

# Institute of Open and Distance Education

Faculty of Management

## Business Communication

Business Communication



2BBA3



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**2BBA3**

**Business Communications**

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## 1

# The Meaning of Communication

## NOTES

**The Chapter Covers :**

- Human communication
- Nonverbal communication
- Visual communication
- Oral communication
- Communication cycle
- Communication as academic discipline
- The Role of Communication
- The Role of Communication in an Organization
- Importance of Communication
- Importance of Communication in an Organization
- Characteristics of Communications
- Successful Communication

**Communication** is the activity of conveying meaningful information. Communication requires a sender, a message, and an intended recipient, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication; thus communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. Communication requires that the communicating parties share an area of communicative commonality. The communication process is complete once the receiver has understood the sender.

## HUMAN COMMUNICATION

### NOTES

Human spoken and picture languages can be described as a system of symbols (sometimes known as lexemes) and the grammars (rules) by which the symbols are manipulated. The word "language" also refers to common properties of languages. Language learning normally occurs most intensively during human childhood. Most of the thousands of human languages use patterns of sound or gesture for symbols which enable communication with others around them. Languages seem to share certain properties, although many of these include exceptions. There is no defined line between a language and a dialect. Constructed languages such as Esperanto, programming languages, and various mathematical formalisms are not necessarily restricted to the properties shared by human languages.

A variety of verbal and non-verbal means of communicating exists such as body language, eye contact, sign language, paralanguage, haptic communication, chronemics, and media such as pictures, graphics, sound, and writing.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also defines the communication to include the display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia, as well as written and plain language, human reader, and accessible information and communication technology.

## NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal communication describes the process of conveying meaning in the form of non-word messages. Research shows that the majority of our communication is non verbal, also known as body language. Some of non verbal communication includes gesture, body language or posture; facial expression and eye contact, object communication such as clothing, hairstyles, architecture, symbols infographics, and tone of voice as well as through an aggregate of the above. Non-verbal communication is also called silent language and plays a key role in human day to day life from employment relations to romantic engagements.

Speech also contains nonverbal elements known as para-language. These include voice quality, emotion and speaking style as well as prosodic features such as rhythm, intonation and stress. Likewise, written texts include nonverbal elements such as handwriting style, spatial arrangement of words and the use of emoticons to convey emotional expressions in pictorial form.

## VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Visual communication is the conveyance of ideas and information through creation of visual representations. Primarily associated with two dimensional images, it includes: signs, typography, drawing, graphic design, illustration, colours, and electronic resources, video and TV. Recent research in the field has focused on web design and graphically oriented usability. Graphic designers use methods of visual communication in their professional practice.

## ORAL COMMUNICATION

Oral communication, while primarily referring to spoken verbal communication, typically relies on both words, visual aids and non-verbal elements to support the conveyance of the meaning. Oral communication includes discussion, speeches, presentations, interpersonal communication and many other varieties. In face to face communication the body language and voice tonality plays a significant role and may have a greater impact on the listener than the intended content of the spoken words.

A great presenter must capture the attention of the audience and connect with them. For example, out of two persons telling the same joke one may greatly amuse the audience due to his body language and tone of voice while the second person, using exactly the same words, bores and irritates the audience. Visual aid can help to facilitate effective communication and is almost always used in presentations for an audience.

A widely cited and widely misinterpreted figure used to emphasize the importance of delivery states that “communication comprise 55% body language, 38% tone of voice, 7% content of words”, the so-called “7%-38%-55% rule”. This is not however what the cited research shows – rather, when conveying *emotion*, if body language, tone of voice, and words *disagree*, then body language and tone of voice will be believed more than words. For example, a person saying “I’m delighted to meet you” while mumbling, hunched over, and looking away will be interpreted as insincere.

## WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AND ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Over time the forms of and ideas about communication have evolved through progression of technology. Advances include communications psychology and media psychology; an emerging field of study. Researchers divides the progression of written communication into three revolutionary stages called “Information Communication Revolutions” (Source needed).

During the 1st stage written communication first emerged through the use of pictographs. The pictograms were made in stone, hence written communication was not yet mobile.

During the 2nd stage writing began to appear on paper, papyrus, clay, wax, etc. Common alphabets were introduced and allowed for the uniformity of language across large distances. A leap in technology occurred when the Gutenberg printing-press was invented in the 15th century.

The 3rd stage is characterised by the transfer of information through controlled waves and electronic signals.

Communication is thus a process by which meaning is assigned and conveyed in an attempt to create shared understanding. This process, which requires a vast repertoire of skills in interpersonal processing, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, gestures, and evaluating enables collaboration and cooperation.

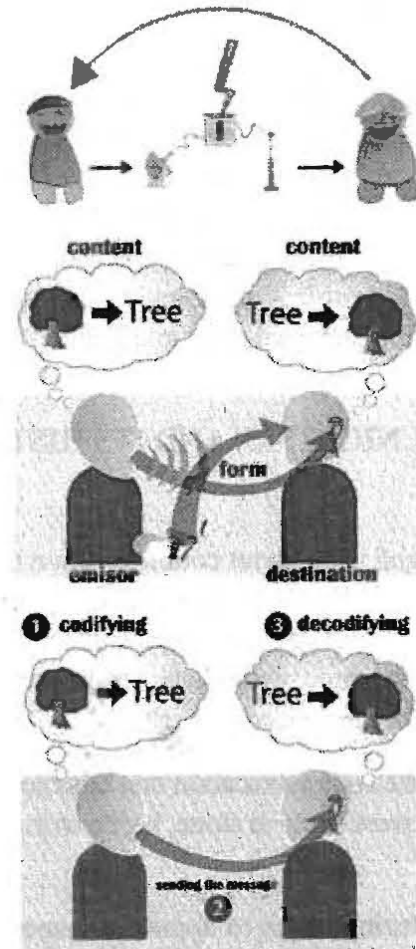


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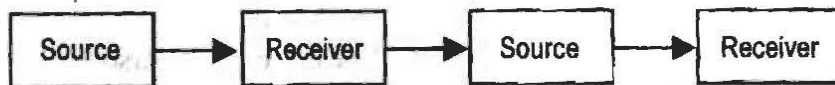
Barriers to successful communication include *message overload* (when a person receives too many messages at the same time), and *message complexity*.<sup>[5]</sup>

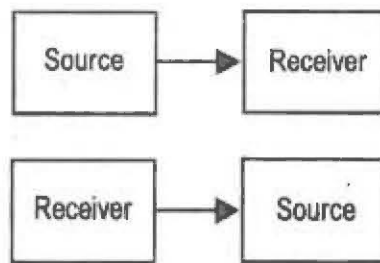
Misunderstandings can be anticipated and solved through formulations, questions and answers, paraphrasing, examples, and stories of strategic talk. Written communication can be clear by planning follow-up talk on critical written communication as part of the normal way of doing business. Minutes spent talking now will save time later having to clear up misunderstandings later on. Then, take what was heard and reiterate in your own words, and ask them if that's what they meant.

**COMMUNICATION CYCLE**



**Communication code scheme**

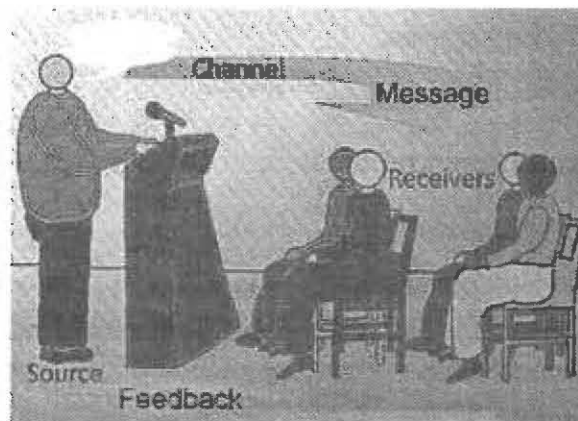




## Interactional Model of Communication



## Berlo's Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver Model of Communication



The first major model for communication came in 1949 by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver for Bell Laboratories [8]. The original model was designed to mirror the functioning of radio and telephone technologies. Their initial model consisted of three primary parts: sender, channel, and receiver. The sender was the part of a telephone a person spoke into, the channel was the telephone itself, and the receiver was the part of the phone where one could hear the other person. Shannon and Weaver also recognized that often there is static that interferes with one listening to a telephone conversation, which they deemed noise.

In a simple model, often referred to as the transmission model or standard view of communication, information or content (e.g. a message in natural language) is sent in some form (as spoken language) from an emisor/ sender/ encoder to a destination/ receiver/decoder. This common conception of communication simply views

communication as a means of sending and receiving information. The strengths of this model are simplicity, generality, and quantifiability. Social scientists Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver structured this model based on the following elements:

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1. An information source, which produces a message.
2. A transmitter, which encodes the message into signals
3. A channel, to which signals are adapted for transmission
4. A receiver, which 'decodes' (reconstructs) the message from the signal.
5. A destination, where the message arrives.

Shannon and Weaver argued that there were three levels of problems for communication within this theory.

The technical problem: how accurately can the message be transmitted?

The semantic problem: how precisely is the meaning 'conveyed'?

The effectiveness problem: how effectively does the received meaning affect behavior?

Daniel Chandler critiques the transmission model by stating:

It assumes communicators are isolated individuals.

No allowance for differing purposes.

No allowance for differing interpretations.

No allowance for unequal power relations.

No allowance for situational contexts.

In 1960, David Berlo expanded on Shannon and Weaver's (1949) linear model of communication and created the SMCR Model of Communication.<sup>[9]</sup> The Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver Model of communication separated the model into clear parts and has been expanded upon by other scholars.

Communication is usually described along a few major dimensions: Message (what type of things are communicated), source / emisor / sender / encoder (by whom), form (in which form), channel (through which medium), destination / receiver / target / decoder (to whom), and Receiver. Wilbur Schram (1954) also indicated that we should also examine the impact that a message has (both desired and undesired) on the target of the message.<sup>[10]</sup> Between parties, communication includes acts that confer knowledge and experiences, give advice and commands, and ask questions. These acts may take many forms, in one of the various manners of communication. The form depends on the abilities of the group communicating. Together, communication content and form make messages that are sent towards a destination. The target can be oneself, another person or being, another entity (such as a corporation or group of beings).

Communication can be seen as processes of information transmission governed by three levels of semiotic rules:

1. Syntactic (formal properties of signs and symbols),
2. Pragmatic (concerned with the relations between signs/expressions and their users) and
3. Semantic (study of relationships between signs and symbols and what they represent).

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Therefore, communication is social interaction where at least two interacting agents share a common set of signs and a common set of semiotic rules. This commonly held rules in some sense ignores autocommunication, including intrapersonal communication via diaries or self-talk, both secondary phenomena that followed the primary acquisition of communicative competences within social interactions.

In light of these weaknesses, Barnlund (2008) proposed a transactional model of communication.<sup>[1]</sup> The basic premise of the transactional model of communication is that individuals are simultaneously engaging in the sending and receiving of messages.

In a slightly more complex form a sender and a receiver are linked reciprocally. This second attitude of communication, referred to as the constitutive model or constructionist view, focuses on how an individual communicates as the determining factor of the way the message will be interpreted. Communication is viewed as a conduit; a passage in which information travels from one individual to another and this information becomes separate from the communication itself. A particular instance of communication is called a speech act. The sender's personal filters and the receiver's personal filters may vary depending upon different regional traditions, cultures, or gender; which may alter the intended meaning of message contents. In the presence of "communication noise" on the transmission channel (air, in this case), reception and decoding of content may be faulty, and thus the speech act may not achieve the desired effect. One problem with this encode-transmit-receive-decode model is that the processes of encoding and decoding imply that the sender and receiver each possess something that functions as a codebook, and that these two code books are, at the very least, similar if not identical. Although something like code books is implied by the model, they are nowhere represented in the model, which creates many conceptual difficulties.

Theories of coregulation describe communication as a creative and dynamic continuous process, rather than a discrete exchange of information. Canadian media scholar Harold Innis had the theory that people use different types of media to communicate and which one they choose to use will offer different possibilities for the shape and durability of society (Wark, McKenzie 1997). His famous example of this is using ancient Egypt and looking at the ways they built themselves out of media with very different properties stone and papyrus. Papyrus is what he called 'Space Binding'. it made possible the transmission of written orders across space, empires and enables the waging of distant military campaigns and colonial admin-

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istration. The other is stone and 'Time Binding', through the construction of temples and the pyramids can sustain their authority generation to generation, through this media they can change and shape communication in their society (Wark, McKenzie 1997).

Bernard Luskin, UCLA, 1970, advanced computer assisted instruction and began to connect media and psychology into what is now the field of media psychology. In 1998, the American Association of Psychology, Media Psychology Division 46 Task Force report on psychology and new technologies combined media and communication as pictures, graphics and sound increasingly dominate modern communication.

## COMMUNICATION AS ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

Communication as an academic discipline, sometimes called "communicology,"<sup>[13]</sup> relates to all the ways we communicate, so it embraces a large body of study and knowledge. The communication discipline includes both verbal and nonverbal messages. A body of scholarship all about communication is presented and explained in textbooks, electronic publications, and academic journals. In the journals, researchers report the results of studies that are the basis for an ever-expanding understanding of how we all communicate.

Communication happens at many levels (even for one single action), in many different ways, and for most beings, as well as certain machines. Several, if not all, fields of study dedicate a portion of attention to communication, so when speaking about communication it is very important to be sure about what aspects of communication one is speaking about. Definitions of communication range widely, some recognizing that animals can communicate with each other as well as human beings, and some are more narrow, only including human beings within the different parameters of human symbolic interaction.

## THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

Communication plays a key role in the success of any workplace program or policy and serves as the foundation for all five types of psychologically healthy workplace practices. Communication about workplace practices helps achieve the desired outcomes for the employee and the organization in a variety of ways:

- Bottom-up communication (from employees to management) provides information about employee needs, values, perceptions and opinions. This helps organizations select and tailor their programs and policies to meet the specific needs of their employees.
- Top-down communication (from management to employees) can increase utilization of specific workplace programs by making employees aware of their availability, clearly explaining how to access and use the services, and demonstrating that management supports and values the programs.

Examples of communication strategies that can help make your workplace programs successful include:

- Providing regular, on-going opportunities for employees to provide feedback to management. Communication vehicles may include employee surveys, suggestion boxes, town hall meetings, individual or small group meeting with managers, and an organizational culture that supports open, two-way communication.
- Making the goals and actions of the organization and senior leadership clear to workers by communicating key activities, issues and developments to employees and developing policies that facilitate transparency and openness.
- Assessing the needs of employees and involving them in the development and implementation of psychologically healthy workplace practices.
- Using multiple channels (for example, print and electronic communications, orientation and trainings, staff meetings and public addresses) to communicate the importance of a psychologically healthy workplace to employees.
- Leading by example, by encouraging key organizational leaders to regularly participate in psychologically healthy workplace activities in ways that are visible to employees.
- Communicating information about the outcomes and success of specific psychologically healthy workplace practices to all members of the organization.

## **THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN AN ORGANIZATION**

Communication plays a very important role in an organization. In fact, it is said to be the life wire of the organization. Nothing in the universe, human or otherwise, that does not communicate; though the means of communication may be very different. Communication is very crucial and unavoidable since we have intentions which we want to pass across to another person, group or even to the outside world.

Communication in an organization is inevitable. Departments communicate from time to time in respect to daily activities and the organization's relationship with the external world. It says what it intended via written and unwritten means, either planned or impromptu. It could be hierarchical, that is, from top to bottom or vice versa. It could be formal or informal; vertical, horizontal or diagonal. Whichever means, modes or types of communication, what matters is that communication takes place.

However, what is being communicated may be well understood and thus feedback or misunderstood or insufficient and thus communication breakdown. In fact, communication within an organization could be grapevine or rumour. In all, communica-

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tion in an organization is very complex and it needs to be correctly handled and monitored to avoid chaos, crisis or conflict.

The basic functions and roles of the management could not be performed without communication. Planning, organizing, coordinating, budgeting, monitoring, controlling, staffing, delegation; and including marketing, production, financing, staffing (human resource managing), research and development, purchasing, selling, etc could not be well coordinated, harnessed and their goals achieved without communication.

At meetings, annual general meeting, ordinary meeting, urgent meeting, etc, communication plays a key role. The effectiveness of an organization also depends on the success of its meetings where goals to be achieved, targets to be met, and activities to be carried out are ironed out and discussed. If the ideas are not well understood at the meeting, then one need to be sure that the workers will mess up everything. Thus, the chairman of the meeting must be an effective speaker or communication capable of ensuring that everyone got what has been discussed correctly.

This will help eradicate rumor and grapevine and likewise help achieve set standards, goals and/or objectives.

In conclusion, everyone in an organization needs to have good communication skill, not the boss only, but also the subordinates. It is what all of us (workers) need to jointly strive to achieve the set goals. Remove communication in an organization, we are going to have dead entity, good for nothing and worth been shut down. Communication is the backbone for organization's success.

## IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is easily overlooked, but the ability to communicate effectively is necessary to carry out the thoughts and visions of an organization to the people. The importance of speech and words whether through a paper or a voice is a communication medium to convey directions and provide synchronization. Without communication, there is no way to express thoughts, ideas and feelings.

There are many ways to provide communication from the organization to the people of your community. Whether through a phone, fax, email, letter, website, instant message softwares, social networking websites (facebook, twitter, myspace) and etc... you are able to communicate your organization to the world. Things can be expressed, ideas can be shared, and thoughts can be joined.

The ability and the importance of communication become much more crucial when you are on a mission or need to fulfill a goal. Without a means to communicate, your organization will become isolated. The ability to effectively communicate is very important when it is usually underestimated and overlooked.

Communication is a necessity as we use it to network, spread ideas, and promote. Communicate effectively through well known mediums and convey it simply and precisely. The importance of communication is crucial to the success of your organization because you need to reach out in order to fulfill your mission.

# IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN AN ORGANIZATION

## NOTES

Effective Communication is significant for managers in the organizations so as to perform the basic functions of management, i.e., Planning, Organizing, Leading and Controlling. Communication helps managers to perform their jobs and responsibilities. Communication serves as a foundation for planning. All the essential information must be communicated to the managers who in-turn must communicate the plans so as to implement them. Organizing also requires effective communication with others about their job task. Similarly leaders as managers must communicate effectively with their subordinates so as to achieve the team goals. Controlling is not possible without written and oral communication.

Managers devote a great part of their time in communication. They generally devote approximately 6 hours per day in communicating. They spend great time on face to face or telephonic communication with their superiors, subordinates, colleagues, customers or suppliers. Managers also use Written Communication in form of letters, reports or memos wherever oral communication is not feasible.

Thus, we can say that “**effective communication is a building block of successful organizations**”. In other words, communication acts as organizational blood.

**The importance of communication in an organization can be summarized as follows:**

1. Communication **promotes motivation** by informing and clarifying the employees about the task to be done, the manner they are performing the task, and how to improve their performance if it is not up to the mark.
2. Communication is a **source of information** to the organizational members for decision-making process as it helps identifying and assessing alternative course of actions.
3. Communication also plays a crucial role in **altering individual's attitudes**, i.e., a well informed individual will have better attitude than a less-informed individual. Organizational magazines, journals, **meetings** and various other forms of oral and written communication help in **moulding** employee's attitudes.
4. Communication also **helps in socializing**. In today's life the only presence of another individual fosters communication. It is also said that one cannot survive without communication.
5. As discussed earlier, communication also assists in **controlling process**. It helps controlling organizational member's behaviour in various ways. There are various levels of hierarchy and certain principles and guidelines that employees must follow in an organization. They must comply with organizational policies, perform their job role efficiently and communicate any



work problem and grievance to their superiors. Thus, communication helps in controlling function of management.

An effective and efficient communication system requires managerial proficiency in delivering and receiving messages. A manager must discover various barriers to communication, analyze the reasons for their occurrence and take preventive steps to avoid those barriers. Thus, the primary responsibility of a manager is to develop and maintain an effective communication system in the organization.

## NOTES

### CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between or among individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, and behavior. As a process, communication has synonyms such as expressing feelings, conversing, speaking, corresponding, writing, listening and exchanging. It's funny how we know so much about communication, but we rarely give a second thought. We should create a whole day for communication. People communicate to satisfy needs in both their work and non-work lives. People want to be heard, to be appreciated and to be wanted. They also want to accomplish tasks and to achieve goals. Obviously, then, a major purpose of communication is to help people feel good about themselves and about their friends, groups, and organizations. For true communication, there must be a transmitting of thoughts, ideas and feelings from one mind to another. If love may be called the heart of happy family living, then communication could be called its lifeblood. whatever they want.

#### Communication as Information

Communication can be seen as processes of the transmission of information governed by three levels of semiotic rules: Syntactic, pragmatic and semantic. Therefore, communication is a kind of social interaction where at least two interacting agents share a common set of signs and a common set of semiotic rules. In a simplistic model, information is sent from a sender or encoder to a receiver or decoder. In a slightly more complex form feedback links a sender to a receiver. This requires that a symbolic activity, sometimes via a language. Communication development is the development of processes enabling one to understand what others say(or sign, or write) and speak(or sign, or write), translate sounds and symbols into meaning and learn the syntax of the language. Communication is often formed around the principles of respect, promises and the want for social improvement. Specialised fields focus on various aspects of communication and include the following:

Non-verbal communication, the act of imparting or interchanging thoughts, opinions or information without the use of words; symbolic communication, the exchange of messages that change a priori expectation of events; animal communication, the discipline of animal behavior that focuses on the reception and use of signals.

Since the beginning of time, the need to communicate emerges from a set of universal questions: Who am I? Who needs to know? Why do they need to know?

How will they find out? How do I want them to respond? Individuals, communities, and organizations express their individuality through their identity. On the continuum from the cave paintings at Lascaux to digital messages transmitted via satellite, humanity continues to create an infinite sensory palette of visual and verbal expression.

- Mass communication
- Development communication
- Communication studies
- Interpersonal Communication
- Organizational communication
- Sociolinguistics
- Conversation analysis
- Cognitive linguistics
- Linguistics
- Pragmatics
- Semiotics
- Discourse analysis
- audiology
- speech therapy
- forensics (debate) and courtroom communication

Communication as a named and unified discipline has a history of contestation that goes back to the Socratic dialogues, in many ways making it the first and most contestatory of all early sciences and philosophies. Seeking to define “communication” as a static word or unified discipline may not be as important as understanding communication as a family of resemblances with a plurality of definitions as Ludwig Wittgenstein had put forth. Some definitions are broad, recognizing that animals can communicate with each other as well as human beings, and some are more narrow, only including human beings within the parameters of human symbolic interaction.

Nonetheless, communication is usually described along three major dimensions;

- Content
- Form
- Destination

With the presence of “communication noise” these three components of communication often become skewed and inaccurate. Between parties, communication content include acts that declare knowledge and experiences, give advice and commands, and ask questions. These acts may take many forms, including gestures (nonverbal communication, sign language and body language), writing, and speech. The form depends on the symbol systems used. Together, communication content and form make messages that are sent towards a destination. The target can be oneself, another person (in interpersonal communication), or another entity (such as a corporation or group).

A particular instance of communication is called a speech act. A speech act typically follows a variation of logical means of delivery. The most common of these, and

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perhaps the best, is the dialogue. The dialogue is a form of communication where both the parties are involved in sending information. There are many other forms of communication but the reason the dialogue is good is because the dialogue lends itself to clearer communication due to feedback. (Feedback being encoded information, either verbal or nonverbal, sent back to the original sender (now the receiver) and then decoded.)

There are many theories of communication, and a commonly held assumption is that communication must be directed towards another person or entity. This essentially ignores intra personal communication (note intra-, not inter-) via diaries or self-talk.

There are many different areas of communication. A few are: nonverbal communication, verbal communication, and symbolic communication. Nonverbal communication deals with facial expressions and body motions. Much of the "emotional meaning" we take from other people is found in the person's facial expressions and tone of voice, comparatively little is taken from what the person actually says (More Than Talk). Verbal communication is when we communicate our message verbally to whoever is receiving the message. Symbolic communications are the things that we have given meaning to and that represent a certain idea we have in place, for example, the American flag is a symbol that represent freedom for the Americans themselves, or imperialism and evil for some other countries.

### **Communication media**

The following model of communication has been criticized and revised.

The beginning of human communication through artificial channels, i.e. not vocalization or gestures, goes back to ancient cave paintings, drawn maps, and writing.

Our indebtedness to the Ancient Romans in the field of communication does not end with the Latin root "communicare". They devised what might be described as the first real mail or postal system in order to centralize control of the empire from Rome. This allowed for personal letters and for Rome to gather knowledge about events in its many widespread provinces.

In the last century, a revolution in telecommunications has greatly altered communication by providing new media for long distance communication. The first transatlantic two-way radio broadcast occurred on July 25, 1920 and led to common communication via analogue and digital media:

Analog telecommunications include traditional telephony, radio, and TV broadcasts. Digital telecommunications allow for computer-mediated communication, telegraphy, and computer networks.

Communications media impact more than the reach of messages. They impact content and customs; for example, Thomas Edison had to discover that hello was the least ambiguous greeting by voice over a distance; previous greetings such as hail tended to be garbled in the transmission. Similarly, the terseness of e-mail and chat rooms produced the need for the emoticon.

ern communication media now allow for intense long-distance exchanges between larger numbers of people (many-to-many communication via e-mail, Internet forums). On the other hand, many traditional broadcast media and mass media favor one-to-many communication (television, cinema, radio, newspaper, magazines).

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The adoption of a dominant communication medium is important enough that historians have folded civilization into “ages” according to the medium most widely used. A book titled “Five Epochs of Civilization” by William McGaughey (Thistlerose, 2000) divides history into the following stages: Ideographic writing produced the first civilization; alphabetic writing, the second; printing, the third; electronic recording and broadcasting, the fourth; and computer communication, the fifth. The media effects what people think about themselves and how they perceive people as well. What we think about self image and what others should look like comes from the media.

While it could be argued that these “Epochs” are just a historian’s construction, digital and computer communication shows concrete evidence of changing the way humans organize. The latest trend in communication, termed smartmobbing, involves ad-hoc organization through mobile devices, allowing for effective many-to-many communication and social networking.

## SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION

Regardless of the type of relationship you have with another person, it is essential that you be able to communicate effectively. This means you need to know how to deliver a message and how to listen to someone else’s message.

### When Doing the Talking

- Be aware of your motivation. Know why you are beginning the conversation and what you want to accomplish.
- Use “I” language.
- Limit your conversation to one concern at a time. Discussions are often a form of criticism so be careful not to overwhelm your listener.
- Choose the right time and place. Select a time and location (neutral turf) where there will not be interruptions, as well as, one in which you feel emotionally calm.
- Temper criticism with praise. Always begin the conversation on a positive note and then move into the issue at hand.
- Nurture small steps towards change. Change takes time so be patient. When you notice a change praise the other person.
- Make specific requests. Share with the listener exactly what you want and/or expect.

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- Avoid “why” questions. “Why” puts people on the defense and is perceived as negative criticism. Rewording the question can be tricky but also save a lot of unnecessary arguing.
- Express anger appropriately. Make certain you direct your anger toward the behavior or issue, not the person.
- Listen. Pay close attention to the response(s) you receive. Then, think about what you want to say next before you actually open your mouth.

**When Doing the Listening**

- Empathize with the communicator. You don’t have to agree but express your care.
- Paraphrase. Repeat back to the communicator what you heard in your own words.
- Acknowledge the concern and find something to agree with. This does not mean you are saying the other person is right but rather that you understand the concern.
- Ask clarifying questions. If you are confused, ask questions.
- Express your feelings. Let the other person know how you feel about what has been shared.
- Focus on future changes. You will both likely need to make some changes so discuss them and come to an agreement.

**Remember, in conversation to always...**

- Maintain eye contact.
- Be aware of non-verbal messages. If you find someone looking away, fidgeting, avoiding feedback, yawning, or behaving in any way that clearly says, “I’m not listening,” end the conversation and arrange a better time to meet and try again.
- Provide feedback. Express you are listening by paraphrasing or sharing your feelings.
- Support the other’s effort. Give them a smile, a nod or perhaps some words of encouragement like “I’m listening, continue.”
- Express unconditional positive regard. Explain that no matter what is said, you will respect the other for their honesty and willingness to communicate.

# 2 Types of Communication

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## **The Chapter Covers :**

- Types of Communication
- Verbal Communication
- Clarification And Understanding
- Nonverbal Communication
- Effective Verbal Communication
- Informal Communication
- Types of Listening Communication
- Oral Communication
- Oral Presentations
- Six Types of Oral Communication Activities
- Written Communication
- Effective Writing Tips
- Writing Effective Proposals

## **TYPES OF COMMUNICATION**

Most animals communicate with each other in some way. Dogs bark at those they perceive as a threat in order to communicate their hostility and in some cases the threat that they will attack if provoked; bees have a pouch in which they carry the scent of their hive so as to identify themselves as members of the community. However, it is only in humans that communication breaks off into different types of communication: verbal and non-verbal, and formal and informal.

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Verbal communication is just what one would expect from the name: communication using words, and in some cases written characters. There are subcategories for verbal communication, depending on who is at the receiving end of the communication. The main division is between interpersonal communication, in which one person speaks directly to another person, and public or group speaking, in which one person speaks to a large group. From here, the intention of the person speaking breaks it down into still further categories depending on whether they are trying to persuade the listener or listeners to think or act in a certain way, to convey information in the clearest manner possible, or even to entertain. However, in many cases, the intentions of the speaker will overlap: speakers may want to persuade, inform, and entertain their audiences all at the same time. Sometimes, they may even be unaware of what their true intentions are themselves.

Non-verbal communication is the type that is more similar to what the dogs and bees mentioned above do. Non-verbal communication includes all the information we convey to others, whether consciously or subconsciously, without actually using any words. Probably the most ubiquitous example of non verbal communication is that of facial expressions. For example, when a person rolls their eyes at someone, they are expressing skepticism about what the speaker said. They are not using any words to convey this message, but using their understanding of the non-verbal cues they can send that message without having to explicitly say, "I really find what you are saying unbelievable". Not all facial expressions are so calculated though: there are those like smiles that come naturally when someone is happy, and indicate this to others.

Beyond these more explicit examples, there are more subtle instances of non-verbal communication. For example, clothing: just as the male peacock uses a vibrant display of his colorful feathers to signal to a potential mate that he is a desirable choice, people use clothing in order to send messages about themselves (whether they are true or not). In this vein, a man going to a job interview will usually wear a suit and tie in order to convey the idea that he is a very professional person. Unlike facial expressions, this kind of non-verbal communication is more like verbal communication because it is arbitrary – there is no intrinsic reason why a suit and tie should convey the idea of professionalism any more than a Japanese kimono would. It is simply that it has become a cultural norm that a suit and tie is what a professional person wears, and as such it becomes a symbol and a means of non-verbal communication.

Formal communication is more strongly associated with large and small group speaking. It is more rule bound, and is more centered on the speaker getting some kind of result. For example, speaking to a board room full of business executives in order to convince them to accept a marketing strategy is an example of formal communication: what is said and how it is said is rule-bound to what is considered appropriate for the setting, and it is directed toward the specific end of getting the executives to accept the ad campaign. Furthermore, there are instances of symbolic

non-verbal communication, such as the wearing of business attire in order to appear professional.

Informal communication is associated with interpersonal communication. While it is still rule bound by the social norms of the those communicating, there is much more room for the speaker to be free in what he or she says. Informal communication is also much less tied to specific ends: in many cases, it takes place simply for the speaker to express what they think and feel about anything in particular, and the speaking is undertaken as an end in itself. It is a much more emotionally involved form of communication, in large part because there is less emphasis on symbolic non-verbal communication and more emphasis on saying what one really feels.

Although these various types of communication are very different, they are all indispensable tools for communicating with and understanding others. In order to be able to look at others and truly appreciate what they are trying to convey and whether what they are saying has any value, one needs to have a thorough understanding of all types.

## VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Communication is at the heart of any relationship, be it familial, business, romantic, or friendly. While there has been significant advances in how we understand body language and other forms of communication, verbal communication continues to be the most important aspect of our interaction with other people. It's important to understand both the benefits and shortcomings of this most basic communication.

### Advantages Of Verbal Communication

In a world flooded with E-mail and other text-based communication, verbal communication has several advantages over other forms of communication. For example, we can slow down and present points one-by-one and make sure that each point is clearly communicated and understood before moving on to the next point. This can greatly increase both the speed and accuracy of communication.

Verbal communication is far more precise than non-verbal cues. No matter how clear we believe we are being, different gestures have different interpretations between different cultures and even between two members of the same culture. One famous example is Richard Nixon's use of the victory finger salute in Australia, as he was unaware that the gesture was a vulgarity there. However, verbal communication is most effective when combined with other forms of communication like body language and gestures to help cue the intensity of the verbiage.

Verbal communication is also the most effective way of explaining intangible concepts, as problem areas can be readily addressed and explained. Verbal communication also does not use natural resources in the way that technological methods or printing can.



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**Disadvantages Of Verbal Communication**

Of course, this does not mean that verbal communication is the best option in every circumstance. From a legal point of view, verbal communication is sometimes problematic because there is a much smaller chance of an objective record. Verbal communication can also be quickly forgotten, especially if there are multiple points to consider. Additionally, there is always the possibility of miscommunications leading to angry responses or quick escalation of a situation that could be less intense in written form.

**Four Purposes Of Communication**

There are four basic purposes for communication. Almost all of these purposes are better served through verbal communication than other options like E-Mail or print.

First, communication can be used to convey information. Of all the purposes of communication, this is the one that can be adequately accomplished through text-based media as well as verbally. Many businesses use E-mail or interoffice memos in this way. It is used simply to pass information such as meeting times or new policies from administration to employees.

Second, communication can be used to ask for help. Asking verbally for help has been shown to trigger natural empathy in the listener more than text-based communication. Often seeing the person asking for help increases the likelihood that a request will be granted. Like other verbal communication, verbal requests also mean that a request can be stated clearly and any miscommunication can be immediately rectified.

The third purposes of communication is to influence a listener or audience. This is the type of communication used by politicians. While this includes non-verbal cues like appearance and dress, the most important aspect is what words and syntax they choose to use. This is the most important component of influencing an audience.

The fourth and final form is entertainment. Once again there is a clear advantage to verbal communication over text-based communications. For example, most of the top comedians in the country make their living in live shows where they can readily interact with an audience rather than in text-based communication like books or websites.

**CLARIFICATION AND UNDERSTANDING**

There are over three thousand languages and dialects that are in use in the world. This variety means that communication can be a difficult problem to overcome. Even within the same language, people have different conceptions of the same word. Words do not have a meaning of their own, but are like placeholders or envelopes into which each individual puts their own particular meaning. Verbal communication allows for the most immediate feedback and clarification of words. Frequently, the

same word has different meanings for different people depending on their own history, upbringing or social status. Direct verbal communication allows for clarification of these misunderstandings as quickly as possible.

## NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

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Nonverbal communication is any kind of communication not involving words. When the term is used, most people think of facial expressions and gestures, but while these are important elements of nonverbal communication, they are not the only ones. Nonverbal communication can include vocal sounds that are not words such as grunts, sighs, and whimpers. Even when actual words are being used, there are nonverbal sound elements such as voice tone, pacing of speech and so forth.

Nonverbal communication can be incorporated in a person's dress. In our society, a person wearing a police uniform is already communicating an important message before they say a word. Another example is a man's business suit, which is perceived by some as communicating an air of efficiency and professionalism.

While each of these cues conveys a message, so does its absence. In some settings, failing to express a nonverbal cue also communicates meaning. A policeman out of uniform is called "plainclothes" and is seen as deliberately trying to conceal his role. To some, this may make him seem smart or efficient, while others may consider him sneaky or untrustworthy. In the same way, a businessman who does not wear a suit is conveying an air of casualness which some would consider slightly less professional. In the modern world, "dressing down" implies a relaxation of professional standards that is much more than just a change of clothes.

Many cues are based on learned cultural standards, but there are some elements of nonverbal communication that are universal. Paul Eckman's landmark research on facial expressions in the 1960's found that the expressions for emotions such as anger, fear, sadness and surprise are the same across all cultural barriers.

The setting where communication takes place also lends a meaning to words apart from their literal definition, and constitutes nonverbal communication. For instance, the word "tradition" means one thing when it is spoken in City Hall, and quite another when it is spoken in a church. The sign of a cross takes on great cultural meaning when used in a religious context, but on a road sign it just means that an intersection is coming up.

Some nonverbal communication accompanies words and modifies their meanings. For instance, our speed of speaking and the pauses we place between our words form a nonverbal element to our speech. A slight pause before a word can imply uncertainty or be interpreted as a request for confirmation from the listener, whereas a lack of pauses can be taken as a sign of confidence or the encouragement of a fast reply from the listener. If someone asks you a question in a hurried manner, you will probably get the feeling that they want a similarly quick reply.

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The use of personal space constitutes a form of nonverbal communication. If someone leans toward their listener as they speak, it implies that they are communicating something personal or secret. Depending on the social nuances of the situation, this may be taken as a sign of friendship or an unwanted invasion of space.

The use of touching as an element of communication is called haptic communication, and its meanings are very culture-dependent. In American society, a handshake, a pat on the shoulder or a "high five" have certain definite meanings understood by practically everybody. In other societies, these might be enigmatic acts or an embarrassing invasion of personal space.

The use of the eyes as an element of nonverbal communication is an area of study in itself, and is called "oculesics." Researchers have divided eye movements into separate elements such as the number and length of eye contacts, blink rate, dilation of the pupils and so forth. Here again, the interpretation of these cues is highly dependent on the culture of the participants. A prolonged stare may establish a bond of trust, or destroy it. It may elicit a reply from the person being stared at, or it may make them become uncommunicative from embarrassment.

This is how most of our communication takes place. When we consider the amount of nonverbal communication that passes between us and compare it with the mere words we say, it is obvious that the nonverbal part is by far the largest.

## EFFECTIVE VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Effective verbal communication has more to do with listening than it does with speaking because you are always dealing with an audience. This is true no matter whether you are speaking to a crowd of thousands or to a party of one. Listening is key because when you address an audience, no matter the size, you have to meet its needs to communicate effectively, and to know the needs of your audience, you have to listen. There are a few basic rules you should keep in mind when aiming for effective verbal communication. These are described in this article.

The first tip to keep in mind is to know your audience. This is perhaps the most important piece of effectively communicating verbally; you have to listen. For example, if you are speaking to a small gathering of people in some kind of informal setting or discussion, the best tool in your kit is the ability and willingness to listen to what the other people in your group are saying, as well as what they are not saying. Similarly, if you plan to speak to a much larger group of people, it will be to your advantage to find out beforehand as much as you possibly can about the audience you intend to speak to. In such situations, it pays to do your homework. Try to find out the burning questions your audience might have. Find out how much they know about the subject you plan to talk about. Find out if they hold any opinions about the topic and if so, which ways those opinions lean. Learn how the audience is likely to communicate; some audiences will listen to everything you say no matter whether they agree with it or not. Other audiences will be full of interrupters and challengers.

The second tip to keep in mind is to know your topic. It might sound like a tip so obvious it would seem unnecessary to include it in a discussion on effective verbal communication. However, you would be surprised if you knew just how many people are willing to stand in front of audiences and deliver unprepared or poorly prepared presentations or performances each day. Fortunately, you don't have to be one of these people as long as you are willing to prepare. Today, the internet offers more information than has previously been available at any other time in human history; take advantage of it. Do your reading; do your listening. Find out as much as you can about your topic so you can become an expert in it. Think about how you feel about the issue you plan to discuss. Think about why you hold the opinions you do. Think of all the potential questions people might ask you about your topic, and think about ways to effectively answer them. If you do not follow many more tips for effective verbal communication, you should follow this one, along with the recommendation to know your audience. Preparing for the people you plan to speak to will help you deliver a more prepared, competent, and confident presentation.

## INFORMAL COMMUNICATION

If formal communication is viewed like dressing for a black tie affair, informal communication is like dressing casually and wearing slippers around the house. Much informal communication occurs on a person-to-person basis, in a face-to-face manner, without ceremony or fanfare. Other ways to communicate in an informal manner may include texting, post-it notes, an informal drop in visit to another person, or a quick and spontaneous meeting.

Informal communication includes all the various methods of relaying information or messages between people. It often is called "the grapevine" as messages weave back and forth and around people. There are none of the trappings of formal messages, such as company letterhead, planned meetings or specific introductions of guests. Everyone is relaxed and casual, eager to chat about many things, as there is no specific agenda to follow.

This type of communication frequently is oral, and works easily for small groups. The scope of the conversation may be broader than a formal presentation, and include topics that are diverse in nature, free flowing and loose rather than scripted carefully. Unfortunately, informal communication is subject to creating rumors and misinformation due to its loose nature and lack of substantiating evidence.

This is the type of interaction that occurs in the workplace as banter between employees, or idle chatting. It is seen as blog entries on the Internet. At colleges, students are encouraged to drop by their professors' offices as needed, informally. Other informal web communication is seen in diaries, personal email letters, instant messaging, emoticons, online chat rooms and cyberspace bulletin boards.

Informal communication also may take a non-verbal form as facial expressions, sign language, or manner of dress. In spoken language, the informal communicative style

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incorporates the use of the second and first voices. This is in contrast to the use of the third person voice in formal communications.

One of the visible signs of informal communication is its natural and easy style, as opposed to being formally regimented. There may be the use of colloquialisms and local slang in the course of speech. It is unconventional and without rules, which is just the opposite of formal.

Informal communication is used to help put people at ease. This can be seen in an interview situation where an interviewer such as a paralegal needs to make a little small talk to help get clients to relax, feel welcome and open up verbally. The use of informal language is far more prevalent in society than the use of formal language.

### **Formal Communication**

Formal communication can be considered as communication efforts that are “dressed up” to fit customary rules and ceremony. For example, in a written letter, the formal communication style will demand that the layout of the piece of written communication follow a specific format that includes the date, header, salutation, body of the letter, close, signature lines and any indicators of enclosures all placed neatly upon company letterhead or personal stationery. By contrast, an informal piece of written communication can be as simple as a jotted note to a friend on a torn slip of paper.

Formal communications are mostly written, although they may now also include formal presentations that are on computer disk, video tape or DVDs, MP3 presentations and other similar electronic reproductions of written communications. Other forms of formal communications include newsletters, legal advisories, invitations, awards, and letters of congratulations. Non-written formal communication devices are in-person communications in the forms of departmental meetings, telephone calls, conferences and special interviews. Some publications that are devoted to a special purpose, such as a company’s annual report, are formal communications.

There is a non-verbal component to formal communication as well. The style and manners of the presenter dictate the formality of a meeting, and this can be immediately seen at the time of introduction of a speaker. Some elements of non-verbal formal communication include maintaining a certain distance from others, standing above the crowd, speaking in formal tones and using formal means of address to others, such as “Mister” or “Doctor” when calling upon others.

Colloquialisms, which are freely used in informal communication, are not present in formal communications. Proper English or another language is spoken. Formal communications will follow a chain of command in the flow of the communication, either upwards to or down from managers.

The use of formal communication is more prevalent in highly technical areas where a message must be exact and specific, leaving no room for misinterpretation. The written communication is carefully thought out, and planned for a certain effect or result. It often is written in a third person non-personal voice of “he, she, it, and

they" rather than "I" or "you" voices. Grammar, spelling and layout are important for written communications, while for spoken communications there is an emphasis placed on the speech voice and pronunciation.

Some communications are congratulatory, others can be advisory or informative and widely used by others. Likewise, scientific research papers have a standard format to follow. Any written communication that is expected to adhere to particular rules can be considered to be formal communication, and the actual content of the piece may range from friendly to threatening. It can be more demanding and imply expectations to the receiver that should create desired results.

### Communication through Body Language

Communication is how human beings interact with the world that surrounds them. There are many forms of communication, some being more effective at conveying the intent or feelings of the individual expressing than others. Many people have a hard time with communication, and can find it difficult to tell others what they think or to give them bad news. Sometimes, they can't find the right words to express the things they want to say. There are also those people who are not to be believed due to a history of dishonesty or embellishing the truth. One form of communication, however, is always honest and can always be counted on.

Body language is a form of communication that is performed subconsciously. It occurs almost constantly, and will almost always give the correct impression that a person has of someone else, the environment, or the situation at hand. Body language makes it easy to know if someone is nervous, scared, interested, or focused, among many other feelings that could be happening.

Learning to read body language can be as simple as paying attention to your own body when feeling specific emotions. For example, if you are able to notice the unconscious things that your body does when you are nervous, then it should be simple for you to be able to see when another person is nervous in a certain situation. Often, reading the body language of another person will tell you more than having an actual conversation would, especially if the conversation has the potential to be uncomfortable or is something that no one wants to acknowledge.

On the lighter side of body language communication, it can be a very helpful tool in determining how interested another person is in you. When single people meet for the first time, reading the signs of body language can help you to determine if this person has any interest in you beyond friendship. If on a date, the person leans towards you when you are speaking or has their arms at their sides with the front of their body facing towards you, that is a sign that signifies a true interest in the things you are saying. If, on the other hand, they have their arms crossed, are leaning back in their chair with their back turned towards you, and are avoiding contact, they probably are not interested. These are some good physical indicators that you could be wasting your time.

## TYPES OF LISTENING COMMUNICATION

### NOTES

Listening is an important aspect of communication, and the role is played by the receiver of the message. Communication is successfully completed with listening and understanding with the use of any of the types of listening communication. Understanding the different types of listening communication is important to be able to apply the right one in the right situation. Although listening is not communication in itself, it is still an integral part in communicating, thereby giving it more focus in the classification of the types of listening communication.

People are taught to read, to speak, and to write, but are not taught to listen, not to mention analyze the types of listening communication. In fact, 45% of all communication activities are made up of listening, which is a big enough to have room for the thorough discussion of the types of listening communication. This way, people can become better listeners and have a better understanding of the various types of listening communication, but also the utter need for it. Besides, the fact that any of the types of listening communication uncontrollably coming, may it be at home, the workplace, or any gathering, further stresses the need to become better listeners.

As mentioned earlier, the types of listening communication are used for certain scenarios. With the use of certain skills, the types of listening communication can be beneficial by rewarding the person with new information, better relationship, appreciation of things, and more. With that, the types of listening communication are informative listening, relationship listening, appreciative listening, evaluative listening, and discriminative listening.

One of the types of listening communication that seek to understand a message is informative listening. Listening to teachers in school, to reporters in television shows, to speakers of seminars, and to anyone in particular who might give you information all need informative listening. In addition, three variables come into play when engaging in this, which are vocabulary, concentration, and memory.

Moving on with the types of listening communication, there is a type which calls a person to build healthier relationships with others through deeper understanding of other people. This is known as relationship listening, which has further specific types. Although information is needed to understand, the stress is placed on the person rather than the information about the person alone. The behaviors involved in this type are attending, supporting, and empathizing.

The types of listening communication are not only about understanding things, because another type known as appreciative listening involves enjoyment, such as listening to your favorite music, watching movies or television programs, or simple hearing out nature's sounds. It is affected by presentation, perception, and previous experiences.

Another one of the types of listening communication involves more attention than the others. This is critical listening, which plays an important role in shaping opinions and

...changes. The things that encompass critical listening and thinking are the credibility of the speaker, the logic of the arguments, and the psychological appeals.

The last of the types of listening communication is discriminative listening. This is perhaps the most important among the others since it is inherent to the rest of them. This is because it is usually used in conjunction with the other types of listening communication. Your hearing ability, awareness of structures in sound, and nonverbal cue integration must be considered when keeping up with this type.

Having a good command of the types of listening communication can tremendously improve the way you communicate and receive messages. The types of listening communication are used in daily living, so making a conscious effort in improving your own listening skills to make the most out of your ears.

## **Job Communication**

For every person who is employed in any kind of business establishment, communication is very important. Often times, assertive communication must be practiced to provide a disciplined atmosphere. But every day in the workplace, various kinds of communication happen, and it is very important to know what the most effective forms of job communication are.

Job communication takes place in different forms. There is a communication between a superior and an employee, or vice versa. There is job communication between departments within the same establishment. There also exists communication between separate business entities.

Along with the directions of different types of job communication, there are those which could also be classified according to tone such as friendly, command, reprimand, or warning. Job communication is so vast in form and structure that it is very important to understand these forms.

Persons with superb job communication skills make valuable employees as they become skilled at working with others, befitting the company, and contributing to the objectives of the company. Improving job communication is simple, and with a little bit of practice, one would be able to develop his verbal and non-verbal communication skills necessary for workplace success.

All types of communication in a work area are essential, be it verbal or nonverbal. Job communication skills also involve....

## **Written communication.**

Instructions, peer communication, questions, and answers are often given through verbal job communication. Letters, memos, and other documents within the work area intended to convey a message are also considered as written job communication.

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## Nonverbal job communication

It, on the other hand, involves gestures, facial expression, actuations, and signals. This type of communication often happens in informal work settings wherein there is no need for formal use of words to relay a message.

In a work area nonverbal job communication also includes eye contact, body language, facial expressions, and posture. At work, people often practice nonverbal job communication more than verbal job communication. Especially considering that you can't always talk in the workplace. But every movement conveys a message.

Effective job communication in the workplace could be achieved in several ways. In the workplace, make others feel the sincerity in what you say. Good job communication does not require you to open your mouth all the time, rather opening one's mouth when it is needed. This should only happen when you know the topic being discussed.

Job communication also requires a clear delivery of message as well as knowing when to speak and when to listen. Sharing worthwhile information to others in the work area also provides a good way to establish rapport with co-workers. A good job communication means a direct and definite goal to convey to another.

In making sure that good job communication is maintained throughout the office, one must always think before speaking. The words you speak will build harmonious relationships with others, and will gain their trust. This way you will improve or help the company. Thus, good job communication skills are essential for anyone who is in a work setting.

## ORAL COMMUNICATION

Oral communication describes any type of inter-action that makes use of spoken words, and it is a vital, integral part of the modern business world. "The ability to communicate effectively through speaking as well as in writing is highly valued, and demanded, in business," Herta A. Murphy and Herbert W. Hildebrandt wrote in their book *Effective Business Communications*. "Knowing the content of the functional areas of business is important, but to give life to those ideas—in meetings or in solo presentations—demands an effective oral presentation." The types of oral communication commonly used within an organization include staff meetings, personal discussions, presentations, telephone discourse, and informal conversation. Oral communication with those outside of the organization might take the form of face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, speeches, teleconferences, or videoconferences.

Conversation management skills are essential for small business owners and managers, who often shoulder much of the burden in such areas as client/customer presentations, employee interviews, and conducting meetings. For oral communication to be effective, it should be clear, relevant, tactful in phrasology and tone,

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concise, and informative. Presentations or conversations that bear these hallmarks can be an invaluable tool in ensuring business health and growth. Unclear, inaccurate, or inconsiderate business communication, on the other hand, can waste valuable time, alienate employees or customers, and destroy goodwill toward management or the overall business.

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## ORAL PRESENTATIONS

The public presentation is generally recognized as the most important of the various genres of oral business communication. As is true of all kinds of communication, the first step in preparing a public speech or remarks is to determine the essential purpose/goal of the communication. As Hildebrandt and Murphy note, business presentations tend to have one of three general purposes: to persuade, to inform or instruct, or to entertain. Out of the purpose will come the main ideas to be included in the presentation. These ideas should be researched thoroughly and adapted to the needs of the audience.

The ideas should then be organized to include an introduction, a main body or text, and a summary or conclusion. Or, as the old adage about giving speeches goes, "Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you told them." The introduction should grab the listener's interest and establish the theme of the remainder of the presentation. The main body should concentrate on points of emphasis. The conclusion should restate the key points and summarize the overarching message that is being conveyed.

Visual aids are an important component of many oral presentations. Whether they are displayed on chalkboards, dry-erase boards, flip charts, or presented using a slide projector, overhead projector, or computer program, visual aids should be meaningful, creative, and interesting in order to help the speaker get a message across. Visual aids should also be adapted to the size of the audience.

Once the presentation has been organized and the visual aids have been selected, the speaker should rehearse out loud and revise as needed to fit time constraints, cover points of emphasis, etc. It may help to practice in front of a mirror or in front of a friend in order to gain confidence. A good oral presentation will include transitional phrases to help listeners move through the material, and will not be overly long or technical. It is also important for the speaker to anticipate questions the audience might have and either include that information in the presentation or be prepared to answer afterward. Professional and gracious presentation is another key to effective communication, whether the setting is a conference, a banquet, a holiday luncheon, or a management retreat. "Recognize that when you speak at a business event, you represent your company and your office in that company," stated Steve Kaye in *IIE Solutions*. "Use the event as an opportunity to promote good will. Avoid complaints, criticism, or controversy. These will alienate the audience and destroy your credibility quickly. Instead, talk about what the audience wants to hear. Praise your host, honor the occasion, and compliment the attendees. Radiate success and

way to determine the depth and range of student knowledge and to stimulate high levels of preparation.

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### WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

The Recruitment and Employment Commission (REC) says that around **half of all CVs received by recruitment consultants contain spelling or grammatical errors**. Candidates aged between 21 and 25 are most likely to make these mistakes and graduates in this age group are, surprisingly, twice as likely to make mistakes as those who did not go on to university. Even something as basic as the name of an employer, or an individual recruiter, is often spelled incorrectly. The former Graduate Recruitment Manager at City law firm Mayer Brown found that **20% of applicants got the firm's name wrong** (one hopes that these people did not also apply to another law firm called Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom (UK) LLP!).

Your **covering letter** is an important part of your job application, as it demonstrates your writing style better than your CV (which is usually more brief and factual). Written Communication involves expressing yourself clearly, using language with precision; constructing a logical argument; note taking, editing and summarising; and writing reports.

*There are three main elements to written communication*

- **structure** (the way the content is laid out)
- **style** (the way it is written)
- **content** (what you are writing about)

Structure and layout can be relatively quickly learnt but learning how to write good quality content takes much longer.

#### Structuring

A good structure will help you to express yourself more clearly, whether in a dissertation, an essay, a job application letter or a CV. The following tactics may help you to structure your writing:

- **Clarify your thoughts and the purpose** of your communication before you start writing
- **Identify the key points, facts and themes**
- **Decide on a logical order** for what you have to say
- **Compose a strong introduction and ending**. The first will make an immediate and positive impression on the reader; the second will remain in their mind after they have finished reading
- **Use short paragraphs and sentences** rather than long, rambling ones

- **Help key points to stand out** by the use of headings, sub-headings and bullet points

## Writing in a style appropriate to the audience

All good communicators should think about their readers:

- **How much information and detail** will they need?
- **Should you use specialist terms** or should you “translate” these to make yourself understood by a generalist reader?
- **How formal or informal** should your writing be?

For example:

- A scientific paper aimed at an audience of non-scientists would have to be written in simpler and less technical language.
- A report in the Financial Times would be written in a very different style from one covering the same issue in the Sun
- A lawyer giving advice to a client would not go into the same amount of details as to legal precedents and arguments as a law student would when writing an academic essay.
- Emails sent with job applications should be treated more formally than emails to friends and family!

*“Bad writers, and especially scientific, political, and sociological writers, are nearly always haunted by the notion that Latin or Greek words are grander than Saxon ones, and (use) unnecessary words like expedite, ameliorate, predict, extraneous, deracinated, clandestine, subaqueous.”*

**George Orwell**

## Checklist

Look at a piece of writing you have had to do (i.e. an essay, report or job application) and check it against the following points.

*Structure (the way the content is laid out)*

- Is the **layout clear** and easy to follow?
- Do **headings stand out** (e.g. are they in a larger font size)?
- Is the information arranged in a **logical sequence** with a beginning (introduction), middle, and end (conclusion)?
- Does the introduction clearly state the **subject and purpose**?
- Does it **briefly summarise the content**?

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**Style (the way it is written)**

- Does it look **neat, and elegant?**
- Is it **concise**, with an exact use of words and economy of style?  
*"If in doubt, cut it out!"*
- Is it **simple, direct and lucid?**  
(See table on right)  
For example a bureaucrat would write:  
*Political organisation administered directly via the populace, intended for the employment of the general community, on behalf of each and every one of the citizens of the nation.*  
Abraham Lincoln wrote:  
*Government of the people, by the people, for the people.*
- Are **paragraphs too long?**  
Paragraphs of less than 10 lines are easier to read.
- Is a **blank line left between paragraphs** to aid clarity?
- Are **sentences too long?** A sentence should contain just one idea.
- Sentences with more than 30 words should normally be split.
- Is the **first sentence interesting?** Does it draw the reader in?
- Have you avoided unnecessary **jargon?**
- Is the style **suitable for the intended audience?** A scientific report aimed at an audience of non-scientists would have to be written in simpler and more jargon free language.
- Are **bulleted lists** used where appropriate?
- Have you used **short, concrete, familiar words** rather than long, obscure, complex words?

**Simplicity:**

- *The four basic premises of writing are clarity, brevity, simplicity, and humanity.* William Zinsser
- *Beauty of style and harmony and grace and good rhythm depend on simplicity.* Plato
- *Simplicity is the final achievement. After one has played a vast quantity of notes and more notes, it is simplicity that emerges as the crowning reward of art.* Chopin
- *Hard writing makes easy reading. Easy writing makes hard reading.* William Zinsser

In other words writing improves in proportion to the amount of effort put in.

As a careers adviser, I can tell within 30 seconds if a CV has been worked on for 1 hour or 10 hours! See our page on simplicity in CVs

**Use single words rather than clichés:**

*Let us have an end to such phrases as these: "it is also important to bear in mind the following considerations" .... "or consideration should be given to the possibility of carrying into effect". Most of these wooly phrases are mere padding, which can be left out altogether, or replaced by a single word.*  
Churchill

- Use the **active words** where possible rather than the passive voice? "*It is recommended ....*" should be replaced by "*We recommend*" as this is simpler and more direct
- Have you kept **wordy phrases to a minimum**?
- Have you **avoided repetition**?
- The Plain English Campaign recommends sans serif fonts (e.g. Arial, Verdana) such as this, as clearer and easier to read than serif fonts (e.g. Times New Roman, Garamond) such as this.

### *Content (what you are writing about)*

- Have you carefully checked the **spelling and punctuation**?
- Have you **thought through in advance** what you want to say?
- Have you a **clear objective**?
- Have you **listed the essential points** you wish to make?
- Have you **made these points clearly**?
- Have you **developed your argument** in a logical way?
- Have you **allowed detail to obscure the main issues**?
- Is the content **positive and constructive**?
- Have you **shown an interest in the reader** by writing with warmth, sensitivity and friendliness?
- Have you **edited it through several revisions**, honing the text until it is just right?
- Have you **left it overnight** if possible: your mind will assimilate it better and you will come back with a fresh view.

### *The writing rules of George Orwell*

- Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
- Never use the passive voice (e.g. "*Bones are liked by dogs*") where you can use the active voice ("*Dogs like bones*").

#### **Using language with precision**

Correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Use your spell checker but don't rely on it completely: a spell-checker failed to pick up the following errors:

- administrator in a busy office
- I have all the right qualities to make an excellent manger
- I have a long-standing interest in pubic relations
- I attended a fist aid course with St John Ambulance
- Studied for an A-level in Art & Design at Canterbury Collage
- In my spare time I enjoy hiding my horse
- I was responsible for sock control
- I hope to hear from you shorty

"We receive standardised letters from graduates which show no thought... They use text speak in covering letters..." *Graduate Recruiter*

NOTES

- Never use jargon if you can think of an everyday equivalent.

## How will employers assess your written communication skills?

### NOTES

Your very first contact with a prospective employer is likely to be in writing. When employers read application forms, CVs and covering letters, **they are not just looking at WHAT you have to say** about yourself, your skills and your experience **but also at HOW you say it.**

### Application Forms

**Application forms** often ask you to write a piece of text in response to questions such as the following:

- *“Please write about yourself in no more than 4000 characters [approx. 750 words].*
- *You may wish to mention any posts of responsibility held at school or subsequently, any regular employment or other work experience, any sporting or other achievements and any particular interests and personal qualities which are relevant). Please also state briefly why you are making this application”*
- *Describe a time you were faced with a particularly difficult situation or problem. What did you do? (200 words)*
- *What are your interests and hobbies? What have you contributed and what do you get out of them? (no word limit, but this is the only question on one A4 page of a paper form!)*

Structuring your answers, and choosing your words, carefully will help you to answer these questions effectively.

Where you have a very tight word limit, it is essential to be very concise in your answers and to avoid any non-relevant information.

Where you have a lot of space to fill, avoid the temptation to go into a lot of unnecessary detail simply in order to fill the page! Select what you are going to say, break down your answer into shorter paragraphs to make it easier for the recruiter to read and structure it into a coherent narrative.

Where written communication is the most important part of the job, for example in journalism, public relations or technical writing, you may also be asked to submit a piece of written work along with your application. Always send something that is relevant in style and content to the employer – academic essays and dissertations are unlikely to be the best example of your writing style in this situation!

### At the interview or assessment centre stage

There may be further tests of your written communication skills such as:

***In-tray/In-box exercises.***

These are a form of role play in which you will be given a selection of letters, emails and reports which somebody doing the job might find in their in-tray or email inbox first thing in the morning. Items may need a response such as drafting a reply to a customer complaint, writing a report, delegating tasks to colleagues or recommending action to superiors.

***Case studies***

*"We like to include a written test as it gives candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the work by giving them a case study and then asking them to pull out the main issues, such as risk, analysis and planning ideas, legislative framework etc. You should never be tested on anything that is not included in the person specification for the job". (Social work recruiter)*

*"You will be presented with a file of papers which provide information from different sources on three fictitious projects, each of which is being considered by the government as a solution to a specific problem. Your task is to analyse the papers and prepare a note which builds a balanced and convincing case for one of the three projects. To do this you will need to compare and contrast the options, using the stated criteria, and explain convincingly the reasons for your recommendation". (Civil Service Fast Stream)*

*"I was given 15 minutes to read through what the employer described as "the world's worst-written press release" (a fictitious example!), mark it up and note the mistakes." (Marketing candidate)*

*"You will have 30 minutes to read the exercise briefing materials and prepare a written report on the given subject. This exercise is designed to assess your ability to produce written reports to an appropriate standard. Your report will be assessed on the basis of your application of structure; use of clear, concise language; and logical and coherent presentation".*

**EFFECTIVE WRITING TIPS**

Effective written communication takes time and skill since such a small portion of our communication is contained in the words themselves.

For business purposes, managers must deliver their message clearly, succinctly and effectively if they want to be successful. Poorly written messages create confusion or fail to achieve their intended purpose.

How to write something depends on the goal to be achieved. In this month's article, we cover several types of written communication:

1. E-mail messages

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2. Business letters

3. Proposals

NOTES

All of these have a few things in common to be effective.

***Summary of the Tips***

1. Be clear about your goal and communicate it
2. Explain what you want the person receiving it to do
3. Explain the benefits for responding as requested
4. Establish credibility and show respect for the reader
5. Choose an appropriate communication method.

Each is explained in more detail.

***Tip 1: Be clear about your goal and communicate it***

First, you must know your goal in writing to someone. What are you trying to achieve by the communication?

- Do you want someone to do something for you?
- Do you want them to take a specific action in response to your message?
- Do you want to pass along information where the receiving person does not need to reply?
- Do you want to discuss a subject and exchange views with someone else?

State your goal clearly in your message.

***Example: Writing to a stranger when you want them to do something for you.***

***Bad Example***

Here's a bad example. We received this e-mail recently (we have not corrected the spelling or changed the original punctuation):

Hi I 'm looking for some information about managing change. What this?How it works?Could you also give me some examples about that topics and a small text dealing about that? Thanks in advance.

Does that message inspire someone to help?

We did not respond to that one at all.

***Good Example***

Here's a good example — someone who explained clearly what they wanted and their reasons for asking us for something:

Dear Barbara and Michael,

Business Communication

I was looking at your website and thought you might be interested in submitting an article, 500-700 words, for our new online newsletter, Working Spirit: for those of us who are unwilling to "leave our souls in the parking lot" during the work week.

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The first issue of Working Spirit is slated to be delivered to over 10,000 CEOs, managers and HR people in corporations all over the country in early September. We intend to introduce principals of spirituality and values-based management techniques to CEOs, HR people, and other corporate professionals. Suze Orman is the featured interview for the first issue.

Working Spirit is produced by Brush Dance, Inc. We are a leading publisher of greeting cards, journals, calendars, and gift items for the Mind, Body, Spirit community. Currently, Brush Dance products are sold in 2,000 stores throughout the United States, including national outlets such as Barnes & Noble (our cards are the number one seller in Barnes and Noble nationwide), Bed Bath & Beyond, Whole Foods, Papyrus and Borders.

I hope to hear from you soon regarding the newsletter and article possibilities. Perhaps you'd like to exchange links as well.

Sincerely,

Randy Peyser Editorial Director, Brush Dance, Inc.

***Tip 2: Explain what you want the person to do***

In the bad example, the writer stated what they wanted. However, the topic "managing change" is so large and the message so poorly written that it did not inspire us to take any action at all. It is similar to many requests we get that go unanswered.

In the good example, the writer clearly states what they would like us to do — write an article and respond to the e-mail message.

In addition, they specified the size of an article, the intended audience and gave information about the timing of their first issue. That provides more detailed information so we can better evaluate whether we can do what they ask.

***Tip 3: Explain the benefits for responding as requested***

In the bad example, no explanation was given about any benefits to us for responding.

In the good example, the writer provided information about the intended audience of their newsletter and how many people it would reach. In addition, the subject matter is one that we are interested in, which the writer clearly referenced. The benefit to us was implied — a larger audience for a subject we support.

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***Tip 4: Establish credibility and show respect for the reader***

In the bad example, no credibility was attempted. Because it was so poorly written, the writer has no credibility with us. Nor did they respect our time by sending a message that was already answered by our website's Frequently Asked Questions page.

In the good example, the writer provided information about their job function, the company behind the newsletter, their other products and services, their audience and their distribution outlets. He showed respect by taking the time to make sure we were interested in his subject.

In any business communication, be careful about spelling, grammar and punctuation. Errors in typing are much more tolerated in e-mail messages than in business letters, because people usually understand they are written quickly. However, be aware that many people are offended by sloppiness so **always** re-read your message before sending it.

If you have an e-mail system with automatic spell-checking, it may be wise to use that feature.

***Tip 5: Choose an appropriate communication method***

E-mail is quickly replacing formal business letters in many situations because of the faster turn-around time. The majority of major corporations now have e-mail systems and a growing percentage of small business also have e-mail.

When writing to strangers, the techniques described above apply equally to e-mail or to formal business letters.

E-mail may be very informal between people who already have an established relationship. However, when writing to someone you don't know, we suggest taking the time to compose your message as you would a formal business letter for greater effectiveness.

**WRITING EFFECTIVE PROPOSALS**

Writing effective proposals requires much more time and effort than writing a business letter. However, the similarities include:

1. Being clear about your goal
2. Respecting the reader
3. Identifying the benefits of your communication to the reader
4. Demonstrating credibility
5. Using an appropriate communication method.

***Responding to a formal Request for Proposal (RFP)***

If the proposal is in response to a formal RFP, the issuer will often provide some guidance about specific points that must be included in the proposal submitted. If they do, follow their suggestions and guidelines strictly.

... If they say they want specific sections, do exactly what is requested. Submit your proposal organized in the same way as the RFP and address every single item requested in the RFP.

Your goal is to make the proposal evaluators comfortable with your proposal. When it is organized the same way as the RFP, you have already connected with the way they have organized the project. That makes their job easier.

The last thing you want is for the proposal evaluator to throw up their hands because they cannot understand your proposal or because they don't understand how it meets their requirements.

If you cannot respond to a particular item, include a statement to that effect rather than just ignoring it.

Include any additional information in an appendix, if that is allowed.

Many proposals are rejected because the writer does not follow specified guidelines or does not present information in a clearly organized way.

### ***Other Business Proposals***

If the proposal is in response to an RFP without specific guidelines or simply a request to "submit a proposal," the proposal writer must be careful to include all the information needed to make their proposal a winner.

General topics to be included:

#### ***Project Overview / Executive Summary***

This section provides an executive summary of the proposal. The overview demonstrates an understanding of the scope of the project and summarizes the details of the proposal succinctly.

The overview should be short - usually no more than 2 pages.

#### ***Experience with Similar Projects, Clients and/or Industry***

This section describes experience that is relevant to the proposed project.

#### ***Proposed Project Tasks***

This section describes the tasks that are to be accomplished in the project. Large project proposals include a time line or Gantt chart.

#### ***Proposed Staffing and Schedules***

This section describes the people involved and the timing of their proposed work on the project.

#### ***Background of Company***

The background section describes the company making the proposal, their history and other similar projects.

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***Client References***

References may be letters or contact information to other clients who can affirm that you are who you say you are.

## NOTES

***Proposed Client Responsibilities***

This section describes any specific responsibilities that must be met by the proposed client.

***Billing Rates and Estimated Project Costs***

Billing rates and project costs are included in this section.

***Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure***

Most proposals include a section on confidentiality and non-disclosure of the contents, since business proposals usually consider proprietary information.

When making proposals to government agencies, this section will prevent company proprietary information from becoming public information.

If you are concerned about this, you should check with the client about their requirements for maintaining confidentiality of proposals. Some public agencies will not honor confidentiality provisions and require complete disclosure of proposals.

***Proposal Effective Date***

This section provides the expected starting date and any restrictions on the term of the proposal. For example, if you can only guarantee the price and terms for 60 days, you must specify that clearly.

***Compliance and/or Certification Information***

Include any legal compliance or certification.

***Attachments and Enclosures***

Include any attachments that do not fit the other sections.

***Packaging and Presentation of Your Proposal***

Your proposal should be packaged attractively with a cover letter and table of contents.

The inclusion of color charts or color text in proposals is becoming more common. If you do use color or fancy enclosures, make sure they support the main purpose of your proposal.

If the client is a government agency working on a very low budget, submitting a proposal that is gold-foil stamped may indicate that you do not understand their needs or corporate culture.

Remember your goal is to have your proposal understood clearly by the client and to make them choose you over others. Whatever it takes to do that is what you want to do, without overwhelming or confusing the client.

## 3

# Effective writing for Communication

NOTES

**The Chapter Covers :**

- Audience and Format
- Composition and Style
- Structure
- Grammatical Errors
- Proofing
- Key Points
- Purposes in Effective Writing
- Clarity in Effective Writing
- Three Obstacles to Clear and Concise Writing
- Writing Clarity
- Principles of Effective Writing
- Unnecessary words
- Personal versus impersonal
- Writing Process

A colleague has just sent you an email relating to a meeting you're having in one hour's time. The email is supposed to contain key information that you need to present, as part of the business case for an important project.

But there's a problem: The email is so badly written that you can't find the data you need. There are misspellings and incomplete sentences, and the paragraphs are so long and confusing that it takes you three times more than it should to find the information you want.

As a result, you're under-prepared for the meeting, and it doesn't go as well as you want it to.

## NOTES

Have you ever faced a situation similar to this? In today's information overload world, it's vital to communicate clearly, concisely and effectively. People don't have time to read book-length emails, and they don't have the patience to scour badly-constructed emails for "buried" points.

The better your writing skills are, the better the impression you'll make on the people around you – including your boss, your colleagues, and your clients. You never know how far these good impressions will take you!

In this article, we'll look at how you can improve your writing skills and avoid common mistakes.

## AUDIENCE AND FORMAT

The first step to writing clearly is choosing the appropriate format. Do you need to send an informal email? Write a detailed report? Create advertising copy? Or write a formal letter?

The format, as well as your audience, will define your "writing voice" – that is, how formal or relaxed the tone should be. For instance, if you write an email to a prospective client, should it have the same tone as an email to a friend?

Definitely not.

Start by identifying who will read your message. Is it targeted at senior managers, the entire human resources team, or a small group of engineers? With everything you write, your readers, or recipients, should define your tone as well as aspects of the content.

## COMPOSITION AND STYLE

Once you know what you're writing, and for whom you're writing, you actually have to start writing.

A blank, white computer screen is often intimidating. And it's easy to get stuck because you don't know how to start. Try these tips for composing and styling your document:

- **Start with your audience** – Remember, your readers may know nothing about what you're telling them. What do they need to know first?
- **Create an outline** – This is especially helpful if you're writing a longer document such as a report, presentation, or speech. Outlines help you identify which steps to take in which order, and they help you break the task up into manageable pieces of information.
- **Use AIDA** – If you're writing something that must inspire action in the reader, follow the **Attention-Interest-Desire-Action (AIDA)** formula. These four steps can help guide you through the writing process.
- **Try some empathy** – For instance, if you're writing a sales letter for prospective clients, why should they care about your product or sales

pitch? What's the benefit for them? Remember your audience's needs at all times.

- **Use the Rhetorical Triangle** – If you're trying to persuade someone to do something, make sure that you communicate why people should listen to you, pitch your message in a way that engages your audience, and present information rationally and coherently. Our article on the **Rhetorical Triangle** can help you make your case in the most effective way.
- **Identify your main theme** – If you're having trouble defining the main theme of your message, pretend that you have 15 seconds to explain your position. What do you say? This is likely to be your main theme.
- **Use simple language** – Unless you're writing a scholarly article, it's usually best to use **simple**, direct language. Don't use long words just to impress people.

## NOTES

## STRUCTURE

Your document should be as “reader friendly” as possible. Use headings, sub-headings, bullet points, and numbering whenever possible to break up the text.

After all, what's easier to read – a page full of long paragraphs, or a page that's broken up into short paragraphs, with section headings and bullet points? A document that's easy to scan will get read more often than a document with long, dense paragraphs of text.

Headers should grab the reader's attention. Using **questions** is often a good idea, especially in advertising copy or reports, because questions help keep the reader engaged and curious.

In emails and proposals, use short, factual headings and subheadings, like the ones in this article.

Adding **graphs and charts** is also a smart way to break up your text. These visual aids not only keep the reader's eye engaged, but they can communicate important information much more quickly than text.

## GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

You probably don't need us to tell you that errors in your document will make you look unprofessional. It's essential to learn **grammar** properly, and to avoid common mistakes that your spell checker won't find.

Here are some examples of commonly misused words:

- **Affect/effect**
  - “Affect” is a verb meaning to influence. (Example: The economic forecast will affect our projected income.)



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- “Effect” is a noun meaning the result or outcome. (Example: What is the effect of the proposal?)

- **Then/than**

- “Then” is typically an adverb indicating a sequence in time. (Example: We went to dinner, then we saw a movie.)
- “Than” is a conjunction used for comparison. (Example: The dinner was more expensive than the movie.)

- **Your/you’re**

- “Your” is a possessive. (Example: Is that your file?)
- “You’re” is a contraction of “you are.” (Example: You’re the new manager.)
- Note: Also watch out for other common homophones (words that sound alike but have different spellings and meanings) – such as their/they’re/there, to/too/two, and so on.

- **Its/it’s**

- “Its” is a possessive. (Example: Is that its motor?)
- “It’s” is a contraction of “It is.” (Example: It’s often that heavy.) (Yes, it is this way around!)
- **Company’s/companies** (and other possessives versus plurals)
- “Company’s” indicates possession. (Example: The company’s trucks hadn’t been maintained properly.)
- “Companies” is plural. (Example: The companies in this industry are suffering.)

To learn more about commonly misused words, misused apostrophes, and other grammatical errors, take our Bite-Sized Training session on **Written Communication**.

**TIP:**

Some of your readers – arguably an increasing number – won’t be perfect at spelling and grammar. They may not notice if you make these errors. But don’t use this as an excuse: there will usually be people, senior managers in particular, who **WILL** notice!

Because of this, everything you write should be of a quality that every reader will find acceptable.

## PROOFING

The enemy of good proofreading is speed. Many people rush through their documents, but this is how you miss mistakes. Follow these guidelines to check what you've written:

- **Proof your headers and subheaders** – People often skip these and focus on the text alone. Just because headers are big and bold doesn't mean they're error free!
- **Read the document out loud** – This forces you to go more slowly, so that you're more likely to catch mistakes.
- **Use your finger to follow text as you read** – This is another trick that helps you slow down.
- **Start at the end of your document** – Proofread one sentence at a time, working your way from the end to the beginning. This helps you focus on errors, not on content.

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## KEY POINTS

More than ever, it's important to know how to communicate your point quickly and professionally. Many people spend a lot of time writing and reading, so the better you are at this form of communication, the more successful you're likely to be.

Identify your audience before you start creating your document. And if you feel that there's too much information to include, create an outline to help organize your thoughts. Learning grammatical and stylistic techniques will also help you write more clearly; and be sure to proof the final document. Like most things, the more you write, the better you're going to be!

## PURPOSES IN EFFECTIVE WRITING

When a person writes something, he or she has purposes for writing. The writer may have motivations of which he or she is unaware. The writer may also have mixed, and even contradictory, motivations for writing.

For instance, a student writing an essay for a class may wish to please the teacher and to amuse his or her classmates. Unfortunately, what might amuse classmates the teacher could find unacceptable.

In general, people write either because they are required to or because they choose to write for their own reasons.

Required writing happens on the job and in school. Self-chosen writing happens in many circumstances. Both required and self-chosen writing can be of many kinds. In either case, reflection on different purposes for writing can help one produce the most effective piece of writing.

Roman Jakobson's model of the communication situation provides a good framework for classifying the varied purposes of writing.

Adapted to written communication, Jakobson's model has these parts:

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1. Writer
2. Reader
3. Context
4. Message
5. Contact
6. Code

Writing can be seen as having six general types of purpose, each type of purpose focusing on one of the parts of the communication model.

1. **Writer: Expressive purposes.** One may write simply to express one's feelings, attitudes, ideas, and so on. This type of writing doesn't take the reader into consideration; instead, it focuses on the writer's feelings, experience, and needs. Expressive writing may take the form of poetry, journals, letters, and, especially, free writing. Often, a person will do expressive writing and then be disappointed when readers don't respond to it.
2. **Reader: Conative purposes.** Conative writing seeks to affect the reader. Persuasive writing is conative; so is writing intended to entertain the reader. Writing intended to arouse the reader's feelings is conative. Conative writing may take about any form, so long as its intention to persuade the reader or affect the reader emotionally.
3. **Context: Informative purposes.** Informative writing refers to something external to the writing itself, with the purpose of informing the reader. For instance, this page is informative, as are the other components of this Map. In our times, informative writing is usually prose, although in earlier periods poetry was used for informative purposes.
4. **Message: Poetic purposes.** Poetic (or literary or stylistic) purposes focus on the message itself—on its language, on the way the elements of language are used, on structure and pattern both on the level of phrase and of the overall composition. Poetic writing can be in prose as well as in verse. Fiction has poetic purposes. Anytime one writes with an emphasis on the way the language is used, one has a poetic purpose.
5. **Contact: Phatic purposes.** Phatic language (and nonverbal communication) establishes and maintains contacts between speakers or between writer and reader. In speaking, for instance, we may greet someone by saying, "Howya doin'?" or "Hozit goin'?" These questions are not requests for information. They are intended to establish and maintain friendly contact. Phatic purposes are not significant in most writing. The use of

greetings and closings in letters is one example of phatic purpose in writing.

6. Code: **Metalinguistic** purposes. Comments on a piece of writing are metalinguistic. If a student attaches a note to an essay to explain why the essay is late, the note is metalinguistic in relation to the essay. An author's preface to a book is another example of metalinguistic purpose in writing.

## NOTES

If you think about it, you will realize that many pieces of writing have more than one purpose. A poem may be intended to arouse the feeling of sadness in the reader (**conative**), express the poet's feelings (**expressive**), and use the language imaginatively and forcefully (**poetic**).

When you write, define the purposes of your writing. Decide what your primary purpose is and subordinate the other purposes to it. If you have conflicting purposes, be aware of that, and try to resolve the conflict or exploit it to make the writing more intense.

I have discussed the purposes of writing from the writer's point of view, not the reader's. The reader's purposes are discussed with interpretation. But for now, consider that the reader's purposes may be quite different from, and may conflict with, the writer's purposes. A poet may have written a poem to experiment with the language. A reader may read the poem seeking biographical information on the poet. Such conflicts and tensions produce much of the energy and excitement of literature.

## CLARITY IN EFFECTIVE WRITING

Have you ever read an email from someone that was too wordy, lacked focus, and left you confused? How can we learn from reading such emails to improve our own communication? How do we compose emails and writings that others will actually want to read?

The ability to write clearly is crucial to getting your message across no matter what you're writing, whether it's an email, a blog post, a magazine article, or a letter to a friend. Clear and concise writing is vital to having your words read and understood.

The whole purpose of most writing is to **inform readers of something or to persuade people to do something**. The more clear and concise your language, the easier your message will be understood, and the more likely your readers will respond to that message.

Before you can write clearly, you have to be able to think clearly. A big reason many writers don't see desired success in conveying their message is that they were not focused on a clear message. Good writing usually stems directly from clear thinking.

In this post, we'll first look at some common obstacles to clear thinking and writing, then offer some suggestions to develop the mental state for clear writing,

and finally give some specific writing tips that, if implemented, will immediately add that magic touch of clarity to your writing.

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## THREE OBSTACLES TO CLEAR AND CONCISE WRITING

### Obstacle 1: False ideas about what good writing is.

Many writers try to write more intelligently and attractively than they need to. Their writing can come across as trying too hard and that isn't intelligent or attractive. There's no cosmic law dictating that as soon as you start putting words on paper, you have to jazz it up and make it sound more intelligent than it really is.

Even writers with more knowledge and experience make this mistake. They want to impress readers with their grandiose grasp of the language, tossing about little-known, large words and trying to write in a clever way that ends up diminishing the clarity of their message. They've forgotten the most important piece of good writing: **your first priority is to inform your readers, not to impress them.**

If you seek first to impress, you probably won't; nor will you often truly inform, as your message gets lost in the jungle of your arcane vocabulary. Seek first to inform, as clearly as you can. If you do that, you stand a better chance of also impressing your readers because you expressed your points clearly.

### Obstacle 2: Not being clear about one's message.

Many writers have a general idea of what they want to say, but they don't crystallize it in one short, snappy sentence. Thus, they start out writing, touching on their topic from different angles, and including every bit of information they think is relevant.

The writing may end up readable and professional sounding, but the readers will come away thinking that, while they understood the gist of the author's intent, they can't precisely say what the take-home point was. This is usually because the writer never really knew what it was either.

### Obstacle 3: Distractions.

Your mind has to be clear for your writing to be precise. If you've got the TV on in the background, if other people are coming in and out of your writing space, if you've got Twitter updates and email updates continually popping up on your screen, etc. – your focus will be eradicated.

## How to Develop the Clear Mental State for Writing

### 1. Read, Read, Read

Reading broadly can accomplish two things: one, broaden your vocabulary so you more naturally use the right words instead of searching about for intelligent-sounding words which might not be a good fit; and two, you can get a much

better, natural feel for what makes up good, clear, and fluid writing.

Additionally, you expose yourself to more ideas and perspectives, forcing yourself to think more critically in general, which will enable you to think more critically about the subjects on which you're writing.

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Respected magazines and newspapers which regularly include in-depth articles and essays have been extremely helpful to me in demonstrating how to write clear, engaging, intelligent prose which convey both a clear message and a colorful style. Two of my favorites are GQ Magazine and the Wall Street Journal newspaper.

## **2. Read Books and Blogs on Writing**

### **3. Clear Your Writing Space**

When it's time to write, clear everything off your writing table except for what's absolutely necessary to write the piece. There might be all kinds of unrelated notes, books, magazines, loose change, several pens, notepads, etc. Simply take a minute to rid the table of all the excess. Only keep resources directly related to the current project and set everything else aside. For example, a pen or notes might be good resources to keep close. Clarity and simplicity in your workspace lends itself to clarity and simplicity in your thinking, and so on down to your writing.

### **4. Block-Off Time**

Determine how much time you realistically think you'll need to write the piece and schedule that time period for writing only. Say it'll take you maybe three hours. Block off that time and do nothing but work on the project for the full three hours, taking a five-minute break at the end of each hour to walk around and stretch.

### **5. Eliminate Distractions**

Turn off the television, turn off your cell phone, turn off instant messaging, turn off Twitter and email updates, and anything else that's likely to interrupt you, thus diminishing your focus. You might also consider turning off your Internet connection so you don't surf the web.

All of that distracting infotainment will still be there in droves once you finish your project. Then info-binge all you want. But, for the time being, do nothing but write. Simple. Clear. Focused.

## **8 Keys to Clarity When Writing**

### **1. Visualize Road Signs**

Think about the street and highway signs you see around your city. People who write road signs have very little space within which to get their message across. In that very limited space, the fewer and larger the words, the more likely drivers are to see the words and process the conveyed message.

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**Examples:**

- *Do Not Enter*
- *Speed Limit 50: Next 400 Miles.*
- *Stop*

Notice the concise prose. The message is very clear. Do the same in your own writing. Choose the right words, the most descriptive words, and keep your words to a minimum. Say exactly what you have to say and be done with it. Don't muddy up your meaning by writing more than is necessary to make your point.

**2. Write a One-Liner Summary**

You may remember writing a thesis statement in high school or college. Similar to a thesis statement, consider putting together a one sentence summary text describing the main purpose prior to writing.

Whenever you have something to write, take a few minutes to think your subject through, and then write out, in one or two short sentences, the main idea you're trying to get across. Think about your purpose with this piece of writing and your expected outcome.

Do this for yourself, as a guiding structure for your writing, and refer back to it regularly to stay on track toward your primary argument.

A purposeful summary or thesis statement is like a company's mission statement; it sets out our clear mission in whatever we're writing.

**3. Do Your Headline First**

A headline is a one-sentence encapsulation of your subject and will act as a guiding force for your entire piece. While the thesis statement is a promise you make to yourself, your writing will reflect the thesis statement – a headline “*is a promise to prospective readers. Its job is to clearly communicate the benefit that you will deliver to the reader in exchange for their valuable time,*” says Brian Clark.

Figure out what you really want your piece to say, and after putting together a good thesis statement, write up a good, snappy, eye-catching, bold, informative, and short headline.

Once you have a good title, it functions as a reference point for your piece. As you're writing, imagine yourself in the place of your readers; continually ask yourself if the arguments you're making, the prose you're writing, truly fulfills the promise made to your readers. Combining a good thesis statement with a good headline *before* you begin writing can have a powerful, laser-like effect on your focus, enabling you to write with more clarity and purpose.

**4. Write Like You Talk**

Instead of reaching about for soaring words and phrases, simply write like normal people speak. Of course, you'll have to adjust for legitimate differences

between spoken and written words, but you should use the language your readers will clearly understand and relate to. Don't confuse your prose's clarity by using jargon or stilted, "intelligent" words.

An example of what you shouldn't write:

*"I do believe that the most important action that could be taken to improve customer satisfaction is to truly engage customers by establishing a significant relationship with them through extended attention to what motivates them to take a particular stance in correlation to the company."*

Most normal people don't speak like that. Change it to:

*"Let's really pay attention to what our customers say they want from us."*

Remember, simple, short, and clear.

Another benefit to writing like you speak is that you retain your own voice and can express yourself authentically. You don't need to search for unfamiliar language to sound more professional. Simply be yourself and write the way you speak. Your prose will become clearer and your own voice will shine through.

## 5. Use Simple Words to Evoke Vivid Images

Often the simple short word will do much better than any large word, to convey your idea, and be more clearly understood. Try to create concrete images in your writing by using real, *earthy* words; words that describe actual things. Here are some related quotes from respected authors:

- *"Never use a long word where a short one will do."*-George Orwell.
- *"Always prefer the clean direct word to the long, vague one. Don't implement promises, but keep them."*-C.S. Lewis.
- *"Poor Faulkner. Does he really think big emotions come from big words? He thinks I don't know the ten-dollar words. I know them all right. But there are older and simpler and better words, and those are the ones I use."*-Ernest Hemingway.

## 6. Eliminate Redundant Words and Phrases

Some redundancy is necessary to stress your main points, but too much indicates that you don't really have much to say or know how to say it well. An easy way of reducing redundancy is to not use two or more words which mean the same thing.

Examples,

- *Past history* – if something is history, it clearly happened in the past;
- *Armed gunman* – if someone has a gun, they're clearly armed;
- *Foreign imports* – if something is imported, it's clearly foreign;
- *Screaming loudly* – if someone is screaming, they're clearly being loud.

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Only use the words you need to use and eliminate excess. After writing, go back to each paragraph and sentence with a fine toothed comb and see how you can rephrase the same meaning using fewer words. Do this several times. Don't be afraid to cut text out, if it means a more effective piece of writing.

**7. Minimize Clichés.**

A cliché is a phrase, expression, or idea that has been overused to the point of losing its intended force or novelty, especially when at some time it was considered distinctively forceful or novel. Dulling your writing or speaking with clichés is lazy thinking. It shows you don't value your subject enough to invest the energy and time to really describe it in more colorful, unique, and accurate language.

George Orwell called clichés *dying metaphors* and *ready-made phrases* that do your thinking for you. Instead of using clichés to fill in space, aim to think critically about meaning and choose words that accurately and freshly conjure the image and meaning you are trying to convey.

Examples of long-standing clichés:

- *Light at the end of the tunnel*
- *Keeping up with the Joneses*
- *Put it on the back burner*

Examples of popular clichés today:

- *Size does matter*
- *Perfect storm*
- *Watergate, Spygate, Nipplegate, Ashleygate.* (anything that's a scandal)-gate

Orwell offers this advice for using more colorful language without resorting to clichés:

*"A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?"*

*But you are not obliged to go to all this trouble. You can shirk it by simply throwing your mind open and letting the ready-made phrases come crowding in. They will construct your sentences for you – even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent – and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself."*

**8. Cut Out Most Metadiscourse.**

Metadiscourse is simply writing about writing. It occurs when a writer comments on what he is saying. Examples are: *I believe, I think, In my opinion.* These

are unnecessary because it is clear that you are the one expressing your opinion, and excessive usage can make your writing sound extra verbose.

An example of especially verbose metadiscourse:

*"I would like to take this opportunity to offer a hearty congratulations to you."*

No need to say *you would like to take this opportunity*; just take it. Don't tell him that you would like to, or are about to, offer congratulations – just congratulate him.

Here's an alternative version projecting the same meaning:

*"Congratulations!"*

There are times when metadiscourse is helpful. Particularly, when the topic is controversial, it is wise to be clear that a statement is our opinion.

The point here is to become aware of when we add extra words to justify ourselves. Constantly adding metadiscourse adds unnecessary words and buries the main point.

## WRITING CLARITY

As writers, our words are our tools. Therefore, with every word, phrase, clause and sentence we write, we should be asking, "Is this the right tool for the job?" Is the way we have written a sentence the clearest, most concise way to express what we are trying to say?

There are several danger zones to be mindful of as we are writing for clarity, conciseness and coherence.

### WORD CHOICE:

The words we choose should communicate just what we mean to communicate—nothing more; nothing less. As noted in "When Words Collide," choosing the *correct* verb is a matter of grammar; but choosing the *right* verb is a matter of conciseness and clarity.

#### Avoid UP

- o Bob appointed his uncle to **head up** the committee.
- o Bob appointed his uncle to **head** the committee.
- o The negligent father finally **faced up** to his responsibilities.
- o The negligent father finally **faced** his responsibilities.
- o His incessant questions only served to **slow up** the meeting.
- o His incessant questions only served to **slow** the meeting.

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**Avoid** those verbs requiring “up” to complete their meaning. These verbs are not wrong; but they are weak.

- o She suspected the student was **making up** the excuse.
- o She suspected the student was **fabricating** the excuse.
- o Business has been **picking up** since the street opened.
- o Business has **improved** since the street opened.

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**“VERBIZING NOUNS”**

Adding the suffix “-ize” to any noun is usually unnecessary, and it often serves to confuse the reader. Nonetheless, some “-ize” words are useful and provide a particular meaning.

Before tacking “-ize” onto a noun, subject it to these three tests.

- o Is it listed in the dictionary as an acceptable word?
- o Does it have a unique meaning? (e.g. pasteurize)
- o Does it have a sound that is not displeasing?

**THAT**

*That* serves a range of grammatical functions.

- o **Adjective:** *That* man is going to fall off of his bike.
- o **Demonstrative pronoun:** *That* is the last thing he will do.
- o **Relative pronoun:** Harvard is the university *that* he wants to attend.
- o **Conjunction:** My brother admitted *that* he is always wrong.

As a pronoun & conjunction, *that* can often be eliminated.

- o My brother admitted he is always wrong.
- o Harvard is the university he wants to attend.

Other times removing *that* requires a sentence be re-written.

- o She treasured the boat that was built by her father.
- o She treasured the boat her father built.

To determine if *that* is necessary, ask these two questions:

- o 1. Can *that* be eliminated with no change in the meaning of the sentence?
- o 2. Can the clause introduced by *that* be expressed more concisely?

**MISPLACED WORDS**

A modifier must point directly and clearly to what it modifies. Place the modifier next to or as close as possible to what it is modifying.

Problem modifiers: **only, nearly, almost, just, scarcely, even, hardly and merely.**

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- o Only the coach lead the team to victory.
- o *No one else can lead them.*
- o The coach can only lead the team to victory.
- o *The coach can't do anything more than lead them.*
- o The coach can lead only the team to victory.
- o *The coach can't lead anyone else.*
- o Just the swimmer missed her chance to compete in the race.
- o *No one else missed a chance.*

**JUST**

- o The swimmer just missed her chance to compete in the race.
- o *The swimmer barely or recently missed her chance*
- o The swimmer missed her chance just to compete in the race.
- o *The swimmer missed her chance simply to compete.*
- o The swimmer missed her chance to compete in just the race.
- o *The swimmer missed only once chance to compete: the race. Or she missed the chance to limit her competing to one event: the race.*

**MISPLACED MODIFIERS**

Phrases and clauses should also be placed next to or near what they modify.

- o Several of the children were confused by math in the class.
- o Rising to their feet, the fight song roared from the fans.
- o Joe found a twenty-dollar bill walking home.

**DANGLING MODIFIERS**

A modifier "dangles" when what it is supposed to modify is not part of the sentence.

- o Before going on vacation, the bills need to be paid.
- o After cutting the grass, the garden was weeded.

## **SPLITTING AUXILIARY AND MAIN VERBS AND SPLITTING INFINITIVES**

Split verbs lead to incoherence. In most cases, it is best to keep auxiliary verbs next to the main verb and to avoid splitting infinitives.

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- o The students who have been, for more than a week, waiting for tickets were disappointed with the news.
- o The burglar was, as far as the detectives could determine, hiding somewhere in the building.
- o Splitting infinitives, though common practice is grammatically incorrect and makes for sloppy writing.
- o For the information to truly be valuable, he will need to verify the source.
- o Sally intended to fully explain the proposal, but she missed the meeting.

## **SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD**

A mood of the verb (to be) that expresses a condition or supposition that is contrary to fact or highly improbable (a wish).

It is also used to express: DOUBTS, UNCERTAINTIES, REGRETS, DESIRES.

With subjunctive mood, use WERE instead of WAS.

- o If I were rich, I would still teach grammar
- o The students looked at me as if I were insane.
- o She wishes she were home in bed instead of in class.

## **PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE WRITING**

### **Five golden rules**

1. Always have in mind a specific reader and assume that reader is intelligent but uninformed. It may be useful to state up front what the reader profile is.
2. Before writing decide what the exact purpose of the report is. Make sure that every sentence makes a contribution to that purpose, and makes it at the right time.
3. Use language that is simple, concrete, and familiar.
4. At the beginning and end of every section check your writing according to this principle: first tell your readers what you're going to tell them, then tell them it, and finally tell them what you told them.
5. Make your report attractive to look at, but do not add meaningless frills.

## Other General tips

- Keep a good dictionary beside you when you are writing. Before using a word that 'sounds good', but whose meaning you are not sure of, check it in the dictionary.
- Once you have finished the first draft of your report read it through carefully, trying to put yourself in the shoes of your potential readers.
- Once you are reasonably confident about the state of your report, ask a friend or colleague to read it *before* you submit it formally

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## Sentence and paragraph length

The English school system produces students who feel ashamed to write short sentences. In my view this is a great failing of our education system. There is nothing clever about writing long, complex sentences. For technical writing it is simply WRONG. You must get used to the idea of writing sentences that are reasonably short and simple. In many cases shorter sentences can be achieved by adhering to the following principles:

1. A sentence should contain a single unit of information. Therefore, avoid compound sentences wherever possible - be on the lookout for words like AND, OR, WHILE which are often used unnecessarily to build a compound sentence.
2. Check your sentences for faulty construction. Incorrect use of commas is a common cause of poorly constructed and excessively long sentences.

**Example** (this example also fixes some other problems that are dealt with below)

**Bad:** "Time division multiplexed systems are basically much simpler, the combination and separation of channels being affected by timing circuits rather than by filters and inter-channel interference is less dependent on system non-linearities, due to the fact that only one channel is using the common communication medium at any instant."

**Good:** "Systems multiplexed by time division are basically much simpler. The channels are combined and separated by timing circuits, not by filters. Interference between channels depends less on non-linear features of the system, because only one channel is using the common communication medium at any time."

3. Use parentheses sparingly. Most uses are due to sheer laziness and can be avoided by breaking up the sentence. NEVER use nested parentheses under any circumstances if you want to retain your reader.

Learning about some of the principles described below, such as using active rather than passive constructs, will go some way toward helping you shorten your sentences.

A paragraph should contain a single coherent idea. It is easier to read a text where paragraphs are not excessively long. You should try always to keep them to less than half a page. On the other hand, successive paragraphs that are very

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short may also be very difficult to read. Such an approach is often the result of poorly structured thinking. If you need to write a sequence of sentences that each express a different idea then it is usually best to use itemized or bulleted lists to do so. The fact that the sentences need to be written in sequence suggests that there is something that relates them. The idea that relates them should be used to introduce the list. As an example, look at the numbered list above.

**Words to avoid**

You should read this section carefully - there are words in here that I would actually penalise you for using.

The golden rule on words to avoid is:

*Never use a difficult word or phrase when there is a simple alternative.*

For example, you should never use the following words because there is a simpler alternative (given in brackets).

utilise (use)

facilitate (help)

at this time (now)

Also unless you are talking about building maintenance, never use the verb 'render' as in:

The testing strategy rendered it impossible to find all the faults.

The 'correct' version of the above sentence is:

The testing strategy made it impossible to find all the faults.

In other words, if you mean 'make' then just write 'make' not 'render'.

Here are some other examples of commonly used words that have much simpler (and better) alternatives:

<b>BAD</b>	<b>GOOD</b>
endeavour	try
terminate	end, stop
transmit	send
demonstrate	show
initiate	begin
assist	help
necessitate	need

In general you should only ever use the 'bad' words here if some special context means it is really necessary to do so.

In many cases there is no simple rule for transforming a sentence with unnecessarily long words, but the following examples should give you some idea of the improvements that can be made.

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BAD	GOOD
The precise mechanism responsible for this antagonism cannot be elucidated	We do not know what causes this antagonism
... with enough ancillary labour to assist ...	with enough extra labour to help
The stability of the process is enhanced by co-operation	Co-operation improves the stability of the process

## UNNECESSARY WORDS

Many sentences contain unnecessary words that repeat an idea already expressed in another word. This wastes space and blunts the message. In many cases unnecessary words are caused by 'abstract' words like *nature*, *position*, *character*, *condition*, *situation* as the following examples show:

BAD	GOOD
The product is not of a satisfactory <u>nature</u>	The product is unsatisfactory
The product is not of a satisfactory <u>character</u>	The product is unsatisfactory
After specification we <u>are in a position</u> to begin detailed design	After specification we can begin detailed design
We are now <u>in the situation of being able</u> to begin detailed design	We can now begin detailed design

In general, you should therefore use such abstract words sparingly, if at all.

Often writers use several words for ideas that can be expressed in one. This leads to unnecessarily complex sentences and genuine *redundancy* as the following examples show:

WITH REDUNDANCY	WITHOUT REDUNDANCY
The printer is <u>located adjacent</u> to the computer	The printer is adjacent to the computer
The printer is <u>located in the immediate vicinity</u> of the computer	The printer is near the computer
The user can <u>visibly see</u> the image moving	The user can see the image moving
The input is <u>suitably processed</u>	The input is processed
This is done <u>by means of</u> inserting an artificial fault	This is done by inserting an artificial fault
The <u>reason for the increase</u> in number of faults found was <u>due to</u> an increase in testing	The number of faults found increased because of an increase in testing
It is likely that problems will arise <u>with regards to the completion</u> of the specification phase	You will probably have problems completing the specification phase
<u>Within a comparatively short period</u> we will be able to finish the design	Soon we will be able to finish the design



Another common cause of redundant words is when people use so-called *modifying* words. These often turn out to be meaningless. For example:

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BAD	GOOD
<u>absolutely</u> critical	critical
<u>considerable</u> difficulty	difficulty
<u>utterly</u> wrong	wrong

Similarly, the following words can be fine when used with a concrete reference, but in many case they are not:

- appreciable
- approximate
- comparative
- definite
- evident
- excessive
- fair
- negligible
- reasonable
- relative
- sufficient
- suitable
- undue

**Using nouns instead of verbs**

One of the worst, but most common, examples of poor writing style is where authors turn verbs into nouns or use abstract nouns rather than active verbs. The following examples show the major improvements you can achieve by getting rid of nasty noun constructions:

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BAD	GOOD
He used to help in <u>the specification of</u> new software	He used to help specify new software
<u>Measurement of</u> static software properties was performed by the tool	The tool measured static software properties
Clicking the icon causes <u>the execution of</u> the program	The program executes when the icon is clicked
<u>The analysis of</u> the software was performed by Fred	Fred analysed the software
<u>The testing of</u> the software was carried out by Jane	Jane tested the software
It was reported by Jones that method x facilitated <u>the utilisation of</u> inspection techniques by the testing team	Jones reported that method x helped the testing team use inspection techniques

The last example is a particular favourite of mine (the bad version appeared in a published paper) since it manages to breach just about every principle of good writing style. It uses a noun construct instead of a verb and it includes one of the forbidden words (facilitated). However, one of the worst features of this sentence is that it says "It was reported by Jones" instead of simply "Jones reported". This is a classic example of use of *passive* rather *active* constructs. We deal with this in the next section.

### Active versus passive style

Consider the following two sentences:

1. Joe tested the software
2. The software was tested by Joe

Both sentences provide identical information. The first is said to be in the *active* style and the second is said to be *passive* style. In certain situations it can make sense to use the less natural passive style. For example, if you really want to stress that a thing was acted on, then it is reasonable to use the passive style. However, many scientists routinely use the passive style simply because they believe it is more 'formal' and 'acceptable'. It is not. Using the passive style is the most common reason for poorly structured sentences and it *always* leads to longer sentences than are necessary. Unless you have a very good reason for the change in emphasis, you should always write in the active style. The following examples show the improvements of switching from passive to active:

BAD	GOOD
The report was written by Bloggs, and was found to be excellent	Bloggs wrote the report, which was excellent
The values were measured automatically by the control system	The control system measured the values automatically
It was reported by the manager that the project was in trouble	The manager reported that the project was in trouble

## PERSONAL VERSUS IMPERSONAL

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Whether to use personal (first person) or impersonal (third person) style is a subject that causes fierce debate. Some writers insist that a report is not truly scientific if it is written in the first person style. There is no rational justification for such an assertion. Moreover, there are now very few scientific journals that still insist on third person writing. The most important justification for using first person style is that it is more natural and results in simpler sentences. Poor sentence structure, notably using passive rather than active style, is most commonly caused when authors are forced to write in the third person. Consider the following examples:

BAD	GOOD
The current research work of the author is also described	I also describe my current research work
In the previous report of the authors the rationale for the proposed method was discussed in detail	We discussed in detail the rationale for the proposed method in our previous report
However, it was the writer's belief that this situation should not have occurred	However, I believed that this situation should not have occurred
Examination and discussion of the of the results obtained, are necessary before a decision can be taken	We must examine and discuss the results before we decide

In many situations avoiding the first person can also introduce ambiguity. For example, consider the statement

“Recent experiments involving formal inspections have resulted in ...”

It is not clear whether the writer is referring to his/her own experiments, other researchers' experiments, or a combination of the two.

Even worse than ambiguity is where use of third person rather than first introduces genuine uncertainty. For example, consider the following:

“It is not possible to state the exact mode of operation of the drug”.

This leaves serious doubts in readers' minds. It might mean that the authors do not know how the drug works, but it might also mean that the operation of the drug is impossible.

One final word about personal versus impersonal writing. Many authors, who are reluctant to use first person but realise that they cannot write a sentence naturally without it, opt to use the expression 'one' as in “One can conclude from the experiment ...”. I have some simple advice about this: DON'T. It sounds pompous and ridiculous. If you feel uneasy about saying “I” then say “We”.

Whether you know it or not, there's a process to writing – which many writers follow naturally. If you're just getting started as a writer, though, or if you always find it a struggle to produce an essay, short story or blog, following the writing process will help.

I'm going to explain what each stage of the writing process involves, and I'll offer some tips for each section that will help out if you're still feeling stuck!

## 1. Prewriting

Have you ever sat staring at a blank piece of paper or a blank document on your computer screen? You might have skipped the vital first stage of the writing process: prewriting. This covers everything you do before starting your rough draft. As a minimum, prewriting means coming up with an idea!

### Ideas and Inspiration

Ideas are all around you. If you want to write but you don't have any ideas, try:

- Using a writing prompt to get you started.
- Writing about incidents from your daily life, or childhood.
- Keeping a notebook of ideas – jotting down those thoughts that occur throughout the day.
- Creating a vivid character, and then writing about him/her.

See also How to Generate Hundreds of Writing Ideas.

*Tip: Once you have an idea, you need to expand on it. Don't make the mistake of jumping straight into your writing – you'll end up with a badly structured piece.*

### Building on Your Idea

These are a couple of popular methods you can use to add flesh to the bones of your idea:

- **Free writing:** Open a new document or start a new page, and write everything that comes into your head about your chosen topic. Don't stop to edit, even if you make mistakes.
- **Brainstorming:** Write the idea or topic in the center of your page. Jot down ideas that arise from it – sub-topics or directions you could take with the article.

Once you've done one or both of these, you need to select what's going into your first draft.

## Planning and Structure

Some pieces of writing will require more planning than others. Typically, longer pieces and academic papers need a lot of thought at this stage.

### NOTES

First, decide which ideas you'll use. During your free writing and brainstorming, you'll have come up with lots of thoughts. Some belong in this piece of writing; others can be kept for another time.

Then, decide how to order those ideas. Try to have a logical progression. Sometimes, your topic will make this easy: in this article, for instance, it made sense to take each step of the writing process in order. For a short story, try the eight-point story arc.

### 2. Writing

Sit down with your plan beside you, and start your first draft (also known as the *rough draft* or *rough copy*). At this stage, don't think about word-count, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Don't worry if you've gone off-topic, or if some sections of your plan don't fit too well. Just keep writing!

If you're a new writer, you might be surprised that professional authors go through multiple drafts before they're happy with their work. This is a normal part of the writing process – no-one gets it right first time.

Some things that many writers find helpful when working on the first draft include:

- **Setting aside at least thirty minutes to concentrate:** it's hard to establish a writing flow if you're just snatching a few minutes here and there.
- **Going somewhere without interruptions:** a library or coffee shop can work well, if you don't have anywhere quiet to write at home.
- **Switching off distracting programs:** if you write your first draft onto a computer, you might find that turning off your Internet connection does wonders for your concentration levels! When I'm writing fiction, I like to use the free program Dark Room (you can find more about it on our collection of writing software).

You might write several drafts, especially if you're working on fiction. Your subsequent drafts will probably merge elements of the writing stage and the revising stage.

*Tip: Writing requires concentration and energy. If you're a new writer, don't try to write for hours without stopping. Instead, give yourself a time limit (like thirty minutes) to really focus – without checking your email!*

### 3. Revising

Revising your work is about making "big picture" changes. You might remove whole sections, rewrite entire paragraphs, and add in information which you've realized the reader will need. Everyone needs to revise – even talented writers.

The revision stage is sometimes summed up with the A.R.R.R. (Adding, Rearranging, Removing, Replacing) approach:

### **Adding**

What else does the reader need to know? If you haven't met the required word-count, what areas could you expand on? This is a good point to go back to your prewriting notes – look for ideas which you didn't use.

NOTES

### **Rearranging**

Even when you've planned your piece, sections may need rearranging. Perhaps as you wrote your essay, you found that the argument would flow better if you reordered your paragraphs. Maybe you've written a short story that drags in the middle but packs in too much at the end.

### **Removing**

Sometimes, one of your ideas doesn't work out. Perhaps you've gone over the word count, and you need to take out a few paragraphs. Maybe that funny story doesn't really fit with the rest of your article.

### **Replacing**

Would more vivid details help bring your piece to life? Do you need to look for stronger examples and quotations to support your argument? If a particular paragraph isn't working, try rewriting it.

*Tip: If you're not sure what's working and what isn't, show your writing to someone else. This might be a writers' circle, or just a friend who's good with words. Ask them for feedback. It's best if you can show your work to several people, so that you can get more than one opinion.*

## **4. Editing**

The editing stage is distinct from revision, and needs to be done after revising. Editing involves the close-up view of individual sentences and words. It needs to be done after you've made revisions on a big scale: or else you could agonize over a perfect sentence, only to end up cutting that whole paragraph from your piece.

When editing, go through your piece line by line, and make sure that each sentence, phrase and word is as strong as possible. Some things to check for are:

- **Have you used the same word too many times** in one sentence or paragraph? Use a thesaurus to find alternatives.
- **Are any of your sentences hard to understand?** Rewrite them to make your thoughts clear.
- **Which words could you cut to make a sentence stronger?** Words like "just" "quite", "very", "really" and "generally" can often be removed.

NOTES

- **Are your sentences grammatically correct?** Keep a careful look out for problems like subject-verb agreement and staying consistent in your use of the past, present or future tense.
- **Is everything spelt correctly?** Don't trust your spell-checker – it won't pick up every mistake. Proofread as many times as necessary.
- **Have you used punctuation marks correctly?** Commas often cause difficulties. You might want to check out the Daily Writing Tips articles on punctuation.

*Tip: Print out your work and edit on paper. Many writers find it easier to spot mistakes this way.*

### **5. Publishing**

The final step of the writing process is publishing. This means different things depending on the piece you're working on.

**Bloggers** need to upload, format and post their piece of completed work.

**Students** need to produce a final copy of their work, in the correct format. This often means adding a bibliography, ensuring that citations are correct, and adding details such as your student reference number.

**Journalists** need to submit their piece (usually called "copy") to an editor. Again, there will be a certain format for this.

**Fiction writers** may be sending their story to a magazine or competition. Check guidelines carefully, and make sure you follow them. If you've written a novel, look for an agent who represents your genre.

# 4 Writing for Business

NOTES

## The Chapter Covers :

- Organize
- Audience
- Start Writing
- Edit and Proofread
- Manage This Issue
- Business Letter Writing
- Writing a Letter of Interest
- Writing an Apology Letter
- Writing a Letter of Appeal
- Writing a Resignation Letter
- Requesting a Letter of Recommendation
- Writing a Letter of Recommendation
- Job Interview Thank You Letters
- Writing Reports
- Structure of a report
- Refinement
- General Guidelines
- Structure of a report
- Refinement
- Types of Report Writing:
- Writing Project Reports: Examining the Main
- Some Samples:
- Writing sensible email messages
- Writing Special Notices

The purpose of business writing is to convey information to someone else or to request information from them. To be effective writing for business, you must be complete, concise, and accurate. Your text should be written in such a way that the reader will be able to easily understand what you are telling or asking them.

A lot of writing for business is sloppy, poorly written, disorganized, littered with jargon, and incomplete. Often it is either too long or too short. All these attributes contribute to ineffective business writing.



Whether you are writing a sales proposal, an email to your department, or an instruction manual for a software package, there are certain steps you need to follow to create effective business writing. You need to:

## NOTES

1. organize your material
2. consider your audience
3. write
4. proofread
5. and edit your text.

The emphasis on each step may vary, depending on what you are writing, but the steps will be the same.

## ORGANIZE

First, organize your material. When writing an email announcing a staff meeting, this may be as simple as collecting your thoughts. On the other hand, you may need to write out a multi-level outline of the material when writing up the results of a pharmaceutical trial. Without an appropriate level of organization, you can't be sure you will include everything or that you will give prominence to the most important topics. Omissions or incorrect focus can make your business writing less clear.

## AUDIENCE

Before you start to write, think about your intended audience. For example, a presentation about your company's new 401(k) program may have the same outline when given to your CFO or to all employees, but the level of detail in various areas will differ. A quick email to your team, reminding them of the company's security procedures, won't have the same tone as your department's section of the company's annual report.

Also remember that you will be more effective writing to your audience if you focus on what you want them to hear rather than on what you are going to say.

## START WRITING

Good writers have different styles of writing. Some prefer to write everything out and then go back and edit. Others prefer to edit as they go along. Sometimes their style varies depending on the piece they are writing.

As you write, or when you edit, be aware of length. Use enough words to make your meaning clear, but don't use unnecessary words just to make it flowery. Business writing needs to be clear and concise, not verbose and flowery. No one in business has time to read any more than necessary.

Conversely, don't make the piece too short. Write enough that your meaning is clear and won't be misunderstood. A part in a warehouse was labeled "used but good". It was unclear whether the author was trying to say the part had been really heavily

used, or that the part was not new, but was still functional. Another couple of words would have made his writing more effective. Don't try to shorten a piece by using jargon or abbreviations. These often mean different things to different readers.

Regardless of the style you use when writing, you need to proofread and edit what you have written.

NOTES

## **EDIT AND PROOFREAD**

After you write anything, you need to proofread it. You may then need to edit it. Proofreading is re-reading what you wrote to make sure all the words in your head made it correctly onto the paper or the screen. Since our brains work faster than our fingers, you may omit words, leave off an ending, or use the wrong homonym (there instead of their, for example). Proofreading catches these errors so you can fix them.

Obviously, proofreading a one-line email is pretty easy. Just glancing over it as you type may be enough. However, if you are writing an instruction manual, your proofreading will be more complicated and take longer.

After you have proofread your material, you need to edit it. Sometimes these can be done together, but it is more effective when they are done sequentially.

You edit to fix or change what you wrote in order to make the material better. When writing for business, this means fixing the errors and making the text clear and concise.

## **MANAGE THIS ISSUE**

You are writing for business, not writing the "great American novel". Your writing should be as descriptive as necessary, but it does not need to paint vivid word pictures using lots of big words and figures of speech. If you mean "glass houses", don't write "vitreous domiciles".

Remember the rules for effective business writing to:

1. organize your material
2. consider your audience
3. write
4. proofread
5. and edit your text.

## **BUSINESS LETTER WRITING**

### **Purpose of a Business Letter**

A business letter (or formal letter) is a formal way of communicating between two or more parties. There are many different uses and business letters. Business letters

can be informational, persuasive, motivational, or promotional. Business letters should be typed and printed out on standard 8.5" x 11" white paper.

### Elements of a Good Letter

#### NOTES

The most important element of writing a good letter is your ability to identify and write to your audience. If you are addressing your letter to the department of human resources, avoid using highly technical terms that only engineers would understand, even if your letter is addressed to an engineering company, chances are that the personnel in human resources does not have an engineering background.

The next element is that you make sure your present your objective in a clear and concise manner. Don't be vague about your objective, most people will not have the patience to sit there and guess at the meaning of your letter or the time to read a long-winded letter, just get to the point without going into unnecessary details.

Another important element to remember is to remain professional. Even if you are writing a complaint letter, remain polite and courteous, simply state the problem(s) along with any other relevant information and be sure to avoid threats and slander.

## Business Letter Format

### Block Format: Business Letter

Return Address Line 1 1

Return Address Line 2

Date (Month Day, Year) 2

Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr. Full name of recipient. 3

Title/Position of Recipient.

Company Name

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Dear Ms./Mrs./Mr. Last Name: 4

Subject: Title of Subject 5

Body Paragraph 1 . . . . . 6

Body Paragraph 2 . . . . . 6

Body Paragraph 3 . . . . . 6

Closing (Sincerely...), 7

Signature 8

Your Name (Printed) 9

Your Title Enclosures (2) 10 Typist Initials. 11
--

**NOTES**

The block format is the simplest format; all of the writing is flush against the left margin. Other Business Letter Formats

**Your Address 1**

The return address of the sender of the letter so the recipient can easily find out where to send a reply to. Skip a line between your address and the date. (Not needed if the letter is printed on paper with the company letterhead already on it.)

**Date 2**

Put the date on which the letter was written in the format Month Day Year i.e. August 30, 2003. Skip a line between the date and the inside address (some people skip 3 or 4 lines after the date).

**Inside Address 3**

The address of the person you are writing to along with the name of the recipient, their title and company name, if you are not sure who the letter should be addressed to either leave it blank, but try to put in a title, i.e. "Director of Human Resources". Skip a line between the date and the salutation.

**Salutation 4**

Dear Ms./Mrs./Mr. Last Name:, Dear Director of Department Name: or To Whom It May Concern: if recipient's name is unknown. Note that there is a colon after the salutation. Skip a line between the salutation and the subject line or body.

**Subject Line (optional) 5**

Makes it easier for the recipient to find out what the letter is about. Skip a line between the subject line and the body.

**Body 6**

The body is where you write the content of the letter; the paragraphs should be single spaced with a skipped line between each paragraph. Skip a line between the end of the body and the closing.

**Closing 7**

Let's the reader know that you are finished with your letter; usually ends with Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Thank you, and so on. Note that there is a comma after the end of the closing and only the first word in the closing is capitalized. Skip 3-4 lines between the closing and the printed name, so that there is room for the signature.

**Signature 8**

Your signature will go in this section, usually signed in black or blue ink with a pen.

**NOTES**

**Printed Name 9**

The printed version of your name, and if desired you can put your title or position on the line underneath it. Skip a line between the printed name and the enclosure.

**Enclosure 10**

If letter contains other document other than the letter itself your letter will include the word "Enclosure." If there is more than one you would type, "Enclosures (#)" with the # being the number of other documents enclosed that doesn't include the letter itself.

**Reference Initials 11**

If someone other than yourself typed the letter you will include your initials in capital letters followed by the typist's initials in lower case in the following format; AG/gs or AG:gs.

**Sample Business Letter**

3519 Front Street  
Mount Celebres, CA 65286

October 5, 2004

Ms. Betty Johnson  
Accounts Payable  
The Cooking Store  
765 Berliner Plaza  
Industrial Point, CA 68534

Dear Ms Patel,

It has come to my attention that your company, The Cooking Store has been late with paying their invoices for the past three months.

In order to encourage our customers to pay for their invoices before the due date, we have implemented a discount model where we'll give you 2% off your invoice if you pay us within 10 days of receiving the invoice.

I hope that everything is going well for you and your company. You are one of our biggest customers, and we appreciate your business. If you have any questions, you can feel free to contact me at (555) 555-5555.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Ramaswami  
Accounts Receivable

## Writing a Complaint Letter

When writing a complaint letter you want to keep it short and to the point to help ensure that your letter will be read in its entirety, if you write a seven page complaint letter, it's highly unlikely that someone will sit down and read all seven pages.

The complaint letter should be addressed to the customer service/consumer affairs department or the head office if there is no customer service department. The address and contact information of the customer service department should be available on the company's products or website.

A hard-copy complaint letter should be written in the business letter format, while an email should be sent in the same format but without the heading (your return address, their address, and the date).

### Complaint Letter Writing

In the first paragraph you should identify what the issue is and any relevant information that you believe is important. Be sure to include the following information if it's applicable to the situation: the date/time of the issue, location, name of person on duty, name of product, what the problem was, your account number, model number, price, warranty information and reference number. Be sure to stick with the facts and avoid putting emotions into your letter.

The next paragraph should state what you would like done to resolve the situation. If you received poor service, you could request an apology or a coupon. If a product malfunctioned, you could request that you could exchange the product for a new one or request a refund.

The last paragraph should thank the reader for the time. You can also throw in some compliments about something you liked about their company's product or service.

You should include your telephone number/e-mail address after your printed name so that they can contact you ASAP if necessary.

Be sure to keep a copy of the letter for yourself and include photocopies of any relevant documents and enclose them with your letter.

### Sample Complaint Letter

65 Market Street  
Val Haven, CT 95135

June 30, 2004

Customer Service  
Cool Sports, LLC  
8423 Green Terrace Road  
Asterville, WA 65435

Dear Sir or Madam:

I have recently ordered a new pair of soccer cleats (item #6542951) from your website

NOTES

NOTES

on June 21. I received the order on June 26. Unfortunately, when I opened it I saw that the cleats were used. The cleats had dirt all over it and there was a small tear in front of the part where the left toe would go. My order number is AF26168156.

To resolve the problem, I would like you to credit my account for the amount charged for my cleats, I have already went out and bought a new pair of cleats at my local sporting goods store so sending another would result in me having two pairs of the same cleats.

Than you for taking the time to read this letter. I have been a satisfied customer of your company for many years and this is the first time I have encountered a problem. If you need to contact me, you can reach me at (555) 555-5555.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Ken Thomas

## WRITING A LETTER OF INTEREST

The letter of interest is also called a “prospecting letter” and with good reason. It’s a type of cover letter you write when you’re searching for a golden job opportunity. The letter of interest is your first chance to make a good impression on a prospective employer.

Letters of interest are written to express your interest in working for a particular company in a specific field. Your letter may be written either in response to a job opening or just to investigate possible employment.

Human resource departments receive dozens of letters of interest each week. However, make your letter stand out from the crowd using the following tips:

1. Before you write, do your homework. Research the background of the company and familiarize yourself with their products and/or services.
2. Be sure to find out the name of the individual who does the hiring. Address your letter to his/her attention and use her/his name in the salutation. “To Whom It May Concern” and “Dear Sir or Madam” are both outdated and considered to be lazy or even rude.
3. Start your introductory paragraph with the reason you are interested in pursuing employment with this company. Try not to start the first sentence with “I”. (See sample letter of interest.) Also, explain what prompted your inquiry, such as a classified advertisement, a media article or interview, or a referral from an employee.
4. In the next paragraph(s), give specific examples of your qualifications. Don’t hesitate to indicate the reasons why you would be an asset to the company. Illustrate your skills, strengths, and achievements in a professional, yet personable way. Stay away from strings of abbreviated credentials. These, if

you have them, should be on the resume you'll enclose with the letter. Direct the reader to your resume and any other enclosures.

5. In your final paragraph, thank the individual for his/her time in considering you as a new employee. Indicate a precise time when you will contact him/her by phone to follow up on your letter. Also, be sure to let the individual know how to contact you.

A hard-copy interest letter should be written in the business letter format, while an email should be sent in the same format but without the heading (your return address, their address, and the date).

Keep your letter short, no more than a single page. Remember to check it thoroughly for errors in spelling, grammar and to be sure it addresses each point you wanted to make.

## NOTES

## Sample Letter of Interest

421 Liberty St.  
Kenyon, MN 55021

June 7, 2007

DTI  
111 Riverfront Ste 325  
PO Box - Box 157  
Wabasha, MN 55946

Attention: Jen Carlson

Dear Ms. Carlson:

Your recent advertisement in the Herald made it clear that customer satisfaction is an integral part of DTI. In addition, my close friend, Paula Chavez who is in your employ, suggested that my special talents might benefit your customer service department.

Part of my success is because I place a high value on personal integrity and represent both my employer and myself in an ethical and respectable manner. Added to my diligence in paying close attention to detail, as a representative of your company I would bring focus not only to the value of your services, but also to quality customer service and the ease of doing business with DTI. Furthermore, I am a hard, smart-working, self-starter who works equally well in a team environment or individually.

I will call you on June 15 to answer any questions about this letter or my resume in the hope of scheduling an interview. If you prefer, please contact me by phone (555) 454-1307 or e-mail, [ljones@nowhere.com](mailto:ljones@nowhere.com).

Thank you for your time in considering my qualifications.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Linda Jones



## COVER LETTER WRITING

### NOTES

#### What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a brief one page letter sent along with the resume to potential employers. The purpose of the cover letter is to present yourself to potential employers and to let them know what position you are interested in and why you'd be a good fit for their company.

#### Cover Letter Format

A hard-copy cover letter should be written in the business letter format, while an email should be sent in the same format but without the heading (your return address, their address, and the date).

#### Cover Letter Writing

Generally the cover letter will consist of three paragraphs. The first paragraph is an introductory one which introduces yourself. You want to include information on the position you are looking for and how you heard about and why you are interested in the position and/or company.

The second paragraph should provide information on your skill, strengths, education, qualifications and/or experience. This paragraph should be concise and give specific examples of why you are the ideal candidate and not simply restate your resume.

The final paragraph should close up the letter by requesting an interview and possibly suggestion times that are convenient for you or stating that you can come in at a time that's convenient for the employer. Also you should let the recipient know what the best way and/or time to contact you is (you should let them know both your contact email and phone number so that they can contact you in their preferred method). Or you can let them that you'll follow up on this letter with a phone call in several days. You should thank them for their time to close up the letter.

Each cover letter that you send out should be unique and tailored to the specific company and position you are applying to. Using one cookie cutter cover letter will lessen your chances for landing an interview. Also be sure to check for grammar and spelling and keep the letter to one page in length.

### Sample Cover Letter

527 West Ave.  
Elmswood, CT 23865

October 28, 2004

Mr. Michael Black  
Directory of Human Resources  
Global Answers  
6542 Sioux Falls, NY

Dear Mr. Black:

It is with great interest that I am applying for the position of chief accountant. When I read the job description in your ad on the New York Times on August 12th, I felt that it was an ideal match with my career aspirations. I have always wanted to work for a Fortune 500 company such as Global Answers.

I believe that I am the ideal candidate for the position due to my extensive experience as an auditor for KPMG. At my current position at KPMG, I perform all of the same tasks that are described in your ad for the chief accountant position. In addition to that I have a reputation for being a hard worker who makes sure the job is done right the first time. My reports are always completed well ahead of the deadline.

Feel free to contact me and setup an interview at your earliest convenience. You can reach me by way of e-mail at [KenJacobs@nadate.com](mailto:KenJacobs@nadate.com) or by way of phone at (555) 555-5555. I look forward to discussing with you my future with Global Answers. Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Ken Jacobs

Enclosure: resume

## WRITING AN APOLOGY LETTER

An apology letter shows that you are sorry and says that you value your relationship with the other party. The sooner an apology letter is written and sent out the better it is for the relationship. Depending on the nature of the letter, it can either be written in the friendly or the business letter format.

### Friendly/Personal Apology Letter

If this is a personal letter you should start the letter by saying that you are sorry to the recipient. Next you should admit your fault and take responsibility for your actions. Next you should volunteer or ask if there is any way that you can help out to resolve the situation. Then you should let the recipient that you will try to make sure that the situation will not happen again. To close off the letter you should apologize again. When writing a personal apology letter it should come from the heart and be sincere.

### Formal/Business Apology Letter

If this is a business letter you should start the letter by saying that you are sorry to the recipient. Next you should give an explanation as to what went wrong. Then you should try to rectify the problem. To close off the letter you should apologize again.

## Sample Apology Letter (Business)

### NOTES

5868 Maple Wood Street  
Fairfield, PA 37626

November 29, 2004

Mr. Joseph Bicman  
358 Noncook Road  
John's Town, PA 57323

Dear Mr. Bicman:

I apologize for the mix-up of order #: 26429782. We have just implemented a new packaging system that still has a few bugs to be worked out, but we did fix your order and sent it out this morning. For your trouble, we have enclosed a \$25 gift certificate which can be used at any of our stores. Once again I would like to apologize for the mix-up in your order and any inconveniences this may have caused you.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Scott Mahoney  
Customer Service Manager

## WRITING A LETTER OF APPEAL

In cases where unfair treatment was committed, a letter of appeal can help to rectify the situation. An appeal letter allows you to state your side of the story using facts to support your cause to convince the reader(s) to reconsider your case.

A hard-copy letter of appeal should be written in the business letter format, while an email should be sent in the same format but without the heading (your return address, their address, and the date).

### Appeal Letter Writing

The first paragraph should introduce yourself and explain why you are writing the letter. Although it may be difficult, be sure to keep your tone and emotions in check so that you can show that you can present an objective viewpoint. Keep the first paragraph as concise and clear as possible so that the reader can immediately understand its urgency.

The next paragraph(s) should narrate the account of what happened, and why your appeal should be granted. Include all the necessary facts in order to legitimize your case. You can start by referring to your handbook or guidelines as member of that particular group or institution. Also, provide specific times and date when particular events occurred. To make your letter more reader-friendly, use bullet-points every time you need to enumerate. After doing this, refer to testimonials from people related to your work, transcript of records, and medical certificate, if necessary. Be certain to cover all the bases necessary to

The last part should summarize everything you have stated above. Repeat the necessary points that need to be elucidated. Also include the contact details and where you can be reached. Close out the letter by thanking the reader for their time.

## Sample Letter of Appeal

NOTES

4682 Farrow Parkway  
Chicago, IL 60621

June 20, 2007

Jack Copeland  
Dean, Academic Division  
Chicago College University  
1323 E. 84th St., 5th floor  
Chicago, IL 60621

Dear Mr. Copeland;

I am a senior Philosophy major who took PH401 Advanced Metaphysics class under Prof. Vanleer, and I am writing to you to appeal a retake for the final comprehensive oral exam that was given on June 18, 2007.

I feel that Mr. Vanleer did not give my situation the proper respect and understanding that it truly deserved. On June 8, 2007 at 10:37 A.M., I was struck by a sedan going 65 mph on my way to the university. I survived the accident but fractured the bones in my legs and hips. I have enclosed the medical documents detailing my stay at St. Francis Hospital along with this letter.

Because of this setback, I had to reschedule all my exams for the following week (June 18-22, 2007) and move to the week after that (June 25-29) to allow for me to recover. I had my classmate Tom Saunders send the necessary letters to all of my professors requesting to postpone the date of my final exams by a week. All of them agreed except for Prof. Vanleer, who did not send any reply at all. The doctors said that it would take me at least two weeks to properly recover, and even if I did prepare for my exams for Prof. Vanleer, I would not be able to produce the expected output considering my debilitated condition.

I feel that the situation is not warranted because I never got a grade lower than a B or (80-85) on his exams. Therefore, the risk of me failing the course and being prevented from graduating because of not being able to take his final exams due to an unavoidable circumstance is unacceptable. The handbook states in Article III, Section II that "Students who have medical emergencies prior to a particular exam will be given the option to reschedule that exam."

The medical situation which prevented me from taking the final at the scheduled time was beyond my control. I would ask you to grant me another opportunity to take the final exam. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss this matter. Feel free to call me with any questions at 555-555-5555. I appreciate the time that you have taken to read my appeal.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Jordan Summer

Enclosure

## WRITING AN INVITATION LETTER

### NOTES

An invitation letter serves the purpose of inviting a guest to a party, an event or a celebration while conveying more information than a traditional invitations card. It serves two purposes; one, to invite the individual to the event and two, to ensure that the person receiving the letter is going to attend.

There are two tenses used within the invitation letter, the present and the future. The present tense conveys information about the event and the future tense ensures the guest is going to attend.

### **Business Invitation Letter**

An invitation letter is a formal way to invite peers and clients to events which are being hosted by the company and are one of the most popular ways of inviting guests to functions. The professional invitation should be written in a formal tone, even when being sent to friends and family members, if the letter is also being sent to professional contacts.

The introduction allows the host and sender to introduce themselves, as well as the organization in which they have chosen to represent. A simple background of the individual or company will suffice in this section of the letter.

Next, in the body of the letter it is important to outline all of the information about the event. The date and time should be included as well as the theme and purpose for the event. At this point, a date should be mentioned in which guests should provide their reply by, and it may also contain any information regarding special roles played at the event, attire and items required for the guest to bring.

Be sure to mention any specifications about dress code in the invitation letter.

Next, in one sentence, the appreciation for the guest to attend the party should be shown. This can be completed with a formal note, stating that you look forward to seeing the individual at the event. Remember, this needs to keep in tone with the rest of the letter.

The conclusion should contain the sign off and a line that ties the complete letter together, drawing the end of the invitation, with a salutation and a signature.

### **Friendly Invitation Letter**

A friendly invitation letter is similar to a business letter but contains less formal speech and can make nuances with memories that may be shared with the guests whom are being invited to the occasion.

Friendly invitation letters are used for a variety of reasons from engagement parties and showers to wedding invitations. They can also be used for personal parties and showers as well as housewarming get together. Personal invitation letters should be signed with a less formal sign off, such as; yours sincerely, best, or sincerely.

Invitation letters are used as an alternative to traditional invitations. They allow the host to convey different messages through the tone of the letter. Invitation letters

allow the host to convey additional information that what is traditionally shared in an invitation card. Memories can be shared with close friends and family members that bring about memories of past events.

When sending an invitation letter, be sure to edit it completely, ensuring there are no punctuation, grammatical or spelling errors before the letter is sent to potential guests. Using these techniques, you should be able to create personal and professional invitation letters with ease.

NOTES

### Sample Invitation Letter (Business)

Lockwood Middle School  
307 Main Street  
Lockwood, NJ 51686

December 17, 2008

Mrs. Jody Coling  
President  
Lockwood Health Association  
23 Main Street  
Lockwood, NJ

Dear Mrs. Coling:

My name is Susan Harris and I am writing on behalf of the students at Lockwood Middle School. We would like to invite you to attend a special event being held at our school in a week's time.

A significant amount of the students at the school have been working on a project which relates to the unemployment problem within the youth demographic of Lockwood. You are invited to attend a presentation that will be held within the media room of the school where a variety of proposals that will demonstrate the ability of the community to develop employment opportunities for the youth within the community.

At the presentation, there will be several students receiving awards which will recognize them within the community from the Mayor. Refreshments will also be available at the presentation.

As one of the prominent figures in the community, we would be honored by your attendance. Please reply by Monday the 26th of February to confirm your attendance to the function.

We look forward to seeing you there,

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Ms. Susan Harris

### WRITING A RESIGNATION LETTER

Before sitting down and writing a resignation letter, you should be almost 100% certain that you want to leave your current job, if not many complications can arise.

NOTES

A hard-copy resignation letter should be written in the business letter format, while an email should be sent in the same format but without the heading (your return address, their address, and the date). The letter should be directed towards your supervisor or manager.

At a minimum the letter should state that you are leaving, when you are leaving, and thank them for the time that they have employed you. It is common courtesy to give at least two weeks notice before you leave your job, but sometimes you'll have no control over it.

It is important that you keep your letter positive, you want to maintain a good relationship with your employer and co-workers, and they can be potential future references or business associates. If you feel like your reason for leaving is honorable, you can include the reason for leaving in your letter, but if you think your reason for leaving may rub your employer the wrong way, there is no need to put the reason in your letter.

**Resignation Letter Writing**

The first paragraph of your letter should state that you are leaving and when you are leaving.

The second paragraph should explain your reason for leaving the company. (This paragraph is optional.)

In the third paragraph you can offer to make your resignation go smoothly for the company. For example, you can offer to help train a replacement with the time you still have left. (This paragraph is also optional.)

The last paragraph should thank the employer for the opportunity to work for, wish them well and/or express interest in maintaining your professional relationship.

**Sample Resignation Letter**

483 Spring Road  
Ft. Berliner, VA 58265

October 21, 2004

Mr. Jack Wilkins  
Head of Inventory Control  
Widgets Unlimited, Inc.  
16 Ferris Blvd.  
Clinton, VA 58763

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

I am formally notifying you that I'll be tendering my resignation from Widgets Unlimited, Inc. My last day will be on November 12, 2004

I never imagined that I would have to leave Widgets Unlimited, but due to the relocation of my wife's work to New York, I have made the decision with my wife to move up to New York as a family.

If there is anything that I can do to make this transition easier for the company, let me know and I'd be more than willing to help out.

I have truly enjoyed my work here and I would like to thank you for the opportunity that you have given me to work here at Widgets Unlimited.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Scott Nelson  
Inventory Specialist

NOTES

## REQUESTING A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Getting a good recommendation letter can significantly help you out in your application process so it is important to ask someone who you are in good terms with for a letter. It is also important to ask someone that knows you well for a recommendation and ask them for it in person. If you are seeking a letter for college or graduate schools, then it is recommended that you request letters from your teachers/professors. If you are seeking a letter for a job, business or professional school then it would be ideal if you got one from your current company. If you have not been at your current company long or if you are not currently employed then asking a previous employer is recommended. If that is not possible seek recommendations from respected professionals that you may know, such as doctors, lawyers, politicians, ministers and so on.

Ask for the letters early on, don't wait until the day before the letter is supposed to be sent in to request the letters of recommendation. Instead ask ahead of time. If you are going to apply to school ask your professor at least a month ahead of time. If you are seeking a professional letter, ask for a letter of recommendation whenever you leave a job.

Assist the writer with as much material as necessary, providing the writer with your resume and a list of achievements will make it easier on the writer. You may also want to give him/her any information that will help with the letter including your plans for the future, your strengths, experiences and other qualities you want to be presented in the letter. Be honest about the information you give, if you embellish it'll catch up with you later.

You should provide the writer with a stamped and addressed envelope. Also if there is a guideline that needs to be followed or any other material that needs to be filled out, you should provide that to him/her.

After the letter is sent out, you should send a thank you note to the writer. You can also thank them in person or over the phone as well.



## WRITING A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

### NOTES

If you are requested to write a letter of recommendation but think that he/she is a poor employee/student or if you don't know him/her very well it is best if you decline. If you feel that you know the employee/student well it is a good idea to ask for additional information and/or conduct a short interview with him/her so that you'll have solid information to write in your letter

Follow the business letter format with the exception of the inside address which you can leave out if it is unknown. Unless the name of the person is given to you, you should address the "To Whom It May Concern:" Also be sure to include your phone number and/or e-mail so the reader can contact you with any questions.

### Letter of Recommendation Writing

The first paragraph should start out by stating your relationship to the applicant and how long you have known him/her. You should also state your professional position at the company/school and any additional information about yourself that will help build your credibility as a good reference.

The second paragraph should focus on building the applicant. It should give an overview of the candidate and his/her strengths and qualities.

The next 2 to 3 paragraphs should focus on a single quality followed by an example(s) of how they show that quality.

The closing paragraph should reiterate that the applicant would be a good employee/student and add any additional comments that you may want to bring up. You can also write about why you think the employee/student will be a good fit with the company, school, and/or position. Also let the reader know that he/she can contact you if they have any additional questions.

### Sample Letter of Recommendation

562 Banquest Street  
Fair Valley, AL 81356

September 28, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I am recommending Rose Berdinger to you. I am the Head Sales Manager at Vacuums Plus and Rose has been under my supervision from November of 2000 to August of 2004 as a saleswoman.

Rose would be a great asset to any company. She is one of the brightest employees that I have ever had. She also has a great drive and passion for her work.

Rose is such a quick learner. Within her first two weeks at Vacuums Plus she had learned all the product names, their features, and how they work. It normally takes a new employee at least two months to get familiar with all the products that we sell.

Rose's drive has led her to great success at Vacuums Plus. She has had the honor of receiving the "Top Sales Person of the Month Award" ten times in her last year at Vacuums Plus, which is a feat that no employee has ever achieved here before.

I believe that Rose Berdinger will be an excellent fit for your company. Rose has been nothing short of an exemplary employee. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me at (555) 555-555 and I'll be happy to answer any questions you have.

Sincerely,

Signature

Peter  
Head Sales Manager

Ziggad

NOTES

## JOB INTERVIEW THANK YOU LETTERS

You should write a thank you letter as soon as possible (within 24 hours is recommended) after the job interview, at a minimum this should be done through email but is recommended that you do this through a hard-copy of a letter printed out of your computer which can be sent in through the postal mail or faxed in. Hand written notes on thank you cards are also acceptable and good for short thank you notes.

A hard-copy thank you letter should be written in the business letter format, while an email should be sent in the same format but without the heading (your return address, their address, and the date).

### Thank you letter writing

The first paragraph should consist of thanking the interviewer for the interviewing you (remind him/her about the position you interviewed for and the date of your interview). You can also include information about your impressions about the company.

The second paragraph should state your interests in the company and include any additional information about yourself that was not brought up in the interview which would make you a good candidate for the position. You can also emphasize your qualifications that were already discussed during the interview (don't make this paragraph too long, try to keep it between 3-5 sentences, pick the traits that you think were most important to the interviewer and emphasize them).

The last paragraph should let the recruiter know that you expect to hear from them soon. Also let them know that you are available to come in again and are willing to discuss the job further. Write down your contact information again and what the best method and/or time to contact you is. To finish up the letter, thank them again for the interview.

### Notes/Tips

- A thank you letter shows that you have good business etiquette, your interest in the company and the position, and reiterates your positive qualifications to the interviewer so it should not be put off.

NOTES

- If there was more than one interviewer; write individual thank you letters to each of the interviewers (make sure each letter is unique). If it was a panel of interviewers interviewing you at the same time, you can send out one letter and address it to the head interviewer and the interview panel and thank them as one group.
- If you forget the spelling or the names of the interviewers, simply call the company and request the proper spelling and title.
- Keep the thank you letter brief; make sure the letter does not go past one page in length.
- Check for proper grammar usage and spelling.

### Sample Interview Thank You Letter

215 Casandle Drive  
Middle Brook, FL 32634

December 15, 2004

Mr. Nigel Adams  
Director of Human Resources  
Nagata Resorts  
6528 Castle Point Street  
South Port, FL 38625

Dear Mr. Adams:

I would like to thank you for taking the time to interview me for the position of hotel manager on December 14. I was very impressed with the amount of vacationers that you stay at Nagata Resorts every year.

I appreciate the time that you spent discussing the responsibilities of the position. I believe that my credentials make me an ideal candidate for the position. As I mentioned in my interview with you, I already have 7 years experience as a hotel manager. I am very organized and have a high attention to detail. I also believe that the customer is the most important asset, so I always treat them with the utmost respect.

I look forward to hearing your decision about the position. You can contact me at (555) 555-5555, if you have any further questions, I'd be more than willing to come in and discuss them with you. Thanks again for the opportunity to interview with Nagata Resorts.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Chad Ulster

## How to Write a Farewell Letter to Your Co-Workers

If you are resigning from your job, you should not send out a farewell letter until you have notified your manager of your resignation. Sending out a farewell letter anytime after that is acceptable.

Typically a farewell letter will be sent through e-mail and it should be sent in the the business letter format, but without the heading (your return address, their address, and the date).

### Farewell Letter Writing

You should try to keep overall tone of your letter positive and avoid any personal attacks or negative comments about the company.

The first paragraph should contain confirmation that you are leaving your job. Let your colleagues know when your last day will be. Use your own discretion on revealing why you are leaving and where you'll be going.

The next paragraph(s) should express your appreciation about for your job. You can call out specific projects, assignments, or people that you are thankful for or learned from.

The last paragraph should conclude with the inclusion of your personal contact information. This may include your personal e-mail where you can be reached, your phone number, and/or a social media profile

## Sample Farewell Letter

Dear Colleagues:

As some of you may already be aware, I will be leaving my job at Acme Corp shortly. My last day will be next Friday. I have come across a new opportunity that I could just not pass up.

I would like to thank all of you for your support during my tenure here at Acme Corp. I have learned a great deal here and will definitely miss all of you. I especially enjoyed the afternoon talks by the water cooler.

I would love to keep in touch with you; I can reach me at my personal e-mail address at rohan@email.com.

Sincerely,

Rohan

Senior Compliance Analyst

NOTES

## WRITING REPORTS

### General Guidelines

These are some general things you should know before you start writing. I will try to answer the questions of the purpose of report writing, and the overall approach as well.

## Purpose of a report: writing to be read

A key thing to keep in mind right through your report writing process is that a report is *written to be read*, by someone else. This is the central goal of report-writing. A report which is written for the sake of being written has very little value.

Before you start writing your report, you need to have in mind the *intended audience*. In the narrowest of possibilities, your report is meant for reading by yourselves, and by your advisor/instructor, and perhaps by your evaluation committee. This has value, but only short-term. The next broader possibility is that your report is readable by your peers or your juniors down the line. This has greater value since someone else can continue on your work and improve it, or learn from your work. In the best case possibility, your report is of publishable quality. That is, readable and useful for the technical community in general.

## Overall approach: top-down

Take a top-down approach to writing the report (also applies to problem solving in general). This can proceed in roughly three stages of continual refinement of details.

1. First write the section-level outline,
2. Then the subsection-level outline, and
3. Then a paragraph-level outline. The paragraph-level outline would more-or-less be like a presentation with bulleted points. It incorporates the flow of ideas.

Once you have the paragraph-level flow of ideas, you can easily convert that into a full report, by writing out the flow of ideas in full sentences.

While doing the paragraph-level outline, think also about (a) figures, (b) tables, and (c) graphs you will include as part of the report at various stages. You will find that many things can be better explained by using simple figures at appropriate places.

Another thing to nail-down while doing the paragraph-level outline is the terminology you will be using. For instance, names of various protocols/algorithms/steps in your solution. Or names/symbols for mathematical notation.

The overall approach also includes multiple stages of refinement, and taking feedback from others (peers/advisor/instructor). I will talk about these in more detail after talking about the overall report structure.

## STRUCTURE OF A REPORT

The following should roughly be the structure of a report. Note that these are just *guidelines*, not *rules*. You have to use your intelligence in working out the details of your specific writing.

### NOTES

- **Title and abstract:** These are the most-read parts of a report. This is how you attract attention to your writing. The title should reflect what you have done and should bring out any eye-catching factor of your work, for good impact.

The abstract should be short, generally within about 2 paragraphs (250 words or so total). The abstract should contain the essence of the report, based on which the reader decides whether to go ahead with reading the report or not. It can contain the following in varying amounts of detail as is appropriate: main motivation, main design point, essential difference from previous work, methodology, and some eye-catching results if any.

- **Introduction:** Most reports start with an introduction section. This section should answer the following questions (not necessarily in that order, but what is given below is a logical order). After title/abstract introduction and conclusions are the two mainly read parts of a report.
  - What is the setting of the problem? This is, in other words, the *background*. In some cases, this may be implicit, and in some cases, merged with the motivation below.
  - What exactly is the problem you are trying to solve? This is the *problem statement*.
  - Why is the problem important to solve? This is the *motivation*. In some cases, it may be implicit in the background, or the problem statement itself.
  - Is the problem still unsolved? This constitutes the statement of *past/related work* crisply.
  - Why is the problem difficult to solve? This is the statement of *challenges*. In some cases, it may be implicit in the problem statement. In others, you may have to say explicitly as to why the problem is worthy of a BTech/MTech/PhD, or a semester project, as the case may be.
  - How have you solved the problem? Here you state the essence of your *approach*. This is of course expanded upon later, but it must be stated explicitly here.
  - What are the conditions under which your solution is applicable? This is a statement of *assumptions*.
  - What are the main results? You have to present the main *summary of the results* here.
  - What is the summary of your contributions? This in some cases may be implicit in the rest of the introduction. Sometimes it helps to state contributions explicitly.
  - How is the rest of the report organized? Here you include a paragraph on the *flow of ideas* in the rest of the report. For any report beyond 4-5 pages, this is a must.

NOTES

## NOTES

The introduction is nothing but a shorter version of the rest of the report, and in many cases the rest of the report can also have the same flow. Think of the rest of the report as an expansion of some of the points in the introduction. Which of the above bullets are expanded into separate sections (perhaps even multiple sections) depends very much on the problem.

- **Background:** This is expanded upon into a separate section if there is sufficient background which the general reader must understand before knowing the details of your work. It is usual to state that “the reader who knows this background can skip this section” while writing this section.
- **Past/related work:** It is common to have this as a separate section, explaining why what you have done is something novel. Here, you must try to think of *dimensions of comparison* of your work with other work. For instance, you may compare in terms of functionality, in terms of performance, and/or in terms of approach. Even within these, you may have multiple lines of comparison — functionality-1, functionality-2, metric-1, metric-2, etc.

Although not mandatory, it is good presentation style to give the above comparison in terms of a *table*; where the rows are the various dimensions of comparison and the columns are various pieces of related work, with your own work being the first/last column. See the related work section of my PhD thesis for an example of such a table :-).

While in general you try to play up your work with respect to others, it is also good to identify points where your solution is not so good compared to others. If you state these explicitly, the reader will feel better about them, than if you do not state and the reader figures out the flaws in your work anyway :-).

Another point is with respect to the *placement* of related work. One possibility is to place it in the beginning of the report (after intro/background). Another is to place it in the end of the report (just before conclusions). This is a matter of judgment, and depends on the following aspect of your work. If there are lots of past work related very closely to your work, then it makes sense to state upfront as to what the difference in your approach is. On the other hand, if your work is substantially different from past work, then it is better to put the related work at the end. While this conveys a stronger message, it has the risk of the reader wondering all through the report as to how your work is different from some other specific related work.

- **Technical sections:** The main body of the report may be divided into multiple sections as the case may be. You may have different sections which delve into different aspects of the problem. The organization of the report here is problem specific. You may also have a separate section for statement of design methodology, or experimental methodology, or proving some lemmas in a theoretical paper.

The technical section is the most work-specific, and hence is the least described here. However, it makes sense to mention the following main points:

- o *Outlines/flow*: For sections which may be huge, with many subsections, it is appropriate to have a rough outline of the section at the beginning of that section. Make sure that the flow is maintained as the reader goes from one section to another. There should be no abrupt jumps in ideas.
- o *Use of figures*: The cliché “a picture is worth a thousand words” is appropriate here. Spend time thinking about pictures. Wherever necessary, explain all aspects of a figure (ideally, this should be easy), and do not leave the reader wondering as to what the connection between the figure and the text is.
- o *Terminology*: Define each term/symbol before you use it, or right after its first use. Stick to a common terminology throughout the report.
- **Results**: This is part of the set of technical sections, and is usually a separate section for experimental/design papers. You have to answer the following questions in this section:
  - o What aspects of your system or algorithm are you trying to evaluate? That is, what are the questions you will seek to answer through the evaluations?
  - o Why are you trying to evaluate the above aspects?
  - o What are the cases of comparison? If you have proposed an algorithm or a design, what do you compare it with?
  - o What are the performance metrics? Why?
  - o What are the parameters under study?
  - o What is the experimental setup? Explain the choice of every parameter value (range) carefully.
  - o What are the results?
  - o Finally, why do the results look the way they do?

The results are usually presented as tables and graphs. In explaining tables and graphs, you have to explain them as completely as possible. Identify trends in the data. Does the data prove what you want to establish? In what cases are the results explainable, and in what cases unexplainable if any?

While describing a table, you have to describe every row/column. And similarly while describing a graph, you have to describe the x/y axes. If necessary, you have to consider the use of log-axes.

If you are presenting a lot of results, it may be useful to summarize the main take-away points from all the data in a separate sub-section at the end (or sometimes even at the beginning) of the results section.



NOTES

- **Future work:** This section in some cases is combined along with the “conclusions” section. Here you state aspects of the problem you have not considered and possibilities for further extensions.
- **Conclusions:** Readers usually read the title, abstract, introduction, and conclusions. In that sense, this section is quite important. You have to crisply state the main take-away points from your work. How has the reader become smarter, or how has the world become a better place because of your work?

## REFINEMENT

No report is perfect, and definitely not on the first version. Well written reports are those which have gone through multiple rounds of *refinement*. This refinement may be through self-reading and critical analysis, or more effectively through peer-feedback (or feedback from advisor/instructor).

Here are some things to remember:

- Start early, don't wait for the completion of your work in its entirety before starting to write.
- Each round of feedback takes about a week at least. And hence it is good to have a rough version at least a month in advance. Given that you may have run/rerun experiments/simulations (for design projects) after the first round of feedback — for a good quality report, it is good to have a rough version at least 2 months in advance.
- Feedback should go through the following stages ideally: (a) you read it yourself fully once and revise it, (b) have your peers review it and give constructive feedback, and then (c) have your advisor/instructor read it.

## Feedback: evaluating someone else's report

Evaluation of a report you yourself have written can give benefits, but it usually is limited. Even in a group project, it is not good enough to have one person write the report and the other person read it. This is because all the group members usually know what the project is about, and hence cannot critique the paper from outside.

It is best to take feedback from your peer (and of course return favours!). The feedback procedure is quite simple. The one reading has to critically, and methodically see if each of the aspects mentioned above in the “structure of the report” are covered. It may even help to have a check-list, although with experience this becomes unnecessary.

- Check if the title/abstract make sense, are effective/eye-catching.
- Are all the relevant questions answered in the introduction?
- Is the overall structure of the rest of the sections meaningful?
- Is the difference from related/past work crisp and meaningful?

- Are the technical sections understandable? Are the figures/tables explained properly? Is the terminology clear? Are the symbols used defined appropriately?
- Are the results explained properly? Are the conclusions drawn from the graphs/tables sound? Or are there technical holes/flaws? Do the results show how the work presented is better/worse than the other cases of comparison?

## NOTES

When I give feedback on a peer's report or a student's report, I usually take a print-out and mark-up at various points in the paper. You may follow a similar procedure, or something suited to you. Be as critical as possible, but with the view that your peer has to improve his/her work, not with the view of putting him/her down. Your comments have to be impersonal. Likewise, while taking feedback from a peer, take the comments on their technical merit.

### **Recommended strategy for producing a high-quality report**

Based on the above, I recommend the following strategy for students who want to produce a high-quality report, which would then have a high potential for being turned into a publication:

- Think through the outline of the report even as you are working on the details of the problem. Such thinking will also lend focus to your work and you will end up optimizing the returns on the time invested.
- Two months before the actual deadline, you have to have at least a paragraph-level outline of the report, with all details worked out.
- After one round of critical analysis by yourselves (or by your group), have another student or another group review it, perhaps in exchange for you reviewing their work. Have them check your flow of ideas. While it may be good to get someone working in the same area, for much of the feedback, this may not really be necessary.
- Now you are probably about 6-7 weeks from the deadline. At this point, have your advisor/instructor give feedback on the paragraph-level outline. Getting this early is important since, based on this, you may have to reorganize your report, rework your theorems, or rerun your experiments/simulations.
- Have a pre-final version of the report ready 2 weeks before the deadline. Again, go through one round of self/peer-feedback, and then advisor/instructor feedback.
- With these 3-4 rounds of revision and critical analysis, the quality of your report is bound to improve. And since many of the student theses are of good quality, quality of writing dramatically improves chances of publication.

## Some More Tips on Writing Reports:

### NOTES

Having clarified the issue on which you are to write a report, and the information necessary for your writing a report, you need to ensure the essential in report writing: consistency.

For this, use the *techniques of writing reports*. These are: Preparing to Write Reports... Presentation in Writing a Report.

You cannot write reports consistently without data preparation. Presentation in writing a report helps show its consistency.

#### *Preparing to write reports:*

*If the issue is detailed and you are writing a report that is substantial you may choose to use specialist computer software. Else, this is a must in such report writing: List different data on separate sheets of paper in a ring-binder -to arrange or re-arrange easily and logically as the data for the report you are writing accumulates.*

#### *Presentation in writing a report:*

*Report writing techniques of presentation involve: structure, enclosures, index and title.*

#### *Structure in report writing:-*

1. *Begin with a brief summary of the main points of your report. Enable the person who you asked you to write the report, at a glance, to see the gist of it.*

*... In the first paragraph briefly tell what the report is going to tell. If you are writing a long report, use a separate page.*

2. *Then, in telling what you said your report was going to tell, keep the detail logical, clear and simple -easy to read...*

*... If writing a technical report don't clutter it with statistical-data, tables, graphs. If such make a report difficult to read attach them as enclosures or appendices, refer to them. In writing long reports use dividers, colour-tags -too many irritate.*

*... Do not use jargon in report writing. When writing a report be direct and specific -write a report that is easily to comprehend.*

4. *End reports as begun. When writing reports, end them, again, with a brief summary of the main points. Tell the report's reader, briefly, what you have told in detail. Write reports with endings that enable every person you write a report for at a glance to see the gist of the report's main points.*

#### *Enclosures in writing a report:-*

5. *When you write a report ensure that each enclosure is clearly marked, easily distinguishable from others attached.*

... *In writing the report refer to each enclosure as marked.*

... *Attach the enclosures in the order referred to in the report.*

*Index in writing reports:-*

6. *After you write a report add an index -or a 'contents' page.*

... *Do so after word-processing the report with page numbers.*

*Title in report writing:-*

7. *When you write reports you need titles-pages for them.*

... *The title-page should be the first in the report you write.*

... *In report writing the title page contains: the title of the report, the date finished writing the report, and the reference number (if any) of the party who asked you to write the report.*

NOTES

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

These are some general things you should know before you start writing. I will try to answer the questions of the purpose of report writing, and the overall approach as well.

### **Purpose of a report: writing to be read**

A key thing to keep in mind right through your report writing process is that a report is *written to be read*, by someone else. This is the central goal of report-writing. A report which is written for the sake of being written has very little value.

Before you start writing your report, you need to have in mind the *intended audience*. In the narrowest of possibilities, your report is meant for reading by yourselves, and by your advisor/instructor, and perhaps by your evaluation committee. This has value, but only short-term. The next broader possibility is that your report is readable by your peers or your juniors down the line. This has greater value since someone else can continue on your work and improve it, or learn from your work. In the best case possibility, your report is of publishable quality. That is, readable and useful for the technical community in general.

### **Overall approach: top-down**

Take a top-down approach to writing the report (also applies to problem solving in general). This can proceed in roughly three stages of continual refinement of details.

1. First write the section-level outline,
2. Then the subsection-level outline, and

3. Then a paragraph-level outline. The paragraph-level outline would more-or-less be like a presentation with bulleted points. It incorporates the flow of ideas.

## NOTES

Once you have the paragraph-level flow of ideas, you can easily convert that into a full report, by writing out the flow of ideas in full sentences.

While doing the paragraph-level outline, think also about (a) figures, (b) tables, and (c) graphs you will include as part of the report at various stages. You will find that many things can be better explained by using simple figures at appropriate places.

Another thing to nail-down while doing the paragraph-level outline is the terminology you will be using. For instance, names of various protocols/algorithms/steps in your solution. Or names/symbols for mathematical notation.

The overall approach also includes multiple stages of refinement, and taking feedback from others (peers/advisor/instructor). I will talk about these in more detail after talking about the overall report structure.

## STRUCTURE OF A REPORT

The following should roughly be the structure of a report. Note that these are just *guidelines*, not *rules*. You have to use your intelligence in working out the details of your specific writing.

- **Title and abstract:** These are the most-read parts of a report. This is how you attract attention to your writing. The title should reflect what you have done and should bring out any eye-catching factor of your work, for good impact.

The abstract should be short, generally within about 2 paragraphs (250 words or so total). The abstract should contain the essence of the report, based on which the reader decides whether to go ahead with reading the report or not. It can contain the following in varying amounts of detail as is appropriate: main motivation, main design point, essential difference from previous work, methodology, and some eye-catching results if any.

- **Introduction:** Most reports start with an introduction section. This section should answer the following questions (not necessarily in that order, but what is given below is a logical order). After title/abstract introduction and conclusions are the two mainly read parts of a report.
  - What is the setting of the problem? This is, in other words, the *background*. In some cases, this may be implicit; and in some cases, merged with the motivation below.
  - What exactly is the problem you are trying to solve? This is the *problem statement*.
  - Why is the problem important to solve? This is the *motivation*. In some cases, it may be implicit in the background, or the problem statement itself.

- o Is the problem still unsolved? This constitutes the statement of *past/related work* crisply.
- o Why is the problem difficult to solve? This is the statement of *challenges*. In some cases, it may be implicit in the problem statement. In others, you may have to say explicitly as to why the problem is worthy of a BTech/MTech/PhD, or a semester project, as the case may be.
- o How have you solved the problem? Here you state the essence of your *approach*. This is of course expanded upon later, but it must be stated explicitly here.
- o What are the conditions under which your solution is applicable? This is a statement of *assumptions*.
- o What are the main results? You have to present the main *summary of the results* here.
- o What is the summary of your contributions? This in some cases may be implicit in the rest of the introduction. Sometimes it helps to state contributions explicitly.
- o How is the rest of the report organized? Here you include a paragraph on the *flow of ideas* in the rest of the report. For any report beyond 4-5 pages, this is a must.

The introduction is nothing but a shorter version of the rest of the report, and in many cases the rest of the report can also have the same flow. Think of the rest of the report as an expansion of some of the points in the introduction. Which of the above bullets are expanded into separate sections (perhaps even multiple sections) depends very much on the problem.

- **Background:** This is expanded upon into a separate section if there is sufficient background which the general reader must understand before knowing the details of your work. It is usual to state that “the reader who knows this background can skip this section” while writing this section.
- **Past/related work:** It is common to have this as a separate section, explaining why what you have done is something novel. Here, you must try to think of *dimensions of comparison* of your work with other work. For instance, you may compare in terms of functionality, in terms of performance, and/or in terms of approach. Even within these, you may have multiple lines of comparison — functionality-1, functionality-2, metric-1, metric-2, etc.

Although not mandatory, it is good presentation style to give the above comparison in terms of a *table*; where the rows are the various dimensions of comparison and the columns are various pieces of related work, with your own work being the first/last column. See the related work section of my PhD thesis for an example of such a table :-).

## NOTES

While in general you try to play up your work with respect to others, it is also good to identify points where your solution is not so good compared to others. If you state these explicitly, the reader will feel better about them, than if you do not state and the reader figures out the flaws in your work anyway :-).

Another point is with respect to the *placement* of related work. One possibility is to place it in the beginning of the report (after intro/background). Another is to place it in the end of the report (just before conclusions). This is a matter of judgment, and depends on the following aspect of your work. If there are lots of past work related very closely to your work, then it makes sense to state upfront as to what the difference in your approach is. On the other hand, if your work is substantially different from past work, then it is better to put the related work at the end. While this conveys a stronger message, it has the risk of the reader wondering all through the report as to how your work is different from some other specific related work.

- **Technical sections:** The main body of the report may be divided into multiple sections as the case may be. You may have different sections which delve into different aspects of the problem. The organization of the report here is problem specific. You may also have a separate section for statement of design methodology, or **experimental methodology**, or proving some lemmas in a theoretical paper.

The technical section is the most work-specific, and hence is the least described here. However, it makes sense to mention the following main points:

- *Outlines/flow:* For sections which may be huge, with many subsections, it is appropriate to have a rough outline of the section at the beginning of that section. Make sure that the flow is maintained as the reader goes from one section to another. There should be no abrupt jumps in ideas.
- *Use of figures:* The cliché “a picture is worth a thousand words” is appropriate here. Spend time thinking about pictures. Wherever necessary, explain all aspects of a figure (ideally, this should be easy), and do not leave the reader wondering as to what the connection between the figure and the text is.
- *Terminology:* Define each term/symbol before you use it, or right after its first use. Stick to a common terminology throughout the report.
- **Results:** This is part of the set of technical sections, and is usually a separate section for **experimental/design papers**. You have to answer the following questions in this section:
  - What aspects of your system or algorithm are you trying to evaluate? That is, what are the questions you will seek to answer through the evaluations?
  - Why are you trying to evaluate the above aspects?
  - What are the cases of comparison? If you have proposed an algorithm or a design, what do you compare it with?

- o What are the performance metrics? Why?
- o What are the parameters under study?
- o What is the experimental setup? Explain the choice of every parameter value (range) carefully.
- o What are the results?
- o Finally, why do the results look the way they do?

The results are usually presented as tables and graphs. In explaining tables and graphs, you have to explain them as completely as possible. Identify trends in the data. Does the data prove what you want to establish? In what cases are the results explainable, and in what cases unexplainable if any?

While describing a table, you have to describe every row/column. And similarly while describing a graph, you have to describe the x/y axes. If necessary, you have to consider the use of log-axes.

If you are presenting a lot of results, it may be useful to summarize the main take-away points from all the data in a separate sub-section at the end (or sometimes even at the beginning) of the results section.

- **Future work:** This section in some cases is combined along with the “conclusions” section. Here you state aspects of the problem you have not considered and possibilities for further extensions.
- **Conclusions:** Readers usually read the title, abstract, introduction, and conclusions. In that sense, this section is quite important. You have to crisply state the main take-away points from your work. How has the reader become smarter, or how has the world become a better place because of your work?

## REFINEMENT

No report is perfect, and definitely not on the first version. Well written reports are those which have gone through multiple rounds of *refinement*. This refinement may be through self-reading and critical analysis, or more effectively through peer-feedback (or feedback from advisor/instructor).

Here are some things to remember:

- Start early, don't wait for the completion of your work in its entirety before starting to write.
- Each round of feedback takes about a week at least. And hence it is good to have a rough version at least a month in advance. Given that you may have run/rerun experiments/simulations (for design projects) after the first round of feedback — for a good quality report, it is good to have a rough version at least 2 months in advance.



- Feedback should go through the following stages ideally: (a) you read it yourself fully once and revise it, (b) have your peers review it and give constructive feedback, and then (c) have your advisor/instructor read it.

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**Feedback: evaluating someone else's report**

Evaluation of a report you yourself have written can give benefits, but it usually is limited. Even in a group project, it is not good enough to have one person write the report and the other person read it. This is because all the group members usually know what the project is about, and hence cannot critique the paper from outside.

It is best to take feedback from your peer (and of course return favours!). The feedback procedure is quite simple. The one reading has to critically, and methodically see if each of the aspects mentioned above in the "structure of the report" are covered. It may even help to have a check-list, although with experience this becomes unnecessary.

- Check if the title/abstract make sense, are effective/eye-catching.
- Are all the relevant questions answered in the introduction?
- Is the overall structure of the rest of the sections meaningful?
- Is the difference from related/past work crisp and meaningful?
- Are the technical sections understandable? Are the figures/tables explained properly? Is the terminology clear? Are the symbols used defined appropriately?
- Are the results explained properly? Are the conclusions drawn from the graphs/tables sound? Or are there technical holes/flaws? Do the results show how the work presented is better/worse than the other cases of comparison?

When I give feedback on a peer's report or a student's report, I usually take a print-out and mark-up at various points in the paper. You may follow a similar procedure, or something suited to you. Be as critical as possible, but with the view that your peer has to improve his/her work, not with the view of putting him/her down. Your comments have to be impersonal. Likewise, while taking feedback from a peer, take the comments on their technical merit.

**Recommended strategy for producing a high-quality report**

Based on the above, I recommend the following strategy for students who want to produce a high-quality report, which would then have a high potential for being turned into a publication:

- Think through the outline of the report even as you are working on the details of the problem. Such thinking will also lend focus to your work and you will end up optimizing the returns on the time invested.

- Two months before the actual deadline, you have to have at least a paragraph-level outline of the report, with all details worked out.
- After one round of critical analysis by yourselves (or by your group), have another student or another group review it, perhaps in exchange for you reviewing their work. Have them check your flow of ideas. While it may be good to get someone working in the same area, for much of the feedback, this may not really be necessary.
- Now you are probably about 6-7 weeks from the deadline. At this point, have your advisor/instructor give feedback on the paragraph-level outline. Getting this early is important since, based on this, you may have to reorganize your report, rework your theorems, or rerun your experiments/simulations.
- Have a pre-final version of the report ready 2 weeks before the deadline. Again, go through one round of self/peer-feedback, and then advisor/instructor feedback.
- With these 3-4 rounds of revision and critical analysis, the quality of your report is bound to improve. And since many of the student theses are of good quality, quality of writing dramatically improves chances of publication.

## **TYPES OF REPORT WRITING:**

### **Academic Report Writing Tips**

Academic report writing is a part of a student's life and there are times that a student's report has too many minor and avoidable mistakes. Changes with these mistakes may lead to a decrease in points that may affect your report grade.

In academic report writing, students make common mistakes that can be looked into to improve the over all grade of the paper. Here are some common mistakes that you can avoid in academic report writing.

- Long sentences - Students commonly write very long sentences just to fill the paper or to express knowledge on the paper. However, sometimes some sentences do not make sense thus in academic report writing it is important that you keep your sentences short.
- Spelling errors – This is a common mistake that student does. In academic report writing it is important that you proofread your paper and be sure that it is free from spelling errors.
- Homonyms – This is another thing that you should watch out for in academic report writing because your sentence might convey another meaning.
- Format – There are different writing styles and formats that you can follow depending on what your teacher would require. Study it before doing your paper. This is important in academic report writing because this is where

## NOTES

you can get an idea on how you will cite references, what to write in the headings and how to write your bibliography correctly.

- **Fluffs** – These are commonly used by students just to fill in the contents of the paper. In academic report writing, instead of elongating your paragraphs with fluffs, research for more facts that you can include in your paper.

These are common mistakes that students can avoid in academic report writing to increase the report grade. These are important things that one has to keep in mind in academic report writing to get better results.

## **WRITING PROJECT REPORTS: EXAMINING THE MAIN**

### **Peculiarities**

Project report writing is a necessary skill that should be possessed by students, especially by those whose future career will be connected with project management. Hence, when writing a project report, students should consider it as an inherent part of the project itself. A report should reveal detailed information on the essential steps taken in a project. This is why it is essential to understand that a report takes the half of the total grade.

### **What are the peculiarities of writing project reports?**

The main problems that should be tackled first are a project itself and what knowledge it provides for writing project reports. Apart from this, the writing itself should be logical, coherent, and correct.

There are several methods for achieving an appropriate level of writing project reports. For example, you may write everything that has been accomplished during the project work without any structure and cohesiveness, including all points beyond the order. The aim of this method consists in committing as much material to the paper as possible to exhaust your mind. After a while, it is time to put the disorganized texts into order by means of paraphrasing and omitting unnecessary wording. This is one of the methods that can be applied to writing project reports, but you are free to use your own one.

### **How to provide good project report writing?**

Many students realize that it is really hard to write a project report. For this occasion, there are a lot of handbooks that can contribute to writing project reports than the professors' guidelines.

The main point that should be considered when writing project reports:

1. Be precise;
2. Be active and accurate;
3. Check spelling and grammar;

→. Provide illustrations and tables.

## Writing Research Reports – Analyzing Qualitative Data

The first requirement for writing research reports is collection of data for the purpose of analyzing it. Once the data has been collected, it needs to be reviewed to check for quality and completeness.

Next, research report writing involves careful summarization of all the data which should be explained with regard to all the variables used. In case there are new variables used for the study, these should be identified and clearly explicated. Writing research reports will involve not only qualitative data but also quantitative data analysis.

Quantitative data analysis in research report writing includes analysis of all the tables, graphs, the means and proportions. Qualitative data analysis includes analyzing all the diagrams, the coding list, matrices and flow charts. These should be carefully examined and identified in the process of research report writing.

Once you are through with the above crucial steps, it is now time to prepare the draft of the research report. Writing research report is a work of great responsibility and you should list the important components with the help of an outline. Remember to write the draft in exact stages.

The draft of your research report should begin with an introduction and should inform the reader the statement of the problem, the rationale behind writing the research report and how it relates to the present context of literature. Next, you should state your research report objectives – what you plan to achieve through this report and how it will be beneficial.

The following methodology section states the use of methods, quantitative or qualitative, informing the reader of all the necessary details taken. The research findings are followed with the discussion section which in turn is followed by the conclusion. Finally, the last step of writing research reports is listing the recommendations on the basis of the findings of the report.

### Writing Scientific Reports: General Points to Consider

Report writing must present accurate data on a conducted research, including the purpose, the main problems, and methods. Report writing also serves to record the key points of meetings, conferences, or dissertations.

Scientific report writing is a more complicated work, as it briefly summarizes different scientific works, including empirical researches and dissertations. This is why it is necessary to highlight the major difficulties and peculiarities of scientific report writing being a significant part of students' academic process.

Several points to be included in scientific report writing:

Purpose

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Scientific report writing will not be successful without identification of the goal of the report.

- Target audience

Before writing a scientific report, a student should make sure that the purpose of his/her scientific report is interesting for the listeners.

- Clarity of writing

The language cramped with metaphors and similes is not about scientific report writing. Everything should be accurately presented for the audience to comprehend the core information.

- Supporting material

Pictures, tables, and maps are allowed when writing a scientific report, as they contribute to better understanding of the report essence.

- Proper format

With regard to the above instructions, report writing should stick to strictly established format norms of report organization.

Main sections of scientific report writing:

- Cover page (title)

Once again, student should refer to the format norms and organize the title of scientific report writing properly.

- Abstract

There are no peculiarities of writing abstracts because, like any other abstracts, it should include purpose, methods, and results revealed in scientific report writing.

- Such sections as introduction, methodology, discussion, and conclusion should also be properly formatted.

### **Writing Technical Reports: Master the Challenge Quickly**

Perhaps the ultimate objective of any technical writing course is writing a technical report. You spend a long time preparing for this challenging final assignment which would allow you to implement all your previously gained technical report writing knowledge.

Using heads, notices, lists, and graphics; handling abbreviations and numbers, — all this constitutes your success in writing technical reports as a good, clear, well-organized paper.

## Writing Technical Reports: Where to Start

In order to succeed in writing a technical report, you should initially consider the following:

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- report topic: make it as narrow as possible;
- report audience: decide on the addressee and the context of the report;
- report purpose: define what needs of the audience the report should fulfill;
- report type:

## Writing Technical Reports: Report Types

Depending on the peculiarities of your technical course, you may prefer to engage in writing a technical report of the following types:

- technical background report: provides specific background on a chosen topic;
- instructions: manuals or backup procedures;
- feasibility, recommendation, and evaluation reports: researches a problem and provides recommendations;
- primary research report: reports experiments and surveys additionally explaining the background of the problem and research methodology;
- technical specifications: discusses a new product widely applying graphics, lists, and tables;
- report-length proposal: an elaborate report including, inter alia, feasibility discussion, review of literature, and qualifications;
- business plan: a proposal to start a new business or to extend an existing one.

Depending on the type of technical report writing you choose to engage in, proceed further with your research, writing, and formatting, which should comply with your school's requirements.

## Professional Report Writing: Support of Experienced Specialists

### No limits to perfection

Most scientists are assured that they will not have problems with writing reports on their researches. Still, they might be disillusioned proceeding to the formal side of the question.

Professional report writing service could simplify their life significantly. Even the most diligent researchers often have their heads in the clouds and are unable to put their

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*genius thoughts into words. Having a set towards mathematics and research activity, they might have problems with grammar and logical reasoning.*

Lack of writing talent should not belittle the importance of one's discoveries. Professional report writing might increase the popularity of one's research papers and help the researchers to get their colleagues' approval.

The scientists' efforts to make their papers authentic from beginning to end are praiseworthy. Still, it is advisable to evaluate one's abilities critically and turn to professional report writing if necessary. Even if a scientist is proud of one's writing style, he/she might adopt the experience of professionals as well. It is said that there is no limits to perfection.

Professional report writing service workers could point to some errors that were overlooked by the researcher.

**Tips for effective cooperation with professional report writing**

1. Set objectives for turning to professional report writing. They might order a revision of the whole paper or separate parts of it.
2. Communicating with professional report writing team, mention your common errors that should be eliminated in the first place.
3. Be precise formulating your requirements. Try to prevent various misunderstandings cooperating with professional report writing service.
4. It is preferable to discuss every correction. Make sure to participate in the process of professional report writing. Note that turning to service is anonymous and you will not be able to shift the responsibility for your paper on others.

**Progress Report Writing: Formatting and Organizing the Process**

A progress report is an interim document that is submitted after the proposal but before the final report. Its main purpose is to account for the stages of the work that remains and to control the overall procedure of report writing.

Progress report writing is a serious piece of work as it takes time and efforts. This procedure also implies a chain of consistent steps without which it is impossible to succeed in progress report writing.

**The main requirements for formatting progress report writing:**

1. Progress report writing should be informal and candid, it is more informal than the proposal, and, therefore, it is often presented as an informal letter or a memo;

2. When writing a progress report, one should make sure that it is easy to read. This is why it is desirable to include visual signs like arrows, headings, subheadings, and bullet points.
3. Progress report writing should be properly formatted.

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### What are the main points of progress report writing?

- Objective

The purpose of report project writing should be expressed within one sentence only. It should succinctly and clearly identify the project, its name, and other specific assignments to be accomplished.

- Summary

A brief overview of project purpose and project progress should be highlighted in the summary of report writing.

- Introduction

The opening part of progress report writing should begin with evaluation of your proposal and its acceptance and validity. In this section, you should state what has been proposed. In addition, this part argues the necessity for investigation explaining the problems, conditions, and situation.

- Progress consideration

This is the main section that should be tackled when writing a progress report. Here you should take into consideration a task pattern or a time pattern. Both plans are disclosed in such sections as Task Breakdown and Methods.

- Conclusion

The closing part of progress report writing briefly assesses the overall progress and further stages of project development.

### SOME SAMPLES:

#### 1. Human Development Report 2010 —20th Anniversary Edition

#### The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development

The first *Human Development Report* in 1990 opened with the simply stated premise that has guided all subsequent Reports: "People are the real wealth of a nation." By backing up this assertion with an abundance of empirical data and a new way of thinking about and measuring development, the *Human Development Report* has had a profound impact on development policies around the world.

The 20th anniversary edition features introductory reflections by the Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen, who worked with series founder Mahbub ul Haq



on the conception of the first *Human Development Report* and contributed to and inspired many successive volumes.

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The 2010 Report continues the tradition of pushing the frontiers of development thinking. For the first time since 1990, the Report looks back rigorously at the past several decades and identifies often surprising trends and patterns with important lessons for the future. These varied pathways to human development show that there is no single formula for sustainable progress—and that impressive long-term gains can and have been achieved even without consistent economic growth.

Looking beyond 2010, this Report surveys critical aspects of human development, from political freedoms and empowerment to sustainability and human security, and outlines a broader agenda for research and policies to respond to these challenges.

As Amartya Sen writes: “Twenty years after the appearance of the first *Human Development Report*, there is much to celebrate in what has been achieved. But we also have to be alive to ways of improving the assessment of old adversities and of recognizing—and responding to—new threats that endanger human well-being and freedom.”

The 20th anniversary edition is a response to that human development imperative.

**2. International cooperation at a crossroads: Aid, trade and security in an unequal world**

This 2005 Human Development Report takes stock of human development, including progress towards the MDGs. Looking beyond statistics; it highlights the human costs of missed targets and broken promises. Extreme inequality between countries and within countries is identified as one of the main barriers to human development—and as a powerful brake on accelerated progress towards the MDGs.

The report suggests that the world’s governments are faced with a choice. They can start a decade for development with the financial resources, technology and capacity to end poverty or we could have a human development failure. “Business as usual” will not allow fulfilling the promises and the commitments made in 2000. The cost of this failure will be measured in human lives, increased inequalities, violations of human rights and threats to peace.

International aid, one of the most effective weapons in the war against poverty, needs to be renovated and reshaped. It should be thought as an investment as well as a moral imperative. In this respect, three conditions for effective aid are:

- sufficient quantity;
- better quality (delivered on a predictable value for money basis, with low transaction cost); and
- country ownership.

Failure in any one area undermines the foundations for future progress.

### 3. STUDY OF CONVERGENCE OF BANKING SECTOR TO HOUSING FINANCE

#### INTRODUCTION

Earlier it was very difficult to take a loan from the financial institutions. Interest rates were high and a lot of documentation was there. But today when there are a large number of financial institutions in India, who are providing credit facility, it has become very easy to take a loan.

Terms and conditions are liberal i.e. low interest rates, less documentation etc. Interest rates are becoming globally competitive and declining continuously. Now a day just think of purchasing a car and car-financing companies will start knocking at your door and ringing your phone.

Financial institutions have adopted liberal credit policies. They enquire less about end use of funds. Various types of loans are there and easily available at cheap rates.

When we take the case of home loans, it is a very safe area of loans from the point of view of financial institutions. They are easier to increase their share in the home loan sector. So they are coming with the attractive schemes. Customers can have the benefit of liberal terms and conditions as well as tax benefits if they choose to take a home loan. So the use has gained attention. The increasing number of home loans available today has strengthened the middle class individual to venture forth and fulfill his dreams.

Today, the demands of the current social status necessitate that varied means are tapped into in order to achieve the ultimate goal-better living. Home loan proposals are thus gaining popularity due to their easy-installments schemes, low interest rates and high returns on the standards of living. While a home loan generally includes financial for home extension, home improvement loans are well as loans for property medication; the terms are more commonly applied to finance schemes for purchasing houses.

#### Home Loan

Home loans are loans you have access to, depending on whether you want to buy or build a house and can also be used to repair or extend an existing house.

#### Who can avail of these loans?

According to lending institutions, any Indian resident who is over 21 years of age at the beginning of the loan and below 65 at its maturity can avail of the loan. Salaried Employees as well as Self-Employed citizens can apply. NRI Salaried and RBI Self Employed, under RBI guidelines, can approach only nationalized banks and other HDFC for loans.

#### NOTES

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**Why should one opt for a loan to buy a house?**

Taking a loan seems like a good option when the money at hand is insufficient to buy the house of your dreams. Consider couples in their twenties and thirties. They enjoy a good income currently, but their accumulated capital isn't enough to purchase a house. Whereas a home loan can give them access to capital through their current earnings.

Also, if you take a 10 years old loan when you are thirty, you could repay it by the time you're forty. So you don't have to be burdened with the interest and are free to plan your retirement savings.

**The Quantum of loan that one can avail of :**

Loan sanctioned depends on your repayment capacity – which is based on your current income and your future repayment capacity. You would include your spouse's name to enhance the loan amount.

The maximum loan can be sanctioned varies with each bank/institutions and ranges from Rs.10 lakhs to Rs. 1 crore.

**Benefits of taking a home loan:**

A home loan is very different from a personal loan like a car loan for instance. You can utilize a home loan for financing an asset that will hold its value and even appreciate over the period of the loan. Though its price could fluctuate in the short terms, Total Estate will show capital appreciation over the years.

The value of your house generally while the loan remains constant. If you had opted to wait, save up and buy a house, it would, in the long run cost you much more; home loans also come with many tax benefits.

**Tax benefits of taking a home loan:**

The income tax authorities look with favor upon those servicing a housing loan from specified financial institutions. And, it is up to you to be wise enough to take advantage of this.

**Section 24 of the Income Tax:**

Interest on loan till Rs.1.5 lakhs per annum is exempted from income tax (under section 23/24(1) of the Income tax act).

**Section 88 of Income Tax Act:**

You get a 20% rebate on repayment of principle during a financial year. Once again, over the years, the principle repayment eligible for rebate has been enhanced from Rs.10,000 to the current limit of Rs.20,000. Stamp duty, registration fee or transfer of such house property to the assessee is also considered under this amount.

**Financial Institutions, which give, home loans:**

Leading Banks

**Financial implications of availing a loan, small or big.**

There are several expenses involved apart from repayment of the actual loan amount:

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1. **Processing fees-** A processing fee (PF) is charges at the time of submission of the application form and covers expenses incurred for processing the application form. This fee has to be paid upfront by the customer -- in some cases, it is non-refundable.
2. **Administration fees-** to meet operating expenses.
3. **Pre-EMI-** A simple interest calculated on the disbursement amount in case of a plot under construction.
4. **EMI-** The EMI is an abbreviated form of the equated money installment and is simply referred to as monthly installment in common parlance. And, being a self-explanatory term that is exactly what it is. The amount you will have to pay you financier every month when repaying your loan. Being a monthly payment, at the end of the year, you would have paid 12 EMIs.

**Types of loans available**

Broadly two types- fixed rate and variable rate loans; while the former deals with a fixed rate of interest over the entire duration of the loan, the latter has the rate of interest changing according to the fluctuations in the market.

**Loan that one can avail**

Up to 85-90% of the total cost based primarily upon the individual's payback capacity.

**General conditions that govern a home loan:**

These are likely to vary with respect to the different types of housing loans:

- ✓ The maximum period of the loan is normally fixed by HFIs. However, HFIs do provide for different tenors with different terms and conditions.
- ✓ The Installment that you pay is normally restricted to amount 45% of your monthly gross income.
- ✓ You will be eligible for a loan amount, which is the lowest as per your eligibility. This is calculated on the basis of your gross income and payback capabilities.
- ✓ Some HFIs insist on guarantees from other individuals for due repayment of your loan. In such cases you have to arrange for the personal guarantee before the disbursement of your loan tasks place.
- ✓ Most HFIs have a panel of lawyers who go through your property documents to ensure that the documents are clear and are not misrepresented. This is an added benefit that you get when you avail of a loan from an HFI.

- ✓ You repay the loan either through Deduction against Salary, Post dated cheques, and standing instructions or by Cash/DD.

#### 4. Influence of Advertisement on Food Habits of Childrens

##### NOTES

##### Introduction

Everyday our children come under an increasing exposure to television commercials and with the growing use of animation techniques. These advertisements are posing attractive to children. How do children process the advertised message, what do they do with it and to what extent they are influenced by what they see and hear? All these questions have become the subject of my research.

The degree of impact of advertising on adults may be problematic but the outcome is devastating for children. Advertising comes in different forms such as television, print, radio and Internet. So using such various communicating devices how the products are advertised to the so-called new segment in the market. Advertisers of children television used to appeal to the parents earlier but now they appeal directly to children who do not have the emotional or cognitive tools to evaluate what's being sold to them. Television is no more just a source of entertainment for children. Some countries have decided that the evidence of advertisings influence on children is strong enough to take legislative action.

For example, Sweden has imposed a ban on all advertising to children under 12 years old and Greece has regulated the content of children television advertising.

The attention span of very young children participating these young that the age of two and half year is quiet common. The child rarely facing oriented towards the television set, younger children tend to pay more attention through out them. Some thing of attential inertia-compared with older children. Older children attention with in series of commercial. Presented in block tended to drop toward the end. For all children full attention to commercial is highest for all the advertisement shown at the beginning of programmes and for children, the auditing full of commercial is often more powerful than the visual.

The accustomed viewing style has its impact on attention. For example viewing while sleeping on bed, sitting on the floor, at the dining table, when doing home work, eating, reading comics or in the presence of friends could results in reduce attention to commercial.

##### Effect of Television on Children

“Promise lay promise is soul of advertisement.

At an early age children becomes attracted to television, the medium most capable of portraying life styles, value and social patterns to us. Indeed many of today's children can not avoid the clutches as television programming. One investigator estimates that during the elementary school years children watch television none that of any other time in their lives averaging 20-25 viewers hours per week. Because the vast amount of time that are spent in front of television set, many feel that

children are drawn away from the other activities such as playing with other youngster's or practicing motor skill.

But in recent years advertising plays an important role in children's life. We note that children see a lot of advertisement but they rarely buy an item is a question. Seeing an actor or actress practicing to use a special brand of food can marginally encourage someone. Even if they do not get the suitable brand they tried to stick to the brand.

## NOTES

The influence of the media on the psychosocial development of children profound, it is important for the parents to know their child's exposure to media and provide guidance on age-appropriate use of all media including television, radio, music, video games and Internet. The objective of the report is to explore both the beneficial and harmful effects of media on children's mental and physical health and to identify how the advertising industry can be regulated by formulating unified laws to prevent the over-exposure of children to the advertising world.

### About Fast Food

Human tastes and preferences keep on changing with the passage of time. This fact of consumer behavior is evident in every sphere of consumables and fast food sector is not an exception. As the society has undergone many transitions the tastes and preferences of consumers and their eating habits have also undergone a dramatic change. Gone are the days when eating at home and cooking was considered to be passion. Today people are more comfortable with eating out ready to eat products. A lot of credit for this can be attributed to various basic changes in the basic structure of society. Some of these are:-

1. Increasing number of working women which has caused office work taking one kitchen work.
2. Nuclear families - Less number of family members, so eating out is not a problem.
3. High disposable income that has caused people to spend more and try out new things.
4. Last but not the least the increasing influence of western culture, which has resulted in people going for a Mc Donald Burger instead of paranthas.

The major path breakers in this sector have been Mc Donald's, Pizza hut.

### Objectives of the study

Broad objective "To know the influence of advertisement on food habits of children"

- To find out the effect of advertisement on children.
- To know the viewer ship of advertisement.
- How far the advertisements change the buying behaviour of children?

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- Do they always buy the product after watching the advertisement?
- What criteria do they keep in mind while choosing between two same products, but of different brand, which are featured in advertisement.
- Do the children keep the price in mind while buying the product?
- Do they remember anything after watching the advertisement?
- To know the liking and the disliking of consumers regarding the advertisement.
- To measure the role of Advertisement in decision-making.

### **5. LOYALTY MYTH : Employee Satisfaction Leads to Business Results?**

The belief that employee satisfaction is important to business outcomes has been around for ages, as far back as the seventeenth century, when an Italian named Bernardino Ramazzini reported on the feelings of workers who dug and maintained cesspools. There are probably a subsequent 7,000 or more identifiable investigations on the subject. Unfortunately, culling through the findings of these studies looking for relationships between employee morale and standard measures of productivity finds a mixed bag: positive correlations, negative correlations, and, in some situations, no correlations whatsoever.

Similarly studies specifically testing the association between employee satisfaction and business results typically discover some linkage. Just as was the case with examinations of employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction, they have failed to reveal consistent indications. Some correlate negatively, some positively, and a few fail to show any correlation.

Most investigations into the linkage between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction and, ultimately, corporate profits have tended to study absolute levels of employee measures (e.g., a rating of 7.3 on a 10-point scale). The authors were fortunate to have access to data sets from several firms (both U.S. and European). In exploring the nature of the linkage between employee measures and business outcomes within these data sets we made a surprising discovery: The consistency of employee feelings was more important than the absolute level in building a cause-effect model!

Employees, like customers, appear to establish thresholds of expected performance. That is, they will accustom themselves to less than ideal circumstances so long as those conditions don't worsen. Employees similarly acclimate to thresholds of environment, even though they may be less than perfect. If, however, these thresholds are breached by deteriorating conditions (breaking through a minimally acceptable level), then there are repercussions in employees' performance, and customer feelings and profits are likely to suffer. But if employee attitudes remain constant or advance slowly, without receding, then customer attitudes and profits are more likely to improve. Again, in our data, the linkage to business outcomes was not universal.

Unfortunately, firms with satisfied employees can still find themselves losing out to competitors and ultimately going out of business.

## WRITING SENSIBLE EMAIL MESSAGES

### NOTES

As we've seen before, getting your inbound email under control will give you a huge productivity boost, but what about all the emails you *send*? If you want to be a good email citizen and ensure the kind of results you're looking for, you'll need to craft messages that are concise and easy to deal with.

### First: Understand *why* you're writing

Before you type *anything* into a new message, have explicit answers for two questions:

1. Why am I writing this?
2. What exactly do I want the result of this message to be?

If you can't succinctly state these answers, you might want to hold off on sending your message until you can. People get dozens, hundreds, *eventhousands* of emails each day, so it's only natural for them to gravitate toward the messages that are well thought-out and that clearly respect their time and attention. Careless emails do not invite careful responses.

Think through your email from the recipient's point of view, and make sure you've done everything you can to try and help yourself before contacting someone else. If it's a valuable message, treat it that way, and put in the time to making your words count.

### Get what you need

Although the possible topics and content of messages are theoretically endless, I'd propose that there are really just three basic types of business email.

1. Providing information - "Larry Tate will be in the office Monday at 10."
2. Requesting information - "Where did you put the 'Larry Tate' file?"
3. Requesting action - "Will you call Larry Tate's admin to confirm our meeting on Monday?"

It should be clear to your recipient which type of email yours is; **don't bury the lede**. Get the details and context packed into that first sentence or two whenever you can. Don't be afraid to write an actual "topic sentence" that clarifies a) what this is about, and b) what response or action you require of the recipient.

Since the Larry Tate meeting on Monday has been moved from the Whale Room, could you please make sure the Fishbowl has been reserved and that the caterer has been notified of the location change? Please IM me today by 5pm Pacific Time to verify.

This isn't the place to practice your stand-up act. Keep it pithy, and assume that *no*



*one* will ever read more than the first sentence of anything you write. Making that first sentence strong and clear is easily the best way to interest your recipient in the second sentence and beyond.

## NOTES

**Write a great *Subject* line**

You can make it even easier for your recipient to immediately understand why you've sent them an email and to quickly determine what kind of response or action it requires. Compose a great "Subject:" line that hits the high points or summarizes the thrust of the message. Avoid "Hi," "One more thing...," or "FYI," in favor of typing a short summary of the most important points in the message:

- Lunch resched to Friday @ 1pm
- Reminder: Monday is "St. Bono's Day"—no classes
- REQ: Resend Larry Tate zip file?
- HELP: Can you defrag my C drive?
- Thanks for the new liver—works great!

In fact, if you're relating just a single fact or asking one question in your email, consider using *just* the subject line to relate your message. As I've mentioned before, in some organizations, such emails are identified by adding (EOM)—for *end of message*—at the end of the Subject line. This lets recipients see that the whole message is right there in the subject without clicking to the view the (non-existent) body. This is highly appreciated by people who receive a large volume of mail, since it lets them do a quick triage on your message without needing to conduct a full examination.

Sadly, good email subjects have become something of a lost art, especially among more recent additions to the Interweb. It's a pity, because you're far more likely to get a favorable response from a busy person when they can quickly grok your message.

**Brevity is the soul of...*getting a response***

It's completely depressing to check your email at 4:55 in the afternoon to discover a gothic novel of a message waiting for you, spilling down your screen the distance of 2 or 3 scrolling pages. It's certainly not the kind of thing that excites the desire to engage and respond. I mean just look at all that!

So, although—in typical Merlin fashion—I have only anecdotal evidence and hunches to prove this point, I'd wager that there's one visual trick most likely to improve your message's success: **fit it onto one screen with *no scrolling***. There's a reason those web ads placed "above the fold" cost a lot more than the ones stuck down at the bottom; it's the only part of the page that you're virtually assured that anyone will see.

Whenever you can, try to distill your beautiful epistle down to just one or two points about a given topic, and then whittle *that* down to the point where there's plenty of white space left underneath your closing. Got more to say? Put it in separate emails with—again—excellent Subject lines, and a descriptive, concise opener.

## What's the action here?

If your message includes any kind of request—whether for a meeting, a progress update, a pony ride, or what have you—put that request near the top of the message and clearly state when you will need it. Do not, under any circumstances, assume that your overwhelmed recipient will take the time to sift through your purple prose for clues about what they're supposed to be doing for you.

## NOTES

Depending on the style of your team and the volume of mail they create, you might even consider adding functional text headers to the top of the body outlining the exact nature of the message.

This email is:         actionable             fyi             social  
Response needed:    yes                     up to you         no  
Time-sensitive:      immediate             soon             none

Sure, it's geeky, but how many minutes have you wasted panning through a sloppy "project update" email only to completely miss the changed deadline or work request buried in the penultimate paragraph?

Remove the guesswork from your messages by thinking of them like friendly, civil *work orders*; you must not be afraid to ask for what you want, especially if you have any desire to actually have the recipient give it to you.

## More good ideas

- **Make it easy to quote** - Power email users will quote and respond to specific sections or sentences of your message. You can facilitate this by keeping your paragraphs short, making them easy to slice and dice.
- **Don't chuck the ball** - Emails to a thread are like comments at a meeting; think of both like your time possessing the basketball. Don't just chuck at the net every chance you get. Hang back and watch for how you can be most useful. *Minimize noise.*
- **A reminder never hurts** - If you're following-up or responding to an email that's more than a few days old, provide context right at the opening. For example, "You wrote in February asking to be notified when the new asthma inhalers are in stock; here's a link to the items we've now made available on our site...."
- **Never mix, never worry** - Unless your team really prefers to work that way, do not mix topics, projects, or *domains of life* in a given email. Inform everyone of Baby Tyler's adorable antics in a different message than the one with the downsizing rumors and budget warnings.
- **No thanks** - I'm not married to this one, but I know *a lot* of people who swear by it. In more informal settings and in high-volume mail environments, it's not necessary to respond with a "Thanks" email whenever someone does what you asked. Save your gratitude for the next time you pass in the hall; a one-word "Thanks" email can be cruffy and unnecessary. On the

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other hand, don't hesitate to thank someone for their time if they've truly done you a proper.

- **RTFM** - If you're asking for help, make sure you've exhausted all the documentation and non-human resources you have at your disposal. When you do ask for help, be sure to quickly cover the solutions you've already tried and what the results were.
- **Skip the overture** - If you're writing to a busy person with an actual question or request, resist the desire to swoon for 2,000 characters. Either write a fan letter or a useful email, but mixing them can seem tacky and disingenuous.

### Sample messages

#### 1. To: Company Employees

Subject: A GENTLE REMINDER

Good afternoon Citizens of ABC Corporation,

It has been impressed upon me the need for a gentle reminder regarding the sending and receiving of mail at our facility.

Any incoming mail should have the company name on it, in addition to the name of the actual recipient. Let me write that again this way: Any incoming mail should have the **COMPANY NAME** on it in addition to the **NAME OF THE RECIPIENT**. I'm not shouting at you, the large caps were added for emphasis. I only hope to stress the importance of this information on incoming mail because we have had instances where the post office has, in their ongoing effort to decrease mis-deliveries, returned mail intended for us to the sender because it lacked a company name. While we still receive mail for other companies in the building, the post office has returned invoices, statements and other materials intended for us due to a lack of a company name. So please emphasize all potential senders the importance of including our proud company name along with your own.

Conversely, we have witnessed some peculiar things while handling outgoing mail. Not wishing to draw undue attention to any particular individuals, let's just say matter of factly that it's okay to remove the backing of the mailing label and apply the sticky side to the top of the package that you are sending. Taping the label to the package defeats the intended purpose of the nice adhesive that's been placed there for us. The following formula has been tested and proven successful: place contents into packaging, seal package, apply label with recipient information to the package face, attach completed shipping form.

If those steps can be followed, we can almost assure, barring any interference from God or human failure, that your goods will reach the desired location within the desired time.

Thank you as always for your cooperation. Stay tuned to this screen.

2. From: Melissa Witt

Subject: Your sample proposal

**Chris:**

I received your sample proposal today. While I was very happy to get it, I'm disappointed in its content. I don't see any indication that you did any of the things that we were going to do for this project. There's no outline at the beginning, no indication of the features that are located within, and no technology case at the end of the proposal as we discussed. In fact, I don't see any web material **anywhere** in the proposal. You still have as a boxed-out feature the "Social Responsibility" box on page 25. According to my notes, you were to take these out, integrate them into the discussion, and call them out with an icon. Do you think the section on Motorola is still valid, considering it's recent ups and downs? I know Mike called and received a temporary password to Wall Street Journal information to use to replace this. Mike, did you not share it with the rest of the group?

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Did I miss something? Are we all "on the same page?" I'm trying to help all of you write a proposal that knocks their socks off. Your colleagues gave you the feedback to do it. According to what I understood, the plan was agreed upon at the meeting, of which Andy gave us all a recap memo. I'm sorry I can't write it for you.

I would appreciate some feedback here from all of you.

### **3. To: All IH Employees**

#### **Subject: Project Team Volunteers Needed**

Using the document created by Reed McKenzie's Web Smart Strategy team, we have a solid foundation from which to build a successful Web Knowledge Curriculum for the DPI group. Building on this backbone, I would like to find a group of people to help me design a curriculum that excels in it's creativity, design and functionality.

As a volunteer for this project, you will have the opportunity to determine the solution that keeps deployment on the forefront of web technology. For the purpose of the project, I would like to get the widest possible participation from the teams within DPI. As a result, please volunteer yourself, or recommend someone who can truly add value; someone whom you trust to design your professional development. I'd like a participant from each group, Desktop, Functions, ABA and BPA as well as balanced representation between Chicago and Sarasota.

If you'd like to think HUGE, present ideas that are outrageous, and develop solutions that are unparalleled, you belong on this team. Let's make an impact together. Please respond to me via lotus notes by Monday, 16 October, 2000.

## **WRITING SPECIAL NOTICES**

In this chapter, and in this course, we use a specific style of notices. This style is standard, required format in this course. If you want to use a different style, discuss this with your instructor. Otherwise, follow these guidelines in planning and designing special notices—they are your "specs"!

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1. Use special notices to emphasize key points or warn or caution readers about damage or injury.
2. Be careful to use the types of special notices precisely, for their defined purposes. Use the four types of special notices in the following ways:

**Note**—To emphasize points or remind readers of something, or to indicate minor problems in the outcome of what they are doing.

**Warning** —To warn readers about the possibility of minor injury to themselves or others.

**Caution** —To warn readers about possible damage to equipment or data or about potential problems in the outcome of what they are doing.

**Danger**—To warn readers about the possibility of serious or fatal injury to themselves or others.

Deciding on which type of notice to use is not an exact science. Don't use a danger notice when a warning is more appropriate (the same as "crying wolf"). Also, use notices in a consistent way throughout a report. Do *not* create your own notices, such as putting "Important:" in place of "Warning."

1. Place special notices at the point in text where they are needed. For example, place a caution or danger notice before discussing a step in which readers might hurt themselves.
2. Avoid having too many special notices at any one point in the text. Otherwise, the effectiveness of their special format will be lost. (If you have too many, combine them.)
3. With warnings, cautions, and danger notices, explain the consequences of not paying attention to the notice. State what will happen if the reader does not heed the notice.
4. The following examples use bold. If you have no access to bold, use underlines instead (but don't use both together). Avoid all-caps for the text of any special notice.

### Format for Special Notices

Use the following for specific details on the capitalization, typography (bold, underlining, different fonts, different types sizes), and spacing for each type of special notice.

**Note.** Use the following format for simple notes:

1. Type the word "Note" followed by a colon. (Underline the word, or use bold if you have it.)
2. Begin typing the text of the note one space after the colon. (But don't put the text of the note in bold.)
3. Singlespace within the text of the note; skip one line above and below the note.

4. Start run-over lines on the regular left margin.
5. Align the note with the text to which it refers (as illustrated in the second example).

### Testing the Drive

To test your new drive by reading a data CD, follow these steps:

1. Open the drive tray and place a data CD on the tray.
2. Close the drive tray and wait a moment for the drive and CD to spin up.
3. Click My Computer on your Windows desktop to view the available drives. You should see your new drive and drive letter.
4. Click the new drive to access the files on the CD.

**Note:** The drive letter you see as your new drive may vary depending on the number of hard disks installed in your system.

### Example of a simple note.

*Optionally, less space above than below the note to indicate it pertains to the bulleted item.*

This is the special notice information. This is the special notice information. This is the special notice information. This is the special notice information:

- This is running text. This is also running text. And this is running text. This is running text. This is running text.

*Note:* This is the special notice information. This is the special notice information. This is the special notice information.

- This is running text. This is also running text. And this is running text. This is running text. This is ...

*Note aligns with the text of the bulleted item it refers to.*

**Example of a note within a bulleted list (not regular running text).** This same principle (that special notices align to the text they refer to) applies to the other types of special notices as well.

**Notes.** Use the following format for multiple notes:

1. Type the word "Notes" followed by a colon. (Underline the word, or use bold if you have it.)
2. Use a numbered list for the individual notes; in it, follow the rules for numbered lists. (Do not use bold for the individual notes.)
3. Align the notes with the text to which they refer; skip one line above and below the notes.
4. Use this format when you have so many notes that they would be distracting to present individually.

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This is running text. This is also running text. And this is also running text. This is running text.

Notes:

1. This is the special notice information.
2. This is the special notice information.
3. This is also running text. And this is running text. This is running text. This is . . .

Two blank lines between running text and the note.

Use a numbered list for the individual notes.

6- to 3-space indentation for the note items.

Individual note items are single-spaced.

*Example of a multiple note.* Use this format if you have lots of notes and want to collect them all in one place to prevent distraction.

**Warning.** Use the following format for warnings:

1. Type the word "Warning," follow with a colon, italicize.
2. Tab to begin the text of the warning. (Try for 0.25 to 0.5 inches of space between the end of the warning label and the beginning of the text.)
3. Use regular body font for the text of the warning notice (no bold, no italics, no all-caps, no color).
4. Align the warning notice with the text it refers to.
5. Single-space the text of the notice; skip one line above and below the caution notice.

4. Run the engine for 3 minutes, then shut it off. Steps 2 - 4 comprise one engine run. Make a note in your log that the first engine run is complete.

*Warning:* Be careful handling your engine after running. Model engines get very hot during operation.

5. Complete 3 more engine runs, letting the engine cool enough to the touch after each run and updating your log as you go.

6. After the fourth engine run, turn the throttle up all the way and adjust the fuel-air mixture by sound.

*Example of a warning notice.* Use this one to alert readers to the possibility of minor injury.

**Caution.** Use the following format for caution notices:

1. Type the word "Caution" follow it with a colon, and bold both the label and the colon.
2. Skip one line and begin the text of the caution aligned with the start of the caution label.
3. Single-space the text of the caution; skip one line above and below the notice.

4. Align the caution notice with the text it refers to (in the preceding, the warning notice occurs within a numbered list and is indented accordingly).

### Create the WebWorks Project

WebWorks uses two tools to assist you: the Project Launcher and the New Project Wizard. To complete the WebWorks project, follow these instructions: (1) start WebWorks and edit the Project Launcher, and (2) edit the New Project Wizard.

#### Caution:

Ensure that your FrameMaker file has no cross-link or book-generation errors. Otherwise, WebWorks may cancel the conversion process.

*Example of a caution notice.* Use this one to alert readers of possible damage to equipment or problems with the procedure.

**Danger.** Use the following format for danger notices:

1. Type the word "DANGER" in all-caps. (Underline it, or use bold.)
2. Align the danger notice with the text it refers to.
3. Singlespace the text of the danger notice; skip one line above and below the danger notice.
4. Use bold on the text of the danger notice if you have it (but never all-caps).
5. If you have graphics capability, draw a box around the danger notice (including the label).

#### How to Operate the M16A Rifle

The M16A rifle is the standard issue rifle used by the infantry division of the United States Army. The rifle is also commercially available for civilians who have a special license for automatic weapons. This rifle is a very accurate and versatile weapon. The rifle fires ammunition in single bursts or multiple bursts for different types of situations. You will be able to safely operate a M16A rifle after learning the following steps: (1) performing a function check, (2) loading the M16A, and (3) unloading the rifle.

<p><b>Danger:</b> Whenever you begin operating any type of firearm, make sure the weapon is pointed in a safe direction at all times.</p>
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*Danger notice.* Use this one to alert readers of the possibility of serious injury or fatality.

#### Other Formatting Issues

Here are some additional points to consider concerning special notices.

**Special alignment.** Special notices must align to the text to which they refer. For example, if you have a note that adds some special detail to something in a bulleted list item, you must align that note to the *text* of the bulleted item. Of course, if the

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note follows a bulleted list but refers to the whole list, then you can use the regular left margin.

**Singlespaced text.** All of the examples and discussion in this unit are based on doublespaced text. For singlespaced text, use your document-design “eye” to decide on spacing. Leave either one blank lines between running text and special notices—depending on what looks best to you. (And of course both running text and the text of the special notices would be singlespaced.)

**Placement of special notices.** The standard rule is to place special notices *before* the point at which they are relevant. For example, you warn readers to back up all data *before* you tell them to reformat their hard drive. However, in practice this applies to serious special notices where great harm to data, equipment, or people is likely to ensue.

One technique used by very cautious writers (maybe those who have been burned) is to place all serious notices (warnings, cautions, and dangers) somewhere at the beginning of the document, and then repeat them individually where they apply.

**Multiple special notices.** You run into situations where you have three or four special notices, all jammed together in the same part of the text, each one following another. This is a problem because the whole point of the special formatting of the notices is lost: something is special because it is different from the surrounding. The solution to this problem is to create one identifying heading (for example, “Notes and Warnings”), and then list the notices (either bulleted or numbered) below it.

**Designing your own notices.** The format of the notices shown here is by no means universal. And while there is agreement on the gradation of special notices (from special point to potential fatality), there is no agreement on what to call each one. The special notices shown here are designed on the principle of increasing noticeability. You’re likely to notice the note-type special notice, but how can you miss the danger notice? If you want to design your own special notices, check with your instructor. For some, the meanings of warning and caution are reversed (although my suspicion is that the word “caution” derives from the Latin *cautere*, which means to cut—suggesting minor injury).

The key though is to decide on a naming and formatting style and *stick to it*. Readers get into the habit of responding certain ways to words and format. Don’t confuse them! And don’t complicate matters by creating new types of notices such as “Important” or “Please read!” and other such weirdness.

# 5

# Writing for Employment

NOTES

**The Chapter Covers :**

- Writing CV's
- Differences between a resume and a CV
- Preparing a Curriculum Vitae
- Proven Success Strategies
- Samples
- Writing Emails
- 32 most important email etiquette tips
- Examples
- Some more Examples

**WRITING CV'S:**

A curriculum vitae, or CV, is a type of resume used by professionals in the fields of academia, medicine, teaching, and research.

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A RESUME AND A CV**

- Education is always listed first. Most candidates who use a CV have an educational background directly related to the positions they seek.

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- CV's almost never list an objective and seldom have a long narrative profile. If you want to make a more elaborate argument for your application, do it in a cover letter.
- CV's should be understated. Self-congratulation is likely to backfire on the author so keep your CV looking simple.
- Name-dropping is more common in CV's than resumes. For example, if you performed research under a certain professor, you would probably include her name and title. Science and academia are small worlds, and it is likely that a prospective employer will have heard of a given specialist in her own field.
- CV's can run on for pages and pages. This is different from resumes, which need to be one to two pages, maximum. CV's should, however, be very neatly organized with clear headings and distinct conceptual divisions.
- CV's often contain many more categories of information than resumes. Experience may be divided between headings for TEACHING and RESEARCH; education may be divided between DEGREES and CONTINUING EDUCATION or ADVANCED TRAINING. How you organize this material determines its impact on your reader.

**Information to include on a CV**

The organization and presentation of your CV is extremely important. Your presentation will be judged largely on the number and nature of listings. Review your total universe of material before deciding what to include, what to feature, and what to omit. Review all potential data in the following categories:

Degrees	Study abroad	Volunteer experience	Appointments
Dissertations	Teaching	Service	Consulting
Theses	Workshops	Languages	Practica
All other college studies	Continuing education	Additional activities	Travel (non tourist)
Clinics	Seminars	Technical skills	Laboratory skills
Training	Conferences	Computer skills	Sports
Specialization	Symposia	Licenses	Awards
Expertise	Publications	Credentials	Bibliography
Profession	Translations	Honors	Addenda
Interests	Presentations	Scholarships	Affiliation
Employment	Papers	Fellowships	Pro bono
Class projects	Lectures	Assistantships	Committees
Research	Exhibitions	Grants	

After compiling this information, organize it on your CV in accordance with your desired impact on the reader. If you're looking for a job in research, emphasize the research in which you've already participated or relevant coursework. All information should be listed in reverse chronological order.

# PREPARING A CURRICULUM VITAE: PROVEN SUCCESS STRATEGIES

## NOTES

Vitas and resumes both have similar purposes — as marketing documents that provide key information about your skills, experiences, education, and personal qualities that show you as the ideal candidate. Where a resume and a curriculum vitae differ is their use, format, and length. This article will help with your writing and preparing your vita.

A curriculum vitae — often called a CV or vita — tends to be used more for scientific and teaching positions than a resume. Thus, vitas tend to provide great detail about academic and research experiences. Where resumes tend toward brevity, vitas lean toward completeness.

Unlike resumes, there is no set format to vitas. While this article will provide a few links to free samples vitas, it is best to also discuss any special formatting your field requires with a mentor or trusted member of your network. There are also a few books that provide much more depth on the subject — and they can be found at the end of this article.

While vitas do not have the one-page rule of resumes, you need to walk the line between providing a good quality of depth to showcase your qualifications and attract potential employer interest and providing too much information thus appearing verbose and turning off potential employer interest.

### Ready to Begin Preparing Your CV?

Typical vita categories or headings may include some or all of the following:

- Personal/Contact Information
  - name
  - address
  - phone number(s)
  - email
- Academic Background
  - postgraduate work
  - graduate work/degree(s), major/minors, thesis/dissertation titles, honors
  - undergraduate degree(s), majors/minors, honors
- Professional Licenses/Certifications
- Academic/Teaching Experience
  - courses taught, courses introduced
  - innovation in teaching

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- teaching evaluations
- Technical and Specialized Skills
- Related/Other Experience
  - other work experience
- Professional/Academic Honors and Awards
- Professional Development
  - conferences/workshops attended, other activities
- Research/Scholarly Activities
  - journal articles
  - conference proceedings
  - books
  - chapters in books
  - magazine articles
  - papers presented/workshops
  - e-zine articles
  - work currently under submission
  - work in progress
- Grants
- Service
  - academic
  - professional
  - community
- Academic/Research Interests
- Affiliations/Memberships
- Foreign Language Abilities/Skills
- Consulting
- Volunteer Work
- References

**Other CV-Related Resources That can Help:**

Helpful books about vitas:

- *Developing a Professional Vita or Resume*, by Carl McDaniels and Mary Anne Knobloch (Ferguson Publishing).

- *The Global Resume and CV Guide*, by Mary Anne Thompson (Wiley).
- *How to Prepare Your Curriculum Vitae*, by Acy L. Jackson and C. Kathleen Geckeis (McGraw-Hill).

#### Other articles/Websites about vitas:

- Curriculum Vitae — from Colorado College's Career Center.
- Curriculum Vitae Resume Writing Tips — from #1 Resume Writing Services & Resume Tips Resource Center.
- Writing Your Vita — from the Psychology Department at Hanover College.

#### NOTES

## SAMPLES:

### RESUME SAMPLE

#### Amit Ghosh

789 White house Road, Koramangala, Bangalore 998 009, India

Email: xxx@aol.com

Phone: 91-80-45679987

**OBJECTIVE:** To secure a job in the IT industry where I can utilise my knowledge for the organisation's growth

### EDUCATION

B.Tech. Computer Science and Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai (2001-2005)

*Thesis Title:* Efficient use of software in offices

*Advisor:* Anne D'Coasta

*Summary:* Improvement in the use of the software that is used in offices at the moment. This was published in Graphics India magazine in 2005

St. Xavier's School, Bangalore (Graduated 2000)

Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in school in 12th C.B.S.E. Board Examination.

### PROJECT WORK (B. Tech)

- Built a computer that could work on solar energy.

### TRAINEESHIP EXPERIENCE

- Research Assistant, TIFR, Mumbai (Aug – Dec 2004):
- Helped the professors to research and collate information on various computer related topics.
- Project Trainee, ABC Networks, Bangalore: (Jan 2005-present):

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- Work as a project trainee for this start-up company. Implemented new projects and participated in them. Tested the new software.

**COMPUTER SKILLS**

- Software: SQL Server, Apache, CVS, Mathematica, Latex. Also, audio/video formats and codecs. Languages: C/C++, STL, Python, Javascript/C#
- Platforms: Linux, FreeBSD, Windows 98, NT 4.0, 2000.

**ACADEMIC AWARDS**

- Best B.Tech thesis – 2004. Dept of Computer Science. IISC Bangalore
- Silver Medalist at the International Mathematical Olympiad at school.
- Ranked 10th in IIT Joint Entrance Examination – 2000.

**TRAININGS / CERTIFICATIONS**

- A six month course in C, C++ and Java from the National Computing Agency
- A certification in multi-media and animation from Animation Toonz
- Communication skills workshops conducted by the British Agency in Bangalore

**REFERENCES**

- Will be furnished when asked for.

**SAMPLE 2 :-**

**FRANCISCO PIRES**

**PERSONAL DETAILS**

Full name: **PIRES, FRANCISCO Manuel Prego de Ochôa e Azevedo**

Nationality: Portuguese (born in Lourenzo Marques, Mozambique)

DOB: 17:12:62

Marital status: Married

Address: **Rua Augusto Gil, 41 – 4460-211 Senhora da Hora, Porto, Portugal**

Mob.: (+355) 932 687 548 / (+355) 964 644 718

Fax. : (+355) 220 125 439

E-Mail: **abcd@clix.pt**

**PROFILE**

My career has led me to specialize increasingly in the management of complex multi-cultural projects and their staffs at international levels. I have experience in: strategic forward-planning; operating within the tight financial disciplines imposed by ambitious budgets which I have helped to plan; methodical administration to deadlines (not to speak of crisis management where necessary); and the application of modern leadership methods (through staff motivation and involvement in both decision-making and target-setting, clarity in communication, and easy personal inter-relations). My own cosmopolitan background and analytical interests in other cultures, together with a command of several European languages, have also left me confident in handling negotiations that require the reconciliation of different national approaches to otherwise common problems.

**NOTES****Skills Base**

- Familiarity with both the artistic and the commercial worlds, the culture of government, and European regulations
- Tested management techniques in both continental and British contexts
- Proven leadership and human management skills
- Budget design and monitoring
- Time-efficient, systematic working methodology
- Rapid adaptability to new problem-solving and new locations
- Languages: Portuguese, English, Spanish, French, and Italian
- IT: Word, Excel, Windows
- Clean driving license

**SAMPLE 3 :-****AKIKO TANAKA**

52 Orchard Street, London W2 3BT

Telephone: 020-7654 3210; Mobile: 07960 999999; E-mail:

akiko9999@hotmail.com

**Employment**

1999-2001      **Natural Group, Tokyo, Japan**

A manufacturer and retailer of natural foods and supplements in Japan

*Sales Assistant*



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- Advised the main shop's customers about organic and health foods
- Developed new business in smaller satellite stores, explaining the benefits of supplements and organic food to potential new customers
- Increased sales at both the main and the satellite shops. The extra profits were used to expand the business by establishing a new shop

1997-1999

**Sony Corporation, Tokyo, Japan**

consumer

A Japanese conglomerate which develops and manufactures and industrial electronic equipment world-wide

*Administration Assistant, General Affairs Department*

*Administration Assistant, General Affairs Department*

appropriate division  
nese

- Examined incoming mail and redirected this to the appropriate division
- Translated foreign letters (written in English) into Japanese

*Air Cargo*

*Customs Clearance Officer, Import Division, Sony*

import of

- Completed reports (e.g. bills of entry) to facilitate the import of goods from abroad
- Dealt with customs enquiries and procedures

**Education**

Sep 2001 - **Britannia School of English, London**

English language school; passed Cambridge First Certificate exam in June 2002

1993-1997 **Meikai University, Chiba, Japan**

Degree in International Relations

**Other Skills**

Computer literate: good knowledge of Word and Excel, as well as e-mail and the internet  
Fluent in Japanese; practical knowledge of English and Korean

**Personal Details**

Date of Birth 6 January 1975

Nationality Japanese

Gender Female  
Work status Student visa  
Interests Studying English, visiting museums, playing golf

## WRITING EMAILS:

### Introduction

It simply comes down to making others understand. Yet people treat writing e-mail as either a chore, a waste of time, or worst, a lesser form of communication. Because of this, it isn't given the same amount of care and attention as putting pen to paper.

So what if penmanship isn't seen, or that the stationery doesn't matter? So what if everything becomes left-justified or gets truncated during transmission? Doesn't this mean that the words themselves become even more important than ever before?

In this section are some guidelines that I use when composing an electronic letter - if simple words aren't able to convey the message properly, we're using the wrong alphabet.

It is amazing to find that in this day and age, some companies have still not realized how important their email communications are. Many companies send email replies late or not at all, or send replies that do not actually answer the questions you asked. If your company is able to deal professionally with email, this will provide your company with that all important competitive edge. Moreover by educating employees as to what can and cannot be said in an email, you can protect your company from awkward liability issues. This website discusses the main etiquette rules and provides advice on how employers can ensure that they are implemented.

*'By requiring employees to use appropriate, businesslike language in all electronic communications, employers can limit their liability risks and improve the overall effectiveness of the organization's e-mail and Internet copy in the process'* - Excerpt from 'Writing Effective E-mail', by Nancy Flynn and Tom Flynn.

### Why do you need email etiquette?

A company needs to implement etiquette rules for the following three reasons:

- **Professionalism:** by using proper email language your company will convey a professional image.

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- Efficiency: emails that get to the point are much more effective than poorly worded emails.
- Protection from liability: employee awareness of email risks will protect your company from costly law suits.

### **What are the etiquette rules?**

There are many etiquette guides and many different etiquette rules. Some rules will differ according to the nature of your business and the corporate culture. Below we list what we consider as the 32 most important email etiquette rules that apply to nearly all companies.

### **32 MOST IMPORTANT EMAIL ETIQUETTE TIPS:**

#### **1. Be concise and to the point.**

Do not make an e-mail longer than it needs to be. Remember that reading an e-mail is harder than reading printed communications and a long e-mail can be very discouraging to read.

#### **2. Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions.**

An email reply must answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions – If you do not answer all the questions in the original email, you will receive further e-mails regarding the unanswered questions, which will not only waste your time and your customer's time but also cause considerable frustration. Moreover, if you are able to pre-empt relevant questions, your customer will be grateful and impressed with your efficient and thoughtful customer service. Imagine for instance that a customer sends you an email asking which credit cards you accept. Instead of just listing the credit card types, you can guess that their next question will be about how they can order, so you also include some order information and a URL to your order page. Customers will definitely appreciate this.

#### **3. Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation.**

This is not only important because improper spelling, grammar and punctuation give a bad impression of your company, it is also important for conveying the message properly. E-mails with no full stops or commas are difficult to read and can sometimes even change the meaning of the text. And, if your program has a spell checking option, why not use it?

#### **4. Make it personal.**

Not only should the e-mail be personally addressed, it should also include personal i.e. customized content. For this reason auto replies are usually not very effective. However, templates can be used effectively in this way, see next tip.

**5. Use templates for frequently used responses.**

Some questions you get over and over again, such as directions to your office or how to subscribe to your newsletter. Save these texts as response templates and paste these into your message when you need them. You can save your templates in a Word document, or use pre-formatted emails. Even better is a tool such as ReplyMate for Outlook (allows you to use 10 templates for free).

**6. Answer swiftly.**

Customers send an e-mail because they wish to receive a quick response. If they did not want a quick response they would send a letter or a fax. Therefore, each e-mail should be replied to within at least 24 hours, and preferably within the same working day. If the email is complicated, just send an email back saying that you have received it and that you will get back to them. This will put the customer's mind at rest and usually customers will then be very patient!

**7. Do not attach unnecessary files.**

By sending large attachments you can annoy customers and even bring down their e-mail system. Wherever possible try to compress attachments and only send attachments when they are productive. Moreover, you need to have a good virus scanner in place since your customers will not be very happy if you send them documents full of viruses!

**8. Use proper structure & layout.**

Since reading from a screen is more difficult than reading from paper, the structure and lay out is very important for e-mail messages. Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph. When making points, number them or mark each point as separate to keep the overview.

**9. Do not overuse the high priority option.**

We all know the story of the boy who cried wolf. If you overuse the high priority option, it will lose its function when you really need it. Moreover, even if a mail has high priority, your message will come across as slightly aggressive if you flag it as 'high priority'.

**10. Do not write in CAPITALS.**

IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. This can be highly annoying and might trigger an unwanted response in the form of a flame mail. Therefore, try not to send any email text in capitals.

**11. Don't leave out the message thread.**

When you reply to an email, you must include the original mail in your reply, in other words click 'Reply', instead of 'New Mail'. Some people say that you must remove the previous message since this has already been sent and is

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therefore unnecessary. However, I could not agree less. If you receive many emails you obviously cannot remember each individual email. This means that a 'threadless email' will not provide enough information and you will have to spend a frustratingly long time to find out the context of the email in order to deal with it. Leaving the thread might take a fraction longer in download time, but it will save the recipient much more time and frustration in looking for the related emails in their inbox!

**12. Add disclaimers to your emails.**

It is important to add disclaimers to your internal and external mails, since this can help protect your company from liability. Consider the following scenario: an employee accidentally forwards a virus to a customer by email. The customer decides to sue your company for damages. If you add a disclaimer at the bottom of every external mail, saying that the recipient must check each email for viruses and that it cannot be held liable for any transmitted viruses, this will surely be of help to you in court. Another example: an employee sues the company for allowing a racist email to circulate the office. If your company has an email policy in place and adds an email disclaimer to every mail that states that employees are expressly required not to make defamatory statements, you have a good case of proving that the company did everything it could to prevent offensive emails.

**13. Read the email before you send it.**

A lot of people don't bother to read an email before they send it out, as can be seen from the many spelling and grammar mistakes contained in emails. Apart from this, reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.

**14. Do not overuse Reply to All.**

Only use Reply to All if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message.

**15. Mailings > use the Bcc: field or do a mail merge.**

When sending an email mailing, some people place all the email addresses in the To: field. There are two drawbacks to this practice: (1) the recipient knows that you have sent the same message to a large number of recipients, and (2) you are publicizing someone else's email address without their permission. One way to get round this is to place all addresses in the Bcc: field. However, the recipient will only see the address from the To: field in their email, so if this was empty, the To: field will be blank and this might look like spamming. You could include the mailing list email address in the To: field, or even better, if you have Microsoft Outlook and Word you can do a mail merge and create one message for each recipient. A mail merge also allows you to use fields in the message so that you

can for instance address each recipient personally. For more information on how to do a Word mail merge, consult the Help in Word.

#### **16. Take care with abbreviations and emoticons.**

In business emails, try not to use abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud). The recipient might not be aware of the meanings of the abbreviations and in business emails these are generally not appropriate. The same goes for emoticons, such as the smiley :-). If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what it means, it is better not to use it.

#### **17. Be careful with formatting.**

Remember that when you use formatting in your emails, the sender might not be able to view formatting, or might see different fonts than you had intended. When using colors, use a color that is easy to read on the background.

#### **18. Take care with rich text and HTML messages.**

Be aware that when you send an email in rich text or HTML format, the sender might only be able to receive plain text emails. If this is the case, the recipient will receive your message as a .txt attachment. Most email clients however, including Microsoft Outlook, are able to receive HTML and rich text messages.

#### **19. Do not forward chain letters.**

Do not forward chain letters. We can safely say that all of them are hoaxes. Just delete the letters as soon as you receive them.

#### **20. Do not request delivery and read receipts.**

This will almost always annoy your recipient before he or she has even read your message. Besides, it usually does not work anyway since the recipient could have blocked that function, or his/her software might not support it, so what is the use of using it? If you want to know whether an email was received it is better to ask the recipient to let you know if it was received.

#### **21. Do not ask to recall a message.**

Biggest chances are that your message has already been delivered and read. A recall request would look very silly in that case wouldn't it? It is better just to send an email to say that you have made a mistake. This will look much more honest than trying to recall a message.

#### **22. Do not copy a message or attachment without permission.**

Do not copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator. If you do not ask permission first, you might be infringing on copyright laws.

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**23. Do not use email to discuss confidential information.**

Sending an email is like sending a postcard. If you don't want your email to be displayed on a bulletin board, don't send it. Moreover, never make any libelous, sexist or racially discriminating comments in emails, even if they are meant to be a joke.

**24. Use a meaningful subject.**

Try to use a subject that is meaningful to the recipient as well as yourself. For instance, when you send an email to a company requesting information about a product, it is better to mention the actual name of the product, e.g. 'Product A information' than to just say 'product information' or the company's name in the subject.

**25. Use active instead of passive.**

Try to use the active voice of a verb wherever possible. For instance, 'We will process your order today', sounds better than 'Your order will be processed today'. The first sounds more personal, whereas the latter, especially when used frequently, sounds unnecessarily formal.

**26. Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT.**

Even more so than the high-priority option, you must at all times try to avoid these types of words in an email or subject line. Only use this if it is a really, really urgent or important message.

**27. Avoid long sentences.**

Try to keep your sentences to a maximum of 15-20 words. Email is meant to be a quick medium and requires a different kind of writing than letters. Also take care not to send emails that are too long. If a person receives an email that looks like a dissertation, chances are that they will not even attempt to read it!

**28. Don't send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.**

By sending or even just forwarding one libelous, or offensive remark in an email, you and your company can face court cases resulting in multi-million dollar penalties.

**29. Don't forward virus hoaxes and chain letters.**

If you receive an email message warning you of a new unstoppable virus that will immediately delete everything from your computer, this is most probably a hoax. By forwarding hoaxes you use valuable bandwidth and sometimes virus hoaxes contain viruses themselves, by attaching a so-called file that will stop the dangerous virus. The same goes for chain letters that promise incredible riches or ask your help for a charitable cause. Even if the content seems to be bona

nde, the senders are usually not. Since it is impossible to find out whether a chain letter is real or not, the best place for it is the recycle bin.

### **30. Keep your language gender neutral.**

In this day and age, avoid using sexist language such as: 'The user should add a signature by configuring his email program'. Apart from using he/she, you can also use the neutral gender: 'The user should add a signature by configuring the email program'.

### **31. Don't reply to spam.**

By replying to spam or by unsubscribing, you are confirming that your email address is 'live'. Confirming this will only generate even more spam. Therefore, just hit the delete button or use email software to remove spam automatically.

### **32. Use cc: field sparingly.**

Try not to use the cc: field unless the recipient in the cc: field knows why they are receiving a copy of the message. Using the cc: field can be confusing since the recipients might not know who is supposed to act on the message. Also, when responding to a cc: message, should you include the other recipient in the cc: field as well? This will depend on the situation. In general, do not include the person in the cc: field unless you have a particular reason for wanting this person to see your response. Again, make sure that this person will know why they are receiving a copy.

### **How do you enforce email etiquette?**

The first step is to create a written email policy. This email policy should include all the do's and don'ts concerning the use of the company's email system and should be distributed amongst all employees. Secondly, employees must be trained to fully understand the importance of email etiquette. Finally, implementation of the rules can be monitored by using email management software and email response tools.

## **EXAMPLES:**

### **Example 1: Formal**

Hello,

I read on your web site that you offer Music CD copying for large quantities of CDs. I'd like to inquire about the procedures involved in these services. Are the files transferred online, or are the titles sent by CD to you by standard mail? How long does it usually take to produce approximately 500 copies? Are there any discounts on such a large quantity?

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Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions. I look forward to your response.

Jack Finley  
Sales Manager, Young Talent Inc.  
(709) 567 - 3498

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**Example 2: Informal**

At 16.22 01/07/2002 +0000, you wrote:

> I hear you're working on the Smith account. If you need any information don't hesitate to get in > contact with me.

Hi Tom,

Listen, we've been working on the Smith account and I was wondering if you could give me a hand? I need some inside information on recent developments over there. Do you think you could pass on any information you might have?

Thanks

Peter

Peter Thompsen  
Account Manager, Tri-State Accounting  
(698) 345 - 7843

**Important Points to Remember**

- Email is much less formal than a written letter. Emails are usually short and concise.
- If you are writing to someone you don't know, a simple "Hello" is adequate. Using a salutation such as "Dear Mr Smith," is too formal.
- When writing to someone you know well, feel free to write as if you are speaking to the person.
- Use abbreviated verb forms (He's, We're, He'd, etc.)
- Include a telephone number to the signature of the email. This will give the recipient the chance to telephone if necessary.
- It is not necessary to include your email address as the recipient can just reply to the email.
- When replying eliminate all the information that is not necessary. Only leave the sections of text that are related to your reply. This will save your reader time when reading your email.

## SOME MORE EXAMPLES:

1. **To:** Email address of first recipient

**CC:** If any

**Subject:** Mention in one line, the purpose of writing the email, so as to grab the attention of the intended recipient.

**Salutation:** Dear Sir/Madam,

This is after all, a form of letter writing, so use the same letter writing tips that you've learned in school. In this first para, introduce yourself and the purpose of writing the email. Be brief.

In the second para, give the details of why you're writing the email and what exactly you hope to achieve by it. Again, be brief and to the point.

The third para may or may not be required. It is just to thank the reader and hope, once again, that your purpose is fulfilled.

**Salutation:** Sincerely,

Your name, or an email signature that your organization may have assigned you.

2.

**To:** abc@wyz.com

**CC:** Accounts Payable

**Subject:** Request for copy of invoice

Dear ABC,

I'm LMN from the Accounts Payable department at GHI. Ltd. I understand that we have an invoice outstanding with your company since 07/01/2010. This email is to request you for a copy of the invoice, so that we can clear it for payment at the earliest.

First of all, apologies for the delay in payment. The accounts team has been reshuffled and this case came to my notice just an hour ago and I am writing to you immediately. The invoice in question is invoice number 246849, for Mr.JKI who stayed at your hotel for a period of 4 days. That is, from 06/28/2010 to 07/01/2010.

We cannot seem to locate the invoice, so I request you to email me a copy of the invoice, so that I can issue the payment right away. Please send it to the email address mentioned below and mark it for my attention. Once again, sincere apologies for the delay.

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Thank you,  
LMN,  
Senior Executive  
Accounts Payable,  
GHI. Ltd

email: [accountspayable@ghi.com](mailto:accountspayable@ghi.com)

In the next business email sample, you will see how to respond to such an email.

To: [accountspayable@ghi.com](mailto:accountspayable@ghi.com)  
CC: Accounts Credit  
Subject: FAO-LMN Copy of invoice

Dear LMN,

This is in reference to the email that you sent me this morning. First off, I would like to thank you for taking the initiative of asking for the invoice copy.

As requested by you, I have attached a copy of the invoice 246849. I'm sure you have our bank details.

Thank you,  
ABC,  
Accounts Credit,  
DYU Group of Hotels

email: [accountscredit@dyugroup.com](mailto:accountscredit@dyugroup.com)

# 6 Group Discussion

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**The Chapter Covers :**

- Types of GD
- Why do we have GD ?
- How to Face GD
- Communication Skills
- GD Tips
- GD Do's
- GD Preparation
- GD Mistakes
- General GD Topics
- Current GD Topics

A GD is a methodology used by an organization to gauge whether the candidate has certain personality traits and/or skills that it desires in its members. In this methodology, the group of candidates is given a topic or a situation, given a few minutes to think about the same, and then asked to discuss the it among themselves for 15-20 minutes. Freshersworld.com brings you an elaborate section for GD as you had ever seen anywhere else.

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**Some of the personality traits the GD is trying to gauge may include :-**

- Ability to work in a team
- Communication skills
- Reasoning ability
- Leadership skills
- Initiative
- Assertiveness
- Flexibility
- Creativity
- Ability to think on ones feet

***Why GDs:-***

The reason why institutes put you through a Group discussion and an interview, after testing your technical and conceptual skills in an exam, is to get to know you as a person and gauge how well you will fit in their institute. The Group discussion tests how you function as a part of a team. As a manager, you will always be working in teams, as a member or as a leader. Therefore how you interact in a team becomes an important criterion for your selection. Managers have to work in a team and get best results out of teamwork. That is the reason why management institutes include GD as a component of the selection procedure.

***Company's Perspective:-***

Companies conduct group discussion after the written test so as to check on your interactive skills and how good you are at communicating with other people. The GD is to check how you behave, participate and contribute in a group, how much importance do you give to the group objective as well as your own, how well do you listen to viewpoints of others and how open-minded are you in accepting views contrary to your own. The aspects which make up a GD are verbal communication, non-verbal behavior, conformation to norms, decision-making ability and cooperation. You should try to be as true as possible to these aspects.

## **TYPES OF GD**

GDs can be **topic-based** or **case-based**.

Topic based Gds can be classified into three types :-

1. Factual Topics
2. Controversial Topics
3. Abstract Topics

## **Factual Topics:-**

Factual topics are about practical things, which an ordinary person is aware of in his day-to-day life. Typically these are about socio-economic topics. These can be current, i.e. they may have been in the news lately, or could be unbound by time. A factual topic for discussion gives a candidate a chance to prove that he is aware of and sensitive to his environment. **E.g.** The education policy of India, Tourism in India, State of the aged in the nation.

## **Controversial Topics:-**

Controversial topics are the ones that are argumentative in nature. They are meant to generate controversy. In GDs where these topics are given for discussion, the noise level is usually high, there may be tempers flying. The idea behind giving a topic like this is to see how much maturity the candidate is displaying by keeping his temper in check, by rationally and logically arguing his point of view without getting personal and emotional. **E.g.** Reservations should be removed, Women make better managers

## **Abstract Topics:-**

Abstract topics are about intangible things. These topics are not given often for discussion, but their possibility cannot be ruled out. These topics test your lateral thinking and creativity. **E.g.** A is an alphabet, Twinkle twinkle little star, The number 10

## **Case-based Gd:-**

Another variation is the use of a case instead of a topic. The case study tries to simulate a real-life situation. Information about the situation will be given to you and you would be asked as a group to resolve the situation. In the case study there are no incorrect answers or perfect solutions. The objective in the case study is to get you to think about the situation from various angles. IIM A, IIM Indore and IIT SOM Mumbai have a case-based discussion rather than topic-based discussion in their selection procedures.

## **WHY DO WE HAVE GD ?**

### **Reasons for having a GD**

- It helps you to understand a subject more deeply.
- It improves your ability to think critically.
- It helps in solving a particular problem.
- It helps the group to make a particular decision.
- It gives you the chance to hear other students' ideas.

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- It improves your listening skills.
- It increases your confidence in speaking.
- It can change your attitudes.

**Strategies for Improving GD Skills for Tutorials & Seminars**

Asking questions and joining in discussions are important skills for university study. If you find it difficult to speak or ask questions in tutorials, try the following strategies.

**Observe**

Attend as many seminars and tutorials as possible and notice what other students do. Ask yourself:

- How do other students make critical comments?
- How do they ask questions?
- How do they disagree with or support arguments?
- What special phrases do they use to show politeness even when they are voicing disagreement?
- How do they signal to interrupt, ask a question or make a point?

**Practice**

Start practicing your discussion skills in an informal setting or with a small group. Start with asking questions of fellow students. Ask them about the course material. Ask for their opinions. Ask for information or ask for help.

**Participate**

Take every opportunity to take part in social/informal discussions as well as more structured/formal discussion. Start by making small contributions to tutorial discussions; prepare a question to ask, or agree with another speaker's remarks.

**Discussion Etiquette (or minding your manners)**

**Do**

- Speak pleasantly and politely to the group.
- Respect the contribution of every speaker.
- Remember that a discussion is not an argument. Learn to disagree politely.
- Think about your contribution before you speak. How best can you answer the question/ contribute to the topic?

- Try to stick to the discussion topic. Don't introduce irrelevant information.
- Be aware of your body language when you are speaking.
- Agree with and acknowledge what you find interesting.

### Don't

- Lose your temper. A discussion is not an argument.
- Shout. Use a moderate tone and medium pitch.
- Use too many gestures when you speak. Gestures like finger pointing and table thumping can appear aggressive.
- Dominate the discussion. Confident speakers should allow quieter students a chance to contribute.
- Draw too much on personal experience or anecdote. Although some tutors encourage students to reflect on their own experience, remember not to generalise too much.
- Interrupt. Wait for a speaker to finish what they are saying before you speak.

### **Leading a Discussion**

You may be in a seminar group that requires you to lead a group discussion, or lead a discussion after an oral presentation. You can demonstrate leadership by:

- introducing yourself and the members of the group
- stating the purpose of the discussion
- inviting quiet group members to speak
- being objective
- summarizing the discussion

### **Chairing a Group Discussion**

When chairing a discussion group you must communicate in a positive way to assist the speakers in accomplishing their objective. There are at least four leadership skills you can use to influence other people positively and help your group achieve its purpose. These skills include:

- introducing the topic and purpose of the discussion,
- making sure all members have approximately the same time, (i.e. no one dominates the discussion by taking too much time)
- thanking group members for their contribution

NOTES



- being objective in summarizing the group's discussion and achievements.

## HOW TO FACE GD

### NOTES

**A group discussion consists of:**

1. Communication Skills
2. Knowledge and ideas regarding a given subject
3. Capability to co-ordinate and lead
4. Exchange of thoughts
5. Addressing the group as a whole
6. Thorough preparations

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The first aspect is one's power of expression. In a group discussion, a candidate has to talk effectively so that he is able to convince others. For convincing, one has to speak forcefully and at the same time create an impact by his knowledge of the subject. A candidate who is successful in holding the attention of the audience creates a positive impact.

It is necessary that you should be precise and clear. As a rule evaluators do not look for the wordage produced. Your knowledge on a given subject, your precision and clarity of thought are the things that are evaluated. Irrelevant talks lead you nowhere. You should speak as much as necessary, neither more nor less. Group discussions are not debating stages.

Ability to listen is also what evaluators judge. They look for your ability to react on what other participants say. Hence, it is necessary that you listen carefully to others and then react or proceed to add some more points. Your behavior in the group is also put to test to judge whether you are a loner or can work in a group.

You should be able to convey your thoughts satisfactorily and convincingly before a group of people. Confidence and level headedness in doing so is necessary. These add value to your presentation. In case you are not good at it, you might gain by joining an institute that offers specialized courses in public speaking. For instance, British Council Division's English Language Teaching Centre offers a wide range of courses like conversation skills, business communication skills, business writing, negotiation skills and presentation skills. Mostly people attend these courses to improve their communication skills. Students here are involved in activities which use communication skills and teachers provide inputs, monitor and facilitate the classes. The course at the Centre makes you confident enough to speak before people without any nervousness.

## Knowledge and Ideas Regarding a Given Subject

Knowledge of the subject under discussion and clarity of ideas are important. Knowledge comes from consistent reading on various topics ranging from science and technology to politics. In-depth knowledge makes one confident and enthusiastic and this in turn, makes one sound convincing and confident.

NOTES

## Leadership and Coordinating Capabilities

The basic aim of a group discussion is to judge a candidate's leadership qualities. The examiner withdraws and becomes a silent spectator once the discussion starts. A candidate should display tactfulness, skill, understanding and knowledge on varied topics, enterprise, forcefulness and other leadership qualities to motivate and influence other candidates who may be almost equally competent.

## Exchange of Thoughts

A group discussion is an exchange of thoughts and ideas among members of a group. These discussions are held for selecting personnel in organisations where there is a high level of competition. The number of participants in a group can vary between 8 and 15. Mostly a topic or a situation is given to group members who have to discuss it within 10 to 20 minutes.

The purpose is to get an idea about candidates in a short time and make assessments about their skills, which normally cannot be evaluated in an interview. These skills may be team membership, leadership skills, listening and articulation skills.

A note is made of your contributions to the discussion, comprehension of the main idea, the rapport you strike, patience, assertion, accommodation, amenability, etc. Body language and eye contact too are important points which are to be considered.

## Addressing the Group as a Whole

In a group discussion it is not necessary to address anyone by name. Even otherwise you may not know everyone's names. It better to address the group as a whole.

Address the person farthest from you. If he can hear you everyone else too can. Needless to add, as for the interview, attend the group discussion in formal dress. The language used should also be formal, not the language used in normal conversations. For instance, words and phrases like "yar", "chalta hai", "CP", "I dunno", etc. are out. This is not to say you should use a high sounding, pedantic language. Avoiding both, just use formal, plain and simple language. Hinglish, (mixture of Hindi and English) should be discarded.

Confidence and coolness while presenting your viewpoint are of help. See that you do not keep repeating a point. Do not use more words than necessary. Do not be superfluous. Try to be specific. Do not exaggerate.

## NOTES

### Thorough Preparation

Start making preparations for interview and group discussions right away, without waiting till the eleventh hour, this is, if and when called for them. Then the time left may not be adequate. It is important to concentrate on subject knowledge and general awareness. Hence, the prime need for thorough preparation. Remember, the competition is very tough. Only 460 candidates make it to the final list from 2.75 lakh civil service aspirants each year.

It may so happen that you are called for interviews and group discussions from three or four organizations but are not selected by any. The reason obviously lies in your not being well-prepared.

In a group discussion you may be given a topic and asked to express your views on it. Or in a case study GD, students have to read a case study and suggest ways of tackling the problem. For this you should have a good general knowledge, need to be abreast with current affairs, should regularly read newspapers and magazines. Your group behaviour and communication skills are on test, i.e. how you convince the others and how clearly you are able to express your points of view. You should be articulate, generate ideas, not sound boring, should allow others to speak, and adopt a stand on a given subject. During the course of the GD this stand can even be changed, giving the impression that you are open to accommodate others' viewpoints.

Additional marks may be given for starting or concluding the discussion.

### Points to Remember

- Knowledge is strength. A candidate with good reading habits has more chances of success. In other words, sound knowledge on different topics like politics, finance, economy, science and technology is helpful.
- Power to convince effectively is another quality that makes you stand out among others.
- Clarity in speech and expression is yet another essential quality.
- If you are not sure about the topic of discussion, it is better not to initiate. Lack of knowledge or wrong approach creates a bad impression. Instead, you might adopt the wait and watch attitude. Listen attentively to others, may be you would be able to come up with a point or two later.
- A GD is a formal occasion where slang is to avoided.

- A GD is not a debating stage. Participants should confine themselves to expressing their viewpoints. In the second part of the discussion candidates can exercise their choice in agreeing, disagreeing or remaining neutral.
- Language use should be simple, direct and straight forward.
- Don't interrupt a speaker when the session is on. Try to score by increasing your size, not by cutting others short.
- Maintain rapport with fellow participants. Eye contact plays a major role. Non-verbal gestures, such as listening intently or nodding while appreciating someone's viewpoint speak of you positively.
- Communicate with each and every candidate present. While speaking don't keep looking at a single member. Address the entire group in such a way that everyone feels you are speaking to him or her.

## NOTES

## GD TIPS

1. Initiation Techniques
2. Body of the group discussion
3. Summarization/ Conclusion

### Initiation Techniques

- **Initiating a GD is a high profit-high loss strategy.**

When you initiate a GD, you not only grab the opportunity to speak, you also grab the attention of the examiner and your fellow candidates.

If you can make a favourable first impression with your content and communication skills after you initiate a GD, it will help you sail through the discussion.

But if you initiate a GD and stammer/ stutter/ quote wrong facts and figures, the damage might be irreparable.

If you initiate a GD impeccably but don't speak much after that, it gives the impression that you started the GD for the sake of starting it or getting those initial kitty of points earmarked for an initiator!

When you start a GD, you are responsible for putting it into the right perspective or framework. So initiate one only if you have in-depth knowledge about the topic at hand.

### Body of the group discussion

- **Different techniques to initiate a GD and make a good first impression:**

NOTES

- i. Quotes
- ii. Definition
- iii. Question
- iv. Shock statement
- v. Facts, figures and statistics
- vi. Short story
- vii. General statement

**i. Quotes**

Quotes are an effective way of initiating a GD.

If the topic of a GD is: Should the Censor Board be abolished?, you could start with a quote like, 'Hidden apples are always sweet'.

For a GD topic like, Customer is King, you could quote Sam (Wall-mart) Walton's famous saying, 'There is only one boss: the customer. And he can fire everybody in the company — from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else.'

**ii. Definition**

Start a GD by defining the topic or an important term in the topic.

For example, if the topic of the GD is Advertising is a Diplomatic Way of Telling a Lie, why not start the GD by defining advertising as, 'Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services through mass media like newspapers, magazines, television or radio by an identified sponsor'?

For a topic like The Malthusian Economic Prophecy is no longer relevant, you could start by explaining the definition of the Malthusian Economic Prophecy.

**iii. Question**

Asking a question is an impact way of starting a GD.

It does not signify asking a question to any of the candidates in a GD so as to hamper the flow. It implies asking a question, and answering it yourself.

Any question that might hamper the flow of a GD or insult a participant or play devil's advocate must be discouraged.

Questions that promote a flow of ideas are always appreciated.

For a topic like, Should India go to war with Pakistan, you could start by asking, 'What does war bring to the people of a nation? We have had four clashes with Pakistan. The pertinent question is: what have we achieved?'

**iv. Shock statement**

Initiating a GD with a shocking statement is the best way to grab immediate attention and put forth your point.

If a GD topic is, The Impact of Population on the Indian Economy, you could start with, 'At the centre of the Indian capital stands a population clock that ticks away relentlessly. It tracks 33 births a minute, 2,000 an hour, 48,000 a day. Which calculates to about 12 million every year. That is roughly the size of Australia. As a current political slogan puts it, 'Nothing's impossible when 1 billion Indians work together'.'

NOTES

**v. Facts, figures and statistics**

If you decide to initiate your GD with facts, figure and statistics, make sure to quote them accurately.

Approximation is allowed in macro level figures, but micro level figures need to be correct and accurate.

For example, you can say, approximately 70 per cent of the Indian population stays in rural areas (macro figures, approximation allowed).

But you cannot say 30 states of India instead of 28 (micro figures, no approximations).

Stating wrong facts works to your disadvantage.

For a GD topic like, China, a Rising Tiger, you could start with, 'In 1983, when China was still in its initial stages of reform and opening up, China's real use of Foreign Direct Investment only stood at \$636 million. China actually utilized \$60 billion of FID in 2004, which is almost 100 times that of its 1983 statistics.'

**vi. Short story**

Use a short story in a GD topic like, Attitude is Everything.

This can be initiated with, 'A child once asked a balloon vendor, who was selling helium gas-filled balloons, whether a blue-colored balloon will go as high in the sky as a green-colored balloon. The balloon vendor told the child, it is not the color of the balloon but what is inside it that makes it go high.'

**vii. General statement**

Use a general statement to put the GD in proper perspective.

For example, if the topic is, Should Sonia Gandhi be the prime minister of India?, you could start by saying, 'Before jumping to conclusions like, 'Yes, Sonia Gandhi should be', or 'No, Sonia Gandhi should not be', let's first

find out the qualities one needs to be a good prime minister of India. Then we can compare these qualities with those that Mrs. Gandhi possesses. This will help us reach the conclusion in a more objective and effective manner.'

## NOTES

### Summarization/ Conclusion

- Most GD do not really have conclusions. A conclusion is where the whole group decides in favor or against the topic.
- But every GD is summarized. You can summaries what the group has discussed in the GD in a nutshell.

**Keep the following points in mind while summarizing a discussion:**

1. Avoid raising new points.
2. Avoid stating only your viewpoint.
3. Avoid dwelling only on one aspect of the GD.
4. Keep it brief and concise.
5. It must incorporate all the important points that came out during the GD.
6. If the examiner asks you to summaries a GD, it means the GD has come to an end.
7. Do not add anything once the GD has been summarized.

### GD DO'S

- **Do's**
1. Be as natural as possible. Do not try and be someone you are not. Be yourself
  2. A group discussion is your chance to be more vocal. The evaluator wants to hear you speak.
  3. Take time to organize your thoughts. Think of what you are going to say.
  4. Seek clarification if you have any doubts regarding the subject.
  5. Don't start speaking until you have clearly understood and analyzed the subject.
  6. Work out various strategies to help you make an entry: initiate the discussion or agree with someone else's point and then move onto express your views.
  7. Opening the discussion is not the only way of gaining attention and recognition. If you do not give valuable insights during the discussion, all your efforts of initiating the discussion will be in vain.

8. Your body language says a lot about you - your gestures and mannerisms are more likely to reflect your attitude than what you say.
9. Language skills are important only to the extent as to how you get your points across clearly and fluently.
10. Be assertive not dominating; try to maintain a balanced tone in your discussion and analysis.
11. Don't lose your cool if anyone says anything you object to. The key is to stay objective: Don't take the discussion personally.
12. Always be polite: Try to avoid using extreme phrases like: 'I strongly object' or 'I disagree'. Instead try phrases like: 'I would like to share my views on?' or 'One difference between your point and mine?' or 'I beg to differ with you'
13. Brush up on your leadership skills; motivate the other members of the team to speak (this surely does not mean that the only thing that you do in the GD is to say "let us hear what the young lady with the blue scarf has to say," or "Raghu, let us hear your views" - Essentially be subtle), and listen to their views. Be receptive to others' opinions and do not be abrasive or aggressive.
14. If you have a group of like-minded friends, you can have a mock group discussion where you can learn from each other through giving and receiving feedback.
15. Apart from the above points, the panel will also judge team members for their alertness and presence of mind, problem-solving abilities, ability to work as a team without alienating certain members, and creativity.

## NOTES

## GD PREPARATION

While selection tools and techniques like tests, interviews etc. provide good data about an individual, they fall short in providing real life data of how an individual would be performing in a real life situation especially a group situation. Team work being an integral part of the BPO work profile, it is important to ascertain group and inter-personal qualities of an individual. Group discussion is a useful tool to ascertain these qualities and many organizations use GDs as a selection tool along with Personal Interviews, aptitude tests etc. A GD is an activity where

- Groups of 8-10 candidates are formed into a leaderless group, and are given a specific situation to analyse and discuss within a given time limit, which may vary between twenty minutes and forty-five minutes, or
- They may be given a case study and asked to come out with a solution for a problem



- They may be given a topic and are asked to discuss the same

## NOTES

### 1. Preparing for a Group Discussion:

While GD reflects the inherent qualities of an individual, appearing for it unprepared may not augur well for you. These tips would help you prepare for GDs:

**Reading:** This is the first and the most crucial step in preparation. This is a never ending process and the more you read, the better you are in your thoughts. While you may read anything to everything, you must ensure that you are in good touch with current affairs, the debates and hot topics of discussion and also with the latest in the IT and ITES industry. Chances are the topics would be around these. Read both for the thoughts as well as for data. Also read multiple view points on the same topic and then create your point of view with rationale. Also create answers for counter arguments for your point of view. The electronic media also will be of good use here.

**Mocks:** Create an informal GD group and meet regularly to discuss and exchange feedback. This is the best way to prepare. This would give you a good idea about your thoughts and how well can you convince. Remember, it is important that you are able to express your thoughts well. The better you perform in these mocks the better would be your chances to perform on the final day. Also try to interact and participate in other GD groups. This will develop in you a skill to discuss with unknown people as well.

### 2. During the Group Discussion:

**What do the panelists assess:** Some of the qualities assessed in a GD are:

**Leadership Skills** - Ability to take leadership roles and be able to lead, inspire and carry the team along to help them achieve the group's objectives.

**Communication Skills** - Candidates will be assessed in terms of clarity of thought, expression and aptness of language. One key aspect is listening. It indicates a willingness to accommodate others views.

**Interpersonal Skills** - People skills are an important aspect of any job. They are reflected in the ability to interact with other members of the group in a brief situation. Emotional maturity and balance promotes good interpersonal relationships. The person has to be more people centric and less self-centered.

**Persuasive Skills** - The ability to analyze and persuade others to see the problem from multiple perspectives.

GD is a test of your ability to think, your analytical capabilities and your ability to make your point in a team-based environment.

These are some of the sub-skills that also get assessed with the skills mentioned above:

- Clarity of thought
- Group working skills (especially during a group task of case study discussion)
- Conflict handling
- Listening and probing skills
- Knowledge about the subject and individual point of view
- Ability to create a consensus
- Openness and flexibility towards new ideas
- Data based approach to decision making

While, it is not possible to reflect all these qualities in a short time, you would do well if you are able to show a couple or more qualities and avoid giving negative evidence on others.

## GD MISTAKES

Here's a list of the most common mistakes made at group discussions:

### Emotional outburst

Rashmi was offended when one of the male participants in a group discussion made a statement on women generally being submissive while explaining his point of view. When Rashmi finally got an opportunity to speak, instead of focussing on the topic, she vented her anger by accusing the other candidate for being a male chauvinist and went on to defend women in general.

### What Rashmi essentially did was to

- Deviate from the subject
- Treat the discussion as a forum to air her own views.
- Lose objectivity and make personal attacks.

Her behaviour would have been perceived as immature and demotivating to the rest of the team.

### Quality Vs Quantity

Gautam believed that the more he talked, the more likely he was to get through the GD. So, he interrupted other people at every opportunity. He did this so often that the other candidates got together to prevent him from participating in the rest of the discussion.

- Assessment is not only on your communication skills but also on your ability to be a team player.

NOTES

- Evaluation is based on quality, and not on quantity. Your contribution must be relevant.
- The mantra is “Contributing meaningfully to the team’s success.” Domination is frowned upon.

**Egotism Showing off**

Krishma was happy to have got a group discussion topic he had prepared for. So, he took pains to project his vast knowledge of the topic. Every other sentence of his contained statistical data - “20% of companies; 24.27% of parliamentarians felt that; I recently read in a Jupiter Report that...” and so on so forth. Soon, the rest of the team either laughed at him or ignored his attempts to enlighten them as they perceived that he was cooking up the data.

- Exercise restraint in anything. You will end up being frowned upon if you attempt showing-off your knowledge.
- Facts and figures need not validate all your statements.
- Its your analysis and interpretation that are equally important - not just facts and figures.
- You might be appreciated for your in-depth knowledge. But you will fail miserably in your people skills.

Such a behavior indicates how self-centered you are and highlights your inability to work in an atmosphere where different opinions are expressed.

**Get noticed - But for the right reasons**

Srikumar knew that everyone would compete to initiate the discussion. So as soon as the topic - “Discuss the negative effects of India joining the WTO” - was read out, he began talking. In his anxiety to be the first to start speaking, he did not hear the word “negative” in the topic. He began discussing the ways in which the country had benefited by joining WTO, only to be stopped by the evaluator, who then corrected his mistake.

- False starts are extremely expensive. They cost you your admission. It is very important to listen and understand the topic before you air your opinions.
- Spending a little time analyzing the topic may provide you with insights which others may not have thought about. Use a pen and paper to jot down your ideas.
- Listen! It gives you the time to conceptualize and present the information in a better manner.

Some mistakes are irreparable. Starting off the group discussion with a mistake is one such mistake, unless you have a great sense of humor.

### Managing one's insecurities

Sumati was very nervous. She thought that some of the other candidates were exceptionally good. Thanks to her insecurity, she contributed little to the discussion. Even when she was asked to comment on a particular point, she preferred to remain silent.

- Your personality is also being evaluated. Your verbal and non verbal cues are being read.
- Remember, you are the participant in the GD; not the evaluator. So, rather than evaluating others and your performance, participate in the discussion.
- Your confidence level is being evaluated. Decent communication skills with good confidence is a must to crack the GDs.

Focus on your strengths and do not spend too much time thinking about how others are superior or inferior to you. It is easy to pick up these cues from your body language.

Knowledge is strength. A candidate with good reading habits has more chances of success. In other words, sound knowledge on different topics like politics, finance, economy, science and technology is helpful.

Power to convince effectively is another quality that makes you stand out among others.

Clarity in speech and expression is yet another essential quality.

If you are not sure about the topic of discussion, it is better not to initiate. Lack of knowledge or wrong approach creates a bad impression. Instead, you might adopt the wait and watch attitude. Listen attentively to others, may be you would be able to come up with a point or two later.

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Language use should be simple, direct and straight forward.

Don't interrupt a speaker when the session is on. Try to score by increasing your size, not by cutting others short.

Maintain rapport with fellow participants. Eye contact plays a major role. Non-verbal gestures, such as listening intently or nodding while appreciating someone's viewpoint speak of you positively.

### NOTES

Communicate with each and every candidate present. While speaking don't keep looking at a single member. Address the entire group in such a way that everyone feels you are speaking to him or her.

NOTES

**GENERAL GD TOPICS**

- US war on Iraq-justified or not.
- Role of UN in peacekeeping.
- Position of Women in India compared to other nations.
- Environment Management.
- Is China better than India in software.
- Should SONIA Gandhi be made the PM
- BPOs in INDIA
- Govt contribution to IT
- will punch lines rule the Advt
- premarital sex
- is china a threat to Indian industry
- India or west , which is the land of opportunities
- water resources should be nationalized
- "BALANCE BETWEEN PROFESSIONALISM AND FAMILY"
- Effect of cinema on Youth
- Education in India compared to Foreign nations
- Is it necessary to ban COCO COLA in India.
- What is the effect of movies on youth. is it good or bad)
- Are studies more beneficial in India or in Abroad.
- "UN's peace activities" and "America's war on Iraq".
- "Environment-Whose Responsibility".
- Is China a threat to the Indian software industry.
- Role of UN in Peace keeping
- War on Iraq
- About Hockey being the primary game in India

- Can America occupy Iraq
- Cricket should be banned or not.
- IS CHINA A THREAT TO INDIA
- Present state of Indian Cricket team.
- Love marriage/Arranged marriage.
- Advantages of Co-education.
- How to deal with international terrorism.
- Should we pursue our policy of dialogue with Pakistan?
- Is peace and non-violence outdated concepts?

## NOTES

**CURRENT GD TOPICS**

- A Unipolar World spells disaster for underdeveloped countries like India
- Is Globalisation Really Necessary?
- What shall we do about our ever-increasing Population?
- Corruption is the price we pay for Democracy
- Foreign Television Channels are destroying our culture
- What India needs is a Dictatorship.
- With media publishing and telecasting trivia, censorship is the need of the hour.
- Kaun Banega Krorapati is less about knowledge but more about money and personality.
- Beauty contests degrade womanhood
- The rise of regional blocs threatens independent nations like India
- Six billion and one bronze!
- Is dependence on computers a good thing?
- Should the public sector be privatised?
- China and India are similar nations with contrasting ways
- Is India a Soft Nation?
- Value based politics is the need of the hour
- Religion should not be mixed with politics

NOTES

- How to deal with high oil prices
- Our cricketers are not to blame for match fixing
- Why cant we be world players in industry as we are in software?
- Multinational corporations: Are they devils in disguise?
- Should there be limits on artistic freedom (the controversy on Fire).
- Should there be private universities?
- Does banning fashion shows and New Year parties save our culture

## 7

# Interview

NOTES

**The Chapter Covers :**

- Role
- Process
- Types
- Controversies
- Validity and predictive power
- Interview success tips
- Interview Skills
- Tips on Preparing for an Interview
- Sample Interview Questions
- Writing a Cover Letter when Applying for a Job
- Case Studies for Job Interviews
- Importance of Skills in Job Interviews
- Indirect Interview Questions and What They Really Reveal
- Sample Interview Questions - Case Study

A **job interview** is a process in which a potential employee is evaluated by an employer for prospective employment in their company, organization, or firm. During this process, the employer hopes to determine whether or not the applicant is suitable for the job.



## ROLE

### NOTES

A job interview typically precedes the hiring decision, and is used to evaluate the candidate. The interview is usually preceded by the evaluation of submitted résumés from interested candidates, then selecting a small number of candidates for interviews. Potential job interview opportunities also include networking events and career fairs. The job interview is considered one of the most useful tools for evaluating potential employees.<sup>[1]</sup> It also demands significant resources from the employer, yet has been demonstrated to be notoriously unreliable in identifying the optimal person for the job.<sup>[1]</sup> An interview also allows the candidate to assess the corporate culture and demands of the job.

Multiple rounds of job interviews may be used where there are many candidates or the job is particularly challenging or desirable. Earlier rounds may involve fewer staff from the employers and will typically be much shorter and less in-depth. A common initial interview form is the phone interview, a job interview conducted over the telephone. This is especially common when the candidates do not live near the employer and has the advantage of keeping costs low for both sides.

Once all candidates have been interviewed, the employer typically selects the most desirable candidate and begins the negotiation of a job offer.

## PROCESS

A typical job interview has a single candidate meeting with between one and three persons representing the employer; the potential supervisor of the employee is usually involved in the interview process. A larger *interview panel* will often have a specialized human resources worker. While the meeting can be over in as little as 15 minutes, job interviews usually last less than two hours.

The bulk of the job interview will entail the interviewers asking the candidate questions about his or her job history, personality, work style and other factors relevant to the job. For instance, a common interview question is "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" In some ways, all questions are really subsets of one of three overarching questions "Can you do the job?" (strengths), "Will you love the job?" (motivation), "Can we stand working with you?" (fit).<sup>[2]</sup> The candidate will usually be given a chance to ask any questions at the end of the interview. These questions are strongly encouraged since they allow the interviewee to acquire more information about the job and the company, but they can also demonstrate the candidate's strong interest in them.

Candidates for lower paid and lower skilled positions tend to have much simpler job interviews than do candidates for more senior positions. For instance, a lawyer's job interview will be much more demanding than that of a retail cashier. Most job interviews are formal; the larger the firm, the more formal and structured the interview will tend to be. Candidates generally dress slightly better than they would for

work, with a suit (called an interview suit) being appropriate for a white-collar job interview.

Additionally, some professions have specific types of job interviews; for performing artists, this is an audition in which the emphasis is placed on the performance ability of the candidate.

In many companies, *assessment days* are increasingly being used, particularly for graduate positions, which may include analysis tasks, group activities, presentation exercises, and psychometric testing.

In recent years it has become increasingly common for employers to request job applicants who are successfully shortlisted to deliver one or more presentations at their interview. The purpose of the presentation in this setting may be to *either* demonstrate candidates' skills and abilities in presenting, or to highlight their knowledge of a given subject likely to relate closely to the job role for which they have applied. It is common for the applicant to be notified of the request for them to deliver a presentation along with their invitation to attend the interview. Usually applicants are only provided with a title for the presentation and a time limit which the presentation should not exceed.

A bad hiring decision nowadays can be immensely expensive for an organization—cost of the hire, training costs, severance pay, loss of productivity, impact on morale, cost of re-hiring, etc. (Gallup international places the cost of a bad hire as being 3.2 times the individual's salary). Studies indicate that 40% of new executives fail in their first 18 months in a new job.<sup>[1]</sup> This has led to organizations investing in onboarding for their new employees to reduce these failure rates.

## TYPES

### Behavioral

A common type of job interview in the modern workplace is the *behavioral interview* or *behavioral event interview*, also called a *competency-based interview*.

This type of interviewing is based on a philosophy that a comprehensive assessment of the past behavior and experiences of a candidate is a reliable indicator of his/her response to identical situations in the future. Typically, prior to the interview, an interviewer identifies a set of behavioral traits and characteristics he/she believes is essential for success on a particular assignment. In behavioral interviews, the interviewer asks candidates to recall specific instances where they were faced with a set of circumstances, and how they reacted. Typical behavioral interview questions:

- “Tell me about a project you worked on where the requirements changed midstream. What did you do?”
- “Tell me about a time when you took the lead on a project. What did you do?”

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- “Describe the worst project you worked on.”
- “Describe a time you had to work with someone you didn’t like.”
- “Tell me about a time when you had to stick by a decision you had made, even though it made you very unpopular.”
- “Give us an example of something particularly innovative that you have done that made a difference in the workplace.”
- “What happened the last time you were late with a project?”
- “Have you ever witnessed a person doing something that you felt was against company policy? What did you do and why?”

### Case

A case interview is an interview form used mostly by management consulting firms and investment banks in which the job applicant is given a question, situation, problem or challenge and asked to resolve the situation. The case problem is often a business situation or a business case that the interviewer has worked on in real life.

### Panel

Another type of job interview found throughout the professional and academic ranks is the *panel interview*. In this type of interview the candidate is interviewed by a group of panelists representing the various stakeholders in the hiring process. Within this format there are several approaches to conducting the interview. Example formats include;

- Presentation format - The candidate is given a generic topic and asked to make a presentation to the panel. Often used in academic or sales-related interviews.
- Role format - Each panelist is tasked with asking questions related to a specific role of the position. For example one panelist may ask technical questions, another may ask management questions, another may ask customer service related questions etc.
- Skeet shoot format - The candidate is given questions from a series of panelists in rapid succession to test his or her ability to handle stress filled situations.

The benefits of the panel approach to interviewing include: time savings over serial interviewing, more focused interviews as there is often less time spend building rapport with small talk, and “apples to apples” comparison because each stakeholder/interviewer/panelist gets to hear the answers to the same questions.<sup>[6]</sup>

Stress interviews are still in common use. One type of stress interview is where the employer uses a succession of interviewers (one at a time or *en masse*) whose mission is to intimidate the candidate and keep him/her off-balance. The ostensible purpose of this interview: to find out how the candidate handles stress. Stress interviews might involve testing an applicant's behavior in a busy environment. Questions about handling work overload, dealing with multiple projects, and handling conflict are typical.<sup>[5]</sup>

Another type of stress interview may involve only a single interviewer who behaves in an uninterested or hostile manner. For example, the interviewer may not make eye contact, may roll his eyes or sigh at the candidate's answers, interrupt, turn his back, take phone calls during the interview, or ask questions in a demeaning or challenging style. The goal is to assess how the interviewee handles pressure or to purposely evoke emotional responses. This technique was also used in research protocols studying stress and type A (coronary-prone) behavior because it would evoke hostility and even changes in blood pressure and heart rate in study subjects. The key to success for the candidate is to de-personalize the process. The interviewer is acting a role, deliberately and calculatedly trying to "rattle the cage". Once the candidate realizes that there is nothing personal behind the interviewer's approach, it is easier to handle the questions with aplomb.

Example stress interview questions:

- Sticky situation: "If you caught a colleague cheating on his expenses, what would you do?"
- Putting you on the spot: "How do you feel this interview is going?"
- Popping the balloon: (deep sigh) "Well, if that's the best answer you can give ... " (shakes head) "Okay, what about this one ...?"
- Oddball question: "What would you change about the design of the hockey stick?"
- Doubting your veracity: "I don't feel like we're getting to the heart of the matter here. Start again - tell me what *really* makes you tick."

Candidates may also be asked to deliver a presentation as part of the selection process. The "Platform Test" method involves having the candidate make a presentation to both the selection panel and other candidates for the same job. This is obviously highly stressful and is therefore useful as a predictor of how the candidate will perform under similar circumstances on the job. Selection processes in academic, training, airline, legal and teaching circles frequently involve presentations of this sort.

## Technical

This kind of interview focuses on problem solving and creativity. The questions aim at your problem-solving skills and likely show your ability and creativity. Sometimes these interviews will be on a computer module with multiple-choice questions.

## Telephone

Telephone interviews take place if a recruiter wishes to reduce the number of prospective candidates before deciding on a shortlist for face-to-face interviews. They also take place if a job applicant is a significant distance away from the premises of the hiring company, such as abroad or in another state or province.<sup>[6]</sup>

## CONTROVERSIES

In many countries, employment equity laws forbid discrimination based on a number of classes, such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and marital status.<sup>[7]</sup> Asking questions about these protected areas in a job interview is generally considered discriminatory, and constitutes an illegal hiring practice. Interviewers must pose their questions carefully in order to obtain the answers they want without instigating allegations of discrimination.<sup>[8]</sup> Human Resources professionals generally learn these methods during their training and help to incorporate them into structured interview questions.

## VALIDITY AND PREDICTIVE POWER

There is extant data<sup>[9]</sup> which puts into question the value of job interviews as a tool for selecting employees. Where the aim of a job interview is ostensibly to choose a candidate who will perform well in the job role, other methods of selection provide greater predictive power and often lower costs.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> Furthermore, given the unstructured approach of most interviews they often have almost no useful predictive power of employee success.

Honesty and integrity are attributes that can be very hard to determine using a formal job interview process: the competitive environment of the job interview may in fact promote dishonesty. Some experts on job interviews express a degree of cynicism towards the process

## INTERVIEW SUCCESS TIPS

You're a superstar. Your mother says you are, right? With a little preparation and follow-through, you can prove it to your future boss.

A job interview can be an excruciating, painful, stressful and awkward hour. Or it can be pleasant, educational, enlightening and successful. The experience of that hour is largely determined by how you spend your time *before* and *after* the interview.

Prepare and plan that first impression long before you walk in the door. Continue that excellent impression in the days following, and that job could be yours.

Here's a timeline for your pre-, during and post-interview phases:

### Long before

1. Get references and letters of recommendation. Think of three to six professional associates (i.e., co-workers, former bosses) who you believe will give you a good recommendation. Then ask their permission to use them as references. If they say yes, get their correct title, work address and work phone number. You could also ask them to take the time to write out a general letter of recommendation for future use.

"People should be going through life asking for referrals," recommends Marjorie Brody, author, speaker, trainer and president of Brody Communications Ltd. in Elkins Park, Pa. "In college, after a successful semester, ask for a letter of recommendation. Not just professors [but also teaching assistants and employers]."

She recommends keeping in touch with people from old jobs. She says, "Create networks on an ongoing basis."

### Days before

2. Research the company. Even before applying, learn all you can about this particular organization and the field, advises Brody. The interviewer will expect you to know something about the work you want to be doing, and about the place where you want to be doing it. It also shows you care — which does count for something.

"Your best interviewees are the ones who've done their homework," says Brody. "Know who the officers of the company are. There's so much information out there. Look up the company's Web page," Brody explains that this homework will show that you are proactive, intelligent and energetic.

This research will also keep you from wasting your time interviewing for jobs that you either don't want or are not suited for. Brody adds, "Try to find out as much as possible what they're looking for to see if you're a good match."

3. Identify your key skills and accomplishments. Make a list and be ready to describe your personal and professional strengths, your transferable skills and your relevant accomplishments. With your research, you have been able to identify qualities that the company values. Come up with a few personal anecdotes that illustrate your possession of those qualities.
4. Practice the interview. Practice makes perfect, and it will give you confidence and a sense of ease when you're truly in the hot seat at an interview. With a friend or a career counselor, practice responding with confidence to typical interview questions. Here are just a few:

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- How has your background influenced what you are today?
- How do you define success?
- What's the most difficult challenge you've overcome on a job?
- How do you deal with deadlines?
- Tell me something about yourself.
- Why are you leaving your old job?
- Why would you be good for our company?
- Where would you like to be five years from now?

"Have answers that are clear, concise and truthful," advises Jennifer Maxwell Parkinson, president of Look Consulting International in New York. "People admire honesty and frankness."

"Get interview books," recommends Brody. "Write out the worst questions that could be asked. Role-play answering possible questions. The books will give you a list of questions and also tell you how to respond."

Additionally, you'll want to have a few questions ready to ask the interviewer. For more on this topic, read *Got Any Questions?*

5. Check clothing. Make sure your suit is clean, shirt ironed, and shoes polished. Now's your chance to check whether your best outfit needs to go to the cleaners or a seamstress for repairs. If you're going to borrow any clothing from a friend or buy a new pair of shoes, do it ahead of time so that you can be sure everything fits well.

Parkinson recommends that you select clothes that are appropriate for the industry and company. Additionally, she stresses the importance of being comfortable.

"Don't wear sweat pants," she explains. "But make sure the suit, the shoes, the jewelry are comfortable, so you'll feel pulled together. Then you don't have to think about it and can focus on the person interviewing you."

Brody agrees, "In an interview, you want to be attentive to the interviewer. If you're worried about a skirt that's too tight, you'll be distracted."

6. Test drive. If you are unsure of the location of the interview, drive there. This way you can be sure of the building, the time to get there and any parking difficulties.

**Day before**

7. Call to reconfirm. Parkinson recommends that when you first make an appointment for an interview that you ask the name of the secretary or receptionist. Then when you call back to reconfirm you can refer to them by name. She reminds, "They have a lot of influence."

8. Prepare clothes. Parkinson says, "Check head to toe what you're going to be wearing." Also, gather all the things you'll be bringing to the interview: an extra copy of your resume, references, a portfolio, a pad of paper, a pen.
9. Watch the weather. "If the weather's going to be bad, be prepared," adds Parkinson.
10. Get a good night's sleep. It's a big day — you'll want to be fresh and alert.

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### Day of interview

11. Work it off. Parkinson suggests exercising earlier in the day if possible, to get your blood flowing and to release stress.
12. Get to the interview on time. Arrive 10 minutes early even. No excuses.
13. Last-minute check. Take a look in your car mirror or in a bathroom mirror at a location near interview. Fix your lipstick, pull loose hairs off the shoulder of your jacket, make sure your shirt is properly tucked in and straighten your tie.

**Now smile.** And check your teeth for any food particles. Yech. OK, now smile and show your confidence.

**Don't forget:** Ditch the gum and turn off your cell phone and/or beeper.

### Waiting

14. Look confident and busy. More than likely you'll end up in a waiting room for at least a few minutes. Don't get sloppy — you are already on. Parkinson recommends, "Bring something to do — look busy, even if it's just writing notes in a book. And don't slouch."

When the interviewer walks in, be ready to shake hands. "Remember, purses and briefcases in left hand," Brody says.

### During

15. Pay attention. After all your preparation, the interview will be a snap, right? Er, sorry, job interviews can still be a little nerve-wracking. Since you prepared, it won't be nearly as much of a struggle — but it is vital that you listen to the interviewer. You may not get exactly the questions you practiced but variations.
16. Relax. If you're nervous, Brody has a solution. She says, "When you sit, keep your palms up. This lowers your blood pressure and air dries the palms."

### Right after

17. Write it down. On a pad of paper in your car, write down your impressions of the company and the interview, and the names of your potential co-workers. These notes have three uses. If you're called for another interview, you can review what was discussed at the first one, thus preparing even better for the second. Also, if you're offered a job, you can determine whether you want to



work for this company. Finally, you can learn from any problems or successes you experienced during the interview.

### Day after

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18. Send thank you note. Thank the interviewer(s) for taking the time to meet with you. This is a polite gesture — and a subtle reminder to them of you, says Parkinson.

“Recap some key interview issues that came up,” advises Brody. She says to write them “I look forward to hearing from you.”

### Week after

19. Make follow-up call. If you haven't heard from the company and you are still interested in the job, make a quick call to the person who interviewed you or the Human Resources department. See if they are closer to making a decision and when you might expect to hear from them. Go ahead and tell them how excited you are about the prospect of working there.

### Weeks after

20. Be patient. You might hear about the job right away. More likely, the company will take some time to interview candidates and then review them. If you got good vibes from the interview or the follow-up call, just be patient.

But don't quit your job search, just because you found what you think will be your dream job. It might not work out, and waiting before applying somewhere else is going to drag out your job search. While some companies won't call or write you when the job is filled — which is irritating as hell — others may just be taking their time.

If you don't get the job, Brody recommends calling and asking, “I'd like to know why you chose someone over me.” While this may seem embarrassing, Brody says more than likely they'll answer you because it shows you want to learn.

A job interview that does not result in a job need not be a failure. You can learn from the experience, improving your presentation and concentration for the next time.

## INTERVIEW SKILLS

### Going for a New Job?

Every once in a while something happens and our lives are shaken up. Sometimes we shake them up deliberately and sometimes outside forces come along and throw our world into a bit of a tailspin.

That's certainly what it feels like at the moment.

When people are fed up, need a new challenge, want more money, want a more conducive work environment they start reading the want ads, polishing their CVs,

pounding the pavements and trawling the internet job updates and interview help sites like ours.

The current situation, however, does tend to mean that a whole lot of other people are also looking for new jobs, so you need to have a jump on the competition by presenting yourself at interview in the best possible light, no matter whether you've been made redundant or are looking for something fresh and motivating.

Even before we created Impact Factory 18 years ago we were helping people develop their careers, present themselves more effectively, identify their best skills and acknowledge their unique qualities, all with the aim of interviewing well and getting terrific jobs.

There are six ways to get a job:

- Internal promotion
- Applying for an advertised job
- Word of mouth
- Nepotism (a form of word of mouth, with a familial twist)
- Going through an agency or using head hunters
- Identifying a company you want to work for, a career you want to pursue or a fantasy job you'd like to have and being pro-active about getting through the door.

They're all valid.

If your brother-in-law's second cousin knows the head of HR at a company you are really interested in, go for it!

Equally, if you want to go to employment agencies and try your luck that way, go for it!

If you want the job, chances are so do about a million other eager people, so your application has to stand out from the crowd. The majority of CVs are usually dull and boring, and people create them as historical documents, rather than as marketing tools.

Remember your CV has about **seven seconds** (yes 7) to make a visual impression. You can dramatically boost your chances of getting an interview by making your CV look and 'sound' special.

- Use good paper
- Design a personal logo
- Fiddle with the layout to make it easy on the eye
- Edit it ruthlessly (everyone always puts in too much detail)

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- Highlight the bits that relate to the job you're going for
- They don't need to know you went to St Mary's School when you were 12!
- Put "Who you are now" at the beginning of your CV
- Leave education and qualifications for the end.

If you don't have what you think are the right educational qualifications, don't worry. Just leave them off. If you include enough interesting and intriguing material about who you are now, what you didn't do is far less important.

Put a short paragraph at the beginning that says something about your personal qualities and your business skills. A short statement about what you're seeking can also go down a treat.

As we know, a job for life is very rare nowadays, that eclectic, unusual and even inconsistent CVs are OK as long as they're presented well.

Depending upon the specific job you're going after, you can be as creative as you like. We've seen CVs presented as graphs, as poems, as drawings, as a route map, as a podcast; you name it, we've probably seen it.

Whichever route you choose, make sure your CV is pitched correctly for the audience who will be receiving it.

You can do the same; highlighting certain areas of your CV to showcase the skills that will matter for the specific jobs you're going for.

You are what you seem! So what do we mean by that?

When we ourselves recruit for new members of staff we are absolutely appalled by the sloppy, unprofessional CVs we receive: misspellings, poor layout, bad grammar. Needless to say, our rubbish bins get filled quickly during our recruitment drives.

So a word of advice: proofread. No. Forget that. Get someone else to proofread your CV.

Make your 7 seconds matter.

### Interview Rules

You hear all sorts of rules about job interviews:

- People decide about you in the first 10 seconds
- You have to make a good first impression
- Always ask insightful questions
- Learn as much as you can about the company

- They'll probably ask questions designed to trip you up
- Have some quick answers to interview questions at the ready

Not bad, as far as rules go: some of them make perfect sense. But getting the job you want isn't about following rules or giving the *right* interview answer.

It's about presenting yourself in the most authentic way that takes care of you and the interviewers at the same time.

So many people chuck their interview chances away: they don't take enough care and interview preparation time so that the whole process is enjoyable, stimulating and informative for both parties.

If you have been invited to an interview it's a given that someone has, however briefly, looked at your CV. Something about you, or the way you have presented yourself has felt a good enough 'fit' to get you through the door.

Here's the key and the most important thing to remember before you go through that door.

*Unless they are simply going through the motions because they've already appointed someone, they want it to be you*

They want to know their search is over, so for the length of the interview, the job is yours. Something else you need to make the most of.

Having said that, first impressions are incredibly important. People do make up their minds quickly so be yourself right from the start.

Of course you can turn up the volume on those bits of you that most match the job and turn it down on the bits that don't. This will help show you in your best light. However, *never ever* shut the volume off entirely, as you will then be pretending to be someone you're not - people can smell pretence and it is a sure recipe for disaster.

**For the same reason it's not a good idea to lie!**

You can be judicious with the truth yes, but lies have a tendency to return and bite you in the bum! Even if they don't actually know that you've lied they will sense something is not right. When you are under pressure it's virtually impossible not to give out the signals that tell your interviewer that something is wrong.

Even if you think your current job stinks, present the good points as though you were looking at the job from the outside in. Most jobs appear much better from the outside than they do from the inside (only you know the real truth); so pump up the goodies and soft-pedal the baddies!

However, we do know that being put on the spot can feel very uncomfortable, and it's easy to fall into a defensive posture. If you're not sure of the answer or feel

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boxed into a corner it's all right to buy time - including saying "I need some time to think about that."

No matter how nervous you are you do need to look after the people interviewing you. They will be looking for signs that you know how to communicate and relate to people. If you get stuck or tongue-tied ask one or two of the more surprising questions you have prepared.

Have a stockpile of anecdotes of past triumphs (and even a few disasters, as long as they're funny or the humorous side is apparent). This is not just a list of what you can do, but some personal examples that help paint the whole picture.

For instance, you could say "I successfully launched a new product for my company." Nothing wrong with that; it just doesn't tell anyone very much about you.

Or you could say, "Let me tell you about the new product launch I ran earlier this year with my colleagues. We had a very tight deadline, the venue was booked, the product was ready, but it was bringing all the elements together that helped make it a success. I'll explain my part in all this...." And off you go.

You're telling a story, not reciting facts. People like stories (as long as they are not long-winded and either too boastful or too self-deprecating) because they help show who you are as a person.

"That's all very well for you to say, but just how do I do all this?"

Ok so let's take a pragmatic approach to interviewing here. Think about it for a second.

You've got through the door. They want it to be you. The job is yours to lose.

So the process you're in now is a test.

Their starting point will be this: "Well, it all looks good on paper, let's get them in and see how they look in person."

That is, by the way, how you will be viewed. Until they see you in person, until they see you walk and talk, until they can smell and hear you, you are an 'it'.

Let's be very clear here. They have information about you. If you've been clever at presenting your CV and application they will have expectations as to what sort of person you are.

Now they want to meet you.

Why? Because they want to know if they will like you, if you're someone they could spend working time with, if you're a good fit with the other people in the company.

Presenting yourself isn't an 'act', nor is it a 'performance', but they do want to see how you perform. Confusing, isn't it?

Don't worry, there's more advice coming right up.

Ok so the problem now is how to 'be yourself' whilst under this sort of pressure. It's worse than a first date.

So here is one of the tricks that successful actors learn (usually after having done hundreds of interview/auditions) that can help take away some of that pressure.

Treat the interview as the job.

The job is the *interview*, not what you will get if you do a good interview.

Simple. Give good interview.

And here are some other things that will help:

Psychologically you will feel better if this is not the only egg in your basket, so apply for more jobs than you need. You will find that if you have another interview lined up there is less pressure.

Wear something you feel good in. It is no good looking great if you feel uncomfortable. If you have an *interview outfit* it helps to wear it to one or two social events to bed it in.

Have something to say in answer to an open question. They will ask open questions.

Classic open interview questions are:

- Tell me about yourself
- What have you been doing lately?
- What made you apply for this job?
- Why should we pick you?

Prepare an answer that allows you to talk about something you've been involved in recently. Preferably something that has got you feeling really enthusiastic.

Be sure to bring in non-work-related stuff to the interview. Remember this is about being a whole person. Don't go on at too much length about the excitement of your Saturday bowls club, but do use anything from your outside life that might illustrate some of your skills and qualities.

What we mean by 'self-disclosure' is the giving or telling of something about yourself that is not actually necessary in order to answer the question.

There is nothing more important you can do in an interview than help give people a feel of what you are like and self-disclosure is the most powerful way to do it. This is an extension of relating stories.

With a little training this is not hard to do.

If they ask "Why do you want to be a nanny?"

You could answer:

“I’ve always wanted to work with children”

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Or you could say:

“Well two years ago my best friend Amanda had a little baby girl Sarah and when she had her christened she asked me to be her Godmother. Well of course I said yes, but as the christening came round and as I prepared for the ceremony I really started to think about Sarah and how important she was and how much we are all responsible for the well being of our children and it got me to thinking about what I really wanted to do with my life....

You get the picture?

What you say hardly matters. What matters is that you speak about something that you feel really strongly about. If you feel strongly about it you will sound enthusiastic, authentic, engaged and alive.

This again is a given, there is nothing wrong with being a bit on edge. If you use the approach laid out above the things you speak about will give you somewhere to channel that nervous energy.

Remember they are unlikely to give the job to someone calm, relaxed and laid back either. Too laid back and you will seem as if you don’t care.

What makes everyone nervous about interview is the fact that they are going to judge you.

Absolutely they are going to judge you! This is supposed to happen. Remember, it’s a test, so get some interview help or interview training and do some practise. You wouldn’t dream of going to your driving test without studying the Highway Code, so treat an interview in the same way.

But remember also, you are interviewing them as well. The test is two way. If you can keep that in the forefront of your mind, it can also help settle interview nerves.

**Prepare and Research for your Interview**

Prepare to talk about something current, a TV programme, the election, the war, the weather, it doesn’t matter what so long as it has affected you and you have a strong opinion about it.

Research - Look at their website

And again - LOOK AT THEIR WEBSITE.

Read our lips:

## LOOK AT THEIR WEBSITE !

The number of people who have come to Impact Factory for interview and have *not* read our website is astounding. People care about their websites and they will give you masses of information (both good and bad) about the organisations you are applying to.

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Think about these things:

- What does their website tell you about them?
- Why do you want to work for them?
- Think about what they need
- Who are their competitors?
- Are they well established?
- What do you want to know about them?
- What do you like about them?

**They *will* ask at least one of the following interview questions**

- What attracted you to xxx?
- Why are you leaving your current job?
- Why do you want to work for xxx?
- What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses?
- How do you see yourself in xx years time?
- How do you like to work?
- What can you bring to xxx?
- Why should we employ you?
- What do you do outside work?

Yes, and sometimes they will even ask - What are your hobbies?

Have at least one question to ask them based on something you have seen in their brochure or on their website. If you can make it something you are genuinely curious about and include a compliment about the organisation so much the better.

**Leave the Interview well.**

Never apologise at the end of an interview. Even if you were a few minutes late arriving do your apology at the beginning, no need to remind them of it now.

Do smile at them as you leave the interview even if you feel like a Cheshire cat.

Act as if it has been a good interview. Say thank you to everyone. Say goodbye to everyone. Shake hands. Look at people and leave with a spring in your step.



Do all of this even if you think the interview has been a disaster. How you feel about your interview is unlikely to bear any relation to how you have done. Indeed, most people are the worst judges of how they actually did.

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**Take Care of the Interviewers!**

You know, interviews are so nerve-wracking and stressful that most people's attention goes solely on themselves. In their heads there's an on-going monologue:

How am I doing? Oh, damn, that answer was absolute crap. What did they just ask? I've gone totally blank, now what do I do? Maybe I shouldn't have worn the pink tie after all. I could really use the loo now. What if they ask me how much salary I want? Did I just say that? They're really going to think I'm an idiot.

And so on.

We can't completely shut off those voices, but we can help divert our attention away from them.

Pay attention to the things around you, notice things in the reception, the office environment. Comment about what you see.

But what things like this do is to serve as icebreakers. They help to break down some of the interviewer-interviewee barriers and help you to put yourself at ease by engaging with them about something to do with them (it can put them at ease as well).

Of course, if you don't have anything good to say or haven't noticed anything outstanding, then don't make it up - then it will sound phoney and indeed, grovelling.

You can help take care of 'them' in other ways during the interview. The type of questions you ask is, of course, important. But you don't just have to limit yourself to questions. It's OK to comment on something they've said; try to get a dialogue going.

**Two-way, two-way, two-way**

You'll know something is wrong if the interview begins to feel like a version of the Spanish Inquisition: Question, Answer, Question, Answer, Question, Answer. Dialogue means that both sides are engaged in the process.

Be bold in the interview questions *you* ask. Nothing wrong with asking question like:

- What's the most important quality you're looking for?
- Why do you think people like working here?
- Is there anything you think I should know that I've forgotten to ask?

When you make someone do a little extra work themselves, you help take care of them because you're engaging their creative process too.

## Interview Follow Up

At the end of your interview, if you haven't been advised, ask when they think they'll be making their decision. At least then you'll know how long you'll have to wait before you hear.

Many places don't automatically let people know if they haven't got the job; so one interview follow-up call is allowable. More than that and it can feel like badgering.

No matter how badly you think the interview went, if you want the job, *always* send a follow-up letter. Since most of us think of clever things to say after the fact, include one or two of those, referring to something specific from the interview.

Use phrases such as:

- 'I've given a lot of thought to our interview and...'
- 'Something you mentioned got me thinking...'
- 'What you said about \_\_\_\_\_ really struck home...'

If you don't get the job and you're curious why not, phone up and get some feedback. It may help you for the next interview.

## TIPS ON PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Your hard work sending out all those cover letters and résumés has finally paid off — you've been called in for a face-to-face job interview. Congratulations! But now is not the time to sit back and think about how you're going to spend your new salary; you've got a lot of work to do. The better prepared you are beforehand, the better your chances are of walking out of the interview with a confident smile on your face that says, "I think I got the job!"

Keep in mind that in the competitive business world, there are sure to be dozens of other highly qualified candidates going after *your* job. It's important to make yourself stand out as someone special. Now is the time to practice exactly how you will sell yourself to a prospective employer during that crucial first meeting.

Here are 10 important tips to help your next interview lead to your next job:

1. **Do your homework.** Research the company beforehand so that you can showcase that knowledge during the interview. This will boost your credibility with the interviewer and will help you to formulate intelligent questions to ask him or her.
2. **Know where you're going.** Make sure to find out where the office is and how to get there. Do you know how long the trip will take? Do you have

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the name and phone number of the person you'll be meeting with? Do you know how easy it is to park? Save yourself time and unnecessary stress by knowign these things before heading to the interview.

3. **Look the part.** Your clothing should be neat, pressed, and professional looking. As it can be difficult to know the culture of the office environment beforehand, err on the side of conservative. Even if everyone's wearing jeans when you arrive, you're still probably better off having shown up in a suit. However, don't be afraid to inject some personality into your look, and don't neglect the details. Make sure to have a fresh haircut and clean, manicured nails.
4. **Rehearse beforehand.** Prior to your interview, prepare answers to common questions the interviewer is likely to ask, such as *What are your strengths and weaknesses?* *Why do you want to work here?* *Why should we hire you?* and the ever popular *Tell me about yourself*. Conduct a mock interview with a trusted friend as practice.
5. **Secure your references.** Find at least three key people — former supervisors, colleagues, or instructors — who are willing to serve as your professional references. Be sure to secure their permission beforehand, and be certain that they will speak highly of you if contacted by a potential employer.
6. **Arrive early.** Be sure to arrive at least 15 minutes before the interview. Visit the restroom and check your appearance in the mirror. Announce yourself to the receptionist to let him or her know that you have arrived and that you have an appointment. Turn your cell phone off so it doesn't ring during your meeting.
7. **Bring necessary documentation.** Make a checklist of documents that you will need for the interview, and make sure that you have them in your briefcase before leaving home. These documents may include extra copies of your résumé, a passport, driver's license, Social Security card, or portfolio of writing samples or other professional work. If you are a recent graduate, you should also bring along your college transcripts.
8. **Sell yourself.** The interview is your chance to shine, so now is not the time to be humble. Develop a 25-second sales pitch that sings your praises. In business this is called an "elevator speech," a compelling overview of *why you?* that can be recited in the time it takes to ride the elevator. It should include your strengths, your abilities, and what sets you uniquely apart from other applicants.
9. **Don't neglect to ask questions.** Based on your earlier research, ask how the responsibilities of the open position relate to the company's goals and plans for the future. Interviewers are often favorably impressed by candidates who show that they are knowledgeable about the organization.

**10. Follow up.** After the interview, don't forget to send a handwritten note or friendly email thanking the interviewer for his or her time and consideration, as well as restating your interest and commitment to the position. If you don't hear anything after one week, call to politely inquire when they will be making a final decision.

Remember to keep this in mind: Every interview is a valuable learning experience. Even if you don't get this particular job, when the next interview rolls around, you'll be much better prepared and more at ease with the whole process. All of which can go a long way to boosting your confidence and improving your chances of being offered the next job. Good luck!

Job interviews can be a source of concern for students and graduates who haven't had much experience with them. Hopefully, what is written here will help to make them less so. Perhaps the most important key to a successful interview is to be well-prepared for it and to have some knowledge of what to expect. Armed with this information you should be able to approach your interview with confidence and hopefully, even pleasurable anticipation. Remember, the employers want you.

The interview itself is merely an exercise in two-way communication between the recruiter and you and each attempts to "sell" the other. The recruiter "sells" the job and his/her company while the student "sells" himself or herself as the person best suited to fill it. The first step is to read the job description carefully and understand the content. Your next step is to find out all you can about the company. Information may be available from the business pages in various newspapers, trade publications and company annual reports, as well as the College library.

As a bare minimum you should know what products the company produces or the services it provides and where it is located.

As mentioned previously, the job interview will require you to "sell" yourself. Your appearance, manner and attitude are of first importance. You must be on time for your interview since nothing creates a worse impression than being late.

As far as dress is concerned, be neatly and conservatively dressed. Your manner and attitude should reflect the type of person you are or would like to be. Recruiters are generally quite good at detecting the person who "puts on an act", so just be yourself! Come to the interview prepared to talk about yourself, your career objectives and your interests. Don't underestimate your hobby interests and extra curricular activities since recruiters are fully aware that what you like to do in your spare time says a lot about the type of person you are. If you have no such interests you should do something about cultivating them.

Above all, approach your interview with a reasonable degree of confidence and self-assurance. Convince yourself that you can do the job as well as the next person and probably better if you put your mind to it. Recruiters are invariably impressed with the student who displays real interest and enthusiasm.

Thank the interviewer for the opportunity and leave with a warm smile and handshake.

**REMEMBER:** Keep in mind posture, body language, and active listening.

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For the interview, ask yourself.....

**On Your Career**

- What are your future career plans?
- Why did you choose your particular career?
- What qualifications do you have that make you feel you would be successful in your field?
- Do you prefer any specific geographic location? Why? Is this a good reason?
- What do you think determines a person's progress in a good company?
- What personal characteristics are necessary for success in your chosen field?
- Do you prefer working with others or by yourself?
- What kind of boss do you prefer?
- What do you know about opportunities in the field in which you are trained?
- What do you expect to be doing in five, ten or fifteen years?
- Do you prefer to work in a large or small city?
- Would you prefer to work for a large or a small company?
- What are the disadvantages of your chosen field?

**On Your Education**

- In what school activities have you participated? Why? Which ones did you enjoy the most?
- What courses did you like best? Least? Why?
- How did you spend your vacations while in high school?
- Do you feel you have received a good general training?
- Do you think that your extra-curricular activities were worth the time that you devoted to them? Why?
- Have you ever changed your major field of interest while studying? Why?
- Do you feel you have done the best scholastic work of which you are capable?
- How did you happen to go to college or vocational school?
- Have you ever had any difficulty getting along with fellow students and teacher?

- Which of your school years was the most difficult?
- Did you enjoy going to school?
- Do you consider your education valuable? Why?

### **On Former Employment**

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- What jobs have you held? How were they obtained, and why did you leave?
- What do you think of your previous employer?
- What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
- Can you get recommendations from previous employers?
- What jobs have you enjoyed the most? The least? Why?
- Have you ever trained anyone to do a job?
- Did you train your replacement?

### **On Your Application and the Company to Whom You Are Applying**

- On Your Application and the Company to Whom You Are Applying
- Why do you think you might like to work for our company?
- What do you know about our company?
- What interests you about our product or service?

### **On Salary**

- What are your ideas on salary?
- What salary do you expect on this job?
- What did you make on your last job?
- Would you be willing to work for the minimum wage to start?

### **On Your Personal Life**

- What types of books have you read?
- Do you enjoy sports as a participant? As an observer?
- What do you do to keep in good physical condition?
- Have you ever had any serious illness or injury?

### **Self-Evaluation**

- Are you primarily interested in making money or do you feel that service to humanity is a satisfactory accomplishment?
- Can you take instructions without feeling upset?
- Do you like routine work?

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- Do you like regular hours?
- What is your major weakness?
- Define cooperation.
- Will you fight to get ahead?
- Do you demand attention?
- Have you an analytical mind?
- Are you eager to please?
- Is it an effort for you to be tolerant of persons with a background and interest different from your own?
- What are your own special abilities? Strengths?
- Do you like to travel?
- How about overtime work?
- What have you done which shows initiative and willingness to work?
- Define success.

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Education & Career Plans

- Why did you choose to study \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- What is the objective of the OC \_\_\_\_\_ program?
- How are you enjoying the program? Why?
- Why did you get involved with the co-op program? What do you hope to get out of participating?
- What are your grades like? (If not good, why?)
- Which courses do you enjoy best? least? Why?
- Which area(s) of the \_\_\_\_\_ field interests you most? Why?
- What do you think it takes to succeed in the \_\_\_\_\_ field?
- You're in school now, but what do you expect to be doing in five years? ten years?

### Experience & Skills

- Which past jobs have you enjoyed the most? the least? Why?
- Under what circumstances did you leave your last job?
- Describe your working relationship with your last supervisor.
- Are you currently working part-time? (If yes,) do you plan to quit to take a co-op position?

- What experience related to this position have you had?
- (If no related experience,) how specifically will your past experience be valuable in the \_\_\_\_\_ field?
- (For non-CIS students) How computer literate are you? What kinds of computer equipment and software have you used?

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**Job Specific/Technical**

- You are being interviewed by several employers this week. Why would you like to work for our organization?
- We are looking for a student who will want to come back here for their second and maybe third work terms, and possibly a permanent position after graduation. How does this suit your plans?
- We are participating in the co-op program because \_\_\_\_\_ is our busy period. We do not foresee an opportunity for future permanent employment. How does this suit your plans?
- This job requires someone with a concern for detail (for example). Do you qualify? Give an example from past experience.
- This job requires someone with above-average interpersonal communication skills (for example). Do you qualify? Give an example from past experience.
- What salary are you expecting during your first work term? Why?
- How would you summarize your overall knowledge and skills in the \_\_\_\_\_ field? (Mention strengths and areas of special interest.)

They will likely ask some technical questions to test your professed level of expertise; sometimes there will be a written test. You may also be asked to construct a brief business letter or memo to demonstrate your business writing skills. Where appropriate you may be asked to provide a portfolio or demonstrate specific skills pertaining to the job.

**Personal**

- What are your strengths? weaknesses? How do you know? Can you give an example of each? (relate to work environment)
- Which three adjectives best describe you? (e.g., reliable, kind, etc.)
- Can you give an example of how you have shown initiative in a past job or volunteer experience?
- What do you consider your greatest accomplishment? Why?
- Do you prefer working on your own or in a team? Why?
- What are some of your leisure interests?
- Do you have a car or some other reliable form of transportation?



- Are you willing to relocate for co-op/permanent employment?

## Your Questions

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At the end of the interview, you will usually be given an opportunity to ask questions. Ask about the work itself and the people you will be working with. Do not ask about salary, benefits or working conditions (perks!) until you are offered the position.

## The Interview Checklist

The goal of a selection interview is to predict the on-the-job performance of each applicant in order to select the best person for the available position. A handful of "on-paper" qualified candidates are interviewed to clarify their skills and experience and to assist their personal suitability to the position.

An interview should be viewed as an opportunity to show an employer what you have to offer, rather than as a nerve-racking ordeal.

**Use this list to help with pre-interview planning.**

### Be Prepared

- Know where the office is and how you are going to get there on time; getting lost will only add to your anxiety level.
- Take time to choose appropriate attire (preferably the day before) and groom carefully — appearances are important!
- Learn about the organization; the employer will want to know why you want to work there and how you think you can contribute to the organization's overall goals.
- Identify the relevant skills and experience you can bring to the job.
- Prepare two or three questions to ask the interviewer; avoid asking about benefits until you have been offered the job.

### Demonstrate Good Manners

- Arrive 5 to 10 minutes before your appointment time.
- Shake hands firmly with the interviewer when you are introduced and again when the interview concludes.
- Do not smoke, chew gum or drink tea or coffee — even if you are invited to do so.
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer; otherwise, you will give the impression that you are disinterested or untrustworthy.

- Try not to fidget; it will distract the interviewer from what you are saying.
- Allow the interviewer to take the lead; do not interrupt when she/he is talking.
- Answer questions clearly and concisely; do not ramble.
- Pause to construct a thoughtful answer; do not blurt out the first thing that comes into your mind.
- Attend to the interviewer's body language and other cues to sense when the interview is concluding; do not linger.
- Thank the interviewer for her/his time before leaving.

### Be Yourself

- Convey your strengths and abilities without appearing boastful or conceited; do not exaggerate your qualifications.
- Answer the questions honestly, rather than telling the interviewer what you think she/he wants to hear; you do not want to succeed in getting hired for a job for which you are not suited!
- Do not hesitate to show your (genuine) enthusiasm and engaging personality and... remember to smile.

### In General

- Volunteer information only if it is positive and pertinent.
- Watch for opportunities to sell your skills.
- Avoid using negative terms. Substitute the words "challenge" or "opportunity" for the word *problem*.
- Never forget that your objective is to get a job offer.

### Dealing with Rejection

You're not alone. Everyone who is now successfully employed has, at one time or another, either lost a job or has been turned down for one.

There are at least two ways to deal with rejection - either mope around complaining about your bad luck or to take charge of your life by adopting a positive attitude while realizing that feelings of stress and anxiety are normal, expected and need not be long lasting.

## WRITING A COVER LETTER WHEN APPLYING FOR A JOB

The cover letter should always be included when sending your resume or CV for a possible job interview. This letter of application serves the purpose of introducing you and asking for an interview. Here is an outline to writing a successful cover

letter. To the right of the letter, look for important notes concerning the layout of the letter signaled by a number.

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**Cover Letter Outline**

2520 Vista Avenue - 1  
Olympia, Washington 98501  
April 19, 2001

Mr. Bob Trimm, Personnel Manager - 2  
Ideas Inc.  
587 Lilly Road

Dear Mr. Trimm: - 3

Opening paragraph - Use one of the following to bring yourself to the attention of the reader and make clear what job you are applying for:

1. Summarize the opening
2. Name the opening
3. Request an opening
4. Question the availability of an opening

Middle paragraph(s)- Use one of the following in each of your middle paragraphs to provide the reader with plenty of reasons to invite you to an interview:

1. Education
2. Work experience
3. Ability to work with others and/or alone
4. Interest in your field
5. Interest in the company
6. Responsibilities in previous positions

Closing paragraph - Use the closing paragraph to ensure action on the part of the reader

The last paragraph needs to help ensure that action is taken. You can ask for an interview appointment time, stating that you will be happy to come to the employer's office when convenient. Make it easy for the reader to follow-up by providing your telephone number and email address.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Beare - 4

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**Important Salutation Notes**

1. *Begin your cover letter by placing your address first, followed by the address of the company you are writing to.*
2. *Use complete title and address; don't abbreviate.*
3. *Always make an effort to write directly to the person in charge of hiring.*
4. *Always sign letters.*

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**Example Cover Letter:**

Here is an example of a sample cover letter written in response to an advertisement in the newspaper. Before taking a look at the letter, here are some useful key phrases to use in your own cover letters.

**Useful Key Phrases**

- I am writing to you in response to your advertisement for...
- As you can see from my enclosed resume, my experience and qualifications match this position's requirements.
- I would like to point out... immediately upon his return.
- During ..., I improved (furthered, extended, etc.) my knowledge of...
- I look forward to an opportunity to speak with you in person. (OR to speak with you personally)

**Cover Letter: Example 1**

2520 Vista Avenue  
 Olympia, Washington 98501  
 April 19, 2001

Mr. Bob Trimm, Personnel Manager  
 Importers Inc.  
 587 Lilly Road

Dear Mr. Trimm:

I am writing to you in response to your advertisement for a Legal Assistant specializing in Port Regulatory Law, which appeared in the Seattle Times on Sunday, June 15. As you can see from my enclosed resume, my experience and qualifications match this position's requirements.

I especially would like to point out that I graduated Cum Laude from The University of Tacoma and was hired directly upon graduation due to my expertise in port authority regulations.

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During the four years that I worked for Shoreman and Co., I further deepened my knowledge of the fast changing regulatory laws in our state. My employer also thought highly enough of my abilities to promote me to head legal researcher after my first year of employment.

I look forward to an opportunity to personally discuss the position with you. I will call you within the next five days to arrange an interview.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Beare

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### **Example Cover Letter 2:**

Here is an example of a sample cover letter requesting a position. Before taking a look at the letter, here are some useful key phrases to use in your own cover letters.

#### **Useful Key Phrases**

- Please accept this letter as an expression of interest in the position of...
- I have enclosed a copy of my resume for your review.
- ...and believe I possess the right combination of...skills.
- My current position .... has provided the opportunity to ...
- I would welcome the opportunity to personally discuss my potential contributions to your company with you.
- I look forward to your reply.

### **Cover Letter: Example 2**

2520 Vista Avenue  
Olympia, Washington 98501  
April 19, 2001

Mr. Bob Trimm, Personnel Manager  
Importers Inc.  
587 Lilly Road

Dear Mr. Trimm:

Please accept this letter as an expression of interest in the position of Areas Sales Manager

I have enclosed a copy of my resume for your review. I am familiar with the requirements for success in the Sales profession and believe I possess the right combination of marketing and management skills.

My current position coordinating two local area sales teams has provided the opportunity to work in a high-pressure, team environment, where it is essential to be able to work closely with my colleagues in order to meet sales deadlines.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to personally discuss my potential contributions to your company with you. Please telephone me at after 4.00 p.m. to suggest a time that we may meet. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Beare

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## CASE STUDIES FOR JOB INTERVIEWS

### The Job-Seeker's "Three Interview Objectives"

**ACTUAL CASE HISTORY:** Erica, a journalism major at a large southwestern university, was soon to face her first real job interview. She was nervous, to say the least. After four years of college, armed with college newspaper experience and two prestigious internships, her "big step forward" was about to begin. At least that's what she hoped. As an aspiring journalist, this was the job of her dreams: a staff writer for a leading monthly fashion magazine. Her interview was coming up, and she didn't know where to begin. Her dad, a senior executive client of ours, asked us to spend a few minutes with her.

To help Erica focus her thoughts and efforts for her upcoming interview, we shared with her the same thing we share with each of our clients facing interviews. While there's never any "standard" interview, there is a "standard," best way to approach interview preparation.

Every job seeker with an upcoming interview has a goal in mind: getting a good job offer. But getting that goal requires reaching three distinct objectives. Three objectives to prepare to reach, three objectives to achieve, and three objectives to serve as a checklist of sorts before arriving at, and leaving, the interview. Even when meeting with five different people in interviewing for one position, in each interview session the job seeker has the same three objectives.

They are: (a) making the right "investigations" to see if you and the position will likely be a good "fit." That's a matter of asking the right questions, and being prepared for theirs, as well. (b) Making a lasting, positive "impression." That's done

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by considering and exhibiting what's so "special" about you. And, (c) showing your potential employer that you will be a good "investment." That is, that you will enhance one or more of their (1) revenues, (2) valuable relations, and/or (3) business reputation.

Sure enough, our sharing The Three Interview Objectives with Erica had the desired effect: First, by reducing the uncertainties inherent in the overall experience, and making the objectives simply three-fold, Erica felt more "certain" of what lied ahead, it seemed a bit more concrete and clear. Erica felt more up to the task; her increased confidence was striking. Second, by giving Erica specific objectives to focus her thoughts on, she became more focused, less anxious, and more purpose-driven – always a great combination. Her confidence, focus, poise and purpose all came across, and won her the position. Would she have been successful without The Three Objectives of the Interview? We'll never know, and never need to find out. She made the right investigations, the right impression, and inspired the investment in her that she sees as pure opportunity. The rest is now up to her.

**LESSON TO LEARN:** When preparing for an interview, focus your thoughts, energies and preparations on The Three Interview Objectives:

1. *Investigation:* Your first Interview Objective is also your interviewer's objective: mutual investigation. That's why they call it an "inter-view." Simply put, that's what an interview's all about. Your objective, though, is to "investigate" your employer, to see if the position, your prospective boss, the company, its culture, the compensation, even the conditions of the position, are what you're really interested in. It's possible they're not. Some people are very, very disappointed with a new job they'd previously longed for. As in many a budding "romance," there's a tendency to overlook telltale signs of incompatibility. It's of the essence that you prepare thoughtful inquiries, ask good questions, and not be bashful about asking follow-up questions, as well. Be tactful, but be tenacious, too.

At the same time, be prepared for their investigation of you. Imagine yourself to be your interviewer. She may ask you about any gaps in employment on your resume, the basis of your interest in the position, what you think about your present boss, perhaps your willingness to travel half-time. Or he may ask you why you're looking to leave your present employer. Just as you should prepare a list of insightful questions, you should prepare yourself for the questions that the interviewers might ask you, and have ready good, positive, thoughtful responses. (Remember: no negativity, no trade secrets and no stretching the truth.)

Investigation – mutual investigation – is your first interview objective. Of course, your investigative efforts should flow naturally from your list of "employment values," . . . that is, what you value in a job, and are looking for from your employment relation. "Employment Values" might include, among others, career stability, financial opportunity, equity (a chance to become an owner), a career stepping stone, or perhaps a great learning opportunity. Your "employment values" are what you should make inquiry about. And don't be afraid to raise issues about anything else impor-

tant to you. Your primary values should be those that center on or about (a) your position, and how it fits in the organization, (b) the organization, and how it works, (c) your and your organization's future, and how they might grow together.

2. *Impression*: "You don't get a second chance to make a first impression." Your second Interview Objective is to leave a positive, lasting impression. Something that your interviewers will not soon forget about you. Even if you have the best credentials, and have the most to offer, if you put your interviewers to sleep, they won't remember you, or hire you even if they do remember you.

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- Positive impression comes from positive social interaction – including a firm handshake, upbeat manner, appropriate attire, confident self-image, looking someone in the eye, sufficient smiling, a positive nature, an interest in others. Listening carefully to others, and answering their questions without pause or squirming, contributes to positive impression.
- Lasting impression is achieved by special qualities, special insights, special things about you that are, literally, unforgettable. Are you "the one" that knows their biggest target customer? Are you "the one" who is an expert on their customer-relations software, and therefore "exactly what we need?" Are you "the one" who is known in the industry as the "best," "hottest," "most able" in the field? Are you "the one" who is fluent in Farsi, and thus the one they need to do business in Afghanistan?" Get the point?
- The question is this: "What's So Darn Special About You?" And when we say "special," we mean "special enough so they put your resume on the top of the pile." And "special enough that they can't forget about you." Our QVP (Quality Vs. Power) Method™ starts with this exact message: Your "Unique Human Capital" is what you sell – make sure others are aware of it. You'd be amazed how many people are too timid to take that first step, who actually miss the opportunity to make the impression that they otherwise could. Make your Impression a positive one, and a lasting one, as well.

3. *Investment*: More than any other lesson of our QVP Method™, and its most important advantage – bar none – is that it instills in those who use it the important habit of seeing your negotiation through the eyes and mind of your employer. Every employer sees hiring a new employee, at least in good part, as a potential investment. Just like an investment in new computers, or investment in a new building. The investment in hiring a new employee is a special one, in that, while like all other investments, it may or may not pay off, hiring a new employee requires a great deal of time, effort, interaction and resources that, if the "investment" does not pay off, are lost forever. Poor hiring choices can cost an employer more dearly than any other investment. Yet – at the same time – investment in people can yield greater and longer lasting returns than any other investment.

Your message needs to be one that inspires an investment in you. In essence, your message needs to be: "Hire me, and it will pay off . . . big . . . for a long time." Be



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concrete, practical, and honest. That's your most important message to convey. "Hire me, and I will . . . increase your revenues . . . strengthen your critical relations . . . enhance your reputation . . . pay off quickly, over time, and more than anyone else you can hire." Be convincing, be inspiring, be motivating.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Whenever you face an upcoming job interview, don't fret; instead, focus. Focus on the three objectives in front of you. Start with Investigation of the position, the company and the possibilities. Proceed with creating a lasting, positive Impression so that you are remembered, remembered in a positive way, and remembered as someone who is truly special. Move onto your third phase: inspire Investment in you and your hiring by "raising a resounding sense of return" on any investment in you, that is, all that you can and will do for your employer. Use Investigation, Impression and Investment as your Interview Objectives, and you'll be far more likely to reach the Interview Goal of being hired, as well.

## IMPORTANCE OF SKILLS IN JOB INTERVIEWS

Skill emphasis through the interview is very important to show the employer why you distinctive from all the other job candidates. Within this competitive world, companies seek out the most qualified employees by weighing skills with the candidates and determining the way they would profit the company.

Most of the top companies look for employers who sticks out based using their expertise, capability to give new developments, and pleasing personalities that could enhance the organization.

Skills are grouped into three kinds - knowledge-based, transferable, and personal traits.

- 1) Knowledge-based skills are the ones learned from experiences. These can sometimes include educational attainment, additional training, seminars attended, along with other practices you have studied to improve your expertise.

Knowledge-based skills include computer and communication skills, marketing or managerial knowledge, product, and many more. These skills vary with respect to the field of industry of every job candidate.

- 2) Transferable or portable skills are those you bring to a specific job. This is the reason why interviewers ask, What could you offer the company? Transferable skills are important because companies strive to look for quality employees that would improve the development of the workforce.

Portable skills include problem solving, team leader potential, organized, writing and communication skills, customer care oriented, serious amounts of project management, and good with numbers and budget. This type of skills varies with regards to the experience and versatility of each and every job candidate.

- 3) Personal traits determine what you are. In a meeting, one of the most common things a company says is Tell me something about yourself. Your fact is vital since it would set a dark tone for the rest of the job interview.

Personal traits include good judgment, well-organized, analytical, goal oriented, flexible, creative and more. Try to sell yourself in as modest as you can within a short time.

- \* Self-assessment. In order to provide an impressive presentation, examine your resume and list all the skills you have used for each past job experience. Make a comprehensive list of your skills and strengths including personal traits, knowledge-based and transferable skills. This would be the basis for your personal commercial.
- \* After you have completed your script, after you are ready to face the interviewer. Keep in mind that employers are curious about your accomplishments. Use words which are concise, direct and clear.

Although a lot of companies need a unique group of skills, you need to still highlight your technical skills within the interview. These skills, which top companies usually seek, include leadership, communication, confidence, flexibility, problem solving and.

Emphasizing all your strengths and skills on job interviews would improve your chances of landing the required job

## **INDIRECT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND WHAT THEY REALLY REVEAL**

The interview is a classic point of stress for most job seekers, and with good cause. Many firms like asking indirect questions that make it hard to judge what information they're really fishing looking for. Of course, interviewers don't want anyone to know the motivation behind their method of questioning, or else potential job candidates could easily game the system. For this reason, most firms ask slightly different questions and have their own method of interviewing. Today, we explore twelve common indirect questions that employers often ask and the motivation behind them.

### **“How long have you been looking for a new job?”**

A big sign that something is amiss with a potential hire in a normal economic climate is how long he or she has been searching for a job. What potential employers really need to determine is whether there is something wrong with the candidate that other potential employers have picked up on already. Of course, asking the candidate such a thing will not yield an honest answer, so instead, employers ask how long the candidate has been looking for a job. They can interpret the candidate's response and try to gauge how likely it is that other interviewers have picked up on some glaring disqualifier that they have not yet discovered.

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## NOTES

**“How did you prepare for this interview?”**

The more passionate an employee is about a particular organization, the more likely it is that he or she will strive to exceed expectations if they are hired. A good candidate will have read up on the firm, researched the products and services they offer, read a bit about the executives who work there, etc. A bad candidate takes the shotgun at the wall approach. This latter candidate takes walks into any old office building, hoping to get through the interview on personality alone. One way companies separate the two is to ask an indirect question regarding how they prepared for the interview. The candidate who mentions reading up on the organization and demonstrates a working knowledge of the firm's strengths, services and management team is enthusiastic about working for that company and will likely strive to be the best they can be if selected.

**“What are your salary requirements for this position?”**

No matter how stellar a candidate might be, budgetary capacity often limits who companies can afford to hire. The firm might only have room for a \$60,000 annual salary for the position and anyone requiring more than that is out of luck. Beyond a certain point, more qualifications and experience cannot equal a higher salary. This is why it is important to the company to determine if they can afford to hire new applicants. They might also try to determine if they can the right person for less than is budgeted for that position, because money saved equals a bigger bottom line. Of course, no interviewer will ever tell the candidate “we can afford to pay you up to \$60,000, but we'd like to hear you say you'll do it for less.” Instead, companies will frequently ask the person what their salary requirements are. The number they name will be important when they review the interview results of multiple applicants and make the final hiring decision.

**“What kinds of people do you have difficulties working with?”**

In today's expanding global economy, it is almost unavoidable that any new hire will be working in some capacity with people from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. The last thing companies want to find out is that their new employee is a bigot and treats people differently because of their background. Not only will this cause problems in-house, it can also destroy the firm's credibility and reputation, depending on how high-up a position he or she is assuming. However, it isn't politically correct or at all professional to ask someone if they have a problem with specific groups of people, and even if an interviewer did, the candidate would likely deny it. Instead, many firms try an indirect way of asking the same thing, for example: “What kinds of people do you have difficulties working with?” By asking this question, the interviewer is subconsciously communicating that the candidate must have a problem working with some kinds of people. This method can be very effective in subtly revealing inner prejudices the potential hire might possess. In contrast, a good candidate will likely name some neutral group of people, like “dishonest employees,” or “perpetual slackers.”

**“When have you been most satisfied in your career?”**

Much like individual people, every company has its own “personality,” per se. This means that every new working environment has its own perks and bottlenecks, its own energy, its own level of employee-employee interaction, etc. Certain companies offer their employees more creative leeway while others demand strict adherence to guidelines. Every one of these factors (and many more) will directly effect a new hire’s motivation. Various people thrive under many different circumstances, and the job of the interviewer is to try to select the person whose personality best fits their firm’s unique environment. The problem is that people in interviews like to smile and nod along whenever the interviewer starts talking at length about the perks of their working environment, making it almost impossible to read what the candidate is really thinking. Instead, many companies have taken to asking something like, “When have you been most satisfied in your career?” This question will get the potential hire talking about the elements of their last few positions and will likely highlight aspects of those jobs that they felt happiest working under. From this, firms can determine if the person would fit in well with their atmosphere.

## NOTES

**“What is your greatest weakness?”**

Perhaps one of the most important tasks of the interviewer is to find a person with a level head on their shoulders. No company wants the narcissistic, fresh-out-of-grad-school candidate who thinks that they’re an infallible compendium of industry knowledge any firm would be lucky to acquire. These kinds of people hurt companies far more often than they help them because they refuse to acknowledge their weaknesses or consider the idea that they might need further training in certain areas. Rather, companies strive to find confident and qualified employees who can be honest with themselves about their shortcomings. These employees are likely to be flexible, honest and are less likely to try and pass blame around the cubicles when they make a mistake. In order to get a grasp on how realistic a candidate is, employers like to ask people about what they feel their biggest weakness is. This question will demonstrate whether or not a candidate can be honest in accepting that which they need to work on. (In contrast, a haughty candidate might spin off the tired response of “My biggest flaw is that I work too much.”)

**“Where do you see yourself five years from now?”**

A big problem in the corporate world is employees using firms as rungs up the corporate ladder. Especially in today’s economy, the last thing a company wants is to allocate salary, benefits and human capital into acquiring a new manager only to have them jump ship to a competitor a year or two later. Sometimes this isn’t even the employees fault. One cannot reasonably expect a person to stunt their own professional life for the sake of a few headaches. Nonetheless, companies will try and gauge the likelihood of that happening by asking an indirect question such as “Where do you see yourself five years from now?” Responses to this question can be good indicators of how stable and loyal the potential employee is likely to be.

## NOTES

A response like "I want to lead a large team at a marketing firm somewhere" is indicative of a mercenary attitude to the corporate world. In contrast, someone who says something like "At the moment I plan on growing my roots here in this company and rising from within to be the best marketer I can for XYZ Firm" demonstrates far more loyalty.

### **"What are some of your hobbies?"**

Employers must be careful not to cross the line into asking too specific questions about a person's personal life. Professionally speaking, your personal life needn't impact your working life. However, in reality we all know that it does. For this reason, employers often look for indicators of stability and healthy hobbies in a person's home life. The idea is that a person with a healthy and enjoyable life outside the office is likely to carry some of that positive energy into work with them. Workaholics and, at the other end of the spectrum, party animals, are not likely to be very friendly, emotionally stable people. Without probing too far, some interviewers will ask questions such as "What are some of your hobbies." Answers to this question can help reveal a little bit about the potential hire's lifestyle and serve as good indicators of roughly how they will carry themselves day to day.

### **"What were you hoping we'd ask today, but didn't?"**

No interviewer can possibly ask all the right questions to highlight every one of the candidate's strengths and accomplishments. At the same time, candidates are often somewhat nervous on the other side of the desk and might not freely offer up information pertaining to aspects of their personal or professional life that they are not asked for. Nonetheless, this information may positively or negatively sway the interviewer's opinion of the candidate and it is thus necessary to prompt the potential hire to speak about it. Therefore, many firms now ask the open-ended question, "What were you hoping we'd ask you today, but didn't?" This question gives the candidate a chance to touch on anything he feels is important to the interview and the employer a chance to hear the candidate speak on his own behalf.

### **"What do you think of your old boss?"**

No employer wants to be maligned to other companies or to the public. Many ex-employees hold very sour opinions of their former bosses. Justified or not, this is not the kind of thing companies want people spreading around. Especially if it appears that a candidate was fired from their last position, an employer might ask about their opinion of their old boss. Of course, very few candidates will go on a tirade about the injustices they suffered at their old job during the interview, but even subtle hints of distain can be picked up on by the interviewer. This question gives the firm an indicator of how they may be spoke of to other firms this person interviews at in the future, should they need to fire him.

**“If you had enough money to retire right now, would you?”**

Many companies survive not on great ideas alone, but by the tireless work ethic and dedication of their teams. It is therefore of great importance for a firm to find people who are passionate about their work and who have a drive to get the job done regardless of reward. Of course, money is extremely important in our society, but the last thing a firm wants is a bump on a log who just wants to do the bare minimum and suck up his salary until he can retire. Questions such as, “If you had enough money to retire right now, would you?” reveal a candidate’s level of passion about their field. Someone who quickly shouts “Yes of course!” without much thought is seen as being in it primarily for money. These are not the kinds of people most firms want to see in their inner circle.

## NOTES

**If you were hiring a person for this job, what would you look for?**

Questions about another person can only reveal so much about about them. Something companies really want to know is what the candidate thinks are the qualities of a good employee for that position. The idea is that if the candidate has a misconstrued concept of the roles he or she will be expected to play at that firm, they might not be the right person for the job. It is much easier to hire a person with notions of the job that are congruent with company expectations than to try to change a candidates entire idea of what’s important in that position. To determine this, interviewers will often ask the question “If you were hiring a person for this job, what would you look for?” This allows the candidate to give his concept of what a good manager is. His or her answer is a great indicator of how he or she will behave if hired.

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - CASE STUDY**

The following are some sample interview questions in case study interviews, they may be presented in four different types.

**1) Estimation questions:**

- How many cars are there in the U.S.?
- How many divorces take place nationally in any given year?
- What is the market for digital cameras likely to be in 15 years?
- How many airplanes are in air right now?

**2) Actual or theoretical client questions:**

- An offline business wants to go online, what is your advice?

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- FedEx is going to offer a new service where customers can drop a package directly into a driver's vehicle. What issues need to be thought about?
- An airline finds that, while its revenues are at an all time high, the company is still operating at a loss. What is going on?
- You are contacted by ABC Pizza to help them develop a plan for entering the home delivery market in a community where XYZ Pizza has the dominant position. As lead consultant to ABC, what would you do?

**3) Brain Teaser Questions:**

- What will be different if, in the future, consumers have to pay for every drop of drinkable water piped to their residence or business?
- Why are manhole covers round?
- How to know if the light inside refrigerator is on or not?

**4) Graphic Interpretation Questions:**

- Interpreting data in a chart or other form of graph.

# 8 Presentation Skills

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**The Chapter Covers :**

- Introduction
- The Objectives of Communication
- Presentation Skills 2

*Presentations are one of the first managerial skills which a junior engineer must acquire. This article looks at the basics of Presentation Skills as they might apply to an emergent manager.*

## INTRODUCTION

Management is the art of getting things done. A Presentation is a fast and potentially effective method of getting things done through other people. In managing any project, presentations are used as a formal method for bringing people together to plan, monitor and review its progress.

But let us look at this another way: what can a presentation do for you?



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Firstly, it puts you on display. Your staff need to see evidence of decisive planning and leadership so that they are confident in your position as their manager. They need to be motivated and inspired to undertaking the tasks which you are presenting. Project leaders from other sections need to be persuaded of the merits of your project and to provide any necessary support. Senior management should be impressed by your skill and ability so that they provide the resources so that you and your team can get the job done.

Secondly, it allows you to ask questions and to initiate discussion. It may not be suitable within the presentation formats of your company to hold a discussion during the presentation itself but it does allow you to raise the issues, present the problems and at least to establish who amongst the audience could provide valuable input to your decision making.

Finally, presentations can be fun. They are your chance to speak your mind, to strut your stuff and to tell the people what the world is really like. While you hold the stage, the audience is bound by good manners to sit still and watch the performance.

## THE OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNICATION

The single most important observation is that the objective of communication is not the transmission but the reception. The whole preparation, presentation and content of a speech must therefore be geared not to the speaker but to the audience. The presentation of a perfect project plan is a failure if the audience do not understand or are not persuaded of its merits. A customers' tour is a waste of time if they leave without realising the full worth of your product. The objective of communication is to make your message understood and remembered.

The main problem with this objective is, of course, the people to whom you are talking. The average human being has a very short attention span and a million other things to think about. Your job in the presentation is to reach through this mental fog and to hold the attention long enough to make your point.

### The Plan

It is difficult to over estimate the importance of careful preparation. Five minutes on the floor in front of senior management could decide the acceptance of a proposal of several months duration for the manager and the whole team. With so much potentially at stake, the presenter must concentrate not only upon the facts being presented but upon the style, pace, tone and ultimately tactics which should be used. As a rule of thumb for an average presentation, no less than 1 hour should be spent in preparation for 5 minutes of talking.

Suppose you have a talk to give, where do you start?

### Formulate your Objectives

The starting point in planning any speech is to formulate a precise objective. This should take the form of a simple, concise statement of intent. For example, the

purpose of your speech may be to obtain funds, to evaluate a proposal, or to motivate your team. No two objectives will be served equally well by the same presentation; and if you are not sure at the onset what you are trying to do, it is unlikely that your plan will achieve it.

One question is: how many different objectives can you achieve, in say, 30 minutes - and the answer: not many. In the end it is far more productive to achieve one goal than to blunder over several. The best approach is to isolate the essential objective and to list at most two others which can be addressed providing they do not distract from the main one. *Focus is key*. If you do not focus upon your objective, it is unlikely that the audience will.

## Identify the Audience

The next task is to consider the audience to determine how best to achieve your objectives in the context of these people. Essentially this is done by identifying their aims and objectives while attending your presentation. If you can somehow convince them they are achieving those aims while at the same time achieving your own, you will find a helpful and receptive audience. For instance, if you are seeking approval for a new product plan from senior management it is useful to know and understand their main objectives. If they are currently worried that their product range is out of date and old fashioned, you would emphasise the innovative aspects of your new product; if they are fearful about product diversification you would then emphasise how well your new product fits within the existing catalogue.

This principal of matching the audience aims, however, goes beyond the simple salesmanship of an idea - it is the simplest and most effective manner of obtaining their attention at the beginning. If your opening remarks imply that you understand their problem and that you have a solution, then they will be flattered at your attention and attentive to your every word.

## Structure

All speeches should have a definite structure or format; a talk without a structure is a woolly mess. If you do not order your thoughts into a structured manner, the audience will not be able to follow them. Having established the aim of your presentation you should choose the most appropriate structure to achieve it.

However, the structure must not get in the way of the main message. If it is too complex, too convoluted or simply too noticeable the audience will be distracted. If a section is unnecessary to the achievement of your fundamental objectives, pluck it out.

## Sequential Argument

One of the simplest structures is that of sequential argument which consists of a series of linked statements ultimately leading to a conclusion. However, this simplicity can only be achieved by careful and deliberate delineation between each section.

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One technique is the use of frequent reminders to the audience of the main point which have proceeded and explicit explanation of how the next topic will lead on from this.

## NOTES

### **Hierarchical Decomposition**

In hierarchical decomposition the main topic is broken down into sub-topics and each sub-topics into smaller topics until eventually everything is broken down into very small basic units. In written communication this is a very powerful technique because it allows the reader to re-order the presentation at will, and to return to omitted topics at a later date. In verbal communication the audience is restricted to the order of the presenter and the hierarchy should be kept simple reinforced. As with sequential argument it is useful to summarise each section at its conclusion and to introduce each major new section with a statement of how it lies in the hierarchical order.

### **Question Orientated**

The aim of many presentations given by managers is to either explain a previous decision or to seek approval for a plan of action. In these cases, the format can be question orientated. The format is to introduce the problem and any relevant background, and then to outline the various solutions to that problem listing the advantages and disadvantages of each solution in turn. Finally, all possible options are summarised in terms of their pro's and con's, and either the preferred solution is presented for endorsement by the audience or a discussion is initiated leading to the decision. One trick for obtaining the desired outcome is to establish during the presentation the criteria by which the various options are to be judged; this alone should allow you to obtain your desired outcome.

### **Pyramid**

In a newspaper, the story is introduced in its entirety in a catchy first paragraph. The next few paragraphs repeat the same information only giving further details to each point. The next section repeats the entire story again, but developing certain themes within each of the sub-points and again adding more information. This is repeated until the reporter runs out of story. The editor then simply decides upon the newsworthiness of the report and cuts from the bottom to the appropriate number of column inches.

There are two main advantages to this style for presentations. Firstly, it can increase the audiences' receptiveness to the main ideas. Since at every stage of the pyramid they have all ready become familiar with the ideas and indeed know what to expect next. This sense of *deja vu* can falsely give the impression that what they are hearing are their own ideas. The second advantage is that the duration of the talk can be easily altered by cutting the talk in exactly the same way as the newspaper editor might have done to the news story. This degree of flexibility may be useful if the same presentation is to be used several times in different situations.

## The Meaty Sandwich

The simplest and most direct format remains the meaty sandwich. This is the simple beginning-middle-end format in which the main meat of the exposition is contained in the middle and is preceded by an introduction and followed by a summary and conclusion. This is really the appropriate format for all small sub-sections in all the previous structures. If the talk is short enough, or the topic simple enough, it can indeed form the entirety of the presentation.

### NOTES

## The Beginning

It is imperative to plan your beginning carefully; there are five main elements:

### Get their attention

Too often in a speech, the first few minutes of the presentation are lost while people adjust their coats, drift in with coffee and finish the conversation they were having with the person next to them. You only have a limited time and every minute is precious to you so, from the beginning, make sure they pay attention.

### Establish a theme

Basically, you need to start the audience thinking about the subject matter of your presentation. This can be done by a statement of your main objective, unless for some reason you wish to keep it hidden. They will each have some experience or opinions on this and at the beginning you must make them bring that experience into their own minds.

### Present a structure

If you explain briefly at the beginning of a talk how it is to proceed, then the audience will know what to expect. This can help to establish the theme and also provide something concrete to hold their attention. Ultimately, it provides a sense of security in the promise that this speech too will end.

### Create a rapport

If you can win the audience over in the first minute, you will keep them for the remainder. You should plan exactly how you wish to appear to them and use the beginning to establish that relationship. You may be presenting yourself as their friend, as an expert, perhaps even as a judge, but whatever role you choose you must establish it at the very beginning.

### Administration

When planning your speech you should make a note to find out if there are any administrative details which need to be announced at the beginning of your speech. This is not simply to make yourself popular with the people organising the session but also because if these details are overlooked the audience may become distracted as they wonder what is going to happen next.

## The Ending

The final impression you make on the audience is the one they will remember. Thus it is worth planning your last few sentences with extreme care.

### NOTES

As with the beginning, it is necessary first to get their attention, which will have wandered. This requires a change of pace, a new visual aid or perhaps the introduction of one final culminating idea. In some formats the ending will be a summary of the main points of the talk. One of the greatest mistakes is to tell the audience that this is going to be a summary because at that moment they simply switch off. Indeed it is best that the ending comes unexpectedly with that final vital phrase left hanging in the air and ringing round their memories. Alternatively the ending can be a flourish, with the pace and voice leading the audience through the final crescendo to the inevitable conclusion.

### Visual Aids

Most people expect visual reinforcement for any verbal message being delivered. While it would be unfair to blame television entirely for this, it is useful to understand what the audience is accustomed to, for two reasons: firstly, you can meet their expectations using the overhead projector, a slide show, or even a video presentation; secondly, if you depart from the framework of a square picture flashed before their eyes, and use a different format, then that novelty will be most arresting. For instance, if you are describing the four functions of a project manager then display the four "hats" he/she must wear; if you are introducing the techniques of brainstorming then brandish a fishing rod to "fish for" ideas.

With traditional visual aids however, there are a few rules which should be followed to ensure they are used effectively. Most are common sense, and most are commonly ignored. As with all elements of a speech, each different view should have a distinct purpose - and if it has no purpose it should be removed. With that purpose firmly in mind you should design the viewfoil for that purpose. Some viewfoils are there to reinforce the verbal message and so to assist in recall; others are used to explain information which can be more easily displayed than discussed: and some viewfoils are designed simply for entertainment and thus to pace the presentation.

If your viewfoil is scruffy then your audience will notice that, and not what is written upon it. Do not clutter a viewfoil or it will confuse rather than assist. Do not simply photocopy information if there is more data on the page than you wish to present; in these cases, the data should be extracted before being displayed. Make sure that your writing can be read from the back of the room. Talk to the audience, not the visual aid.

### The Delivery

*"The human body is truly fascinating - there are some I could watch all day"*  
- Anon

Whatever you say and whatever you show; it is you, yourself which will remain the focus of the audience's attention. If you but strut and fret your hour upon the stage and then are gone, no-one will remember what you said. The presenter has the power both to kill the message and to enhance it a hundred times beyond its worth. Your job as a manager is to use the potential of the presentation to ensure that the audience is motivated and inspired rather than disconcerted or distracted. There are five key facets of the human body which deserve attention in presentation skills: the eyes, the voice, the expression, the appearance, and how you stand.

### **The Eyes**

The eyes are said to be the key to the soul and are therefore the first and most effective weapon in convincing the audience of your honesty, openness and confidence in the objectives of your presentation. This impression may of course be totally false, but here is how to convey it.

Even when in casual conversation, your feelings of friendship and intimacy can be evaluated by the intensity and duration of eye contact. During the presentation you should use this to enhance your rapport with the audience by establishing eye contact with each and every member of the audience as often as possible. For small groups this is clearly possible but it can also be achieved in large auditoriums since the further the audience is away from the presenter the harder it is to tell precisely where he or she is looking. Thus by simply staring at a group of people at the back of a lecture theatre it is possible to convince each of them individually that he or she is the object of your attention. During presentations, try to hold your gaze fixed in specific directions for five or six seconds at a time. Shortly after each change in position, a slight smile will convince each person in that direction that you have seen and acknowledged them.

### **The Voice**

After the eyes comes the voice, and the two most important aspects of the voice for the public speaker are projection and variation. It is important to realise from the onset that few people can take their ordinary conversation voice and put it on stage. If you can, then perhaps you should move to Hollywood. The main difference comes in the degree of feedback which you can expect from the person to whom you are talking. In ordinary conversation you can see from the expression, perhaps a subtle movement of the eye, when a word or phrase has been missed or misunderstood. In front of an audience you have to make sure that this never happens. The simple advice is to slow down and to take your time. Remember the audience is constrained by good manners not to interrupt you so there is no need to maintain a constant flow of sound. A safe style is to be slightly louder and slightly slower than a fire-side chat with slightly deaf aunt. As you get used to the sound, you can adjust it by watching the audience.

A monotone speech is both boring and soporific, so it is important to try to vary the pitch and speed of your presentation. At the very least, each new sub-section

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should be proceeded by a pause and a change in tone to emphasise the delineation. If tonal variation does not come to you naturally try making use of rhetorical questions throughout your speech, since most British accents rise naturally at the end of a question.

### **Expression**

The audience watch your face. If you are looking listless or distracted then they will be listless and distracted; if you are smiling, they will be wondering why and listen to find out. In normal conversation your meaning is enhanced by facial reinforcement. Thus in a speech you must compensate both for stage nerves and for the distance between yourself and the audience. The message is quite simply: make sure that your facial expressions are natural, only more so.

### **Appearance**

There are many guides to management and presentation styles which lay heavy emphasis upon the way you dress and in the last analysis this is a matter of personal choice. That choice should however be deliberately made. When you are giving a presentation you must dress for the audience, not for yourself, if they think you look out of place, then you are.

As an aside, it is my personal opinion that there exists a code of conduct among engineers which emphasizes the scruffy look, and that in many organisations this tends to set the engineer apart, especially from management. It conveys the subliminal message that the engineer and the manager are not part of the same group and so hinders communication.

### **Stance**

When an actor initially learns a new character part, he or she will instinctively adopt a distinct posture or stance to convey that character. It follows therefore that while you are on stage, your stance and posture will convey a great deal about you. The least you must do is make sure your stance does not convey boredom; at best, you can use your whole body as a dynamic tool to reinforce your rapport with the audience.

The perennial problem is what to do with your hands. These must not wave aimlessly through the air, or fiddle constantly with a pen, or (worst of all visually) juggle change in your trouser pockets. The key is to keep your hands still, except when used in unison with your speech. To train them initially, find a safe resting place which is comfortable for you, and aim to return them there when any gesture is completed.

### **The Techniques of Speech**

Every speaker has a set of "tricks of the trade" which he or she holds dear - the following are a short selection of such advice taken from various sources.

## **Make an impression**

The average audience is very busy: they have husbands and wives, schedules and slippages, cars and mortgages; and although they will be trying very hard to concentrate on your speech, their minds will inevitably stray. Your job is to do something, anything, which captures their attention and makes a lasting impression upon them. Once you have planned your speech and honed it down to its few salient points, isolate the most important and devise some method to make it stick.

## **Repeat, Repeat**

The average audience is very busy: they have husbands or wives etc, etc - but repetition makes them hear. The average audience is easily distracted, and their attention will slip during the most important message of your speech - so repeat it. You don't necessarily have to use the resonant tonal sounds of the repeated phrase, but simply make the point again and again and again with different explanations and in different ways. The classic advice of the Sergeant Major is: "First you tell 'em what you are going to tell 'em, then you tell 'em, then you tell 'em what you told 'em!"

## **Draw a Sign**

Research into teaching has yielded the following observation: "We found that students who failed to get the point did so because they were not looking for it". If the audience knows when to listen, they will. So tell them: the important point is ...

## **Draw a Picture**

The human brain is used to dealing with images, and this ability can be used to make the message more memorable. This means using metaphors or analogies to express your message. Thus a phrase like "we need to increase the market penetration before there will be sufficient profits for a pay related bonus" becomes "we need a bigger slice of the cake before the feast".

## **Jokes**

The set piece joke can work very well, but it can also lead to disaster. You must choose a joke which is apt, and one which will not offend any member of the audience. This advice tends to rule out all racist, sexist or generally rude jokes. If this seems to rule out all the jokes you can think of, then you should avoid jokes in a speech.

Amusing asides are also useful in maintaining the attention of the audience, and for relieving the tension of the speech. If this comes naturally to you, then it is a useful tool for pacing your delivery to allow periods of relaxation in between your sign-posted major points.



**Plain Speech**

Yes!

## NOTES

**Short and Sweet**

One way to polish the presentation of the main point of your speech is to consider it thus. The day before your presentation, you are called to the office of the divisional vice-president; there you are introduced to the managing director and a representative of the company's major share holder; "O.K." says the vice president "we hear you have got something to say, we'll give you 30 seconds, *GO*". Can you do it?

If you can crystallise your thoughts and combine your main message with some memorable phrase or imagery, and present them both in 30 seconds then you have either the perfect ending or the basis for a fine presentation.

**The Narrative**

Everyone loves a story and stories can both instruct and convey a message: Zen Philosophy is recorded in its stories, and Christianity was originally taught in parables. If you can weave your message into a story or a personal anecdote, then you can have them wanting to hear your every word - even if you have to make it up.

**Rehearsal**

There is no substitute for rehearsal. You can do it in front of a mirror, or to an empty theatre. In both cases, you should accentuate your gestures and vocal projection so that you get used to the sound and sight of yourself. Do not be put off by the mirror - remember: you see a lot less of yourself than your friends do.

**Relaxation**

If you get nervous just before the show, either concentrate on controlling your breathing or welcome the extra adrenaline. The good news is that the audience will never notice your nerves nearly as much as you think. Similarly, if you dry-up in the middle -*smile*, look at your notes, and take your time. The silence will seem long to you, but less so to the audience.

**Conclusion**

Once the speech is over and you have calmed down, you should try to honestly evaluate your performance. Either alone, or with the help of a friend in the audience, decide what was the least successful aspect of your presentation and resolve to concentrate on that point in the next talk you give. If it is a problem associated with the preparation, then deal with it there; if it is a problem with your delivery, write yourself a reminder note and put it in front of you at the next talk.

Practice is only productive when you make a positive effort to improve - try it.

Presentations and reports are ways of communicating ideas and information to a group. But unlike a report, a presentation carries the speaker's personality better and allows immediate interaction between all the participants.

A report is the orderly presentation of the results of the research which seeks truth and interprets facts into constructive ideas and suggestions (Gwinn, 2007). A report is normally built on research that finds, develops, or substantiates knowledge. Once all the facts are collected, they are then organized and presented in a report designed to meet a need for specific information.

A presentation is created in the same manner as a report; however, it adds one additional element — **The Human Element**.

A good presentation contains at least four elements:

- o **Content** — It contains information that people need. But unlike reports, which are read at the reader's own pace, presentations must account for how much information the audience can absorb in one sitting.
- o **Structure** — It has a logical beginning, middle, and end. It must be sequenced and paced so that the audience can understand it. Where as reports have appendices and footnotes to guide the reader, the speaker must be careful not to loose the audience when wandering from the main point of the presentation.
- o **Packaging** — It must be well prepared. A report can be reread and portions skipped over, but with a presentation, the audience is at the mercy of a presenter.
- o **Human Element** — A good presentation will be remembered much more than a good report because it has a person attached to it. However, you must still analyze the audience's needs to determine if they would be better met if a report was sent instead.

### The Voice

The voice is probably the most valuable tool of the presenter. It carries most of the content that the audience takes away. One of the oddities of speech is that we can easily tell others what is wrong with their voice, e.g. too fast, too high, too soft, etc., but we have trouble listening to and changing our own voices.

There are five main terms used for defining vocal qualities (Grant-Williams, 2002):

- o **Volume:** How loud the sound is. The goal is to be heard without shouting. Good speakers lower their voice to draw the audience in, and raise it to make a point.

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- o **Tone:** The characteristics of a sound. An airplane has a different sound than leaves being rustled by the wind. A voice that carries fear can frighten the audience, while a voice that carries laughter can get the audience to smile.
- o **Pitch:** How high or low a note is. Pee Wee Herman has a high voice, Barbara Walters has a moderate voice, while James Earl Jones has a low voice.
- o **Pace:** This is how long a sound lasts. Talking too fast causes the words and syllables to be short, while talking slowly lengthens them. Varying the pace helps to maintain the audience's interest.
- o **Color:** Both projection and tone variance can be practiced by taking the line "This new policy is going to be exciting" and saying it first with surprise, then with irony, then with grief, and finally with anger. The key is to *over-act*. Remember Shakespeare's words "*All the world's a stage*" — presentations are the opening night on Broadway!

There are two good methods for improving your voice:

1. Listen to it! Practice listening to your voice while at home, driving, walking, etc. Then when you are at work or with company, monitor your voice to see if you are using it how you want to.
2. To really listen to your voice, cup your right hand around your right ear and gently pull the ear forward. Next, cup your left hand around your mouth and direct the sound straight into your ear. This helps you to really hear your voice as others hear it... and it might be completely different from the voice you thought it was! Now practice moderating your voice.

### The Body

Your body communicates different impressions to the audience. People not only listen to you, they also watch you. Slouching tells them you are indifferent or you do not care... even though you might care a great deal! On the other hand, displaying good posture tells your audience that you know what you are doing and you care deeply about it. Also, a good posture helps you to speak more clearly and effectively.

Throughout your presentation, display :

- o **Eye contact:** This helps to regulate the flow of communication. It signals interest in others and increases the speaker's credibility. Speakers who make eye contact open the flow of communication and convey interest, concern, warmth, and credibility.
- o **Facial Expressions:** Smiling is a powerful cue that transmits happiness, friendliness, warmth, and liking. So, if you smile frequently you will be perceived as more likable, friendly, warm, and approachable. Smiling is

often contagious and others will react favorably. They will be more comfortable around you and will want to listen to you more.

- o **Gestures:** If you fail to gesture while speaking, you may be perceived as boring and stiff. A lively speaking style captures attention, makes the material more interesting, and facilitates understanding.
- o **Posture and body orientation:** You communicate numerous messages by the way you talk and move. Standing erect and leaning forward communicates that you are approachable, receptive, and friendly. Interpersonal closeness results when you and your audience face each other. Speaking with your back turned or looking at the floor or ceiling should be avoided as it communicates disinterest.
- o **Proximity:** Cultural norms dictate a comfortable distance for interaction with others. You should look for signals of discomfort caused by invading other's space. Some of these are: rocking, leg swinging, tapping, and gaze aversion. Typically, in large rooms, space invasion is not a problem. In most instances there is too much distance. To counteract this, move around the room to increase interaction with your audience. Increasing the proximity enables you to make better eye contact and increases the opportunities for others to speak.
- o **Voice.** One of the major criticisms of speakers is that they speak in a monotone voice. Listeners perceive this type of speaker as boring and dull. People report that they learn less and lose interest more quickly when listening to those who have not learned to modulate their voices.

## Active Listening

Good speakers not only inform their audience, they also listen to them. By listening, you know if they are understanding the information and if the information is important to them. **Active listening** is NOT the same as **hearing**! Hearing is the first part and consists of the perception of sound.

Listening, the second part, involves an attachment of meaning to the aural symbols that are perceived. Passive listening occurs when the receiver has little motivation to listen carefully. Active listening with a purpose is used to gain information, to determine how another person feels, and to understand others. Some good traits of effective listeners are:

- o Spend more time listening than talking (but of course, as a presenter, you will be doing most of the talking).
- o Do not finish the sentence of others.
- o Do not answer questions with questions.
- o Aware of biases. We all have them. We need to control them.

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- o Never daydream or become preoccupied with their own thoughts when others talk.
- o Let the other speaker talk. Do not dominate the conversation.
- o Plan responses after others have finished speaking...NOT while they are speaking. Their full concentration is on what others are saying, not on what they are going to respond with.
- o Provide feedback but do not interrupt incessantly.
- o Analyze by looking at all the relevant factors and asking open-ended questions. Walk the person through analysis (summarize).
- o Keep the conversation on what the speaker says...NOT on what interest them.

Listening can be one of our most **powerful** communication tools! Be sure to use it!

Part of the listening process is getting feedback by changing and altering the message so the intention of the original communicator is understood by the second communicator. This is done by paraphrasing the words of the sender and restating the sender's feelings or ideas in your own words, rather than repeating their words. Your words should be saying, "This is what I understand your feelings to be, am I correct?" It not only includes verbal responses, but also nonverbal ones. Nodding your head or squeezing their hand to show agreement, dipping your eyebrows to show you don't quite understand the meaning of their last phrase, or sucking air in deeply and blowing out hard shows that you are also exasperated with the situation.

Carl Rogers (1957) listed five main categories of feedback (Demos, Zurwaylif, 1962). They are listed in the order in which they occur most frequently in daily conversations (notice that we make judgments more often than we try to understand):

1. **Evaluative:** Makes a judgment about the worth, goodness, or appropriateness of the other person's statement.
2. **Interpretive:** Paraphrasing to explain what another person's statement mean.
3. **Supportive:** Attempt to assist or bolster the other communicator
4. **Probing:** Attempt to gain additional information, continue the discussion, or clarify a point.
5. **Understanding:** Attempt to discover completely what the other communicator means by her statements.

### Nerves

The main enemy of a presenter is tension, which ruins the voice, posture, and spontaneity. The voice becomes higher as the throat tenses. Shoulders tighten up and limits flexibility while the legs start to shake and causes unsteadiness. The

presentation becomes *canned* as the speaker locks in on the notes and starts to read directly from them.

First, **do not fight nerves, welcome them!** Then you can get on with the presentation instead of focusing in on being nervous. Actors recognize the value of nerves...they add to the value of the performance. This is because adrenaline starts to kick in. It's a left over from our ancestors' "fight or flight" syndrome. If you welcome nerves, then the presentation becomes a challenge and you become better. If you let your nerves take over, then you go into the flight mode by withdrawing from the audience. Again, welcome your nerves, recognize them, let them help you gain that needed edge! Do not go into the flight mode! When you feel tension or anxiety, remember that everyone gets them, but the winners use them to their advantage, while the losers get overwhelmed by them.

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Tension can be reduced by performing some relaxation exercises. Listed below are a couple to get you started:

- o Before the presentation: Lie on the floor. Your back should be flat on the floor. Pull your feet towards you so that your knees are up in the air. Relax. Close your eyes. Feel your back spreading out and supporting your weight. Feel your neck lengthening. Work your way through your body, relaxing one section at a time — your toes, feet, legs, torso, etc. When finished, stand up slowly and try to maintain the relaxed feeling in a standing position.
- o If you cannot lie down: Stand with your feet about 6 inches apart, arms hanging by your sides, and fingers unclenched. Gently shake each part of your body, starting with your hands, then arms, shoulders, torso, and legs. Concentrate on shaking out the tension. Then slowly rotate your shoulders forwards and the backwards. Move on to your head. Rotate it slowly clockwise, and then counter-clockwise.
- o Mental Visualization: Before the presentation, visualize the room, audience, and you giving the presentation. Mentally go over what you are going to do from the moment you start to the end of the presentation.
- o During the presentation: Take a moment to yourself by getting a drink of water, take a deep breath, concentrate on relaxing the most tense part of your body, and then return to the presentation saying to your self, "I can do it!"
- o You do NOT need to get rid of anxiety and tension! Channel the energy into concentration and expressiveness.
- o Know that anxiety and tension is not as noticeable to the audience as it is to you.
- o Know that even the best presenters make mistakes. The key is to continue on after the mistake. If you pick up and continue, so will the audience. Winners continue! Losers stop!

- o Never drink alcohol to reduce tension! It affects not only your coordination but also your awareness of coordination. You might not realize it, but your audience will!

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**Questioning**

Keep cool if a questioner disagrees with you. You are a professional! No matter how hard you try, not everyone in the world will agree with you!

Although some people get a perverse pleasure from putting others on the spot, and some try to look good in front of the boss, most people ask questions from a genuine interest. Questions do not mean you did not explain the topic good enough, but that their interest is deeper than the average audience.

Always allow time at the end of the presentation for questions. After inviting questions, do not rush ahead if no one asks a question. Pause for about 6 seconds to allow the audience to gather their thoughts. When a question is asked, repeat the question to ensure that everyone heard it (and that you heard it correctly). When answering, direct your remarks to the entire audience. That way, you keep everyone focused, not just the questioner. To reinforce your presentation, try to relate the question back to the main points.

Make sure you listen to the question being asked. If you do not understand it, ask them to clarify. Pause to think about the question as the answer you give may be correct, but ignore the main issue. If you do not know the answer, be honest, do not waffle. Tell them you will get back to them... and make sure you do!

Answers that last 10 to 40 seconds work best. If they are too short, they seem abrupt; while longer answers appear too elaborate. Also, be sure to keep on track. Do not let off-the-wall questions sidetrack you into areas that are not relevant to the presentation.

If someone takes issue with something you said, try to find a way to agree with part of their argument. For example, "Yes, I understand your position..." or "I'm glad you raised that point, but..." The idea is to praise their point and agree with them as audiences sometimes tend to think of "us verses you." You do not want to risk alienating them.

**Preparing the Presentation**

After a concert, a fan rushed up to famed violinist Fritz Kreisler and gushed, "I'd give up my whole life to play as beautifully as you do." Kreisler replied, "I did."

**To fail to prepare is to prepare to fail**

The first step of a great presentations is preplanning. Preparing for a presentation basically follows the same guidelines as a *meeting* (a helpful guide on preparing and conducting a meeting, such as acquiring a room, informing participants, etc.)

The second step is to prepare the presentation. A good presentation starts out with introductions and may include an icebreaker such as a story, interesting statement or fact, or an activity to get the group warmed up. The introduction also needs an objective, that is, the purpose or goal of the presentation. This not only tells you what you will talk about, but it also informs the audience of the purpose of the presentation.

Next, comes the body of the presentation. Do NOT write it out word for word. All you want is an outline. By jotting down the main points on a set of index cards, you not only have your outline, but also a memory jogger for the actual presentation. To prepare the presentation, ask yourself the following:

- o What is the purpose of the presentation?
- o Who will be attending?
- o What does the audience already know about the subject?
- o What is the audience's attitude towards me (e.g. hostile, friendly)?

A 45 minutes talk should have no more than about seven main points. This may not seem like very many, but if you are to leave the audience with a clear picture of what you have said, you cannot expect them to remember much more than that. There are several options for structuring the presentation:

- o **Timeline:** Arranged in sequential order.
- o **Climax:** The main points are delivered in order of increasing importance.
- o **Problem/Solution:** A problem is presented, a solution is suggested, and benefits are then given.
- o **Classification:** The important items are the major points.
- o **Simple to complex:** Ideas are listed from the simplest to the most complex. Can also be done in reverse order.

You want to include some visual information that will help the audience understand your presentation. Develop charts, graphs, slides, handouts, etc.

After the body, comes the closing. This is where you ask for questions, provide a wrap-up (summary), and thank the participants for attending.

Notice that you told them what they are about to hear (the objective), told them (the body), and told them what they heard (the wrap up).

And finally, the important part — practice, practice and practice. The main purpose of creating an outline is to develop a coherent plan of what you want to talk about. You should know your presentation so well, that during the actual presentation, you should only have to briefly glance at your notes to ensure you are staying on track. This will also help you with your nerves by giving you the confidence that you can



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do it. Your practice session should include a live session by practicing in front of coworkers, family, or friends. They can be valuable at providing feedback and it gives you a chance to practice controlling your nerves. Another great feedback technique is to make a video or audio tape of your presentation and review it critically with a colleague.

### Habits

We all have a few habits, and some are more annoying than others. For example, if we say “uh”, “you know,” or put our hands in our pockets and jingle our keys too often during a presentation, it distracts from the message we are trying to get across.

The best way to break one of these distracting habits is with immediate feedback. This can be done with a small group of coworkers, family, or friends. Take turns giving small off-the-cuff talks about your favorite hobby, work project, first work assignment, etc. The talk should last about five minutes. During a speaker’s first talk, the audience should listen and watch for annoying habits.

After the presentation, the audience should agree on the worst two or three habits that take the most away from the presentation. After agreement, each audience member should write these habits on a 8 1/2 “x 11” sheet of paper (such as the word “Uh”). Use a magic marker and write in BIG letters.

The next time the person gives her or his talk, each audience member should wave the corresponding sign in the air whenever they hear or see the annoying habit. For most people, this method will break a habit by practicing at least once a day for one to two weeks.

### Slides

Your slides should not only be engaging, but also easy to understand quickly (Reynolds, 2008). Think “Visual” — such as pictures, charts, and drawings that support what you will be speaking about. You want the slides to support and clarify the story you will be telling rather than simply be redundant text that mimics what you are saying.

### Tips and Techniques For Great Presentations

Eleanor Roosevelt was a shy young girl who was terrified at the thought of speaking in public. But with each passing year, she grew in confidence and self-esteem. She once said, “No one can make you feel inferior, unless you agree with it.”

- o If you have handouts, do not read straight from them. The audience does not know if they should read along with you or listen to you read.
- o Do not put both hands in your pockets for long periods of time. This tends to make you look unprofessional. It is OK to put one hand in a pocket but ensure there is no loose change or keys to jingle around. This will distract

the listeners.

- o Do not wave a pointer around in the air like a wild knight branding a sword to slay a dragon. Use the pointer for what it is intended and then put it down, otherwise the audience will become fixated upon your "sword", instead upon you.
- o Do not lean on the podium for long periods. The audience will begin to wonder when you are going to fall over.
- o Speak to the audience...NOT to the visual aids, such as flip charts or overheads. Also, do not stand between the visual aid and the audience.
- o Speak clearly and loudly enough for all to hear. Do not speak in a monotone voice. Use inflection to emphasize your main points.
- o The disadvantages of presentations is that people cannot see the punctuation and this can lead to misunderstandings. An effective way of overcoming this problem is to pause at the time when there would normally be punctuation marks.
- o Learn the name of each participant as quickly as possible. Based upon the atmosphere you want to create, call them by their first names or by using Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.
- o Tell them what name and title you prefer to be called.
- o Listen intently to comments and opinions. By using a *lateral thinking technique* (adding to ideas rather than dismissing them), the audience will feel that their ideas, comments, and opinions are worthwhile.
- o Circulate around the room as you speak. This movement creates a physical closeness to the audience.
- o List and discuss your objectives at the beginning of the presentation. Let the audience know how your presentation fits in with their goals. Discuss some of the fears and apprehensions that both you and the audience might have. Tell them what they should expect of you and how you will contribute to their goals.
- o Vary your techniques (lecture, discussion, debate, films, slides, reading, etc.)
- o Get to the presentation before your audience arrives; be the last one to leave.
- o Be prepared to use an alternate approach if the one you've chosen seems to bog down. You should be confident enough with your own material so that the audience's interests and concerns, not the presentation outline, determines the format. Use your background, experience, and knowledge to interrelate your subject matter.

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- o When writing on flip charts use no more than 7 lines of text per page and no more than 7 word per line (the 7 x 7 rule). Also, use bright and bold colors, and pictures as well as text.
- o Consider the time of day and how long you have got for your talk. Time of day can affect the audience. After lunch is known as the graveyard section in training and speaking circles as audiences will feel more like a nap than attending a presentation.
- o Most people find that if they practice in their head, the actual talk will take about 25 percent longer. Using a flip chart or other visual aids also adds to the time. Remember — **it is better to finish slightly early than to over-run.**

# 9 Meetings

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## The Chapter Covers :

- Types of meetings
- Meeting frequency options
- Running Corporate Meetings
- Media Management
- Being strategic
- Building a media culture
- Working with partners and inspectorates
- Media monitoring and evaluation
- Managing a media crisis
- Prepare for the Crisis

## Definitions

An act or process of coming together as an assembly for a common purpose. A meeting is a gathering of two or more people that has been convened for the purpose of achieving a common goal through verbal interaction, such as sharing information or reaching agreement. Meetings may occur face to face or virtually, as mediated by communications technology, such as a telephone conference call, a skyped conference call or a videoconference.

Thus, a meeting may be distinguished from other gatherings, such as a chance encounter (not convened), a sports game or a concert (verbal interaction is incidental), a party or the company of friends (no common goal is to be achieved) and a demonstration (whose common goal is achieved mainly through the number of demonstrators present, not verbal interaction).

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Commercially, the term is used by meeting planners and other meeting professionals to denote an event booked at a hotel, convention center or any other venue dedicated to such gatherings. In this sense, the term meeting covers a lecture (one presentation), seminar (typically several presentations, small audience, one day), conference (mid-size, one or more days), congress (large, several days), exhibition or trade show (with manned stands being visited by passers-by), workshop (smaller, with active participants), training course, team-building session and kick-off event.

## TYPES OF MEETINGS

Meetings are often held in conference rooms

Common types of meeting include:

1. Investigative Meeting, generally when conducting a pre-interview, exit interview or a meeting among the investigator and representative
2. Work Meeting, which produces a product or intangible result such as a decision
3. Staff meeting, typically a meeting between a manager and those that report to the manager
4. Team meeting, a meeting among colleagues working on various aspects of a team project
5. Ad-hoc meeting, a meeting called for a special purpose
6. Management meeting, a meeting among managers
7. Board meeting, a meeting of the Board of directors of an organization
8. One-on-one meeting, between two individuals
9. Off-site meeting, also called "offsite retreat" and known as an Awayday meeting in the UK
10. Kickoff meeting, the first meeting with the project team and the client of the project to discuss the role of each team member
11. Pre-Bid Meeting, a meeting of various competitors and or contractors to visually inspect a jobsite for a future project. The meeting is normally hosted by the future customer or engineer who wrote the project specification to ensure all bidders are aware of the details and services expected of them. Attendance at the Pre-Bid Meeting may be mandatory. Failure to attend usually results in a rejected bid

## MEETING FREQUENCY OPTIONS

Since a meeting can be held once or often, the meeting organizer has to determine the repetition and frequency of occurrence of the meeting. Options generally include the following:

- A *one-time meeting* is the most common meeting type and covers events that are self-contained. While they may repeat often, the individual meeting is the entirety of the event. This can include a 2006 conference. The 2007 version of the conference is a stand-alone meeting event.
- A *recurring meeting* is a meeting that recurs periodically, such as an every Monday staff meeting from 9:00AM to 9:30 AM. The meeting organizer wants the participants to be at the meeting on a constant and repetitive basis. A recurring meeting can be ongoing, such as a weekly team meeting, or have an end date, such as a 5 week training meeting, held every Friday afternoon.
- A *series meeting* is like a recurring meeting, but the details differ from meeting to meeting. One example of a series meeting is a monthly "lunch and learn" event at a company, church, club or organization. The placeholder is the same, but the agenda and topics to be covered vary. This is more of a recurring meeting with the details to be determined.

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## Six Tips for More Effective Meetings

### 1. Don't Meet

Avoid a meeting if the same information could be covered in a memo, e-mail or brief report. One of the keys to having more effective meetings is differentiating between the need for one-way information dissemination and two-way information sharing. To disseminate information you can use a variety of other communication media, such as sending an e-mail or posting the information on your company's intranet. If you want to be certain you have delivered the right message, you can schedule a meeting to simply answer questions about the information you have sent. By remembering to ask yourself, "*Is a meeting the best way to handle this?*" you'll cut down on wasted meeting time and restore your group's belief that the meetings they attend are necessary.

### 2. Set Objectives for the Meeting

Set objectives before the meeting! Before planning the agenda for the meeting, write down a phrase or several phrases to complete the sentence: *By the end of the meeting, I want the group to...* Depending on the focus of your meeting, your ending to the sentence might include phrases such as: *...be able to list the top three features of our newest product, ...have generated three ideas for increasing our sales, ...understand the way we do business with customers, ...leave with an action plan, ...decide on a new widget supplier, or ...solve the design problem.*

One benefit of setting objectives for the meeting is to help you plan the meeting. The more concrete your meeting objectives, the more focused your agenda will be. A second important benefit of having specific objectives for each meeting is that you have a concrete measure against which you can

evaluate that meeting. Were you successful in meeting the objectives? Why or why not? Is another meeting required? Setting meeting objectives allows you to continuously improve your effective meeting process.

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### 3. Provide an Agenda Beforehand

Provide all participants with an agenda before the meeting starts. Your agenda needs to include a brief description of the meeting objectives, a list of the topics to be covered and a list stating who will address each topic and for how long. When you send the agenda, you should include the time, date and location of the meeting and any background information participants will need to know to hold an informed discussion on the meeting topic. What's the most important thing you should do with your agenda? Follow it closely!

### 4. Assign Meeting Preparation

Give all participants something to prepare for the meeting, and that meeting will take on a new significance to each group member. For problem-solving meetings, have the group read the background information necessary to get down to business in the meeting. Ask each group member to think of one possible solution to the problem to get everyone thinking about the meeting topic. For example, to start a sales meeting on a positive note, have all participants recall their biggest success since the last meeting and ask one person to share his success with the group. For less formal meetings or brainstorming sessions, ask a trivia question related to the meeting topic and give the correct answer in the first few minutes of the meeting. These tips are sure-fire ways to warm up the group and direct participants' attention to the meeting objectives.

### 5. Assign Action Items

Don't finish any discussion in the meeting without deciding how to act on it. Listen for key comments that flag potential action items and don't let them pass by without addressing them during your meeting. Statements such as *We should really...*, *that's a topic for a different meeting...*, or *I wonder if we could...* are examples of comments that should trigger action items to get a task done, hold another meeting or further examine a particular idea. Assigning tasks and projects as they arise during the meeting means that your follow-through will be complete. Addressing off-topic statements during the meeting in this way also allows you to keep the meeting on track. By immediately addressing these statements with the suggestion of making an action item to examine the issue outside of the current meeting, you show meeting participants that you value their input as well as their time.

### 6. Examine Your Meeting Process

Assign the last few minutes of every meeting as time to review the following questions: *What worked well in this meeting? What can we do to im-*

*prove our next meeting?* Every participant should briefly provide a point-form answer to these questions. Answers to the second question should be phrased in the form of a suggested action. For example, if a participant's answer is stated as *Jim was too long-winded*, ask the participant to rephrase the comment as an action. The statement *We should be more to-the-point when stating our opinions* is a more constructive suggestion. Remember – don't leave the meeting without assessing what took place and making a plan to improve the next meeting!

## Meeting Tips Summary

### Don't Meet.

Avoid a meeting if the same information could be covered in a memo, e-mail or brief report.

- **Set Objectives for the Meeting.**

Before planning the agenda, determine the objective of the meeting. The more concrete your objectives, the more focused your agenda will be.

- **Provide an Agenda Beforehand.**

Your agenda needs to include a one-sentence description of the meeting objectives, a list of the topics to be covered and a list stating who will address each topic for how long. Follow the agenda closely during the meeting.

- **Assign Meeting Preparation.**

Give all participants something to prepare for the meeting, and that meeting will take on a new significance to each group member.

- **Assign Action Items.**

Don't finish any discussion in the meeting without deciding how to act on it.

- **Examine Your Meeting Process.**

Don't leave the meeting without assessing what took place and making a plan to improve the next meeting.

## RUNNING CORPORATE MEETINGS

Here are the rules for running meetings. Meetings are vital for management and communication. Properly run meetings save time, increase motivation, productivity, and solve problems. Meetings create new ideas and initiatives. Meetings achieve buy-in. Meetings prevent 'not invented here' syndrome. Meetings diffuse conflict in a way that emails and memos cannot. Meetings are effective because the written word only carries 7% of the true meaning and feeling. Meetings are better than



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telephone conferences because only 38% of the meaning and feeling is carried in the way that things are said. The other 55% of the meaning and feeling is carried in facial expression and non-verbal signals. That's why meetings are so useful. (Statistics from research by Dr Albert Mehrabian.)

Hold meetings, even if it's difficult to justify the time. Plan, run and follow up meetings properly, and they will repay the cost many times over because there is still no substitute for physical face-to-face meetings. Hold meetings to manage teams and situations, and achieve your objectives quicker, easier, at less cost. Hold effective meetings to make people happier and more productive.

Brainstorming meetings are immensely powerful for team-building, creativity, decision-making and problem-solving (see the brainstorming section).

See also how to run workshops and workshop meetings.

Techniques of goal planning and project management are useful for running effective meetings.

Presentation skills and delegation abilities are helpful in meetings, and so is a basic understanding of motivation and personality.

Problem solving and decision-making are important in many meetings, although always consider how much of these responsibilities you can give to the group, which typically depends on their experience and the seriousness of the issue.

Meetings which involve people and encourage participation and responsibility are more constructive than meetings in which the leader tells, instructs and makes all the decisions, which is not a particularly productive style of leadership.

Holding meetings is an increasingly expensive activity, hence the need to run meetings well. Badly run meetings waste time, money, resources, and are worse than having no meetings at all.

The need to run effective meetings is more intense than ever in modern times, given ever-increasing pressures on people's time, and the fact that people are rarely now based in the same location, due to mobile working and progressively 'globalised' teams and organisational structures.

New technology provides several alternatives to the conventional face-to-face meeting around a table, for example phone and video-conferencing, increasingly mobile and web-based. These 'virtual meeting' methods save time and money, but given the advantages of physical face-to-face communications (see the Mehrabian theory) there will always be a trade-off between the efficiencies of 'virtual meetings' (phone and video-conferencing notably) and the imperfections of remote communications methods (notably the inability to convey body language effectively via video conferencing, and the inability to convey body language and facial expressions by phone communications).

Accordingly, choose meeting methods that are appropriate for the situation. Explore other options such as telephone conferencing and video conferencing before deciding that a physical meeting is required, and decide what sort of meeting is appropriate for the situation. Subject to obvious adaptations and restrictions, the main principles of running physical face-to-face meetings apply to running virtual meetings.

Physical face-to-face meetings are the most effective type of meetings for conveying feelings and meanings. Therefore it is not sensible or fair to hold a virtual (phone or video-conferencing) meeting about a very serious matter. Understand that meaning and feelings can be lost or confused when people are not physically sitting in the same room as each other. Trying to save time and money by holding virtual meetings for serious matters is often a false economy for the organisation, and can actually be very unfair to staff if the matter significantly affects their personal futures or well-being.

A meeting provides a special opportunity to **achieve organisational outcomes**, and also to **help the attendees** in a variety of ways, so approach all meetings keeping in mind these two different mutually supporting aims.

**The aim and test of a well run meeting is that whatever the subject, people feel afterwards that it took care of their needs, as well as the items on the agenda.**

### **Factors affecting how best to run meetings**

Your choice of structure and style in running an effective meeting is hugely dependent on several factors:

- the situation (circumstances, mood, atmosphere, background, etc)
- the organisational context (the implications and needs of the business or project or organisation)
- the team, or the meeting delegates (the needs and interests of those attending)
- you yourself (your own role, confidence, experience, your personal aims, etc)
- your position and relationship with the team
- and of course the aims of the meeting.

There will always be more than one aim, because aside from the obvious reason(s) for the meeting, all meetings bring with them the need and opportunity to care for and/or to develop people, as individuals and/or as a team.

When you run a meeting you are making demands on people's time and attention. When you run meeting you have an authority to do so, which you must use wisely.

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This applies also if the people at the meeting are not your direct reports, and even if they are not a part of your organisation.

Whatever the apparent reason for the meeting, you have a responsibility to manage the meeting so that it is a positive and helpful experience for all who attend.

Having this aim, alongside the specific meeting objective(s), will help you develop an ability and reputation for running effective meetings that people are happy to attend.

Having a good understanding of other areas of management, including many featured on this website, will improve your overall ability to run meetings, for example:

- delegation
- goal planning
- project management
- the Tuckman model of team maturity and development
- the Tannenbaum and Schmidt model of team development
- personality and styles
- facilitative decision-making (Sharon Drew Morgen's methodology - it's not just for selling)
- ethical and social responsibility considerations (ethical reference points are essential)

### **Meetings - basic rules**

Here is a solid basic structure for most types of meetings. This assumes you have considered properly and decided that the meeting is necessary, and also that you have decided (via consultation with those affected if necessary or helpful) what sort of meeting to hold.

1. **plan - use the agenda as a planning tool**
2. **circulate the meeting agenda in advance**
3. **run the meeting - keep control, agree outcomes, actions and responsibilities, take notes**
4. **write and circulate notes - especially actions and accountabilities**
5. **follow up agreed actions and responsibilities**

Meetings come in all shapes and sizes, and for lots of purposes.

Meeting purposes include:

- giving information
- training
- discussion (leading to an objective)
- generating ideas
- planning
- workshops
- consulting and getting feedback
- finding solutions/solving problems
- crisis management
- performance reporting/assessment
- setting targets and objectives
- setting tasks and delegating
- making decisions
- conveying /clarifying policy issues
- team building
- motivating
- special subjects - guest speakers
- inter-departmental - process improvement

The acronym POSTAD TV helps to remember how to plan effective meetings, and particularly how to construct the meeting agenda, and then notify the meeting delegates:

Priorities, Outcomes, Sequence, Timings, Agenda, Date, Time, Venue.

### **Meeting priorities**

What is the meeting's purpose, or purposes? Always have a clear purpose; otherwise don't have a meeting. Decide the issues for inclusion in the meeting and their relative priority: importance and urgency - they are quite different and need treating in different ways. Important matters do not necessarily need to be resolved quickly. Urgent matters generally do not warrant a lot of discussion. Matters that are both urgent and important are clearly serious priorities that need careful planning and management.

You can avoid the pressure for 'Any Other Business' at the end of the meeting if you circulate a draft agenda in advance of the meeting, and ask for any other items

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for consideration. ('Any Other Business' often creates a free-for-all session that wastes time, and gives rise to new tricky expectations, which if not managed properly then closes the meeting on a negative note.)

## NOTES

### Meeting outcomes

Decide the type of outcome (i.e., what is the purpose) for each issue, and put this on the agenda alongside the item heading. This is important as people need to know what is expected of them, and each item will be more productive with a clear aim at the outset. Typical types of outcomes are:

- Decision
- Discussion
- Information
- Planning (eg workshop session)
- Generating ideas
- Getting feedback
- Finding solutions
- Agreeing (targets, budgets, aims, etc)
- Policy statement
- Team-building/motivation
- Guest speaker - information, initiatives, etc.

### Meeting sequence

Put the less important issues at the top of the agenda, not the bottom. If you put them on the bottom you may never get to them because you'll tend to spend all the time on the big issues.

Ensure any urgent issues are placed up the agenda. Non-urgent items place down the agenda - if you are going to miss any you can more easily afford to miss these.

Try to achieve a varied mix through the running order - if possible avoid putting heavy controversial items together - vary the agenda to create changes in pace and intensity.

Be aware of the tendency for people to be at their most sensitive at the beginning of meetings, especially if there are attendees who are keen to stamp their presence on proceedings. For this reason it can be helpful to schedule a particularly controversial issue later in the sequence, which gives people a chance to settle down and relax first, and maybe get some of the sparring out of their systems over less significant items.

Also be mindful of the lull that generally affects people after lunch, so try to avoid scheduling the most boring item of the agenda at this time; instead after lunch get people participating and involved, whether speaking, presenting, debating or doing other active things.

### **Meeting timings (of agenda items)**

Consider the time required for the various items rather than habitually or arbitrarily decide the length of the meeting. Allocate a realistic time slot for each item. Keep the timings realistic - usually things take longer than you think.

Long meetings involving travel for delegates require pre-meeting refreshments 30 minutes prior to the actual meeting start time.

Put plenty of breaks into long meetings. Unless people are participating and fully involved, their concentration begins to drop after just 45 minutes. Breaks don't all need to be 20 minutes for coffee and cigarettes. Five minutes every 45-60 minutes for a quick breath of fresh air and leg-stretch will help keep people attentive.

Unless you have a specific reason for arranging one, avoid formal sit-down restaurant lunches - they'll add at least 30 minutes unnecessarily to the lunch break, and the whole thing makes people drowsy. Working lunches are great, but make sure you give people 10-15 minutes to get some fresh air and move about outside the meeting room. If the venue is only able to provide lunch in the restaurant, arrange a buffet, or if a sit-down meal is unavoidable save some time by the giving delegates' menu choices to the restaurant earlier in the day.

It's not essential, but it is usually helpful, to put precise (planned) times for each item on the agenda. What is essential however is for you to have thought about and planned the timings so you can run the sessions according to a schedule. In other words, if the delegates don't have precise timings on their agendas - make sure you have them on yours. This is one of the biggest responsibilities of the person running the meeting, and is a common failing, so plan and manage this aspect firmly. People will generally expect you to control the timekeeping, and will usually respect a decision to close a discussion for the purpose of good timekeeping, even if the discussion is still in full flow.

### **Meeting attendees**

It's often obvious who should attend; but sometimes it isn't. Consider inviting representatives from other departments to your own department meetings - if relationships are not great they will often appreciate being asked, and it will help their understanding of your issues, and your understanding of theirs.

Having outside guests from internal and external suppliers helps build relationships and strengthen the chain of supply, and they can often also shed new light on difficult issues too. Use your discretion though - certain sensitive issues should obviously not be aired with 'outsiders' present.

## NOTES

Avoid and resist senior managers and directors attending your meetings unless you can be sure that their presence will be positive, and certainly not intimidating. Senior people are often quick to criticise and pressurise without knowing the facts, which can damage team relationships, morale, motivation and trust.

If you must have the boss at your meeting, try to limit their involvement to lunch only, or presenting the awards at the end of the meeting. In any event, tell your boss what you are trying to achieve at the meeting and how - this gives you more chance in controlling possible interference.

### Meeting date

Ensure the date you choose causes minimum disruption for all concerned. It's increasingly difficult to gather people for meetings, particularly from different departments or organisations. So take care when finding the best date - it's a very important part of the process, particularly if senior people are involved.

For meetings that repeat on a regular basis the easiest way to set dates is to agree them in advance at the first meeting when everyone can commit there and then. Try to schedule a year's worth of meetings if possible, then you can circulate and publish the dates, which helps greatly to ensure people keep to them and that no other priorities encroach.

Pre-planning meeting dates is one of the keys to achieving control and well-organised meetings. Conversely, leaving it late to agree dates for meetings will almost certainly inconvenience people, which is a major source of upset.

Generally try to consult to get agreement of best meeting dates for everyone, but ultimately you will often need to be firm. Use the 'inertia method', i.e., suggest a date and invite alternative suggestions, rather than initially asking for suggestions, which rarely achieves a quick agreement.

### Meeting time

Times to start and finish depend on the type and duration of the meeting and the attendees' availability, but generally try to start early, or finish at the end of the working day. Two-hour meetings in the middle of the day waste a lot of time in travel. Breakfast meetings are a good idea in certain cultures, but can be too demanding in more relaxed environments. If attendees have long distances to travel (i.e., more than a couple of hours, consider overnight accommodation on the night before.

If the majority have to stay overnight it's often worth getting the remainder to do so as well because the team building benefits from evening socialising are considerable, and well worth the cost of a hotel room. Overnight accommodation the night before also allows for a much earlier start. By the same token, consider people's travelling times after the meeting, and don't be unreasonable - again offer overnight

accommodation if warranted - it will allow a later finish, and generally keep people happier.

As with other aspects of the meeting arrangements, if in doubt always ask people what they prefer. Why guess when you can find out what people actually want, especially if the team is mature and prefers to be consulted anyway.

## NOTES

## Meeting venue

Many meetings are relatively informal, held in meeting rooms 'on-site' and do not warrant extensive planning of the venue as such. On the other hand, big important meetings held off-site at unfamiliar venues very definitely require a lot of careful planning of the venue layout and facilities. Plan the venue according to the situation - leave nothing to chance.

Venue choice is critical for certain sensitive meetings, but far less so for routine, in-house gatherings. Whatever, there are certain preparations that are essential, and never leave it all to the hotel conference organiser or your own facilities department unless you trust them implicitly. Other people will do their best but they're not you, and they can't know exactly what you want. You must ensure the room is right - mainly, that it is big enough with all relevant equipment and services. It's too late to start hunting for a 20ft power extension lead five minutes before the meeting starts.

Other aspects that you need to check or even set up personally are:

- table and seating layout
- top-table (if relevant) position
- tables for demonstration items, paperwork, hand-outs, etc
- electricity power points and extensions
- heating and lighting controls
- projection and flip chart equipment positioning and correct operation
- whereabouts of toilets and emergency exits - fire drill
- confirm reception and catering arrangements
- back-up equipment contingency

All of the above can and will go wrong unless you check and confirm - when you book the venue and then again a few days before the meeting.

For a big important meeting, you should also arrive an hour early to check everything is as you want it. Some meetings are difficult enough without having to deal with domestic or logistics emergencies; and remember if anything goes wrong it reflects on you - it's your credibility, reputation and control that's at stake.



## NOTES

Positioning of seating and tables is important, and for certain types of meetings it's crucial. Ensure the layout is appropriate for the occasion:

- Formal presentations to large groups - theatre-style - the audience in rows, preferably with tables, facing the chairman.
- Medium-sized participative meetings - horse-shoe (U) table layout with the open part of the U facing the chairman's table, or delegates' tables arranged 'cabaret' style.
- Small meetings for debate and discussion - board-room style - one rectangular table with chairman at one end.
- Relaxed team meetings for planning and creative sessions - lounge style, with easy chairs and coffee tables.

Your own positioning in relation to the group is important. If you are confident and comfortable and your authority is in no doubt you should sit close to the others, and can even sit among people. If you expect challenge or need to control the group strongly set yourself further away and clearly central, behind a top-table at the head of things.

Ensure everyone can see screens and flip charts properly - actually sit in the chairs to check - you'll be surprised how poor the view is from certain positions.

Set up of projectors and screens is important - strive for the perfect rectangular image, as this gives a professional, controlled impression as soon as you start. Experiment with the adjustment of projector and screen until it's how you want it. If you are using LCD projector and overhead projector (a rare beast these days) you may need two screens. A plain white wall is often better than a poor screen.

People from the western world read from left to right, so if you want to present anything in order using different media, set it up so that people can follow it naturally from left to right. For instance show introductory bullet points (say on a flip chart on the left - as the audience sees it) and the detail for each point (say on projector and screen on the right).

Position screens and flip chart where they can be used comfortably without obscuring the view. Ensure the speaker/chairman's position is to the side of the screen, not in front of it obscuring the view.

Ensure any extension leads and wiring is taped to the floor or otherwise safely covered and protected.

Supply additional flip chart easels and paper, or write-on acetates and pens, for syndicate work if applicable. You can also ask people to bring laptops for exercises and presentation to the group assuming you have LCD projector is available and compatible.

In venues that have not been purpose-built for modern presentations, sometimes the lighting is problematical. If there are strong fluorescent lights above the screen that cannot be switched off independently, it is sometimes possible for them to be

temporarily disconnected (by removing the starter, which is a small plastic cylinder plugged into the side of the tube holder). In older buildings it sometimes possible to temporarily remove offending light-bulbs if they are spoiling the visual display, but always enlist the help of one of the venue's staff rather than resorting to DIY.

Finally, look after the venue's staff - you need them on your side. Most business users treat hotel and conference staff disdainfully - show them some respect and appreciation and they will be more than helpful.

### Meeting planner checklist

There's a lot to remember, so, particularly for big important meetings and training sessions, use a meetings checklist to make sure you plan properly and don't miss anything:

Meetings Checklist			
	done	comments	date/ref
Agenda			
Priorities			
Outcomes			
Sequence			
Timings			
Attendees			
Date			
Time			
Venue			
Variety			
Notification			
Notes of last meeting			
Directions/map			
Materials (as required by agenda items)			
Reference material for ad-hoc queries			
Results and performance data			
Equipment (make separate check-list)			
Electrical Power (if applicable)			
Domestics			
Catering arrangements			
Note-paper, pens, name-plates			
Refreshments			
Guest care/instructions			

NOTES

## Meeting agenda

NOTES

Produce the meeting agenda. This is the tool with which you control the meeting. Include all the relevant information and circulate it in advance. If you want to avoid having the ubiquitous and time-wasting 'Any Other Business' on your agenda, circulate the agenda well in advance and ask for additional items to be submitted for consideration.

Formal agendas for board meetings and committees will normally have an established fixed format, which applies for every meeting. This type of formal agenda normally begins with:

1. apologies for absence
2. approval of previous meeting's minutes (notes)
3. matters arising (from last meeting)

and then the main agenda, finishing with 'any other business'.

For more common, informal meetings (departmental, sales teams, projects, ad-hoc issues, etc), try to avoid the formality and concentrate on practicality. For each item, explain the purpose, and if a decision is required, say so. If it's a creative item, say so. If it's for information, say so. Put timings, or time-per-item, or both (having both is helpful for you as the chairman). If you have guest speakers or presenters for items, name them. Plan coffee breaks and a lunch break if relevant, and ensure the caterers are informed. Aside from these formal breaks you should allow natural 'comfort' breaks every 45-60 minutes, or people lose concentration and the meeting becomes less productive.

### Sample meeting agenda

(Meeting Title) Monthly Sales Meeting - New Co - Southern Region			
(Venue, Time, Date) Conference Room, New Co, Newtown - 0900hrs Monday 09/05/04			
Agenda			
Coffee available from 0830hrs - Dress is smart casual.			
09:00	Warm up and introductions.	New starters Sue Smith and Ken Brown. Guests are Jane Green, Fleet Manager, Jim Long, Off-shore Product Manager, and Bill Sykes, Tech-range Chief Engineer.	15
09:15	Health and safety update.	Revised procedures for hazardous chemicals at Main Street production facility.	15
09:30	Product revision update.	Tech-range Model 3 now has stand-by mode control. Product will be demonstrated.	30
10:00	Coffee	Chance for hands-on the new Model 3.	15

## NOTES

10:15	Sales results & forecasts.	Ensure you bring qtr2 forecast data and be prepared to present prospect lists and activities.	60
11:15	New product launch.	The new Digi-range is launched in month five. Product demonstrations and presentation of performance data, USP's, benefits for key sectors, and details of launch promotion.	60
12:30	Major accounts initiatives.	Brainstorm session - How can we accelerate major accounts development in offshore sector? - Do some preparatory thinking about this please.	45
13:15	Lunch	Buffet in the meeting room.	45
14:00	New product launch.	The new Digi-range is launched in month five. Product demonstrations and presentation of performance data, USP's, benefits for key sectors, and details of launch promotion.	120
16:00	Coffee		30
16:30	New Company Car Scheme.	Presentation from Fleet Manager Jane Green about the new car scheme.	45
17:15	Awards and Incentive.	Qtr 1 Sales Awards and launch of Qtr 2 Sales Incentive.	45
18:00	Meeting review, questions, close.		30

## Running the meeting

The key to success is keeping control. You do this by sticking to the agenda, managing the relationships and personalities, and concentrating on outcomes. Meetings must have a purpose. Every item must have a purpose. Remind yourself and the group of the required outcomes and steer the proceedings towards making progress, not hot air.

Politely suppress the over-zealous, and encourage the nervous. Take notes as you go, recording the salient points and the agreed actions, with names, measurable outcomes and deadlines. Do not record everything word-for-word, and if you find yourself taking over the chairmanship of a particularly stuffy group which produces reams of notes and very little else, then change things. Concentrate on achieving the outcomes you set the meeting when you drew up the agenda. Avoid racing away with decisions if your aim was simply discussion and involving people. Avoid hours of discussion if you simply need a decision. Avoid debate if you simply need to convey a policy issue. Policy is policy and that is that.

Defer new issues to another time. Practice and use the phrase 'You may have a point, but it's not for this meeting - we'll discuss it another time.' (And then

remember to do it.)

If you don't know the answer say so - be honest - don't waffle - say that you'll get back to everyone with the answer, or append it to the meeting notes.

## NOTES

If someone persistently moans on about a specific issue that is not on the agenda, quickly translate it into a simple exploratory or investigative project, and bounce it back to them, with a deadline to report back their findings and recommendations to you.

Use the rules on delegation to help you manage people and tasks and outcomes through meetings.

Always look at how people are behaving in meetings - look for signs of tiredness, exasperation, and confusion, and take necessary action.

As a general rule, don't deviate from the agenda, but if things get very heavy, and the next item is very heavy too, swap it around for something participative coming later on the agenda - a syndicate exercise, or a team game, a quiz, etc.

### **Meetings notes or meetings minutes**

Who takes the meeting notes or minutes, keeps command (minutes is a more traditional term, and today describes more formal meetings notes).

You must take the notes yourself, unless the meeting format dictates a formal secretary, in which case ensure the secretary is on your side. Normally you'll be able to take the notes. They are your instrument of control, so don't shirk it or give them to someone else as the 'short straw'.

If you are seen to take the notes, two things happen:

- people respect you for not forcing them to do it
- people see that you are recording agreed actions, so there's no escaping them

Meeting notes are essential for managing meeting actions and outcomes. They also cement agreements and clarify confusions. They also prevent old chestnuts re-appearing. A meeting without notes is mostly pointless. Actions go unrecorded and therefore forgotten. Attendees feel that the meeting was largely pointless because there's no published record.

After the meeting, type the notes (it's usually quicker for you to do it), and circulate them straight away, copy to all attendees, including date of next meeting if applicable, and copy to anyone else who should see the notes.

The notes should be brief or people won't read them, but they must still be precise and clear. Include relevant facts, figures, accountabilities, actions and timescales. Any agreed actions must be clearly described, with person or persons

named responsible, with a deadline. See again rules of delegation. Use the acronym SMART for any agreed action (Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic, Timebound). See more acronyms for meetings and training sessions on the acronyms page, there are lots of useful tips there.

The final crucial element is following up the agreed actions (your own included). If you run a great meeting, issue great notes, and then fail to ensure the actions are completed, all is lost, not least your credibility. You must follow up agreed actions and hold people to them. If you don't they will very soon learn that they can ignore these agreements every time - negative conditioning - it's the death of managing teams and results. By following up agreed actions, at future meetings particularly, (when there is an eager audience waiting to see who's delivered and who hasn't), you will positively condition your people to respond and perform, and you will make meetings work for you and your team.

See also the brainstorming meeting techniques.

### **Meeting notes structure and template**

Here is a simple structure for formal meeting notes involving a group of people within an organisation:

- Heading: for example - Notes of Management Meeting (if a one-off meeting to consider a specific issue then include purpose in the heading as appropriate)
- Date and Time:
- Venue:
- Present:
- Apologies for absence:
- In attendance: (if appropriate - guests not normally present at regular meetings, for instance speakers or non-board-members at board meetings)

Followed by numbered agenda items, typically:

- 1. Approval of previous meeting notes/minutes:
- 2. Matters arising: (items arising from meeting or continued from previous meeting which would not be covered by normal agenda items)

And then other items as per agenda, for example (these are some of the many possible typical reports and meeting items discussed within a business or board meeting; other types of meetings would have different item headings):

- 3. Finance/financial performance
- 4. Sales
- 5. Marketing and Business Development

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- 6. Operations or Divisional Activities
- 7. Manufacturing
- 8. Distribution
- 9. Environmental
- 10. Quality Assurance, etc
- 11. Human Resources
- 12. Projects
- 13. Communications and Team Briefing Core Brief
- 14. Any other business (AOB - issues not covered under other agenda items)
- 15. Date of next meeting
- Time meeting finished (normally for formal meetings only)
- Signed and dated as a true record (signed by the chair-person - normally for formal meetings only)
- Writer's initials, file reference and date (useful on all types of meeting notes)

Normally the items and points within each item are numbered 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc., then 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, etc.

Importantly, all actions agreed in the meeting need to be allocated to persons present at the meeting. It is not normally appropriate or good practice to allocate an action to someone who is not present at the meeting. Actions that are agreed but not allocated to anyone will rarely be implemented. (See the article on delegation.)

Responsibility for actions can be identified with a person's name or initials as appropriate.

Action points and persons responsible can be highlighted or detailed in a right-margin column if helpful.

These days verbatim minutes (precise word-for-word records) are only used in the most formal situations. Modern meeting notes should ideally concentrate on actions and agreements.

Reports should if possible be circulated in advance of meetings giving delegates adequate time to read and formulate reactions and answers to any queries raised. It is not good practice to table a report at a meeting if opportunity exists to circulate the report beforehand.

Reports can be appended to the meeting notes or minutes to which they relate.

# Meeting notes template

NOTES

Heading: Date and Time: Venue: Present: Apologies for absence: In attendance:	
notes, agreements and actions (change item headings as applicable)	person responsible for each action agreed
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approval of previous meeting notes/minutes:</li> <li>2. Matters arising:</li> <li>3. Finance/financial performance</li> <li>4. Sales</li> <li>5. Marketing and Business Development</li> <li>6. Operations or Divisional Activities</li> <li>7. Manufacturing</li> <li>8. Distribution</li> <li>9. Environmental</li> <li>10. Quality Assurance, etc</li> <li>11. Human Resources</li> <li>12. Projects</li> <li>13. Communications and Team Briefing Core Brief</li> <li>14. Any other business</li> <li>15. Date of next meeting</li> </ol>	
Time meeting finished:	
Signed and dated as a true record.....	
Writer's initials, file reference and date:	



## Mediation and running mediation meetings

### NOTES

Ensure you have a clear agenda - ensure both sides submit items for inclusion - the agenda is the method by which you control the meeting (timings, items being discussed, staying on track, realistically intended outcomes from agenda items).

Keep insisting that each side really truly tries to learn and understand the other side's aims, objectives, feelings, background etc. Understanding is different to agreeing - very important to keep explaining this - by understanding each other there can be constructive debate towards agreement, without understanding, any agreement is impossible, so too is sensible adult discussion.

Try to agree the meeting aims with the attendees before the start - important to keep this realistic - don't try to reach agreement too early - concentrate on developing mutual understanding and to diffuse conflict and emotional issues which make it impossible to move on any further.

If the gulf is too big to make any progress at all, suggest a job swap or shadow for a week - the chief of each side should experience the other side's challenges and day-to-day difficulties. This will certainly improve mutual understanding and can accelerate improvement in cooperation and agreement.

Follow the rules of running meetings where helpful so that you plan the meeting and keep control.

When you seat people at the meeting mix them up to avoid adversarial one-side-facing-the-other situation, which will happen unless you split them up.

## Strategic planning, goal setting meetings

Here's a simple process for an effective strategic planning meeting:

(This assumes that necessary market research and consultation with staff, customers and suppliers has already taken place.)

Start with the vision - what do we want this business to be in two years time?... infrastructure, staff, structure, communications and IT, customers, markets, services, products, partners, routes to market, quality and mission values, broad numbers and financials.

If delegate numbers permit, allocate syndicates a number of aspects each. Change groups as appropriate, move between whole group brainstorms to small group syndicates sessions.

If appropriate use coloured modelling clay and/or construction kits to provide an interesting way for delegates to express shape, structure, etc., for each vision aspect (many people do not work well using only verbal or written media - shape and touch are essential to the creative process).

Then work on the necessary enablers, obstacles, cause-and-effect steps along the way for each aspect aim. This will result in the basic timescale and strategic plan.

And to add an extra dimension to the meeting and planning process - and too reinforce relationships with your most important customers, suppliers and partners - invite some of them along to the meeting to contribute, validate ideas and collaborate. It's a particularly useful way to make the the session more dynamic and meaningful, as well as keeping the focus on the real world.

NOTES

## **MEDIA MANAGEMENT**

### **Building Positive Media Relations**

There is a direct link between journalists' relationship with an organisation's communications team and the impact this can have on the 'slant' of articles, Ipsos MORI research found.

Relationships tend to be best where:

- councils know what journalists want from a story
- journalists know what they can expect from the council
- press officers take the time to meet journalists face-to-face
- press officers are proactive – providing stories regularly, alerting journalists in advance of stories, phoning journalists to thank them for a particularly positive story or to discuss a negative one
- councils are honest and admit when they've made a mistake.

Journalists get frustrated when the only person they can ever speak to is a press officer. As part of your media strategy, you should plan a programme of using those members and senior managers who are good at delivering the council's message. Promoting a positive media culture within your council will help build people's confidence and willingness to make themselves available to the media.

## **BEING STRATEGIC**

Your media relations should be driven by a media strategy linked to the corporate communications strategy. This should help you be clear about what your priorities are and how you are going to approach working with the media. It should be backed up by a detailed action plan.

### **Media relations audit**

Before you develop your media strategy you need to understand how well you are currently handling media relations. Carrying out a media relations audit will

tell you a lot of information as well as highlighting any gaps in your knowledge about your activity.

NOTES

Done on a regular basis, an audit can also help you identify trends in your coverage and what is working best for you.

The audit usually includes three elements:

- an analysis of how residents gain their information about the council
- an analysis of the council's media monitoring statistics, including percentages of positive, neutral and negative coverage, the number of press stories resulting from proactive media relations and coverage in different media
- a survey of journalists – from local, regional, national, black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and trade media – on how well they view your reactive and proactive media relations.

### **Media relations strategy**

From this, you can devise a media relations strategy. This should be a component part of a wider communications strategy and should focus the council's reactive and proactive media relations on the bigger picture.

### **Media relations action plan**

Your action plan should set out how you are going to implement the strategy. It should include what you are going to do and when, who will be responsible for each element and what resources you will need at each stage. It should be used to evaluate progress regularly.

You should also develop an action plan for individual media campaigns. Action plans should cover:

- key messages
- key audiences
- key media
- milestones
- communications tools
- resources
- targets
- timescales and deadlines
- monitoring and evaluation.

## Proactive media relations

High-performing councils dedicate a large amount of time and resources to proactive media relations, rather than letting the media set the agenda. As part of their media strategy, many of them set targets for stories in different media, such as national, trade and BAME, and put a great deal of effort into working with media other than just their local press.

Here's how the best communications teams do it.

### Know your media

- Identify which media and individual journalists are important to you and your public audiences – local, regional, national, specialist and BAME press.
- Focus on the council's key messages and target key media on the issues that are relevant to their readers.
- Develop an excellent relationship with key journalists – this will help you build trust, float ideas, better understand what stories interest them and find out how they want to receive press releases and briefings.
- Be helpful – be prepared to give a local comment on national stories.

### Plan ahead

- Develop one positive story a week that affects real people.
- Encourage services to tell you their successes.
- Create a forward planning media calendar to ensure there are no internal clashes, that you are prepared for potentially negative stories and that you have a full programme of positive stories.
- Develop key facts around particular services or corporate priorities to ensure that you always have up-to-date information to share with journalists.

### Engage interest

- Be creative – think of unusual visual stories for photographers and TV cameras and interesting sound environments for radio interviews and features.
- Bring your press releases to life by finding the human interest, for example, if you're opening a new service or launching a new strategy, find some residents who can talk about what they or the community will get out of it.

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**Run media campaigns**

Create ongoing campaigns with a number of media 'hooks', rather than just one-off stories. Media campaigns can also be used as part of a wider PR or 'marcomms' – marketing and communications – campaign to 'soften the blow' or change public perceptions on difficult decisions the council has to take – for example, a rise in council tax or cuts in services.

**More about developing marketing campaigns**

To improve children's literacy, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council persuaded Dolly Parton's Dollywood Foundation to launch the star's Imagination Library UK programme in Rotherham. The council ran a media campaign to encourage parents to sign up the Imagination Library. The communications team kept all but basic information under wraps until the launch, which attracted local, regional, trade, national and international coverage. The council won 'gold' in the LGCommunications Reputation Awards 'National story' category in 2008.

**Rotherham enlists Dolly Parton to improve childhood literacy****Dolly Parton talks to the IDeA**

After a 'Tonight with Trevor McDonald' TV programme misrepresented a local estate, the London Borough of Islington chose to fight the residents' corner and defend the reputation of the council and its partners.

Together they made a film for YouTube and promoted it via the national media and council communications. Coverage in 'The Observer' newspaper led to the television programme running a follow-up piece that was much more balanced. This strengthened relationships between local agencies and residents. The council won 'gold' in the LGCommunications Reputation Awards 'Media relations' category in 2008.

**e-communications and new media**

Many councils are embracing developments in e-communications and new media as part of their communications mix to engage with their residents and stakeholders. It's as important to set 'specific, measurable, actionable, relevant and timely' (SMART) objectives for this approach as it is for more conventional media tools. Ideas include:

- using YouTube – for example, Somerset County Council has launched its own YouTube channel to show people the variety of services it provides, and Cambridgeshire County Council used it to appeal for new councillors
- using the website to get across important news quickly to a large number of people – this came into its own during the recent snow storms, when several councils used the website to update parents on school closures

- using social network sites – for example, Babergh District Council used Twitter to announce that refuse collections had been cancelled due to extreme weather conditions
- using the website to create a shared experience – for example, Lichfield District Council used Twitter to appeal for local photographs during the snow storms and then used them to create a special ‘snow section’ on the council’s website
- SMS text messaging in campaigns targeted at young people
- video news releases and audio sound clips for local broadcasters, to encourage them to cover stories they are unable to attend
- blogging
- even councillors are getting in on the act, with a rise in the number who ‘tweet’.

Councils who use Youtube

More examples of councils using Twitter

More about using digital video

Blogging and Facebook for councillors

Find out more about councils and their use of e-communications

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## **Reactive media relations**

Council communication teams tend to spend much of their time dealing with media enquiries. The way and the speed with which the council responds to these will influence the media’s perception of the council, and therefore the kind of coverage it gets.

A good proportion of media enquiries will be hostile. These need to be handled particularly carefully to limit potential damage to the council. Some bad news stories will need crisis management, while others will need good liaison with partner organisations.

## **Effective reactive media relations**

The automated systems used by many councils to log and respond to press enquiries help enormously by providing accessible information to the whole communications team, and helping to meet press deadlines.

They can also store background information, briefing notes and the response given – so if a recurring enquiry comes in, it can be dealt with quickly and simply.

They will also produce useful monitoring information on response times – not just by the communications team, but also other departments’ response times.

Whether or not councils have these systems, there are key points to effective reactive media relations including:

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- responding to the journalist in full by their deadline or giving a 'holding statement' until a full response can be given
- being helpful, polite and positive
- never saying 'no comment', as this can sound as if the council has something to hide
- if there is a major hostile enquiry which other media may get hold of, share it with the team and work out the line to take
- ensuring any statements to hostile enquiries are cleared – and send them in writing
- building up a set of 'experts' across the council who can brief journalists directly
- ensuring the appropriate council spokesperson is available for interview and is fully briefed
- making sure officers and members are aware of media guidelines and media protocol
- building up facts and figures and background information for big stories
- monitoring response times and cuttings to evaluate how effectively the enquiry has been dealt with.

### **Crisis management**

Communications teams should be working closely with their top teams to shape how a council responds to a crisis. Effective crisis management can help to limit the damage caused to the council's reputation by bad headlines.

Some bad news stories will crop up out of the blue but many can be anticipated and planned for. You should have strong internal relationships to help services understand that bad news rarely goes away. You should ensure that they alert you when bad news – such as a critical inspection report – is on the horizon. You don't want to hear it from a journalist first.

Building a strong media culture internally, through media training and media guidelines and protocols will go a long way to achieving this.

Communications managers should make sure that their strategy for communicating in an emergency is kept up to date, and that their teams are fully aware of their role in a major local or national incident.

Other useful guidelines to managing bad news and crises include:

- act quickly – a speedy response and a good council statement will help limit the damage
- never say ‘no comment’ even if there isn’t enough factual information to give out
- build up background briefings and key facts for big stories in advance
- be honest and open and do not try to deceive the media
- if the council is at fault, apologise swiftly and sincerely
- issue the news in a planned and managed way, rather than just react
- make sure the appropriate council spokespeople are available for interview and are fully briefed
- ensure officers and members are aware of the media guidelines and media protocol
- ensure officers and members know who to contact in the press office.

Gloucester City Council faced a potentially damaging story when, for reasons beyond its control, it became clear that the town’s Christmas lights would not be delivered on time. The local evening paper got hold of the story just as the council prepared to go public with it. The communications team had a choice to make. They decided not to issue their own press release to spoil the scoop, which earned them journalists’ goodwill. And they turned the story around by holding regular update briefings with the local media and promoting the team of council staff who were on call around the clock to put up the lights as soon as they arrived. The arrival of the lights prompted good picture opportunities.

When a six-year old pupil tragically died of swine flu in the London Borough of Hillingdon, the media spotlight turned on the council. This case study looks at how its communications team supported schools, council staff and the primary care trust.

## **BUILDING A MEDIA CULTURE**

An important role for the media team is to help senior officers and members understand the importance of effective media relations for the council and their role in achieving it.

One of the most effective and simple things to do is to get out and talk to members and officers about upcoming stories and ideas.

### **Media awareness training**

This can make officers and members more aware of the importance of media relations and how they can contribute to it. The training can include council partners and usually covers proactive and reactive topics, including:



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- how the media works
- what makes a good news story
- what makes a good photo opportunity
- how to write a good press release
- planning a media campaign
- feature writing and placement
- how to handle a negative press enquiry
- how to deal with a media crisis.

Induction programmes are a useful way to explain the importance of media relations and communications. Other training may be useful such as press release writing for managers or tips on taking photographs for officers.

### **Media interview training**

This training is vital for chief officers and lead members. This gives more specialist training and helps you identify who your best spokespeople are. It usually covers:

- preparing for interviews
- developing key messages
- how to manage the interview
- tips on posture and appearance
- practice at pre-recorded and live interviews
- group feedback on performance.

### **Media guidelines and protocols**

These should be used and actively promoted to back up training and face-to-face contact. They set out how the council will approach media relations and are particularly useful for councils with a range of different political groups. Once agreed, they can inform the way the communication team works and make this clear to others.

There is no one way to produce media guidelines or protocols. Some smaller councils may devolve media relations, while larger ones specify that no officer can speak to the media without going through the press office first. However, guidelines typically include:

- responsibilities and roles for the press office, members and senior officers
- how to handle difficult press enquiries

- working proactively
- general guidance to the law relating to communications
- the principles and standards to which the council operates
- writing, clearing and issuing press releases
- dealing with media enquiries, including response times
- use of quotes
- media interviews.

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### Raising the media team's profile

Communications teams should be highly visible internally, demonstrating their worth and explaining what they do and why. This is as important for the media officers as for any of their colleagues.

Some councils issue daily e-news alert to flag up stories that senior officers and members should be aware of or that the council could comment on or react to in some way. A one-sentence summary of each story along with an electronic link is enough. This service is used by a number of councils, including the London Boroughs of Lewisham and Barking and Dagenham.

Other effective ways to make the communications team visible include:

- circulating weekly press cuttings of articles published sent to key officers and members
- distributing promotional material, including contact cards, which give 24-hour contact details for press offices and set out what to do if faced with a hostile enquiry
- publicising the team's successes internally, for example by producing a weekly report, emailed to managers or posted on the intranet, highlighting what releases have been issued and where they have been used
- providing face-to-face briefings for members and senior officers before interviews and providing key facts briefing sheets for them to use
- entering and winning awards, and then communicating internally that you have won.

Derby City Council wanted to refresh its drive to improve communications by organising a 'Communications made easy' week for its employees and those of partner organisations.

They ran 10 events delivered by their own communications professionals, with sessions including new media, web writing and how to communicate with hard-

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to-reach groups and plain English. The week was promoted through the internal newsletter, intranet and a prize draw. Participants received a 'I don't do jargon' biodegradable pen. Evaluation of the week showed that 92 per cent said it had made them more aware of why it was important to produce effective communications and 90 per cent thought they had improved their skills.

## **WORKING WITH PARTNERS AND INSPECTORATES**

Councils are expected to work ever more closely with their partners to deliver improved outcomes for local people. So communications teams will want to be well connected with their counterparts in those organisations.

There should be agreements about a shared approach:

- who does what
- clearance
- spokespersons
- timing.

There should also be a commitment on all parties not to try and take sole credit for positive outcomes or blame each other for a negative news story.

Councils also have to work closely with statutory inspectorates and other non-statutory bodies. Whether good or bad news for the council, inspection reports need to be publicised carefully in the media, with good liaison between the council's communications team and those in the inspectorates.

Most inspectorates have specific guidelines or protocols for dealing with the media. It is a good idea to get hold of these early on and to ensure that they are communicated to relevant officers and members. This will help to avoid leaks to the media or antagonise the inspectorate. Often they will be happy to share embargoed releases as long as the council returns the favour and respects the embargo.

## **MEDIA MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Ongoing media monitoring and evaluation is an essential part of effective media relations management. Monitoring and evaluation not only helps focus the activity and resources, but helps show tangible results of success.

Most councils already do some media monitoring, but if they do not have the full picture, an audit of media relations is a good place to start to get some baseline information. Then the council can set targets and introduce new monitoring and evaluation methods that fit with the media relations strategy and action plan.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation should be analysed regularly to help the council spot trends. It should include:

- the number of press releases issued and take-up rates – media management systems will then collate statistics automatically
- analysis of press cuttings, television and radio reports by good, neutral or bad categories – with a supportive council comment – to see how effective the council has been at getting its message across
- press enquiry response times logged as the percentage achieved within the media's deadline
- a breakdown of figures for releases issued and enquiries answered by service area
- a breakdown of figures by corporate theme
- a breakdown by different media, for example, local, regional, national, BAME and trade press.

## **MANAGING A MEDIA CRISIS**

As much as we all like to deal only in good news, things can and do go wrong. Mistakes, problems, slip-ups, errors of judgement, political controversies or accidents come along once in a while and with them can come the media spotlight.

If your group finds itself in the midst of a media furore the last thing that you want to happen is for an incident to build into a full-blown crisis.

Having such a crisis on your hands can cause long-term damage to your group, mainly through the loss of public confidence. This can lead to a loss of public support, fewer members, supporters, volunteers or helpers and can also hit your group's bottom line through people being reluctant to donate to your group.

Whatever the reason was for the incident, the first priority for your group is to fix it. Make sure there is no ongoing risk to the public and that there are steps in place to ensure there is no chance if the same thing happening again.

The next thing your group need to do is deal with the media and prevent a media crisis.

## **PREPARE FOR THE CRISIS**

The best way of preparing for a media frenzy is to have developed a plan on how your group is going to deal with such situations.

That way, if something does happen and the media come calling, you will have a **crisis communications plan** prepared.

That plan should make sure your group has:

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- An appointed spokesperson (or, possibly a couple of spokespeople, in case one is unavailable) to whom inquiries and the media should be referred.
- A definite process in place so your group's members know who is going to speak to the media if an incident occurs. It is vitally important all group members are clear on procedure and who to refer the media to in case they receive calls or inquiries from them.
- A method whereby senior group members or leaders can quickly get together and gather information so they are well-briefed for media inquiries on any situation or issue.
- A way in which spokespeople can quickly respond to the media with accurate information.

The aim of this sort of plan should be to allow clear and accurate communication to the public and to your group's members, donors, stakeholders, supporters, volunteers and fundraisers through the media. It should also aim to stop any long-term damage to your group or any erosion in its public confidence.

What should you do when the media contacts you about something that has gone wrong and it involves your group?

**Don't run. Don't hide.**

The first and most instinctive reaction for many groups, especially those not used to having the media spotlight shone on them with any intensity is to run from the situation and hide.

Simply put – don't do it.

Trying to avoid the problem, or ignore it, in the hope it will go away will not work and you risk damaging your group's good name in the process.

The reality is that the media will run the story with or without your input. So it makes good sense for you to positively influence that story by addressing the issue quickly, accurately and in a proactive manner.

What you want to do is influence the nature of that story, as much as possible, to ensure that what is run is accurate and fair. It is difficult to complain about not having your side of the story aired when you have refused to provide it.

An important aspect of any media crisis is getting across strongly and clearly that your group is doing everything in its power to address the issue.

Organisations that come out of a media crisis with their reputations intact are those that deal with the issue quickly, effectively, honestly and, just as importantly, are perceived to have done exactly that.

So how does a small non-profit organisation with no money for public relations expertise deal with the situation?

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### **Tips on handling the media through a crisis**

- **Acknowledge there is a crisis.**

If you can't acknowledge there's a problem, how can you find a solution?

By recognising early on that you actually have a crisis on your hands, gives you more of a chance of handling it successfully and rectifying it quickly. The sooner you take action, the better your chances of coming out with your reputation intact.

- **Decide who will be your group's spokesman or public face.**

Where possible ensure it is the highest-ranking person in your group who has the important mix of authority and access to all the latest information.

You also need to have someone who is accessible and readily available to answer the media's questions. Your group needs to stay on top of a crisis, not create a vacuum where yours is the only voice not being heard.

- **Stay calm.**

It's important you stay calm under pressure, if you can't swap places with someone who can. Anger makes good copy for newspapers and great footage for television but it can spell disaster for your group.

Remember, you have developed a crisis communications plan for this very reason – so stick to it and you can remain calm.

- **Address your “real” audience through the media.**

The media may be chasing you for a comment, but it's the public – the general public as well as your members, donors, volunteers, helpers, supporters and stakeholders that you want to address and have hear your side of the story.

Remember you are not speaking to just the media, they are a conduit to the wider public. So speak constructively, positively and frame your responses with the real audience in mind.

- **Make first impressions count.**

First impressions count both the public and the media and are vital in getting your message across. If you are honest, sincere, open, committed

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to resolving the issue and project a positive attitude it will go a long way to dispelling any negative or preconceived notions about your group.

- **Work out what you can legally release.**

If there are legal issues that come into play, be aware of where the line is drawn on what you can say and don't step over it.

Also be aware that many legal advisers will advise you to say nothing at all – that advice should be questioned, if not challenged. You have to publicly address the issue; it is only the manner or amount of information that is up for discussion.

- **Release as much as you can as quickly as you can.**

Linked to the last point is the need for your group to get as much information out into the public arena as quickly as possible.

Your crisis communications plan should cover the procedure for quickly gathering accurate information about the issue at hand.

Once you have the information, it is vital that it is passed on to your nominated spokesperson and communicated through the media. The more information you can release quickly, which accurately conveys your side of the story in context, the better.

The sooner you respond and show that you are acting in a sincere, honest and reliable manner, the sooner your voice is listened to and trusted.

- **Say only what you know to be true.**

If you don't know the answer, don't guess at it.

Stick to confirmed information only and facts you know to be accurate and correct. If necessary, tell the reporters you don't know but will check it out and get back to them.

- **Avoid speculation or answering hypothetical questions.**

Often you are asked to speculate, even if it is in a subtle way, for example: "What will your group do if this is proven to be true?"

Don't speculate - stick to the facts and what did happen, not what might have. You can fend questions off by saying things such as "I don't want to speculate on that" or "I would prefer not to deal in hypotheticals. What we do know is ....."

If you have to use these types of quotes repeatedly to fend off questions, that's fine, the assembled media will soon realise you are not going to speculate.

- **Challenge information you know to be wrong.**

When dealing with information you know is wrong, challenge it strongly. If something is published that is incorrect let the media organisation know their information is wrong and let other organisations know also, so they don't repeat it.

This is particularly important if the problem revolves completely around a wrong or malicious story. To deal with unfounded allegations and emerge with your credibility and standing intact, it is crucial to act quickly to clarify your group's position on the matter.

Wrong "facts" left unchallenged are often more damaging than the truth.

- **Speak in common, easily understood language.**

Avoid jargon. Speak so that people can actually understand the message you are trying to send them.

- **Show concern.**

As a community group, your main mission is to care for, service and support the community. Because of this, it needs to be mindful of the feelings as well as the issues.

If something has happened that has caused injury or distress, show concern and show it publicly through word and deed.

- **Ban the words "no comment".**

Repeating this phrase makes it sound like you know the answer but just do not wish to give it.

Phrases you can use instead include:

- "All I can say is ....."
- "I can't provide that information until I have all the details ...."
- "I can't answer that until I have a full report."
- "I am happy to try and answer those questions once I have spoken to the right people ....."

- **Don't bother blaming the media.**

Your first priority is to address the problem at hand, not to "shoot the messenger".

Certainly, if there is something wrong in the coverage, point it out and seek to have the record amended. If it is a serious issue you want to be seen to be treating it seriously and dealing with it



- **Consider bringing the media into your organisation.**

Hold frequent media briefings rather than have reporters camped on the nature strip.

It lets them show how you are dealing with the crisis and the difficulties and problems you face, that you are human and that you have nothing to hide.

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# 10 Telephone Etiquettes

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**The Chapter Covers :**

- BE PRESENT WITH YOUR CALLER
- Proper Telephone Etiquette at Work

A phone is ringing somewhere in your office. By the third ring the call should be answered. BUT... before you pick up that phone:

1. Clear your mind of all but the task at hand – responding to the caller.
2. Prepare your phone voice
3. Answer by the 3<sup>rd</sup> ring
4. Offer your standardized greeting.
5. Be prepared before you respond.
6. Treat the caller with respect; be efficient, effective, empathetic and responsive.

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### Clear Your Mind of all but the Task at Hand – Responding to the Caller

There's nothing worse than trying to carry on a conversation with someone who is reading their emails, looking at documents or distracted with something other than your conversation. You can always tell; there's an extended pause in the conversation while you wait for a response but, they have none because they were looking through a magazine while chatting on the phone. It's frustrating, it's rude, it makes you feel unimportant and they are likely to miss important information for lack of focus.

### BE PRESENT WITH YOUR CALLER

Being present requires FOCUS. Your center of interest should be on the caller and their conversation. Allowing distractions can result in important information being overlooked or worse, the caller identifies you as a poor provider of customer service and tells others.

#### Hints:

Turn away from your computer and desk when you answer the phone.

Put down your reading material.

Focus your attention on the caller

Take the gum out of your mouth

No drinking or eating during the conversation

### Prepare Your Phone Voice

How you handle yourself on the phone reflects not only on you, but also your department and SIUC. You see it over and over. Someone talking on the phone forms an opinion of the person with whom they are talking based on the tone of their voice, their language skills, etc. It may not be fair, but it happens. According to John Robertson of EZINE @rticles, within 60 seconds people will make assumptions about your education, background, ability and personality based on your voice alone. What reputation do you want to build? What impression do you want to make? Do you sound like this on the phone?

#### Pay attention to:

- What you want to say.
- How you want to say it.

Your voice is very important to your career and your personal life. When you are talking 87% of the listener's opinion of you is based on how you say it according to Robertson. That means that only 13% remains to make a positive impression about what we are saying. Project a tone that conveys enthusiasm, confidence, friendliness and attentiveness. Did you know, when you smile while you are talking it comes across in your voice? Let your personality shine through on the phone.

**Hints:**

Take a deep breath before you pick up the phone.

Smile before you speak

Assume your speaking voice, controlling speed, tone and volume

Speak clearly,

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**Prepare to Offer Your Standard Greeting**

YO, Hey, Whazzzup may be the normal greetings you would expect to hear in the academic setting if you are calling the dorms but they are not generally accepted telephone etiquette for University offices. Remember the 87% rule? Make a good first impression with an effective, efficient greeting. Identify your department, then, identify yourself. Name your department (Music Department), your name (Glenn Campbell); that's it, 4 words! It's crisp, clean and gives all the information the caller can handle at this point in the call. Adding phrases such as

"good morning", "how may I help you" are ok so long as you sound like you mean it. Elaborate, drawn out greetings are distracting and time consuming. You can lose your caller before the conversation begins.

**Be Prepared Before You Respond**

Be prepared to answer the phone. It's not an interruption, it's your job. Have pencil and paper ready; prepare mentally to be present with the caller. Write down the caller's name immediately. If the caller doesn't identify him or herself – ask for a name... "May I say whose calling?" "Could I have your name please?" "With whom am I speaking?" All are polite, appropriate ways to get the caller's name. Use their name frequently throughout the conversation. Use all of your listening skills, focus your attention on the caller, speak calmly and choose your words. Be careful to avoid jargon or acronyms not universally familiar.

**Hints:**

Listen not only to what the speaker is saying but to their unspoken thoughts as well. What is it this person isn't saying that is important to the conversation?

Be sure to get clarification. "If I understand you correctly...", "So you are saying that..." "This is what I understand you are telling me..."

**The phone call and Customer Service**

Let's pause here for a minute to talk about the effect your kindness, courtesy and relationship building has on your department and ultimately the University's relationships with our customers. Ah! Customers! And just who are our customers? A short, informal Webster definition is "a person with whom one must deal". A phone caller is certainly someone to be dealt with: thus, a customer. There are many dealings occurring during the workday outside of your sphere of influence. However, how people react to you, perceive you and thus the organization you represent are all within your control. If you are a cheerful, responsive problem solver, people

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will react positively to you. You can confidently influence your effectiveness with a caller and ultimately the reputation of your department, with a strong customer service orientation. A famous restaurant trains their greeters to ask when you leave about your experience at their restaurant. They ask because they know if you had a bad experience you are likely to tell 7-9 people. Those people will tell others and quickly the customer base erodes because of one bad experience. Without customers, the business fails and employees are out of work. If you treat your caller with disrespect, disdain and curtness, you will unwittingly send a message to 7-9 people you never had direct contact with that employees and you in particular, have no sense of customer service. On the other hand, if you treat the caller with respect, focus on their situation and resolve their

problem, 5 people will hear about the positive experience the caller had with SIUC and you. We build our reputation with the community we live in and serve, one phone call, one customer service experience at a time. Each one counts and each one reflects on you.

### 5 Forbidden Phrases

1. "I Don't Know"
2. "I/We Can't Do That"
3. "You Have To"
4. "Just a Second"
5. "No"

### Be positive, a problem solver, honest and helpful.

Instead of Try: "I Don't know" "That's a good question, let me find out for you". Callers don't want to be passed from person to person. If it is absolutely necessary, transfer the caller to the appropriate department but do not leave the line until they have been connected to an individual to whom you can explain who is calling and why you are transferring them. Never, transfer a call and hang-up before the transfer is complete. If the call requires research, assure the person you will call back and give them a specific time to expect your call. There is no excuse for not returning calls. If you haven't found out the info by the established deadline, call and say so. Make yourself a cheat sheet on your department and other departments. Talk to people outside your immediate office and use the information to provide good customer service. "I/we can't do that" "Here's what we can do." Everyone expects that something can be done about any situation. By offering hope, you will be seen as a problem solver.

"Here's how we can help" or "Here's what needs to be done" or "I need to" When someone is calling you for help, avoid putting the responsibility back on them by using the "you" word. Give options using the words "we" or "I". "Just a second" Give an honest answer about how long it will take you to complete whatever you are doing AND tell them what you are doing. Use the hold button. "No" Try to find a way to state the situation positively. The customer is not always right but s/

he is always the customer. They hate to hear no, as they expect their situation will be resolved to their advantage. If you can't do what they are asking, be sure to tell them what you can do.

## Problem Callers

Problem callers don't usually start out that way. Something happens to make them go ballistic. Customers have an expectation of how they ought to be treated and if you fail to meet that expectation, they become agitated. When you get a caller on the phone who is getting agitated: Listen. Allow them to vent. Stay calm and be sincere. Remember the 87% rule – if you aren't sincere the caller will know immediately. Don't jump in, even if you have heard the same thing 10 times. The caller will be offended. A sincere voice will have a calming effect on the caller. If you become upset or defensive you will make a bad situation worse.

### Hints:

Don't over-react to trigger words. Callers will often try to push your buttons. Listen completely to the complaint, allow the caller to vent. Only when they are finished should you comment. If the call is long-distance you might offer to call them back to avoid phone charges. This can have an immediate positive impact. Empathize. Acknowledge their feelings. "I can hear that you are upset by this" or "I can tell this situation is upsetting you".

### Hints:

To help with this process, keep family pictures in your work area. Pretend you are talking to someone you know and like while you are working with your caller. Force yourself to focus on solving the problem rather than internalizing the caller's attacks. Don't blame anyone for the problem, no matter who is at fault. It's counterproductive to resolving the issue.

Apologize. It doesn't matter who's at fault. Anyone who has been inconvenienced wants an apology. You don't have to agree with the caller, but should express regret that there is a problem. Empathize with the person's feelings and apologize, sincerely... "I'm really sorry this happened". This makes the caller feel that you have aligned with them. It's hard to be upset with someone who is sympathetic and trying to help.

### Hint

Use the person's name a lot and apologize frequently. Solve the problem. Suggest agreeable solutions. Ask how you can help and if it's reasonable, do it; if not, find a compromise. Make sure something is done. Take it upon yourself to ensure the customer gets some satisfaction.

### Hints

Handling difficult customers isn't easy. Remembering the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you", and putting it into action with difficult customers, will help increase your job satisfaction. Paraphrase the problem and repeat it to the caller – get clarification before offering solutions. Work with your

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managers to streamline office/departmental procedures so people who answer the phone are empowered to solve the customer's problem. Picture how good it feels to solve a problem and send someone away satisfied. It makes your whole day better.

### **CONGRATULATIONS!! You've successfully handled a difficult situation.**

Take care of yourself. If it was a particularly difficult call, take a quick break, walk down the hall, or have a drink of water. Talk over the situation with a colleague or your manager. Find some humor in the situation if you can. Pat yourself on the back. Remind yourself how good you are at your job and how committed you are to good customer service. Screening Calls Screening calls is often an unpleasant part of the job. But it is sometimes necessary because the person for whom you are screening does not always have time to talk or want to talk to the caller. Key to handling these situations is considering the being irate over not finding the person they are calling available to them, try sequencing the questions to avoid a conflict.

#### **Sample Conversation:**

**Receptionist:** "Bookkeeping, James Stewart"

**Caller:** "Is Ms. Stell available?"

**Receptionist:** "I'm sorry, Ms. Stell is unavailable at this time, may I take your name and number and have her return your call? Or may I help you?" (Note: you have given the caller the expectation a phone call will be returned but also offered immediate assistance if desired.)

**Caller:** "This is Sam Davis, would you please tell her I called, she has my number."

**Receptionist:** "Mr. Davis, she has asked me to interrupt if you should call, so please hold while I tell her you are on the line." (Had Mr. Davis not been someone who should be passed through you have left no room for doubt about the availability of Ms. Stell.)

#### **Placing Callers on Hold**

The other line is ringing, and you are anxious to answer...requiring you to put your current caller on Hold – it's a necessary evil. We all hate being on Hold. So when it's necessary to place a caller on Hold, check with them first to determine if they can/want to Hold. WAIT for an answer. Remember back when we talked about "being present" with your caller? If you are present with your caller it is only polite to let them decide if they will Hold, go to voice mail, or call back. Handle your current caller before you rush off to another...first come, first serve. Once you have placed a caller on Hold, check back every 15-30 seconds to update them. Thank them for holding and be as specific as you can about how much longer you expect to keep them on Hold. Each time allow them the opportunity to decide if they would like to continue Holding.

## Transferring Calls

When the caller needs to be transferred, be polite and ask if they would like to be transferred. Ask the caller for their number in case you lose them during the transfer. Give the caller the name of the person to whom you are transferring them along with their number in case the call does not go through or in case they would like to call later. If at all possible, stay on the line until the transfer is complete.

If you have a frustrated caller who has been transferred several times already, do not transfer them again. Take ownership of their situation. Call the appropriate party; ensure they have a solution to the situation, only then should you transfer the caller. If you don't know how to fix the situation, take the caller's name and number, find the appropriate person and have them return the call. Check back to make sure the caller's situation has been resolved. The caller will always remember your kindness and will tell others about your terrific customer service skills.

### Hints:

Treat the caller as you would want to be treated. Look at those pictures in your work area; help the caller as if they were family. Make it your goal to call them back within 4 hours if you have to do research to help them with their situation.

## Taking Messages

When taking a message for someone else, be sure you get the following information recorded:

1. The caller's name and company/department
2. The correct spelling of the caller's name, date and time of the call
3. Complete telephone number
4. Brief explanation for call.

Be sure to verify this information with the caller to make sure you have taken the message correctly and give him/her the opportunity to check what they told you.

### Hints

If someone is covering the phones for you, pick up your messages when you return. Don't wait for them to come to you.

## Voice Mail

Voice mail can be a very effective tool for communication if it is used correctly. In general people don't mind getting transferred to voice mail if it gives them helpful information. Your voice mail message should be short and to the point. When forced to leave a message, callers prefer to get right to it, not listen to a longwinded voice mail greeting. Don't state the obvious, (I'm away from my desk or on the other line). State your department, your name and leave clear instruction as to what information you need from the caller such as:

Name and phone number,

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**Best time for you to return the call****Brief summary of the reason for calling****Hints:****NOTES**

*Sample voice mail:* "Housekeeping; Mary Maid. I will be out of the office until Tuesday. Please leave your name, number, and a brief message as to the nature of your call. I will respond when I return."

*Sample voice mail:* "Housekeeping; Mary Maid. I will be out of the office until Tuesday. Please leave your name, number, and a brief message as to the nature of your call. I will respond when I return. If you need immediate assistance please contact Jeeves Butler at x5555."

*Sample voice mail if you change your voice mail daily:* "School of Agriculture; Pepper Greenjeans. Today is (date). At the tone, please leave your name, a brief message regarding your call, along with your phone number and the best time to call you back."

If you are going to be away from the office, say so and leave your date of return so people will know when they might expect a response. If you are going to be out for an extended period, you should consider offering information on another source for helping the caller. In this case, you would state your department name, your name and information about who the caller can contact for assistance. If you plan to refer your calls to another member of your department, be sure to make arrangements with them ahead of time. Leave them a cheat sheet on how to handle special procedures.

**Telephone Etiquettes for Receptionists**

If you have ever applied for the post of a receptionist, or if you have even gone through the job advertisement for the post of a receptionist, you would know the basic requirements and traits that an organization looks for in a receptionist. Apart from the educational qualifications and other requirements, these two prerequisites are a must. 'Should have a pleasing personality' and 'should possess excellent communication skills'! Am I not right? These qualities are required because a receptionist is the interface between an outside customer and the organization. So, the impression that the receptionist will have on the customers, is the impression that the customers will have towards the organization and its people. Be it in person, or via telephone, a receptionist shoulders a huge responsibility in creating goodwill of the organization. We shall be discussing the phone etiquette that should be followed by a receptionist so that the customers feel welcomed and important.

**Receptionist Telephone Etiquette**

The biggest misconception that people have when they talk to someone over the phone is that, 'because the person cannot see us, he cannot sense our body language'. In fact, a person can easily sense your casualty or your body language just by the way you speak and respond to their queries. In fact, a minute is enough for a telephonic customer to make an impression (in terms of knowledge, skills and

professionalism) about the person he or she is speaking to. Therefore, in order to create the correct impression, a receptionist needs to follow certain telephone etiquette, they are mentioned here.

### **Speak with a Smile**

The first and foremost thing that you do when you make or receive a call, is to greet the caller, so make sure you do that with a smile. Yes, I know that the caller can't see you smiling, but then it is a fact that when you smile and talk, your voice seems to sound more welcoming and cheerful. The person on the other end would perceive the voice to be friendly, helpful and welcoming, which would also be the impression of the organization.

### **Be Polite and Attentive**

Though the caller cannot see you physically, he can definitely sense your absence and lack of attention from just the way you talk! For example, if the caller asks you to transfer the call to Ms. White, and you end up asking the name again because you just weren't paying attention, the impression of you and the organization that you work for would be 'unprofessional' and careless. Therefore, you always need to be polite (even when the customer is angry, may be due to a bad experience with the previous person he or she spoke to) to each and every customer and pay close attention to his or her needs and requirements.

### **Never Interrupt the Caller, Listen First and then Respond!**

Do you ever like being interrupted when you are speaking to a customer service representative over the phone? Another blunder that phone receptionists do is that they assume that they have understood what the caller is trying to say, even before the caller finishes his or her sentence! This is something you must never ever do! The most important part of communication is to listen with full attention, let the other person complete his or her sentence and then respond to the query with complete politeness and professionalism. If you have not understood the customer's query, instead of saying, 'sorry I didn't get you', say, 'I understood that you are (say the little bit that you understood), Is this correct?' This way the customer would repeat himself or herself, and you will get a chance to clarify your doubts without putting an impression that the customer was not understandable!

### **Take Permission, and then Put the Caller on Hold**

The main job of a receptionist is to either answer certain business queries and information, or connect the call to the correct person. It is not always that the receptionist will have ready answers. There may be a need to place the caller on hold to solve the concern, or to transfer the call to the concerned person or department. You must always ask the caller's permission to place the call on hold, and also specify as to for how long will the caller have to be on hold. It is also advisable to take their call back number so that in case the call gets disconnected, you can call them back. This indicates professionalism, and conveys the caller the idea that the receptionist knows his or her job really well!

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**Thank the Customer for Calling!**

Once the query has been resolved, or if you are transferring the call to a different department, thank the customer for calling by taking their name. This would make the customer feel important and would create a sense of satisfaction with the organization as a whole.

So these were some basic phone etiquette for receptionists on how they should attend a call. Attentiveness, politeness and professionalism is what is expected as a part of the duties and responsibilities of a receptionist. Another very basic, yet very important point to be kept in mind is to always use professional words and not casual slang. There is always a yes, instead of a 'ya'. Terms and phrases like 'not really', 'am sorry, could you say that again', 'Ok, see ya' are not acceptable at all! Also, if you feel like coughing, or sneezing in the middle of the conversation, always press the mute button and do so, instead of sneezing and yawning right on the caller's face when he is trying to talk to you. Just speak with a smile, answer with confidence and converse with care and concern to make sure that the first impression of you and the organization is the best.

**Telephone Etiquettes at Workplace**

Among the different modes of communication used today, the telephone or the cellphone occupies the top most position; with instant messenger or e-mail coming to a close second. A telephone is the most important part of the customer service, telecommunication, sales, and many other industries. Similarly, a cellphone has become a part and parcel of the modern world and today literally, every person in the developed nation has a cellphone. Although you know how to use a cellphone or a telephone, there are certain etiquettes or rules that you need to follow while using the same. Here we will take a look at telephone etiquette tips at workplace.

**PROPER TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE AT WORK**

There are certain rules you need to keep in mind and follow while answering a call or making a call. The following is a list of the most important and essential tips that should be followed.

- The first and the foremost thing to remember when answering a call is to greet the person with a 'hello' or a simple 'good morning or good afternoon'. Do not ever answer a phone with 'yes' as it is rude.
- You should always ask the person's permission before putting him/her on hold and tell the reason for the same. You should also thank the person for the same.
- It is not considered wise to put a call on hold for more than one minute; however, if you need to do so, talk to the person after regular intervals to show that you have not forgotten him.
- If you are receiving business calls, do not end the call before the caller does so.

- You should not interrupt the caller if he is speaking. It is also wise to keep your cool as much as you can while talking on phone to a frustrated customer.
- If making a call, you should identify yourself, your company's name and your intention for the call in brief.
- Lastly, one of the most important telephone etiquette to remember is to not sound bored, angry, frustrated while receiving calls; it will surely pay to sound sweet and smiling.

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### Proper Cellphone Etiquette at Work

Cellphones are banned in most of the organizations as they lead to distractions. However, if they are not banned in your organization, you still need to follow cell phone and texting etiquette at work to avoid distractions and disturbing other employees. Following are the cell phone etiquette that should be followed.

- A cellphone should always be on 'vibrate' or 'silent' mode at workplace or any business areas. Sometimes, at meeting, vibrating phones can also distract people and hence, it is wise to switch off the phone.
- It is advisable to avoid making personal calls at workplace and also reduce the amount of time you put in making calls.
- If you have to make calls, make sure that you are at least 5-10 feet away from any person and not disturbing anyone.
- You should make personal calls or text only at break times. Avoid frequent texting at workplace or at your desk.
- Surfing on the cellphone, playing games, etc. should be avoided completely.
- Texting should also avoided in movie theaters or for other audio-visual performances as the light emitting from the cellphone can also cause distraction to others around you.
- Text messages should usually be simple and short as replying to complicated and long text messages is also complicated.
- Lastly, it is totally improper or rude to use the restroom/ washroom for talking on the phone as it can be uncomfortable to the speaker as well as for others using the restroom.

These were a few essential tips to be followed at workplace while using the telephone or the cellphone. Following phone etiquette at work shows good manners and common sense which will surely help in making a positive impression on others. So, think about it and follow it.

### Corporate Telephone Etiquettes

The telephone has become an indispensable tool in businesses today. Cell phone technology is rapidly changing. It is imperative to know all the rules while talking on a phone for business purposes. Business telephone etiquettes should be taught to all

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members of the organization. This will leave a good impression of your organization on both the callers and the called.

When you pick up the phone, greet the person depending on the time of the day. While calling you should introduce yourself and give the name of your organization if you are working in one. Use short phrases and simple words while talking on the phone. Long-winding sentences will lead to disinterest and poor comprehension in listeners. Avoid the use of casual words and slang. Sales people could call you. It is not compulsory to hear out an entire sales pitch. One can ask the salesperson's name and business and politely express disinterest in the business or products. Further you can request your number to be removed from the calling list.

Proper customer service is an integral part of business telephone etiquettes. There should be screening of calls by possibly the receptionist before forwarding it to the concerned person. There should be facility to leave a voice message on the phone if the person is not able to take the call at that particular time. If the phone gets disconnected due to some reasons then instead of waiting for the call, callback the person right away. You should avoid multitasking like handling different phone calls at one time. There should be proper scripts for inbound and outbound calls.

If you dial a number that is wrong, apologize promptly and disconnect. One ought to dial carefully and in proper lighting to avoid calling a wrong number and causing inconvenience to others. Etiquette demands that both the caller and receiver should write down information when required. Before making a call or taking one, be sure to have something to write upon. In case the conversation is confidential you should speak from a private room where no one else is present. In case this option is not available speak softly and at the volume not audible to neighboring colleagues. Ideally you should not put a person on hold. You ought to ask permission before putting the person on hold. Unauthorized persons should not be permitted to use the phone. This may have a detrimental effect on the reputation of your organization.

You should never eat food or chew gum while talking on the phone. It causes unpleasant sounds and could possibly irritate the user. Do not talk on the phone while driving. This is not only dangerous but will also divide your attention. Speak softly. Make sure the volume of the phone is not very high as well as speech should be able to be distinctly heard. The correct way to answer the telephone is 'hello'. Simply answering "yes" is an inappropriate and terse response.

You should never be rude to a caller no matter whatever provocation. You should always conduct yourself in a professional business like manner. Speak clearly and slowly when taking a business call. You should not mumble or have slurred speech. Keep phone calls brief and friendly. You ought to be mindful of different time zones. Try to call during the day as far as possible. Calls before 9am and after 9pm should be avoided. You should also be careful in calls where cultural differences come by. Complimentary words and phrases may be considered derogatory in other cultures.

Finally following good business telephone is the responsibility of every person in the organization. These are simple and effective but inexpensive methods to enhance the image of your organization.

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# Speaking Skills for Meetings

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**The Chapter Covers :**

- Strategies for Developing Speaking Skills
- Developing Speaking Skills
- Listening Skills
- Active Listening

Careers are often enhanced, or blunted, in business meetings. Do you sound like someone on his way up — or on his way out? How you come across as a meeting participant can be pivotal. The skills involved in getting your point across are not vastly different than those of a keynote speaker giving a speech to a meeting group.

“Just because the spotlight isn’t shining directly on you doesn’t mean that you can’t be seen,” says Susanne Gaddis, a Chapel Hill, N.C., speech coach and communications authority.

Like public speaking, the art of effective business-meeting communication is very much a learnable skill. Here are eight important, yet often overlooked, tips on speaking well as a meeting participant.

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and body language aside, nothing is more critical to constructive give-and-take in a meeting than emphasizing the upside. Rather than criticizing, stay focused on the implicit value of what someone else says. It's not just Pollyannish. A study at the University of Michigan suggests that a preponderance of positive remarks at business meetings genuinely contributes to successful companies. Try keeping score between positive comments and those designed more to sting than support. "Stay solution focused, offering up twice as many positive comments as you do negative," Gaddis says. "When it's possible, affirm others' ideas by using active and constructive feedback. For example: 'I really like Bill's idea on how we can use a different approach when responding to customer complaints.'"

## 2. Talk to the entire group.

We've all been treated like a fifth wheel—being part of a group, but somehow off the planet when someone is supposedly addressing everyone in the room. Don't make the same snafu. When speaking in a group, move your eyes around and talk to anyone who's listening to what you have to say. "When responding to a question, address the entire group, not just the person who asked the question," Gaddis says. "In this way, everyone feels included."

## 3. Reach out and encourage feedback.

Another meeting pitfall is that hollow sound of silence—comments by speakers that disappear over the horizon leaving no follow-up discussion in their wake. This silence is not golden. So actively encourage comment and feedback based on what you have to contribute. Not only does that make for a better meeting, but it can broaden, amplify and substantiate your remarks. "Get your point across but also open it up for discussion," says John Baldoni, an Ann Arbor, Mich., consultant and the author of "Great Communications Secrets of Great Leaders." "Call on people and ask them what they think. The point is not just to be a participant, but also a facilitator."

## 4. Mirror the tenor of the meeting.

Another business meeting basic is establishing a comfortable atmosphere where everyone feels at ease. One effective way to achieve that is to establish a consistency in communication. If, for instance, most participants are keeping their remarks short, do the same. If their tone is low and reserved, follow their lead. The point is not to mindlessly mimic but, rather, to affirm and contribute to the overall tenor of the meeting. And that makes for productive and efficient give and take. "You can also mirror other behaviors such as leaning forward, crossing your legs and other movements," Gaddis says.

## 5. Don't be a time hog.

Anyone speaking in a business gathering wants to take enough time to identify and, if need be, dissect the point he's trying to convey. But it's all too easy to slip into a filibuster. Gaddis identifies this element as "conversational balance": Be thorough,

but don't take so much time to get your message across that you lose others' attention or, even worse, alienate someone who may be waiting his turn to talk. Again, if others are being succinct, try to do the same. If need be, keep an eye on your watch when you've got the floor so a comment meant to be short doesn't stretch into a diatribe.

#### **6. Check the cliches and rhetoric.**

A central tenet of powerful business-meeting communication is being as clear as possible. Don't muddy your message by wallowing in tired catch phrases — just watch for facial tics when you suggest "pushing the envelope"—or too many rhetorical questions that don't advance the discussion. "Be particularly careful with negative rhetorical remarks like 'What were you thinking?'" says Gaddis.

#### **7. When and if necessary, take it offline.**

Not every in-meeting topic warrants brain surgery. Don't derail meetings or drag them on endlessly by going into detail that can be addressed at another time. "If you make a point that warrants a lot more discussion, tell someone that you'll talk about it in greater detail at some other time," Baldoni says. Or address the issue one-on-one with the questioner after the meeting.

#### **8. Be aware of your body.**

Not everything you convey to others comes by way of your mouth. How you say what you say is equally telling in your ability to share your thoughts with others. Here are a few body language precepts you may wish to embrace (pun definitely intended): Don't limit supportive interaction to just what you say. Show it by nodding your head, making eye contact, raising your eyebrows and making other gestures that demonstrate that your interest and involvement in the discussion aren't mere lip service.

## **STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS**

Students often think that the ability to speak a language is the product of language learning, but speaking is also a crucial part of the language learning process. Effective instructors teach students speaking strategies — using minimal responses, recognizing scripts, and using language to talk about language — that they can use to help themselves expand their knowledge of the language and their confidence in using it. These instructors help students learn to speak so that the students can use speaking to learn.

### **1. Using minimal responses**

Language learners who lack confidence in their ability to participate successfully in oral interaction often listen in silence while others do the talking. One way to encourage such learners to begin to participate is to help them build up a stock of

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minimal responses that they can use in different types of exchanges. Such responses can be especially useful for beginners.

Minimal responses are predictable, often idiomatic phrases that conversation participants use to indicate understanding, agreement, doubt, and other responses to what another speaker is saying. Having a stock of such responses enables a learner to focus on what the other participant is saying, without having to simultaneously plan a response.

## 2. Recognizing scripts

Some communication situations are associated with a predictable set of spoken exchanges — a script. Greetings, apologies, compliments, invitations, and other functions that are influenced by social and cultural norms often follow patterns or scripts. So do the transactional exchanges involved in activities such as obtaining information and making a purchase. In these scripts, the relationship between a speaker's turn and the one that follows it can often be anticipated.

Instructors can help students develop speaking ability by making them aware of the scripts for different situations so that they can predict what they will hear and what they will need to say in response. Through interactive activities, instructors can give students practice in managing and varying the language that different scripts contain.

## 3. Using language to talk about language

Language learners are often too embarrassed or shy to say anything when they do not understand another speaker or when they realize that a conversation partner has not understood them. Instructors can help students overcome this reticence by assuring them that misunderstanding and the need for clarification can occur in any type of interaction, whatever the participants' language skill levels. Instructors can also give students strategies and phrases to use for clarification and comprehension check.

By encouraging students to use clarification phrases in class when misunderstanding occurs, and by responding positively when they do, instructors can create an authentic practice environment within the classroom itself. As they develop control of various clarification strategies, students will gain confidence in their ability to manage the various communication situations that they may encounter outside the classroom.

## DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS

Having good speaking skills is important for today's society. Communication continues to thrive in all aspects of life. Therefore, one should develop speaking skills. Speech strategies can include a variety of things. In addition, knowing when to use correct speech during a certain situation is important.

Focusing on speech is important for developing speaking skills. This includes tonality, expression, emphasis, and so on. The idea is to speak in a way that is most adaptable to a situation. For instance, when giving a public speech, it is good to focus on the words as well as speaking loud enough for the audience. Pronunciation is also very important and can save potential embarrassment.

When speaking to another, it is important to clarify at times. Sometimes other people misconstrue what we are trying to say. In addition, they may misunderstand or not fully pay attention to us. Responding to environment cues is important in these cases. Clarifying what we are saying is good for speaking skills. The idea is to be as understanding and responsive as possible to make others feel that they are being heard.

When dealing with situations, it is good to know how to respond to them via our speaking skills. This can include formal greetings, public speeches, talking to a small group, one on one conversation, and so on. Many times we have to adjust to the situation at hand. As a result, we can change our speaking methodologies to fit the situation. This would include what we say and how we say it.

Speaking is one of the most basic functions of our lives. We all learn to communicate with one another through various means. Developing our speaking skills is important such that we can better communicate with others. Many times speaking has great influence. Great speeches are usually admirable and have a long lasting effect. Therefore, having the speaking skills to influence others for the better is good to obtain.

## LISTENING SKILLS

*We were given two ears but only one mouth.*

*This is because God knew that listening was twice as hard as talking.*

People need to practice and acquire skills to be good listeners, because a speaker cannot throw you information in the same manner that a dart player tosses a dart at a passive dartboard. Information is an intangible substance that must be sent by the speaker and received by an active listener.

### THE FACE IT SOLUTION FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Many people are familiar with the scene of the child standing in front of dad, just bursting to tell him what happened in school that day. Unfortunately, dad has the paper in front of his face and even when he drops the paper down half-way, it is visibly apparent that he is not really listening.

A student solved the problem of getting dad to listen from behind his protective paper wall. Her solution was to say, "Move your face, dad, when I'm talking to you." This simple solution will force even the poorest listener to adopt effective listening skills because it captures the essence of good listening.

**GOOD LISTENERS LISTEN WITH THEIR FACES****NOTES**

The first skill that you can practice to be a good listener is *to act like a good listener*. We have spent a lot of our modern lives working at tuning out all of the information that is thrust at us. It therefore becomes important to change our physical body language from that of a deflector to that of a receiver, much like a satellite dish. Our faces contain most of the receptive equipment in our bodies, so it is only natural that we should tilt our faces towards the channel of information.

A second skill is to use the other bodily receptors besides your ears. You can be a better listener when you *look at the other person*. Your eyes pick up the non-verbal signals that all people send out when they are speaking. By looking at the speaker, your eyes will also complete the eye contact that speakers are trying to make. A speaker will work harder at sending out the information when they see a receptive audience in attendance. Your eyes help complete the communication circuit that must be established between speaker and listener.

When you have established eye and face contact with your speaker, you must then *react to the speaker* by sending out non-verbal signals. Your face must move and give the range of emotions that indicate whether you are following what the speaker has to say. By moving your face to the information, you can better concentrate on what the person is saying. Your face must become an active and contoured catcher of information.

It is extremely difficult to receive information when your mouth is moving information out at the same time. A good listener will *stop talking and use receptive language* instead. Use the *I see . . . un huhh . . . oh really* words and phrases that follow and encourage your speaker's train of thought. This forces you to react to the ideas presented, rather than the person. You can then move to asking questions, instead of giving your opinion on the information being presented. It is a true listening skill to use your mouth as a moving receptor of information rather than a broadcaster.

A final skill is to move your mind to *concentrate on what the speaker is saying*. You cannot fully hear their point of view or process information when you argue mentally or judge what they are saying before they have completed. An open mind is a mind that is receiving and listening to information.

If you really want to listen, you will act like a good listener. Good listeners are good catchers because they give their speakers a target and then move that target to capture the information that is being sent. When good listeners aren't understanding their speakers, they will send signals to the speaker about what they expect next, or how the speaker can change the speed of information delivery to suit the listener. Above all, a good listener involves all of their face to be an active moving listener.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER

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1. If you are really listening intently, you should feel tired after your speaker has finished. Effective listening is an active rather than a passive activity.
2. When you find yourself drifting away during a listening session, change your body position and concentrate on using one of the above skills. Once one of the skills is being used, the other active skills will come into place as well.
3. Your body position defines whether you will have the chance of being a good listener or a good deflector. Good listeners are like poor boxers: they lead with their faces.
4. Meaning cannot just be transmitted as a tangible substance by the speaker. It must also be stimulated or aroused in the receiver. The receiver must therefore be an active participant for the cycle of communication to be complete.

## ACTIVE LISTENING

Hear what people are really saying

Listening is one of the most important skills you can have. How well you listen has a major impact on your job effectiveness, and on the quality of your relationships with others.

We listen to obtain information.

We listen to understand.

We listen for enjoyment.

We listen to learn.

Given all this listening we do, you would think we'd be good at it!

In fact most of us are not. Depending on the study being quoted, we remember between 25% and 50% of what we hear. That means that when you talk to your boss, colleagues, customers or spouse for 10 minutes, they pay attention to less than half of the conversation. This is dismal!

Turn it around and it reveals that when you are receiving directions or being presented with information, you aren't hearing the whole message either. You hope the important parts are captured in your 25-50%, but what if they're not?

Clearly, listening is a skill that we can all benefit from improving. By becoming a better listener, you will improve your productivity, as well as your ability to influence, persuade and negotiate. What's more, you'll avoid conflict and misunderstandings. All of these are necessary for workplace success!

Good communication skills require a high level of self-awareness. By understanding your personal style of communicating, you will go a long way towards creating good and lasting impressions with others.

The way to become a better listener is to practice “active listening”. This is where you make a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying but, more importantly, try to understand the complete message being sent.

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In order to do this you must pay attention to the other person very carefully.

You cannot allow yourself to become distracted by whatever else may be going on around you, or by forming counter arguments that you’ll make when the other person stops speaking. Nor can you allow yourself to get bored, and lose focus on what the other person is saying. All of these contribute to a lack of listening and understanding.

**Tip :** If you’re finding it particularly difficult to concentrate on what someone is saying, try repeating their words mentally as they say them – this will reinforce their message and help you stay focused.

To enhance your listening skills, you need to let the other person know that you are listening to what he or she is saying. To understand the importance of this, ask yourself if you’ve ever been engaged in a conversation when you wondered if the other person was listening to what you were saying. You wonder if your message is getting across, or if it’s even worthwhile continuing to speak. It feels like talking to a brick wall and it’s something you want to avoid.

Acknowledgement can be something as simple as a nod of the head or a simple “uh huh.” You aren’t necessarily agreeing with the person, you are simply indicating that you are listening. Using body language and other signs to acknowledge you are listening also reminds you to pay attention and not let your mind wander.

You should also try to respond to the speaker in a way that will both encourage him or her to continue speaking, so that you can get the information if you need. While nodding and “uh huhing” says you’re interested, an occasional question or comment to recap what has been said communicates that you understand the message as well.

### Becoming an Active Listener

There are five key elements of active listening. They all help you ensure that you hear the other person, and that the other person knows you are hearing what they say.

#### 1. Pay attention.

Give the speaker your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also “speaks” loudly.

- Look at the speaker directly.
- Put aside distracting thoughts. Don’t mentally prepare a rebuttal!
- Avoid being distracted by environmental factors.

- “Listen” to the speaker’s body language.
- Refrain from side conversations when listening in a group setting.

## 2. Show that you are listening.

Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.

- Nod occasionally.
- Smile and use other facial expressions.
- Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
- Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes, and uh huh.

## 3. Provide feedback.

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.

- Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. “What I’m hearing is.” and “Sounds like you are saying.” are great ways to reflect back.
- Ask questions to clarify certain points. “What do you mean when you say.” “Is this what you mean?”
- Summarize the speaker’s comments periodically.

**Tip :** If you find yourself responding emotionally to what someone said, say so, and ask for more information: “I may not be understanding you correctly, and I find myself taking what you said personally. What I thought you just said is XXX; is that what you meant?”

## 4. Defer judgment.

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.

- Allow the speaker to finish.
- Don’t interrupt with counter arguments.

## 5. Respond Appropriately.

Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.

- Be candid, open, and honest in your response.
- Assert your opinions respectfully.

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- Treat the other person as he or she would want to be treated.

### Points Key

#### NOTES

It takes a lot of concentration and determination to be an active listener. Old habits are hard to break, and if your listening habits are as bad as many people's are, then there's a lot of habit-breaking to do!

Be deliberate with your listening and remind yourself frequently that your goal is to truly hear what the other person is saying. Set aside all other thoughts and behaviors and concentrate on the message. Ask questions, reflect, and paraphrase to ensure you understand the message. If you don't, then you'll find that what someone says to you and what you hear can be amazingly different!

Start using active listening today to become a better communicator, improve your workplace productivity, and develop better relationships.

## 12

# Communication Barriers

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**The Chapter Covers :**

- Barriers to Communication
- Cultural Barriers to Effective Communication
- Overcoming Communication Barriers
- Communication Barriers in Organisations
- Communication Barriers in Business
- Communication Challenges in the Workplace

Communication is a process beginning with a sender who encodes the message and passes it through some channel to the receiver who decodes the message. Communication is fruitful if and only if the messages sent by the sender is interpreted with same meaning by the receiver. If any kind of disturbance **blocks** any step of communication, the message will be destroyed. Due to such **disturbances**, managers in an organization face severe problems. Thus the managers must locate such barriers and take steps to get rid of them.

There are several barriers that affects the flow of communication in an organization. These barriers interrupt the flow of communication from the sender to the receiver, thus making communication ineffective. It is essential for managers to overcome these barriers. The main barriers of communication are summarized below.



**Following are the main communication barriers:**

## NOTES

1. **Perceptual and Language Differences:** Perception is generally how each individual interprets the world around him. All generally want to receive messages which are significant to them. But any message which is against their values is not accepted. A same event may be taken differently by different individuals. For example : A person is on leave for a month due to personal reasons (family member being critical). The HR Manager might be in confusion whether to retain that employee or not, the immediate manager might think of replacement because his teams productivity is being hampered, the family members might take him as an emotional support.

The linguistic differences also lead to communication breakdown. Same word may mean different to different individuals. For example: consider a word "value".

- a. What is the **value** of this Laptop?
- b. I **value** our relation?
- c. What is the **value** of learning technical skills?

"Value" means different in different sentences. Communication breakdown occurs if there is wrong perception by the receiver.

2. **Information Overload:** Managers are surrounded with a pool of information. It is essential to control this information flow else the information is likely to be misinterpreted or forgotten or overlooked. As a result communication is less effective.
3. **Inattention:** At times we just not listen, but only hear. For example a traveler may pay attention to one "NO PARKING" sign, but if such sign is put all over the city, he no longer listens to it. Thus, repetitive messages should be ignored for effective communication. Similarly if a superior is engrossed in his paper work and his subordinate explains him his problem, the superior may not get what he is saying and it leads to disappointment of subordinate.
4. **Time Pressures:** Often in organization the targets have to be achieved within a specified time period, the failure of which has adverse consequences. In a haste to meet deadlines, the formal channels of communication are shortened, or messages are partially given, i.e., not completely transferred. Thus sufficient time should be given for effective communication.
5. **Distraction/Noise:** Communication is also affected a lot by noise to distractions. Physical distractions are also there such as, poor lightning, uncomfortable sitting, unhygienic room also affects communication in a meeting. Similarly use of loud speakers interferes with communication.

6. **Emotions:** Emotional state at a particular point of time also affects communication. If the receiver feels that communicator is angry he interprets that the information being sent is very bad. While he takes it differently if the communicator is happy and jovial (in that case the message is interpreted to be good and interesting).
7. **Complexity in Organizational Structure:** Greater the hierarchy in an organization (i.e. more the number of managerial levels), more is the chances of communication getting destroyed. Only the people at the top level can see the overall picture while the people at low level just have knowledge about their own area and a little knowledge about other areas.
8. **Poor retention:** Human memory cannot function beyond a limit. One can't always retain what is being told specially if he is not interested or not attentive. This leads to communication breakdown.

## BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

It's not always easy and often takes a lot of determination. But making an effort to remove the obstacles - tangible and intangible - that stand in our way, can be the key to building relationships that really work

by Eric Garner

Many people think that communicating is easy. It is after all something we've done all our lives. There is some truth in this simplistic view. Communicating is straightforward. What makes it complex, difficult, and frustrating are the barriers we put in the way.

Here are the 7 top barriers.

### 1. Physical barriers

Physical barriers in the workplace include:

- marked out territories, empires and fiefdoms into which strangers are not allowed
- closed office doors, barrier screens, separate areas for people of different status
- large working areas or working in one unit that is physically separate from others.

Research shows that one of the most important factors in building cohesive teams is proximity. As long as people still have a personal space that they can call their own, nearness to others aids communication because it helps us get to know one another.

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**2. Perceptual barriers**

The problem with communicating with others is that we all see the world differently. If we didn't, we would have no need to communicate: something like extrasensory perception would take its place.

The following anecdote is a reminder of how our thoughts, assumptions and perceptions shape our own realities:

A traveller was walking down a road when he met a man from the next town. "Excuse me," he said. "I am hoping to stay in the next town tonight. Can you tell me what the townspeople are like?"

"Well," said the townsman, "how did you find the people in the last town you visited?"

"Oh, they were an irascible bunch. Kept to themselves. Took me for a fool. Over-charged me for what I got. Gave me very poor service."

"Well, then," said the townsman, "you'll find them pretty much the same here."

**3. Emotional barriers**

One of the chief barriers to open and free communications is the emotional barrier. It is comprised mainly of fear, mistrust and suspicion. The roots of our emotional mistrust of others lie in our childhood and infancy when we were taught to be careful what we said to others.

*"Mind your P's and Q's"; "Don't speak until you're spoken to"; "Children should be seen and not heard".* As a result many people hold back from communicating their thoughts and feelings to others.

They feel vulnerable. While some caution may be wise in certain relationships, excessive fear of what others might think of us can stunt our development as effective communicators and our ability to form meaningful relationships.

**4. Cultural barriers**

When we join a group and wish to remain in it, sooner or later we need to adopt the behaviour patterns of the group. These are the behaviours that the group accept as signs of belonging.

The group rewards such behaviour through acts of recognition, approval and inclusion. In groups which are happy to accept you, and where you are happy to conform, there is a mutuality of interest and a high level of win-win contact.

Where, however, there are barriers to your membership of a group, a high level of game-playing replaces good communication.

## 5. Language barriers

Language that describes what we want to say in our terms may present barriers to others who are not familiar with our expressions, buzz-words and jargon. When we couch our communication in such language, it is a way of excluding others. In a global market place the greatest compliment we can pay another person is to talk in their language.

One of the more chilling memories of the Cold War was the threat by the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev saying to the Americans at the United Nations: "We will bury you!" This was taken to mean a threat of nuclear annihilation.

However, a more accurate reading of Khrushchev's words would have been: "We will overtake you!" meaning economic superiority. It was not just the language, but the fear and suspicion that the West had of the Soviet Union that led to the more alarmist and sinister interpretation.

## 6. Gender barriers

There are distinct differences between the speech patterns in a man and those in a woman. A woman speaks between 22,000 and 25,000 words a day whereas a man speaks between 7,000 and 10,000. In childhood, girls speak earlier than boys and at the age of three, have a vocabulary twice that of boys.

The reason for this lies in the wiring of a man's and woman's brains. When a man talks, his speech is located in the left side of the brain but in no specific area. When a woman talks, the speech is located in both hemispheres and in two specific locations.

This means that a man talks in a linear, logical and compartmentalised way, features of left-brain thinking; whereas a woman talks more freely mixing logic and emotion, features of both sides of the brain. It also explains why women talk for much longer than men each day.

## 7. Interpersonal barriers

There are six levels at which people can distance themselves from one another:

1. **Withdrawal** is an absence of interpersonal contact. It is both refusal to be in touch and time alone.
2. **Rituals** are meaningless, repetitive routines devoid of real contact.
3. **Pastimes** fill up time with others in social but superficial activities.
4. **Working** activities are those tasks which follow the rules and procedures of contact but no more.
5. **Games** are subtle, manipulative interactions which are about winning and losing. They include "rackets" and "stamps".

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6. **Closeness** is the aim of interpersonal contact where there is a high level of honesty and acceptance of yourself and others.

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Working on improving your communications is a broad-brush activity. You have to change your thoughts, your feelings, and your physical connections.

That way, you can break down the barriers that get in your way and start building relationships that really work.

## **CULTURAL BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

Owing to cultural differences between people, communication is not always effective. Cultural barriers in communication ought to be dealt with efficiently, in order to enable healthy communication.

*“Most conversations are simply monologues delivered in the presence of a witness.” - Margaret Millar*

It is a fact that effective communication is the key to success in both personal and business relationships. In the absence of proper communication between two people, actions will not be in tandem with the actual motive. Many a time, the reason behind the lack of effective communication between two individuals is, the cultural differences between them. Be it an informal or a corporate setting, a gap is created in the communication between individuals coming from different cultures, as a result of which the message to be conveyed is misinterpreted or not understood. Here is an overview of some of the cultural barriers to communication in personal and professional relationships.

### **Cultural Barriers to Effective Communication**

**Social and Economic Conditions:** Individuals may not communicate with each other due to a difference in the status they hold in society. For example people holding higher ranks or posts or those with a higher position in society may experience difficulty in communicating with individuals holding lesser ranks or those on a lower social status. In the same way, those in a good economic condition may not communicate openly with people in a relatively lower financial status. This is observed at both personal and professional levels. For example, people from rich families may find a communication gap in interacting with people from the middle or lower middle class. A poor economic condition or lower status in society can make one feel inferior. Similarly, a very good economic condition or higher social status can make one feel superior, thus creating a communication gap between these two groups.

**Cultural Background:** People coming from different countries may not find comfort in communicating or coordinating easily with one another. When people from different countries come together, their way of thinking varies. Some might be shy to communicate, while others open for communication. Owing to the difference in their cultural backgrounds, there is a difference in their upbringing, due to which there's a difference in their views and beliefs. Even the communication etiquette

differs across the different countries, thus making it difficult for communication to even start.

**Language and Accent:** Language is one cultural barrier that is observed in people coming from different parts of the world. Many of us hesitate to communicate with a foreigner because we are unable to understand his language or accent. For example, An Asian may not feel comfortable talking to an Australian, owing to his/her heavy English accent.

**Behavior and Nature:** Behavior and human nature can be barriers in communication. Culture influences one's personality and the persona in turn impacts the way one thinks, behaves and communicates. For example, egoistic people may keep themselves away from communicating with the others around. Similarly, people with an inferiority complex may find it difficult to communicate freely. Also, a difference in personalities can lead to a communication gap in people. Extroverts can initiate communication with no difficulty while introverts cannot. Good communication is possible only if both parties are ready to communicate, are able to understand the differences in their personalities and keep their personal differences aside.

**Religion:** Being from different religions or castes can act as a barrier to communicate on a personal or professional level. Sometimes, a person may feel uncomfortable communicating with people from other religions. This is mainly because of the difference in the beliefs they share. Religious views impact the way one thinks and can lead to differences of opinion. But one must understand the reasons behind these differences and tackle them carefully. If this is done, religion would no longer remain a cultural barrier to communication. However, due to globalization and spread of education, the negative impact of this kind of barrier seems to be decreasing.

Apart from the cultural barriers discussed above, differences in political views, living values, priorities in life, trust levels, age difference and moods are some of the other factors that hinder effective communication. Given below are some tips on how to overcome cultural barriers to effective communication.

### **Overcoming Cultural Barriers to Communication**

- While communicating with an individual or a group, use a language they are familiar with.
- Have respect for people from other cultures and their values and beliefs.
- While communicating, do not include terms or references which are exclusively related to a specific culture.
- A knowledge of different cultures and traditions helps you get along with people from other cultures.
- With regards to corporate communication, the management can arrange for cross-cultural training sessions, which contribute to clear communication in people from different cultures.
- Be it a hobby class or workplace training, make sure the training material has an easy-to-understand language for any group of individuals.

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- Having the working knowledge of an additional language is also an effective way to reduce the impact of cultural barriers in communication.
- Treat people from other cultures with respect; doing so will enable healthy communication between you.

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The whole idea of communication is based on transfer of information from a sender to a receiver and communication is said to be complete only when the recipient understands what the sender had to say. Thus, it's obvious that communication cannot take place in the presence of any kind of barriers that hinder healthy interaction between the communicators. Cultural barriers hamper effective communication at both personal and professional levels. Removing these barriers would certainly encourage healthy and effective communication.

## OVERCOMING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Before knowing different ways to overcome communication barriers, it is very important to understand and identify the various barriers to effective communication. These barriers include language barriers, due to differences in the language and understanding; interpersonal barriers, wherein the difference or presumption between two people can cause lack of understanding; physical barriers, wherein the presence of a physical barrier like traffic, loud noise etc. can cause interference; emotional barriers, wherein one is unable to pay attention because of being preoccupied emotionally; and cultural barriers wherein the differences in cultures and traditions lead to misunderstandings and differences. It is only when you identify the barriers to effective communication, you would be able to successfully overcome them.

### Overcoming Communication Barriers

It is very important to understand that communication is a two way process wherein the sender and the receiver play an equally important role. Just putting forth the message to the receiver isn't enough, you must also make sure that the receiver has perceived the information in the same manner as you intended to! Until and unless you are not sure that the correct information in the correct sense has been received by the receiving end, the process of communication is incomplete. Sadly, most of the times it so happens that the information that we tend to convey is always perceived in a different manner. This lack of effective communication can lead to a lot of misunderstandings and friction within all the parties involved. Below mentioned are some effective tips on how to overcome communication barriers. Have a look...

### Be a Good Listener

How many times has it happened to you that you were talking to a person and even before you could finish, you were snubbed. Would you even feel like openly talking to that person again who doesn't even wait for you to finish? Though it is more difficult than said, but listening at times is more important than speaking out. Therefore, if you really want to be a part of a successful communication process, it is important for you to be a good and patient listener. Wait for the other person to finish and put his point across and only then say something ahead.

## **Be Present, not only Physically, but Mentally Too!**

Effective communication demands your attention and presence, not only physically, but mentally as well. If there are any physical barriers like too much of noise, or too many people or too much of distance, then make sure that you either communicate away from the environment or make sure that you eliminate these hindrances. Speaking of mental barriers, keep your mind fully alert and pay attention to the person you are communicating with. Or else, the person will assume that you understood his point when you have not!

## **Don't Presume Beforehand**

Presumption, is the biggest barrier to effective communication. After listening to half the information, we tend to presume what the rest of the part would be, which is something that we are NEVER supposed to do! The stereotype approach of taking things for granted can lead to a lot of misunderstandings and confusions. Therefore, never presume while communicating.

## **Use the Right Channel to Communicate**

Using the appropriate channel to communicate is also equally important. I mean, if you have to tell your employees that the company will be giving bonus, calling everyone individually and informing them would be foolish, why not just put it on the noticeboard! Similarly, if you need to appreciate an employee for their contribution towards the organization, then personally commending the employee in front of the team would be better than putting it on the notice board.

## **Keep it Simple and Easy**

The basic element in the process of communication is language, which must be extremely simple and easy so that there are no loopholes to misinterpret or not understand what you are trying to put across. Try to avoid using jargon or too much of complicated words and sentences. Remember that the basic motive is to put across the message and making sure that people understand it. No one is judging your knowledge or vocabulary, but definitely judging how effective you are when it comes to communicating.

## **Feedback is Extremely Important**

Last but not the least, taking a feedback from the receiving end, just to make sure that they have interpreted the information in the same manner as you intended to is very important! It is only through proper feedback that you can understand how far they have understood, thereby getting a chance to clarify the differences, if any.

So, these were some of the most effective ways on how to overcome communication barriers in an organization, be it a formal or an informal one. Just try to incorporate these simple yet effective tips and you will definitely be able to achieve a smooth and well coordinated environment around you. Communication is very easy, provided to keep it simple and sweet.

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## COMMUNICATION BARRIERS IN ORGANISATIONS

### NOTES

What is communication barriers in organizations? Before that let us understand the importance of communication itself. Communication is an exchange of ideas and thoughts, in order to execute them effectively. It is about putting your thoughts forth and listening to others as well. Communication is considered complete once the listener has perceived your thoughts the way you want him to perceive them. Hence, communication is of utmost importance to be a happy and successful social being.

The place where you spend maximum time of your day is your workplace, where you have people from different backgrounds, cultures, beliefs, etc. Certain protocols have to be followed with seniors while communicating with them, likewise a line has to be drawn while communicating with the juniors, and so on. Hence, communication is not easy at the workplace. It is a complex process. An organization works as a team and communicating effectively among the team members only will ensure the organization's success.

### Barriers to Effective Communication in Organizations

People in an organization spend over 75% of their time on interpersonal communication. To overcome communication barriers in organizations, it's important to know the barriers in the first place. The following are a few main communication barriers in organizations.

#### Distance Barrier

When offices are located at different locations, employees find it difficult to communicate with each other. In fact, the scope to communicate narrows down. Different mediums of communication, other than face to face communication, may be used, which may lead to incorrect or incomplete communication. Hence, distance being the major communication barrier in organizations.

#### Language Barrier

Some employees make use of jargon's which may sound foreign to most recipients. Hence, specialist language for non-specialist audience is another communication barrier. We use 500 common words every day. These 500 words have 1000 different meanings. It is very important to use proper language and to see to it that it is properly communicated to the recipient. Otherwise, language can be a big barrier to effective communication in organizations.

#### Selective Communication and Conflicts

Sometimes, the reporter gives the recipient incomplete information, and sometimes the recipient hears incorrect information, both leading to communication failure. Sometimes, the communicator and recipient share some personal bitterness too, and it definitely affects the communication process. This disturbs the workplace and is another major hurdle in the welfare of the organization. Hence, it is considered as one of the major communication barriers in organizations.

## Cultural Barriers

Some people are rigid and stubborn when it comes to mixing with people from a different culture or community. They are comfortable and do not quite like to get out of their shell. They prefer being with people of the same culture as theirs. This is a reason why culture acts as one of the noteworthy barriers to effective communication in the workplace.

## Correct Use of Medium for Communication

Some organizations try closing an important deal with a customer via email. Substituting face to face communication with electronic communication to protect oneself from the fall-out of people's emotions, will eventually hit back. A face to face communication increases trust and faith in the organization. There are advantages and disadvantages of electronic communication. Using electronic communication when it is really required is good, but not because it is an easy way out.

## Defensive Behavior

Defensive behavior shows lack of self confidence, fear of rejection, and the desire to be perfect in everyone's eye. It is difficult for such people to accept their mistakes and correct them at the same time, hence causing a communication barrier in organizations.

## Lack of Feedback

A communication cycle is not complete if there is no feedback from the recipient. It is important to know what the recipient has absorbed of the communication, and that the ideas put across have been perceived correctly for effective execution of the same. Lack of feedback defeats the very purpose of effective communication, hence, leading to another communication barrier in organizations.

Once the barriers of communication in organizations are considered, it's only easy to find ways and means to overcome them. Barriers of communication definitely affect the organization as a whole but also affects you at a personal level. Hence, overcoming communication barriers in organizations not only helps the organization overcome roadblocks on their way to success but improves you with your effective communication skills as well.

To sum it up, every individual communicates differently. To understand every individuals differences and communicate aptly will make a strong work team, and this is where understanding communication barriers in organizations is important. Hence, keeping the organizational communication effective and barrier free.

## COMMUNICATION BARRIERS IN BUSINESS

Effective business communication or workplace communication is a necessity in this competitive corporate world. A good dialogue among the employees can alone ensure the success of quick and proper learning process. With good communication, team members will be able to take right decisions in favor of the company and increase its profitability considerably. However, a knowledge of the communication

barriers in business is a must for human resource professionals so that they can invent advanced techniques to deal with this issue. Given below are some of the commonly observed communication problems in business.

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## **Communication Problems in Business**

### **Difference in Way of Thinking**

The process of communication is not just speaking by understanding what the other person exactly means. This process is not complete unless the opposite person comes to know the exact meaning of the terminologies used by the speaker. Sometimes, way of thinking of two people working in the same organization can be entirely different. This difference in perception of things can cause delays or problems in the communication process. So, this is one of the biggest barriers to effective communication.

### **Lack of Interest**

Lack of interest on the part of the listener can also be one of the serious barriers in communication. The process of business communication can be complete only if the listener is as enthusiastic in the conversation as the speaker. Lack of interest will result in not understanding concepts and this will cause further problems while working actually. However good the speaker is, he will not be able to help at all if the listener is just not interested in listening to him carefully.

### **Less Grasping Power**

The communication differences in business can also exist because of less grasping power of the listener. If the listener does not have good listening skills and sufficient basic knowledge on the subject of discussion, then completing the communication process becomes extremely difficult and time consuming. So, increasing the grasping power by extensive research on the concerned topics can be a solution for overcoming communication barriers like this.

### **Improper Way of Speaking or Explaining**

Improper way of speaking or explaining on the part of the speaker can be one of the barriers to communication. Some speakers have the ability of taking things for granted and they assume very early that the listener knows a lot on the subject. Some speakers are impatient and restless and they get frustrated immediately when the other person fails to understand things fast. Wrong attitude of the speaker is one of the communication barriers in business in different types of organizational settings. Arrogant behavior of the speaker can be really frustrating for the listeners.

### **Language Problems**

Lack of knowledge of language can also be one of the biggest communication barriers in the workplace. This can happen mostly in the multi-national companies where people of different countries, nationalities and different mother tongue work together. Lack of knowledge of a particular language can surely be a deterrent, however, effective management by the senior managers can help to deal with this problem.

## Cultural Barriers

Cultural barriers which can be there when people belonging to different cultures work together can be one of the communication barriers in business. At times, people may find it difficult or feel hesitant to communicate freely with people belonging to other cultures and castes. Having cultural diversity in the workplace can help greatly in dealing with this kind of problems. HR managers should take lead and come up with innovative solutions for such complex issues.

It is essential that all employees understand the importance of communication in the workplace to make this entire process very easy. All problems in the workplace can be solved by effective and systematic communication. So, hoping that this article on communication barriers in business must have satisfied you by answering all your queries, I would love to sign off here.

## COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN THE WORK-PLACE

Communication is the key to most problems in the world. And problems, they follow you everywhere. So *communication*? Yes, you need that to be your best friend. Is that threatening to go off on a tangent? Alright, then I'll just discipline my mind a tad and stick to what I started to tell you about - Communication barriers in the workplace. You see, communication is of course the key, but *effective* communication is what you should be aiming for. And seriously now, how many times will there be perfect communication taking place? Not often. In the following article I shall get into a little detail about the different aspects of communication barriers in the workplace and how to go about dealing with them. Read and take note.

### What are the Communication Barriers in the Workplace?

If you don't know what are communication barriers in the workplace, how do you expect to overcome them? With an ends to the means kind of approach then, let's get into the details of this one. There are several barriers to effective communication and they work on several levels. Here are some of them that you should be looking into:

#### Difference in Perception

No two people can perceive an event in the same way. What I infer from a particular incident, the other will not necessarily perceive the same. This can act as a major communication barrier because what I convey to a subordinate or colleague will be based on my perception and what he understands from it will be based on his. If the two viewpoints end up differing, it could cause the task at hand to suffer, as well as lead to misunderstandings.

#### Language Barriers

Language can have its own special meaning. One develops jargon and other catch words that denote a completely different meaning than what the word signifies, to cite an example 'Going out' could mean the physical task of leaving a premise or in the colloquial sense it could mean a couple that is dating. Things like these are

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shared within a group who have common experiences and spaces. With this in mind, workplace communication can face major barriers when there are so many people with so many languages and jargon, and a connotation meaning something different for each of them (possibly). So then the possibility of communication barriers gets heightened. That is why one needs to understand the importance of communication in business or the professional world. The best way to avoid miscommunication is to make use of words that are simple and which cannot be interpreted in very many ways.

**Channel Barriers**

The communication process happens through a channel or a medium. It could be the word of mouth, any of the gadgets like phones, emails, faxes etc or through another person. And as many mediums that there are, those are the amount of miscommunication possibilities that can arise. There might be disturbances on the phone, the tone of the email that was drafted and consequently the message that you sent might be misinterpreted, the person through whom you send the message might filter your message leaving out certain key pointers, the person to whom you pass the message might not be using effective listening skills and therefore there might be a wrong message 'understood'. All of these leads to only one thing, that the final message is distorted and *that* itself becomes a major communication barrier.

**Cultural Barriers**

There are several cultural communication barriers in the workplace as well. Cultural is anything that is influenced by cultures. With globalization, there is bound to be cultural diversity in the workplace, and while we know the intercultural communication, it could also lead to communication barriers. Several factors such as religion, body language, personal space, status and hierarchy, gender roles and personal appearance are influenced by the culture that one belongs to and this could lead to miscommunication at many fronts.

Overcoming communication barriers in the workplace is not possible if one does not know what is causing them. To avoid further problems of miscommunication, one should understand the importance of communication in the workplace and strive to achieve it. Only then can one hope to eradicate the problems in the workplace and achieve a healthy and successful working environment.

# 13 Business Grammar

NOTES

## The Chapter Covers :

- Adjective intensifiers
- Business Phrasal Verbs
- Tenses
- Simple Present
- Simple Past
- Past Continuous
- Present Perfect
- Present Perfect Continuous
- Past Perfect
- Past Perfect Continuous
- Simple Future
- Future Continuous
- Future Perfect
- Used To
- Prepositions
- Prepositional Phrases
- Some Words Followed by Prepositions
- The subjunctive mood in English – a guide to usage
- Conditionals

## ADJECTIVE INTENSIFIERS

There are some words which can be used to 'intensify' many adjectives – 'very' 'really' 'totally' 'absolutely' 'completely' 'utterly' 'entirely'.

- o It's very tall.
- o We're really happy.
- o She's totally exhausted.
- o I'm absolutely horrified.
- o He's completely hopeless.

- o You look utterly miserable.
- o I'm entirely satisfied.

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Certain adjectives have their own 'special' intensifiers which are often used with them. Here are some common ones:

**blind drunk**

- o He was blind drunk and behaved really badly.

**bone dry**

- o I must have a drink. I'm bone dry.

**brand new**

- o I've just bought a brand new car.

**crystal clear**

- o The sea near Rhodes is crystal clear.

**dead easy**

- o That exam was dead easy. I've certainly passed.
- o He's won three lottery prizes this year. He's dead lucky.

**dead right**

- o I agree entirely. You are dead right.

**dirt cheap**

- o I bought my car for a dirt cheap price from an old lady who had hardly driven it.

**fast asleep / sound asleep**

- o I was in bed and fast asleep by nine.
- o I was sound asleep and I didn't hear anything.

**paper thin**

- o These office walls are paper thin. You can hear everything said in the next office.

**pitch black**

- o There's no moon. It's pitch black out there.

**razor sharp**

- o Be careful with that knife- it's razor sharp.

**rock hard**

- o It's impossible to dig this soil – it's rock hard.

**stark naked**

- o The hotel door slammed behind me and I was left standing stark naked in the middle of the corridor.

**stone deaf**

- o He can't hear a thing. He's stone deaf.

**wide awake**

- o I was wide awake by six.

**wide open**

- o Who left the door wide open?

**BUSINESS PHRASAL VERBS****Three word verbs**

'Come in for' means to receive. This is usually used with words such as 'criticism' 'abuse' 'blame'.

- He came in for a lot of criticism for his actions.
- She came in for a lot of abuse when she tried to argue with them

'Go in for' can be used with words such as 'competition' to mean 'enter'.

- I went in for a Scrabble tournament at my club and I won.
- She was a good athlete when she was younger and went in for the trials for the Olympic team

'Sit in on' can be used with words such as 'conference' or 'meeting' to indicate that you attend as an observer and not as a regular participant.

- I've asked John to sit in on this meeting as he knows more about these people than we do.
- I'd like you to sit in on the negotiations with the unions as part of your training

'Stand in for' is used to mean 'substitute for'.

- Harry is ill so I'm going to stand in for him and make the presentation.
- Wendy is on vacation and I'm standing in for her

If you 'go along with' existing plans, opinions or decisions you accept them and don't try to change them.

- I go along with your ideas about increasing our marketing in China.

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- You agreed to go along with our decision

If you 'listen out for' something, you keep alert and make an effort to hear it.

- I'm expecting him to call so listen out for the phone ringing.
- Listen out for their car. They should be here soon

If you 'cash in on' a situation, you take advantage of it, often unfairly.

- He cashed in on my absence with flu to contact my customers directly.
- We need to cash in on the emerging markets in Asia

If you 'drop in on' somebody, you make an informal, unarranged visit to see them.

- I dropped in on Martin when I was visiting Sidcup.
- Drop in on me any time you are in town.

### To Be

One way to say you are leaving is to say you are 'off'.

- I'm off now. See you tomorrow.
- It's time I was off or I'll be late for the meeting.

If you have no more supply/stock of something you are 'out of' the item.

- We're out of ink for the photocopier. Can you go out and get some?
- I'm afraid you are out of luck. I sold the last one an hour ago.

If you are depressed and miserable, you are 'down'.

- He's been very down since he lost his job.
- Why are you so down today?

When you have to submit something by a certain date, it has to be 'in' by then.

- The application has to be in before Friday.
- The report was supposed to be in last week but I'm still working on it.

If something is 'on', it is happening at the moment.

- There's a good play on at the theatre. (or should that be theater?)
- I'm going to London because the sales are on.

If somebody is not present, they are 'away'.

- I'm afraid he's away on holiday.
- I'm going to be away for a few days.

If food is no longer fresh, it is 'off'.

- I think this milk is off. Smell it.
- That melon is off. Don't eat it.

If you know some inside information, often a secret, you are 'in on' the information.

- Is Sarah in on our plans? Has anybody told her yet?
- He won't let me in on the secret.

## NOTES

If someone is 'up to' something, they are doing something secretive that you are not supposed to know about.

- I don't know exactly what is happening but Tom is up to something.
- Why all the whispering? What are you up to?

If someone is 'on' something, they are taking something as a form of drug.

- He's on 50 cigarettes a day at the moment.
- She's on her third cup of coffee and it's only 9 o'clock.

## To Bring

If you 'bring something about', you cause it to happen.

- How can we bring about change in this old-fashioned company?
- We need to bring about a change in attitude.

If you 'bring someone along' with you, they come with you.

- I want to bring along John to the meeting, if that is OK.
- Why not bring Simon along, if he's interested?

If something 'brings back' memories, it reminds you of the past.

- That photo brings back memories of our visit to Thailand.
- Meeting him brought back memories of when we worked together.

If you 'bring down' a price, you reduce it.

- We need to bring down the price to something more affordable.
- They're bringing down the price of all their cars.

If you 'bring forward' a meeting, you arrange it for an earlier time.

- I want to bring forward the meeting to Tuesday.
- Can we bring forward the meeting by an hour?

If you 'bring someone in on' a discussion, you ask them to join in with your discussion.

- I want to bring in John on this as he is an expert.

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- We need to bring in an outside consultant.

If you 'bring out' a new product, you introduce it to the market.

- I hear they have brought out a new model.
- We're bringing it out early next year.

If you 'bring someone round', you persuade them.

- He was against the idea but Sally brought him round.
- How can we bring him round?

If you 'bring up' a subject, you mention it.

- Mark brought up the problem with the heating.
- Any other problems that you want to bring up?

If you 'bring on' somebody, you train them to be better.

- Martin always brings on the trainees really well.
- We try to bring on people quickly and promote them.

### To Come

1. Sometimes you keep something even though you don't need it at the time but because you think in the future it might 'come in useful'.

- Keep that. It might come in useful one day.
- I don't like learning English but it will come in useful when I get a job.

2. When something is falling, you can say that it is 'coming down'.

- The football match was stopped because the rain was coming down so heavily.
- Don't buy an Ipod yet. The prices will be coming down soon.

3. When a book is published, it 'comes out'.

- The magazine comes out once a month.
- My new book comes out in August.

4. If you 'come on to' a particular topic or idea, you start discussing it.

- Can we come on to the subject of parking?
- Before we come on to that, does anybody have any comments?

5. If you 'come across' something, you find it by accident.

- I came across these old photos when I was cleaning out my cupboard.
- She came across Richard in the middle of Oxford.

6. If a feeling 'comes over you', it affects you, often in an uncharacteristic way.
- I'm sorry for shouting. I don't know what came over me.
  - A look of pleasure came over her face.
7. If a problem or situation 'comes up' it happens. (We can also say 'crops up'.)
- A big problem came up at work.
  - Something has come up and I can't meet you.
8. If you 'come up with' a plan or idea, you think of it or suggest it.
- Peter came up with a good idea today.
  - Can anybody come up with a solution?
9. If somebody 'comes across' as having a particular characteristic, they have given you the impression that they are like this.
- When you first meet Susan, she comes across as a shy person but in fact she is quite self-confident.
  - Do you know that you come across as very arrogant?
10. When you are talking about the results of a situation, you can talk about what 'comes of' the situation.
- I'll let you know what comes of the meeting.
  - No great harm came from it.
11. If an event or action 'comes off', it is successful or effective.
- I hope this high risk strategy comes off for us.
  - I don't think it is going to come off.
12. If an idea 'comes upon' you, it develops without your really being aware of it.
- The idea came upon me when I was out walking the dog.
  - I came upon the solution by pure chance.

### Phrasal Verbs with Down 1

If you 'lie down' you go for a rest on a bed or a sofa.

- You look exhausted. Lie down for a while.
- I lie down for ten minutes after lunch every day.

If you 'slow down', you go less quickly than before.

- As I have got older, I seem to have slowed down and to be able to get through less work.
- Production has slowed down compared with last year.

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If you 'calm down', you stop being angry or excited.

- He got very angry at first but laughed about it when he had calmed down a bit.
- You need to calm down. You are much too emotional.

If someone or something needs to 'cool down', they are too hot.

- I am going to take a shower to cool myself down a bit.
- The coffee is too hot to drink. Let it cool down a bit.

If you 'cut down' something, it can mean that you reduce the number.

- We need to cut down our workforce by 500 people.
- You should cut down the number of cigarettes you smoke.

If an argument 'falls down', it is very weak.

- Your argument falls down when you look at the inflation rate.
- The argument falls down when you take costs into account.

If you 'mark down' a price, you reduce it.

- The shirts have been marked down by 50%.
- Prices have been marked down by 10% across the board.

If things 'quieten down', they become less noisy.

- I am not going to speak until you all quieten down a bit.
- It was very hectic earlier but things have quietened down now.

If you 'tear something down', you pull it with force from a wall or a notice board.

- He tore down the poster that the union had put up.
- Somebody has torn down the safety notice I put up.

If you 'tone down' something, you make it less extreme.

- You need to tone down the language in your letter. It is too hostile.
- We need to tone down the colors on the website. They are too bright.

### Emotions Phrasal Verbs

If something 'gets you down', it makes you feel unhappy.

- This uncertainty is beginning to get me down.
- The way everybody keeps complaining really gets me down.

If somebody or something makes you feel upset or unhappy, they 'get to' you. This is an informal expression.

- The way he whistles all the time when we are working really gets to me.
- The heat is really getting to me. We need air conditioning.

If something makes you very unhappy, it 'tears you apart'.

- It tears me apart to know that I lost that job because of my own stupidity.
- It would tear me apart if something I said made you leave.

If you are 'put out', you are annoyed.

- I was really put out when he turned down the job.
- He seemed a bit put out that we hadn't invited him to speak.

If you 'cheer up', you start to feel happier.

- Cheer up. Things are not so bad.
- I bought a new Ipod to cheer myself up.

If you 'perk up', you suddenly become happier, cheerful or more energetic. It is also possible to 'perk someone up'.

- Your visit really made him perk up.
- He was being miserable but he perked up when Mary arrived.

If you 'brighten up', you suddenly look or feel happier.

- She brightened up when she heard the good news.
- You need to brighten up. Your long face is putting off the customers.

If you 'liven up', you become more energetic or cheerful. You can also 'liven up' a place, event or person.

- You need to liven up a bit. You're so miserable it is making everybody feel unhappy.
- We need to liven up the party. Everyone looks miserable.

If you 'calm down', you stop feeling angry, upset or excited. It's also possible to 'calm someone down'.

- You need to calm down a bit. You're too excited.
- Calm down. Let me explain.

If you have had an experience that has made you feel unhappy, you need to 'get over' it.

- It took me a year to get over being made redundant.
- You need to get over your disappointment and move on with your life.

If you are feeling sad or unhappy, you can force yourself out of this mood – you can 'snap out of it'. This is an informal expression.

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- You need to snap out of this mood and do something positive.
- I hope he snaps out of this soon.

If you have been acting emotionally and unreasonably because you are upset or angry, you need to 'pull yourself together' and act reasonably.

- Pull yourself together and stop this stupid mood.
- I need some time alone to pull myself together.

If you are so excited about something that you behave in a silly or hasty way, you are 'carried away' by the idea.

- I got carried away reading my book and didn't get any sleep.
- We mustn't get carried away with our enthusiasm. We must exercise reasonable judgment.

If you 'freak out', you start behaving in a very strange or violent way. This is an informal expression. You can also 'freak someone out'.

- I freaked out when I saw my boyfriend kissing another girl.
- It freaked me out to discover that the woman I was talking to was really a man.

If you 'flip out', you start to behave in a very excited or strange way. This is informal and mainly American.

- He flipped out when they wouldn't let him on the flight because he was too late.
- The children flipped out when they met Mickey Mouse.

### Food Phrasal Verbs

If you 'bolt down' food, you eat it very quickly. This expression is informal.

- He bolted down the food. He really enjoyed it.
- I'm so busy that I'm going to bolt down some food and get straight back to work.

If you 'wolf down' food, you also eat it quickly but specifically because you are hungry. This is also informal.

- Did you see the way she wolfed down that food? She must have been ravenous.
- After the marathon, I wolfed down some fish and chips.

If you consume a lot of drink (usually alcohol) quickly, you 'knock it back'. This is informal and is often used quite negatively.

- He was knocking back the champagne at the reception.

- We must watch Bill carefully in the bar with the clients. He can really knock it back.

If you eat an excessive amount of food, you 'pig out'. This is informal.

- I'm not hungry because I pigged out on chocolate this afternoon.
- We really pigged out in the restaurant.

If you 'plough through' some food, you eat it all but with some difficulty because there is a lot of it. In American English, 'plough' can be written as 'plow'.

- He served a huge plate of spaghetti and it took me ages to plough my way through it.
- They served us snake. I didn't like it but I plowed my way through it to be polite.

If you 'put away' food or drink, it can mean you eat or drink a lot of it. (Obviously, it can also mean that you place the food or drink in a fridge or cupboard – the context of the sentence should make clear the meaning.)

- Watch Peter. He's been putting away a lot of beer and he sometimes turns aggressive when he's drunk.
- He has put away some sandwiches but is still hungry.

If you 'pick at' your food, you only eat a small amount of it, usually because you are not hungry, you are on a diet or because you are ill.

- She only picked at her food, even though it was delicious.
- We were so busy talking that we only picked at our food.

If you 'cut down' or 'cut back' on a particular food or drink, you consume less of it.

- My doctor told me to cut back on the amount of salt in my diet.
- I need to cut down the amount of fried food I eat.

If you 'eat up', you finish all your food.

- I don't like tripe but I ate it all up when it was served to us by our hosts.
- Eat up. It's time to go.

If you 'drink up', you finish all your drink.

- We seem to have drunk up all the orange juice.
- Drink up. It's time to go.

If you 'polish off' some food, you finish it completely and quickly.

- The guests polished off all the food in the first thirty minutes.

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- He has just polished off two whole pizzas and still says he is hungry.

If you 'dish up' some food, you put it onto plates or dishes, ready to be served.

- I've heard she is going to dish up something really special.
- Can you collect up the starter plates, while I dish up the main course?

'Serve up' is another way of saying the same thing as 'dish up'.

- They served up a six course meal for their guests.
- It's no better than the food we serve up in our canteen and twenty times more expensive.

If you 'lay on' some food or drink, you provide it.

- We've laid on a buffet lunch for our visitors.
- They laid on a small drinks party for us.

If you make a meal very quickly and easily, you 'whip it up'. This is informal.

- Have a seat and I'll whip us up something to eat.
- I could whip up a salad, if you are hungry.

If you make food quickly and without much effort, you 'knock it up'.

- I knocked myself up a quick meal from what was left in my fridge.
- Do you want me to knock up some lunch?

If you make food hot so that it can be eaten, you 'heat it up'.

- I've already prepared the food for the party. All we need to do is to heat up the pizzas.
- I could heat up a can of soup if you are hungry.

If you 'warm up' cold food, you are making it hot again so that it can be eaten.

- I'll warm up that stew from last night.
- The canteen makes a large quantity once a week and then just warms up the amount needed every day.

### Phrasal Verbs with UP

I've had a lot of requests for some lessons on 'up' so here is the first of several. We'll cover the easy part today.

One common use for 'up' in phrasal verbs is to indicate

- An upward movement
- An increase
- An improvement

See how that applies to these eight verbs.

If you display something such as a poster, you 'put it up' on a wall or a notice-board.

- Have you seen the warning the boss has put up on the notice-board?
- Can you put up a poster in your window?

If somebody is miserable and you want them to be happier, you can tell them to 'cheer up'.

- You look really unhappy. Cheer up!
- I wrote Pearson a letter to try to cheer him up a bit.

If you are sitting and then you rise from your chair, you 'stand up'.

- When the President arrives, everybody must stand up.
- Stand up straight when I am speaking to you.

If a party or a seminar is dull, you need to 'liven it up'.

- You need to liven up your ideas.
- How can we liven up this presentation?

If you want to make something stronger, you can 'build it up'.

- I have built up a strong team of workers.
- I have been ill and need to build up my strength.

I can't hear very well these days – I'm old. When you speak to me, you need to speaker, to 'speak up'.

- Can you speak up? There is a lot of background noise.
- It is a big room. You will have to speak up so that those in the back can hear.

The place where you lived when you were a child is where you 'grew up'.

- I was born in Scotland but grew up in England.
- Where did you grow up?

If something increases fast, it 'shoots up'.

- The price of petrol has shot up recently.
- My English scores shot up after I started studying with Pearson.

## Phrasal Verbs with UP 2

There is a group of expressions using 'up' where the 'up' is not necessary. For example you can say 'fill' or 'fill up' and it means almost the same thing. So why

do we add the 'up'? Well one possible answer is that 'we do it because we do it' – we have just developed the habit of adding 'up'. However, often the 'up' seems to 'intensify' the verb, to make it more 'complete'.

## NOTES

Look at these examples and see what I mean.

If you are late, you need to 'hurry up'.

- Please hurry up. We are terribly late.
- We need to hurry up or we will miss our flight.

You can 'ring up' somebody on the telephone.

- I will ring you up when I get back.
- You can ring me up if you need any help.

If you cut your skin, it needs to 'heal up'.

- This will take a week to heal up.
- I cut myself shaving and it will not heal up.

Before I go on a long journey, I have to 'fill up' my car with petrol ( or if I were in the US 'gas'.)

- I need to fill up my car.
- The concert filled up quickly and not everybody could get in.

When I send a package, I 'wrap it up' well.

- Could you wrap this up for me?
- They didn't wrap it up properly and it got damaged.

If you have something valuable, it is a good idea to 'lock it up'.

- He did not lock up his desk properly and somebody stole his calculator.
- I think they should lock up pedophiles for a very long time.

If you don't have enough money to buy something, you need to 'save up'.

- I am saving up to go on a trip to New York.
- You'll have to save up if you want to buy a car.

When things are in a mess, you need to 'tidy them up'.

- We need to tidy up the office before the visitor comes.
- Tidy up your desk. It's such a mess.

### **Phrasal Verbs with UP 3**

If you make a mess, you need to 'clear it up'.

- It was your party. You clear up the mess.
- Don't expect me to clear up after you.

If you need some support, you need somebody to 'back you up'.

- If you report it, I'll back you up.
- Nobody would back me up when I complained.

If there is none left, you have 'used it all up'.

- The ketchup bottle is empty. We must have used it all up.
- We must stop for petrol (or gas!) . We've used it all up.

On a special occasion, you put on fine clothes – you dress up.

- Do we need to dress up for the party?
- I like dressing up and going somewhere fancy.

If you fall behind in your studies, you need to 'catch up'.

- He was ill for two months and is struggling to catch up.
- I need to put in some work to catch up on what I missed.

If you go to bed late, you 'stay up'.

- My student daughter stays up until 3 every day.
- I cannot stay up late. I've got to start early tomorrow.

Perhaps my daughter's parents didn't 'bring her up' correctly.

- She was brought up very strictly.
- He's been very well brought up.

When it's time to finish drinking, you tell everybody to 'drink up'.

- Drink up. We have to leave now.
- It's time to go so drink up.

If you like vegetables as I do, you 'eat them all up' and don't leave any on your plate.

- If you eat up all your carrots, you can have some ice cream.
- I ate up all the chocolate that we had.

If you need some information, you should 'look it up' on Google.

- I looked up the name of the capital of Scotland. It is not Glasgow.
- Can you look up his phone number for me, please?

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**Phrasal Verbs with UP 4**

## NOTES

If someone 'beats you up', they hit and kick you and hurt you a lot.

- The muggers beat him up badly.
- I was beaten up so badly that I was off work for a month.

If you 'bottle up' a feeling or emotion, you suppress them and don't express them.

- If you bottle up your feelings, you will make yourself ill.
- I was angry but I bottled up my feelings during the meeting.

If you 'call someone up', you phone them.

- I tried to call you up earlier but there was no answer.
- Call me up when you get a chance.

If something 'crops up', it happens unexpectedly.

- Something has cropped up. I am going to have to work late.
- If a problem crops up when I am away, give me a call on my cell phone.

If you 'freshen up', you wash and make yourself more presentable.

- I need a minute to freshen up before we meet them.
- When they arrive, they will probably need a few moments to freshen up after the journey.

If your eyes 'light up', they become excited.

- Her eyes lit up when she saw the dress.
- His eyes lit up when he saw her wearing the dress.

If you 'own up', you confess to something.

- Nobody has owned up to starting the fire.
- He owned up to being a big fan of Britney.

If you 'polish something up', you improve it.

- The basic report is fine but you need to polish it up a bit.
- I must polish up my Japanese before we go to Tokyo.

If you 'speed up', you go faster.

- We need to speed up production. It is taking too long.
- Can you speed up a bit? I am going to miss my train.

If you 'tighten up' something, you make it more secure.

- We need to tighten up security in the light of these threats.

- We need to tighten up our quality control system. There have been too many mistakes.

## Phrasal Verbs with UP 5

If you 'do up' your coat, you fasten it.

- Do up your jacket. It looks untidy.
- Can you do up my coat for me? My hands are frozen.

'Do up' can also mean to decorate or make repairs to something.

- Buy me the paint and I will do up my room.
- I'm going to do up my car so that I can sell it.

To 'hold up' can mean to delay.

- We were held up by a traffic accident.
- I don't mean to hold you up but we must finish this discussion.

To 'keep up with' can mean to go at the same speed as.

- It is difficult to keep up with all the changes they are making.
- I don't know how you keep up with all the news.

To 'keep up' can mean to maintain.

- It is difficult to keep up the payments on my new car.
- I can't afford to keep up an apartment in town and a house in the country.

If you 'kick up a fuss', you complain loudly about something.

- He will kick up a fuss when he finds out that he is not invited to the meeting.
- The restaurant had given away our table so I kicked up a fuss and got another one.

If you 'stir up' trouble, you cause it by agitation.

- She is always stirring up trouble about some grievance or another.
- Some shareholders tried to stir up trouble about the sale of the factory.

If you 'sum up', you briefly restate the main points of a meeting or discussion.

- I'd like to sum up my presentation with this quote from Winston Churchill.
- Could somebody sum up what you talked about this morning?

If you 'turn up' a dial, you increase it.

- Could you turn up the volume? I cannot hear it.

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- That's the brightest I can make the picture. I've turned up the control to the maximum.

If you 'turn up' somewhere, you arrive, sometimes unexpectedly.

- John turned up at the party, even though he wasn't invited.
- He's always turning up for work an hour late.

### Phrasal Verbs with OUT

If you 'ask someone out', you invite them out on a date (with the hope of romance between you.)

- I want to ask her out but I am too shy.
- He asked me out on Friday but I told him I had to wash my hair.

If you 'cut something out', you no longer do it/ eat it etc.

- My doctor told me to cut out dairy products.
- I cut out going to the gym because I did not have the time and now I am fat.

If you 'eat out', you go to a restaurant.

- He never cooks and always eats out or has a takeaway.
- For my birthday, I would like to eat out somewhere nice.

If you 'jump out', you come out quickly and suddenly.

- I was walking quietly down the street when this young man jumped out in front of me.
- Stop the car at the corner and I will jump out.

If you 'keep someone out', you prevent them from entering.

- There is extra security today to keep the protestors out.
- Please keep out of my office. I need some peace and quiet.

If you 'leave something out', you do not mention it.

- Did you leave anything out or is that the whole story?
- It is just a summary. I left out a lot of the details.

If something 'slips out', it escapes quickly and quietly.

- I have slipped out of the meeting for a few minutes but I must get back.
- I did not intend to tell him. It just slipped out.

If you 'squeeze something out', you get it out using force or pressure.

- I can never squeeze out that last bit of toothpaste from the tube.

- I managed to squeeze out of her that the job was offered to Alain.

If you 'stay out', you do not come home.

- I stayed out all night and I feel terrible.
- We stayed out celebrating until the early hours.

If you 'walk out', you leave as a sign of protest.

- When we heard their derisory offer, we walked out of the meeting.
- This presentation is dreadful. I have a good mind to walk out.

## Phrasal Verbs with OUT 2

When you finish your stay in a hotel, you have to 'check out' at reception and pay your final bill.

- I need to check out of my hotel room by 11.
- You check us out whilst I order a taxi for the airport.

If you 'lock yourself out', you close a door without having the key to get back in.

- Richard managed to lock himself out of his hotel room stark naked.
- I've left the keys in the car and locked myself out.

If you 'pick something out', you choose it, often with some care.

- Harry has picked out all the cashew nuts and left only the peanuts for me.
- From the thirty candidates, we've picked out seven to interview.

If you 'reach out' for something, you extend your arm to get it (sometimes metaphorically.)

- Drivers have to reach out a long way to insert the ticket in the machine.
- Our present customers are almost all over fifty. We need to reach out to a younger public.

If you 'rush out', you leave or send out very quickly.

- I wanted to speak to Jane but she rushed out as soon as the meeting was over.
- We rushed out the new catalogue and it is full of spelling errors.

If you 'throw something out', you get rid of it.

- We need to throw out the terrible printers we have and buy some new ones.
- You shouldn't throw out the baby with the bathwater.

If you warn somebody to 'look out', it means that there is danger.

- Look out! The boss is on the warpath.

NOTES



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- Look out! There's a radar camera just up ahead.

If you 'send something out' you send it to a lot of people (for example, to a mailing list.)

- I'll be sending out the newsletter early next week.
- Have you sent out the invitations yet?

If someone or something 'stands out', it is very noticeable or is better than similar people or things.

- One candidate stands out from the rest.
- He likes to stand out from the crowd.

If you 'pour out' your (usually sad) feelings or your thoughts, you talk about them very honestly and without holding anything back.

- He poured his heart out to me about his recent divorce.
- Don't hold back. Let it all pour out. It will do you good.

### Phrasal Verbs with OUT 3

If you are 'tired out' you are very tired.

- All this work is beginning to tire me out. I need a break.
- The long journey has tired me out.

If you 'back out' of something, you decide not to do something that you had previously agreed to do.

- John was going to make the presentation but he backed out at the last minute.
- You've signed the contract so you can't back out now.

If you 'sort something out', you solve any problems or difficulties.

- I had to sort out a problem with our delivery times.
- We're meeting on Monday to sort out the details of the new contract.

If you 'pull out' of negotiations or an agreement, you stop being involved in it.

- They have pulled out of the deal because they didn't like our payment terms.
- The unions have pulled out of the negotiations and are now threatening strike action.

If you 'rule out' something or someone, you decide that it is not suitable or is impossible.

- I think we can rule him out for the job as he doesn't speak Italian well enough.
- We haven't ruled out the possibility of appointing a local agent.

If you 'find something out', you get new information that you want to have or you learn a fact or information for the first time.

- I only found out about this earlier today.
- We need to find out a lot more before we can give a definitive answer.

If you 'wash out' your clothes, you clean them, often by hand. If you have a stain in your clothes, you can try to 'wash out' the stain.

- I usually wash out my clothes in the sink when I am staying in a hotel.
- Red wine is really hard to wash out.

If a sports competition cannot continue because of rain, it has been 'washed out'.

- The tennis at Wimbledon was washed out for the day.
- There so much rain that it might wash out the game.

In US informal English, if you 'wash out', you fail to finish something or to achieve the necessary standard.

- He was a big football star in college but he washed out in the NFL.
- The training course is tough but I'm not going to wash out.

If you 'spread something out', you move things apart so that there is plenty of space or time between them.

- I'll spread these photos out on the table so that you can all see them.
- You can spread the payments out over several months.

### Phrasal Verbs with OUT 4

If you 'show somebody out', you show them the door out of the building.

- My secretary will show you out.
- Could you show Ms Smith out?

If you 'set out', you start a journey or activity.

- We need to set out early if we want to get there in time for lunch.
- I set out to be an architect but ended up a zoologist.

To 'set out' can also mean to give all the details or a full explanation.

- She set out all the facts clearly in her presentation.
- The contract clearly sets out your terms of employment.

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If you 'cross something out', you draw a line through it because it is wrong.

- You can't just cross out things you don't like in the contract. We need to retype it.
- Just cross out her name and put your own in its place.

If you 'miss out' on something, you don't get something that you would like that other people get.

- I missed out on the bonus because I'd not met my sales targets.
- There are some real bargains in the sales. Make sure you don't miss out.

If you 'pass out', you lose consciousness.

- He had too much to drink and passed out.
- It was so hot that I thought I was going to pass out.

If you 'pass something out', you distribute it to people in the room.

- I'm going to pass out a copy of the letter for you to study.
- Could someone pass out these papers, please?

If you 'point someone or something out', you indicate where they are, either by speaking or by pointing your finger.

- If Diana is at this party, I'll point her out to you.
- Martin pointed out several mistakes I had made.

If you 'point something out', you tell them a fact they did not know, usually relevant to the current discussion.

- Harry pointed out that our sale in China were rising rapidly.
- I must point out that this new system has several disadvantages.

If you 'share something out', you divide it into smaller amounts and give one part to each person.

- We shared out the bonus between seven of us.
- You need to share out the work equally between you.

### Phrasal Verbs with INTO

If you 'bump into' someone, you meet them by chance.

- I bumped into Martin in the mall.
- You'll never guess who I bumped into today.

If you 'burst into a room' or 'burst into tears', you do it suddenly and without warning.

- Don't burst into my room like that. Please knock first.
- When I told him the bad news, he burst into tears.

If something 'comes into' force, it begins to happen.

- The new tax rules come into effect from next Monday.
- When the changes come into effect, productivity is certain to rise.

If you say that a particular emotion or quality 'doesn't come into it', it means that it doesn't influence the situation.

- I promoted Kate because she was the best person for the job and the fact that she is my daughter didn't come into it.
- She's rich because she's good at what she does. Luck doesn't come into it.

Often when we use 'go into' it has the idea of 'entering'.

- I was thinking about going into politics.
- The new model has just gone into production.

Sometimes 'go into' can mean to do things in great detail.

- The deal sounds good but we'll have to go into the details of the contract.
- It's very complicated and we don't have time to go into that now.

Time, money or energy that has 'gone into' a project, is what has been used or spent on the project.

- Over \$100,000 has gone into the development of this new system.
- I appreciate that a lot of effort has gone into the writing of this report.

If you 'grow into' an activity, you become better at doing it over time.

- She was very unsure at first but has really grown into her new job.
- Give it some time and you will grow into the role.

If you 'talk someone into' doing something, you persuade them to do it.

- I didn't want to come but Annie talked me into it.
- I think I can talk him into it.

If you 'tune into' a particular radio or television station, you select it.

- More and more people are tuning into 'The Apprentice'.
- People listen to their Ipods and don't tune into the radio as much as before.

NOTES

**Phrasal Verbs with INTO 2**

If you 'check into' a hotel, you arrive at the hotel and complete the registration process.

**NOTES**

- I'm going straight to the meeting. I'll check into my hotel later.
- Just give me thirty minutes to check into my hotel and I'll be ready to go.

If you 'check into' some information, you verify if the information is correct.

- We need to check into his background to see if he is who he says he is.
- We need to check into these statistics to see how reliable they are.

If people 'crowd into' a room, many of them go into a small space.

- Can everybody crowd into this room or do we need a bigger one?
- We all crowded into this tiny room to hear her speak.

If you 'get into' a subject, you become interested in it or involved with it.

- I've been getting into yoga recently and I've become more relaxed.
- I got into teaching English because I wanted to visit other countries.

You can also 'get into' a habit of doing something.

- I've got into the routine of jogging every morning before I start work.
- You should get into the habit of checking your email only twice a day.

If you 'look into' something, you examine all the details.

- We need to look into why we are doing so badly in Japan.
- We'll have to look into the possibility that our sales team have become unmotivated.

If a car 'pulls into' the side of the road, it stops:

- Pull into that rest area so that we can have a break.
- The train was pulling into the station as we got there.

If you have 'put time/effort into' something, you have spent a lot of time/effort on it.

- I've put a lot of effort into this project but I don't seem to be getting anywhere.
- You've put a lot of work into this and I appreciate it.

To 'put money into' something means to invest in it.

- We need to put a lot more money into English training.

- We've put loads of money into research and development with very poor results.

If you 'dig into' something you have been saving, you use it part of it.

- We will need to dig into our reserve fund to finance this work.
- I had to dig into my savings to repair the storm damage to my house.

### Phrasal Verbs with INTO 3

If somebody 'flies into' an emotional state, they do it very suddenly and without warning.

- He flew into a panic when he heard that the big boss was coming.
- She flew into a rage when she heard that her project had been cancelled.

If you 'fool someone into' doing something, you trick them into doing it.

- I fooled him into believing that next Monday was a public holiday.
- She fooled me into thinking that John was Italian.

If you 'slip into' a bad state or condition, you gradually start to be that way.

- The economy is slipping into recession.
- He improved for a while but now he's slipping back into his old habits.

If you 'run into' somebody, you meet them by chance.

- I ran into Martin when I was doing some shopping.
- I hope to run into you again one of these days.

If a quantity 'runs into' the thousands, it is more than one thousand.

- The money spent on the project must run into the millions.
- The death toll runs into the hundreds.

If you 'run into difficulties', you begin to experience them.

- The company ran into difficulties in the 90s when consumer tastes changed.
- We'll run into problems if we don't act now.

If you 'settle into' a new job, you begin to feel relaxed and at ease.

- How are you settling into your new job?
- I've had problems settling into my new company.

If you 'fling yourself into' a task, you do it with a lot of energy.

- He's flung himself into his new job. He's already made a lot of changes.

NOTES

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- She flings herself into everything she does. She has an amazing amount of energy.

If you 'sink money into' a project, you invest it.

- Microsoft have sunk millions into developing their range of products.
- We'd need to sink a lot of money into the factory to turn it around.

If you 'sink into' a state, you gradually get worse.

- He's sunk into a depression over the last few months.
- The company has sunk deeper and deeper into debt.

### Phrasal Verbs with GO

If food is stored in a hot place for too long, it will 'go off'.

- I think this fish has gone off. It smells terrible.
- If you don't keep it in the fridge, it will soon go off.

As time continues, we say that time 'goes by'.

- One year went by without any news from him.
- Time goes by so slowly.

If you have an experience, you 'go through' the experience.

- I went through a lot of problems with my teenage daughter.
- The hurricane was an awful experience to go through.

If you are allowed to start something you can 'go ahead'.

- The boss said we can go ahead and make the necessary changes.
- We can't go ahead without approval from Head Office.

If you are ill, you may have 'gone down with' a virus.

- I went down with flu and had to take a week off work.
- My son has gone down with mumps.

If people receive news badly, it didn't 'go down' very well.

- The news of the redundancies went down very badly.
- The increase in price has gone down surprisingly well with our customers.

The way you 'go about' a job is the way that you handle it.

- You're not going about this very well.
- He's not going about the job in the right way and is having a lot of problems.

Every morning, my alarm clock 'goes off' too early!

- The burglar alarm went off and scared them away.
- I slept in because my alarm didn't go off.

If I want you to continue a story, I will say 'go on'.

- Go on. Tell me more details.
- Please go on. This is very interesting.

If you choose an option, you 'go for' that option.

- I'll go for the larger model.
- Which option will they go for?

## TENSES

### SIMPLE PRESENT

#### FORM

[VERB] + s/es in third person

Examples:

- You **speak** English.
- **Do** you **speak** English?
- You **do not speak** English.

#### Complete List of Simple Present Forms

#### USE 1 Repeated Actions

<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Past	Present			Future		

Use the Simple Present to express the idea that an action is repeated or usual. The action can be a habit, a hobby, a daily event, a scheduled event or something that often happens. It can also be something a person often forgets or usually does not do.

Examples:

- I **play** tennis.
- She **does not play** tennis.
- **Does** he **play** tennis?
- The train **leaves** every morning at 8 AM.
- The train **does not leave** at 9 AM.

NOTES



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- When **does** the train usually leave?
- She always **forgets** her purse.
- He never **forgets** his wallet.
- Every twelve months, the Earth **circles** the Sun.
- **Does** the Sun circle the Earth?

**USE 2 Facts or Generalizations**



The Simple Present can also indicate the speaker believes that a fact was true before, is true now, and will be true in the future. It is not important if the speaker is correct about the fact. It is also used to make generalizations about people or things.

Examples:

- Cats **like** milk.
- Birds **do not like** milk.
- **Do** pigs like milk?
- California **is** in America.
- California **is not** in the United Kingdom.
- Windows **are** made of glass.
- Windows **are not** made of wood.
- New York **is** a small city. *IT IS NOT IMPORTANT THAT THIS FACT IS UNTRUE.*

**USE 3 Scheduled Events in the Near Future**



Speakers occasionally use Simple Present to talk about scheduled events in the near future. This is most commonly done when talking about public transportation, but it can be used with other scheduled events as well.

Examples:

- The train **leaves** tonight at 6 PM.
- The bus **does not arrive** at 11 AM, it **arrives** at 11 PM.
- When **do** we board the plane?

- The party starts at 8 o'clock.
- When does class begin tomorrow?

#### USE 4 Now (Non-Continuous Verbs)

NOTES



Speakers sometimes use the Simple Present to express the idea that an action is happening or is not happening now. This can only be done with Non-Continuous Verbs and certain Mixed Verbs.

Examples:

- I **am** here now.
- She **is not** here now.
- He **needs** help right now.
- He **does not need** help now.
- He **has** his passport in his hand.
- Do you **have** your passport with you?

#### ADVERB PLACEMENT

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

- You **only** speak English.
- Do you **only** speak English?

#### ACTIVE / PASSIVE

Examples:

- Once a week, Tom **cleans** the car. *ACTIVE*
- Once a week, the car **is cleaned** by Tom. *PASSIVE*

#### Present Continuous

##### FORM

[am/is/are + present participle]

Examples:

- You **are watching** TV.
- **Are you watching** TV?

- You are **not watching** TV.

## Complete List of Present Continuous Forms

## NOTES

**USE 1 Now**

Use the Present Continuous with Normal Verbs to express the idea that something is happening now, at this very moment. It can also be used to show that something is not happening now.

**Examples:**

- You are **learning** English now.
- You are **not swimming** now.
- Are you **sleeping**?
- I am **sitting**.
- I am **not standing**.
- Is he **sitting** or **standing**?
- They are **reading** their books.
- They are **not watching** television.
- What are you **doing**?
- Why aren't you **doing** your homework?

**USE 2 Longer Actions in Progress Now**

In English, "now" can mean: this second, today, this month, this year, this century, and so on. Sometimes, we use the Present Continuous to say that we are in the process of doing a longer action which is in progress; however, we might not be doing it at this exact second.

Examples: (All of these sentences can be said while eating dinner in a restaurant.)

- I am **studying** to become a doctor.
- I am **not studying** to become a dentist.
- I am **reading** the book *Tom Sawyer*.
- I am **not reading** any books right now.

- Are you **working** on any special projects at work?
- Aren't you **teaching** at the university now?

### USE 3 Near Future



Sometimes, speakers use the Present Continuous to indicate that something will or will not happen in the near future.

Examples:

- I **am meeting** some friends after work.
- I **am not going** to the party tonight.
- Is he **visiting** his parents next weekend?
- Isn't he **coming** with us tonight?

### USE 4 Repetition and Irritation with "Always"



The Present Continuous with words such as "always" or "constantly" expresses the idea that something irritating or shocking often happens. Notice that the meaning is like Simple Present, but with negative emotion. Remember to put the words "always" or "constantly" between "be" and "verb+ing."

Examples:

- She **is always coming** to class late.
- He **is constantly talking**. I wish he would shut up.
- I don't like them because they **are always complaining**.

### REMEMBER Non-Continuous Verbs/ Mixed Verbs

It is important to remember that Non-Continuous Verbs cannot be used in any continuous tenses. Also, certain non-continuous meanings for Mixed Verbs cannot be used in continuous tenses. Instead of using Present Continuous with these verbs, you must use Simple Present.

Examples:

- She **is loving** this chocolate ice cream. *Not Correct*
- She **loves** this chocolate ice cream. *Correct*

NOTES

### ADVERB PLACEMENT

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

#### NOTES

Examples:

- You are **still** watching TV.
- Are you **still** watching TV?

### ACTIVE / PASSIVE

Examples:

- Right now, Tom is **writing** the letter. *ACTIVE*
- Right now, the letter is **being written** by Tom. *PASSIVE*

### SIMPLE PAST

#### FORM

[VERB+ed] or irregular verbs

Examples:

- You **called** Debbie.
- **Did** you **call** Debbie?
- You **did not call** Debbie.

Complete List of Simple Past Forms

#### USE 1 Completed Action in the Past



Use the Simple Past to express the idea that an action started and finished at a specific time in the past. Sometimes, the speaker may not actually mention the specific time, but they do have one specific time in mind.

Examples:

- I **saw** a movie yesterday.
- I **didn't see** a play yesterday.
- Last year, I **traveled** to Japan.
- Last year, I **didn't travel** to Korea.
- **Did** you **have** dinner last night?
- She **washed** her car.

- He **didn't** wash his car.

## USE 2 A Series of Completed Actions



NOTES

We use the Simple Past to list a series of completed actions in the past. These actions happen 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and so on.

Examples:

- I **finished** work, **walked** to the beach, and **found** a nice place to swim.
- He **arrived** from the airport at 8:00, **checked** into the hotel at 9:00, and **met** the others at 10:00.
- **Did you add** flour, **pour** in the milk, and then **add** the eggs?

## USE 3 Duration in Past



The Simple Past can be used with a duration which starts and stops in the past. A duration is a longer action often indicated by expressions such as: for two years, for five minutes, all day, all year, etc.

Examples:

- I **lived** in Brazil for two years.
- Shauna **studied** Japanese for five years.
- They **sat** at the beach all day.
- They **did not stay** at the party the entire time.
- We **talked** on the phone for thirty minutes.
- A: How long **did you wait** for them?  
B: We **waited** for one hour.

## USE 4 Habits in the Past



The Simple Past can also be used to describe a habit which stopped in the past. It can have the same meaning as "used to." To make it clear that we are talking about a habit, we often add expressions such as: always, often, usually, never, when I was a child, when I was younger, etc.

NOTES

Examples:

- I **studied** French when I was a child.
- He **played** the violin.
- He **didn't play** the piano.
- **Did you play** a musical instrument when you were a kid?
- She **worked** at the movie theater after school.
- They never went to school, they always **skipped class**.

**USE 5 Past Facts or Generalizations**



The Simple Past can also be used to describe past facts or generalizations which are no longer true. As in USE 4 above, this use of the Simple Past is quite similar to the expression "used to."

Examples:

- She **was** shy as a child, but now she is very outgoing.
- He **didn't like** tomatoes before.
- **Did you live** in Texas when you were a kid?
- People **paid** much more to make cell phone calls in the past.

**IMPORTANT When-Clauses Happen First**

Clauses are groups of words which have meaning but are often not complete sentences. Some clauses begin with the word "when" such as "when I dropped my pen..." or "when class began..." These clauses are called when-clauses, and they are very important. The examples below contain when-clauses.

Examples:

- **When I paid her one dollar**, she answered my question.
- She answered my question **when I paid her one dollar**.

When-clauses are important because they always happen first when both clauses are in the Simple Past. Both of the examples above mean the same thing: first, I paid her one dollar, and then, she answered my question. It is not important whether "when I paid her one dollar" is at the beginning of the sentence or at the end of the sentence. However, the example below has a different meaning. First, she answered my question, and then, I paid her one dollar.

- I paid her one dollar **when she answered my question.**

## ADVERB PLACEMENT

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

- You **just** called Debbie.
- Did you **just** call Debbie?

## ACTIVE / PASSIVE

Examples:

- Tom **repaired** the car. *ACTIVE*
- The car **was repaired** by Tom. *PASSIVE*

## PAST CONTINUOUS

### FORM

[was/were + present participle]

Examples:

- You **were studying** when she called.
- **Were you studying** when she called?
- You **were not studying** when she called.

### Complete List of Past Continuous Forms

### USE 1 Interrupted Action in the Past



Use the Past Continuous to indicate that a longer action in the past was interrupted. The interruption is usually a shorter action in the Simple Past. Remember this can be a real interruption or just an interruption in time.

Examples:

- I **was watching** TV when she called.
- When the phone rang, she **was writing** a letter.
- While we **were having** the picnic, it started to rain.



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- What were you doing when the earthquake started?
- I was listening to my iPod, so I didn't hear the fire alarm.
- You were not listening to me when I told you to turn the oven off.
- While John was sleeping last night, someone stole his car.
- Sammy was waiting for us when we got off the plane.
- While I was writing the email, the computer suddenly went off.
- A: What were you doing when you broke your leg?  
B: I was snowboarding.

**USE 2 Specific Time as an Interruption**



In USE 1, described above, the Past Continuous is interrupted by a shorter action in the Simple Past. However, you can also use a specific time as an interruption.

Examples:

- Last night at 6 PM, I was eating dinner.
- At midnight, we were still driving through the desert.
- Yesterday at this time, I was sitting at my desk at work.

**IMPORTANT**

In the Simple Past, a specific time is used to show when an action began or finished. In the Past Continuous, a specific time only interrupts the action.

Examples:

- Last night at 6 PM, I ate dinner.  
*I STARTED EATING AT 6 PM.*
- Last night at 6 PM, I was eating dinner.  
*I STARTED EARLIER; AND AT 6 PM, I WAS IN THE PROCESS OF EATING DINNER.*

**USE 3 Parallel Actions**



When you use the Past Continuous with two actions in the same sentence, it expresses the idea that both actions were happening at the same time. The actions are parallel.

Examples:

- I was studying while he was making dinner.
- While Ellen was reading, Tim was watching television.
- Were you listening while he was talking?
- I wasn't paying attention while I was writing the letter, so I made several mistakes.
- What were you doing while you were waiting?
- Thomas wasn't working, and I wasn't working either.
- They were eating dinner, discussing their plans, and having a good time.

#### USE 4 Atmosphere

In English, we often use a series of parallel actions to describe the atmosphere at a particular time in the past.

Example:

- When I walked into the office, several people were busily typing, some were talking on the phones, the boss was yelling directions, and customers were waiting to be helped. One customer was yelling at a secretary and waving his hands. Others were complaining to each other about the bad service.

#### USE 5 Repetition and Irritation with "Always"

XXXXX

Past                      Present                      Future

The Past Continuous with words such as "always" or "constantly" expresses the idea that something irritating or shocking often happened in the past. The concept is very similar to the expression "used to" but with negative emotion. Remember to put the words "always" or "constantly" between "be" and "verb+ing."

Examples:

- She was always coming to class late.
- He was constantly talking. He annoyed everyone.
- I didn't like them because they were always complaining.

#### While vs. When

Clauses are groups of words which have meaning, but are often not complete sentences. Some clauses begin with the word "when" such as "when she called" or "when it bit me." Other clauses begin with "while" such as "while she was sleeping" and "while he was surfing." When you talk about things in the past, "when" is most

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often followed by the verb tense Simple Past, whereas “while” is usually followed by Past Continuous. “While” expresses the idea of “during that time.” Study the examples below. They have similar meanings, but they emphasize different parts of the sentence.

Examples:

- I was studying **when she called.**
- **While I was studying,** she called.

**REMEMBER Non-Continuous Verbs / Mixed Verbs**

It is important to remember that Non-Continuous Verbs cannot be used in any continuous tenses. Also, certain non-continuous meanings for Mixed Verbs cannot be used in continuous tenses. Instead of using Past Continuous with these verbs, you must use Simple Past.

Examples:

- Jane **was being** at my house when you arrived. *Not Correct*
- Jane **was** at my house when you arrived. *Correct*

**ADVERB PLACEMENT**

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

- You were **just** studying when she called.
- Were you **just** studying when she called?

**ACTIVE / PASSIVE**

Examples:

- The salesman **was helping** the customer when the thief came into the store.  
*ACTIVE*
- The customer **was being helped** by the salesman when the thief came into the store. *PASSIVE*

**PRESENT PERFECT**

**FORM**

[has/have + past participle]

Examples:

- You **have seen** that movie many times.
- **Have you seen** that movie many times?

- You **have not seen** that movie many times.

## Complete List of Present Perfect Forms

### USE 1 Unspecified Time Before Now



We use the Present Perfect to say that an action happened at an unspecified time before now. The exact time is not important. You **CANNOT** use the Present Perfect with specific time expressions such as: yesterday, one year ago, last week, when I was a child, when I lived in Japan, at that moment, that day, one day, etc. We **CAN** use the Present Perfect with unspecific expressions such as: ever, never, once, many times, several times, before, so far, already, yet, etc.

#### Examples:

- I **have seen** that movie twenty times.
- I think I **have met** him once before.
- There **have been** many earthquakes in California.
- People **have traveled** to the Moon.
- People **have not traveled** to Mars.
- **Have you read** the book yet?
- Nobody **has ever climbed** that mountain.
- A: **Has there ever been** a war in the United States?  
B: Yes, there **has been** a war in the United States.

#### How Do You Actually Use the Present Perfect?

The concept of “unspecified time” can be very confusing to English learners. It is best to associate Present Perfect with the following topics:

### TOPIC 1 Experience

You can use the Present Perfect to describe your experience. It is like saying, “I have the experience of...” You can also use this tense to say that you have never had a certain experience. The Present Perfect is **NOT** used to describe a specific event.

#### Examples:

- I **have been** to France.  
*THIS SENTENCE MEANS THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING IN FRANCE. MAYBE YOU HAVE BEEN THERE ONCE, OR SEVERAL TIMES.*
- I **have been** to France three times.

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*YOU CAN ADD THE NUMBER OF TIMES AT THE END OF THE SENTENCE.*

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- **I have never been** to France.  
*THIS SENTENCE MEANS THAT YOU HAVE NOT HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF GOING TO FRANCE.*
- **I think I have seen** that movie before.
- **He has never traveled** by train.
- **Joan has studied** two foreign languages.
- **A: Have you ever met** him?  
**B: No, I have not met** him.

### TOPIC 2 Change Over Time

We often use the Present Perfect to talk about change that has happened over a period of time.

Examples:

- You **have grown** since the last time I saw you.
- The government **has become** more interested in arts education.
- Japanese **has become** one of the most popular courses at the university since the Asian studies program was established.
- My English **has really improved** since I moved to Australia.

### TOPIC 3 Accomplishments

We often use the Present Perfect to list the accomplishments of individuals and humanity. You cannot mention a specific time.

Examples:

- Man **has walked** on the Moon.
- Our son **has learned** how to read.
- Doctors **have cured** many deadly diseases.
- Scientists **have split** the atom.

### TOPIC 4 An Uncompleted Action You Are Expecting

We often use the Present Perfect to say that an action which we expected has not happened. Using the Present Perfect suggests that we are still waiting for the action to happen.

Examples:

- James **has not finished** his homework yet.
- Susan **hasn't mastered** Japanese, but she can communicate.

- Bill has still not arrived.
- The rain hasn't stopped.

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## TOPIC 5 Multiple Actions at Different Times

We also use the Present Perfect to talk about several different actions which have occurred in the past at different times. Present Perfect suggests the process is not complete and more actions are possible.

Examples:

- The army has attacked that city five times.
- I have had four quizzes and five tests so far this semester.
- We have had many major problems while working on this project.
- She has talked to several specialists about her problem, but nobody knows why she is sick.

### Time Expressions with Present Perfect

When we use the Present Perfect it means that something has happened at some point in our lives before now. Remember, the exact time the action happened is not important.



Sometimes, we want to limit the time we are looking in for an experience. We can do this with expressions such as: in the last week, in the last year, this week, this month, so far, up to now, etc.



Examples:

- Have you been to Mexico in the last year?
- I have seen that movie six times in the last month.
- They have had three tests in the last week.
- She graduated from university less than three years ago. She has worked for three different companies so far.
- My car has broken down three times this week.

### NOTICE

"Last year" and "in the last year" are very different in meaning. "Last year" means the year before now, and it is considered a specific time which requires Simple Past.

“In the last year” means from 365 days ago until now. It is not considered a specific time, so it requires Present Perfect.

Examples:

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- I went to Mexico last year.

*I WENT TO MEXICO IN THE CALENDAR YEAR BEFORE THIS ONE.*

- I have been to Mexico in the last year.

*I HAVE BEEN TO MEXICO AT LEAST ONCE AT SOME POINT BETWEEN 365 DAYS AGO AND NOW.*

**USE 2 Duration From the Past Until Now (Non-Continuous Verbs)**



With Non-Continuous Verbs and non-continuous uses of Mixed Verbs, we use the Present Perfect to show that something started in the past and has continued up until now. “For five minutes,” “for two weeks,” and “since Tuesday” are all durations which can be used with the Present Perfect.

Examples:

- I have had a cold for two weeks.
- She has been in England for six months.
- Mary has loved chocolate since she was a little girl.

Although the above use of Present Perfect is normally limited to Non-Continuous Verbs and non-continuous uses of Mixed Verbs, the words “live,” “work,” “teach,” and “study” are sometimes used in this way even though they are NOT Non-Continuous Verbs.

**ADVERB PLACEMENT**

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

- You have **only** seen that movie one time.
- Have you **only** seen that movie one time?

**ACTIVE / PASSIVE**

Examples:

- Many tourists **have visited** that castle. *ACTIVE*
- That castle **has been visited** by many tourists. *PASSIVE*

## PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

### FORM

[has/have + been + present participle]

Examples:

- You **have been waiting** here for two hours.
- **Have you been waiting** here for two hours?
- You **have not been waiting** here for two hours.

Complete List of Present Perfect Continuous Forms

### USE 1 Duration from the Past Until Now



We use the Present Perfect Continuous to show that something started in the past and has continued up until now. "For five minutes," "for two weeks," and "since Tuesday" are all durations which can be used with the Present Perfect Continuous.

Examples:

- They **have been talking** for the last hour.
- She **has been working** at that company for three years.
- What **have you been doing** for the last 30 minutes?
- James **has been teaching** at the university since June.
- We **have been waiting** here for over two hours!
- Why **has Nancy not been taking** her medicine for the last three days?

### USE 2 Recently, Lately



You can also use the Present Perfect Continuous WITHOUT a duration such as "for two weeks." Without the duration, the tense has a more general meaning of "lately." We often use the words "lately" or "recently" to emphasize this meaning.

Examples:

- Recently, I **have been feeling** really tired.
- She **has been watching** too much television lately.

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- **Have you been exercising lately?**
- **Mary has been feeling a little depressed.**
- **Lisa has not been practicing her English.**
- **What have you been doing?**

**IMPORTANT**

Remember that the Present Perfect Continuous has the meaning of “lately” or “recently.” If you use the Present Perfect Continuous in a question such as “Have you been feeling alright?”, it can suggest that the person looks sick or unhealthy. A question such as “Have you been smoking?” can suggest that you smell the smoke on the person. Using this tense in a question suggests you can see, smell, hear or feel the results of the action. It is possible to insult someone by using this tense incorrectly.

**REMEMBER Non-Continuous Verbs/ Mixed Verbs**

It is important to remember that Non-Continuous Verbs cannot be used in any continuous tenses. Also, certain non-continuous meanings for Mixed Verbs cannot be used in continuous tenses. Instead of using Present Perfect Continuous with these verbs, you must use Present Perfect.

Examples:

- **Sam has been having his car for two years. *Not Correct***
- **Sam has had his car for two years. *Correct***

**ADVERB PLACEMENT**

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

- You have **only** been waiting here for one hour.
- Have you **only** been waiting here for one hour?

**ACTIVE / PASSIVE**

Examples:

- Recently, John **has been doing** the work. *ACTIVE*
- Recently, the work **has been being done** by John. *PASSIVE*

**NOTE:** Present Perfect Continuous is less commonly used in its passive form.

# PAST PERFECT

## FORM

[had + past participle]

Examples:

- You **had studied** English before you moved to New York.
- **Had you studied** English before you moved to New York?
- You **had not studied** English before you moved to New York.

## Complete List of Past Perfect Forms

### USE 1 Completed Action Before Something in the Past



The Past Perfect expresses the idea that something occurred before another action in the past. It can also show that something happened before a specific time in the past.

Examples:

- I **had never seen** such a beautiful beach before I went to Kauai.
- I did not have any money because I **had lost** my wallet.
- Tony knew Istanbul so well because he **had visited** the city several times.
- **Had Susan ever studied** Thai before she moved to Thailand?
- She only understood the movie because she **had read** the book.
- Kristine **had never been** to an opera before last night.
- We were not able to get a hotel room because we **had not booked** in advance.
- A: **Had you ever visited** the U.S. before your trip in 2006?  
B: Yes, I **had been** to the U.S. once before.

### USE 2 Duration Before Something in the Past (Non-Continuous Verbs)



With Non-Continuous Verbs and some non-continuous uses of Mixed Verbs, we use the Past Perfect to show that something started in the past and continued up until another action in the past.

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Examples:

- We **had had** that car for ten years before it broke down.
- By the time Alex finished his studies, he **had been** in London for over eight years.
- They felt bad about selling the house because they **had owned** it for more than forty years.

Although the above use of Past Perfect is normally limited to Non-Continuous Verbs and non-continuous uses of Mixed Verbs, the words “live,” “work,” “teach,” and “study” are sometimes used in this way even though they are NOT Non-Continuous Verbs.

**IMPORTANT Specific Times with the Past Perfect**



Unlike with the Present Perfect, it is possible to use specific time words or phrases with the Past Perfect. Although this is possible, it is usually not necessary.

Example:

- She **had visited** her Japanese relatives once in 1993 before she moved in with them in 1996.

**MOREOVER**

If the Past Perfect action did occur at a specific time, the Simple Past can be used instead of the Past Perfect when “before” or “after” is used in the sentence. The words “before” and “after” actually tell you what happens first, so the Past Perfect is optional. For this reason, both sentences below are correct.

Examples:

- She **had visited** her Japanese relatives once in 1993 before she moved in with them in 1996.
- She **visited** her Japanese relatives once in 1993 before she moved in with them in 1996.

**HOWEVER**



If the Past Perfect is not referring to an action at a specific time, Past Perfect is not optional. Compare the examples below. Here Past Perfect is referring to a lack of experience rather than an action at a specific time. For this reason, Simple Past cannot be used.

Examples:

- She never saw a bear before she moved to Alaska. *Not Correct*
- She **had** never seen a bear before she moved to Alaska. *Correct*

### ADVERB PLACEMENT

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

- You **had** previously studied English before you moved to New York.
- Had you **previously** studied English before you moved to New York?

### ACTIVE / PASSIVE

Examples:

- George **had repaired** many cars before he received his mechanic's license.  
*ACTIVE*
- Many cars **had been repaired** by George before he received his mechanic's license. *PASSIVE*

## PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

### FORM

[had been + present participle]

Examples:

- You **had been waiting** there for more than two hours when she finally arrived.
- **Had you been waiting** there for more than two hours when she finally arrived?
- You **had not been waiting** there for more than two hours when she finally arrived.

### Complete List of Past Perfect Continuous Forms

#### USE 1 Duration Before Something in the Past



We use the Past Perfect Continuous to show that something started in the past and continued up until another time in the past. "For five minutes" and "for two weeks" are both durations which can be used with the Past Perfect Continuous. Notice that

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this is related to the Present Perfect Continuous; however, the duration does not continue until now, it stops before something else in the past.

Examples:

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- They **had been talking** for over an hour before Tony arrived.
- She **had been working** at that company for three years when it went out of business.
- How long **had you been waiting** to get on the bus?
- Mike wanted to sit down because he **had been standing** all day at work.
- James **had been teaching** at the university for more than a year before he left for Asia.
- A: How long **had you been studying** Turkish before you moved to Ankara?  
B: I **had not been studying** Turkish very long.

### USE 2 Cause of Something in the Past



Using the Past Perfect Continuous before another action in the past is a good way to show cause and effect.

Examples:

- Jason was tired because he **had been jogging**.
- Sam gained weight because he **had been overeating**.
- Betty failed the final test because she **had not been attending class**.

### Past Continuous vs. Past Perfect Continuous

If you do not include a duration such as “for five minutes,” “for two weeks” or “since Friday,” many English speakers choose to use the Past Continuous rather than the Past Perfect Continuous. Be careful because this can change the meaning of the sentence. Past Continuous emphasizes interrupted actions, whereas Past Perfect Continuous emphasizes a duration of time before something in the past. Study the examples below to understand the difference.

Examples:

- He was tired because he **was exercising** so hard.  
*THIS SENTENCE EMPHASIZES THAT HE WAS TIRED BECAUSE HE WAS EXERCISING AT THAT EXACT MOMENT.*
- He was tired because he **had been exercising** so hard.

*THIS SENTENCE EMPHASIZES THAT HE WAS TIRED BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN EXERCISING OVER A PERIOD OF TIME. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE WAS STILL EXERCISING AT THAT MOMENT OR THAT HE HAD JUST FINISHED.*

### REMEMBER Non-Continuous Verbs / Mixed Verbs

NOTES

It is important to remember that Non-Continuous Verbs cannot be used in any continuous tenses. Also, certain non-continuous meanings for Mixed Verbs cannot be used in continuous tenses. Instead of using Past Perfect Continuous with these verbs, you must use Past Perfect.

Examples:

- The motorcycle **had been belonging** to George for years before Tina bought it. *Not Correct*
- The motorcycle **had belonged** to George for years before Tina bought it. *Correct*

### ADVERB PLACEMENT

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

- You had **only** been waiting there for a few minutes when she arrived.
- Had you **only** been waiting there for a few minutes when she arrived?

### ACTIVE / PASSIVE

Examples:

- Chef Jones **had been preparing** the restaurant's fantastic dinners for two years before he moved to Paris. *ACTIVE*
- The restaurant's fantastic dinners **had been being prepared** by Chef Jones for two years before he moved to Paris. *PASSIVE*

NOTE: Passive forms of the Past Perfect Continuous are not common.

### SIMPLE FUTURE

Simple Future has two different forms in English: "will" and "be going to." Although the two forms can sometimes be used interchangeably, they often express two very different meanings. These different meanings might seem too abstract at first, but with time and practice, the differences will become clear. Both "will" and "be going to" refer to a specific time in the future.



## NOTES

**FORM Will**

[will + verb]

Examples:

- You **will help** him later.
- **Will you help** him later?
- You **will not help** him later.

**FORM Be Going To**

[am/is/are + going to + verb]

Examples:

- You **are going to meet** Jane tonight.
- **Are you going to meet** Jane tonight?
- You **are not going to meet** Jane tonight.

**Complete List of Simple Future Forms****USE 1 “Will” to Express a Voluntary Action**

“Will” often suggests that a speaker will do something voluntarily. A voluntary action is one the speaker offers to do for someone else. Often, we use “will” to respond to someone else’s complaint or request for help. We also use “will” when we request that someone help us or volunteer to do something for us. Similarly, we use “will not” or “won’t” when we refuse to voluntarily do something.

Examples:

- I **will send** you the information when I get it.
- I **will translate** the email, so Mr. Smith can read it.
- **Will you help** me move this heavy table?
- **Will you make** dinner?
- I **will not do** your homework for you.
- I **won’t do** all the housework myself!
- A: I’m really hungry.  
B: I’ll **make** some sandwiches.
- A: I’m so tired. I’m about to **fall asleep**.  
B: I’ll **get** you some coffee.
- A: The phone is **ringing**.  
B: I’ll **get** it.

## USE 2 “Will” to Express a Promise

“Will” is usually used in promises.

Examples:

- I **will call** you when I arrive.
- If I am elected President of the United States, I **will make** sure everyone has access to inexpensive health insurance.
- I promise I **will not tell** him about the surprise party.
- Don’t worry, I’ll **be careful**.
- I **won’t tell** anyone your secret.

## USE 3 “Be going to” to Express a Plan

“Be going to” expresses that something is a plan. It expresses the idea that a person intends to do something in the future. It does not matter whether the plan is realistic or not.

Examples:

- He **is going to spend** his vacation in Hawaii.
- She **is not going to spend** her vacation in Hawaii.
- A: When **are we going to meet** each other tonight?  
B: We **are going to meet** at 6 PM.
- I’m **going to be** an actor when I grow up.
- Michelle **is going to begin** medical school next year.
- They **are going to drive** all the way to Alaska.
- Who **are you going to invite** to the party?
- A: Who **is going to make** John’s birthday cake?  
B: Sue **is going to make** John’s birthday cake.

## USE 4 “Will” or “Be Going to” to Express a Prediction

Both “will” and “be going to” can express the idea of a general prediction about the future. Predictions are guesses about what might happen in the future. In “prediction” sentences, the subject usually has little control over the future and therefore USES 1-3 do not apply. In the following examples, there is no difference in meaning.

Examples:

- The year 2222 **will be** a very interesting year.
- The year 2222 **is going to be** a very interesting year.

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- John Smith **will be** the next President.
- John Smith **is going to be** the next President.
- The movie "Zenith" **will win** several Academy Awards.
- The movie "Zenith" **is going to win** several Academy Awards.

**IMPORTANT**

In the Simple Future, it is not always clear which USE the speaker has in mind. Often, there is more than one way to interpret a sentence's meaning.

**No Future in Time Clauses**

Like all future forms, the Simple Future cannot be used in clauses beginning with time expressions such as: when, while, before, after, by the time, as soon as, if, unless, etc. Instead of Simple Future, Simple Present is used.

Examples:

- When you **will arrive** tonight, we will go out for dinner. *Not Correct*
- When you **arrive** tonight, we will go out for dinner. *Correct*

**ADVERB PLACEMENT**

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

- You will **never** help him.
- Will you **ever** help him?
- You are **never** going to meet Jane.
- Are you **ever** going to meet Jane?

**ACTIVE / PASSIVE**

Examples:

- John **will finish** the work by 5:00 PM. *ACTIVE*
- The work **will be finished** by 5:00 PM. *PASSIVE*
- Sally **is going to make** a beautiful dinner tonight. *ACTIVE*
- A beautiful dinner **is going to be made** by Sally tonight. *PASSIVE*

**FUTURE CONTINUOUS**

Future Continuous has two different forms: "will be doing " and "be going to be doing." Unlike Simple Future forms, Future Continuous forms are usually interchangeable.

**FORM Future Continuous with “Will”**

[will be + present participle]

Examples:

- You **will be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight.
- **Will you be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight?
- You **will not be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight.

**FORM Future Continuous with “Be Going To “**

[am/is/are + going to be + present participle]

Examples:

- You **are going to be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight.
- **Are you going to be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight?
- You **are not going to be waiting** for her when her plane arrives tonight.

REMEMBER: It is possible to use either “will” or “be going to” to create the Future Continuous with little difference in meaning.

**Complete List of Future Continuous Forms****USE 1 Interrupted Action in the Future**

Use the Future Continuous to indicate that a longer action in the future will be interrupted by a shorter action in the future. Remember this can be a real interruption or just an interruption in time.

Examples:

- I **will be watching** TV when she *arrives* tonight.
- I **will be waiting** for you when your bus *arrives*.
- I **am going to be staying** at the Madison Hotel, if anything *happens* and you *need* to contact me.
- He **will be studying** at the library tonight, so he will not see Jennifer when she *arrives*.

Notice in the examples above that the interruptions (*marked in italics*) are in Simple Present rather than Simple Future. This is because the interruptions are in time clauses, and you cannot use future tenses in time clauses.

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## USE 2 Specific Time as an Interruption in the Future

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In USE 1, described above, the Future Continuous is interrupted by a short action in the future. In addition to using short actions as interruptions, you can also use a specific time as an interruption.

Examples:

- Tonight at 6 PM, I am going to be eating dinner.  
*I WILL BE IN THE PROCESS OF EATING DINNER.*
- At midnight tonight, we will still be driving through the desert.  
*WE WILL BE IN THE PROCESS OF DRIVING THROUGH THE DESERT.*

### REMEMBER

In the Simple Future, a specific time is used to show the time an action will begin or end. In the Future Continuous, a specific time interrupts the action.

Examples:

- Tonight at 6 PM, I am going to eat dinner.  
*I AM GOING TO START EATING AT 6 PM.*
- Tonight at 6 PM, I am going to be eating dinner.  
*I AM GOING TO START EARLIER AND I WILL BE IN THE PROCESS OF EATING DINNER AT 6 PM.*

## USE 3 Parallel Actions in the Future



When you use the Future Continuous with two actions in the same sentence, it expresses the idea that both actions will be happening at the same time. The actions are parallel.

Examples:

- I am going to be studying and he is going to be making dinner.
- Tonight, they will be eating dinner, discussing their plans, and having a good time.
- While Ellen is reading, Tim will be watching television.  
*NOTICE "IS READING" BECAUSE OF THE TIME CLAUSE CONTAINING "WHILE."*  
*(SEE EXPLANATION BELOW)*

## USE 4 Atmosphere in the Future

In English, we often use a series of Parallel Actions to describe atmosphere at a specific point in the future.

Example:

- When I arrive at the party, everybody **is going to be celebrating**. Some **will be dancing**. Others **are going to be talking**. A few people **will be eating pizza**, and several people **are going to be drinking beer**. They always do the same thing.

### REMEMBER No Future in Time Clauses

Like all future tenses, the Future Continuous cannot be used in clauses beginning with time expressions such as: when, while, before, after, by the time, as soon as, if, unless, etc. Instead of Future Continuous, Present Continuous is used.

Examples:

- While I **am going to be finishing** my homework, she is going to make dinner. *Not Correct*
- While I **am finishing** my homework, she is going to make dinner. *Correct*

### AND REMEMBER Non-Continuous Verbs / Mixed Verbs

It is important to remember that Non-Continuous Verbs cannot be used in any continuous tenses. Also, certain non-continuous meanings for Mixed Verbs cannot be used in continuous tenses. Instead of using Future Continuous with these verbs, you must use Simple Future.

Examples:

- Jane **will be being** at my house when you arrive. *Not Correct*
- Jane **will be** at my house when you arrive. *Correct*

### ADVERB PLACEMENT

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

- You will **still** be waiting for her when her plane arrives.
- Will you **still** be waiting for her when her plane arrives?
- You are **still** going to be waiting for her when her plane arrives.
- Are you **still** going to be waiting for her when her plane arrives?

### ACTIVE / PASSIVE

Examples:

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- At 8:00 PM tonight, John **will be washing** the dishes. *ACTIVE*
- At 8:00 PM tonight, the dishes **will be being washed** by John. *PASSIVE*
- At 8:00 PM tonight, John **is going to be washing** the dishes. *ACTIVE*
- At 8:00 PM tonight, the dishes **are going to be being washed** by John. *PASSIVE*

NOTE: Passive forms of the Future Continuous are not common.

## FUTURE PERFECT

Future Perfect has two different forms: “will have done” and “be going to have done.” Unlike Simple Future forms, Future Perfect forms are usually interchangeable.

### FORM Future Perfect with “Will”

[will have + past participle]

Examples:

- You **will have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.
- **Will you have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.?
- You **will not have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.

### FORM Future Perfect with “Be Going To”

[am/is/are + going to have + past participle]

Examples:

- You **are going to have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.
- **Are you going to have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.?
- You **are not going to have perfected** your English by the time you come back from the U.S.

NOTE: It is possible to use either “will” or “be going to” to create the Future Perfect with little or no difference in meaning.

### Complete List of Future Perfect Forms

#### USE 1 Completed Action Before Something in the Future



The Future Perfect expresses the idea that something will occur before another action in the future. It can also show that something will happen before a specific time in the future.

Examples:

- By next November, I **will have received** my promotion.
- By the time he *gets* home, she **is going to have cleaned** the entire house.
- I **am not going to have finished** this test by 3 o'clock.
- **Will she have learned** enough Chinese to communicate before she *moves* to Beijing?
- Sam **is probably going to have completed** the proposal by the time he *leaves* this afternoon.
- By the time I *finish* this course, I **will have taken** ten tests.
- How many countries **are you going to have visited** by the time you *turn* 50?

Notice in the examples above that the reference points (*marked in italics*) are in Simple Present rather than Simple Future. This is because the interruptions are in time clauses, and you cannot use future tenses in time clauses.

## USE 2 Duration Before Something in the Future (Non-Continuous Verbs)



With Non-Continuous Verbs and some non-continuous uses of Mixed Verbs, we use the Future Perfect to show that something will continue up until another action in the future.

Examples:

- I **will have been** in London for six months by the time I leave.
- By Monday, Susan **is going to have had** my book for a week.

Although the above use of Future Perfect is normally limited to Non-Continuous Verbs and non-continuous uses of Mixed Verbs, the words "live," "work," "teach," and "study" are sometimes used in this way even though they are NOT Non-Continuous Verbs.

## NOTES

**REMEMBER No Future in Time Clauses**

Like all future forms, the Future Perfect cannot be used in clauses beginning with time expressions such as: when, while, before, after, by the time, as soon as, if, unless, etc. Instead of Future Perfect, Present Perfect is used.

Examples:

- I am going to see a movie when I **will have finished** my homework. *Not Correct*
- I am going to see a movie when I **have finished** my homework. *Correct*

**ADVERB PLACEMENT**

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

- You will **only** have learned a few words.
- Will you **only** have learned a few words?
- You are **only** going to have learned a few words.
- Are you **only** going to have learned a few words?

**ACTIVE / PASSIVE**

Examples:

- They **will have completed** the project before the deadline. *ACTIVE*
- The project **will have been completed** before the deadline. *PASSIVE*
- They **are going to have completed** the project before the deadline. *ACTIVE*
- The project **is going to have been completed** before the deadline. *PASSIVE*

**USED TO****FORM**

[used to + VERB]

Example:

- I **used to go** to the beach every day.

It is better not to use “used to” in questions or negative forms; however, this is sometimes done in informal spoken English. It is better to ask questions and create negative sentences using Simple Past.

## USE 1 Habit in the Past



### NOTES

“Used to” expresses the idea that something was an old habit that stopped in the past. It indicates that something was often repeated in the past, but it is not usually done now.

Examples:

- Jerry **used to study** English.
- Sam and Mary **used to go** to Mexico in the summer.
- I **used to start** work at 9 o'clock.
- Christine **used to eat** meat, but now she is a vegetarian.

## USE 2 Past Facts and Generalizations



“Used to” can also be used to talk about past facts or generalizations which are no longer true.

Examples:

- I **used to live** in Paris.
- Sarah **used to be fat**, but now she is thin.
- George **used to be** the best student in class, but now Lena is the best.
- Oranges **used to cost** very little in Florida, but now they are quite expensive.

### “Used to” vs. Simple Past

Both Simple Past and “Used to” can be used to describe past habits, past facts and past generalizations; however, “used to” is preferred when emphasizing these forms of past repetition in positive sentences. On the other hand, when asking questions or making negative sentences, Simple Past is preferred.

Examples:

- You **used to play** the piano.
- **Did you play** the piano when you were young?
- You **did not play** the piano when you were young.



**ACTIVE / PASSIVE**

Examples:

- Jerry **used to pay** the bills. *ACTIVE*
- The bills **used to be paid** by Jerry. *PASSIVE*

NOTES

**PREPOSITIONS**

Prepositions are short words (on, in, to) that usually stand in front of nouns (sometimes also in front of gerund verbs).

Even advanced learners of English find prepositions difficult, as a 1:1 translation is usually not possible. One preposition in your native language might have several translations depending on the situation.

There are hardly any rules as to when to use which preposition. The only way to learn prepositions is looking them up in a dictionary, reading a lot in English (literature) and learning useful phrases off by heart (study tips).

The following table contains rules for some of the most frequently used prepositions in English:

**Prepositions – Time**

English	Usage	Example
on	days of the week	on Monday
in	months / seasons time of day year after a certain period of time (when?)	in August / in winter in the morning in 2006 in an hour
at	for night for weekend a certain point of time (when?)	at night at the weekend at half past nine
since	from a certain point of time (past till now)	since 1980
for	over a certain period of time (past till now)	for 2 years
ago	a certain time in the past	2 years ago
before	earlier than a certain point of time	before 2004

## NOTES

to	telling the time	ten to six (5:50)
past	telling the time	ten past six (6:10)
to / till / until	marking the beginning and end of a period of time	from Monday to/till Friday
till / until	in the sense of <i>how long something is going to last</i>	He is on holiday until Friday.
by	in the sense of <i>at the latest up to a certain time</i>	I will be back by 6 o'clock. By 11 o'clock, I had read five pages.

## Prepositions – Place (Position and Direction)

English	Usage	Example
in	room, building, street, town, country book, paper etc. car, taxi picture, world	in the kitchen, in London in the book in the car, in a taxi in the picture, in the world
at	meaning <i>next to, by an object</i> for <i>table</i> for events place where you are to do something typical (watch a film, study, work)	at the door, at the station at the table at a concert, at the party at the cinema, at school, at work
on	attached for a place with a river being on a surface for a certain side (left, right) for a floor in a house for public transport for <i>television, radio</i>	the picture on the wall London lies on the Thames. on the table on the left on the first floor on the bus, on a plane on TV, on the radio
by, next to, beside	left or right of somebody or something	Jane is standing by / next to / beside the car.
under	on the ground, lower than (or covered by) something else	the bag is under the table
below	lower than something else but above ground	the fish are below the surface

NOTES

over	covered by something else meaning <i>more than</i> getting to the other side (also <i>across</i> ) overcoming an obstacle	put a jacket over your shirt over 16 years of age walk over the bridge climb over the wall
above	higher than something else, but not directly over it	a path above the lake
across	getting to the other side (also	walk across the bridge

**Other important Prepositions**

English	Usage	Example
from	who gave it	a present from Jane
of	who/what does it belong to what does it show	a page of the book the picture of a palace
by	who made it	a book by Mark Twain
on	walking or riding on horseback entering a public transport vehicle	on foot, on horseback get on the bus
in	entering a car / Taxi	get in the car
off	leaving a public transport vehicle	get off the train
out of	leaving a car / Taxi	get out of the taxi
by	rise or fall of something travelling (other than walking or horseriding)	prices have risen by 10 percent by car, by bus
at	for <i>age</i>	she learned Russian at 45
about	for topics, meaning <i>what about</i>	we were talking about you

**PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES**

Recognize a *prepositional phrase* when you see one.

At the minimum, a prepositional phrase will begin with a preposition and end with a noun, pronoun, gerund, or clause, the “object” of the preposition.

The object of the preposition will often have one or more modifiers to describe it. These are the patterns for a prepositional phrase:

PREPOSITION + NOUN, PRONOUN, GERUND, OR CLAUSE

PREPOSITION + MODIFIER(S) + NOUN, PRONOUN, GERUND, OR

CLAUSE

Here are some examples of the most basic prepositional phrase:

At home

*At* = preposition; *home* = noun.

In time

*In* = preposition; *time* = noun.

From Richie

*From* = preposition; *Richie* = noun.

With me

*With* = preposition; *me* = pronoun.

By singing

*By* = preposition; *singing* = gerund.

About what we need

*About* = preposition; *what we need* = noun clause.

Most prepositional phrases are longer, like these:

From my grandmother

*From* = preposition; *my* = modifier; *grandmother* = noun.

Under the warm blanket

*Under* = preposition; *the, warm* = modifiers; *blanket* = noun.

In the weedy, overgrown garden

*In* = preposition; *the, weedy, overgrown* = modifiers; *garden* = noun.

Along the busy, six-lane highway

*Along* = preposition; *the, busy, six-lane* = modifiers; *highway* = noun.

By writing furiously

*By* = preposition; *writing* = gerund; *furiously* = modifier.

Understand what prepositional phrases *do* in a sentence.

## NOTES

A prepositional phrase will function as an adjective or adverb. As an adjective, the prepositional phrase will answer the question *Which one?*

Read these examples:

The book *on the bathroom floor* is swollen from shower steam.

Which book? The one *on the bathroom floor!*

The sweet potatoes *in the vegetable bin* are green with mold.

Which sweet potatoes? The ones forgotten *in the vegetable bin!*

The note *from Beverly* confessed that she had eaten the leftover pizza.

Which note? The one *from Beverly!*

As an adverb, a prepositional phrase will answer questions such as *How? When? or Where?*

Freddy is stiff *from yesterday's long football practice*.

How did Freddy get stiff? *From yesterday's long football practice!*

*Before class*, Josh begged his friends for a pencil.

When did Josh do his begging? *Before class!*

Feeling brave, we tried the Dragon Breath Burritos *at Tito's Taco Palace*.

Where did we eat the spicy food? *At Tito's Taco Palace!*

Remember that a prepositional phrase will *never* contain the subject of a sentence.

Sometimes a noun within the prepositional phrase seems the logical subject of a verb. Don't fall for that trick! You will *never* find a subject in a prepositional phrase.

Look at this example:

Neither *of these cookbooks* contains the recipe for Manhattan-style squid eyeball stew.

Cookbooks do indeed contain recipes. In this sentence, however, *cookbooks* is part of the prepositional phrase *of these cookbooks*. *Neither*—whatever a *neither* is—is the subject for the verb *contains*.

*Neither* is singular, so you need the singular form of the verb, *contains*. If you *incorrectly* identified *cookbooks* as the subject, you might write *contain*, the plural form, and thus commit a subject-verb agreement error.

Some prepositions—such as *along with* and *in addition to*—indicate “more to come.” They will make you think that you have a plural subject when in fact you don't. Don't fall for that trick either! Read this example:

Tommy, *along with the other students*, breathed a sigh of relief when Mrs. Markham announced that she was postponing the due date for the research essay.

Logically, more than one student is happy with the news. But Tommy is the only subject of the verb *breathed*. His classmates count in the real world, but in the sentence, they don't matter, locked as they are in the prepositional phrase.

## NOTES

## SOME WORDS FOLLOWED BY PREPOSITIONS

### verb followed by a preposition

Some phrasal verbs consist of a verb followed by a preposition. As has been seen in previous chapters, it is very common for English verbs to be followed by prepositions. However, in the case of a phrasal verb, the verb followed by the preposition forms an expression with an idiomatic meaning.

For instance, the phrasal verb **to come across** is an idiomatic expression with the meaning **to find**. Similarly, the phrasal verb **to frown on** is an idiomatic expression with the meaning **to disapprove of**.

e.g. We **came across** an old diary while we were cleaning out the attic.  
The workers **frowned on** the practice of smoking in the office.

It should be noted that some phrasal verbs consisting of a verb followed by a preposition can be used in the Passive Voice.

e.g. The practice of smoking in the office **was frowned on** by the workers.  
The children **were looked after** by their aunt.

In these examples, the phrasal verbs **to frown on** and **to look after** are used in the Passive Voice.

The following are examples of phrasal verbs which consist of a verb followed by a preposition. Each phrasal verb is followed by its meaning and an example of its use.

### Verbs Followed by Prepositions

<b>abide by:</b> adhere to	We <b>abided by</b> the rules.
<b>account for:</b> explain	He <b>accounted for</b> the discrepancy.
<b>ask for:</b> request	They <b>asked for</b> an extension.
<b>bank on:</b> depend on	We are <b>banking on</b> good weather tomorrow.
<b>bear with:</b> be patient with	Please <b>bear with</b> the delay.
<b>border on:</b> be near, be next to	Their excitement <b>bordered on</b> hysteria.
<b>break into:</b> enter by force	Thieves <b>broke into</b> the store.
<b>build on:</b> develop from	We want to <b>build on</b> our success.
<b>burst into:</b> suddenly enter	He <b>burst into</b> the room.
<b>call for:</b> demand	This <b>calls for</b> an investigation.
<b>call on:</b> ask, order	We will <b>call on</b> you to give a speech.
<b>come across:</b> find accidentally	She <b>came across</b> some old papers.

NOTES

**come upon:** discover  
**confide in:** share a secret  
**count on:** depend on  
**cut across:** use a short route  
**dawn on:** realize  
**deal in:** stock, sell  
**deal with:** handle successfully  
**decide on:** settle on  
**dispense with:** proceed without  
**dispose of:** get rid of  
 **dwell on:** emphasize  
**enlarge on:** say more about  
**enter into:** begin, commence  
**expand on:** say more about  
**frown on:** disapprove of  
**get at:** reach  
**get into:** become involved with  
**get over:** recover from  
**get through:** survive, finish  
**go against:** oppose  
**go over:** review  
**go through:** examine in detail  
**go with:** look good with  
**grow on:** become more attractive to  
**guard against:** take precautions  
**hinge on:** depend on  
**Inquire into:** investigate  
**keep to:** adhere to  
**laugh at:** mock, make fun of  
**launch into:** start  
**leaf through:** turn the pages  
**live on:** survive using  
**look after:** take care of  
**look into:** investigate  
**look through:** examine quickly  
**part with:** give up reluctantly  
**pick on:** be unkind to  
**prey on:** hunt and eat; disturb  
**provide for:** prepare for  
**reason with:** try to persuade

We came upon a small lake.  
 The two friends confided in each other.  
 We are counting on you.  
 I cut across the parking lot.  
 Finally the truth dawned on him.  
 He deals in gold and jewels.  
 She can deal with any situation.  
 They decided on a course of action.  
 The chairman dispensed with formalities.  
 If he moves, he will have to dispose of his furniture.  
 He dwelt on the risks involved.  
 Please enlarge on your proposal.  
 The brothers entered into an agreement.  
 Please expand on what you said before.  
 Absenteeism is frowned on.  
 The store was so crowded, it was hard to get at the food.  
 I don't want to get into an argument.  
 Have you got over the flu yet?  
 I don't know how I can get through all this work.  
 Don't go against the rules.  
 I would like to go over the report again.  
 Have you gone through the evidence?  
 Those shoes don't go with that outfit.  
 I'm sure the idea will grow on you.  
 We must guard against possible attack.  
 Everything hinges on her decision.  
 Please inquire into the alternatives.  
 The train will keep to the schedule.  
 Don't laugh at me!  
 He launched into an explanation.  
 She leafed idly through the book.  
 What did you live on?  
 I will look after the children.  
 He will look into the situation.  
 We looked through the magazines while we were waiting.  
 She refused to part with her necklace.  
 Because he was the youngest, the other boys picked on him.  
 Ospreys prey on fish; the idea preys on my mind.  
 We have provided for any emergency.  
 It is hard to reason with an angry person.

## NOTES

<b>reckon on:</b> calculate on	I hadn't <b>reckoned on</b> being the center of attention.
<b>rise above:</b> be superior to	He <b>rose above</b> his circumstances and managed to succeed.
<b>run across:</b> find accidentally	They <b>ran across</b> some interesting information.
<b>run into:</b> meet accidentally	I <b>ran into</b> my cousin downtown.
<b>run over:</b> injured by a vehicle	Children must be careful not to be <b>run over</b> by cars.
<b>see through:</b> not be deceived by	I instantly <b>saw through</b> the disguise.
<b>send for:</b> ask to be sent	You will have to <b>send for</b> your transcripts.
<b>settle for:</b> reluctantly accept	Since there was no kale, we had to <b>settle for</b> cabbage.
<b>side with:</b> support in a dispute	Why did you <b>side with</b> him?
<b>sit through:</b> sit and endure	It was all I could do to <b>sit through</b> the lecture without falling asleep.
<b>stand by:</b> support	I hope you will <b>stand by</b> me.
<b>stand for:</b> represent	What does the abbreviation etc. <b>stand for</b> ?
<b>stick to:</b> adhere to	We shall <b>stick to</b> the original plan.
<b>stumble across:</b> find accidentally	He <b>stumbled across</b> an interesting fossil.
<b>survive on:</b> survive using	During the winter, we had to <b>survive on</b> turnips and parsnips.
<b>take after:</b> resemble an ancestor	He <b>takes after</b> his grandfather.
<b>tamper with:</b> interfere with	Someone has <b>tampered with</b> the lock.
<b>touch on:</b> mention	She <b>touched on</b> many important subjects.
<b>verge on:</b> approach	His behavior <b>verges on</b> rudeness.
<b>wade through:</b> slowly peruse	We had to <b>wade through</b> a pile of documents.
<b>watch over:</b> guard	The shepherd <b>watched over</b> the sheep.

#### a. The position of the object of the preposition

The object of a preposition usually follows the preposition, whether the object is a noun or a pronoun. In the following examples, the objects are underlined.

e.g. We have **launched into** a new project.

We have **launched into** it.

In these examples, the noun **project** and the pronoun **it** are the objects of the preposition **into** of the phrasal verb **to launch into**. Both the noun object and the pronoun object follow the preposition.

#### b. The position of an adverb of manner modifying the verb

If a verb is followed by a preposition, an adverb of manner may be placed between the verb and the preposition. In the following examples, the adverbs of manner are underlined.

e.g. We **reasoned patiently** with the little girl.

I **leafed quickly** through the book.

In the first example, the adverb of manner **patiently** is placed between the verb **reasoned** and the preposition **with** of the phrasal verb **to reason with**. In the



## NOTES

second example, the adverb of manner **quickly** is placed between the verb **leafed** and the preposition **through** of the phrasal verb **to leaf through**.

### c. Stress in spoken English

When a verb followed by a preposition occurs at the end of a clause, it is usually the verb which is stressed in spoken English. In the following examples, the words which are stressed are printed in bold type.

e.g. No one likes to be **laughed** at.  
I need someone to **confide** in.

In the first example, the verb **laughed** followed by the preposition **at** occurs at the end of a clause, and the verb **laughed** is stressed. In the second example, the verb **confide** followed by the preposition **in** occurs at the end of a clause, and the verb **confide** is stressed.

It should be noted that, when used in a phrasal verb at the end of a clause, the prepositions **after**, **into** and **over** are often pronounced with somewhat greater emphasis than the verb. In this case, both the verb and the preposition are stressed. For example:

The twins are easy to **look after**.  
The building would be difficult to **break into**.  
You'll never guess whom I **ran into**.  
I heard that someone was **run over**.

The prepositions **above**, **across** and **through** are also occasionally emphasized in this way. For example:

The research papers were difficult to **wade through**.

### d. Expressions in which the verb has an object

In the case of some phrasal verbs consisting of a verb followed by a preposition, the verb and the preposition may each have an object. In the following examples, the objects are underlined.

e.g. I can **make** nothing **of** the situation.  
We **talked** my sister **into** agreeing.

In the first example, the verb **make** of the phrasal verb **to make of** has the object **nothing**, and the preposition **of** has the object **situation**. In the second example, the verb **talked** of the phrasal verb **to talk into** has the object **sister**, and the preposition **into** has the object **agreeing**.

The following are examples of phrasal verbs consisting of a verb followed by a preposition, where the verb may have an object. The objects of the verbs are underlined. Each phrasal verb is followed by its meaning and an example of its use. The last example illustrates the use of the Passive Voice.

## Verbs followed by Objects followed by Prepositions

<b>drag into:</b> involve unwillingly	Don't <b>drag</b> me <b>into</b> this discussion!
<b>draw into:</b> involve gradually	We managed to <b>draw</b> her <b>into</b> the conversation.
<b>drum into:</b> teach by repetition	We <b>drummed</b> the safety rules <b>into</b> the children.
<b>frighten into:</b> control by fear	The little girl <b>frightened</b> her brother <b>into</b> obeying her.
<b>hold against:</b> blame for	Please don't <b>hold</b> my mistakes <b>against</b> me.
<b>lay before:</b> present to	We will <b>lay</b> the evidence <b>before</b> the court.
<b>let into:</b> allow to share	Shall we <b>let</b> her <b>into</b> the secret?
<b>make of:</b> understand	Can you <b>make</b> anything <b>of</b> this message?
<b>read into:</b> find other meanings	You are <b>reading</b> too much <b>into</b> her remarks.
<b>set against:</b> make antagonistic	She likes to <b>set</b> people <b>against</b> one another.
<b>set on:</b> order to attack	We will <b>set</b> our dogs <b>on</b> any intruders.
<b>talk into:</b> persuade	Can you <b>talk</b> him <b>into</b> changing his mind?
<b>thrust upon:</b> force upon	We <b>thrust</b> the responsibility <b>upon</b> the treasurer.
<b>write into:</b> add to in writing	The terms were <b>written</b> <b>into</b> the lease.

NOTES

## THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD IN ENGLISH – A GUIDE TO USAGE

### Definitions

In the English language, verbs are used in contexts called *moods*. These verbal moods are:

- **indicative** – simple statement or question (*Jill picks up the ball.*)
- **imperative** – a command (*Jill, pick up the ball !*)
- **subjunctive** – a statement contrary to fact, a wish, a mandative statement (*I request that Jill pick up the ball.*)

There are varying definitions of the subjunctive in English. Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines *subjunctive* as "in grammar, designating or of that mood of a verb used to express condition, hypothesis, contingency, possibility, etc., rather than to state an actual fact: distinguished from *imperative*, *indicative*."

One important note: many scholars have dismissed the persistence of the subjunctive in its unmarked form, that is, when it is indistinguishable from the indicative. "I wish you were here" and "I wish they were here" are every bit in the subjunctive as "I wish she were here". Just because "you" and "they" take "were" in both moods does not negate the existence of the subjunctive. Trust that in the earlier days of English, when verbs were distinguished by inflection (e.g., different ending forms), the indicative and subjunctive were quite distinct. A hallmark of the subjunctive is

that tenses are often mixed – one says “I wish [present] she were [past? – ah, subjunctive] here” instead of “I wish [present] she is [present indicative, but incorrect] here”.

## NOTES

**Learning by examples****Counterfactual statements**

*If I were you, then I would not do that.*

I am not you, however, so I use the subjunctive to express this hypothetical or counterfactual condition. Especially note that the modern usage *If I was you* is completely incorrect.

*If only she were here, then she would speak up.*

She is not here, however, so the subjunctive expresses that fact appropriately. Again, *If only she was* has drifted into modern usage and should be avoided.

*We should act as if he were watching.*

We doubt that he is watching or know that he is not.

*It is as though she were here.*

We know she is not here, but it seems so.

**Wishful statements**

*She wishes she were not here.*

The modern usage *She wishes she was* is incorrect.

*He wishes he had a hammer.*

Without the subjunctive, this would be constructed in the indicative as *He wishes he has a hammer*, but the indicative is incorrect.

*I wish I knew.*

This formulation is distinctly different the following indicative statement: *I wish I know* (which makes no sense). The indicative is inappropriate here.

**Conjunctive formulations**

*Do this now, lest you be harried later.*

*Lest* typically takes the subjunctive.

*He keeps the faith, though he face so many trials.*

Here, *though* takes the subjunctive. This sounds very pretentious.

*Whether it be true, we shall proceed.*

*They like all dogs, be they large or small, short or tall, ...*

## CONDITIONALS

**Definition:** The conditional tense says that an action is reliant on something else. The conditionals are used to talk about real or unreal situations, they are sometimes called if-clauses. Real Conditional describes real-life situations. Unreal Conditional describes unreal, imaginary situations.

NOTES

For example: **If** a certain condition is true, **then** a particular result happens.

There are four basic conditionals that we use in English.

- Zero Conditional
- First Conditional
- Second Conditional
- Third Conditional

\* There are some more conditionals formed by mixing some of these four.

### Structure of Conditional Sentences

The Zero Conditional is used for actions that are always true when the conditions are satisfied. The structure of the conditionals is straightforward. There are two basic possibilities in terms of order in the sentence:

IF	Condition	Result
If	It rains,	we will get wet

Result	IF	Condition
we will get wet	If	it rains,

\* Notice that we only use a comma in the first example.

### Conditionals: Time and Probability Table

Probability	Conditional	Example	Time
Certain	zero conditional	If you heat water to 100 degrees celsius, it boils	any time
Likely	first conditional	If it rains, I will stay in.	future
Unlikely	second conditional	If I won the lottery, I would retire.	future
Impossible	second conditional	If I had the money, I would lend it to you	present
Impossible	third conditional	If I had seen him, I would have given him the message.	past

### Zero Conditional: Certainty

The Zero conditional is used for things that are always true as long as the condition is met.

Formation: **if + present simple, + present simple**

NOTES

IF	Condition	Result	Situation
	<b>present simple</b>	<b>present simple</b>	
If	you heat water to 100 degrees celsius,	it boils.	<b>fact- universal</b>
	<b>present simple</b>	<b>present simple</b>	
If	I drink coffee,	I get a headache.	<b>fact- personal</b>

In these examples, the result will always occur if the condition is met, so the time is not important.

**First Conditional: A real possibility in the future**

A First Conditional sentence is for future actions dependent on the result of another future action or event, where there is a reasonable possibility of the conditions for the action being satisfied.

Formation: **if + present simple, + will**

For example: If she gets good grades, she will go to university.

We are talking about the future, but we use a present tense for the condition and will for the result. In this case, the person is sure about going to university. We can use other modal verbs in the result part of the sentence. For example:

IF	Condition	Result	Possibility
If	she gets good grades,	she <b>will</b> go to university.	If the condition is met, then she <b>definitely</b> will go
If	he gets good grades,	he <b>may</b> go to university.	He is <b>not sure</b> about going to university.
If	she gets good grades,	she <b>should</b> go to university.	The speaker is expressing his or her <b>opinion</b> , giving <b>advice</b> .
If	he gets good grades,	he <b>can</b> go to university.	This means that it is <b>possible</b> .
If	she gets good grades,	she <b>could</b> go to university.	This means that it is <b>possible</b> , but <b>not that likely</b> .
If	he gets good grades,	he <b>might</b> go to university.	This means that it is <b>possible</b> , but <b>not that likely</b> .

We can also use different present forms in the **condition** part of the sentence like: present simple, present progressive, present perfect, etc

**Second Conditional: Imaginary Present or Unlikely Future**

The Second Conditional can be used to talk about imaginary present situations, where we are imagining something different from what is really the case. We can also use it to talk about things in the future that are unlikely to happen, as the condition is unlikely to be met. We use the past tense in the condition part and would for the result.

Formation: **if + past simple, + would + base form**

For Example: If I were you, I'd tell her.

IF	Condition	Time	Result	Possibility
	past simple	present	WOULD + base verb	impossible
If	I had the time,		I would learn Italian.	I don't have the time, so I'm not going to learn Italian.
	past simple	future	WOULD + base verb	unlikely
If	I won the lottery		I would travel around the world.	There's a very small chance of winning the lottery, so the trip is unlikely

We can use other modal verbs in the past tense in the result part of the sentence:

IF	Condition	Result	Certainty
	past simple	WOULD + base verb	
If	I had the time,	I would learn Italian.	Although unlikely to happen, the speaker is <b>sure</b> that they would do it given the opportunity.
If	I had more time,	I might learn English.	Although unlikely to happen, it is only a <b>possibility</b> anyway.
If	I had more time,	I should learn some more about IT.	Although unlikely to happen, the speaker is saying that it would be a <b>good idea</b> , but is not <b>committed</b> to it.
If	I had more time	I could learn Hindi.	Although unlikely to happen, it is only a <b>possibility</b> anyway.

**Third Conditional: Imaginary Past** The third conditional is used when we are talking about the past and imagining something different from what actually happened, that means for imaginary past actions, where the conditions for the action WERE NOT satisfied.

Formation: if + past perfect, + would have + past participle

For example: If I had known, I would have helped. I didn't know and didn't help.

IF	Condition	Result	Certainty
	past perfect	WOULD HAVE+ past participle	
If	I had known,	I would have helped.	Although this didn't happen, the speaker is <b>sure</b> about the result.
If	I had known,	I could have helped.	Although this didn't happen, the result is only a <b>possibility</b> .
If	I had known,	I might have helped.	Although this didn't happen, the result is only a <b>possibility</b> .
If	you had known,	you should have helped.	Although this didn't happen, it is only a good <b>suggestion</b> or piece of <b>advice</b> .

**Third Second Mixed Conditionals** For imaginary present actions or situations that are not possible because the necessary conditions were not met in the past.

Formation: if + past perfect, + would + base form

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For example:

- If you had taken the course, you would know about it. (The conditions were not met because the person did not do the course and as a result does not know about it now.)

**Second Third Mixed Conditionals** To avoid the illogicality of saying 'If I had been you', which means that I was not you on that occasion, but could be in the future, which is, of course, impossible.

Formation: **if + past simple, + would have + past participle**

For example:

- If I were you, I wouldn't have done that.

When the first part is still true

For example:

- If I could speak English, I wouldn't have needed to get the letter translated. (This means that I couldn't speak English then when I needed the translator and still can't)

# 14 Business Vocabulary

NOTES

## The Chapter Covers :

- Advertising
- Import-Export
- Money
- Banking
- Insurance
- Presentations
- Company Structure
- Law
- Selling
- Contracts
- Marketing
- Employment
- Meetings

## Advertising

1	<b>ad</b>	<i>abbr.</i> advertisement - <b>advert</b> <i>abbr.</i>
2	<b>advertisement</b>	<i>n.</i> item of publicity for a product or service, in magazine, on TV etc
3	<b>advertising agency</b>	<i>n.</i> company specialising in producing and placing advertisements for clients
4	<b>AIDA</b>	<i>abbr.</i> Attention, Interest, Desire, Action - the objective of all advertisements
5	<b>benefit</b>	<i>n.</i> advantage of a product or service, usually derived from its features
6	<b>billboard<sup>US</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> signboard, usually outdoors, for advertising posters; hoarding <sup>UK</sup>
7	<b>circulation</b>	<i>n.</i> average number of copies of a magazine sold in a particular period
8	<b>classified ads</b>	<i>n.</i> small advertisements in magazine or newspaper categorised by subject
9	<b>commercial</b>	<i>n.</i> paid advertisement on radio or TV
10	<b>coupon</b>	<i>n.</i> part of a printed advertisement used for ordering goods, samples etc



NOTES

11	<b>double-page spread</b>	<i>n.</i> advertisement printed across 2 pages in a magazine or newspaper
12	<b>eye-catcher<sup>US</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> something that especially attracts one's attention - <b>eye-catching</b> <i>adj.</i>
13	<b>features</b>	<i>n.</i> special characteristics of a product, usually leading to certain benefits
14	<b>boarding<sup>UK</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> signboard, usually outdoors, for advertising posters; billboard <sup>US</sup>
15	<b>poster</b>	<i>n.</i> large sheet of paper, usually illustrated, used as advertisement
16	<b>prime time</b>	<i>n.</i> hours on radio & TV with largest audience, esp. the evening hours
17	<b>promote</b>	<i>v.</i> to (try to) increase sales of a product by publicising and advertising it
18	<b>slot</b>	<i>n.</i> specific time in a broadcasting schedule, when a commercial may be shown
19	<b>target</b>	<i>n.</i> objective; what one is aiming at - <b>target audience</b> <i>n.</i>
20	<b>U.S.P.</b>	<i>abbr.</i> Unique Selling Proposition; what makes a product different from others

**Import-Export**

1	<b>bill of lading</b>	<i>n.</i> list of goods and shipping instructions; waybill
2	<b>c.&amp;f.</b>	<i>abbr.</i> cost & freight: includes shipping to named port but not insurance
3	<b>c.i.f.</b>	<i>abbr.</i> cost, insurance & freight: includes insurance and shipping to named port
4	<b>cargo</b>	<i>n.</i> goods or products that are being transported or shipped
5	<b>certificate of origin</b>	<i>n.</i> a document that shows where goods come from
6	<b>container</b>	<i>n.</i> huge box to hold goods for transport - <b>container port</b> <i>n.</i> to <b>containerise</b> <i>v.</i>
7	<b>customs</b>	<i>n.</i> 1 government tax or duty on imported goods 2 officials who collect this tax
8	<b>declare</b>	<i>v.</i> to make a statement of taxable goods - <b>customs declaration form</b> <i>n.</i>
9	<b>f.a.s.</b>	<i>abbr.</i> free alongside ship [includes delivery to quayside but not loading]
10	<b>f.o.b.</b>	<i>abbr.</i> free on board: includes loading onto ship
11	<b>freight</b>	<i>n.</i> goods being transported; cargo
12	<b>irrevocable</b>	<i>adj.</i> that cannot be undone; unalterable - <b>irrevocable letter of credit</b> <i>n.</i>
13	<b>letter of credit</b>	<i>n.</i> a letter from a bank authorising a person to draw money from another bank
14	<b>merchandise</b>	<i>n.</i> things bought and sold; commodities; wares - also <i>v.</i>
15	<b>packing list</b>	<i>n.</i> a document that is sent with goods to show that they have been checked

## NOTES

16	<b>pro forma invoice</b>	<i>n.</i> an invoice or request for payment sent in advance of goods supplied
17	<b>quay</b>	<i>n.</i> a solid, artificial landing place for (un)loading ships; wharf - quayside <i>n.</i>
18	<b>ship</b>	<i>v.</i> to send or transport by land, sea or air - <i>also n.</i> shipment <i>n.</i>
19	<b>shipping agent</b>	<i>n.</i> a person acting for or representing a ship or ships at a port
20	<b>waybill</b>	<i>n.</i> list of goods and shipping instructions; bill of lading - air waybill <i>n.</i>

## Money

1	<b>A.T.M.</b>	<i>abbr.</i> Automated Teller Machine; cash dispenserUK
2	<b>banknote</b>	<i>n.</i> a piece of paper money; bill <sup>US</sup>
3	<b>bill<sup>US</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> a banknote; a piece of paper money
4	<b>black market</b>	<i>n.</i> illegal traffic in officially controlled commodities such as foreign currency
5	<b>bureau de change</b>	<i>n.</i> establishment where currencies of different countries may be exchanged
6	<b>cash</b>	<i>n.</i> 1 coins or bank notes (not cheques); 2 actual money paid (not credit)
7	<b>cash dispenser<sup>UK</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> automatic machine from which clients of a bank may withdraw money; ATM
8	<b>cashier</b>	<i>n.</i> person dealing with cash transactions in a bank, store etc
9	<b>coin</b>	<i>n.</i> a piece of metal money
10	<b>currency</b>	<i>n.</i> the money in general use or circulation in any country
11	<b>debt</b>	<i>n.</i> money etc owed by one person to another
12	<b>exchange rate</b>	<i>n.</i> the rate at which one currency can be exchanged for another
13	<b>foreign exchange</b>	<i>n.</i> the currency of other countries
14	<b>hard currency</b>	<i>n.</i> currency that will probably not fall in value and is readily accepted
15	<b>invest</b>	<i>v.</i> to put money for profit into business, land etc - investment <i>n.</i>
16	<b>legal tender</b>	<i>n.</i> currency that cannot legally be refused in payment of a debt
17	<b>petty cash<sup>UK</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> a cash fund for small, everyday expenses
18	<b>soft currency</b>	<i>n.</i> currency that will probably fall in value and is not readily accepted
19	<b>speculate</b>	<i>v.</i> (risky) buying of foreign currency, land etc for rapid gain - speculation <i>n.</i>
20	<b>transaction</b>	<i>n.</i> a (usually commercial) exchange; a deal - to transact <i>v.</i>

## NOTES

**Banking**

1	<b>balance</b>	<i>n.</i> the difference between credits and debits in an account
2	<b>bank charges</b>	<i>n.</i> money paid to a bank for the bank's services etc
3	<b>branch</b>	<i>n.</i> local office or bureau of a bank
4	<b>checkbook<sup>US</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> book containing detachable checks; chequebook <sup>UK</sup>
5	<b>check<sup>US</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> written order to a bank to pay the stated sum from one's account; cheque <sup>UK</sup>
6	<b>credit</b>	<i>n.</i> money in a bank a/c; sum added to a bank a/c; money lent by a bank - <i>also v.</i>
7	<b>credit card</b>	<i>n.</i> (plastic) card from a bank authorising the purchasing of goods on credit
8	<b>current account</b>	<i>n.</i> bank a/c from which money may be drawn at any time; checking account <sup>US</sup>
9	<b>debit</b>	<i>n.</i> a sum deducted from a bank account, as for a cheque - <i>also v.</i>
10	<b>deposit account</b>	<i>n.</i> bank a/c on which interest is paid; savings account <sup>US</sup>
11	<b>fill in<sup>UK</sup></b>	<i>v.</i> to add written information to a document to make it complete; to fill out <sup>US</sup>
12	<b>interest</b>	<i>n.</i> money paid for the use of money lent - <b>interest rate</b> <i>n.</i>
13	<b>loan</b>	<i>n.</i> money lent by a bank etc and that must be repaid with interest - <i>also v.</i>
14	<b>overdraft</b>	<i>n.</i> deficit in a bank account caused by withdrawing more money than is paid in
15	<b>pay in</b>	<i>v.</i> [paid, paid] to deposit or put money in to a bank account
16	<b>payee</b>	<i>n.</i> person to whom money is paid
17	<b>paying-in slip</b>	<i>n.</i> small document recording money that you pay in to a bank account
18	<b>standing order</b>	<i>n.</i> an instruction to a bank to make regular payments
19	<b>statement</b>	<i>n.</i> a record of transactions in a bank account
20	<b>withdraw</b>	<i>v.</i> [-drew, -drawn] to take money out of a bank account - <b>withdrawal</b> <i>n.</i>

**Insurance**

1	<b>actuary</b>	<i>n.</i> a person who calculates risks for insurance companies
2	<b>assessor</b>	<i>n.</i> a person who calculates the value of something [eg: a building, car etc]
3	<b>claim</b>	<i>n.</i> an application for payment under an insurance policy - <b>to make a claim</b> <i>v.</i>
4	<b>comprehensive</b>	<i>n.</i> [of an insurance policy] all-inclusive; providing complete protection
5	<b>consequential loss</b>	<i>n.</i> a loss that happens as a consequence of or as a result of another

## NOTES

6	<b>cover<sup>UK</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> the protection given by an insurance policy [eg: public liability cover]
7	<b>employer's liability</b>	<i>n.</i> liability or responsibility of a firm for damage caused to one of its employees
8	<b>goods in transit</b>	<i>n.</i> property, merchandise or any goods in the process of being transported
9	<b>insurance broker</b>	<i>n.</i> agent who arranges insurance; middleman between insurer & policyholder
10	<b>liability</b>	<i>n.</i> 1 the state of being liable 2 anything for which a person is liable
11	<b>liable</b>	<i>adj.</i> legally obliged to pay for damage, injury etc; responsible - liability <i>n.</i>
12	<b>loss</b>	<i>n.</i> death, injury, damage etc that is the basis for a claim - to lose <i>v.</i>
13	<b>loss adjuster</b>	<i>n.</i> a person who assesses the amount of compensation arising from a claim
14	<b>policy</b>	<i>n.</i> a contract of insurance [eg: a product liability policy]
15	<b>policyholder</b>	<i>n.</i> the person to whom an insurance policy is issued
16	<b>premium</b>	<i>n.</i> a payment, usually monthly, yearly etc, for an insurance policy
17	<b>product liability</b>	<i>n.</i> liability or responsibility of a firm for damage caused by one of its products
18	<b>public liability</b>	<i>n.</i> responsibility of a firm for damage caused to a member of the public
19	<b>reinsurance</b>	<i>n.</i> the insuring of risk by one insurance company with another - to reinsure <i>v.</i>
20	<b>risk</b>	<i>n.</i> 1 chance or possibility of injury, loss etc 2 person or thing causing risk

## Presentations

1	<b>audience rapport</b>	<i>n.</i> relationship of presenter with audience, esp. when good
2	<b>body language</b>	<i>n.</i> non-verbal communication through facial expressions, body movements etc
3	<b>Finally . . .</b>	Typical word used to signal the last of several points or subjects
4	<b>flip chart</b>	<i>n.</i> a pad of large paper sheets on a stand for presenting information
5	<b>For example . . .</b>	Typical phrase used to signal an illustration or sample of a particular point
6	<b>handout</b>	<i>n.</i> anything (report, sample etc) handed or given to people at a presentation
7	<b>In conclusion . . .</b>	Typical phrase used to signal the summing up or final part of a presentation
8	<b>Ladies &amp; Gentlemen</b>	Polite phrase often used to address an audience of men and women

## NOTES

9	marker	<i>n.</i> whiteboard marker a pen with a broad, felt tip for writing on whiteboards
10	microphone	<i>n.</i> electrical instrument that one speaks into for amplification of the voice etc
11	O.H.T.	<i>abbr.</i> overhead transparency, sheet of film with image for o.h.p.
12	overhead projector	<i>n.</i> device that projects an o.h.t. onto a screen - O.H.P. <i>abbr.</i>
13	pointer	<i>n.</i> device (rod or electric torch etc) for indicating things on a map, screen etc
14	screen	<i>n.</i> large, flat, reflective white surface on which films, slides etc are projected
15	signal	<i>v.</i> to help the audience understand where one is in a presentation
16	slide	<i>n.</i> small (usually 35mm) photographic transparency - slide projector <i>n.</i>
17	To start with . . .	Typical phrase used to signal the beginning of a particular subject or topic
18	Turning now to . . .	Typical phrase used to signal a change from one subject or topic to another
19	visual aids	<i>n.</i> things that one can look at in a presentation [eg: films, maps, charts etc]
20	whiteboard	<i>n.</i> large, flat, white surface or board on which to write or draw with markers

## Company Structure

1	Accounts Dept.	<i>n.</i> department responsible for administering a company's financial affairs
2	A.G.M. <sup>UK</sup>	<i>abbr.</i> Annual General Meeting of a company's shareholders
3	board of directors	<i>n.</i> group of people chosen to establish policy for and control a company
4	chairman <sup>UK</sup>	<i>n.</i> person who heads a Board of Directors; head of a company; chairperson
5	director	<i>n.</i> a member of the board of directors
6	executive officer <sup>US</sup>	<i>n.</i> person managing the affairs of a corporation - chief executive officer <i>n.</i>
7	headquarters	<i>n.</i> a company's principal or main office or centre of control
8	manager	<i>n.</i> person responsible for day-to-day running of a dept.; executive officer <sup>US</sup>
9	managing director <sup>UK</sup>	<i>n.</i> senior director after the chairman responsible for day-to-day direction
10	Marketing Dept.	<i>n.</i> department that puts goods on market, inc. packaging, advertising etc
11	organisation chart	<i>n.</i> a table or plan showing a company's structure graphically

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12	<b>Personnel Dept.</b>	<i>n.</i> department responsible for recruitment and welfare of staff or employees
13	<b>president<sup>US</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> the highest executive officer of a company; head of a company
14	<b>Production Dept.</b>	<i>n.</i> department responsible for physical creation of product
15	<b>Purchasing Dept.</b>	<i>n.</i> department responsible for finding and buying everything for a company
16	<b>R &amp; D Department</b>	<i>n.</i> department responsible for Research and Development of (new) products
17	<b>reception</b>	<i>n.</i> the place where visitors and clients report on arrival at a company
18	<b>Sales Department</b>	<i>n.</i> department responsible for finding customers and making sales
19	<b>shareholder</b>	<i>n.</i> person who holds or owns shares in or a part of a company or corporation
20	<b>vice president<sup>US</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> any of several executive officers, each responsible for a separate division

**Law**

1	<b>attorney</b>	<i>n.</i> 1 a person appointed to act for or represent another 2 <sup>US</sup> lawyer
2	<b>barrister<sup>UK</sup></b>	<i>n.</i> a lawyer who pleads before a superior court
3	<b>brief</b>	<i>n.</i> 1 <sup>UK</sup> instructions to a barrister - <i>also v.</i> 2 <sup>US</sup> written statement of facts
4	<b>case</b>	<i>n.</i> statement of the facts in a trial, esp. the argument of one side
5	<b>contract</b>	<i>n.</i> a formal agreement, usually in writing, between two or more parties
6	<b>court of law</b>	<i>n.</i> the place where law cases are hear and decided; court - courtroom <i>n.</i>
7	<b>evidence</b>	<i>n.</i> information presented to a court to prove or support a point in question
8	<b>guilty</b>	<i>adj.</i> responsible for wrong; culpable - <b>guilt</b> <i>n.</i> <b>not guilty</b> <i>adj.</i>
9	<b>judge</b>	<i>n.</i> official with authority to hear and decide cases in a court of law - <i>also v.</i>
10	<b>jury</b>	<i>n.</i> a group of people chosen to hear the evidence of a case and give a decision
11	<b>lawsuit</b>	<i>n.</i> a trial at court between two private parties
12	<b>lawyer</b>	<i>n.</i> a person trained in law and who advises or represents others 1
13	<b>plead</b>	<i>v.</i> 1 to defend a law case 2 to declare oneself to be guilty or not guilty - <b>plea</b> <i>n.</i>
14	<b>sentence</b>	<i>n.</i> 1 decision of a court, esp. as to the punishment 2 the punishment - <i>also v.</i>
15	<b>solicitor</b>	<i>n.</i> 1 <sup>UK</sup> lawyer advising clients & briefing barristers 2 <sup>US</sup> law officer for a city etc
16	<b>sue</b>	<i>v.</i> to start legal action against someone in a court of law - <b>lawsuit</b> <i>n.</i>

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17	<b>sum up</b>	<i>v.</i> to summarise & review the evidence of a case - <b>summing up</b> <i>n.</i>
18	<b>trial</b>	<i>n.</i> a formal examination of a case in a court of law - <b>to try v.</b>
19	<b>verdict</b>	<i>n.</i> the formal decision or finding of a judge or jury
20	<b>without prejudice</b>	without detriment or damage to a legal right or claim

## Selling

1	<b>after-sales service</b>	<i>n.</i> service that continues after a product has been sold [eg: repairs etc]
2	<b>buyer</b>	<i>n.</i> 1 any person who buys anything 2 a person employed by a firm to buy
3	<b>client</b>	<i>n.</i> a person who buys services from a lawyer, architect or other professionals
4	<b>close</b>	<i>v.</i> to finalise a deal or sale; to make a sale
5	<b>cold call</b>	<i>v.</i> to telephone a prospect without previous contact - <i>also n.</i>
6	<b>customer</b>	<i>n.</i> a person who buys goods or services from a shop or business
7	<b>deal</b>	<i>n.</i> a business transaction - <i>also v. dealer n.</i>
8	<b>discount</b>	<i>n.</i> a reduction in the price; a deduction [usually expressed as a percentage (%)]
9	<b>follow up</b>	<i>v.</i> to continue to follow persistently; to maintain contact [eg: after a lead]
10	<b>guarantee</b>	<i>n.</i> a promise that a product will be repaired or replaced etc if faulty - <i>also v.</i>
11	<b>in bulk</b>	in large quantity, usually at a lower price
12	<b>lead</b>	<i>n.</i> useful indication of a possible customer to be followed up
13	<b>objection</b>	<i>n.</i> a reason given by a prospect for not buying - <b>to object v.</b> <i>see overcome</i>
14	<b>overcome</b>	<i>v.</i> [-came, -come] to overcome an objection to show an objection is invalid
15	<b>product</b>	<i>n.</i> something made and usually for sale - <b>to produce v. see service</b>
16	<b>prospect</b>	<i>n.</i> a possible or probable customer; prospective customer
17	<b>representative</b>	<i>n.</i> sales representative person who represents & sells for a firm; salesperson
18	<b>retail</b>	<i>v.</i> to sell in small quantities (as in a shop to the public) - <i>also n.</i> <i>see wholesale</i>
19	<b>service</b>	<i>n.</i> work done usually in return for payment - <b>to serve v. see product</b>
20	<b>wholesale</b>	<i>v.</i> to sell in bulk (as to a shop for resale to the public) - <i>also n.</i> <i>see retail</i>

1	<b>agreement</b>	<i>n.</i> an arrangement between two or more people, countries etc; contract
2	<b>appendix</b>	<i>n.</i> additional or supplementary material at end of contract, book etc
3	<b>arbitration</b>	<i>n.</i> settlement of a dispute by a person chosen by both parties - <b>to arbitrate v.</b>
4	<b>article</b>	<i>n.</i> a particular statement or stipulation in a contract etc; clause
5	<b>clause</b>	<i>n.</i> a particular statement or stipulation in a contract etc; article
6	<b>condition</b>	<i>n.</i> anything necessary before the performance of something else
7	<b>force majeure</b>	<i>n.</i> superior, power; unforeseeable event excusing one party from fulfilling contract
8	<b>fulfil</b>	<i>v.</i> to satisfy a condition; to complete the required task; to fulfill <sup>US</sup>
9	<b>herein</b>	<i>adv.</i> in here; in this (document etc)
10	<b>hereinafter</b>	<i>adv.</i> in the following part (of this document etc)
11	<b>hereto</b>	<i>adv.</i> to this (document etc) [eg: attached hereto]
12	<b>heretofore</b>	<i>adv.</i> up until now; until the present; before this
13	<b>in behalf of</b>	in the interests of (person etc); for (person etc); on behalf of <sup>UK</sup>
14	<b>null and void</b>	invalid; without legal force; not binding
15	<b>on the one hand</b>	on one side - <b>on the other hand</b> on the other side
16	<b>party</b>	<i>n.</i> the person or persons forming one side of an agreement
17	<b>stipulate</b>	<i>v.</i> to specify as an essential condition - <b>stipulation n.</b>
18	<b>terms</b>	<i>n.</i> conditions or stipulations
19	<b>warrant</b>	<i>v.</i> to give formal assurance; to guarantee
20	<b>whereas</b>	conj: it being the case that; in view of the fact that [in introduction to contracts]

Marketing

1	<b>brand</b>	<i>n.</i> a particular make of product - <b>to brand v.</b> - <b>branded adj.</b>
2	<b>consumer</b>	<i>n.</i> the person who buys and uses a product or service - <b>to consume v.</b>
3	<b>cost</b>	<i>v.</i> [cost, costed, costed] to estimate the price of making a product - <b>costing n.</b>
4	<b>develop</b>	<i>v.</i> to create a new product or improve an existing one - <b>product development n.</b>
5	<b>distribution</b>	<i>n.</i> the delivering of products to end-users, inc. advertising, storing etc
6	<b>end-user</b>	<i>n.</i> the person, customer etc who is the ultimate (and so real) user of a product
7	<b>image</b>	<i>n.</i> the concept or perception of a firm or product held by the general public



## NOTES

8	<b>label</b>	<i>n.</i> small piece of paper, metal etc on a product giving information about it
9	<b>launch</b>	<i>v.</i> to introduce a new product, with publicity etc - <b>product launch</b> <i>n.</i>
10	<b>mail order</b>	<i>n.</i> the selling of goods by post - <b>mail-order catalogue</b> <i>n.</i>
11	<b>market research</b>	<i>n.</i> study of consumers' needs & preferences, often for a particular product
12	<b>packaging</b> <sup>UK</sup>	<i>n.</i> the wrapping or container for a product
13	<b>point of sale</b>	<i>n.</i> the place where a product is actually sold to the public - <b>point-of-sale</b> <i>adj.</i>
14	<b>product</b>	<i>n.</i> something made to be sold; merchandise [includes services] - <b>to produce</b> <i>v.</i>
15	<b>public relations</b>	<i>n.</i> creation and maintenance of a good public image - <b>public relations officer</b> <i>n.</i>
16	<b>registered</b>	<i>adj.</i> registered or officially recorded as a trademark - ® <i>abbr.</i> - <b>to register</b> <i>v.</i>
17	<b>sponsor</b>	<i>n.</i> firm supporting an organisation in return for advertising space - <i>also v.</i>
18	<b>S.W.O.T.</b>	<i>abbr.</i> Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
19	<b>total product</b>	<i>n.</i> the whole product, inc. name, packaging, instructions, reliability, after-sales etc
20	<b>trademark</b>	<i>n.</i> special symbol, design, word etc used to represent a product or firm - " <i>abbr.</i>

## Employment

1	<b>bonus</b>	<i>n.</i> additional pay given to employee as incentive or reward
2	<b>curriculum vitae</b> <sup>UK</sup>	<i>n.</i> short account of one's education, career etc; CV <sup>UK</sup> ; resume <sup>US</sup> ; resume <sup>US</sup>
3	<b>dismiss</b>	<i>v.</i> to remove or discharge from employment; to sack [colloq.]; to fire <sup>US</sup>
4	<b>employer</b>	<i>n.</i> person or firm who employs people - <b>employee</b> <i>n.</i> person employed
5	<b>fire</b> <sup>US</sup>	<i>v.</i> [colloq.] to dismiss
6	<b>interview</b>	<i>v.</i> an oral examination of an applicant for a job - <i>also v.</i>
7	<b>make redundant</b> <sup>UK</sup>	<i>v.</i> [made, made] to dismiss because of not being needed - <b>redundancy</b> <sup>UK</sup> <i>n.</i>
8	<b>maternity leave</b>	<i>n.</i> period of absence from work (for a woman) when having a baby
9	<b>notice</b>	<i>n.</i> advance warning of intention to resign - <b>to give or tender one's notice</b> <i>v.</i>
10	<b>perk</b>	<i>abbr.</i> perquisite; something additional to regular salary [eg: free meals; a car]
11	<b>personnel</b>	<i>n.</i> the people who work for a firm

## NOTES

12	<b>personnel officer</b>	<i>n.</i> manager responsible for recruitment, training and welfare of personnel
13	<b>promotion</b>	<i>n.</i> advancement in rank or position - <b>to promote v.</b>
14	<b>prospects</b>	<i>n.</i> opportunity for success, promotion etc
15	<b>recruit</b>	<i>n.</i> to look for and employ personnel - <b>recruitment n.</b>
16	<b>resign</b>	<i>v.</i> to give up a job - <b>letter of resignation n.</b>
17	<b>retire</b>	<i>v.</i> to leave employment, esp. because of age - <b>retirement n.</b>
18	<b>salary</b>	<i>n.</i> a fixed, regular payment, usually monthly, made by employer to employee
19	<b>staff</b>	<i>n.</i> the people who work for a firm or a particular department; employees
20	<b>take on</b>	<i>v.</i> [took, taken] to employ; to hire

## Meetings

1	<b>A.G.M.</b>	<i>abbr.</i> Annual General Meeting
2	<b>A.O.B.</b>	<i>abbr.</i> Any Other Business [usually the last item on an agenda]
3	<b>absent</b>	<i>adj.</i> not here; not at the meeting; not present
4	<b>agenda</b>	<i>n.</i> a written programme or schedule for a meeting
5	<b>apologies</b>	<i>n.</i> item on agenda announcing people who are absent; apologies for absence
6	<b>ballot</b>	<i>n.</i> a type of vote, usually in writing and usually secret- <b>secret ballot n.</b>
7	<b>casting vote</b>	<i>n.</i> a deciding vote (usually by the chairman) when the votes are otherwise equal
8	<b>chairman</b>	<i>n.</i> the person who leads or presides at a meeting; chairperson; chair
9	<b>conference</b>	<i>n.</i> formal meeting for discussion, esp. a regular one held by an organisation
10	<b>conference call</b>	<i>n.</i> telephone call between three or more people in different locations
11	<b>consensus</b>	<i>n.</i> general agreement
12	<b>decision</b>	<i>n.</i> a conclusion or resolution to do something - <b>to decide v.</b>
13	<b>item</b>	<i>n.</i> a separate point for discussion [as listed on an agenda]
14	<b>matters arising</b>	<i>n.</i> item on agenda for discussion of what has happened as a result of last meeting
15	<b>minutes</b>	<i>n.</i> a written record of everything said at a meeting
16	<b>proxy vote</b>	<i>n.</i> a vote cast by one person for or in place of another
17	<b>show of hands</b>	<i>n.</i> raised hands to express an opinion in a vote
18	<b>unanimous</b>	<i>adj.</i> in complete agreement; united in opinion
19	<b>videoconference</b>	<i>n.</i> conference of people in different locations linked by satellite, TV etc
20	<b>vote</b>	<i>v.</i> to express opinion in a group by voice or hand etc - <i>also n.</i> - <b>to cast a vote v.</b>

