letter remain. The first is that many employers still produce letters as a normal part of business communication. Next, we must consider that papers sales in business have increased across the last decade, showing no signs of the decrease we would associate with the transition to the paperless office. Finally, business letters may serve many functions, and your proficiency in their production will contribute to our personal and professional success.

Conclusion: Letter writing is a skill that will continue to be required in the business environment of today and tomorrow.

Close: Sincerely,

Murray Moman

Signature: Murray Moman

Reference Initials (optional): ARJ

Enclosure Notation (optional, if needed)

Copy Notation (optional): cc: Beth Lloyd

Mailing Notation (optional)

Remember that letters represent you and your company in your absence. In order to communicate effectively and project a positive image, you'll need to:

- be clear, concise, specific, and respectful
- ensure each word contributes to your purpose
- ensure each paragraph focuses on one idea only
- form a complete message
- keep your writing free of errors

Good News or Neutral Information in a Business Letter

Writing a letter that contains good or neutral news is fairly straightforward. Your intention is to get the news across quickly and clearly, while making sure the reader has a positive image of you and your company. You can do this by following these steps:

1. State the news simply and directly.
2. Give the reasons/details.
3. Close with a **goodwill statement**.*

Bad News in a Business Letter

Saying no is more challenging than saying yes! This is true for all kinds of communication, but in a professional context, this can be challenging because you may not know the recipient of your message personally or be able to predict how they will react. When writing a letter that contains bad news, for example, when you need to tell a customer that they will not be receiving a refund, your challenge is to send a negative message while maintaining a positive relationship between your company and the receiver. Bad news can make the receiver feel a number of emotions, from disappointment to irritation, anger, and confusion. You can minimize these negative effects by structuring your letter in a specific way.

When you write a letter that contains bad news, your goals are to
- make the news easy to understand,
- let the receiver know that there will be no change in status (and avoid further communication),
- leave the receiver with a positive impression of your company.

Direct and Indirect Approaches to Writing Business Letters

There are two different ways to deliver bad news in a letter: the direct approach and the indirect approach. You'll decide which approach to use based on the type of news you are delivering.

When using the direct approach, you'll follow these steps:

1. State the bad news simply and directly.
2. Give the reasons.
3. Give an alternative, if possible.
4. Close with a goodwill statement.*

* What is a goodwill statement? It is an assertive but professional statement that demonstrates care about ongoing positive relationship.

The following letter uses the direct approach.

Example Letter (Direct Approach):

Dear Mr. Moore:

The reference you are looking for doesn't seem to have originated with our company. While looking through our record of corporate speeches on the effect of free trade on agriculture, we haven't come across anything similar to the remarks you mentioned. When I asked Mr. Lockhart, he had no recollection of anyone in the company having made that type of analogy.

We have conducted a quick Internet search and have found a number of sites that may well give you the information you are seeking. The Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada website at www.agr.gc.ca is probably a good starting point for your search.

We hope you find this information helpful.

When using the indirect approach, you'll follow these steps:

1. Begin with a **buffer statement**.*
2. Discuss the circumstances leading to the bad news.
3. State the bad news as positively as possible.
4. Give a helpful suggestion or alternative.
5. Close with a goodwill statement.

* What is a buffer statement? It is a gentle but professional statement that sets the tone of your letter.

Choosing an Approach

You would typically use the direct approach in all business letters, except when

- you are delivering bad news and it is unexpected;
- you don't know the reader very well, and a negative emotional reaction is likely to occur.

In these situations, the indirect approach is a better choice.

In situations like these, the reasons you would give in the direct approach (in Step 2) could be viewed as excuses, so it is best not to present them. Instead, you should place the bad news in the middle portion of the letter, providing an explanation before it, and closing with positive or neutral language, as in the indirect approach. It is important to avoid a canned, insincere, inappropriate, or self-serving closing in any letter, but particularly so when you are using the indirect approach.

There are three key things to do in a letter that follows the indirect approach:

1. Provide proof that persuades the reader to accept the bad news.
2. Give the bad news.
3. Give options for future success.

The following letter uses the indirect approach.

Example Letter (Indirect Approach):

Dear James:

Clerks in our office must be ready to serve customers by 9:00 a.m. According to company policy, arriving at work on time is a mandatory element of your employment here.

This month you have been late to work four times. Only two late arrivals are permitted before management must intervene. Since you have exceeded those limits, it is necessary for me to give you a written warning and put you on probation.

If you are on time each day within the next 90 days, I will remove this from your employment record. You will then be able to work towards a promotion and salary increase. I would be pleased to discuss this with you at your convenience.

Tip
When using the indirect approach, you should follow these guidelines: **Don't** mislead the reader with an opening that is too positive.   **Do** keep reasons as short as possible.   **Do** make sure the reader is clear about the bad news.   **Do** avoid negative words and phrasing.   **Don't** end with a statement that is artificial.

When you are writing a letter that contains good news or neutral information, you should use the direct approach.

Check Your Understanding

Instructions: Please review the business letter below and then answer the multiple- choice questions that follow.

Aspen Country Lodge

November 14, 2015

Dorothy Allen
12345 Stream Ave.
St. Augustine, FL 34567

Dear _____(#1):

As the holiday season approaches, we are reminded of the blessings that are bestowed on us throughout the year. At Aspen Country Lodge, the pleasures we share year after year with our Legacy clients are among our most cherished blessings.

And so, as our staff looks forward to spending time with friends and family, we are also thinking of special friends like you and hoping you are enjoying good health and good cheer. We take pride in being your home away from home and reserve a special place in our hearts for the memories we've shared with you.

Thank you for making Aspen Country Lodge part of your annual traditions. Have a blessed Christmas and a peaceful, joyous, and prosperous New Year.

_____(#2),

Theodore P. Hyde, Owner/Manager

Aspen Country Lodge • 402 Aspen Way • Cold Bluff, CA 98765 • (303) 346-7889

This letter is not the perfect specimen of proper English grammar and diction. Which of the following would describe the style of this letter?

     a) formal and impersonal

     b) informal and personal

     c) formal yet personal

     d) informal yet impersonal

Fill in blank #1 with the most suitable salutation.

     a) Ms. (or Mrs.) Allen

     b) Legacy Client

     c) Dorothy

     d) Sir

     e) Dorothy Allen

Fill in blank #2 with the most suitable close. HINT: Your choice should be consistent with the answer you provided for question #1.

     a) Sincerely

     b) Yours Truly

     c) Thank You

     d) Cordially

     e) As Always

Is it appropriate that the signature lines in this letter include the sender's title (position in the

company)? Why or why not?

    a) Yes. It is a standard business practice to always use the sender's title.

    b) No. The sender's title is optional. For example, it is more appropriate to use it business-to-business than business-to-client.

    c) Yes. The title communicates the sender's relevance with respect to the subject of the letter and its central message.

    d) No. The title is optional, so you should consider it with respect to the context and tone of the message.

The eText readings identify a number of functions a business letter can fulfill. Which of those is the most accurate way to describe this letter's function?

    a) to introduce the business to a potential client

    b) to announce or sell a product or service

    c) to maintain positive customer relations

    d) to document an event or decision

    e) to deliver important or specific information

Why is there no return address on this letter?

    a) Because it is written in an informal style, so such deviations are acceptable.

    b) Because the recipient's familiarity with this business means she already knows it.

    c) Because the letterhead graphic takes up too much space.

    d) Because the address is printed in the footer of this letterhead.

    e) All of the above.

Which of the following summarizes best the central message of this letter?

    a) We cherish Legacy clients like you.

    b) We are thinking of you.

    c) We hope you are enjoying good health and cheer.

    d) We are proud of being your home away from home.

    e) All of the above.

Fax Cover Sheet

You might think that email has surely replaced fax by now, but that isn't the case in the business world, at least not yet! You'll notice that faxes are still commonplace when a signature is needed, or when a legally binding document (a contract, for example) is being transmitted. Some industries (such as medical and legal) still rely on faxes because their transmission cannot be intercepted. When confidentiality is important, a fax may be your go-to document format.

Your organization may have a fax cover sheet template that all employees use, so look for this before you send your first fax, as it will make the process much quicker. In general, fax cover sheets usually have some or all of the following contents:

- Company name or logo
- Date
- Name and fax number of receiver
- Name, fax, and phone number of sender
- Number of pages
- Subject*
- Message*
- Confidentiality Notice

*These are not always included. Use them if you have additional information not covered by the fax contents.

Example Fax Cover Sheet:

FAX Ltd.   Smith & Sons.

To: James Milford   **From:** Leonard Smith

| **Fax:** (555) 212-0988 | **Fax:** (555) 313-0122 |
| **Date:** 08/09/2015 | **Phone:** (555) 401-9876 |

CONFIDENTIAL   **Pages:**
5

Subject: Employment Contract

Message:

James,

Please sign and return the attached contract at your earliest convenience.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact my office.

Best Regards,

Leonard.

Short Report

Reports are designed to record and convey information to the reader and can be used both internally and externally. Reports serve to document new information for specific audiences, goals, or functions. 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.

Types of Reports

Reports come in all sizes but are typically longer than a page and somewhat shorter than a book. In this chapter we're focusing on short reports that would typically be up to four pages in length. The type of report depends on its function, and different industries have reports specific to them.

For example, science researchers write lab reports, while incident reports are common in health-and-safety environments.

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. There are many types of reports, but this section will focus on three types common to the workplace. At times, these may be combined into one longer report.

Type	Function
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.

Table 2.2.3 Types of Reports

Progress Report

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.

Recommendation Report

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. If you're writing a recommendation report, it may be helpful to get input from your colleagues.

Summary Report

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.

How Are Reports Organized?

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.

Ten Common Elements of a Report

Page	Element	Function
1. Cover	Title and image	Like the cover of a book, sometimes a picture, image, or logo is featured to introduce the topic to the reader.
2. Title Fly	Title only	Optional
3. Title Page	Label, report, features title, author, affiliation, date, and sometimes for whom the	

	report was prepared	
4. Table of Contents	A list of the main sections and their respective page numbers	
5. Abstract	• Informational abstract: highlight topic, methods, data, and results • Descriptive abstract: (All of the above without statements of conclusion or recommendations)	
6. Introduction	Introduces the topic of the report	
7. Body	Key elements of body include: • Background • Methodology • Results • Analysis and Recommendations	

8. Conclusion	Concise presentation of findings	Indicates the main results and their relation to recommended action or outcome
9. References	Bibliography or Works Cited	List of citations
10. Appendix	Related supporting materials	May include maps, analysis of soil samples, field reports, etc.

Table 2.2.4 Parts of a Report

Here is a checklist for ensuring that a report fulfills its goals:

1. Report considers the audience's needs
2. Form follows function of report
3. Format reflects institutional norms and expectations
4. Information is accurate, complete, and documented
5. Information is easy to read
6. Terms are clearly defined
7. Figures, tables, and art support written content
8. Figures, tables, and art are clear and correctly labelled
9. Figures, tables, and art are easily understood without text support
10. Words are easy to read (font, arrangement, organization)
11. Results are clear and concise
12. Recommendations are reasonable and well-supported
13. Report represents your best effort
14. Report speaks for itself without your clarification or explanation

Formatting a Report

Make it easier for your reader to comprehend the information in your report by formatting your document cleanly. Here are a few guidelines:

- Use 12pt type in a standard font
- Use 1 ½- to 2-inch margins
- Use headings and subheadings to divide the content into clear sections
- Separate paragraphs using white space
- Use visuals (charts, graphs, diagrams, etc.) where they will help in explaining numbers or other information that would be difficult to understand in text form

Check Your Understanding

Read the scenario below and answer the following questions.

Jean is a supervisor in a large agricultural equipment manufacturing facility. The facility has several different departments for different tasks such as fabrication, welding, assembly, and painting. Orders come in through the computer system, which starts a series of tickets for workers, indicating to the workers which and how many parts to produce to fulfill an order. The most recent order was distributed through the ticketing system three weeks ago and has still not been completed. This order should have taken only two weeks to complete. Jean identified that there is a problem in the fabrication department. It seems that the group of new hires are not fabricating parts within the tolerances set by the engineers, which is causing problems at the time of welding and sometimes as far down the line as assembly.

Jean needs to communicate the current state, her assessment of the production issues, and provide an estimated time for completion to her superiors. Which report would she write to accomplish this?

a) a progress report

b) a recommendation report

c) a summary report

Jean believes that she has a solution that will prevent these fabrication issues from occurring in the future. Which type of report would she use to describe what has been completed, what problems were encountered, and solutions to the problems?

  a) a progress report

  b) a recommendation report

  c) a summary report

Jean believes that she has a solution that will prevent these fabrication issues from occurring in the future. She would like to propose these solutions to her boss, Kim Kelly, but has encountered pushback from her boss before. Her boss has made it clear that Jean does not make decisions and that that responsibility (or right) resides with Kelly. Which type of report would best suit Jean's needs and purpose?

  a) a progress report

  b) a recommendation report

  c) a summary report

FAST: Format, Audience, Style, Tone

Format

When composing your business documents, you will first have to decide which format best suits your purpose. In the foundations module we learned that the medium is the message. Similarly in this case, the format you choose for your business document should also align well with the purpose of your message. For example, an email might be considered semiformal depending on audience and purpose; a business letter is usually considered quite formal as are memos, faxes and short reports. Knowing what you've recently learned about the common types of business documents, you must remain mindful that the format you choose tells the audience something about the information they will receive and how important or serious it is for them to pay attention to it.

Once you have chosen the appropriate format for your message, it's also important to ensure that the formatting is correct. For example, if you intend to send a memo, it should not look like an informal email or a business letter; it should contain all the appropriate elements of a memo that you learned about in the previous section. It needs to be clear to the reader what format you are using and you can make that apparent by ensuring the appropriate formatting of your document.

Audience

In the Foundations module you learned the importance of knowing your audience in order to craft effective communications. That is as true as ever when writing business documents. Who you are writing to may be one person or many. The format you choose may make it easy for your document to be accessed by other people (such as email) and include secondary and hidden audiences. But in business writing, of course, your primary audience remains central to your messaging. A helpful approach some communicators use is to try to put themselves in the primary audience's shoes and ask, *What's in it for me?* or *Why should I care?* or *So what?* Identifying the audience and being aware of their needs will help you draft a document that is more likely to get their interest.

Style

Style and tone are often considered interchangeable and there are some blurry distinctions between the two. But for our purposes style refers to elements such as active versus passive writing, varied sentence lengths, flow, variety of word use, and punctuation choices. Style gives your writing a type of personality when coupled together with tone. As with the audience and format, it's important that the style you choose matches with the intended purpose of your message.

Tone

Similar in some ways to style, tone refers to the feeling your audience will get when they decode your document. Here you would ask yourself if your tone is formal, informal, positive, negative, polite, direct, or indirect. The purpose of asking yourself this question is to determine whether the tone suits or otherwise enhances the purpose of your intended message.

The acronym FAST not only helps as a guide to remembering the importance of selecting the right format, remembering your audience, and ensuring appropriate style and tone but also helps you remember that in business writing it's important to get to the point—fast!

Here is a handy tool you can use as you write to remember to use and incorporate the principles of FAST.

Conclusion

This chapter on writing workplace documents began with a review of writing solid paragraphs that include elements like a good topic sentence, body, and conclusion. You then learned about how to prepare a workplace document beginning with an outline and deciding which workplace document to use. You learned about and saw examples of emails, memos, business letters, fax cover sheets, and short reports. Finally, you were introduced to the acronym FAST as a tool to stay mindful of your document and content choices around format, audience, style, and tone.

With this new knowledge you should be well on your way to honing your workplace writing skills, which will be further enhanced in the next section on revising workplace documents.

Learning Highlights

Elements of paragraphs
     ● topic sentence
     ● body
     ● conclusions
 	
 Workplace Documents
     ● Emails are an electronic medium often used to send letters, memos, or less formal

written communication.

- Letters are typically quite formal, brief printed messages often used to inform or persuade customers, vendors, or the public

- Memos are brief documents used internally to inform or persuade employees about business decisions on policy, procedures, or actions.

- Fax cover sheets must always contain complete information about the contents, sender, receiver, and number of pages. Faxing is relevant as a secure way to transmit sensitive documents.

- Short reports can report progress, summarize information, or recommend. They consist of 10 common elements and are no longer than four pages.

Check Your Understanding

Which of the following cases would likely require you to fax the document?

    a) when sending more visually rich documents

    b) to send a direct verbal message to your audience

    c) distributing a company newsletter to all regional offices

    d) an employment contract requiring a signature

After determining the purpose and main points of your message, analyzing the audience, and selecting which workplace document you will create, the best next step would be to

    a) draft the body of the message.

    b) outline the format of the document.

    c) start from the complimentary close and write backwards.

    d) draft and proofread the introductory paragraph.

Enclosure notations are common practice with paper letters. When sending attachments with an email, you should

    a) not include an enclosure note, as the recipient can see that there are attachments in the

email anyway.

b) include the enclosure note, because attachments are not always obvious, especially considering people use a variety of devices to read their emails.

c) not include an enclosure note, because the attachments appear inline in the email body text.

d) include a statement that the attachments are in a separate email and send attachments alone in a follow-up email.

The purpose of this workplace document is to ensure everyone in the department or company receives a consistent message:

a) individualized emails

b) individualized printed letters

c) memorandums

d) faxes

e) project progress reports

Your company is located in a shared office space that houses five companies total. Your company has been notified by the building's security team—by email—that they have seen people smoking too close to the building entrances, which could result in a $250 fine/ticket to those individuals. You should

a) distribute a memo to your company's employees only.

b) distribute a memo to all employees of each company in the building.

c) forward security's email to all the smokers you know in your company.

d) hold a team meeting to discuss the details of security's email.

e) print the email and post it to the pinboard in the lunchroom.

In advance of a meeting, you want to direct all participants' attention to the agenda, which lists the topics that will be covered. Moreover, you want to emphasize that the meeting will not deviate from the topics or their order but that time will be reserved at the end of the meeting for other business. Which document type would you use, and which elements of FAST should

you emphasize in your writing?

    a) Email: audience and tone

    b) Business letter: format and audience

    c) Email: format and style

    d) Short report: format and tone

    e) Business letter: audience and style

You are writing a letter to a company's customer relations department but do not know the name of the person who might be the best recipient for your message. Which of the following should you NOT use?

    a) "To whom it may concern"

    b) No salutation

    c) "Dear Sir or Madam"

    d) "Dear HR Manager"

You are writing a letter to a company's HR manager, Kelly Campbell. You know their name but do not know their title (i.e., Mr., Ms., Mrs, etc.) or gender, and there is no photo on the company's website. How should you write your salutation?

    a) "Dear Kelly Campbell:"

    b) "Dear Mr or Ms Campbell,"

    c) "Dear Sir or Madam Campbell,"

    d) "Dear HR Manager:"

Most often, when closing a formal business letter, you should use which of the following closing statement?

    a) "Cheers"

    b) "From"

    c) "Sincerely"

    d) "Love"

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Lewis, L. (2009, February 13). *Panasonic orders staff to buy £1,000 in products*. Retrieved from http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/markets/japan/article5723942.ece

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Revising Workplace Documents

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to
- describe the role of revision in the writing process;
- describe the three stages, and their elements, of the revision process;
- demonstrate the application of the revision process outlined in this module to a sample of your own writing;
- demonstrate constructive and respectful revision feedback when given a sample of writing.

Topics

- Rewriting vs. revising
- The stages of editing: structural editing, copy editing, proofreading
- Common tools for revising writing

Introduction

You may have heard the phrase "Writing is **rewriting**." This is just as true for technical and business documents such as the ones often found in organizations. Even the best, most accomplished writers in the world almost never lead with their first draft. Instead, there is a

constant process of **revision**, namely, "(to) examine and improve or amend (written or printed matter)."

In this chapter you will first learn to distinguish revision from rewriting. Then you will learn the three stages of editing for business documents that you can perform once you've selected your format and completed a first draft. These include the **structural edit**, the **copy edit**, and **proofreading**. Finally, you will learn about the common tools editors and communicators use to make revising easier and more consistent.

Revision vs. Rewriting

The definition of rewriting is to "write (something) again so as to alter or improve it." In this module we focus on ways to alter and improve your writing, but we wish to make a distinction between revising and rewriting. For our purposes, rewriting would essentially mean throwing away your draft and starting again, whereas revising would mean making incremental improvements to your draft.

For example, you begin to draft a business letter to a supplier because you have a complaint about recent late deliveries. You address it to the client services department and include referencing numbers dates and times of the late deliveries. You use a formal tone, hoping it will be taken seriously by the client services department. Just then your boss gets back from a conference and she tells you that she wound up having lunch with the director of client services for that very supplier. She said the director was very interested in your experience and wanted something on paper sent directly to him. You now have to decide whether to simply revise the letter or start fresh with a rewrite.

You re-read your draft and realize (1) the audience has changed from a department to a specific person; (2) that specific person is already interested in building/maintaining a relationship; (3) the purpose is no longer to complain but to build a better future relationship by solving past problems, namely, late deliveries; and (4) the tone feels overly formal now, considering the new audience and new purpose. For these reasons

you decide to start fresh with a re-write, give the draft to your boss for review/comments, and then officially begin looking at your document through the lenses of the three stages of revision.

The Three Stages of Editing (Revision)

When you are editing, it can be tempting to try to do everything at once. This is usually a recipe for confusion, fatigue, and missed errors. Instead, go through your draft more strategically, moving from ensuring your big ideas make sense to ensuring you spelled your address correctly. These stages of editing do come in a sequence that can work well for most people, but if you're already a master editor with a revision style that works for you, that's fine too. You can still use the following stages in any sequence to ensure your finished document is as polished and professional as possible.

Substantive/Structural Edit

The structural edit aims to make sure that the ideas in the body of your document make sense. At this level you will ask yourself questions like does this paragraph make sense considering my audience and purpose? Is the information complete? This would be the stage that you might want to ensure you've covered the **Five W's and one H**, as applicable (who, what, when, where, why, and how). You might discover that you need to reorganize some paragraphs to make your ideas clearer or get to the point sooner. But the purpose of the structural edit is to make sure that the substance of your message will be clear and logical.

There are some things to consider regarding structure and purpose. The classic **structure for a story** includes a beginning, a middle, and an end. The structure for a news report, known as the **inverted pyramid**, puts all the important information (five W's and one H) within the first one or two paragraphs. Finally, the classic **essay structure** includes an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Most business documents use more of an essay style approach that facilitates a polite introduction, a body that includes the issue at hand, and a conclusion that sums up things in a courteous way. As your writing skills advance, you can use or incorporate other structures like

story or news to make your writing more dynamic. The more practice you get, the better your writing should become over time.

Copy Edit

While structural editing looks at big ideas mostly at the paragraph level, copy editing usually aims to make corrections at the sentence level. Always keeping the audience in mind, a copy edit should also identify specific areas that may confuse or otherwise put off the audience. At this stage you will keep your eyes peeled for things like subject–verb agreement, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and other grammatical issues. You will also scan for appropriate tone (formal, informal, positive, negative, polite, etc.) as well as style (active, passive, varied sentence lengths, flow, variety of word, and punctuation choices, etc). Finally, you will correct any misspelled words as well as any punctuation errors.

It is important to note that many places list copy editing as a code for all editing or revision to documents. Sometimes it includes stylistic editing, which is its own editing category according to the Editors' Association of Canada. Sometimes people also include tasks that fall under proofreading as part of copy editing.

Proofreading

Proofreading assumes that the document is already as correct as can be. At this stage we look for errors within the body of the document, but we also look at the document as a whole for accuracy and correctness. For example, if we are mailing a letter using snail mail, we will want to ensure that the addresses are correct. The easiest way to do a proofread is from top to bottom of the document, ensuring that all the right formatting elements are in place as you go and that the information in the body is uninterrupted by errors or typos. Finally, if there are any enclosures or attachments, the proofreader should ensure that those things are actually enclosed or attached.

In some situations the proofreader may also double as a fact checker if the document happens to contain statistical information, charts, graphs, or other fact-rich information.

While editing or revising a document it is common to become really close to the document, especially if you are also the writer. At that point we tend to see what we think we wrote instead of what's actually on the page. Though it may not always be possible, it's very useful to have a fresh pair of eyes to help us revise our work. Peer review is one way to do this. Another useful technique is to put aside the document for a few hours or even a day if there's time, so that the writer will have a fresh(er) pair of eyes to hopefully catch any mistakes previously missed.

Revisor's Toolkit

Here is a list of some common and accessible tools that you might find useful as you revise your business documents.

Dictionary/Thesaurus

A **dictionary** will give you definitions and proper spelling of words. Today there are a number of reputable online dictionaries that complement or substitute their hardcopy counterparts, such as Oxford Online Dictionary and Merriam-Webster Dictionary. A **thesaurus** is great for expanding your vocabulary by supplying synonyms (similar words), related words, and antonyms (opposite words). For example, a search for "everyone" lists "all" as a synonym, "anybody/anyone, somebody/someone" as related words, and "nobody/none/no one" as antonyms (Merriam-Webster online thesaurus).

Style guide/Style sheet

There are some writing conventions that are not necessarily about right or wrong but more about remaining consistent within and across documents. For example, if you want to show that something happened in the morning, would you write 8AM, 8am, 8 a.m., 8 am, or 8 A.M.? In order to keep a consistent style to documents, several popular **style guides** are available such as the *Chicago Manual of Style*, *The Canadian Press Styleguide*, or even the old classic Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*. Some organizations make their own style guides, known as **house style**, to keep things consistent with their brand. (Imagine trying to start a sentence with a capital

letter at Apple, home of the iPad, iPod, and iPhone!) Similarly, individual writers can also put together a stylesheet to keep track of style decisions in order to keep a document consistent. Some style areas to beware of in business documents include conventions regarding

- dates (year/month/day vs. day/month/year, etc.),
- times (24-hour clock vs AM/PM or a.m./p.m.),
- salutations ("Dear John," vs. "Dear John:" vs. "Dear John"), and
- British-based vs. US-based spelling conventions (e.g., *colour*/*color*, *centre*/*center*, *programme*/*program*).

Spell Check/Grammar Check

Most word processing software packages such as Microsoft Word and even newer online, cloud-based tools like Google Docs have **spelling** and **grammar checking** features. Normally these are found in the drop-down menu marked "Tools." This is especially useful for either the copy edit or proofing phase of revision.

On-screen edits (e.g. Track Changes, find/replace)

It is commonly suggested that looking for errors on the printed page is easier than finding them on-screen. However, there is also a push for environmental sensitivity and moving toward "paperless" offices. To help with this process, in addition to spellcheck, consider using tools such as **Track Changes** in Microsoft Word. This is particularly useful if you are revising written work for your boss or for a colleague who needs to know what changes you've made. Also found under the "Tools" drop-down menu, Track Changes allows you to remove/replace words; delete or add words, sentences, or paragraphs; and make other revisions while showing and keeping track of all changes made.

Another useful tool is the **find/replace** function. Let's say you want to be sure that you change all spellings of *center* to *centre*. You type "center" into the box that says "find," then type "centre" into the box that says "replace." You can then decide to "replace all" or replace them one by one as the system finds them throughout your document. This saves time and ensures

more accuracy than trying to scan the document with your own eyes. The find/replace function is found under the "Edit" drop-down menu.

Off-screen/Hard-Copy Edits (e.g., Proofreader's marks)

If you must revise for someone else on actual paper, you may find a guide for **proofreader's marks** useful. These marks are fairly standard across all kinds of publishing and pretty easy to understand. They save space and time by using marked symbols to explain what changes need to be made and where. Here is a sample of proofreader's marks.

Conclusion

In this chapter you learned that the distinction between rewriting and revising was the equivalent of starting from scratch to making improvements to an already existing draft. You reviewed the three stages of editing that are useful during the revision process, including structural editing, copy editing, and proofreading. You then learned about some tools, such as dictionaries, style guides, and onscreen/offscreen editing tools, that help writers and editors to revise workplace documents.

Learning Highlights

- Rewriting is starting from scratch, whereas revising means making incremental changes.
- The revision process includes three stages of editing: the structural edit, the copy edit, and proofreading.
- Structural edit happens at the paragraph level and focuses on the flow of ideas and ensures logic.
- Copy edit happens at the sentence level and focuses on correcting grammar, punctuation, and style.
- Proofread assumes the document is done and ensures no further errors remain or were introduced in the editing process.

- There are several useful tools that help writers to revise effectively, including dictionaries/thesaurus, style guides, on-screen and off-screen editing tools.

Check Your Understanding

Which stage of revision maintains a focus on the audience while reviewing the document sentence by sentence?

a) Copy edit

b) Proofread

c) Reread

d) Structural edit

Identifying and correcting grammar and punctuation errors such as sentence fragments, and commas splices should occur in which stage of revision?

a) Copy edit

b) Proofread

c) Reread

d) Structural edit

Checking to ensure that all of the necessary information is present in your written document is part of the _____ stage of revision.

a) Copy edit

b) Proofread

c) Reread

d) Structural edit

Checking to ensure that all of the necessary information is present in your written document is part of the _____ stage of revision.

a) Copy edit

b) Proofread

c) Reread

d) Structural edit

The following paragraph contains errors. On your own sheet of paper, correct the paragraph using the revision skills you have learned as needed. There may be more than one way to correct the paragraph.

May 18 2015

Dear Hiring Manager

Allow me to introduce myself in my previous position I was known as the King of Sales. Youre welcome to contact my previous employer to inquire about my performance. I hope to earn the same title within your company. I have a strong work ethic and great interpersonal skills. Clients recognize me as dependable honest and resourceful. My name is Frances Fortune. I have thirteen years experience in corporate sales and account management. I have been the top rated seller for two years in a row. I excel at goal setting and time management. However you don't have to take my word for it I will be happy to provide personal and professional references upon request. I look forward to speaking with you in person in the near future.

Sincerely

Frances Fortune

Further Reading and Links

If you would like to read more about revision, rewriting, and editing see the following sites:

Editors' Association of Canada professional editorial standards.

References

Rewrite. (n.d.). In *Oxford Dictionaries*. Retrieved from

   http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/rewrite

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Chapter Content

Check Your Understandings

Ethical Guidelines for Writing

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- describe plagiarism and ways to avoid it;

- describe copyright and how to use others' work ethically;

- describe the function of workplace codes of ethics and conduct, related to information

   access and record management;

- determine if a sample written summary of given source material would be considered

   plagiarism or not; and

- identify ethical violations in supplied scenarios related to written workplace documents.

Topics

- Plagiarism
- Copyright and Creative Commons
- Access to information and record management
- Codes of conduct in the workplace
- Writing respectfully

Introduction

You love your new job working for a retailer of specialty athletic gear. As a member of the marketing team, you get the idea of writing some fake reviews on a popular online review portal to give your company and your team an edge. What's the harm? No one will know. It's not necessarily bad, because it's not against the law. But would most people consider it the right thing to do?

Ethics is defined as "moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity" (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). Ethical behaviour asks you to be concerned about what is inherently right or wrong in a given situation. The right thing to do may not always be obvious, and sometimes you have an ethical dilemma when there's no clear answer.
To help in situations when you are trying to behave and communicate ethically, most organizations have guidelines in place to help people act in a way that is considered more right than wrong.

Plagiarism, "the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own," (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.) is heavily frowned upon and typically carries big penalties. Effectively using sources and giving credit where credit is due is one way to avoid it.

Copyright, which you learned about briefly in the Foundations module chapter "A Picture Is Worth 1,000 Words: Using Visuals" is a law that helps to stamp out plagiarism and other unauthorized uses of intellectual or creative property. Creative Commons builds upon copyright, enabling flexibility and openness through attribution and sharing while maintaining conditions that seek to prevent unauthorized use.

Because organizations contain so much information, there are often protocols in place to govern who has access to information and under what circumstances—unauthorized access is usually considered unethical. Similarly, **records management** principles and guidelines are also in place in most organizations, because employees need to take great care to ensure records and other personal or private company information is kept safe.

Codes of conduct are found within many organizations that give guidelines for ethical or proper behaviour.

Being able to balance the need for speed and clarity while staying ethically sound means one must cultivate the skill of writing respectfully. Words are powerful, especially in written documents. Respectful writing aims to balance courtesy, professionalism, and and conciseness in a way that is considerate of intended, secondary, and hidden audiences.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism can occur on purpose or be accidental. It can also result from performance pressure, lapses in judgement, total ignorance, or a plethora of other reasons. This is why it is important to be vigilant and aim to be above reproach in your quest to write and communicate ethically. Examine the following high-profile examples of plagiarism about the University of Alberta's Dean of Medicine and the former head of the Toronto District School Board to get a feel for what it looks like and what the potential consequences can be.

There are some key ways to avoid passing off work that isn't your own: namely, give credit where credit is due. Always. If you did not come up with the idea, saying, phrase, or thought yourself, cite your source and make it clear where the words or ideas came from; this is a crucial first step. However, to stay on the right side of the law and be aligned with good ethical practice, you often need to do more than just cite the source to avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism can take many forms and be either intentional or unintentional. Follow this online tutorial where you will describe, identify the types of plagiarism, and demonstrate how to avoid it: http://www.ucd.ie/library/elearning/plagiarism/story.html

Check Your Understanding
Read the following statements. Which cases would be considered plagiarism, and which would not? ● I paraphrased someone else's ideas in my report and included a citation. ● I changed a few words from the source and, therefore, do not have to include quotation marks. ● I did not cite the source in my report, because I found the information online. ● I submitted a report that I bought online. ● I used a direct quote, word for word, and cited the original source.

Copyright and Creative Commons

Copyright and creative commons are among the most useful forms of **intellectual property** tools you will use as a writer of workplace documents. Other forms of intellectual property protection include things like patents, trademarks, and industrial designs (World Intellectual Property Organization, n.d.). In the Foundations module we learned that copyright is the exclusive and assignable legal right given to the originator for a fixed number of years to print, publish, perform, film, or record literary, artistic, or musical material. Once the number of years expires on copyright (in Canada, normally 50 years after the copyright holder's death), the work enters the public domain. A work enters the public domain when the creator's intellectual property rights have expired, been forfeited, or are inapplicable. We also learned that Creative Commons (CC) is a non-profit organization devoted to expanding the range of creative works available for others to build upon legally and to share; the organization has released several copyright-licenses known as Creative Commons licenses free of charge to the public.

Organizations have a special interest in protecting themselves from being sued and also from damaging their brand. If you are responsible for composing documents in your workplace, you might know that in most cases your organization will own the copyright. If you are confused at all regarding a document you create or anything related to ensuring proper protocol around intellectual property, your best bet is to contact the appropriate person in Human Resources and/or the person responsible for legal matters in your organization. The information we provide here is general and should not be taken as legal advice.

Creative Commons licensing is a bit of a new kid on the block. Where people have been grappling with interpreting copyright laws for some time now, the risk with Creative Commons licensing is that it's not as simple as it seems. People often think they are using the licenses correctly, but certain licenses are more compatible with some licences and less compatible with others. Here is a helpful chart that illustrates which licenses can and cannot be combined.
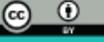
Creative Commons License Compatibility

	PUBLIC DOMAIN	PUBLIC DOMAIN 0	CC BY	CC BY SA	CC BY NC	CC BY ND	CC BY NC SA	CC BY NC ND
PUBLIC DOMAIN	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✘	✔	✘
PUBLIC DOMAIN 0	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✘	✔	✘
CC BY	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✘	✔	✘
CC BY SA	✔	✔	✔	✔	✘	✘	✘	✘
CC BY NC	✔	✔	✔	✘	✔	✘	✔	✘
CC BY ND	✔	✔	✔	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘
CC BY NC SA	✘	✘	✘	✘	✔	✘	✔	✘
CC BY NC ND	✔	✔	✔	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘

Figure 2.4.1 Creative Commons License Compatibility Chart by Laura Underwood

Adapted from Kennisland (2013)

Check Your Understanding

Copyright status is granted only to well-known authors and filmmakers. **True   False**

Amy tells Daniel about her summer vacation, and he says he'd love to see her pictures. Amy uses Facebook to upload the photographs she took at camp so he can download them. That's copyright infringement.   **True   False**

Kathy downloaded a few photos of local organic farms from Flickr.com's Creative Commons (CC) pool. She follows the rules of the photographer's specific CC license and uses them in her digital video about sustainable agriculture. That's OK.

True   False

Paula read an interesting article about the making of the film *Titanic* and wants to use a short quote in her cinema review paper for journalism class. That's copyright infringement.   **True**

   False

Since Richard forgot to register his screenplay before he sent it out to agents for review, he is no longer eligible to copyright it.   **True   False**

Access to Information and Records Management

Here we focus on ethical approaches to accessing information with respect to writing and working in organizations. With so much information around us, organizations often seek to effectively and efficiently manage access to information. Depending on your job or function, you may have access to several sensitive documents, databases, or repositories that can include things like trade secrets, employee information, patents, financial records, or customer/client information.

On one hand you have the consumer perspective where people want to know what information organizations have collected about them. In Canada we have legislation such as the Privacy Act and PIPEDA (aka Digital Privacy act) to ensure certain standards in dealing with the government and other organizations and what information they have and can collect. However, on the other hand we have workers entrusted with the company's information who must manage it responsibly and ethically. Here are several short case studies to illustrate more common issues regarding access to information and records management (with instructive comments in the section to follow):

Situation 1

Shana's brother Dylan starts dating a girl named Zoe. Shana, a civilian clerical worker at the local police unit, thinks Zoe is pretty shady and doesn't trust her. She decides to use her position to get a background check on Zoe.

Situation 2

Felix works in customer service for one of the big phone companies. His mom wants to rent out a room to a mature college student, but he's wary about this person's ability to pay. He decides to go through company records to see if the student has a track record of paying his phone bills on time.

Situation 3

Alicia works in financial analysis and stumbles across an amazing investment opportunity as part of her work. She decides to quietly make an investment and also encourages her financially struggling sister to get in on the investment while it's hot.

Situation 4

Roger, a new dad and new homeowner, just began working as a senior administrator for his dream professional services company. Less than 90 days into the job, his boss comes to him in a panic and demands that he drop everything and start shredding boxes of documents. When Roger asks what the rush is, his boss tells him they are about to be raided and that heads will roll—including Roger's—if the cops get hold of what's in those documents.

Situation 5

Professor Smith has a thing for the handsome, intelligent student in her class. The student comes to her one day with flowers and a sad story about not being able to get a scholarship unless his A– becomes an A+. She accesses his paper record and simply draws a vertical stroke through the middle of the minus sign.

Situation 6

Billy Watson is writing a college exam. He is having trouble remembering his study notes, which he had compiled just the night before. He decides to take a peek at his cellphone while the proctor's back is turned so he can get the right answers. He thinks he's home free, until another exam proctor asks Billy to follow him after the exam.

Codes of Conduct in the Workplace

Codes of conduct come in various forms in organizations. Often during new hire orientation, workers will be exposed to the depth and range of company policies that they are expected to adhere to as a condition of employment. Depending on your role or position in the organization, some codes of conduct may be more applicable to certain people likely to find themselves in certain scenarios.

We cannot provide an exhaustive example of every possible code of conduct in every organization, but we can give brief examples of types of policies that would apply to the five scenarios you read above (in the Access to Information and Records Management section), as follows.

1. Situation 1 has to do with privacy and access to information. Whether Shana accessed records herself or convinced someone else with authorized access to do it, the two main issues here are breach of privacy and unauthorized access to information. Putting the force's reputation at risk with these actions can undermine trust in the organization.
2. Felix's situation is another case where access to information, privacy, and, in this case, financial records such as credit reports have been accessed in an unethical and possibly illegal way.
3. In Alicia's case, codes of conduct relating to insider information/trading and conflict of interest would likely apply here.
4. Roger's biggest issue here, should he follow his boss's instructions, would be less about following codes of conduct and more about the criminal matter of destroying evidence.
5. Professor Smith should be concerned about accepting a bribe and tampering with records.
6. Billy's cheating violated the student code of behaviour and resulted in academic probation.

Codes of conduct and other documents related to ethics, values, and rules that attempt to govern behaviour may not cover every possible situation or outcome. However, it is important to get to

know the ones in your organization and also to get in touch with your own sense of values. Commonly known as the **"tummy test**," whenever you find yourself in an ethical dilemma or other questionable moral workplace situation, using a combination of your workplace's codes of conduct in conjunction with your own notion of what's right and wrong is probably the best way to go.

Writing Respectfully

We learned in the Foundations module about the medium of writing. We learned that it's not the most information rich method but that the written word, especially when it's published on paper, is considered quite formal. We also learned about our audiences and how to meet their needs and expectations.

When we write respectfully, we aim to balance courtesy, professionalism, and conciseness.

Courtesy

You will notice that in most workplace documents, courtesy is embedded in the documents themselves. Take the business letter, for example, which begins with addressing the addressee as "Dear." When you are courteous, it tells the audience that you are considering them and aiming to respect them. When the audience feels respected, they are usually more open to absorbing your message.

We learned about primary, secondary, and hidden audiences in the Foundations module. Being courteous means considering the needs and expectations of all potential audiences. Aiming for courtesy as a means of respect is a time-honoured tradition in human communication, and its expression can vary from one environment to the next. If you are writing for an audience or audiences outside your environment our culture, it makes sense to consult with someone more familiar with the target environment to ensure your courteous message can be received as intended.

Professionalism

Professionalism is described as "the competence or skill expected of a professional." Included in this competence and skill are qualities normally found among ethical guidelines of various professional organizations, such as truthfulness, integrity, confidentiality, respect, and social responsibility. To be professional and write respectfully means being mindful of all of these elements and even having them supercede the desire for your own notions of personal expression. Workplace documents are not the place to insert your opinion or invoke your right to freedom of speech. Being a professional means understanding that there is a time and place for all kinds of expression, and your workplace is the time and place to put your organization front and centre of your communications.

Conciseness

Business people don't like to read any more than they have to. This does not mean they don't enjoy novels or articles; it just means that they are more likely to read workplace documents if they can identify that the information is useful, timely, and relevant to their needs. This comes back to the notion of keeping things short and to the point (as discussed in the section on plain language in the Foundations module) but in a way that balances conciseness with professionalism and courtesy.

Writing respectfully makes your message more palatable to your various audiences, professionalism ensures that ethics and competency are covered, and use of plain language principles keeps things concise in an era of information overload.

Writing respectfully may seem like a relatively basic aim, but is an important skill to master as we aim to communicate in a way that is ethical.

Conclusion

Now you have learned the definition of ethics and several scenarios showcasing ethical issues that can crop up when you write or work with documents in the workplace. You've learned about plagiarism and its pitfalls and how to guard against it with techniques like effective sourcing and

using copyright laws and licenses like Creative Commons. You've seen pitfalls regarding access to information and information management and how codes of ethics along with your own "tummy test" can guard against landing your or your company in hot water. Finally, you learned about the virtues of writing respectfully, including the aim to always be courteous, professional, and concise in your business writing contexts.

Learning Highlights

- The definition of *ethics* is "moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity"
- Several common ethical issues exist in workplace writing, including plagiarism.
- Copyright and Creative Commons can be used as tools to guard against plagiarism while ensuring to give credit where credit is due
- You can use the "tummy test" or codes of conduct as methods to guard against ethical pitfalls around privacy or information management.
- Writing respectfully is considered an ethical way to communicate and includes balancing courtesy, professionalism, and conciseness in business writing.

Check Your Understanding

Your department purchases a single-user online subscription to the local newspaper and shares the username and password so anyone in the department can read it when they wish. Would this be considered copyright infringement?

a) No, because the department is paying for it, so everyone should have access.

b) Yes, because the department only purchased a single-user license.

c) No, because only one person ever accesses the newspaper at one time.

d) Yes, because the newspaper could also be printed and delivered.

Sasha read an article he found publicly on another company's blog. He copies the text and posts the article to his company's internal wiki to share with his colleagues. Would this be considered copyright infringement?

    a) No, because the article was posted publicly online, not behind a paywall.

    b) Yes, because all writing in the wiki should be original writing.

    c) No, because everything online is in the public domain.

    d) Yes, because he made a copy of the work.

When writing workplace documents and communications, especially in potentially volatile circumstances, we aim to write respectfully. This may be achieved by balancing which of the following?

    a) courtesy, style, and tone

    b) courtesy, professionalism, and conciseness

    c) directness, plain language, and positivity

    d) format, formality, and friendliness

    e) indirectness, positivity, and conciseness

A simple and effective way to demonstrate courtesy, even in short emails, is to

    a) ask how the recipient is doing.

    b) state that you are doing well and hope they are too.

    c) use only the recipient's first name.

    d) use the proper salutation and recipient's name.

Ian works as a pharmaceutical technologist at a community pharmacy. While filling prescriptions he recognizes one of the names on the label sheet. The prescription he is filling is for an old neighbour whom he did not get along with. Ian knows that the prescription is supposed to help patients with heart problems. Later that night over dinner Ian casually mentions the prescription for his old neighbour to his wife.

> a) Is it ethical or acceptable for Ian to recount the story of his observation from work? Why or why not?

Further Reading and Links

If you would like to read more about finding, using, and attributing Creative Commons–licensed materials, see the following sites:

- A *New York Times* article regarding deceptive Internet reviews
- A *Guardian* article regarding companies fined for fake internet reviews
- A *CBC* article regarding journal paywalls and copyright violation

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Information Literacy

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- apply information literacy skills to search for and gather information to complete a given research-based task;
- apply information literacy strategies to determine if a source is valid, reliable, and/or

credible;

- write a short report adhering to the norms required for the document type, and the principles of effective workplace writing in response to a given research-based scenario.

Topics

- Identifying your information needs
- Internet search strategies
- Evaluating sources of information for validity, reliability, and credibility
- Citing your sources
- Presenting your findings

Introduction

In this chapter you will learn how to conduct research for use in your professional life. When you are writing more complex pieces of communication, such as the reports you learned about in a previous chapter, you'll need to draw upon research to make your points clear and persuasive. Here you'll find out how to identify what information you need, where to find it, how to cite it, and how to pull together your research into a finished piece of professional work.

Identifying Your Information Needs

Not every piece of business writing requires research or investigation. When you are undertaking more formal documents, particularly reports, you'll need to do your research, but this does not necessarily mean long hours at a library. Start by consulting with colleagues who have written similar documents and ask what worked, what didn't work, and what was well received by management and the target audience. Your efforts will need to meet similar needs.

Before you go to the library, look over the information sources you already have in hand. Do you regularly read a magazine that relates to the topic? Was there an article in the newspaper you read that might work? Is there a book, website, or podcast that has information you can use? You might even know someone who has experience in the area you want to research, someone who has been involved with the topic for his or her whole life. We do a lot of our reading and research online today, so getting information firsthand is probably not the first method that comes to mind—but talking to an expert directly will give you insight into a topic that no website can compete with.

When you sit down to write a message that incorporates research, you'll need to consider the purpose and audience just as you would with any other professional communication. Your **general purpose** will, most often, be to inform, but it may also be to persuade. For example, if you are writing a recommendation report, you'll draw upon your research to persuade the reader to take the action you suggest. You will also have a **specific purpose** in mind, in terms of the results you want to achieve. For example, if you work for a magazine and are researching content for a marketing campaign, your specific purpose might be to increase subscriber numbers by 20 percent in the next quarter.

You'll also consider what your audience's needs and expectations are. For example, if your boss has asked you to draft a report on social media marketing so that he can present an action plan to the management team, your approach will be more formal than if you are simply surfing the web to find and price out a location for the next team-building day. Once you know your audience and purpose, it's time to start gathering information.

Narrowing Your Topic

You'll start with developing ideas around your topic, but even with a purpose in mind, you may still have too broad of a subject to cover within the time frame you have. You might want to revisit your purpose and ask yourself, how specific is my topic?

Imagine that you work for a local skydiving training facility. Your boss has assembled a list of people who might be candidates for skydiving and asks you to write a letter to them. Your general purpose is to persuade, and your specific purpose is to increase the number of students enrolled in classes. Your approach might be to tell your audience how exhilarating the experience of skydiving is, discuss the history and basic equipment, cover the basic requirements necessary to go on a first jump, and provide reference information on where your audience could go to learn more (videos and websites, for example).

But, at this point you'll probably realize that a one-page letter simply is not enough space for the content you are planning to share. Rather than expand the letter to two pages and risk losing the reader, consider your audience and what they might want to learn. How can you narrow your topic to better consider their needs? As you edit your topic, considering what the essential information is and what can be cut, you'll come to focus on the key points naturally and reduce the pressure on yourself to cover too much information in a limited space.

Perhaps starting with a testimony about a client's first jump, followed by basic equipment and training needed, and finally a reference to your organization, may help you to more clearly define your document. Skydiving history may be fascinating, but including it in the letter would result in too much information. Your specific purpose may be to increase enrolment, but, in order to persuade your audience to consider skydiving for themselves, your general goal will need to be to communicate goodwill and establish communication with this target audience.

Focus on Key Points

Let's imagine that you are the office manager for a pet boarding facility that cares for dogs and cats while their owners are away. The general manager has asked you to draft a memo to remind employees about safety practices. Your general purpose is twofold: to inform employees about safety concerns and to motivate them to engage in safe work practices. Your specific purpose is also twofold: to prevent employees from being injured or infected with diseases on the job, and to reduce the risk of the animal patients being injured or becoming sick while in your care.

You are an office manager, not a veterinary or medical professional, and there are volumes written about animal injuries and illnesses, along with entire schools devoted to teaching medicine to doctors who care for human patients. In a short memo, you cannot cover all possible examples of injury or illness. Instead, focus on the behaviours and situations you observe around the office. For example:

- Do employees wash their hands thoroughly before and after contact with each animal?
- Are hand-washing facilities kept clean and supplied with soap and paper towels?
- When cleaning the animals' cages, do employees wear appropriate protection such as gloves?
- What is the procedure for disposing of animal waste, and do all employees know and follow the procedure?
- When an animal is being transferred from one cage to another, are there enough staff members present to assist when needed?
- What should an employee do if he or she is bitten or scratched?
- What if an animal exhibits signs of being ill?
- Have there been any recent incidents that raised concerns about safety?

Once you have posed and answered questions like these, it should be easier to narrow down the information so that the result is a reasonably brief, easy-to-read memo that will get employees' attention and persuade them to adopt safe work practices.

Planning Your Investigation

Now let's imagine that you work for a small accounting firm whose president would like to start sending a monthly newsletter to clients and prospective clients. He is aware of newsletter production service vendors that provide newsletters to represent a particular accounting firm. He has asked you to compile a list of such services, their prices and practices, so that the firm can choose one to employ.

You will begin your planning immediately while your conversation with the president is still going on, as you will need more information before you can gauge the scope of the assignment. Approximately how many newsletter vendors does your president want to know about—are three or four enough? Would 20 be too many? Is there a set budget figure that the newsletter cost must not exceed? How soon does your report need to be done?

Once you have these details, you will be able to plan when and where to gather the needed information. If the president has any examples of newsletters he has seen from other businesses, you can examine them and note the contact information of the companies that produced them.

Assuming that your president wants to consider more than just a couple of vendors, you will need to expand your search. The next logical place to look is the Internet. As anyone who has spent an entire evening aimlessly web surfing can attest, the Internet is a great place to find loads and loads of interesting but irrelevant information. Knowing what questions you are seeking to answer will help you stay focused on your report's topic, and knowing the scope of the report will help you to decide how much research time to plan in your schedule.

Staying Organized

Once you open up a web browser such as Google and type in a search parameter like "newsletter production," you will have a wealth of information to look at. Much of it may be irrelevant, but even the information that fits with your project will be so much that you will be challenged to keep track of it.

Perhaps the most vital strategy for staying organized while doing online research is to open a blank page in your word processor and title it "Sources." Each time you find a webpage that contains useful and relevant information, copy the URL and paste it on this Sources page. Under the URL, you might also make a few notes about what you found there. If in doubt about a source, list it for the time being—you can always discard it later. Having these source URLs and snippets of information all in one place will save you a great deal of time later on.

As you explore various websites of companies that provide newsletter production services, you will, no doubt, encounter new questions that your president did not answer in the original conversation:

- Does the newsletter need to be printed on paper and mailed? Or would an email newsletter be acceptable, or even preferable?
- Does your firm want the newsletter vendor to write all of the content customized to your firm, provide a menu of pre-existing articles for your firm to choose from, or let your firm provide some—or even all—of the content?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of these various options?

You also realize that in order to get any cost estimates, even when the above questions are settled, you will need to know the desired length of the newsletter (in pages or in word count), and how many recipients are on your firm's mailing list. At this point in your investigation, it may make sense to give your president an informal interim report summarizing what you have found out and what additional questions need to be answered.

Having a well-organized list of the information you have assembled, the new questions that have arisen, and the sources where you found your information will allow you to continue researching effectively as soon as you have the answers you need.

Internet Search Strategies

Whether you are searching research **databases** or conducting general **online searches**, the search terms and phrases you use will determine what information you find. Following some basic **search term** guidelines can make the process go smoothly.

Start by using keywords that relate to your topic.

Example: alternative energy

To expand your search, use synonyms or components of the initial search terms.

Synonym Example: renewable energy

Components Example: algae energy, wind energy, biofuel

Another technique you can use is to refine the presentation of your search terms using **boolean operators**. These are words like AND, NOT, and OR. The asterisk and parentheses can also be used. These can be used to filter your search in the following ways.

Tip	Description	Keywords
Use multiple words.	Use multiple words to more narrowly define your search.	*renewable energy* instead of *energy*
Use quotation marks.	Place quotation marks around two or more words that you want to search for only in combination, never individually.	"renewable energy"
Use "AND" to connect words.	Use "AND" between words when you want to retrieve only articles that include both words.	algae AND energy
Use "OR" to choose one or the other.	Use "OR" to find information relating to one of two options but not both. This option works well when you have two terms that mean the same thing and you want to find articles regardless of which term has been chosen for use.	ethanol OR ethyl alcohol
Use "NOT" to eliminate likely options.	Use "NOT" to eliminate one category of ideas you know a search term will likely generate.	algae NOT food
Use "*" to include alternate word endings.	Use "*" to include a variety of word endings. This process is often called using a "wildcard."	alternate* energy

Use parentheses to combine multiple searches.	Use parentheses to combine multiple related terms into one single search using the different options presented in this table.	(renewable OR algae OR biofuel OR solar) AND energy

Table 2.5.1 Internet Search Strategies

When you find a helpful article or website, look for additional search terms and sources that you can follow up on.

Filtering Your Results

When using a **search engine** like Google, you will get a millons of search results on just about any topic you are looking for. Given the volume of possibilities, it is helpful if you can filter these results in some way.

You may be looking for a specific type of **search result**, for example, an image, map location, news article, or video. For this, a bar across the top of Google's search results allows you to **filter results** to these specific types.
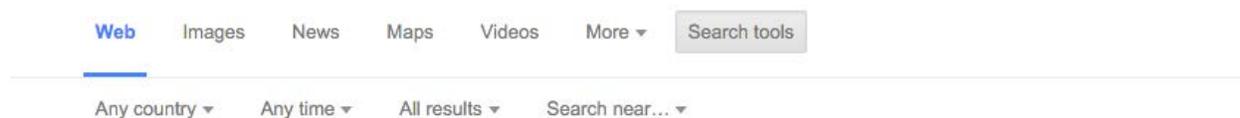

Figure 2.5.1 Google Search Tools
Screenshot from Google

This bar also has a "Search Tools" button that can help you further. When you click on this button, you'll get a second search bar containing options specific to your search type. For example, if you use it in the basic "Web" search, you'll be able to filter your results by country, language, location, and time. If you use it in "Image" search, you can filter your image results

by size, colour, kind, date, and usage rights. These search tools can help you drill down to the information you need more quickly.

Google Scholar

If your research is more academic in nature, you may need to find scholarly articles and journals to support your assertions. Academic journal search engines like Google Scholar search these specifically.

You can filter your search by recency (since 2015, for example); set up alerts for specific keywords; and view the author(s), year of publication, number of citations, source, and other details before you click on the article link.

Most scholarly journals require payment for viewing and downloading articles, but in many cases you can read the article's abstract before you decide to buy. Alternatively, your school library may have purchased access to various scholarly journals for student use, so it is worth inquiring if you can access these using your college or university login. Some workplaces (particularly those in the fields of education and research) will have similar access agreements.

The Filter Bubble

Search engines like Google, and websites that use complex programming to decide what to show you, like Facebook, have a habit of delivering what they think you want to see. To do this, these websites use information they know about you in order to feed you results that will likely appeal to you. This is done by aggregating data on your previous searches, gender, location, language, other websites you visit, products you've looked at in online shops, activity of your friends, political leanings, and many other details. This effect, coined "the Filter Bubble" by Eli Pariser (2011), causes you to receive search results that are not as objective as you think. In other words, It is difficult to get information about viewpoints that oppose your own, for instance.

So when you are using the Internet for research, make a point to seek out viewpoints that oppose your own. Sign out of your online accounts or turn on incognito browsing to see if your results are different. Instead of your own laptop, use computers at school that do not have the same online "picture" of you. Use scholarly search engines to read expert opinions, but, most of all, be aware of the filter bubble, and seek out ways to get around it. It takes a little bit of effort, but by circumventing it, you may find that your research is more well-rounded and objective as a result.

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Check Your Understanding

Use your favourite search engine to search for websites about a topic of your choice. Record the top 10 results on a sheet of paper or a document file. Now perform the same topic search using another search engine (e.g., Google, Yahoo, Bing, DuckDuckGo) and record the top 10 results. Finally, perform the search again either using a different device (e.g., phone, tablet, laptop, school computer) *or* use the private browsing (or "incognito") feature in your web browser.

   a) How are your search results similar?

   b) How are they different?

</div>

Evaluating Sources of Information for Validity, Reliability, and Credibility

One aspect of Internet research that cannot be emphasized enough is the abundance of online information that is incomplete, outdated, misleading, or downright false. Anyone can put up a website; once it is up, the owner may or may not enter updates or corrections on a regular basis. Anyone can write a blog on any subject, whether or not that person actually has any **expertise** in the area. Therefore, it is always important to look beyond the surface of a site to assess who sponsors it, where the information came from, and whether the site owner has a certain agenda. When you write for business and industry you will want to draw on reputable, **reliable sources**—printed as well as electronic ones—because they reflect on the **credibility** of the message and the messenger.

Analyzing and assessing information is an important skill in the preparation of writing. Here are six main points to consider when evaluating a document, presentation, or similar source of information.

In general, documents that represent quality reasoning have the following six traits:
• A clearly articulated purpose and goal
• A question, problem, or issue to address
• Information, data, and evidence that is clearly relevant to the stated purpose and goals
• Inferences or interpretations that lead to conclusions based on the presented information, data, and evidence
• A frame of reference or point of view that is clearly articulated
• Assumptions, concepts, and ideas that are clearly articulated

An additional question that is central to your assessment of your sources is how credible the source is. This question is difficult to address even with years of training and expertise. Academics have long cultivated an understood acceptance of the role of objective, impartial use of the scientific method to determine **validity** and reliability. But as research is increasingly dependent on funding, and funding often brings specific points of view and agendas with it, pure research can be—and has been—compromised. You can no longer simply assume that "studies show" something without awareness of who conducted the study, how it was conducted, and who funded the effort.

It may seem like hard work to assess your sources, to make sure your information is accurate and truthful, but the effort is worth it. Business and industry rely on reputation and trust in order to maintain healthy relationships. Your document, regardless of how small it may appear in the larger picture, is an important part of that reputation and interaction.

Credibility Checklist
When you are looking at a web source, here are some things you should keep in mind when trying to identify the source's credibility:

- **Who wrote the material?** Look for an author's name or company logo. Look up the person/company elsewhere to see what you can find out about them. Also look for any contact information on the website, such as an address or phone number. If the organization is of suspect origins, they are less likely to provide direct contact details.

- **Who owns the website?** You can use web domain lookup tools (like Who.is, for example) to find out who the owner of the web domain is and how long they have owned the domain for. This may help you to decipher who is behind the message.

- **Is the material recent?** You might notice a "last updated" date across the bottom of the website or a date attached to the article. If the information is timely or focuses on a highly changeable topic (technology or medical research, for example), you'll want the most recent information you can find.

- **How is the material laid out?** While not a definitive clue to authenticity, a poorly designed website full of flashing banners and clip art might quickly tell you that you're not looking at the most reputable source!

- **What is the website doing with your information?** Any websites that process payments or collect any user data are required to tell you what they collect and what they are doing with this information, though a cookie alert and perhaps also through a Terms and Conditions page or Privacy Policy. Look for these on any website before you give out personal details of any kind.

- **How is the website viewed by the wider community on the web?** Search for the website's name and any company names or author names you find on the site, using search engines and social media. Can you find any reviews? Has the website been pointed to as a credible resource via social media sharing?

The above list isn't exhaustive, of course, but it will help you in your search. Sometimes your first reaction is the best one: What is your tummy test telling you?

Citing Your Sources

In your academic and professional career, you'll hear about a few different ways to cite your sources—for example, Harvard Style, MLA, and **APA**. In this course, we'll focus on APA formatting, developed by the American Psychological Association.

Citing your sources will be easier if you plan for this at the start of the process. You should

- begin noting down your sources at the beginning of your research,
- apply APA guidelines as you write so that you have less cleanup to do later, and
- use online tools like CiteThisForMe to get correct formatting.

APA Formatting

These are the major components of an APA-style report or paper:

1. Title page
2. Abstract
3. Body, which includes the following:
   - Headings and, if necessary, subheadings to organize the content
   - In-text citations of research sources
4. References page

All these components must be saved in one document, not as separate documents.

Title Page

The title page of your paper includes the following information:

- Title of the paper
- Author's name
- Name of the institution with which the author is affiliated
- Header at the top of the page with the paper title (in capital letters) and the page number (If the title is lengthy, you may use a shortened form of it in the header.)

List the first three elements in the order given in the previous list, centred about one-third of the way down from the top of the page. Use the headers and footers tool of your word-processing program to add the header, with the title text at the left and the page number in the upper-right corner.

Abstract

The next page of your paper provides an abstract, or brief summary of your findings. You may not need to be provide an abstract in every paper, but you should use one in papers that include a hypothesis. A good abstract is concise—about one hundred to one hundred fifty words—and is written in an objective, impersonal style. Your writing voice will not be as apparent here as in the body of your paper. When writing the abstract, take a just-the-facts approach and summarize your research question and your findings in a few sentences.

Margins, Pagination, and Headings

APA style requirements also address specific formatting concerns, such as margins, pagination, and heading styles within the body of the paper. Review the following APA guidelines:

1. Set the top, bottom, and side margins of your paper at 1 inch.
2. Use double-spaced text throughout your paper.
3. Use a standard font, such as Times New Roman or Arial, in a legible size (10- to 12-point).
4. Use continuous pagination throughout the paper, including the title page and the references section. Page numbers appear flush right within your header.
5. Section headings and subsection headings within the body of your paper use different types of formatting depending on the level of information you are presenting.

Headings

APA style uses section headings to organize information, making it easy for the reader to follow the writer's train of thought and to know immediately what major topics are covered. Depending

on the length and complexity of the paper, its major sections may also be divided into subsections, sub-subsections, and so on. These smaller sections, in turn, use different heading styles to indicate different levels of information. In essence, you are using headings to create a hierarchy of information.

The following heading styles used in APA formatting are listed in order of most important to least important:

1. Section headings use centred, boldface type. Headings use title case, with important words in the heading capitalized.
2. Subsection headings use left-aligned, boldface type. Headings use title case.
3. The third level uses left-aligned, indented, boldface type. Headings use a capital letter only for the first word, and they end in a period.
4. The fourth level follows the same style used for the previous level, but the headings are boldfaced and italicized.
5. The fifth level follows the same style used for the previous level, but the headings are italicized and not boldfaced.

In-Text Citations

Throughout the body of your paper, include a citation whenever you quote or paraphrase material from your research sources. The purpose of citations is twofold: to give credit to others for their ideas and to allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic, if desired. Your in-text citations provide basic information about your source; each source you cite will have a longer entry in the references section that provides more detailed information.

In-text citations must provide the name of the author or authors and the year the source was published. (When a given source does not list an individual author, you may provide the source title or the name of the organization that published the material instead.) When directly quoting a source, you are also required to include the page number where the quote appears in your citation.

This information may be included within the sentence or in a parenthetical reference at the end of the sentence, as in these examples.

Example:

Epstein (2010) points out that "junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive" (p. 137).

Here, the writer names the source author when introducing the quote and provides the publication date in parentheses after the author's name. The page number appears in parentheses *after* the closing quotation marks and *before* the period that ends the sentence.

Example:

Addiction researchers caution that "junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive" (Epstein, 2010, p. 137).

Here, the writer provides a parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence that includes the author's name, the year of publication, and the page number separated by commas. Again, the parenthetical citation is placed *after* the closing quotation marks and *before* the period at the end of the sentence.

Example:

As noted in the book *Junk Food, Junk Science* (Epstein, 2010, p. 137), "junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive."

Here, the writer chose to mention the source title in the sentence (an optional piece of information to include) and followed the title with a parenthetical citation. Note that the parenthetical citation is placed before the comma that signals the end of the introductory phrase.

Example:

David Epstein's book *Junk Food, Junk Science* (2010) pointed out that "junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive" (p. 137).

Another variation is to introduce the author and the source title in your sentence and include the publication date and page number in parentheses within the sentence or at the end of the sentence. As long as you have included the essential information, you can choose the option that works best for that particular sentence and source.

Citing a book with a single author is usually a straightforward task. Of course, your research may require that you cite many other types of sources, such as books or articles with more than one author or sources with no individual author listed. You may also need to cite sources available in both print and online and nonprint sources, such as websites and personal interviews.

References List

The brief citations included in the body of your paper correspond to the more detailed citations provided at the end of the paper in the references section. In-text citations provide basic information (the author's name, the publication date, and the page number if necessary), while the references section provides more extensive bibliographical information. Again, this information allows your reader to follow up on the sources you cited and do additional reading about the topic if they so desire.

The specific format of entries in the list of references varies slightly for different source types, but the entries generally include the following information:

- The name(s) of the author(s) or institution that wrote the source
- The year of publication and, where applicable, the exact date of publication
- The full title of the source
- For books, the city of publication
- For articles or essays, the name of the periodical or book in which the article or essay appears
- For magazine and journal articles, the volume number, issue number, and pages where the article appears
- For sources on the web, the URL where the source is located

The references page is double spaced and lists entries in alphabetical order by the author's last name. If an entry continues for more than one line, the second line and each subsequent line are indented five spaces.

Presenting Your Findings

Organizing your Document

The purpose of business writing is to communicate facts and ideas. In order to accomplish that purpose, each document has key components that need to be present in order for your reading audience to understand the message. These elements may seem simple to the point that you may question how any writer could neglect them. But if you take note of how often miscommunication and misunderstanding happen, particularly in written communications, you will realize that it happens all the time. Omission or neglect may be intentional, but it is often unintentional; the writer assumes (wrongly) that the reader will easily understand a concept, idea, or the meaning of the message. From background to language, from culture to education, many variables can come into play and hinder effective communication. The degree to which you address these basic elements will increase the effectiveness of your documents. Each document must address the following:

- Who

- What
- When
- Where
- How
- (and sometimes) Why

If you have these elements in mind as you prepare your document, it will be easier to decide what to write and in what order. They will also be useful when you are reviewing your document before delivering it. If your draft omits any one of these elements or addresses it in an unclear fashion, you will know what you need to do to fix it.

Outlines

Chances are you have learned the basic principles of outlining in English writing courses: an **outline** is a framework that organizes main ideas and subordinate ideas in a hierarchical series of Roman numerals and alphabetical letters. The right column of the following table presents a generic outline in a classical style. In the left column, the three main structural elements of an informative document are tied to the outline. You will need to fill in an outline using the structure on the right with the actual ideas and points you are making in your writing project. Feel free to adapt and tailor it to your needs, depending on the specifics of your report, letter, or other document.

Element	Contents
Introduction	Main Idea
Body	I. Main idea: Point 1 Subpoint 1 A.1 Specific information 1 A.2 Specific information 2
	II. Main idea: Point 2

	Subpoint 1
	B.1 Specific information 1
	B.2 Specific information 2
	III. Main idea: Point 3
	Subpoint 1
	C.1 Specific information 1
	C.2 Specific information 2
Conclusion	Summary: Main points 1–3

Table 2.5.2 Presenting Your Ideas Outline

The following table presents an alternate outline form that may be more suitable for brief documents like letters and emails. You can use this format as a model or modify it as needed.

Element	Contents
Introduction	General purpose, statement, or thesis statement
Body	Point 1:
	Point 2:
	Point 3:
Conclusion	Summarize main points

Table 2.5.3 Presenting Your Ideas Alternate Outline

Using Rhetorical Proofs

Another way to approach organizing your document is with the classical proofs known as *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. **Ethos**, or your credibility, will come through with your choice of sources and authority on the subject(s). Your **logos**, or the logic of your thoughts represented across the

document, will allow the reader to come to understand the relationships among who, what, where, when, and so forth. If your readers cannot follow your logic, they will lose interest, fail to understand your message, and possibly not even read it at all. Finally, your **pathos**, or passion and enthusiasm, will be reflected in your design and word choices. If your document fails to convey enthusiasm for the subject, how can you expect the reader to be interested? Every document, indeed every communication, represents aspects of these classical elements.

General Purpose and Thesis Statements

No matter what your business writing project involves, it needs to convey some central idea. To clarify the idea in your mind and make sure it comes through to your audience, write a thesis statement. A thesis statement, or central idea, should be short, specific, and to the point.

This statement is key to the success of your document. If your audience has to work to find out what exactly you are talking about, or what your stated purpose or goal is, they will be less likely to read, be influenced, or recall what you have written. By stating your point clearly in your introduction, and then referring back to it in the body of the document and at the end, you will help your readers to understand and remember your message.

Organizing Principles

Once you know the basic elements of your message, you need to decide in what order to present them to your audience. A central **organizing principle** will help you determine a logical order for your information. One common organizing principle is chronology, or time: The writer tells what happened first, then what happened next, then what is happening now, and, finally, what is expected to happen in the future. Another common organizing principle is comparison: The writer describes one product, an argument on one side of an issue, or one possible course of action; and then compares it with another product, argument, or course of action.

As an example, let's imagine that you are a business writer within the transportation industry and you have been assigned to write a series of informative pieces about an international initiative

called the "TransAmerican Transportation System Study." Just as the Canadian Pacific Railway once unified Canada from east to west, which was further reinforced by the TransCanada Highway System, the proposed TransAmerican Transportation System will facilitate integrating the markets of Mexico, the United States, and Canada from north to south. Rail transportation has long been an integral part of the transportation and distribution system for goods across the Americas, and its role will be important in this new system.

In deciding how to organize your report, you have several challenges and many possibilities of different organizing principles to use. Part of your introduction will involve an historical perspective, and a discussion of the events that led from the Canadian Pacific Railway to the TransAmerican Transportation System proposal. Other aspects will include comparing the old railroad and highway systems to the new ones, and the transformative effect this will have on business and industry. You will need to acknowledge the complex relationships and challenges that collaboration has overcome, and highlight the common benefits. You will be called on to write informative documents as part of a public relations initiative, persuasive essays to underscore the benefits for those who prefer the status quo, and even write speeches for celebrations and awards.

The following table lists 17 different organizing principles and how they might be applied to various pieces you would write about the TransAmerican Transportation System. The left column provides the name of the organizing principle. The centre column explains the process of organizing a document according to each principle, and the third column provides an example.

Organizing Principle and Explanation of Process	Example
1. Time (Chronological)	Before the Canadian Pacific Railway, the events that

Shows a series of events or steps in a process, which typically has a beginning, middle, and end.	led to its construction, and its impact on early Canada. Additional examples may include the national highway projects and the development of reliable air freight. Now we can consider the TransAmerica Transportation System and the similar and distinct events that led us to today.
2. Comparison Focuses on the similarities and/or differences between points or concepts.	A comparison of pre– and post–Canadian Pacific Railway, showing how health and life expectancy improved with the increased access to goods and services. Another example could be drawn from air freight, noting that organ donation in one part of the country can now save a life in another state or on the opposite coast. In a similar way, the TransAmerica Transportation System will improve the lives of the citizens of Mexico, the United States, and Canada.
3. Contrast Contrasts points to highlight the differences between items and	A contrast of pre– and post–Canadian Pacific Railway showing how much time it took to communicate via letter, or how long it took to move out West. Just in time delivery and the modern highway system and

| concepts. | trucking may serve as an example for contrast.

The TransAmerica Transportation System will reduce customs clearing time while increasing border security along the distribution network. |
| --- | --- |
| **4. Cause and Effect**

Establishes a relationship between two events or situations, making the connection clear. | With the availability of a new and faster way to travel, the movement of people and goods out West grew considerably from 1885 to 1914. Both the modern highway and air transportation systems may serve as examples, noting how people, goods, and services can be delivered in drastically reduced time frames. Citizens of all three countries involved have increasingly been involved in trade, and movement across common borders through the TransAmerica Transportation System will enable the movement of goods and services with great efficiency. |
| **5. Problem and Solution**

States the problem and details how it was solved. This is effective for persuasive writing, particularly in speeches. | Manufacturers were producing better goods for less money at the start of the Industrial Revolution, but they lacked a fast and effective method of getting their goods to growing markets. The Canadian Pacific Railway gave them speed, economy, and access to new markets. Highways and air routes have dramatically increased this trend. In a similar way, this new system is the next evolutionary step in the integration and growth of our common marketplaces. |

6. Classification (Categorical) Establishes categories.	At the time Canada considered the Canadian Pacific Railway, there were three main types of transportation: by water, by horse, and by foot. Now rail, road, and air transportation are the norm across business and industry.
7. Biographical Examines specific people as they relate to the central topic.	1793: Alexander MacKenzie reaches the Pacific Ocean and completes first east-to-west crossing of North America north of Mexico. 1881: Canadian Pacific Railway founded. 1886: First transcontinental train from Montreal arrives in Port Moody, B.C., on July 4; the journey takes 134 hours. 2016: The prime minister can fly from Montreal to Vancouver in 4.5 hours. - So why shouldn't the ratio of time from import to consumer be reduced?
8. Space (Spatial) Examines the parts of something and how they fit to form the whole.	A train uses a heat source to heat water, create steam, and turn a turbine, which moves a lever, causing a wheel to move on a track. A package picked up from an office in Halifax in the morning is delivered to another in Edmonton in the afternoon. From a Pacific port in northern Mexico to a market in Chicago or Winnipeg, this system unifies the movement of goods and services.

9. Ascending and Descending Focuses on quantity and quality. One good story (quality) leads to the larger picture, or the reverse.	A day in the life of a traveller in 1800. Incremental developments in transportation to the present, expressed through statistics, graphs, maps, and charts. A day in the life of a traveller in 1960, 1980, or even 2000, with visual examples of changes and trends may also contribute to the document. A day in the life of a traveller in 2012 compared to the relatively slow movement of goods and services, constrained by an antiquated transportation network that negatively impacts efficiency.
10. Psychological It is also called "Monroe's Motivated Sequence" (Ayers & Miller, 1994). This method focuses on the audience's inherent needs and wants. Useful for a persuasive message.	When families in the year 1800 went out West, they rarely returned to see family and friends. The country as a whole was an extension of this distended family, separated by time and distance. The railroad, the highways, and air travel brought families and the country together. In the same way, common markets already exist across the three countries but remain separated by time, distance, and an antiquated system scheduled for significant improvement.
11. Elimination Outlines all the possibilities.	The government's use of the Canadian Pacific Railway during the North-West Rebellion assisted in the destruction of the Aboriginal people's way of life in 1885. After examining treaties, relocation and reservations, loss of the buffalo, disease, and war, the

	railroad can be accurately considered a catalyst for the end of an era. From the lessons of history we can learn to protect and preserve our distinct cultures, languages, and sovereign territories as we integrate a common transportation system for our mutual benefit and security.
12. Example Provides vivid, specific examples (as opposed to abstract representations of data) to support main points.	Just as it once took weeks, even months, for a simple letter to move from coast to coast, goods and services have had a long and arduous process from importation to market. For example, the popular Christmas toy X, imported to Mexico from China in September, may well not be on store shelves by December 25 under the old system. Now it can move from importation to market in under two weeks.
13. Process and Procedure Similar to the time (chronological) organizational pattern with the distinction of steps or phases that lead to a complete end goal. Takes a "how-to" approach.	From conception to design, manufacturing to packaging, to transportation and inspection, to sales and sales support, let's examine how the new transportation system facilitates increased efficiency in delivery to market and product support.

14. Point Pattern Allows for the presentation of diverse assertions to be aligned in a cohesive argument with clear support.	The TransAmerica Transportation System offers several advantages: security, speed, efficiency, and cost reduction.
15. Definition Allows for a clear introduction of terms and concepts while reducing the likelihood of misinterpretation.	The TransAmerica Transportation System can be defined by its purpose, its integrated components, and its impact on the secure movement of goods and services across common borders.
16. Testimonial Gives a first-person account of an experience and can be an effective way to make an abstract concept clearer to an audience.	According to Ms. X, owner of InterCountry Trading Company, it previously took 12 weeks to import, clear, and deliver a product from Mexico to the United States, and an additional four weeks to take delivery in Canada. Now the process takes less than two weeks.
17. Ceremonial (Events, Ceremonies, or Celebrations) Focuses on the following: 1. Thanking dignitaries and representatives 2. The importance of the event	Thanking the representatives, builders, and everyone involved with the construction of the TransAmerica Transportation System. The railroad will unite North America and bring us closer in terms of trade, communication, and family. Thank you for participating in today's dedication.

3. The relationship of the event to the audience 4. Thanking the audience for participation in the event, ceremony, or celebration	

Table 2.5.4 Presenting Your Ideas Organizational Principles

Conclusion

In this chapter, you read about doing research to support your workplace documents. You learned some new ways to find information that supports your assertions, from speaking to experts, to collaborating with colleagues, reading books, and, of course, searching on the Internet. You considered that not all of the information on the Internet is credible, learned some ways to distinguish between true and false on the Internet, and found ways to target and filter your online research. Then you found out about APA formatting and how to use it to cite your sources. You went on to find out about how to structure your information in a document, such as outlining your work, using rhetorical proofs, and choosing among organizing principles. From here you should be able to successfully develop more complex workplace documents, such as reports. Good luck!

Learning Highlights

- Clarify your general and specific purpose before you begin your research.
- Identify the resources that you have available, narrow your topic, focus on key points, and plan your investigation.
- Use boolean operators to narrow your search.
- Use search engine filters to find information quickly.
- Source academic journal articles using Google Scholar.

- "The filter bubble" can have a significant impact on the types of search results you receive online.
- Evaluate your sources for credibility. Consider the creator, language, recency, activity, and reputation of the website sources you use.
- Use APA style to place inline (in-text) citations and to create your reference list.
- Outline your work first to make the writing process easier.
- Use rhetorical proofs and/or organizational principles to order your document.

Check Your Understanding

You have been asked to gather information about rabies in cats. Which of the following searches would be the best for this task?

    a) (cat OR feline) AND rabies

    b) cat OR (feline AND rabies)

    c) (cat OR rabies) AND feline

    d) cat AND feline AND rabies

Using the word "OR" as a boolean operator in your search

    a) broadens your search to results containing one term, the other, or both.

    b) excludes terms from your search results.

    c) narrows your search to results including combination of search terms.

    d) limits the search to an exact phrase.

    e) groups search terms together.

Using the word "AND" as a boolean operator in your search

    a) broadens your search to results containing one term, the other, or both.

    b) excludes terms from your search results.

    c) narrows your search to results including combination of search terms.

    d) limits the search to an exact phrase.

e) groups search terms together.

Using the word "NOT" as a boolean operator in your search

a) broadens your search to results containing one term, the other, or both.

b) excludes terms from your search results.

c) narrows your search to results including combination of search terms.

d) limits the search to an exact phrase.

e) groups search terms together.

Using quotation marks in your search

a) broadens your search to results containing one term, the other, or both.

b) excludes terms from your search results.

c) narrows your search to results including combination of search terms.

d) limits the search to an exact phrase.

e) groups search terms together.

Using parenthesis marks in your search

a) broadens your search to results containing one term, the other, or both.

b) excludes terms from your search results.

c) narrows your search to results including combination of search terms.

d) limits the search to an exact phrase.

e) groups search terms together.

You are scrolling through your Facebook newsfeed and see one of your friends posted a link to an article about a drastic increase in workplace injuries related to a new type of ergonomic phone. You are drawn in and go read the entire article. The article seems to be professionally written, but the notion of this particular phone seems odd. The news site logo indicates it's a trusted news source. What might you do next to evaluate validity the site?

a) Trust the site because of the logo's statement

b) Trust the site because it is well laid out and the material is recent and pretty well written

c) Check the site's "About" page and publication information

d) check to see if the site uses "https" in the URL

e) look for a credit card validation symbol

Visit either the Beaverton or the Lapine and look for an article that looks interesting to you. As you read the material, respond to the following questions regarding the credibility of the site and its information:

- Write down the article title and URL
- Who wrote the material?
- Who owns the website?
- Is the material recent?
- How is the material laid out?
- How is the website viewed by the wider community?
- What about the article makes it believable and/or unbelievable?
- What strategies can you use to determine if this article is valid, credible, and reliable or not?

Further Reading and Links

If you would like to read more about finding, using, and attributing Creative Commons–licensed materials, see the following sites:

- Formal Reports and Proposals
  http://www.pearsoned.ca/highered/divisions/virtual_tours/northey/sample_chapter_9.pdf
- "SEEK! The search skills game" available from the OER Commons
  https://www.oercommons.org/courses/seek-the-search-skills-game under a CC BY-NC 3.0 Unported license.
- A Guide to Crap Detection Resources
- Written Document Examples from the Ontario College Writing Exemplars

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Writing Module Conclusion

In this module you have learned to apply the principles of effective writing to produce professional messages. You built upon the skills you developed from considering your audience when deciding which type of document (channel) is most appropriate, and you've continued to use the principles of plain language writing to keep your messages clear and concise.

You considered the purpose of your document by recalling whether the goal was to inform, persuade and/or entertain, as first discussed in the Foundations module. You learned that workplace writing is normally focused on one of the first two goals.

To ensure you were able to craft your messages clearly and correctly, you may have chosen to use the optional grammar and punctuation chapter to refresh and practise your basic writing skills.

As we learned in the Foundations module, writing is low on the information-richness scale. This means that when trying to communicate or understand written messages, all we have are the

words on the page or screen; we don't have things like tone of voice, facial expression, or body language.

Document conventions help to standardize the way we communicate in a professional setting. You previously learned about audience expectations; in a business setting your audience will expect to receive common documents like emails, business letters, faxes, memos, and short reports. You learned what they contain, when to use them, and how to create professional messages within them by focusing on Format, Audience, Style, and Tone (FAST).

We covered the importance of ethics in written communication by examining issues like plagiarism, copyright, access to information and codes of conduct. You also learned some rationale and principles about writing respectfully, ensuring you balance courtesy, professionalism, and conciseness.

You had the chance to practise your new skill sets by compiling your own short report using your knowledge of information literacy combined with all of the tools and techniques you have learned from the chapters in this module.

Being able to produce professional messages through common written business documents is a useful skill that you can continue to hone throughout your career. These standards are set and familiar globally, though each company or culture may have their own modifications. What you learn in this module will equip you with skills that are immediately useful and transferable to many professional contexts.

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Glossary

Grammar and Punctuation

Adjectives

An adjective is a word that describes a noun. It tells you something about the noun.

Adverbs

An adverb is a word that usually describes a verb or further modifies (describes) an adjective. It tells you how something is done or *describes the words* that are already describing the noun. It may also tell you when or where something happened.

Antecedent

An earlier word, phrase, or clause to which another word (especially a following relative pronoun) refers back

Antimetabole

A specific kind of reversal of phrasing

Apostrophe

A punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction

Articles

An article is used to introduce a noun.

Colon

A colon is used to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Comma

The comma can indicate a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas indicate grammatical structure and relationship between clauses, phrases, etc. Their presence or absence is integral to meaning, and their placement can drastically change what the sentence means.

Complex Sentence

When you join dependent and independent clauses together, you create complex sentences

Compound Sentence

Consists of two simple sentences joined together by a coordinating conjunction

Conjunctions

A conjunction joins two words, phrases, or sentences together.

Contraction

A word or group of words resulting from shortening an original form

Coordinating Conjunction

There are seven coordinating conjunctions: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*

Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions include the following constructs: *both…and*, *either…or*, *just as…so*, *neither…nor*, *not…but*, *not only…but also*, *whether…or*

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier modifies the subject of a sentence, but the placement of the modifier makes it seem as though it modifies another noun in the sentence. Other times, a dangling modifier

actually modifies someone or something other than the subject of the sentence, but the wording makes it appear as though the dangling modifier modifies the subject.

Dash

A punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis

Dependent Clause

A dependent clause on its own is just part of a sentence or fragment. It must be joined to an independent clause for it to make sense to the reader.

Direct Quotation

An exact account of what someone said or wrote

Exclamation Mark

Used at the end of an exclamatory sentence, indicating that the sentence is an exclamation, or at the end of an imperative sentence to indicate a command.

Grammar

A set of actual or presumed prescriptive notions about correct use of a language

Hyphen

A hyphen is used to combine words that work together to form a single description.

Independent Clause

An independent clause, in addition to containing a subject and verb, expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a simple sentence.

Indirect Quotation

An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote and does not use the person's exact words

Interjections

An interjection is an unusual kind of word, because it often stands alone. Interjections are words that express emotion or surprise, and they are usually followed by exclamation marks.

Misplaced Modifier

A phrase or clause placed awkwardly in a sentence so that it appears to modify or refer to an unintended word

Nouns

A noun is a naming word. It names a person, place, thing, idea, living creature, quality, or action.

Parallelism

The use of successive verbal constructions in poetry or prose that correspond (match) in grammatical structure, sound, metre, meaning, etc.

Parentheses

Punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence

Parts of Speech

The basic types of words that English has (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.)

Period

A very common punctuation mark that indicates the end of a declarative sentence or at the end of an imperative sentence.

Preposition

A preposition usually comes before a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase. It joins the noun to some other part of the sentence.

Pronoun

A pronoun is used instead of a noun, to avoid repeating the noun.

Punctuation

The marks such as period, comma, and parentheses, used in writing to separate sentences and their elements and to clarify meaning

Question Mark

A question mark is used at the end of an interrogative sentence, indicating that the sentence is a question.

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks set off a group of words from the rest of the text and are used to indicate direct quotations or to indicate a title. Sometimes quotation marks indicate that a word or phrase is being used sarcastically. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Semicolon

A punctuation mark indicating a pause, typically between two main clauses, that is more pronounced than that indicated by a comma.

Verb

A verb is a word that describes an action (doing something) or a state (being something).

Writing Workplace Documents

Body

The part of the document that contains the main content or messaging.

Buffer Statement

A gentle but professional statement that sets the tone of your letter.

Call-to-action

An attempt to persuade or motivate the reader to do something in particular

Concluding Sentence

The concluding sentence is the last sentence in the paragraph that reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words.

Conclusion

The conclusion is the final sentence that summarizes the main point.

Controlling Idea

When the topic sentence combines a main idea with the writer's personal attitude or opinion, it is called the controlling idea.

Direct Message

A direct message gets to the point immediately within the document.

Email

Electronic Mail, a frequently used medium for business communication.

FAST

An acronym that stands for Format, Audience, Style, Tone; used as a tool to stay mindful of key elements of writing common business documents.

Fax Cover Sheet

The first page of any document sent by fax machine containing vital information about document contents, sender, receiver, date, number of pages, etc.

Format

The way in which something is arranged or set out

Goodwill Statement

An assertive but professional statement that demonstrates care about ongoing positive relationship

Grapevine

The unofficial, informal communication network within an organization is often referred to as the grapevine, and it is characterized by rumour, gossip, and innuendo.

Indirect Message

An indirect message sandwiches the key point (often bad news) between other information (positive or neutral detail) so as to "soften the blow" of an undesirable communication.

Letterhead

A printed heading on stationery, stating a person or organization's name and address

Letter

A written, typed, or printed communication, (traditionally) sent in an envelope by post or messenger

Main Idea

The governing theme of a topic sentence

Memo

Short for *memorandum*, which is a written message in business or diplomacy

Paragraph

A distinct section of a piece of writing, usually dealing with a single theme and indicated by a new line, indentation, or numbering

Progress Report

A one- to two-page report about accomplishments/challenges that is used to give management an update on the status of a project at timed intervals or on completion of key stages.

Recommendation Report

A recommendation report is used to help management make decisions by identifying a solution to a problem, or suggesting a course of action.

Short Report

A report up to four pages in length

Summary Report

A summary report focuses on the facts, leaving it to management to decide on a course of action.

Supporting Sentence

Supporting sentences occur within the body of a paragraph and help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence

Topic Sentence

A topic sentence is often the first sentence of a paragraph that expresses a main idea combined with the writer's attitude about the subject.

Transitions

A transition is a connecting word that describes a relationship between ideas.

Revising Workplace Documents

Copy Edit

Corrections and revisions made at the sentence level, including grammar, style, and punctuation errors

Dictionary

Book or online resource that provides definitions and proper spelling of words

Essay Structure

Essay structure includes an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

Find/Replace

A useful tool for on-screen editing available in most word processors that allows the writer to type search terms into a box to easily find and/or replace selected words or phrases.

Five W's and one H

Asking if you've covered *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* as a way to ensure information in a document is complete

Grammar Check

A tool available in most word processors to check your document for grammar errors

House Style

An organization's own in-house style guide

Inverted Pyramid Structure (News)

A type of writing structure commonly used in news reports that puts all the important information (five W's and one H) within the first one or two paragraphs.

Proofreader's Marks

Using marked symbols to explain what changes need to be made and where in a document being edited or proofread.

Proofreading

Final stage of the three-step revision process that seeks to catch any remaining errors within the body of the document while scanning the document as a whole for accuracy and correctness

Revision

Making incremental improvements to drafts of your writing

Rewriting

Throwing out your old draft and starting fresh with an all-new one

Spell Check

A tool available in most word processors to check your document for spelling errors

Story Structure

A classic structure that includes a beginning, a middle, and an end

Structural Edit

The start of the three-step editing process that ensures that the ideas in the body of your document make sense and flow logically at the paragraph level.

Style Guide

A manual or sheet detailing writing conventions of a particular publisher, publication, etc., to ensure consistency across written deliverables.

Thesaurus

A book or online resource that supplies synonyms, related words, and antonyms as a tool to improve and diversify vocabulary

Track Changes

A popular on-screen editing tool in Microsoft Word

Ethical Guidelines for Writing

Access to Information
Permission and/or ability to see and use information, records, and other potentially sensitive documents in a workplace context

Codes of Conduct
Found within many organizations, codes of conduct give guidelines for ethical or proper behaviour

Conciseness
Giving a lot of information clearly and in a few words in a way that's brief but comprehensive

Copyright
Copyright is the exclusive and assignable legal right given to the originator for a fixed number of years to print, publish, perform, film, or record literary, artistic, or musical material.

Courtesy
The showing of politeness in one's attitude and behaviour toward others

Creative Commons

Creative Commons is a non-profit organization devoted to expanding the range of creative works available for others to build upon legally and to share; the organization has released several copyright licenses known as Creative Commons licenses free of charge to the public.

Ethics
Moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity

Intellectual Property

Intangible property that is the result of creativity, such as patents, copyrights, etc.

Plagiarism

The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own

Professionalism

The competence or skill expected of a professional

Records Management

The professional practice of managing the records of an organization throughout their life cycle, from the time they are created to their eventual disposal. This includes identifying, classifying, storing, securing, retrieving, tracking and destroying, or permanently preserving records. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Records_management)

Source

A book or document used to provide evidence in research

Tummy Test

A reflective self-check of one's own feelings about whether or not an action is considered ethical

Writing Respectfully

The aim to balance courtesy, professionalism, and conciseness when writing business documents

Information Literacy

APA

Source citation format developed by the American Psychological Association

Boolean Operator

The use of words like AND, NOT, and OR (and possibly the asterisk and parentheses) to filter search results from an online search engine.

Credibility
The quality of being trusted and believed in

Database
A structured set of data held in a computer, especially one that is accessible in various ways

Ethos
One of three classical rhetorical proofs; focuses on credibility

Expertise
Expert skill or knowledge in a particular field

Filter Results
A way to narrow down search results, especially in Google, by selecting types like image, map, or news article

General Purpose
The central idea of your writing, normally contained in the thesis statement

Logos
One of three classical rhetorical proofs; focuses on logic

Online Search
Use of search engines or online databases to research information on the Internet

Organizing Principle

The order in which you choose to present or organize information or messages, such as alphabetical or chronological

Outline

An outline is a framework that organizes main ideas and subordinate ideas in a hierarchical series.

Pathos

One of three classical rhetorical proofs; focuses on passion or enthusiasm

Reliable Source

A source that is consistently good in quality or performance; able to be trusted

Search Engine

A program that searches for and identifies items in a database that correspond to keywords or characters specified by the user, used especially for finding particular sites on the World Wide Web.

Search Result

The outcoming results or information from using a search engine, which may need to be filtered.

Search Term

Words or terminology as a way to obtain useful search results from a database or search engine

Specific Purpose

The specific, usually tangible result you want to achieve with your business writing

Validity

The quality of being logically or factually sound; soundness or cogency