Business Writing For Everyone

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Contents

Adaptation Statement

Business Communication For Everyone was created by Arley Cruthers. Several chapters were written from scratch, while others were adapted and remixed from other open textbooks, as indicated at the end of each chapter. Unless stated otherwise, *Business Communication For Everyone* (c) 2019 by Arley Cruthers and is licensed under a Creative Commons-Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International license.

In *Business Communication For Everyone*, examples have been changed to Canadian references, and information throughout the book, as applicable, has been revised to reflect Canadian content and language. The author has also changed names to reflect her classroom composition and has added examples that reflect her students' diverse experiences. Gender neutral language (they/their) has been used intentionally. In addition, while general ideas and content may remain unchanged from the sources from which this adapted version is based, word choice, phrasing, and organization of content within each chapter may have changed to reflect this author's stylistic preferences.

The author also collaborated with Brenda Fernie, who is the president of Seyem, the economic development branch of the Kwantlen Nation, to produce a series of narratives that connect to the topic explored in the book.

This book was composed on unceded Coast Salish territory.

The following additions or changes have been made to these chapters.

Chapter 1

- Wrote from scratch

Chapter 2

- Wrote from scratch

Chapter 3

- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection.
- Added Context of Production/ Context of Use model.
- Revised material to reflect the CMAPP communication model.
- Revised table of communications mediums to reflect changes in how businesses use faxes and emails. (Added reference to email management systems like MailChimp and services like Dropbox to send larger files).
- Combined two open sources (Ashman & McMurrey) into one document.
- Changed hockey example to cricket and changed some names.

- Added key takeaways.
- Added H5P content.

Chapter 4

- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Added section on inclusive language.
- Added extra examples of active vs. passive voice.
- Rewrote and condensed sections.
- Added information of the 7 C's.
- Added Canadian spellings to Stedman piece.
- Added references to business communication to Stedman piece.
- Removed paragraph about teachers gossiping about students.
- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection.
- Added key takeaways
- Added H5P content.
- Added intro to Stedman piece.

Chapter 5

- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Added a sample email that shows the purpose of each paragraph.
- Added an example of a paragraph organized by topic sentence, then used this example throughout.
- Changed the names in examples.
- Added key takeaways.
- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection.
- Added Philip's story
- Added H5P content.
- Added information about headings/ bullet points.
- Changed the example about paragraph transitions.

Chapter 6

- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Added discussion of the shift in workplace communication thanks to instant messaging and social media.
- Added reference to First Nations Land Acknowledgements in email signatures and gave an example from Kwantlen.
- Added idea of one purpose per email.
- Changed the letter example.

- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection.
- Added reference to CMAPP.
- Added piece about using instant messaging.
- Added “meet the genres” section and created short infographics for each form, which I embedded in a slideshow and them used again in each section.
- Added section on communicating via instant messaging.
- Created H5P content.
- Added email frame.
- Added sample letter.
- Added key takeaways.

Chapter 7

- Added Brenda Fernie’s narrative.
- Added discussion of number of emails workers receive per day, and the importance of not wasting the reader’s time.
- Added more information on sending good and neutral messages.
- Added examples of neutral messages.
- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection.
- Added H5P content.
- Edited on a sentence level.
- Added key takeaways.

Chapter 8

- Added Brenda Fernie’s narrative.
- Added video examples.
- Added discussion of ethos as a way to build sources.
- Added a discussion of Jeannie Wills’ “Making Them an Offer They Can’t Refuse” and created diagrams.
- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection.
- Added intro
- Added Spectrum of Allies material.
- Added key takeaways.
- Added reference to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and the Blackfoot model.
- Added “Wrapping it Up” section.
- Added H5P content.

Chapter 9

- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Adapted material from "Choosing and Using Sources: A Guide To Academic Research by the Ohio State University Libraries," to be more appropriate for the workplace.
- Added discussion of the CRAAP test.
- Added discussion of messiness of research process, including link to Reply All podcast.
- Changed American examples to Canadian ones.
- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection.
- Added H5P content.
- Added key takeaways
- Added Mina's story.
- Condensed some of the discussion around finding sources.
- Rewrote some of the content to use less academic language.

Chapter 10

- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Adapted material from "Choosing and Using Sources: A Guide To Academic Research by the Ohio State University Libraries," to be more appropriate for the workplace.
- Added KPU's definition of academic integrity and a link to the plagiarism policy.
- Added discussion of differences in citation practices in different cultures.
- Changed American examples to Canadian ones.
- Changed names in examples.
- Added example of argument in the workplace.
- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection.
- Added Karan's story.
- Added discussion of Alicia Elliot source.
- Added XKCD comic.
- Added discussion of citation as generosity.
- Added graphic about when to cite.
- Added H5P content.
- Added key takeaways.
- Removed Woody Allen example and replaced with a more workplace appropriate example.
- Added example of synthesis in the workplace.

Chapter 11

- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Added discussion of the persuasive strategy for each report type.

- Added example of a short report.
- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection.
- Added H5P functionality.
- Condensed some material and rewrote to be in plainer language.
- Added key takeaways.
- Added mention of Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Chapter 12

- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection.
- Moved information on headings/subheadings/bullet points/lists in the Organization chapter.
- Edited for concision and rewrote some intros/out-ros when combining different sources.
- Added H5P content
- Rewrote Gestalt Theory section to reflect a business communication framework.

Chapter 13

- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection.
- Changed examples to be Canadian
- Condensed some information.
- Added mention of neurodiverse and intercultural audiences struggling with idioms and metaphors.
- Changed spelling to be Canadian.
- Combined chapters.

Chapter 14

- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Added discussion of remixing.
- Edited the section on higher-level concerns to reinforce messages discussed in previous chapters.
- Added discussion of recording yourself as part of the revision process.
- Added Questions For Reflection.
- Added Key Takeaways.

Chapter 15

- Wrote from scratch.

Chapter 16

- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Added discussion of how peer workshopping can help students succeed in the workplace.
- Added questions for reflection.
- Added activities for further reflection

Chapter 17

- Wrote from scratch

Chapter 18

- Added questions for reflection.
- Added Brenda Fernie's narrative.
- Added key takeaways.
- Added exercises.
- Did some light editing, removing references to other chapters.

About This Book

This book takes an inductive, inclusive approach to business communication. It has the following goals:

- To meet the needs of a diverse student population, including English language learners, students from diverse cultural backgrounds, mature students, and students who are LGBTQ+, neurodiverse and/or disabled. The author has taken care to include activities, examples and reflection exercises tailored to a wide range of students, and to collaborate with communicators from diverse backgrounds.
- To offer an inductive, iterative approach to business communication that focuses less on genre and more on the decisions communicators make.
- To encourage students to reflect on their own attitudes, beliefs and assumptions about communication, and to connect their learning to other courses and/or their workplace experience. Each chapter begins with a 'Questions for Reflection' section so that students can reflect individually or in a learning journal and ends with suggested reflection activities that an instructor can assign.
- To prepare students for a diverse workforce by including the voices of communicators from many different backgrounds.

This book also contains narratives by Brenda Fernie, who is the President of Seyem, the economic development branch of the Kwantlen First Nation. Students are invited to read her narrative then reflect on it as they read the rest of the chapter. Instructors may choose to have students freewrite about the connection between the narrative and the chapter in order to deepen their understanding of both.

Thank You

This book was made better by the many students who analyzed previous versions of this textbook. Thank you for your insight. I'm also grateful to KPU Open for a grant that allowed me to compensate collaborators.

Thank Yous

Business Writing For Everyone would not be possible without a huge amount of support. First, thank you to Brenda Knights for sharing her business communication knowledge. Brenda was extremely generous with her time, and the insights she shared will help our students be more effective, thoughtful and ethical communicators.

Thank you to the entire open education community at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, especially Dr. Rajiv Jhangiani. This book benefitted from a KPU OER Creation Grant. Also thank you to Karen Meijer-Kline and Lana Radomsky for their help with Pressbooks and much more.

I'm also grateful to Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyaq, whose list of Multiply Marginalized and Underrepresented scholars in technical communication was incredibly useful in my research for this book.

Several students reviewed early drafts of *Business Writing For Everyone* and I'm grateful for their thoughtful feedback. (If you're a student who reviewed the textbook and don't see your name here, please email me at arley.cruthers@kpu.ca and I will make sure to include you. A few textbook reviews didn't have names on them). Thank you to:

- Karn Bagri
- Khushi Baghla
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- Manraj Gill
- Karan Hundal
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- Ovanpreet Kaur
- Taranpreet Kaur
- Prabhdeep Kaur
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- Abishek Ram
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- Harleen Sahans
- Kamal Saini
- Arshdeep Singh
- Jaskirat Singh
- Seeret Sooch
- Adam Sum
- Jaspreet Kaur Tiwana
- Simrandeep Toor

Welcome to the KPU Open training session. The purpose of this training session is to give you a brief overview of OER, Creative Commons licensing and more, so that you can more easily achieve a KPU Open Adoption, Adaptation or Creation grant. Taking a few moments to learn the basics of "open" will save you a lot of time in the application process.

Module #1: What is Open?

Reading time: 10 minutes.

In this module, you'll receive a short overview of what "open" is, learn why instructors create and use Open Educational Resources, and explore the difference between something that's open and something that's free.

Move through the slides at your own pace. You can use the quiz questions to test your knowledge. After you're done, you'll be invited to reflect on what you learned.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=1322

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CHAPTER 1: EXPLORING YOUR READING AND WRITING BELIEFS

Photo by [Nick Morrison](#) on [Unsplash](#)

In this section, you'll:

- Reflect on your reading and writing beliefs.
- Learn what experts say about reading and writing beliefs.
- Learn how to use this book.
- Meet Brenda Knights, whose narratives around business communication will be central to this textbook.

Before you can learn to write in a new context, it's helpful to explore how you got to this point. Every one of us arrives in the workplace (and the classroom) with our own beliefs and assumptions about communication. Sometimes, these beliefs are helpful. Sometimes, however, our beliefs can hold us back. So, before we dive in, let's take a moment to reflect.

Read the following questions and think them over. It may be helpful for you to write some notes in a journal.

Questions for Reflection

1. How did you learn to read and write? Who influenced you?
2. What do people in your culture and/or your family believe about reading, writing and telling stories?
3. What are some of your most positive reading and writing memories?
4. Describe some moments when you struggled with reading or writing. How did you react?
5. Have you ever changed a belief around reading and writing?
6. Do you believe that you are a good writer? Why or why not?
7. What is the most frustrating part of reading or writing for you?
8. Describe your writing process. How do you tackle writing tasks?
9. What do you think the role of your writing teacher should be?

Now, reflect on your answers. Do you notice any patterns? Can you identify any beliefs that might hold you back? Let's take a look at how other students answered.

Simran's Story

Simran's earliest memories of reading involve being snuggled up with her grandma, siblings and cousins. She loved being read to. Before she was old enough to go to school, she often sat with her older siblings as they did their homework and pretended to write. Unfortunately, when Simran was in Grade 4, she had a teacher who criticized her writing. She began to believe that she was a bad writer. By the time she reached Grade 12, English was Simran's worst subject.

Today, Simran likes to read for fun, but hates to read for school. When she gets a writing assignment, she often starts and stops and procrastinates. She writes a sentence then gets caught up in grammar details, deletes it, starts over, then checks social media. In the end, she pulls an all-nighter and hands in her assignment with just minutes to spare. Simran likes to write fan fiction based on her favourite T.V. show, and she doesn't understand why the words come so easily when she's writing for fun, but so painfully when she's writing for school. She isn't looking forward to taking a business communication course because she thinks completing the assignments will be stressful.

Jian Yi's Story

Jian Yi began his education in China. He was an excellent student and enjoyed writing. His teachers often praised his beautiful cursive. When Jian Yi was 12, his family moved to Canada. He was placed for a short time in an EAL class, but quickly was integrated into a Grade 7 classroom. He understood very little and felt embarrassed whenever he was asked to speak in class. Though Jian Yi's English skills improved dramatically, he never again enjoyed school.

Jian Yi doesn't enjoy reading or writing. He majored in Accounting because he believed there wouldn't be much reading and writing, and he's disappointed that he has to take a communications class. He is taking a full course load and he wants to get through this course as quickly as possible.

Both Simran and Jian Yi are good writers; Simran can write short stories and Jian Yi can write in multiple languages. Neither, however, expects to do well in this course. That's the power of unhelpful beliefs. They can set us up for failure before we've even started. By talking about our reading and writing beliefs and figuring our where they came from, we can challenge unhelpful beliefs and be more successful.

Thinking about our reading and writing beliefs is also a great way to celebrate the communication strengths you already have. For example, if you've learned Traditional Stories from elders in your community, you already know a story can be used as a powerful teaching tool when tailored to the right audience at the right time. Your ability to play music or sing will help you write sentences that people will enjoy reading. If you can shift between multiple languages or dialects, you can adapt to a new workplace environment. Our goal is not to erase what's unique about your writing voice to make it "appropriate" for the workplace, but to build on your existing skills so that you can be successful in whatever workplace you enter.

What Do Experts Say About Reading and Writing?

The question of how to become a better writer has been studied extensively for decades. We actually know a lot about how people learn to read and write, and how to help students improve. Here are just a few writing beliefs that researchers, writing teachers and scholars believe to be true.[1]. How many of these points do you agree with?

1. "Everyone can become a better writer." [2]
2. "People learn to write by writing."[3]
3. "Writing is a process."[4]
4. Writing helps us think and figure out what we have to say.
5. There is no one way to write well. Different writers have different processes and may even change their process depending on what type of writing they're doing.
6. Editing, revising and rethinking are important to help writers reach their potential.
7. "Writing and reading are related."[5] Reading will improve your writing. It doesn't even matter what genre you read. Read what you enjoy.
8. Talking about your writing with your peers and your teacher can make you a better writer.

In short, you can become a better writer. In fact, some studies have found that students who believe that they can become good writers improve faster than those who don't[6].

I believe that you are a good writer. I believe that you can become a better writer. I believe that you use your writing skills every day. It's hard to change a belief overnight, so perhaps you don't yet agree with me. That's okay. Over the course of the semester, we'll build on what you already know and apply it to the workplace. We'll figure out a writing process that works for you. And hopefully, by the end of the semester, you'll have created writing that you're proud of.

1. http://www2.ncte.org/blog/2015/05/beliefs-about-the-teaching-of-writing/
2. http://www2.ncte.org/blog/2015/05/beliefs-about-the-teaching-of-writing
3. http://www2.ncte.org/blog/2015/05/beliefs-about-the-teaching-of-writing
4. http://www2.ncte.org/blog/2015/05/beliefs-about-the-teaching-of-writing
5. http://www2.ncte.org/blog/2015/05/beliefs-about-the-teaching-of-writing
6. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0370/1e3c57c3bca04881b7f7716f111250d6ce39.pdf

How Do I Use This Book?

Your instructor will tell you how to use this book. For example, if you're in a flipped classroom, each chapter will prepare you for the activities and discussions you'll have in class. Still, you're a busy student with a lot to do. You might not have time to read every word. So how can you still benefit from the book?

Ideal Scenario: The ideal way to use this book is to do a few reflection questions by freewriting, thinking about the questions or discussing them with a friend or partner. You'd then read each chapter, including the stories and examples. You can also do the interactive content.

Short on Time: If you're short, just skim the reflection questions and activities and skip the interactive content. You might also skim the student stories, but make sure to read Brenda Knights' narratives, since these are important to the learning.

Very Short on Time: If you're very short on time, read the headings and anything in bold or bullet points. You won't get the full benefit, but at least you'll be aware of the general principles.

Meet Brenda Knights

Figure 1.1 Brenda Knights

At the beginning of each chapter, you'll find a short narrative by Brenda Knights. Ms. Knights is the President of Səýeḿ, the economic development branch of the Kwantlen Nation. Səýeḿ has 11 companies in a wide range of industries, including a gift shop, a security services company, a marketing and design company, an IT company, land development and a restaurant. In addition, Ms. Knights is a member of the Indigenous Business and Investment Council and a Member at Large of Tourism Langley, and she's pursuing an MA in Leadership through Trinity Western University. This means that Ms. Knights has extensive workplace communication experience and uses her communication skills every day.

Səýeḿ is guided by the seven traditional laws of the Kwantlen Nation: health, happiness, generations, generosity, humbleness, forgiveness and understanding. You will see these principles throughout the narratives.

These narratives have been included in the book to help you explore the nuances of workplace communication and to see how some of the issues we're discussing in theory play out in reality. The goal is not to give you an easy answer, but to help you understand the material in a deeper way and encourage you to reflect on your own communication values. When you read the narratives, ask yourself:

- What parallels can I draw between the story and the rest of the chapter?
- Are there places where the narrative seems to oppose the material in the rest of the chapter? How can I

make sense of this apparent contradiction?

- Can I find connections between the narratives and my own life experience?

Why Doesn't This Book Just Tell Me What To Do?

Especially if you went to school in an education system that emphasizes memorization and repetition, you might be frustrated by parts of this book. That's because this book resists telling you the "right" way to do things. It will give you strategies for success, show you examples of successful workplace documents, and introduce you to people who doing workplace communication well, but you won't find many templates.

That's because business communication is all about making decisions. If your instructor tells you that there's just one way to write a memo, you will struggle when you get hired in a workplace that does memos differently, or that doesn't use memos at all. Already, social media, Slack/Discourse and other new communication platforms are changing the way we communicate in the workplace. If you can make good communication decisions and use the habits of a successful writer, you can be successful anywhere.

Key Takeaways

- Reflecting on your reading and writing beliefs will help you identify places where your beliefs aren't helpful.
- Negative feelings about writing can lead to procrastination and an inability to try new things. Recognizing negative feelings can reduce their power.
- Everyone can become a better writer.
- Writing doesn't just help you express yourself. It's also a great way to figure out what you think about something.
- The goal of this book is to help you make strong decisions about communication. At the beginning of each piece, you will read a narrative by Brenda Knights. Reflect on it as you read the rest of the chapter, then connect it to the rest of the material that you've learned and your own experience.

Activities For Further Reflection

Activities and Exercises

Your instructor may ask you to do one or more of these activities.

1. Draw a short comic strip that illustrates how you learned to read and write. (You won't be judged on your artistic ability). You can focus on one incident in the story of how you learned to read and write or try to illustrate the main parts.Then, write a short email to your instructor that describes
    - How you decided what to include in your comic and what to leave out.
    - What this comic says about your reading and writing beliefs.
2. Write a letter to your instructor that tells them what you believe about reading and writing. Be sure to include:
    - Whether or not you think your beliefs are helpful.
    - Whether you would like to change any of your beliefs.
3. Ask some friends, elders or your parents about their reading and writing beliefs. What trends do you notice about the beliefs of the people around you? How do you think these views have influenced you? Write a few paragraphs about your findings.
4. If you speak a different language or have lived in different cultures, write about how the reading and writing beliefs compare to the reading/writing beliefs in Canada. Do you have different reading and writing beliefs for each language you speak? Write a few paragraphs about your findings.

CHAPTER 2: THE WRITING PROCESS

Photo by UX Indonesia on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Explore the writing process.
- Reflect on the role that emotions play in your writing process.
- Evaluate your own writing process and find ways to remove barriers you encounter.
- See examples of the writing process in the workplace.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

- Describe a time when you wrote something you're proud of. How did you get started? What conditions did you write under? Did you revise?
- What is your ideal writing process? Do you currently use your ideal writing process?
- How do you normally complete an assignment? Do you feel that this method is successful?
- If you write in different genres (music, creative writing, videos, etc), do you use the same writing process for each? For example, would you write an essay the same way you would write a short story?
- If you write in more than one language, do you use the same writing process for each language you write? How are your writing processes the same and different?

Brenda Knights Narrative

When I'm writing a grant or a tender, I find that doing the project plan first with timelines helps me to think things through. Before I jump into the writing, I map it out in Microsoft Projects. I think about who's involved, what's involved, what's the budget. Going through that process in advance helps me refine. If you write first, your ideas could grow and get out of scope. If you do a quick project plan and a budget, you keep it really focused.

When you do the scope and budget in advance, a couple of things become revealing. You think about the people who need to be involved. Do they have the availability? That might influence your timeline. If this has to be completed in six months, but the right person isn't available, then you have to look for another person or ask yourself if it's something we can even do.

In general, there are a lot of people with great ideas, and not a lot of people who are good at executing and following through and completing the tasks. That's the hard part. It's not the idea. It's the execution. Organizing and planning before you start to write gives you the ability to execute and know that what you're doing is realistic.

I also talk to other employees and ask their thoughts before I start to write. If you start the writing process first, you're often scramble later to adjust your timeline or track down people and suddenly someone's gone on vacation and the project is due. That's why you need to talk to people right up front. The writing's the easiest part. Once you've talked to people, it will come out in your writing. You'll feel confident that you've got a good plan in place.

What is the Writing Process?

Writing is not one thing. To write successfully, you also need to pre-write, think, research, plan, organize, draft, revise, rethink, analyze and brainstorm. Why is it important to think of writing as more than just the act of physically writing out words? Because often when people say that they're "bad at writing," they actually just need to make a few adjustments to just one of the phases of the writing process. The more you understand your writing process, the more control you have over it.

The writing process is made up of three main parts:

Pre-writing: In the pre-writing stage, you might read an assignment prompt, research, make an outline, sketch some ideas, brainstorm, doodle, jot down notes or even just think about your writing topic while you're on the bus or driving home.

Writing: In the writing or drafting stage, you write down words. Your writing task will determine how you write. Some people write long or important documents by composing them in a notebook and then typing out the final product. Some write in one long paragraph and then break it up in the revision stage.

Technology Tip: Speech-to-text software was originally created for people whose disability impacts their hand function or fatigue levels, but it has a wide range of applications. For example, artist and parasport athlete John Loeppky, who has cerebral palsy, uses it in the pre-writing stage when he is writing something creative that has a strong voice. He gets his thoughts down, then edits them. Many people use speech-to-text apps to brainstorm, to write down a great idea when they're away from home or to look at their writing in a new way. You can try out a free speech-to-text program SpeechNotes.

Revision: After you've finished writing, it's time to rethink your piece. Many students think that revising is just making grammatical changes, but it's a lot more than that. Expert writers often spend most of their composition time on revision. They may rethink their strategy, try a new outline, show their work to a colleague to get feedback, read their work out loud to see where it sounds choppy or simply put the work away for a few hours so that they can come back to it with a fresh perspective.

It's important to note that your writing process won't be a straight line. Expert writers switch between different modes. For example, you might realize that you need more research and go back to the pre-writing process. You might revise and write as you go. You might show a draft to a colleague or friend and decide to reorganize the entire work based on their feedback. Sometimes, this back-and-forth feels frustrating to new writers, but it's a normal part of the writing process.

What Role Do Emotions Play in Writing?

Because this is a business writing class, it might seem weird to talk about feelings. But how you feel about a writing task often determines how effectively you can complete it. For example, have you ever struggled to write an apology to someone you upset? Have you ever found yourself procrastinating to write an assignment you don't really understand? Have you ever found that it's easier for you to seem to write better in some classes more than others?

Emotions are the reason that sometimes you can write without thinking and sometimes you find yourself procrastinating, then staring at a blank screen, typing and deleting the same words over and over, feeling your writing becoming more awkward rather than less. That's why simply acknowledging how you feel can help you avoid procrastination.

The first step is acknowledging how you feel, and the second step is figuring out why you feel that way. For example, some students have negative feelings about a writing assignment because they don't like the teacher (or a teacher they had years ago), or they've had past struggles in a subject, or they don't understand the point of the assignment, or they're overwhelmed with other classes. Being able to identify why you're feeling an emotion takes the power out of it. Sometimes you can even find a solution to make the writing task easier.

Here are some stories about how student writers changed their writing processes.

Raveena's Story

Whenever Raveena writes, she feels a little editor on her shoulder who's always chiming in correcting her grammar and telling her that her sentences are awkward and sloppy. She spends so much time editing while she writes that she loses her train of thought and has trouble just letting her thoughts flow. Writing a single page takes her hours.

Raveena's instructor asked if she had always written this way. Raveena said she used to write easily, but during her first semester of university she had a couple of instructors who were tough graders. Whenever she would write, she would imagine her instructors criticizing her. Raveena's instructor suggested two solutions:

1) She should pretend to write to someone she likes. It's easier to write to a friendly reader than a hostile one. Raveena imagined writing to her favourite cousin and writing got a little easier.

2) She asked Raveena to put a piece of paper over her laptop screen or turn the screen's brightness to the lowest setting, then type out her thoughts. At first, Raveena found this very uncomfortable. When she turned her screen back on, she saw a jumble of text. But Raveena soon discovered that she had quickly written 500 words, which would have taken her hours under her old method. Raveena then used her excellent editing skills to shape what she had written.

Kai's Story

Kai prided themself on being able to write their essays the night before. They would drink some energy drinks and buy their favourite snacks and write for hours. They rarely revised their work. This technique worked well in high school, but when they got to university their grades started slipping. Their instructors noted that they had great ideas, but many were not well-organized or were incomplete.

Kai's instructor asked the class to bring a draft for a peer workshop. Kai told their instructor that they wouldn't be able to write a draft, since they could only write well the night before the assignment was due. Kai's instructor asked them what they liked about writing at night. Kai said that they liked how quiet it was in the house at 3 a.m. and how the pressure made them focus. Kai's instructor asked them to try to replicate the same environment (dark room, snacks, drinks etc.), set a timer for 2 hours and see how much they could write. Kai was able to write a rough draft of their assignment, though they didn't feel the "writing magic" in the same way.

During the workshop, Kai's classmates offered several useful suggestions for improvement, but they were worried about overthinking things and ruining them by doing too much revision. Kai's instructor told them to save the rough draft as a different file. If they didn't like the revisions, they could go back to the previous draft. Kai tried a number of revision techniques and ended up with a much stronger assignment. Slowly, they used more and more revision techniques in their other assignments. The result: higher grades and more sleep.

If your writing process is working for you, then there's no need to change it. But if the way you write frustrates you, consider making some changes. You might also consider changing your writing process for certain writing tasks, such as important assignments.

Ways the Switch Up Your Writing Process

Here are some simple ways to change your writing process. Pick a few and try them.

Pre-Writing

1. Read the assignment prompt, then quickly write down 5 things you'll need to do to be successful in the assignment. Using this list and the assignment prompt, create a timeline for finishing the assignment. For example, if you're being graded on using primary and secondary research, you'll want to make time to research, analyze your sources and add your citations.
2. Go for a walk (or do some exercise) and think about your writing task. Sometimes moving your body helps you do brainstorming.
3. Create an outline for your work.
4. Use brainstorming (mind mapping, bubble maps, etc).
5. Try illustrating your project visually. Connect ideas and thoughts with lines.
6. Read a similar document to get ideas.
7. Talk about your writing task with a friend.
8. Represent your writing task visually. Sometimes creating a comic strip or series of doodles helps you to figure out where to start.

Writing

1. Turn off the screen of your computer and try writing your document. This will help you get your thoughts down without worrying about editing.
2. Use the voice recorder in your phone to record yourself describing what you want to write about as if to a friend.
3. Write an imaginary conversation between your sources. How would they respond to each other?
4. Try free-writing. Write the phrase "What I want my reader to know is…" or "The most surprising thing about my research is…" Then, set a timer for 5 minutes and write about this topic. Don't stop writing. Ignore all grammar and spelling errors. See how much you can write.
5. Schedule a time each day to write and put it in your calendar.
6. Try to Pomodoro Technique, where you work intensely for 25 minutes then take a 5 minute break.
7. Use website blocking software like Freedom, FocusBooster or StayFocusd to block your internet use for a few hours so you can concentrate.

Revising

1. Read your work out loud. The ear is a better editor than the eye.
2. Leave your work overnight so that you can come back to it with fresh eyes.
3. Describe your work to a trusted friend or family member and encourage them to ask you questions.
4. Compare your work to the assignment prompt or rubric. Read a criteria/rubric point then go to your work and underline where in the work you met the criteria.

5. Print your work out and cut it up so that each paragraph is on its own piece of paper. Try reorganizing your paragraphs. Does another order work better?
6. If your writing uses sources, print your work out and highlight every time you use a source. If your writing has no highlighted parts, you might want to add sources. If your writing is mostly highlighted, you might want to do more analysis of the sources.
7. Underline the main point of each paragraph. If you can't point out what the point of the paragraph is, you may need to rethink it. If your paragraph has multiple points, you may need to break it up.
8. Show your work to your teacher, a colleague or friend and ask them what they think the goal of the assignment is.

The Writing Process in the Workplace

Students are often surprised to learn how much time professional writers devote to pre-writing and editing. In fact, a study conducted by a Toronto consulting firm found that writers in the workplace spend 40% of their time pre-writing or planning, 30% of their time revising and only 20% of their time writing[1]. In contrast, some studies have found that students only spend 3-5% of their composition time revising.

In the workplace, you will vary your writing process depending on several factors, including:

- The importance of the writing task.
- Your deadline.
- The deliverable.
- Your own writing process.
- The culture of your workplace.
- How much collaboration is required.

A Note on Collaboration

Much of the writing that you'll be doing in the workplace will involve collaborating with others. To do so effectively, you will have to respect other people's writing processes and listen carefully to your collaborators.

Different cultures also have different collaboration practices. For example, if your project impacts Indigenous People, you would want to involve many different people from the impacted community, especially Elders. If you're not Indigenous, you might begin the project by taking time to listen, ask questions, and build trust.

When done well, collaboration will make your work stronger. This quote from settler scholar Sophie McCall shows that collaboration doesn't just have to be about ensuring that everyone agrees:

> "Collaboration does not have to aim for a seamless platform of agreement; indeed, collaboration can embrace differences and acknowledge conflict. We came to think of our process as one of working across differences of experience, profession, background and interest." – Sophie McCall on working with Metis artist Gabrielle L'Hirondelle (as quoted in Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by And About Indigenous Peoples by Gregory Younging.

1. https://www.mdctraining.com/

Joe's Writing Process

Joe is a communications and marketing manager for a non-profit. Because his organization is small, he has a very broad job description. Over the course of a single day, he might write emails to partner organizations, clients and coworkers, do research for a grant, plan a social media campaign and take minutes in a meeting. To be effective, Joe has to balance producing quality work with using his time effectively. For this reason, his writing process often changes depending on his task.

Figure 2.1 Joe's writing process for his donation letter. [Image Description]

Every year, Joe's non-profit organization sends out a letter to previous donors asking for donations. The letter tells a story about someone who has benefitted from the organization's services. The organization expects to raise between $20,000 and $25,000 from the letter, so it's very important.

Pre-writing: Joe begins by researching what kind of stories other organizations have told to donors. He is especially interested in what larger organizations with larger budgets are doing. Next, he has a meeting with his boss and several program coordinators to identify a client whose story should be highlighted in the letter. Joe does some research on the client, then works with a program coordinator who knows the client to come up with interview questions. Joe conducts the interview, then immediately goes to a coffee shop to sketch out his ideas for the letter while the interview is still fresh in his mind. When he gets home, he transcribes his interview notes.

Writing: Joe drafts two different versions of the letter.

Pre-Writing: Joe's coworkers provide feedback on the two letters. Joe's boss also shows the letters to a few former donors who now sit on the Board of Directors. They all agree on one version of the letter. Joe's boss asks him to contact the client again to ask some follow-up questions that will make the letter more specific. Joe contacts the client again and does more research.

Revision: Joe revises his letter based on the feedback. When his boss is satisfied, he sends it to a company that specializes in designing and mailing out donations letters. He includes photos of the client to be included in the letter. Joe and his boss go back and forth with the company to come up with a final design that everyone is happy with.

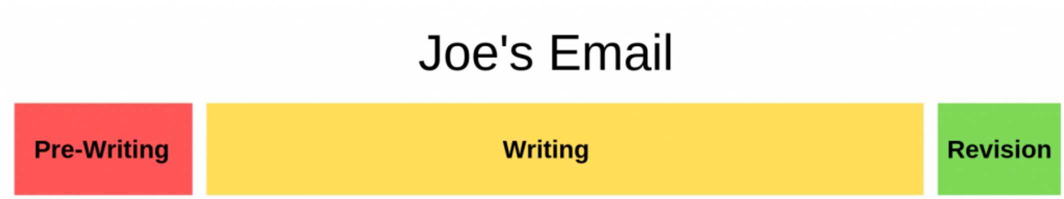

Figure 2.2 Joe's writing process for an email. [Image Description]

Joe sends hundreds of emails in a week. Usually, he hardly has to think about them. Today, however, he receives an email from the Executive Director of another organization asking for Joe's thoughts on an upcoming social media campaign her organization is planning. Joe is happy to help the Executive Director, but he is busy and can only spare an hour.

Pre-writing: Joe takes a look at the Executive Director's campaign. He's unsure about one aspect of the campaign, so he does a little bit of research. He compares the campaign to the final report from a similar campaign that he ran.

Writing: Joe has a few criticisms of the Executive Director's campaign idea, so he chooses his words carefully. The email is long, so he includes a few headings and some bullet points to make it easier to read.

Revision: So that he can catch any mistakes, he leaves the email for a few hours. When he comes back to it, he finds a few grammar mistakes. He also rewrites the first few lines to make sure that they achieve the correct tone.

Image Description

Figure 2.1 image description: This bar graph shows Joe's writing process. He moves from pre-writing (presented in red), then spends a short amount of time writing (in yellow) then moves back to pre-writing and spends a large chunk of time revising (in green). [Return to Figure 2.1]
Figure 2.2 image description: This graph shows Joe's writing process for an email. He spends a short amount of time pre-writing (in red), then the bulk of his time is spent writing (in yellow) and then spends a short amount of time revising (in green). [Return to Figure 2.2]

Test Your Knowledge

How well can you identify the parts of the writing process?

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=377

Key Takeaways

- By understanding your own writing process, you can have more control over your writing.
- The writing process consists of pre-writing, writing and revising. Though students spend most of their time on the writing stage, in the workplace, most of the time is spent on pre-writing and revising.
- Simple changes to your writing process can save you time and lead to an improved final product.
- To improve your writing, you must think both about what you do when you write, but also how you feel when you write. Figuring out why you feel something about a particular writing task can reduce procrastination.

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following exercises.

1. Write a paragraph connecting Brenda Knights' narrative to the rest of the chapter or to your own experience.
2. Review Raveena and Kai's stories. Now, write one about yourself. If you're happy with your writing process, write about how you developed it. If you'd like to make some changes, imagine what advice your instructor would give you. If you're not sure, ask!
3. Think of two different writing tasks that you've accomplished. Using Joe's story as a model, create a diagram that shows your writing process for each task, then tell the story of that writing process.
4. Re-read the "Ways to Switch Up Your Writing Process," and pick a few methods that are interesting to you. Try them over the next few weeks, then write a memo to your instructor reporting on how the experience went.
5. Ask a friend about their writing process. Then, write a short email giving them advice on how to make their writing process more enjoyable or efficient. (Note: you don't actually have to send the email to your friend. You can just send it to your instructor).

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT, AUDIENCE, PURPOSE

Photo by Samuel Pereira on Unsplash

In this section, you will:

- Learn how communication models can be practical.
- Explore how our context impacts how well our messages are received.
- Learn two different communication models.
- See how these communication models can be applied to workplace communication.

Questions For Reflection

Before you start, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. Think about a time when a miscommunication occurred in your life. Why do you think it happened?
2. Think about a time when you had to write to a new audience or in a new context. For example, perhaps you had to write an email to an instructor when you were new to university. How did you tackle the task? Is there anything you wish you did differently?
3. Pretend that you woke up this morning and are sick. Write 1-2 sentences to the following audiences:
    - Your best friend or partner, complaining about being sick.
    - Your instructor, because you're supposed to write a midterm today.
    - Your followers on Facebook or Twitter.

Now, reflect on the differences between those messages. Which was the easiest to write? Which was the hardest? Would you post such a message on social media? Why or why not?

Brenda Knights Narrative

I used to work in a business where I wore suits. I can recall going into my first elder's meeting wearing a suit, and I probably came across as intimidating, as not one of them, not part of the group. I have learned that even my business attire needs to adapt to my audience's expectations. If I'm going to meet with government officials, I'll dress up more. If I'm going to meet with elders and have a meal with them, I don't go in a suit. I want to open doors and make them feel that I'm one of them, I'm not different from them. My style of dress allows the conversation to take place. If I have to speak on Indigenous issues, I'll wear my cedar hat or my jewelry. For me, that shares my culture and helps me promote my community. I can tell them where the necklace is from and promote people in my community.

So, it's catering to what the audience is expecting, but it doesn't have to be tokenistic. I'm not showing up in regalia, for example, since that's not the place for regalia. You want to meet the audience's expectations in a sincere and authentic way. I see it as an opportunity to teach that person. An example is that someone will call me for an event and say that they want drummers and singers to come. They want to participate in reconciliation and the first thing they think is: drummers and singers. But, I'll ask, "What are you actually doing to put reconciliation into action? If drummers and singers come, what actions are going to come out of that? What's next?" It starts the dialogue that there are other ways we can participate and put that into action. We'll talk about the event and brainstorm how we can make it a sincere event. For me, that's through business and partnering and working together to extend it beyond one speaking engagement.

We've had some discussions about authenticity in our community. We've been going through some business planning in our restaurant and thinking about how we represent ourselves as an Indigenous business while still being authentic. We came to the conclusion that it wasn't necessarily about the pictures on the wall or what's on the menu, but the overall values you incorporate. If we have a value for sustainability, our menu should reflect that. If we have a value for family, then how we treat our employees should reflect that. It's how we carry ourselves day in and day out that make us authentic, not because we're selling salmon or bannock, or that there's art on the wall.

We believe that when it comes to meeting people's expectations, we have to start with our own values or we're going to be disappointed. Even in the case of tourism, most of us have travelled to a place where we've experienced something that feels inauthentic, like you're being sold something. So, we start with our values. In business in general, those businesses who are going to last are those who are authentic and have strong values. That should come across in everything you do.

Why Use Communication Models?

Think back to the last time you had a miscommunication with someone. Maybe a friend misinterpreted the tone of your chat message. Maybe an email you sent wound up in a spam filter and so it wasn't even seen. Maybe you tried to argue your position but couldn't think of the right evidence.

Every day, you communicate in thousands of ways: some successful, some less so. There are many current models and theories that help us to plan successful communication and explain why some communication decisions work better than others. In the workplace, we might be more concerned about practical knowledge and skills than theory. However, understanding communication models allows you to make better decisions, which allow you to be a more successful communicator.

Defining Communication

The word communication is derived from a Latin word meaning "to share." Communication can be defined as "purposefully and actively exchanging information between two or more people to convey or receive the intended meanings through a shared system of signs and (symbols)" ("Communication," 2015, para. 1).

Let us break this definition down with an example. Imagine you are in a coffee shop with a friend, and they are telling you a story about a cricket match they won over the weekend. What images come to mind as you hear their story? Is your friend using words you understand to describe the situation? Are they speaking in long, complicated sentences or short, descriptive sentences? Are they leaning back in their chair and speaking calmly, or can you tell they are excited? Are they using words to describe how the match played out, or did they draw a diagram on a napkin? Did your friend pause and wait for you to to comment throughout their story or just blast right through? Did you have trouble hearing your friend at any point in the story because other people were talking or because the milk steamer in the coffee shop was whistling?

All of these questions directly relate to the considerations for communication in this course, including analyzing the audience, choosing a communications medium, using plain language, and using visual aids.

Before we examine each of these considerations in more detail, we should explore the elements of the communication process.

The Communication Process

When communication scholars first started studying communication, they saw it as a straightforward process: a sender sends a message to a receiver. The receiver receives it. This model makes the receiver very passive. If this model was true, miscommunications would rarely occur. Today, communication scholars know that what's happening is more complicated.

In 1948, C.E. Shannon proposed a more complicated theory, which I've simplified below.[1]. The main point, however, is that a lot of factors influence and interfere with communication.

Fig. 3.1: Context of Use and Context of Production

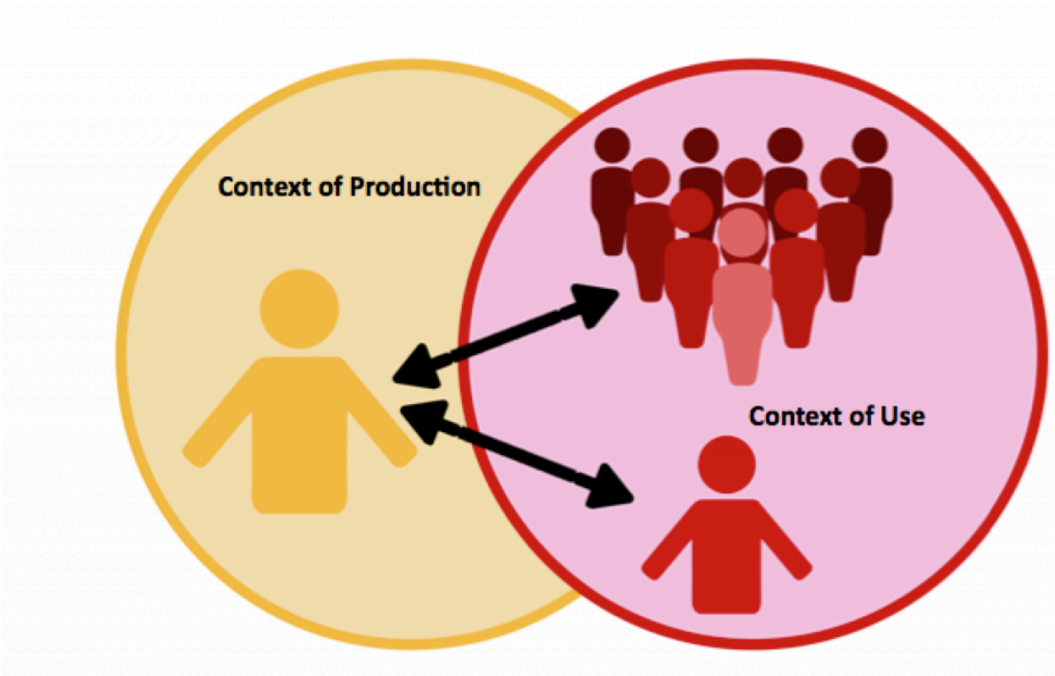

Figure 3.1 The Context of Product/ Context of Use Model. *[Image Description]*

According to this model, there are four steps in the communication process.
1) Production: In this model, the person in yellow is the sender. They create a message. But, when they create the message, they don't do it in isolation. Instead, they **encode** the message with their own beliefs, attitudes, experiences, feelings, background, environment and much more. This is called the **Context of Production**, or the context in which the message was created.
2) Circulation: How the message is circulated impacts how the audience receives it. For example, you would react differently if someone broke up with you face-to-face than you would if they broke up with you by text message. The sender circulates the message using the medium that they think will be most effective.

3) Use: The audience (in red) doesn't just passively receive the message. Instead, they **decode** the message based on their

1. http://math.harvard.edu/~ctm/home/text/others/shannon/entropy/entropy.pdf

own **Context of Use**. They draw on their own beliefs, attitudes, experiences, feelings, background, etc. to understand the message. The more these two circles overlap, the more meaning is created.

4) Reproduction: Again, the audience isn't passive. In the final stage, the audience takes action (or doesn't) after receiving the message. They may alter it, share it with others, or even ignore it.

If the Context of Production circle overlaps with the Context of Use circle, then then the audience understands the message. The more overlap, the more understanding. So, if your friend telling the story about the cricket match is talking quickly, if the coffee shop gets noisy or if you get distracted by an argument going on across the room, then the circles would overlap less. If you don't understand cricket, you might appreciate your friend's enthusiasm but not how the match actually went. If you're listening to everything your friend says and you understand because of your shared experiences just how much the cricket match meant to him, then the circles would overlap a lot.

One of the reasons the Context of Use/ Context of Production model is useful is that it helps us think of context as something that changes and that can be individual. The scholar Godwin Agboka says that when we think of intercultural communication, we often think about "large culture" models. [2]This can lead to stereotypical thinking and making too big of a distinction between "us" and "them," which can actually make it harder to communicate across cultures. For example, a textbook might tell you that people from India behave one way, and people from Japan behave a different way.

But not everyone within a culture has the same beliefs and experiences, and many of us go between cultures. For example, an international student from India might behave one way with friends in India, another way when socializing with other international students from India while in Canada, and a third way when interacting with domestic students who have South Asian heritage.

To understand this model better, let's take a look at this vintage ad for ketchup:

2. Agboka, G. (2012). Liberating Intercultural Technical Communication from "Large Culture" Ideologies: Constructing Culture Discursively. Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 42(2), 159–181. https://doi.org/10.2190/TW.42.2.e

Figure 3.2 How have things changed since this ad was created?

Sometimes it's easiest to see the Context of Production when we look at a context that's very different from our own. This ad was created in the 1950s, almost 70 years ago. It was created in a very different context. What kind of values, beliefs and assumptions led to the creation of this ad? Who do you think created it? Who was it marketed to?

When you look at the ad, think about what's in it and what's not in it. Judging by the caption, we can probably make some assumptions about how North American society in the 1950s viewed women. To put this ad in perspective, women in Canada weren't allowed to own a credit card until the 1970s; the first woman officially ran a marathon in the late 1960s. We can assume that this message was produced at a time when the dominant cultural view was that women are weak. In fact, this ad is actually marketed to women (who did the majority of the grocery shopping), so many women saw themselves this way too.

We can also think about what's not in it. The woman in the ad looks very stereotypically feminine (red fingers and nails, dress, etc.) and we can assume that she's maybe middle class or upper class by her jewelry. She's also white; it's likely that this ad was created by white people with the intended audience of white people. That's not surprising. Around the time this ad was created, Canada had just allowed people of Japanese, Chinese and South Asian descent to vote and when these groups were depicted in advertisements, they were racist caricatures. (In fact, Indigenous people were not allowed to vote in Canada until 1960). That ad is **encoded** with a Context of Production that saw women as weak, that valued a particular type of femininity, and that ignored or discriminated against BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour), and the ad reflects that.

This ad was probably **circulated** in magazines at the time. Imagine seeing this ad in a magazine. The bright yellow would likely stand out in contrast to the red ketchup bottle, fingernails and lips and catch your attention. Sometimes, ads like this one were accompanied by recipes that used ketchup. People (mostly women) could cut out the recipes and add them to their recipe box. This ad is therefore designed to be circulated in a particular way.

Today, however, the **Context of Use** is very different. How do you think a modern North American audience would react to this ad? They might be insulted. That's because they're **decoding** the ad in a society where women do Crossfit and lift weights, and would not see themselves as being too weak to open a ketchup bottle. You're also seeing this ad in a textbook or on a computer screen or mobile phone, which is something that the creators of this ad couldn't have even dreamed of. Maybe you're new to Canada and you don't know much about Canadian politics or history. Still, your individual Context of Use (what people in your family and culture think about women, your own experiences, etc.) will determine how you reacted to the ad.

When this ad was created, the creators hoped that it would make people go out and buy ketchup. They obviously weren't thinking that their ad would be **reproduced** in this textbook. By including this ad as an example, I'm using it for my own purposes: to teach you about a communication model. You might further **reproduce** it by remixing it for a project or showing it to a friend.

Because the **Context of Use** is so different from the **Context of Production**, there's not a lot of overlap between the two circles. We can read the message, but it probably doesn't make us want to buy ketchup. In the 1950s, there would have been much more overlap.

The benefit of studying this communication model is that it helps us to see how our own worldview influences how we communicate. Often, communicators do a lot of work analyzing their audience, but they forget to think about how their own assumptions and values influence how they communicate. A lack of self-reflection can lead to miscommunication and even cause harm to your audience. This is especially important when you are communicating with people of other cultures. As intercultural communication scholar E.T. Hall said, "Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand other cultures, but to understand our own." (Hall, 1973) This model helps us understand how our own culture influences how we judge other people.

To test your understanding of the model, explore it by clicking on hotspots on the image.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=389

Image Description

Figure 3.1 image description: This model describes the context of use and context of production. There are two overlapping circles: one yellow and one red. The first circle represents the speaker's context of production. The second represents the context of use that the audience decodes the message in. Because there's overlap, there's understanding. [Return to Figure 3.1]

Applying the Communication Process

Our goal as communicators is to use our understanding of the communication process to make sure that when we send a message, the circle of our **Context of Production** overlaps as much as possible with the audience's **Context of Use**.

Another way to look at the communications process is to think of CMAPP, which stands for Context, Message, Audience and Purpose.

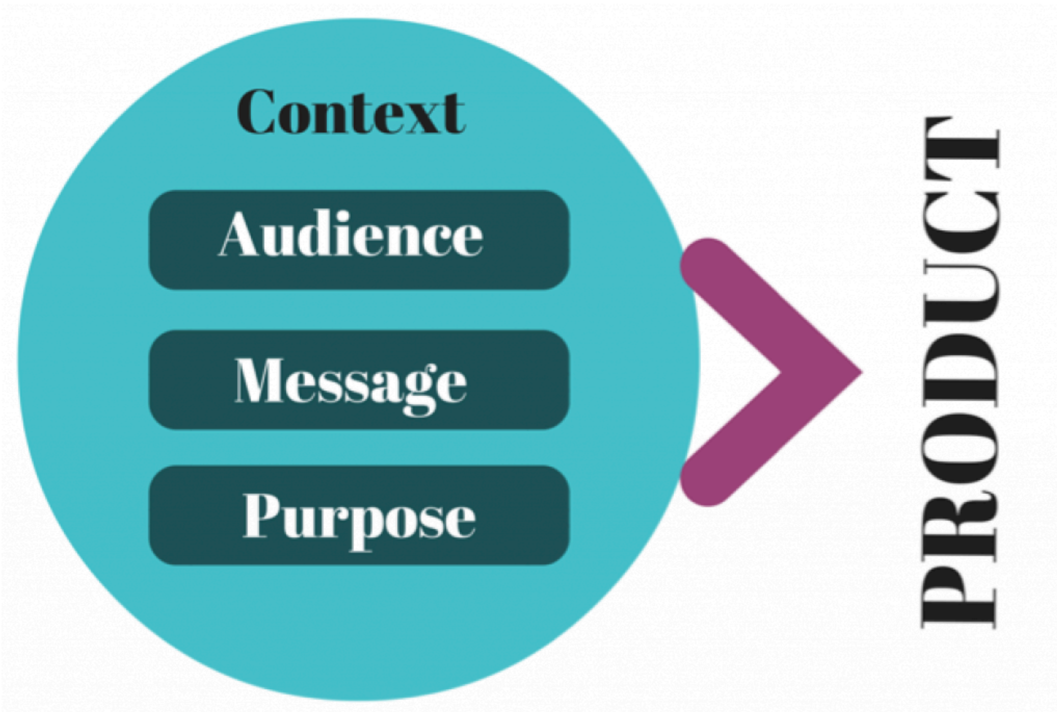

Figure 3.3 CMAPP Diagram. [Image Description]

Sometimes, new communicators will want to start the writing process by deciding what product they want to create. For example, they might want to create an Instagram account to promote the company. If you don't analyze your context, audience, message and purpose, however, then you could end up choosing the wrong product.To communicate effectively, you should undertake the following steps.

1) Determine the Message's Purpose

In their book *The Essentials of Technical Communication*, Elizabeth Tebeaux and Sam Dragga note that in the workplace, you "write to create change." (2014) By this, they mean that every piece of communication done in the workplace has some sort of purpose. You don't send an email or write a proposal just for fun. You write to change something. Maybe you want to change something small, like having your coworker send you a file, or maybe you want to make a big change, like convincing another company to buy goods or services from you. But every piece of writing in the workplace should exist for a reason.

Before you can start communicating, you need to know the purpose of the message. What do you want your audience to do? Sometimes, the purpose is obvious. If you're applying for a grant, for example, the purpose is to win the grant and earn the money. Sometimes, however, the purpose is not so clear. Let's say that you receive an angry email from a customer. Depending on your relationship to the customer and the nature of their complaint, you may respond with the purpose of keeping the customer's business, you may respond to break bad news in a way that the audience will at least respect, or you may not respond at all.

2) Analyze your Audience

The audience any piece of writing is the intended or potential reader or readers. This should be *the most important* consideration in planning, writing, and reviewing a document. You "adapt" your writing to meet the needs, interests, and background of the readers who will be reading your writing.

The principle seems absurdly simple and obvious. It's much the same as telling someone, "Talk so the person in front of you can understand what you're saying." It's like saying, "Don't talk rocket science to your six-year-old." Do we need a course in that? Doesn't seem like it. But, in fact, lack of audience analysis and adaptation is one of the root causes of most of the problems you find in business documents.

Audiences, regardless of category, must also be analyzed in terms of characteristics such as the following:

- **Background—knowledge, experience, training:**One of your most important concerns is just how much knowledge, experience, or training you can expect in your readers. Often, business communicators are asked to be clear, but what's clear to you might not be clear to someone else. For example, imagine that you're a software developer who's developing an app for a client. Unfortunately, your code had a number of bugs, which put you behind schedule. If you give a highly technical explanation of why the bugs occurred, you will likely confuse your client. If you simply say "we ran into some bugs," your client might not be satisfied with the explanation. Your job would be to figure out how much technical knowledge your audience has, then find a way to communicate the problem clearly.
- **Needs and interests:**To plan your document, you need to know what your audience is going to expect from that document. Imagine how readers will want to use your document and what will they demand from it. For example, imagine you are writing a manual on how to use a new smart phone—what are your readers going to expect to find in it? Will they expect it to be in print or will they look for the information online? Would they rather watch a series of Youtube videos?
- **Different cultures:**If you write for an international audience, be aware that formats for indicating time and dates, monetary amounts, and numerical amounts vary across the globe. Also be aware that humour and figurative language (as in "hit a home run") are not likely to be understood outside of your own culture. Ideally, your company should employ someone from within that culture to ensure that the message is appropriate, especially if it's an important message.
- **Other demographic characteristics:** There are many other characteristics about your readers that *might* have an influence on how you should design and write your document—for example, age groups, type of residence, area of residence, gender, political preferences, and so on.

Audience analysis can get complicated by other factors, such as mixed audience types for one document and wide variability within the audience.

- **More than one audience.**You may often find that your business message is for more than one audience. For example, it may be seen by technical people (experts and technicians) and administrative people (executives). What

to do? You can either write all the sections so that all the audiences of your document can understand them (good luck!), or you can write each section strictly for the audience that would be interested in it, then use headings and section introductions to alert your audience about where to go and what to avoid in your report.
- **Wide variability in an audience.**You may realize that, although you have an audience that fits into only one category, there is a wide variability in its background. This is a tough one—if you write to the lowest common denominator of reader, you're likely to end up with a cumbersome, tedious book-like thing that will turn off the majority of readers. But if you don't write to that lowest level, you lose that segment of your readers. What to do? Most writers go for the majority of readers and sacrifice that minority that needs more help. Others put the supplemental information in appendices or insert cross-references to beginners' books.

In the workplace, communicators analyze their audience in a number of ways. If your audience is specific (for example, if you're writing a report to a particular person), you may draw on past experience, ask a colleague, Google the person or even contact them to ask how they would best like the information. If you're communicating to a large group, you might use analytics, do user testing or run a focus group.

Unless your project is important, you may not have time to undertake sophisticated audience analysis. In this case, you should follow the most important maxim of workplace communication: **don't waste people's time**. In general, clear, plain language that is clearly arranged will please most audiences. We'll talk more about Plain Language in the next chapter.

3) Craft Your Message

Let's say you've analyzed your audience until you know them better than you know yourself. What good is it? How do you use this information? How do you keep from writing something that will still be incomprehensible or useless to your readers?

The business of writing *to* your audience takes a lot of practice. The more you work at it, the more you'll develop an intuition about how most effectively to reach your audience. But there are some controls you can use to have a better chance to connect with your readers. The following "controls" mostly have to do with making information more understandable for your specific audience:

- **Add information readers need to understand your document.** Check to see whether certain key information is missing—for example, a critical series of steps from a set of instructions, important background that helps beginners understand the main discussion, or definitions of key terms.
- **Omit information your readers do not need.** Unnecessary information can also confuse and frustrate readers—after all, it's there so they feel obligated to read it. For example, you can probably chop theoretical discussion from basic instructions.
- **Change the level of the information you currently have**. You may have the right information but it may be "pitched" at too high or too low a technical level. It may be pitched at the wrong kind of audience—for example, at an expert audience rather than a technician audience. This happens most often when product-design notes are passed off as instructions.
- **Add examples to help readers understand.** Examples are one of the most powerful ways to connect with audiences, particularly in instructions. Even in non-instructional text, for example, when you are trying to explain a technical concept, examples are a major help—analogies in particular.
- **Change the level of your examples.** You may be using examples, but the technical content or level may not be appropriate to your readers.
- **Change the organization of your information.** Sometimes, you can have all the right information but arrange it in

the wrong way. For example, there can be too much background information up front (or too little) such that certain readers get lost. Sometimes, background information needs to be consolidated into the main information—for example, in instructions it's sometimes better to feed in chunks of background at the points where they are immediately needed.

- **Strengthen transitions.** It may be difficult for readers, particularly non-specialists, to see the connections between the main sections of your report, between individual paragraphs, and sometimes even between individual sentences. You can make these connections much clearer by adding *transition words* and by echoing *key words* more accurately. Words like "therefore," "for example," "however" are transition words—they indicate the logic connecting the previous thought to the upcoming thought.
- **Write stronger introductions—both for the whole document and for major sections.** People seem to read with more confidence and understanding when they have the "big picture"—a view of what's coming, and how it relates to what they've just read. Therefore, make sure you have a strong introduction to the entire document—one that makes clear the topic, purpose, audience, and contents of that document. And for each major section within your document, use mini-introductions that indicate at least the topic of the section and give an overview of the subtopics to be covered in that section.
- **Create topic sentences for paragraphs and paragraph group**s. It can help readers immensely to give them an idea of the topic and purpose of a section (a group of paragraphs) and in particular to give them an overview of the subtopics about to be covered.
- **Change sentence style and length.** How you write—down at the individual sentence level—can make a big difference too. In instructions, for example, using imperative voice and "you" phrasing is vastly more understandable than the passive voice or third-personal phrasing. Passive, person-less writing is harder to read—put people and action in your writing. Similarly, go for active verbs as opposed to *be* verb phrasing. All of this makes your writing more direct and immediate—readers don't have to dig for it. Sentence length matters as well. An average of somewhere between 15 and 25 words per sentence is about right; sentences over 30 words are often mistrusted.
- **Work on sentence clarity and economy.** This is closely related to the previous "control" but deserves its own spot. Often, writing style can be so wordy that it is hard or frustrating to read. When you revise your rough drafts, put them on a diet—go through a draft line by line trying to reduce the overall word, page or line count by 20 percent. Try it as an experiment and see how you do. You'll find a lot of fussy, unnecessary detail and inflated phrasing you can chop out.
- **Use more or different graphics**. For non-specialist audiences, you may want to use more graphics—and simpler ones at that. Graphics for specialists are more detailed and more technical.
- **Break text up or consolidate text into meaningful, usable chunks.** For non-specialist readers, you may need to have shorter paragraphs.
- **Add cross-references to important information**. In technical information, you can help non-specialist readers by pointing them to background sources. If you can't fully explain a topic on the spot, point to a section or chapter where it is.
- **Use headings and lists.** Readers can be intimidated by big dense paragraphs of writing, uncut by anything other than a blank line now and then. Search your rough drafts for ways to incorporate headings—look for changes in topic or subtopic. Search your writing for listings of things—these can be made into vertical lists. Look for paired listings such as terms and their definitions—these can be made into two-column lists. Of course, be careful not to force this special formatting—don't overdo it.
- **Use special typography**, and work with margins, line length, line spacing, type size, and type style. You can do things like making the lines shorter (bringing in the margins), using larger type sizes, and other such tactics. Certain type styles are believed to be friendlier and more readable than others.

4) Choose Your Medium/Product

Analyzing your purpose, audience and message will lead you to your medium, which is how the message is communicated. Should your message be a letter? A memo? An email? A text? A GIF?

For example, we have discussed a simple and traditional channel of written communication: the hard-copy letter mailed in a standard business envelope and sent by postal mail. But in today's business environment, this channel is becoming increasingly rare as electronic channels become more widely available and accepted.

When is it appropriate to send an instant message or text message versus a conventional e-mail? What is the difference between a letter and a memo? Between a report and a proposal? Writing itself is the communication medium, but each of these specific channels has its own strengths, weaknesses, and understood expectations that are summarized in Table 2.5.1.

Table 2.5 Written communication channels.

Channel	Strengths	Weaknesses	Expectations	When to choose
Instant message or text message	Very fast Good for rapid exchanges of small amounts of informationInexpensive	Informal Not suitable for large amounts of information Abbreviations lead to misunderstandings	Quick response	Informal use among peers at similar levels within an organization You need a fast, inexpensive connection with a colleague over a small issue and limited amount of information
Channel	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**	**Expectations**	**When to choose**
Email	Fast Good for relatively fast exchanges of information“Subject” line allows compilation of many messages on one subject or project Easy to distribute to multiple recipients Inexpensive	May be overlooked or deleted without being read. Large attachments may cause the e-mail to be caught in recipient’s spam filter (though this can be remedied by using Dropbox) Tone may be lost, causing miscommunications.	Normally a response is expected within 24 hours, although norms vary by situation and organizational culture	You need to communicate but time is not the most important consideration You need to send attachments (provided their file size is not too big)
Channel	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**	**Expectations**	**When to choose**
Fax	Fast Provides documentation	Very few businesses have a fax machine anymore, unless you work in the legal or medical field.	Normally, a long (multiple page) fax is not expected	You want to send a document whose format must remain intact as presented, such as a medical prescription or a signed work order
Channel	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**	**Expectations**	**When to choose**
Memo	Official but less formal than a letter Clearly shows who sent it, when, and to whom	Memos sent through e-mails can get deleted without review Sending to many recipients (without using an email delivery CRM like MailChimp) can cause your message to get stuck in a spam filter.	Normally used internally in an organization to communicate directives from management on policy and procedure, or documentation	You need to communicate a general message within your organization
Channel	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**	**Expectations**	**When to choose**
Letter	Formal Letterhead represents your company and adds credibility	May get filed or thrown away unread Cost and time involved in printing, stuffing, sealing, affixing postage, and travel through the postal system	Specific formats associated with specific purposes	You need to inform, persuade, deliver bad news or negative message, and document the communication
Channel	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**	**Expectations**	**When to choose**
Report	Can require significant time for preparation and production	Requires extensive research and documentation	Specific formats for specific purposes	You need to document the relationship(s) between large amounts of data to inform an internal or external audience
Channel	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**	**Expectations**	**When to choose**
Proposal	Can require significant time for preparation and production	Requires extensive research and documentation	Specific formats for specific purposes	You need to persuade an audience with complex arguments and data

By choosing the correct channel for a message, you can save yourself many headaches and increase the likelihood that your writing will be read, understood, and acted upon in the manner you intended.

In terms of writing preparation, you should review any electronic communication before you send it. Spelling and grammatical errors will negatively impact your credibility. With written documents, we often take time and care to get it right the first time, but the speed of instant messaging, text messaging, or emailing often deletes this important review cycle of written works. Just because the document you prepare in a text message is only one sentence long doesn't mean it can't be misunderstood or expose you to liability. Take time when preparing your written messages, regardless of their intended presentation, and review your work before you click "send."

To further explore the CMAPP model, click on the hotspots below.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=391

Let's wrap up by seeing these principles in action.

Image Description

Figure 3.3 image description: This is a diagram of Context, Message, Audience, Purpose, and Product. The blue circle represents the context. Audience, message and purpose sit within the context. There's a purple arrow that leads to product, which shows how product comes last, after the other factors have been considered. [Return to Figure 3.3]

Anmol's Story

Anmol's Story

Anmol had a question for his accounting teacher, so he decided to email her. He didn't know what to put for the email subject, so he left it blank. He was worried about not getting the answer to his question in time to complete his homework, so he just wrote the email quickly and didn't do a lot of proofreading. He also put a lot of exclamation marks so the teacher would take him seriously. Anmol was surprised when the teacher told him that the email was rude.

Let's run this situation through the CMAPP model.

The university is a new context. It has spoken and unspoken rules. Because Anmol wasn't aware of the context of the university, it was hard to make a good communication choice. Looking back, he realized that a university context is perhaps more formal than other types of environments he'd communicated in, so perhaps his email didn't have an appropriate tone.

Audience: Anmol realized that his teacher was also a bit on the formal side. She wore a business suit to class each day, unlike some of his other instructors. When he re-read his email, he realized that multiple question marks looked a bit too informal. Anmol also realized that his teacher probably received a lot of student emails and was busy, so she didn't want to have to re-read an email. Because he hadn't done any proofreading, his email was hard to read.

Purpose: Anmol's purpose was to receive a quick response to his question. He realized that he'd simply written "I don't understand this week's homework. What should I do?" This is a broad question, so it would be hard for his teacher to help him. Because he didn't include a subject in his email, it was also hard for his teacher to know what the email was about.

Message/ Product: To help achieve his purpose, Anmol decided to review the instructions his teacher had given, then narrow his question down. He then edited his email to make sure it was easy to read and correctly punctuated. He made sure that his tone was polite. He also added a clear subject line, which included his class and section number. He decided that an email was the correct product to create, since his teacher didn't give any other contact information.

Key Takeaways

- When you write, you should consider your audience's needs. The more you understand about your audience, the easier it will be to write.
- When you communicate, your message is encoded with your own Context of Production: all of the values, beliefs and assumptions that make up your worldview. Being aware of how your values and beliefs shape your communication will help you communicate more clearly.
- When your audience receives your message, they will decode it based on their Context of Use. Being aware of what your audience believes and how they will use the message will help you make better choices.
- Many new communicators want to start by creating a product, such as an email or Instagram account. By first considering your context, audience, purpose and message, however, you can make better choices about what product to create.

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following activities:

1. Write a paragraph connecting Brenda Knights' narrative to the rest of the chapter or to your own experience.
2. Find a vintage ad online. Draw a diagram of the Context of Production that you think the message was created in and Context of Use that you're viewing it in. Do you find the ad persuasive? Why or why not? Do you think the overlap between the Context of Use and Context of Production circles has changed since the ad was created? Why?
3. Think about a miscommunication that you experienced or that you found online. Diagram the miscommunication according to the Context of Production/ Context of Use model. Label the stages (encoding, circulation, use and reproduction). Then, write a short paragraph about what stage(s) of the communication process caused the miscommunication to occur.
4. Look at the prompt for an upcoming assignment. Analyze it according to the CMAPP model. What do you know about the assignment's context, message, audience, purpose and product? How can this knowledge help you be successful in your assignment?
5. Think about an assignment that you've created recently. Then, look online to try to see how other people have delivered a similar message in a different genre. For example, if you had to write an essay in a history class about Winston Churchill, you might find this post on the Reddit subreddit r/AskHistorians or the Epic Rap Battles of History episode about Winston Churchill vs Theodore Roosevelt. How does the genre impact the message? What's left out and what's included? Does it appeal to a different audience? Write a paragraph or two about your findings.

Attribution

CHAPTER 4: STYLE AND TONE

Photo by Melody Jacob on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Learn how a piece's tone can impact how successfully the message is received.
- Explore some strategies to write more clearly and concisely.
- Learn how to use plain language.
- Learn how to use inclusive language.
- Explore what 'writing voice' is and how to stay true to yours while still being successful in a business context.

Questions for Reflection

Before you start, consider the following questions. Your instructor might ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. Have you ever experienced a miscommunication where someone's tone was misinterpreted? How do you think the miscommunication happened?
2. How would you describe your writing voice?
3. How similar do you think your writing voice is to your speaking voice?
4. Who is your favourite author? Why do you like the way that author writes?
5. When you communicate online, how do you make sure your audience understands your tone?

Brenda Knights Narrative

I get asked to do public speaking events. A lot of times when you're asked to speak, you get butterflies to an extent, no matter how experienced you are. You can do research on who your audience is, but the thing I've found that always calms my nerves has been to speak from the heart. When I think about other speakers I've enjoyed hearing and learned from, it's all people who speak from the heart, who draw from the place where their values are. That resonates with people.

Anyone can read statistics. I'll often go to speaking events and see someone reading off a Powerpoint. The audience starts to pick up their phones. They're disinterested. They're not engaged. To engage the audience, you need to speak to the heart using real-life experiences so that others can say, "Yeah, I can see what you're going through. I can see that happening in my business." When you're preparing to give a speech, you can think about your talking points, but find a way to connect your experience to the topic. That's much more engaging than reading statistics. You can provide handouts with statistical information, but most people would rather listen to a storyteller than have someone lecturing them. When you look at TED speakers, they're bringing their life experience in and telling stories of what happened to them. They might bring statistics in, but it's the stories that get the audience engaged.

When I'm writing a grant or proposal, I need to sell them on why my proposal is better than the competition's. I find that if you speak from the heart in your writing, you can draw that connection. You can say if you give us this grant, it's going to be meaningful to my community. That's going to make your proposal stand out over others. I'll even add pictures with captions to tell the story.

If I'm writing a grant – say I'm looking to fund a wool weaving class – I'll add a picture of one of our elders teaching a wool weaving class. In the writing, I'll share that on this date we held a class and had very positive feedback, that community members enjoyed the storytelling, and that they felt they were putting reconciliation into action. The results will be that this knowledge will be passed down to future generations. I tell the story of it. That's more impactful than saying that you want to do a wool weaving class and here's how much it will cost. The people who are reviewing these proposals are looking for ones that are going to give you maximum value for the funding. I've been on both sides of the fence where I've written grants and where I've been an evaluator, and I can tell you that you're shopping around for the best story.

Why Pay Attention to Style and Tone

Style and tone refer to how something is said: the words you choose, your sentence and paragraph lengths, the details you include, your attitude towards the reader, whether you use positive or negative words, etc. Every word you choose creates a reaction within the reader.

For example, which would you prefer to hear?

- *I'm happy to answer any questions.*
  or
- *If you still don't understand, I can clarify for you.*

Probably the first one, right? Even though these sentences mean roughly the same thing, one makes the speaker seem approachable and friendly. The other makes it seem as if anyone who doesn't understand is at fault and is wasting the speaker's time. That's the power of tone.

It's important to pay attention to tone because, especially when we communicate in writing, tone can be hard to convey. If someone's confused about your message's content, they'll ask you follow-up questions. But people don't often give each other feedback about tone. It's rare that someone will say, "Your email came off as a little hostile. Did you intend that?" Without you knowing it, tone miscommunications can negatively impact your relationships with coworkers, bosses and clients.

This chapter will also tackle wordiness. Wordy or imprecise writing is responsible for a lot of lost productivity in the workplace. In one survey of 547 business professionals, 81% said that "poorly written material wastes a lot of their time." (Bernoff, 2016, para. 4). So, learning how to write clearly and concisely can give you a huge advantage.

Sailing the 7 C's

Sometimes when business communicators talk about "style and tone," we say that business communication should have the 3 Cs: clear, concise and correct. This was expanded on in the 1952 book Effective Public Relations by Cutlip and Center into 7 Cs:

- Clarity
- Completeness
- Correctness
- Concision
- Concreteness
- Coherence
- And courtesy.

Other scholars have thrown in other C words like credibility, context, capability etc. (Are you feeling confusion and consternation about the letter C yet?)

This is good advice. Sometimes, however, miscommunications still happen because the writer forgot to consider their audience. What seems clear and coherent to a nuclear physicist might not seem that way to a general audience. What seems concise to someone passionate about a topic might seem long-winded to those just looking for basic information. So, to understand style and tone, we need to apply the communication models we explored in the last chapter and constantly ask what our audience needs.

In most workplaces, the biggest constraint is **time**. Every day, an estimated 300 billion emails are sent worldwide[1]. One study found that the average office worker received 121 emails a day[2]. If every email took just an extra minute to read because it was confusing, each person would waste 2 hours a day.

So how can we ensure that we help our audience save time? Plain language.

1. https://www.statista.com/statistics/456500/daily-number-of-e-mails-worldwide/
2. https://www.lifewire.com/how-many-emails-are-sent-every-day-1171210

Plain Language

While there was a time when many business documents were written in the third person to give them the impression of objectivity, this formal style was often passive and wordy. Today, it has given way to active, clear, concise writing, sometimes known as "plain English" (Bailey, 2008). Plain language style involves everyday words and expressions in a familiar group context and may include contractions.

Many people see plain language as an ethical means of communication. For example, one legal expert rewrote Instagram's terms of use to be in plain language, then showed her version to teenagers. They were shocked by what Instagram was able to do with their photos, and would not have consented if they had read the plain language version instead of the one written in complicated legal jargon.

No matter who your audience is, they will appreciate your ability to write using plain language. Here are five principles for writing in plain language:

Principle 1: Use Active Voice

To use active voice, make the noun that performs the action the subject of the sentence and pair it directly with an action verb.

Read these two sentences:

- Matt Damon left Harvard in the late 1980s to start his acting career.
- Matt Damon's acting career was started in the late 1980s when he left Harvard.

In the first sentence, left is an action verb that is paired with the subject, Matt Damon. If you ask yourself, "Who or what left?" the answer is Matt Damon. Neither of the other two nouns in the sentence—Harvard and career—"left" anything.

Now look at the second sentence. The action verb is started. If you ask yourself, "Who or what started something?" the answer, again, is Matt Damon. But in this sentence, the writer placed career—not Matt Damon—in the subject position. When the doer of the action is not the subject, the sentence is in passive voice. In passive voice constructions, the doer of the action usually follows the word by as the indirect object of a prepositional phrase, and the action verb is typically partnered with a version of the verb to be.

Writing in the Active Voice

Writing in active voice is easy once you understand the difference between active and passive voice. First, find the verb. Then, ask yourself who did the verb. Is the subject present?

Review Active vs. Passive Voice

Identify the sentences with active voice:

1. Mika kicked the ball.
2. The ball was kicked by Mika.
3. Great students attend Kwantlen Polytechnic University.
4. The university is attended by great students.
5. I made a mistake.
6. Mistakes were made.

Answers: 1, 3, and 5

Using the Passive Voice

While using the active voice is preferred, sometimes passive voice is the best option. For example, maybe you don't know who's responsible for an action or you don't want to place the blame on someone. For example, you might say "a lamp was broken at our recent party" to avoid saying who broke the lamp.

Principle 2: Use Common Words Instead of Complex Words

Sometimes, new communicators believe that large words feel more appropriate to a business environment. Also, the world is filled with wonderful, long words that are fun to use. Often, however, long words cause more confusion. Worse than that, they can exclude anyone who doesn't understand that particular word. Maybe you've had the experience of reading an academic article or textbook chapter and having to read the same sentence three times over to try to figure out what it was trying to say. Then, when you asked your instructor, they explained it in a simple way. If you've ever thought, "Why didn't they just say it simply from the beginning?" you can understand the power of plain language.

Again, the trick is to use words that are appropriate to the audience, the context and your purpose. As we've said, time is the biggest constraint, so simple words likely meet most audiences' needs. In specialized environments, however, more complex words are required. For example, a lawyer has to use specific, technical language to precisely lay out a case. A doctor has to use medical language to convey a patient's exact symptoms and diagnosis.

When you enter into a new workplace context, look at how your coworkers are writing to determine the level of formality the situation requires. You can also use one of the many free online tools such as Readability Formulas to determine the reading level of your writing. When you use these tools, you copy and paste some text into the tool and it will estimate the reading level.

Principle #3: Use a Positive Tone Whenever Possible

Unless there is a specific reason not to, use positive language wherever you can. Positive language benefits your writing in two ways. First, it creates a positive tone, and your writing is more likely to be well-received. Second, it clarifies your meaning, as positive statements are more concise. Take a look at the following negatively worded sentences and then their positive counterparts, below.

Examples:

Negative: Your car will not be ready for collection until Friday.
Positive: Your car will be ready for collection on Friday.

Negative: You did not complete the exam.
Positive: You will need to complete the exam.

Negative: Your holiday time is not approved until your manager clears it.
Positive: Your holiday time will be approved when your manager clears it.

Writers don't just create a positive tone on the sentence level. They can also create this tone by choosing what details to include. If something negative is unimportant to the reader, you can leave it out. Kitty O. Locker called the practice of using "positive emphasis" (Locker, 2016) to meet your audience's needs "You Attitude."

This is especially important if a situation is negative to you but not the audience. For example, imagine that you held a fundraiser that didn't raise as much money as you hoped. This might really impact your budget and the future of some programs you run. But if you're sending out an email with the goal of getting people to fill out a survey asking for ways to improve the fundraiser, none of this matters.

Read the following two examples, then ask yourself which version would make you more likely to fill out the survey:

Negative Details: Unfortunately, this year's Gala Under the Stars only raised half of its expected profit. This means that we will need to cancel our Little Stars after-school program and lay off part-time staff. Obviously, this is devastating to our organization, so we need to make sure it doesn't happen again. Please fill out this survey to help make the Gala Under the Stars better.

Positive Details: Help us make Gala Under the Stars even better next year. Fill out this five-minute survey and be entered into a draw for two movie tickets.

In the first example, the reader has to wade through negative details in order to get to the survey. They might not even read the email long enough to find out about the survey. In the second example, however, the benefit to reader (free tickets) and what's being asked of them (to fill out a survey) is listed first. Positive details don't just lead to a positive tone, they also help you fulfill the purpose of the communication.

Principle 4: Write for your Reader

When you write for your readers and speak to an audience, you have to consider who they are and what they need to know. When readers know that you are concerned with their needs, they are more likely to be receptive to your message, and will be more likely to take the action you are asking them to and focus on important details.

Your message will mean more to your reader if they get the impression that it was written directly to them.

Organize your Document to Meet your Readers' Needs

When you write, ask yourself, "Why would someone read this message?" Often, it is because the reader needs a question answered. What do they need to know to prepare for the upcoming meeting, for example, or what new company policies do they need to follow? Think about the questions your readers will ask and then organize your document to answer them.

Principle 5: Keep Words and Sentences Shorts (Conciseness)

It is easy to let your sentences become cluttered with words that do not add value to your message. Improve cluttered sentences by eliminating repetitive ideas, removing repeated words, and editing to eliminate unnecessary words.

Eliminating Repetitive Ideas

Unless you are providing definitions on purpose, stating one idea twice in a single sentence is redundant.

Removing Repeated Words

As a general rule, you should try not to repeat a word within a sentence. Sometimes you simply need to choose a different word, but often you can actually remove repeated words.

Example:

Original: The student who won the cooking contest is a very talented and ambitious student.

Revision: The student who won the cooking contest is very talented and ambitious.

Rewording to Eliminate Unnecessary Words

If a sentence has words that are not necessary to carry the meaning, those words are unneeded and can be removed.

Examples:

Original: Gagandeep has the ability to make the most fabulous twice-baked potatoes.

Revision: Gagandeep makes the most fabulous twice-baked potatoes.

Original: For his part in the cooking class group project, Malik was responsible for making the mustard reduction sauce.

Revision: Malik made the mustard reduction sauce for his cooking class group project.

Avoid Expletive Pronouns (most of the time)

Many people create needlessly wordy sentences using expletive pronouns, which often take the form of "There is …" or "There are …."

Pronouns (e.g., I, you, he, she, they, this, that, who, etc.) are words that we use to replace nouns (i.e., people, places, things), and there are many types of pronouns (e.g., personal, relative, demonstrative, etc.). However, expletive pronouns are different from other pronouns because unlike most pronouns, they do not stand for a person, thing, or place; they are called expletives because they have no "value." Sometimes you will see expletive pronouns at the beginning of a sentence, sometimes at the end.

Examples:

There are a lot of reading assignments in this class.

I can't believe how many reading assignments *there are*!

Note: These two examples are *not* necessarily bad examples of using expletive pronouns. They are included to help you first understand what expletive pronouns are so you can recognize them.

The main reason you should generally avoid writing with expletive pronouns is that they often cause us to use more words in the rest of the sentence than we have to. Also, the empty words at the beginning tend to shift the more important subject matter toward the end of the sentence. The above sentences are not that bad, but at least they are simple enough to help you understand what expletive pronouns are. Here are some more examples of expletive pronouns, along with better alternatives.

Examples

Original: *There are* some people who love to cause trouble.

Revision: Some people love to cause trouble.

Original: *There are* some things that are just not worth waiting for.

Revision: Some things are just not worth waiting for.

Original: *There is* a person I know who can help you fix your computer.

Revision: I know a person who can help you fix your computer.

When you find yourself using expletives, always ask yourself if omitting and rewriting would give your reader a clearer, more direct, less wordy sentence. Can I communicate the same message using fewer words without taking away from the meaning I want to convey or the tone I want to create?

Choose Specific Wording

You will give clearer information if you write with specific rather than general words. Evoke senses of taste, smell, hearing, sight, and touch with your word choices. For example, you could say, "My shoe feels odd." But this statement does not give a sense of why your shoe feels odd, since "odd" is an abstract word that does not suggest any physical characteristics. Or you could say, "My shoe feels wet." This statement gives you a sense of how your shoe feels to the touch. It also gives a sense of how your shoe might look as well as how it might smell, painting a picture for your readers.

Inclusive Language

Good communicators include everyone and don't make assumptions about their readers. You can make your language more inclusive by:

- Using the singular "they" instead of "he or she." For example, instead of saying, "A communicator should understand his or her audience," you could say, "A communicator should understand their audience" or "Communicators should understand their audience."
- Being specific when discussing a person's identity and use the terminology they prefer. For example, instead of saying "Marilyn Gabriel is a First Nations person," you could say "Marilyn Gabriel is a member of the Kwantlen Nation." Usually, a person's disability isn't relevant, but if it is, use neutral and specific language. For example, instead of saying "Brent is confined to a wheelchair" (which is both inaccurate, negative and vague), you could say "Brent uses a wheelchair" or "Brent has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair." When in doubt, ask the person what terminology they prefer.
- Question the assumptions that you make about your audience. Consider that many of your readers might not share the same cultural values or experiences. For example, before writing a sentence like "Every child waits all year for Christmas morning," consider that many of your readers might not have shared this experience.
- Avoid expressions or idioms that would be confusing to English language learners. Workplaces are increasingly global, and your writing should be understood by people from many different backgrounds.

Words and phrases also often have complex histories. For example, often we don't think twice about calling a decision "stupid" or "dumb," but these words have a long history rooted in harm against people with cognitive or intellectual disabilities. One way that we can address ableism, racism, sexism, xenophobia, fatphobia and other forms of discrimination is to replace these words with words that are more precise. For example, saying "our manager's decision is stupid" is vague, whereas "our manager's decision will make life harder for the interns" or "our manager's decision ignores the data that Cody presented at the meeting last week" is much more specific.

You should be especially careful when writing about groups of people in a way that might reinforce stereotypes. For example, in his book *Elements of Indigenous Style*, Gregory Younging discusses how subtle bias can have a big impact when non-Indigenous people write about First Nations, Metis and Inuit people. For example, instead of portraying Indigenous people as victims, focus on their "resilience, agency and future." (2018, pg. 77). Instead of portraying an Indigenous culture as something static that existed in the past, focus on how that culture is thriving and changing.

Practice What You Learned

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=411

What is Voice?

Everyone has a natural writing voice, just like everyone has an accent. Being aware of your writing voice allows you to manipulate your voice so that you can adapt your writing to many different contexts and participate in many different types of conversations.

This essay by Kyle Stedman is both an example of voice and also gives some useful tips about how to discover your own narrative voice.

Making Sure Your Voice Is Present
by Kyle Stedman

The Terror of Voice

I like order. I love the comfort of a beautiful and functional Excel spreadsheet. I organize my CDs by genre and then alphabetically by artist. I eat three meals a day.

But my love of order sometimes butts heads with my love of writing. That's because no matter how much attention I pay to following the rules of writing, I know that to produce writing that astounds readers—moving them, making them gasp, enticing them—I'll have to include more than just *correct* writing. I'll need to find a way to make my voice present.

And sometimes, that terrifies me with the uncertainty of it all. I sometimes wish writing excellently were like working in Excel. I know I can make a spreadsheet *absolutely perfect* if my formulas are coded properly and my data is lined up correctly. Writing excellently is messier than that: it means admitting the difficult truth that even when everything in my essay follows all the grammatical and mechanical rules, my writing can still lack qualities that will make my readers' eyes pop out of their heads with delightful surprise.

I often tell my students that the difference between A-level and B-level writing is voice. In other words, assignments often deserve B's even when they have perfect punctuation and grammar, an intriguing concept, brilliant ideas, excellent and well-integrated sources, and a Works Cited page that would earn a standing ovation at the annual MLA convention. An assignment can have all of those things but still feel dry and voiceless, reading like a dying man trudging through the desert, sandal-slap after sandal-slap, lifeless sentence after lifeless sentence.

So What is Voice in Writing?

"Voice" is a weird term, right? We usually say your *voice* is the quality of how you sound when you talk out loud—but aren't we talking about writing?

First, let's think about everything that makes your speaking voice distinctive. It has its own aural quality, formed by the size of your mouth, throat, and tongue, along with your distinctive habits of how you use your body to manipulate the sound of the air exhaling from your lungs.

But beyond the sounds your body naturally produces through your mouth, you also have your own way of choosing words, and that's part of your voice, too. You have words you use more often than others, phrases you rely on, and ways you make the musical tone of your voice go up and down in distinct ways. All of those choices are partly based on how you learned to speak in your family and culture, and they're partly based on what you bring to the table as an individual. Sometimes you just let out whatever you're thinking, and sometimes you pause to consider how you want to sound.

Don't miss that: qualities of spoken voice are, to some extent, *chosen*. Depending on where and when and with whom we're speaking, our voice can change.

Now let's turn to writing. I would define voice in writing as *the quality of writing that gives readers the impression that they are hearing a real person, not a machine*. Voice in writing is therefore multifaceted: it's partly an unconscious, natural ring that dwells in the words you write, but it's also related to the words you choose (stuffy and overused or fresh and appealing?), the phrases you rely on (dictionary-like or lively?), and how you affect your readers' emotions (bored or engaged?). And it's not something that is magically there for some writers and not there for others. Voice is something that can be cultivated, practiced, watered, even designed.

I'm reminded of a quote from poet D.A. Powell, which I heard on the trailer for a documentary called *Bad Writing*. He says, "Bad art is that which does not succeed in cleansing the language of its dead—stinking dead—usages of the past" (MorrisHillPictures). Voice in writing is like that: it gives readers the sense that they're hearing a fresh, cleansed voice unlike any they've heard before.

We Need Voice in Business and Academic Writing, Too

A common misconception among writers is that writing for college, especially in a fancy-looking, citation-filled essay, should have the complexity and difficulty of *Pride and Prejudice*: "She is all affability and condescension, and I doubt not but you will be honoured with some portion of her notice when service is over" (Austen). That is, we sometimes assume that a formal workplace is where we say things with big words and in roundabout ways that seem sort of something like what we imagine talk is like around a gilded dinner table in a palace, somewhere.

I think this assumption is wrong. Even when reading assignments that were written for college classes, readers don't want to be bored or confused. They want liveliness; they want voice. Listen to veteran writing teacher Donald Graves use all of his cute-old-man powers to beg you to use your personal voice in even your standardized writing tests:

Donald Graves on the Importance of Putting Voice in your Writing

I recently taught a class that focused entirely on blogging for the first thirteen weeks of the course, followed by a final academic essay at the end of the semester. Students regularly asked me what style they should adopt in their final essay, how formal to be, what kind of voice to adopt. To most of the students, my reply was, "Write it how you wrote your blog!" To which almost all of them said, "Huh? That was *informal*. This is *formal*." To which I said, "You're partly right. You paid less attention to details when you were blogging, sure, but your voices were there. You used sentences that sounded like you! They were *resonant*! I was *moved*! Do you hear the *italics* in my voice? That's how good your writing was! So don't lose that by putting on a new coat of formality when it doesn't fit well!" As the one who was going to read their academic essays, I was afraid that I was going to get a bunch of essays that sounded like *Pride and Prejudice*, with big words and roundabout sentence constructions. I wanted big, complex ideas in these final essays, but I also wanted stylistic liveliness, sentences that made me sit up straight and open my eyes wide. I admit that after the students had written first drafts of their essays, I backed off a little, and we talked about the ways that formal writing situations do indeed demand a different kind of voice than a blog post—but I was always insistent that *no* writing situation called for bored readers.

Of course, I see the other side: there's a place for formality in a lot of writing. Depending on the circumstance, sometimes our most formal coat is indeed what we need to wear. In your future college classes, you might not get much of an idea from your professor about what kind of coat she expects you to wear, so you'll probably have to do some asking. ("Dear Professor X, I'm baffled about what kind of voice to use in my essay. For example, may I write the word *baffled*? Please send examples. Sincerely, Judy Jetson.")

My favourite trick here is one I learned from a small writing textbook called *They Say, I Say*: purposefully mixing the formal and informal in a single sentence or two. If you want to talk about something using a formal term, which is often a good idea in formal writing, use the formal term but then turn around and say it again informally. Like this: "Spoken voice is affected by our use of the epithelium, the vocal ligament, and the vocalis muscle. We've got a lot of ways to make sound." The authors of *They Say, I Say* remind us that "translating the one type of language into the other, the specialized into the everyday, can help drive home a point" (Graff, Birkenstein, and Durst 118).

That leads me to the stuff you're probably here for: actual ideas about how to get this elusive thing called voice into your writing.

1. Trust the gush—but then come back to the gush with a critical eye.

In one of my favourite articles about voice in writing, writing scholar Tom Romano tells the story of a student who turned in a piece of paper with the words "TRUST THE GUSH" messily scribbled on it. Romano expounds on what the phrase means to him:

Trusting the gush means moving on the heat quickening in you.
Trusting the gush means being fearless with language.
Trusting the gush means writing about what you are emotionally moved by and perhaps don't even know why.
Trusting the gush means putting onto the page those thoughts, connections, and perceptions that stand ready to be uttered. (51)

It's beautiful advice that feels true to me. I've had times where I turn off the screen of my computer and write with no visual reference, letting words gush out of me in their most natural, voice-filled way.

But remember how I said that voice isn't just natural, it's also constructed for specific occasions? My gush is usually full of some good, usable words, phrases, and sentences, but it's also a big, gushy mess. So that's when I back away for a bit of time (more than a day, if possible), returning later to my gush in search of the lines that seem most lively, most full of voice, the ones that fit best into my current writing context.

2. Don't be afraid to use some of speech's informalities, but always punctuate them in formal ways.

Sometimes students ask if they can use contractions in their academic essays, and I always say yes—but then I regret it when I get "theyre not understanding" and "he said your not smart enough" in submitted work. But on the flip side, I find I'm more willing to be lenient with student writing that is slightly too informal for my taste when the writer shows that she knows what she's doing with her punctuation. Life is like that, you know? If you take one step of goodwill (knowing your punctuation), people want to give you lenience in other areas (accepting informality, even if it seems to step over the line).

3. Read your work aloud—and don't be afraid to have fun with it.

I tell students to read their stuff aloud all the time, and usually I get a scared, silent look in return. (I think this look might mean, "Do you have any idea how stupid I would look if someone walked in while I was talking to myself?") Well, fine—play around with it:

- Read your own stuff aloud to yourself. I like to do this after printing it out. Listen for places where you stumble, where you seem to be saying the same word over and over, where you think you might be boring. [Peter Elbow justifies this well]:

I find that when students have the repeated experience of reading their writing aloud, they are more likely to write sentences that are inviting and comfortable to recite—which in turn makes the sentences better for readers who get them in silence. Putting this differently, the sound of written words when spoken is a crucial benefit for silent readers, yet too few students hear the words they write. When they have to read their writing aloud frequently and thus hear it, they tend to listen more as they write—and readers hear more meaning as they read. (5)

- Have someone else read your stuff aloud to you, with another copy in front of yourself to follow along with and mark spots that feel voiceless. Ask your friend what sounded best, what he most remembers on the sentence level, where it sounded like *you*.
- Play The Boring Game: have three people sit down, each with a piece of paper with a line drawn through the middle; this is The Boring Line. Make one person the timekeeper. Start reading your essay out loud to them, and ask the timekeeper to raise his hand every thirty seconds. At those moments, the readers all make a dot on the paper to show how bored they are; a dot way above the boring line means they're absolutely engaged, as if beautiful aliens had just transported into the room, while a dot way below the boring line means they're wondering why they agreed to play the stupid boring game with you. After the essay is done, ask them to connect the dots, showing you a line of where they were relatively more or less bored. Talk to them to help identify what parts of the essay bored them; you probably didn't have much voice in those spots.

4. *Surprise Your Readers*

I'm serious: make sure that throughout your piece, every once in a while you throw in a word or phrase that makes you think, "I bet they *never* saw that one coming!" (In this piece that you're reading now, one of my attempts at that is my first heading, "The Terror of Voice." I'm counting on readers thinking, "Wait, the *terror* of voice? . . . I'm confused! I'd better read on to figure out what he means!")

My guess is that with a little practice, this won't be too hard to achieve. You could read through a draft of something and highlight (either on paper or the computer) every place where you think you're breaking the expectation of your reader in a surprising way, whether because of the topic you chose to dive into or because of a phrase or sentence they might not have seen coming. Then you skim back through and find places without any highlights around, and try to work something in there.

As with most of my suggestions, this can backfire if you take it too far, which is why I think playing The Boring Game (above) is so important, so you can feel out your choices with real people. Obviously, your readers will be surprised if you start slamming sexually explicit words onto the screen, but that's clearly not the kind of voice I'm talking about. Less dramatically, I've been in situations where I go for a strong, surprising personal voice and later discover (on my own, or with the help of someone else) that it's just not working for that audience.

This happened to me recently when I was writing a piece about integrating sources into essays. I worked up this detailed analogy involving Jane Austen, gardens, statues, and helicopters (seriously), and I even kept the analogy through a few drafts. But a friend, whom I had asked to read my draft, told me she was a little confused by the whole thing. At first I ignored her—I was being surprising! There were helicopters—*helicopters*! But eventually, I realized she was right; I had to back down and rework my surprising analogy into something that just plain made more sense. The revised version was still surprising (involving Spider-Man), but it was surprising *and it worked*. There's a difference.

5. Use Rhetorical Figures to Help Shape Your Sentences

Sometimes we hear or read something and say, "Wow, there was so much power in those words!" And sometimes, we fall for a common lie: we think that powerful speakers and writers are just plain born that way, that their skill comes from some indefinable something that they have and we don't.

I like rhetorical figures because they expose that thinking as a lie.

Since the days of classical Greece and Rome, instructors in rhetoric have realized that this lie existed, so they formulated organized ways of figuring out what exactly makes some speaking and writing feel so powerful. They labeled these terms and encouraged their students to try using these sentence forms in their own sentences. Here are some examples, all of which are direct quotes from *Silva Rhetoricae*: *The Forest of Rhetoric*, an awesome site at https://rhetoric.byu.edu/ (Burton):

- anaphora: Repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences, or lines. Example: This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England, / This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings.
- asyndeton: The omission of conjunctions between clauses, often resulting in a hurried rhythm or vehement effect. Example: Veni, vidi, vici (Caesar: "I came; I saw; I conquered")
- epitasis: The addition of a concluding sentence that merely emphasizes what has already been stated. Example: Clean your bedroom. All of it.

These and dozens of others are available at *Silva Rhetoricae* and at the (somewhat more manageable) *American Rhetoric* site, especially the page on "Rhetorical Figures in Sound" (Eidenmuller).

The idea is to force yourself to try setting up a sentence or two following the guidelines of one of the rhetorical figures, and then to sit back and gauge the result for yourself. Often, I think you'll be impressed with how excellent you sound, with a very present and powerful tone of voice.

The Terror of Practice

In the end, there's one more terrifying thing about writing with voice: it's unlikely that you'll see a huge change without lots of practice. And that means lots of writing. And that means time. Which you might not have.

So I'm closing with a word of moderation. To see a change in your writing voice in just a short semester, you'll need to think about voice in every piece of writing you do. Shooting off a quick Moodle forum response? Try using a rhetorical figure. Confirming a meeting time with a friend over text message? Try to surprise her with an unexpected phrase. Writing an in-class assignment? Read it over slowly in your head, paying careful attention to how it would sound if you read it out loud. (Or, if your teacher lets you, just read it out loud there in the classroom. This is unlikely.) Writing an essay draft that feels like busy-work? Play around with how you might perfectly punctuate some informal language (and don't be afraid to ask your teacher if you did it correctly).

Even though a YouTube search for "voice in writing" will give you lots of good advice—including one devastatingly cute video of young kids baking brownies while the "Word Chef" talks about what makes for a strong voice in a book about a cockroach (teachertubewriting)—there really is no substitute for practice. Thinking about writing is never, ever the same as practicing writing.

And most of all, breathe. Our voice comes from our breath, the life that flows from our bodies into the minds of our listeners. Shape it, practice it, use it for good. (That's asyndeton—did you catch it?)

Key Takeaways

- Everyone has a unique writing voice. You can use revision to help adjust your natural writing voice for different contexts.
- Many business writing audiences value plain, clear language that can be easily understood.
- In general, active voice is easier to read than passive voice.
- Your language should be inclusive. Especially when you are communicating to or about groups who face stereotypes, you should be precise with your language and think carefully about whether your words reflect bias.

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following exercises.

1. Write a paragraph connecting Brenda Knights' narrative to the rest of the chapter or to your own experience.
2. Pick a mood like "happy" or "nervous" or "bored." Then, go outside and write down 10 details that you see that could convey that mood. For example, if you were standing in your classroom and were happy, you might see bright clothing, friendly faces, delicious cups of coffee etc. If you were bored, you might see white walls, a dreary day outside, too much text on the Powerpoint slides, a clock ticking slowly. Use your 10 details to write a short paragraph that conveys the mood you were trying to express without saying it. You can also consider your sentence length and rhythm. When you're done, read your work out loud and see if someone can guess the mood.
3. Go online and find the terms of service for a social media platform or website that you like, such as Facebook or Twitter. See if you can translate a few paragraphs into plain language.
4. Take a long or wordy paragraph (either something you've written or something you've read – maybe even in this textbook) and try to turn it into a tweet (280 characters) without losing the meaning.
5. Find a video you've saved that shows your friends and family interacting. Watch the video and listen to how each person is speaking. What makes their "voice" unique? Do they use certain words more often? Do they favour long or short sentences? Do they talk quickly or slowly? If you had to describe their "voice," how would you describe it.
6. If you can write in more than one language, write a paragraph or two that reflects on the difference between what is seen as "good writing" in the different languages you speak. Do all cultures value plain language? What features does good writing have in other languages you speak?
7. Using the voice recorder on a smartphone or computer, record yourself reading an assignment. Then, listen to the recording. What do you notice about the style and tone of your piece? Write a paragraph on your findings.

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Attributions

CHAPTER 5: ORGANIZING YOUR IDEAS

Photo by Dan Azzopardi on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Learn how organization can meet your reader’s needs.
- Explore some strategies for organizing your ideas using headings, subheadings and bullet points.
- Learn how to write coherent and effective paragraphs.
- Use the strategy of ‘reverse outlining’ to test how well-organized your draft is.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. When you write, how do you know when to begin and end a paragraph?
2. How do you organize your thoughts when you write?
3. Look at a piece written by your favourite author. How does he or she use paragraphs?
4. Have you ever had an experience where you missed an important piece of information because it was buried in a paragraph or otherwise hard to read? What happened?
5. How do you organize ideas within a paragraph?
6. What role does pre-writing and revision play in how you organize your writing?

Brenda Knights Narrative

One thing I can share as someone who's evaluated grants is that if you're responding to a call for tender or a grant, you need to read the questions and respond to those questions. I've evaluated grant applications where a company has just put in their company flier and banked on having a good reputation. That's demonstrating disrespect. Granting organizations have a lot of accountabilities and they have to show why they selected who they selected. They'll go through each question and assign a score. They want to see that the person answered each question.

When I write a grant, I respond in the same order that they asked, so it's easy to find. You don't want them to have to hunt around to see if you answered the questions. So I'll put it in the same order and make sure there are headings. I make it easy on the reader to respect their time.

In some ways, the process is really similar to applying for a job. When you apply for a job, you write a cover letter and resume where you explain why you should be considered. It's the same thing with grant applications. You're trying to sell your company and show why you should be successful. When someone's looking at your cover letter and resume, they'll ask, "Does this person understand what I'm looking for? Did they take the time to answer all my questions?" Grant writing is like that.

When a person doesn't take time and care with an application, it creates an impression with the reader that this isn't someone who will take time and care to do the job. Are they going to follow through in the project, when they couldn't follow through with the grant writing? It diminishes the reviewer's confidence in you, so you can't put your best foot forward.

Philip's Story

During his co-op term, Philip helped to organize an informal conference. The week before the conference, his supervisor asked him to send out an email to all the participants to let them know the schedule of events. Because everyone was so busy getting ready for the conference, Philip's supervisor didn't have time to look over the email. Philip wrote:

Hi everyone,

We're all looking forward to seeing you on Saturday morning for the conference. We have an exciting lineup of speakers ready to help your business apply design thinking to tough problems. We're especially excited for our keynote speaker! Best of all, the entire event is catered by Cedar Feast House Catering, so get ready for some tasty treats. When you arrive, please check in and receive your welcome package and identification. There is also a welcome social on Friday night at 6 pm in the Starlight Room. If you signed up for the childcare services, please tell the front desk and they will take you to the childcare area. I've attached the full lineup of speakers to this email or you can visit our website here. If you have any questions, please contact me at 604-555-5555 or PhilipTheIntern@company.com. Thanks!

Philip and his coworkers were surprised when only a few people came to the welcome social and many claimed not to know about it. Can you see why?

It's because the information about the social event was buried in the middle of the email. Many people simply read "see you on Saturday morning," skimmed the rest of the email and overlooked the social. That's the power of organization. Philip's email was clear and had a positive tone, but because of the organization his message wasn't delivered. We'll come back to Philip at the end of the chapter.

Organizing Your Ideas

As we've learned, successful business communicators meet their audience's needs. Organization is one more way to do that. When a document is well-organized, readers can easily get the information they need. Good organization also helps readers see the connections between ideas.

We know that time is one of the biggest constraints in modern business communication. Most people get a lot of emails, and so often must skim. If you can't capture your audience's attention in the first few seconds, you risk losing it completely. When organizing business documents, we therefore need to ask ourselves some questions:

- What is the most important thing for the audience to know?
- What does the audience need to know first? Second?
- How can I draw attention to key points using organizational aids like headings and bullet points? (For more information on headings and bullet points, check out the chapter on Visual Communication Strategies).
- Will my audience understand the connections between my ideas? If not, how can I help them?
- Should all the information be in the document, or should some of it be in attachments or links?

To give you some strategies for tackling these questions, we'll take a look at a few tools in your organizational toolbox:

- Headings and subheadings
- Lists
- Paragraphs

But first, let's see how all of these work together. Take a look at the visual below. Which one do you think your audience is most likely to read: the black text, the red text, the blue text or the green text? Probably, your audience would read the black text, the red text, the blue text and then the green text. You can explore the graphic below to learn a little more about organization. We'll go into detail later in the chapter.

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Headings, Subheading and Lists

Headings and subheadings help to organize longer documents. Because the text is larger and often bold, the reader's attention is drawn to them. Headings and subheadings are especially useful when you're writing a document like a report, which often has different audiences looking for different types of information.

To write effective headings:

- **Use parallelism:** When you start a pattern, you should keep using it. For example, if you started with the heading "Christmas Gift Ideas for Toddlers" and then used "Christmas Gift Ideas for School-Aged Kids," you would disrupt the pattern if your next heading was "What Toys Boys Like."
- **Use consistent sizes and fonts**: In your document, you might have different "levels" of headings. For example, the title of the document in the above example is larger than the headings. Apply the same font and size to each "level" of headings in your document.
- **Use limited articles:** An article is a word like "the" or "a." Too many of these can crowd your headings. For example, instead of saying "The Academic Barriers to Student Success," you could say "Academic Barriers to Student Success."

> Tip: Headings and subheadings can help you in the writing process. Many people like to create an outline of an important document like a report. Outlining also helps you to see places where you need more detail or less detail.

Writing Lists

Lists are an easy way to show readers the connections between ideas. Bullet points often draw the reader's attention, so they're the perfect organizational aid for helping a reader to see next steps or important recommendations. Lists also remove the need for awkward transition words like 'firstly' and 'secondly.' To write effective lists:

- **Use parallelism:** Again, if you start a pattern, you should continue it.
- **Keep between 3 – and 6 bullet points:** Too many bullet points are hard for readers to follow.
- **Punctuate the list effectively**: If you're using a paragraph list, put a colon after the topic sentence, then capitalize the first word. (As I've done here).

Writing Effective Paragraphs

Unlike punctuation, which can be subjected to specific rules, no ironclad guidelines exist for shaping paragraphs. If you presented a text without paragraphs to a dozen writing instructors and asked them to break the document into logical sections, chances are that you would receive different opinions about the best places to break the paragraph.

In part, where paragraphs should be placed is a stylistic choice. Some writers prefer longer paragraphs that compare and contrast several related ideas, whereas others stick to having one point per paragraph. In the workplace, many writers use shorter paragraphs – and even use one-line paragraphs – since this allows readers to scan the document quickly.

If your readers have suggested that you take a hard look at how you organize your ideas, or if you are unsure about when you should begin a paragraph or how you should organize final drafts, then you can benefit by reviewing paragraph structure.

Note: *When you are drafting, you need to trust your intuition about where to place paragraphs; you don't want to interrupt the flow of your thoughts as you write to check on whether you are placing them in logical order. Such self-criticism could interfere with creativity or the generation of ideas. Before you submit a document for a grade, however, you should examine the structure of your paragraphs.*

Structuring a Paragraph

We've already learned that every piece of workplace communication should have a purpose. That's also true of paragraphs. In general, you should have one purpose per paragraph, although for the overall flow of the document you might want to combine two points. Let's take a look at this customer service email:

Paragraph	Purpose
Dear Ms. Tran,	
Thank you for your patience as we investigated your missing clothing order, which you brought to our attention on Tuesday.	Provides a context for writing.
Once we received your email, we contacted both our warehouse and FedEx. The warehouse confirmed that your order was processed on Feb. 19th and FedEx confirmed that a shipping label was created on Feb. 20th. Unfortunately, we were not able to locate the package from that point.	Tells the reader what the writer did to solve the problem.
We are sorry for the inconvenience. Since we value your business and we know that you have been waiting for your clothes for two weeks, we would like to offer you two choices: 1. We can refund your money and give you a 25% discount towards future purchases. 2. We can send your clothing order with free one-day shipping and still give you a 25% discount towards future purchases.	Apologizes and offers a solution.
Please let us know which option you choose and we will immediately process your order. If you have any questions, you can also call me at 604-123-4557.	Tells the reader what to do next.
Thank you again for your patience. We appreciate your business and look forward to making this right. Sincerely, Makiko Hamimoto	Ends the communication on a positive note, looking towards the future.

As you can see, most of the paragraphs have only one point. In short communication, it's enough to simply understand what role the paragraph plays in your writing. In longer or more important communication, you may choose to use topic sentences to structure your paragraphs.

What is a Topic Sentence?

A topic sentence summarizes the main idea or the purpose of a paragraph. In business writing, the topic sentence usually comes at the beginning of the paragraph. Then, the rest of the paragraph provides the supporting details. Sometimes, a writer will choose to put the topic sentence at the end of the paragraph in order to break bad news or build the reader up to a point.

A topic sentence functions in several important ways:

- **It informs the reader of the paragraph's direction**

The topic sentence announces the direction of the paragraph's conversation. With the help of an effective topic sentence, readers will better understand what the paragraph will be about.

- **It guides the reader through the major points that support the writer's purpose**

Clearly worded topic sentences may help readers find the author's position or argument more convincing.

- **It places boundaries on the paragraph's content**

The body of the paragraph provides support for the topic sentence. The paragraph should only include evidence and details that relate directly to the boundary established by the topic sentence.

Let's Look at an Example:

Topic sentence: This year, our Instagram marketing program outperformed our other social media campaigns.

Details within the paragraph:

- We hosted a unicorn-themed party for Instagram influencers in the Vancouver area, which led to our hashtag trending locally and a 167% increase in local sales of our Pastel Cloud Eye Paints.
- Our Instagram influencer program continues to drive sales. For every $1 in product we give to an influencer, we make back $23.
- Instagram accounts for 57% of social-media-driven traffic to our website and 78% of all social-media-driven purchases.
- For every dollar we spent on Instagram marketing, we made $7.45.

When the topic sentence prefaces the sentences with supporting details, the purpose of the paragraph is clearer to the reader. Together, the topic sentence and the body sentences create a well-organized and easy to follow paragraph:

> This quarter, Instagram marketing was the top performer of our social media marketing plan. For every dollar we spent on Instagram marketing, we made $7.45. Overall, Instagram accounts for 57% of social-media-driven traffic to our website and 78% of all social-media-driven purchases. Much of this success is due to our Instagram influencer program. For every $1 in free product we give out, we make $23 in product sales. In May, we also hosted a unicorn-themed party for Instagram influencers in the Vancouver area to promote our Pastel Cloud Eye Paints, which led to our hashtag trending locally and a 167% increase in local product sales. We therefore recommend investing more heavily in Instagram next quarter in order to expand our influencer program.

Organization Within Paragraphs

Note that in this paragraph, the ideas are organized logically. The author starts out with the topic sentence, then organizes the rest of the information from most general to most specific. The logic of the paragraph is therefore:

1. Instagram marketing was successful.
2. It was successful because overall it was profitable.
3. It was profitable because of the Instagram influencer program.
4. Therefore, we should expand the Instagram influencer program.

Notice how the author uses transition words to link these ideas. Let's look again:

> This quarter, Instagram marketing was the top performer of our social media marketing plan. For every dollar we spent on Instagram marketing, we made $7.45. **Overall**, Instagram accounts for 57% of social-media-driven traffic to our website and 78% of all social-media-driven purchases. Much of **this success** is due to our Instagram

> influencer program. For every $1 in free product we give out, we make $23 in product sales. In May, we **also** hosted a unicorn-themed party for Instagram influencers in the Vancouver area to promote our Pastel Cloud Eye Paints, which led to our hashtag trending locally and a 167% increase in local product sales. We **therefore** recommend investing more heavily in Instagram next quarter in order to expand our influencer program.

Too many transition words make your paragraph feel forced. In this instance, however, a few transition words help the reader to see the connections that the author is making. We'll talk more about transition words below.

If you're having trouble organizing your paragraph, you can try the following formats:

- **General to specific:** This is the most common format, and is the one used in the paragraph above.
- **Specific to General**: Building the reader up to a point. This is usually used to soften bad news, since it helps prepare the reader for the news.
- **Cause and Effect:** Show how one thing caused another thing to happen.
- **Chronological**: Describe events as they happened.
- **Narrative**: Describe a scene. Though this form is usually used in creative writing, it is often used in the workplace in incident reports, donations letters and other forms of storytelling.

Paragraph Transitions

Readers expect paragraphs to relate to each other as well as to the overall purpose of a text. Establishing transitional sentences for paragraphs can be one of the most difficult challenges you face as a writer because you need to guide the reader with a light hand. When you are too blatant about your transitions, your readers may feel patronized.

Effective paragraph transitions signal to readers how two consecutive paragraphs relate to each other. The transition signals the relationship between the "new information" and the "old information."

For example, the new paragraph might:

- elaborate on the idea presented in the preceding paragraph
- introduce a related idea
- continue a chronological narrative
- describe a problem with the idea presented in the preceding paragraph
- describe an exception to the idea presented in the preceding paragraph
- describe a consequence or implication of the idea presented in the preceding paragraph.

Let's take a look at an example. Can you find the transition between these two ideas?

> In 1997, then-CEO Wen Xie gave a presentation that set a bold new direction for our company. She recognized that the marketplace was shifting and we needed to embrace digital technology. She said that

"all employees can be potential change-makers within the organization" and she announced a bold new retraining and restructuring program. The result: our company experienced unprecedented growth.

Over 20 years later, the principles Xie laid out still apply. Though technology has changed, the company's commitment to empowering all employees to be "changemakers" remains. That's why we have launched a new online portal for employees to give their ideas for the improvement of the company.

Here, the writer outlines two ideas:

- In 1997, Xie changed the direction of the company.
- The organization has launched a new online portal for employees to give their ideas.

What's the connection? That the principles Xie outline still apply, and that's the reason for the new online portal. Without connection words like "still," it would be hard for the audience to see how a speech given in 1997 relates to the new online portal.

As the above examples illustrate, effective paragraph transitions signal relationships between paragraphs. They help the reader see the connections that you are making and move easily through your argument.

Below are some terms that are often helpful for signalling relationships among ideas.

Chronology	before, next, earlier, later, during, after, meanwhile, while, until, then, first, second
Comparison	also, similarly, likewise, in the same way, in the same manner
Contrast	however, but, in contrast, still, yet, nevertheless, even though, although
Clarity	for example, for instance, in other words
Continuation	and, also, moreover, additionally, furthermore, another, too
Consequence	as a result, therefore, for this reason, thus, consequently
Conclusion	in conclusion, in summary, to sum up

(As you can see, business communication textbook instructions really like the letter C).

Reverse Outlining

Often, outlining is recommended as an early component of the writing process as a way to organize and connect thoughts so the shape of what you are going to write is clear before you start drafting it. This is a tool many writers use that is probably already familiar to you.

Reverse outlining, though, is different in a few ways. First, it happens later in the process, after a draft is completed rather than before. Second, it gives you an opportunity to review and assess the ideas and connections that are actually present in the completed draft. This is almost an opposite approach from traditional outlining, which considers an initial set of ideas that might shift as the draft is written and new ideas are added or existing ones are moved, changed, or removed entirely. A reverse outline can help you improve the structure and organization of your already-written draft, letting you see where support is missing for a specific point or where ideas don't quite connect on the page as clearly as you wanted them to.

How to Create a Reverse Outline

1. At the top of a fresh sheet of paper, write your primary purpose for the text you want to outline. This should be the purpose exactly as it appears in your draft, not the purpose you know you intended. If you can't find the actual words, write down that you can't find them in this draft of the message—it's an important note to make!
2. Draw a line down the middle of the page, creating two columns below your message purpose.
3. Read, preferably out loud, the first body paragraph of your draft.
4. In the left column, write the single main idea of that paragraph (again, this should be using only the words that are actually on the page, not the ones you want to be on the page). If you find more than one main idea in a paragraph, write down all of them. If you can't find a main idea, write that down, too.
5. In the right column, state how the main idea of that paragraph supports the purpose.
6. Repeat steps 3-5 for each body paragraph of the draft.

Once you have completed these steps, you have a reverse outline! It might look a little something like the reverse outline shown in Figure 6.2.1.

Thesis: Katniss Everdeen, the heroine of The Hunger Games, creates as much danger for herself as she faces from others over the course of the film.

Main idea	How it supports the thesis
Body #1: She volunteers to fight in the games.	This is the root of most of the immediate danger she finds herself in, so her directly volunteering to do it definitely helped put her in font of that danger.
Body #2: Shooting the apple out of the pig's mouth.	This draws more attention to her and essentially puts a target on her back the other tributes will very much want to hit.

Figure 6.2.1 An example of a reverse outline

Working with the Results of your Reverse Outline

Now what? You've probably already made some observations while completing this. Do you notice places where you are repeating yourself in your message? Do you notice places where some of your paragraphs have too many points or don't clearly support the purpose of the message?

There are a number of observations that can be made with the aid of a reverse outline, and a number of ways it can help you strengthen your messages.

If multiple paragraphs share the same idea

You might try combining them, paring back the information for that specific idea so it doesn't feel imbalanced in how much space it takes up, and/or organizing these paragraphs about the same point so they are next to each other in the paper.

If any paragraphs have multiple main ideas

Each paragraph should have only one primary focus. If you notice a paragraph does have more than one main idea, you could look for where some of those ideas might be discussed in other paragraphs and move them into a paragraph already focusing on that point. You could also select just the one main idea you think is most important to this paragraph and cut the other points out. Another option would be to split that paragraph into multiple paragraphs and expand on each main idea.

If any paragraph lacks a clear main idea

If it was hard for you to find the main idea of a paragraph, it will also be hard for your reader to find. For paragraphs that don't yet have a main idea, consider whether the information in that paragraph points to a main idea that just isn't written on the page yet. If the information does all support one main idea, adding that idea to the paragraph might be all that is needed. Alternatively, you may find that some of the ideas fit into other paragraphs to support their ideas, or you may not need some of them in the next draft at all.

If any ideas don't connect well to the purpose of the message

It should be clear how the main idea of each paragraph supports the purpose of the message. If that connection is not clear, ask yourself how the main idea of that paragraph does further your purpose and then write that response.

If there are gaps in reasoning

If a message starts out introducing something that is a problem in a community, then presents a solution to the problem, and then talks about why the problem is a problem, this organization is likely to confuse readers. Reorganizing to introduce the problem, discuss why it is a problem, and then move on to proposing a solution would do good work to help strengthen the next draft of this paper. If there are gaps in reasoning, you may need to move, revise, or add transition statements after moving paragraphs around.

Test Your Knowledge

To test your knowledge, let's edit the email that Philip sent at the beginning of the chapter.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: *https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=437*

Key Takeaways

- A clear paragraph provides your audience with an appropriate amount of information and is structured so that the reader can see the connection between ideas. Many paragraphs had topic sentences, but because paragraphs can be so short in business communication, this is not a hard-and-fast rule.
- Each paragraph should have a purpose.
- You can use transitional words to help the reader see the connection between ideas and between paragraphs.
- Your paragraph should meet your audience's needs in terms of detail and length.
- You can use reverse outlining to make sure that everything in your document is clearly organized and supported.

Activities For Further Reflection

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following exercises.

1. Write a paragraph connecting Brenda Knights' narrative to the rest of the chapter or to your own experience.
2. Pick an assignment you've recently completed or some writing you've done in the workplace. Underline the topic sentence of each paragraph. If you don't have a topic sentence, write one in the margins. Next, number the rest of the sentences within your paragraph from most to least important. When you're done, take a look at your paragraphs. Do you notice any trends? Are all of the paragraphs organized from most to least important, or did you use a different organizational pattern? Based on what you've learned, rewrite any paragraphs that could use stronger organization.
3. Pick an assignment you've recently completed or some writing you've done in the workplace. In the margins, write the purpose of each paragraph (or why it exists in the document). Next, take out a highlighter and highlight any sentence that fulfills the purpose. Look at your document. Does everything in the paragraph meet the purpose? If not, edit your document. You might split one paragraph into two or create a new paragraph.
4. Pick an assignment you've recently completed or some writing you've done in the workplace. Write the purpose of each paragraph in the margin or underline the topic sentence. Next, draw an arrow between each paragraph. On the arrow, write the connection you see between the paragraphs. (Review the Paragraph Transitions section for examples). Next, read your document to make sure that your audience will see the same connections you're making. If not, use transition sentences or a few transition words.
5. Pick an assignment you've recently completed or some writing you've done in the workplace. Try the Reverse Outlining technique described in this chapter.
6. Pick an assignment you've recently completed or some writing you've done in the workplace. Print it off, then cut it up so that each paragraphs is on its own scrap of paper. Shuffle the pages, then play with the order of the paragraphs. Is there a better way to organize the paragraphs than the one you're currently using?

Attribution

CHAPTER 6: WRITING EMAILS, MEMOS, LETTERS AND INSTANT MESSAGES

Photo by Jason Leung on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Review the CMAPP communication model.
- Get introduced to the genres of business communication.
- Learn how to select a genre for your purpose.
- Explore ways to effectively send emails, memos, letters and instant messages.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. If you have workplace experience, how do people use email, letters and memos in your workplace?
2. Have you ever experienced a miscommunication because of emails, letters or memos? Why did the miscommunication occur?
3. Have you ever had to send an email/letter/memo that was very difficult to write? What made it difficult? How did you deal with this? Were you happy with how it turned out?
4. If you speak a different language or have experience with more than one culture, how does email use vary among these cultures/languages?

Brenda Knights Narrative

Email is terribly misused. We're inundated with so many emails that people's attention spans are not there. If you're writing a lengthy email, no one is going to read it. They don't have the time. Sometimes, there are reasons to send an email, such as documenting something officially, but it's often not effective for communicating.

The one thing that drives me nuts in an office environment, and this is getting worse, is that people aren't getting up from their desks and talking to their neighbours. I question whether that's efficient. I think it's a better use of time to get up from your desk, talk to your coworker and resolve the issue. If a coworker's busy and you can't drop in, you might send an email and ask if they have a couple of minutes to talk today. Schedule a time if the person's really busy. It doesn't have to be a long meeting. If the issue is really important to the point that your email is becoming long, you need to talk to the person. Things get misinterpreted or you might not have all of the information, but a quick discussion can resolve it.

I also see people making the mistake of sending email when they're upset or angry. Even if you're trying really hard not to sound upset, your coworker's going to pick up on that and your words will come across as offensive. Your coworkers will miss what you were trying to say and focus on you being rude. It's like driving a car. When we hide inside our car, we can turn into these awful beings. We can become angry with someone for cutting us off, but in person we're less likely to do that. Speaking face-to-face can keep you accountable to good behaviour.

When there's written communication, there's such a huge chance of miscommunication. If there's a difficult conversation, have it face-to-face so it doesn't get misconstrued. Because once it's misconstrued, it's hard to come back from that. Those relationships become damaged and now there's mistrust. Repairing that mistrust is so difficult. You don't always know how people will interpret your writing, so before you write, think about whether you really need to be writing.

From a legal perspective, the other factor is that in many organizations, whatever you write can be accessed by the company. The company owns those emails. The company computer is their asset, the email is their asset, so you could be putting the company at risk or putting something in writing that might embarrass you down the road. What you write could be subpoenaed or someone could file a Freedom of Information request. Sometimes we don't emphasize just how high the stakes are in written communication. We put people in these scenarios where they don't realize that they could hurt themselves or the company by what they're putting out there.

Whether it's social media, writing something in a grant, writing an email, writing a text, I always think to myself, what if someone else reads that? What would they be thinking of me? How would they be interpreting it? One way or another, that message could get out. You need to be really, really careful with what you put in writing and what you share.

When I worked at a bus company, I oversaw bus drivers. They're working in the field, so I didn't see them day-to-day. My boss was at head office, so I didn't see him regularly. But if there was something important, he would come out and see me. I knew that the very fact that he took time to see me meant that it was important. Without him having to tell me it was important; I knew by his actions. That message had way more meaning than if he blasted me an email. He took time out of his day to come and talk to me.

So, I applied the same thing to the drivers. If I got a commendation praising a driver, I could send them a letter in the mail saying thanks for doing a great job. They would open the letter, maybe feel good. Sure. But if I took time out of my day to go to the workplace, show up on the bus and say that I stopped by to give them this commendation, that has more meaning. Coming out to the bus and giving them that praise face-to-face reinforced positive behaviour and made them more likely to repeat it. It stuck with them, as opposed to getting a letter in the mail, which might seem insincere.

Our days get busy. It's hard. But taking time with your employees and making room to acknowledge and celebrate them will lead to more positive behaviours.

Reviewing CMAPP

Before we begin, let's review the CMAPP model we learned about in Chapter 3.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=447

This model tells us that before you choose a medium (or genre), you must consider your context, message, audience and purpose. Right now, the context is especially important because workplace communications is undergoing a shift. For the past 20 years, email has taken over many of the jobs once reserved for faxes, memos and letters. Now, instant messaging programs like Slack are taking over some of the work that email used to do. Social media has also taken over some of email's job in the workplace. For example, many companies offer customer service over Twitter and Facebook.

Often, students want to learn the perfect way to write a memo or letter, or to have a template that they can fill out. But because the context is always changing, and because different workplaces have different practices, it's not possible to say that there's one correct way to write each document. Instead, we're going to explore the different decisions that go into choosing a medium, and the different roles each medium plays in the workplace.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself before you choose a genre:

- How quickly does my audience need this information?
- How does my audience expect to receive this information?
- How will my audience use this information? For example, if I'm informing my audience about new fitness classes at a gym, would it be better to create a printed schedule that participants could put on their fridge? Or would they prefer to access the information through a website, on an app?
- What way is this information normally sent in my organization?
- Will I be expected to use a template or build off someone else's work?
- Does my audience have any accessibility requirements?

Meet The Genres

Meet the Genres

Before we dive into discussing each one, let's get a brief overview of the most popular business writing genres. We'll talk about reports in Chapter 11 and social media in Chapter 15.

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Writing Memos

Writing Memos

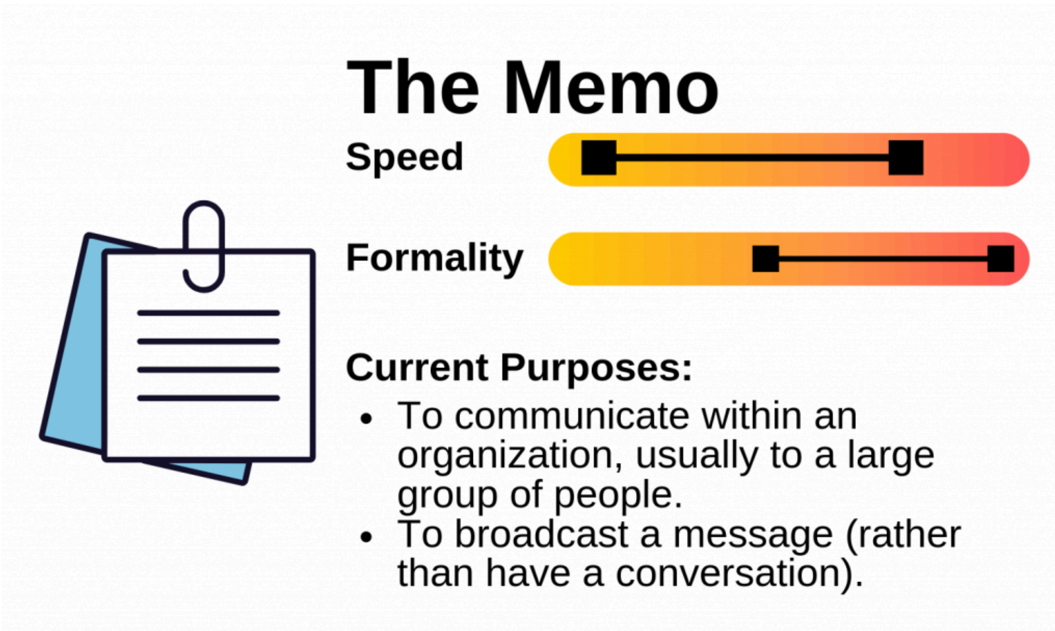

Figure 6.1 The Memo
[Image Description]

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

Memos can be tricky because they often communicate to multiple audiences who have different levels of knowledge about the context. For example, if you are communicating a new company policy, different types of employees will want to know exactly how the policy impacts them.

Format

Memos have a header that includes DATE, TO, FROM, and SUBJECT lines. Other lines, such as CC or BCC, may be added as needed. An RE ("Reference") line may be used instead of SUBJECT, but this use is becoming rarer as "RE" is often mistaken as "Reply" because of its use in email.

- **DATE**: List the date on which the memo is distributed.
- **TO**: List the names of the recipients of the memo. If there are several recipients, it's acceptable to use a group name, such as "All Employees" or "Personnel Committee Members."
- **FROM**: List the name and job title of the writer(s).
- **SUBJECT**: Think of the SUBJECT line as the title for the memo. Make it specific so that readers can immediately identify the topic.

Many organizations have their own style preferences on these issues. If not, the order listed above, double-spaced, is the most common.

The text of memos typically uses block format, with single-spaced lines, an extra space between paragraphs, and no indentions for new paragraphs.

Organization

Depending on whether you're breaking good, neutral or bad news, you will choose between a direct, or indirect approach. We'll cover this in Chapter 7.

When organizing your memo, you should make decisions with a few principles in mind:

- **Meeting the needs of multiple audiences**: Because memos are used to broadcast a message, they often have a large audience. Memos are structured to allow all of these audiences to easily find the information they need. Most memos use headings, for example. Memos also often start with a clear statement of purpose that explains what the memo is about. They also might contain a 'background' section for those who are unfamiliar with the memo's topic. For example, if the purpose of the memo is to outline the new work-from-home policy, the background might explain the previous policy or why the policy has been updated.
- **Conveying Seriousness:** In the past, memos were used routinely. Now that email exists, however, memos are most often used to send out official announcements. You might ignore an email, but most employees will read a memo. Memos may also be printed, or posted on a bulletin board in common work spaces. Sometimes, memos have legal implications. (How often have you read a news article that contains the line "In a leaked memo, the company said…"). Memos therefore tend to be more clearly edited, precise and formal. That doesn't mean that memos are full of big words, but just that the author usually chooses their words carefully. Your memo may undergo several rounds of revisions.
- **Telling the Reader What to Do:** Because memos often go to large audiences and because they're for broadcasting, not conversation, it's important to tell the reader what steps they're expected to take, if any. For example, if you're updating the work-from-home policy, are employees expected to contact someone if they're interested in working from home? Do they need to follow a new procedure? Who should they talk to if they have questions? Clearly laying out the next steps will avoid confusion and frustration.

Sample Memo

Let's take a look at a sample memo.

Memorandum

Date: March 18, 2019

To: Department Managers

From: Safiyya Dev, Store Manager

Subject: Customer Service Excellence Nominations

Please submit your nominations for the quarterly Customer Service Excellence Award by April 8. Help us identify great employees!

Do you have an employee who you feel fortunate to have in your department? Does this employee show a positive and professional attitude when helping customers? Do you get frequent comments about this person's friendliness and helpfulness? Now, you have an opportunity to give this employee the recognition they deserve.

According to the nomination criteria, nominees must:

- demonstrate excellent customer service consistent with Variety Craft Supplies' policies;
- have worked at Variety Craft Supplies for at least six months;
- work 20 or more hours per week;
- not have received the Customer Service Excellent Award within the last year; and
- have a record clear or oral and written warnings for the last six months.

The winner of the award will receive a framed certificate and a $100 check.

A nominating form is attached. Please complete and return it to me by Monday, April 8. Thank you for your help in identifying and rewarding excellent customer service representatives.

As you can see, this memo has a direct and concise opening that states the purpose of the memo. The body paragraph provides the award criteria, which will help managers follow through on the request. The conclusion provides action information, a deadline and a courteous closing message.

Style and Tone

While memo reports and policy memos have a more formal tone, the audience of memos are coworkers, so the writing style usually assumes a relationship with them (and therefore a certain lack of formality). Just keep in mind that the relationship is a professional one, so the writing should reflect that. Furthermore, as with all workplace documents, the audience may contain a variety of readers, and the style and tone should be appropriate for all of their technical and authority levels.

Common Memo Writing Situations

Memos are used in a variety of workplace communication situations, from documentation of procedures and policies to simple announcements. Below are some common types of memos:

- Policies (changes and new)
- Instructions
- Procedures
- Announcements
- Trip reports

Image Description

Figure 6.1 image description: This photo shows that the memo has variable speed (because it can be sent through email or in hard copy) and is moderately to very formal. Its purpose is to communicate within an organization and to broadcast a message. Memos aren't used for conversations. [Return to Figure 6.1]

Writing Letters

Writing Letters

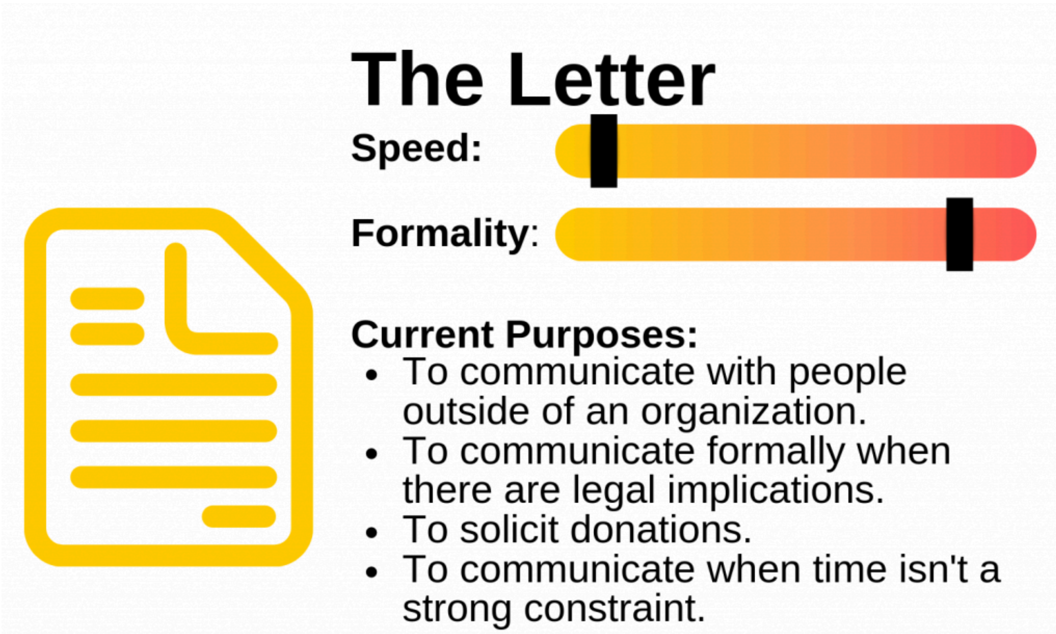

Figure 6.3 The Letter
[Image Description]

Though letters were the main mode of communication for thousands of years, today they're mostly brief messages sent to recipients that are usually **outside** the organization (Bovee & Thill, 2010). They are often printed on letterhead paper and represent the business or organization in one or two pages. Because communications are increasingly electronic, letters are getting rarer in the workplace. Often, they're reserved for important communications that have legal implications, such as offering someone a job or trying to collect money your organization is owed.

As genres shift, business communicators are trapped in a weird situation where business documents are set up like letters but are set electronically. For example, your cover letter might be attached as a PDF to an email.

Regardless of the type of letter you need to write, it can contain up to fifteen elements in five areas. While you may not use all the elements in every case or context, they are listed in Table 4.2.1.

Table 4.2.1 Elements of a business letter

Content	Guidelines
Content	**Guidelines**
1. Return address	This is your address where someone could send a reply. If your letter includes a letterhead with this information, either in the header (across the top of the page) or the footer (along the bottom of the page), you do not need to include it before the date.
2. Date	The date should be placed at the top, right or left justified, five lines from the top of the page or letterhead logo.
3. Reference (Re:) *optional	Like a subject line in an e-mail, this is where you indicate what the letter is in reference to, the subject or purpose of the document.
4. Delivery *optional	Sometimes you want to indicate on the letter itself how it was delivered. This can make it clear to a third party that the letter was delivered via a specific method, such as certified mail (a legal requirement for some types of documents).
5. Recipient note *optional	This is where you can indicate if the letter is personal or confidential.

6. Salutation	A common salutation may be "Dear Mr. (full name)." If you are unsure about titles (i.e., Mrs., Ms., Mr., Mx., Dr.), you may simply write the recipient's name (e.g., "Dear Cameron Rai") followed by a colon. A comma after the salutation is correct for personal letters, but a colon should be used in business. The salutation "To whom it may concern" is appropriate for letters of recommendation or other letters that are intended to be read by any and all individuals. If this is not the case with your letter, but you are unsure of how to address your recipient, make every effort to find out to whom the letter should be specifically addressed. For many, there is no sweeter sound than that of their name, and to spell it incorrectly runs the risk of alienating the reader before your letter has even been read. Avoid the use of impersonal salutations like "Dear Prospective Customer," as the lack of personalization can alienate a future client.
7. Introduction	This is your opening paragraph, and may include an attention statement, a reference to the purpose of the document, or an introduction of the person or topic depending on the type of letter. An emphatic opening involves using the most significant or important element of the letter in the introduction. Readers tend to pay attention to openings, and it makes sense to outline the expectations for the reader up front. Just as you would preview your topic in a speech, the clear opening in your introductions establishes context and facilitates comprehension.
8. Body	If you have a list of points, a series of facts, or a number of questions, they belong in the body of your letter. You may choose organizational devices to draw attention, such as a bullet list, or simply number them. Readers may skip over information in the body of your letter, so make sure you emphasize the key points clearly. This is your core content, where you can outline and support several key points. Brevity is important, but so is clear support for main point(s). Specific, meaningful information needs to be clear, concise, and accurate.
9. Conclusion	An emphatic closing mirrors your introduction with the added element of tying the main points together, clearly demonstrating their relationship. The conclusion can serve to remind the reader, but should not introduce new information. A clear summary sentence will strengthen your writing and enhance your effectiveness. If your letter requests or implies action, the conclusion needs to make clear what you expect to happen. This paragraph reiterates the main points and their relationship to each other, reinforcing the main point or purpose.
10. Close	"Sincerely" or "Cordially" are standard business closing statements. Closing statements are normally placed one or two lines under the conclusion and include a hanging comma, as in Sincerely,
11. Signature	Five lines after the close, you should type your name (required) and, on the line below it, your title (optional).
12. Preparation line	If the letter was prepared or typed by someone other than the signatory (you), then inclusion of initials is common, as in MJD or abc.
13. Enclosures (attachments)	Just like an e-mail with an attachment, the letter sometimes has additional documents that are delivered with it. This line indicates what the reader can look for in terms of documents included with the letter, such as brochures, reports, or related business documents. Only include this line if you are in fact including additional documentation.
14. Courtesy copies or "CC"	The abbreviation "CC" once stood for carbon copies but now refers to courtesy copies. Just like a "CC" option in an e-mail, it indicates the relevant parties that will also receive a copy of the document.
15. Logo and contact information	A formal business letter normally includes a logo or contact information for the organization in the header (top of page) or footer (bottom of page).

Let's take a look at a sample letter.

Marge Gagnon
1111 Random St.
Vancouver, BC
T3T 3T301/01/2020Re: Offer of Employment at XYZ CompanyDelivery: Canada Post Registered MailNote: ConfidentialDear Ms. Gagnon,This letter is to formally offer you employment as a Bean Counter at Bubba's Bean Barn. As a member of our bean counting team, you will be responsible for using best practices in bean counting to efficiently count a wide variety of beans and work effectively with a team of other bean counters. Your starting salary will be $65,000, including benefits, which have been outlined in the attached benefits package. You will start on Feb. 1st 2020 at 8:30 am.On behalf of all of us at Bubba's Bean Barn, welcome to our bean team! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.Sincerely,
Bubba Jean McBeanGSM/epEnclosures: Benefits package, full job description.
CC: Jen Yee

bubba.jean.mcbean@bubbasbeans.com
604-222-3333

Image Description

Figure 6.3 image description: This diagram shows that the letter is a slow medium and these days is quite formal. It's mostly used to communicate with people outside of organizations or if there are legal implications. As well as, solicit documents and to communicate when time isn't a strong constraint. [Return to Figure 6.3]

Writing Emails

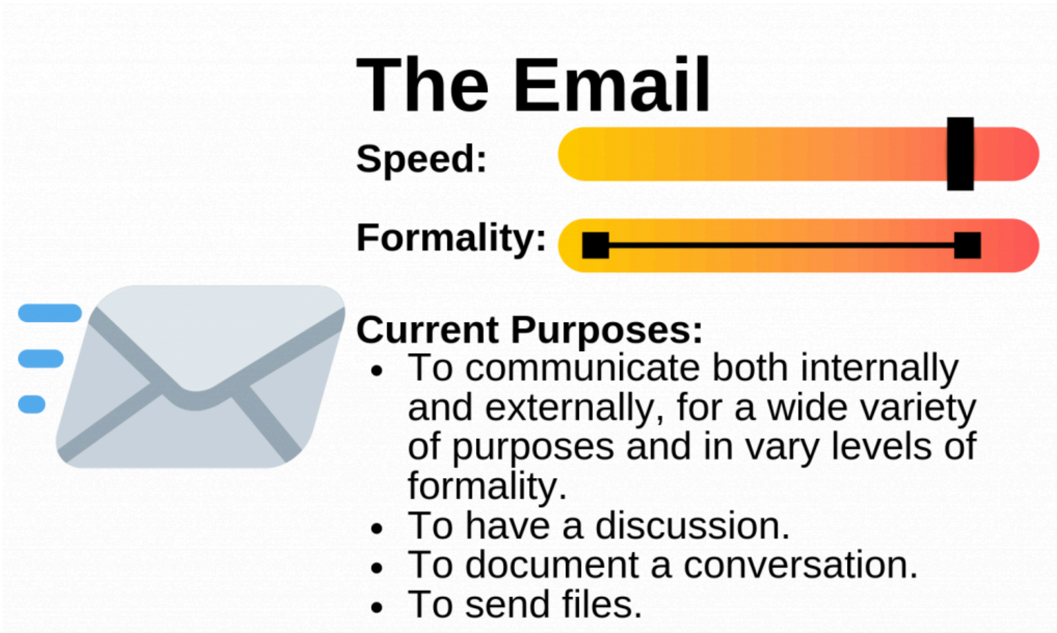

Figure 6.2 The Email
[Image Description]

Email is typically quite familiar to most students and workers. While it may be used like text messaging, or synchronous chatting, and it can be delivered to a cell phone, email remains an asynchronous communication tool. In business, email 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, 2008). Email 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 email in which standard paragraphs are used, but you choose from a menu of sentences to make the wording suitable for a particular transaction.

The rise of email management systems like MailChimp and Constant Contact have also made it easy to integrate graphic design elements into emails and to send emails to an entire mailing list without getting caught in a spam filter. Now, businesses send everything from newsletters to donations campaigns to holiday greetings through email.

Emails may be informal in personal contexts, but business communication requires attention to detail, awareness that your email reflects you and your company, and a professional tone so that it may be forwarded to any third party if needed. Email often serves to exchange information within organizations. Although email may 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 or CEO.

Tips for effective business emails

If you're struggling to write an email, err on the side of not wasting the reader's time. Many readers get hundreds of emails a day. While a reader might sit down to read a letter or a memo, they will usually spend a few seconds scanning an email for relevant information before moving on to the next one.

Unless your email is sensitive or you are breaking bad news, it's nearly always a good idea to state the main point of the email clearly and to clearly tell the audience what you want them to do.

It may be helpful for you to think of this as building a frame around your email. In the first part of the frame, you open by telling the reader why you're writing. Then, in the body, you give the main message. In the bottom part of the frame, you end by telling the reader what to do next. Here's an example. The grey shaded parts represent the frame.

> Frame: I'm writing to congratulate you on being named Employee of the Month.

> In your nomination form, your manager noted that you've always had exceptional customer service skills, but last month you stood out by helping an elderly customer troubleshoot her computer issues. Your patience and dedication was inspirational to the rest of the team.

Frame: We would like to present you with a certificate and your $100 cheque at the staff meeting on Monday, June 5th. Please confirm whether or not you'll be in attendance so we can plan accordingly.

Congratulations once again. We are lucky to have you part of our team!

First, the writers tells exactly why they're writing. Then, they provide the supporting details. Last, they tell the reader what to do (confirm whether or not they'll be at the meeting).

Here are some more tips for sending successful 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. It is becoming increasingly common for businesses to add First Nations Land Acknowledgements to their email signatures. For example, at Kwantlen, we can use: "At KPU we work, study, and live in a region south of the Fraser River which overlaps with the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of the Kwantlen, Musqueam, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt and Kwikwetlem peoples."
- Be brief.
- Use a clear format. Include line breaks between sentences or divide your message into brief paragraphs for ease of reading.
- Your email should have one purpose. If you find yourself covering more than one topic in your email, you should consider sending multiple emails so that your reader does not miss important information.
- 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 email than to get it right the first time.
- Reply promptly. Watch out for an emotional response—never reply in anger—but make a habit of replying to all emails within 24 hours, even if only to say that you will provide the requested information in 48 or 72 hours.
- Use "Reply All" sparingly. Do not send your reply to everyone who received the initial email unless your message absolutely needs to be read by the entire group.
- If you include a link, test it to make sure it is complete.
- Announce email attachments in your message.
- Give feedback or follow up. If you don't get a response in 24 hours, e-mail or call. Spam filters may have intercepted your message, so your recipient may never have received it.

Sample Standard Email

To: Harriet Adamo, Physical Plant Manager, XYZ Corporation

From: Mel Vargas, Construction Site Manager, Maxim Construction

Sent: Monday, 10/25/2019 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 St, Big City, Canada

(111) 222-3333 ext. 4444

Image Description

Figure 6.2 image description: This diagram shows that the email is fairly rapid and can vary greatly in formality. Use it to communicate externally and internally for a wide range of purposes, send files and to document a conversation. Unlike memos, you can have a discussion over email. [Return to Figure 6.2]

Writing Instant Messages

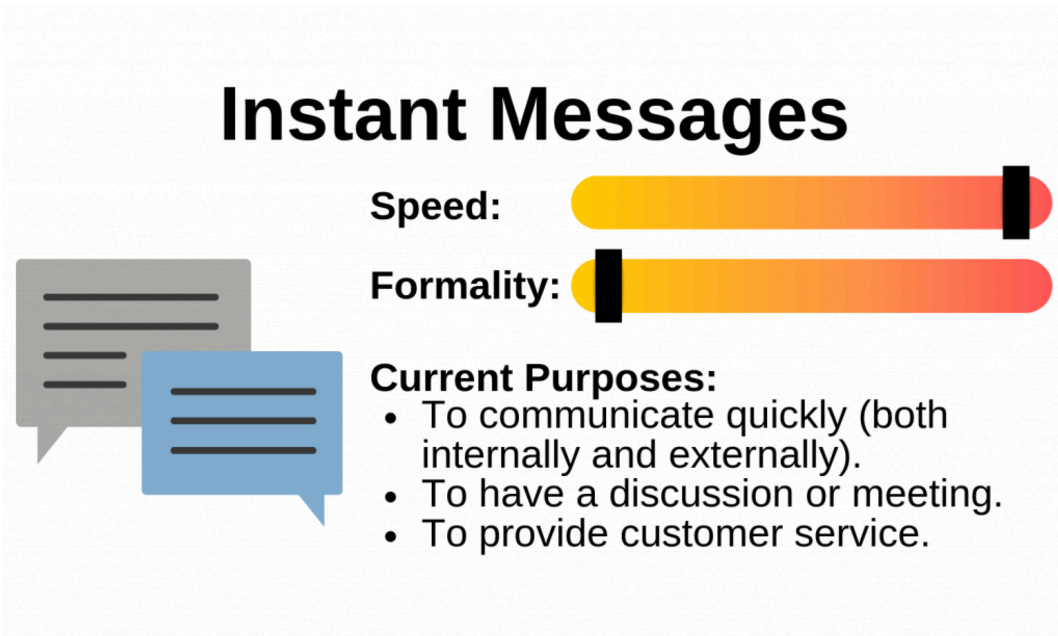

Figure 6.4 Instant Messages [Image Description]

It may seem weird to learn about instant messaging in a textbook, given that you probably are very familiar with it. But instant messaging is transforming workplaces, and major differences exist between using instant messaging with friends and using it with colleagues. Fans of instant messaging says it reduces the high volume of emails, allows people to get their questions answered quickly and enables people across multiple offices to talk without the need for meetings. Opponents say that instant messaging is distracting, that it results in too many side conversations and it's not a secure medium.

To use instant messaging effectively, you should:

- Avoid sending anything you wouldn't be okay with the CEO reading. Sometimes, miscommunications happen because people use too many text-message acronyms, which makes their messages seem sloppy and confusing. When in doubt, err on the side of speaking clearly and plainly.
- Respond promptly.
- Adjust your tone and level of formality to your audience. Before communicating on a new channel, take a minute to watch your colleagues interact. How do people use grammar? Do they use GIFs? Is every message on-topic or do people chat about their lives? Every organization has a slightly different culture around Slack. Often miscommunications arise because people treat Slack like Facebook or Twitter.
- Consider who needs to see your message. Are you posting in the right channel?
- Since your coworkers might get notifications on their phones, only post during business hours.[1]
- Don't message everyone in the group (using @everyone on Slack) unless you really need to talk to everyone in the

1. https://www.nav.com/blog/9-embarrassing-slack-mistakes-avoid-22922/

group.

- Don’t criticize people. In fact, you should usually keep your tone positive.

Image Description

Figure 6.4 image description: This diagram shows that instant messages are very fast and informal. They're usually used to reach someone quickly (both internally and externally), provide customer service and have discussions. [Return to Figure 6.4]

Netiquette

We create personal pages, post messages, and interact via mediated technologies as a normal part of our lives, but how we conduct ourselves can leave a lasting image, literally. Several 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 behaviour online that you follow in real life.
- Know where you are in cyberspace.
- Respect other people's time and bandwidth.
- Share expert knowledge.
- Respect other people's privacy.
- Don't abuse your power.
- Be forgiving of other people's mistakes (Shea, 1994).

One of the really difficult things about this particular moment in workplace communication is that many people have to be online for their jobs, but risk online is unevenly distributed. For example, one 11-year study found that 71% of victims in online harassment cases were women[1]. Racialized people also experience more harassment. A Pew study found that 25% of black Americans had been harassed because of their race online.[2]. LGBTQ2S+ youth are also three times more likely to experience online harassment.[3].

When you post online, it's great to upload standards of professionalism, but it's also important to think about the wider context around you. For example, you might use Twitter to follow experts in your field from diverse backgrounds and open yourself up to perspectives you might not have considered. If your company has a Slack channel or Discord server, you might pay attention to the dynamics that go on between employees. When people joke around, whose expense is it at? Whose voice is the loudest? Whose perspective is ignored?

And while many people give advice about "building your brand" online, people who are successful on social media often listen more than they post. They amplify other people's voices when they aren't an expert on the subject. They're true to their own personality. We'll talk more about social media in Chapter 15.

1. https://womensmediacenter.com/speech-project/research-statistics
2. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2017/07/11/online-harassment-2017/
3. https://www.glsen.org/news/out-online-experiences-lgbt-youth-internet

Test Your Knowledge

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=461

Key Takeaways

- The CMAPP model will help you determine which genre to use.
- The most important constraint in business is to not waste people's time.
- A memo is used to communicate within an audience. It's about broadcasting a message, not about having a conversation.
- You can use an indirect or a direct organizational model.
- Emails have a wide range of purposes. If you're sending a longer email, consider using an email frame that tells the reader why you're writing, provides follow-up details, then ends by telling the reader what to do next.
- Letters are used for communicating outside an organization, often when the communication has to be documented for legal purposes.
- When using instant messaging in the workplace, use clear, plain language and don't say anything that you wouldn't be comfortable with the CEO reading. Be aware of the conventions of different instant messaging channels.

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following exercises.

1. Choose one of the following scenarios, then write an email, memo or letter as a response. Think about what genre would be most effective, then use the models discussed in the chapter to write your response.

- Your company has decided to consider allowing employees to work from home. Anyone who is interested in working from home must have a conversation with their manager to determine if their position would be appropriate for this arrangement. If the manager approves, they must submit Form 4A to their HR representative. Those who are approved to work from home will start with a 3 month trial period, where they will be required to submit a weekly log of the tasks they performed at home. Your job is to inform employees of this new opportunity and make sure they know how to apply.
- Easter is coming up in a few weeks and you work for a flower shop. Many people order lilies for Easter, but these can be toxic to pets. The florist has come up with a pet-friendly Easter bouquet. He asks you to let the customers know about the dangers of lilies and suggest that they order a non-toxic Easter bouquet instead.
- You work for a non-profit that gives out scholarships to disadvantaged teenagers. You've already informed the winners of the scholarship by phone, but your boss wants you to send them something in writing with all of the official details and any forms that need to be filled out to claim the scholarship.
- You volunteer on your condo's strata. The strata has approved painting the outside of the building. Between April 5-10, the residents must not open their windows and must remove anything from their balconies. You don't have email addresses for every resident, but you do have access to their physical mailboxes.
- You recently purchased a new guitar at a local music shop. One of the shop's employees, Maria, spent over an hour helping you make your purchase. She was very knowledgeable, and was the reason that you purchased the guitar at the small local store instead of going to a larger store with more selection. You want to let Maria's boss know about her excellent service.

2. Brenda Knights' narrative talks about the perils of email. Why do you think it was included in the chapter? Do you agree that people should write fewer emails, memos and letters? Do you prefer to converse via email or in person?

Reference

Bovee, C., & Thill, J. (2010). *Business communication essentials: A skills-based approach to vital business English* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

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CHAPTER 7: COMMUNICATING GOOD, NEUTRAL AND NEGATIVE MESSAGES

Photo by Jon Tyson on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Learn how to send good and neutral messages.
- Learn how to send news to multiple audiences.
- Explore some strategies for breaking bad news.
- Explore how to break bad news on social media.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. Think about the last time that you got disappointing news. How did the sender deliver the message? How did that make you feel? Can you think of a way that you would have preferred to be told?
2. Have you ever received a rejection from a job or university? Do you remember how that news was communicated? How did it make you feel? How would you have preferred to hear that news?
3. Think about a time when you broke disappointing news to someone in the workplace or in your personal life. What strategy did you use to break the news? How did it go? Is there anything you wish you had done differently?
4. How do you give bad news in your culture or family? Are you blunt or do you ease into it? Do you give different people bad news in different ways?
5. Have you ever had to communicate news to a big group of people, like your family or your entire workplace? How did you decide what to put in the message?

Brenda Knights Narrative

Most of the bad news I give has to do with employee discipline. I often see managers getting frustrated and thinking the worst of the situation, but one thing I've learned is that there's always more to the story. Reserve judgement until you can talk to the employee and hear their side. The worst thing you can do is to just start lecturing them, then find out that there's more to the story and it wasn't as bad as you thought. Taking the time to understand what went on and allowing the employee to be heard really builds that level of respect.

One thing that makes difficult conversations easier is that they should never be a surprise to the employee. If the bad news comes out of the blue and there's been no corrective coaching, no expectations set, and you just come down hard on someone, the message isn't going to be heard. They'll feel mistreated. That's why it's so important to take that time up front with employees to talk to them, to explain the expectations and to provide support so they can get on track. Discipline isn't about getting people to termination. It's about correcting behaviour and supporting people.

I always start with asking open-ended questions to see what comes out of that. Rather than saying, "you were late and this is against policy," I need to find out why. That allows the employee to feel comfortable and share. What new information can I gather that will allow us to fix the problem? Did the bus schedule change? Was it a one-time thing? So, you get agreement from the employee about what the next steps are going to be and how we're going to solve the problem together.

I had a situation where someone was late. I talked to the employee and it turned out that they were going through a separation and they were struggling to deal with two kids and get them to school on time. We came up with a plan. We were able to assign them to a different shift so they could take care of their kids and be successful. When you talk to your employee and work on problem solving, if they do continue to fail, they are more likely to hear the negative message because they know you've tried to work with them to resolve the situation already.

I've also had the difficult situation where I've tried to work with an employee, tried to problem solve, but they're insistent that they've done nothing wrong and still aren't following policies. Sometimes, you have to recognize that when you're in a leadership role, you're expected to conduct yourself professionally. You may come across employees who are going to push your buttons and even say things that are unpleasant. If someone is being aggressive, I will say, 'I'm going to take a break until we can come back to the table and talk calmly. Let's take a 5 or 10-minute break and calm down so we can collect our thoughts." Sometimes I will also direct the conversation by asking questions to keep the conversation focused and to-the-point.

I've found that with about 95% of employees, taking time to talk with them and listen to them and work with them solves most problems. And if you have to end up terminating someone, it's usually an amicable conversation because the employee knows you've done everything. They may be upset, but they feel that you've showed them respect and they'll often own up to their mistakes. With that remaining 5%, who may be angry, it's about knowing your audience. No matter what you say, you're not going to change the person's mind. There's a difference of opinion. So, I go back to saying to the person, "Thank you for sharing that. Thank you for telling me that, but this is the policy, this is what's expected, and the decision has been made." You need to be firm. I try to end those conversations as quickly as possible, because you're not going to change their way of thinking, you're just going to inflame the situation the longer it goes on.

It's also best not to sugar coat bad news. You want to stick to the facts. I will always prepare in advance. I'll have the relevant policy ready, the dates and times of previous conversations and what was talked about, the letters I've used to document those meetings. But by the time we get to the point in the process where it's a termination or really bad news, it's usually not a shock. Just last week I had been working with an employee, but this business line was not financially where it needed to be. I'd been working for the past year and giving specific tasks around my expectations, but the employee wasn't able to move the organization in the right direction. In the end, though, the employee was actually very receptive and said to me in the exit interview, "This isn't a surprise. I knew this was coming. I knew you'd told me over the past year." That's the ideal outcome. It doesn't come as a shock. Everyone feels respected.

I don't want employees to be fearful of me or scared that I'll come down on them. I have to see them in the field and in the community and I want them to feel comfortable and part of a team and not walk out feeling resentful. I've found that if you're firm and fair, they will respect you.

As a manager and a leader, you have to know your employees really well. The old school style of leadership was that the leader didn't associate with the employees. It was a very militant style. But nowadays a leader has to know their staff and know them well. One of our teachings is about finding people's gifts, finding what makes them strong in a role. You have to set a person up for success.

We all have goodness within us. No one intends to be difficult or make your life challenging. But it's taking the time and care to understand why someone is approaching something a certain way. Once you get at the why, it's much easier to solve the problem. You just have to come at it with some empathy and understanding and respect.

Delivering Good or Neutral News

In this section, we'll learn how to deliver different types of news. While you're reading this section, pay attention to the role that audience analysis plays. How can you communicate messages in a way that meets the reader's needs?

Delivering Good or Neutral News

Hopefully, most of the communication you will do in the workplace will involve giving neutral or good news. Usually, a direct approach is best. Consider the context in which most people receive workplace communication. Some studies have found that the average worker receives 90 emails per day and sends 40 emails per day. Now, imagine that every time the worker receives an email, they need to spend 1 minute re-reading it because the point of the email was not immediately obvious. That would be 1.5 hours of wasted time! If you factor in lost productivity due to miscommunication, the cost is even higher.

When it comes to neutral or positive messages, usually the best strategy is to get to the point. Make it clear:

- Why you're writing.
- What supporting details the reader needs to know.
- If the reader needs to do anything.

It's this last point that business communicators often stumble on. They give the information, but forget to tell the audience what to do with the information. The reader is left wondering whether they're just supposed to be aware that the information exists, or if they're supposed to act on it in some way.

One helpful tip is to end the communication by looking towards the future. Tell the reader what you want them to do. If they merely need to be aware of the information, you could use a phrase like "If you have any questions, let me know." If they need to do something, state it clearly. For example, you might say, "Please send your changes to this document to me by Thursday at 10 am so that I can get them into the final draft."

You might find this format helpful:

- **Be direct:** start with the good news to put the reader in a positive frame of mind.
- **Give supporting details, explanation and commentary.** These should be clearly organized. If you have a large amount of information, you may choose to use bullet points, headings or links/attachments.
- **If there are any drawbacks, state them clearly but positively**. ("Please mail the defective phone back so that we can issue you a new model).
- **End with a note of thanks or congratulations.**

Here's an example:

> To: Alice Meng

From: Ilya Marchenkova
Subject: Baby Carrier Replacement
Date: Jan. 19th 2019Ms. Meng,Thank you for emailing us about the broken strap on your baby carrier. We would be happy to send you a replacement carrier at no cost.To receive your new carrier, please:
1) Cut the straps of your damaged carrier and take a photo. Make sure that the warranty number located on the waistband of your carrier is clearly displayed. I've attached a PDF with a series of photos to show you how to do this.

2) Email me the photo along with your mailing address.

Once we receive this information, we will send your new carrier with next-day shipping.

Let me know if there's anything more we can help you with.

Thanks,
– Ilya

As you can see, Ilya breaks the good news immediately, then clearly lays out what Alice needs to do next to receive the new carrier. Even the drawbacks, such as having to cut the straps on her current carrier so that it is not used by another baby, are stated positively. Ilya also includes attachments to help her easily follow his instructions. He then ends on a positive note.

Remember that when you communicate, you should always be aware of the context, audience and purpose of your message, as well as the relationship you have with your reader. Concision is highly valued in the workplace, but it should not come at the expense of tact or using a positive tone.

Delivering Positive and Neutral Messages to Multiple Audiences

When you write a message to a single audience – especially if you know that audience – it's often clear what the reader needs to know. But what if you're communicating to multiple audiences? And what if those audiences have different levels of experience with your subject matter?

Let's take a look at this email written by Erin White coming out to their colleagues as non-binary. This is obviously positive news, but they don't know exactly what each colleague knows and believes about non-binary people. When you read this email, ask yourself the following questions:

- How do they use the good/neutral news model discussed in the last section?
- How would you describe their tone?
- How do they structure their message? (Headings, etc)
- How do they meet the needs of different types of audiences?

Subject: Good morning! I'm coming out as nonbinary

All

Y'all have made VCU feel like home for me for the past 10 years. I wanted to share with you today that I am nonbinary, and use they/them pronouns. I have been out as nonbinary in my personal life for a while and I'm ready to bring that part of myself to my work life.

Why now?
I have been a member of the VCU community for a long time, I love working here, and I know this is a place where I can bring my whole self to work. I think my work and VCUL community are enriched when employees are authentically present. I think that all you kind folks at VCUL are open to welcoming me. I also think it's important to be visible to folks in the community, especially students, who are trans or nonbinary.

What does that mean for me, your colleague?
I'm asking you to change how you talk to me and how you refer to me. Instead of using she or her pronouns to refer to me, you can use they and them. "Erin sent that message about their pronouns." It's kind of awkward at first but it gets easier with practice.

What can I call you?
– Addressing me: Erin, you, friend, colleague, erwhite, E-dubs, Mx. White (pronounced "mix")…
– Referring to me: Erin, they, them, theirs, that person, friend, colleague, talented IT professional…

What shouldn't I call you?

– Addressing me: Ms., Miss, lady, girl, woman, ma'am…
– Referring to me: she, her, he, him, it, Ms., Miss, lady, girl, woman…

What if I get it wrong?
It's okay! If you catch yourself, correct and move on. What's important is to try.

Will you correct me if I get it wrong?
It depends on the situation. If I remind you, it's because I know we respect each other and both care about our relationship.

Can I correct others?
Yes, in the spirit of calling folks in rather than calling them out. We're all in community with each other, and want to be generous with each other as we learn.

I don't agree that I should use they/them pronouns for you.
I hope that you can respect me and honour how I am asking to be addressed, recognizing that inclusion is a core value at VCU, so we can work together. Another option is to just use my name instead of my pronouns.

That's it! There are more resources on how to affirm nonbinary folks online if you are interested. Thank you for reading this far and thank you for your support.

Source: Erinrwhite.com

In this email, Erin uses a lot of the strategies we just discussed. They are direct and get right to the point (delivering the key message in the subject line and the first sentence), then provide supporting details. They meet the needs of multiple types of audiences by using clear headings and links to external resources for those who want more information. They also use a warm, positive tone that assumes that the VCU community will be supportive and respectful. For example, they refer to the audience as "kind folks" and stresses that "inclusion is a core value" of the university.

They also think about the topic from the perspective of their audience and anticipate that some people might find using the 'they' pronoun a little awkward. By mentioning this, assuring the reader that it gets easier with practice, and giving an alternative (referring to them by their name, rather than pronoun), Erin anticipates all of their reader's needs.

When you communicate to multiple audiences, you can use the same strategies:

- Thinking about what information different types of audiences might need.
- Using headings to allow people to skim for relevant content.
- Thinking about tone and word choice. How will different audience members react to your tone? Do you need to define any words?
- Providing links or attachments with more information for those who need it.
- Anticipating questions or objections your audience might have and answering them.

Bad News Messages

A bad news message (or negative news message) delivers news that the audience does not want to receive. Delivering negative news is never easy. Whether you are informing someone they are being laid off or providing constructive criticism on their job performance, how you choose to deliver the message can influence its response (Bovee & Thill, 2010).

Some people prefer their bad news to be direct and concise. Others may prefer a less direct approach. How you break bad news will also depend on your culture, your family and norms of your industry. For example, people in India might be very direct with their family and close friends, but use an indirect approach in a workplace setting.

Regardless of whether you determine a direct or indirect approach is warranted, your job is to deliver news that you anticipate will be unwelcome.

In this section we will examine several scenarios that can be communicated internally (within the organization) and externally (outside the organization), but recognize that the lines can be blurred as communication flows outside and through an organization or business. Internal and external communication environments often have a degree of overlap. The rumour of anticipated layoffs may surface in the local media, and you may be called upon to address the concern within the organization. In a similar way, a product that has failed internal quality control tests will require several more tests and improvements before it is ready for market, but if that information leaves the organization, it can hurt the business reputation, prospects for future contracts, and the company's ability to secure financing.

Goals of Bad News Messages

When you break bad news, you first want to think about the best possible outcome for everyone involved. For example, if you have to lay off a good employee because of budget cuts, the best case scenario is that the person is upset but understands that the layoff wasn't about their work performance. If you handle the news with professionalism, you might be able to preserve the working relationship in the future. If you're firing an employee who hasn't responded to multiple Performance Improvement Plans, however, you would want to break the news clearly and compassionately, but you might not care as much about preserving the relationship.

This also applies to external communication. Sometimes, an angry customer might complain on social media. You might not be able to preserve the relationship with that customer, but other customers will be watching to see how you handle it. If you deal with the angry customer in a fair, professional manner, you will leave others with a positive impression of your company.

There are seven goals to keep in mind when delivering negative news, in person or in written form:

1. Be clear and concise to minimize the chances of confusion or back-and-forth communication.
2. Help the receiver understand and accept the news.
3. Maintain trust and respect for the business or organization and for the receiver.
4. Avoid legal liability or erroneous admission of guilt or culpability.
5. Maintain the relationship, even if a formal association is being terminated. (Note: this only applies to situations where you want the relationship to continue. When dealing with an abusive client, for example, your goal might be to clearly sever the relationship).
6. Reduce the anxiety associated with the negative news to increase comprehension.

7. Achieve the designated business outcome.

Scenarios

Let's go through some scenarios. Let's say you're a supervisor and have been given the task of discussing repeated lateness with an employee called Brian. Brian has frequently been late for work, and the problem has grown worse over the last two weeks. The lateness is impairing not only Brian's performance, but also that of the entire work team. Your manager has instructed you to put an end to it. The desired result is for Brian to stop being late and to improve his performance.

You can

1. stop by Brian's cubicle and simply say, "Get to work on time or you are out"
2. invite Brian out to a nice lunch and let him have it
3. write Brian a stern e-mail
4. ask Brian to come to your office and discuss the behaviour with him in private

While there are many other ways you could choose to address the situation, let's examine each of these four alternatives in light of the goals to keep in mind when presenting negative news.

Scenario 1

First, you could approach Brian in his work space and speak to him directly. Advantages to this approach include the ability to get right to the point right away. However, this approach could strain your supervisor-employee relationship as a result of the public display of criticism, Brian may not understand you, there is a lack of a formal discussion you can document, and there is a risk that your actions may not bring about the desired results.

The goals of delivering a negative message include the desire to be clear and concise in order to avoid having a back-and-forth conversation where you're continually providing clarification. The approach described above does not provide the opportunity for discussion, feedback, or confirmation that Brian has clearly understood your concern. It fails to address the performance concern and it limits the correction to the lateness. Overall, it fails to demonstrate respect for all parties. The lack of tact apparent in the approach may reflect negatively on you as the supervisor and your supervisors or managers.

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

Scenario 2

Let's say you invite Brian to lunch at a nice restaurant. There is linen on the table, silverware is present for more than the main course, and the water glasses have stems. The environment says "good job." Your words will contradict this nonverbal message. The juxtaposition between the environment and the verbal message will cause tension and confusion, which will probably be an obstacle to the receiver's ability to listen. If Brian doesn't understand the message, and the message requires clarification, your approach has failed. The contrast between the restaurant setting and the negative message does not promote understanding and acceptance of the bad news or correction. Furthermore, it does not build trust in the relationship, as the restaurant invitation might be interpreted as a "trap" or a betrayal. Let's examine yet another approach.

Scenario 3

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

Scenario 4

You ask Brian to join you in a private conversation. You start the conversation with an expression of concern and an open-ended question: "Brian, I've been concerned about your work lately. Is everything all right?" As Brian answers, you may demonstrate that you are listening by nodding your head and possibly taking notes. You may learn that Brian has been having problems sleeping or that his living situation has changed. Or Brian may decline to share any issues, deny that anything is wrong, and ask why you are concerned. You may then state that you've observed the chronic lateness, name one or more specific mistakes you have found in his work, and end with a reiteration that you are concerned. This statement of concern may elicit more responses and open the conversation up into a dialogue where you come to understand the situation, Brian sees your concern, and the relationship is preserved. Alternatively, in case the conversation does not go well, you will still keep a positive attitude even as you document the meeting and give Brian a verbal warning.

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

One additional point to consider as you document this interaction is the need to present the warning in writing. You may elect to prepare a memo that outlines the information concerning Brian's performance and lateness and have it ready should you want to present it. If the session goes well, and you have the discretion to make a judgment call, you may elect to give him another week to resolve the issue. Even if it goes well, you may want to present the memo, as it documents the interaction and serves as evidence of due process should Brian's behaviour fail to change, eventually resulting in the need for termination.

This combined approach of a verbal and written message is increasingly the norm in business communication.

Delivering a Bad News Message

Delivering a Bad News Message

There are two approaches you can use to deliver a negative news message–the direct approach and the indirect approach. We'll go through each of these in turn.

Direct approach

The direct approach is often used when the audience values brevity, the message needs to be concise, the message is very complex and might not be understood easily, the message is related to a known issue or problem (and bad news won't be a surprise), or you're terminating a business relationship.

As shown in Figure 4.11.1, the bad news is announced in the opening or introduction of the message.

> Your request for vacation time from August 1-30 was not approved because it is over your vacation days entitlement of 10 days.
>
> Please re-submit your request for vacation days (up to a maximum of 10) to HR as soon as possible.

Figure 4.11.1 An example of a bad news message delivered using the direct approach

Indirect approach

When the bad news may have a significant impact on the recipient or you don't know them very well, you may prefer to use the indirect approach. Figure 4.11.2 shows an example of a bad news message delivered using this approach.

> Thank you for submitting your request for 10 days of vacation (your maximum entitlement) in August.
>
> Summer is traditionally a time when many employees are out of the office and demands on the servers are reduced. In order to minimize the disruption to staff throughout the company, the IT department will be rolling out a server replacement project during July and August. Because this project will need to be

completed in a more compressed timeframe, no vacation requests in July and August are possible for staff in the IT department. As a result, your request for vacation during August has not been approved. However, you are welcome to take vacation before and/or after the project rolls out. In compensation, HR is providing IT staff with three extra days of paid vacation.

We look forward to receiving your revised vacation request soon.

Figure 4.11.2 An example of a bad news message delivered using the indirect approach

The indirect approach for delivering bad news has five main parts:

1. Open with a buffer statement
2. Explain the situation
3. Break the bad news
4. Redirect or provide alternatives
5. End politely and forward-looking

We'll go through each of these parts in detail.

Buffer statement

The first part of a negative news message, verbal or written, is a buffer statement. It provides neutral or positive information. It sets the tone and often serves as a cushion for the information to come. It is important that the buffer not be overly positive because this can be misleading or set up the reader to expect a positive news message instead.

Explanation

Next, an explanation discusses why there is an issue. This may be relatively simple, quite complex, or uncomfortable. While an explanation is important, never admit or imply responsibility without written authorization from your company cleared by legal counsel. Try to avoid labeling the bad news, such as calling it inconvenient or disappointing, because this can assume the feelings of your reader and create a negative impression. The person receiving the message may not have felt badly about receiving the news until you pointed out that it was indeed inconvenient or disappointing.

Break the bad news

The third part of the negative news message involves the bad news itself, and the emphasis here is on clarity and accuracy. While you want to break the bad news clearly, try not to spotlight it.

Redirect or provide alternatives

The fourth part of a bad news message is the redirect, where you refocus attention on a solution strategy, possible alternatives, or the subsequent actions that will take place.

End politely and forward-looking

Last, you want to end your message politely and looking to the future. Don't mention the bad news again!

Breaking Bad News on Social Media

Breaking Bad News on Social Media

When someone complains about you or your company on social media, you might be tempted to ignore it. Unfortunately, the conversation about your company will continue whether or not you respond, so responding gives you an opportunity to control the message.

Let's say that a customer, Amir, posted on Twitter that the watch your company sold him broke within a week. Your goal is to help resolve Amir's complaint and also show that your watch company has great customer service. Getting into a back-and-forth exchange with Amir will make you look unprofessional, so the best thing to do is to reply to Amir with a short message like: "Thanks for bringing this to our attention. Please follow me so that we can DM (direct message) each other and find a solution. Or, you can email me at ___."

Hopefully, this will take the conversation offline so that you can resolve it. Maybe it will turn out that Amir's watch is under warranty and you can repair or replace it. Or maybe Amir broke his watch in a way that's not covered. You can break the bad news using the strategies above in a private manner.

Practice What You Learned

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=481

Key Takeaways

- When giving good or neutral news, the most important constraint is not to waste people's time. Get to the point right away.
- When communicating good and neutral news to multiple audiences, make sure to use clear organization and headings to help people find the information they need. It's also important to use a positive tone and anticipate questions that a reader might have.
- When breaking bad news, think about the best case scenario. Your goals should be to be clear and concise, help the receiver understand the news, maintain trust and respect for the business, avoid legal liability, maintain the relationship if possible, reduce anxiety associated with the news and achieve the desired business outcome.
- You can use a direct or indirect approach to bad news.

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following exercises.

1. Choose one of the following bad news scenarios. Decide how you want to deliver the message (in person, phone, email, letter, etc), then write out the message (or a script for a conversation). Feel free to make up supporting details.

Scenario: You are the manager of a clothing store. A customer emails you to complain that she was not allowed to return a dress. Unfortunately, the customer's dress had been torn up by her dog. Your refund policy does not cover this type of damage. You must tell the customer that you can't refund her money.
Scenario: You promised your boss that you would finish your report by 5 pm today. Unfortunately, you are still waiting for information from your coworker, Pam. Pam and your boss are good friends. You must let the boss know that if you don't get the information from Pam soon, the report will be late.
Scenario: You are a manager of a restaurant. Your best waiter is named Chad. Lots of customers come in to the restaurant because they love his service. Unfortunately, Chad has been rude to the other wait staff and they have complained to you. Today, you witnessed Chad yelling at a hostess for a very minor reason. You need to get Chad to improve his behaviour, while also maintaining a positive relationship with him so he doesn't quit.
Scenario: You work for a small start-up that makes designer baby toys. Recently, your team has received several complaints about your most popular toy, saying that it has broken in a way that could harm babies. Your CEO asked you to research this issue, and your research shows that the toy is not safe and must be recalled. You must tell the CEO immediately.
Scenario: You run a coffee shop. Your friend Becky is an artist. She asked if she could hang her art on the walls of your coffee shop. You've done this in the past with other artists, and it's been a success, so you agreed. Unfortunately, you've just found out that the art that Becky wants to display is pornographic. You no longer want to hang it in the coffee shop. You need to tell her in a way that preserves the friendship.

2. Search for some of your favourite businesses online and see how they handle customer complaints. Do they follow the strategies discussed in this textbook?

Reference

Bovee, C., & Thill, J. (2010). *Business communication essentials: A skills-based approach to vital business English* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Attribution

CHAPTER 8: PERSUADING YOUR READER

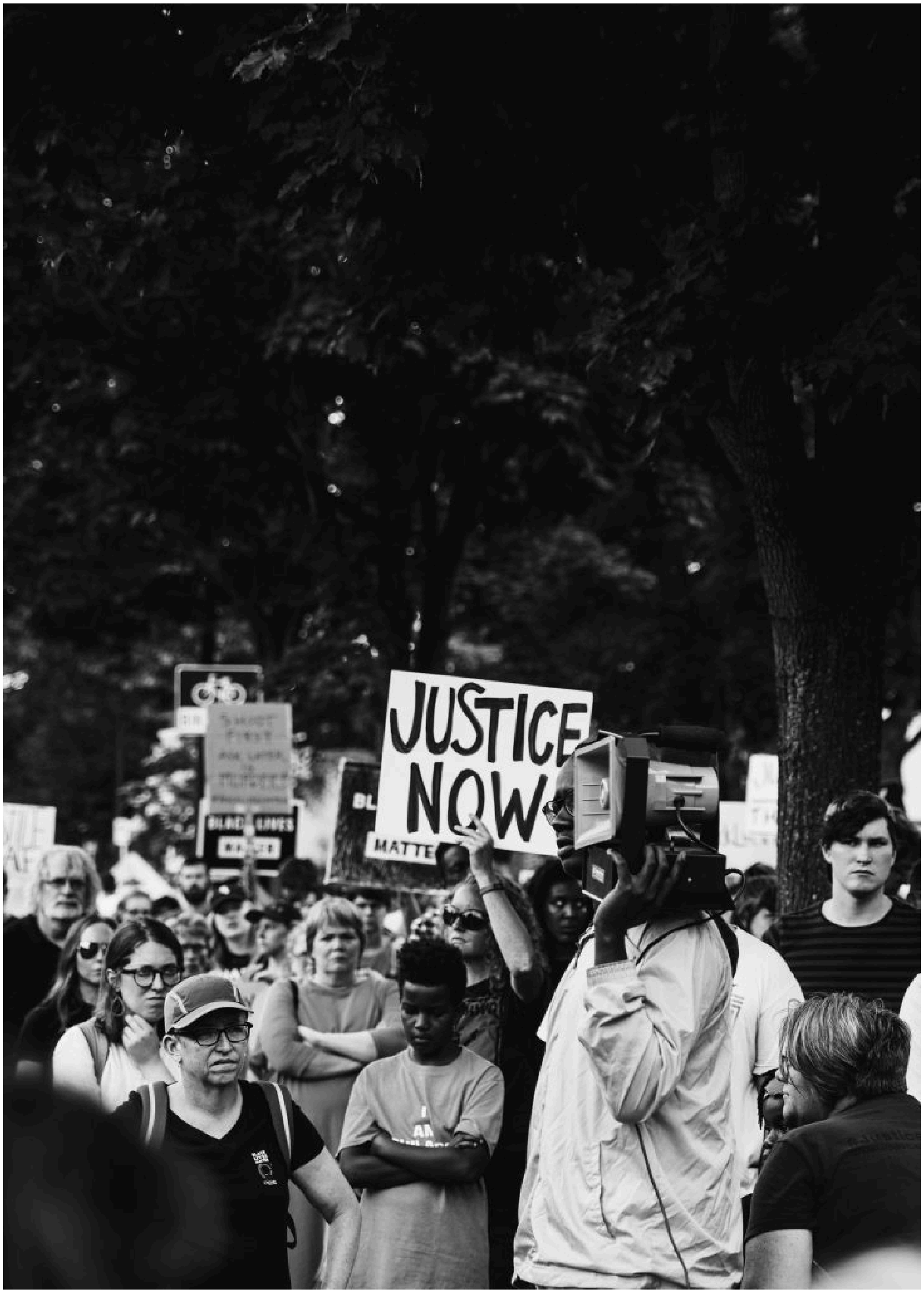

Photo by Isaiah Rustad on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Explore what persuasion looks in a business communication context.
- Learn ways that people's needs motivate them.
- Apply the rhetorical triangle (ethos, pathos and logos) to persuasive situations.
- Apply the Spectrum of Allies to persuasive strategies.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. Have you ever changed your mind about something important? How did you change your mind? Did it happen immediately or slowly? What evidence was most important?
2. Have you ever purchased something because of an advertisement? How did the advertisement persuade you?
3. If you speak more than one language or have lived in more than one culture, how does persuasion differ across different languages or cultures? Can you provide some examples?
4. What makes persuasion ethical?
5. Political organizations and companies that are facing public resistance or a scandal will often hire people to post online pretending to be regular people who support a particular viewpoint. This is called "astroturfing." The company supplies talking points and the astroturfers rewrite these points in their own voice and post them on the comment sections of news articles an on social media/Reddit. The people reading these messages don't know that they were paid for by a corporation. Do you think that this form of persuasion is ethical? Why or why not?

Brenda Knights Narrative

As Kwantlen people, we're taught that the community is a circle with four interconnected parts: government, community services, culture and economic development. If these aren't working in harmony, then you won't be successful. They all work together. We're the economic development, but if the culture isn't the strong and the community isn't strong and the governance isn't strong, then our business won't be successful. We need each other.

So, when I think of persuasion, it's not just about me convincing you that I should get my own way but making sure that all four parts are working together. For example, we work together to make sure that the community side is able to share in resources of the business group. We're larger, so we have more human resources. We encourage their managers to call on us. So, it's about building consensus, so everyone has their needs met.

In society, we used to have neighbourhoods where people helped one another. Now we have strained family relationships. Lots of people are struggling on their own. They don't have that support structure. But Səýeḿ is a community environment that I feel grateful to be a part of. My mom is an Elder, and our community practices Elder care. That means I can come to work and not worry about my mom. I can use my gifts to help the community because someone else is taking care of her. In a business we need to treat our employees as our family. There may be times when an employee is struggling and it's up to each team member to be aware and support one another in times of need. It's how a business can thrive and create work life balance for its employees. As a Manager or Leader there is the opportunity to reassign tasks or help take some of the workload off a struggling employee. A business needs to operate as its own community and for employees, it's important for their leaders be there for them in times of need.

Persuasion is also about respecting people's viewpoints. Sometimes, I know that there will be squeaky wheel in the room, someone who will oppose a project no matter what. If I get into a back-and-forth with that person, it will reflect poorly on me. I won't convince them. As a leader, I have to be professional. So, I will listen respectfully and say, "Thank you for sharing that. I'll take it under consideration." That will at least let the critic know I'm listening, and it will show everyone else that I can handle criticism.

Persuasion: It's Everywhere

When you communicate in the workplace, nearly every message you'll send will have at least a little bit of persuasion. For example, when you give your opinion at a meeting, you are trying to convince others to agree with you or at least take you seriously. When you ask your coworker to update a document at the last minute to meet a deadline, you're persuading them to give your work priority over their other tasks.

Often, people equate persuasion with marketing. But persuasion in workplaces can be both much more subtle and much more complicated. For example, if you disagree with a company policy, do you try to fight it alone or do you slowly try to get coworkers on your side? Do you use forceful language or a subtler approach? Do you do research to show how other organizations have tackled the issue or do you focus on making an emotional connection with your audience to help them understand how the policy impacts you? Do you identify one person who has the power to change the policy and convince them, or do you try to get broad support? All of these answers will change depending on your company culture, the people in your company, and your own position within the company.

Luckily, many of the principles we've already discussed apply. Understanding your audience's needs and the context of your message will help you craft your persuasive strategy. In this chapter, we'll add a few more tools to your persuasive toolkit:

- The Hierarchy of Needs
- Ethos, Pathos and Logos
- The Spectrum of Allies

Two Hierarchies of Needs

If you've taken a psychology class, you might be familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The main point is that until people's basic needs are met, like food and shelter, they can't care about higher-level concerns like creativity. For example, if your coworker is worried about getting fired or if they don't feel accepted into your organization, they're not going to do their best work.

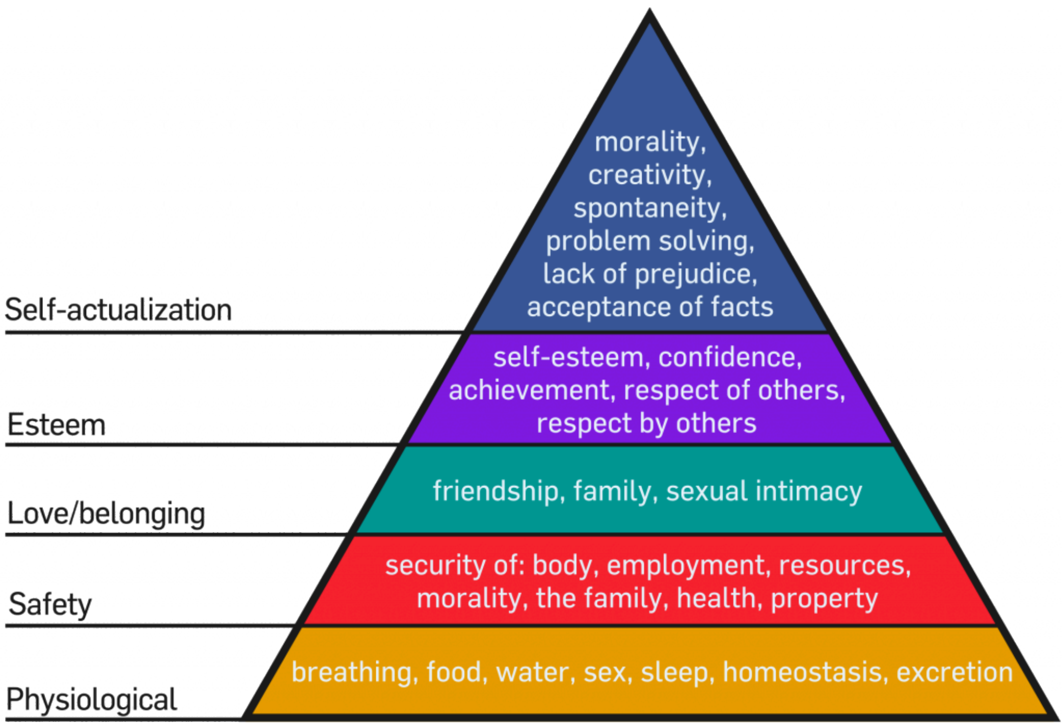

Figure 8.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs [Image Description] *Saul McLeod [CC BY-SA 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0)]*

But did you know that Maslow actually learned about the worldview of the Blackfoot (*Niitsitapi* or *Siksikaitsitapi*)people and turned it into his Hierarchy of Needs? According to University of Alberta professor Dr. Cindy Blackstock, who's a member of the Gitksan First Nation, the model is "a rip-off from the Blackfoot nation." (Blackstock, 2014) (This blog post by Karen Lincoln Michel lays out Blackstock's case and explains the model more deeply). Instead of a triangle, the Blackfoot people use a tipi. At the base is self-actualization, then community actualization, then cultural perpetuity.

There are two big differences between the models:

1. Maslow focuses on the individual, while the Blackfoot model focuses on caring for the community and keeping culture thriving.
2. Self actualization is the base of the Blackfoot model, while for Maslow it's the pinnacle of human achievement.

These two competing models both remind us that thinking about our audience's unmet needs will help us craft a persuasive strategy. More importantly, however, they show us that people's needs don't exist in a vacuum. Your audience's cultural context shapes their needs.

Image Description

Figure 8.1 image description: This diagram represents Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It is in the shape of a pyramid. At the base in yellow is physiological needs (breathing, food, sleep, sex), then safety in red (health, employment etc), then love/belonging in teal (friendship, family, sexual intimacy), then Esteem in purple (self-esteem, confidence, achievement), then self-actualization in navy blue (morality, creativity, problem solving etc). [Return to Figure 8.1]

The Rhetorical Triangle: Ethos, Pathos and Logos

Thousands of years ago, Aristotle provided us with three ways to appeal to an audience, and they're called *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. You'll learn more about each appeal in the discussion below, but the relationship between these three appeals is also often called *the rhetorical triangle* as shown in Figure 8.2. The idea is a persuasive message has all 3 of the points of a triangle. (As you can see, this is a very triangle-heavy chapter).

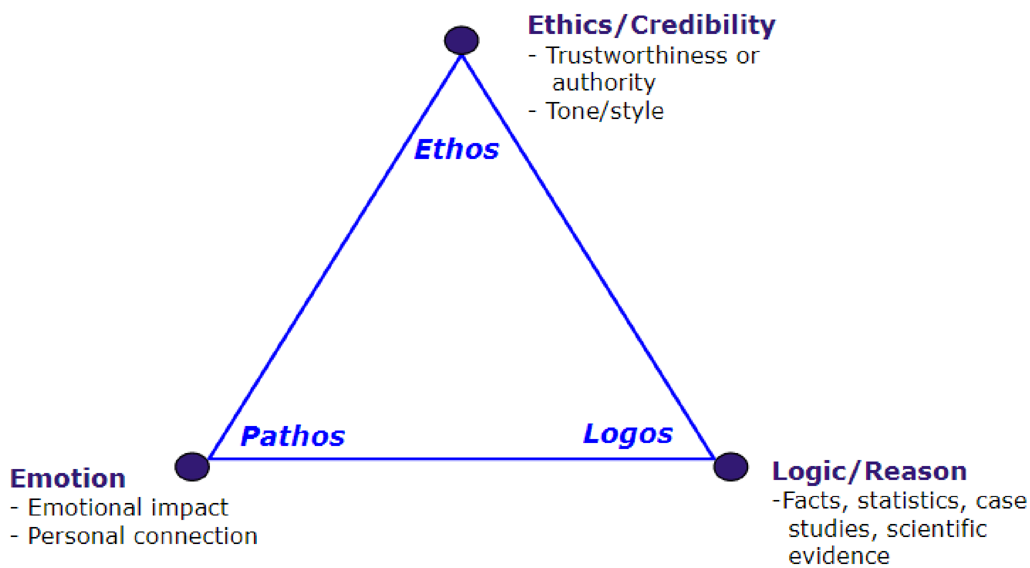

Figure 8.2. The rhetorical triangle [Image Description]

Pathos

Latin for emotion, *pathos* is the fastest way to get your audience's attention. People tend to have emotional responses before their brains kick in and tell them to knock it off. Be careful though. Too much *pathos* can make your audience feel emotionally manipulated or angry because they're also looking for the facts to support whatever emotional claims you might be making so they know they can trust you.

Many donations campaigns draw on pathos, such as this classic ASPCA ad:

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=495

Logos

Latin for logic, *logos* is where those facts come in. Your audience will question the validity of your claims; the opinions you share in your writing need to be supported using science, statistics, expert perspective, and other types of logic. However, if you only rely on *logos*, your writing might become dry and boring, so even this should be balanced with other appeals.

Ethos

Latin for ethics, *ethos* is what you do to prove to your audience that you can be trusted, that you are a credible source of information. (See *logos*.) It's also what you do to assure them that they are good people who want to do the right thing. This is especially important when writing an argument to an audience who disagrees with you. It's much easier to encourage a disagreeable audience to listen to your point of view if you have convinced them that you respect their opinion and that you have established credibility through the use of *logos* and *pathos*, which show that you know the topic on an intellectual and personal level.

You can also gain ethos through your use of sources. Reliable, appropriate sources act as expert voices that provide a perspective you don't have. Layout, graphic design choices, white space, style and tone: all of these factors influence your ethos.

Fallacies

Regardless of what appeals you use in your writing, it is important to be aware of fallacies (errors in reasoning) because they can reduce the impact of your message on your reader. For more information on common fallacies, refer to these resources available from the Writing Commons:

- Logical fallacies: https://writingcommons.org/fallacious-logos
- Emotional fallacies: https://writingcommons.org/fallacious-pathos
- Ethical/credible fallacies: https://writingcommons.org/fallacious-ethos

Using Ethos, Pathos and Logos

According to Aristotle, a solid argument needed ethos, pathos and logos. That doesn't mean that you should try to balance each one in every persuasive argument you make. Instead, ethos, pathos and logos help us do two things:

1. **Determine why an argument isn't currently persuasive.** For example, if you show a sample ad campaign to a client and they don't find it trustworthy, you can examine how you're using ethos. If your Powerpoint presentation is boring, you can think about how pathos could be used to help your audience take your message seriously.
2. **Identify how others are trying to persuade us:** Ethos, pathos and logos can be useful tools for information literacy. When a salesperson comes into your office to give you a slick pitch about a new piece of software that's going to change your working life, you can think about how they're trying to persuade you. Is it all pathos with very few facts to back it up?

Practicing Ethos, Pathos and Logos

To practice your rhetorical triangle skills, see if you can identify how this vintagead for candy is using ethos, pathos and logos. It's a little hard to read, so the hotspots repeat the text. (You'll also notice that this ad is a product of its time. Would a candy ad for today ever have this much text?)

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=495

Image Description

Figure 8.2 image description: Starting at the top of the triangle, ethos, which is ethics and credibility; then, going counterclockwise pathos, which is emotion; and logos, which is logic and reason, are the three points in the rhetorical triangle. [Return to Figure 8.2]

The Spectrum of Allies

Often, we think that if we could just give someone the right fact, they would instantly change their mind. This, however, is not true. Changing your mind is a hard thing to do, and many people rarely do it. No one likes to admit that they're wrong. So, sometimes it can help to think about not just delivering a convincing argument, but thinking about how to move someone from one position to another.

In her essay "Making Them An Offer They Can't Refuse," Jeanie Wills suggests that if you want to persuade your audience, you shouldn't just focus on what you want your audience to do, but what you want them to *be*. She says:

> Our words can have an even more profound effect if we consciously offer the audience a clearly defined role to play. When the role is one the audience knows how to accept, then they can become people who are more knowledgeable, who have more intellectual depth, and who have a greater understanding of a subject than they did before. Accepting such a role has a ripple effect. For instance, audiences who have been moved to take on a new role may be more likely to accept other roles that are similar in nature. In other words, the audience learns that they can learn, and they take that knowledge not only into other classes, but also into their professional life. (Wills, 191)

By thinking of persuasion as offering your audience a new role to play, you can see persuasion as an active process. Let's say that you have a friend named Ahmed who is a heavy metal fan and who considers himself too much of a music snob to listen to pop music. Even the most well-reasoned argument will probably not turn Ahmed into a pop music fan overnight because he's currently playing the role of Heavy Metal Fan Who Looks Down on Pop. It's part of his identity.

If you want to convince him to play a new role, you're going to think about the journey he will take to get there. You'll also have to lay out the benefits of thinking in a new way. Maybe you convince Ahmed to listen to a pop song that was produced by a well-respected producer or one that a heavy metal artist has recommended. You're not asking Ahmed to change his worldview, just showing him that liking this one song still allows him to keep his identity as someone with "good taste in music." That's not too big of a leap.

Fig 8.3: A Pop Music Hater's Journey Part 1[Image Description]

If Ahmed enjoys this one song, he's seen that it's possible to like at least a little bit of pop music. That doesn't mean that he's going to run to the nearest Taylor Swift concert, but it might mean that he would be open to hearing another pop song, or maybe a whole album. Your persuasive strategy has allowed Ahmed to transition from Heavy Metal Fan Who Looks Down on Pop to Fan of A Wide Range of Music, Which Includes a Little Bit of Pop. He's seen that liking a wide range of music makes him more cultured, not less. He's also seen that while there's plenty of bad pop music out there, he held some stereotypical views about pop. He can be a music snob and a fan of some pop songs at the same time.

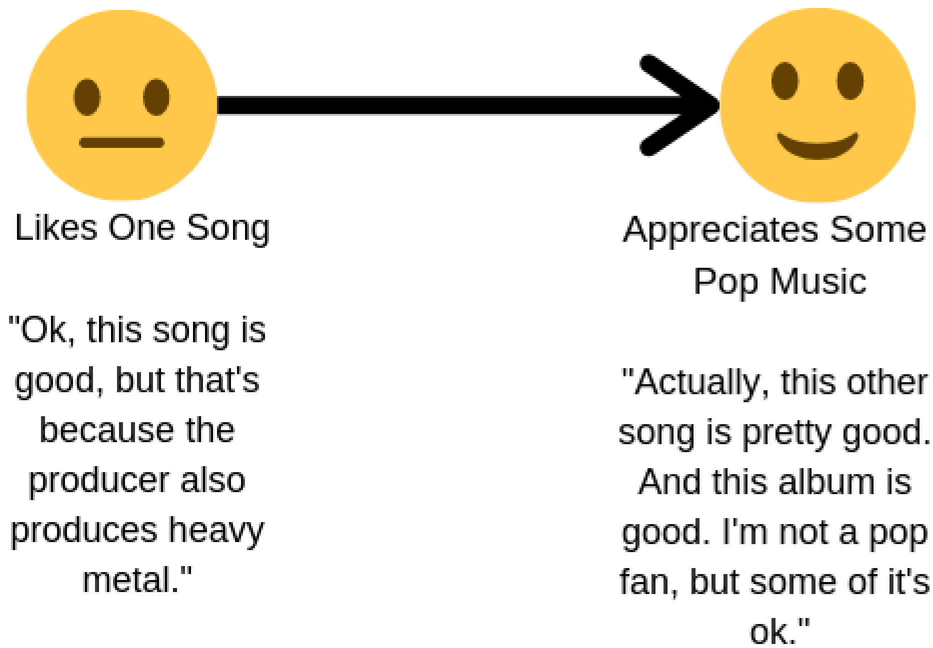

Figure 8.4 A Pop Music Hater's Journey Part 2 [Image Description]

When you begin crafting your persuasive message, it might be helpful to draw a diagram of the role your audience is currently occupying, the role you want them to assume, and the journey you'll take them on.That's where the Spectrum of Allies comes in. This is a model that helps activists and community organizers change the public's opinion on an issue.

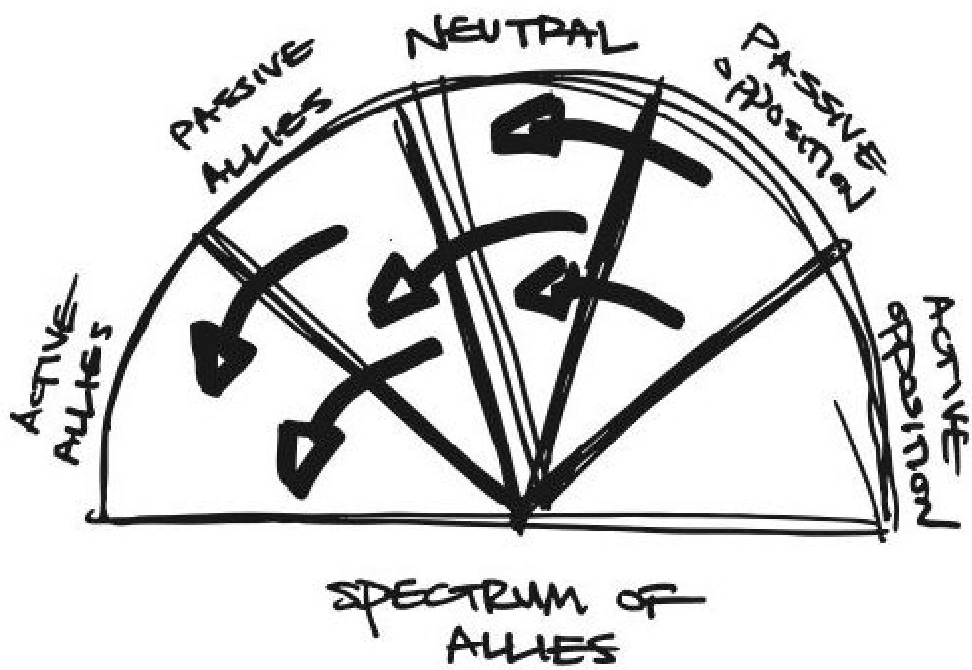

Figure 8.5 Spectrum of Allies [Image Description] *By Joshua Kahn Russell: CC – BY – SA 3.0*

Here's how a spectrum-of-allies analysis works: in each wedge you can place different individuals (be specific: name them!), groups, or institutions. Moving from left to right, identify your *active allies*: people who agree with you and are fighting alongside you; your *passive allies*: folks who agree with you but aren't doing anything about it; *neutrals*: fence sitters, the unengaged; *passive opposition*: people who disagree with you but aren't trying to stop you; and finally your *active opposition*.Some activist groups only speak or work with those in the first wedge (active allies), building insular, self-referential, marginal subcultures that are incomprehensible to everyone else. Others behave as if everyone is in the last wedge (active opposition), playing out the "story of the righteous few," acting as if the whole world is against them. Both of these approaches virtually guarantee failure.

Movements win not by overpowering their active opposition, but by shifting the support out from under them

.For example, in 1964, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a major driver of the civil rights movement in the U.S. South, conducted a "spectrum-of-allies style" analysis. They determined that they had a lot of passive allies who were students in the North: these students were sympathetic, but had no entry point into the movement. They didn't need to be "educated" or convinced, they needed an invitation to enter.To shift these allies from "passive" to "active," SNCC sent buses north to bring folks down to participate in the struggle under the banner "Freedom Summer." Students came in droves, and many were deeply radicalized in the process, witnessing lynching, violent police abuse, and angry white mobs, all simply as a result of black activists trying to vote.Many wrote letters home to their parents, who suddenly had a personal connection to the struggle. This triggered another shift: their families became *passive allies*, often bringing their workplaces and social networks with them. The students, meanwhile, went back to school in the fall and proceeded to organize their campuses. *More shifts*. The result: a profound transformation of the political landscape of the U.S. This cascading shift of support, it's important to emphasize, wasn't spontaneous; it was part of a deliberate movement strategy that, to this day, carries profound lessons for other movements.

Practice the Spectrum of Allies

Practice the Spectrum of Allies by placing the people below according to what "wedge" they belong in. After you're done, check your work.

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Image Description

Figure 8.3 image description: A yellow sad face labeled "pop music hater' with the caption "I'm someone who has great taste in music, not like those pop fans!" An arrow shows the transition to a neutral yellow smiley face labeled 'Likes One Song' with the caption "Ok, this song is good, but that's because the producer also produces heavy metal." [Return to Figure 8.3]

Figure 8.4 image description: Neutral yellow face labeled 'Likes One Song' with the caption "Ok, this song is good but that's because the producer also produces heavy metal." An arrow shows the transition to a happy smiley face labeled 'Appreciates Some Pop Music" with the caption "Actually, this other song is pretty good. And this album is good. I'm not a pop fan, but some of it is ok." [Return Figure 8.4]

Figure 8.5 image description: The spectrum of allies shows 4 wedges: active allies, passive allies, neutral, passive opposition and active opposition. The point is to move someone from one wedge to the other. [Return to Figure 8.5]

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we've learned a few tools that can help you become more persuasive. Choosing what tool to use will depend on the importance of your communication. In a low-stakes situation, you might just think of the benefit to the reader and use the positive emphasis skills we learned in Chapter 4. If, however, the stakes are high or your work just doesn't feel persuasive enough, you can use the tools we've discussed to increase your persuasiveness.

Key Takeaways

- Most communication in the workplace involves at least a little persuasion. If the stakes are low, you can simply stress the benefit to the reader. If the stakes are high, you might think specifically about your persuasive strategy.
- Being aware of an audience's needs and what benefits you're offering will help you persuade them.
- Persuasion is a complicated skills and is highly dependent on culture.
- We can use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to think about what motivates people. If people's basic needs aren't met, they won't be able to do their best work. Maslow actually based his Hierarchy of Needs on the Blackfoot model. In the Blackfoot model, the base is self-actualization, then community actualization, then cultural perpetuity.
- We can use Artistotle's Rhetorical Triangle to craft a persuasive message. Aristotle believed that an effective message contains ethos (ethics/credibility), pathos (emotion) and logos (logic).
- In "Making Them An Offer They Can't Refuse," Jeanie Wills suggests that persuasion is about moving someone from one "role" to another. (From the role of a person who hates pop music to a person who likes one pop music song, for example).
- We can use the Spectrum of Allies model to change the public's opinion on an issue. People are classified as being active allies, passive allies, neutral, passive opposition or active opposition. After identifying where someone is on the spectrum, you can think about how to move them one step to the left. You might choose not to focus on people who are in active opposition, but focus on making people who are just passively opposed more neutral.

Activities For Further Reflection

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following exercises.

1. Choose an advertisement and write a short paragraph identifying ethos, pathos and logos in it.
2. Write a paragraph connecting Brenda Knights' narrative to the rest of the chapter or to your own experience.
3. Choose three advertisements in three different genres: online ad, print ad, television ad (you can usually find these on Youtube if you don't have a TV). Write a few paragraphs comparing on how these three ads use ethos, pathos and logos.
4. Choose one of the following scenarios. Then, using the Spectrum of Allies, identify what wedge the person currently occupies, where you'd like to shift them to, and how you'll get them there.
    - You are tired of the cost of living in Vancouver and want to move to Calgary, but your partner likes to be active outdoors and doesn't want to leave the Vancouver lifestyle.
    - Your company has an outdated website that often receives complaints from customers. Unfortunately, the website was made by your coworker Ned. Ned thinks it's a great website, and is very sensitive to criticism, but he is passionate about new technology and website design.
    - Last week, a fire alarm rang in the middle of class and the class missed 45 minutes of instructional time. Because of this, you didn't get to finish your peer review session. You want to ask your instructor to give you an extra week to work on your assignment so that you can finish the peer review process. This will inconvenience your instructor, but you believe that the class will create better work, which will cut down on their marking time.

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1

1. Price, D. (2005). *How to communicate your sales message so buyers take action now!* Retrieved from http://ezinearticles.com/?How-To-Communicate-Your-Sales-Message-So-Buyers-Take-Action-Now!&id=89569.

2

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Attribution

2. Winston, W., & Granat, J. (1997). *Persuasive advertising for entrepreneurs and small business owners: How to create more effective sales messages*. New York, NY: Routledge.

CHAPTER 9: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Photo by Trust "Tru" Katsande on Unsplash.

In this section you will:

- Learn the role that sources play in persuasion.
- Develop a research question.
- Narrow your research focus.
- Explore the types of sources you can use and where to find them.
- Learn how to ask effective survey and interview questions.
- Make a source plan.
- Evaluate sources for trustworthiness.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. Think about the last time that you did research. What kind of research did you do? Were you able to find all the sources you needed? If not, what kind of sources did you struggle to find?
2. How do you use the internet when you research? What kind of sites do you visit? Why?
3. What does academic integrity mean to you?
4. How do you determine what sources to trust online?
5. If you've also attended school in a different country, how does that school system teach source use?

Brenda Knights Narrative

The level of effort I put into research depends on how important the decision is. If it's something that has a major financial impact to the organization, I will spend more time using academic research to back up what I'm saying. If there's some resistance to the idea, I'll take a research-based approach as opposed to a top-down approach. Time is the biggest challenge. We may not have the time and the research may not be available.

In my own Masters program, I'm finding that in Indigenous Studies, there's not a lot of research and you're often having to draw on information from around the world. I'll read research from Australia or New Zealand and it's often focused on tourism. In the US, it's focused on casinos. Within Canada, it can be challenging because some of the research is around nations who have incredible land value, and it's hard to relate it back to my own community.

But I think within those projects, there's value because even though they're different, those nations often started from the place my community is currently in. How did they get there? I can recall a report on tourism in Canada in Indigenous communities. I was able to look at the report and see where they got their information, and find older research reports that were more in line with where my community was at. Sometimes I'll even use those reports to draw out questions I might want to do my own research around. What's missing here? I'll look up the names of people who might have been involved, and I'll go cold-calling. I've found that people are really receptive, especially if you're a student and you're doing a project. People are happy to talk. That's often a great way to get new information.

Sometimes you need to do your own digging to find information that's at the right scale for you. For example, the Maori have amazing tourism programs in New Zealand. We're not at the stage they're at, but there are similarities in terms of how they carry it out in an authentic way and what cultural traditions they bring into that environment. Having an inquisitive mind when you're reading the source, then jotting down questions you might need more information about helps to make the source more relevant. It's a place to start. It's not always easy, but I find that in every paper I read, there's something new, something valuable that I can take and use. You just have to dig through it and find it. Also, it's okay if the research doesn't support you. You don't want to ignore that. Paying attention to research that doesn't support you will prevent you from going down the wrong path.

I also find that often people's research questions are too challenging. Research grows over time. Sometimes we want to reach this grandiose conclusion and produce this amazing report, so we come up with a big question, but the information isn't available yet. Often, we need to back it up a bit. Is it too complex? What research is available, how can we grow this research a little bit, what new question hasn't been answered? You may have a big idea, but the research isn't there yet, it may not be our time for the answer to be revealed. So, don't make it too difficult on yourself.

Why Use Sources

Imagine that you wake up one morning and are craving a dish from your childhood. You want to make it, but you don't know how. To get the recipe, you'll need to do research. Obviously, you won't have time to sift through the millions of recipes out there to pick the right one, so you'll narrow your search down based on particular criteria.

If you want the exact dish from your childhood, you might phone up a relative and ask how to make it. But maybe your relative doesn't use a recipe, and just adds a little of this and a dash of that and you don't have enough cooking experience to follow along. Or maybe the dish takes days to make, and you want a quicker version, or you want a vegetarian version or a version with cheaper ingredients. You will narrow down your search based on these constraints.

You'll also evaluate the recipes based on what you know about cooking. You might choose to read a trusted cookbook whose recipes always turn out well, or you might draw on your cooking experience to know that the ratios of a particular recipe are off. You might read reviews. Or, you might combine elements from a couple of recipes to find one that will work for you.

If your dish turns out well, you'll file this knowledge away and you won't need to do such extensive searching next time. If it turns out poorly, you'll figure out what went wrong.

If you've ever done something like this, you've used the types of research skills we'll be talking about in this chapter. In the above example, your research task became easier when you understood *why* you were using sources. You searched out the recipe to fill in a gap in your knowledge. You called a relative because you needed a recipe that tasted exactly like the one from your childhood, or you tried a 30-minute version because speed was the most important factor.

Sometimes, academic and workplace research is difficult because we know we have to use sources, but we don't always understand why. Why has my teacher told me that I have to use scholarly articles? Why do I have to use 6 – 8 sources? Why does my boss want me to do a survey?

Research in the workplace runs the gamut from looking up Yelp reviews to find a restaurant to host a holiday party to writing reports of several hundred pages that require both extensive primary and secondary research. However you research, being able to find the most useful sources quickly will help you streamline your work. To find the most useful source, you should ask yourself why you're using sources in the first place.

In the workplace, you'll use sources to answer questions that you don't know. Research can:

- Provide a deep look into a narrow topic;
- Provide a broad overview of something you're just learning about;
- Show you up-to-date information on a topic that changes quickly;
- Save you time by allowing you to build off of someone else's work;
- Offer a perspective you haven't considered yet;
- Test your ideas to see if they're sound;
- Help you solve a problem by showing how someone else solved it;
- Bring together different perspectives so you can consider a problem from all sides;
- Allow you to analyze the opinions of many different people, so you can find trends;
- Show how someone in a different industry, company or location solved a problem;

In this chapter, we'll learn how to narrow a research question, then find sources that will be help you achieve your purpose.

Asking Research Questions

Whether you're writing a paper for a university class or doing workplace research, you'll be more efficient if you begin with a clear research question. That's because research questions are more than handy tools; they are essential to the research process. By defining exactly what the researcher is trying to find out, these questions influence most of the rest of the steps taken to conduct the research.

For instance, if you're seeking information about a health problem in order to learn whether you have anything to worry about, research questions will make it possible for you to more effectively decide whether to seek medical help–and how quickly. Or, if you're researching a potential employer, having developed and used research questions will mean you're able to more confidently decide whether to apply for an internship or job there.

The confidence you'll have when making such decisions will come from knowing that the information they're based on was gathered by conscious thought rather than luck.

Most of us look for information to answer questions every day, and we often act on the answers to those questions. Are research questions any different from most of the questions for which we seek information? Yes.

Regular Question: What time is my movie showing at Silver City Richmond on Friday?
Research Question: How do "sleeper" films end up having outstanding attendance figures?
Regular Question: What can I do about my insomnia?
Research Question: How do flights more than 16 hours long affect the reflexes of commercial jet pilots?
Regular Question: How many children in Canada have allergies?
Research Question: How does his or her country of birth affect a child's chances of developing asthma?

Research questions cannot be answered by a quick web search. Answering them involves using more critical thinking than answering regular questions because they seem more debatable. Research questions require more sources of information to answer and, consequently, take more time to answer. They, more often than regular questions, start with the word "How" or "Why."

That's why research questions are so key to workplace research. If the answer was easy to find, **no one would pay you to find it.**

To test your knowledge, sort the following questions into "research questions" and "not research questions."

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Narrowing Your Focus

For many students, having to start with a research question is the biggest difference between how they did research in high school and how they are expected to do research in university and in the workplace. Let's look at a scenario.

Mina's Story

Mina is doing an internship at a small press. Authors and agents submit children's books for potential publication and Mina is responsible for reading them all and passing on the most promising ones to the editorial team. One day, the head editor says that she is frustrated by the lack of diversity in the children's book manuscripts that she is receiving. She asks Mina to do some research about the problem.

Mina isn't sure where to start. The topic of diversity in children's book publishing is huge. She begins by doing some background research. A Twitter thread leads her to an article about how 50% of main characters in children's books are white, 27% are animals, and only 23% are BIPOC characters.[1] Then, she looks at the submission history for her press for the last few months and realizes that the breakdown is pretty similar.

Mina narrows her research question from "diversity in publishing" to "How can our small press encourage more diverse submissions?" Narrowing the question was only possible because she did some initial research. If she'd found that the press received diverse submissions but only accepted books with white main characters, her research focus would be totally different. Her question is now both more manageable (which will save her time) and more useful.

From there, Mina does the following research:

- Reads articles about how other presses have encouraged more diverse applications.
- Follows some popular BIPOC authors on Twitter and learns about some of the challenges they've faced in the publishing industry, and interviews a few.
- Discovers that disabled authors face additional barriers and identifies this as an untapped market.
- Interviews a few agents to get their perspective.
- Looks at the website copy for different presses and realizes that her press' website copy could be more inclusive.
- Writes a short report outlining her findings.

As you can see, a specific research question allowed Mina to save time and also made sure that she was asking the right questions. Mina also kept an open mind throughout the process. She didn't go looking to prove her own theories, and was open to being surprised. She hadn't thought about disability, but her research led her to this area. The result: her editor was able to use her research to make positive changes within the press.

1. https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=an-updated-look-at-diversity-in-childrens-books

Why Narrow a Topic?

Once you have a need for research—say, an assignment—you may need to prowl around a bit online to explore the topic and figure out what you actually want to find out and write about. For instance, maybe your assignment is to develop a poster about "spring" for an introductory horticulture course. The instructor expects you to narrow that topic to something you are interested in and that is related to your class.

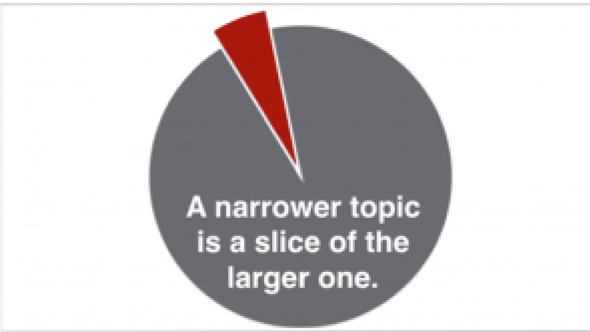

Figure 9.1

Ideas about a narrower topic can come from anywhere. In this case, a narrower topic boils down to deciding what's interesting to you about "spring" that is related to what you're learning in your horticulture class and small enough to manage in the time you have.

One way to get ideas would be to read about spring in Wikipedia, looking for things that seem interesting and relevant to your class, and then letting one thing lead to another as you keep reading and thinking about likely possibilities that are more narrow than the enormous "spring" topic. (Be sure to pay attention to the references at the bottom of most Wikipedia pages and pursue any that look interesting. Your instructor is not likely to let you cite Wikipedia, but those references may be citable scholarly sources that you could eventually decide to use.)

Or, instead, if it is spring at the time you could start by just looking around, admire the blooming trees on campus, and decide you'd like your poster to be about bud development on your favourites, the crabapple trees.

Background Reading

When you're working on university projects it's wise to do some more reading about that narrower topic once you have it. For one reason, you probably don't know much about it yet. For another, such reading will help you learn the terms used by experts who have studied your narrower topic. Those terms are certain to be helpful when you're looking for sources later, so jot them down or otherwise remember them.

For instance, if you were going to do research about the treatment for humans with bird flu, this background reading would teach you that professionals and scholars usually use the term avian influenza instead of bird flu when they write about it. (Often, they also use H1N1 or H1N9 to identify the strain.) If you didn't learn that, you would miss the kinds of sources you'll eventually need for your assignment.

This initial reading could cause you to narrow your topic further, which is fine because narrower topics lead to greater specificity for what you have to find out. After this upfront work, you're ready to start developing the research question(s) you will try to answer.

In the workplace, you may have varying degrees of control over your research question. As you progress in your career, you may spend less time hunting for background information because you're more familiar with the industry, and because you know where to look for relevant information.

Fuel Your Inspiration

It's worth remembering that reading, scanning, looking at, and listening to information resources is very useful during any step of the process to develop research questions. Doing so can jog our memories, give us details that will help us focus, and help us connect disparate information–all of which will help us come up with research questions that we find interesting.

Many new communicators are surprised by how much background exploration goes into workplace researching. For example, maybe you're a graphic designer who's been asked to create some social media content. Reading graphic design blogs and magazines, checking out graphic designers you admire on Instagram and Twitter, and looking at what companies similar to yours are doing may seem like just browsing for fun, but the process is actually helping you come up with more creative, interesting and useful ideas.

Types of Sources

Once you have your research question, you'll need information sources to answer it. In today's complex information landscape, just about anything that contains information can be considered a source.

Here are a few examples:

- books and encyclopedias
- websites, web pages, and blogs
- magazine, journal, and newspaper articles
- research reports and conference papers
- interviews and surveys
- photographs, paintings, cartoons, and other art works
- TV and radio programs, podcasts, movies, and videos
- illuminated manuscripts and artifacts
- bones, minerals, and fossils
- pamphlets and government documents

With so many sources available, the question usually is not whether sources exist for your project but which ones will best meet your information needs. Being able to categorize a source helps you understand the kind of information it contains, which is a big clue to (1) whether might meet one or more of your information needs and (2) where to look for it and similar sources.

A source can be categorized by asking the following questions:

- Why was the source created?
- How will you use the source?
- Who was the original audience of the source?
- What format is the source in?

As you may already be able to tell, sources can be in more than one category at the same time because the categories are not mutually exclusive.

The Purpose of the Source

When you encounter a source, you should ask yourself, "Why does this source exist?" Thinking about the reason an author produced a source can be helpful to you because that reason was what dictated the kind of information they chose to include. Depending on that purpose, the author may have chosen to include factual, analytical information. Or, instead, it may have suited their purpose to include information that was meant to be entertaining. The author's reason for producing the source also determined whether they included more than one perspective or just their own.

Authors typically want to:

• Inform and educate

• Persuade

• Sell services or products or

• Entertain

An author's purpose can influence the kind of information they choose to include. Sometimes authors have a combination of purposes, as when a marketer decides he can sell more smart phones with an informative sales video that also entertains us. The same is true when a singer writes and performs a song that entertains us but that she intends to make available for sale.

Why Intent Matters

Authors' intent matters because their goal will impact what information they include and how they present that information. For instance, when you're looking for sources that will help you actually decide your answer to your research question or evidence for your answer that you will share with your audience, you will want the author's main purpose to have been to inform or educate their audience. That's because, with that intent, they are likely to have used:

- Facts where possible
- Multiple perspectives instead of just their own
- Little subjective information
- Seemingly unbiased, objective language that cites where they got the information

The reason you want that kind of resource when trying to answer your research question or explaining that answer is that all of those characteristics will lend credibility to the argument you are making with your project. Both you and your audience will simply find it easier to believe—will have more confidence in the argument being made—when you include those types of sources.

Sources whose authors intend only to persuade others won't meet your information need for an answer to your research question or evidence with which to convince your audience. That's because they don't always confine themselves to facts. Instead, they tell us their opinions without backing them up with evidence.

It's especially important to ask the purpose of online sources. Let's say that you find a social media infographic about the health benefits of elderberry syrup. Someone took the time to create the post. Why did they do that work? Are they trying to sell you elderberry syrup or are they from a government health organization trying to combat misinformation about health supplements? The difference will tell you whether you can trust the source.

How Will You Use the Source?

Another way to categorize information is by the role it will play in your argument. Are you planning on doing analysis on the source or have you chosen the source because someone else has already done some analysis? We call this difference primary vs. secondary sources.

Primary Source – Information in its original form. When you work with primary sources, you provide the interpretation. Some examples are:

- Survey data
- A novel

- Breaking news
- An advertisement
- An eyewitness account
- A painting
- An interview

Secondary Source – Repackaged, restated, or interpretation of primary information. Use secondary sources when you're interested in the analysis of others. Such as:

- A book about marketing.
- An article that critiques a new piece of software.
- An article or web site that summarizes and synthesizes several eyewitness accounts for a new understanding of an event.

Tertiary Source – An index or something that condenses or summarizes information. Such as:

• Almanacs

• Guide books

• Survey articles

• Timelines

• User guides

• Encyclopedias

The difference between primary, secondary and tertiary can be a little confusing. Think of a primary source as raw materials that you will use to build an argument. You're the one doing the analysis. For example, let's say that your company wants to know how to increase the open rates of its email marketing campaign. The data of all of the email open rates from the past year are a primary source. You'll use this data to look for trends about which emails are most and least popular. If you read a blog post by an expert in email marketing, however, you're doing secondary research. You've chosen the blog posts because you want someone else's expert opinion. A tertiary source is a source that you use to find other sources. For example, you might look at the Wikipedia entry for 'email marketing' to find some other reliable sources.

Test Your Knowledge

Understanding the difference between primary and secondary sources is crucial to developing a source plan. Let's say that you run a small company. Lately, your employees have been unmotivated. You don't have a human resources department, so you want to do some research about the source of the employees' lack of motivation. Sort the sources by primary or secondary.

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Who Was the Intended Audience?

We can also categorize information by the expertise of its intended audience. Considering the intended audience–how expert one has to be to understand the information–can indicate whether the source has sufficient credibility and thoroughness to meet your needs. When you're writing papers in university, academic articles are usually the best source. In the workplace, however, you may be researching something that doesn't have many peer-reviewed articles about it yet or you may only need a basic understanding of the topic.

There are varying degrees of expertise:

Popular – Popular newspaper and magazine articles (such as The National Post, Maclean's Magazine, and Rolling Stone) are meant for a large general audience, generally affordable, easy to purchase or available for free. They are written by staff writers or reporters for the general public.

Professional – Professional magazine articles (such as Plastic Surgical Nursing and Music Teacher) are meant for people in a particular profession, often accessible through a professional organization. Staff writers or other professionals in the targeted field write these articles at a level and with the language to be understood by everyone in the profession.

Additionally, they are:

- About trends and news from the targeted field, book reviews, and case studies.
- Often less than 10 pages, some of which may contain footnotes and references.
- Usually published by professional associations and commercial publishers
- Published after approval from an editor.

Scholarly – Scholarly journal articles (such as Plant Science and Education and Child Psychology) are meant for scholars, students, or the general public who want a deep understanding of a problem or issue. Researchers and scholars write these articles to present new knowledge and further understanding of their field of study.

Additionally, they are:

- Where findings of research projects, data and analytics, and case studies usually appear first.
- Often long (usually over 10 pages) and always include footnotes and references.
- Usually published by universities, professional associations, and commercial publishers.
- Published after approval by peer review or from the journal's editor.

The most-respected scholarly journals are peer-reviewed, which means that other experts in their field check out each article before it can be published. It's their responsibility to help guarantee that new material is presented in the context of what is already known, that the methods the researcher used are the right ones, and that the articles contribute to the field.

Peer-reviewed articles are more likely to be credible. Peer-reviewed journal articles are the official scholarly record, which means that if it's an important development in research, it will probably turn up in a journal article eventually.

Conducting Interviews and Surveys

In the next section, we'll learn how to locate secondary sources. Often, however, your workplace research will ask you to create original research, such as conducting interviews and surveys. The quality of the data you get will depend on the questions you ask and the planning you do.

Conducting Ethical Research

If you conduct scholarly research, such as research that will be published in a peer-reviewed journal, you'll first have to get approval from a Research Ethics Board. This board will ensure that your research will be beneficial, and won't harm anyone. Unless you're a specialized researcher, you likely won't need research ethics board approval in the workplace. That doesn't mean, however, that you shouldn't consider ethics.

To conduct research ethically, you should consider the risk you're placing your participants under. Specifically, you can consider:

- How might my research cause harm?
- How can I limit this harm?

Harm doesn't just mean that the person will be physically injured. Even simple-seeming survey and interview questions can expose people to risk. For example, say you work in H.R. and you're designing a survey to solicit feedback from a team about their manager. If your survey isn't carefully designed to preserve anonymity and circulated with care, the manager could figure out who said a particular piece of negative feedback and retaliate against the person who said it.

Minimizing harm also extends to emotional harm. If you're going to ask sensitive questions that might upset someone, you should notify them in advance so that they can decide if they want to answer these questions. Survey and interview participants should also be able to opt out from answering questions.

You should also take care to store survey data safely. For example, if your workplace receives government funding, you may not be allowed to store client data on servers outside of Canada.

Surveys vs. Interviews

When deciding what type of primary research to do, you should consider your purpose. In general, interviews give you **qualitative** data. That's data that can't be measured and is often descriptive. For example, you might interview someone whose career you admire to get career advice about how to become a business analyst. Surveys give you **quantitative** data: data that can be measured. For example, you might do a survey of 100 business analysts to find out what percentage of them are happy with their jobs.

Asking Useful Questions

Whether you're doing a survey or an interview, you'll want to think carefully about the questions you ask. When you design your questions you should:

- **Have a clear purpose:** For example, if you want to confirm what you already know or sort survey participants into categories, you would ask a closed question, such as "Have you shopped at our store in the past month?" Closed questions can be answered with a yes or no. If you want a detailed answer, you should use an open-ended question. These are questions that begin with Who, What, Where, When, How or Why, and require more detailed responses.
- **Research in advance:** Knowing what questions to ask usually takes experience or research. For example, if you have an informational interview with a business analyst to get career advice and you've only got 30 minutes with her, you'll want to make those count. Doing a bit of research, such as reading her bio on the company website or checking out her LinkedIn profile or social media presence, will all you to ask more useful, specific questions. Instead of asking, "What university did you go to?" you could ask, "What was your experience like with UBC's program? Would you recommend it?"
- **Keep it simple:** Especially if you're doing a survey, ask clear, simple questions. Make sure to only ask one question at a time. Show your questions to a colleague and revise them to make sure that they can be easily understood. If some participants misunderstand your question, your data will be skewed.
- **Word your questions neutrally:** Remember: you're researching to find out something new, not confirm what you want to hear. Neutral questions don't make assumptions and are open to a wide range of answers. For example, in 2019, The White House released a survey that asked the question "Do you believe that the media is engaging in a witch hunt to take down President Trump?" It's clear which way the people who made the survey wanted participants to answer.

It can be tricky to word questions neutrally. Practice your skills by sorting questions into 'neutral' or 'biased.'

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=728

Fantastic Sources and Where to Find Them

Once you know the types of sources you're looking for, it's time to find them.

Conducting Effective Online Searches

The Internet is filled with sources: some of them useful, some of them not. Watch this short video to learn how to effectively find information on a search engine such as Google.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=517

Finding Scholarly Articles

Most scholarly articles are housed in specialized databases. Libraries (public, school, or company) often provide access to scholarly databases by paying a subscription fee for patrons. For instance, KPU Libraries provide access to several databases available free to people affiliated with the University. You can search for a journal title or view a list of databases by subject in these databases.

Databases that aren't subject-specific are called general databases. Google Scholar is a free general scholarly database available to all who have access to the Internet.

Searching Databases

Sometimes, a little knowledge about how to do precise searches can save you a lot of time. To find relevant sources when searching Google or a research database you should.

1. **Identify the main concepts in your research question.** Stick to nouns. For example, if your research question was "How are students affected by the Vancouver Housing Crisis?" your main concepts would be 'housing crisis' and 'students.'
2. **Find related search terms.** You might choose to use a thesaurus for this. For example, you might search for "affordability crisis" or (if you have discovered that some students have faced homelessness because they were unable to afford a place to live) "homelessness" or "housing vulnerability."
3. **Try using subject headings instead of keywords.** When you visit the KPU library, you will see subject guides for different topics. You can also search for subject headings within databases.
4. **When searching in databases (or Google) us quotation marks around phrases to make your search more specific.** For example, you would search for "common cold" so you don't get info on cold war or cold weather.
5. **Use wildcard and truncation symbols to broaden your search.** For example, if you type "wom?n" into a search engine, it will show results for "woman' and "women." If you type "mathemat*" into a search engine, it will show results for both "mathematician" and "mathematics."
6. **Use phrases like "and" and "not" to make your search more specific.** For example, if you were searching a job board to try to find a job as a network administrator, but you kept finding positions as a network manager, you might search for "network administrator NOT manager."

News as a Source

News sources can provide insights that scholarly sources may not or that will take a long time to get into scholarly sources. For instance, news sources are excellent for finding out people's reactions, opinions, and prevailing attitudes around the time of an event.

When Are News Sources Helpful?

- You need breaking news or historical perspectives on a topic (what people were saying at the time).
- You need to learn more about a culture, place, or time period from its own sources.
- You want to keep up with what is going in the world today.

When Are News Sources of Limited Use?

- You need very detailed analysis by experts.
- You need sources that must be scholarly or modern views on a historical topic.

Other Types of Sources

News articles are typically written by journalists who are experts in investigating and get paid for their work. Usually, journalists will work with an editor to make sure that their work is accurate and fair. Depending on your topic, however, you might seek sources such as:

- **Social media posts:** Sometimes, experts in a subject will engage in public scholarship over Twitter or social media platforms. For example, professional historians will often share their work with the public on Twitter by relating current events to historical moments. The benefit of this type of scholarship is that it can be very current, and you can often see different scholars interact with one another. The downside is, however, that this information hasn't been vetted by anyone. You may be witnessing an expert's "rough draft" thoughts, and they might change their mind based on new information or the peer review process. To know if you should trust a social media post, you'll also have to know a lot about who's posting and if they're credible.
- **Blog posts:** Though blogging is less popular now than it once was, blogs are still a great way to find out current information about a topic in a format that's more detailed than social media allows for. For example, a cybersecurity expert might tweet about a new threat, but they might then write a blog post that outlines their concerns more explicitly and provides extensive proof. Remember that blogs are not vetted by an editor, and often bloggers have a motivation to sell products or services.
- **Archives:** If your topic involves the past, you might check out an archive. Many museums make their collections available online through archives. The B.C. Archives offers maps, photographs, letters and much more.

Making a Source Plan

Your Source Plan

Okay, so once you know what kinds of sources you need to meet your information needs, where should you look for them? Once more, thinking about categories can help.

Where sources are located is generally organized by audience expertise level—by whether they are popular, professional, or scholarly sources. Popular and professional are often grouped together. But scholarly sources tend to hang out by themselves. (That's why searching Google Scholar locates more of them than just plain old Google, and an academic library has more scholarly sources than a public library.)

Before you start looking, try the Plan for Sources table below along with the suggestions made in this section to think through what sources you'll need for your own research project. Having your Plan for Sources always at your side while you search for sources will guide where you look and what you're willing to accept. It will help you keep track of whether you have found the right resources.

PLAN FOR SOURCES			
Course:	Due Date:	Type of Final Product:	
Research Question:			
Information Needs	Kinds of Sources (Popular, Professional, or Scholarly) That Should Meet Each Need	Publication Formats Likely to be Helpful in Meeting Each Need	Where to Look
To learn more background information			
To answer your research question and convince your audience			
To report what others have said			
To describe the situation and why it's important			

Thinking through the types of sources you need to meet your information needs helps you target your search. You can download the Plan for Sources table at http://go.osu.edu/planforsources.

Figure 9.2 Plan For Sources. [Image Description]

You can download the table at http://go.osu.edu/planforsources, then fill it out. Using this table doesn't mean you can't change your mind if you later find another kind of resource that looks too good to pass up. But making a plan first will insure that you don't just grab any resource you come across. The few minutes you take to complete the table will save you time later. And it's nice to have a plan all in one place that you can put into action!

Image Description

Figure 9.2 image description: This plan for sources allows students to identify their information needs, the kind of sources they'll need, the publication formats and where to look. This will make a source plan. [Return to Figure 9.2]

What If You Can't Find Sources For Your Topic?

As a college librarian, Patricia Knapp worked with many students who were new to academic research and writing. She observed that beginning students often “have a basic misconception of the function” of research: “they look for and expect to find ‘the answer to the question’ instead of evidence to be examined” (as quoted in Kuhlthau, 10).

Don’t worry if you’ve ever harboured the mistaken belief that research is all about finding the perfect source, a book or article that completely answers your research question. Experienced researchers fall into that way of thinking, too! But they’re also able to step back and rethink their approach to a research question–they’re able to “divide and conquer.” Here’s an example:

Our research question is: **How can virtual teams be implemented at Pixar Animation Studios?**

You might want to dive right into a library database to find “the answer” to the question, with a search like this:

“virtual teams” AND Pixar

And you might think that such a search will find a ready-made answer to the research question, as represented in this Venn diagram:

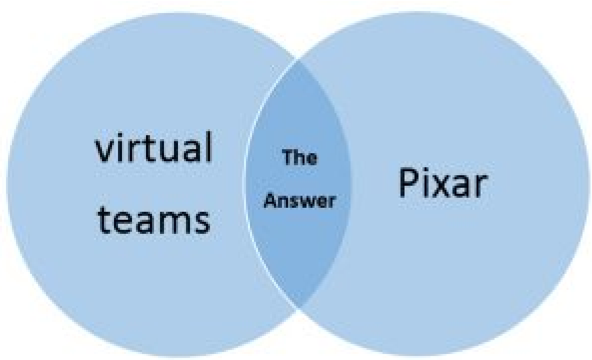

Figure 9.3

But the facts are: a) probably no one has ever published an article about virtual teams at Pixar, so the search would yield zero results, and b) research isn’t about finding “the answer”–it’s about finding ideas and facts you can use to create your own answer.

You should divide the question into two parts, in order to conquer it:

1. First research virtual teams (their challenges, best practices, etc.).
2. Next research Pixar (its mission, corporate culture, etc.).

Accordingly, your two separate database searches might look like this:

1. “virtual teams” AND (challenges OR “best practices”)
2. Pixar AND “corporate culture”

A journal article that you might choose from the first search is by Soo Jeoung Han et al., “How Virtual Team Leaders Cope with Creativity Challenges,” in which the authors study ways that creativity can be fostered in virtual teams. From your second search, you might use an article from *Harvard Business Review* by Pixar cofounder Ed Catmull, "How Pixar Fosters Collective Creativity."

By putting these two texts—Han et al. and Catmull—into conversation, you can begin to develop your own argument about how virtual teams could be implemented at Pixar. You might begin with the observation that, according to Han et al., the qualities of an effective creative team are the same, whether it is a virtual or an in-person team. Because, as Catmull notes, Pixar already has such a strong team culture, the company would be well positioned to implement virtual teams: they have formed close relationships, strive to create a space where it's safe to bring up new ideas or critique others' ideas, and group members at all levels of the company support one another and take on leadership roles. You could lay out some of the promising parallels between Han et al.'s key findings and the vibrant group culture at Pixar.

Once you've started putting the two texts into dialogue, you would probably see more connections. For instance, one of Han et al.'s most interesting claims is that using state-of-the-art technology to communicate can be a motivating factor in itself. Catmull tells us that, at Pixar, "Technology inspires art, and art challenges the technology" (71). Given the fascination with technology at Pixar, members of virtual teams would be motivated to participate because of the opportunity to experiment with the newest forms of digital communication.

By orchestrating an interplay between your two sources, putting them in dialogue with each other and with your own ideas, you can offer an original analysis. "Conquering" your paper means offering this analysis—your thinking, visible on the page. This is what professors—and all genuinely interested readers—want to see.

Speaking again in Venn, the process of creating your own answer to the research question looks like this:

Divide:

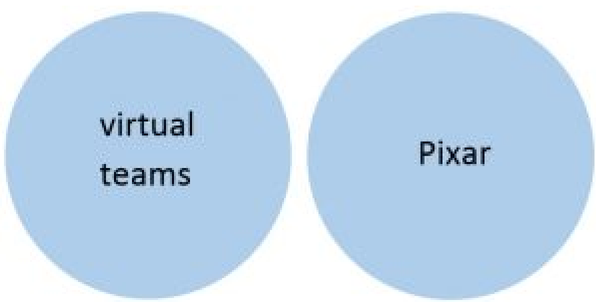

Figure 9.4

Conquer:

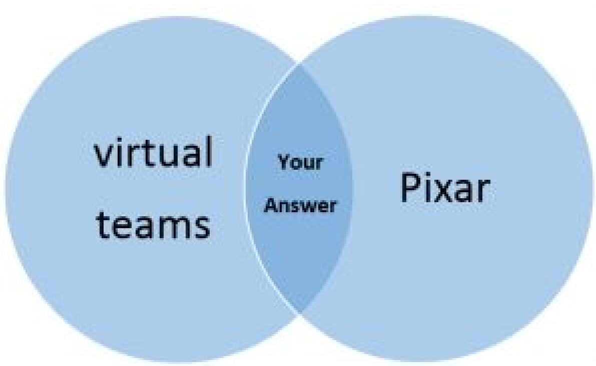

Figure 9.5

The rhetorician Kenneth Burke famously described academic writing as a conversation that has been taking place among various authors, across time, on a given topic; it’s your job as an academic writer to add something new to this conversation. You may think of academic writing and creative writing as completely separate, especially if you’ve been taught to exclude your own voice and opinions from school papers. But when you “divide and conquer,” looking for evidence that can help you to contribute an original idea, academic writing *is* creative.

Evaluating Sources

Once you've located your sources, you have to determine whether or not you can trust them. The wrong sources can weaken the ethos of your argument, so it's important to fact check your sources thoroughly.

In this section, we'll provide two models: The CRAAP test, and the SIFT test. You can choose which one you feel is most helpful. The CRAAP test shows you a series of questions you can ask yourself to determine whether you a piece of information is trustworthy and useful. The SIFT test is a series of "moves" you will take to evaluate information.

The CRAAP Test

Sarah Blakeslee and the librarians at California State University, Chico, came up with the CRAAP Test to help researchers easily determine whether a source is trustworthy. You can download a handout that explains the CRAAP test here.

There are five parts to the CRAAP Test:

- **CURRENCY:** When was the information published? For some topics, it's okay if you use an older source. For example, if you want to know what DNA is, it's okay if the source was published five years ago. But, if you're researching what the latest DNA discoveries, a five-year-old source wouldn't be helpful.
- **RELEVANCE:** Does this information meet your needs? For example, an article aimed at educating young children about DNA would probably not be a relevant source if you work for a tech firm and are writing a report about whether to acquire some DNA technology. It's okay if a source isn't perfectly relevant to your research question, since that's where analysis comes in. For example, if you were researching the Housing Crisis in Vancouver, you might read about how expensive cities like San Francisco and Hong Kong are dealing with their own housing crises in order to get ideas.
- **AUTHORITY:** Who wrote this information? Your source should be written by someone who has the authority to speak on the matter. For example, you might come across a blog that offers natural health remedies for cancer or depression written by someone who says they're a doctor. If they're a doctor because they have a PhD in English Literature, however, then they wouldn't have the authority to offer medical advice. (You would, however, be able to trust their opinion on depictions of natural remedies in novels). To determine how trustworthy an online source is, you can also look at the URL. If it comes from a .gov or .edu website, you would probably trust it.
- **ACCURACY:** How reliable or trustworthy is the information? Specifically, you should examine how the source uses evidence. Does the source link to other trustworthy sources? Does the source support its claims with evidence? How reliable is that evidence?Tip: If you're not sure whether a source is reliable, try Googling the source's claim plus "criticism" or "hoax." For example, if you read that baking soda cures cancer, you should Google "baking soda cancer cure hoax." Sometimes, untrustworthy websites take up the top spots in Google, so if you simple Google "baking soda cancer cure," you'll find other untrustworthy websites telling the same lies.
- **PURPOSE:** Why was this information published? You should be able to identify how the author benefitted from publishing this information. Specifically, consider how the author makes money from putting this information out there. Sources that make money aren't necessarily untrustworthy, but following the money gives you a clue if the author in

The SIFT Test

The SIFT test was developed by Mike Caulfield. Instead of giving you a list to think about, it gives you some practical steps you can take to figure out if you can trust a source.

Stop

The first move is the simplest. **STOP** reminds you of two things.

First, when you first hit a page or post and start to read it – STOP. Ask yourself whether you know the website or source of the information, and what the reputation of both the claim and the website is. If you don't have that information, use the other moves to get a sense of what you're looking at. Don't read it or share media until you know what it is.

Second, after you begin to use the other moves it can be easy to go down a rabbit hole, going off on tangents only distantly related to your original task. If you feel yourself getting overwhelmed in your fact-checking efforts, STOP and take a second to remember your purpose. If you just want to repost, read an interesting story, or get a high-level explanation of a concept, it's probably good enough to find out whether the publication is reputable. If you are doing deep research of your own, you may want to chase down individual claims in a newspaper article and independently verify them.

Please keep in mind that both sorts of investigations are equally useful. Quick and shallow investigations will form most of what we do on the web. We get quicker with the simple stuff in part so we can spend more time on the stuff that matters to us. But in either case, stopping periodically and reevaluating our reaction or search strategy is key.

Investigate the source

We'll go into this move more on the next page. But idea here is that you want to know *what* you're reading *before* you read it.

Now, you don't have to do a Pulitzer prize-winning investigation into a source before you engage with it. But if you're reading a piece on economics by a Nobel prize-winning economist, you should know that before you read it. Conversely, if you're watching a video on the many benefits of milk consumption that was put out by the dairy industry, you want to know that as well.

This doesn't mean the Nobel economist will always be right and that the dairy industry can't be trusted. But knowing the expertise and agenda of the source is crucial to your interpretation of what they say. Taking sixty seconds to figure out where media is from before reading will help you decide if it is worth your time, and if it is, help you to better understand its significance and trustworthiness.

Find trusted coverage

Sometimes you don't care about the particular article or video that reaches you. You care about the *claim* the article is making. You want to know if it is true or false. You want to know if it represents a consensus viewpoint, or if it is the subject of much disagreement.

In this case, your best strategy may be to ignore the source that reached you, and look for trusted reporting or analysis on the claim. If you get an article that says koalas have just been declared extinct from the Save the Koalas Foundation, your best bet might not be to investigate the source, but to go out and find the *best* source you can on this topic, or, just as importantly, to scan multiple sources and see what the expert consensus seems to be. In these cases we encourage you to "find other coverage" that better suits your needs – more trusted, more in-depth, or maybe just more varied. In lesson two we'll show you some techniques to do this sort of thing very quickly.

Do you have to agree with the consensus once you find it? Absolutely not! But understanding the context and history of a claim will help you better evaluate it and form a starting point for future investigation.

Trace claims, quotes, and media back to the original context

Much of what we find on the internet has been stripped of context. Maybe there's a video of a fight between two people with Person A as the aggressor. But what happened before that? What was clipped out of the video and what stayed in? Maybe there's a picture that seems real but the caption could be misleading. Maybe a claim is made about a new medical treatment based on a research finding – but you're not certain if the cited research paper really said that.

In these cases we'll have you trace the claim, quote, or media back to the source, so you can see it in it's original context and get a sense if the version you saw was accurately presented.

It's about REcontextualizing

There's a theme that runs through all of these moves: they are about reconstructing the necessary context to read, view, or listen to digital content effectively.

One piece of context is who the speaker or publisher is. What's their expertise? What's their agenda? What's their record of fairness or accuracy? So we investigate the source. Just as when you hear a rumor you want to know who the source is before reacting, when you encounter something on the web you need the same sort of context.

When it comes to claims, a key piece of context includes whether they are broadly accepted or rejected or something in-between. By scanning for other coverage you can see what the expert consensus is on a claim, learn the history around it, and ultimately land on a better source.

Finally, when evidence is presented with a certain frame – whether a quote or a video or a scientific finding – sometimes it helps to reconstruct the original context in which the photo was taken or research claim was made. It can look quite different in context!

In some cases these techniques will show you claims are outright wrong, or that sources are legitimately "bad actors" who are trying to deceive you. But in the vast majority of cases they do something just as important: they reestablish the context that the web so often strips away, allowing for more fruitful engagement with all digital information.

Key Takeaways

A Final Note

In the workplace, research is a messy process. It's okay if you encounter some stumbling blocks, if your research doesn't tell you what you want to hear, or if you initially struggle to find sources. To get a sense of just how frustrating research can be, check out this episode of the podcast Reply All, which follows a journalist trying to figure out why a woman in New Jersey is getting strange calls to her office phone number. It's a great example of formulating a specific research question, then using multiple methods to answer it.

Key Takeaways

- In the workplace, the amount of research you'll do depends on the amount of time you have and the importance of the topic.
- Having a clear research question will save you time. You may have to do some background research before you find your actual research question.
- Being aware of the role the source will play in your argument will help you find appropriate sources. You can create a source plan to organize your research.
- To do an effective online search, identify the main concepts in your research. Stick to nouns. Then, find related search terms. Use quotation marks around phrases to make your search more specific. You can also use wildcard symbols and phrases like 'and' and 'not' to refine your search.
- If you can't find sources on your topic, try the divide and conquer approach.
- To determine how useful a source is, you can evaluate it according to the CRAAP test. When evaluating online sources, it's especially important to determine whether the person has the authority to speak on the topic and whether the ideas have been supported with evidence.
- Research is messy. It's okay if you end up changing your mind based on new research.

Activities For Further Reflection

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following exercises.

1. Log in to Facebook or Twitter and try to find a political or health-related claim. Evaluate this claim according to the CRAAP test. Write a paragraph about your findings.
2. If you're taking more than one class, see if you can blend what you're studying this week in two different classes into one thesis by using the "divide and conquer" method. For example, if you're studying psychographic targeting in your marketing class and corporate social responsibility in your public relations class, you might write a research question that asks "Is all psychographic targeting ethical?"
3. Write a paragraph connecting Brenda Knights' narrative to the rest of the chapter or to your own experience.

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Attributions

CHAPTER 10A: CITING SOURCES

Photo by Jo Szczepanska on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Explore the difference between workplace and academic citation.
- Learn what academic integrity is.
- Learn why we cite.
- Learn some strategies for citing, including in-text citation and references.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. What kind of sources have you used in the workplace? How has this differed from the kind of sources you've used in school?
2. Why do you think the rules that we have around source use exist? Why do we cite sources?
3. How does your culture handle using other people's ideas and words? Who "owns" an idea? How do you respectfully use someone's words?
4. What questions do you have about citation?
5. What's your definition of "academic integrity?"
6. Do you think that the rules of "academic integrity" apply to the workplace?

Karan's Story

When Karan studied in India, he wasn't expected to cite. When he started studying in Canada, he was surprised by the length of the writing assignments. He didn't know how to use sources, so he copied and pasted a few paragraphs into his assignment and hoped he'd done it right.

He was worried when his teacher asked to meet with him. She said that he'd plagiarized, and that he could get into a lot of trouble. Luckily, Karan's teacher decided to help him and not report him. She explained that in North American schools, you must distinguish between what **words** are yours and what come from the source, and what **ideas** are yours and what come from the source. Karan learned to use quotation marks to show what words came from the source, and to paraphrase by never looking directly at the source.

Workplace vs. Academic Citation

In this chapter, we'll tackle how to use sources ethically, analyze them and combine them into an effective argument.

But first: a note about the difference between workplace citation and academic citation.

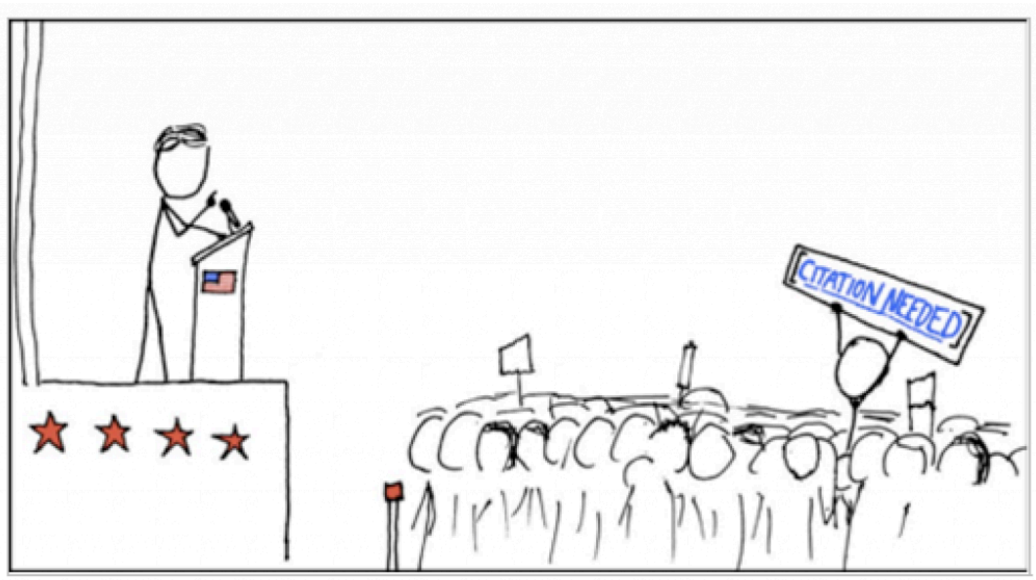
In the workplace, you may often find yourself using your colleague's words without crediting them. For example, your boss might ask you to write a grant application using text from previous grant applications. Many people might work on the same document or you might update a document written by someone else.

In the workplace, your employer usually owns the writing you produce, so workplace writing often doesn't cite individual authors (though contributors are usually named in an Acknowledgements section if it's a large project/report). That doesn't mean that you should take credit for someone else's work, but in general a lot of sharing and remixing goes on within an organization.

For example, say that you work in HR and have been asked to launch a search for a new IT manager. You might use a template to design the job posting or update copy of the ad you posted the last time you hired someone for this role. No one would expect you to come up with an entirely new job posting just because it was originally written by someone who's left the company.

That said, writers in the workplace often use a wide range of sources to build their ethos. Citation is not only an ethical practice, but it is also a great persuasive strategy. The citation practices you learn in school will therefore serve you well in the workplace.

In school in North America, the context is different. Your instructor has given you an assignment to evaluate how well you can perform skills like integrating research, citing, quoting and paraphrasing. Unless your instructor specifically tells you otherwise, they will assume that you wrote everything in your assignment, unless you use quotation marks.



In everyday conversation and political speeches, evidence for arguments is often not provided. (Image source: XKDC)

Figure 10a.1 XKCD comic [Image Description]

Image Description

Figure 10a.1 image description: In this XKCD comic, a stick figure is talking into a podium that has an American flag on it and is decorated with stars. A stick figure in the crowd holds up a sign that says ‘citation needed.’ [Return to Figure 10a.1]

What is Academic Integrity?

Before we talk about how to cite, let's take a minute to think about the stakes. Unfortunately, citation an area where the stakes are high during your university career. As a student, you're expected to learn by making mistakes. But unfortunately, citation mistakes can be costly. In this chapter, we're going to avoid taking a punishing approach to source use, but we need to be aware that plagiarism or citation errors can have heavy consequences for students who commit what are called academic integrity violations.

Different universities have different definitions. Here is the definition we use at Kwantlen Polytechnic University:

> The University ascribes to the highest standards of academic integrity. Adhering to these standards of academic integrity means observing the values on which good academic work must be founded: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with these values. These standards of academic integrity require Students to not engage in or tolerate Integrity Violations, including falsification, misrepresentation or deception, as such acts violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.[1]
>
> You can read the full policy here.

In other words, you must take full responsibility for your work, acknowledge your own efforts, and acknowledge the contributions of others' efforts. Working/ writing with integrity requires accurately representing what you contributed as well as acknowledging how others have influenced your work. When you are a student, an accurate representation of your knowledge is important because it will allow both you and your professors to know the extent to which you have developed as a scholar.

It's worth noting that other cultures have different – equally valid – definitions of academic integrity. By making you aware of what we mean by academic integrity in this context, you can be aware of the expectations that are being placed on you.

What Is Plagiarism?

Let's take a look at a common definition of plagiarism. This one comes from Ohio State University's First Year Experience Office:

> At any stage of the writing process, all academic work submitted to the teacher must be a result of a student's own thought, research or self-expression. When a student submits work purporting to be [their] own, but which in any way borrows organization, ideas, wording or anything else from a source without appropriate acknowledgment of the fact, [they are] engaging in plagiarism.

Plagiarism can be intentional (knowingly using someone else's work and presenting it as your own) or unintentional (inaccurately or inadequately citing ideas and words from a source). It may be impossible for your professor to determine whether plagiarized work was intentional or unintentional.

1. http://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Policies/ST2%20Student%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy.pdf

While academic integrity calls for work resulting from your own effort, scholarship requires that you learn from others. So in the world of "academic scholarship" you are actually expected to learn new things from others AND come to new insights on your own. There is an implicit understanding that as a student you will be both using other's knowledge as well as your own insights to create new scholarship. To do this in a way that meets academic integrity standards you must acknowledge the part of your work that develops from others' efforts. You do this by citing the work of others. You plagiarize when you fail to acknowledge the work of others and do not follow appropriate citation guidelines.

What is Citing?

Imagine that you've just arrived for a meeting about a group project. You and your classmate Chad are early, so you chat about the project.

"I think we should do our project about how small businesses can take advantage of green technology tax incentives," you say.

"That's a great idea," says Chad.

The rest of your group members arrive, and you begin to brainstorm ideas for your project. Before you can share your idea, however, Chad speaks up.

"I've been thinking that we should do something about green technology tax incentives. Maybe we could write about the ways small businesses can benefit," he says.

Everyone thinks it's a great idea and compliments Chad on coming up with it.

If this happened to you, how would you feel? Probably, you would feel angry that Chad had taken your idea and passed it off as his own, even if he didn't use your exact words. Would you feel differently if Chad had told the group that it was your idea? Probably, right?

Citing is basically giving credit. If your source is well-cited, you've told the audience whose ideas/words belong to whom and exactly where to go to find those words.

Think of citation as a way of saying thank you. Lots of scholars, like Jesse Stommel and Pete Rorabaugh, say that it's easier to understand citation when you think of it as saying thank you to those who have given you great ideas. In a blog post, Stommel says no one has truly original ideas, but that we should practice "citation, generosity, connection, and collaboration" to work with sources ethically. [1] .

Why Cite Sources?

There are many good reasons to cite sources.

To Avoid Plagiarism & Maintain Academic Integrity
Misrepresenting your academic achievements by not giving credit to others indicates a lack of academic integrity. This is not only looked down upon by the scholarly community, but it is also punished. When you are a student this could mean a failing grade or even expulsion from the university.

To Acknowledge the Work of Others
One major purpose of citations is to simply provide credit where it is due. When you provide accurate citations, you are acknowledging both the hard work that has gone into producing research and the person(s) who performed that research.

1. https://hybridpedagogy.org/the-four-noble-virtues-of-digital-media-citation/

To Provide Credibility to Your Work & to Place Your Work in Context

Providing accurate citations puts your work and ideas into an academic context. They tell your reader that you've done your research and know what others have said about your topic. Not only do citations provide context for your work but they also lend credibility and authority to your claims.

For example, if you're researching and writing about sustainability and construction, you should cite experts in sustainability, construction, and sustainable construction in order to demonstrate that you are well-versed in the most common ideas in the fields. Although you can make a claim about sustainable construction after doing research only in that particular field, your claim will carry more weight if you can demonstrate that your claim can be supported by the research of experts in closely related fields as well.

Citing sources about sustainability and construction as well as sustainable construction demonstrates the diversity of views and approaches to the topic. Further, proper citation also demonstrates the ways in which research is social: no one researches in a vacuum–we all rely on the work of others to help us during the research process.

To Help Your Future Researching Self & Other Researchers Easily Locate Sources

Having accurate citations will help you as a researcher and writer keep track of the sources and information you find so that you can easily find the source again. Accurate citations may take some effort to produce, but they will save you time in the long run. So think of proper citation as a gift to your future researching self!

Ethical Citation Beyond Giving Credit

Citation is also a time to think about what kind of sources you value and who you cite. One way to ensure that you have a thorough view of the issue is to look intentionally for scholars from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Sometimes, when you're busy, it's easy to reach for the first few sources that pop up in the database. But if all of these scholars are of the same demographic, (for example, if they're all white males between 45 and 60), you're likely missing an important perspective. Being intentional about who you cite will help you do more thorough analysis.

Other Challenges in Citing Sources

Besides the clarifications and difficulties around citing that we have already considered, there are additional challenges that might make knowing when and how to cite difficult for you.

You Learned How to Write In A Different School System.

Citation practices are not universal. Different countries and cultures approach using sources in different ways. If you're new to the Canadian school system, you might have learned a different way of citing. For example, some countries have a more communal approach to sources. Others see school as "not real life," so you don't need to cite sources in the same way that you would on the job.

Arley's note: If you're not sure if you have citation right, you can always show me a draft.

Not Really Understanding the Material You're Using

If you are working in a new field or subject area, you might have difficulty understanding the information from other scholars, thus making it difficult to know how to paraphrase or summarize that work properly. It can be tempting to change just one or two words in a sentence, but this is still plagiarism.

Running Out of Time

When you are a student taking many classes, working and/or taking care of family members, it may be hard to devote the time needed to doing good scholarship and accurately representing the sources you have used. Research takes time. The sooner you can start and the more time you can devote to it, the better your work will be.

Shifting Cultural Expectations of Citation

Let's be honest: citation was WAY easier before the Internet came along. Most citation systems were created before the Internet, which is how we end up with strange work-arounds like having to count the paragraph numbers of an online source. Because of new technologies that make finding, using and sharing information easier, many of our cultural expectations around how to do that are changing as well. For example, blog posts often "reference" other articles or works by simply linking to them. It makes it easy for the reader to see where the author's ideas have come from and to view the source very quickly. In these more informal writings, blog authors do not have a list of citations (bibliographic entries). The links do the work for them. This is a great strategy for online digital mediums, but this method fails over time when links break and there are no hints (like an author, title and date) to know how else to find the reference, which might have moved.

This example of a cultural change of expectations in the non-academic world might make it seem that there has been a change in academic scholarship as well, or might make people new to academic scholarship even less familiar with citation. But in fact, the expectations around citing sources in academic research remain formal.

How to Cite Sources

Ok, so now we know why we cite, so let's learn how to cite. Citation and source use are all about balance. If you don't use enough sources, you might struggle to make a thorough argument. If you cite too much, you won't leave room for your own voice in your piece.

To illustrate this point, think of a lawyer arguing a case in a trial. If the lawyer just talks to the jury and doesn't call any witnesses, they probably won't win the case. After all, a lawyer isn't an expert in forensics or accident reconstruction or Internet fraud. The lawyer also wasn't there when the incident occurred. That's where witnesses come in. The witnesses have knowledge that the lawyer doesn't.

But if the lawyer just lets the witnesses talk and sits there quietly, they'll likely also lose the case. That's because the lawyer is the one who's making the overall argument. The lawyer asks the witnesses questions and shows how the testimony of different witnesses piece together to prove the case.

To cite sources, you should make two things clear:

- The difference between your words and the source's words.
- The difference between your ideas and the source's ideas.

This diagram illustrates the difference:

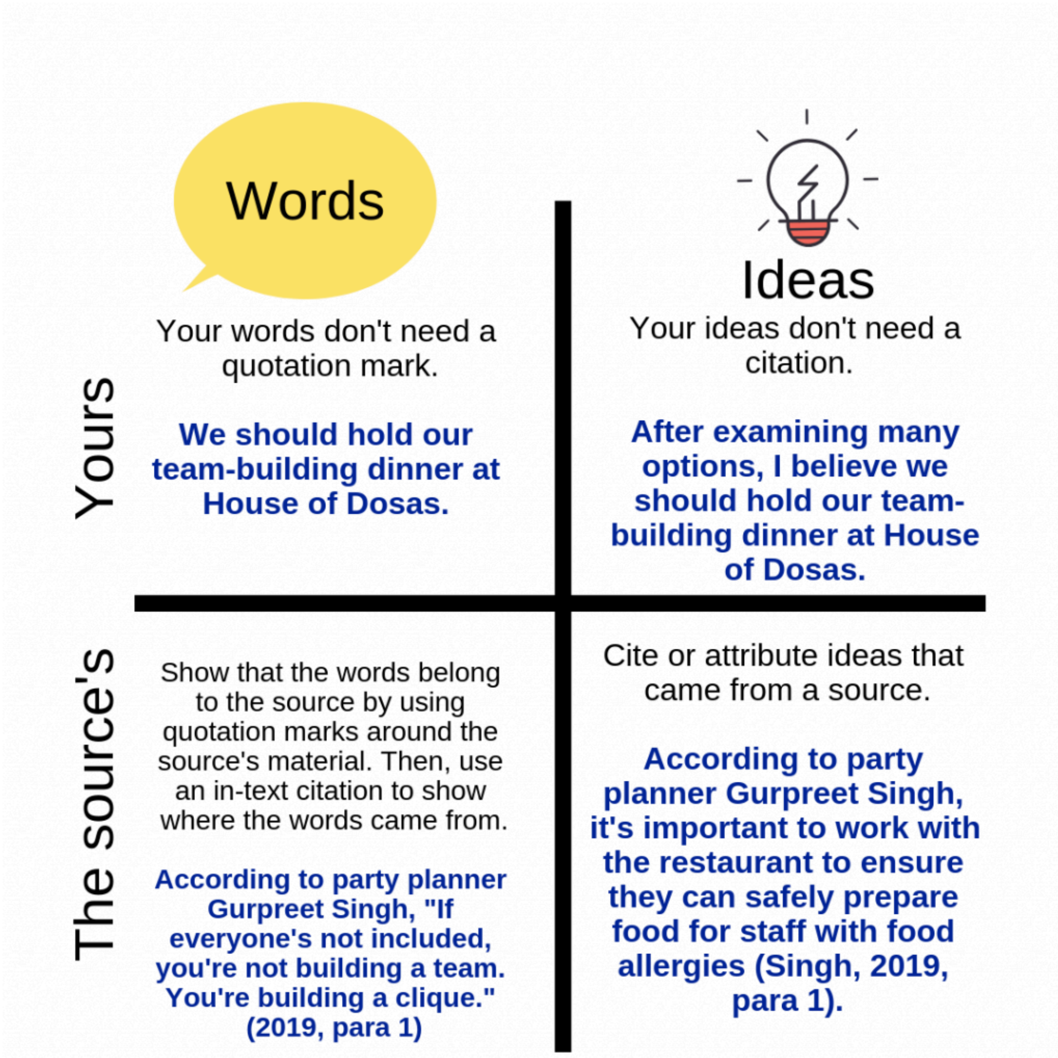


Figure 10a.2 The distinction between your own words and a sources. [Image Description]

Attributing A Source's Words

When you quote someone in your document, you're basically passing the microphone to them. Inviting another voice into your piece means that the **way** that person said something is important. Maybe that person is an expert and their words are a persuasive piece of evidence. Maybe you're using the words as an example. Either way, you'll likely do some sort of analysis on the quote.

When you use the source's words, put quotation marks around them. This creates a visual separation between what you say and what your source says. You also don't just want to drop the quote into the document with no explanation. Instead, you should build a "frame" around the quote by explaining who said it and why it's important. In short, you surround the other person's voice with your own voice.

Tip: The longer the source, the more analysis you're likely going to do.

Here's an example of a way to integrate a quote within a paragraph.

According to Haudenosaunee writer Alicia Elliot, "We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages." (2019, pg. 18) **Here, Elliot shows that when Indigenous people have the opportunity to learn Indigenous languages, which for generations were intentionally suppressed by the Canadian government, they can connect with their culture in a new way.**

As you can see, Elliot's words are important. If you tried to paraphrase them, you'd lose the meaning. Elliot is also a well-known writer, so adding her voice into the document adds credibility. If you're writing about Indigenous people, it's also important to include the voices of Indigenous people in your work.

You can see that in this example, the author doesn't just pass the microphone to Alicia Elliot. Instead, they surround the quote with their own words, explaining who said the quote and why it's important.

Attributing the Source's Ideas

When the source's ideas are important, you'll want to paraphrase or summarize. For example, Elliot goes on to say that when over half of Indigenous people in a community speak an Indigenous language, the suicide rate goes down (2019, pg. 18). Here, it's the idea that's important, not the words, so you should **paraphrase** it.

What is paraphrasing? Paraphrasing is when you restate an idea in your own words. It's this last bit – the "own words" part – that is confusing. What counts as your own words?

When you're paraphrasing, you should ask yourself, "Have I restated this in a way that shows that I understand it?" If you simply swap out a few words for synonyms, you haven't shown that you understand the idea. For example, let's go back to that Alicia Elliot quote: "We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages." What if I swapped out a few words so it said "We know our cultures have **value** and **importance**, and that culture lives and **exhales** inside our languages."?

Does this show that I understand the quote? No. Elliot composed that line with a lot of precision and thoughtfulness. Switching a few words around actually shows disrespect for the care she took with her language.

Instead, paraphrase by not looking at the source material. Put down the book or turn off your computer monitor, then describe the idea back as if you were speaking to a friend.

Here's another example from Alicia Elliot's book *A Mind Spread Out On the Ground*. See if you can paraphrase it. First, read the quote:

> I've heard people say that when you learn a people's language, you learn their culture. It tells you how they think of the world, how they experience it. That's why translation is so difficult—you have to take one way of seeing the world and translate it to another, while still piecing the words together so they make sense.
> (2019, pg. 18)

Before you paraphrase it, think about what it means to you. Maybe you've had the experience of learning the slang or curse words in a new language and finding out what that culture sees as valuable or taboo. Maybe you've felt frustrated by not being able to make yourself clear in a different language. Maybe you've had to translate for a friend or family member, and haven't been able to exactly capture what was said.

Now, pretend that someone asked you what Alicia Elliot said. How would you describe it?

Maybe you wrote, "According to Alicia Elliot, it's hard to translate from one language to another because a language is about so much more than just the words on a page." Maybe you wrote, "According to Alicia Elliot, knowing another language shows how other people see the world." Paraphrasing this way not only helps you analyze the quote, but also gives Alicia Elliot credit for her ideas.

What's the Difference Between Paraphrasing and Summarizing?

When you paraphrase, you take a single point within a source and restate it. What you did above is paraphrasing. Usually, the paraphrased version is about the same length as the original source. The goal of paraphrasing is usually to take someone else's idea and restate it so that it fits the tone of whatever you're writing. For example, you might take a complicated sentence from an academic journal and restate it so that your classmates could more easily understand it.

When you summarize, you are simply trying to capture the main points of a larger source in a short way. Your summary will be shorter than the original source. For example, an abstract summarizes the contents of an entire report or article. You might read a book and summarize it by telling friends the main points.

What Information Do I Cite?

Citing sources is often depicted as a straightforward, rule-based practice. In fact, there are many grey areas around citation, and learning how to apply citation guidelines takes practice and education. If you are confused by it, you are not alone – in fact you might be doing some good thinking. Here are some guidelines to help you navigate citation practices.

Cite when you are directly quoting. This is the easiest rule to understand. If you are stating word for word what someone else has already written, you must put quotes around those words and you must give credit to the original author. Not doing so would mean that you are letting your reader believe these words are your own and represent your own effort.

Cite when you are summarizing and paraphrasing. This is a trickier area to understand. First of all, summarizing and paraphrasing are two related practices but they are not the same. Again, summarizing is when you read a text, consider the main points, and provide a shorter version of what you learned. Paraphrasing is when you restate what the original author said in your own words and in your own tone. Both summarizing and paraphrasing require good writing skills and an accurate understanding of the material you are trying to convey. Summarizing and paraphrasing are not easy to do when you are a beginning academic researcher, but these skills become easier to perform over time with practice.

Cite when you are citing something that is highly debatable. For example, if you want to claim that an oil pipeline is necessary for economic development, you will have to contend with those who say that it produces few jobs and has a high risk of causing an oil spill that would be devastating to wildlife and tourism. To do so, you'll need experts on your side.

When Don't You Cite?

Don't cite when what you are saying is your own insight. Research involves forming opinions and insights around what you learn. You may be citing several sources that have helped you learn, but at some point you are integrating your own opinion, conclusion, or insight into the work. The fact that you are NOT citing it helps the reader understand that this portion of the work is your unique contribution developed through your own research efforts.

Don't cite when you are stating common knowledge. What is common knowledge is sometimes difficult to discern. Generally quick facts like historical dates or events are not cited because they are common knowledge.

Examples of information that would not need to be cited include:

- Partition in India happened on August 15th, 1947.
- Vancouver is the 8th biggest city in Canada.

Some quick facts, such as statistics, are trickier. For example, the number of gun- related deaths per year probably should be cited, because there are a lot of ways this number could be determined (does the number include murder only, or suicides and accidents, as well?) and there might be different numbers provided by different organizations, each with an agenda around gun laws.

A guideline that can help with determining whether or not to cite facts is to determine whether the same data is repeated in multiple sources. If it is not, it is best to cite.

The other thing that makes this determination difficult might be that what seems new and insightful to you might be common knowledge to an expert in the field. You have to use your best judgment, and probably err on the side of over-citing, as you are learning to do academic research. You can seek the advice of your instructor, a writing tutor, or a librarian. Knowing what is and is not common knowledge is a practiced skill that gets easier with time and with your own increased knowledge.

Image Description

Figure 10a.2 image description: This chart illustrates the concept that you should use quotation marks and in-text citation to distinguish between the words of the source and your own words. You should use paraphrasing and in-text citation to distinguish between your ideas and the source's ideas. [Return to Figure 10a.2]

Creating In-Text Citations and References

Now that we know what to cite and how to quote and paraphrase, we need to decide what format to create our in-text citations and references. Your instructor will tell you whether they prefer MLA, APA, Chicago or another style format. Luckily, the Kwantlen Library librarians have come up with handy citation guides, which you can access on the Citation Styles section of the KPU website.

Rather than covering every citation rule (which you can find in the guides), let's just discuss the purpose of each one.

Creating an In-Text Citation

An in-text citation tells the reader where the information in a particular sentence came from. If the in-text citation is done well, the reader will be able to use it to find the full reference in the bibliography, then easily find the exact spot where the idea/quote came from.

In MLA citation, the in-text citation consists of the author's last name and the page number (or paragraph number for sources with no page numbers). If you've already used the author's name in the sentence, you don't have to repeat it in the in-text citation. It looks like this:

According to Haudenosaunee writer Alicia Elliot, "We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages." (18)

or this:

"We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages" (Elliot, 18).

If you're using APA citation, you add the date that the work was created. As with MLA, you don't have to repeat the name of the author if you've already said it in the sentence. It looks like this:

According to Haudenosaunee writer Alicia Elliot, "We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages." (2019, pg. 18).

or this:

"We know our cultures have meaning and worth, and that culture lives and breathes inside our languages." (Elliot, 2019, pg. 18).

If you don't know the name of the author, simply put the first few words of the title. If you don't know the date, write "n.d." for No Date. If you don't know the page number, put in the paragraph number.

Creating a Reference

As with in-text citations, it's best to refer to KPU's Citation Guides. The purpose of a reference, however, is to give enough information for the reader to find the original source.

Here's an example of an MLA reference:

Elliot, Alicia. A *Mind Spread Out On the Ground.* Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2019. Print.

Here's an example of an APA reference:

Elliot, A. (2019) A *Mind Spread Out on the Ground.* Toronto: Doubleday Canada. Print.

The good news, however, that you can usually use a citation generator to create your references (as long as you double-check them for accuracy). In fact, on the KPU Library website, you can create a citation by clicking on the quotation marks and then selecting your reference type.

Figure 10a.3 How to generate a citation on the KPU website. [Image Description]

This section tells you how to cite. In the next section, you'll learn how to create an argument using your well-cited sources.

Image Description

Figure 10a.3 image description: This screenshot shows a search on the KPU website, highlighting that you can click on the grey quotation marks to create a citation for a source. [Return to Figure 10a.3]

Test Your Knowledge

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=544

Key Takeaways

- When you research, you'll need to build on the ideas of others. Citation is a way to give credit to the people whose ideas influenced you.
- In the workplace, your employer usually owns the copyright to your work, so you'll end up building on the work of others and you may not cite in the same way. In school, however, you're expected to formally give credit through citation to your sources.
- When it comes to citation, you have two tools: in-text citation (which go at the end of the sentence where the source was referenced) and references (a longer citation at the end of the work that helps the reader locate the source). In the workplace, you may also use footnotes and links.
- If the words of the source are important, you should quote. Put quotation marks around the words and then provide an in-text citation. In general, you will include some sort of analysis that explains why the quote is meaningful to your topic.
- If the ideas of the source are important, you will quote and either paraphrase or summarize the source. This involves changing the language of the source so that it matches your document. Don't simply swap out a few words, but restate the author's point so that it matches the tone of your document. Put an in-text citation at the end of the sentence.
- Citation practices can be tricky in the age of the Internet, so you can use citation generators as long as you check to make sure they're correct.

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following exercises.

1. Create a quiz that tests your classmates' citation skills.
2. Come up with 10 questions that you still have about citation. Compare them to your partner's questions. See how many you can answer together. If you don't know the answer, ask your instructor or see if you can find the answer in the KPU Citation Guides.
3. Complete a Citation Scavenger Hunt. Using the Internet and the KPU Citation Guides, do the following:
    - Cite an Instagram account in MLA.
    - Find a blog post about the rising costs of textbooks and cite it.
    - Find an article by Alicia Elliot then paraphrase a point she makes and create an in-text citation.
    - Cite a scholarly article in APA.
    - Create a block quote.
    - Cite a tweet in MLA.
    - Answer the question "If a student does a survey, should it go in an APA bibliography?"
    - What about an MLA bibliography?
    - Cite a news article without an author in either MLA or APA.

Attribution

CHAPTER 10B: MAKING AN ARGUMENT USING SOURCES

Photo by Zainul Yasni on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Learn how to make an argument.
- Learn how to synthesize sources.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. Have you ever argued with someone online? If so, how did you present your argument? Was your argument successful?
2. How do people create arguments in your area of study or career path? Are there certain ethical rules that people in your industry must follow?
3. How do people argue in your culture? Do you argue with everyone the same way (an elder vs. someone your age)?
4. Do you think it's possible to change someone's mind using logic?
5. Do you find it easier to create an argument in writing or in person? Why?

Brenda Knights Narrative

If you have resistance to an idea and it's an important issue or a high-cost item, that's where investing in research is important. We have 11 entities, and we had an issue around cost charges. I suspected that the way these costs were being allocated wasn't fair and they were based on people's impressions rather than reality. So I did my own quantitative research. I had all the staff track their time in a Harvest report. I was able to go back and show that over the course of these months, here's how people are spending their time. It was easy for people to see. And that lessened the resistance.

Another example of research where it's incredibly important to get that scholarly perspective is when we're dealing with rights and title claims. We have to prove our historical use of that land. Having that arms-length person who can come in and do the scholarly research, look at ethnographic accounts, maps, journals and elder interviews makes everything more credible. In that case, these are significant settlements, so that makes research absolutely necessary.

Making an Argument

Making an argument means trying to convince others that you are correct or persuade them to take a particular action. Important not just in university, that skill will be necessary for nearly every professional job you hold.

Realizing that your research report, essay, blog post, or oral presentation is to make an argument gives you a big head start because right off you know the sources you're going to need are those that will let you write the components of an argument for your reader.

Components of an Argument

Making an argument in a report, term paper, or other university writing task is like laying out a case in court. Just as there are conventions that attorneys must adhere to as they make their arguments in court, there are conventions in arguments made in university assignments. Among those conventions is to use the components of an argument.

Note: This section on making an argument was developed with the help of "Making Good Arguments" in *The Craft of Research*, by Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams, University of Chicago Press, 2003.

The arguments you're used to hearing or participating in with friends about something that is uncertain or needs to be decided contain the same components as the ones you'll need to use in reports and on the job. Arguments contain those components because those are the ones that work–used together, they stand the best chance of persuading others that you are correct.

For instance, the question gets things started off. The claim, or **thesis**, tells people what you consider a true way of describing a thing, situation, or phenomenon or what action you think should be taken. The **reservations**, **alternatives**, and **objections** that someone else brings up in your sources or that you imagine your readers logically might have allow you to demonstrate how your **reasons** and **evidence** (maybe) overcome that kind of thinking–and (you hope) your claim/thesis comes out stronger for having withstood that test.

EXAMPLE: Argument as a Dialog

Here's a dialog of an argument, with the most important components labeled.

Marco: Where should we have my parents take us for dinner when they're here on Sunday? *[He asks the question about something that's unsettled.]*

Rupi: We should go to The Cascades! *[She makes her main claim to answer the question.]* It's the nicest place around. *[Another claim, which functions as a reason for the main claim.]*

Marco: How so? *[He asks for a reason to believe her claims.]*

Rupi: White table cloths. *[She gives a reason.]*

Marco: What's that have to do with how good the food is? *[He doesn't see how her reason is relevant to the claim.]*

Rupi: Table cloths make restaurants seem upscale. *[She relates her reason for the claims.]* And I've read a survey in Columbus Metro that says the Cascades is one of the most popular restaurants in town. *[She offers evidence.]*

Marco: I never read the Metro. And Dino's has table cloths. *[He offers a point that contradicts her reason.]*

Rupi: I know, but those are checkered! I'm talking about heavy white ones. *[She acknowledges his point and responds to it.]*

Marco: My dad loves Italian food. I guess he's kind of a checkered-table-cloth kind of guy? *[He raises another reservation or objection.]*

Rupi: Yeah, but? Well, I know The Cascades has some Italian things on the menu. I mean, it's not known for its Italian food but you can order it there. Given how nice the place is, it will probably be gourmet Italian food. *[She acknowledges his point and responds to it. There's another claim in there.]*

Marco: Ha! My dad, the gourmet? Hey, maybe this place is too expensive. *[He raises another reservation.]*

Rupi: More than someplace like Dino's. *[She concedes his point.]*

Marco: Yeah. *[He agrees.]*

Rupi: But everybody eats at The Cascades with their parents while they're students here, so it can't be outlandishly expensive. *[She now puts limits on how much she's conceding.]*

Order of the Components

The order in which the components should appear in your persuasive reports, presentations and other assignments may vary, but one common arrangement is to begin with an introduction that explains why the situation is important—why the reader should care about it. Your research question will probably not appear, but your answer to it (your thesis, or claim) usually appears as the last sentence or two of the introduction.

The body of your paper follows and consists of:

- Your reasons the thesis is correct or at least reasonable.
- The evidence that supports each reason, often occurring right after the reason it supports.
- An acknowledgement that some people have/could have objections, reservations, counterarguments, or alternative solutions to your argument and a statement of each.
- A response to each acknowledgement that explains why that criticism is incorrect or not very important. Sometimes you might have to concede a point you think is unimportant if you can't really refute it.

Let's take a look at how this might work in a short persuasive email.

A Short Argument

To: Ralph Niblet, CEO
From: Hannah Vuong, Communications Manager
Subject: Migrating to MailChimp
Date: Sept. 1st, 2018

Hi Ralph,

Last week, you asked me to research whether we should switch our email marketing software from Constant Contact to MailChimp. I think that we should go with MailChimp for the following reasons:

1. MailChimp is free for a business of our size, while Constant Contact costs us $57 a month.
2. MailChimp integrates with Salesforce and would allow us to use our database more effectively. I spoke to Sam Cho, who currently administers our Salesforce account, and he shared many exciting ways that we could integrate the two platforms without much effort. He also offered to host a webinar to train our staff.
3. MailChimp allows us segment audiences more effectively. I've included some links to a few blog posts that illustrate what we could do. A lot of our current unsubscribes happen because we can't target emails to specific groups of customers effectively. Our email marketing report from last quarter showed that 70% unsubscribed because of emails that were "not relevant."

Some colleagues have voiced the objection that they already know how to use Constant Contact and they find MailChimp less intuitive. We will also have to migrate our existing data and clean it. I believe, however, that these barriers can easily be overcome with employee training and good data migration practices.

I am happy to show you a demo of MailChimp this week if you are free.

Thanks,

Hannah

In this short space, Hannah uses a few sources:

- A price comparison done on MailChimp and Constant Contact's websites
- A discussion with Sam Cho.
- Blog posts
- The company's email marketing report.
- Interviews with colleagues.

She also uses all of the components of a good argument. First, she states her thesis. Then, she gives reasons and provides her evidence for believing these reasons. In her last paragraph, she acknowledges objections and responds to these objections.

Sometimes when we're researching, it can be tempting to reach for sources that agree with you. You will likely be rushed on time, or you really want to convince your boss or a coworker of your opinion. But a crucial part of working with sources is that they should help you to reach the right decision. Finding a source that disagrees with you is a gift because either:

1. You are able to think in advance about what objections your audience might have and prepare a response. You won't be surprised at a meeting. For example, if you're considering buying a new piece of software, you should read negative reviews. You might find out that the people who had a bad experience had a business context that you don't share. Maybe they're in a different industry or they're trying to use the software for a different purpose.
2. If you can't come up with a response, you might have to change your initial plan. It's better to make this discovering in the research phase, rather than wasting time and money doing something that's not a good idea. For example, if you find a lot of negative reviews of a piece of software, you might choose not to purchase it. Or you might ask the software rep for a longer time to try it out.

Understanding the parts of the argument can be tricky. Test your knowledge by matching each sentence to which part of the argument it represents.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=554

Synthesizing Sources

As we've learned, the major barrier to research in the workplace is time. If you're being asked to research something, it's because it's really important to your organization. Usually, you're being paid not for just summarizing sources, but for providing your own analysis. Even so, you will be reacting to your sources.

- What parts of them do you agree with?
- What parts of them do you disagree with?
- Did they leave anything out?

It's wise to not only analyze—take apart for study—the sources, but also to try to combine your own ideas with ideas and experience. In the classroom, professors frequently expect you to interpret, make inferences, and otherwise synthesize—bring ideas together to make something new or to find a new way of looking at something old. (It might help to think of synthesis as the opposite of analysis).

The same is true in a workplace. Often, you'll be invited to consider the way that your business has always done something. You might draw on your experience in a different company to provide a fresh perspective. Or, you might remember a blog post you read and combine that with a conference presentation you watched to solve a unique problem your workplace has faced.

Getting Better at Synthesis

To practice synthesis, you should look for connections and patterns. One way to synthesize when writing an argument essay, paper, or other project is to look for themes among your sources. So try categorizing ideas by topic rather than by resource—making associations across sources.

Synthesis can seem difficult, particularly if you are used to analyzing others' points but not used to making your own. Like most things, however, it gets easier as you get more experienced at it. So don't be hard on yourself if it seems difficult at first.

In the workplace, the more you advance in your job, the more synthesis will likely be required of you. Basically, you'll be paid for your own insights: insights that you built in part from your source material. Let's take a look at an example of synthesis.

EXAMPLE: Synthesis in the Workplace

When you synthesize, you link different sources together to come up with new insights. So let's imagine that you work in Human Resources. Your CEO wants to do something around encouraging employee wellness, but she doesn't have any solid ideas about what that will look like. The budget is $10,000. Initially, you think it could be fun to do some sort of wellness challenge and give prizes to the people who go to the gym most. But then you read an article about how disabled people are often excluded or even shamed by these types of programs. Not everyone can go the gym. Also, would the company be liable if someone got injured trying to win a prize? Hmm.

You do a bit more searching and read some critiques of employee wellness initiatives. This leads you to an interesting article about fatphobia in the workplace. What does it mean to be well in the workplace? Some of the problems are outside of your control. You can't control the company's benefits or how they pay their employees, which contribute to wellness. You go to a conference and find a few interesting examples of what kind of wellness programs organizations in other industries have tried. You reflect on your own experiences with wellness programs. You talk to the union representative to see what kind of ideas will work within a union environment. You design a survey to find out what the employees want.

Combining all of these sources – everything from the academia article about fatphobia to the Instagram posts of fun employee activities at other companies – and then adding them to your own experience is challenging, but in the end you come up with an idea that is much better than your original one. Because you took the ideas from different sources and found the links and trends between them, you've saved your company from doing something ineffective or even harmful, and you shielded yourself from the criticism you might have received if you'd just gone with your initial idea.

Key Takeaways

- Sources add to the ethos of your argument by providing knowledge and perspectives that you don't have.
- An argument usually has a thesis (what you're claiming), evidence, reasoning (how the evidence connects to the claim), acknowledgement (what someone who doesn't agree with you would say) and response (how you'd refute that).
- Crafting an argument can lead you to change your mind. If you can't find a response for an acknowledgement, you might have to alter your thesis.
- When you summarize sources, you restate their point. When you synthesize, you combine multiple ideas to turn them into something new.
- When you synthesize, look for patterns.

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following exercises.

1. Find an online argument. You might check out the Reddit subreddit [Change My View](), where people post controversial viewpoints and others try to change their mind. Try to identify the elements of an argument you learned in this chapter. Write 1 – 2 paragraphs about your findings.
2. Write a paragraph that connects Brenda Knights' narrative to the rest of the chapter and your own personal experience.
3. Find an online argument. You might check out the Reddit subreddit Change My View, where people post controversial viewpoints and others try to change their mind. Imagine that you were asked to contribute to the discussion. Write a response that uses the elements of an argument we learned in this chapter. You don't need to post it, but if you do post it, pay attention to the responses you get. How do people respond to your argument?
4. Find a report or other piece of writing where someone is making an argument in the workplace. Identify its thesis and major points. Do you agree with all of the points? If so, write 1-2 paragraphs about whether the argument was persuasive. If not, write 1-2 paragraphs identifying weaknesses in the argument.
5. If you speak another language, find an example of an argument in that language. Does it use the elements of argument you learned in this chapter? Are there any differences in how the argument is constructed?

Attribution

CHAPTER 11: WRITING REPORTS

Photo by William Iven on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Learn how audience analysis impacts reports.
- Explore different types of reports.
- Learn how to organize reports.
- Explore features of formal reports.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. Have you ever written a report in the workplace? (Incident report, progress report, etc.?) How did you compose the report? Did you encounter any challenges? If so, what were they?
2. Have you ever written a report as part of a course? What was the purpose of the report? How did you write it? Did you encounter any challenges? If so, what were they?
3. Select one or more concepts that we've studied so far this semester. How do you think it will be useful when writing reports?
4. How do you think a report differs from an essay?

Brenda Knights Narrative

Reports are all about knowing your audience. What I put in an internal monthly report for our staff meeting isn't what I'm sharing with our elders table or what I'm sharing with the board of directors. With the staff report, the intent is that each department knows what's going on. So, it provides context for an operating environment. Sharing the details is important. But for the elders, that's too much detail. The elders are our shareholders. They don't need to know the day-to-day. They're interested in what's the status of new business, what new business opportunities are we pursuing. We only have a short period of time.

With the elders, we want to give them enough so they'll feel informed and give them an opportunity to ask questions. It's also a chance to gauge to see how they feel about an idea. I've had land developers approach us. At the first meeting, I might say, "We've been approached. We're exploring whether or not it's feasible." That's it. The next time, I'll say, "Internally, we now believe it's feasible. Now, we need to determine lease rates. Here are the next steps." When it comes time to have a referendum about whether that tenant can be onsite, it's not new to elders and it's not taking them by surprise. They know we've done our due diligence. You can also gauge from previous meetings if there will be any objections. With some land developers, I've had concerns about their practices related to sustainability. Through these discussions, we will either address that, our we'll see that we're getting a lot of opposition and this is not a business we will support.

With the board of directors, their time is limited. These are highly accomplished people, and they want the facts in a very high level. They want to know financial information, the reputation of the company. Usually, there's a verbal report that's quick, but then we give additional handouts for them to review. If they ask a question, hopefully I'm able to say that the answer is on this page of the report, and you can read more about it there.

So, knowing who your audience is, is crucial. And so is being honest. In grant reporting, for example, they're going to want to know if you delivered what you said you would. You don't want to embellish the truth. That will impact you in future opportunities. It's likely that your audience will find out. It's okay to say that we attempted to do something, but we ran into an obstacle, and this is what we learned. Honesty is so important in reporting. Reporting is an opportunity to learn. If you apply again in the second year and the organization knows you didn't deliver and didn't explain it, it won't look favourably. So, the process is about honesty and building trust.

Audience Analysis in Reports

Reports are a flexible genre. A report can be anything from a one-page accident report when someone gets a minor injury on the job to a 500+ page report created by a government commission, such as [The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report](). Your report could be internal or external, and it could be a printed document, a PDF or even an email.

The type of report is often identified by its primary purpose, as in an accident report, a laboratory report, or a sales report. Reports are often analytical or involve the rational analysis of information. Sometimes they report the facts with no analysis at all. Other reports summarize past events, present current data, and forecast future trends. This section will introduce you to the basics of report writing.

Audience Analysis in Formal Reports

Many business professionals need to write a formal report at some point during their career, and some professionals write them on a regular basis. Key decision makers in business, education, and government use formal reports to make important decisions. Although writing a formal report can seem like a daunting task, the final product enables you to contribute directly to your company's success.

There are several different organizational patterns that may be used for formal reports, but all formal reports contain front matter material, a body, and back matter (supplementary) items. The body of a formal report discusses the findings that lead to the recommendations. The prefatory material is therefore critical to providing the audience with an overview and roadmap of the report. The following section will explain how to write a formal report with an audience in mind.

Analyzing your Audience

As with any type of writing, when writing reports, it is necessary to know your audience. Will you be expected to write a one-page email or a formal report complete with a Table of Contents and an Executive Summary? Audience analysis will tell you.

For example, if your audience is familiar with the background information related to your project, you don't want to bombard them with details. Instead, you will want to inform your audience about the aspects of your topic that they're unfamiliar with or have limited knowledge of. In contrast, if your audience does not already know anything about your project, you will want to give them all of the necessary information for them to understand. Age and educational level are also important to consider when you write. You don't want to use technical jargon when writing to an audience of non-specialists.

One of the trickier parts of report writing is understanding what your audience expects. Why is your audience reading the report? Do different parts of the report serve different purposes? Will you be expected to follow a specific template? Make sure that you have specifically responded to the expectations of your boss, manager, or client. If your audience expects you to have conducted research, make sure you know what type of research they expect. Do they want research from scholarly journal articles? Do they want you to conduct your own research? No matter what type of research you do, make sure that it is properly documented using whatever format the audience prefers (MLA, APA, and Chicago Manual of Style are some of the most commonly-used formats). As we've discussed in the chapter on persuasion, research will contribute to your ethos and your confidence.

For further information about what types of research you may want to include, see this article about research methods and methodologies.

Here are some questions to consider about your audience as you write:

- What does your audience expect to learn from your report?
- Do you have only one audience or multiple audiences? Do they have different levels of knowledge about the topic?
- How much research does your audience expect you to have done?
- How current does your research need to be?
- What types of sources does your audience expect you to have?
- What is the educational level of your audience?
- How much background information does your audience need?
- What technical terms will your audience need defined? What terms will they already be familiar with?
- Is there a template or style guide that you should use for your report?
- What is the cultural background of your audience?

Types of Reports

Reports vary by function, style, and tradition. Within your organization, you may need to address specific expectations. This section discusses reports in general terms, focusing on common elements and points of distinction. Reference to similar documents at your workplace may serve you well as you prepare your own report. As shown in Table 11.1, there are many types of reports.

Table 11.1 Types of reports

Report type	*Description*
Progress report	Monitor and control production, sales, shipping, service, or related business process.
Recommendation report	Make recommendations to management and provide tools to solve problems or make decisions.
Summary report	Present summaries of the information available on a given subject.

Progress report

A progress report is used to give management an update on the status of a project. It is generated at timed intervals (for example, once a month) or on completion of key stages. It records accomplishments to date and identifies any challenges or concerns. It is usually written by the project lead and is one to two pages long.

When you write a progress report, begin by stating why you are writing the report:

- Identify what you've accomplished
- List any problems you have encountered
- Outline what work still remains
- Conclude by providing an overview of the project's status and what should be done next.

It's helpful to think about a report not just in terms of what should be included, but **why** certain elements are included. Most reports have a persuasive element, so when reporting your progress you are trying to:

- Demonstrate that you have taken appropriate, competent action so far.
- Assure the reader that they can trust you to finish the remainder of the work effectively and that your plan remains a good one.
- Convince the reader that the project has been successful so far.
- If the project hasn't been successful, then you will want to explain why and suggest ways to improve. Never downplay or lie about challenges you are experiencing. Not only will this damage your reputation when the truth comes out, but you'll also be defeating the purpose of the progress report: which is to evaluate the project and address issues as they happen.

Understanding your persuasive strategy will help you organize and write your progress report.

Recommendation report

A recommendation report is used to help management make decisions. The goal of this report is to identify a solution to a problem or suggest a course of action. In it, the writer might suggest that a procedure be adopted or rejected, assess an unsatisfactory situation, or persuade decision makers to make a change that will benefit the organization. For example, the report might suggest ways to enhance the quality of a product, increase profit, reduce cost, or improve workplace conditions. The intention of a recommendation report is not to assign blame or be overly critical, but to suggest improvements in a positive manner.

The persuasive goals of most recommendation reports are:

- That a problem or opportunity exists and the organization should take it seriously. Why should your organization devote its resources to this issue? Why now?
- That you have done the necessary research and have the expertise to solve the problem.
- That your research and expertise has led you to a solution, which is the best of all possible solutions.
- That your solution offers benefits to the company and has minimal risks. If there are risks, you are aware of them and have a plan to mitigate them.

The importance and expense of what you're recommending will dictate the form, amount of detail, length and use of visual aids like charts and graphs. It will also dictate how you lay out your argument.

In Chapter 10, we explored how to craft an argument. This section will be useful to you as you craft the persuasive strategy for your recommendation report. Let's take another look at the example of an argument we studied in Chapter 10.

A Very Short Report

To: Ralph Niblet, CEO
From: Hannah Vuong, Communications Manager
Subject: Migrating to MailChimp
Date: Sept. 1st, 2018

Hi Ralph,

Last week, you asked me to research whether we should switch our email marketing software from Constant Contact to MailChimp. I think that we should go with MailChimp for the following reasons:

1. MailChimp is free for a business of our size, while Constant Contact costs us $57 a month.
2. MailChimp integrates with Salesforce and would allow us to use our database more effectively. I spoke to Sam Cho, who currently administers our Salesforce account, and he shared many exciting ways that we

could integrate the two platforms without much effort. He also offered to host a webinar to train our staff.

3. MailChimp allows us segment audiences more effectively. I've included some links to a few blog posts that illustrate what we could do. A lot of our current unsubscribes happen because we can't target emails to specific groups of customers effectively. Our email marketing report from last quarter showed that 70% unsubscribed because of emails that were "not relevant."

Some colleagues have voiced the objection that they already know how to use Constant Contact and they find MailChimp less intuitive. We will also have to migrate our existing data and clean it. I believe, however, that these barriers can easily be overcome with employee training and good data migration practices.

I am happy to show you a demo of MailChimp this week if you are free.

Thanks,

Hannah

If Hannah wanted to turn this email into a report, she would likely find that the major elements are there. She's done some research, she has used that research to come up with a solution, and she's anticipated some potential risks or downsides to her plan. As you read about the parts of the report, think about how Hannah might turn her email into a recommendation report.

Summary Report

A summary report is used to give management information. For example, if you work in the marketing department, your boss might ask you to find out about your competitors' online activities so that your company can effectively compete with them. To do this, you would research your competitors' websites, social media profiles, digital advertising campaigns, and so on. You would then distill what you find down to the key points so that your boss can get the essential information in a short time, and then decide how to act on it. Unlike the recommendation report, the summary report focuses on the facts, leaving it to management to decide on a course of action.

In general, the main persuasive point that you are making in summary reports is that you have done enough research and have used appropriate sources, and that you have organized this information in a logical and useful manner. Because summary reports give a general overview, it's important to think about how your reader can skim through the document. Remember: your goal is to save your audience time, so part of the challenge of the report is determining what information your audience needs, and what is irrelevant. You will also have to condense material.

Organizing Reports

Report Organization

Reports vary by size, format, and function. You need to be flexible and adjust your report to the needs of the audience. Reports are typically organized around six key elements:

- Who the report is about and/or prepared for
- What was done, what problems were addressed, and the results, including conclusions and/or recommendations
- Where the subject studied occurred
- When the subject studied occurred
- Why the report was written (function), including under what authority, for what reason, or by whose request
- How the subject operated, functioned, or was used

Pay attention to these essential elements when you consider your stakeholders. That may include the person(s) the report is about, whom it is for, and the larger audience of the organization. Ask yourself who the key decision makers are, who the experts will be, and how your words and images may be interpreted. While there is no universal format for a report, there is a common order to the information. Each element supports the main purpose or function, playing an important role in the transmission of information. Some common elements in a report are shown in Table 11.2.

Table 11.2 Parts of a report

Page	Description
Title page	Report title; date of submission; name, title, and organization of the person who prepared the report; name, title, and organization of the person receiving the report. If your report contains sensitive information or if it is going to be exposed to the elements, it might also contain a cover page. No page number.
Table of contents	A list of the sections in the report and their respective page numbers. All headings/sub-headings in the report should be listed on this page. This page is not labelled with a page number.
Executive summary	The executive summary is a one-page overview of the entire report aimed at managers or people in a position of power. It discusses the managerial implications of your report: basically what managers or other people who have the authority to approve your report need to know. Summarize the topic, methods, data/evidence, results, and conclusions/recommendations. On its own page. Labelled as page iii.
Introduction	Introduces the topic of the report, states the purpose of the report, and previews the structure of the report. This section often contains similar information to the Executive Summary, but in a clear, factual manner. Begins on a new page. Labelled as page 1.
Body	Key elements of the report body may include the background, methods, results, and analysis or discussion. Uses descriptive or functional headings and sub-headings (is not labelled "Body"). Pagination continues from the introduction.
Conclusion and/or recommendations	Concise presentation of findings and/or recommendations. Indicate the main results and their relation to the recommended action(s) or outcome(s). Pagination continues from the body of the report.
References	A list of all references used in the report. All in-text citations included in the report should have an accompanying entry in the reference list. Begins on a new page. Pagination continues from the conclusions and/or recommendations.

Appendix or appendices	Related supporting materials. All materials in the appendix (or appendices) must be referred to in the body of the report. Only one item per appendix. Each appendix begins on a new page, is labelled as Appendix A, B, C, etc, and is given a title. Pagination continues from the reference list.

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

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

Writing Formal Reports

While you may write much shorter, more casual reports, it's helpful to go into a bit of detail about formal reports. Formal reports are modular, which means that they have many pieces. Most audience members will not read every piece, so these pieces should stand on their own. That means that you will often repeat yourself. That's okay. Your audience should be able to find exactly what they need in a particular section, even if that information has been repeated elsewhere.

While it's fine to copy and paste between sections, you will likely need to edit your work to ensure that the tone, level of detail and organization meet the needs of that section. For example, the Executive Summary is aimed at managers. It's a short, persuasive overview of everything in the report. The Introduction may contain very similar information, but it focuses on giving a short, technical overview of everything in the report. Its goal is to inform, not to persuade.

Let's take a look at some of the parts of the report in greater detail.

Title Page

The title page provides the audience with the:

- Name of the report
  - This should appear 2 inches from the top margin in uppercase letters.
- Name, title, and organization of the individual receiving the report
  - Type "Prepared for" on one line, followed by two separate lines that provide the receiving organization's name and then the city and state. Some reports may include an additional line that presents the name of a specific person.
- Name of the author and any necessary identifying information
  - Type "prepared by" on one line, followed by the name(s) of the author(s) and their organization, all on separate lines.
- Date of submission
  - This date may differ from the date the report was written. It should appear 2 inches above the bottom margin.

The items on the title page should be equally spaced apart from each other.

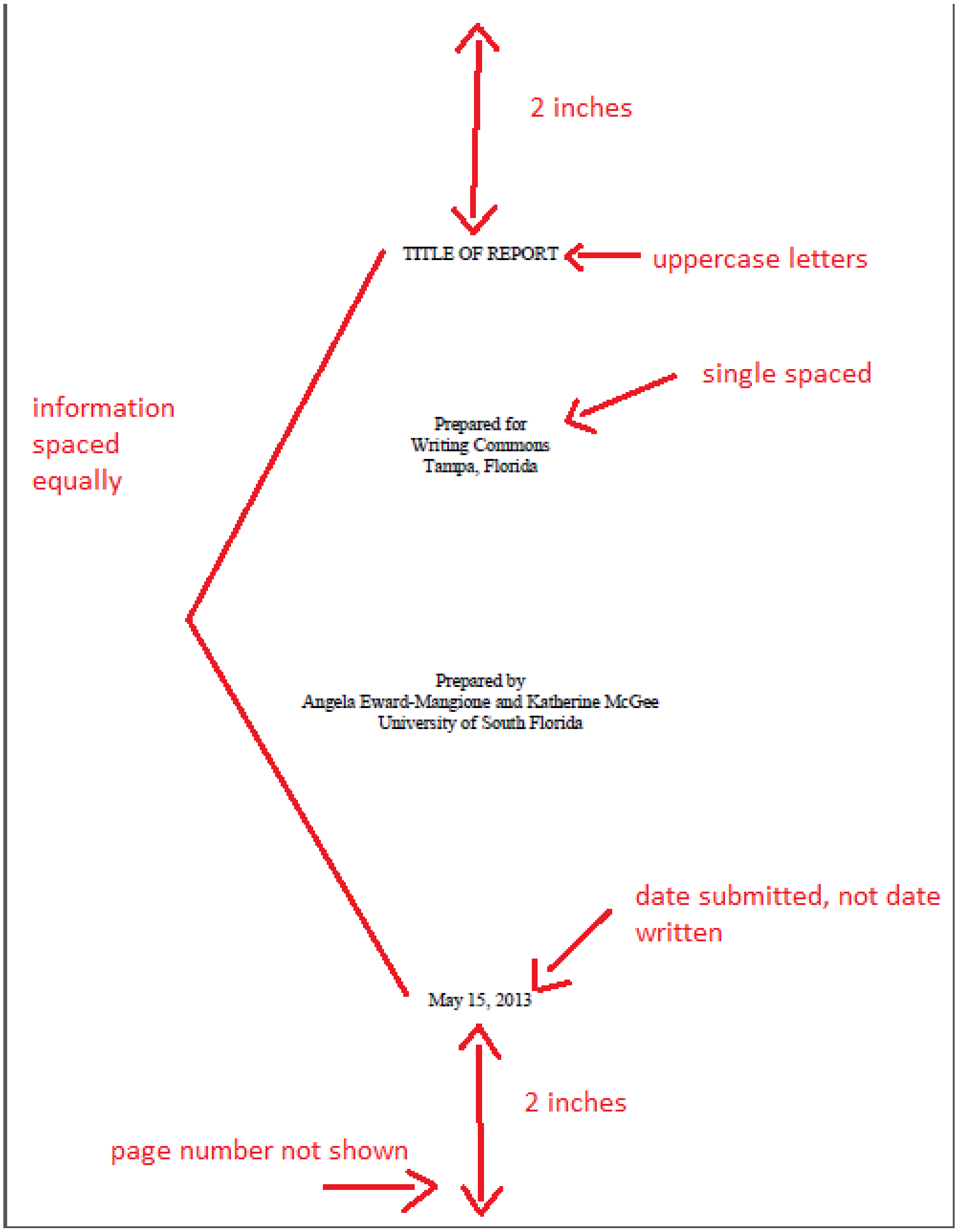


Figure 11.1 Report Title Page Components [Image Description]

A note on page numbers:

The title page should not include a page number, but this page is counted as page "i." Use software features to create two sections for your report. You can then utilize two different types of numbering schemes. When numbering the pages (i.e., i, ii, iii, etc.) for a formal report, use lowercase roman numerals for all front matter components. Utilize arabic numbers for the other pages that follow. Additionally, if you intend to bind the report on the left, move the left margin and center 0.25 inches to the right.

Letter of Transmittal

A letter of transmittal announces the report topic to the recipient(s).

If applicable, the first paragraph should identify who authorized the report and why the report is significant. Provide the purpose of the report in the first paragraph as well. The next paragraph should briefly identify, categorize, and describe the primary and secondary research of the report. Use the concluding paragraph to offer to discuss the report; it is also customary to conclude by thanking the reader for their time and consideration.

The letter of transmittal should be formatted as a business letter. Some report writers prefer to send a memo of transmittal instead.

When considering your audience for the letter or memo of transmittal, make sure that you use a level of formality appropriate for your relationship with the reader. While all letters should contain professional and respectful language, a letter to someone you do not know should pay closer attention to the formality of the word choice and tone.

Table of Contents

The table of contents page features the headings and secondary headings of the report and their page numbers, enabling audience members to quickly locate specific parts of the report. Leaders (i.e. spaced or unspaced dots) are used to guide the reader's eye from the headings to their page numbers.

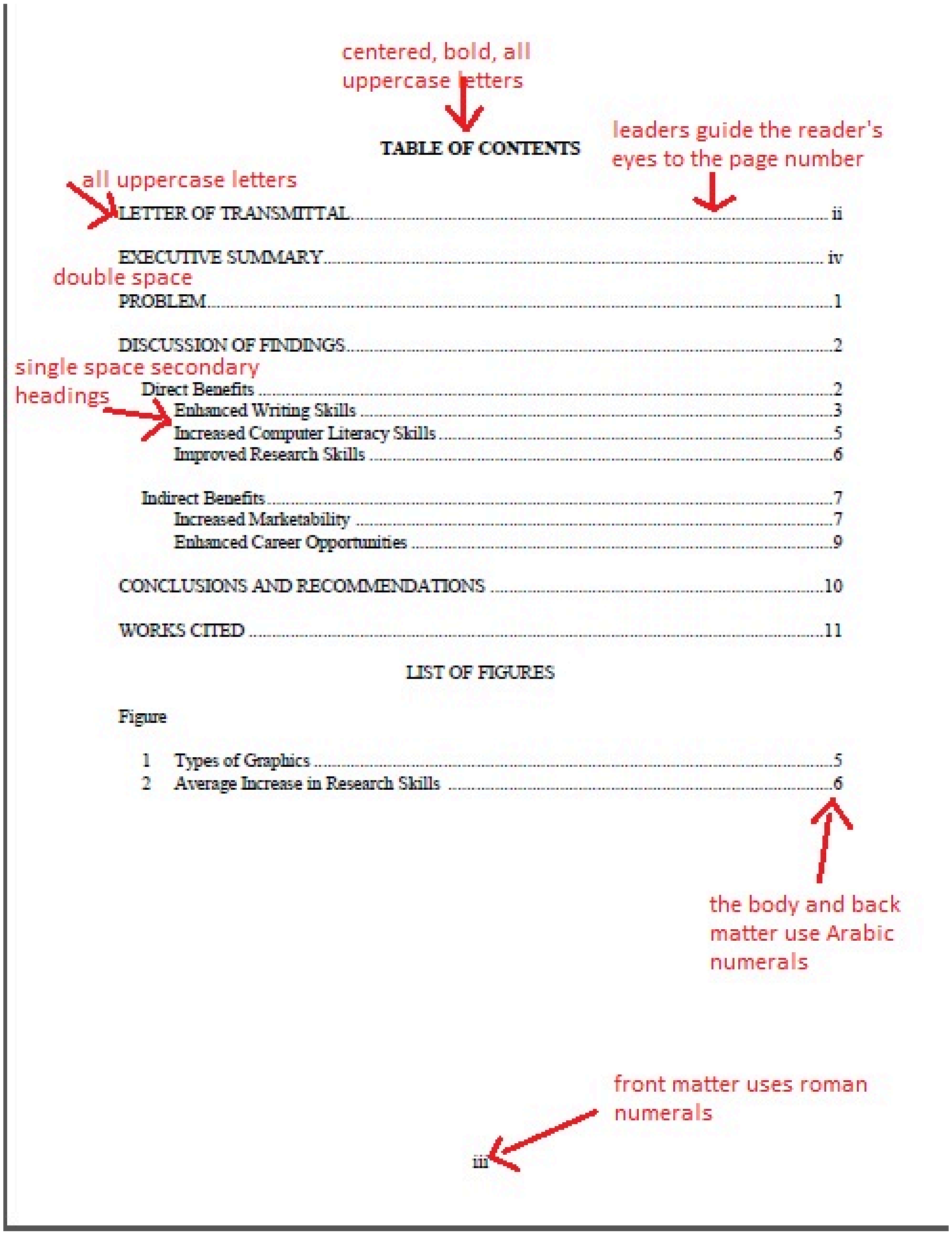


TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

iii

Figure 11.2 Table of Contents and List of Figures components [Image Description]

The words "TABLE OF CONTENTS" should appear at the top of the page in all uppercase and bolded letters. Type the titles of major report parts in all uppercase letters as well, double spacing between them. Secondary headings should be indented and single spaced, using a combination of upper- and lowercase letters.

Executive Summary

An executive summary presents an overview of the report that can be used as a time-saving device by recipients who do not have time to read the entire report.

The executive summary should include a:

- Summary of purpose
- Overview of key findings
- Identification of conclusions
- Overview of recommendations

To begin, type "EXECUTIVE SUMMARY" in all uppercase letters and centered. Follow this functional head with paragraphs that include the above information, but do not use first-level headings to separate each item. Each paragraph of information should be single-spaced with double spacing between paragraphs. Everything except for the title should be left-aligned.

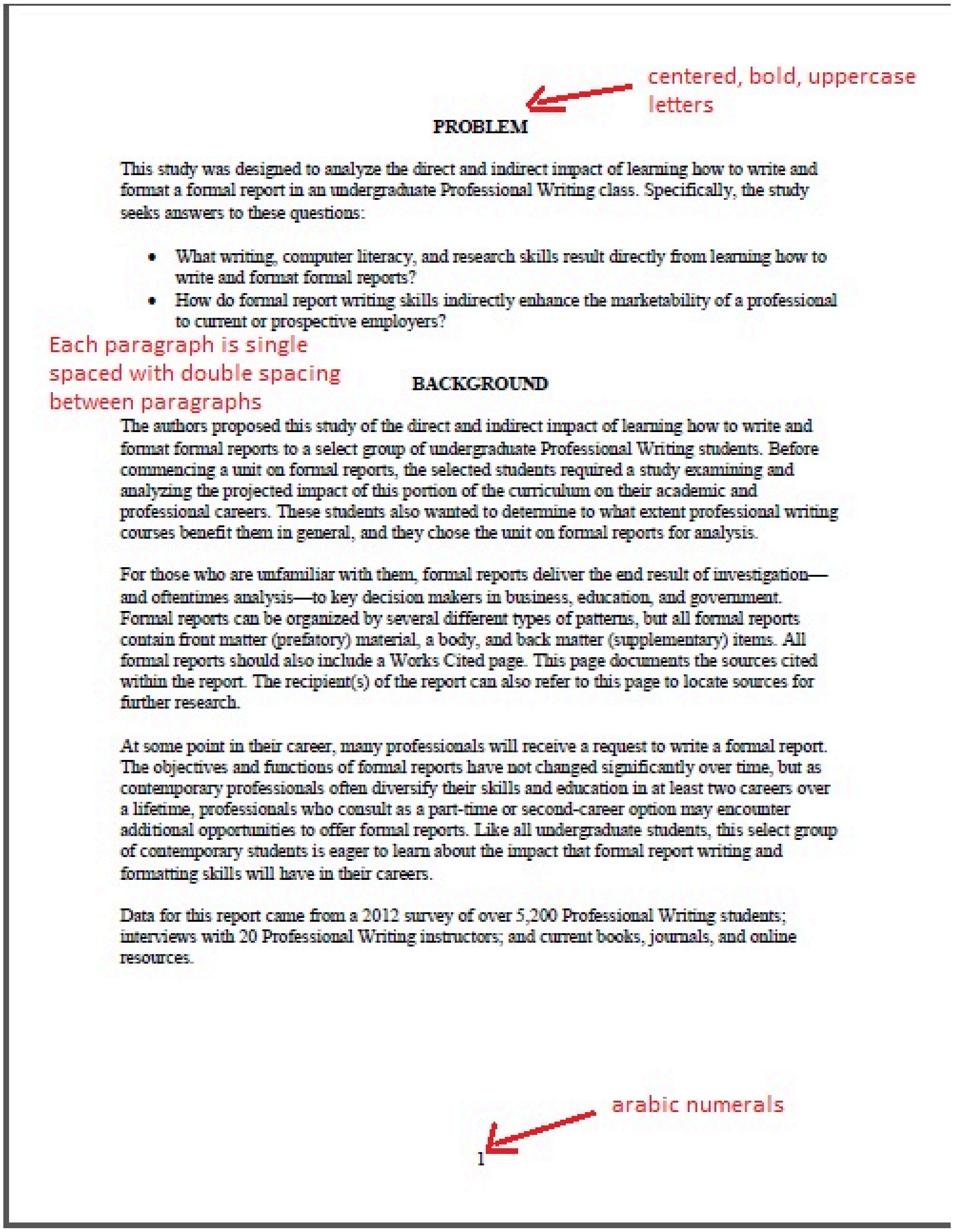
An executive summary is usually ten percent of the length of the report. For example, a ten-page report should offer a one-page summary. A 100-page report should feature a summary that is approximately ten pages.

The executive summary is usually seen as the most important part of the report, and it should be written last. When you're writing the executive summary, imagine that you're sitting across from your most important audience member. If you only have a few minutes to talk to them, what do you want them to know? What would be most persuasive?

Introduction

The body of a formal report begins with an introduction. The introduction sets the stage for the report, clarifies what need(s) motivated it, and helps the reader understand what structure the report will follow.

Most report introductions address the following elements: background information, problem or purpose, significance, scope, methods, organization, and sources. As you may have noticed, some parts of a formal report fulfill similar purposes. Information from the letter of transmittal and the executive summary may be repeated in the introduction. Reword the information in order to avoid sounding repetitive.



PROBLEM

This study was designed to analyze the direct and indirect impact of learning how to write and format a formal report in an undergraduate Professional Writing class. Specifically, the study seeks answers to these questions:

- What writing, computer literacy, and research skills result directly from learning how to write and format formal reports?
- How do formal report writing skills indirectly enhance the marketability of a professional to current or prospective employers?

BACKGROUND

The authors proposed this study of the direct and indirect impact of learning how to write and format formal reports to a select group of undergraduate Professional Writing students. Before commencing a unit on formal reports, the selected students required a study examining and analyzing the projected impact of this portion of the curriculum on their academic and professional careers. These students also wanted to determine to what extent professional writing courses benefit them in general, and they chose the unit on formal reports for analysis.

For those who are unfamiliar with them, formal reports deliver the end result of investigation—and oftentimes analysis—to key decision makers in business, education, and government. Formal reports can be organized by several different types of patterns, but all formal reports contain front matter (prefatory) material, a body, and back matter (supplementary) items. All formal reports should also include a Works Cited page. This page documents the sources cited within the report. The recipient(s) of the report can also refer to this page to locate sources for further research.

At some point in their career, many professionals will receive a request to write a formal report. The objectives and functions of formal reports have not changed significantly over time, but as contemporary professionals often diversify their skills and education in at least two careers over a lifetime, professionals who consult as a part-time or second-career option may encounter additional opportunities to offer formal reports. Like all undergraduate students, this select group of contemporary students is eager to learn about the impact that formal report writing and formatting skills will have in their careers.

Data for this report came from a 2012 survey of over 5,200 Professional Writing students; interviews with 20 Professional Writing instructors; and current books, journals, and online resources.

1

Figure 11.3 Introduction Page [Image Description]

To begin this section, type "BACKGROUND" or "INTRODUCTION" in all uppercase letters. This functional head should be followed by the information specified above (i.e., background information, problem or purpose, etc.). You do not need to utilize any first-level headings in this section.Because this section includes background information, it would be the appropriate place to address the needs of audiences that may need additional knowledge about the topic. Provide definitions of technical terms and instruction about the overall project if necessary. If you are uncertain if your audience needs a particular piece of information, go ahead and include it; it's better to give your reader a little bit too much background than not enough.

Discussion of Findings

The Discussion of Findings section presents the evidence for your conclusions.

This key section should be carefully organized to enhance readability.

Useful organizational patterns for report findings include but are not limited to:

- Best Case/Worst Case
- Compare/Contrast
- Chronology
- Geography
- Importance
- Journalism Pattern

Use a Best Case/Worst Case organizational pattern when you think that the audience may lack interest in the topic. When examining a topic with clear alternatives to your proposed solution, consider using a Compare/Contrast pattern. Geographical patterns work effectively for topics that are discussed by location.

When describing the organization of the report in the first paragraph, broadly identify how the material in the report is organized rather than state that the report uses a specific pattern (e.g. Chronology, Geography). For example, write, "The research findings address curriculum trends in three provinces: (a) British Columbia, (b) Alberta, and (c) Ontario," not, "This report uses a geographical organizational pattern."

Follow the first paragraph with a first-level heading. Use first-level headings for all other major parts of this section. First-level headings should appear in bold, uppercase letters. Center first-level headings, but align any second-level headings with the left margin. Type any second-level headings in bold, upper- and lowercase letters.

As you present, interpret, and analyze evidence, consider using both text and graphics. Take into account what will be easiest for your audience to understand.

Include citations for all quoted or paraphrased material from sources as well; check with your organization as to whether they prefer parenthetical citations or footnotes.

Integrating Graphics

Formal report authors use graphics to present data in different forms. Paragraphs of text and complex or numerical data tend to bog readers down, making graphics a beneficial enhancement. Graphics also make data easier to understand, so they sometimes make a stronger impact on the audience.

Knowing when—and how—to effectively employ graphics is the key to successfully integrating them. Keeping the audience in mind is also critical. You will learn more about creating charts and graphs in the chapter on Visual Communication Strategies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations section conveys the key results from the analysis in the discussion of findings section. Up to this point, readers have carefully reviewed the data in the report; they are now logically prepared to read the report's conclusions and recommendations.

Type "CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS" in all uppercase letters. Follow this functional head with the conclusions of the report. The conclusions should answer any research questions that were posed earlier in the report. Present the conclusions in an enumerated or bulleted list to enhance readability.

Recommendations offer a course of action, and they should answer any problem or research questions as well. Think back to the expectations of your audience. Have all of their requirements been addressed?

Works Cited

All formal reports should include a works cited page; his page documents the sources cited within the report. The recipient(s) of the report can also refer to this page to locate sources for further research.

It is acceptable to follow MLA (Modern Language Association), CMS (Chicago Manual of Style), or APA (American Psychological Association) documentation style for entries on this page. Arrange all sources alphabetically. Refer to the latest edition of the appropriate style handbook for more information about how to format entries for print and electronic sources on the Works Cited page

Conclusion

While some of the formatting rules may seem tedious at first, they are necessary in order for your audience to better understand the report. Using a regulated format allows for a more universal organization that everyone will understand. Being aware of your audience's needs and expectations will allow for a strong report that will satisfy your employee and demonstrate your competence in your field.

Test Your Knowledge

Understanding the parts of the report can be challenging, so test your knowledge by dragging the part of the report to its definition.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=572

Image Description

Figure 11.1 image description: This is a diagram of a report title page. Leave 2 inches between the top and the title of the report (which should be in uppercase letters), then write in the middle of the page who the report was prepared for. 3/4 of the way down the page, say who the report was prepared for. Then write the date submitted. [Return to Figure 11.1]

Figure 11.2 image description: A sample table of contents and List of Figures. Use uppercase letters for major parts and use leaders to guide the reader's eye to the page numbers. The list of figures should be separate from the table of contents. [Return to Figure 11.2]

Figure 11.3 image description: A sample body page of an introduction. This one is separated into 'PROBLEM' (all in uppercase letters, bold, and in the center) and BACKGROUND. Each paragraph is single spaced with double spacing between paragraphs. [Return to Figure 11.3]

Key Takeaways

- Audience analysis is key to reports. Most reports are modular, which means that they are organized into parts that stand on their own. This helps the reader to look for just the information that's relevant to them.
- Reports have a wide variety of purposes and styles. The three major types are progress reports, recommendation reports and summary reports.
- In a progress report, identify what you've accomplished, listed any problems you've encountered, outline what work still remains and conclude by providing an overview of the project's status and what should be done next.
- A recommendation report is used to help management make decisions. You should identify that a problem or opportunity exists and your organization should take it seriously, that you've done the research necessary to solve the problem, that your research and expertise has led you to a solution, and that this solution is the best one, and that you're aware of any risks and have a plan for them.
- A summary report gives management information. The main point is that you've done enough research, have used enough sources and have organized them in an appropriate manner.
- Formal reports usually have an executive summary, an introduction, a body (which might be separated into background, methods, results, and analysis), a conclusions/recommendations section, references, and an appendix.

Activities For Reflection

Exercises For Reflection

1. Write a paragraph connecting Brenda Knights' narrative to the rest of the chapter or to your own experience.
2. Look online to find a report. See if you can identify the parts of the report that we've discussed. If it's organized in a different way, why do you think that is? What is the author trying to accomplish?
3. Find an essay or project that you've done in another class. Try writing a short Executive Summary for it. How did writing an Executive Summary change the way you looked at the material? How did you decide what to put in the Executive Summary?
4. Find a famous report online, such as The Mueller Report or the Final Report of the National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. What tone does the report have? How does it try to persuade its audience? How does it use evidence?

Attribution

CHAPTER 12: VISUAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

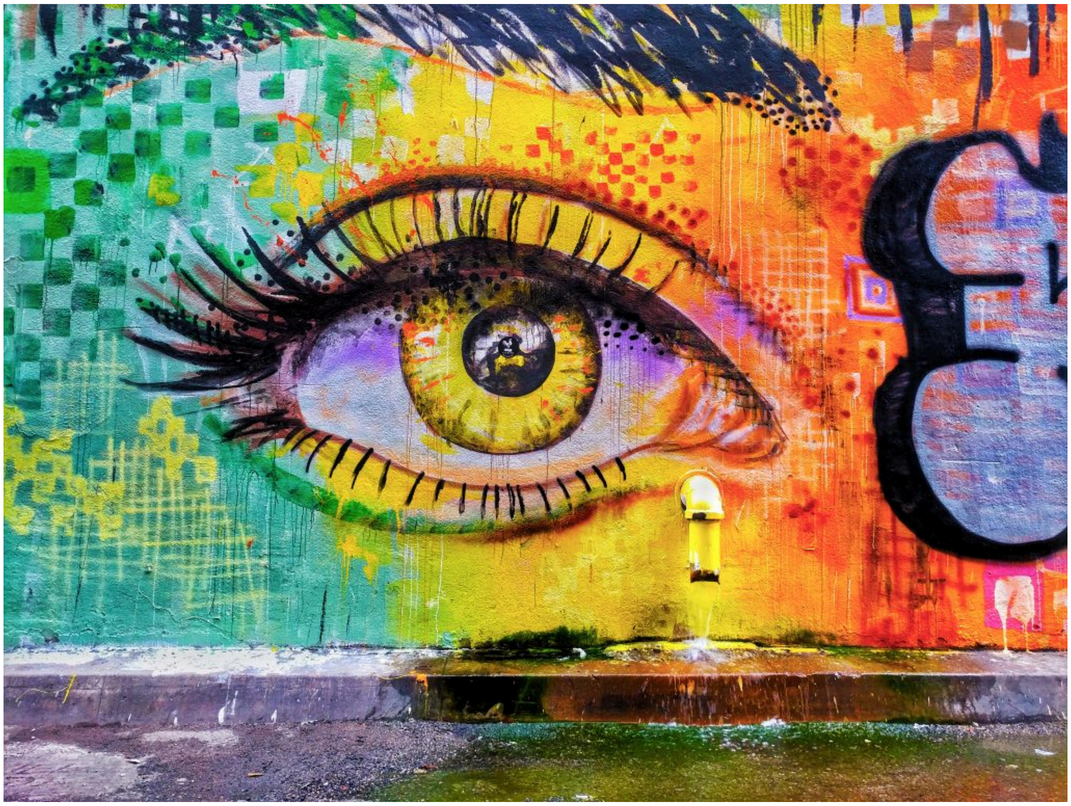


Photo by ???.?.?. ‖ .? on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Learn how audience analysis impacts visual design.
- Explore types of graphics.
- Use Gestalt Theory to understand why some visuals are more effective than others.
- Learn how to choose a graphic to fit your purpose.
- Learn how to integrate your graphic into a document and cite it.
- Learn how to revise your graphic.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

- What sort of visuals do you find persuasive?
- Have you ever encountered a chart or graph that's misleading or unethical? Why was it unethical?
- What does good document design look like to you?
- If you have experience with more than one culture, how does graphic design change between the cultures you've experienced?
- What colours do you feel are calming? What give you energy?
- Would you agree that people expect more visuals these days? Why or why not?

Brenda Knights Narrative

When it comes to communication with the elders, I know that as a group, they're very visual. I would never come in with a Powerpoint with lots of words. But they love a Powerpoint with pictures. It helps them to understand. I might even do a site visit so they can see something in person. It's about knowing how to convey the message to the audience in the best way.

With staff, with internal communications, I find that multiple modes work because people learn in different ways. We have a communications team that's responsible for sharing information. We have TV monitors at our work locations and use Brightsign to put up pictures and little notes about where people can go for more information. That's in our lunch rooms and in our back of house of restaurants, so people can see them. But, we also have a system called Alert Media, where employees can sign up and choose how they want to receive information. Do you want to be contacted by email? By phone? We'll send the information out based on their preferred method.

I think sometimes we under-communicate as opposed to over-communicate. Having those multiple modes is so important. In the case of Kwantlen, we have some people who don't have access to computers, so we'll use paper. We'll deliver to them door to door. It's about knowing your audience. If I send out an email, it's only going to reach half my audience.

When I create visuals, I also make sure I really know the tool. There are new tools like Prezi that are neat, but if you're not fully comfortable, it's going to impact your confidence. And I always think about a backup plan in case things go wrong. I'm very comfortable with Powerpoint, but I bring paper copies because what if there's a power outage. Things go wrong. But if you have a backup, it won't impact your confidence.

With all of my grant writing, I use a lot of pictures. After I complete a grant, I'll go through and ask how can I make this more visual? I find that the images really helps my grant stand out. They're also a reference point. If someone's trying to figure out whether I answered a question, they can use the photo as a cue. They might remember that information is on the page with the picture of a person weaving. So visuals are a good way to help people locate information.

Audience Analysis in Document Design

All documents have a purpose—to persuade, to inform, to instruct, to entertain—but the first and foremost purpose of any document is to be ***read***. Choosing effective document design enhances the ***readability*** or ***usability*** of your document so that the target audience is more likely to get the message you want them to receive, and your document is more likely to achieve your intended purpose.

Choose document design elements that make your document "user friendly" for the target audience. Keep in mind that people do not read technical writing for pleasure; they read it because they have to; it's part of their job. And since "time is money," the longer it takes to read the document, the higher the "cost." Your job as the document designer is to make their reading process as easy, clear, useful and efficient as possible by using all the tools at your disposal.

Designing a document is like designing anything else: you must define your purpose (the goals and objectives you hope your document achieves, as well as the constraints – such as word count and format – that you must abide by), understand your audience (who will read this document and why), and choose design features that will best achieve your purpose and best suite the target audience. In essence, you must understand the **Rhetorical Situation** (see Ch. 3: Context, Audience, Purpose). in which you find yourself: *Who is communicating with whom about what and why*? What kind of document design and formatting can help you most effectively convey the desired message to that audience? You want to use the most effective rhetorical strategies at your disposal; document design is one of those strategies.

We can think of document design in a couple of ways. In the chapter on Organization, we thought about how to organize our ideas through paragraphs, headings, lists and other organizational aids. Now, let's think about creating charts and graphs, and making overall strong design choices.

Types of Graphics

Before getting into details on creating, formatting, and incorporating graphics, consider the types and their functions. You can use graphics to represent the following elements in your writing:

- **Objects** – If you're describing a fuel-injection system, you'll probably need a drawing or diagram of the thing. If you are explaining how to graft a fruit tree, you'll need some illustrations of how that task is done. Photographs, drawings, diagrams, maps, and schematics are the types of graphics that show objects.
- **Numbers –** If you're discussing the rising cost of housing in Vancouver, you could use a table with the columns being for five-year periods since 1970; the rows could be for different types of housing. You could show the same data in the form of bar charts, pie charts, or line graphs. Tables, bar charts, pie charts, and line graphs are some of the principal ways to show numerical data.
- **Concepts** – If you want to show how your company is organized, such as the relationships of the different departments and officials, you could set up an organization chart, which is boxes and circles connected with lines showing how everything is hierarchically arranged and related. This would be an example of a graphic for a concept; this type depicts nonphysical, conceptual things and their relationships.
- **Words** – Graphics can be used to depict words. You've probably noticed how some textbooks may put key definitions in a box, maybe with different colour in the background. The same can be done with key points or extended examples.

Creating Accessible Graphics

Graphics are a key way to persuade and inform your audience, so you'll want to make sure that everyone can benefit from them. If you haven't written alt text for your photos, for example, someone using a screen reader couldn't understand them. Choosing the wrong colour palate would make it hard for someone who's colourblind (or who's viewing the material in black and white) to understand your graphics. Choosing a colour that has a negative association in another culture might also give readers a negative impression of your graphics.

Karwai Pun, who works for the U.K. Home Office, has created a series of posters to show how to design accessible graphics. You'll notice that a lot of the advice works for all users. Take a moment to scroll through these graphics and see how you can apply what you've learned when creating charts and graphs in the rest of the chapter.

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This Do's And Don'ts Of Designing Accessible Services page also contains plain text versions of the posters.

Gestalt Theory

Graphic design can be a source of conflict in some workplaces. People often have strong opinions about what they like and dislike when it comes to visuals. We go by our gut feeling. But, these gut feelings are highly subjective and based in our individual context. This can make it hard to fairly evaluate graphics when we're not the target audience. Sometimes, it helps to have some language to talk about design choices.

Gestalt Theory is framework of understanding how people look at visuals as a whole. It was developed in the 1920s by the German psychologists Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler, and Kurt Koffka. The term Gestalt means *unified whole.* Gestalt works because the mind seeks to organize visual information. There are six basic Gestalt principles: (1) similarity, (2) continuation, (3) closure, (4) proximity, (5) figure/ground, and (6) symmetry and order.

Similarity

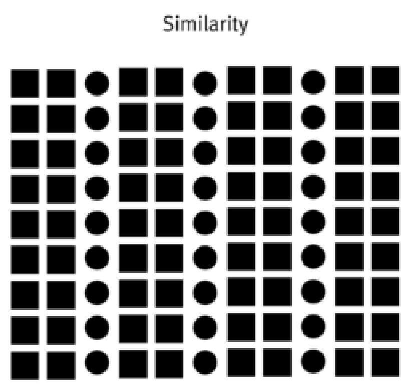

Figure 12.1 Similarity

When visual elements have a similar shape or look as one another, a viewer will often connect the discrete components and see a pattern. This effect can be used to create a single illustration, image, or message from a series of separate elements. Basically, if something has he same shape, colour, size or texture, humans will see them as linked. For example, every 'Questions for Reflection' section in this book have the same colour, shape and layout. If you start using a particular font and size for a heading, you should continue the pattern so that readers aren't confused.

Continuation

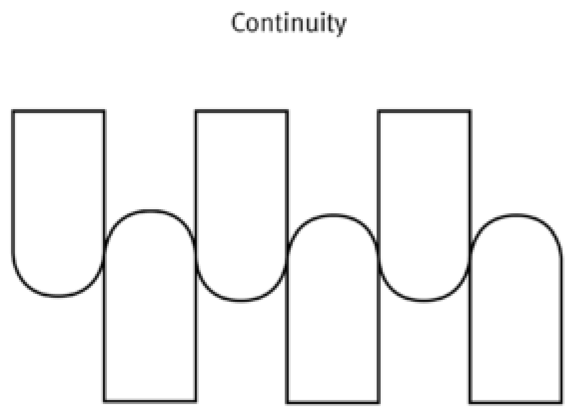

Figure 12.2 Continuity [Image Description]

Continuation is the tendency of the mind to see a single continuous line of connection rather than discrete components (see Figure 12.2). The eye is drawn along a path, line, or curve, as long as there is enough proximity between objects to do so. This tendency can be used to point toward another element in the composition, or to draw the eye around a composition. The eye will continue along the path or direction suggested by the composition even when the composition ends, continuing beyond the page dimensions.

To understand this principle, think about this famous optical illusion, which is a drawing of a tree that has several faces hidden in it. You're able to see the faces because your mind "continues" the lines to complete the shape of the face.

Closure

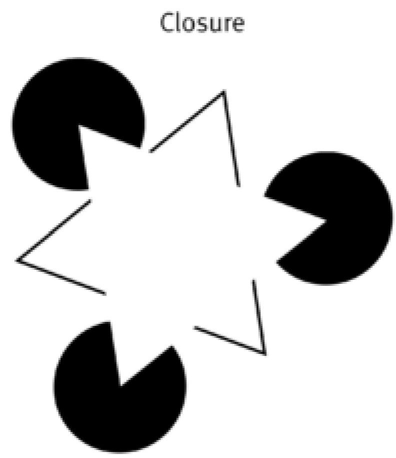

Figure 12.3 Closure

Closure is a design technique that uses the mind's tendency to complete incomplete shapes (see Figure 12.3). The principle works if the viewer is given enough visual information to perceive a complete shape in the negative space. In essence, the mind 'closes' a form, object, or composition. In the example above, the triangle is formed by the viewer's mind, which wants to close the shape formed by the gaps and spaces of the adjacent circles and lines. The partial triangle, outlined in black also hints at the missing shape. The above optical illusion is also an example of closure, because your mind 'closes' the head shape.

Proximity

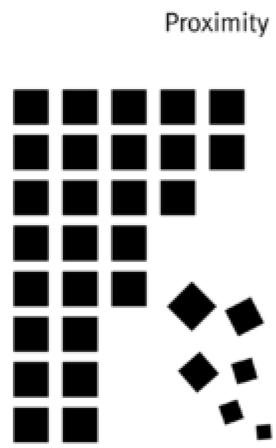

Figure 12.4 Proximity

Proximity is an arrangement of elements that creates an association or relationship between them (see Figure 12.4). If individual elements are similar, they will probably be perceived first as a whole and second as discrete components. If, like the example above, some of the components form to create a large 'whole,' similar elements positioned away from the main shape will also be associated with the large shape. In this case, the viewer interprets them as falling off or away from the main shape. The shapes used do not have to be geometric to create the effect of proximity. Any components that are similar in shape, colour, texture, size, or other visual attribute can achieve proximity.

Thinking about proximity helps you to think about how your audience is finding relationships between the parts of your document. For example, if a photo is under a headline in a newspaper, the audience will associate the two elements. Many of the headlines contained in this list of famous newspaper gaffes, for example, are proximity errors.

Figure/Ground

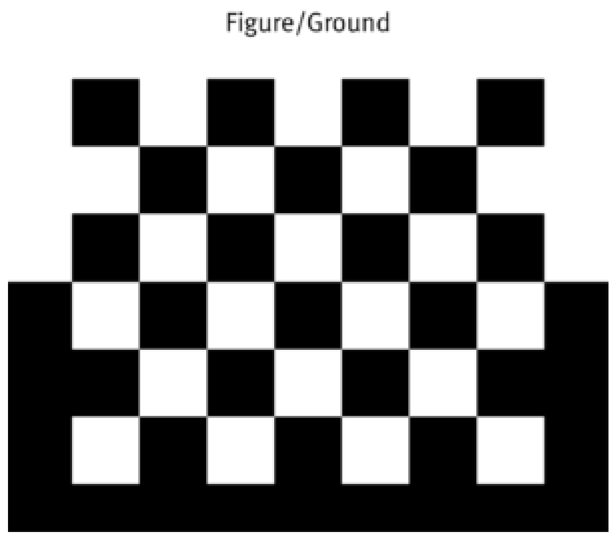

Figure 12.5 Figure/Ground

Figure/ground segregation refers to the contrast between the foreground and background of an image. Graphic designers often use this principle to design negative space around an object. The area where it's most commonly used is when laying text over an image. If there's not enough contrast between the figure and the ground, the reader will not be able to read the text.

Symmetry and Order

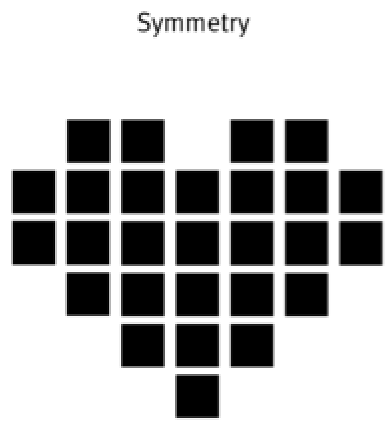

Figure 12.6 Symmetry

Symmetry and order follow the premise that a composition should not create a sense of disorder or imbalance (see Figure 12.6), because the viewer will waste time trying to mentally reorder it rather than focus on the embedded content. The photographic example in Figure 12.7 is composed symmetrically and allows the viewer to concentrate on the figure in the centre. Achieving symmetry in a composition also gives the composition balance and a feeling of harmony.

Figure 12.7 Example of symmetry and order [Image Description]

To see Gestalt Theory in action, browse this image of a 1950s movie festival poster. See how many principles you can find, then click on the hotspots to see some of the principles.

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Image Description

Figure 12.2 image description: A series of rounded rectangles lined up to create a continuous curvy line across the shapes to illustrate the principle of continuity. [Return to Figure 12.2]

Figure 12.7 image description: A poster for the Chicago World's Fair, which has a strong sense of symmetry in its composition. There is a big tower stretching across the middle of the page and two smaller towers of equal lengths on each side of it. [Return to Figure 12.7]

Working With Graphics

Graphics should never be for decoration. Instead, they should have a clear purpose and help the reader to understand something in your document that would be difficult to show with text alone. For that reason, you'll need to take some extra steps to help your audience use the graphic effectively.

Pick The Right Graphic For Your Purpose

Different graphics have different functions, so you should choose one that meets your needs. For example, let's say that you've been asked to write a report recommending whether your company should voluntarily recall a product. You might insert a photo of the damaged product so that your readers can see proof that the damage is extensive. You might also include a diagram of the product to help the reader understand why the malfunction occurs. If you want your reader to understand that the product has been receiving a lot of customer complaints, you might create a bar chart that compares the number of complaints received by your product to those of similar products that you sell.

When selecting a chart, graph or table, you'll want to pick the one that fits the **relationship** you're trying to show. For example, if you wanted to show how something changed over time, you'd use a line graph. If you wanted to compare different numbers, you'll use a bar graph. If you wanted to show the percentages of a whole, you'd use a pie chart.

This collection of images will help you to see some popular types of charts and graphs. For a version that's accessible to print documents and screenreaders, the information is also repeated below.

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Types of Charts

- **Line Graph:** Shows how something changed over time. Shows trends.
- **Table:** Shows a large amount of numerical data, especially when there are many variables.
- **Bar Graph:** Helps your audience compare numbers, shows how items relate to one another.
- **Pie chart:** Shows the parts of a whole. Note: only use this when your data adds up to 100%. For example, if you did a survey and allowed participants to choose more than one option, a pie chart wouldn't be appropriate.
- **Checklist:** Helps readers understand the steps in a process and keep track of what they have completed.
- **Flowchart:** Helps readers understand the steps in a process/procedure
- **Infographic:** Makes a lot of data accessible or entertaining to a general audience.
- **Venn Diagram:** Shows how different ideas or elements overlap.
- **Organizational tree:** Shows a hierarchy, such as the structure of an organization.
- **Gantt Chart:** Shows a project schedule, including what tasks must be completed and when.

Make Your Graphic

Once you understand your audience and the purpose of your graphic, it's time to create it. Many people create charts in Excel, Word, Google Docs, or a free chart generator. Make sure that you label your chart clearly.

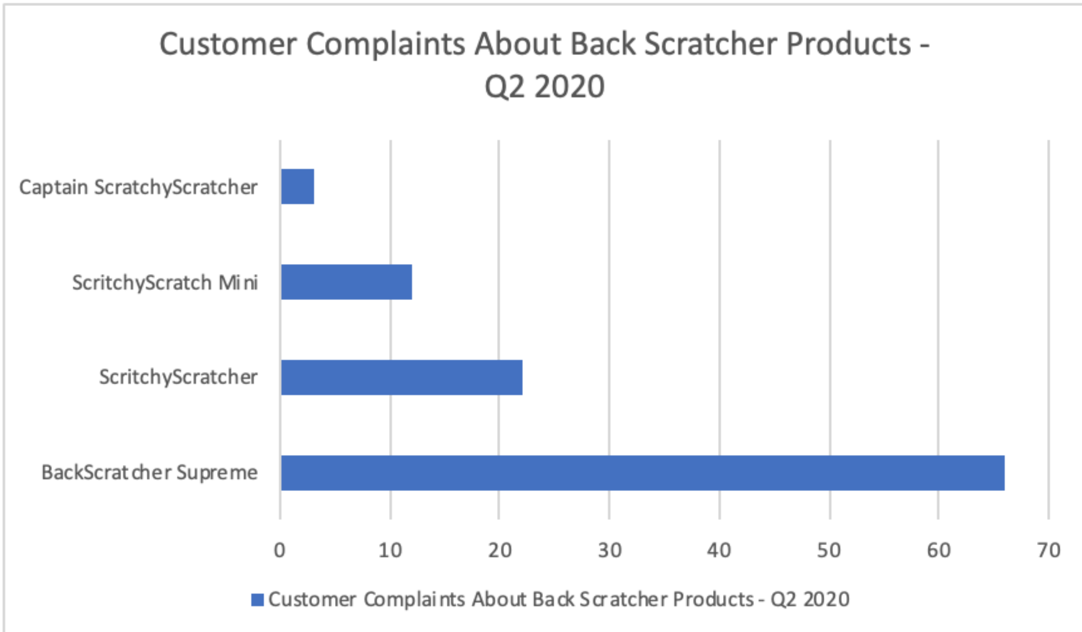
Integrate Your Graphic

You chose your graphic because it shows a relationship, but unless you help your reader out, they might not see the same connection that you see. Insert your graphic close to the text that discusses it, though you should make sure that your graphic fits on one page. For example, if you've written a paragraph about how the defective product has three times more customer complaints than similar documents, you would put the bar graph that shows this data directly below.

The first mention of a graphic is called a lead-in statement. It's also recommended to also use a lead-out statement after the graphic. This is a statement that connects the figure to the material that follows.

Here's an example:

> Our research shows that the BackScratcher Supreme received three times more complaints than our other backscratchers. This bar graph shows the number of customer complaints we received last quarter for each product.
>
> **Figure 12.8: Customer Complaints About Back Scratcher Products** *[Image Description]*



As you can see, no other back scratcher comes close for the number of complaints. This suggests that the matter is systemic, not just a few isolated incidents.

By clearly preparing the reader for the graphic, then giving further details, the reader knows how to interpret the chart.

Label The Graphic

As you can see above, it's also important to clearly title the graphic so that your reader knows what to expect. The graphic above has a clear, precise title. It's also labeled 'Figure 11.1. This means that it's the first graphic in the 11th chapter of the report.

Add Alt Text for the Graphic

As we said above, your graphic should be accessible. If you're inserting your graphic as an image, you can add alt text. Describe the graphic so that someone who can't see it can have a similar experience. If your alt text is long, you might include an image description in the caption, as I've done above.

Cite the Graphic

Just as you would cite and reference a paraphrase or a direct quote, so too must you cite and reference any graphics that you use that were created by someone else or that were based on someone else's data. Indicate the source of any graphic or data you have borrowed. Whenever you borrow a graphic or data from some other source, document that fact in the figure title using an in-text citation. You should also include the reference information in the reference list.

This reference guide from SFU tells you how to cite graphs, charts, photos and other images in a variety of settings.

Image Description

Figure 12.8 image description:

A horizontal bar graph that compares customer complaints about back scratcher products in Q2 of 2020. Showing that the BackScratcher Supreme had 66 complaints, compared to 22 for ScritchyScratcher, 12 for ScritchyScratch Mini and 3 for Captain ScritchyScratcher. [Return to Figure 12.8]

Revising Graphics

Just like written text, graphics have to be revised. The following checklist will help you revise your visual communication to make sure that it's as effective as possible.

Putting the Pieces Together

Revision Checklist

1. First Pass: Document-level Review

- Review specifications to ensure that you have included all required content.
- Make sure your title, headings, subheading, and table/figure labels are clear and descriptive. Headings should clearly and efficiently indicate the content of that section; Figure and Table captions should clearly describe the content of the visual.
- Make sure visual elements have appropriate passive space around them.
- Make sure ideas flow in a logical order and explanations come in a timely manner. Make sure visuals illustrate your textual information.
- Write "Reader-Centred" prose: determine the relationship between your purpose in writing and your reader's purpose in reading. Give your readers the information they want and need to get from your document as efficiently as possible.
- Make sure you are using an appropriate tone (neutral, objective, constructive, formal)

2. Second Pass: Paragraph-level Review

- Make sure each paragraph begins with a topic sentence that previews and/or summarizes the content to come.
- Add coherent transitions to link one sentence logically to the next.
- Cut unnecessary or irrelevant information.
- Avoid overly long or short paragraphs (5-10 lines long is a reasonable guideline).

3. Third Pass: Sentence-level Review

- Watch sentence length; consider revising sentences longer than 25 words. Vary the length and structure of sentences.
- Look at the ratio of *verbs:number of words per sentence*. Generally, the more verbs/words in the sentence, the better the sentence.
- Use concrete, strong, active verbs – avoid vague, passive, verbs and "is/are/was/were/being" whenever feasible (move the –*tion* and –*ment* words up the verb scale).
- Create a clear Actor/Action relationship (Subject-Verb).
- Verbs like "make" "do" 'have" and "get" have many possible meanings. Try to find more precise ones.
- In general, keep subject and verb close together, and keep verb near the beginning of the sentence.

4. Fourth Pass: Word-level Review

- Use concrete, specific, precise words; avoid vague, abstract, generalizing words.
- Match your vocabulary to your audience: experts can tolerate complex information with a lot of terminology; general readers require simpler, less detailed descriptions/explanations.
- Use clear, plain language rather than pompous diction; write to **express**, not impress.
- Avoid "sound bite" phrases that have no real meaning; use a single word instead of a phrase whenever possible.
- Avoid clichés, colloquial expressions, and slang.
- Use second person (you) pronouns carefully and sparingly.
- Avoid "ad speak" – don't sound like you are "selling" something; use objective, measurable descriptors.

Key Takeaways

- Visual design is important because people don't read workplace documents for fun. They read them because they have to. Your job is to make documents as readable and usable as possible.
- Before you design your document, define your purpose and think about your audience.
- To make sure that everyone can benefit from your graphics, consider accessibility.
- Gestalt Theory helps us to think about how the document functions as a whole. The six principles of Gestalt Theory are: similarity, continuation, closure, proximity, figure/ground segregation and symmetry.
- When designing charts and graphs, think about what relationship you're trying to show.
- It's important to revise graphics and other document design elements in the same way that it's important to revise what you write.

Activities For Further Reflection

Activities For Reflection

1. Choose an assignment that you've created in this class or another class that doesn't currently have a chart or graph. Find some data that could benefit from being a chart or graph. Create a chart or graph that illustrates the data, making sure to choose the correct relationship. For example, you might find a sentence in an essay you wrote that says that 10% of Millenials don't own a smart phone. You could show this visually using a pie chart.
2. Find an infographic online. Then, evaluate it according to what you've just learned. Write a short paragraph that answers the following questions: How does it present data? Is it easy to understand? Is it ethical? Can you understand where the data came from?
3. Find a poster in your campus or workplace, or out in the community. Take a photo of it, then evaluate it according to Gestalt Theory. Can you identify all of the principles?
4. Choose a website that you like to visit, then use what you learned about accessibility to evaluate how accessible the website's visuals are. Write a short email (you don't have to send it) to the website's owner suggesting three changes they could make to improve the accessibility of their visuals.

Attribution

CHAPTER 13: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

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In this section you will:

- Learn how oral presentations are important in your working life.
- Learn how to advocate for your point of view through public speaking.
- Explore ethical communication decisions.
- Develop some strategies for public speaking anxiety.
- Explore some ways to give effective oral presentations.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

- Think back to the most impactful speaker you've ever encountered? What made that person impactful? How did they deliver the message?
- What emotions come up when you think about giving an oral presentation? Why do you feel that way?
- If you have experience with a different language or culture, what similarities and differences do you notice in oral presentations across cultures?
- In the age of the internet when we can write down everything we need to say, create videos and create graphics easily, why do we still have oral presentations? What role do they serve?
- How do you use storytelling in your daily life? Do you consider yourself an effective storyteller?
- If you have experience with a different language or culture, what similarities and differences do you notice in storytelling across cultures?

Brenda Knights Narrative

We have many community members who work in our places of business. We expect employees to follow company policy. If they're not following company policy, we have to follow through with progressive discipline at times. What that employee goes home and tells their family might be different, but we have to maintain confidentiality and professionalism and can't convey what happened. A family member might be really upset because they're hearing one side of the story. The strategy that I've used is recognizing that sometimes, no matter what you say, you're not going to appease them or change their mind. But it's important to recognize them, hear them out, thank them for sharing and leave it at that. It's not always about fixing the problem right there. Sometimes people just want to be heard. Eventually, the truth has a way of revealing itself. I've found that over time, people figure it out. As a leader, you have to keep that confidentiality. Even if you are tempted to defend your position, you have to realize it's not the most appropriate time or place.

That can apply in any place of business. As you move up in the company, you're privileged to learn more and more information that can't be shared. It can become difficult because you you might feel that sharing information would resolve a conflict or make someone understand, but you might also be putting the company at risk. As a leader, if you're always trying to come forward with all the answers, you may be seen as defensive as opposed to professional. As people get to know you as a leader, if you're consistent and known as someone who's confidential and professional, people will want to work with you and will trust you. I've experienced that with elders. I've talked to an elder and even though I don't understand everything, I'm astute enough to know that there's more to the story that I don't have access to, and I trust that.

You need to know who's in the room, too, and whether you need to speak or if someone else should speak. If I'm in the room and our chief is there, the audience wants to hear from the chief, not from me. Out of respect, since she has a senior role, I'm going to defer to her. In a smaller setting, I've had a person direct a question to me, and even though I can answer it, I will turn to Chief Marilyn and give her that respect and that opportunity to speak first. When you don't do that, you can come across as over ambitious. It's really important to know when it's your time to speak and who's the appropriate person to speak. You don't always have to be the one to answer the question.

In our Kwantlen community, we're taught that everyone has a different gift to bring. When it comes to a certain topic, it's okay to defer to the person who is respected in the community as a knowledge keeper. If you do, your information will become more credible and people will buy in to the idea. When you work as a team and put your ego aside and draw on the experts, you realize that you can't be an expert in everything. It doesn't always have to be the leader who speaks on everything and has to be knowledgeable on everything.

I always think about our traditional teachings. We were taught as Indigenous people to respect and listen to our elders. It's not that when you reach a certain age, you automatically become an elder. There's a purpose for that. Elders are people who have knowledge that they can pass on. If you stop and take the time to listen, there's often a great deal of information that you can get. Often, we have been taught that it's rude to leave awkward silences, so sometimes we feel that all that time needs to be filled with talking, but it's okay to stop and have silence and reflect, as opposed to always talking. You'll miss out on good information.

Importance of Oral Presentations

In the workplace, and during your university career, you will likely be asked to give oral presentations. An oral presentation is a key persuasive tool. If you work in marketing, for example, you will often be asked to “pitch” campaigns to clients. Even though these pitches could happen over email, the face-to-face element allows marketers to connect with the client, respond to questions, demonstrate their knowledge and bring their ideas to life through storytelling.

In this section, we’ll focus on public speaking. While this section focuses on public speaking advocacy, you can bring these tools to everything from a meeting where you’re telling your colleagues about the results of a project to a keynote speech at a conference.

Imagine your favourite public speaker. When Meggie (one of the authors of this section) imagines a memorable speaker, she often thinks of her high school English teacher, Mrs. Permeswaran. You may be skeptical of her choice, but Mrs. Permeswaran captured the students’ attention daily. How? By providing information through stories and examples that felt relatable, reasonable, and relevant. Even with a room of students, Meggie often felt that the English teacher was *just talking to her*. Students worked hard, too, to listen, using note-taking and subtle nods (or confused eyebrows) to communicate that they cared about what was being said.

Now imagine your favourite public speaker. Who comes to mind? A famous comedian like Jen Kirkman? An ac tivist like Laverne Cox? Perhaps you picture Barack Obama. What makes them memorable for you? Were they funny? Relatable? Dynamic? Confident? Try to think beyond *what* they said to *how they made you feel*. What they said certainly matters, but we are often less inclined to remember the *what* without a powerful *how*– how they delivered their message; how their performance implicated us or called us in; how they made us feel or how they asked us to think or act differently.

Laverne Cox speaking at the Missouri Theatre

In this chapter, we provide an introduction to public speaking by exploring what it is and why it’s impactful as a communication process. Specifically, we invite you to consider public speaking as a type of advocacy. When you select information to share with others, you are advocating for the necessity of that information to be heard. You are calling on the audience and calling them in to listen to your perspective. Even the English teacher above was advocating that sentence structure and proper writing were important ideas to integrate. She was a trusted speaker, too, given her credibility.

Before we continue our conversation around advocacy, let’s first start with a brief definition of public speaking.

What's Public Speaking?

In the opening section of this chapter, we asked that you imagine your favourite public speaker, but what qualifies? How do we know when public speaking is happening? This section will briefly define public speaking to provide some working terminology and background information.

In **public speaking**, a speaker attempts to move an audience by advocating for a purposeful message—through informing, persuading, or entertaining—in a particular context. In almost all cases, the speaker is the focus of attention for a specific amount of time. There may be some back-and-forth interaction, such as questions and answers with the audience, but the speaker usually holds the responsibility to direct that interaction either during or after the prepared speech has concluded. As the focus, speakers deliver sound arguments in a well-organized manner. Historically, public speaking was a face-to-face process, but public speaking can now be delivered and viewed digitally.

Broken down, public speaking includes these basic components:

- The sharing of a well-organized, well-supported, message from a designated speaker to an audience;
- In a context;
- Generally prepared;
- With purpose ranging from informative to persuasive to entertaining.

A speaker often feels strongly that the audience would benefit from the message presented. After all, public speaking is purposeful, so giving a speech is the process of providing a group of people with information that is useful and relevant. It may sound like a simple process, but it requires keen delivery – including attention to verbal and nonverbal skills – argument creation, research, and rehearsal to create a captivating experience for your audience. Public speaking is more than a message, it's an experience.

Brené Brown is one speaker that creates an experience for her audience. You may be familiar with her TedTalk, "The Power of Vulnerability" from 2014 (she's done some great stuff since then, too). She created a captivating experience with research around vulnerability, told stories that were intriguing, and used humour to draw the audience in —she advocated for ideas that were made meaningful to and for her audience.

We could, conversely, ask you to imagine a less-captivating public speaker. Sadly, we have these in our minds, too. These are often speakers who didn't deliver information that you were compelled to listen to: they didn't advocate that the information was of importance to you, to your community, or to other communities. Perhaps they gave you information that you already knew or had been disproven. Put simply: they didn't create a meaningful experience.

What you advocate for and how you deliver your message are crucial to creating a captivating experience for your audience. Tracing public speaking back to its roots will underscore the historical relevance of public speaking as a form of advocacy.

Public Speaking As Advocacy

Public speaking as a form of advocacy can be traced through the history of oral communication. Public speaking, or "rhetoric" as it was originally called, has long been considered a method in Western culture of building community, facilitating self-governance, sharing important ideas, and creating policies. In fact, these are the reasons the ancient Athenian Greeks emphasized that all citizens should be educated in rhetoric: so that they could take part in civil society. Rhetoric was a means to discuss and advocate civically with other citizens and community members.

Public speaking is still seen as a key form of **civic engagement**. Being a good civil servant means listening to information that's relevant to your community/communities and using public outlets—voting, petitioning, or speaking— to participate in democracy. Public speaking becomes a necessary outlet to advocate for issues within and for your community – it's a way to become civically engaged.

Public speaking can and should remain invested in advocacy, but "advocacy" can sound slightly intimidating.

To clarify, think about **advocacy** as one or more of the following components:

- Advocacy is the promotion of an idea, cause, concept, or information
- Advocacy includes actions toward a specific goal
- Advocacy finds solutions to current problems

To advocate is to say "this idea matters" and "I invite each of us to think more deeply about this information." This could happen by discussing an idea that you believe a community needs to hear or by overtly asking audiences to change their mind about a controversial topic. When you make a selection to provide a perspective, you are actively supporting (or advocating for) that perspective. Of all the arguments, topics, or insights in the world, you have selected one – you've selected an advocacy.

Click for More

Exploring Advocacy

You may be wondering, "if advocacy means the promotion of a cause that affects communities, how do I figure out a cause I find worthy to speak about?"

Believe us, you've done this before.

When is the last time you advocated for a certain perspective? You may have shared an article online that suggested boycotting a musical artist. Perhaps you backed your sister up in an argument with your parents about curfews. You may be thinking about arguing with a friend to boycott fast food chains or asking an important question through social media. These are forms of advocacy. You become passionate about these topics and they motivate your engagement around these issues.

Public speaking asks that you expand those moments beyond interpersonal or social media exchanges to include a broader audience where you're the designated speaker.

You might, for example, be asked to represent a student organization on campus. You would be responsible for advocating on behalf of that group – a responsibility that can be exhilarating and meaningful. You care about the organization –its mission, ideas, and people in it—so you want to successfully advocate for the group's ideas.

When we advocate, we are balancing our own individual interests with the interests or goals of a larger community or group. We can sometimes over-rely on the first half: our own interests, and forget about the latter: the interests of the larger community. Oftentimes, what we advocate for or about can impact others – both directly (like your student organization) and indirectly (like language choices that are used).

Therefore, advocating for ideas through public speaking has personal and social functions. Public speaking as advocacy will guide our approach through this book, and we encourage you to begin considering your areas of advocacy. There is a lot at stake when we advocate, so we must strive to be ethical communicators.

Communicating Ethically

Ethics is the practice of what's right, virtuous, or good (Tompkins, 2011, p. 3). You could likely list a few key ethics that you personally hold. You may view violence as unethical, for example. Ethics are also understood and defined in our own communities. Colleges view plagiarism—or representing someone else's work as our own—as unethical and wrong within the university community (we'll discuss this in later chapters). As public speakers, ethics is central because you are attempting to influence others.

When preparing for a public speech, there are two key communication ethics questions to consider:

First, am I advocating for information and others in ethical ways? Anytime we communicate, including public speaking, the content should be crafted with truthful and honest information. Ethical advocacy might include:

- Presenting sound and truthful information while providing credit to external sources
- Avoiding **defamatory speech**, or a false statement of fact to damage a person's character
- Avoiding **hate speech** or language directed against someone or a community's nationality, race, gender, ability, sexuality, religion or citizenship.
- Avoiding **demagoguery,** or actions that attempt to manipulate by distorting an audience through prejudice and emotion.

Second, am I representing myself in ethical ways? Am I misrepresenting myself? When you ask an individual or a larger audience to listen, you're asking them to trust not just what you say, but trust who you are. You are establishing credibility—or **ethos.** Attempts to establish ethical ethos might include:

- Showing character by, in word and action, demonstrating honesty and integrity.
- Being prepared.
- Avoiding misrepresentations of your experience, expertise, or authority.

If we advocate for ideas with reckless disregard for truth, we are communicating in unethical ways. Instead, we can work to become ethical public speakers that communicate information and present ourselves honestly and transparently.

In addition to ethics, there are three additional principles of communication that are central to a deeper understanding of the communication process and, thus, public speaking. We construct public speeches through communication. Below, we'll outline 3 major considerations about communication that will influence our understanding of ethical public speaking and advocacy: human communication is constitutive, contextual, and cultural.

Communication is Constitutive, Contextual and Cultural

Communication is the basis of human interaction because we use communication to create shared meaning. We negotiate this meaning through **symbols** – a word, icon, gesture, picture, object, etc.—that stand in for and represent a thing or experience. "Dog" is a symbol that represents adorable pets. When you see the symbol "dog," you might picture your own dog, so that symbol has an additional layer of meaning for you. "Dog" also often represents pets as friends (or "humans' best friend!"), so symbols can refer to literal objects or larger ideals and norms – it's what makes communication both fascinating and, at times, complex.

Consider the following: your friend comes over to vent about a current relationship. "I am so annoyed!" they claim. "Charlie really needs to work on her communication skills. She never calls me back."

At first, it may seem that Charlie's *lacking* in communication by not returning phone calls. However, communication isn't secluded to verbal feedback, and it still occurs in our nonverbal symbols, in silence, or in emojis . So, Charlie's still communicating, just not a meaning that your friend is receiving happily.

As this example begins to demonstrate, communication (and, thus, public speaking) is complex, and below we highlight 3 important components of communication, beginning with communication as constitutive.

Constitutive

When we (your authors) were new public speakers, we often failed to take seriously the opportunity of speaking and communicating with others. We would commonly use words or phrases without investigating their impact on audiences or considering what they represented. That's because we falsely viewed ourselves as vessels that transmitted information rather than active creators in our own and other' worldview.

We now know, however, that communication is **constitutive,** meaning that communication creates meaning and, thus, reality (Nicotera, 2009). Rather than merely transmit pre-determined information, what you say matters and makes up our social world. Think back to the example with your friend and Charlie: Charlie's communication was affecting your friend and their perception of Charlie. It affected your friend's world and relationship with Charlie in *real* ways.

This principle is true of public speaking, too. The message that you create in your speech matters, because it both extends others' information (like research) and constructs its own meaning. As communicators and public speakers, realizing that you are creating shared meaning may feel like added responsibility. And it is. It means that we are all responsible in thinking deeply about what we decide to speak about and how we decide to represent those ideas.

Power is thus a core consideration of communication because when we communicate, we are influencing others and selecting certain ways to represent our ideas. When you speak, you are elevating certain perspectives, and those often lead to the empowerment or disempowerment of people, places, things or ideas. Communicating is never neutral because meaning is always being negotiated. When you were a child, for example, a guardian may have looked at you angrily, and you knew to behave or there would be consequences. You are being nonverbally influenced and creating shared meaning with that guardian.

Key Takeaway

Communication is never neutral because meaning is always being negotiated.

Recent debates around school and sports' mascots help demonstrate the role of power in communication. Maine, for example, unanimously banned Indigenous mascots in public schools after tribal communities expressed discomfort in the images (Hauser, 2019). For Indigenous communities, the verbal and visual images were disrespectful representations of their culture – it was communication that created problematic and stereotypical narratives that represented Indigenous cultures is disempowering ways.

Meaning is being constituted (or created) when you're in the audience, too. Because public speaking is an experience in a particular context, audience members also contribute to the meaning being shared. Consider these three scenarios (some of which you may have experienced). While someone is giving a formal speech:

- 3 front-row audience members are sleeping;
- 3 front-row audience members are providing positive, nonverbal feedback and taking notes;
- Someone is vacuuming loudly outside the room during the presentation.

These may sound familiar, and you may even experience these in class! Each scenario, however, does not communicate the same thing and all 3 will affect the public speaking experience – for the speaker and other audience members.

Audience's play a key role in public speaking events

As humans, we are constantly communicating to make meaning with others. Viewing communication as constitutive highlights how these acts create our worldviews, not merely reflect them. In public speaking, then, our advocacies are not just recreating information, but our speeches are active contributors to the world we live in. Our worlds, though, are never universal, and communication is also always contextual.

Information Literacy Pro-Tip: In addition to creating meaning, you will also create original scholarship. You are likely familiar, for example, with citing prominent writers, speakers, or scholars when trying to support an idea in an essay. When you begin giving speeches, you are creating citable information, and your original insights are your own.

Contextual

Like we've mentioned, communication is humans trying to make meaning together. As you've experienced, though, that meaning is not received or understood the same all of the time. That's because communication is **contextual**. It happens in a particular time and place.

Pretend, for example, that you want to break up with your partner. Communicating that desire over text message is a different context then a coffee shop or in a private apartment. As this example demonstrates, context refers to a specific time and place – the literal context. You may decide that a private apartment is more fitting because a coffee shop may lend itself to external noise, changing the vibe, and disrupting your serious talk.

For public speaking, the time and place are similarly key considerations because that context will inform what you say, why, and for how long. Ask yourself,

- Where will I be speaking? To whom?
- What is the purpose?
- When is it taking place?
- Am I delivering the message through a live or mediated channel?

The literal context can have substantial implications for what and how you're able to communicate. For a public speaker, the place and space will dictate your movement, your presentation aids, and/or the length of your speech. To review these concepts, consider Chapter 3.

In addition to the literal context – the time and place – communication occurs within larger dialogues and contexts – historical and cultural. We'll discuss communication as cultural below and Chapter two will dive deeper into analyzing your speaking context, but let's work to understand the larger context here, too.

A communication act – like a speech or interpersonal exchange – occurs in a particular historical context. Have you ever been to a family function where you didn't know that two family members were feuding? Perhaps you loudly commented on their behaviour jokingly, making the room silent and awkward. Unfortunately, you weren't aware of the larger context.

In Canada, major conversations are occurring at municipal, provincial and federal level to address climate change. These conversations may be occurring in your communities, too. If you were discussing or speaking about climate change, being aware of these conversations would situate you to enter the larger context. Are you up-to-date on the scientific findings? Is your community susceptible to certain climate change impacts? What about other communities?

As a communicator and public speaker, being attuned and informed about the larger context is paramount, because it will direct you toward an advocacy. What's relevant? What's important to consider now? What references or examples are timely?

Communication occurs in a context – the literal time and place and the larger historical conversations. The final component of communication is closely connected with context, and below, we explore communication as cultural.

Cultural

Finally, all communication is cultural.

First, let's define culture. **Culture** refers to the collection of language, values, beliefs, knowledge, rituals, and attitudes shared amongst a group ("Culture and Communication," 2002). Your college campus, for example, may have certain cultural elements (like a school song) that band students together toward similar beliefs and values.

Canada, more broadly, has certain cultural characteristics – celebrating Canada Day or being seen as polite and hockey-loving, for example. You don't, however, just belong to one or even two cultures. We are all influenced by multiple cultural norms and values.

Communication is cultural because cultures rely on symbols – the bedrock of communication – to determine the norms, expectations, and values within the group. This means two things:

- First, culture is created through the communication process. In other words, we use communication to negotiate (and create) our cultural values;
- Second, communication reflects the cultural values and norms of the people communicating. We can often glean what cultural values are present by looking at someone's communication.

When we communicate, we are relying on the cultural norms that we've been taught and, by using those symbols, advocating for those ideals.

When you are advocating for an idea and communicating why that idea matters, it's important not to assume that your cultural perspective or location is *the* best or only perspective (it's contextual, remember?!). Instead, you must be reflexive about what norms you are advocating for and how you may be representing topics or ideas from or about other cultures. **Reflexivity** means to critically consider how our values, assumptions, actions, and communication affect others. From a communication perspective, reflexivity acknowledges that your intentions are secondary to the impact that your verbal and nonverbal behavior has on others and on the cultural realities that you create.

Think back to Maine's legislation that prohibits public schools from using Indigenous mascots. In the U.S., free speech is an important cultural value, so many people argue that free speech should protect these mascots and images. For Indigenous communities, however, these images don't accurately represent their cultural ideas and negatively stereotype. Because communication does more than just reflect reality (but creates it, ahem: is constitutive), there is power in the information that's portrayed to others. In this case, we should reflexively ask: Are the images representing our or other cultures ethically? Are we communicating in a way that disempowers others?

These questions are important because communication affects our perceptions of other cultures and cultural norms. We not only learn our own cultural values through communication, we also learn about other cultures through communication, in positive and negative ways. If you grew up in New Westminster, you might have been told negative stories about Surrey. This likely impacted your perception of Surrey and even the people who live there.

This may seem like a silly example, but it demonstrates how communication is the bedrock of cultural meaning – both our own and others.

Communication, as a process of creating shared meaning, is constituted (creating the worlds in which we live), contextual (occurs in a time and place), and cultural (shared rituals, norms, values). These three characteristics are true of all communication – interpersonal, organizational, intercultural, and digital, to name a few.

As public speakers, these components guide our decisions on what information to advocate for and to whom. They ask us to consider, what's at stake in the perspective that I'm introducing? How will it influence my audience and my community? How am I entering a relevant conversation? What world views am I supporting and creating?

Public speaking is a privilege – not everyone, every day is given an audience of people willing to listen to their ideas. So it's important, it matters, and it's meaningful.

So far, we've discussed public speaking as a form of advocacy and identified some core communication principles to keep in mind. There is one additional (albeit unwelcome) component that defines many speakers' experience with public speaking: apprehension. In the final major section of this chapter, we walk through communication apprehension.

Public Speaking Anxiety

Admittedly, thinking about advocacy or advocating for ideas can sound intimidating. Even experienced professors can feel anxiety before teaching. To advocate or present information to an audience – some more willing to listen actively than others – is a big responsibility. Understandably, this can lead speakers to experiencing apprehension while preparing and delivering a presentation. In this section, we explore public speaking apprehension while providing some useful tips to manage anxiety.

Public speaking apprehension is fear associated with giving a public speech. This could occur prior to or during a presentation. It's common to hear that public speaking is a fear, but why are so many people fearful to speak in public?

The first is fear of failure. This fear can result from several sources: real or perceived bad experiences involving public speaking in the past, lack of preparation, lack of knowledge about public speaking, not knowing the context, and uncertainty about one's task as a public speaker (such as being thrown into a situation at the last minute).

The second fear is fear of rejection of one's self or one's ideas. This one is more serious in some respects. You may feel rejection because of fear of failure, or you may feel that the audience will reject your ideas, or worse, you as a person.

Scholars at the University of Wisconsin-Stout ("Public Speaking Anxiety," 2015) explain that fear in public speaking can also result from one of several misperceptions:

- "all or nothing" thinking—a mindset that if your speech falls short of "perfection" (an unrealistic standard), then you are a failure as a public speaker;
- overgeneralization—believing that a single event (such as failing at a task) is a universal or "always" event; and
- fortune telling—the tendency to anticipate that things will turn out badly, no matter how much practice or rehearsal is done.

One common belief that undergirds our fear is that we often hold ourselves to "expert-level" standards. We learn that audience members look for proof of our credibility, and new public speakers may wonder, "why am I credible?" or "why should someone listen to me?" At the beginning of this chapter, we asked that you imagine your favourite public speaker, and they may have years of experience speaking in public. While it's important to view these speakers as informal mentors, it can also incite some anxiety. "Am I supposed to speak like them?" you may be wondering.

Likewise, many new college students operate under the false belief that intelligence and skill are "fixed." In their minds, a person is either smart or skilled in something, or they are not. Some students apply this false belief to math and science subjects, saying things like "I'm just no good at math and I never will be," or even worse, "I guess I am just not smart enough to be in college." As you can tell, these beliefs can sabotage someone's college career. Unfortunately, the same kind of false beliefs are applied to public speaking, and people conclude that because public speaking is hard, they are just not "natural" at it and have no inborn skill. They give up on improving and avoid public speaking at all costs. The classroom is a cool space to begin building some foundational knowledge around public speaking. Remember that you are building a critical thinking portfolio, so have patience with yourself and trust the educational process.

Finally, we often experience students believing the incongruent ideas that public speaking (as a class) should be an "easy A" *and* that they'd rather die than give a speech. Instead, remember that good public speaking takes time and energy *because* it is difficult. Public speaking asks you to engage and advocate on behalf of yourselves and others who may not be able to access spaces to advocate for themselves.

Public speaking is also embodied: it requires the activation of and communication through your entire body. Unlike writing an essay or posting a picture online, public speaking requires that your entire body deliver a message, and that can feel odd for many of us. Consequently, learning public speaking means you must train your body to be comfortable and move in predictable and effective ways. This all happens in front of other people: scary! This is difficult work, so of course it's viewed as fear-inducing for some.

Addressing Public Speaking Anxiety

We wish that we had a "Felix can fix it!" (from Wreck-It Ralph) mentality toward public speaking apprehension. If you have experienced some anxiety around speaking, you know that it can be merely aggravating or completely overwhelming. In this section, we provide some guidance and strategies to address public speaking apprehension.

Mental Preparation

Mental preparation is an important part of public speaking. To mentally prepare, you want to put your focus where it belongs, on the audience and the message. Mindfulness and full attention to the task are vital to successful public speaking. If you are concerned about a big exam or something personal going on in your life, your mind will be divided and add to your stress.

The main questions to ask yourself are "Why am I so anxiety-ridden about giving a presentation?" and "What is the worst that can happen?" For example, you probably won't know most of your classmates at the beginning of the course, adding to your anxiety. By midterm, you should be developing relationships with them and be able to find friendly faces in the audience. However, very often we make situations far worse in our minds than they actually are, and we can lose perspective.

Physical Preparation

The first step in physical preparation is adequate sleep and rest. You might be thinking, "Impossible! I'm in college." However, research shows the extreme effects a lifestyle of limited sleep can have, far beyond yawning or dozing off in class (Mitru, Millrood, & Mateika, 2002). As far as public speaking is concerned, your energy level and ability to be alert and aware during the speech will be affected by lack of sleep.

Secondly, eat! Food is fuel, so making sure that you have a nutritious meal is a plus.

A third suggestion is to select what you'll wear before the day you speak. Have your outfit picked out and ready to go, eliminating something to worry your mind the day-of.

A final suggestion for physical preparation is to utilize some stretching or relaxation techniques that will loosen your limbs or throat. Essentially, your emotions want you to run away but the social system says you must stay, so all that energy for running must go somewhere. The energy might go to your legs, hands, stomach, sweat glands, or skin, with undesirable physical consequences. Tightening and stretching your hands, arms, legs, and throat for a few seconds before speaking can help release some of the tension. Your instructor may be able to help you with these exercises, or you can find some online.

Contextual Preparation

The more you can know about the venue where you will be speaking, the better. For this class, of course, it will be your classroom, but for other situations where you might experience "communication apprehension," you should check out the space beforehand or get as much information as possible. For example, if you were required to give a short talk for a job interview, you would want to know what the room will be like, if there is equipment for projection, how large the audience will be, and the seating arrangements. If possible, you will want to practice your presentation in a room that is similar to the actual space where you will deliver it.

The best advice for contextual preparation is to be on time, even early. If you have to rush in at the last minute, as so many students do, you will not be mindful, focused, or calm for the speech.

Speech Preparation

Please, please, please, rehearse. You do not want the first time that you say the words to be when you are in front of your audience. Practicing is the only way that you will feel confident, fluent, and in control of the words you speak. Practicing (and timing yourself) repeatedly is also the only way that you will be assured that your speech meets the requirements of the context (length, for example).

Your practicing should be out loud, standing up, with shoes on, with someone to listen, if possible (other than your dog or cat), and with your visual aids. If you can record yourself and watch it, that is even better. If you do record yourself, make sure you record yourself from the feet up–or at least the hips up–so you can see your body language. The need for oral practice will be emphasized over and over in this book and probably by your instructor. As you progress as a speaker, you will always need to practice but perhaps not to the extent you do as a novice speaker.

As hard as it is to believe, YOU NEVER LOOK AS NERVOUS AS YOU FEEL.

You may feel that your anxiety is at level seventeen on a scale of one to ten, but the audience does not perceive it the same way. They may perceive it at a three or four or even less. That's not to say they won't see any signs of your anxiety and that you don't want to learn to control it, only that what you are feeling inside is not as visible as you might think. This principle relates back to focus. If you know you don't look as nervous as you feel, you can focus and be mindful of the message and audience rather than your own emotions.

Providing Support in the Audience: As an audience member: there are ways to provide supportive feedback to speakers who may be anxious. You can use positive non-verbals to encourage them as they speak, ask thoughtful questions at the conclusion of the presentation, or listen attentively.

Verbal Communication Strategies

Consider your favourite podcaster or podcast series. We love crime podcasts! Despite being reliant on vocal delivery only, the presenters' voices paint an aesthetic picture as they walk us through stories around crime, murder, and betrayal. So, how do they do it? What keeps millions of people listening to podcasts and returning to their favourite verbal-only speakers? Is it how they say it? Is it the language they choose? All of these are important parts of effective vocal delivery.

Below, we begin discussing vocal delivery—language choices, projection, vocal enunciation, and more.

Language and Aesthetics

It was 5 p.m. As she looked out the smudged window over the Kansas pasture, the wind quickly died down and the rolling clouds turned a slight gray-green. Without warning, a siren blared through the quiet plains as she pulled her hands up to cover her ears. Gasping for breath, she turned toward the basement and flew down the stairs as the swirling clouds charged quickly toward the farm house.

What's happening in this story? What are you picturing? A treacherous tornado? A devastating storm rumbling onto a small Kansas farm? If so, the language in the story was successful.

Like this example demonstrates, the language that you use can assist audiences in creating a mental picture or image – creating a visualization is a powerful tool as a speaker.

Aesthetics is, certainly, based on how you deliver or embody your speech. But aesthetics also incorporates language choices and storytelling – techniques that craft a meaningful picture and encompass *how* you deliver the information or idea to your audience. In this section, we will explore vivid language, implementing rhetorical techniques, and storytelling as an aesthetic tool to create resonance with your audience.

Vivid Language

Vivid language evokes the senses and is language that arouses the sensations of smelling, tasting, seeing, hearing, and feeling. Think of the word "ripe." What is "ripe?" Do ripe fruits feel a certain way? Smell a certain way? Taste a certain way? Ripe is a sensory word. Most words just appeal to one sense, like vision. Think of colour. How can you make the word "blue" more sensory? How can you make the word "loud" more sensory? How would you describe the current state of your bedroom or dorm room to leave a sensory impression? How would you describe your favourite meal to leave a sensory impression?

In the opening Kansas storm example above, the author may want the audience to sense danger or a certain intensity around the approaching tornado. To create that audience experience, you must craft language that emphasizes these elements.

When using vivid language, you're trying to bring those sensations to life in a way that can create a vivid experience for your audience. "How can I best represent this idea?" you might ask or "how can I best create a scenario where the audience feels like they're a part of the scene?"

Viivd language can take time to craft. As you work through your speech, determine where you'd like the audience to experience a particular sensation, and focus on integrating vivid language.

Remember that pathos is a persuasive appeal that is at your disposal, and using vivid language can assist in creating an emotional experience and sensation for the audience.

Rhetorical Techniques

There are several traditional techniques that have been used to engage audiences and make ideas more attention-getting and memorable. These are called rhetorical techniques. Although "rhetorical" is associated with persuasive speech, these techniques are also effective with other types of speeches. We suggest using alliteration, parallelism, and rhetorical tropes.

Alliteration is the repetition of initial consonant sounds in a sentence or passage. In his "I Have a Dream Speech," Dr. Martin Luther King said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character." Do you notice how the consonant of "C" resounds throughout?

Parallelism is the repetition of sentence structures. It can be useful for stating your main ideas. Which one of these sounds better?

"*Give me liberty or I'd rather die.*"

"*Give me liberty or give me death.*"

The second one uses parallelism. Quoting again from JFK's inaugural address: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty." The repetition of the three-word phrases in this sentence (including the word "any" in each) is an example of parallelism.

Tropes are a turning of the text where the literal meaning is changed or altered to provide new insight (Brummett, 2019). This is often referred to as figurative language, or using comparisons with objects, animals, activities, roles, or historical or literary figures. A literal statement would say, "The truck is fast." Figurative says, "The truck is as fast as…" or "The truck runs like…"

You are likely most familiar with the metaphor – one type of trope. **Metaphors** are direct comparisons, such as "When he gets behind the wheel of that truck, he is Kyle Busch at Daytona." Here are some more examples of metaphors:

Love is a battlefield.

Upon hearing the charges, the accused clammed up and refused to speak without a lawyer.

Every year a new crop of activists is born.

Note: while tropes, metaphors and similes can be useful tools, remember that neurodiverse members in your audience, or people who are not familiar with the Canadian context, may have trouble understanding you.

Similes are closely related to metaphors, and use "like" or "as" when crafting a comparison. "The truck runs like," is the beginning of a simile.

Tropes are useful because they assist the audience in seeing an idea in a new way or a new light. This can be particularly helpful if you're struggling to create a vivid experience but have been unsuccessful at evoking the senses. A metaphor can assist by comparing your argument with an idea that the audience is familiar with. If you're trying to evoke a particular felt sense, make sure the compared idea can conjure up that particular feeling.

Whatever trope you use, the goal is to craft an interesting comparison or turn the text in a unique way that leads to great comprehension for the audience.

> **Research Spotlight**: Researchers found that listeners (or, in this case, audience members) had greater aesthetic appreciation when figurative language (like a metaphor) was used compared to conventional, familiar rhetoric (Wimmer et al, 2016).

Storytelling

Stories and storytelling, in the form of anecdotes and narrative illustrations, are a powerful tool as a public speaker. For better or worse, audiences are likely to remember anecdotes and narratives long after a speech's statistics are forgotten. Human beings love stories and will often will walk away from a speech moved by or remembering a powerful story or example.

So, what makes a good story?

As an art form, storytelling may include:

- Attention to sequence, or the order of the story;
- Embedding a dramatic quality (or using pathos);
- The use of imagery (or figurative language).

While there is no "one-model-fits-all" view of storytelling, we often know a good story when we hear one, and they are a helpful way to expand your argument and place it in a context.

If you have personal experience with an argument or advocacy that you select, it may be helpful to provide a short story for the audience that provides insight into what you know. Remember that anecdotes are a form of evidence, and we can feel more connected with an idea if the story is related to something a speaker has been through. For example, if you selected police brutality as a speech advocacy, embedding a story about police violence may support your thesis statement and allow your audience to visualize what that might be like. It may draw them in to see a perspective that they hadn't considered.

Similarly, consider the placement of your story. While your speech may rely on a longer narrative form as an organizational pattern, it's more likely that you'll integrate a short story within your speech. We most commonly recommend stories as:

- The attention getter
- Evidence within a main point
- A way to wrap up the speech and leave the audience with something meaningful to consider.

Stories, rhetorical techniques, and vivid language are important mechanisms to evoke language with aesthetics. In addition to what you say, verbal delivery also includes *how* you say it, including: vocal projection, verbal enunciation and punctuation, and vocal rate.

Projection

"Louder!"

You may have experienced a situation where an audience notified a speaker that they couldn't be heard. "Louder!" Here, the audience is letting the speaker know to increase their **volume**, or the relative softness or loudness of one's voice. In this example, the speaker needed to more fully project their vocals to fit the speaking-event space by increasing their volume. In a more formal setting, however, an audience may be skeptical to give such candid feedback, so it is your job to prepare.

Projection is a strategy to vocally *fill the space*; thus, the space dictates which vocal elements need to be adapted because every person in the room should comfortably experience your vocal range. If you speak too softly (too little volume or not projecting), your audience will struggle to hear and understand and may give up trying to listen. If you speak with too much volume, your audience may feel that you are yelling at them, or at least feel uncomfortable with you shouting. The volume you use should fit the size of the audience and the room.

Vocal Enunciation and Punctuation

Vocal enunciation is often reduced to pronouncing words correctly, but enunciation also describes the expression of words and language.

Have you ever spoken to a friend who replied, "Stop that! You're mumbling." If so, they're signaling to you that they aren't able to understand your message. You may have pronounced the words correctly but had indistinct enunciation of the words, leading to reduced comprehension.

One technique to increase enunciation occurs during speech rehearsal, and it's known as the "dash" strategy: *e-nun-ci-ate e-ve–ry syll–a–bal in your pre-sen-ta-tion.*

The dashes signify distinct vocal enunciation to create emphasis and expression. However, don't go overboard! The dash strategy is an exaggerated exercise, but it can lead to a choppy vocal delivery.

Instead, use the dash strategy to find areas where difficult and longer words need more punctuated emphasis and, through rehearsal, organically integrate those areas of emphasis into your presentational persona.

Verbal punctuation is the process of imagining the words as they're written to insert purposeful, punctuated pauses to conclude key thoughts. Your speech is not a run-on sentence. Verbal punctuation allows decisiveness and avoids audiences wondering, "is this still the same sentence?"

Verbal punctuation is a strategy to minimize **vocalized fillers**, including common fillers of "like, and, so, uh." Rather than use a filler to fill a vocal void in the speech, punctuate the end of the sentence through a decisive pause (like a period in writing!).

We know what you're thinking: "there's no way that reducing fillers is this easy." You're partially right. We all use vocalized fillers, particularly in informal conversation, but the more you rehearse purposeful punctuation and decisive endings to your well-crafted thoughts and arguments, the fewer filler words you will use.

It is also helpful to ask for input and feedback from friends, colleagues, or teachers. "What are my filler words?" We have listed common fillers, but you may unconsciously rely on different words. One author, for example, was never aware that they used "kind of" until a colleague pointed the filler out. Once you're aware of your filler words, work to carefully, consciously, and meticulously try to catch yourself when you say it. "Consciously" is key here, because you need to bring an awareness about your fillers to the forefront of your brain.

Pace and Rate

How quickly or slowly you say the words of your speech is the **rate**. A slower rate may communicate to the audience that you do not fully know the speech. "Where is this going?" they may wonder. It might also be slightly boring if the audience is processing information faster than it's being presented.

By contrast, speaking too fast can be overly taxing on an audience's ability to keep up with and digest what you are saying. It sometimes helps to imagine that your speech is a jog that you and your friends (the audience) are taking together. You (as the speaker) are setting the pace based on how quickly you speak. If you start sprinting, it may be too difficult for your audience to keep up and they may give up halfway through. Most people who speak very quickly know they speak quickly, and if that applies to you, just be sure to practice slowing down and writing yourself delivery cues in your notes to maintain a more comfortable rate.

You will want to maintain a good, deliberate rate at the beginning of your speech because your audience will be getting used to your voice. We have all called a business where the person answering the phone mumbles the name of the business in a rushed way. We aren't sure if we called the right number. Since the introduction is designed to get the audience's attention and interest in your speech, you will want to focus on clear vocal rate here.

You might also consider varying the rate depending on the type of information being communicated. While you'll want to be careful going too slow consistently, slowing your rate for a difficult piece of supporting material may be helpful. Similarly, quickening your rate in certainly segments can communicate an urgency.

And although awkward, watching yourself give a speech via recording (or web cam) is a great way to gauge your natural rate and pace.

Vocal Pauses

The common misconception for public speaking students is that pausing during your speech is bad, but pausing (similar to and closely aligned with punctuation) can increase both the tone and comprehension of your argument. This is especially true if you are making a particularly important point or wanting a statement to have powerful impact: you will want to give the audience a moment to digest what you have said. You may also be providing new or technical information to an audience that needs additional time to absorb what you're saying.

For example, consider the following statement: "Because of issues like pollution and overpopulation, in 50 years the earth's natural resources will be so depleted that it will become difficult for most people to obtain enough food to survive." Following a statement like this, you want to give your audience a brief moment to fully consider what you are saying. Remember that your speech is often *ephemeral*: meaning the audience only experiences the speech once and in real time (unlike reading where an audience can go back).

Use audience nonverbal cues and feedback (and provide them as an audience member) to determine if additional pauses may be necessary for audience comprehension. Audiences are generally reactive and will use facial expressions and body language to communicate if they are listening, if they are confused, angry, or supportive.

Of course, there is such a thing as pausing too much, both in terms of frequency and length. Someone who pauses too often may appear unprepared. Someone who pauses too long (more than a few seconds) runs the risk of the audience feeling uncomfortable or, even worse, becoming distracted or letting their attention wander.

Pauses should be controlled to maintain attention of the audience and to create additional areas of emphasis.

Key Takeaways

Hopefully, this section will have given you some useful tools to create engaging presentations and to communicate in a wide range of communication contexts: from meetings to Ted Talks.

Key Takeaways

- Think of public speaking as a type of advocacy. When you share information with others, you're advocating for a particular perspective and calling your audience in to listen to your perspective.
- Public speaking is when a speaker attempts to move an audience by advocating for a purposeful message – through informing, persuading or entertaining– in a particular context.
- Advocacy means promoting an idea, cause, concept or information, saying "this idea matters" and "I invite each of us to think more deeply about this information."
- Effective public speaking is also ethical. Establish your credibility by showing your character in word and action, being prepared and avoid misrepresenting your experience, expertise or authority.
- Communication is constitutive (it creates meaning and matters), contextual (it happens in a particular time and place), and cultural.
- Fear of public speaking comes from fear of failure or a fear of rejection. Preparing yourself mentally and physically, rehearsing your speech and understand your context will help you be effective.
- Effective public speakers use language aesthetics, storytelling and body language to bring their presentations to life.

Activities For Further Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. In Brenda Knights' chapter, she talks about silences and when not to speak. Write a paragraph explaining how this information fits with the rest of the chapter.
2. Find an essay or project that you created in another class. Then, prepare a 3-minute presentation trying to make your audience care about the topic. Tell the story of your assignment. If possible, record your presentation and pay attention to body language, enunciation and storytelling.
3. Watch the first minute of a TED talk or other public speaking video. Then, write a short paragraph about how the speaker tries to hook the audience in. Consider voice, body language, visuals, storytelling and other elements.
4. Think back to the last oral presentation that you did (either for work or school). How did it go? Write a very short letter to yourself giving some advice for improvement based on what you've learned.

Attribution

Media Attributions

CHAPTER 14: REVISION AND REMIXING

Photo by KAL VISUALS on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Explore what revision looks like in the workplace.
- Develop strategies for revising your work.
- Learn what remixing is, and explore how you can use it to produce new insights.
- See remixing in action.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, take a moment to reflect on your experiences with revision and remixing. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

1. In the beginning of the semester, we discussed the writing process. Have you made any changes to your writing process over the semester? How are these changes working?

2. Write a paragraph connecting Brenda Knights' narrative to the rest of the chapter or to your own experience.
3. Think about the last time that you learned something new. What steps did you take to learn the new skill?
4. Have you ever applied skills you've learned in one class to another class? What new insights did you come up with?
5. How has the peer workshopping process impacted you? Have you made changes based on your peers' feedback? How does this process feel now that you have tried it a few times?

Brenda Knights Narrative

During one of my first days working at Kwantlen, I had to go work at the gift store because someone was sick. I said I'd go over there to work for a day, and the person I was talking to said, "You'll be fine. There's a manual. Just follow the manual." Fine, I get the manual, and it shows you how to log on to the computer. I did the first step. But then the second step says, "Open the point of sale."

I looked at the screen and there were all of these icons. I didn't understand. None of the icons said 'point of sale.' So where's the point of sale? That crucial step was missing. So, I couldn't even get it open. If there was a visual that showed a picture of the icon, I could have opened it up. Because it just said 'open the point of sale,' I couldn't even get past step 2.

It's really important to bring someone in who's not familiar at all with the topic and have them test your instructions. You have to think about how much your audience knows. Manuals need to be so simple that literally anyone can pick it up and follow the instructions. But often, we skip ahead and assume that the reader knows more than they do. That's why we need to ask them and not make assumptions.

Revising, Editing, Proofreading

In Chapter 2, we discussed the writing process and shared the writing processes of different professional communicators. One of the main takeaways of this chapter was that in the workplace, communicators revise their work extensively and approach revision as rethinking the entire piece from the perspective of their audience, not just editing the grammar. When we discussed using sources, we also explored the difference between how workplace communicators use sources and how students are expected to use sources. In this chapter, we'll further explore the revision process and discuss remixing: how communicators take someone else's message and build upon it to create something new.

The amount of revision you will do will depend on the importance of the document. If you're sending an email, you might do a little proofreading. If you're writing a proposal that you've spent weeks working on, you'll likely need to do more significant editing.

Revising, Editing, and Proofreading

As we discussed in Chapter 2, the difference between a new communicator and an experienced one is simply that the experienced communicator has learned the value of revision. While you may feel that you write best "under pressure" the night before your assignment is due or in the minutes before sending an email at work, writing a single draft at the last minute rarely results in anyone's best work. You may feel that you've put a lot of effort into your first draft, so it can be challenging to think about changing your work or even eliminating words that you toiled over. You might worry about ruining your first draft and over-editing. However, it's well worth the pain of revising, editing, and proofreading so you produce a polished piece of writing that others can easily understand.

Many writing experts describe writing this way: the first draft if for the writer, but the second draft is for the reader. You already know about the importance of audience analysis, so think of revision as one more way to meet the audience's needs. In your first draft, you're getting the material down. In the revision process, you're taking a step back and thinking about what you've written from the audience's perspective.

To revise a piece of writing, it may help you to consider three approaches: look at the big picture, check your organization, and proofread your final draft.

Higher Order Concerns

Revising for higher order concerns means working on the organization of your ideas. You might insert sentences, words, or paragraphs; you might move them elsewhere in your document; or you might remove them entirely (Meyer, 2017).

When you revise at the "big picture" stage, you are looking at the most important aspects of the writing tasks, and the ones that require the most thought. Here's a set of questions to help you revise for these higher order concerns:

- Have I met the purpose and requirements?
- Does my draft say what I mean?
- What would my audience think about what I've written?

- Have I changed my thinking through writing or researching?
- Are there parts that do not belong here?
- Are there pieces missing?
- Are there places where the reader would struggle to understand my meaning?
- Is the tone right for my reader?
- Are my sources the right kind for my purpose and reader?
- Are all the pieces in the right place?
- Will the reader understand the connections between my ideas?
- Are sources documented?
- Are the visuals appropriate? Could they be clearer?

Another way to edit for higher order concerns is to prepare a reverse outline using your draft. This technique is discussed in Chapter 5.

One of the hardest parts of learning revision is building trust in your ability to make big changes and stray from original plan. It can be tempting to keep trying to tinker: moving words around in a sentence or rearranging a paragraph, hoping that the problem you've identified can be solved. But a key part of the writing process is embracing that you've learned something new from the time you started your draft to the time you finished it. With that new information, you may realize that a new approach is needed.

If you're feeling stuck with revision, another technique is to imagine that you're having a conversation with a friend. Your friend asks what your document is about. Record yourself giving that answer. When you play it back, you'll likely hear some insight into how to solve a tricky revision problem you're having.

Lower Order Concerns

Lower order concerns focus on editing and proofreading. When you edit, you work from your revised draft to systematically correct issues or errors in punctuation, grammar, spelling, and other things related to writing mechanics (Meyer, 2017). Proofreading is the last stage where you work from your almost-finished document to fix any issues or errors in formatting or typos you missed (Meyer, 2017). Here's another way of distinguishing these two tasks. Editing is the act of making changes or indicating what to change; proofreading means checking to make sure those changes were made.

Perhaps you are the person who proofreads and edits as you write a draft, so when you are done drafting and revising for content and structure, you may not have that much editing or proofreading to do. Or maybe you are the person who pays no attention to grammar and spelling as you draft, saving all of the editing until you are finished writing. Either way, plan to carefully edit and proofread your work. For most people, proofreading on a printed copy is more effective than working entirely on screen.

Here are some additional strategies for editing and proofreading your work:

- Take a break between writing and editing. Even a 15 minute break can help you look at your document anew.
- Read your work aloud.
- Work through your document slowly, moving word by word.
- Start at the end of your document and work towards the beginning.
- Focus on one issue at a time. Trying to look for spelling errors, punctuation issues, awkward phrasing, and more all at once can make it easier to miss items needing correction.
- Don't rely exclusively on spelling- or grammar-checking software. (This poem was run through such a program

and no problems were detected!)
- Review through your document several times.

What is Remixing?

The definition of a remix is:

> A piece of media which has been altered from its original state by adding, removing, and/or changing pieces of the item. A song, piece of artwork, books, video, or photograph can all be remixes. The only characteristic of a remix is that it appropriates and changes other materials to create something new.[1]

In the workplace, you will often remix the writing of your coworkers. (This is sometimes called "patchwriting.") For example, you might build on work that your coworker did: adding new information and rewriting older content so that it fits a new purpose. You might also remix content so that it is accessible to a new audience. For example, perhaps your company has been awarded a contract to create a new park. You might take design plans from a large proposal written in technical language and remix them into social media content aimed at a general audience to build excitement within the community about the new park.

In fact, even this textbook is a remix. The author wrote some chapters, but she also used pieces from multiple different open source textbooks. Sometimes, she did small edits, like changing American spellings to Canadian ones or adding different examples. She often combined sources and rearranged them. Other times, she reimagined the chapter. For example, she took some material that was focused on academic writing and reimagined it from a business writing perspective. Because this textbook is open source, other writers will likely build upon it in the future.

In the workplace, remixing saves time and helps use the talents of many different people. For example, if your non-profit organization often applies for grants, it wouldn't make sense to write each one from scratch, but it also wouldn't be a successful strategy to use the same material to apply for every grant. Through remixing, you can use existing material as building blocks to create something new.

Remixing can also teach us a lot about how the creative process works. Chances are strong that you already practice the basics of remixing when you learn a new skill. The video below will show you how many of the books, movies and songs you love are actually remixes.

Everything Is A Remix

In "Everything is a Remix," Kirby Ferguson draws on examples like Star Wars, Quentin Tarantino movies and more to show the power of remixing. Take a look:

https://vimeo.com/139094998

As you watch the video, think about how you use the three elements of remixing in your own life:

- **Copy**: When you learn a new skill, do you usually start with copying? For example, maybe you've watched a

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remix

makeup tutorial on how to make the perfect smokey eye and followed along. Maybe you improved your skill with a music instrument by trying to play a song exactly as the original artist did.

- **Transform**: Have you ever transformed the work of someone else? For example, maybe you mastered the smokey eye, but adapted it to your own eye shape and experimented with different colours. Maybe you created a cover of a favourite song in a different style than the original.
- **Combine:** Have you ever combined elements of different works to create something new? For example, maybe you watched several makeup tutorials then combined a few techniques into a look that was completely your own. Maybe you combined two songs into a mashup.

Experimenting with remixing can help you in many ways in the workplace. Many people's careers have been launched by the skills they learned while remixing for fun. For example, many graphic designers first mastered Photoshop by creating funny memes for their friends. But as the video shows, professionals often use remixing skills to create new insights on the job. For example, you might notice a trend going on in a different industry or a piece of technology with a different purpose and discover how to apply it to your own particular context.

In the past, communicators in North America sought to control how their words or images were used by others. Many public relations professionals were slow to adapt to the Internet culture, which led to a backlash. For example, in 2013, Beyonce's publicist tried to get some unflattering photos of her removed from the internet. The move backfired. Thousands of people instead shared and remixed the photo, leading to many more views than if the publicist hadn't tried to take the photos down.

Recently, many marketing and communications professionals have learned that embracing remixing can be a great way to promote their brand. Let's take a look at how a mascot became a political meme.

Remixing Gritty

In September of 2018, the Philadelphia Flyers NHL team launched a new mascot named Gritty. This video introduces you to the mascot.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=633

He was created by Brian Allen, a graphic designer who has created many different mascots. In an [article](https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/12/24/18145323/gritty-explained-mascot-flyers-meme-leftist) written by Todd VanDerWerff for Vox, Allen describes how he wanted to create something that was a "blank slate." According to Allen: "We eventually settled on a monster. Because with a monster, it doesn't come with preconceived stereotypes…If you choose a bull, it's gotta be aggressive, or if you choose a hawk, it's gotta be cunning."[1] In short, a monster could be what the audience wanted it to be.

Both Allen and the Flyers' marketing team wanted to take a risk with Gritty by creating an edgier mascot that you "would high-five but maybe not hug."[2] This risk was backed up by audience analysis. Philadelphia has a reputation for being a

1. https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/12/24/18145323/gritty-explained-mascot-flyers-meme-leftist
2. https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/12/24/18145323/gritty-explained-mascot-flyers-meme-leftist

rough city that loves underdogs. (In fact, its sports culture is so rough that fans of the Philadelphia Eagles are known for throwing batteries at players!) To win over the fans, the mascot would have to be different than a mascot in Toronto or Los Angeles.

The best way to get the audience to buy in was to let them share in making the "blank slate" mascot mean something. Instead of trying to take control of all of the communication around Gritty, the Flyers' marketing team therefore encouraged remixing right from the start. They understood that people talking about Gritty – no matter what they were saying – was good publicity. The marketing team even created their own remixes, such as this remix of a movie poster:

(Image description: The movie poster for A Star Is Born, where Gritty has been photoshopped to take the place of the female lead, so it looks like costar Bradley Cooper is embracing them. The tweet says: Saw a movie this weekend. Lady Gaga, I've also been called the songbird of my generation. What did you guys do?)

> Saw a movie this wknd. @ladygaga I've also been called the songbird of my generation ?
>
> What did you guys do? pic.twitter.com/6YyP1cn6WK
>
> – Gritty (@GrittyNHL) October 22, 2018

The plan worked. Today, Gritty has been remixed into a political symbol for people who oppose American President Donald Trump, which is not something that Allen and his team intended, but which has led to Gritty taking on a personality of his own. There are Reddit subreddits, Facebook pages, Instagram accounts and more: all remixing images of Gritty for new audiences, purposes and contexts.

Here's a Christmas Gritty meme:

(Image description: Twitter user @zech_smith has Photoshopped the nativity scene so that every character – from Jesus to the Three Wise Men – looks like Gritty).

> Wishing everyone a Gritty Christmas! pic.twitter.com/BMZK3ANMjl
>
> – Zech Smith (@zech_smith) December 25, 2018

Gritty has even appeared in tattoos. Here's Simon Ali's tattoo "remix" of a photo of Gritty:

Simon Ali's Gritty tattoo is the ultimate expression of fandom!

Today, lots of people who love Gritty have never even seen a hockey game. Because of remixing, Gritty has become one of the most recognizable hockey mascots in a very short period of time.

Gritty offers a few lessons to communicators:

- Online tools make it easy to remix material and participate in an online conversation. Instead of fighting back against the new online context by trying to shut down remixes, smart companies have embraced remixing and even joined in on the fun.
- Remixing allows people to re-imagine something for a new audience, context or purpose. It's therefore a great way to come up with new ideas.
- Remixing turns marketing from a one-way street to a conversation. Instead of consuming ads, fans participate and are co-creators.

Test Your Revision Skills

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Key Takeaways

- The amount of revision you'll do will depend on the importance of the document.
- Many students see revision as just checking spelling and grammar, but revision is about re-thinking the piece. The first draft if for you, so that you can get your thought down, and the second is for your audience. When you revise, think about your audience.
- When you revise, start with higher-order concerns. Don't be afraid to reorganize or even cut pieces and start over.
- After you've revised the big picture pieces, focus on editing (looking for punctuation, spelling and grammar mistakes), and then proofreading (taking one last look at your almost-finished document to make sure all the changes were made).
- Remixing involves taking a source and turning it into something new. In the workplace, you'll often remix the work of your coworkers.
- In "Everything Is a Remix," Kirby Ferguson tells us that the creative process consists of copying, transforming and combining.
- In the past, companies resisted allowing audiences to remix their work, but today many encourage it by deliberately creating work that can be easily remixed and turned into memes.

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to do the following exercises.

1. Find something you wrote a long time ago, such as a high school essay or short story. What do you notice when you look at it again? How would you revise it?
2. Write an assignment from this class in another style or for a new audience. For example, turn your memo into a video or a meme.
3. Try three different revision techniques on a single assignment. Which one was most successful? How did each impact the final product.
4. Remix an assignment from this class (or another you're taking) to share it in a different way with a different audience. For example, you might take a report you wrote in your horticulture class about GMO foods and turn it into an Infographic that educates an online audience about a myth about GMO food.
5. Remix something for an audience who speaks a different language or is part of a different culture.
6. Come up with two different concepts or ideas that you've learned in two different classes, then see how many ways you can combine them together.

References

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VanDerWerff, Todd. (2018) *Gritty's evolution from googly-eyed hockey mascot to meme to leftist avatar, explained.* Retrieved from https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/12/24/18145323/gritty-explained-mascot-flyers-meme-leftist

Attribution

CHAPTER 15: SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION

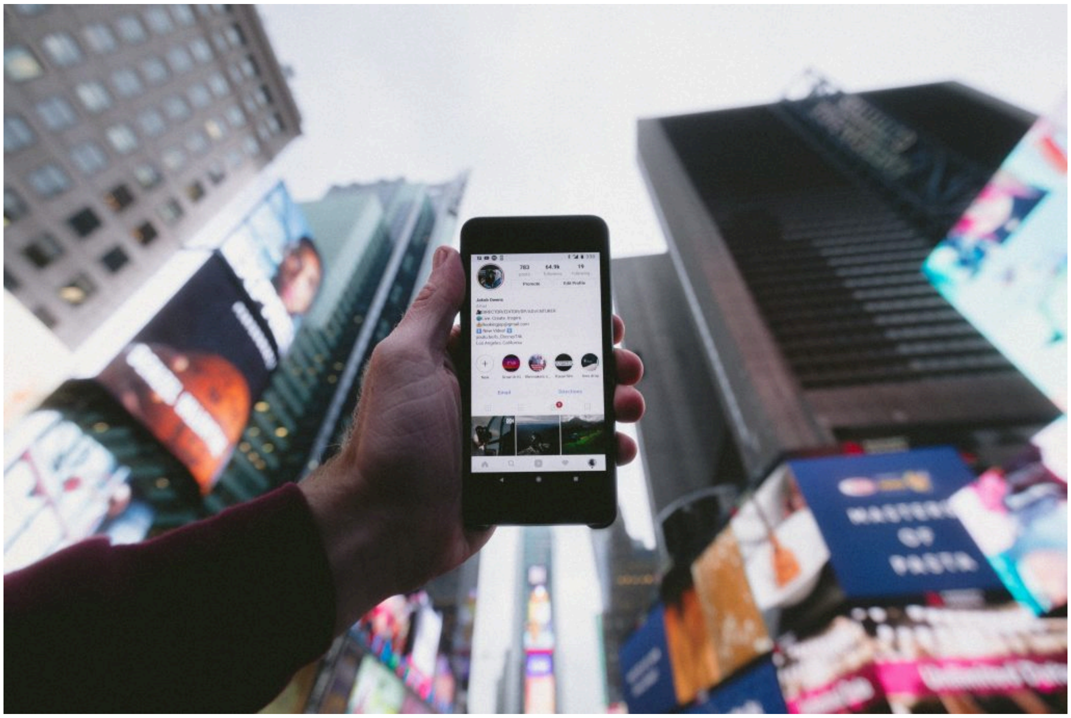

Photo by KAL VISUALS on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Apply the communication strategies you've learned throughout the textbook to social media.

Questions for Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

- How many hours per day do you spend online? What sort of platforms do you use? Why do you use these platforms?
- Are you the same person online as you are in real life? Why or why not?
- If you use multiple social media platforms, do you behave the same way on each one? Explain any differences you see on different social media platforms.
- If you use social media, how do you use it? Do you comment? Create content? Have discussions? Just observe?
- How often do you think about privacy online? Do you take any steps to protect your privacy?
- What impact has social media had on your life?

Brenda Knights Narrative

Businesses that utilize social media would benefit from taking time to plan in advance. What forms of social media makes sense for the business? Who will be responsible for managing social media content? What audience is your customer going to best respond to best?

Most businesses feel pressure to have an online presence and so invest a considerable amount of time and energy without really understanding the return on investment. What other methods of communications might be more effective for your audience? Billboards, Blogs, Print media or in some cases there are businesses that do not invest any dollars in marketing and instead give those dollars to charity. One could argue that this good deed is clever marketing, as it gives the company a form of recognition.

In any case spend the time to research who you want to communicate with and how best to reach them. What information do they want to read that will engage them? Please, please, please whatever you do, do not constantly use any form of advertising to constantly be "selling" something to your customer. Most savvy shoppers are tired of always being sold something. Instead, be engaging and provide your audience with useful information. Through providing useful information your audience will get to know your brand.

The other issue I've encountered is that many times the right person is not providing content and can be damaging to the brand. An example of this is when Seyem' first started, we had outsourced our social media. We were treated as any other customer was; however there was an incident where the outsourced company did a feature on me on Facebook where it also said I was the owner of the company. I was highly embarrassed by this as the ownership is the entire Kwantlen membership.

Culturally speaking as well, we say it takes a community, and so featuring only myself in the article was not culturally appropriate. This is again another form of communication where its important to be careful what you put in writing. In my generation, growing up we wrote in our personal journals or maybe on the bathroom wall. My journal could be shredded and the bathroom wall painted over. Today what you put on social media is forever and you don't own that content.

Social Media Communication in the Workplace

If you were starting your career in the 1980s or 90s, few people outside of the company would read your writing. Thanks to email, messaging tools like Slack and social media, however, it's normal for even very new employees to communicate with clients, often with very little time for revision. It's still unfortunately common for small companies to assume that young employees must know something about social media and assign them the responsibility of managing the company's entire social media platforms. That means that hundreds of thousands of people could see the messages you create for social media. Obviously, the stakes are very high.

Social media fulfills many roles within an organization's communications plan, including:

- Marketing
- Responding to customer questions and complaints.
- Recruiting potential employees
- Getting new leads on clients.
- Learning about new advancements in your field.
- Communicating with other companies and experts.

While social media marketing is outside of the scope of this textbook, social media can teach us a lot about how the communication fundamentals you've been exploring in this course are applicable in multiple contexts. Our goal with this chapter is not to teach you how to use social media, but to invite you to bring together multiple elements we've learned this semester. We'll ask more questions than we answer.

Social Media Communication in the Workplace

Many people, especially older people, see social media as a world apart from their other communication efforts. But the basic of communication still apply. Let's take a look at social media through the lens of one of the communication models we studied in Chapter 3.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=645

You'll recall that according to this model, a communicator should consider the context, message, audience and purpose of their communication before creating the product.

Context: One of the challenges of communicating online is that each platform has its own context and this context is always changing. For example, a message on Twitter used to be less than 140 characters. Recently, however, that limit has been increased to 280 characters. It's also become easier to integrate photos, GIFs, and other links, and to write "threads" by linking multiple tweets. This changes how communicators can effectively communicate.

Often, miscommunications occur because communicators don't fully understand the context of each platform. For example, some communicators link their Twitter and Facebook accounts to save time, but because the message isn't tailored to each account, the message might not be effectively received by the audience.

The best way to understand the context of the platform is to experiment. What works in one industry or for one company might not work for another.

Some of the factors to consider when understanding the context of each platform:

- Frequency of posting. For example, you can usually post more often on Twitter than you can on Facebook.
- Timing of posts: When is the best time to post so that the most people will see it?
- Use of amplification tools (hashtags, tagging, etc).
- Specialized language, such as inside jokes, acronyms, memes.
- Paid messages and advertising: How can your business pay to amplify your message?

Purpose

Often, companies feel that they "should" be on social media, but to be effective in social media, you must have a purpose. Before you embark on a social media campaign, you should ask yourself, "What real-world effects do I want to produce?" Or, put more simply, "How will this social media campaign make me money?"

Are you trying to meet new clients? Sell a particular product? Address a stereotype of misconception? Make a particular audience familiar with your product? Establish yourself as an expert in a particular area?

Your purpose will determine what platform you use, how you create your message, when you release your message, what amplification tools you'll use, and much more.

Audience

Once you have determined your purpose, you can define your audience. Audience analysis is key to success online. Luckily, most platforms provide business communicators access to sophisticated analytics, which you can use to refine your social media approach. Here's an example of the analytics Twitter offers, though external tools like Hootsuite will offer even more extensive insights.

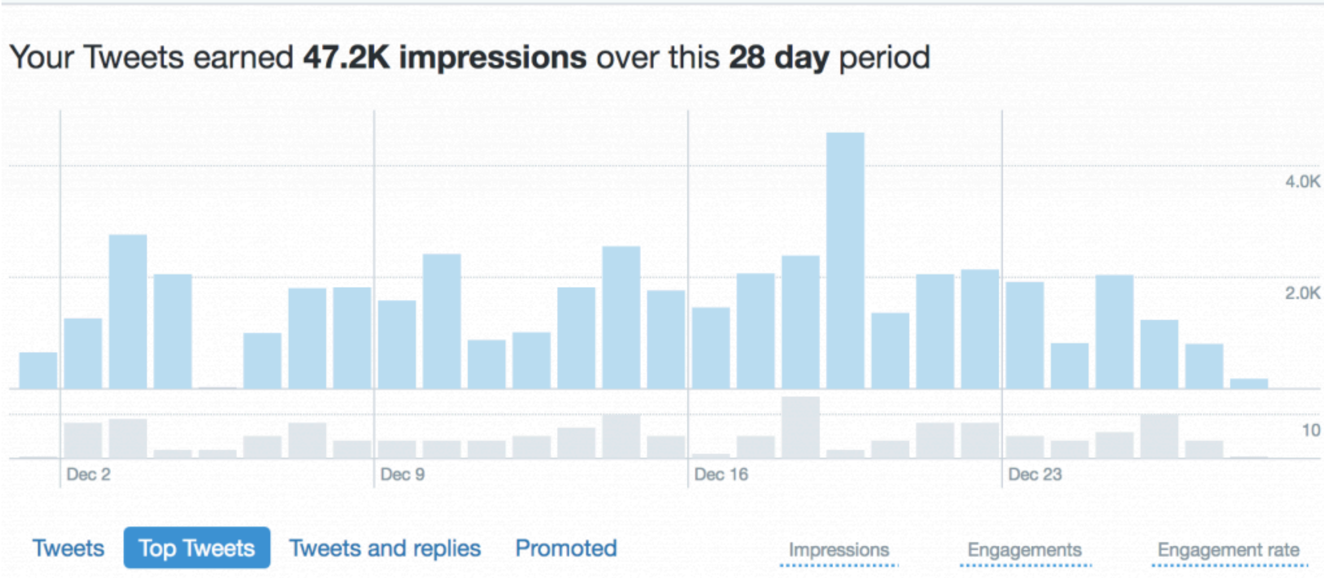

Figure 15.1 Twitter Analytics You can also use Google Analytics to study how you're able to use social media to achieve key goals.

Analytics gives you part of the package, but the other part comes from trial and error. Every company has a unique audience, and sometimes you'll need to go against "best practices" to be successful. For example, social media consultants usually advise that you should post on a regular basis, but the social media team behind the NHL mascot Gritty often go weeks without posting, which adds to the mascot's cool factor. As you can see, what works for Gritty likely does not work for any other NHL mascot.

Message

Your purpose and your audience will determine your message. For example, you might choose to use different visuals or text on different platforms. You might test different messages using A/B testings (showing two different messages to two different groups to see which one performs best). You might craft a series of messages to go out at different times. (You can use a scheduling tool like Hootsuite to automate this).

Product

Your context, message, audience and purpose will lead you to your product. On social media this usually consists of:

- What platforms you're using.
- How the message will differ based on the platform.
- Visuals or video.
- Timing
- Frequency of the message
- Whether you've paid to promote or amplify a post.

Social Media Communication in Action: Special K Cereal

Let's take a look at how one cereal brand, Special K, uses social media. Explore the following graphics and see what similarities and differences you can note. As you do so, ask yourself why the social media team has made the decisions they've made. Some questions to ask are:
Some questions to ask yourself are:

- How do you think the audiences differ across platforms?
- What similarities exist across platforms?
- What differences exist across platforms?
- How do the different platforms use colour?
- What do you think the purpose of each platform is. What real-world effects are they trying to create?
- What platforms do you think the social media team devotes the most time to? Why?

Facebook

Explore the image hotspots to learn about how the Special K social media team uses Facebook. You can also visit their Facebook page directly.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=647

Twitter

Explore the image hotspots to learn about how the Special K social media team uses Twitter. You can also visit their Twitter account directly.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=647

Instagram

Explore the image hotspots to learn about how the Special K social media team uses Instagram. You can also visit their Instagram account directly.

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Pinterest

Explore the image hotspots to learn about how the Special K social media team uses Pinterest. You can also visit their Pinterest page directly.

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=647

Key Takeaways

Many new communicators want a cheatsheet of different best practices for different platforms. Unfortunately, this isn't possible. Platforms change, new platforms emerge, and every organization will require a slightly different strategy. By applying the basics of communications, however, you'll be able to make smart decisions that will help your organization achieve its goals.

Key Takeaways

- Social media is a key piece of many businesses' marketing, customer service and communication strategies.
- Before you communicate on social media, use the CMAPP model to make sure that you are being effective.

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of these activities.

- Look at your own social media presence. Which content gets the most likes/comments/interaction? Why do you think this is?
- Choose a brand that you admire and perform the same type of analysis that we did with Special K. Write a short paragraph explaining your results.
- Write a paragraph explaining how you use social media, and if your social media use has changed over time.
- Since social media uses algorithms to determine what you want to see, your social media is in a “bubble.” Investigate your own social media use. How long does it take you to find a post you don’t agree with?

CHAPTER 16: PEER REVIEW

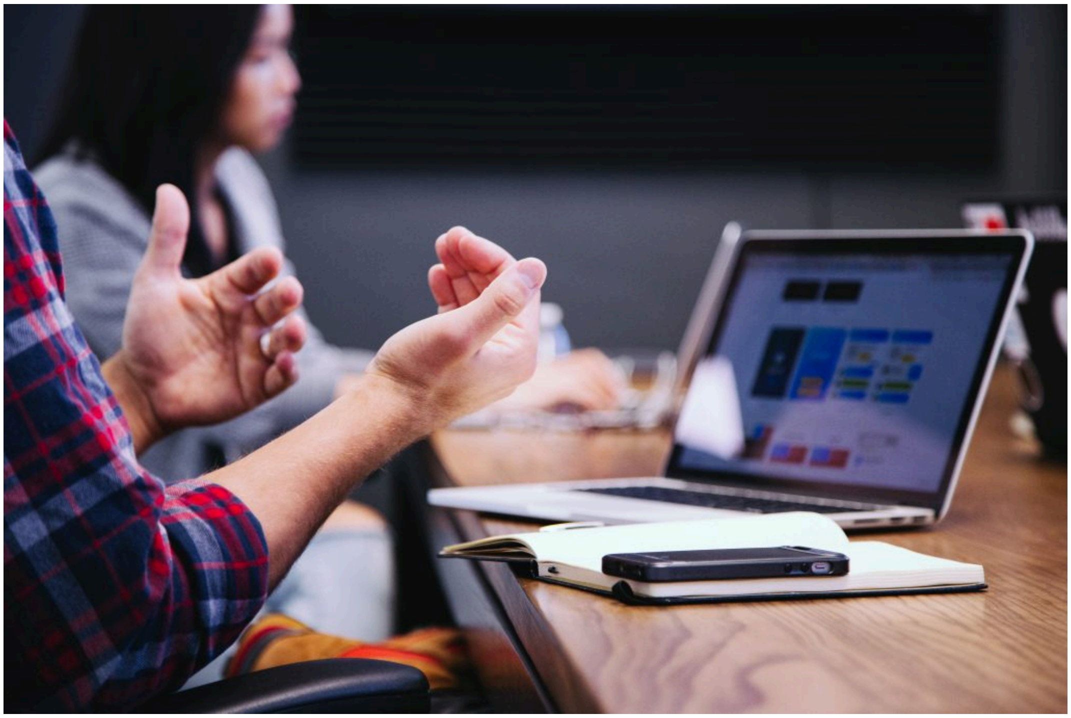

Photo by Headway on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Explore the benefits of peer review.
- Learn what peer review looks like in the workplace.
- Gain some strategies for giving and receiving feedback.

Questions For Reflection

1. Have you ever done a peer review? What was the experience like?
2. How do you like to receive feedback on your work?
3. If you've had a job that involves writing, who has given you feedback on your writing and what was that process like?
4. What are your concerns about peer review?
5. What is the most useful piece advice that someone has given you about your own writing?
6. If you have experience with a different culture, how is feedback given in that culture?
7. What is more important: to give direct feedback or to save people's feelings? Why?

Brenda Knights Narrative

We all have a nature to want to be liked. We're human. Sometimes it's easy to avoid those conversations because we don't want that conflict. But if you make the decision to move into a leadership position, you are expected to carry out policies and you are going to have people dislike you for that. The folks that are happy with the work you're doing are not going to be out there saying, "Wow, she's a fantastic manager." But there's a silent majority who are coming to work, doing their job, who are watching your interactions. What message are you sending to them? Leaders are recognized long after they're gone. It's not in the moment. You'll have days where you feel isolated and alone, and that's where good mentors come in. But if your management style is to make everyone like you, that's not going to go over well. But you're there for the betterment of the business and ensuring it will survive, and sometimes that means making decisions employees aren't going to like.

We carried over policies from the band office, and a lot of those were developed at a time when our band office was just a few families in the community, but it's expanded. One of the policies was Christmas bonuses. Because we were just starting off our economic development, ethically I didn't feel right collecting bonuses, because we're part of the community. We're here to give back to the community and be a part of the community. We're here to serve the community, and that money should be to support education and health in our community. So, I made the unpopular decision to discontinue Christmas bonuses. And I knew that no matter what, people were going to be upset, but I also knew that if we were doing something that felt unethical, the truth would reveal itself at some point that that would affect us in the long run. I knew that at some point, I couldn't face my community and say, "We are collecting Christmas bonuses, but we haven't given anything back to our nation."

Sure enough, today our community is having governance discussions, and members are looking very closely at everything. Five years ago, we had very upset employees. But as a leader, you have to think strategically and ethically and deliver an unpopular message. If we'd continued with the bonuses, it would be causing stress in our business group and we would be exposed in the community. So, it's about thinking long-term and being clear and up-front and honest.

Peer Review in the Workplace

In the workplace, writing is often collaborative, which means you will often need to give your peers feedback about their writing. Sometimes, your job will be to review the content of a piece to make sure it's accurate. More often, however, you will need to point out areas where the writing isn't clear, is too wordy, or doesn't meet the purpose of the message. Sometimes, you might even need to give your boss feedback.

Different writers have different levels of sensitivities to getting feedback, so while some coworkers might appreciate a straightforward approach, others will need a softer, more indirect approach. If you don't have a lot of practice with giving feedback, you might accidentally offend your colleague or give vague advice that doesn't help him or her improve. You might speak in unhelpful terms like "I like this" or "this is good."

That's why we practice peer review in class. Learning how to discuss a peer's writing in a way that is actually helpful is a valuable skills: one that takes practice. But peer review also helps you learn about the writing process itself. When you study work by established writers, you're seeing a final draft: something that a writer and editor have worked on extensively. You don't see the months or years of work, the back-and-forth between the writer and the editor, and all of the revisions. In short, you see the final product but not the process it took to get there.

It can also be very hard to see our own writing from the perspective of a reader. That's why it's much easier to spot issues in a classmates' writing than it is to spot the same issue in our own writing. For example, a writing instructor may have suggested that you break up longer sentences to make them easy for the reader to understand, but you resisted making the changes because you like writing them. During peer review, however, you might find yourself reading a classmates' long sentence three times to understand the meaning. Because you experience that frustration as a reader, you might be able to see how your own long sentences impact your readers.

One great way to be helpful to your reviewing partner and avoid hurting their feelings is to think yourself as a fellow reader, not a judge. Speak about how the work impacts you. After all, another reader might have a totally different reaction. It's also a great idea to ask questions. So, instead of saying, "This paragraph doesn't make any sense," you might say, "I couldn't connect this paragraph to the thesis. How do you think it relates?"

The following essay from Writing Commons will help you to navigate the tricky process of peer review.

Peer Review in Class

So there is this student who has just written a draft for one of the projects assigned to him in his professional communication class. He is walking to class with a copy of the draft in his hand, knowing that today the instructor has an in-class peer review session planned, and his stomach drops.

He begins more and more to think about the prospect of his own peers reading his work and becomes anxious. He starts thinking that perhaps today is the perfect time to take one of those “free” days that each student gets for absences. He thinks, This isn’t a “real” class, anyway—I’m not going to miss anything . . . . Why is my instructor making me share my writing with people I just met a few weeks ago? This is going to be so awkward. I mean, this draft isn’t even meant to be read yet! I only spent an hour or so on it, and the ink is not even dry yet . . . . Isn’t writing supposed to be a solitary activity, anyways, where strange and artistic people lock themselves up in a dark room or sit under a tree somewhere? Why do people need to read my writing in front of me, judging me and thinking I’m dumb!? I don’t care what they think—having my instructor read my drafts is punishment enough. Ugh.

Meanwhile, already inside the classroom is another student, also with a draft in hand, patiently awaiting for the class and more specifically the in-class peer review session to begin. He has been waiting for this day, this glorious day, where he can finally show his peers what a great writer he thinks he is. He too does not fully understand the purpose of in-class peer review, but he is not anxious like his classmate above. He is excited and thinks, Man, I don’t belong here. I’m a great writer—I’ve been told so by so many people! What a waste of time this will be for me. I mean, I’m pumped to show these people how good of a writer I am, but this peer review actually cannot improve my writing. These people are lower writers than I am. I’ve seen their discussion board posts. What can they possibly have to tell me about my writing that will improve it? I mean, please.

Are these two students caricatures? Maybe. But they represent the extremes, and perhaps more importantly, they represent the fact that each and every student comes to in-class peer review sessions with entirely different perspectives and experiences. Sharing your writing online is much different than sharing your writing in face-to-face settings. There are so many more social factors that are involved when you are physically present. There are feelings that might get hurt, people that might not get along, and moments of sharing feedback that might get awkward. Yet all of these factors must be put aside, in whichever way you see fit, because the purpose of in-class peer review is not to make friends, get embarrassed, or feel punished—it is to improve your writing and the writing of your peers.

So whether or not you identify more with the anxious student or the confident student, it really does not matter. Neither of them share the proper approach to in-class peer review as a time when meaningful collaboration happens. As such, and because other sections in this reader give you specific questions to answer about your peers’ writing and also convince you about the importance and effectiveness of collaboration in the writing process, the remainder of this section focuses on how you can begin to attain a proper approach to this strange activity called in-class peer review.

Paradigm Shift: Mustard Face

Let’s begin with a deep, philosophical question: If the person sitting next to you in class has leftover mustard on his face from your lunch at Subway together, would you tell him? Although you might want to know more specifics about the situation (i.e., Am I his friend? What type of person is he?), ultimately it comes down to a negotiation between what is good for the person and what is awkward for you. Some people would not hesitate to inform their peer about the mustard, convincing themselves that a little embarrassment now is better than continued embarrassment for that person throughout the day. Other people would avoid this situation entirely and perhaps would even convince themselves that if that person really cared about how they looked, he would have seen the mustard by now. To what extent do we as people have a responsibility to overcome awkward situations for the betterment of other people's circumstances?

In the writing classroom, you will be faced with similar situations all the time. Except in this setting, the mustard is a thesis and the face is a draft of a project. Regardless of whether or not you have social anxieties, know the person well, or find yourself slowly falling in love with the classmate sitting next to you, as a writer gaining authority in a business writing context you have the responsibility to provide critical feedback to the fellow writers in your class. This is difficult to do in face-to-face settings, but it gets much easier as you progressively begin to think of in-class peer review as something that is expected of you as a growing writer. The acts of informing your classmate that you think her introduction is too vague or the conclusion ends abruptly are not acts of attack but acts of care. They are not acts of pretentiousness or of snobbishness but acts of collaboration and genuine concern.

If you are a person who would not tell your classmate that he has mustard on his face, then to be consistent you should be entirely comfortable knowing that for the rest of the day hundreds of people will see this person with mustard on his face and that, in fact, it might be your fault that the student is now infamously known as "mustard face." Joking aside, what you tell someone about his or her writing might be awkward and uncomfortable, but at the same time it has the potential to really help that writer's reputation in the future.

This is (Not) Personal: Feedback Sandwiches

Now, of course, just as there are proper ways to tell someone he has mustard on his face, so too are there proper ways to tell someone that her thesis is lacking focus. When you are asked to answer a question about your peers' work (such as, "Is the writer's thesis focused?"), which of the following two ways do you think would be more beneficial for the purposes of in-class peer review? Circle only one.

- "Hmmmm . . . yep, just what I thought–your thesis is really vague, just like Professor Kessel said we shouldn't do it. I thought he made that pretty clear. You should definitely re-write it because it seems like a pretty dumb thing to do. If I were you, I would definitely not want to come across that way."
- "Mikhail, I really like how the introduction leads into the thesis, explaining the topic in detail before getting to the argument. About the thesis, though, I would consider making the argument more clear, because I am having a hard time nailing down exactly what the thesis is trying to say. Maybe being more specific about which side the paper is taking would help me understand it better. But keep the word 'vociferous' in the description of English majors. Good word use there."

Okay. So the more appropriate choice might be rather obvious, but it is important to know why.

- The first thing that should stick out to you is the tone of the people speaking. Speaker 1's tone is almost dismissive, speaking to her peer as though the mistake she made is the most obvious thing in the world. Speaker 2's tone is more supportive because she places herself not as someone who knows everything but as someone who is there to help the writer work through some issues in her writing.
- Secondly, Speaker 1 frames her response almost as a personal attack. She uses "you" and "your" throughout her response and even at one point claims that having a vague thesis is a "pretty dumb thing to do." This speaker shows little attentiveness to the feelings of the writer and comes across as rather aggressive in her feedback. It would be easy for the writer to take what she said very personally, which is not something that we want. As a way to avoid this, consider providing feedback in the manner in which Speaker 2 does. In her response, she does not provide feedback with "you" statements but rather speaks of the paper as something separate from the person (i.e., she

calls it "the thesis," and not "your thesis"). Sometimes this can be a helpful way to learn how to give productive feedback in a way that makes the writer take your concerns less personally.

Again, not taking things personally is easier said than done. Even if we all speak of our writing as separate entities from ourselves, at the end of the day you are going to leave class (hopefully) with a paper that is covered in feedback that articulates room for improvement in your writing. Speaker 2 seems to acknowledge this point by responding to her peer in the form of a "feedback sandwich": keep, fix, keep. She places her "fix this" feedback (thesis) in between two very positive statements about her peer's writing (introduction and word choice). Not only is this useful for the reader in finding positive things about the paper, it is also very useful in keeping the writer's confidence high at a time when it is particularly vulnerable.

All In This Together

This portion, which is really short and to the point, is aimed solely at trying to calm your nerves: Try and take some solace in the fact that at the exact same time that you are worrying about having your writing judged, assessed, torn apart, or ridiculed, there are about twenty-something other students in your classroom that are more than likely thinking the exact same thing. Everybody on campus, regardless of what field, discipline, or area her or she is studying, must have his or her writing read at one point or another at various stages in the writing process. The quicker you become comfortable with and realize the benefits of peer review, the better off you will be in your academic and non-academic lives. The more comfortable and open you are with peer review (whether it's in FYC or not), the more feedback you will receive; the more feedback you receive, the better your product gets. Acknowledge this fact. Live it. Get used to it.

Return of Mustard Face: Listen To Your Peers

Of course, none of this work to become successful contributors to in-class peer review means anything if the person receiving the feedback does not take into account what their peers are saying. Whether or not you believe you can learn and improve your writing from peer feedback, the fact of the matter is that a significant chunk of time in this class is devoted to peer review so you might as well fully invest into the time you have to share your writing. Think about "mustard face." Think about the risk he would have been taking if he chose to ignore the feedback of his peer—the job interview later that day, that run-in with his crush, that time spent chatting during his professor's office hours. All instances of negative future encounters could have been avoided if only he listened to his peer. Sigh.

Now, it is not expected that you change every last detail that your peers suggest that you change; but, it is expected that you at least take into consideration every last detail your peers suggest that you change. Your peers are your readers, and as such, every thing they say means something. Every single word they utter to you about your writing means that at some point their brain was thinking about your writing. This is valuable. Period. Whether you think it is or not. And you need to acknowledge that the fact that having a group of peers willing to give you feedback on a piece of writing that is a high percentage of your grade is not an inexhaustible commodity. Take advantage of this resource while you can, and do yourself a favour by listening carefully, critically, and compassionately to the words of others as they pertain to your own writing.

We all have mustard on our face. What separates committed from careless writers is whether or not we choose to acknowledge the mustard and thank our friends for pointing it out.

Key Takeaways

- In the workplace, writing is often collaborative, so you'll have to give and receive feedback.
- How you give feedback will depend on your audience.
- Peer review doesn't just improve your own work. It also helps you to learn about the writing process and how to analyze the work of others and gives you practice in giving feedback and integrating other people's feedback into your own work.
- Useful feedback is specific and shows respect for the writer. Tone is important.
- When you give feedback, position yourself as a fellow reader, rather than a judge. Speak about how the work impacted you. Also, make sure to ask questions.
- When you receive peer feedback, make sure to write it down and reflect on it later. You don't have to take every piece of advice, but you should be aware of why your peer made that suggestion and be able to explain why you don't want to follow the advice.

Attribution

CHAPTER 17: COMMUNICATING FOR EMPLOYMENT

Photo by Christina @ wocintechchat.com on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Learn how to meet the needs of both an algorithm and a prospective employer.
- Learn how to write an effective resume.
- Learn how to write an effective cover letter.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

- If you already have a cover letter or resume, how did you compose it? How successful do you think your cover letter or resume is?
- When you write a cover letter or resume, how do you decide what information to put in it?
- If you have experience with another culture, what are job application materials like in that culture? How do people get jobs?
- How do you feel about promoting yourself? Is it hard to talk about your accomplishments? Why or why not?
- Write about a time when you did something in the workplace that you were proud of. (It doesn't have to be a major accomplishment).
- What makes you a great employee?
- Have you ever hired someone for a role? If so, what did reviewing resumes and cover letters of other people teach you about the job application process?

Brenda Knights Narrative

Kwantlen translates to ‘tireless runner.’ We had a shortage of staff in one of our businesses one night and it resulted in one night, going out and covering the shift. And some people say, wow, that’s amazing, you went off and covered the shift. But I know that for myself, it wasn’t a big deal. I am driven by the value that we’re Kwantlen, and that means tireless runner, and as a Kwantlen person we’re taught to step up when we’re needed. I didn’t even hesitate. I’ve been brought up this way. And that becomes infectious with employees. They’ll buy into that idea as well. They’ll see it’s not lip service, that we all have to pitch in and do what needs to be done. There’s going to come a time when you’ll be asked to step up and help. That traditional teaching tells us that when you carry a name, you need to carry it with pride, because it has a lot of meaning. In this case there was no other alternative.

Audience Analysis and Algorithms

When it comes to resumes and cover letters, everyone has an opinion. You'll take your resume to a resume workshop on campus and get one piece of advice, then show it to your friend and get another, and ask a mentor and get told to ignore what the first two people told you. That's because conventions about resumes and cover letters differ according to the job and the industry.

Resume and cover letter conventions also evolve over time. In the 1970s and 80s, many people included their height, weight and a photograph when they applied for the job. You can imagine how this led to discriminatory hiring practices. Thanks to Human Rights Tribunal cases and advocacy from workers who spoke out against the practice, employers stopped asking for photographs. (Some restaurants and bars still ask for photos when hiring servers, and while the practice isn't technically illegal, it's a sign that you should never work there). Cover letters used to be formatted like actual letters, but today very few cover letters are actually sent through the mail. Today, cover letters and resumes are adapting to the fact that many companies using software that forces you to copy and paste your resume and cover letter into little text boxes.

In this section, we'll focus on how to make effective decisions about your cover letters and resumes. We'll avoid giving prescriptive advice and instead focus on helping figure out what your audience wants and how to market yourself effectively. In doing so, we'll draw on a lot of the different skills we've learned this semester: analyzing an audience, persuasion, graphic design, plain language and more.

Audience Analysis: Communicating To An Algorithm

When you write a resume and cover letter, you have two audiences and one isn't even human. Right now, an important context in workplace communications is that many companies use some form of artificial intelligence to make hiring decisions. An applicant uploads a resume and cover letter to the H.R. software, and an algorithm scans it for keywords, skills, progression (whether the person has been promoted and taken on experience), and other factors. This means that even if you're qualified for the job, your application could be thrown out before a human ever sees it.

Algorithms can:

- **Search your resume and cover letter for specific keywords and phrases.** For example, one keyword might be 'Adobe Photoshop' or 'marketing manager.' The algorithm can even assign different weights to different keywords. A resume will receive a certain number of points based on how closely it matches the keywords. So, if it's really important that a candidate has a Ph.D., that keyword would be worth a lot of points.
- **Use the dates on your resume to determine how much experience you have and whether or not you've been promoted or taken on more responsibility**. Clear formatting can help the algorithm see your career progression.
- **Use "linking text" and "expressed magnitude" to try to figure out if you have soft skills like leadership skills or project management**.[1] Linking text means that the algorithm is searching for phrases ("managed a team of # people"). Expressed magnitude means that the software searches for adjectives and adverbs (such as 'expert' or

1. https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycaprino/2019/03/23/how-to-write-a-resume-that-passes-the-artificial-intelligence-test/#484017456ea7

'highly') to figure out how good you are at a particular task. Algorithms will even analyze your word choices to try to figure out how passionate, positive or enthusiastic you are.

- **Search for "signals" about your competence.** [2]For example, many algorithms will reject candidates who make spelling or grammar errors. Some algorithms even reject people who use certain software to create their resumes.

There's a great case to be made that using artificial intelligence to make these decisions is highly problematic. Often, suitable candidates are excluded because they didn't use the right keywords or because they took a non-traditional career path. More than that, however, software is never neutral because the unexamined biases of the people who created the software end up in the algorithm. So, if you're white, you may create facial recognition software that works best on white faces. (Google Photos, Flickr and other companies have been criticized for accidentally labeling black people as "monkeys" or "apes," for example). [3] Founder of the Algorithm Justie League Joy Buolamwini calls this the "coded gaze," which means that discrimination gets baked into software "by those who have the power to code systems" (Buolamwini 2016). And since companies often don't test software for biases, it's a hard problem to correct.

You may not have control over some of the ways that algorithms interpret your cover letter or resume, but here are some ways to meet this audience's needs:

- **Find key phrases in the job posting and use them in your resume and cover letter** [4]. When you read the job posting, underline key phrases, paying special attention to ones that are repeated. We'll show you how to do this in the next section.
- **Don't take too many design risks.**[5] If you work in a creative field, you may be tempted to use different fonts, photos or Photoshop to show off your skills. Algorithms have a hard time with these. Use a clear, simple format that's easy to read.
- **Be clear and specific**[6]**:** Using plain language and setting your accomplishments in concrete terms will help you pass the algorithm. For example, instead of saying "I'm a highly experienced and passionate engineer," you could say "I have 10 years of experience as a Mechnical Engineer and am an expert in creating CAD drawings and collaborating with Project Managers."
- **Proofread both your resume and cover letter:** Since many algorithms will throw out any resume or cover letter that has a spelling mistake, make sure to check your work carefully before you submit it.

This visual offers you an overview of the audiences involved in the hiring process.

2. https://www.cnbc.com/2018/10/01/how-to-make-sure-the-robots-pass-your-resume-on-to-the-hiring-manager.html
3. https://medium.com/africana-feminisms/the-coded-gaze-algorithmic-bias-what-is-it-and-why-should-i-care-51a416dbc3f3
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6. https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycaprino/2019/03/23/how-to-write-a-resume-that-passes-the-artificial-intelligence-test/#484017456ea7

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Audience Analysis: Customization is Key

Unless you're applying to an entry-level position where the employer wants to hire a large number of people and is willing to train them, (such as some student summer jobs, fast food jobs, warehouse jobs etc.), a customized cover letter and resume will help you stand out from the rest. Many experts suggest that you will get more interviews if you create a personalized resume and cover letter for 5 jobs than if you send out the same cover letter and resume to 100 jobs.

Why? Because the average hiring manager looks at a resume for six seconds[1]. That's it. Six seconds stands between you and in interview for your dream job. If your resume doesn't immediately show the hiring manager how you're qualified for this job, then you won't make it on to the next stage.

Because relatively few people actually take the time to create personalized job application materials, doing this can also provide you with a huge advantage. Stay away from templates and lists of "action verbs" you found on the internet, and take the time to create your own application materials.

To begin personalizing your resume and cover letter, first look carefully at the job ad. Let's look at an example together. Here's a real ad for a Marketing Communications Coordinator. When you read it, ask yourself:

- What tone does it take? How would you describe this workplace?
- What skills and experience does the position ask for?
- What soft skills (communications, leadership, etc.) are important?
- What values do you think the company has?
- What keywords can you find?

Marketing Communications Coordinator – St. John's Ambulance

Marketing Communications Coordinator

Vancouver, BC

Are you a new or recent marketing or communications grad that's looking for an opportunity to make an impact? Is working for an organization that's driven by a greater purpose important to you?

St. John Ambulance BC/Yukon (SJA) is looking for a Marketing Communications Coordinator to join our team. We're BC and Yukon's safety charity. SJA offers first aid training and safety products, as well as provides a range of charitable safety and wellness services to communities. Our humanitarian roots go back 900 years (yup 900, that's not a typo!). Today, we're part of the greater St. John network that spans the globe.

The Marketing Communications Coordinator fills a dynamic role that offers plenty of opportunity to hone and grow your skills as you help us make our communities safer. This position provides key support within our

1. https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/scanning-resumes/

small and busy marketing team in our Vancouver headquarters. We're looking for a self-starter with the ability to work independently on tasks with guidance provided along the way. As a successful candidate, you'll focus on developing creative and engaging content through storytelling and design. We're a very collaborative group, and your contribution will be important to help us meet our organizational and team goals.

Sound interesting? Here's what we're looking for!

- 1 – 2 years marketing or communications experience, or equivalent relevant education
- Experience in written storytelling
- Experience using Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Premiere Pro), Canva, and other design apps
- A strong creative eye
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Experience building social media content and managing social channels, including a working knowledge of Hootsuite and other social media tools
- Proven knowledge of video creation and editing, including video creation for social media
- Awesome copywriting and editing skills for web, social, and newsletter/email content
- A proven ability to meet deadlines
- Great organization skills
- Experience with or exposure to media relations is an extra plus

Our office is located next to Oakridge Mall with handy transit access. We offer comprehensive benefits and extra perks like on-site parking (if you're inclined to drive), a retirement savings plan, and more.

This is a hands-on and exciting role. If you're a rising star looking for purposeful fit, send us your resume and cover letter. Please include your salary expectations. If you're selected for an interview, we'll ask to see a few samples of your best work.

We appreciate and thank you for your interest in our charity. Please note that only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

Source: Indeed.

You might have noticed that the tone of the piece is upbeat and casual. It uses exclamation marks and phrases like "yup, that's not a typo." A lot of the wording ("rising star," "recent grad") suggests they're looking for a young person who has ambition. It also suggests that this office is perhaps more casual and less hierarchical than other companies. You might imagine that they would value innovation and creativity. Someone who works there would also have to believe in the charity's work.

It's clear from the job application that they're looking for someone with strong writing and graphic design skills, as well as some experience in marketing and communications. Storytelling is mentioned, and they also ask for writing samples if you make it to the interview round. That means your cover letter's going to be important, since they'll be using it as evidence of your writing skills. You'll also want to make sure your resume is well-designed to provide evidence of your graphic-design skills. (This doesn't mean that you should do something splashy and hard-to-read, but your resume should give the hiring manager a sense of your ability to use basic graphic-design principles).

Analyzing a job posting in this way shows you which of your skills and experiences you'll want to emphasize. The more experience you get reading job postings, the more you'll learn which companies to avoid.

Let’s take a lot at how to write an effective resume.

Writing an Effective Resume

Alison Green, who runs the popular blog Ask A Manager and has written several books, including the How To Get a Job e-book, suggests that job-seekers ask themselves one important question when deciding what to put in their job application documents: **"What did you accomplish in this job that someone else wouldn't have?"** (Green, pg. 15). Basically, she is suggesting that you focus on your accomplishments, rather than your job duties.

In many positions, you might have 10, 20 or even 50 job duties over the course of a year. Following this advice doesn't just help you decide what job duties to include in your resume, but it also helps you be more specific and persuasive. Let's look at an example:

Job Duty: I prepared tax returns for customers.

Job Duty That Focuses On Accomplishments: I had a 99.5% accuracy rate when preparing tax returns, which put me in the top 2% of all employees.

The first example describes what everyone in that position did. The second example shows how the job seeker accomplished something that the average person wouldn't have done. It's more specific and persuasive.

If you are new to the workforce, you might initially struggle to find examples of what you did that the average person working in a job wouldn't have done. But in nearly every job, you can find one area where you excelled. For example, maybe you worked as a salesperson in a clothing store and were constantly called upon by coworkers to deal with difficult customers. Maybe you speak multiple languages and were able to communicate effectively with a broad range of customers.

When you begin writing your resume, think back to the jobs you've held, then freewrite about what you did that the average person wouldn't have done. Turn this into a short, well-edited bullet point list.

Test Your Knowledge

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=673

Show Don’t Tell

Whether you’re creating a resume or a cover letter, you will benefit from the old piece of creative writing advice that says “show don’t tell.” In creative writing, this means that instead of saying “the character was angry” or “the house was spooky,” you should describe the actions. (“The door to the old house was boarded up, but in the window I saw a collection of doll’s heads, each one painted with strange symbols.”) But showing not telling is also great advice when discussing soft skills in your resume.

Many employers value soft skills like teamwork, leadership, communication skills or problem-solving skills, and so many people put these on their resume. But it’s not enough to simply say “I’m a great leader.” Anyone can say this. I could say that I’m a nuclear physicist, but that doesn’t make it true.

Instead of telling your employer that you’re a great leader or an engaging writer, show it. Think of a time when you showed leadership skills, then mention it in you cover letter or resume. Instead of saying you’re a good writer, use your cover letter and resume to let your writing skills shine.

Harman’s Story

Harman is 20 years old and has had two jobs. Currently, he works in a warehouse, but last summer he worked at his uncle’s hardware store. His goal is to get a co-op position in accounting, and he’s not sure how to represent his experience in a way that will make him look professional and ambitious. He did freewrites about both jobs. When he compared the two, he realized that in both jobs, he took on extra duties and enjoyed helping people. Taking on extra duties shows that he’s ambitious, and helping people shows his good communication and teamwork skills.

Harman turned his freewrites into bullet points to include on his resume. He made sure to show his soft skills rather than tell them. For example, instead of saying that he’s ambitious, he described taking initiative to get certified in forklift operation.

Here’s what he came up with:

Warehouse Loader **Jan. 2018 – present**
Random Warehouse

- Took initiative to get certified in forklift operation and industrial first aid and was promoted to Lead Hand.
- Balanced speed with accuracy to build secure pallet loads.
- Communicated effectively to coworkers in English, Punjabi and Hindi.

Sales Associate **May 2018 – Sept 2018**
Local Family Hardware

- Was quickly promoted from the slow daytime shift to the busy weekend rush due to my customer service skills.
- Was selected to give in-store tutorials on home improvement projects to customers. Delivered presentations in both English and Punjabi.
- Was named Employee of the Month in June because of my ability to make customers feel listened to and

welcome.

What Should Go In Your Resume?

As we've already said, your resume should be set up to be skimmed easily. You'll want your name, address, phone number and email address to be at the top. From there, it really depends on what the prospective employer will be looking for and what about your experience is most persuasive.

For example, if you've taught yourself multiple programming languages and have created apps or games for fun, but you haven't yet been paid to do this, you might create a "Technical Skills" section above your work experience that lists in point form all of the programming languages you know. If you have a unique skill set that might not be immediately obvious when someone looks at your resume, you might choose to write a 1-2 sentence summary of yourself as a candidate, such as "Ahmed Muhammad is a PMP-certified Project Manager who specializes in managing construction projects in ecologically sensitive locations."

Most resumes will include:

- **Your work experience.** You may choose to combine volunteer and work experience. Depending on how long you've been in the workforce, you might leave off unrelated jobs or jobs that you held a long time ago. If you're 5 years into your career as an accountant, for example, there's no need to include the house painting job you had during the summer in your first year of university. These should be listed from most recent to least recent. It should also include the name of your company, your job title, when you worked there and what you did.
- **Your education:** Once you're out of high school, this should include just post-secondary experience. You can include your GPA (if it's impressive) and your major.
- **Any awards, honours or recognition you received,** such as scholarships.
- **Technical skills:** If you're going to include a list of skills you have, make sure to include only technical skills, such as an ability to use the Adobe Creative Suite, rather than soft skills like an ability to work in teams.

What Not To Include

Alison Green tells us that the objectives section "adds nothing and takes up space" (2013, pg. 13) and at best simply restates that you're interested in getting a job, which the employer already knows. It's also not necessary to include hobbies or other interests, unless these relate to the position. (For example, if you're applying to work at a company that makes yoga clothing, being a yoga enthusiast might be useful). Remember: the goal of a resume is to get an interview, not to have a potential employer know everything about you.

Harman's Story Continued

When designing his resume, Harman decided that the most persuasive part of his resume is his 3.78 GPA and the fact that he's been on the Dean's List for the past two semesters. He also knows how to use different programs like QuickBooks, Excel, Sage, Word and the Adobe Creative Suite. He decides to list his technical skills first, followed by his education and then his work experience. He lists his technical skills in bullet points, and under his education he makes sure to include his GPA and the fact that he's been on the Dean's List.

Harman uses clear headings and makes sure that his formatting is easy to read. He gets his friend to check his spelling and grammar. He adds lines between the different sections to allow readers to skim. His resume is ready to go!

Tech Tip: Save your resume in PDF so that the formatting gets preserved.

Writing an Effective Cover Letter

Your cover letter is your chance to speak directly to your potential employer and tell them why you want the job, so once again it's important to personalize it. Your cover letter shouldn't just restate everything in your resume, but should instead show why you should get an interview for this particular job. Here's your chance to give details about an accomplishment or project, speak to specific qualifications that the employer wants, and portray a bit of your personality. (It's obviously not the place to gush about your hobbies or pets, but your tone can convey what type of colleague you'll be).

According to Alison Green, you should:

- Show enthusiasm for wanting to work at the company and explain specifically why you want to work there. (Green, 2013).
- Mention what you offer the company. Why should they hire you? If there's something that sets you apart that isn't really shown on your resume, you should state it. (Green, 2013).
- Explain any concerns that the employer might have, if relevant. If you don't have 100% of the qualifications or have a non-traditional career path, you should acknowledge it and explain why you're still a great candidate. For example, if you recently went back to school so that you could move to a new industry, you should show how your experience in your previous career is actually a benefit. (Green, 2013).

Harman's Story

Harman now needs to write a cover letter for the co-op position in accounting. When he reads the job description, he realizes that the post says twice that all co-op students are expected to be professional and punctual, and that they must be eager to learn. The job posting also stresses that the successful candidate will have to use QuickBooks and Sage, and Harman got top marks on projects using these. More importantly, he was part of a team that won an accounting competition, which really sets him apart.

Here's the cover letter he comes up with:

Dear Mr. Sikula,

Thank you for considering me for a co-op internship at A+ Accounting. I was excited when I saw this job listed because I admire how your organization provides low-cost services to non-profit organizations, and how you match employee charitable donations.

I'm in my fourth year of the accounting program at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and I have a 3.87 GPA. (My GPA for accounting courses alone is 4.0). I was recently part of a four-person student team that won the ACHIEVE 2019 competition. To win, we had to work collaboratively and conduct extensive analysis under pressure. I've also completed numerous projects that required me to use Sage and QuickBooks. I love watching Youtube tutorials to figure out how do advanced tasks in Sage.

In the workplace, I'm known for my professionalism and reliability. I pride myself on having never been late to a *shift. My perfect attendance and ability to make customers feel welcome earned me an Employee of the Month award at Local Hardware Store. I also took initiative to get certified in industrial first aid and forklift operation, which led to me becoming the youngest person ever to get promoted to Lead Hand at Random Warehouse.*

I think that I would be a good fit for your team, and I would appreciate the chance to discuss my qualifications further in an interview. Please contact me at 778-111-2222 or harman.d@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Here, Harman begins by specifically saying why he wants to work at this accounting firm. It's clear that he's done his research. Because he's a student with no paid accounting work, he has realized that his academic experience is most persuasive. Since Harman knows that the company is looking for someone who is eager to learn, he includes the line about how he seeks out Youtube videos to supplement his knowledge. He also uses his warehouse and hardware store jobs to demonstrate his reliability and professionalism.

Harman also creates a tone that's enthusiastic but professional. If he'd said "I would be thrilled and honoured and delighted to work at your company," his tone would have been a little over-the-top. His cover letter also is concise. He knows that when he gets to an interview, he'll be able to discuss his qualifications further.

In the end, Harman gets the interview….and the job.

Key Takeaways

Creating job application materials asks you to blend persuasion, plain language, document design, audience analysis and many of the other skills we've learned throughout this course. When you first start writing them, it can feel strange to have to promote yourself in this way. With a little practice, however, you can set yourself apart from other candidates and get an interview.

Key Takeaways

- When you create a cover letter and resume, you're communicating first to an algorithm (which will look for key phrases and how long you've been at particular companies) and then to a human.
- When you read a job posting, pick out key phrases. Look especially for phrases that have been repeated. Make sure that you use the language of the job posting.
- A resume is a "marketing document" (Green, 2013, pg 13) that convinces employers that they should interview you. It contains a summary of your skills, work experience, education and accomplishments. Use plain language and a clear format.
- When writing your resume and cover letter, focus on your accomplishments, not your job duties. What did you do that someone else in the role wouldn't have done?
- A cover letter is your chance to speak directly to an employer and say why you want this particular job. It shouldn't repeat your resume, complement it. Make sure to be specific about why you want this particular job, and why they should hire you.
- Make sure to proofread your job materials before you send them out.

Activities For Further Reflection

Your instructor may ask you to complete one or more of the following exercises.

- Think back to your last job. Freewrite on the topic "what did I do in this role that the average employee wouldn't have done?" Then, take what you've written and turn it into 3 – 5 sentences for your resume that focus on your accomplishments, not your job duties.
- Pick a fictional character and try to write a resume for them. Have fun with it. For example, if you picked Elsa from Frozen, you might write "Harnessed abilities to create systemic changes across environment, leading to a 50% reduction in temperature and a 100% increase in singing."
- Find a job posting online. Highlight key phrases and make a list of the top 3 qualities/skills that the employer is looking for.
- Read 10 job postings for a career that you want after graduation. Underline key phrases, then look for trends among the postings. What are the most common skills/qualities/traits that employers are looking for? Identify 3, then write 1 – 2 paragraphs explaining how you'll acquire these skills/qualities/traits before graduation.
- If you have experience with a different culture, write a blog post explaining to someone who's just moved to the country how to get a job there.

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CHAPTER 18: GETTING ALONG WITH OTHER PEOPLE

Photo by Perry Grone on Unsplash

In this section you will:

- Explore intrapersonal communication.
- Explore interpersonal communication.
- Troubleshoot conflict in the workplace.
- Explore intercultural communication.
- Explore team dynamics.

Questions For Reflection

Before we begin, consider the following questions. Your instructor may ask you to freewrite about one or more of these questions in your learning journal.

- How much experience do you have communicating with people of different cultures? How have these experiences impacted you?
- When you enter into a new workplace, community or culture, how do you learn how to communicate effectively in that space?
- What are your fears about intercultural communication?
- Have you ever worked in a group before? How did the experience go? Did you experience any miscommunications?
- When you first came to this university, how did you feel about communicating with your teachers? How do you feel now?
- How did you learn how to communicate with others? Do you feel that all the communication skills you learned were helpful? Why or why not?

Brenda Knights Narrative

Different cultures communicate differently, and you have to be respectful of what's valued in each culture. You have to be adaptable to that. There's a story about a cowboy who meets with an Indigenous man, and they're trying to get to another city together. They were using each other's resources to get there, but they couldn't communicate and speak the same language. The cowboy kept talking and talking. The Indigenous man was thinking: won't think guy ever shut up? He's not respectful. Our elders taught us to listen. Why does he keep going on and on? Why doesn't he stop? The cowboy was thinking, this guy is rude. He's not answering me. I'm trying to be his friend, but he hardly speaks. You can see the differences in culture. That expands around the world. We're a global society and we need to be aware of what's respectful and what's disrespectful behaviour to your audience.

Forgiveness and understanding are also important, as is showing that you care enough to learn. Everyone's bringing different cultural values that they've been brought up with. When you gain an understanding of where people are coming from, it's easier to deal with people in your network. You have to adapt to different people.

Intrapersonal Communication

You can craft a perfect memo with exceptional spelling and grammar, or give a stirring oral presentation, but if you can't engage with other people in a healthy manner, you will struggle in most workplaces. In this section, we'll cover:

- **Intrapersonal communication:** knowing yourself.
- **Interpersonal communication:** communicating with others.
- **Intercultural communication:** communicating with people from other cultures.
- **Communicating effectively in teams.**

What is Intrapersonal Communication?

Intrapersonal communication can be defined as communication with one's self, and that may include self-talk, acts of imagination and visualization, and even recall and memory (McLean, 2005). You read on your phone that your friends are going to have dinner at your favourite restaurant. What comes to mind? Sights, sounds, and scents? Something special that happened the last time you were there? Do you contemplate joining them? Do you start to work out a plan of getting from your present location to the restaurant? Do you send your friends a text asking if they want company? Until the moment when you hit the "send" button, you are communicating with yourself.

From planning to problem solving, internal conflict resolution, and evaluations and judgments of self and others, we communicate with ourselves through intrapersonal communication.

All this interaction takes place in the mind without externalization, and all of it relies on previous interaction with the external world.

Watch the following 1 minute video on *Intrapersonal Communication*

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=685

Self-Concept

Returning to the question "what are you doing?" is one way to approach self-concept. If we define ourselves through our actions, what might those actions be, and are we no longer ourselves when we no longer engage in those activities? Psychologist Steven Pinker defines the conscious present as about three seconds for most people. Everything else is past or future (Pinker, 2009). Who are you at this moment in time, and will the self you become an hour from now be different from the self that is reading this sentence right now?

Just as the communication process is dynamic, not static (i.e., always changing, not staying the same), you too are a dynamic system. Physiologically your body is in a constant state of change as you inhale and exhale air, digest food, and cleanse waste from each cell. Psychologically you are constantly in a state of change as well. Some aspects of your personality and character will be constant, while others will shift and adapt to your environment and context. These complex combinations contribute to the self you call you. You may choose to define yourself by your own sense of individuality, personal characteristics, motivations, and actions (McLean, 2005), but any definition you create will likely fail to capture all of who you are, and who you will become.

Self-concept is "what we perceive ourselves to be," (McLean,, 2005) and involves aspects of image and esteem. How we see ourselves and how we feel about ourselves influences how we communicate with others. What you are thinking now and how you communicate impacts and influences how others treat you. Developing a sense of self as a communicator involves balance between constructive feedback from others and constructive self-affirmation. You judge yourself, as others do, and both views count.

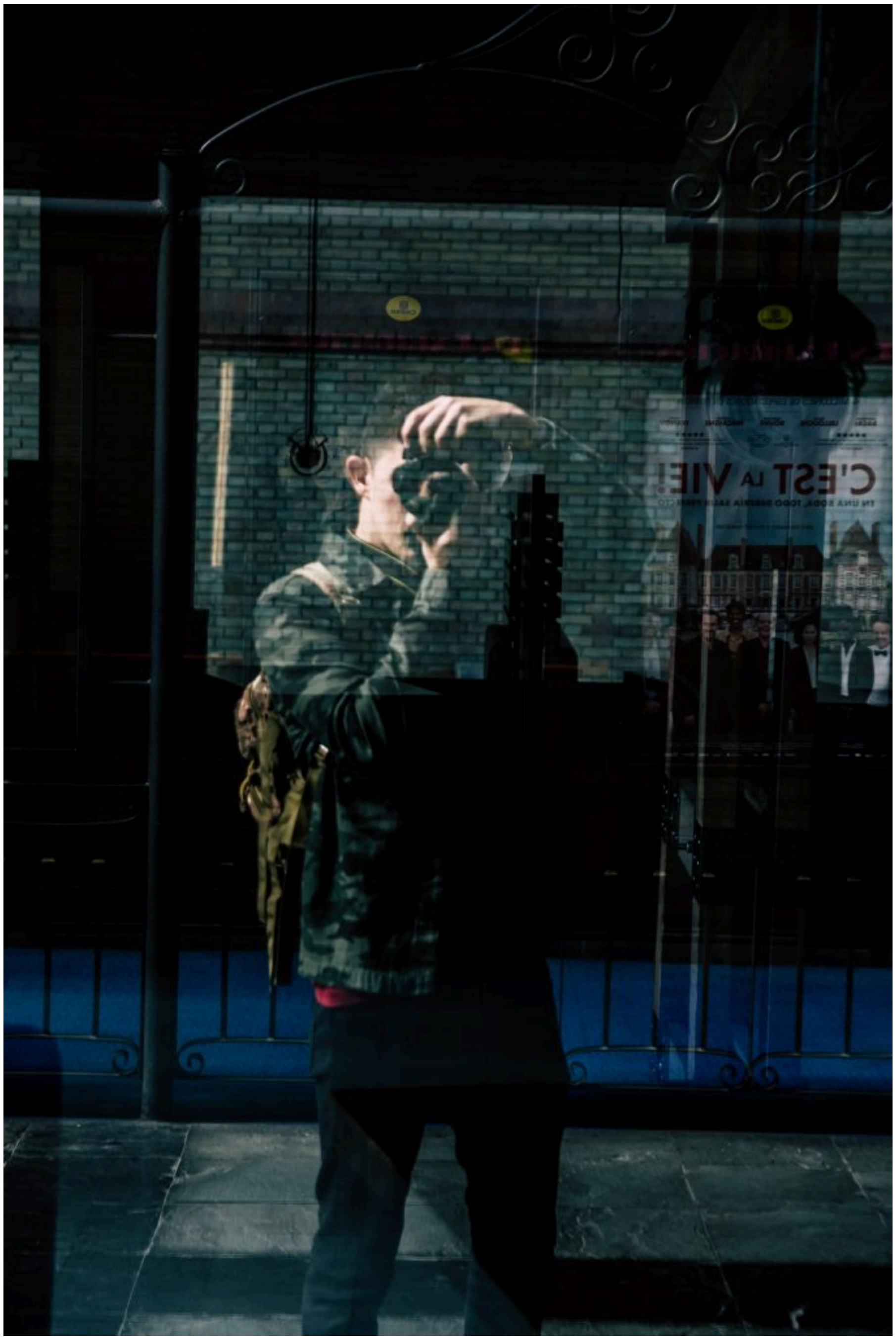

Figure 18.1 Photo by [Pablo Guerrero] on [Unsplash]

Self-reflection is a trait that allows us to adapt and change to our context or environment, to accept or reject messages, to examine our concept of ourselves and choose to improve.

Internal monologue refers to the self-talk of intrapersonal communication. It can be a running monologue that is rational and reasonable, or disorganized and illogical. Your self-monologue can empower and energize you or it can unintentionally interfere with listening to others, impede your ability to focus, and become a barrier to effective communication.

You have to make a choice to listen to others when they communicate through the written or spoken word. Refraining from preparing your responses before others finish speaking (or before you finish reading what they have said) is good listening, and essential for relationship-building. It's good listening practice to take mental note of when you jump to conclusions from only partially attending to the speaker or writer's message. There is certainly value in choosing to listen to others in addition to yourself.

One principle of communication is that interaction is dynamic and changing. Interaction can be internal, as in intrapersonal communication, but can also be external. We may communicate with one other person and engage in paired interpersonal communication. If we engage two or more individuals, group communication is the result.

To summarize, self-concept involves multiple dimensions and is expressed as internal monologue and social comparisons. Self-concept can be informed by engaging in dialogue with one or more people, and through reading or listening to spoken works; attending to what others communicate can add value to your self-concept.

Interpersonal Communication

We communicate with each other to meet our needs, regardless of how we define those needs. From the time you are a newborn infant crying for food or the time you are a toddler learning to say “please” when requesting a cup of milk, to the time you are an adult learning the rituals of the job interview and the conference room, you learn to communicate in order to gain a sense of self within the group or community–meeting your basic needs as you grow and learn.

Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging messages between two people whose lives mutually influence one another in unique ways in relation to social and cultural norms (University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, 2013). A brief exchange with a grocery store clerk who you don’t know wouldn’t be considered interpersonal communication, because you and the clerk are not influencing each other in significant ways. If the clerk were a friend, family member, coworker, or romantic partner, the communication would fall into the interpersonal category.

Aside from making your relationships and health better, interpersonal communication skills are highly sought after by potential employers, consistently ranking in the top ten in national surveys (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2010). Interpersonal communication meets our basic needs as humans for security in our social bonds, health, and careers. But we are not born with all the interpersonal communication skills we’ll need in life.

Social Penetration Theory

How do you get to know other people? If the answer springs immediately to mind, we’re getting somewhere: communication. Communication allows us to share experiences, come to know ourselves and others, and form relationships, but it requires time and effort. Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor describe this progression from superficial to intimate levels of communication in social penetration theory, which is often called the Onion Theory because the model looks like an onion and involves layers that are peeled away (Altman & Taylor, 1973). According to social penetration theory, we fear that which we do not know. That includes people. Strangers go from being unknown to known through a series of steps that we can observe through conversational interactions.

At the outermost layer of the onion, in this model, there is only that which we can observe. We can observe characteristics about each other and make judgments, but they are educated guesses at best. Our nonverbal displays of affiliation, like a team jacket, a uniform, or a badge, may communicate something about us, but we only peel away a layer when we engage in conversation, oral or written.

As we move from public to private information we make the transition from small talk to substantial, and eventually intimate, conversations. Communication requires trust and that often takes time. Beginnings are fragile times and when expectations, roles, and ways of communicating are not clear, misunderstandings can occur.

According to the **social penetration theory**, people go from superficial to intimate conversations as trust develops through repeated, positive interactions. **Self-disclosure** is “information, thoughts, or feelings we tell others about ourselves that they would not otherwise know” (McLean, 2005). Taking it step by step, and not rushing to self-disclose or asking personal questions too soon, can help develop positive business relationships. Figure 9.1 below, an image of onion layers resembles the process of building interpersonal communication relationships.

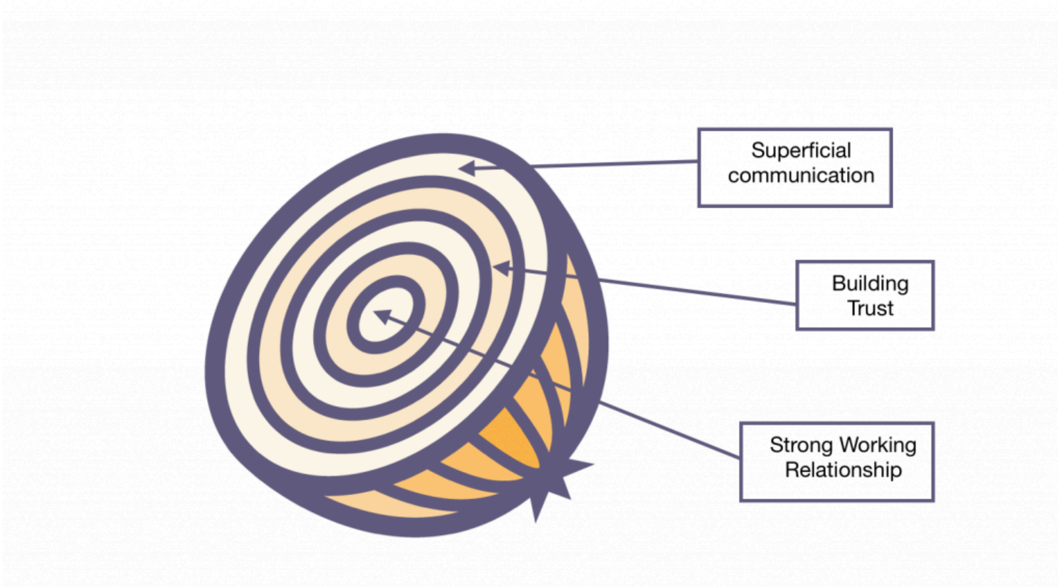

Figure 18.2 Layers of disclosure in interpersonal communication [Image Description]

Principles of Self-Disclosure

From your internal monologue and intrapersonal communication, to verbal and nonverbal communication, communication is constantly occurring. What do you communicate about yourself by the clothes (or brands) you wear, the tattoos you display, or the piercing you remove before you enter the workplace? Self-disclosure is a process by which you intentionally communicate information to others, but can involve unintentional, but revealing slips.

Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal communication can be defined as communication between two people, but the definition fails to capture the essence of a relationship. This broad definition is useful when we compare it to intrapersonal communication, or communication with ourselves, as opposed to mass communication, or communication with a large audience, but it requires clarification. The developmental view of interpersonal communication places emphasis on the relationship rather than the size of the audience, and draws a distinction between impersonal and personal interactions.

For example, one day your coworker and best friend, Iris, whom you've come to know on a personal as well as a professional level, gets promoted to the position of manager. She didn't tell you ahead of time because it wasn't certain, and she didn't know how to bring up the possible change of roles. Your relationship with Iris will change as your roles transform. Her perspective will change, and so will yours. You may stay friends, or she may not have as much time as she once did. Over time, you and Iris gradually grow apart, spending less time together. You eventually lose touch. What is the status of your relationship?

If you have ever had even a minor interpersonal transaction such as buying a cup of coffee from a clerk, you know that some people can be personable, but does that mean you've developed a relationship within the transaction process? For many people the transaction is an impersonal experience, however pleasant. What is the difference between the brief interaction of a transaction and the interactions you periodically have with your colleague, Iris, who is now your manager?

The developmental view places an emphasis on the prior history, but also focuses on the level of familiarity and trust. Over time and with increased frequency we form bonds or relationships with people, and if time and frequency are diminished, we lose that familiarity. The relationship with the clerk may be impersonal, but so can the relationship with the manager after time has passed and the familiarity is lost. From a developmental view, interpersonal communication can exist across this range of experience and interaction.

Regardless of whether we focus on collaboration or competition, we can see that interpersonal communication is necessary in the business environment. We want to know our place and role within the organization, accurately predict those within our proximity, and create a sense of safety and belonging. Family for many is the first experience in interpersonal relationships, but as we develop professionally, our relationships at work may take on many of the attributes we associate with family communication. We look to each other with similar sibling rivalries, competition for attention and resources, and support. The workplace and our peers can become as close, or closer, than our birth families, with similar challenges and rewards.

To summarize, interpersonal relationships are an important part of the work environment. We come to know one another gradually (layer by layer). The principle of self-disclosure is a normal part of communication.

Image Description

Figure 18.2 image description: This diagram shows three layers inside an onion symbolizing interpersonal communication. The outermost layer represents superficial communication, the middle layer represents building trust and the innermost layer represents a strong working relationship. [Return to Figure 18.2]

Rituals of Conversation

You no doubt have participated in countless conversations throughout your life, and the process of how to conduct a conversation may seem so obvious that it needs no examination. Yet, all cultures have rituals of various kinds, and conversation is one of these universal rituals. A skilled business communicator knows when to speak, when to remain silent, and to always stop speaking before the audience stops listening. Expectations may differ based on the type of conversation and the knowledge and experience of participants, but here are the basic five steps of a conversation.

Figure 18.3 Photo by [Kawtar CHERKAOUI](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Conversation as a Ritual

Steven Beebe, Susan Beebe, and Mark Redmond offer us five stages of conversation that are adapted here for our discussion (Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, 2002).

1. Initiation

The first stage of conversation is called initiation, and requires you to be open to interact. How you communicate openness is up to you; it may involve nonverbal signals like eye contact or body positions, you may be smiling or facing the other person and making eye contact. For some, this may produce a degree of anxiety. If status and hierarchical relationships are present, it may be a question of who speaks when, according to cultural norms.

2. Preview

The preview is an indication, verbal or nonverbal, of what the conversation is about, both in terms of content and in terms of the relationship. A word or two in the subject line of an email may signal the topic, and the relationship between individuals, such as an employee-supervisor relationship, may be understood. A preview can serve to reduce uncertainty and signal intent.

3. Talking Point(s)

Joseph DeVito characterizes this step as getting down to business, reinforcing the goal orientation of the conversation (DeVito, 2003). In business communication, we often have a specific goal or series of points to address, but we cannot lose sight of the relationship messages within the discussion of content. By clearly articulating, either in written or oral form, the main points, you provide an outline or structure to the conversation.

4. Feedback

Similar to a preview step, this stage allows the conversational partners to clarify, restate, or discuss the points of the conversation to arrive at a sense of mutual understanding. Western cultures often get to the point rather quickly and once an understanding is established there is a quick move to the conclusion.

Feedback is an opportunity to make sure the interaction was successful the first time. Failure to attend to this stage can lead to the need for additional interactions, reducing efficiency across time.

5. Closing

The acceptance of feedback on both sides of the conversation often signals the transition to the conclusion of the conversation.

There are times when a conversational partner introduces new information in the conclusion, which can start the process all over again. You may also note that if words like "in conclusion" or "oh—one more thing" are used, a set of expectations is now in force. A conclusion has been announced and the listener expects it. If the speaker continues to recycle at this point, the listener's listening skills are often not as keen as they were during the heat of the main engagement, and it may even produce frustration. People mentally shift to the next order of business and this transition must be negotiated successfully.

By mentioning a time, date, or place for future communication you can clearly signal that the conversation, although currently concluded, will continue later. In this way, you can often disengage successfully while demonstrating respect.

Conflict in the Work Environment

The word "conflict" produces a sense of anxiety for many people, but it is part of the human experience. Just because conflict is universal does not mean that we cannot improve how we handle disagreements, misunderstandings, and struggles to understand or make ourselves understood.

Figure 18.4 Photo by [Chris Sabor] on [Unsplash]

Conflict is the physical or psychological struggle associated with the perception of opposing or incompatible goals, desires, demands, wants, or needs (McLean, 2005). When incompatible goals, scarce resources, or interference are present, conflict is a typical result, but it doesn't mean the relationship is poor or failing. All relationships progress through times of conflict and collaboration. How we navigate and negotiate these challenges influences, reinforces, or destroys the relationship. Conflict is universal, but how and when it occurs is open to influence and interpretation. Rather than viewing conflict from a negative frame of reference, view it as an opportunity for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship.

Conflict Management Strategies

As professional communicators, we can acknowledge and anticipate that conflict will be present in every context or environment where communication occurs. To that end, we can predict, anticipate, and formulate strategies to address conflict successfully. How you choose to approach conflict influences its resolution. Joseph DeVito (2003) offers several conflict management strategies that you might adapt and expand for your use.

Avoidance

You may choose to change the subject, leave the room, or not even enter the room in the first place, but the conflict will remain and resurface when you least expect it. Your reluctance to address the conflict directly is a normal response, and one which many cultures prize. In cultures where independence is highly valued, direct confrontation is more common. In cultures where the community is emphasized over the individual, indirect strategies may be more common. Avoidance allows for more time to resolve the problem, but can also increase costs associated with problem in the first place. Your organization or business will have policies and protocols to follow regarding conflict and redress, but it is always wise to consider the position of your conversational partner or opponent and to give them, as well as yourself, time to explore alternatives.

Defensiveness versus Supportiveness

Defensive communication is characterized by control, evaluation, and judgments, while supportive communication focuses on the points and not personalities. When we feel judged or criticized, our ability to listen can be diminished, and we may only hear the negative message. By choosing to focus on the message instead of the messenger, we keep the discussion supportive and professional.

Face-Detracting and Face-Saving

Communication is not competition. Communication is the sharing of understanding and meaning, but does everyone always share equally? People struggle for control, limit access to resources and information as part of territorial displays, and otherwise use the process of communication to engage in competition. People also use communication for collaboration. Both competition and collaboration can be observed in communication interactions, but there are two concepts central to both: face-detracting and face-saving strategies.

Face-detracting strategies involve messages or statements that take away from the respect, integrity, or credibility of a person. Face-saving strategies protect credibility and separate message from messenger. For example, you might say that "sales were down this quarter," without specifically noting who was responsible. Sales were simply down. If, however, you ask, "How does the sales manager explain the decline in sales?" you have specifically connected an individual with the negative news. While we may want to specifically connect tasks and job responsibilities to individuals and departments, in terms of language each strategy has distinct results.

Face-detracting strategies often produce a defensive communication climate, inhibit listening, and allow for little room for collaboration. To save-face is to raise the issue while preserving a supportive climate, allowing room in the conversation for constructive discussions and problem solving. By using a face-saving strategy to shift the emphasis from the individual to the issue, we avoid power struggles and personalities, providing each other space to save-face (Donohue & Klot, 1992).

In collectivist cultures, where the community's well-being is promoted or valued above that of the individual, face-saving strategies are a common communicative strategies. In Japan, for example, to confront someone directly is perceived as humiliation, a great insult. In the United States, greater emphasis is placed on individual performance, and responsibility may be more directly assessed. If our goal is to solve a problem, and preserve the relationship, then consideration of a face-saving strategy should be one option a skilled business communicator considers when addressing negative news or information.

Empathy

Communication involves not only the words we write or speak, but how and when we write or say them. The way we communicate also carries meaning, and empathy for the individual involves attending to this aspect of interaction. Empathetic listening involves listening to both the literal and implied meanings within a message. By paying attention to feelings and emotions associated with content and information, we can build relationships and address conflict more constructively. In management, negotiating conflict is a common task and empathy is one strategy to consider when attempting to resolve issues.

Managing Your Emotions

There will be times in the work environment when emotions run high. Your awareness of them can help you clear your mind and choose to wait until the moment has passed to tackle the challenge.

Emotions can be contagious in the workplace, and fear of the unknown can influence people to act in irrational ways. The wise business communicator can recognize when emotions are on edge in themselves or others, and choose to wait to communicate, problem-solve, or negotiate until after the moment has passed.

Evaluations and Criticism in the Workplace

There may come a time, however, when evaluations involve criticism. Knowing how to approach this criticism can give you peace of mind to listen clearly, separating subjective, personal attacks from objective, constructive requests for improvement. Guffey offers us seven strategies for giving and receiving evaluations and criticism in the workplace that we have adapted here.

Listen without Interrupting

If you are on the receiving end of an evaluation, start by listening without interruption. Interruptions can be internal and external, and warrant further discussion. If your supervisor starts to discuss a point and you immediately start debating the point in your mind, you are paying attention to yourself and what you think they said or are going to say, and not that which is actually communicated. Let them speak while you listen, and if you need to take notes to focus your thoughts, take clear notes of what is said, also noting points to revisit later.

Determine the Speaker's Intent

We have discussed previews as a normal part of conversation, and in this context they play an important role. People want to know what is coming and generally dislike surprises, particularly when the context of an evaluation is present. If you are on the receiving end, you may need to ask a clarifying question if it doesn't count as an interruption. You may also need to take notes and write down questions that come to mind to address when it is your turn to speak. As a manager, be clear and positive in your opening and lead with praise. You can find one point, even if it is only that the employee consistently shows up to work on time, to highlight before transitioning to a performance issue.

Indicate You Are Listening

In many Western cultures, eye contact is a signal that you are listening and paying attention to the person speaking. Take notes, nod your head, or lean forward to display interest and listening. Regardless of whether you are the employee receiving the criticism or the supervisor delivering it, displaying listening behaviour engenders a positive climate that helps mitigate the challenge of negative news or constructive criticism.

Paraphrase

Restate the main points to paraphrase what has been discussed. This verbal display allows for clarification and acknowledges receipt of the message.

If you are the employee, summarize the main points and consider steps you will take to correct the situation. If none come to mind or you are nervous and are having a hard time thinking clearly, state out loud the main point and ask if you can provide solution steps and strategies at a later date. You can request a follow-up meeting if appropriate, or indicate you will respond in writing via email to provide the additional information.

If You Agree

If an apology is well deserved, offer it. Communicate clearly what will change or indicate when you will respond with specific strategies to address the concern. As a manager you will want to formulate a plan that addresses the issue and outlines responsibilities as well as time frames for corrective action. As an employee you will want specific steps you can both agree on that will serve to solve the problem. Clear communication and acceptance of responsibility demonstrates maturity and respect.

If You Disagree

If you disagree, focus on the points or issue and not personalities. Do not bring up past issues and keep the conversation focused on the task at hand. You may want to suggest, now that you better understand their position, a follow-up meeting to give you time to reflect on the issues. You may want to consider involving a third party, investigating to learn more about the issue, or taking time to cool off.

Do not respond in anger or frustration; instead, always display professionalism. If the criticism is unwarranted, consider that the information they have may be flawed or biased, and consider ways to learn more about the case to share with them, searching for a mutually beneficial solution.

If other strategies to resolve the conflict fail, consider contacting your human resources department to learn more about due process procedures at your workplace. Display respect and never say anything that would reflect poorly on yourself or your organization. Words spoken in anger can have a lasting impact and are impossible to retrieve or take back.

Learn from Experience

Every communication interaction provides an opportunity for learning if you choose to see it. Sometimes the lessons are situational and may not apply in future contexts. Other times the lessons learned may well serve you across your professional career. Taking notes for yourself to clarify your thoughts, much like a journal, serve to document and help you see the situation more clearly.

Recognize that some aspects of communication are intentional, and may communicate meaning, even if it is hard to understand. Also, know that some aspects of communication are unintentional, and may not imply meaning or design. People make mistakes. They say things they should not have said. Emotions are revealed that are not always rational, and not always associated with the current context. A challenging morning at home can spill over into the work day and someone's bad mood may have nothing to do with you.

In summary, conflict is unavoidable and can be opportunity for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship. Try to distinguish between what you can control and what you cannot, and always choose professionalism.

Check Your Knowledge

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Intercultural Communication

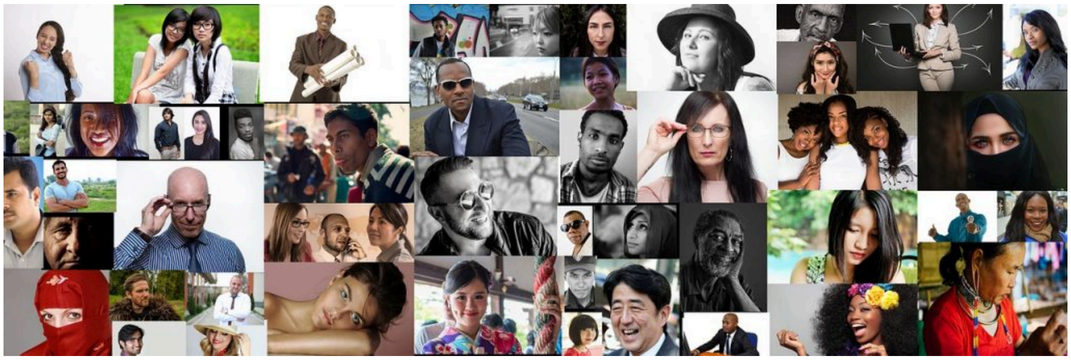


Figure 18.5 Source: pixabay.com

Culture involves beliefs, attitudes, values, and traditions that are shared by a group of people. From the choice of words (message), to how you communicate (in person, or by email), to how you acknowledge understanding with a nod or a glance (nonverbal feedback), to the internal and external interference, all aspects of communication are influenced by culture.

Watch the following 1 minute video *What is Culture*?

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/?p=695

It is through intercultural communication that you come to create, understand, and transform culture and identity. Intercultural communication is communication between people with differing cultural identities. One reason you should study intercultural communication is to foster greater self-awareness (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Your thought process regarding culture is often "other focused," meaning that the culture of the other person or group is what stands out in your perception. However, the old adage "know thyself" is appropriate, as you become more aware of your own culture by better understanding other cultures and perspectives. Intercultural communication can allow you to step outside of your comfortable, usual frame of reference and see your culture through a different lens. Additionally, as you become more self-aware, you may also become more ethical communicators as you challenge your ethnocentrism, or your tendency to view your own culture as superior to other cultures.

Ethnocentrism makes you far less likely to be able to bridge the gap with others and often increases intolerance of difference. Business and industry are no longer regional, and in your career, you will necessarily cross borders, languages, and cultures. You will need tolerance, understanding, patience, and openness to difference. A skilled business communicator knows that the process of learning is never complete, and being open to new ideas is a key strategy for success.

Communication with yourself is called **intrapersonal** communication, which may also be intracultural, as you may only represent one culture. But most people belong to multiple groups, each with their own culture. Does a conversation with yourself ever involve competing goals, objectives, needs, wants, or values? How did you learn of those goals, or values? Through communication within and between individuals many cultures are represented. You may struggle with the demands of each group and their expectations and could consider this internal struggle intercultural conflict or simply intercultural communication.

Culture is part of the very fabric of our thought, and you cannot separate yourself from it, even as you leave home, defining yourself anew in work and achievements. Every business or organization has a culture, and within what may be considered a global culture, there are many subcultures or co-cultures. For example, consider the difference between the sales and accounting departments in a corporation. You can quickly see two distinct groups with their own symbols, vocabulary, and values. Within each group, there may also be smaller groups, and each member of each department comes from a distinct background that in itself influences behaviour and interaction.

Intercultural communication is a fascinating area of study within business communication, and it is essential to your success. One idea to keep in mind as you examine this topic is the importance of considering multiple points of view. If you tend to dismiss ideas or views that are "unalike culturally," you will find it challenging to learn about diverse cultures. If you cannot learn, how can you grow and be successful?

To summarize, intercultural communication is an aspect of all communicative interactions, and attention to your perspective is key to your effectiveness. Ethnocentrism is a major obstacle to intercultural communication.

How to Understand Intercultural Communication

The American anthropologist Edward T. Hall is often cited as a pioneer in the field of intercultural communication (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Born in 1914, Hall spent much of his early adulthood in the multicultural setting of the American Southwest, where Native Americans, Spanish-speakers, and descendents of pioneers came together from diverse cultural perspectives. He then traveled the globe during World War II and later served as a U.S. State Department official. Where culture had once been viewed by anthropologists as a single, distinct way of living, Hall saw how the perspective of the individual influences interaction. By focusing on interactions rather than cultures as separate from individuals, he asked people to evaluate the many cultures they belong to or are influenced by, as well as those with whom they interacted. While his view makes the study of intercultural communication far more complex, it also brings a healthy dose of reality to the discussion. Hall is generally credited with eight contributions to the study of intercultural communication as follows:

1. Compare cultures. Focus on the interactions versus general observations of culture.
2. Shift to local perspective. Local level versus global perspective.
3. You don't have to know everything to know something. Time, space, gestures, and gender roles can be studied, even if we lack a larger understanding of the entire culture.
4. There are rules we can learn. People create rules for themselves in each community that we can learn from, compare, and contrast.
5. Experience counts. Personal experience has value in addition to more comprehensive studies of interaction and culture.
6. Perspectives can differ. Descriptive linguistics serves as a model to understand cultures, and the U.S. Foreign Service adopted it as a base for training.
7. Intercultural communication can be applied to international business. U.S. Foreign Service training yielded applications for trade and commerce and became a point of study for business majors.
8. It integrates the disciplines. Culture and communication are intertwined and bring together many academic disciplines (Chen & Starosta, 2000; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990; McLean, 2005).
9.

Hall indicated that emphasis on a culture as a whole, and how it operated, might lead people to neglect individual differences. Individuals may hold beliefs or practice customs that do not follow their own cultural norm. When you resort to the mental shortcut of a stereotype, you lose these unique differences. **Stereotypes** can be defined as a generalization about a group of people that oversimplifies their culture (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999).

The American psychologist Gordon Allport explored how, when, and why people formulate or use stereotypes to characterize distinct groups. When you do not have enough contact with people or their cultures to understand them well, you tend to resort to stereotypes (Allport, 1958).

As Hall notes, experience has value. If you do not know a culture, you should consider learning more about it firsthand if possible. The people you interact with may not be representative of the culture as a whole, but that is not to say that what you learn lacks validity. Quite the contrary; Hall asserts that you can, in fact, learn something without understanding everything, and given the dynamic nature of communication and culture, who is to say that your lessons will not serve you well? Consider a study abroad experience if that is an option for you, or learn from a classmate who comes from a foreign country or an unfamiliar culture. Be open to new ideas and experiences, and start investigating. Many have gone before you, and today, unlike in generations past, much of the information is accessible. Your experiences will allow you to learn about another culture and yourself, and help you to avoid prejudice.

Read the following web article [Stereotypes Impact Workplace Behavior In Complex Ways]

Prejudice involves a negative preconceived judgment or opinion that guides conduct or social behaviour (McLean., 2005). As an example, imagine two people walking into a room for a job interview. You are tasked to interview both, and having read the previous section, you know that Allport (1958) rings true when he says we rely on stereotypes when encountering people or cultures with which we have had little contact. Will the candidates' dress, age, or gender influence your opinion of them? Will their race or ethnicity be a conscious or subconscious factor in your thinking process? Allport's work would indicate that those factors and more will make you likely to use stereotypes to guide your expectations of them and your subsequent interactions with them.

People who treat other with prejudice often make assumptions, or take preconceived ideas for granted without question, about the group or communities. As Allport illustrated, you often assume characteristics about groups with which you have little contact. Sometimes you also assume similarity, thinking that people are all basically similar. This denies cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and many other valuable, insightful differences.

In summary, ethnocentric tendencies, stereotyping, and assumptions of similarity can make it difficult to learn about cultural differences.

Common Cultural Characteristics

Figure 18.6 Culture Characteristics [Image Description]

Groups come together, form cultures, and grow apart across time. How do you become a member of a community, and how do you know when you are full member? What aspects of culture do people have in common and how do they relate to business communication? Researchers who have studied cultures around the world have identified certain characteristics that define a culture. These characteristics are expressed in different ways, but they tend to be present in nearly all cultures.

Rites of Initiation

Cultures tend to have a ritual for becoming a new member. A newcomer starts out as a nonentity, a stranger, an unaffiliated person with no connection or even possibly awareness of the community. Newcomers who stay around and learn about the culture become members. Most cultures have a rite of initiation that marks the passage of the individual within the community; some of these rituals may be so informal as to be hardly noticed (e.g., the first time a coworker asks you to join the group to eat lunch together), while others may be highly formalized (e.g., the ordination of clergy in a religion). The nonmember becomes a member, the new member becomes a full member, and individuals rise in terms of responsibility and influence.

Across the course of your life, you have no doubt passed several rites of initiation but may not have taken notice of them. Did you earn a driver's license, register to vote, or acquire the permission to purchase alcohol? In North American culture, these three common markers indicate the passing from a previous stage of life to a new one, with new rights and responsibilities.

Rites of initiation mark the transition of the role or status of the individual within the group. Your first day on the job may have been a challenge as you learned your way around the physical space, but the true challenge was to learn how the group members communicate with each other. If you graduate from college with a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, you will already have passed a series of tests, learned terms and theories, and possess a symbol of accomplishment in your diploma, but that only grants you the opportunity to look for a job—to seek access to a new culture.

In every business, there are groups, power struggles, and unspoken ways that members earn their way from the role of a "newbie" to that of a full member. The newbie may get the tough account, the office without a window, or the cubicle next to the bathroom, denoting low status. As the new member learns to navigate through the community—establishing a track record and being promoted—he passes the rite of initiation and acquires new rights and responsibilities.

Over time, the person comes to be an important part of the business, a "keeper of the flame." The "flame" may not exist in physical space or time, but it does exist in the minds of those members in the community who have invested time and effort in the business. It is not a flame to be trusted to a new person, as it can only be earned with time. Along the way, there may be personality conflicts and power struggles over resources and perceived scarcity (e.g., there is only one promotion and everyone wants it). All these challenges are to be expected in any culture.

Common History and Traditions

Think for a moment about the history of a business like Tim Hortons—what are your associations with Tim Horton, the relationship between hockey, coffee, and donuts? Traditions form as the organization grows and expands, and stories are told and retold to educate new members on how business should be conducted. The history of every culture, of every corporation, influences the present. There are times when the phrase "we've tried that before" can become stumbling block for members of the organization as it grows and adapts to new market forces. There may be struggles between members who have weathered many storms and new members, who come armed with new educational perspectives, technological tools, or experiences that may contribute to growth.

Common Values and Principles

Cultures all hold values and principles that are commonly shared and communicated from older members to younger (or newer) ones. Time and length of commitment are associated with an awareness of these values and principles, so that new members, whether they are socialized at home, in school, or at work, may not have a thorough understanding of their importance.

Watch the following 2 minute video: *Core Values & Company Culture from Jim Collins, Tony Hsieh, and Steve Jobs*

https://youtube.com/watch?v=ecWiloEJ1dk%3Ffeature%3Doembed

Common Purpose and Sense of Mission

Cultures share a common sense of purpose and mission. Why are we here and whom do we serve? These are fundamental questions of the human condition that philosophers and theologians all over the world have pondered for centuries. In business, the answers to these questions often address purpose and mission, and they can be found in mission and vision statements of almost every organization. Individual members will be expected to acknowledge and share the mission and vision, actualize them, or make them real through action. Without action, the mission and vision statements are simply an arrangement of words. As a guide to individual and group behavioural norms, they can serve as a powerful motivator and a call to action. For example, Boeing Canada's Purpose and Mission, and Aspiration statements are as follows:

Purpose and Mission: Connect, Protect, Explore and Inspire the World through Aerospace Innovation

Aspiration: Best in Aerospace and Enduring Global Industrial Champion

Based on these two statements, employees might expect a culture of innovation, quality, and safety as core to their work. What might those concepts mean in your everyday work if you were part of Boeing "culture?"

Common Symbols, Boundaries, Status, Language, and Rituals

Many people learn early in life what a stop sign represents, but not everyone knows what a ten-year service pin on a lapel, or a corner office with two windows means. Cultures have common symbols that mark them as a group; the knowledge of what a symbol stands for helps to reinforce who is a group member and who is not. Cultural symbols include dress, such as the Western business suit and tie. Symbols also include slogans or sayings, such as "Mr. Christie you make good cookies" or "Noooobody". The slogan may serve a marketing purpose but may also embrace a mission or purpose within the culture. Family crests and clan tartan patterns serve as symbols of affiliation. Symbols can also be used to communicate rank and status within a group.

Space is another common cultural characteristic; it may be a nonverbal symbol that represents status and power. In most of the world's cultures, a person occupying superior status is entitled to a physically elevated position—a throne, a dais, a podium from which to address subordinates. Subordinates may be expected to bow, curtsy, or lower their eyes as a sign of respect. In business, the corner office may offer the best view with the most space. Movement from a cubicle to a private office may also be a symbol of transition within an organization, involving increased responsibility as well as power. Parking spaces, the kind of vehicle you drive, and the transportation allowance you have may also serve to communicate symbolic meaning within an organization.

The office serves our discussion on the second point concerning boundaries. Would you sit on your boss's desk or sit in his chair with your feet up on the desk in his presence? Most people indicate they would not, because doing so would communicate a lack of respect, violate normative space expectations, and invite retaliation. Still, subtle challenges to authority may arise in the workplace. A less than flattering photograph of the boss at the office party posted to the recreational room bulletin board communicates more than a lack of respect for authority. By placing the image anonymously in a public place, the prankster clearly communicates a challenge, even if it is a juvenile one. Movement from the cubicle to the broom closet may be the result for someone who is found responsible for the prank. Again, there are no words used to communicate meaning, only symbols, but those symbols represent significant issues.

Communities have their own vocabulary and way in which they communicate. Consider the person who uses a sewing machine to create a dress and the accountant behind the desk; both are professionals and both have specialized jargon used in their field. If they were to change places, the lack of skills would present an obstacle, but the lack of understanding of terms, how they are used, and what they mean would also severely limit their effectiveness. Those terms and how they are used are learned over time and through interaction. While a textbook can help, it cannot demonstrate use in live interactions. Cultures are dynamic systems that reflect the communication process itself.

Cultures celebrate heroes, denigrate villains, and have specific ways of completing jobs and tasks. In business and industry, the emphasis may be on effectiveness and efficiency, but the practice can often be "because that is the way we have always done it." Rituals serve to guide our performance and behaviour and may be limited to small groups or celebrated across the entire company.

Rituals can serve to bind a group together, or to constrain it. Institutions tend to formalize processes and then have a hard time adapting to new circumstances. While the core values or mission statement may hold true, the method of doing things that worked in the past may not be as successful as it once was. Adaptation and change can be difficult for individuals and companies, and yet all communities, cultures, and communication contexts are dynamic, or always changing. As much as we might like things to stay the same, they will always change—and we will change with (and be changed by) them.

Read the following web article: Culture at Work: The Tyranny of 'Unwritten Rules'

To summarize, all cultures have characteristics such as initiations, traditions, history, values and principles, purpose, symbols, and boundaries.

Divergent Cultural Characteristics

We are not created equal. Cultures reflect this inequality, this diversity, and the divergent range of values, symbols, and meanings across communities. People have viewpoints, and they are shaped by their interactions with communities. Let's examine several points of divergence across cultures.

Figure 18.7 Source: Pixabay.com

Individualistic versus Collectivist Cultures

The Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede explored the concepts of individualism and collectivism across diverse cultures (Hofstede, 2005). He found that in individualistic cultures like the United States and Canada, people value individual freedom and personal independence, and perceive their world primarily from their own viewpoint. They perceive themselves as empowered individuals, capable of making their own decisions, and able to make an impact on their own lives.

Cultural viewpoint is not an either/or dichotomy, but rather a continuum or range. You may belong to some communities that express individualistic cultural values, while others place the focus on a collective viewpoint. Collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 1982), including many in Asia and South America, and many Indigenous cultures, focus on the needs of the nation, community, family, or group of workers. Ownership and private property is one way to examine this difference. In some cultures, property is almost exclusively private, while others tend toward community ownership. The collectively owned resource returns benefits to the community. Water, for example, has long been viewed as a community resource, much like air, but that has been changing as business and organizations have purchased water rights and gained control over resources. How does someone raised in a culture that emphasizes the community interact with someone raised in a primarily individualistic culture? How could tensions be expressed and how might interactions be influenced by this point of divergence? In the following sections these viewpoints will be examined.

Explicit-Rule Cultures versus Implicit-Rule Cultures

Do you know the rules of your business or organization? Did you learn them from an employee manual or by observing the conduct of others? Your response may include both options, but not all cultures communicate rules in the same way. In an explicit-rule culture, where rules are clearly communicated so that everyone is aware of them, the guidelines and agenda for a meeting are announced prior to the gathering. In an implicit-rule culture, where rules are often understood and communicated nonverbally, there may be no agenda. Everyone knows why they are gathered and what role each member plays, even though the expectations may not be clearly stated. Power, status, and behavioural expectations may all be understood, and to the person from outside this culture, it may prove a challenge to understand the rules of the context.

Outsiders often communicate their “otherness” by not knowing where to stand, when to sit, or how to initiate a conversation if the rules are not clearly stated. While it may help to know that implicit-rule cultures are often more tolerant of deviation from the understood rules, the newcomer will be wise to learn by observing quietly—and to do as much research ahead of the event as possible.

Uncertainty-Accepting Cultures versus Uncertainty-Rejecting Cultures

When people meet each other for the first time, they often use what they have previously learned to understand their current context. People also do this to reduce uncertainty. Some cultures, such as the United States and Britain, are highly tolerant of uncertainty, while others go to great lengths to reduce the element of surprise. Whereas a U.S. business negotiator might enthusiastically agree to try a new procedure, the Egyptian counterpart would likely refuse to get involved until all the details are worked out.

Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese (1975) developed **Uncertainty Reduction theory** to examine this dynamic aspect of communication. Here are seven axioms of uncertainty:

1. There is a high level of uncertainty at first. As we get to know one another, our verbal communication increases and our uncertainty begins to decrease.

2. Following verbal communication, nonverbal communication increases, uncertainty continues to decrease, and more nonverbal displays of affiliation, like nodding one's head to indicate agreement, will start to be expressed.

3. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, we tend to increase our information-seeking behaviour, perhaps asking questions to gain more insight. As our understanding increases, uncertainty decreases, as does the information-seeking behaviour.

4. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, the communication interaction is not as personal or intimate. As uncertainty is reduced, intimacy increases.

5. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, communication will feature more reciprocity, or displays of respect. As uncertainty decreases, reciprocity may diminish.

6. Differences between people increase uncertainty, while similarities decrease it.

7. Higher levels of uncertainty are associated with a decrease in the indication of liking the other person, while reductions in uncertainty are associated with liking the other person more.

Time Orientation

Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall (1987) state that monochronic time-oriented cultures consider one thing at a time, whereas polychronic time-oriented cultures schedule many things at one time, and time is considered in a more fluid sense. In monochromatic time, interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time. Even the multitasker from a monochromatic culture will, for example, recognize the value of work first before play or personal time. Canada, Germany, and Switzerland are often noted as countries that value a monochromatic time orientation.

Polychromatic time looks a little more complicated, with business and family mixing with dinner and dancing. Greece, Italy, Chile, and Saudi Arabia are countries where one can observe this perception of time; business meetings may be scheduled at a fixed time, but when they actually begin may be another story. Also note that the dinner invitation for 8 p.m. may in reality be more like 9 p.m. If you were to show up on time, you might be the first person to arrive and find that the hosts are not quite ready to receive you.

When in doubt, always ask before the event; many people from polychromatic cultures will be used to foreigner's tendency to be punctual, even compulsive, about respecting established times for events. The skilled business communicator is aware of this difference and takes steps to anticipate it. The value of time in different cultures is expressed in many ways, and your understanding can help you communicate more effectively.

Short-Term versus Long-Term Orientation

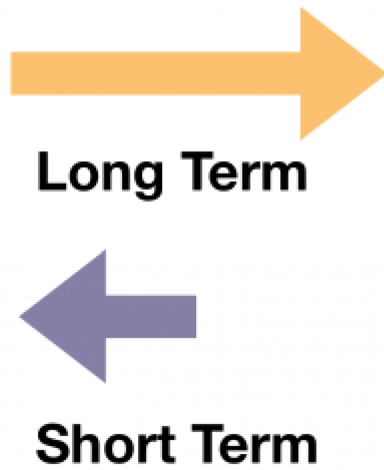


Figure 18.8 Short-Term/Long-Term [Image Description]
Source: ecampusontario

Do you want your reward right now or can you dedicate yourself to a long-term goal? You may work in a culture whose people value immediate results and grow impatient when those results do not materialize. Geert Hofstede discusses this relationship of time orientation to a culture as a "time horizon," and it underscores the perspective of the individual within a cultural context. Many countries in Asia, influenced by the teachings of Confucius, value a long-term orientation, whereas other countries, including Canada, have a more short-term approach to life and results. Indigenous peoples are known for holding a long-term orientation driven by values of deep, long-term reflection and community consultation.

If you work within a culture that has a short-term orientation, you may need to place greater emphasis on reciprocation of greetings, gifts, and rewards. For example, if you send a thank-you note the morning after being treated to a business dinner, your host will appreciate your promptness. While there may be a respect for tradition, there is also an emphasis on personal representation and honour, a reflection of identity and integrity. Personal stability and consistency are also valued in a short-term oriented culture, contributing to an overall sense of predictability and familiarity.

Long-term orientation is often marked by persistence, thrift and frugality, and an order to relationships based on age and status. A sense of shame for the family and community is also observed across generations. What an individual does reflects on the family and is carried by immediate and extended family members.

Direct versus Indirect

In Canada, business correspondence is expected to be short and to the point. "What can I do for you?" is a common question when a business person receives a call from a stranger; it is an accepted way of asking the caller to state his or her business. In some cultures it is quite appropriate to make direct personal observation, such as "You've changed your hairstyle," while for others it may be observed, but never spoken of in polite company. In indirect cultures, such as those in Latin America, business conversations may start with discussions of the weather, or family, or topics other than business as the partners gain a sense of each other, long before the topic of business is raised. Again, the skilled business communicator researches the new environment before entering it, as a social faux pas, or error, can have a significant impact.

Materialism versus Relationships

Members of a materialistic culture place emphasis on external goods and services as a representation of self, power, and social rank. If you consider the plate of food before you, and consider the labour required to harvest the grain, butcher the animal, and cook the meal, you are focusing more on the relationships involved with its production than the foods themselves. Caviar may be a luxury, and it may communicate your ability to acquire and offer a delicacy, but it also represents an effort. Cultures differ in how they view material objects and their relationship to them, and some value people and relationships more than the objects themselves. The United States and Japan are often noted as materialistic cultures, while many Scandinavian nations feature cultures that place more emphasis on relationships.

Low-Power versus High-Power Distance

In low-power distance cultures, according to Hofstede (2009), people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant or subordinate roles, regardless of their actual formal roles as employee and manager, for example. In a high-power distance culture, you would probably be much less likely to challenge the decision, to provide an alternative, or to give input. If you are working with people from a high-power distance culture, you may need to take extra care to elicit feedback and involve them in the discussion because their cultural framework may preclude their participation. They may have learned that less powerful people must accept decisions without comment, even if they have a concern or know there is a significant problem. Unless you are sensitive to cultural orientation and power distance, you may lose valuable information.

Read the following Harvard Business Review article: Research: The Biggest Culture Gaps Are Within Countries, Not Between Them

To summarize, cultures have distinct orientations when it comes to rules, uncertainty, time and time horizon, masculinity, directness, materialism, and power distance.

Image Description

Figure 18.6 image description: This diagram is showing a large circle with the words Global Village in it and four surrounding circles with the words political, ethical, legal, and economic in them. [Return to Figure 18.6]

Figure 18.8 image description: This diagram shows a long arrow pointing to the right and the words long term underneath, short arrow pointing to the left with the words short term underneath. [Return to Figure 18.8]

Understanding Team Dynamics

An important aspect of effective teamwork entails understanding group dynamics in terms of both team situation and individual temperament. This section reviews a variety models often applied in workplaces that can help a team perform optimally and manage crises effectively.

The Tuckman Team Model

"Tuckman's Stages of Group Development," proposed by psychologist Bruce Tuckman in 1965,[1] is one of the most famous theories of team development. It describes four stages that teams may progress through: **forming, storming, norming**, and **performing** (a 5th stage was added later: **adjourning**). According to McCahan *et al.*, the stages move from organizing to producing, and although the stages appear linear, in fact teams may move backwards depending on events that may influence the team and the communications strategies that they use. Some teams can also stall in a stage and never fully realize their potential. **Figure 18.9** outlines these stages. Please refer to the McCahan *et al.* text[3] for a more complete discussion.

1. [2]
2. [1]
3. [4]
4. [2]

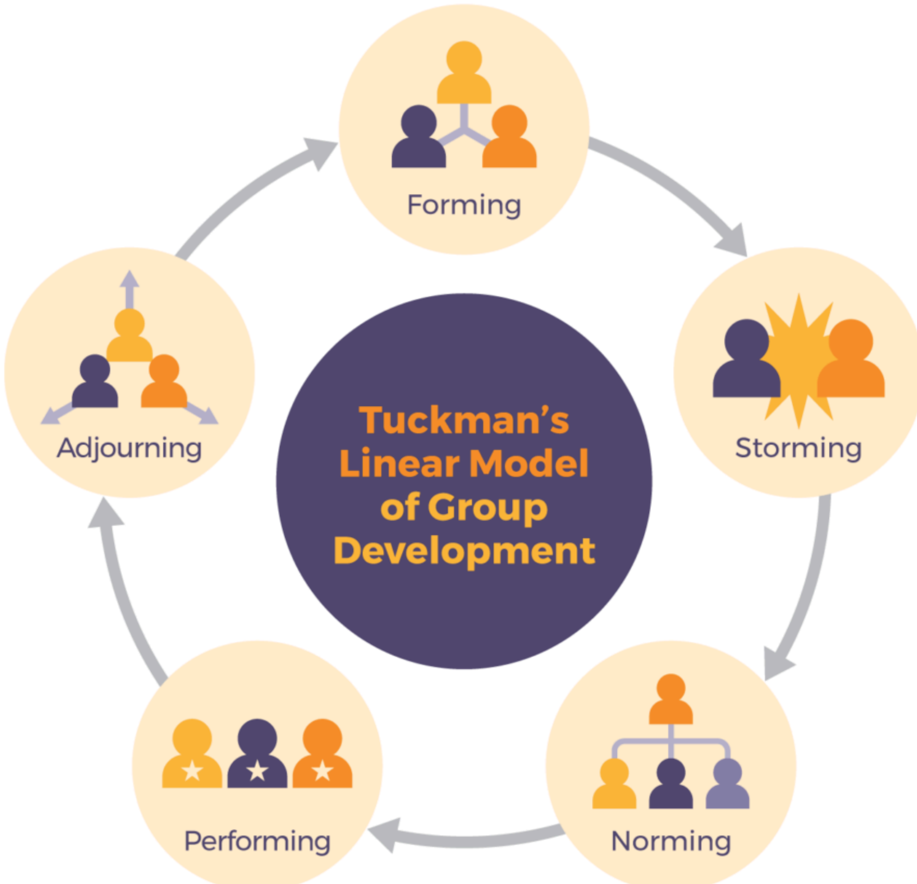


Figure 18.9 The Stages of the Tuckman Model. [5]
[Image Description]

Note that at each stage, communication is a critical component of successfully moving to the next stage. The **forming** stage, when everyone is getting to know each other and are trying to make a good impression, is a good time to create a set of shared expectations, guidelines, or a Team Charter. A team forming activity is also a good idea to help build trust and get to know the various strengths and weaknesses of the team members. This is an orientation stage, on both an interpersonal and professional level, where preliminary boundaries and expectations are established.

The **storming** stage is the one most often characterized by group conflict and dysfunction. It is often where the preliminary expectations and boundaries are challenged as individuals learn more about each other's motivations. This coincides with the "brainstorming" stage of the design process, in which each member contributes ideas that could potentially become the focus of the project. It is also the stage where team mates learn about each others' strengths and weaknesses, and try to determine what their roles will be in the project. Learning to harness the constructive potential of conflict and compromise in this stage is important to progressing to the next stage.

5. [6]
6. [3]

During the **norming** stage, if conflicts have been resolved and team mates have proved flexible, all is going well, each team member knows their role and works on their part of the project. Sometimes, people work independently in this stage, but check in with team mates frequently to make sure work flow is efficient and effective. Group cohesion ensures that everyone is responsible to the task and to each other. Problems might arise at this stage if teammates do not fully understand their role, the team expectations, or the overall goal; revisiting the forming or storming stage may be required.

Few first-time teams reach the **performing** stage, as this happens when teams have worked together well on several projects, have established a synergy, and have developed systems that that make projects go smoothly and efficiently. Less time is needed to form, storm and learn to norm; performing teams can move quickly and interdependently to tackling the task at hand. **Adjourning** and going their separate ways can often be somewhat emotional for these teams. **Figure 18.10**[7] depicts the trajectory of each team member during each stage.

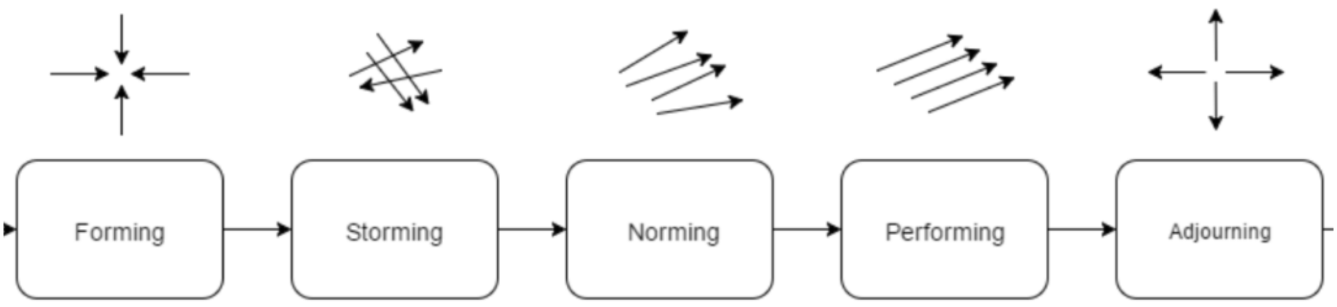


Figure 18.10 Trajectory of team mates during each stage of the Tuckman team formation model. [Image Description]

DISC Model

DISC theory, developed in 1928 by Dr. William Moulton Marston (who also, as it happens, created the *Wonder Woman* comic series!), has evolved into a useful model for conflict management as it predicts behaviours based on four key personality traits he originally described as Dominance, Inducement, Submission, and Compliance.[9] The names of these four traits have been variously revised by others over the decades, so you might find different terms used in different contexts. The four general traits are now often described as (1) Dominance, (2) Influence/Inspiring (3) Steadiness/Supportive, and (4) Compliance/Conscientiousness (see **Figure 18.11**).

7. [8]
8. [4]
9. [10]
10. [5]

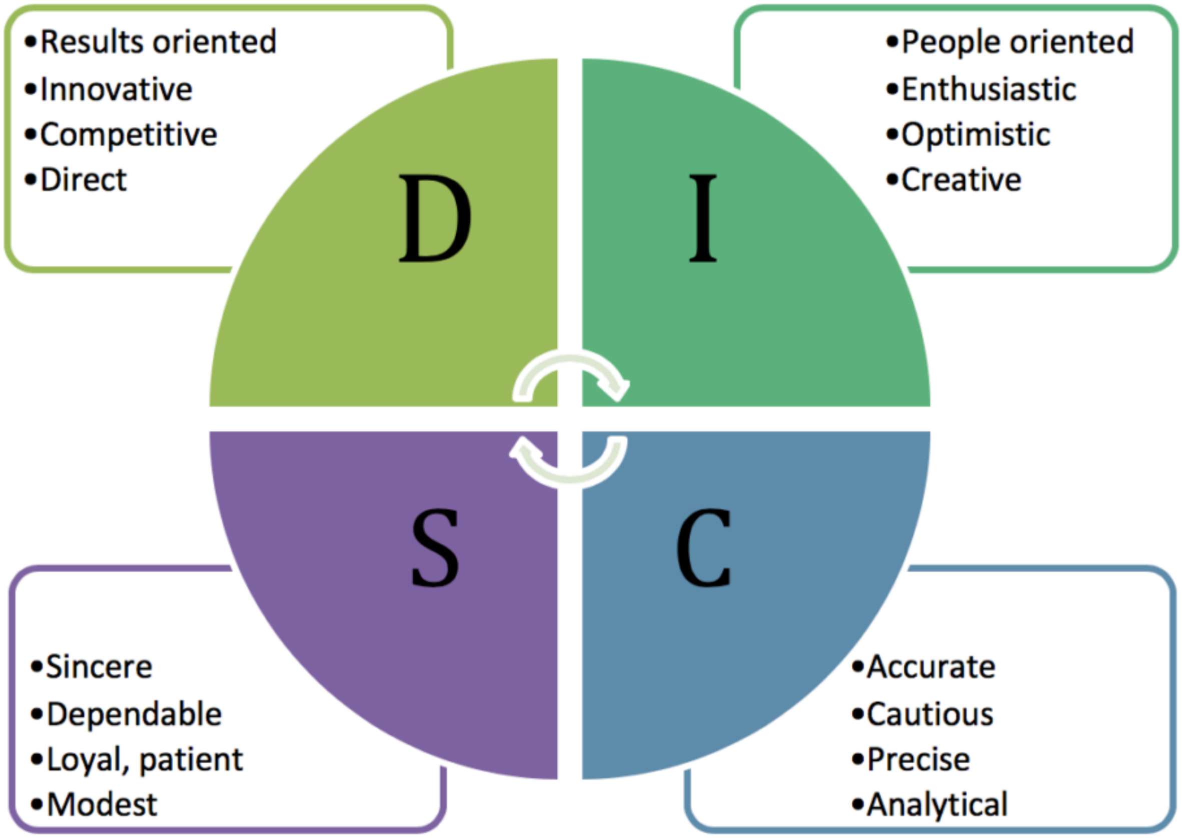


Figure 18.11 DISC Profile

Industries often use DISC assessments in professional contexts. Having some insight into your teammates' personality traits can help when trying to resolve conflicts. General characteristics of each trait are as follows:

- **Dominance**
  - *Characteristics*: direct, decisive, ego-driven, problem-solver, and risk-taker; likes new challenges and freedom from routine; driven to overcome obstacles
  - *Strengths*: great organizer and time manager; challenges the status quo; innovative
  - *Weaknesses*: can be argumentative, disrespectful of authority, and overly ambitious (taking on too much); can be blunt, stubborn, and aggressive
- **Inspiring/Influential**
  - *Characteristics*: enthusiastic, persuasive, optimistic, trusting, impulsive, charismatic, and emotional
  - *Strengths*: creative problem solver; great cheer-leader, negotiator, and peace-maker; a real "people person"
  - *Weaknesses*: more concerned with popularity than tangible results; lacks attention to detail
- **Steady/Supportive**

- *Characteristics*: reliable, predictable, friendly, good listener, team player, empathetic, easy-going, and altruistic.
- *Strengths*: dependable, loyal; respects authority; has patience and empathy; good at conflict resolution; willing to compromise.
- *Weaknesses*: resistant to change; sensitive to criticism; difficulty prioritizing

- **Cautious/Conscientious/Compliant**
  - *Characteristics*: has high standards; values precision and accuracy; analytical and systematic; even-tempered, realistic, and logical; methodical; respect for authority
  - *Strengths*: great information gatherer/researcher; able to define situations precisely and accurately; offers realistic perspective
  - *Weaknesses*: can get bogged down in details; needs clear boundaries, procedures, and methods; difficulty accepting criticism; may avoid conflict or just "give in." May be overly timid.

GRIP Model

Richard Beckhard's GRPI model,[11] originally developed in 1972, has been widely adapted in sports contexts as the **GRIP** model (see **Figure 18.12**), outlining four interrelated components of highly effective teamwork:

- **Goals**: everyone must fully understand and be committed to the goals of the team, and of the organization. Everyone's goals must be aligned in order to establish trust, make progress, and achieve desired outcome.
- **Roles**: all team members must know what part they play, what is expected, and how they are held accountable and responsible.
- **Interpersonal**: quality communication and collaboration require and foster trust among team members; sensitivity and flexibility needed to deal with conflict and make progress.
- **Processes**: defined system for how decisions are made, how the team solves problems and addresses conflict; defines work flow and procedures to be followed in completing the project.

11. [12]

12. [6]

Figure 18.12 GRIP Model of teamwork dynamics.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Model

Thomas and Kilmann's model[13] for handling team conflict outlines five main approaches to managing team conflict (*Competing, Accommodating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Collaborating*), placed in a matrix of two

13. [14]
14. [7]

scales: ***Assertiveness***—the degree to which one tries to meet one's own needs; and ***Cooperativeness***—degree to which one tries to satisfy the needs of other team members (See **illustration**).

Each approach can have both positive and negative impacts:

1. **Competing:** highly assertive, but uncooperative behaviour, characterized by the urge to "win at all costs," dominate, and engage in power struggles. This can result in animosity, but can also spur teammates to compete constructively, which can lead to interesting innovations if well managed.
2. **Accommodating**: highly cooperative, but unassertive behaviour. This may seem like a good way to avoid conflict, but it can also lead to self-silencing of good ideas in order to appease others, which may lead to feelings of resentment.
3. **Compromising**: this approach is the most moderate in both scales, and while it might seem constructive, it can lead to dissatisfaction and mediocre progress or results. Sometimes compromise is necessary, but often, the best solution comes from a single inspirational source.
4. **Avoiding**: being unassertive and uncooperative is generally the least effective way to deal conflict, as this simply avoids the problem and neglects the need for a solution. However, when a feasible solution to a problem seems impossible, sometimes ignoring it and focusing on what is good can be the best way to just get through it.
5. **Collaborating**: being highly assertive and cooperative is the best way to find solutions that benefit the whole team and build respect.

Lencioni Model

In his 2005 book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Lencioni[15] outlines five common problems teams experience that impact their effectiveness:

1. **Lack of trust**: if team members do not trust each other, they are unlikely to take risks or ask for help. A lack of trust means a low level of comfort that makes it difficult to communicate and perform effectively as a team
2. **Fear of conflict**: avoiding conflict can lead to an artificial "peace" at the expense of progress and innovation. Conflict is a normal part of team work and can be very productive if managed effectively.
3. **Lack of commitment**: team members do not commit to doing the work, do not follow through on decisions or tasks, do not meet deadlines, and let their teammates down, ultimately affecting the success of the whole project.
4. **Avoidance of accountability**.
5. **Inattention to results**: when team members focus on their own personal goals instead of project goals, they lose sight of the expected results that actually measure the success of the project. Not focusing on the results during the process means that no one is planning how to improve those results.

15. [16]

16. [8]

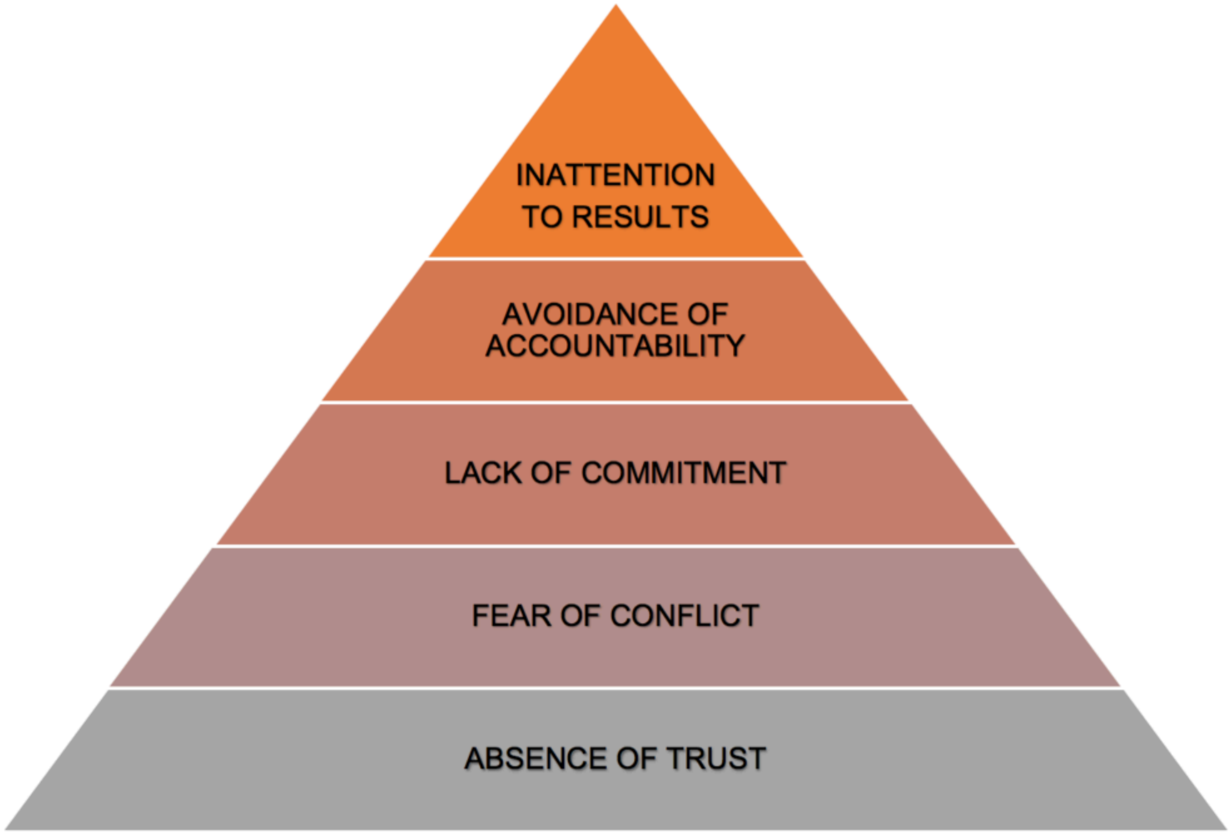
6. 

Figure 18.13 Lencioni Model: Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Lencioni advises tackling each dysfunction, displayed in the pyramid in **Figure 18.13**, from the bottom up. Establishing trust is a crucial first step to being able to manage conflict, achieve commitment, create accountability and focus on results.

Image Description

Figure 18.9 image description: A circular diagram of Tuckman's Linear Model of group development. Shows five stages: Forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. [Return to Figure 18.9]

Figure 18.10 image description: This diagram shows five stages with arrows above each stage to show the trajectory of team mates during each stage of the Tuckman team formation model. For the first stage, forming, 4 arrows are pointing to the centre. For the second stage, storming, 4 arrows are going in various random directions. For the third stage, norming, 4 arrows are going in almost the same direction. For the fourth stage, performing, 4 arrows are perfectly aligned. For the last stage, adjourning, 4 arrows are pointing outward from the centre in the 4 cardinal directions. [Return to Figure 18.10]

Activities For Further Reflection

Activities For Further Reflection

Apply one or more of these models to your past or current experience of teamwork:

1. Have you engaged in the Tuckman team formation steps?
2. Can you determine which of the DISC characteristics most closely matches your personality traits?
3. Have you experienced a team project where misaligned goals or unclear roles had a negative impact?
4. Do you think learning about the conflict modes or typical dysfunctions can help make your future team experiences more productive?
5. Could you propose an alternative model for effective teamwork?

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Attributions