



Cairo University
Faculty of Engineering

Department of Electronics and
Electrical Communications
Engineering



Technical Writing And Communication skills

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2016-2017

Action Plan for delivering the course entitled (Communication Skills and Technical writing)
For Professional Master

The Course Action Plan is designed to help the post graduates to record and assess their goals, especially after finalizing the course.

Course Description:

The purpose:

The purpose of this course is to be a good presenter and to use public speaking to gain maximum results for the future growth. Add to this, the students will also know how to write a good technical report and use correspondence in your business and professional career. This will be the result of their commitment to implementing what they learn.

Time Frame:

14 lectures for the course. Each lecture is 3 hours (total teaching hours are 39 and the 3 hours for the final exam.) starting from Sep. 24th,2016 till Dec. 2016.

Training Delivery Method:

- Clarify how we use communication skills and its styles.
- Perception and its purpose.
- Message delivering process
- Communication Model (Johari Window)
- Teaching what are the steps and process of writing a technical report.
- Give the students assignment for every step to train on sequentially until they make a full report.

- Make groups to participate in writing a full report to submit it as a mid term project.
- Delivering lectures on how to write a business writing to help them in their professional future career such as (different types of short reports, minutes of meetings CV, letters, memos and E-mails etiquette).

As for the presentation skills:

- Clarifying the steps of delivering presentation
- Showing videos to let the students know the good and bad presenters
- Let the student's comments on the videos from their point of view and from what they have learned.

1- Make practices and rehearsals:

Make a group of student to present their own technical reports in front of their colleagues.

(ILOs) Outcomes of the course:

- Knowing and understanding the steps of communication skills and the process of public speaking.
- Knowing and understanding how to write a technical reports, short reports, business writing such as (CVs, letters, memos, and E-mails).
- Having the skills of collaborating together and working under stress to present their work.
- Getting the skills of verbal, nonverbal and written communication.
- Getting the self-confidence of speaking in front of the public.

Students Assessments:

- Attendance and class participations	5%
- Quiz	10%
- Assignments	10%
- Presentation	15%
- Technical Writing Project (Mid Term)	20%
- Final-Term Exam.	40%
- Total	100%

Course Contents

- 1- Effective Communication and Perception
- 2- Report Writing
- 3- Effective Business Writing
- 4- Effective Presentation skills

Communication Skills

Effective communication Skills

Overview:

Being able to communicate effectively is the most important of all life skills.

Communication is simply the act of transferring information from one place to another, whether this be vocally (using voice), written (using printed or digital media such as books, magazines, websites or emails), visually (using logos, maps, charts or graphs) or non-verbally (using body language, gestures and the tone and pitch of voice).

How well this information can be transmitted and received is a measure of how good our communication skills are.

Developing your communication skills can help all aspects of your life, from your professional life to social gatherings and everything in between. The ability to communicate information accurately, clearly and as intended, is a vital life skill and something that should not be overlooked. It's never too late to work on your communication skills and by doing so improve your quality of life.

Professionally, if you are applying for jobs or looking for a promotion with your current employer, you will almost certainly need to demonstrate good communication skills. For example, the ability to: speak appropriately with a wide variety of people whilst maintaining good eye contact, demonstrate a varied vocabulary and tailor your language to your audience, listen effectively, present your ideas appropriately, write clearly and concisely and work well in a group all require good communication skills.

Introduction

As the business environment grows in its complexity, the importance of skillful communication becomes essential in the pursuit of institutional goals. In addition to the need to develop adequate statistical skills, you will find it necessary to effectively communicate to others the results of your statistical studies. It is of little use to formulate solutions to business problems without transmitting this information to others involved in the problem-solving process. The importance of effectively communicating the results of your statistical study cannot be overemphasized.

Unfortunately, it seems that many business managers suffer from inadequate communication skills. The December 1990 issue of the Training and Development Journal reports that "Executives polled in a recent survey decry the lack of writing skills among job candidates." A report in 1993 issue of Management Review notes the "liability imposed on businesses by poor writing skills." The report states that employers are beginning to place greater emphasis on communication in hiring practices. Many employers have adopted policies requiring job candidates to submit a brief written report as part of the screening process. An August 1992 issue of Marketing News reveals that "Employers seek motivated communicators for entry-level marketing positions." Obviously, the pressing lack of adequate writing and communications skills in American businesses is well documented.

Therefore, the purpose of this course is to illustrate some of the major principles of business communication and the preparation of business reports. We examine the general purpose and essential features of a report and stress the benefits of effective report writing. Emphasis is placed on the customary form a business report should take and the format, content, and purpose of its component parts.

We will study illustrations of practical reports and the problems will provide the opportunity for students to develop and sharpen their communication skills.

The Need to Communicate:

Most business decisions involve the cooperation and interaction of several individuals. Sometimes dozens of colleagues and co-workers strive in unison to realize mutual goals. Lines of communication must therefore be maintained to facilitate these joint efforts. Without communicating ideas and thoughts it would be impossible to identify common objectives and purposes necessary for successful operations. Without communication and the team effort it permits, the successful completion of any important project can be jeopardized. Some aspects of the project would be unnecessarily replicated while other tasks would be left unattended. Further, in the absence of adequate communication, colleagues would find themselves working at Coors purposes and perhaps pursuing opposing goals. What one team member may have worked to assemble one day, a second team member may dismantle the next. Without communication the chances for a successful outcome of any business endeavor are significantly reduced.

The Purposes of Human Communication :

There are five general purposes of communication. These purposes may be conscious or unconscious, recognizable or unrecognizable. These five purposes are:

1. To Discover:

One of the major purposes of communication concerns personal discovery. When you communicate with another person, you learn about yourself as well as about the other person.

2. To Relate:

One of the purposes of communication is to establish and maintain close relationships with others.

People want to feel loved and accepted by others, and in turn want to love others.

3. To Help:

Therapists, counselors, teachers, parents and friends are some categories of those who communicate to help solving a problem.

4. To Persuade:

The mass media exist to persuade us to change our attitudes and behaviors in a certain direction.

5. To Entertain:

We may communicate to relax, and get away from pressures and responsibilities.

Communication Effects:

Communication always has some effect on one or more persons involved in the communication act. For every communication act, there is some effect.

1. Intellectual/Cognitive effects

We may gain knowledge or learn how to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate something.

2. Affective Effects

We may acquire or change our attitudes, beliefs and feelings.

3. Psychomotor Effects

We may learn new body movements.

The Johari Window

The Johari Window is a communication model that is used to improve understanding between individuals. The word "Johari" is taken from the names of Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, who developed the model in 1955.

There are two key ideas behind the tool:

1. That you can build trust with others by disclosing information about yourself.
2. That, with the help of feedback from others, you can learn about yourself and come to terms with personal issues.

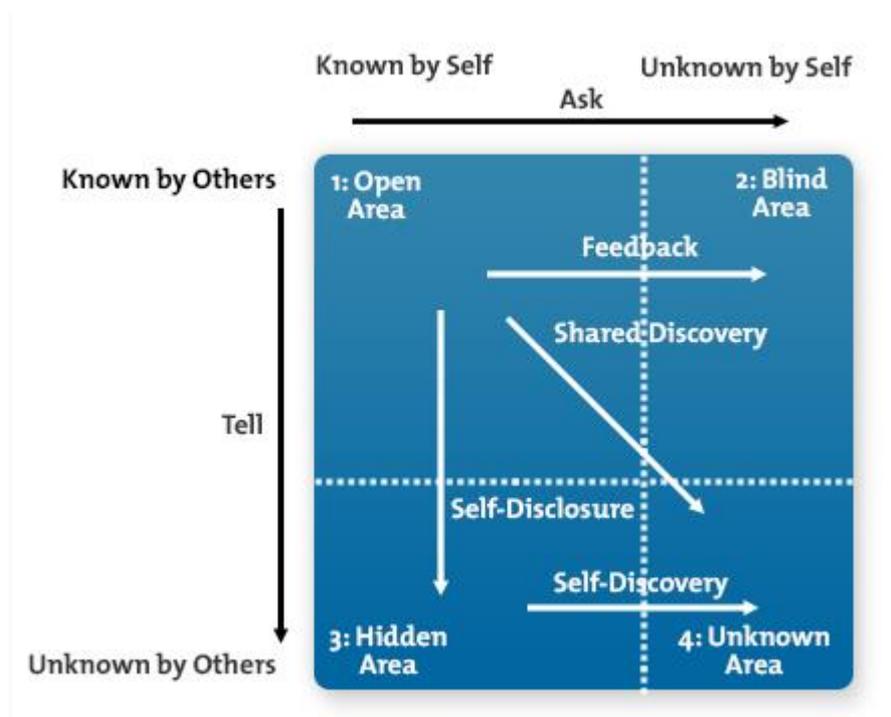
By explaining the idea of the Johari Window, you can help team members to understand the value of self-disclosure, and you can encourage them to give, and accept, constructive feedback.

Done sensitively, this can help people build better, more trusting relationships with one another, solve issues, and work more effectively as a team.

Explaining the Johari Window

The Johari Window is shown as a four-quadrant grid, which you can see in the diagram below.





From "Of Human Interaction," by Joseph Luft. © 1969. Reproduced with permission from McGraw-Hill Education.

The four quadrants are:

1. Open Area (Quadrant 1)

This quadrant represents the things that you know about yourself, and the things that others know about you. This includes your behavior, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and "public" history.

2. Blind Area (Quadrant 2)

This quadrant represents things about you that you aren't aware of, but that are known by others.

This can include simple information that you do not know, or it can involve deep issues (for example, feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, unworthiness, or rejection), which are often difficult for individuals to face directly, and yet can be seen by others.

3. Hidden Area (Quadrant 3)

This quadrant represents things that you know about yourself, but that others don't know.

4. Unknown Area (Quadrant 4)

This last quadrant represents things that are unknown by you, and are unknown by others.

The End Goal

The ultimate goal of the Johari Window is to enlarge the Open Area, without disclosing information that is too personal. The Open Area is the most important quadrant, as, generally, the more your people know about each other, the more productive, cooperative, and effective they'll be when working together.

The process of enlarging the Open Area quadrant is called "self-disclosure," and it's a give-and-take process that takes place between yourself and the people that you're interacting with.

As you share information, your Open Area expands vertically and your Hidden Area gets smaller. As people on your team **provide feedback** + to you about what they know or see about you, your Open Area expands horizontally, and your Blind Area gets smaller.

The size of the open area should be expanded vertically downwards into the hidden or avoided space by the person's disclosure of information, feelings, etc about him/herself to the group and group members. Also, group members can

help a person expand their open area into the hidden area by asking the person about him/herself. Managers and team leaders can play an important role in facilitating feedback and disclosure among group members, and in directly giving feedback to individuals about their own blind areas. Leaders also have a big responsibility to promote a culture and expectation for open, honest, positive, helpful, constructive, sensitive communications, and the sharing of knowledge throughout their organization. Top performing groups, departments, companies and organizations always tend to have a culture of open positive communication, so encouraging the positive development of the 'open area' or 'open self' for everyone is a simple yet fundamental aspect of effective leadership.

Done well, the process of give and take, sharing, and open communication builds trust within the group.

At first glance, the Johari Window may look like a complex tool, but it's actually very easy to understand with just a little effort. As such, it provides a visual reference that people can use to look at their own character, and it illustrates the importance of sharing, being open, and accepting feedback from others.

People who have a large Open Area are usually very easy to talk to, they communicate honestly and openly with others, and they get along well with a group. People who have a very small Open Area are difficult to talk to, they seem closed off and uncommunicative, and they often don't work well with others, because they're not trusted.

Other people might have a large Blind Area, with many issues that they haven't identified or dealt with yet. However, others can see these issues clearly. These people might have low self-esteem, or they may even have anger issues when working with others.

Using the Tool

The process of enlarging your Open Area involves self-disclosure. Put simply, the more you (sensibly) open up and disclose your thoughts, feelings, dreams, and goals, the more you're going to build trust with your team.

Feedback

The importance of feedback in this process can't be overstated. It's only by receiving feedback from others that your Blind Area will be reduced, and your Open Area will be expanded.

Group members should strive to help other team members to expand their Open Area by offering constructive feedback. The size of the Open Area can also be expanded vertically downwards into the Hidden Area, as people disclose information and feelings to the group.

Also, group members can help a person expand their Open Area into the Hidden Area by asking personal questions. Managers and team leaders play a key role here, by teaching team members how to give constructive feedback  to individuals about their own Blind Areas.

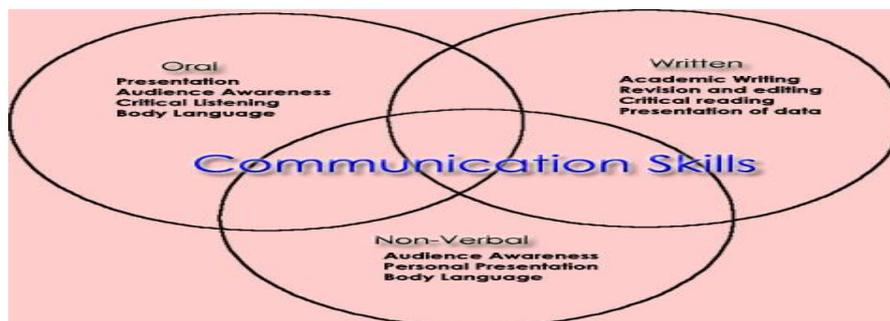
What is Communication:

Communication Is

We live, in this world, with other people. In our personal lives, we need each other for security, comfort, friendship and love. In the working environment, we need each other in order to achieve goals and objectives. None of these goals can be achieved without communication, as it is the thread that ties us together.

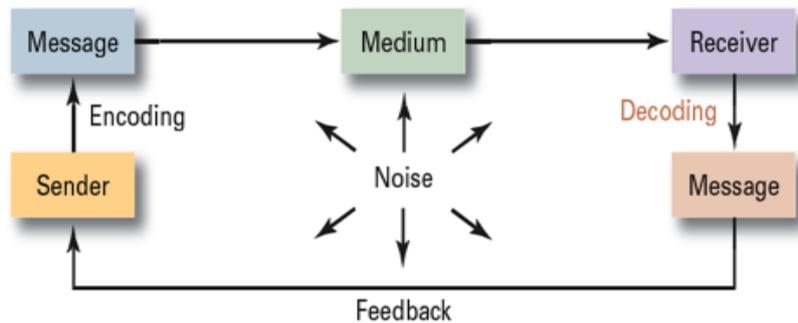
"Communication can be defined as the process by which information is exchanged between a Sender and a Receiver".

Through communication, we make known our needs, wants, ideas and feelings. The better we are communicating, the more effective we are in achieving our hopes and dreams.



The ability to effectively communicate with others is one of the most powerful tools for personal and/or professional success. Most people are challenged by the many day-to-day interactions with co-workers, family, and friends. It is often seen as an **indicator** of your ability and intelligence. **80% of problems in the workplace are communication related**

Communication Process



It takes place when the ideas from your mind are transferred to another's and arrive intact, complete, and coherent" (from a Pitney-Bowes survey)

Communication begins when symbols are selected and arranged in a sequence to be transmitted. This is referred to as **encoding**. The encoded message is transmitted through a communication channel (spoken, written,...).

The receiver then attempts to **decode** these symbols and uncover their meaning. To complete the process, the receiver becomes a sender by transmitting **feedback**. As this transaction takes place, meaning is transferred and clarified. The average person receives about 190 communications a day by paper, voicemail, email, phone, etc.

The most common ways of communication:

- Spoken words
- Visual images
- Body Language
- Written Words

We communicate and build interpersonal relationships through:

- Speech
- Writing
- Listening
- Non-verbal language
- Music, art, and crafts

How do we spend our communication time?

- 16 % Reading
- 30% Talking
- 45% Listening
- 9% Writing

Written Communication Process:



- *Aim* – Who do you want to talk to ,what do you want them to do and what is your purpose?
- *Compose* – What is the message (information) you need to deliver to your audience to get them to do what you what them to do?
- *Transmit* – What media should you use to deliver your message and when should you deliver it?

- *Feedback* – What is the audience telling you about the effect of the communication?
- *Analyze/Change* – What can you discover about whether the communications had the effect you aimed for?
- *Improve* –What and how will you change the communications (message, media, timing) to achieve your aim?

Communication Noise:

Noise is a disturbance in communication that distorts the message. Noise prevents the receiver from getting the message the source is sending.

Noise can have 3 different kinds as follows:

Type	Definition	Example
Physical	Interference with the physical transmission of the message	People talking in the background
Psychological	Cognitive or mental interference	Biases and prejudices in senders and receivers, closed-mindedness
Semantic	Speaker and listener assigning different meanings	People speaking different languages, using different terminology

Feedback and Feed forward Messages:

Throughout the listening process, a listener gives a feedback. A **Feedback** is a message sent back to the speaker reacting to what is said. It tells the speaker what effect he/she is having on the listener(s).

A **positive feedback** (applause, smiles and head nods signifying approval) tells the speaker that the message is being well received.

A **negative feedback** (puzzled looks and gestures signifying disapproval), on the other hand, tells the speaker that something is wrong and that some adjustment needs to be made.

Feed forward is information you provide before sending your primary messages revealing something about the messages to come. Examples of feed forward can be diverse such as the preface of a book, magazine covers and introductions in public speeches.

Obstacles to giving constructive feedback:

- Separating the person from the problem
- Others becoming defensive or angry
- Fear of negative consequences (especially if the other person is a supervisor)
- Dealing with potential conflict (especially if the other person is aggressive)
- Avoiding hurt feelings
- Preserving relationships
- Not having all the facts and jumping to conclusions

- Choosing the right time so that the other person is most receptive

Active Listening:

- Listening: the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages; to hear something with thoughtful attention. Effective communication is 2-way depends on speaking and listening.

Why Listening:

- Our brain works four times the speed that someone can speak. You have to actively focus on listening so that your mind doesn't wander. It enriches you and those around you, and guides other areas of your life.
- It can build trust and respect between people, and prevent misunderstandings that can lead to conflict, frustration or hurt feelings. While listening to other people's point of view, you may just learn something new and fascinating!

Listening is a conscious activity based on three basic skills:

- 1) Attitude
- 2) Attention
- 3) Adjustment

Poor Communication:

What Are the Causes of Poor Communication?

- Poor communication in can lead to poor relations between individuals and an unfriendly work atmosphere in general that renders persons inefficient and ineffective.

Unclear Goals

- An employer provides the description of a job when it advertises a position. This, in itself, is not enough. When you select a person to fill the position, take the individual through the job description face to face. People have different ways of interpreting a job posting. If the company does not communicate its expectations, the new employee gets confused and ends up underperforming. Unclear goals lead to poor communication and frustration.

Cultural Diversity

- The world is turning into more of a global village. It is common to find people from different backgrounds and locations converging in the same workplace. This diversity, encouraged in businesses, still can prove a cause of poor communication. Different cultures have their own way of interpreting things, especially with nonverbal language. For instance while pointing with the index finger is normal to Americans, the Asians consider it rude. If the company does not bridge the differences, there is a danger that misunderstandings will arise.

Poor leadership

- Employees look to their leaders to provide direction in the workplace. If the people at the helm have poor leadership skills, the chances of having poor communication are high. Incompetent leaders exhibit indecisiveness and fail to inspire confidence in their subordinates or over-exert control and pass on poor communication to their employees. They may also be unable to answer queries raised by the employees, leaving subordinates in the dark over what to do.

Personal Issues

- Though you encourage employees not to let personal matters interfere with their work, there are times when it is hard to divorce a person from situations

the individual may be facing outside of work. A distracted employee is irritable and may wrongfully communicate disrespect and lack of interest in the job. Give distracted employees some time off, where necessary and possible, to allow them deal with a personal matter.

Demoralization

- Demoralized employees lose interest in the company. They may be present at their workstation but only do the expected and nothing more. Employees gets demoralized when they are unappreciated, disrespected or not given a chance to use their creativity and skills at work. Such employees do not communicate anything extra other than what is necessary, leading to weak lines of communication. When you respect employees, they are more creative, productive and alert.

Communication styles:

Learning to identify the different communication styles - and recognising which one we use most often in our daily interactions with friends, family and colleagues - is essential if we want to develop effective, assertive communication skills. But how can we tell the difference between the styles, and is there a time and place for each one in certain situations?

Aggressive style:

- Describe hostility and forcefulness. He may display angry expression, Shouting, Personal insults and name calling, Abusive phone calls, letters, online messages.
- He has uncompromising behavior and forces his own needs instead of considering the others.
- This behavior does not promote professionalism but rather add tension.
- People avoid him which impede future conversation

It is an ineffective communication style as the content of the message may get lost because people are too busy reacting to the way it's delivered.

Behavioral Characteristics

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Frightening, threatening, loud, hostile○ Willing to achieve goals at expense of others○ Out to "win"○ Demanding, abrasive○ Belligerent○ Explosive, unpredictable○ Intimidating○ Bullying | Non-Verbal Behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Voice – volume is loud○ Posture – 'bigger than' others○ Gestures - big, fast, sharp/jerky○ Facial expression – scowl, frown, glare○ Spatial position - Invade others' personal space, try to stand 'over' others |
|---|---|

People on the Receiving end Feel

Language

- "You are crazy!"
 - "Do it my way!"
 - "You make me sick!"
 - "That is just about enough out of you!"
 - Sarcasm, name-calling, threatening, blaming, insulting.
- Defensive, aggressive (withdraw or fight back)
 - Uncooperative
 - Resentful/Vengeful
 - Humiliated/degraded
 - Hurt
 - Afraid
 - A loss of respect for the aggressive person
 - Mistakes and problems are not reported to an aggressive person in case they "blow up". Others are afraid of being railroaded, exploited or humiliated.

Passive Aggressive style:

- Person does not want to communicate directly with another person.
- He manipulates people by avoiding confrontational issues.
- He sabotages another's work or idea
- He has negative behavior such as gossiping, emotional abuse and sarcasm to get what he wants.

This is a style in which people appear passive on the surface, but are actually acting out their anger in indirect or behind-the-scenes ways. Prisoners of War often act in passive-aggressive ways in order to deal with an overwhelming lack of power. People who behave in this manner usually feel powerless and resentful, and express their feelings by subtly undermining the object (real or imagined) of their resentments – even if this ends up sabotaging themselves. The expression "Cut off your nose to spite your face" is a perfect description of passive-aggressive behaviour.

Behavioral Characteristics

- Indirectly aggressive
- Sarcastic
- Devious
- Unreliable
- Complaining
- Sulky
- Patronizing
- Gossips
- Two-faced - Pleasant to people to their faces, but poisonous behind their backs (rumors, sabotage etc.)
People do things to actively harm the other party e.g. they sabotage a machine by loosening a bolt or put salt in their food.

Language

- Passive-aggressive language is when something like "Why don't you go ahead and do it; my ideas aren't very anyway" but maybe with a little sting of irony or even worse, sarcasm, such as "You always know any case."
- "Oh don't you worry about me, I can myself out – like I usually have to."

Passive (Submissive) style:

- He is more timid and puts other's feeling, needs or desire first.
- He wants to keep peace and avoid confrontation.
- He agrees to anyone regardless his thoughts or opinions.
- He always interact negative results. He is always withdrawing.

Non-Verbal Behavior

- Voice – Often speaks with a sugary sweet
- Posture – often asymmetrical – e.g. Standing with hand on hip, and hip thrust out (when being sarcastic or patronizing)
- Gestures – Can be jerky, quick
- Facial expression – Often looks sweet and innocent
- Spatial position – often too close, even touching other as pretends to be warm and friendly

People on the Receiving end Feel

- Confused
- Angry
- Hurt
- Resentful

This style is about pleasing other people and avoiding conflict. A submissive person behaves as if other peoples' needs are more important, and other people have more rights and more to contribute.

Behavioral Characteristics

- Apologetic (feel as if you are imposing when you ask for what you want)
- Avoiding any confrontation
- Finding difficulty in taking responsibility or decisions
- Yielding to someone else's preferences (and discounting own rights and needs)
- Feeling like a victim
- Blaming others for events
- Refusing compliments
- Inexpressive (of feelings and desires)

Language

- "Oh, it's nothing, really."
- "Oh, that's all right; I didn't want it anymore."
- "You choose; anything is fine."

Assertive style:

- He is not afraid to express himself.
- He is honest and confident in stating a position.

Non-Verbal Behavior

- Voice – Volume is soft
- Posture – make themselves as small as possible, head down
- Gestures – twist and fidget
- Facial expression – no eye contact
- Spatial position – make themselves smaller/lower than others
- Submissive behavior is marked by a martyr-like attitude (victim mentality) and a refusal to try out initiatives, which might improve things.

People on the Receiving end Feel

- Exasperated
- Frustrated
- Guilty
- You don't know what you want (and so discount you)
- They can take advantage of you.
- Others resent the low energy surrounding the submissive person and eventually give up trying to help them because their efforts are subtly or overtly rejected.

- He may speak using the fact with non-defensive approach. They do not blame on others.
- They also has the ability to listen to others and respect the other parties.
- He is positive, clear, confident, ,shares information and promote collaboration.

Assertive communication is born of high self-esteem. It is the healthiest and most effective style of communication - the sweet spot between being too aggressive and too passive. When we are assertive, we have the confidence to communicate without resorting to games or manipulation. We know our limits and don't allow ourselves to be pushed beyond them just because someone else wants or needs something from us. Surprisingly, however, Assertive is the style most people use least.

Behavioral Characteristic

- Achieving goals without hurting others
- Protective of own rights and respectful of others' rights
- Socially and emotionally expressive
- Making your own choices and taking responsibility for them
- Asking directly for needs to be met, while accepting the possibility of rejection
- Accepting compliments

Non-Verbal Behavior

- Voice – medium pitch and speed and volume
- Posture – open posture, symmetrical balance, tall, relaxed, no fidgeting
- Gestures – even, rounded, expansive
- Facial expression – good eye contact
- Spatial position – in control, respectful of others

Language

- "Please would you turn the volume down? I am really struggling to concentrate on my studies."
- "I am so sorry, but I won't be able to help you with your project this afternoon, as I have a dentist appointment."

People on the Receiving end Feel

- They can take the person at their word
- They know where they stand with the person
- The person can cope with justified criticism and accept compliments
- The person can look after themselves
- Respect for the person

The Manipulative Style

This style is scheming, calculating and shrewd. Manipulative communicators are skilled at influencing or controlling others to their own advantage. Their spoken words hide an underlying message, of which the other person may be totally unaware.

Behavioral Characteristics

- Cunning
- Controlling of others in an insidious way – for example, by sulking
- Asking indirectly for needs to be met
- Making others feel obliged or sorry for them.
- Uses 'artificial' tears

Language

- "You are so lucky to have those chocolates, I wish I had some. I can't afford such expensive chocolates."
- "I didn't have time to buy anything, so I had to wear this dress. I just hope I don't look too awful in it." ('Fishing' for a compliment).

Non-Verbal Behavior

- Voice – patronizing, envious, ingratiating, often high pitch
- Facial expression – Can put on the 'hang dog' expression

People on the Receiving end Feel

- Guilty
- Frustrated
- Angry, irritated or annoyed
- Resentful
- Others feel they never know where they stand with a manipulative person and are annoyed at constantly to try to work out what is going on.

Dealing with hostility and criticism positively:

At some point in your life you will be criticized, perhaps in a professional way. Sometimes it will be difficult to accept – but that all depends on your reaction.

You can either use criticism in a positive way to improve, or in a negative way that can lower your self-esteem and cause stress, anger or even aggression. To deal with criticism positively may require good self-esteem and some assertiveness skills.

When challenged by another person, it is common to react in a negative manner. Consider how negative reactions make you look – and more importantly how they make you feel. The way in which you choose to handle criticism has a knock-on effect in various aspects of your life, therefore it is better to identify ways in which you can benefit from criticism and use it to your advantage to be a stronger and more able person.

How to Deal With Criticism

Criticism is never fun, whether it's coming from a well-meaning English teacher or from your arch frenemy. If the criticism is meant to be constructive, then you can use it to become a more well-rounded person. And if it's only meant to harm you, then you can work on shaking it off like a bad habit. So how do you deal with it? Read these steps to find out.

1- Change your perspective

Know the difference between destructive and constructive criticism.

This is the first step to being able to deal with criticism. You have to know where the feedback is coming from and understand the intentions of the person who is giving it to you. If it's a teacher or a superior, then chances are the person only wants you to perform better; but when it's coming from a supposed friend, a frenemy, or even an enemy, then you have to wonder whether or not the person has your best interest in mind.

- If you're sure that the criticism is completely invalid, totally off, and only meant to hurt you, then you can skip down to the second section to learn how to deal with destructive criticism.
- Constructive criticism is, ideally, meant to help you. Destructive criticism is only intended to cause hurt.
- Try to focus on the message as well as the delivery. It's hard to see that a person really is telling you something legitimate that you can work on if he or she is yelling at you or just acting like you're a nuisance.

2-Accept that you're not perfect.

This is a great way to deal with criticism. If you want to be able to take a little bit of feedback, then you can't keep thinking that you can do no wrong. Nobody's perfect, so if you think you're perfect, then you're nobody. (Har, har.) Okay, but seriously: every person has flaws, and if you don't see any of yours, then you're not analyzing yourself as closely as you should.

- Make a list of your 10 biggest flaws. That's right. 10! Can you think of 10 things that need improvement? How about 15? This exercise isn't meant to make you feel bad about yourself; it's only meant to make you see that you have room for improvement.
- Think about all of the people you know. Can you name a single one who is perfect who isn't a movie star? And remember that even most movie stars have *some* flaws, however visibly small they may be.

3-Don't take it personally.

If you want to know how to best deal with criticism, then you can't take it personally. If your boss says you've been a little less productive than usual lately, it's not because he thinks you're fat and lazy; it's because he wants you, his employee, to step up your game. If your best friend says that you have a tendency to zone out when she's talking to you, don't think that she's calling you a horrible friend and a zombie; she just wants you to communicate a little better.

- If the criticism is constructive, then it's intended to guide you and to help you improve as a person, not to bring you down and make you feel inadequate.
- If your teacher has given you rather critical feedback on a paper, it's not because she thinks you're stupid or annoying in class; it's because she thinks you have some work to do when it comes to making an argument.

4-Work on being less sensitive. If you always find yourself crying, getting defensive, and feeling generally upset when someone gives you what was supposed to be helpful feedback, then you have to start thickening your skin. Work on accepting your flaws and being able to hear about some areas where you can improve. If you never improve, then you'll be flat-lining, and you don't want that, do you? Try to focus on the message and its intention to help you instead of focusing on all of the "mean" or "hurtful" things that were said to you.

- Think about where the message is coming from. Chances are, your boss didn't just send you a terse email to be a jerk or to make you feel bad. He just probably wants you to do your job better.
- Control your emotions. You don't have to tear up every time someone says a negative word.
- Work on your reputation. If people think you are sensitive, they will be less likely to tell you the truth, and you don't want people to feel like they're walking around on eggshells whenever they talk to you.

Constructive and Destructive Criticism

The difference between constructive criticism and destructive criticism is the way in which comments are delivered.

Although both forms are challenging your ideas, character or ability, when someone is giving destructive criticism it can hurt your pride and have negative effects on your self-esteem and confidence.

- **Destructive criticism** is often just thoughtlessness by another person, but it can also be deliberately malicious and hurtful. Destructive criticism can, in some cases, lead to anger and/or aggression.
- **Constructive criticism**, on the other hand, is designed to point out your mistakes, but also show you where and how improvements can be made.

Constructive criticism should be viewed as useful feedback that can help you improve yourself rather than put you down.

Dealing with constructive Criticism

When criticism is constructive it is usually easier to accept, even if it still hurts a little. In either scenario always try to remember that you can use criticism to your advantage.

1- Understand what you're really being told.

If you want to deal with criticism, then you have to understand the message behind it. If you've determined that the criticism is meant to be constructive, then you have to break it down so you can start figuring out what to do next. Sometimes, you may be focused on the hurtful aspects of the feedback and your pride may be too wounded for you to see what is right in front of you.

- Sure, you weren't happy with the "C" on your English paper. But was your teacher trying to tell you that you were stupid and a horrible writer? Probably not. She wanted to tell you to research your argument more, and to use more concrete evidence to back up your claims. It also wouldn't have hurt to actually meet the word limit, would it?
- If your friend told you you're obsessed with yourself, sure that hurts. But could there be something helpful behind the message? Sure: your friend is telling you to be a little more empathetic, and to spend more time thinking about others and less time thinking about yourself.

2-See if there's some truth to it.

If the feedback is coming from a person who has your best interest in mind, then you have to consider the possibility that there really is some truth to those words. It's even more likely if you've heard similar comments before. If ten

people told you you were selfish, or if your last three girlfriends told you you were emotionally distant, then they can't all be wrong, can they? Take a moment to consider the possibility that this person is really on to something.

3-Make a game plan for addressing it.

Okay, you've decided that your English teacher, boss, boyfriend, or best friend is completely right, or at least somewhat right. Now, you've got to write down the thing you need to work on, and make a plan for addressing it. This can take a long time, and it's never too late to start. Once you come up with a plan, a way of adjusting your expectations and actions, you can begin to address the criticism and become a better person.

- If your English teacher is right about you needing to do more research, then make a point of spending twice as much time reading up on your sources before you come up with an argument next time.
- If your boss tells you you're disorganized, work on organizing your desk, Inbox, and your spreadsheets until you feel more in control.
- If your boyfriend tells you you're too needy, work on giving him some space by spending more time alone or with your girlfriends.

4-Thank the person for being honest (if he's also being kind).

If you have received some criticism that was delivered in a friendly and helpful way, or just in a way that was meant to be honest and clear, then take the time to thank the person and to say that you appreciate the fact that the person told you something that can make you an even better friend, girlfriend, student, or professional.

- Thanking people who give you honest criticism is also a sign of maturity. Suck it up and say "thank you" even if you're gritting your teeth.

5- Stop making excuses.

If someone is giving you valid criticism, stop making excuses for why that person is completely wrong, especially if you know that there is some truth to what he or she is saying. If you get defensive and make excuses, then the person won't be able to finish telling you exactly what he or she means, and you won't get the information you need to really improve. It's natural that we feel defensive and get the feeling that we can do no wrong, but it's important to hear people out before you cut them off to prove you're perfect.

- If someone is in the middle of telling you something you can do to improve, don't say, "But actually, I already do that..." unless you feel like the person is really off base.
- If your teacher says you need to work harder, don't give her a lame excuse for why you've been slacking off. Instead, note the feedback and try to address it.
- It takes maturity to stay quiet instead of making excuses for why the person is wrong when you're getting valid feedback.

6-Remember that constructive criticism can make you a better person.

Sure, it's tough to deal with even the most well-meaning criticism, especially if you're convinced you're perfect and that you can do no wrong. But if you're so invested in being an awesome person, then remind yourself that being aware of your flaws and shortcomings and making a plan for addressing them will make you an even more amazing person.

- The next time you hear some constructive criticism, embrace it! It's kind of like what Kelly Clarkson said: "Whatever (criticism) doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

Dealing with Destructive Criticism

1-Understand the person's true motives.

If you have recognized the criticism as completely destructive and hurtful, then you can think about *why* the person might have said such a thing to make yourself feel better. Maybe the girl was jealous of your new outfit and said you dress like a skank. Maybe a guy said you're not a good writer because he's jealous that you just published a story. Maybe the person was just in a bad mood and felt like taking it out on someone. Whatever the reason, remind yourself that it had little to do with who you are.

- Put yourself in the person's shoes. Understand where he is really coming from. Though the words will still sting, it might make you feel better. If your coworker yelled at you for no reason, but you remember that he is going through a divorce, then you'll start to be a bit more understanding, won't you?

2-Look for the grain of truth.

Okay, so maybe the criticism was delivered in a way that was completely mean, unnecessary, and hurtful, and most of the things that were said were way off base. Maybe your co-worker said you were "a complete mess" or your friend said you were "totally selfish" for what you think was no reason at all. Take a minute to think about it, though: do you need to brush up on your organizational skills? Have you been known to be a little selfish from time to time? If so, then maybe you should reconsider your actions without getting hurt by the way the criticism was given.

- Sure, it's very hard to take someone seriously if they are yelling at you, calling you names, or generally treating you with completely disrespect. This makes it *nearly* impossible to take a word they say seriously. But if you want to be the bigger person, try to find the underlying message if there is one.

3-Remember that words can never hurt you.

What was that thing your mother told you about "sticks and stones" not being able to break your bones? Sure, you thought it was stupid in third grade, but now, you're a lot older, and it's starting to make sense. In the end, destructive criticism isn't made up of bullets, swords, or atomic bombs -- it's just a series of words connected together in a way designed to make *you* feel terrible. So, remind yourself that criticism only consists of *a bunch of words*.

- Criticism can't steal your money, slap you across the face, or crash your car. So don't let it get to you.

4-Stay confident.

The most important thing you can do is maintain your confidence. No matter what people are saying about you, you have to stay strong, remember who you are, and not let other people influence your own self-worth. Being confident doesn't mean thinking that you're flawless, but it does mean loving who you are and how you look. If you're truly confident, then you won't let haters get you down and make you think less of yourself.

- If you're unhappy with who you are, ask yourself why. Make a list of a few things you don't like about yourself and figure out what you can change.
- Being confident also means accepting the things you cannot change about yourself. So, you don't like that you're so tall. Do you plan on slouching for the rest of your life, or will you start to love your long legs after all?
- Hanging out with people who make you feel good about yourself will also go a long way in making you feel more confident. If you're hanging with people who always bring you down, then yeah, you're not going to feel good about yourself.

5-Keep doing what you're doing.

So...you've heard that someone said you're a brown-noser. Will you start participating less in class? Or your co-worker has told you you're too type A. Are you going to stop being who you are if it's working for you? Of course not. If you haven't received a valid criticism and know that what people are telling you is only only being said because of jealousy, anger, or mean-spiritedness, then there's no need to change your routine to please people.

- If the criticism has no basis whatsoever, then the best thing you can do is to *ignore it completely*.
- Don't feel bad if you're not able to push all of these negative words aside right away. It takes practice to stop caring about what people think.

Dealing with Critical People:

- Some individuals are critical by nature and do not always realize that they are hurting the feelings of another person.
- If you know a person who is critical of everything try not to take their comments too seriously, as this is just part of their character trait. If you do take negative comments to heart it can create resentment and anger towards the other person, which could damage the relationship.
- Remember, people who criticize everything or make scathing remarks to be hurtful are the ones that need help – not you!
- The key thing to remember is that whatever the circumstance is, don't respond in anger as this will cause a scene and create bad feelings – and possibly a bad image of you.

- **Try to remain calm and treat the other person with respect and understanding.** This will help to defuse the situation and potentially stop it from getting out of hand. Show that you are the stronger person and try not to rise to the bait, do not use it as a reason to offer counter criticism. If you challenge the other person you may start an argument that is probably unnecessary.
- **If you do feel that you may lose self-control, or say or do something potentially damaging, walk away.** If you are in a meeting at work, politely excuse yourself and leave the room until you have had time to gather yourself. Even though somebody's negative remarks may hurt, it is more harmful for you to allow their criticism to be destructive to your confidence.

Taking the Positives Out of Criticism

- **We all make mistakes all the time, it is human nature.** As we go through life we have plenty of opportunity to learn and improve ourselves. Therefore, no matter what kind of criticism is aimed at you, analyse it to find something you can learn from it. In material matters at work, school or social clubs for example, try to take criticism on board to help you improve. When somebody is attacking your character it is hard to accept, but that does not mean you should ignore it.
- Also bear in mind that the criticism aimed at you may not make sense at the time. Generally speaking, there is usually some truth in criticism, even when it appears to be given out of spite and bitterness. It is often the case that a slight on your character is a fair reflection of how another person sees you at that point in time. Take a step back and try to see things from the other person's point of view, perhaps ask a friend for their honest opinion – use criticism wisely and as a learning experience. See if it is

possible to learn a little about how others perceive you, you may be able to use criticism to improve your interpersonal skills.

- We all learn by making mistakes, and learning how to deal with criticism positively is one way that we can improve our interpersonal relationships with others.

Here are five strategies for better coping with criticism.

Tip #1 Don't React

When criticized, we can often be too quick to react. The problem with this is that when we react in the heat of an emotion, we are more likely to do or say things that we later regret.

So, next time you are criticized, let it marinate. Take in what has been said and then sit with it for at least a day or two. This can give you the time to come down from your emotions and think about what you are actually being criticized for. However, don't let yourself dwell on it for too long, just let it in before resuming with your day-to-day life. Then after a few days have passed, decide whether you still feel strongly enough to give a reaction. More often than not, you will have forgotten about the whole affair or might find that it is no longer of any importance to you.

Tip #2 Listen To Your Critic

Sometimes, once we have calmed our initial emotions at being criticized, we realize that the reasons for our critic's comments were actually well founded. When this happens, instead of recoiling at the horror of having made a mistake, take the time and care to try and really understand what your critic is trying to teach you. Where did you go wrong? How can you do better next time?

Tip #3 Don't Get Defensive

When we are being criticized by others, it can be all too easy to fall into the trap of becoming defensive. When people pick fault in something that we feel we have worked hard on or feel strongly about, defending it and trying to bring the other person around to our way of thinking is a completely natural reaction. However, before you allow yourself to become defensive try and remember that everybody is welcome to their different opinions and that you are not always right. When you remember these two things, you can begin to view other's criticism in an entirely new light and instead of fighting their view point, choose to learn from it.

Tip #4 Admit When You Are Wrong

Admitting when we are wrong is one of the most life-changing things that we can ever learn to do. When we take responsibility for the mistakes that are ours, we are taking ownership of both our achievements and failures. This not only shows that we are capable of admitting when we have made a mistake, but that we are also capable of resolving it.

Tip #5 Learn From It

If we do not learn to see criticism as something positive, then we will always live in fear of it. It is when we fear failure or criticism that we never try anything new; never put ourselves out there or take creative

Perception & Judgment of Others

What is perception:

Perception is the process of interpreting the messages of our senses to provide order and meaning to the environment. The world is a complex place, and perception helps us sort out and organize the input received by our senses of sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing. Some of the most important perceptions that influence OB are the perceptions that organizational members have of each other.

By interpretation we mean Comprehend & express meaning or significance of wide variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgments, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures, or criteria

The Objective of Perception:

Learning the following:

- Looking is not as simple as it looks.
- Most important things for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity.
- **Eyesight is became insight.**

So, One learns to look behind the façade, to grasp the root of things, learns to recognize the undercurrents, Learns the antecedents of the visible, and one has to dig down, to uncover, to find the cause, to read between lines to **analyze.**

I. The Perceiver

The perceiver's experience, motives and emotions can affect his/her perceptions.

Experience: One of the most important characteristics of the perceiver that influences his/her impressions of a target is experience. Past experiences lead us to develop expectations, and these expectations affect current perceptions.

Motivational State: This relates to the particular needs that an individual has at any given point in time. These might be needs for things such as food, affection or money. Frequently, our motivational state has an unconscious influence on our perceptions by causing us to perceive what we wish to perceive.

Emotional State: Refers to the particular emotions that an individual is experiencing at any given point in time. Emotions such as anger, happiness or fear can influence our perceptions. Notice how an employee who has been promoted fails to notice how upset his/her coworker can be. In some cases, our perceptual system serves to defend us against unpleasant emotions. This phenomenon is known as *Perceptual Defense*.

II. The Target

Perceptions are affected by characteristics of target. Two of the most important characteristics are the degree of ambiguity of the target and the target's social status.

Ambiguity: An ambiguous target should not present problems for a perceiver. Its characteristics or motives should simply be perceived as unclear, and that should be that. Perception involves interpretation and the addition of meaning to the target; and ambiguous targets are especially susceptible to interpretation and addition.

Social Status: This refers to the person's position in society and is generally determined by factors such as income, occupation, location, and so on. Status can influence our perceptions of physical characteristics.

III. The Situation

The most important effect that the situation can have is to add information about the target. Imagine a casual critical comment about your performance from your boss the week before he decides whether or not you will be promoted. You will likely perceive this comment very differently than you would if you were not up for promotion. The perceiver and the target are the same, but the situation differed.

To wrap up perception, many factors are involved in interpersonal communication. One of those is the dynamics involved in our perception of others. The idea of interpersonal perception means the process of making meaning from things we experience in people and our relationships.

This process involves three components: selection, organization, and interpretation. **Selection** means attending to a stimulus. These are the things you notice about someone. **Organization** helps you make sense of what you notice. To help with this, our minds classify each stimulus into categories. These categories are known to psychologists as schema. The idea behind this is that we cannot possibly classify each and every stimulus we receive individually and independently. Instead, we create little boxes in our minds and put each stimulus in its appropriate box, when we receive it, to help with organization. The third component of interpersonal perception is **interpretation**. In this step, we assign meaning to the information we have received.

Stereotyping

Stereotypes are generalizations about groups that are applied to the individuals who are members of that group. Stereotypes are not inherently "bad" -- rather, they are classification systems, and they can be very useful in encountering new input. Where we have to be careful with stereotypes is in overgeneralizing, because individuals don't always possess all of the characteristics of their perceived group memberships. The problem with stereotypes comes when we treat individuals as extensions of the groups to which they belong, and assign the group's characteristics to the individual, without giving the individual a chance to truly be an individual, separate from the group's characteristics.

Primacy and recency effects

First impressions, are known as the primacy effect. First impressions are important because they set the tone for future interactions. Recency effects are final impressions. These matter, because this is how people tend to remember us. Both the first impressions and last impressions tend to be more important than any impressions people form in between.

Perceptual set

Perceptual set is the idea that we perceive only what we want or expect to perceive. This limits our ability to accurately perceive what is actually there. An example of this is the preconception we form when we see a baby wrapped in blue. It then becomes difficult for us to imagine that this child could be a girl. People tend to see what they are used to seeing.

Egocentrism

The idea of egocentrism means the inability to take another's perspective. As you might imagine, this interferes with our ability to accurately perceive others. While this is common in children, most of us outgrow this – but not all. In egocentrism, we assume that others should react to situations the way we would.

Positivity and negativity biases

Both positivity and negativity biases affect our ability to accurately perceive the communications of others. Positivity bias means a tendency to focus heavily on another's positive attributes when forming a perception of that person. A negativity bias means the reverse: a tendency to focus heavily on another's negative attributes when forming a perception of that person. In a negativity bias, even one piece of negative information can adversely affect your perception of that person. These types of biases are particularly influential in the communications of long-term relationships, such as marriage. Satisfied couples tend to emphasize the positive attributes of their relationship, while dissatisfied couples tend to emphasize the negative.

The characteristics in this section -- stereotyping, primacy, recency, perceptual sets, egocentrism, positivity, and negativity are all powerful influences on communications. These can lead to errors in perception. The more we are aware of these types of errors, the more equipped we are to work around them in our communications.

Attribution

In addition to noticing others' behaviors, we want to figure out the causes of these behaviors. Why did she behave like that at the party yesterday? We want to know.

In answering the "why" question, we offer explanations for the behaviors we observe. These explanations are known as attributions. Whatever we attribute someone's behavior to, we proceed with them in accordance with the attribution. For example, let us say we are hit by a car. When we approach the other driver, we find that he had a heart attack, and that is why he hit us. How would you respond to this? On the other hand, when we approach the other driver, we find that he is completely drunk. Would your response to the drunk man be different from your response to the man who had a heart attack? Most people would probably say yes.

There are three main types of attribution errors we tend to make in perceiving and interpreting behaviors and situations. The first is self-serving bias. This means we attribute our successes to our own internal characteristics, but our failures to external causes. For example, if you get an "A" on your exam, it is because you are smart and you studied well; but if you get an "F," it is because the exam was not fair. In other words, your success was your own, but your failure was someone else's fault. The next type of attribution error is called the fundamental attribution error. Here, we attribute others' behaviors to internal, rather than external, causes. For example, the girl volunteers because she is kindhearted, and the cashier miscounted our change because she does not know how to count. The fundamental attribution error is exceedingly strong, and research has found that it applies even when we consciously know better. As competent communicators, we need to keep in mind that most behaviors are in response to external causes. The third type of common attribution error is over-attribution. Here, we identify one or two obvious characteristics of an individual and extrapolate those characteristics to explain other things that person does. For example, if you know someone who is the youngest of eight children, you might attribute that person's insistence on getting her own way all the time to her being the baby of a large family. This might also be the reason you offer for her always

seeming to need to be the center of attention, and interrupting others when they speak. Over-attribution can be problematic, particularly within the context of marriage, when, for example, a woman expressing her needs is dismissed as her simply being a woman. This can also be problematic when interacting with individuals from marginalized groups, such as migrants or homeless people, where an individual's behaviors can be attributed primarily to that person's group membership.

Improving our perceptual abilities

It is easy to make mistakes in perception. We stereotype, we rely on perceptual sets, we commit attribution errors, and more. The first step to improving our perceptual abilities is to be mindful of our perceptions. We must be aware of our perceptual tendencies, and conscious of how those tendencies might affect accurate perception. The first thing we can do is to know ourselves: Recognize your own tendencies toward bias. The second thing we can do is to focus on other people's characteristics. We might recognize their group memberships, but it is important to treat each person as an individual. Third, we should check the accuracy of our perceptions. In part, this means separating interpretations from facts. This also means generating alternative perceptions. We can test our perceptions for accuracy, sometimes by simply asking the other person if our perception is correct. Lastly, we should revise our perceptions as necessary. Sometimes, our perceptions are accurate from the start, and other times they simply are wrong. It is important to recognize and admit this.

The process of interpersonal perception is complex and often unconscious. **Raising awareness of humans' common perceptual tendencies can help us become more competent communicators by becoming aware of our own common perceptual errors, and working to improve them.**

SELF-TEST: How Accurate Are You At People Perception?

Respond to each of the following statements with T (true) or F (false), according to your accurate description of your behavior. Try to answer according to your true behavior, rather than choosing a socially acceptable behavior.

- _____ 1. I base most of my impressions of people on the first few minutes of our meeting.
- _____ 2. When I know some things about another person I fill in what I don't know
- _____ 3. I make predictions about people's behaviors that generally prove to be true.
- _____ 4. I have clear ideas of what people of different national, racial and religious groups are really like.
- _____ 5. I reserve making judgments about people until I learn a great deal about them and see them in a variety of situations.
- _____ 6. On the basis of my observations of people, I formulate guesses about them (which I am willing to revise) rather than the firm conclusions.
- _____ 7. I pay special attention to people's behaviors that might contradict my initial impressions.
- _____ 8. I delay formulating conclusions about people until I have lots of evidence.
- _____ 9. I avoid making assumptions about what is going on in someone else's head on the basis of their behaviors.
- _____ 10. I recognize that people are different, and I don't assume that everyone else is like me.

Technical Writing

Writing Types

Writing is an important form of communication. Good writers use different writing techniques to fit their purposes for writing. To be a good writer, you must master each of the following writing techniques.

1. Description

Through description, a writer helps the reader use the senses of feeling, seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting to experience what the writer experiences. Description helps the reader more clearly understand the people, places, and things about which the writer is writing. It is the most common form of writing. You will find descriptive writing in newspapers, magazines, books, and most other forms of written communication.

2. Exposition

Through exposition, a writer informs, explains, and clarifies his/her ideas and thoughts. Exposition goes beyond description to help the reader understand with greater clarity and depth the ideas and thoughts of the writer. Expository writing, like descriptive writing, is commonly found in newspapers, magazines, books, and most other forms of written communication.

3. Narration

Through narration, a writer tells a story. A story has characters, a setting, a time, a problem, attempts at solving the problem, and a solution to the problem. Bedtime stories are examples of short stories while novels are examples of long stories. The scripts written for movies and plays are further examples of narrative writing.

4. Persuasion

Through persuasion, a writer tries to change a reader's point of view on a topic, subject, or position. The writer presents facts and opinions to get the reader to

understand why something is right, wrong, or in between. Editorials, letters to the editor in newspapers and magazines, and the text for a political speech are examples of persuasive writing.

5. Comparison and Contrast

Through comparison and contrast, a writer points out the similarities and differences about a topic. Comparison is used to show what is alike or in common. Contrast is used to show what is not alike or not in common. Describing living conditions in 1900 and living conditions today would allow for much comparison and contrast.

By using the writing technique that fits your purpose, you will be able to communicate your ideas effectively.

Technical Writing

Communication skills are extremely important. Unfortunately, both written and oral skills are often ignored in engineering schools. Technical writing is like programming, painting, good writing takes practice. Therefore, do not expect to produce perfect writing at once. Every first draft of document, whether technical report or one page memo or a fifty page set of procedures, needs to be worked on and improved before being sent to the reader.

What is Technical Writing?

Technical writing is sometimes defined as simplifying the complex. Inherent in such a concise and deceptively simple definition is a whole range of skills and characteristics that address nearly every field of human endeavor at some level. A significant subset of the broader field of technical communication, technical writing involves communicating complex information to those who need it to accomplish some task or goal.

Technical writing where the author is writing about a particular subject that requires direction, instruction, or explanation. This style of writing has a very different purpose and different characteristics than other writing styles such as creative writing, academic writing or business writing.

Oxford Dictionaries Online (ODO) provides four definitions for the word technical, all of which relate to the profession of technical writing:

1. of or relating to a particular subject, art, or craft, or its techniques
2. of, involving, or concerned with applied and industrial sciences
3. resulting from mechanical failure

4. according to a strict application or interpretation of the law or rules

With these definitions in mind, it's easy to see that technical writing has been around as long as there have been written languages. Modern references to technical writing and technical communications as a profession begin around the time of World War I as technical developments in warfare, industry and telecommunications began to evolve more rapidly. Although many people today think of technical writing as creating manuals for computers and software, the practice of technical writing takes place in any field or industry where complex ideas, concepts, processes or procedures need to be communicated. In fact, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics defines technical writers as those who "...put technical information into easily understandable language. They work primarily in information-technology-related industries, coordinating the development and dissemination of technical content for a variety of users; however, a growing number of technical communicators are using technical content to resolve business communications problems in a diversifying number of industries."

Uses for Technical Writing

Technical writing is straightforward, easy to understand explanations and/or instructions dealing with a particular subject. It is an efficient and clear way of explaining something and how it works.

The subject of technical writing can either be:

- **Tangible** - Something that can be seen or touched, such as a computer or software program, or information on how to assemble a piece of furniture.
- **Abstract** - Something that involved a series of steps that aren't related to a tangible object. One example of this might be steps required to complete an office process.

Successful Technical Writing

When carrying out a technical writing assignment, you must remember to follow what is known as the three ‘Cs’ and ask yourself the following questions:

- Is it clear?
- Is it concise?
- Is it complete?

Because technical writing is so often aimed towards those who may be unfamiliar with technical jargon and terminology, it is important that a technical writer uses clear and unambiguous language in their assigned piece.

- If the writing is too full of technical language, the message may not come across as intended.
- If the information being written about is provided in a convoluted and round-about way, the message is likely to be lost entirely. Straight forward and to the point is always best.

If a technical writer’s information is incomplete, it inhibits the audience’s understanding of the topic and can, in some cases such as instruction and safety manuals, prove dangerous.

Above all, technical writing needs to be very clear and concise to be successful

The Goal of Technical Writing

Good technical writing results in relevant, useful and accurate information geared to specifically targeted audiences in order to enable a set of actions on the part of the audience in pursuit of a defined goal. The goal may be using a software application, operating industrial equipment, preventing accidents, safely consuming a packaged food, assessing a medical condition, complying

with a law, coaching a sports team, or any of an infinite range of possible activities. If the activity requires expertise or skill to perform, then technical writing is a necessary component.

Only a small proportion of technical writing is actually aimed at the general consumer audience. Businesses and organizations deliver vast amounts of technical writing to explain internal procedures, design and produce products, implement processes, sell products and services to other businesses, or define policies. The leading professional association representing technical writing, Society for Technical Communication, hosts a number of special interest groups for these different aspects of the profession.

Technical Writing Categories:

Technical writing comprises the largest segment of technical communications. Technical writers work together with editors, graphic designers and illustrators, document specialists, content managers, instructional designers, trainers, and analysts to produce an amazing variety of deliverables, including:

Contracts	Online and embedded	Requirements specifications
	help	
Customer Service scripts	Policy documents	Simulations
Demonstrations	Process flows	Training course materials
Design documents	Project documents	User manuals
FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)	Product catalogs	Warning labels
How-to videos	Product packaging	Web-based Training
Instructions	Proposals	Websites
Knowledge base articles	Release notes	White papers
	Reference guides	

Technical writing follows a development lifecycle that often parallels the product development lifecycle of an organization:

1. Identification of needs, audience(s), and scope
2. Planning
3. Research & content development
4. Testing / review and revision
5. Delivery / production
6. Evaluation and feedback
7. Disposition (revision, archiving, or destruction)

Technical Writing and Integrated Technical Communications

Enormous changes have occurred in the field of technical writing in the last 20 years, particularly with how technical content is researched, and how it is produced and delivered. As a result, more organizations are developing integrated technical communications to effectively manage the information that must be communicated. They also build a content management strategy that encompasses delivery of technical, marketing and promotion, internal and other communications messages between the organization and its customers, suppliers, investors and employees.

The objectives of Technical Writing are to:

- Explain how technical writing differs from academic writing.
- Explain the key elements of technical writing.
- Define technical writing
- Show how technical writing is important to professionals in a wide range of fields.
- Show students some samples of technical writing.

- Explore the meaning of the term technical to indicate the broad application of technical writing.
- Explain the role that communication plays within an organization.
- Explain the importance of good communication skills.
- Identify the foundations of technical writing.
- Identify the qualities of good technical writing.

The Foundations of Effective Technical Writing

Regardless of the type of document which is written, technical writing requires the writer to follow the properties of knowing their audience, writing in a clear, non-personal style and doing extensive research on the topic. By including these properties, the writer can create clear instructions and explanations for the reader.

1. Know your reader

An expert in the field will understand certain abbreviations, acronyms, and lingo that directly applies to such a field. The novice will not understand in the same manner and, therefore, every detail must be explained and spelled out for them.

2. Use an impersonal style.

Write from a third person perspective, like a teacher instructing a student. Any opinions should be omitted.

3. Know your objective

Whether to explain, inform, persuade, convince, seeking for approval or taking decision.

4. Be simple, direct, and concise.

The writing should be straightforward, to the point, and as simple as possible to make sure the reader understands the process or instruction. This at times may appear as simply a list of steps to take to achieve the desired goal or may be a short or lengthy explanation of a concept or abstract idea.

5. Know how to research.

Gather information from a number of sources, understand the information gathered so that it can be analyzed thoroughly, and then put the information into an easy to understand format to instruct those who read it. The more inexperienced your audience, the more information you will need to gather and explain.

6. Know the context in which your communication will be received and used.

Be thorough in description and provide enough detail to make your points; but, you also have to consider that you need to use an economy of words so that you do not bore your reader with gratuitous details.

A good technical writing can make a difficult task easy and quickly explain a complex piece of information.

Which Skill Sets are Important for a Technical Writer?

Like any profession, becoming a technical writer requires a mastery of a certain set of skills. This skill set used to involve primarily writing and illustration skills, as large manuals for print publication were the standard in the profession. The worlds of communications and technology have evolved dramatically in the latter part of

the 20th century and the early part of this century. How has that evolution affected the skill set required for a technical writer?

- **Writing skills** – For a technical writer, writing skills can never be overlooked. The technical writer still needs to write in a clear and concise manner and to be able to convey information appropriately for a variety of audiences.
- **Technical skills** – The technical skill set of a technical writer depends greatly on the subject matter, product or service that requires documentation. Hardware and software documentation differ in the skills that the technical writer needs to bring to the table. Additionally, pharmaceuticals and other manufacturing industries have specific requirements that translate into knowledge the technical writer must have. A technical writer asked to document a developer’s guide may need to have a pretty good handle on specific programming languages, while a technical writer tasked with documenting a weapons defense system might need a high degree of engineering comprehension as well as a solid knowledge of government documentation standards.
- **Tools skills** – Needless to say, a technical writer needs to know his or her way around computer systems, since they are used to produce documentation in a variety of formats. Specific tool knowledge, such as Adobe FrameMaker, MS Word, MadCap Flare, RoboHelp, and even PageMaker and Quark really depends on the tools the organization has come to rely on in order to produce its technical documentation. However, technical writers are accustomed to learning – it’s really what they do, and most are capable of learning a new tool quickly and efficiently.
- **Interviewing and listening skills** – Technical writers need to know how to ask questions. They also need to know who is the best person to approach and they need to have a feel for the varying personalities and preferences of the people – the subject matter experts, in order to know how best to approach them. Once the technical writer has found the appropriate readers to approach, strong listening

skills will be required to capture the information necessary and to know which follow-up questions need to be answered.

- **Design skills** – An appreciation for the visual can be an important part of the skill set of a technical writer. Even the earliest technical documents didn't consist of just the written word. To a growing extent the technical writer needs an appreciation for graphics and formatting as well as illustration skills. Depending on the needs of the organization, these skills may only need to be rudimentary or they may need to be very advanced.
- **Usability and testing skills** – A technical writer may also be asked to take an active role in usability and testing. Even if not asked to take a role, the technical writer knows that validation of the documentation is important – the confirmation that the product works the way it is documented to work. In some organizations, the technical writer is an important part of the User Experience team.

These skills are just a small part of what a technical writer brings to the table. The skill sets of a technical writer vary widely, depending on the technical writer's experience and educational background.

The Qualities of Good Technical Writing:

- Know your objective
- Exemplifies effective design; makes a good impression
- Is designed so that it can be read selectively
- Has a rational and discernible plan
- Reads coherently and cumulatively throughout

- Know your reader
- Answers readers' questions as they arise in the readers' minds
- Has the necessary front matter to characterize the report and disclose its purpose and scope
- Has a body that provides essential information and that is written clearly without jargon or padding
- When appropriate, uses tables and graphs to present and clarify its content
- Be simple, direct, and concise.

Because the qualities of good technical writing vary, depending upon audience and objective, we cannot offer you a list that applies equally to everything you write.

Good Technical Writing:

Good technical writing is free from typographical errors, grammatical errors, and misspelled words. It Conveys an impression of authority, thoroughness, soundness, and honest work. It Can stand alone and be understood by readers who are not part of the initial audience. It Makes a positive statement about the writer and the organization.

The Paragraph

A paragraph is a group of sentences about the topic. The kinds of paragraphs are as follows:

- The Descriptive paragraph which describes a person, a process, or a place.
- The example paragraph in which explain a topic by giving examples.
- The process paragraph which explains how to do something step by step.
- The opinion paragraph which expresses his/her feeling, ideas, and opinion about the topic.
- The narrative paragraph which tells a story.

Paragraph organization:

Atypical paragraph has a topic sentence, supporting sentence and a concluding sentence.

- Topic sentence introduce the topic and tells what the writer will say about the topic.
- The sentence that follow further explain and support the topic sentence.
- The conclusion sentence often repeats the information in the topic sentence in different way.

REPORT WRITING TECHNIQUES

The Characteristics of the Reader:

Technical reports are quite often intended for a wide variety of different audiences. It is critical that you carefully identify the intended audience for your report, otherwise, it is likely that your report will be misdirected and less effective. You should consider exactly what the readers of your report already know and what they need to know to make informed decisions.

You should also consider the attitude the audience will adopt toward your report. If you fear that the readers may be somewhat hostile toward your report, you may want to offer more supporting evidence and documentation that you would if their reception was thought to be more favorable. The educational background and work experience of the audience is also a key factor in the formulation of your report. A report written for top executives will differ considerably from the prepared for line supervisors in terms of style, word usage, and complexity. Even age, gender, and other demographic characteristics might serve to shape the report.

One thing is certain. Whether you earn your livelihood as an accountant, a marketing manager, a production supervisor, or a sales representative, you will work in a vacuum. You will find it necessary to constantly communicate with others in order to successfully complete your job. Generally speaking, the larger the institution in which you work, the greater will be the need to prepare written reports. As the organization grows in complexity, so does the required degree of formal communication.

WHAT IS A REPORT?

A Report may be defined as a document in which a given problem is examined for the purpose of conveying information, reporting findings, putting forward ideas and, sometimes, making recommendations.

Report writing is a specialised form of written communication. Many of the rules which must be observed when writing a report are therefore, equally applicable to written communications in general.

There are three cardinal Rules of Report Writing:-

- a) Accuracy
- b) Brevity
- c) Clarity

These are not easily mastered. "Hard writing makes easy reading". A Report writer must constantly strive to make his/her reader's task as easy as the subject matter permits.

THE FOUR STAGE METHOD IN REPORT WRITING:

- Stage I : Preparation of report**
- Stage II : Arrangement of report**
- Stage III: Writing of Report**
- Stage IV: Revision of Report**

STAGE I: PREPARATION OF A REPORT

1. Your Purpose

- b) Find out exactly what you have been asked to do. In other words; try to get concise "Terms of Reference."
- b) Establish clearly in your mind the subject , scope and purpose of your report. The purpose will generally be a combination of some or all of the following:-
 - To give information, either general or detailed
 - To report findings;
 - To put forward ideas;
 - To recommend a course of action.

2. Your Reader

Ask yourself:-

- a) What does my reader want to know ?

- b) What does he know already ?
- c) How can I graft new knowledge on to his existing knowledge ?
- d) What kind of terminology will he understand ?
- e) How will he /she use my report ?

Remember that you have to meet the needs of a specific reader(s). Is his (or their) outlook Executive, Administrative, technical or practical ?

3. Your Material

- a) Collect facts and ideas about your subject by experiment, observation, reading, conversation, interviewing etc. This may be a bigger job than the actual writing of the report.
- b) Check the facts for accuracy.

NOTE: Write down All Your Facts and Ideas. Record them in note form. Any order may be followed at this stage, as circumstances dictate. If any main division of your subject are obvious, however, you can allot a separate page or index card to each of them. For instance, an Information System Development Project may divide itself naturally into Technical, Financial and Administrative aspects.

STAGE II: ARRANGEMENT OF A REPORT

Observance of the following ten points will help you to construct a concise, logical and well arranged report:-

1. Write down your purpose in one sentence.

This will test your understanding of your task and deter you from including unnecessary points. Then choose a title that makes your purpose plain.

2. Consider your collected Facts and Ideas.

Reject any which on second thoughts are neither helpful nor necessary to your purpose. Add notes of any others which now appear essential or desirable.

3. Review any main division critically, and revise them if necessary.

If you could not make groupings earlier, consider now what the main divisions should be. Choose a section heading for each main division.

4. Decide the order in which you will present the main divisions.

They will form sections of your report. Number your section headings so that they can be easily referred to in any discussions of your report.

5. Within each division, arrange your material in an order which your reader will easily follow.

Lead the reader step by step from the known to the unknown. If there are few items in any one group, you can number them on your existing sheet or card. If there are many items under any one heading, you may prefer to re-write them, in your chosen order, on a fresh sheet or card. Careful preparation of this kind is the only way to clarify a complex subject.

6. Make sure your Conclusion or Recommendations square with your facts.

Decide whether to group them in a section of their own which will form a natural Conclusion to your report, or distribute them among the sections to which they belong. You may use even use both methods, stating your Conclusions and Recommendations Section by section, and re-stating them with cumulative force in your Conclusion.

7. Review your Title and Section Headings critically.

They should identify, and not merely describe, the subject matter under them. Brevity is desirable, but three or four precise, informative words are better than two vague, ambiguous ones.

8. Consider what use you can make of Illustrations to supplement or replace words.

"A good diagram is often worth more than a page of writing."

9. Consider the Advisability of using Footnotes.

If used with discretion they may help the unimpeded flow of narrative or argument. However, Footnotes should be as brief as possible.

Footnotes may be used to:-

- a) Give sources of quotations or references mentioned in the text;
- b) Indicate authorities or sources of additional information;
- c) Explain passages in the text which may be clear to some readers but not to others.

10. Consider whether you can lift any Factual details out of the Main Divisions and place them in Appendices.

Appendices perform functions similar to those of footnotes by removing distracting details and thus enabling the reader to follow the main line of thought without interruption. You may of course have the summarize the relegated details in the Report itself.

STAGE III: WRITING THE REPORT

1. Report Style

Decide what the tone of your text should be. A lucid, business-like and balanced exposition is usually desired in Business, Scientific and Technical

Reports. A challenging or controversial approach may, however, occasionally be justified.

2. Arrangement

Consider whether you can help your reader by numbering or lettering paragraphs or items within the sections. Any numbering scheme must be maintained consistently and must be set out on the page so that it is clearly subordinate to the section numbering.

3. Illustrations

Think of your illustrations as you write, so that reading matter and visual items may be closely linked. Every illustration should be referred to at least once in the text and should be accompanied by an identifying caption or title. If you have more than 2 or 3 illustrations, it may be advisable to number them for reference.

4. Introduction

Your report will need an introduction- which may be written last of all. The introduction is the place for a broad, general view of your material. Avoid details which belong properly to the main sections or Appendices.

In your introduction:-

a) State the name and appointment of the recipient.

If the report is to go to several people append a Distribution List subdivided, if necessary, into two parts. As:

- For Action Recipients
- For Information Recipients.

b) Date your report:

c) Use classifications,

Such as "Secret", "Confidential" and "Private" only where they genuinely apply.

d) Define your subject and indicate broadly its extent, composition and significance.

e) State your purpose and Terms of Reference, and indicate how far you are able to carry them out.

f) Provide background information,

Information in which your reader will need, and which he may not know or clearly remember.

g) State fully, or summarize, your Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

h) Announce the arrangement of your Main sections.

i) Define technical terms and words (Jargons) that you intend to use in a special sense.

Make your Introduction as interesting as you can, for instance by singling out points of immediate practical or financial significance, but beware of sensationalism or distortion of the fact.

5. THE MAIN SECTION AND APPENDICES

Concentrate on writing one of your sections or Appendices at a time. You may need to do some or all of the following in each section:-

- a) State facts obtained and indicate source;
- b) Analyses these facts;

- c) State the conclusions or recommendations based on them;
- d) Describe the procedure followed in your investigations or experiments;
- e) Refer to, or summarize, matters fully presented in an Appendix.

Once you have overcome the first inertia, forge ahead from point to point in the sequence you planned when arranging your material. What you are producing is a "Draft Report", subject to revision.

It is more important to achieve a flowing style than to worry at this stage about niceties of grammar, or even the exact observance of the advice on this page.

6. THE CONCLUSION

Your conclusion should do some or all of the following:-

- a) summarize the discussion in the main sections;
- b) summarize findings and inferences;
- c) Make recommendations based on your findings and inferences;
- d) State clearly what action should be taken as a result of your Recommendations, and by whom;
- e) Emphasize finally the significance of your subject matter;
- f) Refer briefly to any wider considerations, outside your terms of reference, on which your report may have a bearing.

"Conclusion and Introduction are closely interdependent"

If you merely summarise your Conclusion and Recommendations in your Introduction you will still need to give them in full in your Conclusion section. If you give them in full in your Introduction section, you may decide not to repeat them in your Conclusion.

The Conclusion should have a section heading of its own, to mark it off clearly from the last main section.

You may decide to make a radical change in the Introduction - Main Section - Conclusion sequence of the report by placing the Conclusion immediately after the Introduction section as the "Management Summary", or even by combining the Introduction and Conclusion sections. The Main Section of the report will then become in effect, though not in name, Appendices.

This re-arrangement is often suitable when you have to cater for two classes of reader:-

- a) The General Reader, who wants to reach your Conclusions and Recommendations quickly without studying your facts and reasoning.
- b) The Specialist readers, who wishes to examine your subject matter in full detail.

7. LIST OF REFERENCES

If your report contains numerous references to other publications it may be useful to compile a separate bibliographical appendix.

Each reference should contain full information in the following order:-

- Author(s)
- Title
- Edition
- Place of Publication
- Publisher
- Date of Publication etc.

8. THE TABLE OF CONTENTS

Some people may wish to read your main headings without going right through your report. You should, therefore, provide them with a Table of Contents.

This customarily precedes the Introduction, but it is equally logical for the Introduction to come first.

The Tables of Content may be compiled as follows:-

- a) Copy the numbered section and sub-section headings.

- b) Indicate the relationship between headings and sub-headings by indentation.

- c) Add separate lists of tables and illustrations, if necessary.

- d) Leave space for page numbering to be filled in by the typist (if you are not typing the report yourself).

9. THE SYNOPSIS (Executive Summary)

You may think it helpful, or it may be the practice of your organisation, to present a Synopsis of the whole Report before the Table of Contents and Introduction. Your original Single-sentence statement of your Purpose may help you to make the Synopsis brief and pithy.

STAGE IV: REVISION

When you have completed your Draft report, lay it aside for a day or two, if time permits. Then try to criticise it objectively as though it were the work of another author.

1. Make a Cursory Examination of your Draft as a whole.

Is the design of your report apparent ? Check your System headings. Are the purpose consistent with your with your purpose?

2. Consider The Title, Table of Contents, Introduction and Conclusion in relation to one another.

- Have you stated your subject, purpose and plan clearly in Introduction?
- Do your headings agree with the Table of Contents and with the plan announced in the Introduction section
- Have you carried out your plan from start to finish of your report?
- Have you placed emphasis on the correct points?
- Are the parts in agreement with, and in proportion to, one another?

3. Examine the Text In Detail.

Weigh every statement critically, especially if you think it is liable to be quoted out of its context. Check grammar, spelling, punctuation and style.

4. Read the Text aloud to yourself, or preferably to somebody else.

- Does it read easily and smoothly?
- Can your listener follow you?
- Are there any tiresome repetitions?
- Have you omitted any essential points or failed to mention them early enough to ensure understanding ?

5. Check Your Illustrations

- Does each convey its message clearly?
- Have you eliminated unnecessary detail?
- Have you included everything helpful to your purpose?
- Is the association between and Illustrations as clear and as close as possible?

- Have you fully exploited your Illustrations as a means of avoiding longwinded explanations in the text?

- Are the captions precise and informative?

6. If Possible, Submit your Draft Report to a Person Qualified to give constructive criticism.

LENGTH OF A WRITTEN REPORT

Unfortunately the written report is the most abused method used by Analyst to communicate with end-users. The Systems Analyst have a tendency to generate large, voluminous reports that look quite impressive. Sometimes such reports are necessary, but often they are not. If you lay a 300 pages report on a manager's desk, you can expect that manager will skim it but not read it - and you can be certain that the manager will not study it carefully!

Report size is an important issue, after many bad experience, we have learned to use the following guidelines to restrict report size:-

- o To Executive-level managers - One or two pages
- o To Middle-level managers - Three to five pages
- o To Supervisory-level managers- Less than 10 pages
- o To Operational - level personnel - less than 50 pages.

It is possible to organize a larger report to include sub-reports for managers who are at different levels. These sub-reports are usually included as early sections in the report and summarize the report, focusing on the bottom line;

What is wrong; what do you suggest or want ?

A LAST WORD ON THE REPORT WRITING TECHNIQUES

As you are entering in the field of Systems Analysis do avail yourselves of every opportunity to improve your writing skills, through business and technical writing classes, books and seminars. Writing can greatly influence career paths in any profession. There are a few further guidelines which we can strongly recommended you to follow in addition to the Four-stage methods covered under this topic.

- o A Paragraph should convey a single idea. They should flow nicely, one to the next. Proper paragraphs structure can almost always be traced to outlining deficiencies.
- o Sentences should not be too long. The average sentence length should not exceed 20 words. Studies suggest that sentences longer than 20 words are more difficult to read and understand.
 - o Write in Active Voice (Direct Speech). The passive voice becomes wordy and boring when used consistently.
- o Eliminate Jargon.

Writing Executive Summary

The intent of the executive summary is to immediately provide the time-constrained reader with the important facts and findings derived from the study. It summarizes these findings and conclusions, along with any recommendations, and places them at the beginning of the study. This placement provides easy access to the more important information relevant to any decision that a manager must make. If the manager is interested in any further details, he or she may consult the main body of the report.

The executive summary should be written in a **non-technical manner**. It is intended for upper-level managers whose expertise often lies in business management and not in technical fields such as chemistry, physics, or even, in many cases, statistics. They generally have little concern for the technical aspect of the report. They only want to be assured that you have considered all relevant business factors and followed proper scientific procedures in the formulation of the report. If the reader then decides a more complete technical explanation, he or she can read any additional portion of the report. The executive summary seldom exceeds one or two pages.

Although the executive summary precedes the main report when it is submitted in final form, the summary is written only after the study has been conducted and the rest of the report has been completed. The summary should include no new information not presented in the report, and should not offer conclusions based on data or information not contained in the report.

Writing INTRODUCTION

Introduction is describing the nature and scope of the problem. Any relevant history or background of the problem that is essential to a thorough

understanding and provides clarification for the rest of the study should also be included. A statement is made explaining why the resolution of this issue is important and the critical need to formulate a course of action.

Abstract vs Executive Summary

Abstract and Executive Summary are two terms that are to be understood with difference. Abstract is a term used in the writing of research papers. On the other hand executive summary is a term used in business for a short document that summarizes a longer report.

An abstract is written with the purpose of letting the readers understand the gist of the research paper to be presented during a seminar or a conference. It is a short form of the entire research paper. In other words it contains the subject matter of the research paper in a nutshell.

An abstract is written for orientation whereas an executive summary is written as a form of condensed version. It is indeed possible that different businesses define executive summary as according to the nature of their business models.

An executive summary should be written in non-technical language whereas an abstract can be written in technical language. An executive summary should have conclusion at the end. On the other hand an abstract has no conclusion at the end.

An executive summary should attempt at making a recommendation at the end. On the other hand an abstract makes no such recommendation towards the end. An executive summary should summarize more than one document. On the other hand an abstract summarizes just one research paper to be presented in the seminar.

An executive summary should contain short and concise paragraphs. At the same time an abstract also can contain short and concise paragraphs. At times it contains only one paragraph too.

Different Types Short Reports

Introduction

Reports have different purposes in the workplace. For example you may prepare a report to:

- transfer general information
- present the results of an investigation
- make a persuasive argument

In some cases, you may want to accomplish all three of these goals. But regardless of your workplace goal, you will always want your report to make you "look good". By being well-prepared and well-written, the report may also tell the reader that you know how to:

- understand and resolve problems
- communicate effectively
- identify new opportunities and share ideas

So preparing a good report will help you to get positive attention from your managers and executives, and ultimately improve your career. Likewise, a poor report will make you look bad, and can frustrate your career goals.

Types of Reports

An important aspect of getting started to write a good report is recognizing and writing the correct TYPE of report for the situation. Reports can be of different types. They could be:

- **Basic Reports**
- **Comprehensive Report**

- **Basic Reports**

Basic reports provide information about a particular situation.

1. Event-Based: These are generally short reports but their length is determined by the information required. Most workplaces will have a required standard format for many of these reports.

- Accident or Inspection reports
- Trip or Conference reports
- Laboratory or Test results

2. Time-Related: These reports provide information that is generated periodically.

- Status reports - Annual reports, Quarterly reports, Monthly reports, Sales reports, etc.
- Progress reports - Keep managers informed on regular basis about projects, programs, etc.
- Informational reports - Provide data to clarify questions or concerns raised on an issue, or provide information on an activity.

Structure of a Basic Report

Summary Contains the key points and most important information from the report. It should be short and to the point.

Background Describes the circumstances leading to the event and describes the scope and nature of the information that will be included in the report.

Details Includes all the important and relevant details in a clear and organized fashion. This is the heart of the report

Conclusions Sum up the results of the report and indicate whether follow-up actions are required.

Comprehensive Reports:

Comprehensive reports differ from Basic reports in that they comment on or analyze the information provided. Both investigative and analytical reports allow the reader to make a decision, implement new activities or systems or take some other action. The only difference between these reports is that investigative reports are not just analytical, but also evaluate the possible impacts of new changes.

1. Investigative reports provide research information or recommendations on an issue usually focusing on the possible impact of something new (or a change?).

They include:

- Feasibility studies - impact of change on current process, or program
- Proposals - persuading reader to try a new idea or concept
- Experiments - results of research studies

2. Analytical reports provide research on the current situation. They provide organized data, conclusions, and recommendations on options. They frequently attempt to solve problems and persuade the reader. They tend to rely on accurate and complete information and provide a rational conclusive recommendation. They can also be called evaluation reports.

Much on-the-job writing consists of reports. An informal report, normally no longer than a few pages, may take the form of a memo that circulates within the

organization or a letter that is sent outside the organization. Common types of reports are described below.

- **Trouble reports**, the records of accidents, breakdowns, or work stoppages, are usually written as memos. The writer should identify the precise time and place of the trouble, any injury or property damage involved, and any expenses that resulted from the incident. The report should continue with a detailed analysis of the likely cause of the accident or breakdown and conclude with a statement of what is being done or will be done to prevent a recurrence of the incident.
- **Investigative reports** present data that the writer has gathered. An investigative report, ordinarily in memo format, opens with a statement of the information the writer has sought and goes on to define the extent of the investigation. The report then presents the writer's findings and an interpretation of them, if such an analysis is appropriate. The report ends with conclusions and may include recommendations.
- **Progress reports** inform the reader of the status of an ongoing project, frequently one that lasts a long time. Progress reports issued at regular intervals are called *periodic reports*. By stating precisely what work has been done and what work remains to be completed, progress reports alert readers to necessary adjustments in scheduling, budgeting, or work assignments. It compels evaluation of the work done.
- **Trip reports**, generally memos submitted to the writer's immediate superior following a business trip, include the destination and the dates of the trip in the subject line. The body of a trip report explains the purpose of the trip, whom the writer visited, and what he or she accomplished. Any conclusions

and recommendations the writer wishes to present are included at the end of the report.

Comparison Reports

A comparison report examines two or more options and performs a "relative advantages" analysis to determine which option would best serve the client. Use a comparative format when there are several serious alternatives that should be considered.

Comparison reports are similar to recommendation reports and feasibility reports in their approach (i.e., establishing criteria for a good option and evaluating possible options), and sometimes the reports are identical except in name. But in some technical communication situations, the comparison report only includes analysis and does not recommend a course of action. If it does not recommend an action, then the comparison report takes on some of the functions of a white paper or backgrounder.

Feasibility Reports

A feasibility report may respond to a single question or recommend a specific option. It may also apply several criteria to that option and make a judgment as to whether it would be in the client's best interest to implement the option. It judges the possibility of a given project (Technical, commercial, financial, social..etc.). (Simple thumbs up or thumbs down.) Use a feasibility format when the client has one favored alternative or plan of action and is trying to determine the effects of that one course of action.

"Feasibility" in this context refers both to technical feasibility in the limited sense (can this be done? will this action solve the problem?), as well as to a wider sense of feasibility that focuses on the desirability of a certain course of

action (should this be done? is it reasonable to do this? will the benefits of doing this outweigh the ill effects? is this in the best interests of the company?)

General Outline:

1. **Introduction:** introduce the subject, purpose, and scope. Presents reasons for the study, persons doing the study, background, limitation, and procedures.
2. **Body:** Discusses solutions, evaluations, arguments, comparisons of all the aspects of the project, social, economical, financial, political, technical feasibility, effectiveness, desirability..etc.
3. **Conclusion:** presents factual summaries, shows the outcome of the study as seen by the author(s); should be oriented towards action or help decision making.

Recommendation Reports

As their name suggests, recommendation reports advise on what specific action should be taken by an organization. They are composed at the end of a process of inquiry and notify the reader that a certain course of action should be followed. The argument of a recommendation report can be developed in numerous ways.

Periodic Reports

In almost every work setting, certain kinds of reports are generated periodically, either on a regular schedule, such as annual performance reviews, or when necessary, such as trip reports. Periodic reports often follow clear and fairly rigid formats and can range from very brief (most trip reports) to extensive and formal (corporate annual reports).

Annual Reports

An annual report informs stockholders and others outside the company about the company's achievements and financial performance in a given year. Such a report usually serves both a promotional and an informative purpose. The report provides basic financial information about the status of an organization and addresses the question of a company's profitability and degree of financial success—but it also attempts to instill some confidence in the stockholders that their investment is a worthy one.

Performance Reports

A performance report evaluates individual or organizational performance over a given period of time. When applied to employees, such a report might be called a "personnel evaluation." Most companies develop forms that help in developing a score, and many also have the supervisor write a summary paragraph for each segment of the evaluation.

Activity Reports

Employees produce activity reports to identify what they have accomplished over a period of time (usually six months or a year). These reports often help employers to assemble the employee's performance evaluation. The activity report, therefore, allows employees to craft their own portraits. If successful, they influence how bosses view their employees' work.

Since the activity report is often a list, it shares some of the challenges involved in writing a résumé: How does one use a list to create a portrait?

Proposals

Proposals include forms, letters, memos, and more formal reports. In some companies and contexts (such as in the construction industry), a "proposal" refers to a work contract with a customer. In this sense, a proposal (which is often called a "bid") is a promise that specific work will be executed by a certain time for a certain cost (and such a promise is sometimes structured as a memo of understanding). "Proposal" could also refer to a grant proposal, which also needs to meet strict informational criteria (and may involve precise formatting—such as answering questions in specific boxes). Grant proposals, however, do allow the writer to convey and explain his or her vision. In other contexts, the term "proposal" is used in the same sense as a recommendation report and thereby "proposes" a course of action. The content of the report depends on the purpose of the report: study a problem, sell equipment, services, support, sell, etc.

Grant proposals sent to foundations are often two-page letters that pitch an idea and attach some financial information. These proposals are informal but require the writer to match the group's mission statement in the opening, present the problem that needs to be addressed immediately in concrete terms, and convince the foundation that the group is qualified to successfully address the problem.

Proposals can also take the form of the "long proposal," a formal document that proposes to complete a future project and that requests organizational support. Often such proposals are in response to an RFP (Request for Proposal): Companies or organizations have jobs that need to be done and issue calls to interested bidders.

White Papers

White papers provide background for decisions. These reports can be internal and are often profoundly influenced by the particular discipline of their context.

They can present investigations of new methods or technologies or report on new sales solutions. To offer an example of the internal white paper, novice engineers are often asked to write a white paper for their division about some aspect of new methods/technologies that they have been taught but the company does not currently use. White papers can also meet the needs of external audiences in responding to the frequently asked questions of customers. Used regularly in information technology, these reports examine a technology problem, investigate potential solutions, and highlight the solutions offered by the company.

White papers differ from recommendation reports and feasibility reports as they do not reach a decision about what action a group should (or should not) take. Instead, they offer backgrounds upon which decisions can be made, thus functioning somewhat like term papers.

Principles to Remember:

Do:

- Plan out what you will say to make your writing more direct and effective.
- Use words sparingly and keep sentences short and to the point.
- Avoid jargon and “fancy” words. Strive for clarity instead.

Don't:

- Argue that you simply can't write. Anyone can become a better writer with practice.
- Pretend that your first draft is perfect, or even passable. Every document can be improved.
- Bury your argument. Present your main idea as soon as possible.

Business writing

Use these business writing tips to make sure you write accurately and clearly, and minimize the chance of misunderstandings.

Make a writing plan:

A plan is great skill to develop and really helps you focus on what you want to write. Use a plan to organize your ideas and structure your text logically and clearly. This helps you stay focused and relevant and ultimately, saves you time writing.

Say why you are writing in the first sentence:

Help your reader understand why you are writing by starting with an objective sentence. Use phrases such as "I am writing to enquire about" or "We have been experiencing some technical problems with"

Keep it short and sweet:

Don't make your reader have to wade through long, rambling sentences. Write concisely and clearly and use a simple sentence structure. Avoid falling into the trap of using over-formal words such as "hereby" and "herewith". They will make you sound old-fashioned and pompous and don't add any meaning to your sentence. Stick to your plan and only include relevant and necessary information.

Link your ideas:

Guide your reader through your text by using linking words and phrases. Words such as "and", "because" or "however" make your text flow and prevent your sentences from appearing isolated from each other.

Get the tone right:

The tone of your text is the "voice" that you use with your reader, and the one you choose depends on who you are writing to, and why you are writing. For example, if you are responding to a colleague's email, your tone will probably be friendly and helpful, while if you are writing a letter of apology to a customer, your tone could be polite and impersonal.

Getting the tone right also means you need to think from your reader's point of view. For example, if you use "you should" instead of "perhaps you could" to your boss, your writing tone becomes over-direct, or even challenging. Similarly, if you give bad news without introducing it first with a word or phrase such as "Unfortunately" or "We are sorry, but..." your reader might assume that you don't care. Thinking about the impact your writing has will help you avoid giving the wrong impression.

Keep your style appropriate and consistent:

Bear in mind the formality of the situation. Writing to a friend is very different skill from writing to your bank manager and there are a number of factors which determine style, such as vocabulary choice, length and complexity of sentence and so on. When in doubt, the safest course of action is to choose a neutral style to avoid sounding either too formal or too informal for the situation.

End your correspondence by referring back to the reader:

Make sure your reader knows what the next step should be. If you are asking for help in an email, you could end "Thanks for your help". In a letter you could write "I look forward to hearing from you." If you are replying to an enquiry, you could end the email or letter with "Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further information". You could also end your correspondence by

referring forward to a meeting, such as: "I look forward to meeting you next Thursday" or in an email "See you next week", or by asking the reader to do something, such as "Please sign and return the enclosed by the end of the month."

Make sure your salutation and ending are correct:

If you start a letter with "Dear Mr X" or "Dear Ms X", end "Yours sincerely" (or in American English, "Sincerely yours"). If you know your reader quite well, you can start "Dear + first name" and end with "Best wishes" or "Best / Kind regards". If you don't know the name of the person you are writing to and start "Dear Sir or Madam", end with "Yours faithfully" rather than "Yours sincerely".

You can also start and end emails in the same way as letters. But if you are writing to more than one person, you can omit the salutation completely and start with your objective. Other ways you can end emails is by writing "Thanks" or even "Cheers", but never "Bye".

Pay attention to your punctuation:

Most common punctuation mistakes are made with capital letters, commas and apostrophes. Remember that commas are used in lists, and to separate clauses, to give a kind of "breathing space". Capital letters should be used for proper nouns, and in the first sentence of your correspondence. Apostrophes are used to show possession or contraction, but never for plurals.

Edit your writing:

Read through what you have written to check for spelling and grammar mistakes. Typical mistakes are confusing there and their, lose and loose, it's and its, for example. As you read your writing, check that you have followed your plan and that there is no redundant information.

How to start and end business letter or E-mail

A common mistake in ending an email is to write "Bye" or "Bye Bye". As this is not a standard way of ending business emails, it makes your writing look unprofessional. Here are some widely used phrases for starting and ending correspondence in British English.

1. Formal letter of application (for a job)

Dear Sir / Madam

I am writing to apply for...

End:

I look forward to hearing from you

Yours faithfully

2. Formal business correspondence (for example: letter of enquiry)

Dear Mr Smith (Dear Ms Smith)

I am writing to enquire about your prices

End:

An early reply would be appreciated / I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

3. Formal letter of reference

To whom it may concern

I write with reference to Ms Smith...

End

Yours faithfully

4. Business email – friendly

Dear (+ first name)

Just a quick note to remind you about

End

Best wishes / Kind regards

5. In-company email request

(no salutation)

Could you...

End

Thanks / Cheers

Formal English: We use it when writing essays, cover letters to apply for jobs, or emails and letters at work.

Informal English: We use it with friends, children, and relatives.

The following list will help you to recognize the informal and formal ways of saying the same thing. The list is divided into sections of: verbs, transitions, emphasis words, abbreviations, and slang.

Verbs – Informal & Formal

Informal	Formal
say sorry	apologize
go up	Increase
go down	Decrease
set up	Establish
look at	Examine
blow up	Explode
find out	Discover
bring about	Cause
put off	postpone, delay
rack up	Accumulate
make up	Fabricate
stand for	Represent
find out	discover, ascertain
leave out	Omit

Informal	Formal
point out	Indicate
go against	Oppose
get in touch with	Contact
It's about	It concerns, It's in regards to
need to	Required
think about	Consider
Get	Obtain
put up	Tolerate
deal with	Handle
Seem	Appear
Show	demonstrate, illustrate, portray
Start	Commence
Keep	Retain
Free	Release
get on someone's nerves	Bother

Informal	Formal
ring up	Call
show up	Arrive
Let	Permit
fill in	substitute, inform
Block	Undermine
give the go ahead, greenlight	authorize, authorise

Transitions – Informal & Formal

Informal	Formal
Anyways	Nevertheless
Plus/Also	Moreover/ Furthermore
But	However
So	Therefore/Thus
Also	In addition, Additionally

Informal	Formal
ASAP	as soon as possible/at your earliest convenience
Okay, OK	Acceptable
In the meantime	In the interim
I think	In my opinion,
In the end,	Finally
To sum up	In conclusion,
In a nutshell/Basically	To summarize,
Anyway,	Notwithstanding
All right	Acceptable
Well,	
To top it all off,	
On top of it all,	

Informal	Formal
	In order to

Emphasis Words – Informal & Formal

Informal	Formal
lots of/ a lot of	much, many
tons of, heaps of	large quantities of, a number of
Totally	completely, strongly
really, very	Definitely

Letter Expressions – Informal & Formal

Informal	Formal
Hi Robert,	Dear Sir or Madam
Just wanted to let you know...	I am writing to inform you...
Love,	Yours sincerely, Yours faithfully,
Cheers,	
Yours Truly, Best regards, kind regards	

Informal	Formal
Hope to hear from you soon	I look forward to hearing from you
You can call me if you need anything	Please do not hesitate to contact me

Abbreviations – Informal & Formal

Informal	Formal
ASAP	as soon as possible
T.V.	Television
Photo	Photograph
Cell	cell phone
Net	Internet

Slang – Informal & Formal

Informal	Formal
Kids	Children
Bad	Negative
Good	Positive

Informal	Formal
really big	Considerable
Right	Correct
Wrong	Incorrect
Smart	Intelligent
Cheap	Inexpensive
Loaded	Rich

How To Write An Email

Sample Business Letters

Writing for business letters, emails and other situations. Business Skills

Tips on writing well and clearly. Emails are generally shorter than letters. As they are often written quickly, in response to a request or question, they may contain only a few lines. Informal English, abbreviations, and absence of standard salutations are common when you write emails.

Emails may contain the following elements:

- Subject line

This shows the reader the exact subject of the email

- (Salutation)

This is optional. Some people start with "Hi", others with the first name "Clare", or others with no name or salutation at all.

- Reason for writing
- Main point
- (Closing)

There are a variety of closing phrases, such as "Cheers" or "Thanks". These are also optional.

How to write better emails:

1. Use a descriptive subject line.

Say what the email is about in a few words. Instead of writing "Urgent", write "Meeting at 10am about pay rise".

Use a subject line each time you reply to an email, to avoid subject lines starting Re: or R:R:

Be careful to avoid writing general subject lines, such as "Hello" or "Hi", as some email providers automatically delete these as spam.

2. Keep your emails short.

Try to keep to only one point in each email. If necessary, you can send more emails on different points. If you write a descriptive subject line for each email, it's easier for your reader to understand the content of your email.

You don't need to quote all the previous messages in the one you send. You can selectively quote (only including the previous question, for example) by using the angle brackets < < quote here >>.

3. Write simple, direct English.

This is especially important if you're writing to someone whose first language is not English.

Here are some ways of writing simple English:

- use active forms instead of passive forms
- write short sentences rather than long ones (if in doubt, stick to a "who did what to who, how, where and when")
- don't use idioms
- use common words rather than technical or jargon words if your reader is not in the same field as you

4. Make sure your reader knows what to do next.

Help your reader act on your email. For example, if you want your reader to find some information for you, write "Please can you find me the sales figures for 2016" instead of the vaguer "I'm going to need the sales figures for 2016".

5. Reduce the amount of email you send.

Most people receive more "rather than less" email every day. Here are some ways you can reduce the number of emails you send to people:

- make a phone call rather than write an email. This is particularly effective if you only want a quick piece of information
- only send an email to the people who need to see it. Don't automatically click "reply to all" if only one or two people need to read your message.
- don't take part in chain emails (when you have to forward something on to five of your best friends, for example)

- don't reply to spam

6. Don't send heavy attachments.

If possible, send a zip file, or give web addresses where your reader can find information.

7. Be careful what you write in your email.

Try to make your emails informative and polite, and use a neutral tone. Remember that your reader could forward your email to other people, so only write what you would be happy for other people to read. (No gossip, no personal comments, no confidential information and no ambiguous English such as sarcastic humor.)

Avoid using emoticons and smilies in business emails, or too many exclamation marks.

8. Check your email before you send it.

Use a spell check to eliminate spelling mistakes. Read your email aloud to check for grammar and punctuation errors. Ask yourself these questions:

"Is this clear?"

"Does my reader know what to do next?"

"Is this polite?"

Samples for writing emails

There are a number of ways to start the email. In many cases, you can copy the sender and use the same greeting, but if you are the one to write first, here are some possible greetings.

- Friends and colleagues

"Hi" is informal, and you can use it for friends and colleagues.

You can also use "Hello" or "Hello + first name" if you know the person well.

- For acquaintances

Use "Dear Mr Jones" / "Dear Ms Jones" if you know the name of the person.

Like with letters, use Ms instead of Miss or Mrs.

- Formal emails

If you don't know the name of the person, you can write "Dear Sir", "Dear Madam" or "Dear Sir / Madam".

- Writing to a group of people

If you are writing to a group of people, you could use a collective noun:

"Dear customers", "Dear partners".

If you are writing to a group of people who work in the same company or department, you could write "Dear All", "Dear colleagues", or "Hello everyone".

- Writing to a group of bosses in your company

Here you could write "Dear Managers", "Dear Directors" or "Dear Board members".

- No greeting

Often in companies, you write quick emails to colleagues. Using email in this way is almost like using the telephone. In these situations, you don't need to write any greeting or name, but just start the message.

Starting your email

Your first sentence should tell the reader what your email is about. Here are four of the most common reasons for writing an email, along with some sentences you can use to start:

1. Replying to a previous email

Thanks for the information.

Thanks for your phone call.

Thanks for getting me the figures.

2. Giving brief updates

Just a quick note to tell you...

Just a quick note to let you know...

Just to update you on...

3. Referring to an attachment

Take a look at the attached file.

Have a quick look at the file I've attached about...

Thought you might find the attached interesting.

4. Changing plans

Sorry, but I can't make the meeting tomorrow.

Sorry, but I won't be able to meet you next week.

Sorry, but something has come up and I can't meet you for lunch.

Your first sentence should only have one theme. For example, your reason for writing may be to ask for help, or to share some information, or to ask a question. Your first sentence for these different situations could be:

"Have you got a few minutes to help me with...?"

"Just wanted to let you know..."

"Regarding X, can you tell me if...?"

If you have more than one reason for writing, give each reason its own paragraph. It doesn't matter if your paragraph is only one line long. In fact, the extra space helps your reader to understand you have more than one reason for writing, and that each reason is different from the other.

Sample email writing

Hi Jo

Just wanted to let you know we got the project! They're signing tomorrow, so we should be starting the planning next week.

Regarding your presentation to them last year, do you still have the Powerpoint files?

Thanks

Business Letter

There are some situations in which writing a letter is more appropriate than writing an email. If you need a permanent record of what you are writing, or if you are writing in a formal situation, a letter is a better choice. For example, you would probably write a letter of resignation and a covering letter with your CV.

Letter writing often contains the following elements:

- A standard greeting (For example: Dear Sir / Madam)
- A reference to previous contact or reason for writing

In this first paragraph, say why you are writing the letter. Use a sentence that refers to a previous contact, such as a previous letter or phone call. Or use an objective sentence to say why you are writing: to confirm, clarify or enquire about something, for example.

- (The background to the letter.)

This is an optional paragraph and gives your reader more information to become familiar with the subject of the letter.

- Main point or idea
- Additional points
- Asking for action / reference to the future

In the final paragraph, close the letter with an offer of further help, or ask for future action.

Standard closing (For example: Yours faithfully)

Business letter samples

- Making reference

"With reference to your letter, I..."

"In response to your letter, I can confirm..."

"With regard to your memo, I..."

"Following our phone conversation, I...."

"I am writing with reference to your enquiry."

"Thank you for your letter of..."

- Replying to a request

"As you requested, I am enclosing a brochure about our adventure holidays."

"As you suggested, I am sending you my CV."

"In answer to your enquiry, I am enclosing information which I hope will be useful to you."

"As promised, I am sending you the..."

- Establishing context

"Your name was given to me by (source)"

"My colleague, Ewan Jones, suggested that I write to you concerning..."

"I have been advised to contact you regarding your policy on insurance claims."

"I am the Marketing Manager of a search engine optimisation company, and I am writing to you to ask if your company would be interested in promoting ..."

- Making reference to something your reader knows

"As you may already know / have heard, the Production Division is merging with..."

- Saying thank you

"Thank you for your letter in which you enquired about..."

"Thank you for your advice regarding..."

"I am writing to thank you for your assistance."

- Informing

"It has come to our notice that..."

"I am writing to inform you that..."

"Please be advised that..."

"I am writing to advise you that..."

- Confirming

"I am writing to confirm"

"I would like to confirm"

- Asking for information or advice

"I am writing to enquire about"

"I would be interested to receive further details about"

"Please could you give me the necessary details concerning ...?"

"I would be grateful for your advice concerning..."

"I would appreciate your advice on ..."

- Explaining and clarifying

"I am writing to explain ..."

"I would like to clarify certain points regarding..."

"I would like to take this opportunity to clarify ..."

- Making a suggestion or giving advice

"In response to may we suggest that you contact"

"With regard to your enquiry about ... we advise you to ... "

"We would like to advise all our customers to ..."

- Enclosing

"Please find enclosed"

"Enclosed please find ..."

"Enclosed is a ..."

"Enclosed are"

"I am enclosing a ..."

"I have pleasure in enclosing ..."

- Apologizing

"Please accept our apologies for this misunderstanding."

"We apologize for our mistake and we would like to take this opportunity to assure you that it will not happen again."

"We hope that this misunderstanding has not caused you too much inconvenience."

- Referring to a meeting

"I look forward to seeing you on..."

"I look forward to meeting you on..."

"I would be delighted to arrange a meeting with you."

- Asking for action

"I would be grateful if this matter could be resolved..."

"I would appreciate further information on..."

"I would be grateful for further advice."

"I would be grateful if you could send me..."

- Offering help

"Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance."

"If you would like any more information, please do not hesitate to contact me on..."

"Please feel free to contact me again if I can be of further assistance."

- Expressing urgency

"As this matter is now urgent, we would appreciate a prompt reply."

"We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience."

"Due to the urgency of the situation, I would appreciate receiving your advice as soon as possible."

Writing thank you letters

Sample Business Letters

Writing for business letters, emails and other situations. Business Skills

Tips on writing well and clearly. Everyone likes to receive thanks for their help and support, and colleagues also appreciate being thanked in writing. You might want to thank someone for helping you with a project, donating their time or for sharing their expertise.

Thank you letter samples:

I just wanted to write and thank you for your help in / with / at...

This is just a quick email to show my appreciation for your support.

I just wanted to let you know that your help has been invaluable.

I really appreciate (d) your contribution to...

Many thanks for your help in / with / at...

Thank you so much for helping me with...

Write a letter of complaint

if you have paid for goods or services that did not come up to your expectations.

When you write a letter of complaint, remember these writing tips.

- be factual and precise. Say exactly what the problem is, and how it is contrary to your expectations.

- don't use sarcasm or emotional language. Use a neutral rather than angry tone.

- be clear about what you want to happen. State how much compensation you

want.

- be polite and avoid threats unless you want to take legal action.

How to start your complaint letter

I am writing to complain about...

I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with...

Give the background to your complaint

We paid \$890 for a five-night stay at the Paradise [Hotel](#). Although the travel agent assured us the hotel was 5-star, the building works had not been completed, and few of the promised facilities were available.

We were told that a booking fee of US\$120 for the Pyramid Tours would be refunded once the tour was paid in full. However, no refund has yet been paid.

Say what you want to happen

In view of the above, I expect a substantial refund. Under the circumstances, I feel that a refund of \$XX is appropriate.

Using these simple samples in your complaint letter should help get better results!

Complaint Letters

Complaint letters are among the most difficult types of letters or emails to write because it's important to get the tone just right to get results. Fortunately, there are two great complaint letter resources available.

You need to be careful to sound polite and diplomatic when you write to people with high status, such as your boss or a client. Make sure you use the correct

verb forms to avoid sounding too direct. Here are some tips and samples for writing politely.

1. Make a suggestion rather than giving advice.

"We should commission a report" becomes "**Perhaps we could** commission a report."

2. Make a request rather than saying what you think.

"We need to discuss my salary" becomes "**Would it be possible to** discuss my salary?"

3. Instead of giving orders, make a request.

"I would like you to sign this letter" becomes "**Could you** sign this letter?"

4. Involve the other person, rather than focusing on your own needs.

"We need to meet the suppliers" becomes "**Do you think we should / could** meet the suppliers?" Or "**It might be useful to** meet the suppliers."

Tips on writing well and clearly.

Writing effectively means your message is unambiguous and your reader knows what to do next. Effective business writing is clear, concise and courteous.

Writing clearly

- Use an objective sentence

Give your reason for writing in your first sentence so your reader immediately understands why you're writing.

(See Writing a business letter for samples.).

- Keep sentences grammatically simple

If you're writing to an international audience, minimize the risk of misunderstandings by avoiding complicated constructions such as "not only, but..." or "in spite of the fact that..."

If in doubt, use simple word order principles when you write, such as the SVOMPT principle:

Subject Verb Object (Manner Place Time)

"I am writing to confirm our meeting on Tuesday at 3pm."

Write short sentences, with one idea in each sentence. Avoid using too many commas or brackets / parentheses, which can make your sentences over-long.

- Don't write with over-formal words

Use general business words rather than old-fashioned formal words. For example, avoid "above-mentioned" (use "above"); "herewith" and "hereby" (you can normally delete these without changing the meaning of the sentence); and "hitherto" (use "up to now").

- Check your writing before you send it

Check your spelling and make sure your punctuation is correct. Avoid shortening words too much (wld; pls etc), as this can make your reader spend time trying to understand what you want to say.

Make sure, too, that you've answered any questions fully and that the information is complete.

Concise business writing

- Plan what want to write before you start writing.

Put your points into paragraphs before you start, so that you only write what's relevant and you can avoid repeating the same ideas.

- Find shorter ways of expressing yourself

You can often express your ideas with modal verbs (might, could, would etc) instead of using longer phrases.

Here are some ways you can use modals instead of longer phrases:

It is likely to / There is the likelihood that = We may / We might / it may / it might

It is unlikely to happen = It might not happen

There is a necessity to / It is necessary to = We must / We have to

For ability = can / can't

There is a possibility that = We can / We could

- Edit out unnecessary words

Replace wordy phrases by single words where possible.

"as of the date of" = from

"by means of" = by

"at this moment in time" = now

"for the purpose of" = for

"so as to" = so

"in the event that" = if

"further to" = following

Avoid words that add no meaning. For example, "very" can usually be deleted without changing the meaning. For example, you can write "expensive" instead of "very expensive" without losing any extra meaning. Other words that can generally be deleted to make your writing more concise are "really" and "absolutely".

- Write using verbs rather than noun clauses

Verbs give your business writing more impact than heavy-sounding noun phrases. For example, use "discuss" instead of "have a discussion".

Other examples of this are "have a meeting" (meet), "give consideration to" (consider) and "be of concern to" (concern)

- Avoid cliches

Cliches make you sound unimaginative. Examples of cliches are "to all intents and purposes", "to think outside the box" and "to push the envelope". If you have made a plan before you write so that you only include relevant information, then you don't need to add cliches to "pad" out your message.

How to write courteously

Being polite is not just a question of remembering to use please or thank you. It's also about the tone you use when you write. To make sure that your writing is polite, put yourself in your reader's shoes to anticipate what your reader will think when they read your letter or email,. Could your message be interpreted differently to your intended meaning? Does it sound rude or unhelpful?

- Acknowledge letters and emails

If someone has taken the time and trouble to write to you, it's only polite to reply within a day or so. If you can't answer the person within this time frame, write something short to let them know you will answer more fully later.

"Thanks for your email. I'll get back to you within the next day / tomorrow / next week."

If you're going on holiday and will be away for more than a few days, consider setting up an autoresponder to reply automatically to emails.

- Thank someone for their work or input

If someone has put in time to quote for a project or to give you some information, make sure you thank them. Making someone feel appreciated means that they are more likely to want to do business with you in the future.

"I'm sorry you didn't get the project, but thanks for your work."

"Thank you for finding me the information about X. I really appreciate your help."

- Show you care

Even if you cannot help a person, avoid sounding unfriendly or direct.

"We are sorry to inform you that we are no longer manufacturing this item."

"We would like to apologize for this misunderstanding."

Introduce bad news to soften the impact:

"Unfortunately, the company has decided to close its offices in New York."

"We regret to inform you that your application has been unsuccessful."

- Write using polite phrases

Avoid making demands with phrases like I want. Instead write:

"I would like some information on your range of printers."

"I would be grateful for some information on your range of printers."

"I would appreciate your help with an order."

- **Be tentative rather than dogmatic.**

Make suggestions and requests rather than giving orders, such as "Perhaps you could consider..." or "Could you let us know your ideas on..." and keep negotiations open by using would rather than is / are. For example, "These prices would be too low" rather than "Your prices are too low".

- **Use past forms to put distance between you and the other person and to make you sound less definite.**

"We were hoping for..." (rather than "We are hoping for...")

"We wanted to know..." (rather than "We want to know...")

- **Be neutral rather than confrontational**

Reduce the impact of a criticism by replacing a negative adjective by 'not very' + positive adjective.

Write "Your customer service representatives are not very polite" instead of "Your customer service representatives are rude."

Use words with a positive focus instead of a negative focus.

"issue" or "matter" (instead of "problem")

"inconvenience" / "inconvenient" (rather than "difficulty" or "difficult")

"misunderstanding" (rather than "argument")

"sensitive" (to describe an issue that you would rather not discuss)

"unfortunate" or "disappointing" (rather than "bad")

Minimize problems by using qualifiers such as "rather", "a little", "somewhat" or "a slight".

"We have a problem with the account" becomes "We have a slight problem with the account."

- Avoid "you"

Change the focus of the sentence to avoid sounding as if you are accusing the reader. Instead of writing "you", write "there" or "we".

"You made a mistake" becomes "There seems to be a mistake."

"You said" becomes "We understood"

Using the tips above will help you write more effective business writing – don't forget to see our page on

20 Rules of Writing Effective Business E-Mails

Developing effective business-to-business (B2B) email marketing messages is significantly different than developing business-to-consumer (B2C) emails. That is why, after writing extensively about consumer-oriented emails in past columns, I'll now address B2B communications.

As I'm sure you know from your own personal experience, business people who receive email want to know the point as quickly as possible. They don't have time to read through a lot of copy unless something immediately captures their interest. They don't appreciate fluff and spin, just benefits and facts. Keeping this in mind, here are my 20 rules for writing effective business email messages:

1. **Be accurate.** Whatever claims you make, benefits you offer, or statistics you quote, make sure they are true and not inflated. Nothing is worse than starting off a relationship with exaggerated or even false information.
2. **Be brief.** Your job with B2B email is to capture interest, then provide more information if it's wanted. You need to identify the most important benefit to the recipient and sum it up in a short paragraph. Think of it as the 30-second "elevator pitch" in email form.
3. **Be clear.** Most business people are turned off by email messages with bad grammar, misspellings, and/or unintelligible content. If you personally struggle with writing, hiring a professional writer to prepare your messages is a worthwhile investment.
4. **Be genuine.** Forget the hype that works with consumers. The B2B relationship is built on trust. Make sure everything you say conveys you are a genuine, upstanding, honest person running a reputable business.

5. **Speak their language.** Whatever you're going to say, write in words they understand and are comfortable with. Don't write down to them or above their comprehension level. People tend to understand and react better to words they use in everyday conversations.
6. **Put yourself in their shoes.** Try to picture the daily routine of the people you're contacting and reflect that in your writing: "I know you're busy, so I'll get right to the point."
7. **Watch out for a "knowledge gap."** Don't assume recipients have the same knowledge about your product or service you do. After you've captured their interest and have reached the "additional information" stage, try offering a step-by-step walkthrough of whatever you're marketing to help them understand what you're trying to say.
8. **Write business emails as letters, not as ads.** In the B2B world, a forthright communication in letter format is much more effective than an email that looks and smells like an ad.
9. **Take your time.** As you would with B2C (and any other communication, for that matter), let your B2B email message sit for a day or two after you complete it. Show it to colleagues and other business people, and get their opinions. In almost every case, the passage of time and other people's input will help you improve your messaging and writing.
10. **Remember your email is likely to be passed around.** Because it's so easy for email to be forwarded, assume your message will be sent to others if the initial recipient has any interest. You may want to include links to information that is relevant to others, including technical details, operations info, and financial data.

11. **Mimic your verbal presentation.** Although a lot of what you say in person may not be necessary or appropriate for an initial email, you should still consider how you verbally present your product or service, whether by phone or in person. Think about what points you stress (those could be underlined or bolded in your email) and the words you use (stick with verbal explanations that people understand).
12. **Check your signature block.** Make sure it's complete: your full name, title, company, address, phones, pager, fax, email, and Web site links. Give the recipient a choice of how to contact you for more information.
13. **Carefully choose when you actually send the mail.** Most business people spend Monday mornings catching up on the email, postal mail, and phone calls that have piled up since the previous Friday. You don't want your email mixed in with dozens or even hundreds of communications that are being reviewed by recipients.
14. **Prepare your subject line carefully.** After the sender address, the subject line is the first thing B2B email recipients will look at. It's akin to what you might say on the phone in the first 5 to 10 seconds. The subject line should directly relate to the primary benefit your product or service offers.
15. **Use graphics wisely.** Business people are interested in benefits, details, other customers, and so forth. Unless graphics enhance your message in a meaningful way, don't use them.
16. **Make sure links within your email display and work properly.** When you list "for more information" links, make sure they are clickable so the recipient does not have to cut and paste. Also make sure they go to the exact page you want and this landing page is up to date and provides the information

you want them to have. Sending people to your home page and leaving to them to figure out where to go is not a good idea.

17. **Be wary about sending attachments.** Most of the time, you don't know what software the recipient has or what filter settings are enabled. Sending PDFs, Word documents, or Excel spreadsheets may not be a good idea, since you don't know if the recipient can read -- or even receive -- what you send. A better idea: links to Web pages where the information contained in the attachments is displayed.
18. **Test.** Just as you do with any consumer email campaign, test subject lines and message copy. Testing is no less critical with B2B emails.
19. **Be complete.** Most B2B email recipients will form some sort of preliminary conclusion about your product or service before they respond to your email. They'll determine for themselves whether your email helps meet their needs. That's why providing details and complete information is important -- to give recipients the details they need to make the decision to call you or act on your offer.
20. **Don't look like everyone else.** Spend some time reviewing B2B emails you get to see what others are doing. Get on the email lists of your competitors so you can see how they communicate. Analyze them all and find ways to differentiate yourself from the pack

Writing Meeting Minutes

The minutes of a meeting are a meeting report that is sent after the meeting, and include a report of what was said and decided during the meeting. The minutes contain the date of the meeting, as well as the initials and names of the people who attended. You can write the term "apologies for absence were received from..." to say which people didn't come to the meeting.

Meeting minutes layout

Minutes of meetings usually include:

- Minutes of the last meeting
- Matters arising from the last minutes
- The agenda of the meeting itself
- Any other business (AOB)
- Meeting minutes also show who is responsible for carrying out action. In a column on the right-hand side, you can put the person's initials in bold to show that he or she will perform the action.
- Report what was said
- When you take minutes of a meeting, it is useful to report the ideas, rather than every sentence. To do this, you need to use a variety of speech verbs.

Here's a list that you might find useful:

suggested = "CA suggested raising the budget."

promised = "MB promised to find out more."

discussed = "Three issues were discussed."

decided = "It was decided to delay action until the next meeting."

agreed = "Everyone agreed on the proposal." "LS agreed to get further information." "Everyone agreed with the chairman."

brought up = "The issue of pay was brought up."

mentioned = "RJ mentioned the possibility of extra funds."

reported = "The Sales Manager reported on the results of the trade fair."

asked = "The Chairman asked to see a copy of the report."

wondered = "DM wondered if there would be extra funding."

recommended = "Five strategies were recommended."

explained = "SB explained the reason for the delay."

emphasized = "TA emphasized the necessity of a new product range."

stressed = "RR stressed his commitment to the project."

complained = "TM complained about the delays."

More help with Writing Meeting Minutes

Even though writing the minutes of a meeting is an important and common business writing task there are surprisingly few guides available. One good guide we recommend is *Taking Minutes of Meetings – Write Accurate Minutes*. Training and secretarial education expert Joanna Gutmann takes you on a thorough guide to the art of writing minutes. Topics covered include tips for setting up a meeting, guidelines for taking and formatting minutes as well as how to clearly, concisely and accurately record the decisions and actions taken in a meeting.

Finally, These steps break the larger writing task into smaller ones. Proceeding through them one at a time will help you write successful business documents.

Depending on the complexity of the writing task, they will be either more or less demanding.

Writing Terms

In your language arts and English classes, you will encounter many specific terms that relate to writing. Knowing the meanings of these terms will make you a more effective reader and writer. Here are twenty important writing terms whose meanings you should know.

Anecdote – A short account of a particular incident or event, typically of an interesting or amusing nature.

Autobiography – A writer's account of his or her own life. This is in contrast to a **biography**, which is a story of someone's life written by another person.

Characterization – A process by which a writer reveals a fictional character's personality to the reader.

Cliché – A phrase or expression that has been so overused that it has lost its significance. Good writing avoids the use of clichés.

Connotation - The emotion or feeling that a word creates.

Denouement – The final clarification or resolution of a plot in a written work.

Dialog – A conversation between two or more characters in a literary work. Dialog is set off by quotation marks.

Didactic – A form of writing that teaches something.

Epigram – A brief or witty saying or poem.

Hyperbole – An excessive exaggeration.

Irony – An outcome of events that is contrary to what was expected to happen.

Juxtaposition – Placing two words or ideas close together for contrast or interest.

Myth – A story passed down over the generations that was once believed to be true.

Oxymoron – Two words of contradictory meaning that are placed next to each other to make a point.

Parable – A short story that teaches a moral or religious lesson.

Protagonist – The main character or hero in a story.

Pseudonym – A false name used by a writer, often referred to as a **pen name**.

Style – The manner in which a writer chooses to write to his or her audience.

Theme – The idea that a writer wishes to convey about a subject.

Tone – The attitude of a writer toward his or her subject.

Knowing the meanings of these twenty terms will be helpful to you in your language arts and English classes.

Confusing Pairs of Words

Many pairs of words sound alike or nearly alike, but each has a different meaning. For example, **affect** means to influence something, while **effect** means the result of something. Words like these can be easily confused with each other.

You must be careful to use the correct word from a pair of such confusing words when you are writing and speaking. If not, you may express something different than what you mean to express.

For example, suppose you are writing about the importance of a good marriage. You write that *martial* bliss is a wonderful thing. The word **martial** refers to war. You should have written that *marital* bliss is a wonderful thing. The word **marital** refers to marriage.

You wouldn't want to embarrass yourself by addressing a letter to the administrator of your school as "Dear **Principle**." The word principle means a fundamental truth. You should write "Dear **Principal**." The word principal refers to the head of a school.

Here are some word pairs that are commonly confused. Learn the meanings of each of the words so that you use them correctly.

Accept - to take something that is given to you

Except - to leave out

Altar - a raised place used in religious services

Alter - to change

Ascent - to climb

Assent - to agree

Brake - a device for stopping or slowing a vehicle

Break - to come apart

Cite - to document

Site - a place

Coarse - rough

Course - moving from one point to the next

Complement - something that makes a thing whole or perfect

Compliment - to praise

Conscience - a sense of right and wrong

Conscious - state of being awake

Descent - coming from a higher place to a lower one

Dissent - to disagree

Desert - a dry, hot, sandy area

Dessert - the sweet final part of a meal

Device - something made for a certain purpose

Devise - to invent something or develop a plan

Elicit - to bring out

Illicit - illegal

Eminent - famous or well respected

Imminent - about to happen

Faint - weak

Feint - a movement meant to deceive

Forth - forward

Fourth - an ordinal number

Here - at or in a place

Hear - to receive sound through one's ears

Hoard - to save and store away

Horde - a very large group

Hole - an opening through something

Whole - an entire thing

Loath - reluctant

Loathe - greatly dislike

Palate - the roof of the mouth

Palette - an artist's board for mixing paints

Peace - absence of fighting

Piece - a portion of something

Plain - clearly seen, heard, or understood

Plane - a flat surface

Pore - a very small opening in the skin

Pour - to cause something to flow

Precede - to come before

Proceed - to go forward

Shear - to cut the wool off a sheep

Sheer - so thin you can see through it

Stationary - to stand still

Stationery - writing paper

Waist - the part of the human body between the ribs and the hips

Waste - to use or spend carelessly

Weak - without strength

Week - a period of seven days

Don't be CONFUSED! Learn the meanings of these words to use them correctly.

Presentation Skills

Presentation Skills

Presenting information clearly and effectively is a key skill to get your message or opinion across and, today, presentation skills are required in almost every field.

Whether you are a student, administrator or executive, if you wish to start up your own business, apply for a grant or stand for an elected position, you may very well be asked to make a presentation. This can be a very daunting prospect.

What is a Presentation?

A presentation is a means of communication which can be adapted to various speaking situations, such as talking to a group, addressing a meeting or briefing a team. To be effective, step-by-step preparation and the method and means of presenting the information should be carefully considered.

Preparing a Presentation:

Preparation is the most important part of making a successful presentation. This is the crucial foundation and there should be no short-cuts.

Organising the Presentation Material

Irrespective of whether the occasion is formal or informal, you should always aim to give a clear, well-structured delivery.

You should know exactly what you want to say and the order in which you want to say it. Clarity of ideas and good organisation should result in a lively, logical and compelling message.

Writing Your Presentation:

Before you write your presentation, you should already have started to prepare by developing your ideas and selecting the main points to include.

Deciding the Presentation Method

Once you have decided on your key messages, and thought about organising your material, you next need to think about how you will present. Presentations range from the formal to the informal, and your choice of presentation method will depend on many factors, including the audience, the venue, the facilities, and your own preferences.

Managing your Presentation Notes

Few people are able to give a presentation without notes. You will need to know your own abilities and decide how best to make the presentation. You might manage your talk by using full text, notes on cue cards, keywords on cue cards, or mind maps.

Working with Visual Aids

Most visual aids will need advance preparation and should be operated with efficiency.

Only use visual aids if they are necessary to maintain interest and assist comprehension: do not use them just to demonstrate your technological prowess. If visual aids are used well, they will enhance a presentation by adding impact and strengthening audience involvement, but if not, they can ruin a presentation.

to avoid falling into the trap of the dreaded '*Death by Powerpoint*'.

Presenting Data

There are times when using data in a presentation can really help you to tell the story better. But it's important not to blind your audience with statistics, and also to remember that many people find numbers difficult to understand.

Managing the Event

The practicalities of how you manage your presentation can make a significant difference to its success, and to your nerves! Learn how to cope, and also about managing sound systems, audio-visual equipment and lecterns.

Coping with Presentation Nerves

It is entirely natural to feel nervous before making a presentation.

Fortunately, there are some tried and tested strategies and techniques to manage your nerves so that you can concentrate on delivering an effective and engaging presentation.

Dealing with Questions

Decide in advance how and when you wish to handle questions. Some speakers prefer questions to be raised as they arise during the presentation whilst others prefer to deal with questions at the end. At the start of your presentation, you should make clear your preferences to the audience.

Self-Presentation in Presentations

Finally, how you present yourself can affect how your audience responds to your presentation.

You need to fit with your audience's expectations if they are not going to spend quite a large chunk of your presentation dealing with the differences between expectations and reality.

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