

TECHNICAL AND REPORT WRITING



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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1.1: What is Technical Writing?

What is Technical Writing?^[1]

You're probably wondering what this "technical writing thing" is. Someone may even have told you, "It's this course where they make you write about rocket science and brain surgery." Well, not really, as you will see in a moment. Actually, the field of technical communication is essential in a wide range of fields and occupations. It is a fully professional field with degree programs, certifications, and—yes!—even theory. It's a good field with a lot of growth and income potential; and an introductory technical-writing course for which this book has been developed is a good way to start if you are interested in a career in this field.

Technical writing is an audience-centered means of communication that provides a reader with clear and easy access to information. In the business world, time equates to profit, and profit is the force behind all business interaction. The technical writer and reader have a vis-à-vis relationship. The writer recognizes, respects, and addresses the importance of time in effective and efficient communication by providing documents written in specific formats, using unambiguous language to send clearly accessible information. The reader in turn thoroughly understands the information in order to give a thoughtful response.

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1.2: The Meaning of "Technical"

The Meaning of "Technical"

Technical communication—or technical writing, as the course is often called—is not writing about a specific technical topic such as computers, but about any technical topic. The term "technical" refers to knowledge that is not widespread, that is more the territory of experts and specialists. Whatever your major is, you are developing an expertise—you are becoming a specialist in a particular technical area. And whenever you try to write or say anything about your field, you are engaged in technical communication.

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1.3: Academic Writing Versus Technical Writing

Academic Writing Versus Technical Writing

The definite purpose, strict format and use of appropriate language in technical writing define the differences between technical writing and academic writing. The academic writer's purpose may be to write an assignment, a story, a letter, etc.. These works may or may not have a reader. However, technical writing always has a definite purpose and will always have a reader. Regardless of the number of the intended readers of a document who may or may not read the document, the document will be read by the primary reader.

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1.4: Workplace Writing

Workplace Writing

However, the focus for technical-writing courses is not necessarily a career as a technical writer but an introduction to the kinds of writing skills you need in practically any technically oriented professional job. No matter what sort of professional work you do, you're likely to do lots of writing—and much of it technical in nature. The more you know about some basic technical-writing skills, which are covered in this guide and in technical-writing courses, the better job of writing you're likely to do. And that will be good for the projects you work on, for the organizations you work in, and—most of all—good for you and your career.

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1.5: Really Technical Writing

Really Technical Writing

Keep relaxing, but you should know that professional technical writers do in fact write about very technical stuff—information that they cannot begin to master unless they go back for a Ph.D. But wait a minute! The technical documents have to ship with the product in less than nine months! How do they manage? Professional technical writers rely on these strategies to ensure the technical accuracy of their work:

- Study of books, articles, reports, websites related to the product
- Product specifications: what the product is supposed to do, how it is designed
- Interviews with subject matter experts: the product specialists, developers, engineers
- Product meetings during the development cycle
- Live demonstrations of the product
- Familiarization with similar, competing products
- Experimenting with working models of the product
- Most importantly, subject matter experts' review of technical writers' work for technical accuracy and completeness

Of course, experienced technical writers will tell you that product development moves so fast that specifications are not always possible and that working models of the product are rarely available. That's why the subject matter experts' review is often the most important.

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1.6: Considerations of Technical Documents

Considerations of Technical Documents

There are key components of what makes a document strong. Therefore, writers keep these items in mind while constructing technical documents.

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1.10: Ethics

Technical writers have a responsibility to their readers and to their employers to follow ethics when writing reports. Technical writers must use words that demonstrate valid appeals to reason, avoiding emotional words and phrases that appeal to basic emotion instead of justifiable reasoning. In addition, technical writers must use valid references to support ideas and strategies, avoiding referencing non experts to sway readers' support. Also, technical writers must use accurate numbers to report data, avoiding charts and tables that skew data. Using any type of fallacies in technical writing is unethical and could result in dire consequences.



Figure 1.10.1: Image of Text with Watch. **Authored by:** Stephen Wu. **Located at:** <https://flic.kr/p/tZ1LP>. **License:** [CC BY-NC-ND: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives](#)

Not only do technical writers have a responsibility to report accurate information, but they also have a responsibility to credit accurate sources of information. At no time is it acceptable to rearrange information in order to attempt to indicate that the writer is the source of someone else's idea or to indicate that the writer read a report that included information he/she cited, when the primary source of the information was cited in another report. All sources must be referenced accurately in the text and cited on a reference page.

Daniel G. Riordan (2005), in *Technical Report Writing Today*, cites Dombrowski to define three threads of ethics:

One major thread is that the communicator must be a good person who cares for the audience. Communicators must tell the truth as convincingly as possible, because truth will lead to the good of the audience. Another thread is that the communicator must do what is right, regardless of possible outcomes. A third thread is that communicators must act for the greatest good for the greatest number of people (p. 16).

In addition, Riordan (2005) references the “code of ethics of the Society for Technical Writers, and cites five of the code’s tenants:

My commitment to professional excellence and ethical behaviors means that I will...

- Use language and visuals with precision.
- Prefer simple direct expression of ideas.
- Satisfy the audience’s need for information, not my own need for self-expression.
- Hold myself responsible for how well my audience understands my message.
- Report the work of colleagues, knowing that a communication problem may have more than one solution (Riordan, 2005, pp. 15-16).

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1.11: References

Hall, E. T. & Hall, M. R. (1990). Understanding Cultural Differences. Yardmouth: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Riordan, D. G. (2005). Technical Report Writing Today. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

- **Visuals & Readability**

To make a document more reader friendly, many technical writers rely on visuals to achieve this goal. ^[5] *For example, labels, callouts and captions are identifying text for graphics.* Labels and callouts identify specific elements or features on a graphic; whereas captions are short phrases or sentences that describe the graphic. Notes, or footnotes, explain, or give credit.

Labels and Callouts

To identify specific elements or features, labels and captions are placed directly on the graphic or near it. "Although the terms are used interchangeably, labels are text identifiers that are self-explanatory in an image, while callouts are labels that require further information outside the image to explain what they are identifying" (Gurak 304). They supplement the visual information. But use them selectively; use them only if readers need them (Rude 116).

The advantage of labels is that the reader gains a basic understanding of elements in the graphic without referring to supplementary explanations. But, too many labels obscure the image. In this case, callouts are the better option. Use numbers or letters to identify each element and the supplementary explanations.

Guidelines for Creating Labels and Callouts

- Determine the number of items to identify in the image (Gurak 308).
- Estimate how much explanation each item requires to determine if labels or callouts are more appropriate (Gurak 308).
- When writing labels and callouts,
 - create a consistent visual style (Gurak 308)
 - use the same terms on the label or callout as in the text (Rude 116)
 - in general, all parts mentioned in the text should have a label or callout, and all parts with a label or callout should be mentioned in the text. (Rude 116)
- Layout the labels or callouts next to the elements in the graphic they identify, using a line to connect the two, if necessary.
- Use a standard font and size for readability (Rude 116)
- Align the labels and callouts for a neater appearance (Rude 116)
- If callouts are used, place the explanatory text in a key next to the graphic.

Labels

Labels can take different forms (Gurak 304 - 306):

- They may be placed directly on the graphic (whereby they become part of the graphic).
- They may be placed around the graphic and use lines to point to the relevant element in the graphic.
- Online, labels can be links or hotspots whereby more information about the element is displayed on mouse rollover.

This is an example of labels placed directly on the graphic.

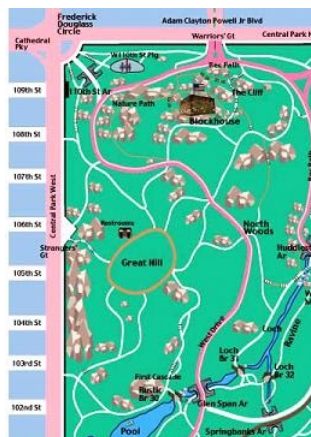


Figure 1.11.1: Map of the West Side Central Park, NYC between 102nd and 110th Streets.

Here, the labels are placed around the graphic.

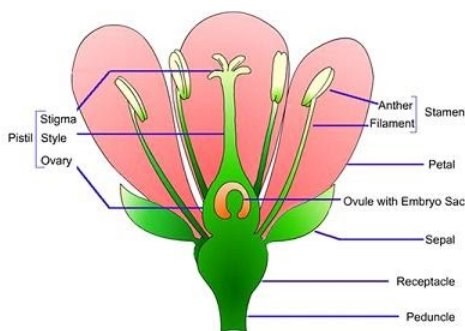


Figure 1.11.2: Parts of a flower.

In this sample, when the mouse is rolled over the 'Firebox' label, the text will read: "Literally a box containing the fire. It is surrounded by water on the top and all sides. The bottom is a grate with an ash pan below that." Additional information is displayed.

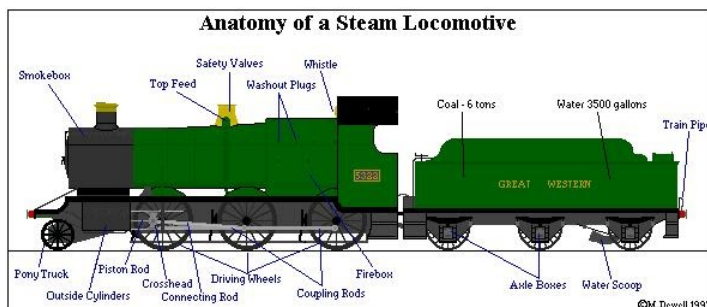


Figure 1.11.3: Labels as hotspots.

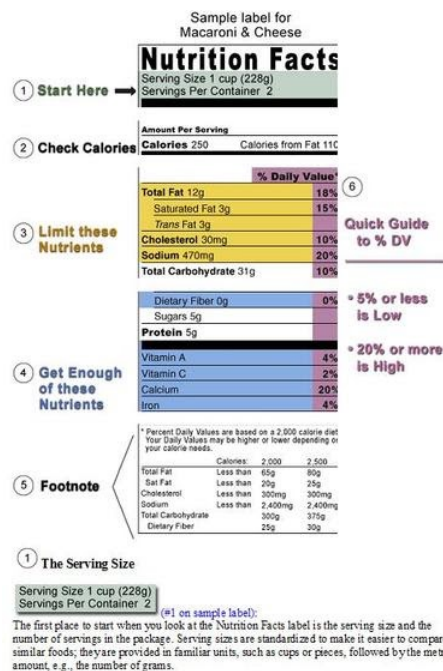


Figure 1.11.4: How to understand and use the Nutrition Facts Label.

Callouts

Callouts are best used when many parts of the image need to be labeled and each part requires a longer explanation. In fact, the label sequence may be in alphabetical or numerical (as in Figure 15.36) order. Ensure that the explanation is near the graphic

Coded callouts are in numerical sequence; the explanation for each number appears below the graphic. The example above shows part of the explanation of Number 1 explanation only.

Captions

Captions, table, and graphics titles must clearly identify information to the reader. Interpretive captions usually require one or more sentences. Captions should be informational, without becoming too lengthy. Captions that are merely a title for a graphic are not very helpful (Franklin 96).

Writing Style for Captions

- Captions for graphics include the title and any explanatory material, immediately under the graphic.
- Words such as Figure, Illustration, and Table should be in bold type.
- The caption should be italicized.
- Treat tables and figures the same.

Good captions are what guide readers not only to see, but also to understand. Captions label graphics with titles and explain to readers what they are seeing, and how to interpret the information captured in the visual. The Franklin Covey Style Guide for Business and Technical Communication provides an excellent source for writing captions (Franklin 39 - 41).

Five Specific Style Rules

- **Use interpretive captions** whenever possible. Interpretive captions provide both a title and explanatory information, usually expressed in a complete sentence, to help readers understand the central point(s) that the writer wants to convey. A graphic and its caption should be clear and understandable without requiring readers to search for clarifying information in the text:
- **Figure 4. Cabin-Temperature Control System.** Constant cabin temperature control is maintained by the system's modulated cabin sensor.
- This interpretive caption gives the title and then tells the reader the principle message - that the check valve provides near-zero risk. And, it states how the check valve provides near-zero risk (Franklin 39).

- **Figure 23. Check Valve.** The risk of bad air entering the changer is near zero because the check valve permits air flow in one direction only.
- This interpretive caption gives the title of the figure and emphasizes that the cabin has a constant temperature - a benefit provided by the feature described in the figure. The caption states clearly what the writer wants the reader to learn from the drawing (Franklin 39).
- **Avoid using short, often ambiguous, titles** to replace interpretive captions. In the past, styles for technical and scientific documents used only short, simple title captions for visuals. These were often superfluous, providing no real information other than the obvious to the reader, i.e. - A Horse. Titles that are so short and cryptic that they sound telegraphic are not useful. Such captions are only useful when the graphics are self-explanatory, and require no interpretation (Franklin 40).
- **Number figures and tables sequentially** throughout the document, and place the number before the caption. If an important figure or table is presented twice, treat it as two separate visuals and number each. Figure and table numbers should be whole numbers (Franklin 40).
- **Use periods** following interpretive captions but no punctuation following short captions that are not sentences. Interpretive captions are usually complete sentences and should therefore end with a period. Short captions, like titles and headings, are not usually complete sentences, so they require no punctuation (Franklin 41).
- Captions may appear below or above a visual, but consistency throughout a document is critical. Arguments support both options; choose one, warrant your choice, and be consistent.
- **Put the caption above the visual** for better visibility when captions are used with slides and other project visual aids. Captions placed at the bottom may be blocked by the heads of those seated in front (Franklin 99).

Notes

Notes or footnotes are categorized as either explanatory or source notes. Explanatory footnotes are identified by a superscript number or letter. The order in which notes appear is important; explanatory footnotes are placed above source notes. And both are placed above the caption, if the caption is placed at the bottom of the illustration.

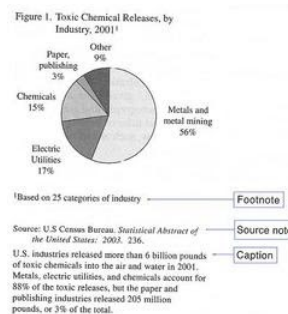


Figure 1.11.5: Placement of footnote, source note and caption.

Source: Rude, p. 115, modified

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1.12: The Writing Process

Writing, especially when compiling a larger document, is not something you sit down, complete in one session, and quickly submit. This is especially true when writing for the workplace where accuracy and clarity are necessary. In fact, writing should be seen as a process that is recursive where the writer moves in and out of various stages of writing and often times revisits some of the stages. The writing process might consist of the following:

Prewriting

This is the planning done before writing a document. It may be defining the purpose of the task, analyzing the primary and secondary readers, sketching the document and what will go in each section, or gathering research.

Drafting

This is writing and compiling a first draft of the document. Sometimes, the writer worries more about getting ideas down more than guaranteeing every punctuation or grammar choice is correct.

Revising

When a writer revises, a writer revisits the draft and makes substantial changes to it. This is more than editing. It is adding, deleting, and moving entire sections of the document around to prepare it as a final, comprehensive document. In fact, it is here that many writers ask others for feedback before revising to ensure that another, unbiased set of eyes have looked over the document and easily understand it.

Editing

This is the final part of the process. It is reading through the document several times while looking for clarity, consistency, and accuracy. In fact, consider reading your document aloud and listening to it as you do so instead of reading and “seeing” it. Most individuals communicate mostly through talking and listening. Therefore, when you read aloud, you can hear if something in your document doesn’t sound right and then correct it. You should be able to read it in a way that it is understandable and sounds conversational.

For additional information on the writing process, visit The Writing Center website for the University of Texas: [University of Texas Writing Center & The Writing Process](#).

Using a process in the workplace and in our class will strengthen your documents significantly. In fact, remember that your documents reflect on who you are as student, technical writer, employee, and even researcher.

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1.7: The Importance of Audience

- The Importance of Audience

Another key part of the definition of technical communication is the receiver of the information—the audience. Technical communication is the delivery of technical information to readers (or listeners or viewers) in a manner that is adapted to their needs, level of understanding, and background. In fact, this audience element is so important that it is one of the cornerstones of this course: you are challenged to write about highly technical subjects but in a way that a beginner—a nonspecialist—could understand. This ability to "translate" technical information to non-specialists is a key skill to any technical communicator. In a world of rapid technological development, people are constantly falling behind and becoming technological illiterates. Technology companies are constantly struggling to find effective ways to help customers or potential customers understand the advantages or the operation of their new products.

Not only is the the level at which you write important but so are the language choices you make as you do so. Please review the information on the following link for tips: [Use Language that is Sensitive to Your Audience](#)^[2]

So relax! You don't have to write about computers or rocket science—write about the area of technical specialization you know or are learning about. Also, plan to write about it in such a way that even Grandad can understand!

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1.8: Formatting and Language

- Formatting and Language

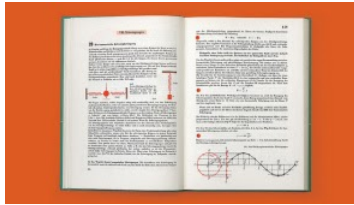


Figure 1.8.1: Image of Textbook. **Authored by:** Dominik Wagner. **Located at:** <https://flic.kr/p/eoAvCb>. **License:** [CC BY: Attribution](#)

Formatting and appropriate language are the basic design elements of all technical documents. A format that shows a hierarchical structure and a coordinate structure of information leads the reader through text. *Readers should be able to identify a writer's organizational pattern very quickly when reading a technical document. This sometimes refers to a document being "reader friendly."* In addition, using appropriate language is significant in providing the reader with a thorough understanding of the purpose of the document, how the document relates to the reader's needs, and what action is expected of the reader. ^[3]

A document may also have one reader (the primary reader) or several readers (the secondary readers). A primary reader is the person who ordered the report to be written or the person for whom a report is intended. These readers will usually read the entire report. Secondary readers are those readers who will read only the sections of the report that relate to them, their jobs, their departments, responsibilities, etc. For example, if a report was sent that detailed funding for different departments, a piping superintendent may only want to read the section that relates to piping. This is where format, the use of headings, is significant in allowing the reader easy access to information. When the piping superintendent can scan through the document and clearly find the heading that identifies his department saves time.

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1.9: Cultural Communication

- Cultural Communication

Technical writers need to be aware of the differences between the behavior and the norms, beliefs and values of specific cultural. According to Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, In *Understanding Cultural Differences*, each culture operates according to its own rules (1990, pp. 3-4). Hall and Hall add that problems occur when members of one culture apply the rules to another culture (1990, pp. 3-4). To communicate effectively with other cultures, the technical writer needs to not only be aware of rules governing behaviors that can be observed but also of the not-so-obvious rules that govern the norms, beliefs, and values of the people of a culture. The invisible rules of a culture dramatically impact the acceptance of ideas, plans, and strategies. The Cultural Iceberg illustrates patterns of world communication, showing indicators of Institutional Culture (the obvious behavior of a culture), which can be clearly seen as the tip of the iceberg, and People Culture (the norms, beliefs and values of a culture), which cannot be seen and which are the barriers to successful communication.

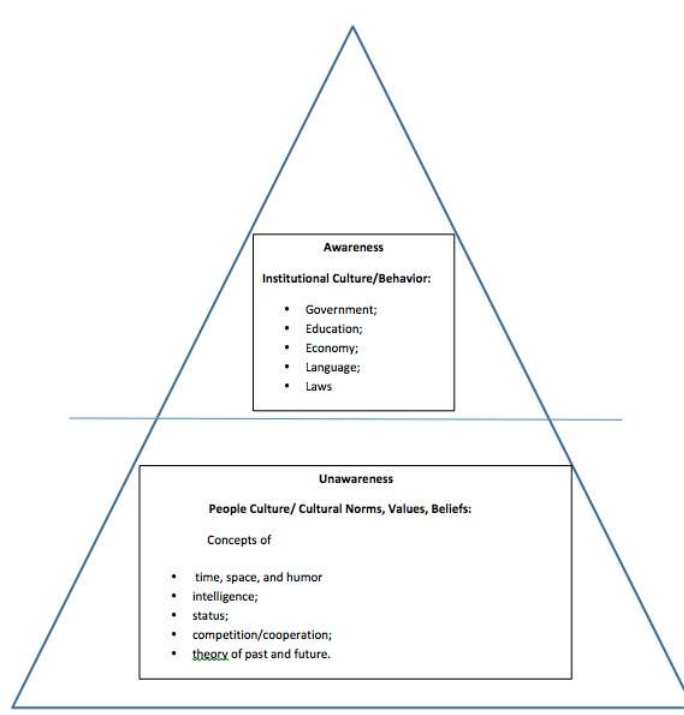


Figure 1.9.1: The Cultural Iceberg

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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2.1: Ethics and Technical Communication

As you put together professional documents and begin working in the “real” world, you must understand what could easily lead to your downfall in your professional workplace. The Paul Anderson text claims that at work in a professional setting, there are at least three major “sources of guidance”:

1. The code of ethics already developed by your field’s professionals.
2. The ethical code set in place by your company.
3. Your own personal ethics.

Some companies have decided to have employees keep their personal ethics at home. In reality, companies that try to keep personal ethics at home find that employees are occasionally asked to perform actions that they do not condone at home. In professional settings we would like to assume that companies would not act unethically, so why should we even pay attention?

The truth is, companies do act unethically whether it is disposing of toxic waste incorrectly or price gouging to name a few. The same goes for writing professional documents. You should keep them clean and standardized to save yourself from damaging a possible job opportunity and the name you represent.



Figure 2.1.1

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2.2: Stakeholders

Stakeholders

When writing any professional document, it is important to identify the potential stakeholders. A stakeholder is anyone who will be affected by what you are intending on writing. How you choose to word your document or even the choice to write the document becomes an ethical matter to stakeholders. It is crucial to consider your main objective(s) before writing. If you are writing a document that would be used to harm other living things (like writing a manual for a handgun) you have to weigh the implications to all stakeholders impacted. According to the Paul Anderson text, there are three types of stakeholders: direct, indirect, and remote. [8]

Direct

The direct stakeholders are those initially impacted by what you write. For instance, if you are writing about opening a new waste disposal area, the stakeholders clearly include the company you are writing to. However, disposal companies that might use this waste area in the future are also considered direct stakeholders. Their future business will be impacted based on whether your proposal is accepted or declined.

Indirect

The indirect stakeholders are those that are not impacted until a later time. Using the previous example of the waste disposal, citizens in the area would be indirect stakeholders. The stakeholders don't necessarily need to be people. The nearby eco-systems would be indirect stakeholders to this same proposal. If toxic waste is dumped there, it would harm the animals, rivers and plant life nearby.

Remote

Finally, the remote stakeholders are not affected until far into the future. One example following our hypothetical waste disposal area, is future generations. While it may seem far-fetched, historically, there have been instances where toxic or poisonous things have been disposed of incorrectly and the run-off that went into lakes and streams caused birth defects. While this is remote, it must be considered when writing a document.



Figure 2.2.1

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2.3: Ethical Writing

Ethical Writing

Once on the job, you will be assigned to create many documents throughout your professional career. Some may be simple and straightforward, some may be difficult and involve questionable objectives. Overall, there are a few basic points to adhere to whenever you are writing a professional document:^[9]

- Don't mislead.
- Don't manipulate.
- Don't stereotype.

Don't Mislead

This has more than one meaning to the professional writer. The main point is clear. When writing persuasively, do not write something that can cause the reader to believe something that isn't true. This can be done by lying, misrepresenting facts, or just "twisting" numbers to favor your opinion and objectives. This is clearly different from the resume ethics. Once you are on the job, you cannot leave out numbers that show you're behind or over-budget on a project, no matter how well it may work once it is completed. Facts are facts and they must be represented in that way. Be cautious when using figures, charts and tables, making sure they are not misleading. While this may seem easy to read about, when the pressure is on and there are deadlines to meet, taking shortcuts and stretching the truth are very common.

The other, less frequently used component is **plagiarizing**. While it may seem like this is something students learn to avoid after they graduate, it remains an important guideline for all professionals. Plagiarizing is misrepresenting the source or facts, most commonly when you claim the ideas you are writing about are yours. When you are researching professional documents, make sure you are using material with permission. If you are writing about what you've researched, make sure you are citing the sources of your information and giving credit to all the necessary researchers.

This rule also extends beyond writing to what is referred to as intellectual property. Intellectual property includes the following:

Patents and trademarks are company names (WalMart), logos (the Target bullseye), processes or slogans (I'm lovin' it) that belong to a person or company. None of these things can be used without proper recognition of or approval from the appropriate company or individual involved.

A company uses a TM to show something is trademarked or an ® for something registered with the U.S Patent and Trademark Office. An example would be Nike and their famous swoosh symbol.

This law extends beyond the major companies. Any written document in your own company is copyrighted by law once produced. That means if you are borrowing a good idea from a friend at another company, you must cite them as a source. Also, although not required by law, it is a good idea to cite sources from inside your own company as well. You wouldn't want someone else taking credit for your ideas. Why should you treat others any differently?

The legal consequences are most notable when one considers writing in the professional world. While plagiarizing may give you a failing grade in a class, plagiarizing in the workplace can not only get you fired, but could result in a costly lawsuit or possibly even jail time. It is not only ethical to follow these rules, it is an enforced law. Make sure you properly document all sources so as not to mislead a reader.

Spend a few minutes viewing the following website for clarification on copyright, trademark, and registered trademark: [Differences Between a Copyright, Trademark, & Registration](#).

Copyright law includes items whose distribution is protected by law (books, movies, or software). The copyright symbol is shown with a ©. Copyright is different from plagiarism in that it is a legal issue. Only the copyright holder, the person/organization who owns the protected item, can copy it.

Some considerations made by the court when determining if a copyright law has been violated include:

- The character, purpose of use, and amount of information being used. Was it a phrase, sentence, chapter, or an entire piece of work? Was the information simply copied and pasted as a whole or changed? Was it taken from something published or

unpublished? What was it used for?

- If the person using another's material did so to profit from it. Only the copyright holder should profit from the material he/she owns. For example, this is why a faculty member cannot use his or her personal cd for a movie screening on campus and charge students to attend the viewing.
- If using someone else's property affected the market for the copyrighted work. For example, if I take an item that would cost money to buy and copy it for other people, I am affecting the market for that product since the people I give it to will now not have to purchase it themselves. Therefore, the original owner of the material is denied a profit due to my actions.

When dealing with copyright questions, consider the following tips. First, find out if the item can be used. Sometimes, the copyright holder allows it if credit is given. Second, don't use large amounts of another person's information. Third, if possible, ask permission to use another person's work. In addition, and most importantly, cite sources accurately so as to give credit to the another person's ideas if you are able to use them.

Don't Manipulate

If you are holding a professional job, it is understood that you have a decent ability to write persuasively, even if your first persuasive document was your resume. Do not use your ability to persuade people to do what is not in their best interest. While this may not always seem easy, a good writer with a bad motive can twist words to make something sound like it is beneficial to all parties. The audience may find out too late that what you wrote only benefited you and actually ended up hurting them. This goes back to the stakeholders. Make sure they are not only considered and cared for when writing a persuasive document. It is easy to get caught up in the facts and forget all the people involved. Their feelings and livelihood must be considered with every appropriate document you create.

Don't Stereotype

Most stereotyping takes place subconsciously now since workplaces are careful to not openly discriminate. It is something we may not even be aware we are doing, so it is always a good idea to have a peer or coworker proofread your documents to make sure you have not included anything that may point to discriminatory assumptions.

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2.4: Addressing Unethical Practices

Many times in the professional setting, workers find it difficult to deal with unethical practices in their company. First, begin by bringing the unethical practice to the surface, which is usually the hardest part. Paul Anderson's text reviews **three** ways that you can bring your company's practices to the surface. It is easiest to first start asking questions. Asking questions may seem too simple but it is an effective way of bringing attention to your company's problems. Ask questions about who their decisions are affecting and why they are making those decisions. This will not put you on the spot for being the bad guy, but it will allow you to voice your opinion.

The second idea Anderson describes as being helpful in revealing unethical practices is to use facts or reason, instead of accusation. Before you raise questions about your company's unethical practices, make sure you have cold hard facts instead of accusations. Many times accusations are made about situations where people truly do not know the reason those decisions were being made. If you base your thoughts around true facts, your company will assume you looked into the situation and will take your thoughts more seriously.

The third helpful way to bring your company's unethical practices to the surface is to remain open to others ideas. What this allows you to do is base a solution around many different sides instead of just your own. Since people usually have different ethical values, your own stance may not coincide with everyone else's'. Make sure you identify possible values of others when considering possible solutions.

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2.5: Employing Ethical Techniques

In professional writing, ethical dimensions begin to surface especially in persuasive writing. When you are trying to persuade other people to make a certain decision or to take action, stay clear of manipulation and misconceptions. At times, you may be misleading someone unintentionally. In persuasive writing, you must respect the reader's values and viewpoints. Do not use false or skewed facts or argue from such premises because you may deceive the reader(s) and cause them to make an unlawful decision.

Avoiding manipulation when writing persuasively is also key. Sometimes you may be aware of the readers point. If so, you must make sure not to use this personal information against them in your writing. It is unethical to persuade readers to make a decision that benefits yourself and not them. Most times, people try to manipulate others to receive some type of reward or gain.

To avoid using misleading or manipulating words and phrases, it is important to be open to alternative viewpoints. In preparing any type of persuasive writing, you will come across conflicting viewpoints, so being aware of other views should not be hard. Keep your readers' ideas and goals in mind and consider what lies behind their concerns. To help solve these problems it may also be good to make statements based on human values. Discussing several opinions and ideas on the subject will make you more persuasive, because most viewpoints will be included to prevent you from appearing biased.

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2.6: Legal Issues and Communication

In business, image is everything. Public opinion of a company affects a consumer's views on that company's products. This, in turn, affects the company's public profit, and essentially its standing. When a company is involved in a lawsuit or a recall, the company has to consider the consequences that these issues will have on their business and needs to consider the costs of repairing the company's reputation. These are among the reasons certain documents are carefully reviewed before being sent to their intended readers. To write ethically, you must also identify another group of people: the individuals who will gain or lose because of your message. Collectively, these people are called *stakeholders* because they have a stake in what you are writing. Only by learning who these stakeholders are can you assure that you are treating them in accordance with your own ethical values. When crafting your communication think about who will be affected by what you say and how you say it. You have to be sensitive to the following language in a professional document:

- Race and gender roles
- Political correctness
- Generalizations
- Cultural awareness
- Religious symbols

Under the law, most documents written by employees represent the position and commitments of the organization itself. There are always legal issues to consider when writing a professional document and they reflect in writing style. Professional documents can serve as evidence in disputes over contracts and in product liability lawsuits. A lawsuit is a civil action brought in court. Today, the average company is involved in 400 lawsuits at any given time. While most companies win their lawsuits, being caught in a lawsuit has many consequences. Lawsuits cost companies time and money. The money spent on lawyers and the time spent in court takes away resources a company could use for improving business and products. Lawsuits also have ramifications for a company's reputation. Recalls can be another legal problem for companies. A recall is when a product is removed from the market or a correction is made to the product because it is either defective or potentially harmful. In most cases, a recall results from an unintentional mistake by a company rather than from an intentional disregard for the law. Sometimes a company discovers a problem and recalls a product on its own. Other times a company recalls the product after concerns are made.

There are a number of reasons why a company may face a lawsuit or a recall. One of the main reasons a company gets involved in a lawsuit is because the directions to the company's product were not clear to the consumer. For this reason, the general guideline is that instructions should be understandable, clear and concise at the fourth to sixth grade reading level. Also, when in a lawsuit, a company has to remember that all documents may be subpoenaed. This means that any document from memos and emails to proposals and studies can be subject to revision by a court of law. Another reason a company gets into a lawsuit may be over a recall. An aspect of recalls are those dealing with safety concerns. Many products are recalled for potential safety concerns, even if no one was actually hurt. To avoid safety recalls, companies need to make sure they consider every possible danger involved with a product. Some dangers may seem to be common knowledge, but companies should be aware of those and label the product accordingly, regardless of assumptions about common knowledge.

Communication Constraints

Constraints are limits for documents set by the company or industry. As you gather the information that will form the basis for the way you craft your communication, you should also learn about any expectations, regulations, or other factors that may constrain what you can say and how you can say it. In the working world, expectations and regulations can affect any aspect of a communication. Aspects that affect communication are as follows:

- Tone of voice
- Use of abbreviations
- Tables
- Margins
- Length of document (as a maximum)

It is important to find out about these constraints and take them into account as you create your communication. Some of these constraints come directly from the employer. Your employer and your readers probably have expectations about the way you write

a professional document. There are often, unspoken expectations about how the required elements will be prepared. You are cultivating a company's desire for a particular corporate image, to protect its legal interests, and to preserve its competitive edge. A toy company like LEGO, would not want to be associated with a technical document that includes slang or words that could damage their reputation. They are legally protecting their business. Since all documents can be used against individuals and companies in court, all written documents with the company name should include only professional content that properly represents the company.

Other times, constraints are set by government regulations that determine how certain reports need to be written. Regulations are laws made by the government that affect what is in a document or how a document is written. Writing constraints can originate from outside the company. For example, from government regulations that specify how patent applications, environmental impact report, and many other types of documents are to be prepared. Similarly, scientific, technical, or other professional journals have strict rules about many aspects of the articles they publish. These regulations act as standards for crafting your communication effectively.

Style Constraints

Constraints may be set by style issues as well. There should be no clichés and idioms in documents because they may pose a problem with translating documents from one language to another. A cliché is a worn-out or overused expression that tends to sound trite and often doesn't express what you truly mean to say. Examples include: the bottom line is, head over heels, or take it or leave it. Idioms are words or expressions that are specialized vocabulary used by a group of people also known as jargon. Look at the phrases that you use when you write and see if they make sense when translated literally. If they don't, replace them with language that is clear and direct, and will not be misunderstood. Don't use "compound" sentences (and, or, nor, but, however, yet). Opinions and jokes should also be avoided in business documents. Communicate, argue or persuade your readers through facts and data instead of opinions.

Many companies also like to form a "custom" way of writing. Companies like Microsoft want all their documents to be written in the same style and format. The only way to do this is to teach the writers the "correct" way to write in order to portray Microsoft. What many people may not know is that Microsoft does this to cover themselves in a legal trial. If every single document is written using the same format, they can make sure that the customers understand the entire document and do not run into trouble with inconsistencies.

How do you know if you are following the correct constraints? The easiest way to understand how to write in your specific field is to look at documents written by your company and other companies in the industry within the past few months. This will allow you to see their style and how they make their argument. Some companies even publish style guides for writing. By seeing your company's regulations, you can begin to draft your argument. Make sure to follow your company's guidebook (if they have one) to be sure that your style is correct with their recommendations.

Remember that in professional writing you are trying to persuade the reader using an ethical style. This means to avoiding content that will not stand up in court, especially since people file lawsuits for everything these days. Make sure that the documents you write for your company are persuasive while also preserving your company's competitive edge.

Contributors and Attribution

- Wikipedia: https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Professional_and_Technical_Writing/Ethics/Legal_Issues

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2.10: Legal Requirements: Protecting Consumers

Documentation should prepare readers to safely use the product. US law stipulates that a manual must list any hazards that may occur “from the intended or unintended but reasonably foreseeable use of its products.” You have a legal duty to warn consumers when:

1. The product supplied is dangerous.
2. The danger is or should be known by the manufacturer.
3. The danger is present when the product is used in the usual and expected manner.
4. The danger is not obvious or well known to the user.

Failure to “adequately” warn consumers opens your company up to lawsuits. What exactly makes a warning “adequate”? Good question. Adequacy is almost impossible to define. It’s much easier to define what is not adequate. Here’s a few common ways that manuals or instructions fall short:

- Failure to warn users about how to properly use a product.
- Failure to warn against risks from proper use of a product.
- Failure to warn against any reasonably foreseeable misuses of a product.

The key commonality is that everything listed could result in bodily harm or death.

Safety information must also be accessible to your readers. Therefore, warnings should stand out from the rest of the documents, possibly with icons, colored fonts, or bolding. They should also be easy to understand. A confusing warning is just as bad as not warning users at all.



Figure 2.10.1

Many companies list warnings at the beginning of the manual or instructions to give them prominence. That’s fine, but also list hazards where the reader might encounter them in your instructions.

Of course, it’s tempting to frontload the warnings as a preemptive strike against lawsuits. Lots of companies do it. Every electronic product is dangerous if you stick your tongue in the socket along with the plug. Just be reasonable. We’ve seen warnings that border on the bizarre: “Do not eat your iPod Shuffle”; “Do not use your hairdryer while sleeping”; “Do not use this rotary drill as a home dentistry kit.” etc.

Before you brainstorm a list of improbable-but-possible warnings, we’ve got a warning of our own: Too many warnings—especially ridiculous ones—make the whole safety section seem silly. Then, no one takes the warnings seriously—not even the real ones. Remember: You only have to caution users when a danger is “reasonably foreseeable.” Aim for the Goldilocks principle: find the middle ground between not enough warnings and way too many.

There are often contract and liability laws put into place to protect consumers

Contract Law is an agreement between two entities. It can be written or oral. There are usually two kinds: express warranty and implied warranty. An express warranty is a clearly written or oral statement that the product is capable of. An implied warranty can be reasonably inferred by the purchaser. How so? How the packaging is done and what is on the accompanying fliers or material can be part of this.

Liability Law helps companies and organizations act responsibly. Therefore, the company or organization is responsible for giving adequate instructions and warning users about the risks associated with the product. They can also be held liable if a consumer is

injured or damages occur.

Liability and contract laws can vary by country. European regulations are decidedly strict, and Asian laws are starting to follow suit. If you plan on selling wares internationally, account for various regional requirements. Learn about [liability concerns](#) and relevant [international product liabilities](#) before you publish your manual. As always, consult a lawyer for specific information on how to construct warnings.

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2.7: Appreciating Different Cultures

[This section](#) discusses the importance of considering diversity when writing because our world is multicultural, and your writing needs to reflect our world in that regard. Click on the blue link that starts this section.

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2.8: Ethics Decision Checklist

- What is the nature of the ethical dilemma?
 - What are the specific aspects of this dilemma that make you uncomfortable?
 - What are your competing obligations in this dilemma?
 - What advice does a trusted supervisor or mentor offer?
 - Does your company's code of conduct address this issue?
 - Does your professional association's code of conduct address this issue?
 - What are you unwilling to do? What are you willing to do?
 - How will you explain or justify your decision?
-

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2.9: Legal Issues and Communication



Figure 2.9.1: Image of Buildings. **Authored by:** Miroslav Petrasko. **Located at:** <https://flic.kr/p/9f1ucR>. **License:** [CC BY-NC-ND: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives](#)

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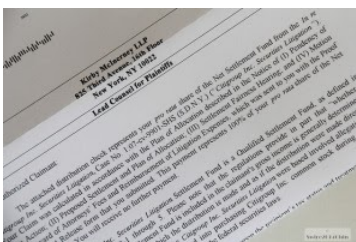


Figure 2.9.2: Image of Legal Paperwork. **Authored by:** Canadian Pacific. **Located at:** <https://flic.kr/p/ouJwP>. **License:** [CC BY-NC: Attribution-NonCommercial](#)

Under the law, most documents written by employees represent the position and commitments of the organization itself. There are always legal issues to consider when writing a professional document and they reflect in writing style. Professional documents can serve as evidence in disputes over contracts and in product liability lawsuits. A lawsuit is a civil action brought in court. Today, the average company is involved in 400 lawsuits at any given time. While most companies win their lawsuits, being caught in a lawsuit has many consequences. Lawsuits cost companies time and money. The money spent on lawyers and the time spent in court takes away resources a company could use for improving business and products. Lawsuits also have ramifications for a company's reputation. Recalls can be another legal problem for companies. A recall is when a product is removed from the market or a correction is made to the product because it is either defective or potentially harmful. In most cases, a recall results from an unintentional mistake by a company rather than from an intentional disregard for the law. Sometimes a company discovers a problem and recalls a product on its own. Other times a company recalls the product after concerns are made.

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- Tone of voice
- Use of abbreviations
- Tables
- Margins
- Length of document (as a maximum)



Figure 2.9.3

It is important to find out about these constraints and take them into account as you create your communication. Some of these constraints come directly from the employer. Your employer and your readers probably have expectations about the way you write a professional document. There are often, unspoken expectations about how the required elements will be prepared. You are cultivating a company's desire for a particular corporate image, to protect its legal interests, and to preserve its competitive edge. A toy company like LEGO, would not want to be associated with a technical document that includes slang or words that could damage their reputation. They are legally protecting their business. Since all documents can be used against individuals and companies in court, all written documents with the company name should include only professional content that properly represents the company.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Writing Collaboratively and Using Social Media

[3.1: Collaboration](#)

[3.2: Social Media& Internet Presence](#)

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3.1: Collaboration

Collaboration

Collaboration, or working together, is a necessary task in most workplaces. Some people hate group work because they've had negative past experiences. They may be the person who seems to do more work than others, they may dislike having to rely on another person to follow through, or maybe they feel it was difficult to pull together so many ideas from so many people. Others don't mind it. They may have had positive experiences and see the value in group work. In fact, if done correctly, collaboration can be an effective tool to getting work done.

Please navigate to the following link [Advice of Finding Collaborators](#), watch the music video, and consider the point being made about collaboration.

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3.2: Social Media& Internet Presence

Social Media & Internet Presence

Social media can be a helpful tool for any professional – if used correctly. It can also increase collaboration. Additionally, it can promote products or your company, help you connect to others, and keep yourself informed about what is going on in the business world. These are only some of the potential benefits. However, consider this: How do you market yourself to the outside world? More specifically, how do you do this online?

We are in an era where the use of social media is a cultural norm. Siblings, moms and dads, and grandparents are on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Instagram. Through social media, we are allowed a window into the lives of distant relatives, neighbors, friends, and even strangers and give them a view into our lives. But what does this have to do with technical & report writing?

We would like to think that our online activity is private – but it isn't; online means that the rest of the world has access to anything you post and that potentially means the place you work for. How and who you market yourself to online impacts your potential as an employee, and employers see employees as representatives of their company.

More and more potential employers are checking the online presence of applicants or are even requesting applicants to open their social media sites during interviews so they can see how candidates “market” themselves to the outside world. Teachers have been fired for posting pictures of themselves drinking with underaged students. Parents and their children have been asked to leave private schools they tweeted negatively about. Employers have required employees to publicly apologize for comments written on social media sites – even if done so on the employee’s own time and personal site. Social media is being utilized as a communication tool by individuals for their own personal use and also by their employees to increase business. Therefore, anything posted online by anyone should be done so in a way that is thoughtful.

In addition, social media tools can make completing work easier. Building valuable connections through LinkedIn shows the credibility you have in your field. Blogging appropriate updates at work can bolster business. Using online wikis can help a group complete a document with everyone’s input. Tweeting can give coworkers updates. In fact, a class Blackboard site has a wiki function, but we use Google Docs instead because it is a tool students can use in the workplace after leaving this class. In fact, some of the dual enrolled students may have already been using it at their schools as it grows in popularity.

Even though technology can help us professionally, we must be careful how we use it. Consider googling variations of your name and see what comes up. Then, review your online presence and try to determine what a potential employer would feel about what he or she finds: News articles about awards received? Media postings praising your kindness? Or are there slanderous rants on an online tv report? An abundance of drinking photos? If at all possible, try to clean up your online presence, use strong privacy settings, and post purposely.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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- 4.1: Letters
- 4.2: Application Letters and Cover Letters
- 4.3: Common Components
- 4.4: Memos
- 4.5: Emails, Texting, & Microblog Overview
- 4.10: Writing Definitions, Description, & Instructions
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4.1: Letters

Principles to Keep in Mind

Business Writing is Different

Writing for a business audience is usually quite different than writing in the humanities, social sciences, or other academic disciplines. Business writing strives to be crisp and succinct rather than evocative or creative; it stresses specificity and accuracy. This distinction does not make business writing superior or inferior to other styles. Rather, it reflects the unique purpose and considerations involved when writing in a business context.

When you write a business document, you must assume that your audience has limited time in which to read it and is likely to skim. Your readers have an interest in what you say insofar as it affects their working world. They want to know the “bottom line”: the point you are making about a situation or problem and how they should respond.

Business writing varies from the conversational style often found in email messages to the more formal, legalistic style found in contracts. A style between these two extremes is appropriate for the majority of memos, emails, and letters. Writing that is too formal can alienate readers, and an attempt to be overly casual may come across as insincere or unprofessional. In business writing, as in all writing, you must know your audience.

In most cases, the business letter will be the first impression that you make on someone. Though business writing has become less formal over time, you should still take great care that your letter’s content is clear and that you have [proofread](#) it carefully.

Pronouns and active versus passive voice

Personal pronouns (I, we, and you) are important in letters and memos. In such documents, it is perfectly appropriate to refer to yourself as “I” and to the reader as “you”. Be careful, however, when you use the pronoun “we” in a business letter that is written on company stationery, since it commits your company to what you have written. When stating your opinion, use “I”; when presenting company policy, use “we”.

The best writers strive to achieve a style that is so clear that their messages cannot be misunderstood. One way to achieve a clear style is to minimize your use of the [passive voice](#). Although the passive voice is sometimes necessary, often it not only makes your writing dull but also can be ambiguous or overly impersonal. Here’s an example of the same point stated in passive voice and in the active voice:

PASSIVE: The net benefits of subsidiary divestiture were grossly overestimated. [Who did the overestimating?]

ACTIVE: The Global Finance Team grossly overestimated the net benefits of subsidiary divestiture.

The second version is clearer and thus preferable.

Of course, there are exceptions to every rule. What if you are the head of the Global Finance Team? You may want to get your message across without calling excessive attention to the fact that the error was your team’s fault. The passive voice allows you to gloss over an unflattering point—but you should use it sparingly.

Focus and Specificity

Business writing should be clear and concise. Take care, however, that your document does not turn out as an endless series of short, choppy sentences. Keep in mind also that “concise” does not have to mean “blunt”—you still need to think about your tone and the audience for whom you are writing. Consider the following examples:

- After carefully reviewing this proposal, we have decided to prioritize other projects this quarter.
- Nobody liked your project idea, so we are not going to give you any funding.

The first version is a weaker statement, emphasizing facts not directly relevant to its point. The second version provides the information in a simple and direct manner. But you don’t need to be an expert on style to know that the first phrasing is diplomatic and respectful (even though it’s less concise) as compared with the second version, which is unnecessarily harsh and likely to provoke a negative reaction.

Business Letters: Where to Begin

Reread the description of your task (for example, the advertisement of a job opening, instructions for a proposal submission, or assignment prompt for a course). Think about your purpose and what requirements are mentioned or implied in the description of the task. List these requirements. This list can serve as an outline to govern your writing and help you stay focused, so try to make it thorough. Next, identify qualifications, attributes, objectives, or answers that match the requirements you have just listed. Strive to be exact and specific, avoiding vagueness, ambiguity, and platitudes. If there are industry- or field-specific concepts or terminology that are relevant to the task at hand, use them in a manner that will convey your competence and experience. Avoid any language that your audience may not understand. Your finished piece of writing should indicate how you meet the requirements you've listed and answer any questions raised in the description or prompt.

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4.2: Application Letters and Cover Letters

Application Letters and Cover Letters

Many people believe that application letters and cover letters are essentially the same. For purposes of this handout, though, these kinds of letters are different. The letter of application is a sales letter in which you market your skills, abilities, and knowledge. A cover letter, on the other hand, is primarily a document of transmittal. It identifies an item being sent, the person to whom it is being sent, and the reason for its being sent, and provides a permanent record of the transmittal for both the writer and the reader.

Application Letters

When writing an application letter, remember that you probably have competition. Your audience is a professional who screens and hires job applicants—someone who may look through dozens or even hundreds of other applications on the day she receives yours. The immediate objective of your application letter and accompanying resume is to attract this person's attention. Your ultimate goal is to obtain an interview.

As you write your application letter, be sure you complete three tasks: catch the reader's attention favorably, convince the reader that you are a qualified candidate for the job, and request an interview.

Application letter checklist:

- Identify the job by title and let the recipient know how you heard about it.
- Summarize your qualifications for the job, specifically your work experience, activities that show your leadership skills, and your educational background.
- Refer the reader to your enclosed resume.
- Ask for an interview, stating where you can be reached and when you will be available. If your prospective employer is located in another city and you plan to visit the area, mention the dates for your trip.
- If you are applying for a specific job, include any information pertinent to the position that is not included in your resume.

To save the reader time and to call attention to your strengths as a candidate, state your objective directly at the beginning of the letter.

Example:

- I am seeking a position as a manager in your Data Center. In such a management position, I can use my master's degree in information systems and my experience as a programmer/analyst to address business challenges in data processing.

If you have been referred to a company by one of its employees, a career counselor, a professor, or someone else, mention that before stating your job objective.

Example:

- During the recent ARRGH convention in Washington, D.C., one of your sales representatives, Dusty Brown, informed me of a possible opening for a manager in your Data Center. My extensive background in programming and my master's degree in information systems make me highly qualified for the position.

In subsequent paragraphs, expand on the qualifications you mentioned in your opening. Add any appropriate details, highlighting experience listed on your resume that is especially pertinent to the job you are seeking. Close with a request for an interview. Proofread your letter carefully.

Two sample letters of application are presented below. The first letter (Sample #1) is by a recent college graduate responding to a local newspaper article about the company's plan to build a new computer center. The writer is not applying for a specific job opening but describes the position he seeks. The second letter (Sample #2) is from a college senior who does not specify where she learned of the opening because she is uncertain whether a position is available.

Sample #1...

6123 Farrington Road

Apt. B11

Chapel Hill, NC 27514

January 11, 2005

Taylor, Inc.

694 Rockstar Lane

Durham, NC 27708

Dear Human Resources Director:

I just read an article in the News and Observer about Taylor's new computer center just north of Durham. I would like to apply for a position as an entry-level programmer at the center.

I understand that Taylor produces both in-house and customer documentation. My technical writing skills, as described in the enclosed resume, are well suited to your company. I am a recent graduate of DeVry Institute of Technology in Atlanta with an Associate's Degree in Computer Science. In addition to having taken a broad range of courses, I served as a computer consultant at the college's computer center where I helped train users to work with new systems.

I will be happy to meet with you at your convenience and discuss how my education and experience match your needs. You can reach me at my home address, at (919) 233-1552, or at krock@devry.alumni.edu.

Sincerely,

Raymond Krock

Sample #2...

6123 Farrington Road

Apt. G11

Chapel Hill, NC 27514

January 11, 2005

Taylor, Inc.

694 Rockstar Lane

Durham, NC 27708

Dear Ms. Jones:

I am seeking a position in your engineering department where I may use my training in computer sciences to solve Taylor's engineering problems. I would like to be a part of the department that developed the Internet Selection System but am unsure whether you have a current opening.

I expect to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering from North Carolina State University in June and by that time will have completed the Computer Systems Engineering Program. Since September 2000, I have been participating, through the University, in the Professional Training Program at Computer Systems International in Raleigh. In the program I was assigned to several staff sections as an apprentice. Most recently, I have been a programmer trainee in the Engineering Department and have gained a great deal of experience in computer applications. Details of the academic courses I have taken are included in the enclosed resume.

If there is a position open at Taylor Inc., please let me know whom I should contact for further information. I look forward to hearing from you soon. I may be reached at my office(919-866-4000 ext. 232) or via email (Brock@aol.com).

Sincerely,

Rebecca Brock

Cover Letters

As mentioned previously, application letters and cover letters are not the same. Cover letters are general letters that transmit some type of business. In fact, a cover letter may accompany other documents such as a proposal to introduce an idea to the company who is receiving it. A cover letter identifies an item being sent, the person to whom it is being sent, and the reason for it being sent. A cover letter provides a permanent record of the transmittal for both the writer and the reader.

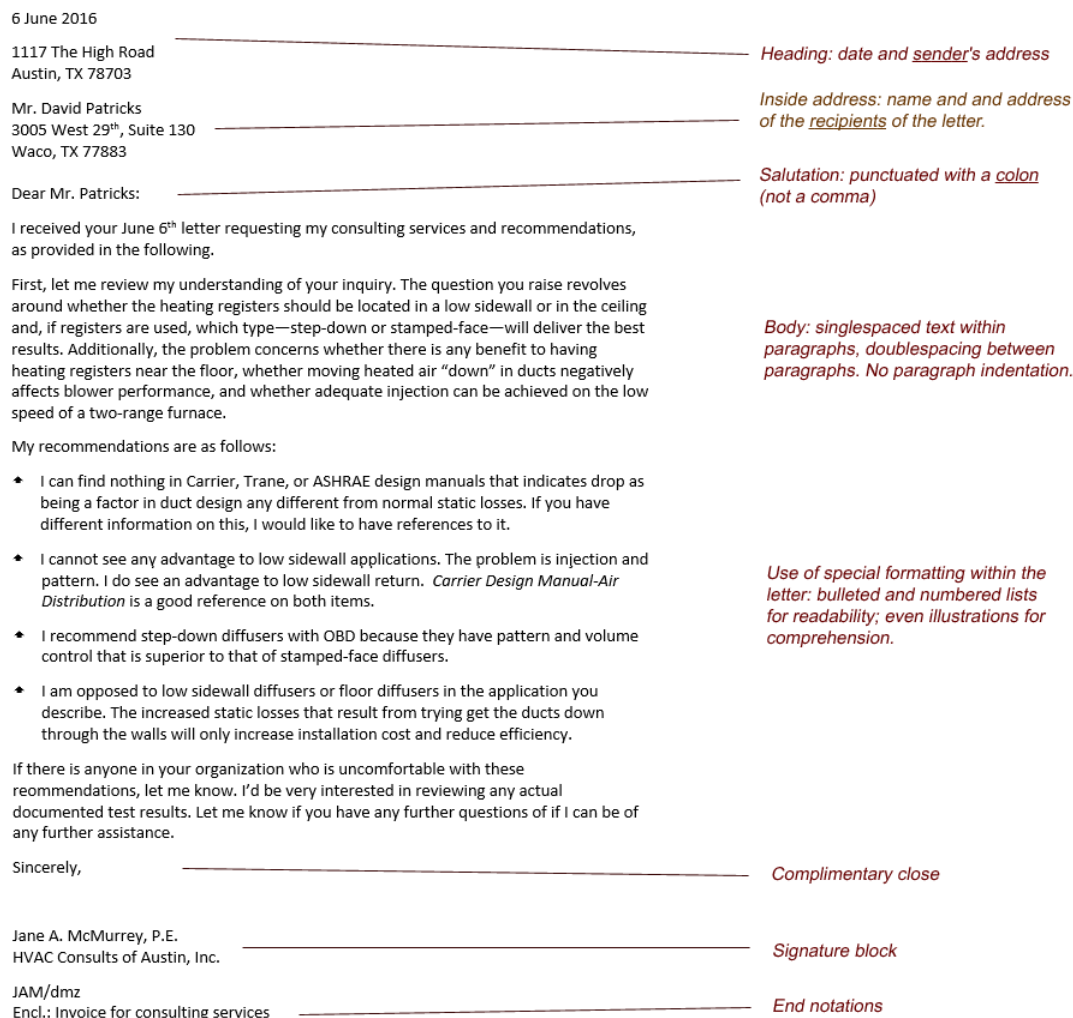
In a cover letter, keep your remarks brief. Your opening should explain what you are sending and why. In an optional second paragraph, you might include a summary of the information you are sending. A letter accompanying a proposal, for example, might point out sections in the proposal that might be of particular interest to the reader. The letter could then go on to present a key point or two explaining why the writer's firm is the best one for the job. The closing paragraph should contain acknowledgements, offer additional assistance, or express the hope that the material will fulfill its purpose.

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4.3: Common Components

Common Components of Business Letters

The following is concerned with the mechanical and physical details of business letters. All of the components discussed in the following are illustrated in the following:



6 June 2016

1117 The High Road
Austin, TX 78703

Mr. David Patrick
3005 West 29th, Suite 130
Waco, TX 77883

Dear Mr. Patrick:

I received your June 6th letter requesting my consulting services and recommendations, as provided in the following.

First, let me review my understanding of your inquiry. The question you raise revolves around whether the heating registers should be located in a low sidewall or in the ceiling and, if registers are used, which type—step-down or stamped-face—will deliver the best results. Additionally, the problem concerns whether there is any benefit to having heating registers near the floor, whether moving heated air “down” in ducts negatively affects blower performance, and whether adequate injection can be achieved on the low speed of a two-range furnace.

My recommendations are as follows:

- I can find nothing in Carrier, Trane, or ASHRAE design manuals that indicates drop as being a factor in duct design any different from normal static losses. If you have different information on this, I would like to have references to it.
- I cannot see any advantage to low sidewall applications. The problem is injection and pattern. I do see an advantage to low sidewall return. *Carrier Design Manual-Air Distribution* is a good reference on both items.
- I recommend step-down diffusers with OBD because they have pattern and volume control that is superior to that of stamped-face diffusers.
- I am opposed to low sidewall diffusers or floor diffusers in the application you describe. The increased static losses that result from trying get the ducts down through the walls will only increase installation cost and reduce efficiency.

If there is anyone in your organization who is uncomfortable with these recommendations, let me know. I'd be very interested in reviewing any actual documented test results. Let me know if you have any further questions of if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Jane A. McMurrey, P.E.
HVAC Consults of Austin, Inc.

JAM/dmz
Encl.: Invoice for consulting services

Heading: date and sender's address

Inside address: name and address of the recipients of the letter.

Salutation: punctuated with a colon (not a comma)

Body: singlespaced text within paragraphs, doublespacing between paragraphs. No paragraph indentation.

Use of special formatting within the letter: bulleted and numbered lists for readability; even illustrations for comprehension.

Complimentary close

Signature block

End notations

Figure 4.3.1

Letter to Mr. David Patrick's

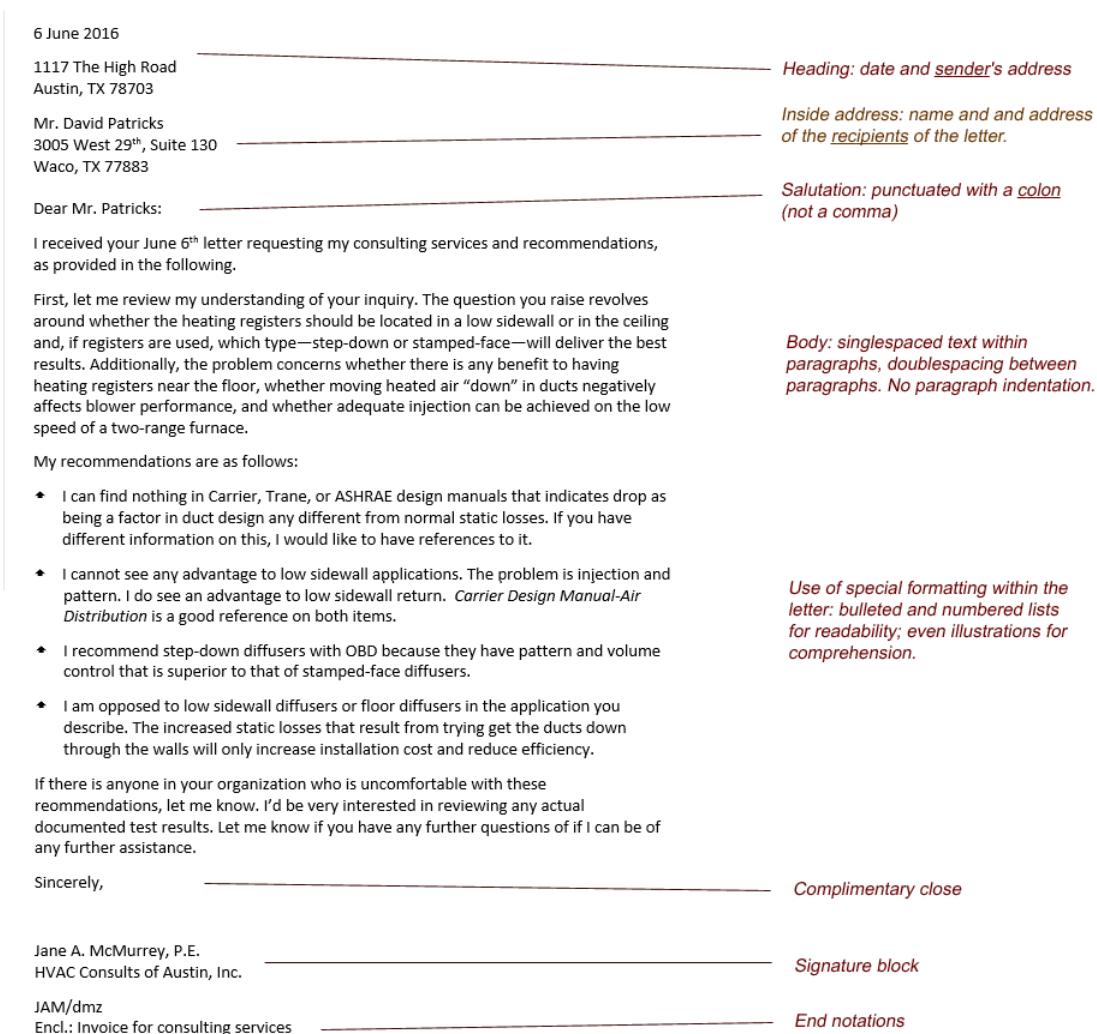
Common Components of Business Letters

Heading. The heading contains the writer's address and the date of the letter. The writer's name is not included; only a date is needed in headings on letterhead stationery.

Inside address. The inside address shows the name and address of the recipient of the letter. This information can help prevent confusion at the recipient's offices. Also, if the recipient has moved, the inside address helps to determine what to do with the letter. In the inside address, include the appropriate title of respect of the recipient; and copy the name of the company exactly as that company writes it. When you do have the names of individuals, remember to address them appropriately: Mrs., Ms., Mr., Dr., and so on. If you are not sure what is correct for an individual, try to find out how that individual signs letters or consult the forms-of-address section in a dictionary.

Salutation. The salutation directly addresses the recipient of the letter and is followed by a colon (except when a friendly, familiar, sociable tone is intended, in which case a comma is used). Notice that in the [simplified letter](#) format, the salutation line is eliminated altogether. If you don't know whether the recipient is a man or woman, the traditional practice has been to write "Dear Sir" or "Dear Sirs"—but that's sexist! To avoid this problem, salutations such as "Dear Sir or Madame," "Dear Ladies and Gentlemen," "Dear Friends," or "Dear People" have been tried—but without much general acceptance. Deleting the salutation line altogether or inserting "To Whom It May Concern" in its place, is not ordinarily a good solution either—it's impersonal.

The best solution is to make a quick, anonymous phone call to the organization and ask for a name; Or, address the salutation to a department name, committee name, or a position name: "Dear Personnel Department," "Dear Recruitment Committee," "Dear Chairperson," "Dear Director of Financial Aid," for example.



6 June 2016
1117 The High Road
Austin, TX 78703

Mr. David Patricks
3005 West 29th, Suite 130
Waco, TX 77883

Dear Mr. Patricks:

I received your June 6th letter requesting my consulting services and recommendations, as provided in the following.

First, let me review my understanding of your inquiry. The question you raise revolves around whether the heating registers should be located in a low sidewall or in the ceiling and, if registers are used, which type—step-down or stamped-face—will deliver the best results. Additionally, the problem concerns whether there is any benefit to having heating registers near the floor, whether moving heated air “down” in ducts negatively affects blower performance, and whether adequate injection can be achieved on the low speed of a two-range furnace.

My recommendations are as follows:

- I can find nothing in Carrier, Trane, or ASHRAE design manuals that indicates drop as being a factor in duct design any different from normal static losses. If you have different information on this, I would like to have references to it.
- I cannot see any advantage to low sidewall applications. The problem is injection and pattern. I do see an advantage to low sidewall return. *Carrier Design Manual-Air Distribution* is a good reference on both items.
- I recommend step-down diffusers with OBD because they have pattern and volume control that is superior to that of stamped-face diffusers.
- I am opposed to low sidewall diffusers or floor diffusers in the application you describe. The increased static losses that result from trying get the ducts down through the walls will only increase installation cost and reduce efficiency.

If there is anyone in your organization who is uncomfortable with these recommendations, let me know. I'd be very interested in reviewing any actual documented test results. Let me know if you have any further questions of if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Jane A. McMurrey, P.E.
HVAC Consults of Austin, Inc.

JAM/dmz
Encl.: Invoice for consulting services

Heading: date and sender's address

Inside address: name and address of the recipients of the letter.

Salutation: punctuated with a colon (not a comma)

Body: singespaced text within paragraphs, doublespacing between paragraphs. No paragraph indentation.

Use of special formatting within the letter: bulleted and numbered lists for readability; even illustrations for comprehension.

Complimentary close

Signature block

End notations

Figure 4.3.1:

Block letter format

Subject or reference line. As shown in the [order letter](#), the subject line replaces the salutation or is included with it. The subject line announces the main business of the letter.

Body of the letter. The actual message of course is contained in the body of the letter, the paragraphs between the salutation and the complimentary close. Strategies for writing the body of the letter are discussed in the section on [business-correspondence style](#).

Complimentary close. The "Sincerely yours" element of the business letter is called the complimentary close. Other common ones are "Sincerely yours," "Cordially," "Respectfully," or "Respectfully yours." You can design your own, but be careful not to create florid or wordy ones. Notice that only the first letter is capitalized, and it is always followed by a comma.

Signature block. Usually, you type your name four lines below the complimentary close, and sign your name in between. If you are a woman and want to make your marital status clear, use Miss, Ms., or Mrs. in parentheses before the typed version of your first name. Whenever possible, include your title or the name of the position you hold just below your name. For example, "Technical writing student," "Sophomore data processing major," or "Tarrant County Community College Student" are perfectly acceptable.

End notations. Just below the signature block are often several abbreviations or phrases that have important functions.

- Initials. The initials in all capital letters in the preceding figures are those of the writer of the letter, and the ones in lower case letters just after the colon are those of the typist.
- Enclosures. To make sure that the recipient knows that items accompany the letter in the same envelope, use such indications as "Enclosure," "Encl.," "Enclosures (2)." For example, if you send a resume and writing sample with your application letter, you'd do this: "Encl.: Resume and Writing Sample." If the enclosure is lost, the recipient will know.
- Copies. If you send copies of a letter to others, indicate this fact among the end notations also. If, for example, you were upset by a local merchant's handling of your repair problems and were sending a copy of your letter to the Better Business Bureau, you'd write this: "cc: Better Business Bureau." If you plan to send a copy to your lawyer, write something like this: "cc: Mr. Raymond Mason, Attorney."

Business Letter Formats

If you are writing a business letter, select one of the common formats as shown in the example letters listed below. These include the block letter, the semi-block letter, the alternative block letter, and the simplified letter.

- See the [block letter](#).
- See the [semi-block letter](#).
- See the [alternative block letter](#).
- For the [simplified letter](#).

Which of these formats to use depends on the ones commonly used in your organization or the situation in which you are writing. Use the simplified letter if you lack the name of an individual or department to write to.

Style in Business Correspondence

Writing business letters and memos differs in certain important ways from writing reports. Keep the following advice in mind when you write and especially when you revise your business letters or memos.

State the main business, purpose, or subject matter right away. Let the reader know from the very first sentence what your letter is about. Remember that when business people open a letter, their first concern is to know what the letter is about, what its purpose is, and why they must spend their time reading it. Therefore, avoid round-about beginnings. If you are writing to apply for a job, begin with something like this: "I am writing to apply for the position you currently have open...." If you have bad news for someone, you need not spill all of it in the first sentence. Here is an example of how to avoid negative phrasing: "I am writing in response to your letter of July 24, 1997 in which you discuss problems you have had with an electronic spreadsheet purchased from our company." The following shows an additional example.

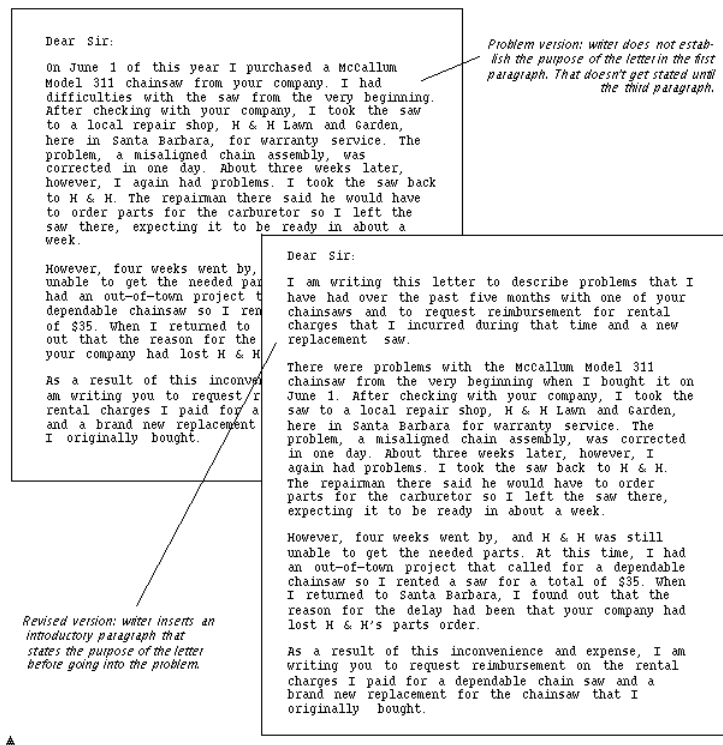


Figure 4.3.1:

State the main purpose or business of the letter right away. The problem version just starts flailing away from the very outset. The revised version at least establishes the purpose of the letter (and then starts flailing).

If you are responding to a letter, identify that letter by its subject and date in the first paragraph or sentence. Busy recipients who write many letters themselves may not remember their letters to you. To avoid problems, identify the date and subject of the letter to which you respond:

Dear Mr. Stout:

I am writing in response to your September 1, 19XX letter in which you describe problems that you've had with one of our chainsaws. I regret that you've suffered this inconvenience and expense and....

Dear Ms. Cohen:

I have just received your August 4, 19XX letter in which you list names and other sources from which I can get additional information on the manufacture and use of plastic bottles in the soft-drink industry....

Keep the paragraphs of most business letters short. The paragraphs of business letters tend to be short, some only a sentence long. Business letters are not read the same way as articles, reports, or books. Usually, they are read rapidly. Big, thick, dense paragraphs over ten lines, which require much concentration, may not be read carefully—or read at all.

To enable the recipient to read your letters more rapidly and to comprehend and remember the important facts or ideas, create relatively short paragraphs of between three and eight lines long. In business letters, paragraphs that are made up of only a single sentence are common and perfectly acceptable. Throughout this chapter, you'll see examples of the shorter paragraphs commonly used by business letters.

"Compartmentalize" the contents of your letter. When you "compartmentalize" the contents of a business letter, you place each different segment of the discussion—each different topic of the letter—in its own paragraph. If you were writing a complaint letter concerning problems with the system unit of your personal computer, you might have these paragraphs:

- A description of the problems you've had with it
- The ineffective repair jobs you've had
- The compensation you think you deserve and why

Study each paragraph of your letters for its purpose, content, or function. When you locate a paragraph that does more than one thing, consider splitting it into two paragraphs. If you discover two short separate paragraphs that do the same thing, consider joining them into one.

Provide topic indicators at the beginning of paragraphs. Analyze some of the letters you see in this chapter in terms of the contents or purpose of their individual paragraphs. In the first sentence of any body paragraph of a business letter, try to locate a word or phrase that indicates the topic of that paragraph. If a paragraph discusses your problems with a personal computer, work the word "problems" or the phrase "problems with my personal computer" into the first sentence. Doing this gives recipients a clear sense of the content and purpose of each paragraph. Here is an excerpt before and after topic indicators have been incorporated:

Problem:

I have worked as an electrician in the Decatur, Illinois, area for about six years. Since 1980 I have been licensed by the city of Decatur as an electrical contractor qualified to undertake commercial and industrial work as well as residential work.

Revision:

As for my work experience, I have worked as an electrician in the Decatur, Illinois, area for about six years. Since 1980 I have been licensed by the city of Decatur as an electrical contractor qualified to undertake commercial and industrial work as well as residential work. (Italics not in the original.)

List or itemize whenever possible in a business letter. Listing spreads out the text of the letter, making it easier to pick up the important points rapidly. Lists can be handled in several ways, as explained in the chapter on lists. For examples of lists in business correspondence, see the block-letter format in the preceding, the [inquiry letter](#), and [order letter](#).

Place important information strategically in business letters. Information in the first and last lines of paragraphs tends to be read and remembered more readily. These are high-visibility points. Information buried in the middle of long paragraphs is easily overlooked or forgotten. For example, in application letters which must convince potential employers that you are right for a job, place information on your appealing qualities at the beginning or end of paragraphs for greater emphasis. Place less positive or detrimental information in less highly visible points. If you have some difficult things to say, a good (and honest) strategy is to de-emphasize by placing them in areas of less emphasis. If a job requires three years of experience and you only have one, bury this fact in the middle or the lower half of a body paragraph of the application letter. The resulting letter will be honest and complete; it just won't emphasize weak points unnecessarily. Here is an example:

Problem:

In July I will graduate from the University of Kansas with a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics. Over the past four years in which I have pursued this degree, I have worked as a lab assistant for Dr. Alison Laszlo and have been active in two related organizations, the Student Dietetic Association and the American Home Economics Association. In my nutritional biochemistry and food science labs, I have written many technical reports and scientific papers. I have also been serving as a diet aide at St. David's Hospital in Lawrence the past year and a half. (The job calls for a technical writer; let's emphasize that first, then mention the rest!)

Revision:

In my education at the University of Kansas, I have had substantial experience writing technical reports and scientific papers. Most of these reports and papers have been in the field of nutrition and dietetics in which I will be receiving my Bachelor of Science degree this July. During my four years at the University, I have also handled plenty of paperwork as a lab assistant for Dr. Alison Laszlo, as a member of two related organizations, the Student Dietetic Association and the American Home Economics Association, and as a diet aide at St. David's Hospital in Lawrence in the past year and a half.

Find positive ways to express bad news in your business letters. Often, business letters must convey bad news: a broken computer keyboard cannot be replaced, or an individual cannot be hired. Such bad news can be conveyed in a tactful way. Doing so reduces the chances of an end of business relations with the recipient of the bad news. To convey bad news positively, avoid such words as "cannot," "forbid," "fail," "impossible," "refuse," "prohibit," "restrict," and "deny" as much as possible. The first versions of the

example sentences below are phrased in a rather cold and unfriendly negative manner; the second versions are much more positive, cordial and tactful:

Problem:

Because of the amount of information you request in your letter, I simply cannot help you without seriously disrupting my work schedule.

Revision:

In your letter you ask for a good amount of information which I would like to help you locate. Because of my work commitments, however, I am going to be able to answer only a few of the questions....

Problem:

If you do not complete and return this advertisement contract by July 1, 19XX, you will not receive your advertising space in this year's Capitol Lines. If we have not heard from you by this deadline, we will sell you your advertisement space to some other client.

Revision:

Please complete the enclosed contract and return it to us by July 1, 19XX. After this deadline, we will begin selling any unrenewed advertisement space in this year's Capitol Lines, so I hope we hear from you before then.

Problem:

While I am willing to discuss changes in specific aspects of this article or ideas on additional areas to cover, I am not prepared to change the basic theme of the article: the usability of the Victor microcomputer system.

Revision:

I am certainly open to suggestions and comments about specific aspects of this article, or any of your thoughts on additional areas that you think I should cover. I do want, however, to retain the basic theme of the article: the usability of the Victor microcomputer system.

Focus on the recipient's needs, purposes, or interests instead of your own. Avoid a self-centered focus on your own concerns rather than those of the recipient. Even if you must talk about yourself in a business letter a great deal, do so in a way that relates your concerns to those of the recipient. This recipient-oriented style is often called the "you-attitude," which does not mean using more you's but making the recipient the main focus of the letter.

Problem:

I am writing you about a change in our pricing policy that will save our company time and money. In an operation like ours, it costs us a great amount of labor time (and thus expense) to scrape and rinse our used tableware when it comes back from large parties. Also, we have incurred great expense on replacement of linens that have been ruined by stains that could have been soaked promptly after the party and saved.

Revision:

I am writing to inform you of a new policy that we are beginning, effective September 1, 19XX, that will enable us to serve your large party needs more often and without delay. In an operation like ours in which we supply for parties of up to 500, turn-around time is critical; unscrapped and unrinsed tableware causes delays in clean-up time and, more importantly, less frequent and less prompt service to you the customer. Also, extra fees for stained linens can be avoided by immediate soaking after the party.

Problem:

For these reasons, our new policy, effective September 1, 19XX, will be to charge an additional 15% on unrinsed tableware and 75% of the wholesale value of stained linens that have not been soaked.

Revision:

Therefore, to enable us to supply your large party needs promptly, we will begin charging 15% on all unrinsed tableware and 75% of the wholesale value of stained linens that have not been soaked. This policy we hope will encourage our customers' kitchen help to do the quick and simple rinsing and/or soaking at the end of large parties. Doing so will ensure faster and more frequent service.

Avoid pompous, inflated, legal-sounding phrasing. Watch out for puffed-up, important-sounding language. This kind of language may seem business-like at first; it's actually ridiculous. Of course, such phrasing is apparently necessary in legal documents, but why use it in other writing situations? When you write a business letter, picture yourself as a plain-talking, common-sense, down-to-earth person (but avoid slang). Check out the following illustration for a serious dose of bureaucratise.

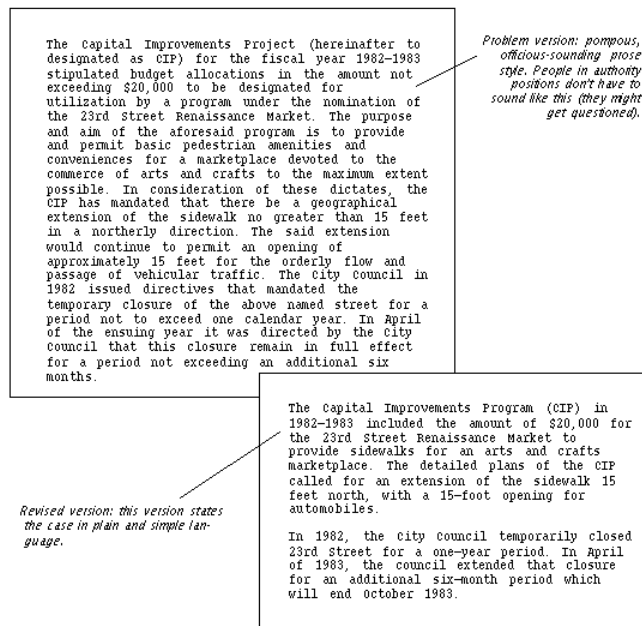


Figure 4.3.1:

Avoid pompous, officious-sounding writing. Not only is the tone of the problem version offensive, it is nearly twice as long as the revised version! *This is good news. It means that technical report writing requires clear and concise phrasings that are easy to read which is usually easier to write anyway.*

Give your business letter an "action ending" whenever appropriate. An "action-ending" makes clear what the writer of the letter expects the recipient to do and when. Ineffective conclusions to business letters often end with rather limp, noncommittal statements such as "Hope to hear from you soon" or "Let me know if I can be of any further assistance." Instead, or in addition, specify the action the recipient should take and the schedule for that action. If, for example, you are writing a query letter, ask the editor politely to let you know of his decision if at all possible in a month. If you are writing an application letter, subtly try to set up a date and time for an interview. Here are some examples:

As soon as you approve this plan, I'll begin contacting sales representatives at once to arrange for purchase and delivery of the notebook computers. May I expect to hear from you within the week?

I am free after 2:00 p.m. on most days. Can we set up an appointment to discuss my background and this position further? I'll look forward to hearing from you.

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4.4: Memos

Memos Overview

Memos are a major accepted method of communication within a specific business, company, or institution. *The fact that memos are only used internally makes them different from letters, emails, and texting which can be used inside and outside of the workplace.* The successful operation of a company depends on memos for communication between the employees of the company. Types of memos include: inquires, recommendations, problem-solution, etc.

A memo's format provides employees with clear and easy access to information. The message is direct. Unless directly related to the message, references to company structure and operation are eliminated in a memo. However, a memo follows a specific format for easy access to information.

A memo includes a heading block that identifies the recipient, the sender, the date, and the subject of the message. The order of the parts of the memo heading block and location of specific part of the block varies, according to different companies' expectations.

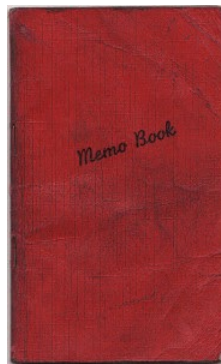


Figure 4.4.1

However, the message has three parts, each of which is identified by a specific heading. The three parts are the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. The introduction references background information and informs the purpose of the message. The body is the message. The body can be one simple paragraph or multiple paragraphs. The conclusion expresses what you expect the recipient to do. The conclusion could be one paragraph or several paragraphs, or the conclusion could be a simple sentence that asks for the recipient to contact the sender if there are questions.^[20]

Consider the following scenario: You are a consultant for a construction company. The project manager of the company has charged you with following the progress of a job that the company has contracted. To keep the project manager informed of the progress of the job, you may send him/her one of 3 types of memos: A Projection Analysis Timeline Memo, which is sent before the job begins and details the expected beginning and ending dates of the job; a Progress Memo, which is sent during the progression of the job and details the progress of the job, and a Period Report Memo, which is sent after the completion of the job and details the completion dates of all phases of the job.

Please visit the following website and read through the information on memos: [Memos](#)^[21]

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4.5: Emails, Texting, & Microblog Overview

Once the dominant form of communication in the workplace, memos typically serve as internal communication within an organization. Memos can update policies and procedures, announce meetings or organizational changes, or inform the internal audience as needed. Memos must typically be brief, concise, organized for readability, and addressed to targeted audiences with specific subject lines. However, emails, which often replace memos for internal communication, can be sent internally or externally. While this form of business communication must take into account the time constraints most readers face as a result of high email volume, people use emails to communicate issues both large and small. Emails must make use of strong subject lines, clear formatting, and concise writing. Email also presents some ethical challenges as the forwarding and BCC function enables you to easily share communications with larger audiences quickly and in a way that is documented for the longer term. *In addition, texting and microblogs are additional workplace tools that are also used internally and externally.*

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4.10: Writing Definitions, Description, & Instructions

Definitions, Descriptions, & Instructions

An important part of technical and report writing is the use of definitions, descriptions, and instructions.

Definitions. We grow up reading these from the time we are in elementary school. They are one of the more common patterns of organization used. I see them in my son's middle school math textbooks to define various terms or his social studies book explaining that "caste" is a social ranking. My daughter is exposed to them in elementary school when her handouts come home defining what a number line is. Definitions can be simple short insertions in a sentence to clarify a term or they can be an entire document known as an extended definition. The good news is that you have already been exposed to them from the time you were very little.

Descriptions. These are similar to a definition but can be longer, more detailed, and have a visual representation to further explain a concept. More than likely, you have read these as well. Descriptions explain objects, mechanisms, and processes – and they do so in a way that whatever is being described is easily understood. If a description of the greenhouse effect was created for specialists in the field, it might be more complex. If this same idea was written for a general audience, the language would be "dumbed down" or simplified.

Instructions. I was redoing my daughter's room and putting up a cherry tree decal on her wall. I opened the package and pulled out a sheet with several "stickers" labeled with numbers; It was sort of like a tree puzzle I had to put together. I looked for directions to make it easier; however, none were to be found except for a small picture on the package of the pieces put together and the correlating numbers next to the pieces. The problem was that the picture was so tiny that the numbers didn't fit. In fact, I have a "spatial reasoning deficit" of some sort and could not follow the directions even after taping the picture to the wall next to where I wanted to place the cherry tree decal. Frustrated, I threw the directions out and made up the tree myself. Needless to say, I will be more careful when purchasing a similar product and will avoid doing so from the same company who made the cherry tree decal. I'm sure you have had similar experiences with following directions. Directions should use visuals to help the reader understand what is expected, be written clearly while using transitions to move the reader from one step to the next, and should include troubleshooting tips (ideas for how to fix common problems that may occur).

Technical Definitions^[27]

A technical definition helps a reader understand items such as an object or process. It can be short and embedded in a document, or it can be its own document. The purpose of a definition is to provide clarity to the reader. The extent of the definition depends on your audience's background knowledge in regards to what you are writing about. For example, it could be a parenthetical definition that follows a potentially unknown term, a full sentence used after a term to further define it, or it may be an extended definition, or larger definition. In fact, a writer may use many methods within the definition to help the reader better understand it. Some methods that can be used include graphics, examples, comparisons, and contrasts.

Technical Descriptions^[28]

The biggest hurdle you may face in writing a description is remembering what the term means as it is used in this context. We all use the word description loosely to refer to practically any discussion or explanation. But in this context, it means the detailed discussion of the physical aspects of a thing. That means discussing things like color, shape, size, weight, height, width, thickness, texture, density, contents, materials of construction, and so on.

For example, this sentence is not really description in our sense of the word: A computer diskette is a device used for storing electronic data.

It explains the function or purpose but provides little or no physical detail. It is a definition. However, this sentence is very definitely description: The common computer diskette is 3.5 inches by 3.5 inches and approximately 1/8 inch thick.

Be sure to check out the [example descriptions](#) available with this chapter.

Contexts for Description

As mentioned earlier, descriptions are common element in technical writing—just not quite in the same way that instructions are. Descriptions appear more often as a sentence or two here, a paragraph there, or a whole section elsewhere. Certain kinds of

technical writing feature description:

- Accident reports requiring plenty of description.
- Product specifications—documents that describe design and feature of a new or changed product—have plenty of description.
- Instructions often require description to enable readers to visualize what they are doing and what they are working with.

Contents and Organization of Descriptions

The following is a review of the sections you'll commonly find in descriptions. As you read, check out the example descriptions.

Introduction. Plan the introduction to your description carefully. Make sure it does all of the following things (but not necessarily in this order) that apply to your particular description:

- Indicate the specific object about to be described.
- Indicate what the audience needs in terms of knowledge and background to understand the description.
- Provide a general description of the object.
- Include an overview of the contents of the description.

Background. If the thing you are describing is not likely to be familiar to most of your readers, consider adding some background before you plunge into the actual description. If you are about to describe an SGO/3 density gauge to non-specialists, you'd better first discuss what in the world the thing is, what it does and on what part of the planet it is used.

Visual. The easiest way for an individual to understand something is to see it. Visuals help with this. In addition, the parts of the object or process are often labeled so that the reader can further understand how each part works in conjunction with the entire item.

Discussion of the parts or characteristics. The main part of your description is the discussion of each part or characteristic. You must divide the thing you are describing into parts, or characteristics, or both. Parts are easy: for example, a wooden pencil has lead, a wooden barrel, an eraser, and a metal clip. Characteristics are describable aspects of a thing but are not parts: for example, the pencil has a certain weight, length, width, and so on. If you were a budding real-estate tycoon and had to describe a vacant lot for company files, you'd probably describe it by its characteristics: its location, square footage, terrain, vegetation, access to utilities, and so on. (Check out the description of the primitive stone scraper in the examples; part of it is arranged by characteristics and part by parts!) If this section follows a visual, it is often organized to match the visual. For example, it might list the parts in clockwise order or from top to bottom of how they are labeled on the visual. In addition, the descriptors labeled on the visual match what is listed in this section exactly. Consistency is key.

Once you've divided the thing you are describing into parts, characteristics, or both, your next job is to describe each one. For mechanical things, it works well to start by defining the part, by explaining its function. After that, you describe the part from general to specific, using any of the sources of description that are appropriate.

Notice that in description, you can mix other kinds of writing. You'll find yourself explaining functions, defining terms, discussing a bit of process as you describe. That's not a problem as long as the primary focus and the majority of the content is truly description.

Discussion of the related operation or process. At some point in a description, often at the end, it is useful to summarize the operation or process associated with the object you're describing. For example, if you've just described a mechanical pencil, you could briefly explain how it is used. If you've just described a snowflake, you could discuss the process by which it formed.

Sources of Description

When you write a description, you need to think about the kinds of descriptive detail you can provide. Sometimes, descriptions are rather weak in this area. Use the following list to plan your description or to review a description you have written. Think of the categories of descriptive detail you could provide, or use the following list to identify categories you have not used:

color	depth
height	amount
width	pattern, design
shape	ingredients
weight	age
materials	subparts
texture	length
width	finish
location	temperature
methods of attachment	moisture content
	smell

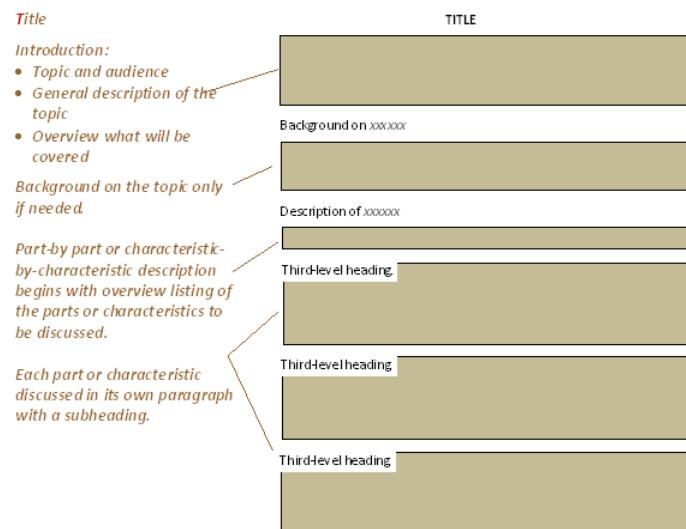


Figure 4.10.1

Schematic view of descriptions. Remember that this is just a typical or common model for the contents and organization—many others are possible.

Miscellaneous Concerns

In descriptions, you'll probably find yourself puzzling over how to handle numbers, abbreviations, and symbols:

Numbers. Remember that technical writing breaks some of those rules you worked so hard to learn in past writing classes. In the technical writing context, we are often vitally concerned about numbers and want them to stand out. This means that you should use numerals in running text when the number indicates an exact, measured, or measurable amount or when it represents a critical value. For example, in these sentences, it seems to matter that the numbers are exact:

The cup is 3 inches in diameter.

Use 4 tacks to fasten the poster to the wall.

However, this does not mean using numerals for indifferent values. For example, in this sentence, there is nothing heart-stopping about how many sections the report has:

The report contains four major sections.

See the section on [numbers vs. words](#) for further details.

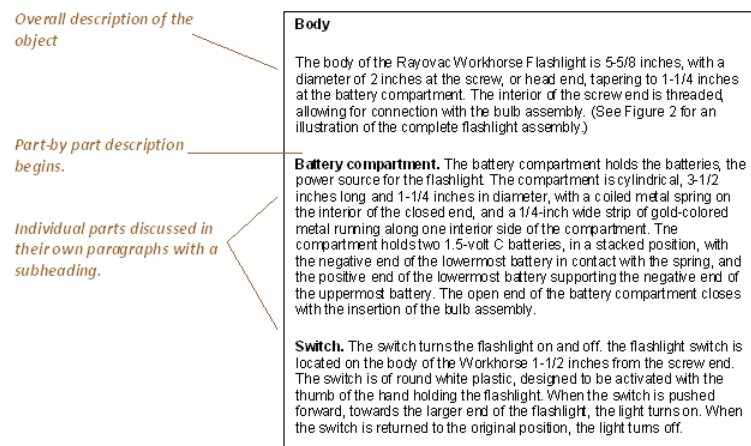


Figure 4.10.2

Anatomy of a descriptive paragraph. Typically, it starts with some statement about the purpose or function of the part, with the descriptive detail following. Descriptive detail draws upon the "sources" of description—such things as color, shape, width, and height.

Abbreviations. In technical writing, we expect to see abbreviations. Use them in your description freely. Remember the rule on punctuating abbreviations—punctuate them only if they spell a word (for example, "in."). Remember too that abbreviations do not go up against the number they are used with (for example, make that "8 mm tape" or "8-mm tape" but not "8mm tape").

Symbols. The most common problem with symbols in instructions and descriptions has to do with inches and feet. If you're writing instructions for a carpenter's dream project where there are feet and inches all over the place, use the symbols " (inches) and ' (feet). However, if you cite inch and foot measurements only a few times, use the word or abbreviation instead.

Graphics and Format in Descriptions

In most descriptions, you'll need at least one illustration of the thing you are describing, with labels pointing to the parts. See the section on [graphics](#) for more on creating graphics, formatting them, and incorporating them into your descriptions.

Headings. In descriptions, you'll want to use headings and subheadings to mark off the discussion of the individual parts or characteristics. Remember that, ideally, you want to describe each part in a separate paragraph or section—and flag that discussion with a heading.

If you have a background section, use a heading for it too. See the section on [headings](#) for the specific requirements.

Lists. Lists are not nearly so important in descriptions as they are in instructions. However, if you itemize parts or subparts or list specifications, these are good situations for lists. See the section on [lists](#) for the specific requirements.

Special notices. In descriptions, there is nothing like the important role for special notices as there is in instructions. After all, if it really is a description, readers should not be trying to follow any procedure, and therefore should not be running any risks of damaging equipment, wasting supplies, screwing up the procedure, or injuring themselves or others. However, you may find the note special notice to be useful to emphasize important points or exceptions. See the section on [special notices](#) for complete discussion of the proper use of these special notices as well as their format and placement within instructions.

Instructions

Go to the following website and read it in its entirety for information on writing instructions:

[Creating Rhetorically Effective Instruction Manuals^{\[29\]}](#)

Common Components of Instructions^[30]

Title

Keep it simple but clearly identify the task that will be performed. Use a “how to” or gerund (ing verb) when crafting it. Make sure the title adequately reflects the product and process users will be working on. It should be simple and clear.

Introduction

The goal of the introduction is to give general information about the process. What is it? Why should it be done? It is an overview of the process and why it is important. Often times, the writer lists the benefits of completing the process so that the reader feels good about the task he or she is about to complete.

Tools & Materials

List the items necessary to complete the task so that the reader can gather and organize them before starting the process. Consider using a bulleted list or some other formatting tool so that it is easy for the reader to skim through.

Visuals

Your reader will need visuals to refer to and act as a guide through the process. Remember to label the visuals as Figure 1, Figure 2, and so on, and then title each visual so the reader knows what he/she is looking at. Often times, the visual is referred to within the step-by-step part of the instructions.

Step-By-Step Instructions

Use a numbered list of step-by-step instructions for completing the process. Consider transitional words to keep the reader on track. Examples of transitions include: first, next, then, and finally. Also, write in clear and complete sentences throughout this section. In addition, refer to the visuals in this section. For example, a writer might include a phrase such as: “See Figure 3.” This will help the reader see the relationship between the steps and the visual.

Another reminder is to avoid the word “you” as you write; use the imperative mood. For example, instead of writing “You then push the blue button” write “Next, push the blue button.”

One last reminder is to explain to the reader why to do or not do something that may have negative consequences. This will help the reader have a positive experience completing the process.

Troubleshooting

A troubleshooting section helps the reader solve common problems. It is when someone tells the user to do something and adds, “If that doesn’t work, try this...” Sometimes, telling the reader what not to do is just as important as stating what to do. If you have several troubleshooting tips, organize this section so the reader can easily find the particular difficulty he or she needs solving at the moment. Therefore, make this section reader friendly and skimmable.

Conclusion

End the instructions with positive comments about the product and/or the process the user just completed. Sometimes there is a phone number for a Help Line if further assistance is needed. The benefits can also be restated but in different words but make sure not to use the exact words from the introduction. Readers don’t like to read the same exact words/phrases/sentences in the conclusion as they did in the introduction because it feels like the writer was too lazy to actually work on the document.

Warnings

Just because this is listed last in this section it doesn’t mean it is any less important than the other parts of the document or that it actually goes last in the document. In fact, the writer has to decide where in the document to put the warnings. They should be dispersed throughout. Also, remember legal and ethical obligations. It is the writer’s job to protect the reader from harm or damage. This being said, any set of instructions needs a careful balance of warnings strategically placed throughout the document. If the writer overuses them, there is a risk of scaring the user or making it so that the reader doesn’t want to carry out the process being described in the instructions. If the writer under-uses warnings, there is a risk of someone getting injured.

In addition, don’t create instructions where the user has already completed the process and injured him/herself before the warning comes. If someone is injured as the results of hidden or omitted warnings, it is the responsibility of the technical writer whose job it is to keep the reader safe.

In fact, there are standard precautionary statements that are color-coded and used for danger, warnings, cautions, and notes or notices. Click on the following link and carefully review them: [Precautionary Statements](#). Do NOT skip looking over this link! You will be expected to incorporate information from in it into the instructions you will create for the course.

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4.11: Writing Reports

Reports are a common technical writing document required at any workplace. Reports are an important part of communication in the working world. They can update readers about progress on a project being worked on, inform of some activity, show research on an item, make recommendations to the reader, document a problem, or request funding or some type of further action. These are only some examples of what a report can do. However, the purpose of a report is to clearly and accurately describe something that has happened or is happening.

In fact, at many universities, some faculty members are hired or even promoted based on their strong ability to research and publish their findings. They bring the institution credibility and notoriety through their unique skill set: an ability to research and write about what occurred in a way that is accurate and clear. This is only one example of how knowing how to write an effective report can be beneficial.

Often times, the format of a report varies – depending on the type of report, its purpose and who the audience is, of course.

Click on this link and review all of the information and links on it: [Audience Analysis in Formal Reports](#).^[31]

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4.12: Writing Job Application Materials

Resumes

Job seeking is a process that involves several steps that should be completed in order to effectively obtain the desired position. Often, it looks like the following:

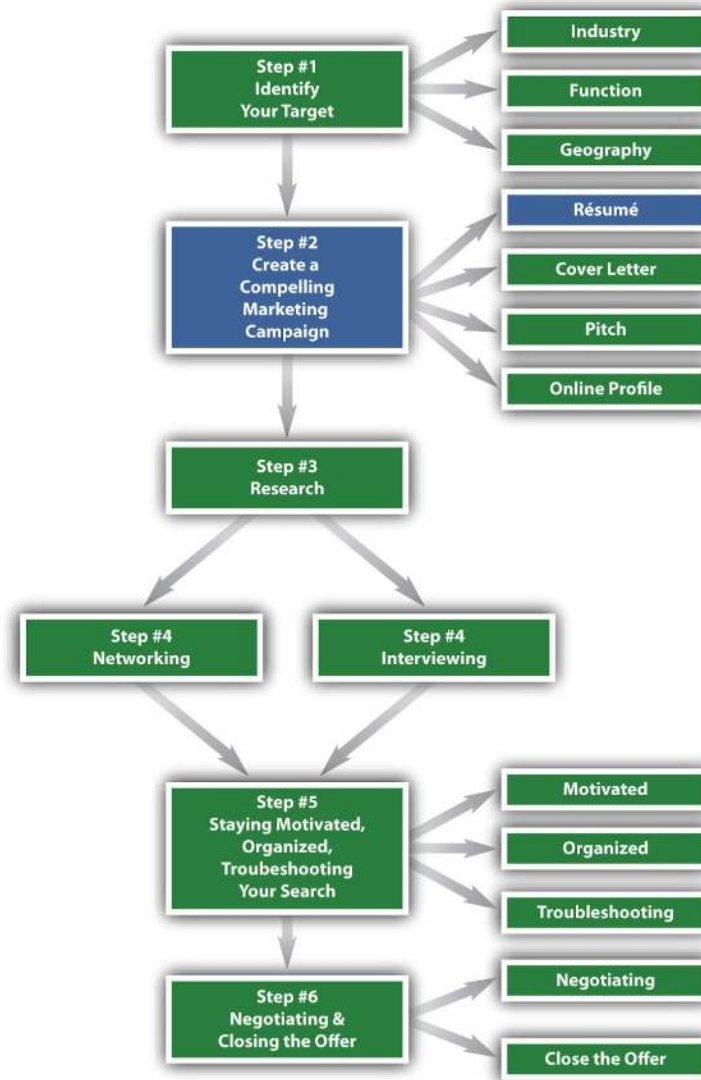


Figure 4.12.1: The Six-Step Job Search Process—Step 2

Overview

Market Yourself First with Your Résumé. At this point in your search, you have completed step 1 with a specific industry, function, and geography in mind.

Step 2, or creating a compelling marketing campaign, consists of four distinct tools that can help construct a strong, effective, and successful job search:

1. Your résumé
2. Your cover letter
3. Your online profile
4. Your pitch

This chapter will focus only on your résumé. [Chapter 5](#) will complete this step, and we will then focus on the remainder of your marketing campaign: your cover letter, your pitch, and your online profile.

Marketing Focus. Your résumé is a marketing document that sells your candidacy. It provides an outline of your educational background, your work experience, and the key skills you have acquired. Your résumé should be marketed in a format that is pleasing to read, efficient in its use of the English language, and so concise that it fits on one page. Once you have approximately ten years of experience, it is more acceptable to have a two-page résumé, but until then, you should adhere to a one-page document. Recruiters can frown on the audacity of a college student with a two-page résumé. Whether you are not sure you can fill a one-page résumé, or whether you think it's not possible to fit your information to only one page, this chapter will help you get to your goal: an exceptional, one-page résumé.

Quality, Clarity, and Accuracy. Your résumé is the most critical component, or cornerstone, of your marketing campaign and it must meet two important criteria:

1. Your résumé must be written in a clear and concise manner so the reader can quickly grasp what you offer as a candidate. Most seasoned recruiters scan a résumé in about seven to ten seconds, but do not let that short review time throw you. Recruiters have an eye for the key things to look for in a résumé, so a lot of care should be put into its construction. That construction should highlight the following features:
 - Your strengths
 - Your responsibilities
 - Your accomplishments
2. Your résumé must be completely error-free. A résumé represents you when you are not there. Recruiters look for reasons to reduce the number of résumés to review, so one error can be all that is needed to discard your résumé and your candidacy. This is true in both good and bad economies, so take great care to guarantee 100 percent accuracy. *In fact, potential employers often only review a resume for a handful of seconds before deciding to look it over more thoroughly or discard it, therefore, correctness is important.*

Proofread your résumé several times, use spell check, and ask someone who is exceptional at proofreading to review it. Always assume that an error lurks somewhere in your résumé and review it and review it and review it until you find that error! Résumés often have the following common errors:

- Misspellings (Spell check does not catch every misspelled word; meat will not be corrected if you meant to write meet.)
- Errors in verb tense (Past experiences should be written in the past tense and current experiences in the current tense.)
- Grammatical errors of any kind
- Inconsistent formatting
- Inappropriate length

How to Craft the Perfect Résumé. This is a trick title because there is no perfect résumé. You could always choose to have a particular bullet written in ways that are grammatically correct, are results oriented, and use action verbs, but writing a résumé is not a perfect science. You could show your résumé to five different recruiters and you might get five different opinions. There is no need to worry. The important thing is that it is well-written and highlights your accomplishments (no matter how big or how not so big). It's important that the format be consistent and that you get an opinion from a professional, whether it is someone from career services, a professor, or a person who is currently working in the field in which you are most interested.

On-Campus Recruiting. If you are participating in on-campus recruiting (when a company comes onto your campus to recruit), three interview scenarios are possible: open, closed, or a mixed schedule. The school dictates the type of schedule, and it's important to know in which type you are participating:

1. An **open schedule** allows any student to go to the career services office to drop their résumé for the specific position in which they are interested. An open schedule, therefore, is open to any candidate who wishes to be considered for an interview. The company recruiter will then review all of the résumés and select the top ten or twelve candidates they will interview on campus. (Thirty-minute interview schedules allow for twelve students to be interviewed, while forty-five-minute interview schedules allow for nine students to be interviewed.) The company will select the length of interviews when they initially book the schedule with career services.

2. A **closed schedule** happens when the recruiter selects all of the ten or twelve individuals they will interview either from the résumé book, from interactions they have had on campus, or from a colleague's recommendation. Perhaps they met a student who impressed them at a marketing event. The recruiter could choose to include that student in a closed schedule.
3. **Half open/half closed schedules** are a hybrid of the two preceding schedules. Half the students will be selected from students who have dropped their résumés, and the recruiter will select the other half from the résumé book, a recommendation, or a direct interaction with the student while they were on campus.

Whether you drop your résumé for an open schedule or you are selected to participate in a closed schedule, the recruiting cycle is fast paced and résumés can be easily missed due to no fault of the job seeker and résumé writer. Sometimes recruiters review hundreds of résumés to find the ten or twelve they will pursue, and sometimes résumés can be missed because of something as simple as pages sticking to one another.

Should your résumé be one of the many that isn't selected, you can write to the recruiter, using your cover letter to make a strong case for why you should be considered. In some cases, this may work to get you an interview. In other cases, it will not. You can easily be passed over for no reason.

The recruiting process is not perfect, so it's recommended that you apply for as many positions as possible. Never rely solely on the submission of one résumé. Instead, when on-campus recruiting takes place, apply for all positions that fit your strengths and interests.

Off-Campus Recruiting. Don't limit your search to only on-campus opportunities because off-campus opportunities can also be fruitful. Conducting both an on-campus and off-campus job search only increases the number of opportunities you can consider. You will want to pursue off-campus opportunities for three reasons:

1. Your school does not have a robust career services department that attracts a variety of employers.
2. You are interested in a company that does not recruit on campus.
3. You want to hedge your bets to have as many opportunities as possible, representing a mix of on-campus and off-campus possibilities.

The main difference between on-campus and off-campus recruiting is that in off-campus recruiting, you manage the entire process. You are responsible for getting your résumé into the hands of the company recruiters or hiring managers. You schedule the interview and follow up on your own. An off-campus job search demands that you are organized and proactive enough to keep things moving.

Make an Exceptional First Impression. Your résumé will probably be the first impression a potential employer has of you and your qualifications, so it must hold their attention long enough to propel your job search forward. Use this opportunity to impress and to intrigue them enough to want to interview you. This chapter will outline multiple strategies you can employ to be seriously considered for numerous job opportunities.

Purpose and Goal of a Résumé

Learning Objectives

1. Understand that a résumé is a marketing document that sells your candidacy and represents you when you are not there.
2. Get specific ideas of how to quantify your accomplishments and create a résumé that proves your worth to past employers, which then proves your worth to future employers.

A well-written résumé can do seven specific things for you and your job search:



1. It represents you when you are not there.

2. It quantifies your accomplishments.

3. It clearly states your abilities.

4. It shows your command of the written word.

5. It creates talking points for a future interview.

6. It proves your worth to your past employers.

7. It demonstrates what you can do for your future employer.

Figure 4.12.2

It Represents You When You Are Not There

Your résumé can be uploaded to online global job boards like Monster, CareerBuilder, and others in a few minutes. It can be sent to a company's online database with a push of a button. It can then be shared with dozens of recruiters and hiring managers without you even knowing about it. In fact, it's a lot easier to get your résumé in front of a recruiter than it is to have a physical presence in their office; therefore, make certain it's a well-written, well-positioned document that makes an exceptional first impression.

It Quantifies Your Accomplishments

The best résumés quantify results and accomplishments clearly and easily. Here are some examples:

1. If you reduced errors by 35 percent, if you increased profits by 55 percent, and if 75 percent of your customers are repeat customers, include this information clearly, succinctly, and proudly.
2. If you have been a student teacher with thirty-five students in a classroom and student grades improved by 25 percent, include that as well.
3. If you have worked as an administrative assistant in a dentist's office and you are part of a marketing team that has increased new patient accounts by 10 percent last quarter, include that!
4. If you worked in the school library and the number of lost books has declined by 50 percent, or if you provide guidance to approximately fifty students per day, that information should be in your résumé.

Quantifying your accomplishments gives your résumé readers the specific information they need to know about your abilities and to be intrigued by what you can do for them.

It Clearly States Your Abilities

Focus on the results of your actions. Being results oriented helps résumé readers understand your abilities. What exactly do you do, or what have you done in the past? Your résumé should answer this question very quickly. For example, if you have been responsible for opening and closing a retail store on a daily basis and for managing the register that took in approximately \$5,000 worth of merchandise a day, state that clearly and concisely. If you have written three to four sports articles for your school paper every month for the past three years, include that as well. The more you quantify your accomplishments, the more your abilities will be understood.

It Shows Your Command of the Written Word

You don't have to be an English major to make sure that your résumé is well-written. If your school has a career services department that offers résumé workshops, be sure to participate in them. Ask an older sibling who is in the workplace to review your résumé before it goes into cyberspace or to a future employer. Other options include asking a teacher, professor, or perhaps someone with whom you worked with or for in the past to review your résumé. Whatever the case, it is your responsibility to have a well-written résumé. You can pay for résumé-writing services, but finding someone who knows the basics of solid résumé writing may be all you need, along with this textbook. Remember that if it has one misspelled word, your résumé could easily be dismissed, along with your candidacy. It's critical that your résumé be accurate and well written.

It Creates Talking Points for Your Future Interviews

Clearly listing your accomplishments and quantifying those accomplishments can create talking points for your future interviews. For example, perhaps your bullet point is the following:

- Responsible for the intake and outtake of approximately 1,000 books daily, ensuring that all library users are logged into the new electronic database, which has decreased the number of lost books by 80 percent in the past year.

Many individuals have to think about the results of their work. Including this detailed information in your résumé actually allows you to easily talk about the value you've brought to previous employers. During an interview, with the preceding example in mind, you can easily talk about how you use technology to improve processes. You can discuss the team environment of the library staff and how you are all working toward decreasing the number of lost books. It shows that you have positively affected the bottom line by helping libraries hold onto books versus losing them, which results in unnecessary fees to library users.

It Proves Your Worth to Your Past Employers

Whenever including bullet points about past work, always tie your efforts to the bottom line. Earlier examples in this chapter included the following accomplishments:

- Reducing errors by 35 percent
- Increasing profits by 55 percent
- Boosting repeat sales to 75 percent

Information relating to a company's bottom line is exactly what employers want to read. Highlighting results like these increases your chances of having your résumé noticed.

It Demonstrates What You Can Do for Your Future Employer

Unlike financial investments, past performance is an indicator of future success, so include and quantify your past performance, and future employers will be inclined to believe you can do the same for them. They will believe it, but you have to continue supporting that belief with your exceptional networking and interviewing skills. Remember, however, that your résumé is introductory in nature. You want to get their attention and initiate their interest so your foot can inch ever closer to getting in their door.

Header

Your résumé header should include four items:

1. Your full name
2. Your address
3. Your e-mail address
4. Your phone number

Your Full Name

Include your full name. If your first name is difficult to pronounce, you could include your nickname in quotation marks or parentheses (e.g., Xioang “Angie” Kim or Massimo “Mass” Rapini). Names are typically bolded and centered on the page, but aligning your name to the right or left is also appropriate.

Your Address

You can use your school address or your permanent home address, or both. Most recruiters prefer both because, at times, they may need to send information to both addresses at different times of the year. Clarity is always a very good thing.

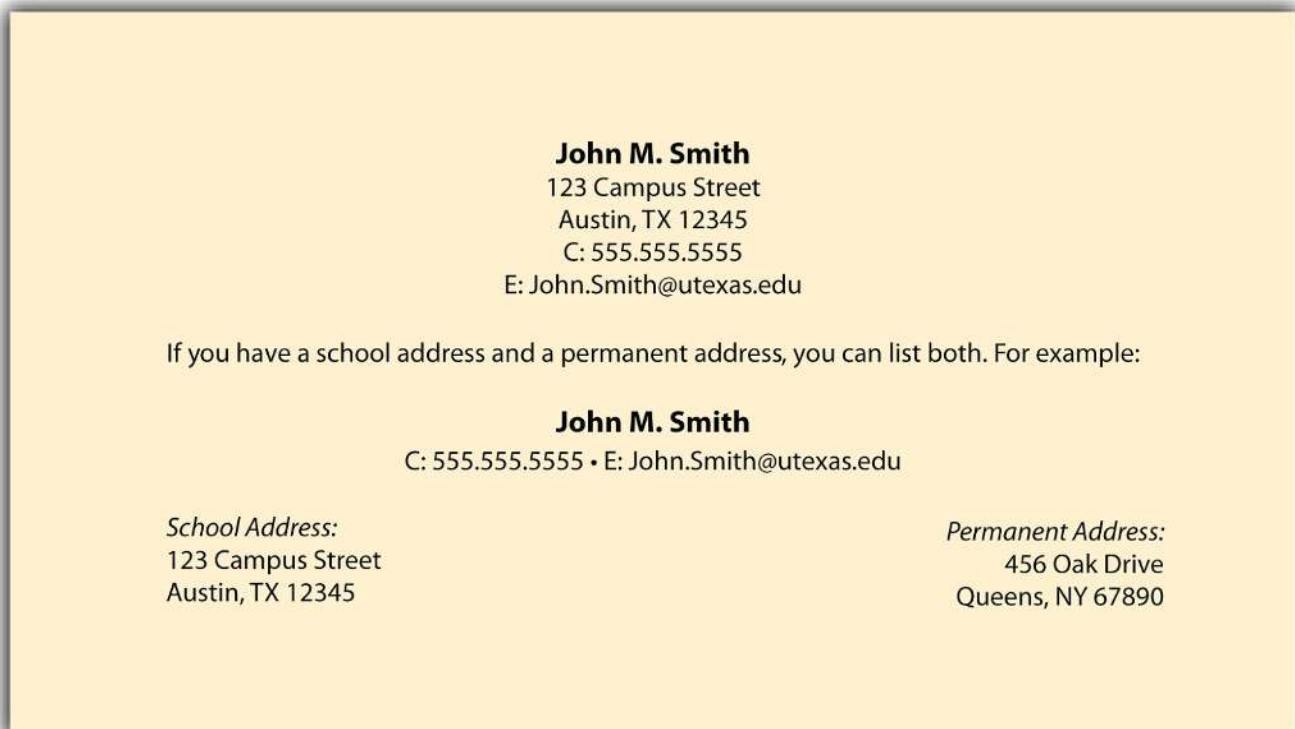


Figure 4.12.3

Your E-mail Address

Have a professional e-mail address because employers frown upon unprofessional addresses such as greeneyes2@gmail.com or runningguy62@verizon.net. It's best to use your first name and your last name in a simple email format.

Establish a professional e-mail address as soon as possible (e.g., c.thompson@gmail.com or e.autoris@verizon.net). It's much more relevant than c.thompson@rutgers.edu, especially if you graduated six months earlier. If you continue your job search after graduation, you might not be permitted to use your school email address, nor should you once you have graduated. Given this, obtaining a professional email address is a good networking opportunity to contact the individuals with whom you've been in touch regarding your job search. Inform those individuals and any relevant recruiters that you've updated your contact information.

Your Phone Number

Include only one phone number on your résumé and record a professional voice mail. Do not play music on your voicemail, and speak clearly and succinctly. It's also recommended that you not answer your cell phone if you are in a loud area, especially when you do not recognize the number. Allow the call to go to voicemail, listen to it in a quiet place, and return the call as soon as possible. It very well could be a recruiter who would not be impressed by you shouting, "What? I can't hear you!" A professional voicemail might sound like the following: "You've reached John Smith at 555.555.5555. Please leave a message and I will call you back as soon as possible."

Include your name and repeat the phone number to help the recruiter know for certain that the proper person has been reached. Clarity is always helpful and appreciated. Lastly, be sure to check your voicemail on a regular basis, even if you are on vacation.

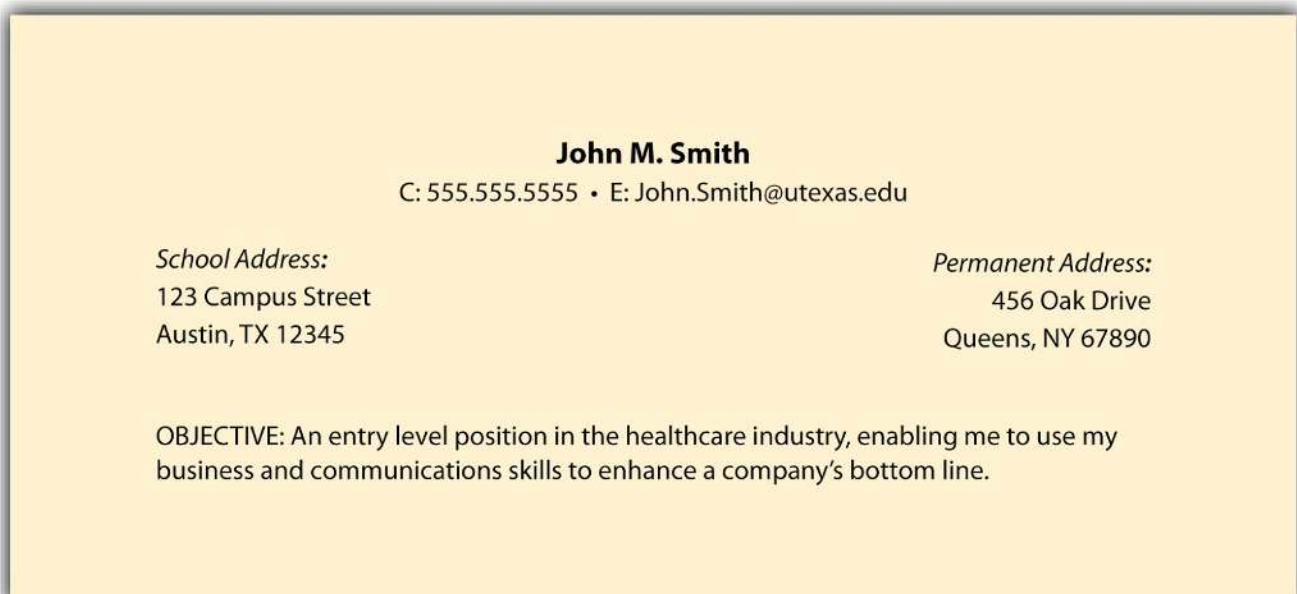
Objective

Recruiters appreciate clarity, and an objective can help a recruiter understand exactly what you offer or what business would best suit your background. Objectives can be very targeted and mention a specific position or can be a bit broader in describing a job function. Whatever objective you choose, it should state what you are looking for and what you have to contribute. It's not only about you. It's about what you can do for them. Here are some examples of effective objectives:

- An entry-level accounting position in audit, allowing me to use my analytical and detail orientation to ensure accuracy in all reports and reviews.
- A communications internship at a top media company that will allow me to use my knowledge and experience to produce and edit clear and effective communications.
- An entry-level position in the healthcare industry, enabling me to use my business and communications skills to enhance a company's bottom line.
- A full-time marketing position at a Fortune 500 company, enabling me to utilize my knowledge and experience to enhance marketing efforts firm-wide.

Your objective should not ramble past two lines because no recruiter appreciates reading a paragraph-sized objective.

Using the four preceding items, [Figure 4.2](#) illustrates how our sample résumé looks thus far.



John M. Smith
C: 555.555.5555 • E: John.Smith@utexas.edu

<i>School Address:</i> 123 Campus Street Austin, TX 12345	<i>Permanent Address:</i> 456 Oak Drive Queens, NY 67890
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OBJECTIVE: An entry level position in the healthcare industry, enabling me to use my business and communications skills to enhance a company's bottom line.

Figure 4.12.4: Sample Résumé—Header and Objective

Education Section

While you are in school, or up to one year after you graduate, your education section should appear before your experience section. Once you are a working professional, these two sections can and should be flipped.

Additional items in this section include the following:

- **Expected graduation date:** Listing the month or the season both work well here (e.g., Spring 2013 or May 2013).
- **Relevant coursework:** You may choose to list relevant coursework if it pertains to the position for which you are applying.
- **Major and minor:** You may choose to include both your major and your minor.
- **GPA:** You may include your overall GPA or you may decide to list the GPA of your major. It's recommended that you not include your GPA if it is below 3.3. Certain industries are more concerned with GPA than others, including consulting, investment banking, and trading, which can require a 3.6 or 3.7 and above. It's best to research each industry to better familiarize yourself with such requirements because this can vary by industry and by company.
- **Extracurricular activities:** Recruiters may be impressed to read that you were active in your college and that you belonged to targeted student clubs. If you held any leadership posts, that information should be included as well.
- **Study abroad:** If you have studied abroad, list that here. You should include the name of the university, the city and country, and the coursework.

Nontraditional college students (those who have significant work experience and then decide to obtain their degree) may want to list experience before education. Since this is unusual for a new graduate, you should consult with either career services or a career coach regarding this résumé order.

Here is an example of how to list your education information.

University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

Expected graduation date: 2013.

Pursuing a B.S. in mathematics with honors and with a minor in economics.

GPA: 3.7

Coursework: Honors Calculus IBL Sequence; Honors Analysis; Honors Econometrics; Algebra

Extracurricular Activities: Mathematics Club, Member; Investment Banking Club, Treasurer;

Oxford University, London, England: course on Shakespeare, Spring 2010.

Figure 4.12.5

If you attended only one college, only that college should be listed in this section.

If you transferred from another college, you should list both schools in this section. The first school you list is the current school you attend, followed by the previous school. If and when you attend graduate school, law school, and so forth, your postgraduate school would then be listed first.

University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

Expected graduation date: 2013.

Pursuing a BS in mathematics with honors and with a minor in economics.

GPA: 3.7

Coursework: Honors Calculus IBL Sequence; Honors Analysis; Honors Econometrics; Algebra

Extracurricular Activities: Mathematics Club, Member; Investment Banking Club, Treasurer.

Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois

2009–2010

Obtained 24 credits toward BS degree before transfer.

Figure 4.12.6

High schools, no matter how prestigious, should not be included in a résumé.

If you've received additional training and certifications, this information does not belong in your education section. Instead, it can be listed in skills and additional information, which will be reviewed in the section of this chapter titled "Skills, Additional Information, and References."

Use the preceding information, [Figure 4.3 "Sample Résumé—Header, Objective, and Education"](#), to see how they illustrate what our résumé looks like thus far.

John M. Smith

C: 555.555.5555 • E: John.Smith@utexas.edu

School Address:
123 Campus Street
Austin, TX 12345

Permanent Address:
456 Oak Drive
Queens, NY 67890

OBJECTIVE: An entry level position in the healthcare industry, enabling me to use my business and communications skills to enhance a company's bottom line.

EDUCATION:

University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois Expected graduation date: 2013
Pursuing a BS degree in mathematics with honors and with a minor in economics
GPA: 3.7
Coursework: Honors Calculus IBL Sequence; Honors Analysis; Honors Econometrics; Algebra
Extracurricular Activities: Mathematics Club, Member; Investment Banking Club, Treasurer;
Oxford University, London, England: course on Shakespeare, Spring 2010.

Figure 4.12.7: Sample Résumé—Header, Objective, and Education

Work Experience

This section is arguably the most important of your résumé because most recruiters look for past work experience as a predictor of future work experience. The most conventional method of listing your work experience is in opposite chronological order (as with your education section). List your most recent job experience first and include the following information:

- The name of the company
- The city and state and, when outside the United States, the country
- The years of employment (If you've had several jobs at one company, include the overall years of experience, and for separate jobs, note specific years of experience.)
- Three to seven bullet points describing your responsibilities and the results of your work, depending on the number of years of experience

It's important to use bullet points because they clearly and succinctly list your responsibilities and achievements. Recruiters do not enjoy or appreciate reading long paragraphs because they want to quickly skim the information.

Action verbs are helpful in this section of your résumé. You may want to consider the following words.

• Accomplished • Analyzed • Assisted • Calculated • Circulated • Clarified • Collected • Conducted • Decreased • Directed • Distributed • Documented • Edited • Eliminated • Expanded • Expedited • Facilitated	• Generated • Influenced • Introduced • Investigated • Joined • Led • Located • Maintained • Managed • Marketed • Negotiated • Organized • Programmed • Provided • Resolved • Responded • Reviewed	• Showed • Standardized • Structured • Supplied • Supported • Surveyed • Taught • Trained • Updated • Used • Utilized • Verified • Won • Worked • Wrote
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Bullets should be results oriented and used to help quantify as many things as possible. Earlier in this chapter, we referenced the following examples:

- Reducing errors by 35 percent
- Increasing profits by 25 percent
- Boosting repeat sales to 75 percent

Here is how these items can be put into bullets:

- Reduced errors by 35 percent by creating an Excel program that immediately highlights inconsistencies when raw data are entered into the system.
- Increased profits by 25 percent by gathering best practices and creating a training program for all new hires.
- Boosted repeat sales by 75 percent by delivering the very best customer service, as evidenced by numerous satisfaction letters and comments to senior management.

Work experience comes in many forms. The majority of your experience will be paid, but it's fine to include unpaid work experience. Perhaps you had an unpaid internship working in the marketing department of a magazine. Absolutely include that in your work experience. Perhaps you volunteered to help a teacher organize their classroom, and perhaps you interacted with students and helped them be prepared for the lesson plan. Include that in your work experience. The bottom line here is that through every experience, either paid or unpaid, you learn something. If you are washing cars, you learn the value of a production line: someone washes, someone rinses, and someone receives the payment. It's fine to list work experiences such as babysitting, where your bullet could read as follows:

- Managed three to four hours of after-school activities for three children ages seven to eleven, ensuring homework was completed accurately and efficiently.

You may work in a grocery store and include the following information in your bullet:

- Assisted dozens of customers daily with all aspects of the store's retail offerings, including answering questions about the locations of items and checking out customers quickly and efficiently at the register.

Sample résumés are included the end of this chapter. Refer to them when drafting your résumé as some have quite a bit of related work experience, some have very little, and others have international exposure. Each sample will give you an idea of how to craft your résumé for your job search.

Skills and Additional Information

This section of your résumé should include, but not be limited to, the following information:

- Computer skills: Most employers expect Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, but include additional software knowledge (e.g., Dreamweaver).
- Language skills: Include your honest level of fluency (e.g., Spanish, fluent, French, beginner).
- Community service: Include any volunteer work, such as park cleanups, walk-a-thons for various causes, fundraising events of any kind. Be specific about your responsibilities and your results including: dollars raised, hours spent, leadership position, end-user experience (e.g. fund-raising efforts reached over \$20K, providing for five developmentally disabled students and their parents to travel to Florida to swim with the dolphins.)
- Interests: This information can help to build rapport with interviewers. It's best to keep it simple and include things that are truly of interest to you such as reading, movies, and physical fitness (in general) or tennis, football, softball (specifically). It's true that the "Interests" section is not a core piece of information, but the vast majority of interviewers enjoy reviewing this, and the rapport you build can be helpful!

You can include additional information:

- Licenses and certifications: Individuals can achieve literally hundreds of professional licenses in the areas of health care, finance, real estate, insurance, and so forth. For a complete list, Google professional licenses, and you will be able to identify if you should include any on your résumé. Examples include Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Level I, Licensed Real Estate Agent, and so forth.

Important note: Never misrepresent any information on your résumé. If you have knowledge of another language, qualify your knowledge as fluent, intermediate, or beginner. If you don't speak a language other than English, do not include a bullet point about language because you might not know the language capabilities of your interviewers.

Some résumé readers differ on this, but listing your interests can help develop rapport with your résumé reader and interviewer. No matter what the skill level of the interviewer, having a common interest can always begin a great conversation.

An example of information listed in this section could include the following:

SKILLS and ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Computer skills: Fluent in Microsoft Word and Excel. Some knowledge of PowerPoint.
- Language skills: Spanish/Intermediate
- Certifications: CPR, 2009.
- Community service: Member of Fundraising Committee achieving goal of raising \$10K for South Shore YMCA, Spring 2010.
- Interests: Enjoy reading, cycling, and surfing.

Figure 4.12.8

References

One of the famous last lines of a résumé is "References furnished upon request." This is not necessary because employers can simply ask for references when they want them. However, a proactive, impressive strategy would be to create a single-page document that includes the following information:

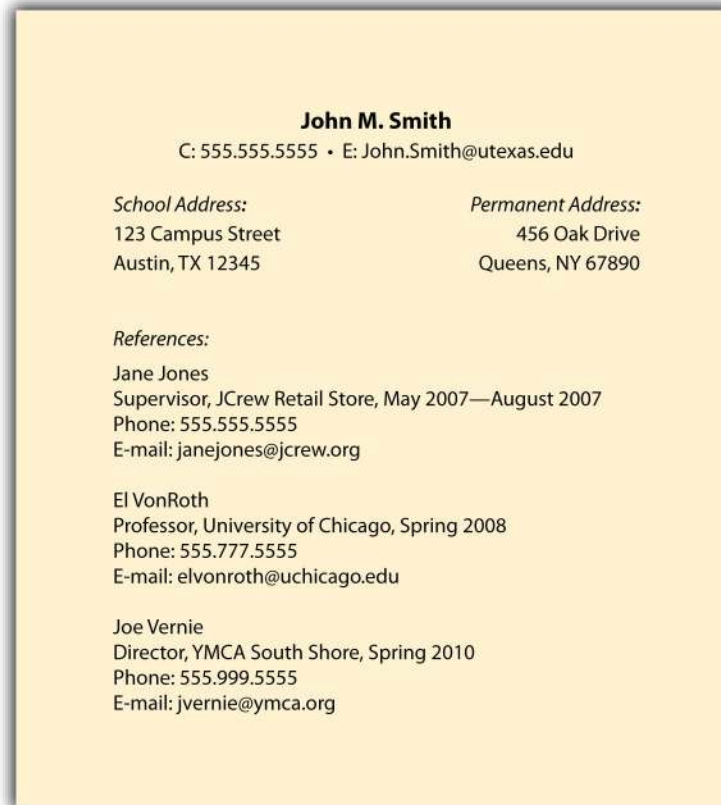
- Your header (so it's a matched set with the résumé), including your name, address, and contact information
- Your reference's name

- Your reference's company and title
- Your reference's relationship to you (e.g., manager, peer, vendor, and so forth)
- Your reference's contact information, including their e-mail address and phone number

Do not widely distribute this information because it contains the contact information of your references, which you should treat as confidential. However, having the list prepared enables you to quickly share this information with prospective employers upon request.

Help your references help you by notifying them that they can expect a call and by highlighting the most important qualities you want them to mention.

An example of this document could include the following.



John M. Smith
C: 555.555.5555 • E: John.Smith@utexas.edu

<i>School Address:</i> 123 Campus Street Austin, TX 12345	<i>Permanent Address:</i> 456 Oak Drive Queens, NY 67890
---	--

References:

Jane Jones
Supervisor, JCrew Retail Store, May 2007—August 2007
Phone: 555.555.5555
E-mail: janejones@jcrew.org

El VonRoth
Professor, University of Chicago, Spring 2008
Phone: 555.777.5555
E-mail: elvonroth@uchicago.edu

Joe Vernie
Director, YMCA South Shore, Spring 2010
Phone: 555.999.5555
E-mail: jvernies@ymca.org

Figure 4.12.9: Sample Reference Document

Functional Résumés

This chapter thus far has reviewed a résumé that follows a chronological format. Another format to consider is a functional résumé, which highlights the skills you've developed more than the individual jobs you've held.

Functional résumés can be different from what most recruiters will review, so it's best to proceed with care. This includes consulting a career services office and consulting a professional résumé writer.

It's important to note that throughout the many, many years that individuals have been drafting résumés, recruiters have expected to see a chronological résumé with certain sections: employment, education, and additional information. In most cases, it's best to give recruiters what they expect: a chronological résumé.

With that understood, functional résumés can be used for college students and experienced candidates for the following reasons:

- Individuals may want to highlight their skills and achievements rather than the companies for which they worked.
- College students who do not have a strong work experience history can use a functional résumé to give them a chance to include other achievements, honors, and abilities in a very pronounced way.

- Experienced individuals can deemphasize gaps in employment because recruiters often notice gaps and then want those gaps explained.
- Experienced individuals can also deemphasize career mobility and emphasize skills and achievements.

Here are some categories you may want to consider when drafting a functional résumé:

- Communication skills
- Teamwork skills
- Leadership skills
- Honors and special achievements
- Athletic involvement and achievements
- Volunteer experiences

Review the following: [Figure 4.4](#) and [Figure 4.5](#) are examples of how a functional résumé might look.

ROBERTA HAWLEY

333 West Terrace
Madison, WI 55555
E-mail: rh333@uwisconsin.edu
Cell: 917.333.5555

OBJECTIVE:

To secure an entry-level position in the health care industry, using my volunteer experience, along with my client focus, and results-oriented approach.

EDUCATION:

University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI
BS degree, expected Spring 2013
Major: health care, Minor: communications
GPA: 3.8

HONORS:

- Heath Care Award recipient, Wisconsin General Hospital, 2011
- University of Wisconsin Student Government, elected junior class president, 2011
- Dean's List, 2010, 2011
- Senator Smith Scholarship for Academic Excellence, 2010
- Pi Kappa Delta
- Silver Helmet National Honor Society

LEADERSHIP SKILLS:

- President, health care club, 2011, member 2008–2012
- Treasurer, nutrition club, 2010, member 2009–2012
- Captain, varsity tennis team, 2009–2012 and state singles champion, 2009

HEALTH CARE VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:

- Volunteer reader, Mercy General Hospital, 2007–Present
- Gift shop volunteer, Mercy General Hospital, 2009–Present

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:

- Fun Run, Memorial Half Marathon, 2009–Present
- Wisconsin Cares volunteer, Coat Collection Drive, 2010
- Tennis coach, Wisconsin Special Olympics, 2008–2010

COMPUTER SKILLS:

- Microsoft Office Suite: Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Apple formats, Photoshop, and UNIX platforms
- LexisNexis and VISIO
- Programming skills: C++

Figure 4.12.10: Sample Functional Résumé 1

NICOLE FRANK

333 Ross Avenue • Palm Beach, FL 22222
Email: rh333@uwisconsin.edu • Cell: 917.333.5555

OBJECTIVE:

To secure an entry-level position in the health care industry, using my volunteer experience, along with my client focus, and results oriented approach.

EDUCATION:

U Wisconsin, Madison, WI

BS degree, expected Spring 2012

Major: health care, Minor: communications

GPA: 3.8

Problem Solving/Analytical Skills

- Was part of a task force that developed an innovative approach for reviewing patient data, when original plans included purchasing a new system, Mercy Hospital, 2010
- Interacted with other departments to improve surveillance of hospital visitors and vendors, Mercy Hospital, 2009

People/Leadership Skills

- Manager of hospital gift shop, with revenues of \$5K per week, Mercy Hospital, 2008
- Team captain for women's varsity tennis team, University of Wisconsin, 2010. Member of team 2008–Present

Communication/Writing Skills

- Presented team project in University of Wisconsin health care competition, winning first place
- Wrote and edited health care policies/procedures by incorporating feedback from four other departments; policy manual used by entire hospital
- Presented team project to more than fifty students in Communications class, earning an A on the report, and an A in the class

Figure 4.12.11: Sample Functional Résumé 2

Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Some people interchange the word résumé with curriculum vitae (CV), which is incorrect because they are different items. A CV is mostly used internationally, particularly for research-oriented positions. A CV is often longer and more detailed than a résumé. In some cases, CVs are six to eight pages long and include published material and conference information if the person presented information to colleagues. A CV may or may not include biographical information, including marital status and nationality (this is typically the case with international students studying in the United States).

With this said, a résumé is the appropriate document when seeking any nonacademic or nonclinical position in the United States. If you are interested in working overseas, use research to familiarize yourself with an employer's expectation regarding résumés, CVs, and additional information.

Cover Letters

Learning Objectives

1. Conduct the preliminary work needed to write a cover letter that has purpose and gets noticed.
2. Learn the three basic sections of a cover letter.

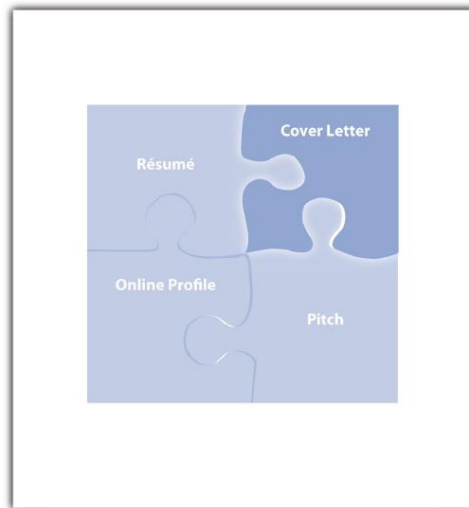


Figure 4.12.12

Is it worth writing a cover letter knowing it might never be read? The short answer is yes. Some recruiters don't read cover letters and go straight to the résumé, but other recruiters read and carefully weigh the information in cover letters. You don't know which recruiter will receive your résumé and letter, so write the best cover letter you can. A well-written cover letter is an opportunity to present yourself well and influence a recruiter, so always take full advantage of that opportunity. A cover letter can also be viewed as your first conversation with a future employer, so be certain its quality is exceptional.

Your cover letter should be engaging, informative, and show your command of the written word. It should flow easily from a reader's perspective, making the connection between the opportunity and your ability to succeed if given the chance. The tone should be compelling. You should be excited about the opportunity and you should be confident of your ability to succeed (even if you truly lack the confidence).

Cover Letter Preliminary Work

Preparation and practice are critical to every step of the job search process, and the cover letter is no different. Five actions can help make your cover letter compelling:

1. Make a list of your top ten strengths.
2. Make a list of your top five weaknesses (also known as areas you'd like to strengthen).
3. Decipher the job description to identify each separate skill and qualification.
4. Compare the two lists to see if they are in alignment. Also identify the gaps—does the job description list something that you haven't done?
5. Highlight your top three skills that align with the job description as you will use them in your cover letter.



Figure 4.12.13

List Your Top Ten Strengths

Knowing your top strengths is vital to your job search efforts. To find your top strengths, assess your past successes. Fill out the following chart, and, next to each strength, list a detailed example of how you have excelled at this particular strength. Quantify as much of your example as possible, and ensure you include a clear beginning, middle, and end. [Table 5.1](#) lists the following example for your reference:

Table 4.1 : Chart of Top Strengths

Top Strengths		Examples
1	Organized	• In my last internship, I was asked to manually organize paperwork for the past year's real estate transactions, with little other direction. • I was given two weeks to complete this, and all of the paper work was in approximately five boxes. • I quickly reviewed the contents, which fit into four categories: (1) commercial, (2) private homes, (3) condos, and (4) incomplete transactions. • I asked my manager to review this to make sure I was going in the right direction. He gave me the green light. • I finished the project in one week, and I not only organized the files but also computerized the entire process. • As a result, my manager quickly focused on completing 25% of the outstanding transactions, adding ~\$100K in the last half of the year!
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Notice that the example is very detailed:

- Time was referenced (in a few ways): This project was during your last internship, and you had two weeks to complete the task. The work was actually finished ahead of schedule—in one week versus two.
- The duties were defined: You had to organize the contents of boxes of paperwork for the year's real estate transactions.
- The action was emphasized: You took the initiative to organize the work into four categories and you checked with your manager to make sure you were going in the right direction.
- The accomplishment was highlighted: You completed the task in half the time, and you automated the process. Most of all, you enabled your employer to close 25 percent of the outstanding transactions, adding about \$100,000 in revenue to the bottom line.
- (Whenever possible, identify the result(s) of your actions. Future employers will hire you because you have proved your worth to your past employers.)

Other strengths and skills could include (in alphabetical order):

• Analytical • Detail oriented • Client focused • Conscientious • Communicative • Creative • Hard worker • Industry knowledge • Technical • Leader	• Loyal • Optimistic • Passionate • Persistent • Proactive • Quick learner • Team Player • Tenacious • Thoughtful • Trustworthy • Vigilant
---	--

List Your Top Five Weaknesses

Many job search candidates are uncomfortable talking about their weaknesses. This should not be the case. Knowing your weaknesses is just as important to your job search as knowing your strengths. Three very strong reasons exist to speak fluidly and confidently about your weaknesses:

1. Employers want to hire individuals who are self-aware, and you can be self-aware only if you know both your strengths and weaknesses. Being self-aware is the only way you can improve.
2. Employers know it takes a certain level of maturity to talk about your weaknesses. They want to ensure you have achieved that level of maturity before extending an offer.
3. Your weaknesses should in no way contain a hint of the skills necessary to excel at your target position. Your weaknesses should in no way contain a hint of the skills necessary to excel at any position.

Remember that everyone has strengths and everyone has weaknesses, including every CEO, every country's president, every manager, and every one of your coworkers. You will be in good company when considering and discussing your weaknesses.

The trick, if there is a trick, to your weaknesses lies in your plan to strengthen them. Having a plan to strengthen a weakness is impressive, especially if you've already taken steps to do so.

[Table 5.2](#) will help you identify five weaknesses, or areas you'd like to improve.

Table 4.2: Chart of Weaknesses

Weaknesses		Plan to Strengthen
1	Public speaking	• I have given many presentations, and on a scale of 1–10, I'm probably a 6. I do my best when I'm very prepared and when I rehearse. • To improve, I've registered for a public speaking class next semester, and until then, I raise my hand more than usual. • I also volunteer to present whenever I can because the more I practice, the better I get. Lastly, I'm reading a book about presenting, and it's helped very much.
2		
3		
4		

Notice that the weakness is specifically described with a plan for improvement:

- You are aware that public speaking is a weakness, yet you've already given presentations, are not an abysmal failure in this area, and have already achieved some success.
- You quantified where you are on a scale of one to ten and consider yourself a six. You have shown that you know the topic well, but haven't yet mastered it. You mention two important aspects to being a good presenter: (1) you do best when you are prepared and (2) rehearsal and practice help you as well.
- You already have a plan to strengthen this skill: (1) you will take a public speaking class, (2) you are raising your hand as much as possible in class (which is a form of public speaking), (3) you are volunteering to present whenever you can, and (4) you are reading a book about presenting and it's already helped.

In addition, it's important to note that a weakness should never be a core component of the job. For example, if you perceive your weakness to be public speaking, you wouldn't apply for a position as a trainer. If you perceive your weakness to be analytical skills, you wouldn't apply for a position as an accountant. A weakness can be a part of a job, for example, if you are applying for a position as an accountant, you would predominately do financial work and only sometimes present (e.g., share your findings with management), so using public speaking as a weakness in this case is fine.

Decipher the Job Description and Identify Each Skill and Qualification

Most job descriptions can be copied from the employer's website. Copy the job description and do the following (if you only have a hard copy, it's worthwhile to retype it as you'll want to manipulate each requirement for the position):

- Put each skill and qualification on a separate line.
- Group like with like. If communication skills are listed as important, in addition to giving presentations to potential clients, list one after the other.

In the following sample, each component of the job description is considered and deciphered, in preparation for applying and eventually interviewing for the position.

Job Description Sample

Entry-Level Sales

The CML Company, a leading provider of recruiting and staffing services, is currently seeking motivated, career-oriented individuals to join our recruiting team.

Our recruiters work with our clients and inside sales team identifying, screening, interviewing, and presenting qualified candidates for contract and permanent positions.

CML promotes from within. Entry-level sales staff start as recruiters. Once they master that role and have a desire to become a member of our sales team, they can be considered for promotion.

Qualified Candidates for the Recruiter Position Will

- Develop recruiting strategies designed to identify qualified candidates through various recruiting tools.
- Evaluate candidates' strengths compared with clients' requirements by evaluating, screening, and interviewing the candidate.
- Negotiate wage rates and other terms and conditions of employment with candidates, and gain commitment from candidates for current and future job requirements.
- Complete necessary pre-employment processes, including reference and background checks and drug tests.
- Work with account executives to identify top accounts, client skill sets, and key market segments, and to assess clients' staffing requirements.
- Communicate effectively with others to create a productive team environment.
- Communicate with peers by sharing recruiting best practices and providing accurate, thorough documentation on contract employees in our applicant-tracking system or by using other documentation tools.

- Maintain relationships with industry contacts to provide customer service, gain industry knowledge, and get referrals and sales leads.

Qualified Candidates for the Recruiter Position Must

- Have a bachelor's degree or related sales or recruiting experience
- Be available to work before and after typical office hours as work may demand
- Possess strong written and oral English communication skills
- Be familiar with Microsoft Word and MS Outlook (or similar e-mail applications)
- Have work experience in a service-oriented business
- Have a desire to learn and advance in a fast-paced sales environment, and be capable of regularly using good judgment and discretion to accomplish goals and work requirements
- Be currently authorized to work in the United States for any employer

Requirements:

1. Bachelor's degree
2. Able to work flexible, long hours
3. Strong written and verbal communication skills
4. Computer literate
5. Desire to learn in a fast-paced sales environment
6. Good judgment
7. Discretion
8. Currently authorized to work in the United States

Review the Job Description Sample

Consider the preceding sample. Study each component of the job description and how it relates to your skills so you can apply for and gain an interview for the position:

- Eight items are listed in the requirements section. Do your skills match all of these requirements, or the vast majority of them? It would be wise to compare this list to your list of strengths.
- An additional three requirements are not stated as obviously: (1) individuals must be motivated, (2) they must have the ability to master the work, and (3) they must have a desire to be a part of the sales team in order to be promoted. These requirements are found in the first section of the job description.
- Don't count out the opportunity if you don't fit every requirement. Do your best to think of something that is somewhat related. For example, if you have never worked in a fast-paced sales environment, focus on your desire to learn. Focus on the fact that you've observed fast-paced sales environments, and those situations appeal to you. At the very least, you could think of the fact that although you don't have direct experience in that particular environment, you have always been very proactive in completing tasks as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- If you are a strong match for the majority of the requirements, ensure you have specific, results-oriented examples to demonstrate these skills.
- You will not have a clear indication as to which skills are more important than others, so use your best judgment call. Treat each skill as if it's the most important. For example, consider communication skills—have a specific, results-oriented example of your verbal skills and your written skills. At some point, however, you will want to select the three skills you think are most important, match them to your strongest skills, and then write your cover letter.

Consider Future Responsibilities of the Job

Note that it's not necessary for you to know how to develop recruiting strategies. You can learn that on the job. However, a proactive candidate may research recruiting strategies and the identification of talented individuals.

Compare the Two Lists and Find the Alignment between Your Strengths and Weaknesses

You now have taken the following two steps:

1. Deciphered the job description into each individual skill and requirement needed

2. Listed your top ten strengths, with examples for each

Your next step is to check if the two lists are aligned:

- If there is alignment, you have a potential good match and you should apply for the job.
- If there isn't alignment, it's a clear indication that the job is not the right fit for you and it's best to continue your search.

Highlight Your Top Three Strengths

The last step in this section is to select the top three skills needed in the job description, and decide which skills fall within your strengths and which you will highlight in the cover letter. These three skills, if positioned properly, will make the case for why you should be hired.

The Cover Letter Template

The cover letter template includes three main sections:

1. The introductory paragraph
2. The last paragraph, which reiterates your interest
3. The magic middle

The Introductory Paragraph

In the introductory paragraph, you introduce yourself to the hiring manager or recruiter. The paragraph should include five general items:

1. Why you are contacting them
2. How you heard about the position (If someone referred you, mention the name of your contact.)
3. Whether you are still in school and, if so, your major and minor
4. How your work experience pertains to your desired or targeted job
5. Why you are interested in the position

The Magic Middle

The middle of the cover letter is magical because it makes the case for why you'd be an exceptional hire. Select three strengths necessary to excel and assign each strength to a bulleted section or brief paragraph. Boldly indicate your strengths and include your best examples of how you excel at each strength. See the following sample cover letter as an example of how to highlight your strengths.

Some candidates have two paragraphs that cover the "magic middle". In one paragraph, the candidate could focus on education and the ways it has prepared the candidate for the position. A second paragraph then discusses work experience and applies skills learned to the position in which is being applied for.

Anything listed as a strength in the resume needs to include visible proof of that strength. For example, don't write that you have strong interpersonal skills unless you can list why and how. You could back this up by writing about a course that required group work to finish a large project and how you took the lead, what it required, and that your group was successful.

The Last Paragraph

In the last paragraph, you summarize and close, taking the following five steps:

1. Reiterate your interest.
2. State you would be a perfect match because your strengths match the key skills necessary to succeed at the job.
3. Inform them that you will contact them in a week.
4. Ask that they contact you if they have any questions or an interest in moving forward.
5. Thank them for their time and consideration.

Sample Application Letters

[Figure 5.2](#) and [Figure 5.3](#) are sample application letters. There are more sample letters at the end of this chapter, and some of them correspond to the sample résumés at the end of the previous chapter.

Joe Student
555 Campus Center Street
Hadley, MA 55555

Company Name
Company Address
City, State Zip

November 20, 2010

Dear Hiring Manager,

I am writing about the Marketing Summer Internship Program that I researched in my school's career services department. I am currently a junior at Success University with a major in marketing and a GPA of 3.6. I have executed several challenging marketing projects and I'm confident that I can succeed at your internship. Attached is my résumé in addition to my design portfolio.

My professional experience and various educational activities have prepared me well for this internship as I've honed the following skills:

- Research: Last fall, I researched over one dozen potential speakers to select the final list of three speakers that were invited to speak at my school's Women's Leadership Conference, which was attended by over 1,000 students. My team of five successfully invited the local leaders of various art galleries, in addition to other prominent leaders in the marketing field. The formal program featured solid advice given to participants on how to succeed in business with a particular focus on marketing, and we received extremely strong feedback from participants. The speakers also commented upon the overwhelming interest of the audience members and the quality of the students they spoke to directly.
- Creative problem solving: I have created many websites and logos to ensure that the brand image of each was relevant and strong. While working at XYZ Company last month, I designed a visual template for the new website using the research I conducted on potential marketing targets. My manager complimented me on my listening skills as they were critical to creating quality results.
- Communication: I am the lead campus event coordinator for our five "sister" campuses in the Massachusetts area. I've used my clear and transparent communication skills most recently when planning a marketing conference this past April for all five campuses. The entire project took approximately six months to plan, and during the first four months, each coordinator met via a conference call every two weeks. We constructed very clear project plans outlining everyone's responsibilities and due dates. We were vigilant in our communications because it was the only way to ensure success for the 500 participants, and the 10 speakers who attended. The conference received a 90 percent approval rating from participants.

I would like to reiterate my interest in your marketing internship. I am excited about the prospect of working for your company and I'm confident that my above mentioned skills will ensure my success. I will call you next week to follow up. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out to me at the phone number or email below.

Best regards,

Joe Student
Phone
E-mail address

Attachment

Figure 4.12.14: Application Letter Sample 1

Jane Smith
555 East 28th Street, Apartment 9E
New York, NY 10022

Company Name
Street
City, State, Zip

September 25, 2011

Dear Hiring Manager:

I would like to express my interest in the full-time position with your company which was posted on your website. I will graduate this spring from Fordham University with a BA in public accounting. My classmate, Alicia Smith, has shared with me her tax internship experience at ABC Company and she spoke very highly of her experience there. I am interested in this position because you have the largest tax practice in the United States, and I excel in large companies with a culture that is both inclusive and proactive.

My previous experiences make me a very strong candidate. I had two summer internships with XYZ Accounting, and partnered closely with my manager to set up the internal control system which helped us to meet regulatory requirements. In addition to improving the efficiency of our process, it saved our company significant time and money.

At EFG Inc., I organized and analyzed large amounts of data using excel and access. This work was shared with all accountants and strategies were created to compensate for areas of weakness. I'm proud to say that these programs and processes are still being used today, even though I worked at the company two years ago.

At Fordham University, teamwork and leadership are critical to our learning. I have been the vice-president of our accounting club for the past year. I managed the budget of \$7K but more importantly, worked closely with other student clubs leaders to hold a successful recruiter's panel discussion, which was attended by over 100 students. The panels resulted in many positive career discussions and will hopefully result in full-time jobs for my fellow students. This successful event would not have been possible without the teamwork of the accounting club, and the partnership we built with Career Services and the companies that were represented.

My experience and skills in addition to my enthusiasm for taxes, will allow me to make an immediate and meaningful contribution to your company. I am very interested in discussing my qualifications with you.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
xxxxx@fordham.edu
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

Attachment

Figure 4.12.15: Application Letter Sample 2

Creating a Portfolio: Show and Tell

If you have examples of your expertise in a particular discipline, consider creating a portfolio of that information to share with potential employers. For example, perhaps you are a communications major and have written several documents that showcase your talent in this area. Include five or six samples of your communications to help build the case for why you should be hired. Perhaps you are a graphic design candidate, and you created several visuals that were used by neighborhood businesses, or for a class project. Include those visuals in a portfolio to help prove your talent to a future employer.

How would you share this information with future employers? You can either attach your samples, along with your résumé and cover letter, in your e-mail to a future employer, or bring them with you when you have secured an interview. Either method is an acceptable way to impress a future employer. A portfolio that you can carry to an interview could simply be a neat and professional-looking folder that contains hard copies of your work. Or you can include a virtual portfolio of online work with a link an employer can use to view your samples. You can include this information in a cover letter and you can also include it in a résumé. Either way, having samples and presenting them can prove to future employers that you have the talent to succeed.

Miscellaneous Things to Consider

Format

Formatting is important and must be neat and professional. It's recommended that you flush all text to the left, as various software programs can wreak havoc with indentations and tabs.

Greeting

Put extra effort into identifying the name of the hiring manager, so that your letter can be appropriately addressed to the specific person who will be reviewing résumés. Employers do not make this an easy step for you, and you have to do your research. Helpful exercises include researching the company website, reading news releases, and even calling the company to ask. Laziness will hurt your job search effort if this special effort is not made. If, after doing all the preceding, you still do not know the name of the person to whom you are sending your information, by all means, address it using Dear Hiring Manager or Dear Recruiter.

References

Pull from the information in the resume section since the link covers resumes and cover letters together. Just separate them.

Writing Proposals

Components of a Proposal^[34]

A basic Research Proposal has seven sections: Problem, S

olution, Research, Implementation, Method of Operation, Costs, and Benefits. These different sections are presented as follows:

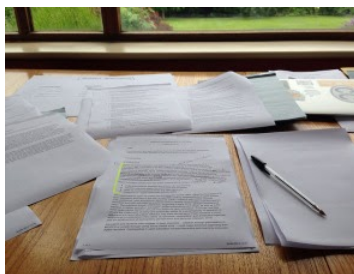


Figure 4.12.16

Problem section: Introduce the problem. State and discuss the problem. In the discussion, define and detail the 5 W's (who, what, where, when, and why).

Solution section: discuss the solution. Since your problem is unique, the research will not present the solution to your problem. However, the research will discuss similar problems and the solutions to these problems. This research will provide you information with which to formulate a solution that is relative to your specific problem.

Research section: Research your topic. Your sources must be current, within the last 2 or 3 years. Therefore, you need to research journals or newspapers for published articles, published interviews, published speeches, etc. You cannot use books. Information in books is usually outdated.

You will need at three (3) or four (4) documents that address a problem similar to the one you have chosen. Although you will not find your exact situation/problem, you will find documents that refer to similar problems. These documents will have similar populations, environments, workforces, etc. For example, if you propose to implement a shuttle bus service from the parking lot to work places for a more efficient and effective way for people to report to work, you may find documents from other workplaces, with circumstances similar to yours, which experienced similar problems and solved them by providing shuttle bus services.

The research will provide you with information that validates your topic as a problem and your solution, as well as validating your proposed implementation, methods of operation, costs, and benefits as credible.

Note that you need at least three (3) references/sources for your proposal.

Implementation section: Tell when, why, and how the solution will be used for the first time. The implementation period is usually a trial period to see if the solution is feasible as planned. Thus, you will pick a time that does not impact the normal operation of existing programs/patterns of operation/etc. In addition, describe the location of implementation, who will be involved, costs of implementation, what is expected to happen, the date and time of implementation, the duration of implementation, etc. Explain also why you chose this time for implementing the solution. State that during this time you will note what works and what needs to be changed.



Figure 4.12.17

Methods of Operation section: This section will tell how the solution will fit into and be used as a functional part of the day to day operation of the company/business, etc. Detail the date you expect to launch the solution into the operation the company, the place from where the solution will operate, how it will operate, and who will be involved (identify their responsibilities, duties, and any titles, certifications, degrees, etc, needed).

Costs section: This section tells how much the solution will cost. Detail the cost. Report costs in dollar amounts.

Benefits section: This section explains the benefits of the solution. There is little reason why your proposal should be accepted if there are not meaningful benefits. Thus, be sure to show that your solution will result in substantial benefits for the organization, company, etc.

Reference page: The reference page is a separate page that references your research. Remember to use the APA style of documentation.

Appendices: The Appendices include the full summaries and responses, the Problem Analysis, and any information that is meaningful to the proposal.

Business Proposal:

An effective business proposal informs and persuades efficiently. It features many of the common elements of a report, but its emphasis on persuasion guides the overall presentation.

Let's say you work in a healthcare setting. What types of products or services might be put out to bid? If your organization is going to expand and needs to construct a new wing, it will probably be put out to bid. Everything from office furniture to bedpans could potentially be put out to bid, specifying a quantity, quality, and time of delivery required. Janitorial services may also be bid on

each year, as well as food services, and even maintenance. Using the power of bidding to lower contract costs for goods and services is common practice.

In order to be successful in business and industry, you should be familiar with the business proposal. Much like a report, with several common elements and persuasive speech, a business proposal makes the case for your product or service. Business proposals are documents designed to make a persuasive appeal to the audience to achieve a defined outcome, often proposing a solution to a problem.

Common Proposal Elements

Idea

Effective business proposals are built around a great idea or solution. While you may be able to present your normal product, service, or solution in an interesting way, you want your document and its solution to stand out against the background of competing proposals. What makes your idea different or unique? How can you better meet the needs of the company than other vendors? What makes you so special? If the purchase decision is made solely on price, it may leave you little room to underscore the value of service, but the sale follow-through has value. For example, don't consider just the cost of the unit but also its maintenance. How can maintenance be a part of your solution, distinct from the rest? In addition, your proposal may focus on a common product where you can anticipate several vendors at similar prices. How can you differentiate yourself from the rest by underscoring long-term relationships, demonstrated ability to deliver, or the ability to anticipate the company's needs? Business proposals need to have an attractive idea or solution in order to be effective.

Traditional Categories

You can be creative in many aspects of the business proposal, but follow the traditional categories. Businesses expect to see information in a specific order, much like a résumé or even a letter. Each aspect of your proposal has its place and it is to your advantage to respect that tradition and use the categories effectively to highlight your product or service. Every category is an opportunity to sell, and should reinforce your credibility, your passion, and the reason why your solution is simply the best.

Table 4.3: Business Proposal Format

Cover Page	Title page with name, title, date, and specific reference to request for proposal if applicable.
Executive Summary	Like an abstract in a report, this is a one- or two-paragraph summary of the product or service and how it meets the requirements and exceeds expectations.
Background	Discuss the history of your product, service, and/or company and consider focusing on the relationship between you and the potential buyer and/or similar companies.
Proposal	The idea. Who, what, where, when, why, and how. Make it clear and concise. Don't waste words, and don't exaggerate. Use clear, well-supported reasoning to demonstrate your product or service.
Market Analysis	What currently exists in the marketplace, including competing products or services, and how does your solution compare?
Benefits	How will the potential buyer benefit from the product or service? Be clear, concise, specific, and provide a comprehensive list of immediate, short, and long-term benefits to the company.
Timeline	A clear presentation, often with visual aids, of the process, from start to finish, with specific, dated benchmarks noted.
Marketing Plan	Delivery is often the greatest challenge for Web-based services—how will people learn about you? If you are bidding on a gross lot of food service supplies, this may not apply to you, but if an audience is required for success, you will need a marketing plan.
Finance	What are the initial costs, when can revenue be anticipated, when will there be a return on investment (if applicable)? Again, the proposal may involve a one-time fixed cost, but if the product or service is to be delivered more than once, and extended financial plan noting costs across time is required.
Conclusion	Like a speech or essay, restate your main points clearly. Tie them together with a common theme and make your proposal memorable.

Keep in mind that formatting may vary. A business or organization may even provide a template they want to writer to use or specify what components they expect to be covered in the proposal. However, if they don't, then follow the suggested format above.

Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

Ethos refers to credibility, pathos to passion and enthusiasm, and logos to logic or reason. All three elements are integral parts of your business proposal that require your attention. Who are you and why should we do business with you? Your credibility may be unknown to the potential client and it is your job to reference previous clients, demonstrate order fulfillment, and clearly show that your product or service is offered by a credible organization. By association, if your organization is credible the product or service is often thought to be more credible.

In the same way, if you are not enthusiastic about the product or service, why should the potential client get excited? How does your solution stand out in the marketplace? Why should they consider you? Why should they continue reading? Passion and enthusiasm are not only communicated through “!” exclamation points. Your thorough understanding, and your demonstration of that understanding, communicates dedication and interest.

Each assertion requires substantiation, each point clear support. It is not enough to make baseless claims about your product or service—you have to show why the claims you make are true, relevant, and support your central assertion that your product or

service is right for this client. Make sure you cite sources and indicate “according to” when you support your points. Be detailed and specific.

Professional

A professional document is a base requirement. If it is less than professional, you can count on its prompt dismissal. There should be no errors in spelling or grammar, and all information should be concise, accurate, and clearly referenced when appropriate. Information that pertains to credibility should be easy to find and clearly relevant, including contact information. If the document exists in a hard copy form, it should be printed on a letterhead. If the document is submitted in an electronic form, it should be in a file format that presents your document as you intended. Word processing files may have their formatting changed or adjusted based on factors you cannot control—like screen size—and information can shift out of place, making it difficult to understand. In this case, a portable document format (PDF)—a format for electronic documents—may be used to preserve content location and avoid any inadvertent format changes when it is displayed.

Effective, persuasive proposals are often brief, even limited to one page. “The one-page proposal has been one of the keys to my business success, and it can be invaluable to you too. Few decision-makers can ever afford to read more than one page when deciding if they are interested in a deal or not. This is even more true for people of a different culture or language,” said Adnan Khashoggi, a successful multibillionaire. Riley, P. G. (2002). *The one-page proposal: How to get your business pitch onto one persuasive page* (p. 2). New York, NY: HarperCollins. Clear and concise proposals serve the audience well and limit the range of information to prevent confusion.

Two Types of Business Proposals

Solicited

If you have been asked to submit a proposal it is considered solicited. The solicitation may come in the form of a direct verbal or written request, but normally solicitations are indirect, open-bid to the public, and formally published for everyone to see. A request for proposal (RFP), request for quotation (RFQ), and invitation for bid (IFB) are common ways to solicit business proposals for business, industry, and the government.

RFPs typically specify the product or service, guidelines for submission, and evaluation criteria. RFQs emphasize cost, though service and maintenance may be part of the solicitation. IRBs are often job-specific in that they encompass a project that requires a timeline, labor, and materials. For example, if a local school district announces the construction of a new elementary school, they normally have the architect and engineering plans on file, but need a licensed contractor to build it.

Unsolicited

Unsolicited proposals are the “cold calls” of business writing. They require a thorough understanding of the market, product and/or service, and their presentation is typically general rather than customer-specific. They can, however, be tailored to specific businesses with time and effort, and the demonstrated knowledge of specific needs or requirement can transform an otherwise generic, brochure-like proposal into an effective sales message. Getting your tailored message to your target audience, however, is often a significant challenge if it has not been directly or indirectly solicited. Unsolicited proposals are often regarded as marketing materials, intended more to stimulate interest for a follow-up contact than make direct sales. Sue Baugh and Robert Hamper encourage you to resist the temptation to “shoot at every target and hope you hit at least one.” Baugh, L. S., & Hamper, R. J. (1995). *Handbook for writing proposals* (p. 3). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. A targeted proposal is your most effective approach, but recognize the importance of gaining company, service, or brand awareness as well as its limitations.

Sample Technical Documents

Visit this site to see view sample documents covered in this chapters:

<https://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/models.html#instructions>

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4.6: Text, E-mail, and Microblog Netiquette

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss the role of text messaging and microblogging in business communication.
2. Write effective emails for both internal and external communication.
3. Demonstrate the appropriate use of netiquette.

Text messages, micro blogging, and emails are part of our communication landscape, and skilled business communicators consider them a valuable tool to connect. Netiquette refers to etiquette, or protocols and norms for communication, on the Internet.

Texting

Whatever digital device you use, written communication in the form of brief messages, or texting, has become a common way to connect. It is useful for short exchanges, and is a convenient way to stay connected with others when talking on the phone would be cumbersome. Texting is not useful for long or complicated messages, and careful consideration should be given to the audience.

It is often said that you can tell how old someone is by how he or she inputs a phone number on a cell phone. If the person uses his or her thumb while holding the digital device, that person may have been raised on video games and be adept at one-handed interfaces. If he holds the digital device with one hand and inputs the number with the other, he may be over thirty, or may be less comfortable with some technological devices. Of course, there is no actual correlation between input and age, but it is a useful example to use when considering who your audience is when writing a text message. If the person is a one-hander, and knows all the abbreviations common to texting, you may be able to use similar codes to communicate effectively. If the person is a two-hander, you are better off using fewer words and spelling them out. Texting can be a great tool for connecting while on the go, but consider your audience and your company, and choose words, terms, or abbreviations that will deliver your message.

Tips for Effective Business Texting

- Know your recipient; “? % dsct” may be an understandable way to ask a close associate what the proper discount is to offer a certain customer, but if you are writing a text to your boss, it might be wiser to write, “what % discount does Murray get on \$1K order?”
- Anticipate unintentional misinterpretation. Texting often uses symbols and codes to represent thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Given the complexity of communication, and the useful but limited tool of texting, be aware of its limitation and prevent misinterpretation with brief messages.
- Contacting someone too frequently can border on harassment. Texting is a tool. Use it when appropriate but don’t abuse it.
- Unplug yourself once in awhile. Do you feel constantly connected? Do you feel lost or “out of it” if you don’t have your cell phone and cannot connect to people, even for fifteen minutes? Sometimes being unavailable for a time can be healthy—everything in moderation, including texting.
- Don’t text and drive. Research shows that the likelihood of an accident increases dramatically if the driver is texting behind the wheel. Houston Chronicle. (2009, September 23). Deadly distraction: Texting while driving, twice as risky as drunk driving, should be banned. Houston Chronicle (3 STAR R.O. ed.), p. B8. Retrieved from http://www.chron.com/CDA/archives/archive.mpl?id=2009_4791006 Being in an accident while conducting company business would reflect poorly on your judgment as well as on your employer.

Microblogs^[24]

A microblog is a short blog that may be less formal than a letter or memo. Examples of sites that allow microblogging are Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. More businesses and organizations are using this as a communication tool. Often, the audience is a consumer. Therefore, the same rules that apply to other forms of technical writing covered also apply to microblogs.

Email

Electronic mail, usually called e-mail, is quite familiar to most students and workers. It may be used like text, or synchronous chat, and it can be delivered to a cell phone. In business, it has largely replaced print hard copy letters for external (outside the company)

correspondence, as well as taking the place of memos for internal (within the company) communication. Guffey, M. (2008). *Essentials of business communication* (7th ed.). Mason, OH: Thomson/Wadsworth. E-mail can be very useful for messages that have slightly more content than a text message, but it is still best used for fairly brief messages.

Many businesses use automated e-mails to acknowledge communications from the public, or to remind associates that periodic reports or payments are due. You may also be assigned to “populate” a form e-mail in which standard paragraphs are used but you choose from a menu of sentences to make the wording suitable for a particular transaction.

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

Tips for Effective Business Emails

- Proper salutations should demonstrate respect and avoid mix-ups in case a message is accidentally sent to the wrong recipient. For example, use a salutation like “Dear Ms. X” (external) or “Hi Barry” (internal).
- Subject lines should be clear, brief, and specific. This helps the recipient understand the essence of the message. For example, “Proposal attached” or “Your question of 10/25.”
- Close with a signature. Identify yourself by creating a signature block that automatically contains your name and business contact information.
- Avoid abbreviations. An e-mail is not a text message, and the audience may not find your wit cause to ROTFLOL (roll on the floor laughing out loud).
- Be brief. Omit unnecessary words.
- Use a good format. Include line breaks between sentences or divide your message into brief paragraphs for ease of reading. A good e-mail should get to the point and conclude in three small paragraphs or less.
- Reread, revise, and review. Catch and correct spelling and grammar mistakes before you press “send.” It will take more time and effort to undo the problems caused by a hasty, poorly written e-mail than to get it right the first time.
- Reply promptly. Watch out for an emotional response—never reply in anger—but make a habit of replying to all emails within twenty-four hours, even if only to say that you will provide the requested information in forty-eight or seventy-two hours.
- Use “Reply All” sparingly. Do not send your reply to everyone who received the initial e-mail unless your message absolutely needs to be read by the entire group.
- Avoid using all caps. Capital letters are used on the Internet to communicate emotion or yelling and are considered rude.
- Test links. If you include a link, test it to make sure it is complete.
- E-mail ahead of time if you are going to attach large files (audio and visual files are often quite large) to prevent exceeding the recipient’s mailbox limit or triggering the spam filter.
- Give feedback or follow up. If you don’t get a response in twenty-four hours, e-mail or call. Spam filters may have intercepted your message, so your recipient may never have received it.

Let’s look at two examples of business e-mail. In [Figure 9.1](#), we have an e-mail form. In [Figure 9.2](#), we have a letter written specifically for the situation and audience.

Welcome to The [our name] Store

Dear [customer's name]

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

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

You can change your contact details and password, track recent orders, add alternate shipping addresses, and manage your preferences and customer profile all in this one convenient location.

Thank you for your interest in The [our name] Store.

We look forward to your next visit.

Figure 4.6.1

To: Harriet Adamo, Physical Plant Manager, XYZ Corporation
From: Mel Vargas, Construction Site Manager, Maxim Construction Co.
Sent: Mon 10/25/09 8:14 AM
Subject: construction interruptions

Harriet,

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

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

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

Thanks,
Mel

Melvin R. Vargas
Construction Site Manager, Maxim Construction Co.
1234 Main Street, Big City, USA 98765-1111
(111) 123-4567, ext. 98

Figure 4.6.2

Netiquette

We create personal pages, post messages, and interact via mediated technologies as a normal part of our careers, but how we conduct ourselves can leave a lasting image, literally. The photograph you posted on your MySpace page may have been seen by your potential employer, or that nasty remark in a post may come back to haunt you later. Some fifteen years ago, when the Internet was a new phenomenon, Virginia Shea laid out a series of ground rules for communication online that continue to serve us today.

Virginia Shea's Rules of Netiquette

- Remember the human on the other side of the electronic communication.
 - Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life.
 - Know where you are in cyberspace.
 - Respect other people's time and bandwidth.
 - Make yourself look good online.
 - Share expert knowledge.
 - Keep flame wars under control.
 - Respect other people's privacy.
 - Don't abuse your power.
 - Be forgiving of other people's mistakes.
- Shea, V. (1994). Netiquette. San Francisco, CA: Albion Books.

Her rules speak for themselves and remind us that the golden rule (treat others as you would like to be treated) is relevant wherever there is human interaction.

Although email is a valuable communication tool, its widespread use in academic and business settings has introduced some new challenges for writers.

Because it is a relatively new form of communication, basic social conventions for writing and responding to e-mail are still being worked out. Miscommunication can easily occur when people have different expectations about the emails that they send and receive. In addition, e-mail is used for many different purposes, including contacting friends, communicating with professors and supervisors, requesting information, and applying for jobs, internships, and scholarships. Depending on your purposes, the messages you send will differ in their formality, intended audience, and desired outcome. Finally, the use of e-mail for advertising purposes has clogged communication channels, preventing some e-mails from reaching their intended audience. Writers are challenged to make their e-mail stand apart from "spam" and to grab and hold the attention of their audience.

So—how do you know when sending an e-mail is the most effective way of getting your message across? When is a brief message o.k., and when it is more appropriate to send a longer, more professional-sounding e-mail? How should a writer decide what style of writing is appropriate for each task? How can you prevent your e-mail from ending up in the junk pile? Keep reading for answers to these questions!

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4.7: When is E-mail the Appropriate Form of Communication to Use?

When is E-mail the Appropriate Form of Communication to Use?

E-mail is a good way to get your message across when:

- You need to get in touch with a person who is hard to reach via telephone, does not come to campus regularly, or is not located in the same part of the country or world (for instance, someone who lives in a different time zone).
- The information you want to share is not time-sensitive. The act of sending an e-mail is instantaneous, but that does not mean the writer can expect an instantaneous response. For many people, keeping up with their e-mail correspondence is a part of their job, and they only do it during regular business hours. Unless your reader has promised otherwise, assume that it may take a few days for him/her to respond to your message.
- You need to send someone an electronic file, such as a document for a course, a spreadsheet full of data, or a rough draft of your paper.
- You need to distribute information to a large number of people quickly (for example, a memo that needs to be sent to the entire office staff).
- You need a written record of the communication. Saving important e-mails can be helpful if you need to refer back to what someone said in an earlier message, provide some kind of proof (for example, proof that you have paid for a service or product), or review the content of an important meeting, deadline, memo.

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4.8: When is e-mail not an appropriate form of communication to use?

When is e-mail not an appropriate form of communication to use?

E-mail is not an effective means of communication when:

- Your message is long and complicated or requires additional discussion that would best be accomplished face-to-face. For example, if you want feedback from your supervisor on your work or if you are asking your professor a question that requires more than a yes/no answer or simple explanation, you should schedule a meeting instead.
- Information is highly confidential. E-mail is NEVER private! Keep in mind that your message could be forwarded on to other people without your knowledge. A backup copy of your e-mail is always stored on a server where it can be easily retrieved by interested parties, even when you have deleted the message and think it is gone forever.
- Your message is emotionally charged or the tone of the message could be easily misconstrued. If you would hesitate to say something to someone's face, do not write it in an e-mail.

Who is your audience?

People have different opinions about the form and content of emails, so it is always helpful to be aware of the expectations of your [audience](#). For example, some people regard email as a rapid and informal form of communication—a way to say “hello” or to ask a quick question. However, others view email as simply a more convenient way to transmit a formal letter. Such people may consider an informal e-mail rude or unprofessional.

A message like this one might be o.k. to send your friend, but not to your professor:

Hey Joan,

Do you know what the assignment is about? Can U help me?

~M

Although it may be obvious to you that you wouldn't send such an email to your professor, let's carefully examine what assumptions this message makes about the reader and his/her expectations.

The tone of this message is very casual; it assumes that the reader knows who the sender is and has a close personal relationship with the sender. Because it contains an ambiguous reference to “the assignment,” this message also assumes that the reader is familiar with the subject matter at hand (for instance, it assumes the reader will know which course and which particular assignment the sender is referring to). In this message, the writer also makes an implicit assumption about the reader's familiarity with the slang that is often used when sending an instant message or text message. If the reader is not familiar with this type of slang, the “U” in “Can U help me?” might be confusing, or it might even be taken as a sign that the writer is too lazy to type out the word “you.”

Making assumptions about your audience's expectations increases the risk that your message or its tone will be misinterpreted. To ensure that your message has its intended effect, use the following questions to help you think about your audience and their needs:

- Who is your audience? How often does your audience use e-mail to communicate? How comfortable is your audience with using electronic communication—for example, when in their lifetime did they begin using e-mail (childhood or adulthood)?
- What is your audience's relationship to you—for example, is the reader your teacher? Your boss? A friend? A stranger? How well do you know him/her? How would you talk to him/her in a social situation?
- What do you want your audience to think or assume about you? What kind of impression do you want to make?

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4.9: Important components of an effective e-mail

Important Components of an Effective E-mail:

Subject Lines

E-mail subject lines are like newspaper headlines. They should convey the main point of your e-mail or the idea that you want the reader to take away from your e-mail. Therefore, be as specific as possible. One word subjects such as “Hi,” “Question,” or “FYI” are not informative and don’t give the reader an idea of how important your message is. If your message is time sensitive, you might want to include a date in your subject line, for example, “Meeting on Thurs, Dec 2.”

Greetings and Sign-offs

Use some kind of greeting and some kind of sign-off. Don’t just start with your text, and don’t stop at the end without a polite signature. If you don’t know the person well, you may be confused about how to address him/her (“What do I call my TA/professor?”) or how to sign off (From? Sincerely?). Nonetheless, it is always better to make some kind of effort. When in doubt, address someone more formally to avoid offending them. Some common ways to address your reader are:

Dear Professor Smith,

Hello Ms. McMahon,

Hi Mary Jane,

If you don’t know the name of the person you are addressing, or if the e-mail addresses a diverse group, try something generic, yet polite:

To whom it may concern,

Dear members of the selection committee,

Hello everyone,

Your ending is extremely important because it lets the reader know who is contacting them. Always sign off with your name at the end of your e-mail. If you don’t know the reader well, you might also consider including your title and the organization you belong to; for example:

Mary Watkins

Senior Research Associate

Bain and Company

Joseph Smith

UNC-CH, Class of 2009

For your closing, something brief but friendly, or perhaps just your name, will do for most correspondence:

Thank you,

Best wishes,

See you tomorrow,

Regards,

For a very formal message, such as a job application, use the kind of closing that you might see in a business letter:

Sincerely,

Respectfully yours,

Cc: and Bcc: ('carbon copy' and 'blind carbon copy')

Copying individuals on an e-mail is a good way to send your message to the main recipient while also sending someone else a copy at the same time. This can be useful if you want to convey the same exact message to more than one person. In professional settings, copying someone else on an e-mail can help get things done, especially if the person receiving the copy is in a supervisory role. For example, copying your boss on an email to a nonresponsive co-worker might prompt the co-worker to respond. Be aware, however, that when you send a message to more than one address using the Cc: field, both the original recipient and all the recipients of the carbon copies can see all the e-mail addresses in the To: and Cc: fields. Each person who receives the message will be able to see the addresses of everyone else who received it.

Blind copying e-mails to a group of people can be useful when you don't want everyone on the list to have each other's email addresses. The only recipient address that will be visible to all recipients is the one in the To: field. If you don't want any of the recipients to see the e-mail addresses in the list, you can put your own address in the To: field and use Bcc: exclusively to address your message to others. However, do not assume that blind copying will always keep recipients from knowing who else was copied—someone who is blind copied may hit “reply all” and send a reply to everyone, revealing that he/she was included in the original message.

Some additional tips for writing more effective emails:

Think about your message before you write it. Don't send emails in haste. First, decide on the purpose of your e-mail and what outcome you expect from your communication. Then think about your message's audience and what he/she/they may need in order for your message to have the intended result. You will also improve the clarity of your message if you organize your thoughts before you start writing. Jot down some notes about what information you need to convey, what questions you have, etc., then organize your thoughts in a logical sequence. You can try [brainstorming](#) techniques like mapping, listing, or outlining to help you organize your thoughts.

Reflect on the tone of your message. When you are communicating via e-mail, your words are not supported by gestures, voice inflections, or other cues, so it may be easier for someone to misread your tone. For example, sarcasm and jokes are often misinterpreted in e-mails and may offend your audience. Similarly, be careful about how you address your reader. For instance, beginning an e-mail to your professor or TA with “Hey!” might be perceived as being rude or presumptuous (as in, “Hey you!”). If you're unsure about how your e-mail might be received, you might try reading it out loud to a friend to test its tone.

Strive for clarity and brevity in your writing. Have you ever sent an email that caused confusion and took at least one more communication to straighten out? Miscommunication can occur if an e-mail is unclear, disorganized, or just too long and complex for readers to easily follow. Here are some steps you can take to ensure that your message is understood:

1. Briefly state your purpose for writing the email in the very beginning of your message.
2. Be sure to provide the reader with a context for your message. If you're asking a question, cut and paste any relevant text (for example, computer error messages, assignment prompts you don't understand, part of a previous e-mail message, etc.) into the e-mail so that the reader has some frame of reference for your question. When replying to someone else's e-mail, it can often be helpful to either include or restate the sender's message.
3. Use paragraphs to separate thoughts (or consider writing separate e-mails if you have many unrelated points or questions).
4. Finally, state the desired outcome at the end of your message. If you're requesting a response, let the reader know what type of response you require (for example, an e-mail reply, possible times for a meeting, a recommendation letter, etc.) If you're requesting something that has a due date, be sure to highlight that due date in a prominent position in your e-mail. Ending your e-mail with the next step can be really useful, especially in work settings (for example, you might write “I will follow this e-mail up with a phone call to you in the next day or so” or “Let's plan to further discuss this at the meeting on Wednesday”).

Format your message so that it is easy to read. Use white space to visually separate paragraphs into separate blocks of text. Bullet important details so that they are easy to pick out. Use bold face type or capital letters to highlight critical information, such as due dates. (But do not type your entire message in capital letters or boldface—your reader may perceive this as “shouting” and won't be able to tell which parts of the message are especially important.)

[Proofread](#). Re-read messages before you send them. Use proper grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. If your email program supports it, use spelling and grammar checkers. Try reading your message out loud to help you catch any grammar

mistakes or awkward phrasing that you might otherwise miss.

Questions to ask yourself before sending an e-mail message:

- Is this message suitable for e-mail, or could I better communicate the information with a letter, phone call, or face-to-face meeting?
- What is my purpose for sending this e-mail? Will the message seem important to the receiver, or will it be seen as an annoyance and a waste of time?
- How many emails does the reader usually receive, and what will make him/her read this message (or delete it)?
- Do the formality and style of my writing fit the expectations of my audience?
- How will my message look when it reaches the receiver? Is it easy to read? Have I used correct grammar and punctuation? Have I divided my thoughts into discrete paragraphs? Are important items, such as due dates, highlighted in the text?
- Have I provided enough context for my audience to easily understand or follow the thread of the message?
- Did I identify myself and make it easy for the reader to respond in an appropriate manner?
- Will the receiver be able to open and read any attachments?

Sample emails:

Use what you've just learned to explain why Student 2's e-mail to Professor Jones is more effective than the e-mail written by Student 1. How does the tone of the messages differ? What makes Student 2's e-mail look and sound more appropriate? What are the elements that contribute its clarity? If you were Professor Jones and you received both emails, how would you respond to each one?

E-mail from Student 1:

hey,
i need help on my paper can i come by your office tomorrow
thx

E-mail from Student 2:

Hi Dr. Jones,

I am in your ENGL 101 class on Thursdays, and I have a question about the paper that is due next Tuesday. I'm not sure that I understand what is meant by the following sentence in the prompt: "Write a 10 page paper arguing for or against requiring ENGL 101 for all UNC freshmen and provide adequate support for your point of view."

I am not sure what you would consider "adequate" support. Would using 3 sources be o.k.?

Can I come by your office tomorrow at 2:00 pm to talk to you about my question? Please let me know if that fits your schedule. If not, I could also come by on Friday after 1:00.

Thank you,
Tim Smith

Here are two versions of an e-mail from a supervisor, Jane Doe, to a group of her employees. Which version do you think is most effective? Why?

Version 1 of Jane Doe's E-mail:

Subject: tomorrow

As you know, tomorrow afternoon we'll be meeting to discuss the status of all of our current projects. Donuts will be provided. Be sure to arrive on time and bring along the materials you have been working on this week—bring enough copies for everyone. Some of these material might include your calendars, reports, and any important emails you have sent. Also, I wanted to remind you that your parking permit requests are due later this week; you should turn those in to Ms. Jones, and if she is not at her desk when you stop by, you can email them to her.

Version 2 of Jane Doe's E-mail:

Subject: Materials for Wed. Staff Meeting

Hi, everyone—

For tomorrow's 3 p.m. staff meeting in the conference room, please bring 15 copies of the following materials:

- Your project calendar
- A one-page report describing your progress so far
- A list of goals for the next month
- Copies of any progress report messages you have sent to clients this past month

See you tomorrow—

Jane

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Research

5.1: Research Overview

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5.1: Research Overview

Research Overview

Being a good technical writer also means being an effective researcher. This includes finding accurate information from trustworthy sources, seamlessly incorporating the information into a document, and knowing how to cite, or give credit, to the original source.



Figure 5.1.1:

APA

In this course, you will be asked to research and then present your research in technical documents. When doing this, give credit to others' ideas that you use. We do this by documenting sources.

There are different ways to format when documenting research. Most of the students in this class have completed research papers using MLA (Modern Language Association) since this is what is most often used by English teachers. However, in this course we use APA (American Psychological Association) because it applies to more students and their majors. This being said, MLA and APA are simply ways to format research. Don't let the task of research be daunting. When documenting source for this class, you don't have to memorize how to cite a book vs. an online article; you simply have to know how to use our class textbook or an online resource to cite your information.

What to Document

Researchers document **anything that is quoted**. This is a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or longer section taken from a source. Make sure to place quotation marks around the borrowed material to show that it is the exact phrasing used from a source.

Paraphrased or summarized information also needs to be documented. These are ideas taken from someone else that you put into your own words. The language used needs to be original and fresh. The writer cannot simply switch a sentence around and switch out a few words. The writer must completely put the source's ideas into the writer's own words. Quotation marks are not used but the writer does use a textual citation to give credit to the original source.

Any visuals, graphics, and pictures taken from anywhere need to be cited. Often, individuals think they can snag an image from Google and copy and paste it into a paper or presentation without citing it; this is plagiarism. Anything that was not created in whole by the writer needs to be cited.

In short, always give credit to another person's ideas or work; never pass them off as your own.

How it Works

When taking information from another source, give credit by doing two things:

1. Use textual citations. Cite the source within the text of the document to show which section of your document was taken from the source. This is called a "textual citation." It goes after the information the writer borrowed and consists of a few pieces of information in parenthesis that gets the reader to the list of references at the end of the document which has all of the information for the source.

Textual citations in APA usually consist of the author's last name, a comma, the year it was published, another comma, and a page number (if there is one). These are put within parentheses.

Examples of Textual Citations:

- This issue was identified and revealed more than 50 years ago (Abramson, 2000).
or
- Abramson (2000) identified and revealed this issue more than 50 years ago.
or
- The greenhouse effect is a controversial one that some people are not taking serious (Smith, 2014, p. 56).\

2. Link every textual citations used to the list of references at the end of the document. Create a “references” page at the end of your paper. Textual citations are a way to get the reader to the list of references where all of the information to find each source used within the paper is located. The textual citations must match the list of references. You never have a textual citation that isn’t covered in the list of references or a source cited in the list of reference that doesn’t have a textual citation. They go together. Consider them a couple.

Example of a reference at end of document:

References

Abramson, M. (2000). Communication mythes. Baltimore, General Press.

Purdue Owl Website

For additional tips and samples of APA textual citations, visit the following website and skim through it: [Purdue OWL: APA Formatting](#). This website works well because it is reputable, and it can be accessed when ENGL 145 ends. In fact, many colleges and universities regularly use it. Save this site on your computer, and use the links on the left side of it to create textual citations and a list of references at the end of a document.

American Psychological Association Website

This is another site that can help with APA: [APA: American Psychological Association](#). It is the official APA website.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Punctuation, Grammar, and Conventions of English

6.1: Grammer&Punctuation Activities and Instructions

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6.1: Grammer&Punctuation Activities and Instructions

Use this link for assistance with grammar, punctuation, or other questions: [Grammar & Punctuation Activities and Instructions](#)

ENGL 145
Technical & Report Writing
1st Edition

Meet the OER Team



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Figure 6.1.1

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