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ENGL 2311 - Technical and Professional Writing - Language and Communication

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P.V. Panthers'
Technical and Business Writing

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Resources:

- Effective Technical Writing in the Information Age
- Howdy or Hello – Technical and Professional Communication
- Introduction to Professional Communications
- Let's Get Writing!
- Technical and Professional Writing Genres
- Technical Writing Essentials
- Technical Writing

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Chapter 1:

Introduction to Technical Communication

Introduction

Technical writing courses introduce you to some of the most important aspects of writing in the worlds of science, technology, and business—in other words, the kind of writing that scientists, nurses, doctors, computer specialists, government officials, engineers, and other professionals do as a part of their regular work. The skills learned in technical writing courses can be useful in other fields as well, including education and social sciences.

The Society of Technical Communications (STC) defines technical communication as a broad field that includes any form of communication that is about technical or specialized topics, that uses technology such as web pages or help files, or that provides instruction about how to do something. Therefore, technical and professional communication is the process of making and sharing ideas and information in the workplace, as well as the documents you write such as letters, emails, instructions, reports, proposals, websites, and blogs. In this textbook, the word "document" refers to any of the many forms of technical writing, whether it be a web page, an instruction manual, a lab report, or a travel brochure.

Specifically, technical writing involves communicating complex information to a specific audience who will use it to accomplish some goal or task in a manner that is accurate, useful, and clear. Whether you write an email to your professor or supervisor, develop a presentation or report, design a sales flyer, or create a webpage, you are a technical communicator.

Technical writing courses build on what you have learned in other writing courses. But there is plenty new to learn! If you currently have a job in which you do some writing, you will discover that you can put what you learn in your technical writing course to immediate use.

About Technical and Professional Writing

While technical communication is essential in a wide range of fields and occupations, technical writing is also a fully professional field of its own with degree programs, certifications, and theory. An introductory technical and professional writing course is a good way to start if you are interested in a career in this technical communication or any career in which writing is a component. Many students of technical writing courses, however, are not necessarily planning for careers as technical writers. That is why this course provides you with an introduction to the kinds of writing skills you need in practically any technically oriented professional job. No matter what sort of professional work you do, you are likely to do some writing—and much of it may be technical in nature. The more you know about some basic technical writing skills, the better your writing is likely to be, which will be good for the projects you work on, for the organizations you work in, and—most of all—good for you and your career.

How "Technical" Writing and "Professional" Writing are Related and How they Differ

Technical communication—or technical writing, as the course is often called—is writing about any technical topic. The term "technical" refers to specialized knowledge that is held by experts and specialists. Whatever your major is, you are developing an expertise and becoming a specialist in a particular technical area. And whenever you try to write or say anything about your field, you are engaged in technical communication.

Professional (or business) writing, on the other hand, covers much of the additional writing you'll be doing in your profession. Professional writing includes correspondence such as emails, memos, business letters, and cover letters, as well as other documents such as résumés, social media posts, blogs, and vlogs. While professional writing may convey technical information, it is usually much more brief and targets an individual or small group of readers who may or may not be experts in the field.

Importance of Audience

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

Really Technical Writing

Technical writers do not necessarily need to possess a doctorate or other top-tier credentials to convey complex disciplinary-specific information about a procedure or product effectively. However, conveying information outside of their direct expertise is a challenge technical writers often face. Fortunately, there are several strategies technical writers can employ to ensure the technical accuracy of their work:

- Study of books, articles, reports, and websites related to the topic, issue, or product
- Product specifications: what the product is supposed to do, how it is designed
- Interviews with subject matter experts: specialists, developers, engineers
- Product meetings during the development cycle
- Live demonstrations of the product
- Familiarity with prior research and discourse on the topic
- Experimentation, testing for feasibility, clinical trials, and replication studies

- Subject matter experts' review of technical writers' work for technical accuracy and completeness

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

The Nature of Technical Writing

Did you know that you probably read or create technical communication every day without even realizing it? If you noticed signs on your way to work, checked the calories on a cereal box, emailed your professor to request a recommendation, or followed instructions to make a withdrawal from an ATM, you have been involved with technical, professional, or business communication.

Today, writing is a more important skill for professionals than ever before. The National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges declares that writing today is an essential skill for many, and that much of what is important in American public and economic life depends on strong written and oral communication skills. Unfortunately, not all college students are entering the workforce well-equipped to write successfully. A survey by the Workforce Solutions group at St. Louis Community College asserts that many employers are concerned at the lack of communication and interpersonal skills among the large number of college graduates applying for jobs.

Good communication skills, particularly in writing, are essential if you are going to succeed in the workplace. The working world depends on written communication because almost every action is documented in writing within modern organizations. Furthermore, many kinds of writing, including correspondence, presentations, technical reports, and formal reports, are prevalent in most workplaces. And the communication within those documents has to be good, accurate, and clear.

How Do We Define This Kind of Writing?

Where does technical communication come from?

According to the STC, technical communication's origins have actually been attributed to various eras dating back to Ancient Greece (think Rhetoric!) and to the Renaissance, but what we know today as the professional field of technical writing began during World War I, arising from the need for technology based documentation for military and manufacturing industries.4 As technology grew, and organizations became more global, the need and relevance for technical communication emerged, and in 2009, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics recognized Technical Writer as a profession.

What does technical and professional communication look like?

Examples of technical and professional communication are everywhere, if you know what you are looking for. Check out the CDC guidelines about COVID-19. Who is the target audience? What information does this document provide? What task or goal will it help to accomplish? What elements of this document do you think make it useful? Does it solve a problem? What about the style of the writing in this government document? Is it concise and accurate? This is just one example of the many kinds of technical documents you will work with in this course.

What Standards Should I Observe to Make My Writing Successful?

As a member of any organization or team, you want to produce the absolute best writing you can. Here are the standards you must follow and some tips to help you. Keep these in mind as you work through your learning in this text:

- First and most important, your writing must be **honest.** Your trustworthiness in communication reflects not only on you personally but on your organization or discipline.
- Your writing has to be **clear** so that your reader can get from it the information you intended to convey. Strive to make sure that you have expressed exactly what you mean and have not left room for incorrect interpretations.
- Next, good writing is **accurate**. Do your homework and make sure you have your facts right. There is no excuse for presenting incorrect information.
- Also, make sure you have all the facts, as your writing must be **complete.** Have you included everything that your reader needs?
- Good writing is always **concise** writing. Your audience has neither time nor patience for excessive verbiage, so simplify and cut any clutter.
- Your document should be **attractive** and pleasing to look at. Just as you wouldn't eat a hamburger from a dirty plate, your reader will not be moved by a document that is not carefully designed and professional.

Technical and professional writing within the US is almost always situated in the conventions of Standard Written English (SWE). SWE and those who use it tend to value strict adherence to traditional rules of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure, so make sure that you carefully check for these issues when editing. More likely than not, SWE is not an exact reflection of the English you use in casual conversation; also, it closely resembles dialects associated with perceptions of privilege, wealth/class, and conventional systems of power. Consequently, as a technical writer you will need to consider and adjust your linguistic register (formality, tone, word choice, etc.) to communicate effectively within SWE conventions and to fulfill audience expectations.

Accessibility in Technical Writing

Accessibility is perhaps the most important standard for excellence in technical communication. At the very least, the design of your document should be useful, easy to navigate, and with all information easy to locate. Specifically, websites and e-learning documents must meet ADA (American with Disabilities Act) laws for accessibility.7The ADA National Network provides additional information about the ADA.

Strategies for Successful Technical and Professional Communication

Technical or professional writing is intended to solve problems, seek solutions, and provide necessary information that workers will then use to do the same: solve problems, seek solutions, and provide necessary information. Technical and professional writing conventions are thus largely centered around the needs and expectations of their audiences. We will explore this concept further in later chapters, but in order to have a basic understanding of technical writing, it’s important to consider the value of your readers’ time and to remember to be courteous to them through your documents’ content and organization.

How do you ensure that your document will be useful to your readers? Jakob Nielsen observes that readers, or users, won't read content unless it is clear, simple, and easy to understand.9 William Zinsser, author of On Writing Well, emphasizes the same points: "Good writing has an aliveness that keeps the reader reading from one paragraph to the next, and it's not a question of gimmick to personalize the author. It's a question of using the English language in a way that will achieve the greatest clarity and strength.”

First, make sure your writing is **legible.** Is the font large enough to be read by a variety of audiences? Is it an easy-to-read font style that is appropriate for the content? If you are writing for the internet, these considerations are especially significant. If there are problems with legibility in your document, it will be of little use to your reader.

Then, make sure your writing is **readable.** If you have identified and analyzed your audience, you are off to a good start. Readable means that your document can be easily understood by your target audience, and readability refers to the formula whereby words, sentence length, and sentence complexity determine how hard or easy your sentences are to read. If your readability is too high for the audience, then they will either take more time getting what they need from your writing or determine that the information won't be of any use to them at all. If the readability is too low, you may come across as condescending, if not unprofessional.

Microsoft Word has a readability test built into the program under the Review heading that will give you a good starting place. However, don't rely completely on it to assess the ease or difficulty of your writing. Have a trusted colleague take a look and give you feedback. You can also use one of many free online readability formulas.

Finally, your writing may be legible and readable, but is it **comprehensible**? That is, how well can your audience comprehend your document in the way you intended? Is the reader able to use the document in the manner you meant? To enhance the reader's comprehension, use language and terminology familiar to the reader and limit paragraphs to one main idea each. Strive for brevity if your users will be reading on tablets or mobile devices. Use visuals such as charts or diagrams to present a lot of information in a graphic format.

Finally, you can evaluate how easy your document is to comprehend by having another person look at it. Ask a colleague to read your text and then tell you what the important ideas are. If you are conveying your ideas clearly, your reader will be able to sum them up and repeat them back to you. This process is often called “peer review” and can be a highly structured exercise in which you ask your reader to answer specific questions about your work, or it can be relatively unstructured as you ask your reader to repeat back the most important points they’ve taken away from your writing.

Characteristics and Conventions

Like journalism and scholarly writing, technical writing possesses distinct features that readers expect to see in documents that fall within this category. Mike Markell, Sidney Dobrin et al., Elizabeth Tebeaux and Sam Dragga,14 and others all identify similar characteristics of technical writing. Below is a summary of those major characteristics and what they might look like in a technical or business document.

Audience Focused.

Designing technical communication is like designing any other product for an intended user: the ultimate goal is to make it “user friendly.” Therefore, technical and professional documents address a specific audience. The audience may be an individual or a group who may or may not be known to the writer. Potential audiences for technical and professional documents can include fellow employees such as subordinates, colleagues, managers, and executives, as well as clients and other stakeholders, the general public, and even readers within the legal system.

While there is always a primary audience addressed, there may also be a secondary audience. The primary audience is the individual or group who will be directly using the documentation, whereas secondary audiences may use the documents as references or in order to learn about what is going on in a company or organization. For example, your syllabus for calculus is written with students as the primary audience; however, other secondary audiences including college administrators, accreditors, and other professors may use the syllabus for other reasons.

Purposeful.

All technical communication requires a purpose for existing. Typically, technical and professional documents are designed to help their user solve a problem or to compel them to act. Common purposes for a technical document include

- Providing technical or specialized information in accessible and usable ways
- Offering clear instructions on how to do something, and
- Advancing the goals of the company or organization.

For example, the syllabus of your calculus class informs the students what is expected of them and when assignments are due; the university's web site provides information to potential students about how to apply or to current students about where to seek assistance.

Professional.

Technical communication reflects the values, goals, and culture of an organization, and thus creates and maintains the public image of that organization. Characteristics of "professional" writing include concise, clear, and direct language. To achieve clarity and concision, writers may include specialized terminology, use short sentences and paragraphs, employ active (rather than passive) voice, and make the purpose of the document immediately clear.

"Professional" also refers to tone, or the general mood that a document conveys. Falling between formal and informal, business and technical documents may use first person (I or we) or second person (you). The overall sound of the document is objective, neutral, courteous, and constructive.

Design Centered.

Technical communication uses elements of document design such as visuals, graphics, typography, color, and spacing to make a document interesting, attractive, usable, and comprehensible. While some documents may contain only written words, many more use images such as charts, photographs, and illustrations to enhance readability and understanding and to simplify complex information. Typically, professional documents are highly structured and use short paragraphs, clear transitions, and structural cues (such as headings and subheadings or transitions) to guide the reader.

Common design features of professional and technical documents include

- Headings and subheadings to organize information into coherent sections,
- Lists to present information concisely,
- Visuals such as figures and tables to present data and information visually, and
- Spacing and alignment to enhance readability.

Collaborative.

Because of workplace demands, technical and workplace writing is often created in collaboration with others through a network of experts and designers.

Research Oriented.

Rhetorically, technical and professional documents usually employ logos, or appeals to evidence, logic, and reason. Statements and claims are evidence- and data-driven. This type of writing therefore depends on sound research practices to ensure that information provided is correct, accurate, and complete.

On October 13, 2010, President Obama signed into law the Plain Writing Act of 2010, which is designed to promote clear government communication that the public can understand and use. This Act calls for writing that is clear, concise, and well-organized. See "Law and Requirements," Federal Plain Language Guidelines, Mar. 2011, [https://plainlanguage.gov/law/]

Ethical.

Lastly, technical communication is ethical. All workplace writers have ethical obligations, many of which are closely linked to legal obligations that include liability laws, copyright laws, contract laws, and trademark laws.

Ultimately, technical documents are intended to communicate accurate information to the people who need it, in a way that is clear and easy to read, at the right time to help make decisions and to support productivity.

Attribution:

This Chapter was derived from:

Race, Cassandra, David McMurrey, Annemarie Hamlin, Chris Rubio, Michele DeSilva, Claire Carly-Miles, Matt McKinney, Kalani Pattison, and Nicole Hagstrom-Schmidt. Chapter 1: Introduction. *Howdy Or Hello? Technical and Professional Communication.* Howdy or Hello - Fall 2020.pdf - Google Drive

Chapter 2:

Understanding the Rhetorical Situation

Understanding the “rhetorical situation.” Before you begin drafting a document, determine the needs of your rhetorical situation (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Rhetorical Situation.

The “rhetorical situation” is a term used to describe the components of any situation in which you may want to communicate, whether in written or oral form. To define a “rhetorical situation,” ask yourself this question: **“who is talking to whom about what, how, and why?”** There are five main components:

- Purpose
- Writer
- Audience
- Message
- Context/Culture

PURPOSE

Purpose refers to the why you are writing. Determining your purpose requires that you engage in Task Analysis — that is, determine what you hope to accomplish by writing this document. Ask yourself what you hope the reader(s) will do/think/decide/ or how they will behave as a result of reading the text. There are three general purposes for communication in the workplace: 1) to create a record, 2) to give or request information, and 3) to persuade.

Within those general purposes, you will find a myriad of specific purposes. For example, your purpose may be to propose an innovative solution to a specific problem. In this case, you want the reader to agree to explore the idea further, or approve funding for further research and development, which would fall under the general purpose of writing to persuade.

WRITER

Writer refers to you, the writer/creator/designer of the communication. It is important to examine your own motivation for writing and any biases, past experiences, and knowledge you bring to the writing situation. These elements will influence how you craft the message, whether positively or negatively. This examination should also include your role within the organization, as well as your position relative to your target audience.

AUDIENCE

Audience refers to your readers/listeners/viewers/users. **Audience Analysis** is possibly the most critical part of understanding the rhetorical situation. Consider Figure 2 below. Is your audience internal (within your company) or external (such as clients, suppliers, customers, other stakeholders)? Are they lateral to you (at the same position or level), upstream from you (management), or downstream from you (employees, subordinates)? Who is the primary audience? Who are the secondary audiences? These questions, and others, help you to create an understanding of your audience that will help you craft a message that is designed to effectively communicate specifically to them.

Figure 2. Understanding your relationship to your audience.

Keep in mind that your different audiences will also have a specific purpose in reading your document. Consider what their various purposes might be, and how you can best help them achieve their purpose. Considering what they are expected to do with the information you provide will help you craft your message effectively. Consider also that technical writing often has a long "life-span" – a document you write today could be filed away and reviewed months or even years down the road. Consider the needs of that audience as well.

Audience	Purpose for Reading
Executives	Make decisions
Supervising Experts/Managers	Advise decision makers; direct subordinates
Technical Experts/Co-workers	Implement decisions; advise
Lay People/Public/Clients	Become informed; choose options; make decisions

Some companies develop audience profiles to help guide their communications. This is a good exercise whenever you have something to communicate, especially if the information is complex. Here are some questions to consider as part of the audience profile:

Developing an Audience Profile

- Who are your primary readers? (specific names and titles, or general roles)
- Are they above you in the organizational hierarchy? Lateral, subordinate? Outside of your organization?
- Who else might read this document? (secondary readers)
- Do you know what their attitude towards the topic is?
- How might cultural differences affect their expectations and interpretations?
- How much technical background do the readers have?
- How much do they already know about the topic?
- What situation gave rise to this document?

MESSAGE

Message refers to what information you want to communicate. This is the content of your document. It should be aligned to your purpose and targeted to your audience. While it is important to carefully choose what content your audience needs, it is equally critical to cut out content that your audience does not need or want. "Time is money" may be a tired old cliché, but it is important to avoid wasting your audience's time with information that is unnecessary or irrelevant to them. Your message should be professional, and expressed in an appropriate tone for the audience, purpose, and context.

CONTEXT

Context refers to the situation that creates the need for the writing. In other words, what has happened or needs to happen that creates the need for communication? The context is influenced by timing, location, current events, and culture, which can be organizational or social. Ignoring the context for your communication could result in awkward situations, or possibly offensive ones. It will almost certainly impact your ability to clearly convey your message to your audience.

Attribution:

This chapter was derived from:

Last, Suzan and Candice Neveu. 1.3 Understanding the Rhetorical Situation. *Technical Writing Essentials.* 1.3 Understanding the Rhetorical Situation – Technical Writing Essentials (bccampus.ca)

Chapter 3
Ethics in Technical Writing

In this chapter, you will learn about some of the ethical challenges that you may encounter in your professional and academic life, especially when it comes to technical writing. The chapter explains the importance of articulating your own ethical code so you can be prepared when you find yourself in uncomfortable and/or unethical situations. The chapter covers ethical principles, how ethics may affect the presentation of information, and some common ethical problems encountered by technical writers. Much of this chapter is concerned with the appropriate and ethical use and documentation of sources. The chapter provides some practical information on how to make sure your writing is ethical and how to handle ethical dilemmas along with possible legal issues in the workplace.

Ethics in Technical Writing

You probably think about technical writing in relation to communicating technical information clearly in an accessible format that meets the needs of its audience. These are important aspects of technical writing, to be sure, but they only represent the surface of what you need to know. This chapter will introduce some of the ethical issues that may arise as technical writers research, write, revise, and produce a technical document.

Like other professionals, technical writers come up against ethical issues regularly and must make decisions about how to move forward with a project in the face of ethical dilemmas. Writers may encounter situations in which they must ask the following kinds of questions: What kinds of support material and sources are ethical to use? Are open web sources just as valid as academic sources for certain topics? Can email communications be used without permission? What if the writer discovers that a company falsified data about the effectiveness of its product? Should they reveal this in their report or should they take other courses of action? How much should a writer adapt to an audience without sacrificing their own views?

Ethics principles provide the basis for deciding whether "x" is ethical, but in reality, ethical issues are complicated—for example, imagine working for a large company that employs substantial numbers of people in your town, where relatively few other employment opportunities exist. Imagine that the company disposes of its chemical waste in a way that could endanger people's health. While the company may be following the law, it is clear they could dispose of their waste more safely and be more responsible stewards of the neighborhood. However, that would cost the company more money, and may affect profit margins, result in slower growth, and provide fewer jobs for the locals. What do you do? Is quarterly growth and expanding jobs more serious than the risk of future health problems and a degraded environment? Which choice is really more ethical?

Many ethical lapses that occur in the workplace are not so obvious, and they often begin with good intentions – for example, a manager or owner of a business may commit financial fraud to avoid laying off employees. The intention may be good, but breaching ethics results in a slippery slope – one that often leads to further and larger ethical breaches. Falsifying one report will make it that much more likely the subsequent reports will be falsified, just as neglecting to properly cite one source at the end of a report only makes it more tempting to neglect citing the remainder of the sources.

Acting ethically is rarely rewarded from the outside – you are not likely to be congratulated by your boss and co-workers for passing on an opportunity to undermine the competition in an unethical manner. The "rewards" of acting ethically are often simply internal. It is important to think about ethics and articulate your ethical values *before* you find yourself in a situation where ethics will factor into your decision-making. With a strong set of ethical values, you will be better prepared to make the right decision and stick to your principles when faced with an ethical dilemma.

There is a good chance that at some point in your career you will find yourself in a situation that involves unethical behavior at your workplace. You may be faced with having to decide to go along with unethical actions or behavior, ignore the behavior, or report unethical conduct to the appropriate person (internally or externally). It could be something as simple (albeit pernicious) as harassment, or it could be something as large as major fraud. It may be easier to mind our own businesses and keep quiet, but really the only right thing to do is to stand up, and speak up, for what is right.

We are taught from a young age that you should never "rat" on anyone, and staying silent is often easier than mustering the courage to reveal ethical corruption. However, sometimes speaking up, and/or notifying authorities is the only right thing to do, as difficult as that may be. The National Whistle Blower center is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that has many resources available for individuals who may be faced with the difficult situation of doing the right thing (https://www.whistleblowers.org/index.php).

You should spend some time examining your ethics and thinking about how and where they may be challenged in your career. What will you do when you are asked, implicitly or explicitly, to compromise your ethics? What will you do when you witness unfair, demeaning, and unethical behavior? In almost every field, there are legal and professional consequences for committing unethical behavior, and often remaining silent about corrupt conduct—whether the action are yours or a colleague's—can implicate you as well.

General Principles

In day-to-day life, most people have a sort of sliding scale on what constitutes ethical behavior. For example, you might tell your best friend their new haircut looks attractive when in fact you believe that it does not. This lie, though minor, preserves your friend's feelings and does no apparent harm to them or anyone else. Some might consider the context before determining how to act. For example, you might not tell a stranger that they were trailing toilet paper but you would tell a friend. With a stranger, your calculations may include how the stranger might respond to the interruption, and both of you may feel some embarrassment in the exchange. Such calculations may make it easier for you to look away and let someone else deal with it, but with a friend, you would be willing to risk some short-term awkwardness to do the right thing.

In a far more serious situation, a person might not risk their lives to help a stranger, but they might risk their lives to help a close friend or relative. For example, if you witnessed a stranger attacking someone you do not know on a crowded street, you may be afraid to interfere because you could be injured in the event. Instead, you might stay back and call the police. But if a close friend or a relative was in the same danger, you may be more likely to put yourself in harm's way to protect your friend. In this case, your commitment to loyalty might outweigh your sense of self-preservation. In the former case, if you valued physical courage above all else, you might be willing to step into a fight to protect a victim. In either case, weighing the costs, and having a strong value system would help you feel like you did the right thing, especially upon reflection after the event.

Ethical behavior, including ethical technical communication, involves not just telling the truth and providing accurate information, but telling the truth and providing information so that a reasonable audience is made aware of the behavior. It also means that you act to prevent actual harm, with set criteria for what kinds and degrees of harm are more serious than others. For example, saving someone's life should always outweigh the prospect of financial damage to your company. Human values, and human life, are far more important than monetary values and financial gain. As a guideline, ask yourself what would happen if your action (or non-action) became entirely public, and started trending on social media, got its own hashtag, and became a meme picked up by the national media. If you would go to prison, lose your friends, lose your job, or even just feel embarrassed, the action is probably unethical. If your actions cannot stand up to that scrutiny, you might reconsider them. Having a strong ethical foundation always helps. However, nothing is ever easy when it comes to ethical dilemmas. Sometimes the right thing to do is the unpopular thing to do. Just because some action enjoys the adulation of the masses, does not necessarily means it is ethical. That is another reason why it is important to give some serious thought to your own value system and how it may fit into the value systems of the exemplars your admire and respect. That way, you will be better prepared to do the right thing when you are confronted with an ethical dilemma. Internalizing your ethics in such a manner will certainly make you a more ethical writer.

Professional Ethics

Many organizations and employers have a corporate code of ethics. If you are a technical writer and you join a professional associations such as the Society of Technical Communicators you will need to be aware of their codes of ethics, published online (e.g., http://www.stc.org/about-stc/ethical-principles). If you are a technical writer researching and writing a report within a specific professional field, you will also need to be aware to that field's codes of ethics. For example, if you are writing a report for a group of physical therapists on the latest techniques for rehabilitating knee surgery patients, you should be aware of the code of ethics for physical therapists so that you work within those principles as you research and write your report.

Look for the codes of ethics in your own discipline and begin to read and understand what will be expected of you as a professional in your field.

Presentation of Information

How a writer presents information in a document can affect a reader's understanding of the relative weight or seriousness of that information. For example, hiding some crucial bit of information in the middle of a long paragraph deep in a long document seriously de-emphasizes the information. On the other hand, putting a minor point in a prominent spot (say the first item in a bulleted list in a report's executive summary) might be a manipulative strategy to emphasize information that is not terribly important. Both of these examples could be considered unethical, as the display of information is crucial to how readers encounter and interpret it.

A classic example of unethical technical writing is the memo report NASA engineers wrote about the problem with O-ring seals on the space shuttle Challenger. The unethical feature was that the crucial information about the O-rings was buried in a middle paragraph, while information approving the launch was in prominent beginning and ending spots. Presumably, the engineers were trying to present a full report, including safe components in the Challenger, but the memo's audience—non-technical managers—mistakenly believed the O-ring problem to be inconsequential, even if it happened. The position of information in this document did not help them understand that the problem could be fatal.

Ethical writing, then, involves being ethical, of course, but also presenting information so that your target audience will understand the relative importance of information and understand whether some technical fact is a good thing or a bad thing.

Ethical Issues in Technical Writing

There are a few issues that may come up when researching a topic for the business or technical world that a writer must consider. Let us look at a few.

Research that Does Not Support Project Idea

In a technical report that contains research, a writer might discover conflicting data that does not support the project's goal. For example, your small company continues to have problems with employee morale. Research shows bringing in an outside expert, someone who is unfamiliar with the company and the stakeholders, has the potential to impact the greatest change. You discover, however, that to bring in such an expert is cost prohibitive. You struggle with whether to leave this information out of your report, thereby encouraging your employer to pursue an action that is not the most productive. In this situation, what would you do, and why?

Suppressing Relevant Information

Imagine you are researching a report for a parents' group that wants to change the policy in the local school district requiring all students to be vaccinated. You collect a handful of sources that support the group's goal, but then you discover convincing medical evidence that indicates vaccines do more good than potential harm in society. Since you are employed by this parents' group, should you leave out the medical evidence, or do you have a responsibility to include all research, even some that might sabotage the group's goal? Is it your responsibility to tell the truth (and potentially save children's lives) or to cherry pick information that supports the parent group's initial intentions?

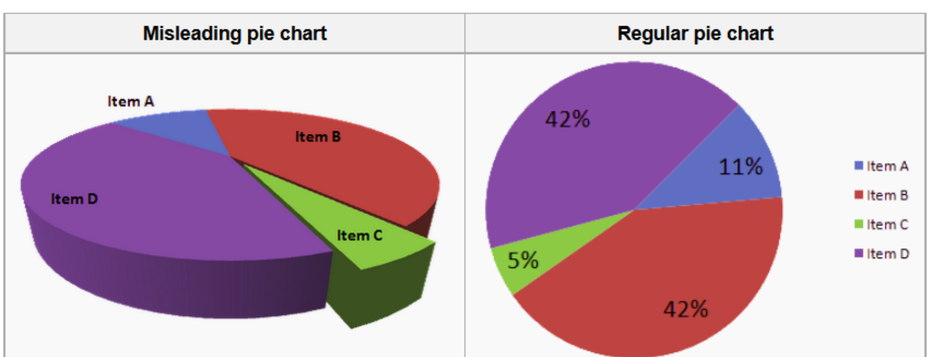
Limited Source Information in Research

Thorough research requires a writer to integrate information from a variety of reliable sources. These sources should demonstrate that the writer has examined the topic from as many angles as possible. This includes scholarly and professional research, not just from a single database or journal, for instance, but from a variety. Using a variety of sources helps the writer avoid potential bias that can occur from relying on only a few experts. If you were writing a report on the real estate market in Stillwater, Oklahoma, you would not collect data from only one broker's office. While this office might have access to broader data on the real estate market, as a writer you run the risk of looking biased if you only chose materials from this one source. Collecting information from multiple brokers would demonstrate thorough and unbiased research.

Presenting Visual Information Ethically

Visuals can be useful for communicating data and information efficiently for a reader. They provide data in a concentrated form, often illustrating key facts, statistics or information from the text of the report. When writers present information visually, however, they have to be careful not to misrepresent or misreport the complete picture.

The graphic below shows two perspectives of information in a pie chart. The data in each is identical but the pie chart on the left presents information in a misleading way (see Figure 1). What do you notice, however, about how that information is conveyed to the reader?

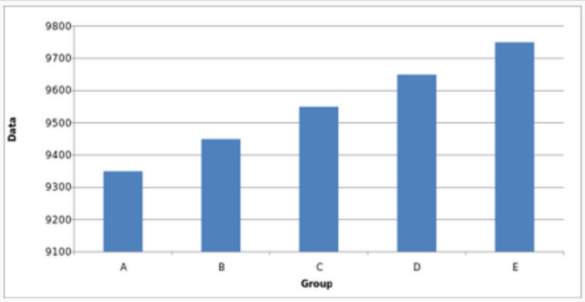
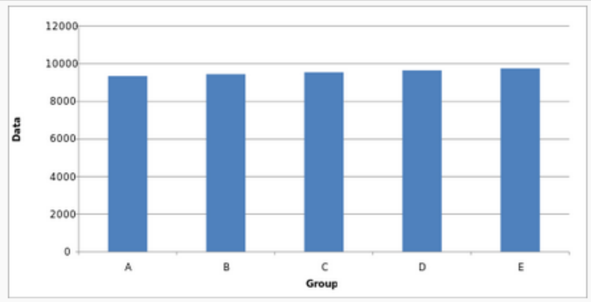


In the misleading pie chart, Item C appears to be at least as large as Item A, whereas in actuality, it is less than half as large.

Figure 1: Misleading and regular pie charts

Imagine that these pie charts represented donations received by four candidates for city council. The candidate represented by the green slice labeled “Item C,” might think that she had received more donations than the candidate represented in the blue “Item A” slice. In fact, if we look at the same data in a differently oriented chart, we can see that Item C represents less than half of the donations than those for Item A. Thus, a simple change in perspective can change the impact of an image.

Similarly, take a look at the bar graphs in Figure 2 below. What do you notice about their presentation?

Truncated bar graph	Regular bar graph
	

Note that both of these graphs display *identical data*; however, in the truncated bar graph on the left, the data *appear* to show significant differences, whereas in the regular bar graph on the right, these differences are hardly visible.

Figure 2: Misleading and regular bar graphs

If the bar graph above were to represent sales figures for a company, the representation on the left would look like good news: dramatically increased sales over a five-year period. However, a closer look at the numbers shows that the graph shows only a narrow range of numbers in a limited perspective (9100 to 9800). The bar graph on the right, on the other hand, shows the complete picture by presenting numbers from zero to1200 on the vertical axis, and we see that the sales figures have in fact been relatively stable for the past five years.

Presenting data in graphical form can be especially challenging. Keep in mind the importance of providing appropriate context and perspective as you prepare your graphics. You need to be extra vigilant to avoid misleading your readers with graphics. Graphics will usually be the first thing a reader notices about your document; if a reader finds your graphics misleading, your entire document may be called into question.

Additional Concerns

You might notice that most of these ethics violations could happen accidentally. Directly lying is unlikely to be accidental, but even in that case, the writer could rationalize and/or persuade themselves that the lie achieved some “greater good” and was therefore necessary. This is a slippery slope.

An even more common ethics violation results from the person who designs the information mistakenly believing that they are presenting evidence objectively, without recognizing their own bias in how they presented that information.

Most ethics violations in technical writing are (probably) unintentional, but they are still ethics violations. That means a technical writer must consciously identify their biases and check to see if a bias has influenced any presentation: whether in charts and graphs, or in discussions of the evidence, or in source use (or, of course, in putting the crucial O-ring information where the launch decision makers would realize it was important).

For example, scholarly research is intended to find evidence that the new researcher's ideas are valid (and important) or evidence that those ideas are partial, trivial, or simply wrong. In practice, though, most folks are primarily looking for support. "Hey, I have this great new idea that will solve world hunger, cure cancer, and make mascara really waterproof. Now I just need some evidence to prove I am right!" This is one version of confirmation bias (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confirmation_bias) – where people tend to favor evidence that supports their preconceived notions and reject evidence that challenges their ideas or beliefs.

On the other hand, if you can easily find 94 high-quality sources that confirm you are correct, you might want to consider whether your idea is worth developing. Often in technical writing, the underlying principle is already well-documented (maybe even common knowledge for your audience) and the point *should* be to use that underlying principle to propose a specific application.

Using a large section of your report to prove an already established principle implies that you are saying something new about the principle—which is not true. Authors of technical documents typically do not have the time or space to belabor well-known points or common-sense data because readers do not need to read page upon page of something they already know or something that can be proved in a sentence of two. When you use concepts, ideas, or findings that have been established by others, you only need to briefly summarize your source and provide accurate references. Then you can apply the information from your source(s) to your specific task or proposal.

Ethics and Documenting Sources

The most immediate concern regarding ethics in your technical writing course is documenting your sources. Whatever content you borrow must be clearly documented both in the body of your text and in a works cited or references page (the different terms reflect different documentation systems, not just random preference) at the end.

Including an item only in the source list at the end suggests you have used the source in the report, but if you have not cited this source in the text as well, you could be seen as misleading the reader. Either you are saying it is a source when in fact you did not really use anything from it, or you have simply failed to clarify in the text what are your ideas and what comes from other sources.

Documenting source use in such a way as to either mislead your reader about the source or make identifying the source difficult is also unethical—that would include using just a URL or using an article title without identifying the journal in which it appears (in the works cited/references; you would not likely identify the journal name in the report's body). It would also be unethical to falsify the nature of the source, such as omitting the number of pages in the works cited entry to make a brief note seem to be a full article.

Unethical source use includes suppressing information about how you have used a source, such as not making clear that graphical information in your report was already a graph in your source, as opposed to a graph you created on the basis of information in the source.

With the ease of acquiring graphics on the internet, it has become ever more tempting to simply copy and paste images from a search engine. Without providing accurate citation information, the practice of cutting and pasting images is nothing less than plagiarism (or theft); it is unethical, and may be illegal if it violates copyright law. Furthermore, it is downright lazy. Develop good habits now and maintain them through practice. Properly cite your images by providing credit to the original creator of the image with full citations. You cannot just slap a URL under a picture, but rather you need to give full credit with an appropriate citation. Any assignment turned in that uses material from an outside source, including graphics and images, needs to include in-text citations as well as a list of references.

What about Open Source Images?

If you need to use graphics from the internet, a good option is to look for graphics that are open source. Open source refers to material that is freely available for anyone to use. Creative Commons is an organization that has developed guidelines to allow people to "share their knowledge and creativity." They provide "free, easy-to-use copyright licenses to make a simple and standardized way to give the public permission to share and use" creative work ("What we Do" https://creativecommons.org/about/). There are a number of options (https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/licensing-types-examples/) that a creator has in regards to how they want to set up permissions, but the idea is that these works are free for anyone to use; they are open source.

Graphics created by the federal government, say from the National Park Service, or the FDA, or the EPA, are not under copyright, and therefore can be used without having to go through the sometimes-onerous process of securing permissions. This is particularly helpful for written materials that will be professionally published.

Likewise, you can customize a Google image search so that only images that are open source will come up. If you click on the "Tools" button, you have the option of filtering results by how they are licensed. See Figure 3 below.

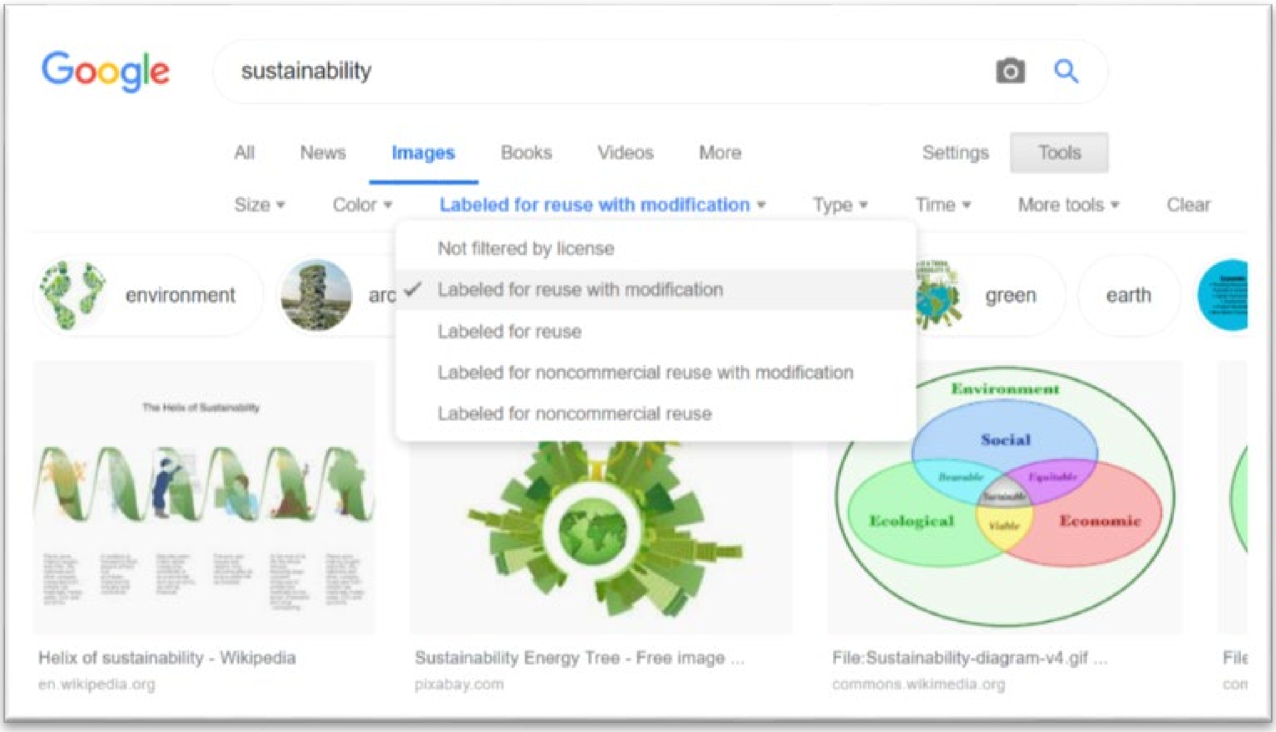


Figure 3: A screen shot from a Google search where the images are filtered by their license.

Regardless of the copyright, you should always keep track of where you found the graphics, and for assignments for your class, you need to record the source so you can cite it. If you use graphics (or anything at all) in an assignment that you did not create, you need to indicate as much. Just because a graphic is open source, does not mean that you can pass it off as your own work, and if you don't cite it, that is exactly what you are doing, whether or not that was your intention.

Many problems in documenting sources occur because the writer is missing the point of source use. Remember, you must clearly distinguish between your ideas and borrowed material; and you must use borrowed material primarily as evidence for your own, directly stated ideas.

Intellectual Property

Patents and trademarks are company names (WalMart), logos (the Target bullseye), processes or slogans (McDonald's "I'm lovin' it") that belong to a person or company. None of these things can be used without proper recognition of or approval from the appropriate company or individual involved. A company uses a ™ to show something is trademarked or an ® for something registered with the U.S Patent and Trademark Office. An example would be Nike and their famous swoosh symbol.

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

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

Copyright law includes items whose distribution is protected by law (books, movies, or software). The copyright symbol is shown with a ©. Copyright is different from plagiarism in that it is a legal issue. Only the copyright holder, the person/organization who owns the protected item, can copy it. Spend a few minutes checking out The United States Patent and Trademark Office (https://www.uspto.gov/trademarks-getting-started/trademark-basics/trademark-patent-or-copyright) for clarification on trademarks, patents, and copyright.

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

- The character, purpose of use, and amount of information being used. Was it a phrase, sentence, chapter, or an entire piece of work? Was the information simply copied and pasted as a whole or changed? Was it taken from something published or unpublished? What was it used for?
- If the person using another's material did so to profit from it. Only the copyright holders should profit from material they own. For example, this is why a faculty member cannot use their personal DVD for a movie screening on campus and charge students to attend the viewing.
- If using someone else's property affected the market for the copyrighted work. For example, if you take an item that would cost money to buy and copy it for other people, you are affecting the market for that product since the people you give it to will now not have to purchase it themselves. Therefore, the original owner of the material is denied a profit due to your actions.

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

Ethics, Plagiarism, and Reliable Sources

Unlike personal or academic writing, technical and professional writing can be used to evaluate your job performance and can have implications that a writer may or may not have considered. Whether you are writing for colleagues within your workplace or outside vendors or customers, you will want to build a solid, well-earned, favorable reputation for yourself with your writing. Your goal is to maintain and enhance your credibility, and that of your organization, at all times.

Credibility can be established through many means: using appropriate professional language, citing highly respected sources, providing reliable evidence, and using sound logic. Make sure as you start your research that you always question the credibility of the information you find. You should ask yourself the following questions:

- Are the sources popular or scholarly?
- Are they peer reviewed by experts in the field?
- Can the information be verified by other sources?
- Are the methods and arguments based on solid reasoning and sound evidence?
- Is the author identifiable and do they have appropriate credentials?

Be cautious about using sources that are not reviewed by peers or editor, or in which the information cannot be verified, or seems misleading, biased, or even false. Be a wise information consumer in your own reading and research in order to build your reputation as an honest, ethical writer.

Quoting the work of others in your writing is fine, provided that you credit the source fully enough that your readers can find it on their own. If you fail to take careful notes, or the sentence is present in your writing but later fails to get accurate attribution, it can have a negative impact on you and your organization. That is why it is important that when you find an element you would like to incorporate in your document, in the same moment as you copy and paste or make a note of it in your research file you need to note the source in a complete enough form to find it again.

Giving credit where credit is due will build your credibility and enhance your document. Moreover, when your writing is authentically yours, your audience will catch your enthusiasm, and you will feel more confident in the material you produce. Just as you have a responsibility in business to be honest in selling your product or service and avoid cheating your customers, so you have a responsibility in business writing to be honest in presenting your idea, and the ideas of others, and to avoid cheating your readers with plagiarized material.

Ethical Writing

Throughout your career, you will be required to create many documents. Some may be simple and straightforward, some may be difficult and involve questionable objectives. Overall, there are a few basic points to adhere to whenever you are writing a professional document: a) do not mislead, b) do not manipulate, and c) do not stereotype.

Do Not Mislead

This has more than one meaning to the professional writer. The main point is clear. When writing persuasively, do not write something that can cause the reader to believe something that is not true. This can be done by lying, misrepresenting facts, or just "twisting" numbers to favor your opinion and objectives. Once you are on the job, you cannot leave out numbers that show you are behind or over-budget on a project, no matter how well it may work once it is completed. Be cautious when using figures, charts and tables, making sure they visually represent quantities with accuracy and honesty. While this may seem easy to read about, when the pressure is on and there are deadlines to meet, taking shortcuts and stretching the truth become ever more tempting.

Do Not Manipulate

Do not persuade people to do what is not in their best interest. A good writer with bad motives can twist words to make something sound like it is beneficial to all parties. The audience may find out too late that what you wrote only benefited you and actually hurt them. Make sure all stakeholders are considered and cared for when writing a persuasive document. It is easy to get caught up in the facts and forget all the people involved. Their feelings and livelihood must be considered with every appropriate document you create.

Do Not Stereotype

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

The not-for-profit organization Project Implicit (https://www.projectimplicit.net/) has been researching subconscious biases for years and has developed several, free online tests. (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html) The tests can help you understand your proclivities and subconscious biases. Knowing your biases may help you begin to overcome them.

Ethics Decision Checklist

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

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Chapter 4

Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?

1. Sentence Writing

Imagine you are reading a book for school. You need to find important details that you can use for an assignment. However, when you begin to read, you notice that the book has very little punctuation. Sentences fail to form complete paragraphs and instead form one block of text without clear organization. Most likely, this book would frustrate and confuse you. Without clear and concise sentences, it is difficult to find the information you need.

For both students and professionals, clear communication is important. Whether you are typing an e-mail or writing a report, it is your responsibility to present your thoughts and ideas clearly and precisely. Writing in complete sentences is one way to ensure that you communicate well. This section covers how to recognize and write basic sentence structures and how to avoid some common writing errors.

Components of a Sentence

Clearly written, complete sentences require key information: a **subject**, a **verb**, and a complete idea. A sentence needs to make sense on its own. Sometimes, complete sentences are also called **independent clauses**. A clause is a group of words that may make up a sentence. An independent clause is a group of words that may stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. The following sentences show independent clauses.

Figure 4.1 “Sentence Components”

All complete sentences have at least one independent clause. You can identify an independent clause by reading it on its own and looking for the subject and the verb.

Subjects

When you read a sentence, you may first look for the subject, or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a **noun** or a **pronoun**. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are *I*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *you*, *they*, and *we*. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined once.

Malik is the project manager for this project. He will give us our assignments.

In these sentences, the subject is a person: *Malik*. The pronoun *He* replaces and refers back to *Malik*.

The computer lab is where we will work. It will be open twenty-four hours a day.

In the first sentence, the subject is a place: *computer lab*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* substitutes for *computer lab* as the subject.

The project will run for three weeks. It will have a quick turnaround.

In the first sentence, the subject is a thing: *project*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* stands in for the *project*.

> ***Tip***
>
> In this chapter, please refer to the following grammar key:
>
> Subjects are underlined once.
>
> *Verbs* are italicized.
>
> LV means linking verb, HV means helping verb, and V means action verb.

Compound Subjects

A sentence may have more than one person, place, or thing as the subject. These subjects are called compound subjects. Compound subjects are useful when you want to discuss several subjects at once.

Desmond and Maria have been working on that design for almost a year. Books, magazines, and online articles are all good resources.

Prepositional Phrases

You will often read a sentence that has more than one noun or pronoun in it. You may encounter a group of words that includes a preposition with a noun or a pronoun. Prepositions connect a noun, pronoun, or verb to another word that describes or modifies that noun, pronoun, or verb. Common prepositions include *in*, *on*, *under*, *near*, *by*, *with*, and *about*. A group of words that begin with a **preposition** is called a **prepositional phrase**. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and modifies or describes a word. It cannot act as the subject of a sentence. The following circled phrases are examples of prepositional phrases.

Figure 4.2 “Prepositional Phrases”

We went on a business trip. That restaurant with the famous pizza was on the way. We stopped for lunch.

Exercise 1

Read the following sentences. Underline the subjects, and circle the prepositional phrases.

1. The gym is open until nine o’clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
8. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
9. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
10. His latest invention does not work, but it has inspired the rest of us.

Verbs

Once you locate the subject of a sentence, you can move on to the next part of a complete sentence: the verb. A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: **action verbs**, **linking verbs**, or **helping verbs**.

Action Verbs

A verb that connects the subject to an action is called an action verb. An action verb answers the question *what is the subject doing?* In the following sentences, the action verbs are in italics.

> The dog *barked* at the jogger.
>
> He *gave* a short speech before we ate.

Linking Verbs

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a linking verb because it links the subject to a describing word. In the following sentences, the linking verbs are in italics.

> **Tip**
>
> Whenever you write or edit sentences, keep the subject and verb in mind. As you write, ask yourself these questions to keep yourself on track:
>
> **Subject:** Who or what is the sentence about?
>
> **Verb:** Which word shows an action or links the subject to a description?

The coat *was* old and dirty.

The clock *seemed* broken.

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas a linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject.

A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs.

Action Verb: The boy *looked* for his glove.

Linking Verb: The boy *looked* tired.

Although both sentences use the same verb, the two sentences have completely different meanings. In the first sentence, the verb describes the boy's action. In the second sentence, the verb describes the boy's appearance.

Helping Verbs

A third type of verb you may use as you write is a helping verb. Helping verbs are verbs that are used with the main verb to describe a mood or tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of *be*, *do*, or *have*. The word *can* is also used as a helping verb.

- The restaurant *is known* for its variety of dishes.
- She *does speak up* when prompted in class.
- We *have seen* that movie three times.
- She *can tell* when someone walks on her lawn.

(is, does, have, and can are helping verbs and known, speak up, seen, and tell are verbs)

Exercise 2

Copy each sentence onto your own sheet of paper and underline the verb(s) twice. Name the type of verb(s) used in the sentence in the space provided (LV, HV, or V).

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside. ________
2. We have not eaten dinner yet. ________
3. It took four people to move the broken-down car. ________
4. The book was filled with notes from class. ________
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages. ________
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail. ________

7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice. ________
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces. ________

Sentence Structure, Including Fragments and Run-ons

Now that you know what makes a complete sentence—a subject and a verb—you can use other parts of speech to build on this basic structure. Good writers use a variety of sentence structures to make their work more interesting. This section covers different sentence structures that you can use to make longer, more complex sentences.

Sentence Patterns

Six basic subject-verb patterns can enhance your writing. A sample sentence is provided for each pattern. As you read each sentence, take note of where each part of the sentence falls. Notice that some sentence patterns use action verbs and others use linking verbs.

Subject–Verb

Computers (subject) *hum* (verb)

Subject–Linking Verb–Noun

Computers (subject) *are* (linking verb) tool (noun)

Subject–Linking Verb–Adjective

Computers (subject) *are* (linking verb) expensive (adjective)

Subject–Verb–Adverb

Computers (subject) *calculate* (verb) quickly (adverb)

Subject–Verb–Direct Object

When you write a sentence with a direct object (DO), make sure that the DO receives the action of the verb.

Sally (subject) rides (verb) a motorcycle (direct object)

Subject–Verb–Indirect Object–Direct Object

In this sentence structure, an indirect object explains *to whom* or *to what* the action is being done. The indirect object is a noun or pronoun, and it comes before the direct object in a sentence.

My coworker (subject) *gave* (verb) me (indirect object) the reports (direct object)

Exercise 3

Use what you have learned so far to bring variety in your writing. Use the following lines or your own sheet of paper to write six sentences that practice each basic sentence pattern. When you have finished, label each part of the sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO).

1. ____
2. ____
3. ____
4. ____
5. ____
6. ____

Collaboration

Find an article in a newspaper, a magazine, or online that interests you. Bring it to class or post it online. Then, looking at a classmate's article, identify one example of each part of a sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO). Please share or post your results.

Fragments

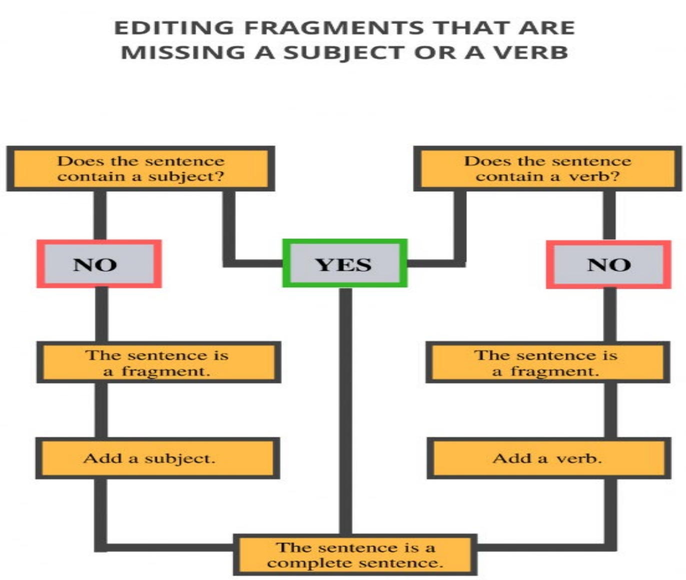
The sentences you have encountered so far have been independent clauses. As you look more closely at your past writing assignments, you may notice that some of your sentences are not complete. A sentence that is missing a subject or a verb is called a fragment. A fragment may include a description or may express part of an idea, but it does not express a complete thought.

Fragment: Children helping in the kitchen.

Complete sentence: Children helping in the kitchen **often make a mess**.

You can easily fix a fragment by adding the missing subject or verb. In the example, the sentence was missing a verb. Adding *often make a mess* creates an S-V-N sentence structure.

Figure 4.3 "Editing Fragments That Are Missing a Subject or a Verb



See whether you can identify what is missing in the following fragments.

Fragment: Told her about the broken vase.

Complete sentence: I told her about the broken vase.

Fragment: The store down on Main Street.

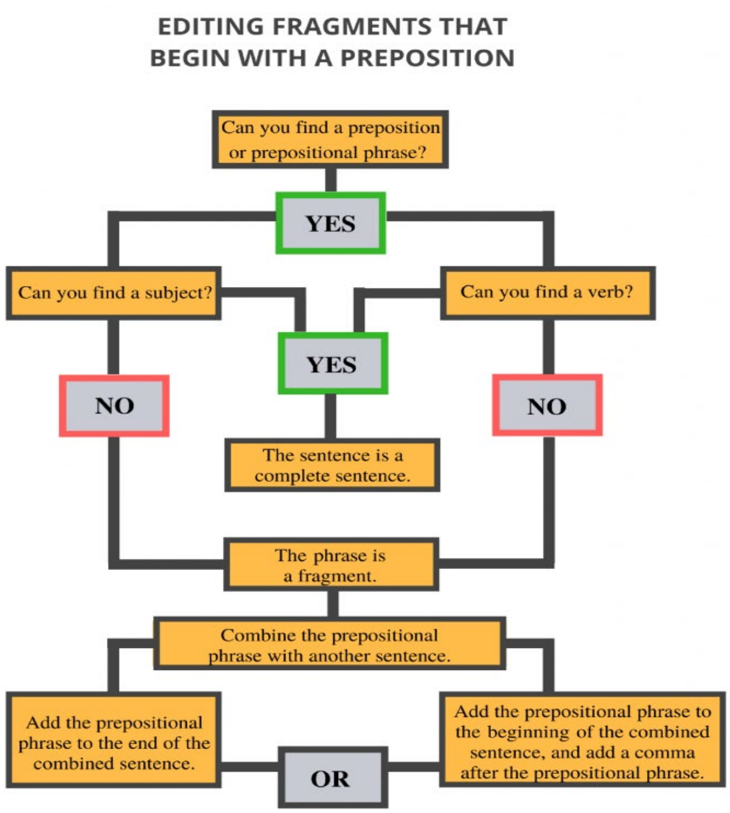
Complete sentence: The store down on Main Street **sells music**.

Common Sentence Errors

Fragments often occur because of some common error, such as starting a sentence with a preposition, a dependent word, an infinitive, or a gerund. If you use the six basic sentence patterns when you write, you should be able to avoid these errors and thus avoid writing fragments.

When you see a preposition, check to see that it is part of a sentence containing a subject and a verb. If it is not connected to a complete sentence, it is a fragment, and you will need to fix this type of fragment by combining it with another sentence. You can add the prepositional phrase to the end of the sentence. If you add it to the beginning of the other sentence, insert a comma after the prepositional phrase.

Figure 4.4 “Editing Fragments That Begin with a Preposition”



Example A

Incorrect: After walking over two miles. John remembered his wallet.

Correct: After walking over two miles, John remembered his wallet.

Correct: John remembered his wallet after walking over two miles.

Example B

Incorrect: The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner. When it was switched on.

Correct: When the vacuum cleaner was switched on, the dog growled.

Correct: The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner when it was switched on.

Clauses that start with a dependent word—such as *since*, *because*, *without*, or *unless*—are similar to prepositional phrases. Like prepositional phrases, these clauses can be fragments if they are not connected to an independent clause containing a subject and a verb. To fix the problem, you can add such a fragment to the beginning or end of a sentence. If the fragment is added at the beginning of a sentence, add a comma.

Incorrect: Because we lost power. The entire family overslept.

Correct: Because we lost power, the entire family overslept.

Correct: The entire family overslept because we lost power.

Incorrect: He has been seeing a physical therapist. Since his accident.

Correct: Since his accident, he has been seeing a physical therapist.

Correct: He has been seeing a physical therapist since the accident.

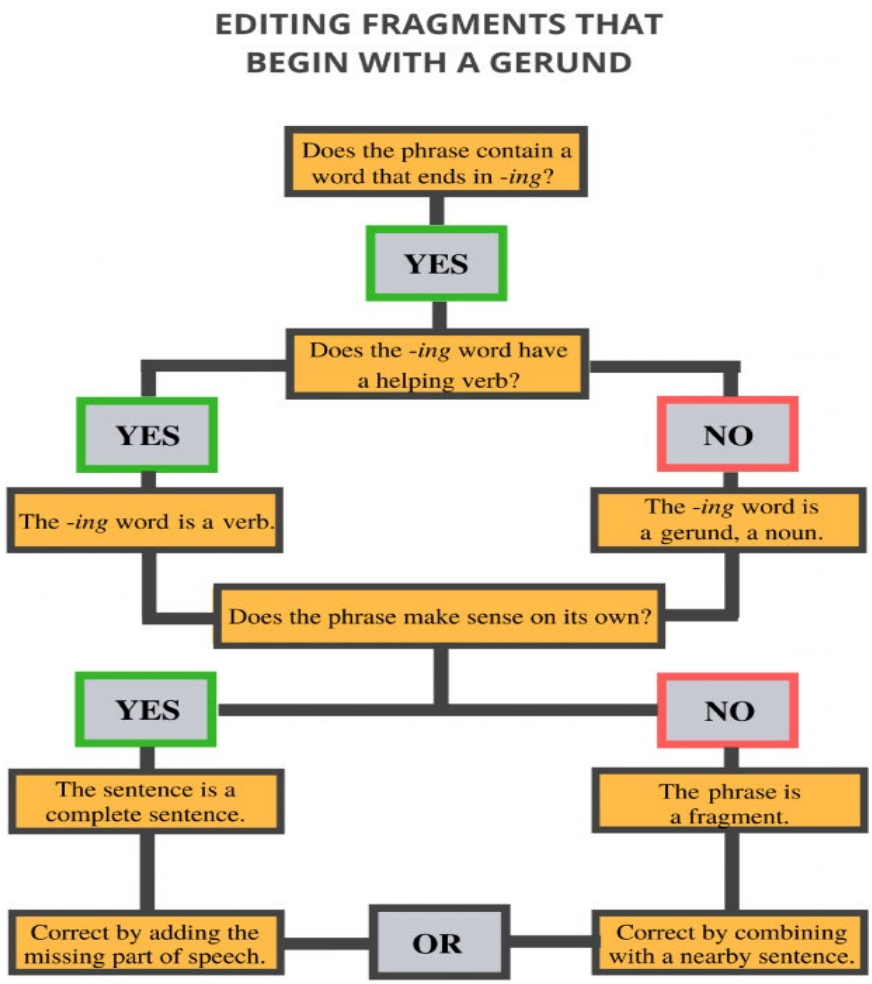
When you encounter a word ending in *–ing* in a sentence, identify whether or not this word is used as a verb in the sentence. You may also look for a helping verb. If the word is not used as a verb or if no helping verb is used with the *–ing* verb form, the verb is being used as a noun. An *–ing* verb form used as a noun is called a gerund.

Verb: I *was* (helping verb) *working* (verb) on homework until midnight.

Noun: <u>Working</u> until midnight makes me tired the next morning.

Once you know whether the *–ing* word is acting as a noun or a verb, look at the rest of the sentence. Does the entire sentence make sense on its own? If not, what you are looking at is a fragment. You will need to either add the parts of speech that are missing or combine the fragment with a nearby sentence.

Figure 4.5 “Editing Fragments That Begin with a Gerund”



Incorrect: Taking deep breaths. Saul prepared for his presentation.

Correct: Taking deep breaths, Saul prepared for his presentation.

Correct: Saul prepared for his presentation. He was taking deep breaths.

Incorrect: Congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Correct: She was congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Correct: Congratulating the entire team, Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Another error in sentence construction is a fragment that begins with an infinitive. An infinitive is a verb paired with the word *to*; for example, *to run*, *to write*, or *to reach*.

Although infinitives are verbs, they can be used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. You can correct a fragment that begins with an infinitive by either combining it with another sentence or adding the parts of speech that are missing.

> **Incorrect**: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. To reach the one thousand mark.
>
> **Correct**: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes to reach the one thousand mark.
>
> **Correct**: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. We wanted to reach the one thousand mark.

Exercise 4

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and circle the fragments. Then combine the fragment with the independent clause to create a complete sentence.

1. Working without taking a break. We try to get as much work done as we can in an hour.
2. I needed to bring work home. In order to meet the deadline.
3. Unless the ground thaws before spring break. We won’t be planting any tulips this year.
4. Turning the lights off after he was done in the kitchen. Robert tries to conserve energy whenever possible.
5. You’ll find what you need if you look. On the shelf next to the potted plant.
6. To find the perfect apartment. Deidre scoured the classifieds each day.

External Links:

For more information about fragments, follow this **link** (https://tinyurl.com/yaggttd2).

Run-on Sentences

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic too. Sentences with two or more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as run-on sentences. A run-on sentence may be either a fused sentence or a comma splice.

Fused sentence: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

Comma splice: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

When two complete sentences are combined into one without any punctuation, the result is a fused sentence. When two complete sentences are joined by a comma, the result is a comma splice. Both errors can easily be fixed.

Punctuation

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation. For example, adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences.

Run-on: There were no seats left, we had to stand in the back.

Correct: There were no seats left. We had to stand in the back.

Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses.

External Links:

For more information on semicolons, see **Capitalize Proper Nouns**.

Run-on: The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Complete sentence: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma.

Run-on: The project was put on hold we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Complete sentence: The project was put on hold; however, we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Coordinating Conjunctions

You can also fix run-on sentences by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction. A coordinating conjunction acts as a link between two independent clauses.

Run-on: The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.

Complete sentence: The new printer was installed, but no one knew how to use it.

> **Tip**
>
> These are the seven coordinating conjunctions that you can use: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses. The acronym *FANBOYS* will help you remember this group of coordinating conjunctions.

Dependent Words

Adding dependent words is another way to link independent clauses. Like the coordinating conjunctions, dependent words show a relationship between two independent clauses.

Run-on: We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.

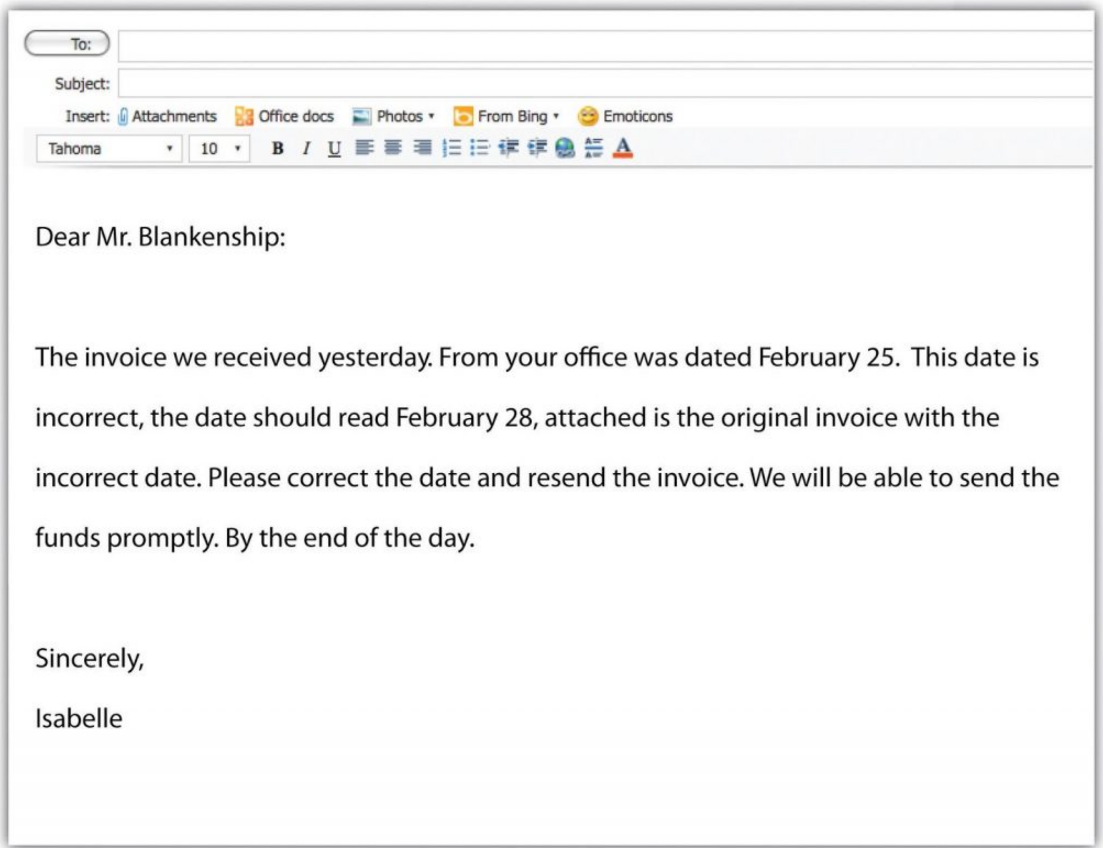
Complete sentence: Although we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

Run-on: Cobwebs covered the furniture, the room hadn't been used in years.

Complete sentence: Cobwebs covered the furniture **because** the room hadn't been used in years.

Writing at Work

Figure 4.6 "Sample e-mail"


To:

Subject:

Insert: Attachments Office docs Photos From Bing Emoticons

Tahoma 10

Dear Mr. Blankenship:

The invoice we received yesterday. From your office was dated February 25. This date is incorrect, the date should read February 28, attached is the original invoice with the incorrect date. Please correct the date and resend the invoice. We will be able to send the funds promptly. By the end of the day.

Sincerely,

Isabelle

Isabelle's e-mail opens with two fragments and two run-on sentences containing comma splices. The e-mail ends with another fragment. What effect would this e-mail have on Mr. Blankenship or other readers? Mr. Blankenship or other readers may not think highly of Isaebelle's communication skills or—worse—may not understand the message at all!

Communications written in precise, complete sentences are not only more professional but also easier to understand. Before you hit the "send" button, read your e-mail carefully to make sure that the sentences are complete, are not run together, and are correctly punctuated.

Exercise 5

A reader can get lost or lose interest in material that is too dense and rambling. Use what you have learned about run-on sentences to correct the following passages:

1. The report is due on Wednesday but we're flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that day she suggested that we come back a day early to get the report done and I

told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his boss, she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the file our new deadline is next Friday.

2. Anna tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting list so she put our names down on the list when the day of our reservation arrived we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up unexpectedly which was good because we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.

3. Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da Vinci, not because of his paintings but because of his fascinating designs, models, and sketches, including plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer enhanced versions researchers use a variety of methods to discover and enhance the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.

Key Takeaways

- A sentence is complete when it contains both a subject and verb. A complete sentence makes sense on its own.
- Every sentence must have a subject, which usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. A subject may be a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun.
- A prepositional phrase describes, or modifies, another word in the sentence but cannot be the subject of a sentence.
- Variety in sentence structure and length improves writing by making it more interesting and more complex.
- Fragments and run-on sentences are two common errors in sentence construction.
- Fragments can be corrected by adding a missing subject or verb. Fragments that begin with a preposition or a dependent word can be corrected by combining the fragment with another sentence.
- Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding appropriate punctuation or adding a coordinating conjunction.

Writing Application

Using the six basic sentence structures, write one of the following:

1. A work e-mail to a coworker about a presentation.
2. A business letter to a potential employer.
3. A status report about your current project.
4. A job description for your résumé.

External Links:

Choose this **link** for more information on how to correct run-on sentences.

2. Subject-verb agreement

In the workplace, you want to present a professional image. Your outfit or suit says something about you when meeting face-to-face, and your writing represents you in your absence. Grammatical mistakes in your writing or even in speaking make a negative impression on coworkers, clients, and potential employers. Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

Agreement

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

- **Number**. All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
- **Person**. All parts must match in first person (*I*), second person (*you*), or third person (*he, she, it, they*) forms.
- **Case**. All parts must match in subjective (*I, you, he, she, it, they, we*), objective (*me, her, him, them, us*), or possessive (*my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours*) forms. For more information on pronoun case agreement, see **Pronoun Agreement**.
- **Gende**r. All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form. For more information on subjects and verbs, see **Sentence Writing**.

Singular: The cat *jumps* over the fence.

Plural: The cats *jump* over the fence.

Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in *-s*. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in *-s.* Study the following regular verb forms in the present tense.

Figure 4.7 “Regular Verb Forms in the Present Tense”

	Singular Form	**Plural Form**
First Person	I live	We live

	Singular Form	Plural Form
Second Person	You live	You live
Third Person	He/She/It lives	They live

Tip

Add an *–es* to the third person singular form of regular verbs that end in *–sh*, *-x*, *–ch*, and *-s*. (I wish/He wishes, I fix/She fixes, I watch/It watches, I kiss/He kisses.)

Singular: I *read* every day.

Plural: We *read* every day.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the first person singular and the first person plural.

Singular: You *stretch* before you go to bed.

Plural: You *stretch* before every game.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the second person singular and the second person plural. In the singular form, the pronoun *you* refers to one person. In the plural form, the pronoun *you* refers to a group of people, such as a team.

Singular: My mother *walks* to work every morning.

In this sentence, the subject is *mother*. Because the sentence only refers to one mother, the subject is singular. The verb in this sentence must be in the third person singular form.

Plural: My friends *like* the same music as I do.

In this sentence, the subject is *friends*. Because this subject refers to more than one person, the subject is plural. The verb in this sentence must be in the third person plural form.

Tip

Many singular subjects can be made plural by adding an *-s*. Most regular verbs in the present tense end with an *–s* in the third person singular. This does not make the verbs plural.

Singular subject, singular verb: The <u>cat</u> *races* across the yard.

Plural subject, plural verb: The <u>cats</u> *race* across the yard.

Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, write the correct verb form for each of the following sentences.

1. I (brush/brushes) my teeth twice a day.
2. You (wear/wears) the same shoes every time we go out.
3. He (kick/kicks) the soccer ball into the goal.
4. She (watch/watches) foreign films.
5. Catherine (hide/hides) behind the door.
6. We (want/wants) to have dinner with you.
7. You (work/works) together to finish the project.
8. They (need/needs) to score another point to win the game.
9. It (eat/eats) four times a day.
10. David (fix/fixes) his own motorcycle.

Irregular Verbs

Not all verbs follow a predictable pattern. These verbs are called irregular verbs. Some of the most common irregular verbs are *be*, *have*, and *do*. Learn the forms of these verbs in the present tense to avoid errors in subject-verb agreement.

Be

Study the different forms of the verb *to be* in the present tense.

Figure 4.8 "Forms of To Be Present Tense"

	Singular Form	**Plural Form**
First Person	I am	We are
Second Person	You are	You are
Third Person	He/She/It is	They are

Have

Study the different forms of the verb *to have* in the present tense.

Figure 4.9 "Forms of To Have Present Tense"

	Singular Form	**Plural Form**
First Person	I have	We have

	Singular Form	Plural Form
Second Person	You have	You have
Third Person	He/She/It has	They have

Do

Study the different forms of the verb *to do* in the present tense.

Figure 4.10 "Forms of To Do Present Tense"

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I do	We do
Second Person	You do	You do
Third person	He/She/It does	They do

Exercise 7

Complete the following sentences by writing the correct present tense form of *be*, *have*, or *do*. Use your own sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. I ________ sure that you will succeed.
2. They ________ front-row tickets to the show.
3. He ________ a great Elvis impersonation.
4. We ________ so excited to meet you in person!
5. She ________ a fever and a sore throat.
6. You ________ not know what you are talking about.
7. You ________ all going to pass this class.
8. She ________ not going to like that.
9. It ________ appear to be the right size.
10. They ________ ready to take this job seriously.

Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as *anyone* or *everyone*;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as *team* or *organization*;
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

Compound subjects combined with *and* take a plural verb form.

Two singular subjects: Alicia and Miguel *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Two plural subjects: The girls and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Singular and plural subjects: Alicia and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Compound subjects combined with *or* and *nor* are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

Two singular subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor Rianna *wants* to eat at that restaurant.

Two plural subjects: Neither the kids nor the adults *want* to eat at that restaurant.

Singular and plural subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor the kids *want* to eat at that restaurant.

Plural and singular subjects: Neither the kids nor Elizabeth *wants* to eat at that restaurant.

Two singular subjects: Either you or Jason *takes* the furniture out of the garage.

Two plural subjects: Either you or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.

Singular and plural subjects: Either Jason or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.

Plural and singular subjects: Either the twins or Jason *takes* the furniture out of the garage.

Tip

If you can substitute the word *they* for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Separation of Subjects and Verbs

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

The following are examples of a subject and verb separated by a prepositional phrase:

- The students with the best grades *win* the academic awards.
- The puppy under the table *is* my favorite.

The following are examples of a subject and verb separated by a dependent clause:

- The car that I bought *has* power steering and a sunroof.
- The representatives who are courteous *sell* the most tickets.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to an unspecified person, thing, or number. When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form. However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun. View the chart to see a list of common indefinite pronouns and the verb forms they agree with.

Figure 4.11 "Common Indefinite Pronouns"

Indefinite Pronouns That Always Take a Singular Verb	**Indefinite Pronouns That Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb**
anybody, anyone, anything	All
each	Any
everybody, everyone, everything	None
much	Some
many	
nobody, no one, nothing	
somebody, someone, something	

Singular: Everybody in the kitchen *sings* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *everybody* takes a singular verb form because *everybody* refers to a group performing the same action as a single unit.

Plural: All the people in the kitchen *sing* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *all* takes a plural verb form because *all* refers to the plural noun *people*. Because *people* is plural, *all* is plural.

Singular: Al l the cake *is* on the floor.

In this sentence, the indefinite pronoun *all* takes a singular verb form because *all* refers to the singular noun *cake*. Because *cake* is singular, *all* is singular.

Collective Nouns

A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and considers those people, places, or things one singular unit. Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb. Some commonly used collective nouns are *group*, *team*, *army*, *flock*, *family*, and *class*.

Singular: The class *is* going on a field trip.

In this sentence, *class* is a collective noun. Although the class consists of many students, the class is treated as a singular unit and requires a singular verb form.

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. In other words, the subject of the sentence may not appear where you expect it to appear. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Here or There

In sentences that begin with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb.

- Here *is* my wallet!
- There *are* thirty dolphins in the water.

If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with *here* or *there*; it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

- My wallet *is* here!
- Thirty dolphins *are* in the water.

Questions

When you ask questions, a question word (*who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*) appears first. The verb and then the subject follow.

- Who *are* the people you are related to?
- When *am* I going to go to the grocery store?

Tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.

When *am* I going to the grocery store? I *am* going to the grocery store tonight!

Exercise 8

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write *OK*. Copy the corrected sentence or the word *OK* on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time.
2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.
3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.
4. My family are moving to California.
5. Here is the lake I told you about.
6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.
7. Which room is bigger?
8. When are the movie going to start?
9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.
10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

Exercise 9

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph. Copy the paragraph on a piece of notebook paper and make corrections.

> Dear Hiring Manager,
>
> I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by e-mail or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.
>
> Thanks,
>
> Felicia Fellini

Writing at Work

Figure 4.12 “Advertisement”

Imagine that you are a prospective client and that you saw this ad online. Would you call Terra Services to handle your next project? Probably not! Mistakes in subject-verb agreement can cost a company business. Paying careful attention to grammatical details ensures professionalism that clients will recognize and respect.

Key Takeaways

- Parts of sentences must agree in number, person, case, and gender.
- A verb must always agree with its subject in number. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb.
- Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern in their singular and plural forms. Common irregular verbs are *be*, *have*, and *do*.
- A compound subject is formed when two or more nouns are joined by the words *and*, *or*, or *nor*.
- In some sentences, the subject and verb may be separated by a phrase or clause, but the verb must still agree with the subject.
- Indefinite pronouns, such as *anyone*, *each*, *everyone*, *many*, *no one*, and *something*, refer to unspecified people or objects. Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and treats those people, places, or things one singular unit. Collective nouns require singular verbs.
- In sentences that begin with *here* and *there*, the subject follows the verb.
- In questions, the subject follows the verb.

Writing Application

Use your knowledge of subject-verb agreement to write one of the following:

1. An advertisement for a potential company
2. A memo to all employees of a particular company
3. A cover letter describing your qualifications to a potential employer
4. Be sure to include at least the following:

5. One collective noun
6. One irregular verb
7. One question

3. Verb tense

Suppose you must give an oral presentation about what you did last summer. How do you make it clear that you are talking about the past and not about the present or the future? Using the correct verb tense can help you do this.

It is important to use the proper verb tense. Otherwise, your listener might judge you harshly. Mistakes in tense often leave a listener or reader with a negative impression.

Regular Verbs

Verbs indicate actions or states of being in the past, present, or future using tenses. Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from the present to past tense. For example, to form a past-tense or past-participle verb form, add *–ed* or *-d* to the end of a verb. You can avoid mistakes by understanding this basic pattern.

Verb tense identifies the time of action described in a sentence. Verbs take different forms to indicate different tenses. Verb tenses indicate

- an action or state of being in the present,
- an action or state of being in the past,
- an action or state of being in the future.

Helping verbs, such as *be* and *have,* also work to create verb tenses, such as the future tense.

Present Tense: <u>Time</u> *walks* to the store. (Singular subject)

Present Tense: <u>Sue</u> and <u>Kimmy</u> *walk* to the store. (Plural subject)

Past Tense: Yesterday, <u>they</u> *walked* to the store to buy some bread. (Singular subject)

Exercise 10

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tenses. Write the corrected sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. The Dust Bowl (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of very destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s.
2. Historians today (consider, considered, will consider) The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather of events in American history.
3. The Dust Bowl mostly (affects, affected, will affect) the states of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.
4. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.
5. The dust storms during The Dust Bowl (cause, caused, will cause) irreparable damage to farms and the environment for a period of several years.

6. When early settlers (move, moved, will move) into this area, they (remove, removed, will remove) the natural prairie grasses in order to plant crops and graze their cattle.
7. They did not (realize, realized, will realize) that the grasses kept the soil in place.
8. There (is, was, will be) also a severe drought that (affects, affected, will affect) the region.
9. The worst dust storm (happens, happened, will happen) on April 14, 1935, a day called Black Sunday.
10. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains (arrive, arrived, will arrive).
11. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to affect the region, but hopefully they will not be as destructive as the storms of the 1930s.

Irregular Verbs

The past tense of irregular verbs is not formed using the patterns that regular verbs follow.
Here we consider using irregular verbs.

Present Tense: Lauren *keeps* all her letters.
Past Tense: Lauren *kept* all her letters.
Future Tense: Lauren *will keep* all her letters.

Exercise 11

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the irregular verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tense. Copy the corrected sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Marina finally (forgived, forgave, will forgive) her sister for snooping around her room.
2. The house (shook, shaked, shakes) as the airplane rumbled overhead.
3. I (buyed, bought, buy) several items of clothing at the thrift store on Wednesday.
4. She (put, putted, puts) the lotion in her shopping basket and proceeded to the checkout
5. line.
6. The prized goose (layed, laid, lay) several golden eggs last night.
7. Mr. Batista (teached, taught, taughted) the class how to use correct punctuation.
8. I (drink, drank, will drink) several glasses of sparkling cider instead of champagne on New Year's Eve next year.
9. Although Hector (growed, grew, grows) three inches in one year, we still called him "Little Hector."
10. Yesterday our tour guide (lead, led, will lead) us through the maze of people in Times Square.
11. The rock band (burst, bursted, bursts) onto the music scene with its catchy songs.

Exercise 12

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence using the correct form of the verb tense shown below.

1. Throw (past)
2. Paint (simple present)
3. Smile (future)
4. Tell (past)
5. Share (simple present)

Maintaining Consistent Verb Tense

Consistent verb tense means the same verb tense is used throughout a sentence or a paragraph. As you write and revise, it is important to use the same verb tense consistently and to avoid shifting from one tense to another unless there is a good reason for the tense shift. In the following box, see whether you notice the difference between a sentence with consistent tense and one with inconsistent tense.

Inconsistent tense:

The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.

Consistent tense:

The crowd *started* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.

Consistent tense:

The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approaches* the finish line.

Tip

In some cases, clear communication will call for different tenses. Look at the following example:

- When I was a teenager, I *wanted* to be a firefighter, but not I *am studying* computer science.
- If the time frame for each action or state is different, a tense shift is appropriate.

Exercise 13

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the inconsistent verb tense. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

In the Middle Ages, most people lived in villages and work as agricultural laborers, or peasants. Every village has a “lord,” and the peasants worked on his land. Much of what they produce go to the lord and his family. What little food was leftover goes to support the peasants’ families. In return for their labor, the lord offers them protection. A peasant’s day usually began before sunrise and involves long hours of backbreaking work, which includes plowing the land, planting seeds, and cutting crops for harvesting. The working life of a peasant in the Middle Ages is usually demanding and exhausting.

Writing at Work

Read the following excerpt from a work e-mail:

Figure 4.13 “Work e-mail,”

> I would like to highlight an important concern that comes up after our meeting last week. During the meeting, we agree to conduct a series of interviews over the next several months in which we hired new customer service representatives. Before we do that, however, I would like to review your experiences with the Customer Relationship Management Program. Please suggest a convenient time next week for us to meet so that we can discuss this important matter.

The inconsistent tense in the e-mail will very likely distract the reader from its overall point. Most likely, your coworkers will not correct your verb tenses or call attention to grammatical errors, but it is important to keep in mind that errors such as these do have a subtle negative impact in the workplace.

Key Takeaways

- Verb tense helps you express when an event takes place.
- Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Irregular verbs do not follow regular, predictable patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Using consistent verb tense is a key element to effective writing.

Writing Application

Tell a family story. You likely have several family stories to choose from, but pick the one that you find most interesting to write about. Use as many details as you can in the telling. As you write and proofread, make sure your all your verbs are correct and the tenses are consistent.

External Links:

Follow this **link** (https://tinyurl.com/y7t629xu) for more information concerning verbs.

4. Capitalization

Text messages, casual e-mails, and instant messages often ignore the rules of capitalization. In fact, it can seem unnecessary to capitalize in these contexts. In other, more formal forms of communication, however, knowing the basic rules of capitalization and using capitalization correctly gives the reader the impression that you choose your words carefully and care about the ideas you are conveying.

Capitalize the First Word of a Sentence

Incorrect: the museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

Correct: The museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

Incorrect: cooking can be therapeutic.

Correct: Cooking can be therapeutic.

Capitalize Proper Nouns

Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

Incorrect: He grew up in harlem, new york.

Correct: He grew up in Harlem, New York.

Incorrect: The sears tower in chicago has a new name.

Correct: The Sears Tower in Chicago has a new name.

Tip

Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on.

Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way. See the following chart for the difference between proper nouns and common nouns.

Figure 4.14 “Common and Proper Nouns”

Common Noun	**Proper Noun**
museum	The Art Institute of Chicago
theater	Apollo Theater
country	Malaysia
uncle	Uncle Javier
doctor	Dr. Jackson
book	*Pride and Prejudice*

Common Noun	Proper Noun
college	Smith College
war	the Spanish-American War
historical event	The Renaissance

Exercise 14

On your own sheet of paper, write five proper nouns for each common noun that is listed. The first one has been done for you.

Common noun: river

1. Nile River
2.
3.

Common noun: musician

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Common noun: magazine

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Capitalize Days of the Week, Months of the Year, and Holidays

> **Incorrect**: On wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.
>
> **Correct**: On Wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.
>
> **Incorrect**: The fourth of july is my favorite holiday.
>
> **Correct**: The Fourth of July is my favorite holiday.

Capitalize Titles

> **Incorrect**: The play, *fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Correct: The play, *Fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Incorrect: The president of the united states will be speaking at my university.

Correct: The President of the United States will be speaking at my university.

Tip

Computer-related words such as “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are usually capitalized; however, “e-mail” and “online” are never capitalized.

Exercise 15

Edit the following sentences by correcting the capitalization of the titles or names.

1. The prince of england enjoys playing polo.
2. “Ode to a nightingale” is a sad poem.
3. My sister loves to read magazines such as the new yorker.
4. *The house on Mango street* is an excellent novel written by Sandra Cisneros.
5. My physician, dr. alvarez, always makes me feel comfortable in her office.

Exercise 16

Edit the following paragraphs by correcting the capitalization.

david grann’s *the lost City of Z* mimics the snake-like winding of the amazon River. The three distinct Stories that are introduced are like twists in the River. First, the Author describes his own journey to the amazon in the present day, which is contrasted by an account of percy fawcett’s voyage in 1925 and a depiction of James Lynch’s expedition in 1996. Where does the river lead these explorers? the answer is one that both the Author and the reader are hungry to discover.

The first lines of the preface pull the reader in immediately because we know the author, david grann, is lost in the amazon. It is a compelling beginning not only because its thrilling but also because this is a true account of grann’s experience. grann has dropped the reader smack in the middle of his conflict by admitting the recklessness of his decision to come to this place. the suspense is further perpetuated by his unnerving observation that he always considered himself a Neutral Witness, never getting personally involved in his stories, a notion that is swiftly contradicted in the opening pages, as the reader can clearly perceive that he is in a dire predicament—and frighteningly involved.

Writing at Work

Did you know that, if you use all capital letters to convey a message, the capital letters come across like shouting? In addition, all capital letters are actually more difficult to read and may annoy the reader. To avoid “shouting” at or annoying your reader, follow the rules of capitalization and find other ways to emphasize your point.

Key Takeaways

Learning and applying the basic rules of capitalization is a fundamental aspect of good writing.

Identifying and correcting errors in capitalization is an important writing skill.

Writing Application

Write a one-page biography. Make sure to identify people, places, and dates and use capitalization correctly.

External Links:

Follow this **link** (https://tinyurl.com/y8bnxecf) for more information regarding capitalization.

5. Pronouns

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like *Bob said that Bob was tired* or *Christina told the class that Christina received an A.* Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the antecedent of the pronoun.

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.

    She refers to *Lani*.

    Lani is the antecedent of *she*.

2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.

    Him refers to Jeremy.

    Jeremy is the antecedent of *him*.

3. *Crina and Rosalie* have been best friends ever since *they* were freshman in high school.

    They refers to *Crina and Rosalie*.

    Crina and Rosalie is the antecedent of *they*.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular.

> **Incorrect**: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

Correct: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *he or she* (sing.) must have a receipt.

*If it seems too wordy to use *he or she*, change the antecedent to a plural noun.

Correct: If *students* (plur.) want to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

Agreement in Person

Figure 4.15 “Singular and Plural Pronouns”

	Singular Pronouns			**Plural Pronouns**		
First Person	I	me	my (mine)	we	us	our (ours)
Second Person	you	you	your (yours)	you	you	your (your)
Third Person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its	they	them	their (theirs)

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Incorrect: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *you* (2nd) should leave a tip.

Correct: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *he or she* (3rd) should leave a tip.

Correct: When *we* (1st) go to a restaurant, *I should* (1st) should leave a tip.

Exercise 17

Edit the following paragraph by correcting pronoun agreement errors in number and person.

Over spring break I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a butterfly exhibit at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular. The following are some common indefinite pronouns.

Figure 4.16 “Common Indefinite Pronouns”

Common Indefinite Pronouns				
all	each one	few	nothing	several
any	each other	many	one	some
anybody	either	neither	one another	somebody
anything	everybody	nobody	oneself	someone
both	everyone	none	other	something
each	everything	no one	others	anyone

Indefinite pronoun agreement

Incorrect: *Everyone* (sing.) should do what *they* (plur.) can to help.

Correct: *Everyone* (sing.) should do what *he or she* (sing.) can to help.

Incorrect: *Someone* (sing.) left *their* (plur.) backpack in the library.

Correct: *Someone* (sing.) left *his or her* (sing.) backpack in the library.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular. Look over the following examples of collective nouns.

Figure 4.17 “Common Collective Nouns”

Common Collective Nouns		
audience	faculty	public
band	family	school
class	government	society
committee	group	team

Common Collective Nouns		
company	jury	tribe

Collective noun agreement

Incorrect: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *their* (plur.) annual picnic next week.

Correct: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *its* (sing.) annual picnic next week.

Exercise 18

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste ________ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, ________ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did ________ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving ________ a smile in return.
5. My family has ________ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train ________ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward ________.
8. My mother's singing group has ________ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer ________ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost ________ way in the storm.

Subject and Object Pronouns

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. Object pronouns function as the object of a verb or of a preposition.

Figure 4.18 "Singular and Plural Pronouns"

Singular Pronouns		**Plural Pronouns**	
Subject	**Object**	**Subject**	**Object**
I	me	we	us
you	you	you	you

Singular Pronouns		Plural Pronouns	
he, she, it	him, her, it	they	them

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

- *She* loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.
- Every summer, *they* picked up litter from national parks.
- The following sentences show pronouns as objects:
- Marie leaned over and kissed *him*.
- Jane moved *it* to the corner.

Tip

Note that a pronoun can also be the object of a preposition.

- Near *them*, the children played.
- My mother stood between *us*.

The pronouns *us* and *them* are objects of the prepositions *near* and *between*. They answer the questions *near* whom? And *between* whom?

Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the subject of the sentence.

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

> **Incorrect**: *Me and Harriet* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.
>
> **Correct**: *Harriet and I* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.
>
> **Correc**t: Jenna accompanied *Harriet and me* on our trip.

Tip

Note that object pronouns are never used in the subject position. One way to remember this rule is to remove the other subject in a compound subject, leave only the pronoun, and see whether the sentence makes sense.

For example, *Me visited the Grand Canyon last summer* sounds immediately incorrect.

Compound object pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the object of the sentence.

> **Incorrect**: I have a good feeling about *Janice and I*.
>
> **Correct**: I have a good feeling about *Janice and me*.

Tip

It is correct to write *Janice and me*, as opposed to *me and Janice*. Just remember it is more polite to refer to yourself last.

Writing at Work

In casual conversation, people sometimes mix up subject and object pronouns. For instance, you might say, “Me and Donnie went to a movie last night.” However, when you are writing or speaking at work or in any other formal situation, you need to remember the distinctions between subject and object pronouns and be able to correct yourself. These subtle grammar corrections will enhance your professional image and reputation.

Exercise 19

Revise the following sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly. Copy the revised sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Write a C for each sentence that is correct.

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.
2. She and him have decided to sell their house.
3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.
4. Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.
5. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.
6. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.
7. New Year’s Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.
8. You exercise much more often than me.
9. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.
10. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

Who versus Whom

Who or *whoever* is always the subject of a verb. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

- *Who* won the marathon last Tuesday?
- I wonder *who* came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, *whom* and *whomever* serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does *not* perform an action. Use *whom* or *whomever* when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

- *Whom* did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)
- From *whom* did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

Tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use *who* and *whom*, try this trick. Take the following sentence:

- *Who/Whom* do I consider my best friend?

Reorder the sentence in your head, using either *he* or *him* in place of *who* or *whom*.

- I consider *him* my best friend.
- I consider *he* my best friend.

Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use *him*, you should use *whom*.

Exercise 20

Complete the following sentences by adding *who* or *whom*. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. ________ hit the home run?
2. I remember ________ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To ________ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea ________ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. ________ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With ________ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew ________ the famous actor was.
8. ________ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From ________ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew_______ ate the cake mom was saving.

Key Takeaways

- Pronouns and their antecedents need to agree in number and person.
- Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- Collective nouns are usually singular.
- Pronouns can function as subjects or objects.
- Subject pronouns are never used as objects, and object pronouns are never used as subjects.
- *Who* serves as a subject of a verb.
- *Whom* serves as an object of a sentence or the object of a preposition.

Writing Application

Write about what makes an ideal marriage or long-term relationship. Provide specific details to back your assertions. After you have written a few paragraphs, go back and proofread your paper for correct pronoun usage.

6. Adjectives and adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words that bring your writing to life.

Adjectives and Adverbs

An adjective is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It often answers questions such as *which one*, *what kind*, or *how many?*

1. The *green* sweater belongs to Iris.
2. She looks *beautiful*.

In sentence 1, the adjective *green* describes the noun *sweater*.

In sentence 2, the adjective *beautiful* describes the pronoun *she*.

An adverb is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs frequently end in *–ly*. They answer questions such as *how*, *to what extent*, *why*, *when*, and *where*.

3. Bertrand sings *horribly*.
4. My sociology instructor is *extremely* wise.
5. He threw the ball *very* accurately.

In sentence 3, *horribly* describes the verb *sings*. How does Bertrand sing? He sings *horribly*.

In sentence 4, *extremely* describes the adjective *wise*. How *wise* is the instructor? *Extremely* wise.

In sentence 5, *very* describes the adverb *accurately*. How *accurately* did he throw the ball? *Very* accurately.

Exercise 21

Complete the following sentences by adding the correct adjective or adverb from the list in the previous section. Identify the word as an adjective or an adverb (Adj, Adv).

1. Frederick ________ choked on the piece of chicken when he saw Margaret walk through the door.
2. His ________ eyes looked at everyone and everything as if they were specimens in a biology lab.
3. Despite her pessimistic views on life, Lauren believes that most people have ________ hearts.
4. Although Stefan took the criticism ________, he remained calm.
5. The child developed a ________ imagination because he read a lot of books.
6. Madeleine spoke ________ while she was visiting her grandmother in the hospital.
7. Hector's most ________ possession was his father's bass guitar from the 1970s.
8. My definition of a ________ afternoon is walking to the park on a beautiful day, spreading out my blanket, and losing myself in a good book.
9. She ________ eyed her new coworker and wondered if he was single.
10. At the party, Denise ________ devoured two pieces of pepperoni pizza and a several slices of ripe watermelon.

Comparative versus Superlative

Comparative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare two people or things.

1. Jorge is *thin*.
2. Steven is *thinner* than Jorge.

Sentence 1 describes Jorge with the adjective *thin*.

Sentence 2 compares Jorge to Steven, stating that Steven is *thinner*. So *thinner* is the comparative form of *thin*.

Form comparatives in one of the following two ways:

If the adjective or adverb is a one syllable word, add *–er* to it to form the comparative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *bigger*, *faster*, and *shorter* in the comparative form.

If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *more* in front of it to form the comparative. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *more happily*, *more comfortable*, and *more jealous* in the comparative.

Superlative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare more than two people or two things.

1. Jackie is the *loudest* cheerleader on the squad.
2. Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student by her graduating class.

Sentence 1 shows that Jackie is not just *louder* than one other person, but she is the *loudest* of all the cheerleaders on the squad.

Sentence 2 shows that Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student of all the students in her class.

Form superlatives in one of the following two ways:

If the adjective or adverb is a one-syllable word, add *–est* to form the superlative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *biggest*, *fastest*, and *shortest* in the superlative form.

If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *most* in front of it. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *most happily*, *most comfortable*, and *most jealous* in the superlative form.

Tip

Remember the following exception: If the word has two syllables and ends in *-y*, change the *-y* to an *-i* and add *-est*. For example, *happy* would change to *happiest* in the superlative form; *healthy* would change to *healthiest*.

Exercise 22

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the errors in comparative and superlative adjectives.

Our argument started on the most sunny afternoon that I have ever experienced. Max and I were sitting on my front stoop when I started it. I told him that my dog, Jacko, was more smart than his dog, Merlin. I could not help myself. Merlin never came when he was called, and he chased his tail and barked at rocks. I told Max that Merlin was the most dumbest dog on the block. I guess I was angrier about a bad grade that I received, so I decided to pick on poor little Merlin. Even though Max insulted Jacko too, I felt I had been more mean. The next day I apologized to Max and brought Merlin some of Jacko's treats. When Merlin placed his paw on my knee and licked my hand, I was the most sorry person on the block.

Irregular Words: Good, Well, Bad, and Badly

Good, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often used incorrectly. Study the following chart to learn the correct usage of these words and their comparative and superlative forms.

Figure 4.19 "Irregular Words"

		Comparative	**Superlative**
Adjective	Good	Better	Best
Adverb	Well	Better	Best
Adjective	Bad	Worse	Worst
Adverb	Badly	Worse	Worst

Good versus Well

Good is always an adjective—that is, a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. The second sentence is correct because *well* is an adverb that tells how something is done.

Incorrect: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *good* on a test.

Correct: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *well* on a test.

Well is always an adverb that describes a verb, adverb, or adjective. The second sentence is correct because *good* is an adjective that describes the noun *score*.

Incorrect: Cecilia's team received a *well* score.

Correct: Cecilia's team received a *good* score.

Bad versus Badly

Bad is always an adjective. The second sentence is correct because *badly* is an adverb that tells how the speaker did on the test.

Incorrect: I did *bad* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Correct: I did *badly* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Badly is always an adverb. The second sentence is correct because *bad* is an adjective that describes the noun *thunderstorm*.

Incorrect: The coming thunderstorm looked *badly*.

Correct: The coming thunderstorm looked *bad*.

Better and Worse

The following are examples of the use of *better* and *worse*:

- Tyra likes sprinting *better* than long distance running.
- The traffic is *worse* in Chicago than in Atlanta.

Best and Worst

The following are examples of the use of *best* and *worst*:

- Tyra sprints *best* of all the other competitors.
- Peter finished *worst* of all the runners in the race.

> **Tip**
>
> Remember *better* and *worse* compare two persons or things. *Best* and *worst* compare three or more persons or things.

Exercise 23

Write *good*, *well*, *bad*, or *badly* to complete each sentence. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Donna always felt ________ if she did not see the sun in the morning.
2. The school board president gave a ________ speech for once.
3. Although my dog, Comet, is mischievous, he always behaves ________ at the dog park.
4. I thought my back injury was ________ at first, but it turned out to be minor.
5. Steve was shaking ________ from the extreme cold.
6. Apple crisp is a very ________ dessert that can be made using whole grains instead of white flour.
7. The meeting with my son's math teacher went very ________.
8. Juan has a ________ appetite, especially when it comes to dessert.
9. Magritte thought the guests had a ________ time at the party because most people left early.
10. She ________ wanted to win the writing contest prize, which included a trip to New York.

Exercise 24

Write the correct comparative or superlative form of the word in parentheses. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. This research paper is ________ (good) than my last one.
2. Tanaya likes country music ________ (well) of all.
3. My motorcycle rides ________ (bad) than it did last summer.
4. That is the ________ (bad) joke my father ever told.
5. The hockey team played ________ (badly) than it did last season.
6. Tracey plays guitar ________ (well) than she plays the piano.
7. It will go down as one of the ________ (bad) movies I have ever seen.

8. The deforestation in the Amazon is ________ (bad) than it was last year.
9. Movie ticket sales are ________ (good) this year than last.
10. My husband says mystery novels are the ________ (good) types of books.

Writing at Work

The irregular words *good*, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often misused along with their comparative and superlative forms *better*, *best*, *worse*, and *worst*. You may not hear the difference between *worse* and *worst*, and therefore type it incorrectly. In a formal or business-like tone, use each of these words to write eight separate sentences. Assume these sentences will be seen and judged by your current or future employer.

Key Takeaways

- Adjectives describe a noun or a pronoun.
- Adverbs describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb.
- Most adverbs are formed by adding *–ly* to an adjective.
- Comparative adjectives and adverbs compare two persons or things.
- Superlative adjectives or adverbs compare more than two persons or things.
- The adjectives *good* and *bad* and the adverbs *well* and *badly* are unique in their comparative and superlative forms and require special attention.

Writing Application

Using the exercises as a guide, write your own ten-sentence quiz for your classmate(s) using the concepts covered in this section. Try to include two questions from each subsection in your quiz. Exchange papers and see whether you can get a perfect score.

7. Misplaced and dangling modifiers

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out *what* the writer meant to say. A writer's goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions. The good news is that these errors can be easily overcome.

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.

> **Incorrect**: She wore a bicycle helmet on her head *that was too large*.
>
> **Correct**: She wore a bicycle helmet *that was too large* on her head.

Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head were too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person's head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer's meaning.

Look at the following two examples:

Incorrect: They bought a kitten for my brother *they call Shadow*.

Correct: They bought a kitten *they call Shadow* for my brother.

In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother's name is *Shadow*. That's because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is *kitten*.

Incorrect: The patient was referred to the physician *with stomach pains*.

Correct: The patient *with stomach pains* was referred to the physician.

The incorrect sentence reads as if it were the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains.

> **Tip**
>
> Simple modifiers like *only*, *almost*, *just*, *nearly*, and *barely* often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Tyler *almost* found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

Revised: Tyler found *almost* fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

How do you *almost* find something? Either you find it or you do not. The revised sentence is much clearer.

Exercise 25

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called "Speed Racer."
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn't drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

Incorrect: *Riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

Correct: As Jane was *riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader!

Incorrect: *Walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

> **Correct**: As Jonas was *walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.
>
> **Correct**: The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was *walking home at night*.

In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

> **Incorrect**: To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.
>
> **Correct**: If we want to win the spelling bee this year, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do!

Tip

The following three steps will help you quickly spot a dangling modifier:

Look for an *–ing* modifier at the beginning of your sentence or another modifying phrase:

Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. (*Painting* is the *–ing* modifier.)

Underline the first noun that follows it:

Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie.

Make sure the modifier and noun go together logically. If they do not, it is very likely you have a dangling modifier.

After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the sentence.

Painting for three hours at night, Maggie finally finished the kitchen.

Exercise 26

Rewrite the following the sentences onto your own sheet of paper to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.

7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Exercise 27

Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers.

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Key Takeaways

- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers distract the reader.
- There are several effective ways to identify and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

Writing Application

See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it. Exchange papers with a classmate, and rewrite your classmate's sentences to correct any misplaced modifiers.

Attribution

This chapter was derived from:

Browning, DeVries, Boylan, Kurtz, and Burton. *Let's Get Writing!* Virginia Western Community College. (https://vwcceng111.pressbooks.com/).

Chapter 5.1

Writing Resumes

The purpose of a résumé is twofold: first, to serve as an overview or quick summary of your skills, experience, and education as they relate to your career objective; secondly, to function as a marketing tool that conveys your personal brand. All of us want our résumés to stand out from the stack. The best way to create an eye-catching résumé is not through gimmicks or flash, but rather through substance and customization. As a marketing document that sells your candidacy, your résumé should have a format that is pleasing to read, efficient in its use of the English language, and very concise. Once you have several years of experience, it is acceptable to have a two-page résumé; the average résumé is now two pages in length, although résumés may range from one to three pages. You should aim for a full page as you are building experience and generating content.

Regardless of your starting point—whether you are unsure you can fill a two-page résumé, or whether you think it will be difficult to fill a single page—this chapter will help you accomplish your goal: designing an exceptional résumé. Remember, as the most critical component of a marketing campaign in which you advertise your professional self, your résumé must be clear, concise, and error free. Most seasoned recruiters scan a résumé in about seven to twenty seconds; because they have many documents to review, they look for reasons to reduce the number of résumés that demand a second look. This means that a single error can be all that is needed to discard your résumé and your candidacy. However, recruiters also have an eye for key details, so they will quickly recognize a well-constructed résumé and discard one that is poorly designed.

While writing your résumé, it is important that you keep in mind not only its purpose, but also its general goals, which include the following:

- **To make an exceptional first impression**. Your résumé will likely be the first impression a potential employer has of you and your qualifications, so it must hold attention long enough to propel your job search forward.
- **To quantify strengths, responsibilities, abilities, and accomplishments**. Mentioning factual, numerical examples of praiseworthy attributes and skills will allow you to boast without sounding boastful
  - For example, if you reduced errors by 35% and increased profits by 55%.
  - If you have been a student teacher with 35 students and student grades improved by 25%.
  - If you are part of a marketing team that has increased new patient accounts by 10% last

  - If you worked in the school library and the number of lost books has declined by 50%.

- **To argue, in an articulate and polite way, that you are well suited for the job**. Based on the content of the job ad, you will want to address how your education and/or work experiences (including internships and volunteer work) have taught you both technical and "soft" skills that will help you perform the listed job duties.
- **To represent you when you are not there**. Your résumé can be uploaded to online global job boards like Monster and CareerBuilder. It can be sent to a company's online database with a push of a button, where it will be shared with dozens of recruiters and hiring managers.
- **To obtain an interview and create talking points**. Listing your accomplishments and quantifying them can create talking points for future interviews. For example, perhaps you bullet point the following: Responsible for intake and outtake of approximately 1,000 books daily, resulting in 80% fewer lost books this year. During an interview, with this example in mind, you can easily talk about using technology to improve processes. You can discuss the team environment of the library staff and how you worked toward decreasing the number of lost books.
- **To show your command of the written word**. You do not have to be an English major to make sure that your résumé is well-written. Your professors, teachers, peers, and family members may be willing to help by answering questions based on their expertise, or even reviewing a résumé draft.

Overall, highlighting specific results in each résumé category will increase your chances of getting your résumé noticed. Unlike financial investments, past performance is an indicator of future success: include details about your past performance and quantify your accomplishments whenever possible, and future employers will be inclined to believe you can do the same for them. What exactly do you do, or what have you done in the past? Your résumé should answer this question very quickly. The more you quantify your accomplishments using specific details, the more your abilities will be understood.

For example, stating that you "worked in sales" on your résumé does not provide specific proof of your skills—and therefore is not likely to be as impressive—as a statement that quantifies your experiences and provides unique details. Stronger examples of résumé statements might include: "completed an average of 65 customer transactions per hour, setting a company record for the 2019 fiscal year" or "managed national and international supplier accounts with purchase ranges from $1,000 to $10,000,000 USD."

Types of Résumés

Just as work histories come in a variety of forms, so also do résumés. Although career experts debate which style is the best, you must decide which fits your current situation. There are many reasons to choose one format over another. The *chronological résumé* is the most common résumé format. It is best for candidates with a long/uninterrupted work history, in fields where the company worked for is of paramount importance. It is also well suited for those applicants who want to highlight their education, as many jobs will ask for a degree (e.g. BA, JD, MBA, MA, MD, PhD, etc.) in a certain field as a minimum requirement. In contrast, the *functional (or skills) résumé* serves candidates who are transitioning between fields, who are shifting from a military to a civilian career, or who have gained skills in a variety of different settings (workplace, academic, volunteer). The following information offers an overview of these two best-known formats. Visual examples are given in the section afterwards, followed by suggestions on where to begin a résumé draft or how to develop your current draft further.

Chronological résumé

The **chronological résumé** is a traditional format whose principal section is the *Employment Experience* section. In this section, jobs are listed in reverse chronological order (starting with the most recent positions/schools and working backward), and achievements/skills are detailed underneath each position. The chronological résumé presents experience under headings by job title, company, location, and dates of employment. *Education* is another common category that, like all sections on a résumé, is also in reverse chronological order. While the chronological résumé dedicates the majority of its space to providing relevant details from previous work experience, the education section is often placed above the work section.

Functional (skills) résumé

In contrast, the **functional (skills) résumé,** centers around well-developed *Skills & Achievements* section, in which skills are organized into categories. The functional résumé still includes an *Employment Experience* section and likely an *Education* section, but these sections are streamlined to include only the basic information about each position held or each school attended. The functional résumé focuses on skills and experience, rather than on chronological work history. It describes responsibilities, accomplishments, and quantifiable achievements under categories in the skills section. The functional résumé typically opens with a brief *s*ummary/profile detailing strengths (one to three sentences) and demonstrates how you match the requirements of your potential job by including relevant achievements and accomplishments.

It is worth noting that, especially in the case of advanced positions, many recruiters expect to see a chronological résumé with traditional sections like employment and education. In most cases, it is best to give recruiters the résumé they expect. However, both the college student and the more experienced candidate may choose a functional résumé for these reasons:

- To highlight skills and achievements rather than past employment/companies.
- To minimize a less-than-extensive work experience history.
- To emphasize other achievements, honors, and abilities.
- To de-emphasize gaps in employment or career mobility.
- To include categories like communication, teamwork, and leadership skills, as well as volunteer experience or athletic achievements.

Sample Chronological Resume

STUDENT NAME

Email: studentname@gmail.com | *Phone:* (333)-222-1111 | *Address:* 232 President Dr., Apt. 1, Plano, TX, 70074

EDUCATION

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY — **December, 2016**
B.Sc. Mechanical Engineering — **GPA – 3.82/4.00**

EXPERIENCE

***System Engineering*, Texas Instruments (Dallas, TX)** — **03/2017 - Present**
+ Execute capital/expense projects for systems such as HW, ChW, HVAC, and Cathodic Protection

***Teaching Assistant*, OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY (Stillwater, OK)** — **01/2016 – 12/2016**
+ Assisted professors in coursework related to Thermodynamics II and System Dynamics

***Project Engineer*, M INDUSTRIES – JOHN Z CO LLC (Tulsa, OK)** — **05/2016 – 08/2016**
+ Wrote material requisitions and data sheets for vendors
+ Performed property, area, and cost analysis on refractory materials
+ Visited refinery in *Minnesota* to help resolve issues related to pilots and duct burner Piping
+ Reviewed and revised P&ID, GA and fabrication drawings
+ Created shipping lists using BOM to be sent to customer
+ Generated quote using Salesforce and sent to customer
+ Created cost estimate tool using VBA

***Engineering Business Development Intern*, ARNE (Houston, TX)** — **05/2015 – 08/2015**
+ Completed objectives given by Senior LIBD Analyst
+ Built volumetric and commercial models to analyze impact of downstream sales
+ Assisted Business Development Managers with preparation of ZPR, RIC and customer projects
+ Practiced creative thinking and performed strategy studying for

PROJECTS

Design Heating and Cooling system for an office
+ The project involved calculating the heating and cooling loads, selecting relevant heating/cooling equipment and diffusers, and finally designing the ductwork for an office at a given location.

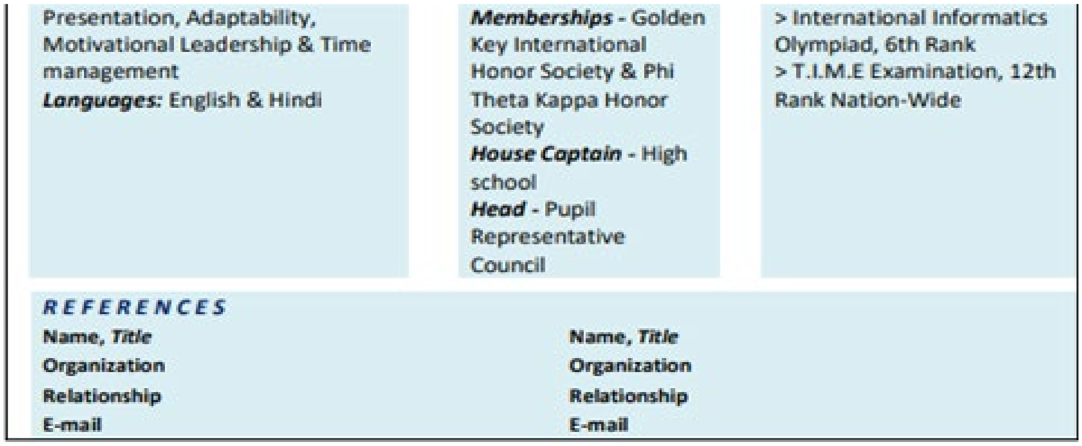
Designing an Airline Pod Handling System
+ The project required the design team to develop a cost effective, robust and safe system to retrieve and deliver passenger pods for a range of aircrafts from A320 to A380 sized.

Designing a Turbine
+ Based on given specifications of a power plant, the task was to estimate the number and detailed design of turbines and penstocks required to extract all the power possible from the water reservoir.

SKILLS
Computer Skills: MS Office, VBA, Python, EES
Other Skills: Problem Solving, Effective Communication, Public

ACTIVITIES
Project Lead - Safe Schools
Project Lead - Slow the flow

AWARDS
> OSU Regents Scholarship
> CEAT Scholarship
> President's and Dean's Honor Roll Certificates



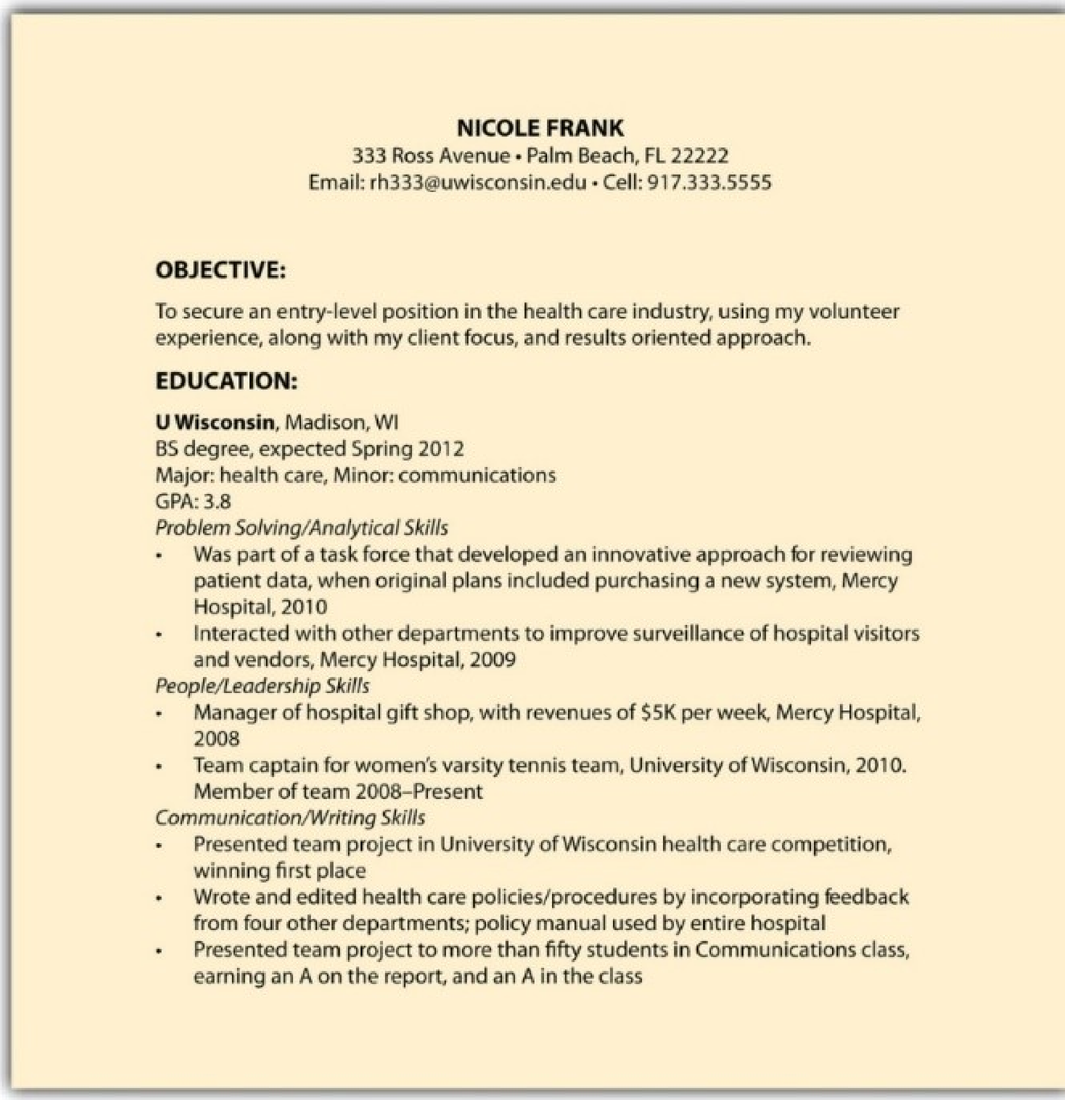
Presentation, Adaptability, Motivational Leadership & Time management ***Languages:*** English & Hindi	***Memberships*** - Golden Key International Honor Society & Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society ***House Captain*** - High school ***Head*** - Pupil Representative Council	> International Informatics Olympiad, 6th Rank > T.I.M.E Examination, 12th Rank Nation-Wide

REFERENCES

Name, *Title*	**Name, *Title***
Organization	**Organization**
Relationship	**Relationship**
E-mail	**E-mail**

Figure 1: Detailed chronological résumé with original color and design choices, created using Excel.

Sample Functional Résumé



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

OBJECTIVE:

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

EDUCATION:

U Wisconsin, Madison, WI
BS degree, expected Spring 2012
Major: health care, Minor: communications
GPA: 3.8

Problem Solving/Analytical Skills

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

People/Leadership Skills

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

Communication/Writing Skills

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

Figure 2: Basic functional resume that emphasizes three skill sets.

Drafting and Design: Where to Start

Concerned about where to begin when drafting your résumé? Here are a few general guidelines and tips. Based on your qualifications, goals, and job ad, first use the information from the previous section to choose from the two major résumé types. You might consider using a template as a helpful starting point. However, if you do use a common template to help with layout and section format, be sure to modify it in some way so it does not look identical to another candidate's résumé. As you modify your chosen résumé type and template, keep in mind the following information on basic design features and conventions.

Design Conventions

- Use tables to align sections, then hide the borders to create a neat presentation.
- Choose a standard ten-to-twelve-point font such as Times New Roman.
- Use the same font in your résumé and your cover letter to create coherence.
- Choose a font that looks serious and professional and is easy to read.
- When describing work experience (and possibly education), include bullet points. Start your bullet with an action verb describing a skill or achievement. Follow it with the details of that skill or achievement, and then describe the positive impact of your achievement. For example: Developed (VERB) new paper flow procedure (DETAILS), resulting in reduced staff errors and customer wait times (RESULT); Provided (VERB) friendly customer-focused service (DETAILS) leading to a 15% improvement in customer satisfaction and loyalty (RESULT).
- Avoid relying on graphics or ornate design feature. Too many design features may make the résumé look busy.
- Be strategic and consistent in your use of capitalization, bold, italics, punctuation, and underlining.
- Place more space between sections than within a section to create visual groupings of information. This way your reader will be able to easily distinguish between the key sections of your résumé, and between the items in each section.
- Write in sentence fragments that begin with active verbs and leave out sentences' subjects. Example: "I eliminated the duplication of paperwork in my department by streamlining procedures" would become "Eliminated paperwork duplication in a struggling department by streamlining procedures."
- Place your name at the top of the résumé to make it obvious to readers that *you* are the subject of each verb.
- Learn about field-specific conventions. The conventions in your field or industry will affect your choices in writing your résumé. Length, formality, design, delivery method, and key terms are just some of the factors that may vary across disciplines. Ask faculty or professional contacts in your field about employers' expectations, visit your school's career center, or conduct web research to make informed field-specific choices.

- Quantify your skills and achievements, as explained previously. This means including references to technologies and equipment you have used; types of documents you have produced; procedures you have followed; languages you speak; technical languages you know; types of clients you have worked with (demographic information that might be relevant in your new workplace); and so on.
- Avoid filler words, or fluff that does not show meaningful skills. Filler words include: team player, results-oriented, fast-paced, and self-motivated. If you MUST use these phrases, find concrete examples to back them up. For example, instead of using *team player*, include a time you “collaborated with peers to save the company over $500/month on delivery methods” or “co-managed a team of six to interview/hire vendors for annual company picnic.”
- Use key terms gathered in your pre-writing, preparation phase (from the job description and research into your field). If your potential employer is using a résumé-scanning program, these key terms may make the difference between getting an interview or a rejection.
- Make sure your résumé is completely error free. Proofread your résumé several times, use spell check, and ask an exceptional proofreader to review it. Always assume that an error lurks somewhere in your résumé and review it until you find that error!

What to Include and Exclude

Despite variations in résumé type, formatting, and design, there are understood rules of thumb on what to include and exclude. Here are a few general guidelines on what to exclude. For example, high schools, no matter how prestigious, should not be included in a résumé. Also avoid including sections with titles like *Hobbies* or *Other*, with interests that may seem irrelevant to the position: golfing for business jobs, video game play for software design jobs, and blogging for PR jobs have little direct bearing on your professional training.

In a North American context, never include information like height, weight, or marital status, as this information is unrelated to your qualifications and might become a source of discrimination. Similarly, although you may have seen résumé samples that include a picture (this may be common in some cultural contexts), it is non-standard and strongly discouraged in the United States to include a photo with the job packet. It may also be a good idea to be appraised of your legal rights when working through the job process, from application to interview. To become more aware of protections guaranteed by federal law, you may want to review a resource like the following, published by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Permission: (https://www.eeoc.gov/facts/qanda.html).

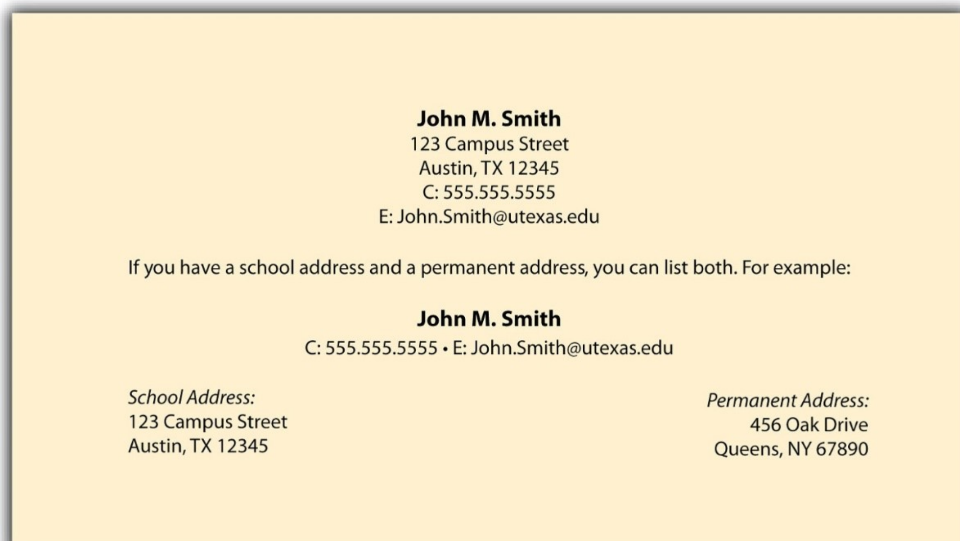
Now that you know what to exclude, what information should you include in a résumé? As their foundation, most résumés integrate three sections or types of information: the résumé header with contact information, education section, and work experience.

Résumé Headers

First of all, your Résumé Header should include four items: full name, address, email address, phone number, and possibly your professional website or LinkedIn page. If your first name is difficult to pronounce, you could include your nickname in quotation marks or parentheses (e.g., Xioang "Angie" Kim or Massimo "Mass" Rapini). Names are typically bolded and centered on the page, but aligning your name to the right or left is also appropriate, depending on the template or style you have chosen. You may include your school address or your permanent home address, or both. Most recruiters prefer both because, at times, they may need to send information to both addresses at different times of the year.

As noted in the chapter on email etiquette, it is important to choose a professional e-mail address because employers frown upon addresses such as (greeneyes2@gmail.com) or (runningguy62@verizon.net).

Instead, consider using your first name and your last name in a simple email format. If you continue your job search after graduation, you might not be permitted to use your school email address, nor should you once you have graduated. Include only one phone number on your résumé and record a professional voicemail in case the employer calls. Do not play music on your voicemail. If in a loud area, do not answer your cell phone, especially when you do not recognize the number. Allow the call to go to voicemail, listen to it in a quiet place, and return the call as soon as possible. A professional voicemail might sound like the following: "You've reached John Smith at 555.555.5555. Please leave a message and I will call you back as soon as possible." Be sure to check your voicemail on a regular basis.



John M. Smith
123 Campus Street
Austin, TX 12345
C: 555.555.5555
E: John.Smith@utexas.edu

If you have a school address and a permanent address, you can list both. For example:

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

School Address:
123 Campus Street
Austin, TX 12345

Permanent Address:
456 Oak Drive
Queens, NY 67890

Figure 3: Resume header with contact information, both a school address and a permanent address.

Education Section

Secondly, the Education Section will likely appear before your experience section. Once you are a working professional, you may choose to flip these two sections, in order to emphasize the information that is more important to a particular employer, or to follow the conventions in your field. Within the education section, it is standard to include your GPA, typically if it is 3.0 or better, along with your expected graduation date, major(s), and minor(s). You may include your overall GPA, or you may decide to list the GPA of your major. Certain industries are more concerned with GPA than others, including consulting, investment banking, and trading, which can require a 3.6 or 3.7 and above.

Be sure to research each industry to familiarize yourself with such requirements. If you attended only one college, only that college should be listed in this section. If you transferred from another college, you should list both schools in this section. The first school you list is the current school you attend, followed by the previous school. If you attend graduate school, law school, and so forth, your postgraduate institution would be listed first. You also have the option of including relevant courses that prepared you for the job you are seeking and any special accomplishments related to school—like projects, offices held, service, and awards or scholarships. If you have many of the latter, you might alternatively consider placing them in their own section marked Honors.

University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
Expected graduation date: 2013.
Pursuing a BS in mathematics with honors and with a minor in economics.
GPA: 3.7
Coursework: Honors Calculus IBL Sequence; Honors Analysis; Honors Econometrics; Algebra
Extracurricular Activities: Mathematics Club, Member; Investment Banking Club, Treasurer.
Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois
2009–2010
Obtained 24 credits toward BS degree before transfer.

Figure 4: Education information showing two universities attended.

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

School Address:
123 Campus Street
Austin, TX 12345

Permanent Address:
456 Oak Drive
Queens, NY 67890

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

EDUCATION:

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

Figure 5: Resume header followed by contact information, an objective statement, and education.

Employment Section

Thirdly, the Employment Section should highlight the most relevant jobs you have held and downplay less significant experience. This section is arguably the most important of your résumé because recruiters often look for past work experience as a predictor of future work experience. The conventional method of listing your work experience is in reverse chronological order (as with your education section). List your most recent job experience first and include the following information:

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

As noted in the section on design, you should use bullet points as a means of clearly and succinctly listing your responsibilities and achievements.

Optional Sections

In addition to contact information, education, and work experience, you may be wondering what other sections to include while developing résumé. Your options are many, but here are a few additional ideas.

Objective Statement:

This statement is increasingly controversial—some sources will recommend that you include an objective statement, while others will warn strongly against it. Proponents will tell you that recruiters appreciate clarity, and an objective can help a recruiter understand exactly what you offer or what business would best suit your background. Naysayers argue that the résumé is meant to be scanned in a matter of minutes and the objective statement only slows this process down with details that will likely be explored in the cover letter. If included, objective statements should be very targeted and mention a specific position. Whatever objective you choose, it should be highly specific in stating what you are looking for and what you have to contribute. It should also be you-centered, showing what you can do for the company in no more than two sentences.

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

School Address:
123 Campus Street
Austin, TX 12345

Permanent Address:
456 Oak Drive
Queens, NY 67890

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

Figure 6: Resume header with contact information followed by an objective statement.

If you are unsure about including an objective statement, or if it would be too vague and general, it is best to omit it altogether.

Here are a few examples of possible objective statements:

- An entry-level accounting position in auditing, allowing me to use my analytical and detail orientation to ensure accuracy in all reports and reviews.

- A communications internship at a top media company that will allow me to use my knowledge and experience to produce and edit clear and effective communications.
- An entry-level position in the healthcare industry, enabling me to use my business and communications skills to enhance a company's bottom line.

Consider the above examples to be a general starting point. In writing your objective statement, you would want to use the specific job title as it is given in the job ad or on the company website (with proper capitalization), and you would likely want to state the company name as well. This shows your focused intention to apply for a specific job position at a specific company, rather than producing a one-size-fits-all résumé that lacks focus.

Skills and Additional Information:

This section of your résumé includes, but is not limited to, the following information.

- Computer Skills: Most employers expect Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, but include additional software knowledge (e.g., Dreamweaver).
- Language Skills: Include your honest level of fluency (e.g., Spanish, fluent, French, beginner).
- Study Abroad: Include the name of the university, the city and country, and the coursework.
- Community Service: Include any volunteer work, such as park cleanups, walk-a-thons for various causes, or fundraising events of any kind. Be specific about your responsibilities and your results including dollars raised, hours spent, leadership position, end-user experience (e.g. fund-raising efforts reached over $20K, providing for five developmentally disabled students and their parents to travel to Florida to swim with the dolphins).
- Licenses and Certifications: Individuals can achieve literally hundreds of professional licenses in the areas of health care, finance, real estate, insurance, and so forth. Examples include Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Level I or Licensed Real Estate Agent.

In constructing this section, be sure to keep in mind your options. If you want to highlight certain information, or if you need to add a lot of detail, you might consider making a separate section for an item, or you might decide to combine similar items within the same section.

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

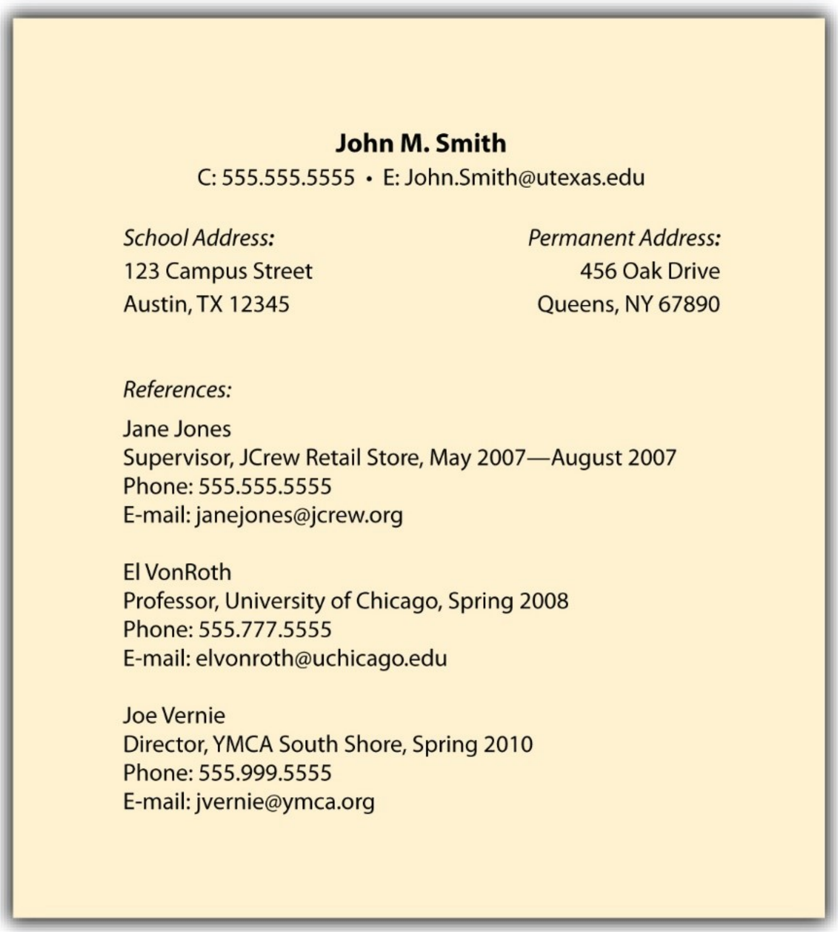
Figure 7: A skills section that groups together additional qualifications from computer skills to language.

References:

One of the famous last lines of a résumé is References furnished upon request. This is not necessary because employers can simply ask for references when they want them. In fact, if you simply include a references page with your résumé, it may save an interested employer the trouble of having to ask in the first place; a proactive, impressive strategy would be to create a single-page document that includes the following information.

- Header (that matches the résumé header) to include your name, address, and contact information
- Reference's name
- Reference's company and title
- Reference's relationship to you (e.g., manager, peer, vendor, and so forth)
- Reference's contact information, including e-mail address and phone number

Be sure to notify those who have agreed to serve as references that they may be receiving a call or email from a potential employer.



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

School Address:
123 Campus Street
Austin, TX 12345

Permanent Address:
456 Oak Drive
Queens, NY 67890

References:

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

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

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

Figure 8: List of three references (a standard number), with applicant's contact information repeated at the top.

Activities and Resources

As you work on your résumé, you may worry that you have nothing valuable to include, or you may feel that you sound like you are bragging. One way to get over these hurdles is to allocate pre-writing time to a self-inventory. Brainstorm your skills, accomplishments, and knowledge. What did you accomplish at work, school, or a volunteer position? What skills have you learned? What would you tell a friend or family member you were proud of having achieved there? What sort of technical advice do friends and family members seek from you? Start writing down key terms and action verbs that describe your experiences and accomplishments, but do NOT worry yet about putting them into a résumé format.

Action Verb Activity

Here are some action verbs that may be helpful to use in your résumé sections.

Accomplished	Generated	Showed
Analyzed	Influenced	Standardized
Assisted	Introduced	Structured
Calculated	Investigated	Supplied
Circulated	Joined	Supported
Clarified	Led	Surveyed
Collected	Located	Taught
Conducted	Maintained	Trained
Decreased	Managed	Updated
Directed	Marketed	Used
Distributed	Negotiated	Utilized
Documented	Organized	Verified
Edited	Programmed	Won
Eliminated	Provided	Worked
Expanded	Resolved	Wrote
Expedited	Responded	Showed
Facilitated	Reviewed	Standardized

Attribution:
This chapter was derived from:

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Chapter 5.2:

Writing Emails

Background

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

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

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

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

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

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

- You need a written record of the communication. Saving important e-mails can be helpful if you need to refer back to what someone said in an earlier message, provide some kind of proof (for example, proof that you have paid for a service or product), or review the content of an important meeting, deadline, memo.

When is E-mail Not an Appropriate Form of Communication to Use?

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

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

Who is Your Audience?

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

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

Hey Joan,

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

M

Although it may be obvious to you that you wouldn't send such an e-mail to your professor, let's carefully examine what assumptions this message makes about the reader and his/her expectations. The tone of this message is very casual; it assumes that the reader knows who the sender is and has a close personal relationship with the sender. Because it contains an ambiguous reference to "the assignment," this message also assumes that the reader is familiar with the subject matter at hand (for instance, it assumes the reader will know which course and which particular assignment the sender is referring to). In this message, the writer also makes an implicit assumption about the reader's familiarity with the slang that is often used when sending an instant message or text message. If the reader is not familiar with this type of slang, the "U" in "Can U help me?" might be confusing, or it might even be taken as a sign that the writer is too lazy to type out the word "you."

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

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

Important Components of an Effective E-mail:

Subject Lines

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

Greetings and Sign-offs

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

Dear Professor Smith,
Hello Ms. McMahon,
Hi Mary Jane,

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

To whom it may concern,
Dear members of the selection committee,
Hello everyone,

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

Mary Watkins
Senior Research Associate
Bain and Company
Joseph Smith
UNC-CH, Class of 2009

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

Thank you,
Best wishes,
See you tomorrow,
Regards,

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

Sincerely,
Respectfully yours,

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

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

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

Some Additional Tips for Writing More Effective E-mails

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

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

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

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

you might write "I will follow this e-mail up with a phone call to you in the next day or so" or "Let's plan to further discuss this at the meeting on Wednesday").

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

Proofread. Re-read messages before you send them. Use proper grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. If your e-mail program supports it, use spelling and grammar checkers. Try reading your message out loud to help you catch any grammar mistakes or awkward phrasing that you might otherwise miss.

Questions to Ask Yourself Before Sending an E-mail Message

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

Sample E-mails

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

E-mail from Student 1:

hey,

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

thx

E-mail from Student 2:

Hi Dr. Jones,

I am in your ENGL 101 class on Thursdays, and I have a question about the paper that is due next Tuesday. I'm not sure that I understand what is meant by the following sentence in the prompt:

"Write a 10 page paper arguing for or against requiring ENGL 101 for all UNC freshmen and provide adequate support for your point of view."

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

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

Thank you,

Tim Smith

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

Version 1 of Jane Doe's E-mail:

Subject: tomorrow

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

Version 2 of Jane Doe's E-mail:

Subject: materials for Wed. staff meeting

Hi, everyone –

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

Your project calendar

A one-page report describing your progress so far

A list of goals for the next month

Copies of any progress report messages you have sent to clients this past month

See you tomorrow –

Jane

Attribution

This chapter was derived from:

Lamb, Sandra E. *How to Write It. A Complete Guide to Everything You'll Ever Write.* Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1998. www.mindtools.com *Effective Email Communication*

Terminello, Verna and Reed, Marcia G.*NetEffect Series: E-mail Communicate Effectively.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003.

Chapter 5.3:

Memorandums

Memos

A memo (or memorandum, meaning "reminder") is normally used for communicating policies, procedures, or related official business within an organization. It is often written from a one-to-all perspective (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.

Memo Purpose

A memo's purpose is often to inform, but it occasionally includes an element of persuasion or a call to action. All organizations have informal and formal communication networks. The unofficial, informal communication network within an organization is often called the grapevine, and it is often characterized by rumor, gossip, and innuendo. On the grapevine, one person may hear that someone else is going to be laid off and start passing the news around. Rumors change and transform as they are passed from person to person, and before you know it, the word is that they are shutting down your entire department.

One effective way to address informal, unofficial speculation is to spell out clearly for all employees what is going on with a particular issue. If budget cuts are a concern, then it may be wise to send a memo explaining the changes that are imminent. If a company wants employees to take action, they may also issue a memorandum. For example, on February 13, 2009, upper management at the Panasonic Corporation issued a declaration that all employees should buy at least $1,600 worth of Panasonic products. The company president noted that if everyone supported the company with purchases, it would benefit all (Lewis, 2009).

While memos do not normally include a call to action that requires personal spending, they often represent the business or organization's interests. They may also include statements that align business and employee interest, and underscore common ground and benefit.

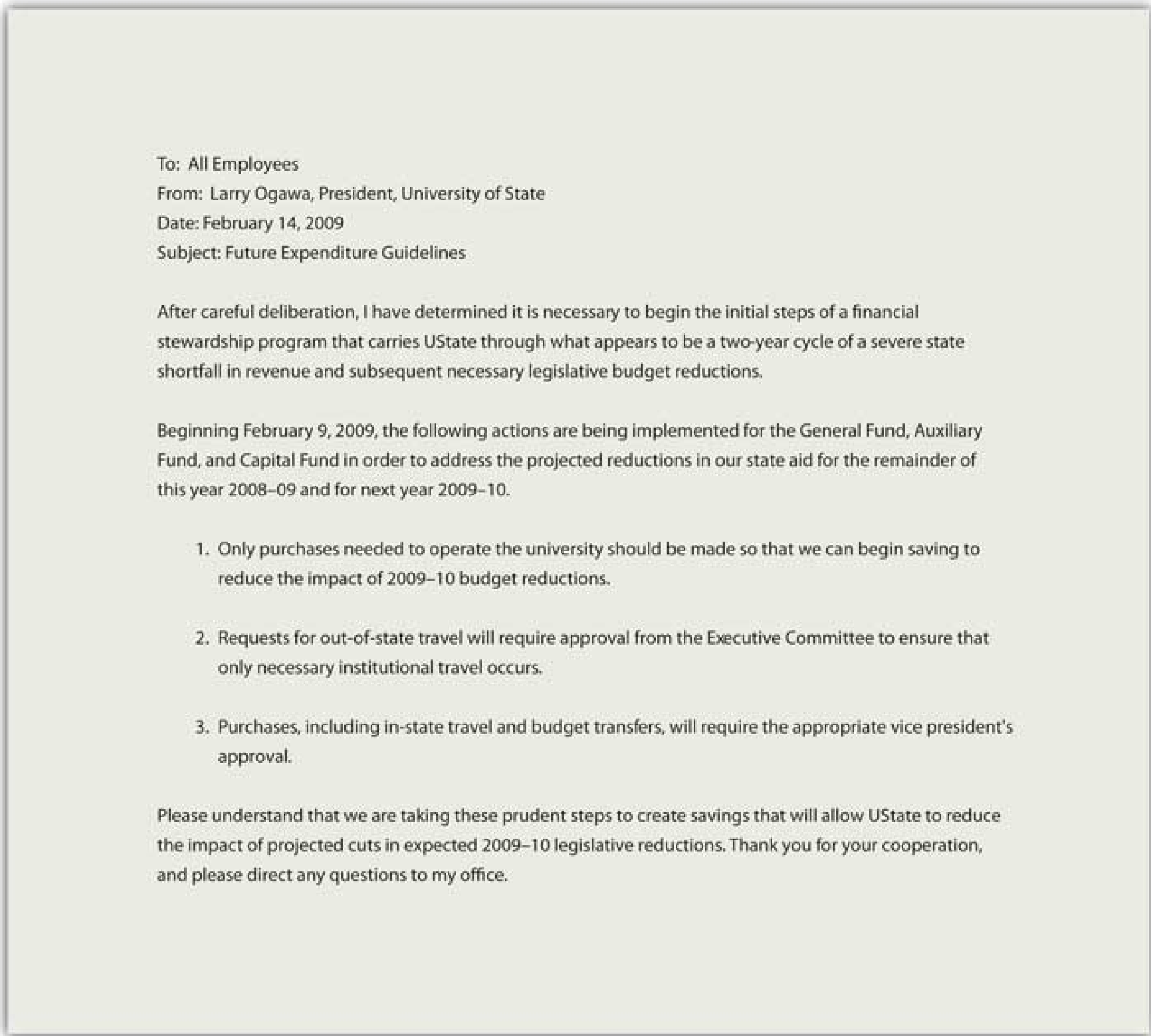
Memo Format

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

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

Let's examine a sample memo.

Figure 5.3.a



To: All Employees
From: Larry Ogawa, President, University of State
Date: February 14, 2009
Subject: Future Expenditure Guidelines

After careful deliberation, I have determined it is necessary to begin the initial steps of a financial stewardship program that carries UState through what appears to be a two-year cycle of a severe state shortfall in revenue and subsequent necessary legislative budget reductions.

Beginning February 9, 2009, the following actions are being implemented for the General Fund, Auxiliary Fund, and Capital Fund in order to address the projected reductions in our state aid for the remainder of this year 2008–09 and for next year 2009–10.

1. Only purchases needed to operate the university should be made so that we can begin saving to reduce the impact of 2009–10 budget reductions.
2. Requests for out-of-state travel will require approval from the Executive Committee to ensure that only necessary institutional travel occurs.
3. Purchases, including in-state travel and budget transfers, will require the appropriate vice president's approval.

Please understand that we are taking these prudent steps to create savings that will allow UState to reduce the impact of projected cuts in expected 2009–10 legislative reductions. Thank you for your cooperation, and please direct any questions to my office.

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

Attribution

This chapter was derived from:

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

Chapter 5.4:

Creating and Maintaining LinkedIn Presence

LinkedIn is a social networking site (SNS) used for making valuable career connections and finding that critical first job. As a student, it's important to have a LinkedIn profile that highlights the expertise you bring to a potential employer. Your degree, the courses you took, major projects completed, and your college jobs and affiliations all combine to create a picture of who you are and what you can do.

However, LinkedIn can be a bit disconcerting. Its pages show professionals with lists of jobs and accomplishments that can be intimidating. Almost no one with a LinkedIn profile page is a person the average student can relate to. The whole LinkedIn thing, students tell me, is off-putting to anyone who's still in college.

As well, students have told me they don't see a lot of value in LinkedIn. Nothing happens with their profiles—it's a digital dead zone. The payoff for investing time and effort with LinkedIn doesn't seem to be there, so students put up a bare-bones profile for a class, and then proceed to ignore it for the next several years. However, LinkedIn isn't a SNS you should ignore.

You've got a powerful partner in LinkedIn when it comes to your career. But, that partner can only work for you if you know how to leverage its powers. The purpose of this piece is just that—it's about how to harness LinkedIn's power and take advantage of what this SNS can do for you and your career. We'll start with your photograph and then move into the writing.

Your Photo: What They'll See First

Right away, you need to get a professional headshot. This photo's only job is to convey your ethos as an individual preparing to enter the workforce. Those selfies you've taken with your phone or your webcam aren't what you need here.

Professional headshots are a genre: They have conventions. If you look at a headshot gallery on a professional photographer's site, you'll see the photos share similar characteristics. The backgrounds are a plain screen or have some architectural features in the distance. To make these photos more interesting and to showcase the subject's personality, the photographer uses lighting, positioning, and interesting angles.

But, professional headshots can be expensive. You may not be able to afford what a professional photographer can provide. However, as a student, there are always options. Many college career offices offer free LinkedIn headshot photography for students. Pay them a visit and see if they have any sessions coming up.

Your school may have photography classes or a photography club. Approach the students in the class or the club and ask if they can take a headshot. If you have a friend with a *real* camera—a digital SLR—you might have a lot of fun organizing a group photo session.

Let’s Get to the Writing

When it comes to writing, the biggest mistake you can make with LinkedIn is thinking it’s like your one-page print resume. While there are similarities between the two—both function to get you a job—LinkedIn operates very differently. Your print résumé is highly scannable; it’s designed for a busy human such as a manger or recruiter to skim. You appeal to this individual by condensing your qualifications and hitting the highlights.

With LinkedIn, however, now you’re appealing to a search algorithm first and then to a human. How you appeal to the search engine takes some finessing and relies on your writing skills. But, before we go to writing, let’s talk about how technology comes into play.

When a recruiter or hiring manager goes to LinkedIn to find a new hire, they use either the simple search at the top of the page or, for more targeted results, the **Advanced People Search** page. Both of these searches use what’s called algorithms to do the heavy lifting and return relevant results.

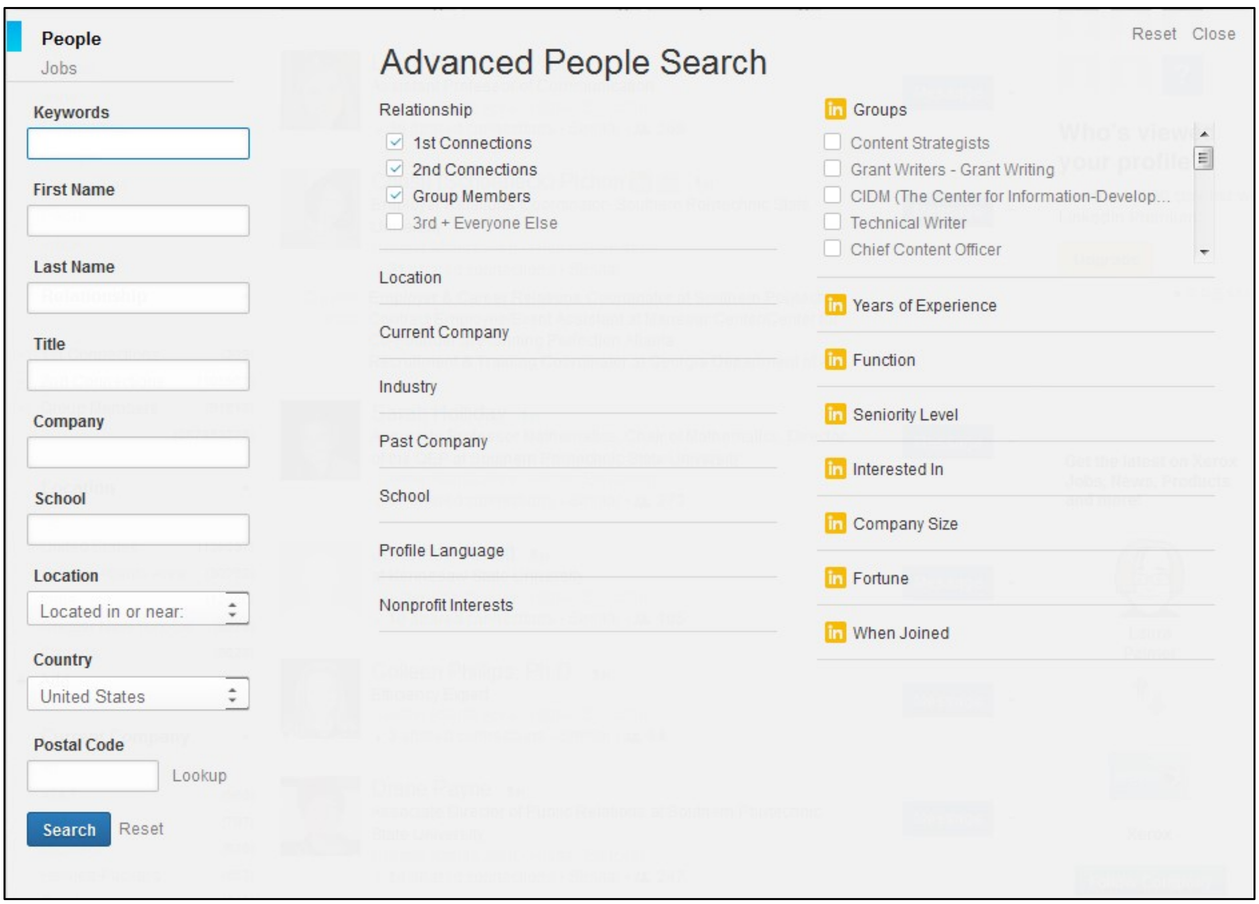

Figure 5.4.1 LinkedIn Advanced People Search

An algorithm is simply a set of steps used to solve a problem. For a recruiter searching on LinkedIn, the “problem” they have is finding a person with the right qualifications for the job. LinkedIn’s goal for their algorithms is to get relevant results to the searcher. So, LinkedIn uses its own proprietary algorithms to rank and order the results when someone searches on the site (LinkedIn, 2014).

Take a look at Figure 5.4.1. There are countless ways recruiters can define who they’re looking for—from very broadly to very narrowly. It seems daunting, if not impossible, to be found on LinkedIn, but you can maximize your chances through SEO (search engine optimization). Good SEO can make you visible to LinkedIn’s algorithms. That means, when a recruiter does a search, you’ll pop up in her results.

LinkedIn’s Major Sections

Your LinkedIn profile needs words to take advantage of SEO. First, it needs words in the form of a compelling and interesting description. Next, it needs keywords that would match what a recruiter in your discipline would enter into LinkedIn’s search functions. At their most basic, keywords are terms used during searches. When you type “college papers about whales” into Google, you’ve used keywords to tell Google what you want to find.

So, how do you make LinkedIn work for you? You need to write text that makes good use of the keywords a prospective employer would use. Your LinkedIn profile has several major sections, so we’ll go through each one and look at what you should do and where you’ll need to leverage your writing skills.

Name, Photo, and Profile URL

At the top of the profile, put in your name, what city you live in, and upload your professional headshot. Here’s a must-do for this section: Edit your contact information.

If you want to get that first job, people need to contact you. You can include your email address, Twitter handle, or link a visitor to your portfolio website. Be careful with your online privacy when it comes to your phone numbers, your address, or other personal information. You may want to leave those sections blank.

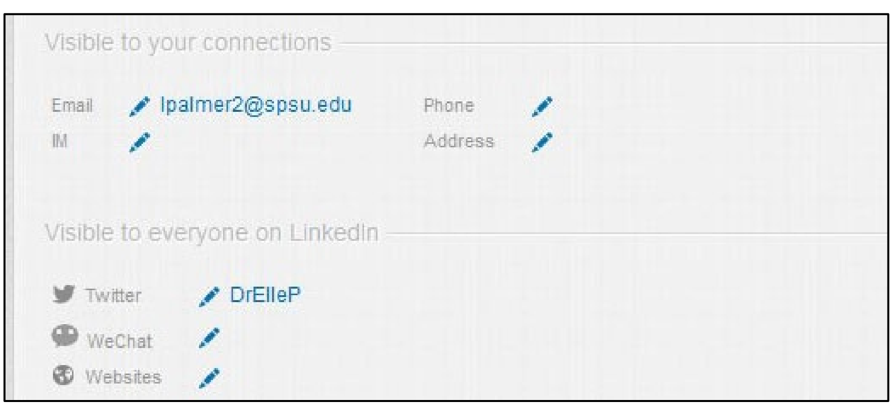

Figure 5.4.2 Expanded Edit Contact Info fields

Next, create your custom public profile URL for LinkedIn by clicking **Edit** at the very bottom of the **Edit Contact Info** screen. It's not immediately obvious how to make this change, but when you click edit, you'll be taken to a display view of your profile. Next, you'll need to:

- Scroll to the right-hand side of the Public Profile page.
- Scroll down until you see **Your public profile URL.**
- Click **Customize your public profile URL.**
- **Update your profile regularly.** Add new classes, projects or jobs right away. When you update your profile, your network of connections receives a notice about your changes.
- **Join various LinkedIn groups.** Your activity on the site is also important (LinkedIn, 2014). For you that means you should start to chat on various groups, like what people post, and show that you're engaged with the LinkedIn community.
- **Connect with other students and professionals.** Start small with your connections by asking other students to connect with you. When you get more comfortable with connecting, expand your horizons to professionals in your field.

Figure 5.4.3 shows you what you'll see. This URL can go on business cards, online portfolios, and more. It's the shortcut to your LinkedIn profile. Make sure you use something close to your real name in the URL so it's memorable.

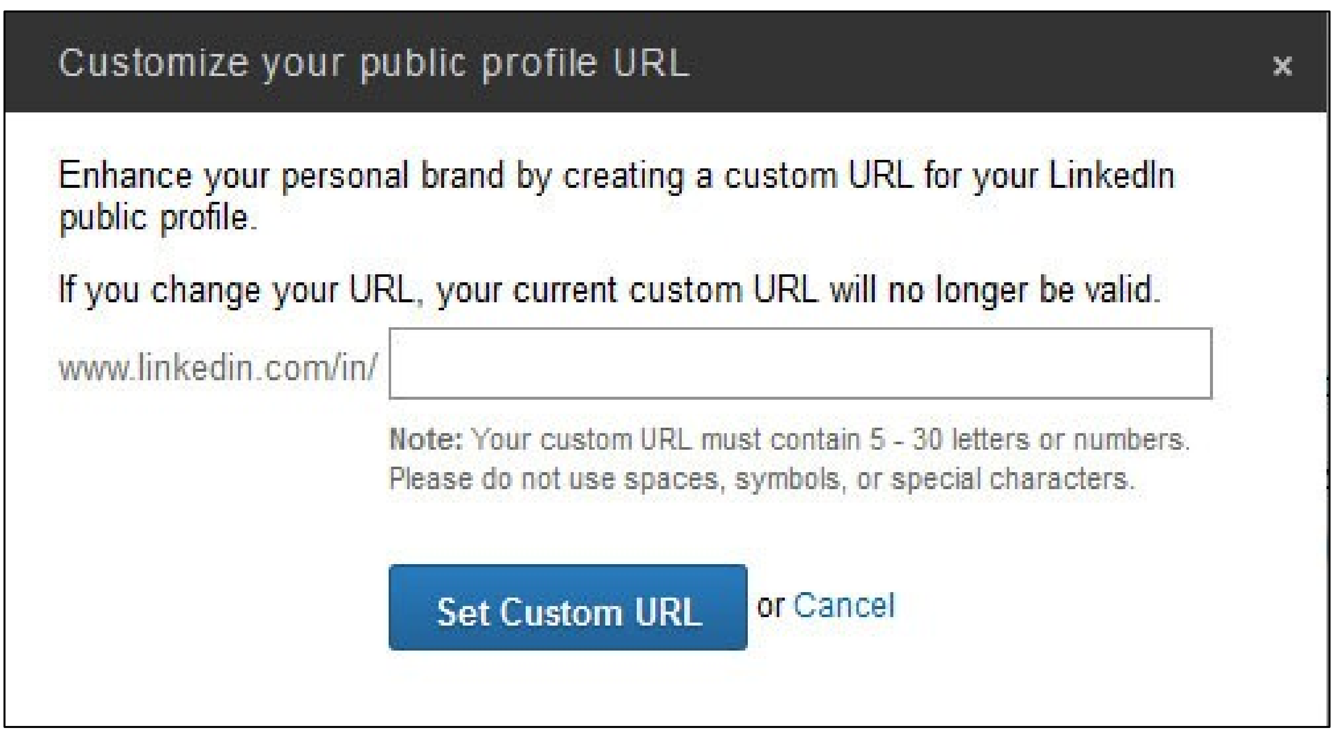

Figure 5.4.3 Custom public profile URL feature

Summary Section

Now, we're getting to the words part of your profile. Again, LinkedIn isn't a repeat of your printed résumé; LinkedIn is your digital introduction to career professionals in your field. Online, this is how people meet you for the first time; it's vital you make a good impression and introduce yourself through a carefully crafted narrative.

You need to write several paragraphs about yourself, your goals, the career you're looking for, and your education. Employers want to know what you can do for them, so tell them in these paragraphs. Don't be afraid of explaining what you're capable of in your summary.

In writing, it's common to talk about appeals to the reader, but remember that your first "reader" is the LinkedIn search algorithm. Before you start writing, you'll need to consider the keywords you'll use in your paragraphs. Write down keywords you see as relevant to your profession, and then do a search on LinkedIn. LinkedIn will return three types of information: jobs, people, and related groups. Right now, you're interested in jobs and people—we'll cover groups later.

Look at several of the job postings and people profiles LinkedIn gave you in response to your search. If you see keywords you hadn't thought of, write them down. When you start to draft your summary, you'll want to work these words into your writing.

With keywords in hand, it's time to tell your story. Compose three or four paragraphs. Don't follow what you've learned about résumé creation; this isn't the place to keep it brief or use bullet points. You're trying to attract a search engine first and foremost. The human will follow once your profile is findable.

Before you start, though, here's a word of caution directly from LinkedIn: "More keywords aren't always better" (LinkedIn, 2014). LinkedIn doesn't want you to stuff your profile with irrelevant keywords just to get people to look at your profile. If you do that, you'll fall out of favor with the algorithms and fewer people will see your profile.

Spelling and grammar count more than you can imagine here. If you're weak in those areas, compose in your word processor first, and then run the spell/grammar check. Next, have a friend or your instructor review your summary sections to ensure they read well and sound professional. You can't be too careful here, as many potential employers will dismiss you on the spot for sloppy writing and bad grammar.

Throughout LinkedIn there are places to include samples of your work as either links to URLs or uploaded files. Are you blogging for a class? Do you have an online capstone web portfolio of your work? Make sure you include the URL link to these. You can also upload individual files. Did your lab report receive an "A"? PDF the file and upload it. Take advantage of the link and upload features, shown in Figure 5.4.4, in your Summary section and in other sections in your profile.

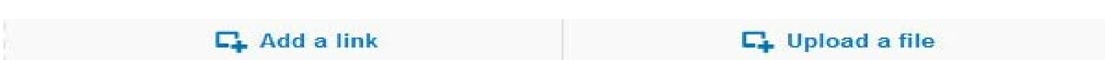

Figure 5.4.4 Add links or upload files

For links, you'll need to include the URL. When you click **Add**, you'll see there's space for the title and for a description. LinkedIn is all about using words to be found, so make sure you write a rich and interesting description about the link. If you upload a file, do exactly the same thing—include a title and a rich description of the piece, audience, and purpose in the space provided.

Experience

College students often lament that their work experience won't be of interest to employers. It's important to remember that what you learned is more significant than what you did. Those early jobs teach us time management, interpersonal communication skills, problem solving, and more. So, as you list your jobs in the Experience section, write about the competencies you gained more than about what you did. If you accomplished something outstanding in a job, make sure you include it. If you were the engineering intern who worked with the team on a significant contract, you'll want to point that out in this section.

Courses

Everyone knows you've taken the basics for a college degree. There's no need to list your composition and government classes; instead, list the courses that are significant to your major and your career. Particularly, junior- and senior-level classes are important for this section. You need to include both the course number and the title. Why? Employers can go to the course catalog to see what the class covered. That way, they can be sure you've got what they need in a potential hire.

Publications

If you're in a writing-based major like technical communication, professional/creative writing, journalism, and beyond, you may have published your work. The same holds true if you wrote for your student newspaper or co-authored with a professor.

When you're filling out the Publications section, make sure you include the full title of the piece you wrote, where it appeared, the date, and a brief description of the contents. If the piece you wrote (or co-wrote) is online, include a link via the URL. If it was in print, include a PDF. Never miss an opportunity to showcase your work and include paragraphs with keywords that the search algorithms can find.

Skills and Endorsements

Are you good with a particular software or laboratory test? This is the place to list those skills. Once you add some skills (and some contacts), you'll see other people endorse you for those skills. If someone does endorse you for a skill, return the favor.

Projects

This category is another excellent opportunity to highlight what you've learned and what you can do. Projects allow you to include your team members, define the title and the date of the project, and provide a description. Do I need to remind you about keywords again? If the project relates to your professional goals, remember to add relevant keywords to the text.

Education

This may surprise you, but students often have a difficult time framing their education for LinkedIn. Most students include the name of the university and the title of the degree; then, they stop. Yet, there’s no reason to give a reader (or a search algorithm) so little information.

LinkedIn provides you with several fields to highlight what you’ve done in college, as Figure 5.4.5 makes clear. Make sure you take the time to fill those fields out. Include any special activities and/or societies you’ve been involved with in the appropriate field. Employers like to see well-rounded people when they’re looking to hire.

And, describe your degree in detail—with words that the search algorithm will use. Don’t assume everybody knows what’s covered in a degree. They don’t. Educate your reader about your degree, what you’ve learned, and what you can offer an employer. Don’t be shy about using the Description field to discuss any assignments or other activities from classes that would be relevant to the job you want. Like the Summary section, there’s room for several paragraphs here.

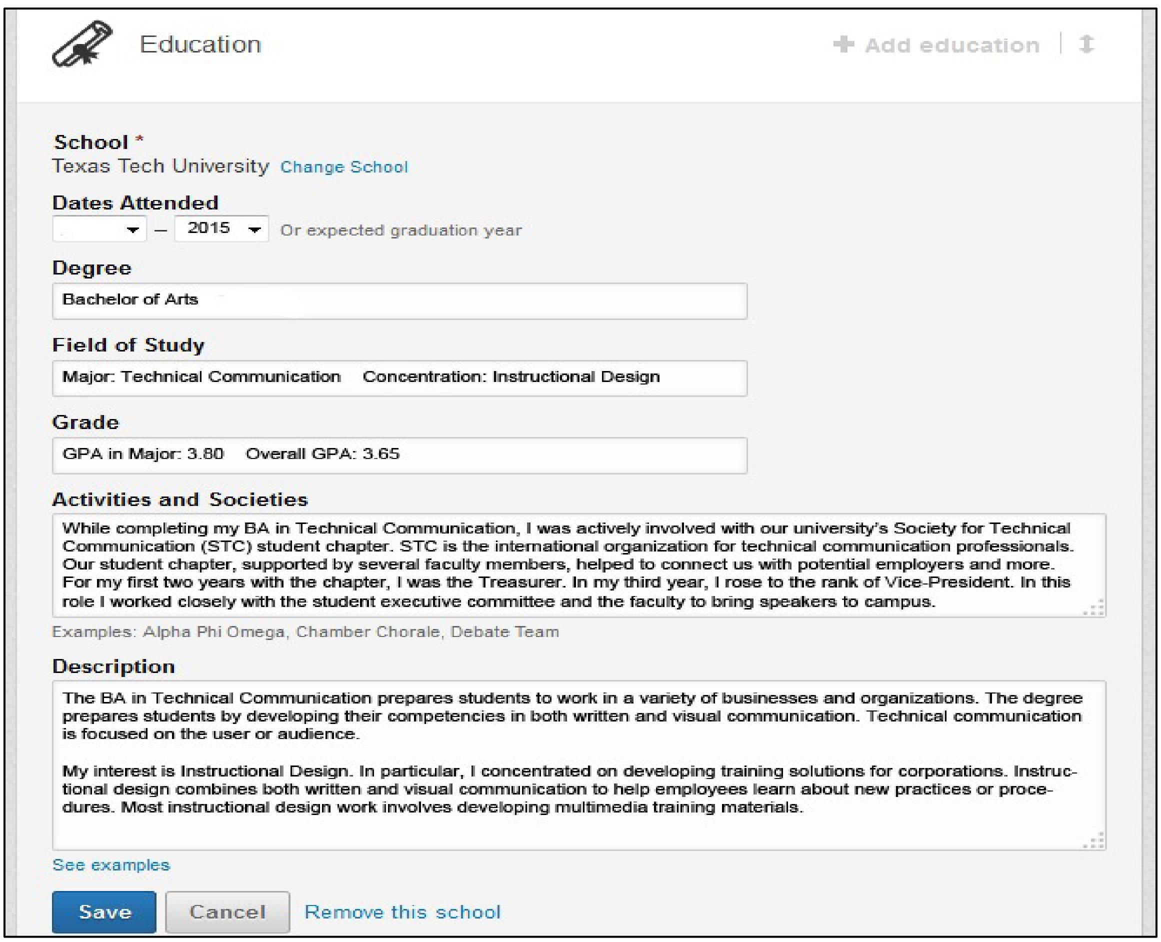

Figure 5.4.. Detailed fields in the Education section of a LinkedIn profile

A Word on Ordering Your Sections

You can move, via dragging, the major sections in your LinkedIn profile per Figure 5.4.6. Start with your Summary section, then consider the logical order for other sections. For many of you Education, Courses, and Projects may be the correct order. Perhaps it's Education, Courses, and Experience. No matter the order, think about what will work to your advantage. Just remember that what you put first is what your reader will see first.

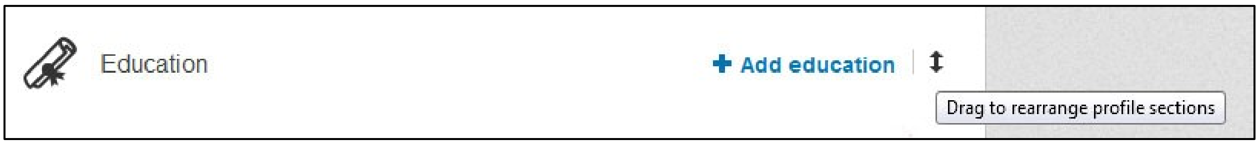

Figure 5.4. 6 Use the black arrow to rearrange profile sections.

What Happens Next?

Once you have a complete and robust profile, you'll start to see people looking at your profile. My students have said it feels a bit creepy to see strangers reviewing what you can do, but this is how LinkedIn works. Some of these same strangers may ask to connect with you—many of them may be recruiters, hiring managers, or professionals in your field. Make sure you connect right away. Several of my students received connection requests shortly after we finished our LinkedIn assignment. The class was even more amazed to find people were messaging them to discuss their qualifications and upcoming graduation dates.

Even if you're a year or more away from graduating, recruiters may want to follow your progress. When you're getting close to graduating, don't be surprised if several people reach out to ask about interviewing you.

Now that you have a rich and interesting LinkedIn profile, you have to maintain it. Here's what you need to do:

- **Update your profile regularly**. Add new classes, projects or jobs right away. When you update your profile, your network of connections receives a notice about your changes.
- **Join various LinkedIn groups**. Your activity on the site is also important (LinkedIn, 2014). For you that means you should start to chat on various groups, "Like" what members post, and demonstrate via your own original posts that you're engaged with the LinkedIn community.
- **Connect with other students and professionals**. Start small with your connections by asking other students to connect with you. When you get more comfortable with connecting, expand your horizons to professionals in your field.

Remember, a LinkedIn profile is always a work in progress. When you land that first job, you'll need to update your profile, emphasize your new position, and more. Now's the time, however, to get started on this important step towards finding your career through the power of social media and online connections.

Attribution:

This chapter was derived from:

LinkedIn. (January 28, 2014). LinkedIn Search Relevance – People Search. Retrieved from (http://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/4447/~/linkedin-search-relevance—people-search)

Chapter 5.5:

Professionalizing Social Media

Mark Zuckerberg claimed in a 2010 interview that we all only have “one identity” (as cited in Mainwaring, 2010). But as we have witnessed social networking sites (SNSs) set up shop across vastly different communities for vastly different purposes, it has become clear that Zuckerberg cannot be right. While there may be similarities found in an individual’s Facebook, LinkedIn, and other profiles, the differing target audiences, interfaces, and SNS purposes make it easy for an individual to create and express a plurality of social identities.

Though the concept of social identity is not new, social networking and new media technologies have extended our understanding of social identities. Furthermore, writing plays a significant role in the various online spaces we use to create our individualized digital footprints, that is, the digital trail of data that we leave behind when interacting in or with online technologies Whether we write on Facebook to share with friends or families or on LinkedIn to connect with other professionals, the act of public writing should be executed with thought and critical consideration. With employers regularly looking to SNSs to tell them whether or not to hire prospective employees, it is crucial for individuals to be aware of not only what their social identities reveal about themselves but also how this information can be interpreted. A 2011 survey of hiring professionals reveals that 91% of employers do active screening of potential employees through social network sites, and 76% of the time they screen through Facebook, 48% through LinkedIn, and 53% with Twitter (Swallow, 2011). Additionally, “In June 2013, a nationwide survey by CareerBuilder found that more than two in five hiring managers (43 percent) who vetted applicants online did not hire an applicant based on information found online” (Jodka, 2013). Research shows that employers are intently looking at prospective employees’ social identities, but even if what they discover is not necessarily bad, employers may misinterpret what they find.

Likewise, a study on online relationships between employers and employees points out that “companies that screen applicants via social media may misunderstand online behavior, causing them to eliminate good candidates” (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard, & Berg, 2013, p. 648; Jodka, 2013). Hiring managers may misinterpret information found online because this information is often decontextualized. It is already clear that maintaining privacy in online spaces is highly difficult, if at all possible, to effectively manage. Thus, when hiring managers or other people in positions of power access digitally archived information (as in a Facebook timeline or Twitter feed), this information is not contextualized for the viewer/reader, so they interpret that information in accordance with their own experiences. Because this information is not “tailored to the particular relationship or situation, [. . .] its original context and meaning may be skewed” (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard, & Berg, 2013, p. 648).

Despite the fact that public writing has become popular in the creation and performance of social identities, some people think little about what they write online. It is clear that poor choices in public writing influence employers in their hiring decisions. As this infographic shows, decisions to not hire have been made because prospective employees “posted inappropriate comments,” “demonstrated poor communication skills,” or “made discriminatory comments,” among doing other things (Swallow, 2011).

Employers scrutinize social identities for information related to their applicants. But employers are not the only ones using SNS as vetting tools. Bill Greenwood draws attention to the fact that “21% [of the 243] college and universities surveyed stated that they research and recruit potential students on social networking sites” (2009, p. 1). Then, when thinking about what digital footprints you want to leave behind, your choices when writing publicly should be carefully designed and executed.

Some public writing spaces on which students are active include the following:

- Learning Management Systems (LMSs), such as Blackboard and Canvas
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Acadenua.edu
- Blogging sites (e.g., WordPress, Blogger, or Tumblr)
- Discussion forums or wikis

The approach to public writing and the creation of social identities is no different than traditional approaches to writing: the writer should be aware of his or her audience, the publication venue (e.g., a newspaper, online blog, or academic journal), and purpose (i.e., why am I writing this?). When an individual creates a digital footprint (or regularly updates it), he or she needs to be fully aware of these same things. However, regardless of these differences in SNSs, information posted is generally made available to the public, and “private” information can be accessed if an employer wants it.

With the rapidly growing number of SNSs, Internet privacy has become a contested area, and more and more SNSs are offering levels of privacy. Private or password-protected blogs have become more common, and some sites like Facebook have made it possible for you to tailor and share information with specific groups of people. Furthermore, LMS blogs like those on Blackboard and Canvas are heavily secured sites, and what you write publicly in these spaces will only be visible to your instructor and classmates. In this way, Blackboard and Canvas writing are semi-public. The advantage to using the Blackboard and Canvas blog function is that while they work like other blog spaces, they provide more privacy.

Similarly, professional SNSs like LinkedIn and Academia.edu have gained popularity. The goal of these sites is to professionally network and share ideas, documents, or articles specific to professional identities. LinkedIn’s interface resembles a digitized version of a résumé or CV where users can list their educational and professional experience in addition to professionally relevant skills. Academia.edu is the academic version of LinkedIn and allows people working in academia to list their research interests and upload publications and current works-in-progress, as well as network similarly to LinkedIn.

Public Writing Etiquette

Many of us have sent a text message, email, or Facebook message that unintentionally offended someone because digital writing disallows the reader access to social cues, such as bodily and facial expressions and vocal tone. Before undertaking any type of digital writing, a writer should be aware of the way readers may perceive his or her words by taking precautions to avoid sounding offensive. These precautions are especially important when considering digital footprints and social identities because of the longevity of information posted on the Internet: some online writing spaces continue to exist years after the original posting date. When writing publicly, always ask yourself if your words reflect the person you want to be in ten, or even twenty, years. Even if you write something that you later delete, you should be aware that your posts can often be retrieved by archiving sites such as www.archive.org. Be aware of Internet etiquette and norms—especially those particular to individual online writing spaces—and writing with those norms in mind will help you avoid publishing something online that you may regret and a troublesome digital footprint. Some general norms regarding Internet etiquette include:

- Respect the community. Interact with members of the online community in question in a way that reflects the treatment you would expect to receive. In other words, be nice.
- Listen to others. When someone presents an opinion that is different from your own, make an effort to understand that person's perspective on the topic. Resist the urge to immediately tell someone she is wrong simply because her opinion differs from yours. Remember that many employers made the decision not to hire because a prospective employee may have made personal comments that the employer interpreted as objectionable.
- Be accountable for your actions. The perceived anonymity of online interactions causes some users to feel comfortable writing things they would not say in a face-to-face situation. Take responsibility for your actions and never write something online that you would not feel comfortable saying in person (Brantner, 2011). The Internet Protection Act, which requires web administrators to eliminate anonymous postings, is aimed at increasing accountability in online interactions.

Therefore, while there are many benefits to public writing, students must do so responsibly. Consider, for example, whether or not a specific form of electronic discourse (txt spk, colloquial language, Internet jargon, etc.) is a viable and effective form of writing for a particular online forum. Remember that different target audiences prefer different forms of written expression, which is the benefit to having several social identities. Also, be sure not to include any material that would be considered unacceptable in the space in which you are composing. This does not mean that you cannot express your opinions within your own writing or in response to others, but you should express your opinions in a caring way that shows respect for those opinions that differ from your own.

Public Writing in Practice

Now that you have read about digital footprints and the potential negative implications of public writing in digital spaces, let's practice applying what you've learned to two scenarios that you may have already encountered within Facebook and Twitter.

Scenario 1: Imagine that you are perusing your Facebook page around the time of an upcoming presidential election. You see that someone in your network has posted a comment in support of her favorite candidate, but you notice that the content of her post is biased and, in your opinion, misinformed. You are upset by the content of this post, and you aren't sure how to proceed. Which of the following actions do you perform and why? Think about the potential implications of each action.

1. Unfriend this person.
2. Hide this person from your newsfeed.
3. Ignore this post and move on with your day.
4. Comment on this person's post.
5. Send this person a private message.
6. Other.

Scenario 2: Imagine that you are on Twitter, reading through tweets that contain hashtags associated with trending topics. One of the trending topics deals with a recent news story that has gained international attention, and you come across a tweet that uses racial epithets to describe the persons involved in the case. While you agree with the content of the tweet, you don't agree with the language used to describe those involved in the case. Which of the following actions do you perform, and why? Think about the potential implications of each action.

1. Favorite it.
2. Retweet it.
3. Do nothing.
4. Write your own tweet.
5. Other.

Conclusion

When publishing online, be sure that you are respecting yourself, the members of your online community, others who may read your posts, and the writing space itself. Even though you create your own digital footprints and social identities, "Social media profiles [. . .] are not a reflection of one's identity, as Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg wants us to believe, but are part and parcel of a power struggle between users, employers/employees and platform owners to steer online information and behavior" (van Dijck 212). Remember that identities are created both inwardly and outwardly: while you maintain your own understanding of who you are, as identity research explains, your identities are also created by how others perceive and interpret you. In short, you should always strive to represent yourself professionally when publicly writing to critically control your digital footprints.

Exercises

Visit your Facebook profile page and locate a post, composed or shared by you, that you think might be potentially upsetting to either existing members of your social network or to secondary connections who might see your post. Write a short paragraph describing your initial intentions when composing or sharing the post. Additionally, reflect on how members of your audience might have interpreted your post in a way that you did not intend.

Visit Twitter and examine the current trending topics. Within one of the trending topics, locate a tweet that you find offensive or that you think could be offensive to certain audiences. Write a short paragraph describing your interpretation of the initial intentions of the tweeter. Additionally, revise the tweet to be more appropriate for Twitter's audience, and justify your choices.

Taking Control: Managing Your Online Identity for the Job Search

Background

In 2008, while working as a career counselor, a student came into my office to discuss her difficulty securing an internship prior to graduation. On paper, she was a phenomenal candidate—3.8 GPA, active in student government, successful athlete, and in possession of solid letters of recommendation from her instructors, coaches, and past employers. Despite her many strengths, she had interviewed with seven prospective employers throughout her junior year but was unable to secure the internship that was required by her academic program. Perplexed, I called up a recruiter I knew from one of the companies she interviewed with and asked him to describe the hiring process for internships. In addition to the basics (i.e. phone interview, in-person interview(s), and reference checks), his company had begun e-screening applicants; he explained that the top candidates were ranked following the in-person interviews and were subsequently vetted by Human Resources which included an examination of public social media profiles and a general search of popular search engines. The student and I then conducted our own searches for her and quickly identified her problem. Although this student was a qualified candidate, negative information online created a professional roadblock.

Today, there remains little doubt that social media has had a huge impact on the way business is conducted. Worldwide, more than 800 million users log onto social media sites (like Facebook and Twitter) every month, including 7.5 million college students in the United States alone (Maxwell 47; Peluchette & Karl 30). Unbeknownst to many of these users, employers have begun reviewing social media profiles when screening candidates for employment. A recent CareerBuilder survey suggested that approximately 45% of U.S. employers are currently accessing social media sites to research applicants. Furthermore, the survey also indicated that 35% of respondents reported dismissing candidates based upon information provided in their social media profiles ("One-in-Four"). While the employers seem to be increasingly aware of what is going on in the digital world, new evidence suggests that college students are not as concerned with their own online activities, with more than 50% of sampled college students posting content deemed "inappropriate" by employers on their social media pages; this content often includes evidence of underage alcohol abuse, semi-nude photos, and profanity directed at peers, teachers, and current employers (Peluchette & Karl 30). If you are a college student, you are preparing to enter one of the most competitive and hostile job markets in U.S. history, and as such, you should be aware of the real-world consequences of your virtual activities. Often, you may post information online that is intended for one audience, unaware of the effect that this content has on unintended viewers, but a simple three-step process of reflection, revision, and reinvention could help to mitigate these consequences.

Managing Your Identity: Three-Step Strategy

An evaluation of online presence should be a regular part of your job search preparation. Although it is difficult to completely revamp your entire online identity, there are several steps that can bolster your virtual curb appeal for prospective employers. The most effective strategy for doing so actually involves a three-step process of reflection, revision, and reinvention.

Reflection

To begin overhauling your online presence, a period of reflection is necessary to honestly evaluate your personal values, beliefs, and activities to ensure that they are compatible with your professional aims. Although this may prove to be a challenging process, one of the best ways to start out is to examine the impact online activities have on others. For example, an online search of the keywords "denied degree social media" will ultimately lead you to the story of Stacy Snyder, a woman who was denied a teaching degree from Millersville University of Pennsylvania, due (at least in part) to her online activities via MySpace (Krebs). Likewise, a search for the terms "fired over Facebook remarks" will return the story of Wisconsin Department of Transportation Executive, Steven Krieser, detailing how he was fired after posting Facebook comments about illegal immigration (Richmond). There are many cases where the impact of seemingly innocuous online activities can affect your employability in the real world. Ultimately the decision to include or omit any content on social media must be made by you as an individual, but it is vital to recognize that those decisions have consequences.

Common areas of concern for employers include:

- sexually explicit material (suggestive comments, skimpy / partially nude photos, etc.),
- evidence of excessive or illegal alcohol or drug use, (conversation, photos, etc.) and
- hot button issues relating to religious or political activism (including memes).

Revision

After identifying the areas where your online presence could be improved, try to make revisions where possible. The focus of this process should remain on your social media presence(s). Take care to delete inflammatory comments, questionable photos, and personal information that may alienate members of your prospective audience. At times, you may notice that your posts may not be as concerning as the comments posted by your friends. During this process, you will not only be revising your individual persona, but you may also need to consider who you want as members of your social network or even which social networks and what social networks you would like to be a part of. If some of your friends are posting controversial or risqué material, some employers will find you guilty by association, so unfriending some of your social media friends may help to distance yourself from those behaviors. Again, the choice of what to revise is an individual one, but these decisions will have repercussions.

Privacy settings are another area that you should understand when revising your social media presence. The ongoing commodification of social media means that it is in the best interest of social media sites to create open, transparent networks. Because of this motivation, site administrators constantly change default settings with system updates, which users must opt out of. For example, in 2010, you may have changed your privacy settings to the highest level possible at the time, only to realize that when your profile migrated to timeline format, friends of your friends can now access your content, as well. This means that a profile that you once thought hidden can now be accessed by an employer who has friended your classmate who had an internship with their organization last summer. Similarly, posts and pages that you like on social media are also, by default, visible to the public, and those likes tell a lot about who you are. The only way to know for sure who can see what information is to continually monitor your privacy settings to ensure that they have not been changed by system administrators.

Reinvention

After revising your social media presence, it is time to address the information that is digitally archived by Internet search engines. On some occasions, questionable content can be removed by contacting individual website administrators and making a simple request; however, as most information online is virtually impossible to remove, a more proactive strategy can help you make that information much less noticeable.

Understanding how search engines rank results is important to devising a strategy that works best for you. Whichever search engine is used, top ranked results will appear fairly similar, as they are ranked according to similar criteria. Although your name may be mentioned a million times online, not all sources are created equal. Search engines will organize findings according to relevance and popularity. Webpages that receive a significant amount of traffic or that are linked to many other sites will appear earlier in the results than less prominent pages. Public profiles on popular social media sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) will usually appear earlier in searches for this reason. In addition to popularity, sites will also be ranked according to their relevance. This means that webpages that contain specific keywords, use the person's name in the URL, or that are more recent will often appear earlier in the results than older, or more fragmented information.

To use these search engines to your advantage, consider creating your own professional webpage or blog that integrates your name into the URL. In doing this, search engines will automatically register that website as being more relevant than other search results. As these pages gravitate to the top of your search results, older, less relevant, and less appealing entries will drop further down the list, making them less likely to draw an employer's attention. As you build your professional webpage or blog:

Avoid (unless directly relevant to the industry in which you plan on working):

- personal hobbies (hunting, snowmobiling, recreational sports, etc.),
- personal or family details (birthdate, siblings, hometown, religious affiliation, etc.), and
- out dated information (high school activities)

Consider including the following on your professional blog or website:

- a professional profile that outlines your professional goals and objectives,
- an electronic portfolio that showcases academic or internship projects, and
- an up-to-date resume that contextualizes your achievements, skills, and experience.

Finally, link digital spaces that you occupy to create a more complete image of yourself online. Including links to your accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn will ensure that your employer is more easily able to navigate and evaluate your online identity. Often, when conducting personnel searches, employers may locate profiles from different people with similar names. Connecting professional spaces makes it easy for an employer to navigate profiles, ensuring that your profile is not misidentified. These mix ups can occur; organizing your information effectively online ensures that you do not pay the price for someone else's content.

Conclusion

It is important to recognize that, in today's digital age, we all are living an increasingly public existence, whether we want to or not. Some may choose to avoid a social media presence all together, but evasion may not be the answer as corporate entities are using digital media to more effectively connect with their target demographics. Your total absence may imply that you are not tech savvy or are out of touch with current trends. Likewise, overuse or unprofessional use of this same media can paint you as a liability for an organization looking to maintain a certain image in both the digital and real worlds. Reflecting upon the digital spaces you currently occupy, revising content, and creating new, more professional spaces will hone your online persona to connect more effectively with prospective employers, proving that you have the skills, knowledge, and identity to be successful with any organization.

Attribution:

The chapter was derived from:

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Chapter 6:

External Communication: Formal Letters

While memos are used for internal communication and emails for both internal and external communication, formal letters are mainly used as an external means of communication. Understanding when a communications context requires the more formal delivery of a physical letter falls under the initial considerations of the audience analysis and design/formatting stages of the writing process.

Letters can range from friendly introductions to more formal announcements with accompanying legal documents. In their more serious capacity, letters seek to create a formal and documented chain of communication.

Two main formats exist for letters: the block format and the indented format. Both require the recipient's and sender's full names and addresses. They begin with a formal salutation and end with a complimentary closing. Their formal structure helps to convey authority and credibility.

Chapter 6.1:

Business Letter Formats

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

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

Common components of business letters

The following is concerned with the mechanical and physical details of business letters.

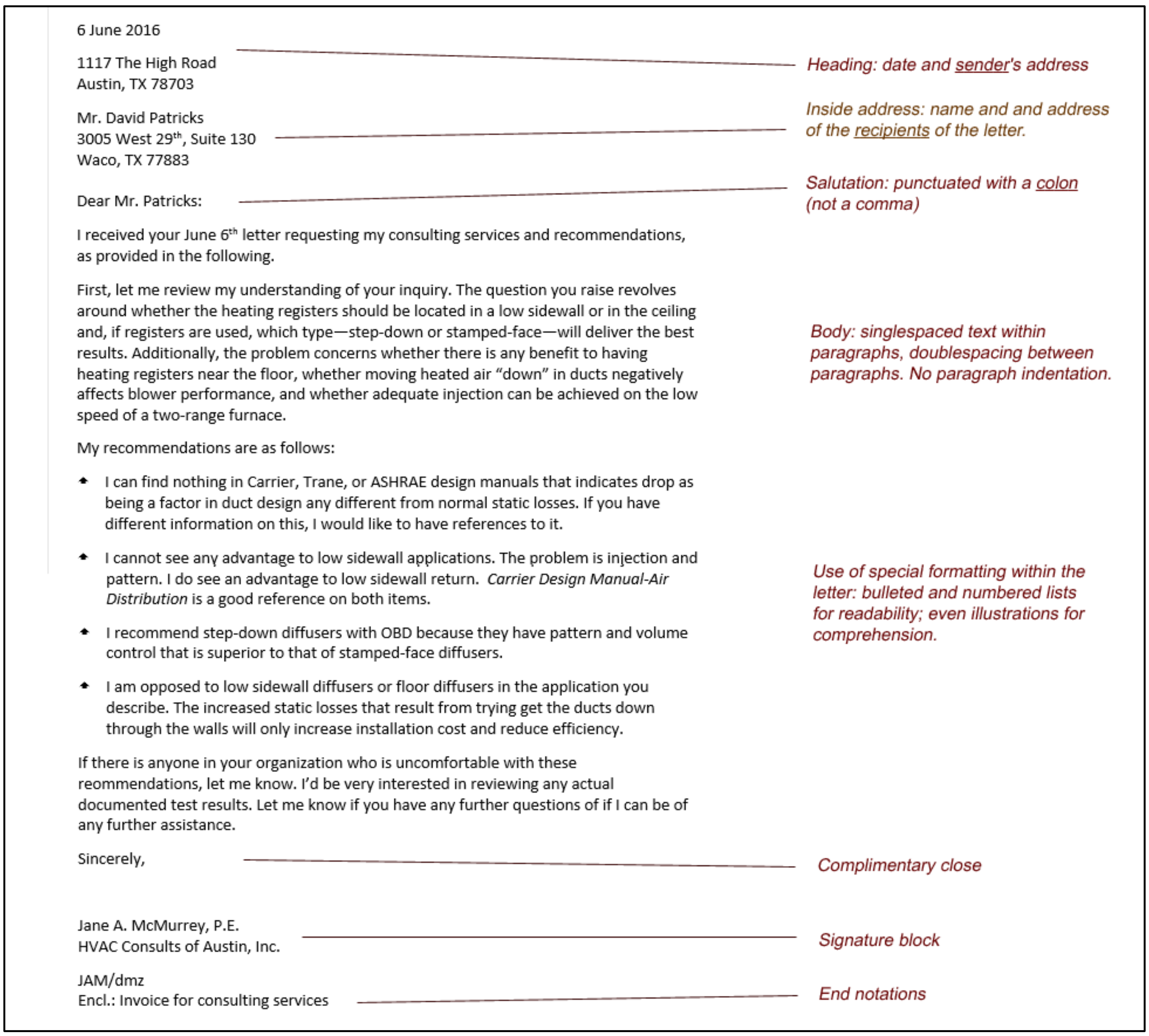
Heading. The heading contains the writer's address and the date of the letter. The writer's name is not included; only a date is needed in headings on letterhead stationery.

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

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

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

Figure 6.1.a Sample Business Letter:



6 June 2016

1117 The High Road
Austin, TX 78703

Heading: date and sender's address

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

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

Dear Mr. Patricks:

Salutation: punctuated with a colon (not a comma)

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

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

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

My recommendations are as follows:

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Complimentary close

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

Signature block

JAM/dmz
Encl.: Invoice for consulting services

End notations

Block letter format

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

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

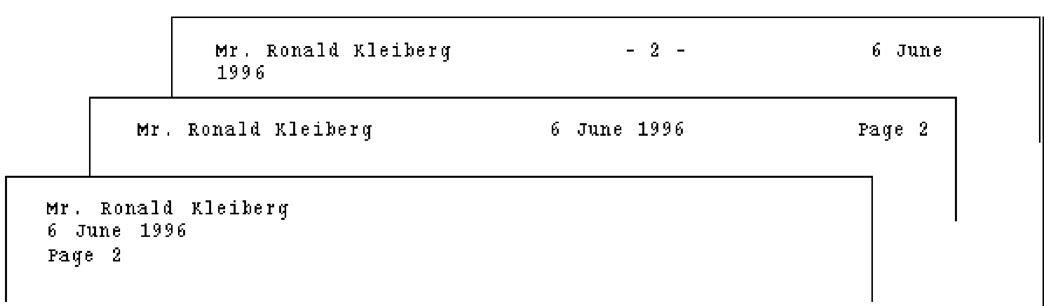
Complimentary close. The "Sincerely yours" element of the business letter is called the complimentary close. Other common ones are "Sincerely", "Cordially", "Respectfully", or "Respectfully yours." You can design your own, but be careful not to create florid or wordy ones. Notice that only the first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

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

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

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

Following pages. If your letter is longer than one page, the heading at the top of subsequent pages can be handled in one of the following ways:


Mr. Ronald Kleiberg - 2 - 6 June 1996

Mr. Ronald Kleiberg 6 June 1996 Page 2

Mr. Ronald Kleiberg
6 June 1996
Page 2

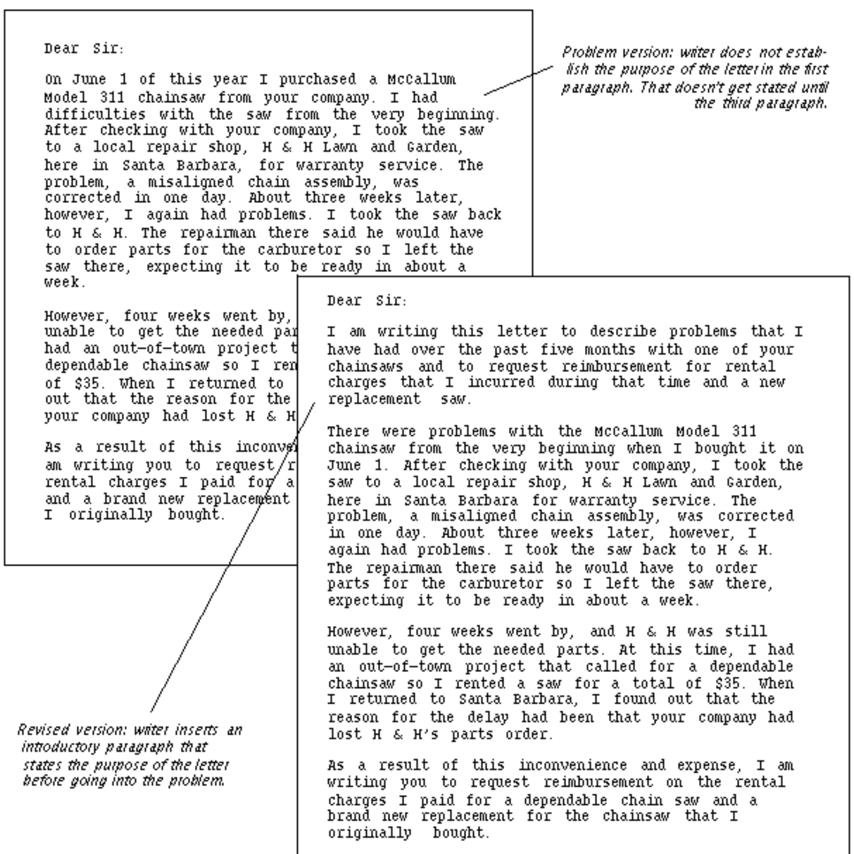
Figure 6.1.b Sample headings

If you use letterhead stationery, remember not to use it for subsequent pages. However, you must use blank paper of the same quality, weight, and texture as the letterhead paper (usually, letterhead stationery comes with matching blank paper).

Style in Business Correspondence

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

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


Dear Sir:

On June 1 of this year I purchased a McCallum Model 311 chainsaw from your company. I had difficulties with the saw from the very beginning. After checking with your company, I took the saw to a local repair shop, H & H Lawn and Garden, here in Santa Barbara, for warranty service. The problem, a misaligned chain assembly, was corrected in one day. About three weeks later, however, I again had problems. I took the saw back to H & H. The repairman there said he would have to order parts for the carburetor so I left the saw there, expecting it to be ready in about a week.

However, four weeks went by, unable to get the needed par had an out-of-town project t dependable chainsaw so I ren of $35. When I returned to out that the reason for the your company had lost H & H

As a result of this inconve am writing you to request r rental charges I paid for a and a brand new replacement I originally bought.

Dear Sir:

I am writing this letter to describe problems that I have had over the past five months with one of your chainsaws and to request reimbursement for rental charges that I incurred during that time and a new replacement saw.

There were problems with the McCallum Model 311 chainsaw from the very beginning when I bought it on June 1. After checking with your company, I took the saw to a local repair shop, H & H Lawn and Garden, here in Santa Barbara for warranty service. The problem, a misaligned chain assembly, was corrected in one day. About three weeks later, however, I again had problems. I took the saw back to H & H. The repairman there said he would have to order parts for the carburetor so I left the saw there, expecting it to be ready in about a week.

However, four weeks went by, and H & H was still unable to get the needed parts. At this time, I had an out-of-town project that called for a dependable chainsaw so I rented a saw for a total of $35. When I returned to Santa Barbara, I found out that the reason for the delay had been that your company had lost H & H's parts order.

As a result of this inconvenience and expense, I am writing you to request reimbursement on the rental charges I paid for a dependable chain saw and a brand new replacement for the chainsaw that I originally bought.

Figure 6.1.c Sample business letter problems

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

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

> Dear Ms. Cohen:
>
> I have just received your August 4, 20XX letter in which you list names and other sources from which I can get additional information on the manufacture and use of plastic bottles in the soft-drink industry....

> Dear Mr. Stout:
>
> I am writing in response to your September 1, 20XX letter in which you describe problems that you've had with one of our chainsaws. I regret that you've suffered this inconvenience and expense and....

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Problem:
To date, I have done no independent building inspection on my own. I have been working the past two years under the supervision of Mr. Robert Packwood who has often given me primary responsibility for walk-throughs and property inspections. It was Mr. Packwood who encouraged me to apply for this position. I have also done some refurbishing of older houses on a contract basis and have some experience in industrial construction as a welder and as a clerk in a nuclear construction site. *(Let's not lie about our lack of experience, but let's not put it on a billboard either!)*

Revision:
As for my work experience, I have done numerous building walk-throughs and property inspections under the supervision of Mr. Robert Packwood over the past two years. Mr. Packwood, who encouraged me to apply for this position, has often given me primary responsibility for many inspection jobs. I have also done some refurbishing of older houses on a contract basis and have some experience in industrial construction as a welder and as a clerk in a nuclear construction site.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Capital Improvements Project (hereinafter to designated as CIP) for the fiscal year 1982–1983 stipulated budget allocations in the amount not exceeding $20,000 to be designated for utilization by a program under the nomination of the 23rd Street Renaissance Market. The purpose and aim of the aforesaid program is to provide and permit basic pedestrian amenities and conveniences for a marketplace devoted to the commerce of arts and crafts to the maximum extent possible. In consideration of these dictates, the CIP has mandated that there be a geographical extension of the sidewalk no greater than 15 feet in a northerly direction. The said extension would continue to permit an opening of approximately 15 feet for the orderly flow and passage of vehicular traffic. The City Council in 1982 issued directives that mandated the temporary closure of the above named street for a period not to exceed one calendar year. In April of the ensuing year it was directed by the City Council that this closure remain in full effect for a period not exceeding an additional six months.

Problem version: pompous, officious-sounding prose style. People in authority positions don't have to sound like this (they might get questioned).

The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) in 1982–1983 included the amount of $20,000 for the 23rd Street Renaissance Market to provide sidewalks for an arts and crafts marketplace. The detailed plans of the CIP called for an extension of the sidewalk 15 feet north, with a 15-foot opening for automobiles.

In 1982, the City Council temporarily closed 23rd Street for a one-year period. In April of 1983, the council extended that closure for an additional six-month period which will end October 1983.

Revised version: this version states the case in plain and simple language.

Figure 6.1.d. Sample business letter problems

Avoid pompous, officious-sounding writing. Not only is the tone of the problem version offensive, it is nearly twice as long as the revised version!

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

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

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

Table 6.1.a Elements of a Business Letter

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:)	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).” But if you are unsure about titles (i.e., Mrs., Ms., 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

Content	Guidelines
	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. It is usually courteous to conclude by thanking the recipient for his or her attention, and to invite them to contact you if you can be of help or if they have questions. This paragraph reiterates the main points and their relationship to each other, reinforcing the main point or purpose.

Content	Guidelines
10. Close	“Sincerely” or “Cordially” are standard business closing statements. (“Love,” “Yours Truly,” and “BFF” are closing statements suitable for personal correspondence, but not for business.) 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 word-processed, 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.
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/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).

Figure 6.1.e Sample Business Letter:

(1 inch margins on all sides of the letter)

1. **Return Address**: (if not in letterhead logo)
2. **Date**: 01/01/201X

3. **Reference—Re**: How to write a letter

4. **Delivery** (optional): USPS Certified Mail #123456789

5. **Recipient Note** (optional): Confidential

6. **Salutation**: Dear Student X:

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

8. **Body**: While e-mail has largely replaced letter writing for many applications, there remain several reasons for producing a hard copy letter. The first reason is that you are required to write it for this class, as many employers still produce letters as a normal part of business communication, including documentation. Next, we must consider that paper sales in business have increased across the last decade, showing no signs of the decrease we would associate with the transition to the paperless office. Finally, business letters serve many functions, and your proficiency in their efficient and effective production will contribute to your personal and professional success.

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

10. **Close**: Sincerely,

11. **Signature Line**: Scott McLean

12. **Preparation Line**: GSM/ep

13. **Enclosures**: (optional, if needed)

14. **Courtesy Copies**: cc: Jenn Yee

15. **Logo/Contact Information**: flatworld 13 N. Mill Street
Nyack, NY 10960

Attribution:

This chapter was derived from:

Chapter 6.2:

Overview of Formal Letter Writing

Business Letters: Principles To Keep In Mind

Business writing is different

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

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

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

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

Pronouns and active versus passive voice

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

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

PASSIVE: The net benefits of subsidiary divestiture were grossly overestimated.

[Who did the overestimating?]

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

The second version is clearer and thus preferable.

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

Focus and specificity

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

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

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

Business letters: Where to begin

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

Chapter 6.3

Application Letters and Cover Letters

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

Application Letters

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

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

Application letter checklist:

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

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

Example:

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

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

Example:

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

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

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

Sample #1

6123 Farrington Road
Apt. B11
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
January 11, 2005

Taylor, Inc.
694 Rockstar Lane
Durham, NC 27708

Dear Human Resources Director:

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Raymond Krock

Sample #2

6123 Farrington Road
Apt. G11
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
January 11, 2005

Taylor, Inc.
694 Rockstar Lane
Durham, NC 27708

Dear Ms. Jones:

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Rebecca Brock

Cover Letters

As mentioned previously, application letters and cover letters are not the same. A cover letter identifies an item being sent, the person to whom it is being sent, and the reason for its being sent. A cover letter provides a permanent record of the transmittal for both the writer and the reader.

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

The following are examples of cover letters. The first letter (Sample #1) is brief and to the point. The second letter (Sample #2) is slightly more detailed because it touches on the manner in which the information was gathered.

Sample #1

Your Company Logo and Contact Information

January 11, 2005

Brian Eno, Chief Engineer
Carolina Chemical Products
3434 Pond View Lane
Durham, NC 27708

Dear Mr. Eno:

Enclosed is the final report on our installment of pollution control equipment at Eastern Chemical Company, which we send with Eastern's Permission. Please call me collect (ext. 1206) or email me at the address below if I can answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Nora Cassidy
Technical Services Manager
ncassidy@company.com

Enclosure: Report

Sample #2

Your Company Logo and Contact Information

January 11, 2005

Brian Eno, Chief Engineer
Ecology Systems, Inc.
8458 Obstructed View Lane
Durham, NC 27708

Dear Mr. Eno:

Enclosed is the report estimating our power consumption for the year as requested by John Brenan, Vice President, on September 4.

The report is the result of several meetings with Jamie Anson, Manager of Plant Operations, and her staff and an extensive survey of all our employees. The survey was delayed by the transfer of key staff in Building A. We believe, however, that the report will provide the information you need to furnish us with a cost estimate for the installation of your Mark II Energy Saving System.

We would like to thank Billy Budd of ESI for his assistance in preparing the survey. If you need more information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Nora Cassidy
New Projects Office
ncassidy@company.com

Enclosure: Report

Works Consulted

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using.

- Freeman, Lawrence H. *Franklin Covey Style Guide for Business and Technical Writing*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Franklin Covey, 1997.
- Locker, Kitty O. *Business and Administrative Communication*. Boston, Mass.: Irwin/McGraw-Hill, 1997.

- For samples of various types of resumes and business letters:
- http://careers.unc.edu/
- http://www.provenresumes.com
- http://www.4hb.com/letters/index.html

Chapter 6.4

Cover letters

Traditionally, the application letter or cover letter is a formal letter that accompanies your resume when you apply for a position. Its purpose is to support your resume, providing more specific details, and to explain in writing why you are a strong candidate for the specific position to which you are applying. It should not simply reiterate your resume; it's an opportunity for you to make a case for your candidacy in complete sentences and phrases, which gives the reader a better sense of your "voice."

It can be helpful to start by first thinking about the audience and purpose for the application letter. What information does your reader need to glean from your letter? At what point in the hiring process will they be reading it?

As you draft the letter, consider what you would want to say if you were sitting across the desk from your reader. It should be written in a formal, professional tone, but you still want it to flow like natural speech—this will make it easier for your reader to absorb the information quickly.

What to include

It can be helpful to think about writing your application letter in sections or "blocks." This provides a basic structure for the letter; once you have an understanding of this foundation, you can customize, update, and personalize the letter for different applications and employers.

Introductory paragraph

Open your letter with a concise, functional, and personable introduction to you as a job candidate. This is your chance to establish the essential basics of your qualifications and to set the themes and tone for the rest of the letter.

- Name the position you're interested in (by exact name and number, if available)
- Clearly state that you are applying for the position—remember that you are requesting (not demanding) that they consider you as a candidate for the position
- Summarize your best qualification and how it's relevant to the position
- Indicate you've enclosed your resume for additional information

Optionally, you might also take the opportunity at the beginning of the letter to express your interest in working for this particular company and/or your passion for and interest in the field—I am particularly interested in this position because… This sets a nice tone and shows that you are engaged and enthusiastic. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge about the employer and what they do (developed through your research).

Education & academics paragraph(s)

The purpose of this paragraph is to paint a detailed picture of your training and credentials and how this is relevant to the position. Your opportunity in this paragraph is to explain the activities and knowledge you have gained and/or are developing that most matter for this position and employer. Carefully consider what the employer will value most about your educational experiences. If you have a lot of project experience or several key experiences that you want to highlight, this information may be written in multiple paragraphs.

This content should NOT be a laundry list of course titles. Instead, describe how your academics/training have shaped your understanding of the field you are entering and significant skills you are developing, but always tie it back to what the employer is looking for—stay focused on the information your audience needs and what they will care about.

Employment paragraph (if applicable)

It is important for employers to feel that they are hiring responsible, reliable people who know how to hold down a job. If you do have work experience in this field such as a previous internship, this is a perfect time to discuss that. If you have previous work experience, even if it’s not related to your field, this is your opportunity to describe the value of that experience—the value for you, but, more importantly, to your reader. Describe your previous work experience that shows your a good employee and explain how this is relevant to the position. Be specific about the company, the time frame, your responsibilities, and the outcomes/results. Focus on your relevant and transferable skills.

Other qualifications (if applicable)

Awards you’ve received; publications you’ve achieved; and your activities and involvement in things outside of your coursework and work experiences, such as student organizations, clubs, and volunteer work, are great pieces of information to include that show you are a well-rounded, motivated person with good time management skills. Personal, human connections are an important part of the job application process, and describing some of these activities and interests can help your reader start to feel a more personal connection. Describe your specific actions and involvement honestly, while still trying to connect to transferable skills and the keywords in the job posting.

Concluding Paragraph

As you conclude the letter, tie everything together, politely express interest in an interview, and end on a positive note. Don't ask for the job here; you're requesting–and not demanding–an interview.

Letter formatting

Your application letter should use formal letter formatting.

In today's job market, where many applications are online, the letter might be delivered in a variety of different formats. For example, it might be a PDF file uploaded to an online application system or if might be simply sent in the body of an email. Make sure you submit your cover letter in the file format and way the job advertisement specifies.

Attribution

Chapter 6.5

Inquiry Letters

This chapter focuses on the inquiry letter or inquiry e-mail; let's call it the inquiry communication. The *inquiry communication* is useful when you need information, advice, names, or directions. Be careful, however, not to ask for too much information or for information that you could easily obtain in some other way – for example, by a quick trip to the library or by an Internet search.

Be sure to check out the examples.
(https://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/models.html#inquiry_letters)

For related matters, see the chapter on general business-letter format and style.
(https://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/genlett.html)

Inquiry Communications: Types and Contexts

There are two types of inquiry communications: *solicited* and *unsolicited*.

You write a *solicited* inquiry communication when a business or agency advertises its products or services. For example, if a software manufacturer advertises some new package it has developed and you can't inspect it locally, write a solicited letter or e-mail to that manufacturer asking specific questions. If you cannot find any information on a technical subject, an inquiry letter or e-mail to a company involved in that subject may put you on the right track. In fact, that company may supply much more help than you had expected (provided of course that you write a good inquiry communication). If you need to find the names and addresses of businesses related to your report project, see the chapter on finding information in libraries and online.

Your inquiry communication is *unsolicited* if the recipient has done nothing to prompt your inquiry. For example, if you read an article by an expert, you may have further questions or want more information. You seek help from these people in a slightly different form of inquiry letter or e-mail. As the steps and guidelines for both types of inquiry communications show, you must construct the unsolicited type more carefully, because recipients of unsolicited inquiry letters or e-mail are not ordinarily prepared to handle such inquiries.

Inquiry Letters or E-mail: Contents and Organization

1. Early in the letter or e-mail, identify the purpose – to obtain help or information (if it's a solicited communication, information about an advertised product, service, or program).
2. In an unsolicited letter or e-mail, identify who you are, what you are working on, why you need the requested information, and how you found out about the individual. In an unsolicited letter or e-mail, also identify the source that prompted your inquiry, for example, a journal article.
3. In the communication, list questions or information needed in a clear, specific, and easy-to-read format. If you have a number of questions, consider making a questionnaire and including a stamped, self-addressed envelope. If it's e-mail, just put the questions in the body of the e-mail or attach a separate questionnaire document.
4. In an unsolicited letter or e-mail, try to find some way to compensate the recipient for the trouble, for example, by offering to pay copying and mailing costs, to accept a collect call, to acknowledge the recipient in your report, or to send him or her a copy of your report. In a solicited letter or e-mail, suggest that the recipient send brochures or catalogs.
5. In closing an unsolicited letter or e-mail, express gratitude for any help that the recipient can provide you, acknowledge the inconvenience of your request, but do not thank the recipient "in advance". In an unsolicited letter or e-mail, tactfully suggest to the recipient will benefit by helping you (for example, through future purchases from the recipient's company).

Sample #1

1102 West 30th
Lawrence, KS 66321
August 4, 19XX

Dr. Maria Gomez-Salinas
Director of the Diabetes Clinic
St. David's Hospital
1000 Greenberg Lane
Wichita, KS 66780

Dear Dr. Gomez-Salinas:

I am writing you in hopes of finding out more about how the new Glucoscan II blood glucose monitoring system, which a representative at Lifescan informed me that your clinic is currently using.

Originally, I saw Lifescan's advertisement of this new device in the January 19XX issue of *Diabetes Forecast* and became very interested in it. I wrote the company and got much useful information, but was recommended to write several current users of the system as well.

For a technical report that I am writing for a technical writing class at Johnson County Junior College, I need some help with the following questions:

1. How often does the Glucoscan II need to be calibrated in practical, everyday use conditions?
2. How accurate is the Glucoscan II compared to other similar systems that your patients have used?
3. What problems do your patients experience with this new device?

The Lifescan representative indicated that your clinic is one the leaders in implementing new technology for diabetics, and therefore I am eager to hear from you. In the report I will acknowledge your contributions, and I will send you a copy of the completed report if you wish.

Thank you for your time, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Anita Teller
Student, Medical Technology
Johnson County Junior College

Sample #2

0000 Paul's Path
Austin, TX 78700
July 12, 1998

Technical Support
Red Hat Software, Inc.
4201 Research Commons, Suite 100
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Dear Technical Support Department:

I am writing this letter to ask you some technical questions about hardware support in version 5.1 of Red Hat Linux. I saw Red Hat Software's advertisement for version 5.1 of Linux in the August, 1998, issue of *Linux Journal*. I was quite impressed with the capabilities as listed in the advertisement, and I would like to learn some more about the product. Before I make the decision to purchase the software, I need to be certain that it will work properly on my computer.

I have three hardware support questions that I would like you to answer. I have reviewed the technical support information at Red Hat Software's home page (www.redhat.com), but I have not been able to find answers to my questions. The three hardware-related questions that I have are as follows:

1. Does the latest release of Red Hat Linux support the Diamond Viper 330 PCI video card? This card uses the Riva chipset released by NVIDIA Corporation.
2. If Red Hat Linux does not currently have a driver for this card, is there a timetable for when the card will be supported?
3. Is there an online site for the latest list of supported hardware. This would be a great aid to me in the future, as I often upgrade my machine.

I am aware that some of the early versions of Red Hat Linux were not able to support some of Diamond Multimedia's products, and I hope that new drivers have been created in this latest software release. If the latest release of Red Hat Linux can support my video hardware, I will definitely purchase the product. I feel that the price on the product is exceptional, and the range of features is outstanding.

For your convenience, you can respond to me by e-mail. My e-mail address is garyc@nnn.com. If you prefer to respond by telephone, you can reach me at (512) 000-0000. I appreciate any assistance that you are able to provide me.

Sincerely,

W. Gary NNNNN

Attribution:

This chapter was derived from:

David McMurrey's "Inquiry Letters: Ask for Information in a Professional Manner"

Chapter 6.6

Bad News Messages

A bad news message (or negative news message) delivers news that the audience does not want to hear, read, or 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. Regardless of whether you determine a direct or indirect approach is warranted, your job is to deliver news that you anticipate will be unwelcome, unwanted, and possibly dismissed.

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 rumor 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

Your ability to manage, clarify, and guide understanding is key to addressing challenges while maintaining trust and integrity with your employees, stakeholders, and the public.

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.
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 behavior 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 workspace 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" in its uniqueness, presentation, and luxury. 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 behavior 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

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 the sample below, the bad news is announced in the opening or introduction of the message.

Sample Bad News Message Using Direct Approach:

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.

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.

Sample Bad News Message Using Indirect 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.

Five main parts of 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!

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 7

The Research Cycle

Although information publication follows a linear timeline, the research process itself is not linear. For example, you might start by trying to read scholarly articles, only to discover that you lack the necessary background knowledge to use a scholarly article effectively. To increase your background information, you might consult an encyclopedia or a book on your topic. Or, you may encounter a statement in a newspaper editorial that inspires you to consult the scholarly literature to see if research supports the statement.

The important thing to remember is that you will probably start your research at different points and move around among resource types depending on the type of information you need.

Figure 1: The research cycle

Chapter 7.4

Research Tools

Databases

Very often, you will want articles on your topic, and the easiest way to find articles is to use a research database – a specialized search engine for finding articles and other types of content. For example, if your topic is residential solar power, you can use a research database to look in thousands of journal titles at once and find the latest scientific and technical research articles – articles that don't always show up in your

Google searches. Depending on the database you are using, you might also find videos, images, diagrams, or e-books on your topic, too.

Most databases require subscriptions for access; check with your college, public, or corporate library to see what databases they subscribe to for you to use. Whether they are subscription-based or free, research databases contain records of journal articles, documents, book chapters, and other resources and are not tied to the physical items available at any one library. Many databases provide the full-text of articles and can be searched by keyword, subject, author, or title. A few databases provide just the citations for articles, but they usually also provide tools for you to find the full text in another database or request it through interlibrary loan. Databases are made up of records, and records contain fields, as explained below:

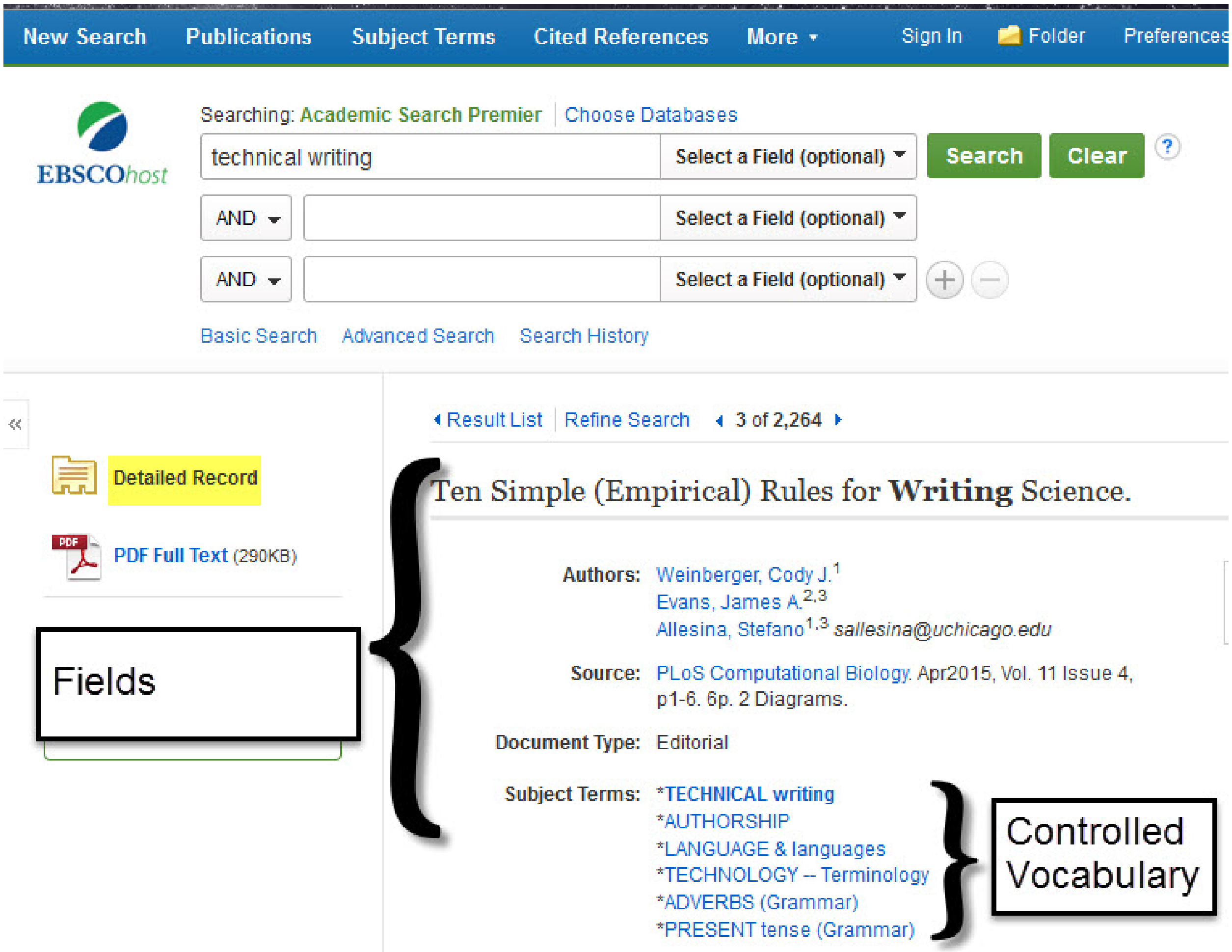
- Records: A record describes one information item (e.g., journal article, book chapter, image, etc.).
- Fields: These are part of the record, and they contain descriptions of specific elements of the information item such as the title, author, publication date, and subject.

Another aspect of databases to know about is controlled vocabulary. Look for the label subject term, subject heading or descriptor. Regardless of label, this field contains controlled vocabulary, which are designated terms or phrases for describing concepts. It's important because it pulls together all of the items in that database about one topic. For example, imagine you are searching for information on community colleges. Different authors may call community colleges by different names: junior colleges, two-year colleges, or technical colleges. If the controlled vocabulary term in the database you are searching is “community colleges,” then your one search will pull up all results, regardless of what term the author uses.

Databases may seem intimidating at first, but you likely use databases in everyday life. For example, do you store contact information in your phone? If so, you create a record for everyone for whom you want to store information. In each of those records, you enter descriptions into fields: first and last name, phone number, email address, and physical address. If you wanted to organize your contacts, you might put them into groups of “work,” “family,” and “friends.” That would be your controlled vocabulary for your own database of contacts.

The image below shows a detailed record for a journal article from a common research database, Academic Search Premier. The fields and controlled vocabulary are labeled.

Figure 2: Fields and controlled vocabulary



General

Databases that contain resources for many subject areas are referred to as general or multidisciplinary databases. This means that they are good starting points for research because they allow you to search a large number of sources from a wide variety of disciplines. Content types in general databases often include a mix of professional publications, scholarly journals, newspapers, magazines, books, and multimedia.

Common general databases in academic settings include

- Academic Search Premier
- Academic OneFile
- JSTOR

Specialized

Databases devoted to a single subject are known as subject-specific or specialized databases. Often, they search a smaller number of journals or a specific type of content.

Specialized databases can be very powerful search tools after you have selected a narrow research topic or if you already have a great deal of expertise in a particular area. They will help you find information you would not find in a general database. If you are not sure which specialized databases are available for your topic, check your library's website for subject guides, or ask a librarian.

Specialized databases may also focus on offering one specific content type like streaming films, music, images, statistics, or data sets.

Table 4. Examples of specialized databases and their subject focus

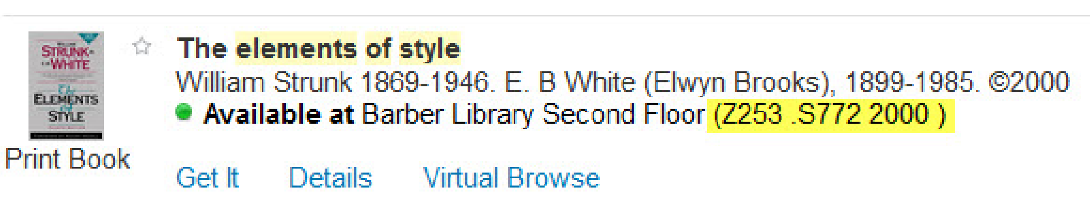
Database	Subject Focus
PsycInfo	Psychology
BioOne	Life Sciences
MEDLINE	Medicine/health
ARTstor	Fine arts images

Library Catalogs

A library catalog is a database that contains all of the items located in a library as well as all of the items to which the library offers access, either in physical or online format. It allows you to search for items by title, author, subject, and keyword. Like research databases, library catalogs use controlled vocabulary to allow for powerful searching using specific terms or phrases.

If you locate a physical item in a catalog, you will need the call number to find the item in the library. A call number is like a street address for a book; it tells you exactly where the book is on the shelf. Most academic libraries will use the Library of Congress classification system, and the call numbers start with letters, followed by a mix of numbers and letters. In addition to helping you find a book, call numbers group items about a given topic together in a physical place. The image below shows an example of the location of a call number in a library catalog.

Figure 3. A call number in an online library catalog display



Along with physical items, most libraries also provide access to scholarly e-books, streaming films, and e-journals via their catalogs. For students and faculty, these resources are usually available from any computer, meaning you do not have to go to the library and retrieve items from the shelf.

Consortia and Interlibrary Loan

In the course of your research, you will almost certainly find yourself in a situation where you have a citation for a journal article or book that your institution's library doesn't have. There is a wealth of knowledge contained in the resources of academic and public libraries throughout the United States. Single libraries cannot hope to collect all of the resources available on a topic. Fortunately, libraries are happy to share their resources and they do this through consortia membership and interlibrary loan (ILL). Library consortia are groups of libraries that have special agreements with one another to loan materials to one another's users. Both academic and public libraries belong to consortia.

Central Oregon Community College (COCC) belongs to a consortium of 37 academic libraries in the Pacific Northwest called the Orbis Cascade Alliance, which sponsors a shared lending program called Summit. When you search the COCC Library Catalog, your results will include items from other Summit institutions, which you can request and have delivered to the COCC campus of your choice.

Interlibrary loan (ILL) allows you to borrow books, articles and other information resources regardless of where they are located. If you find an article when searching a database that COCC doesn't have full text access to, you can request it through the interlibrary loan program. If you cannot get a book or DVD from COCC or another Summit library, you could also request it through interlibrary loan. Interlibrary loan services are available at both academic and public libraries.

Government Information

Another important source of information is the government. Official United States government websites end in .gov and provide a wealth of credible information, including statistics, technical reports, economic data, scientific and medical research, and, of course, legislative information. Unlike research databases, government information is typically freely available without a subscription.

USA.gov is a search engine for government information and is a good place to begin your search, though specialized search tools are also available for many topics. State governments also have their own websites and search tools that you might find helpful if your topic has a state-specific angle. If you get lost in searching government information, ask a librarian for help. They usually have special training and knowledge in navigating government information.

Table 5. Examples of specialized government sources and their subject focus

Specialized Government Source	Subject Focus
PubMed Central	Medicine/health
ERIC	Education
Congress.gov	Legislation and the legislative process

Experts

People are a valuable, though often overlooked, source. This might be particularly appropriate if you are working on an emerging topic or a topic with local connections.

For personal interviews, there are specific steps you can take to obtain better results. Do some background work on the topic before contacting the person you hope to interview. The more familiarity you have with your topic and its terminology, the easier it will be to ask focused questions. Focused questions are important for effective research. Asking general questions because you think the specifics might be too detailed rarely leads to the best information. Acknowledge the time and effort someone is taking to answer your questions, but also realize that people who are passionate about subjects enjoy sharing what they know. Take the opportunity to ask experts about additional resources they would recommend.

For a successful, productive interview, review this list of Interview Tips before conducting your interview.

Chapter 7.5

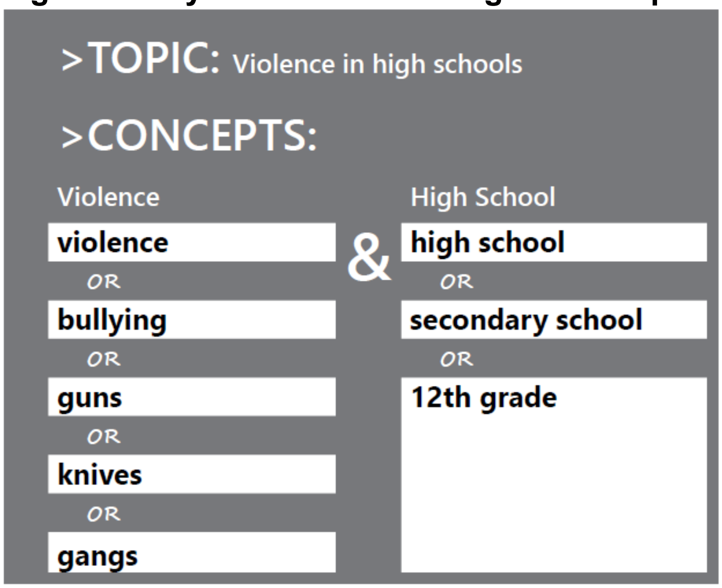
Search Strategies

Now that you know more about the research tools available to you, it's time to consider how to construct searches that will allow you to find the most relevant, useful results as efficiently as possible.

Develop Effective Keywords

The single most important search strategy is to choose effective search terms. This may seem obvious, but it is too often overlooked, with deleterious consequences. When deciding what terms to use in a search, break down your topic into its main concepts. Do not enter an entire sentence or a full question. The best thing to do is to use the key concepts involved with your topic. In addition, think of synonyms or related terms for each concept. If you do this, you will have more flexibility when searching in case your first search term does not produce any or enough results. This may sound strange, since if you are looking for information using a Web search engine, you usually get too many results. Databases, however, contain fewer items than the entire web, and having alternative search terms may lead you to useful sources. Even in a search engine like Google, having terms you can combine thoughtfully will yield better results.

Figure 4. Keyword brainstorming for the topic of violence in high schools



Advanced Search Techniques

Once you have identified the concepts you want to search and have carefully chosen your keywords, think about how you will enter them into the search box of your selected search tool. Try the techniques below in both research databases and web search engines.

Boolean Operators

Boolean operators are a search technique that will help you

- focus your search, particularly when your topic contains multiple search terms
- connect various pieces of information to find exactly what you are looking for

There are three Boolean operators: AND, OR, and NOT. You capitalize Boolean operators to distinguish them from the words and, or, and not (words which most search engines ignore). It is also important to note that you should spell out AND rather than substituting commas, ampersands, or plus signs. Usually you should spell out NOT as well, except in Google, where you must use the minus sign (-).

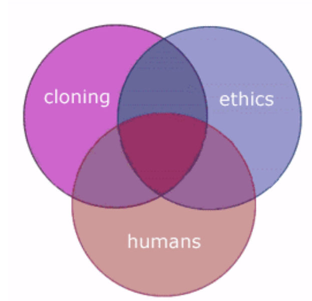
AND

Use AND in a search to

- narrow your results
- tell the database that ALL search terms must be present in the resulting records

Example: cloning AND humans AND ethics
The purple triangle where all circles intersect in the middle of the Venn diagram below represents the result set for this search. It is a small set created by a combination of all three search words.

Figure 5. Example of search terms connected by AND



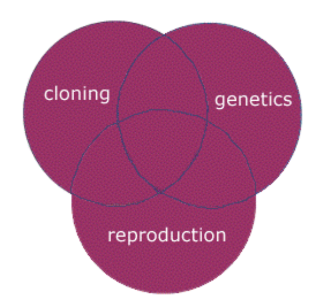
OR

Use OR in a search to accomplish the following:

- connect two or more similar concepts (synonyms)
- broaden your results, telling the database that any one of your search terms can be present in the resulting records

Example: (cloning OR genetics OR reproduction)
All three circles represent the result set for this search. It is a big set because the OR operator includes all of those search terms.

Figure 6. Example of search terms connected by OR



NOT

Use NOT in a search to

- exclude words from your search

- narrow your search, telling the database to ignore concepts that may be implied by your search terms

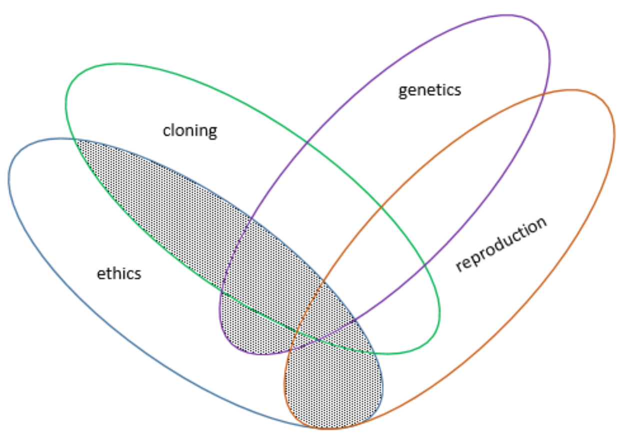
Example: cloning NOT sheep
The purple part of the circle below represents your results for this search, because you've used NOT to exclude a subset of results that are about sheep (represented by the gray circle).

Figure 7. Example of search using NOT

Combining operators

You can combine the different Boolean operators into one search. The important thing to know when combining operators is to use parentheses around the terms connected with OR. This ensures that the database interprets your search query correctly.
Example: ethics AND (cloning OR genetics OR reproduction)
The shaded area of the diagram below represents the results set for the above search.

Figure 8. Example of complex Boolean search that connects terms with AND and OR



Phrases

Web and research databases usually treat your search terms as separate words, meaning they look for each word appearing in a document, regardless of its location around the other words in your search term. Sometimes you may instead want a system to search for a specific phrase (a set of words that collectively describe your topic).

To do this, put the phrase in quotation marks, as in "community college."
With phrase searches, you will typically get fewer results than searching for the words individually, which makes it an effective way to focus your search.

Truncation

Truncation, also called stemming, is a technique that allows you to search for multiple variations of a root word at once. Most databases have a truncation symbol. The * is the most commonly used symbol, but !, ?, and # are also used. If you are not sure, check the help files. To use truncation, enter the root of your word and end it with the truncation symbol.

Example: genetic* searches for genetic, genetics, genetically

Chapter 7.6

Evaluate Sources

Information sources vary in quality, and before you use a source in your academic assignments or work projects, you must evaluate them for quality. You want your own work to be of high quality, credible, and accurate, and you can only achieve that by having sources possess those same qualities.

Watch this video on evaluating sources for an overview of what credibility is, why it's important, and some of the criteria to look for when evaluating a source.

(https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/tutorials/evaluating-sources)

There are five basic criteria for evaluating information. While it may seem like a lot to think about at first, after a little practice, you will find that you can evaluate sources quickly.

Here are the five basic criteria, with key questions and indicators to help you evaluate your source:

- Authority
    - **Key Question:** Is the person, organization, or institution responsible for the intellectual content of the information knowledgeable in that subject?
    - **Indicators of authority:** formal academic degrees, years of professional experience, active and substantial involvement in a particular area

- Accuracy
  - **Key Question:** How free from error is this piece of information?
  - **Indicators of accuracy:** correct and verifiable citations, information is verifiable in other sources from different authors/organizations, author is authority on subject
- Objectivity
  - **Key Question:** How objective is this piece of information?
  - **Indicators of objectivity:** multiple points of view are acknowledged and discussed logically and clearly, statements are supported with documentation from a variety of reliable sources, purpose is clearly stated
- Currency
  - **Key Question:** When was the item of information published or produced?
  - **Indicators of currency:** publication date, assignment restrictions (e.g., you can only use articles from the last 5 years), your topic and how quickly information changes in your field (e.g., technology or health topics will require very recent information to reflect rapidly changing areas of expertise)
- Audience
  - **Key Question:** Who is this information written for or this product developed for?
  - **Indicators of audience:** language, style, tone, bibliographies

When evaluating and selecting sources for an assignment or work project, compare your sources to one another in light of your topic. Imagine, for example, you are writing a paper about bicycle commuting. You have three sources about bicycle safety. One is written for children; one is for adult recreational bicyclers; and one is for traffic engineers. Your topic is specifically about building urban and suburban infrastructure to encourage bicycling, so the source written for traffic engineers is clearly more appropriate for your topic than the other two. Even if the other two are high-quality sources, they are not the most relevant sources for your specific topic.

Until you have practiced evaluating many sources, it can be a little difficult to find the indicators, especially in web sources.

Table 6. Locations where you might find indicators of quality in different types of sources

If you are looking for indications of…	In books see the…	In journals see the…	In websites see the…

Authority	Title page, Forward, Preface, Afterward, Dust Jackets, Bibliography	Periodical covers, Editorial Staff, Letters to the Editor, Abstract, Bibliography	URL, About Us, Publications, Appearance
Accuracy	Title page, Forward, Preface, Afterward, Periodical covers, Dust Jackets, Text, Bibliography	Periodical covers, Text, Bibliography	URL, About Us, Home page, Awards, Text
Objectivity	Forward, Preface, Afterward, Text, Bibliography	Abstracts, Text, Bibliography, Editorials, Letters to the Editor	About Us, Site Map, Text, Disclaimers, Membership/Registration
Currency	Title page, copyright page, Bibliography	Title page, Bibliography, Abstracts	Home page, Copyright, What's New
Audience	Forward, Preface, Afterward	Letters to the editor, Editorial, Appearance	Home page, About, Mission, Disclaimer, Members only

When you have located and evaluated information for your paper, report, or project, you will use it to complete your work. A later chapter of this text will cover how to use it correctly and ethically.

Chapter 7.7

Citations and Plagiarism

Like most writers, technical writers need to demonstrate their credibility, objectivity, and thoroughness by referencing quality source material. Technical writers reveal and share source information both to give credit to the writers of that material and also to demonstrate they have done thorough research. Because this text was designed for an academic course in technical writing, this chapter describes conventions of academic citations you will use in producing a report. That said, the information will easily transfer to other professional and academic writing tasks.

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Chapter 8

Avoiding Plagiarism and Citing Sources Properly

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is when you use words, thoughts, or ideas that belong to someone else without giving them credit. In both the classroom and in the professional world of publishing, documenting your information sources is the only way you can convey to others how thorough and careful you have been in researching your topic. Moreover, if you do not tell readers where your information came from, they may think (and many do) that you either made up the information or "stole" it.

When to Cite

Documenting your sources entails providing information on the author of the referenced materials and the publication in which they appear. This practice is also known as **citing a source**. The specific requirements for citing a source vary across different citation styles. In certain styles, such as APA, you must include the date of publication somewhere in the body text. In MLA, by contrast, you are not required to include a date in the in-text citation.

Regardless of the citation style you use, the major question is this: when exactly should you provide documentation for something? As a rule, cite whenever you use something (text, data, idea, or image) in whole or in part from another source. Specifically, you must cite your source when you:

- Copy a sentence or paragraph verbatim (literally, word-for-word) from a book, article, website, blog posting, or anywhere online or in print.
- Use an exact phrase or choice words from a sentence or paragraph, even if you are not copying the whole sentence or paragraph.
- Use original information that you have obtained from an interview or conversation with someone.
- Paraphrase or reword a sentence or phrase from an outside source, or use the ideas inherent in the exact sentence or phrase.
- Reprint images, maps, diagrams, charts, or tables.
- Embed video files or audio files into your work.

When Not to Cite

You do not need to provide citations for commonly known dates and facts. One guideline is that if a fact appears in more than five sources, then it is commonly known. However, if it was **not** common knowledge to you, and you use a source, then document where you located the information.

You do not need to provide citations for common turns of phrase or idioms, such as “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.”

When in doubt, it is better to “over”-cite than “under”-cite. Unnecessary citations can be easily removed, and their presence has little overall impact; however, information that lacks proper documentation is much harder to correct and leads to more dire consequences.

Specific Concerns for Academic Integrity

When it comes to academic integrity, word-for-word plagiarism is not the only concern. There are a few situations specific to this course that you will want to be aware of that are less clear-cut when it comes to what is acceptable.

For **all course assignments**, you must consult with your instructor and obtain their permission before using work that you created for and/or submitted in a **different** class. Failure to do so constitutes self-plagiarism and counts as academic dishonesty. For example, while you may have a cover letter and résumé readily at hand, you must construct original documents to submit for the Job Application Packet in English 210.

In your **Job Application Packet**, if you use a template for your résumé, make sure that all of the content in your résumé is originally created by you. Some templates provide helpful examples of content—use these examples to inspire your writing rather than directly copy them. This also goes for your cover letter. Using specific, detailed language taken from another source for your cover letter constitutes plagiarism.

For your 210 Portfolio (containing a proposal, progress report, recommendation report, and any group documentation), you may use the text you wrote for one part of your portfolio in a later part of your portfolio. For example, you will probably want to use parts of your Progress Report in your final Recommendation Report. This does not count as plagiarism because the work has been produced within the same class, and each assignment in the portfolio builds in some way upon the previous assignment.

Four Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism

In order to avoid plagiarism, remember to do the following:

1. **Consider your need for information.** If you are contemplating intentionally plagiarizing something, ask yourself what information you need to finish your assignment and then consider alternate means for finding it. Your professor, your campus writing or academic success center, and your campus libraries are great places to get more information.

2. **Give yourself time.** Make sure that you leave enough time to complete your assignment. If you budget your time carefully, you will be able to ask for help

when necessary and will not feel the pressure to "copy and paste" in sections of writing.

3. **Take notes.** When you are researching, always drop in the last name of the author, or even just a note saying "CITE," in your writing. Take down as much bibliographic data as you can at the moment. This way you can keep track of your ideas and where they came from. You can format your citations later in the revision process.

4. **Ask for help.** You may feel like you don't understand the assignment or the text and think that the only way to complete your work is to plagiarize. If this is the case, contact the professor (through email or by going to their office hours) to talk about the assignment and your sources. Your professor is there to help you, and one-on-one meetings are available if you feel like you don't want to ask questions in class. If you don't want to talk to your professor, contact your librarian or writing center, or consult with a friend, family member, or classmate. Talking about your writing is a great way to start coming up with ideas.

Specific Resources for PV Students

If you are unsure about what you need to cite and what you don't, ask your professor, a librarian, or a University Writing Center consultant. The John B. Coleman library website provides contact information so you can get help from a librarian by phone, chat, text, or email.[1] You can also make an appointment to speak with a consultant on the Writing Center's website.[2]

Other Considerations for Using Sources Ethically

Students are often concerned with the details of correct citation—when to include an author's name in parentheses, how to format a References section, how to indicate a quotation within a quotation—and while these are all important and helpful to know, it is more important to understand the larger ethical principles that guide choosing and using sources. Here are a few of these larger ideas to keep in mind as you select and synthesize your sources:

> **You must represent the topic or discipline you are writing about fairly.** If nine out of ten sources agree that evidence shows the middle class in the United States is shrinking, it is unethical to use only the tenth source that argues it is growing without also acknowledging the minority status of that source.

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[1] John B. Coleman library, https://pvamu.libguides.com/c.php?g=906034&p=7167691
[2] The PV Writing Center, https://www.pvamu.edu/student-success/writing-center/

You must represent the individual source fairly. If a source acknowledges that a small segment of the middle class in the United States is growing but most of the middle class is shrinking, it is unethical to suggest that the former is the writer’s main point.

You must acknowledge bias in your sources. While they may be credible, it is unethical to represent sources that offer extreme political views as if these views are mainstream.

You must quote all sources, even informal ones like Wikipedia or a dictionary. Quoting a dictionary definition is still quoting: you need quotation marks. Wikipedia is not “common knowledge”: cite it.

You must summarize and paraphrase in your own words. In order to be truly yours, a summary or paraphrase must be completely in your own words and sentence structure. Be sure to give credit where credit is due: clearly distinguish what work and words belong to another and what work and words are yours.

Using Sources in Your Document

As stated in Chapter 1, technical writers are often faced with the challenge of communicating and relaying information or concepts on which they may not have direct expertise. Additionally, if they are investigating an ongoing problem or gap in understanding on a research topic, technical writers also have to demonstrate that they are well versed in the current discourse and arguments surrounding the topic.

In both cases, one of the most effective strategies technical writers can employ is to integrate and cite sources into their documents and presentations. Beyond avoiding plagiarism, using sources effectively allows you to draw on the expertise of others to support your points. Using sources effectively also helps the reader understand how you are situating different findings, ideas, and arguments in conversation with one another, as well as how you yourself are participating in that conversation.

To help you master these skills, this section will review the different kinds of sources and citation forms that you are likely to encounter in technical and professional writing.

Primary Sources and Secondary Sources

Primary sources are direct, firsthand sources of information or data. These are sources that are fixed in a point in time and typically do not contain analysis or discussion. For example, if you were writing a report about the First Amendment right to freedom of speech, the text of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights would be a primary source. Other types of primary sources include the following:

- Data sets (your own or from a published source)

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Photographs
- Social media posts
- Visuals such as schematics or plans
- Historical and some government documents
- Art & literature, including but not limited to novels, paintings, musical recordings, movies, and video games

Secondary sources discuss, interpret, analyze, consolidate, or otherwise rework information from primary sources. In researching a report about freedom of speech, you might read articles about legal cases that involved First Amendment rights, or editorials expressing commentary on the First Amendment. These sources would be considered secondary sources because they are one step removed from the primary source of information. The following are examples of secondary sources:

- Biographies and histories
- Journal articles
- News commentaries
- Blogs
- Video essays

Your topic, audience, and purpose determine whether you must use both primary and secondary sources in your document. Ask yourself which sources are most likely to provide the information that will answer your research questions. If you are writing a research report about reality television shows, you will need to use some reality shows as a primary source, but secondary sources, such as a reviewer's critique, are also important. If you are writing about the health effects of nicotine, you will probably want to read the published results of scientific studies, but secondary sources, such as magazine articles discussing the outcome of a recent study, may also be helpful.

Classifying Primary and Secondary Sources

Whether a text (document or otherwise) is primary or secondary depends a lot on content and context. For example, you could conduct an interview with an individual about their life, and that would be a primary source. If you interviewed that person about their area of expertise, that might be considered more of a secondary source. Similarly, a journal article reporting the results of an original research study may be a primary source, while a journal article comparing and analyzing the results of several research studies may be a secondary source.

Citing Personal Primary Research

In many circumstances, you may be presenting primary research that you have conducted. In this case, the primary research can take the form of experimental data gained from lab experiments, results from surveys, or material from interviews or on-site evaluations. In all these scenarios, the research is not yet published prior to its inclusion in your report, paper, or article. Therefore, you do not cite it in the same way you would a published source using parenthetical citations or an entry in a Works Cited or References page.

For data acquired through an experiment, survey, or on-site research, indicate in your text where the information comes from. When specifically referencing data such as a measurement or results from a survey, you may use signal phrases like you would for a quotation, summary, or paraphrase. This signaling should be within the same sentence and in close proximity to the information itself. For example, when referencing the results of an online survey, you might say one of the following:

- 75% of responders to **our online survey** reported that they were dissatisfied with the lab's spectrometer.
- **Our online survey** revealed that 75% of our respondents were dissatisfied with the lab's spectrometer.

Notice in the example above that while the writers use a signal phrase ("our online survey"), they do not provide any citation information in parentheses. This is because non-published primary research conducted by the authors usually does not appear in a bibliography. One major exception to this rule is an interview or interpersonal communication, depending on your citation style. In MLA style, personal communication, whether in-person, over the phone or Zoom, or via an email exchange, is included both in the Works Cited list and parenthetically in the document. In APA, however, personal communication is only cited parenthetically in the document. To see how to cite personal communication in both styles, see APA Quick Reference and MLA Quick Reference later in this chapter.

The Methods section of a report or technical document serves as another major place where you discuss your primary research. In a Methods (or Method or Methodology) section, you discuss the design of your research project. This section will include a description of how you collected any information, including what tools (if any) you used, your research protocol, and any deviations from a standard protocol. See Chapter 20: Recommendation Reports for additional information.

Depending on the type of primary research you are conducting, you may want to include an appendix offering supplementary information on your research design. The two most common types of appendices you will see in recommendation reports in this class include a list of survey or interview questions (especially if they do not appear in list form in the report itself) and large tables of data from an extended period of data collection. When their data serves a supplementary purpose, these materials are placed in an appendix rather than integrated into the report itself. If the information is interesting but not necessarily relevant to the purpose and audience of the report, then that information is kept separate.

Quoting

Direct quotations are portions of a text taken word-for-word and placed inside of another document. Readers know when an author is using a direct quote because it is denoted by the use of quotation marks and an in-text citation. In this section, you will learn when to use direct quotes and the rules for direct quotation.

When Should I Use Direct Quotes?

Generally speaking, direct quotes should be used sparingly because you want to rely on your own understanding of material and avoid over-relying on another's words. Over-quoting does not reinforce your credibility as an author; however, according to the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) you should use direct quotes when "the author you are quoting has coined a term unique to her or his research and relevant within your own paper."[3]

The Basics of Direct Quotation

For each direct quotation you use, be sure to observe the following steps:

1. Enclose the quoted material in quotation marks to set it off from the rest of the text. The exception to this rule is block (or long) quotes, which require different formatting.
2. Provide a word-for-word reproduction from the author's original text. If you need to alter wording or spelling, use an ellipsis or brackets.
3. Precede each quotation with a clear signal phrase/attribution tag. If the signal phrase is a complete sentence, you should use a colon as the punctuation between the signal phrase and the quotation. Otherwise, a comma is usually best.
4. Follow each quotation with a parenthetical citation.
5. Clearly interpret or integrate the text into your own argument so that your readers know how to understand the quotation within the context of your work. Quotations can't be left to speak for themselves (see "Integrating Quotes into Your Writing" later in this chapter).

Example:

> (MLA) In his seminal work, David Bartholomae argues, "Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion" (4).

---

[3] "How to Use Quotation Marks," Purdue Online Writing Lab, Accessed May 8, 2020, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/quotation_marks/index.html.

> Bartholomae uses this strong image to emphasize how important it is to instructors to understand students' perceptions of their audiences.

> (APA) In his seminal work, David Bartholomae (1986) argues, "Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion" (p. 4). Bartholomae uses this strong image to emphasize how important it is to instructors to understand students' perceptions of their audiences.

Note that in both examples the author encloses the entire quotation with quotation marks, provides a signal phrase, and offers a page number for the quoted material. With this information, a reader can consult the document's Works Cited (MLA) or References page (APA) to locate Bartholomae's original article.[4] Furthermore, the second sentence in each example connects the quotation to the argument by emphasizing the aspect of the quotation most relevant to the author's argument. In subsequent sentences, the writer may respond to Bartholomae, perhaps using his argument to further the writer's own, offering a counter argument, or even using a combination of these two approaches.

Block Quotations

Longer quoted passages are formatted using the block quote format. In MLA, you will use this format if the typed quotation is more than three lines long. In APA, quotations longer than 40 words use this format. In both citation styles, the quoted section is indented one half inch and is not enclosed by quotation marks. A longer signal phrase (usually a full sentence) precedes the long quotation. Parenthetical citation is placed at the very end of the quotation, after any final punctuation.

Whether you are using MLA or APA style, you want to maintain the same line-spacing for block quotes and the rest of your document. For example, most technical documents are single-spaced with a blank line between paragraphs, so your block quotes will be single-spaced as well. By contrast, in the traditional academic formatting you're likely familiar with from most of your college essays, block quotes and the rest of the document are double-spaced. Below is an example of a long quotation from Bartholomae's article in the block format in both MLA and APA styles, which maintains single-spacing in the writer's words and the block quotes.[5]

Example:

MLA: In his seminal work, David Bartholomae illustrates the thought process that college students must go through when they write for professors:

[4] David Bartholomae, "Inventing the University." *Journal of Basic Writing* 5, no. 3 (1986): 4.
[5] David Bartholomae, "Inventing the University." *Journal of Basic Writing* 5, no. 3 (1986): 4.

> Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion--invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community.(4)

Bartholomae uses the strong language of inventing to emphasize the importance of understanding how students may find it difficult to join in with unfamiliar academic discourses.

APA: In his seminal work, David Bartholomae (1986) illustrates the thought process that college students must go through when they write for professors:

> Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion--invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community.(p.4)

Bartholomae uses the strong language of inventing to emphasize the importance of understanding how students may find it difficult to join in with unfamiliar academic discourses.

Modifying Direct Quotations

Sometimes, in order to smoothly integrate quoted material into your paper, you may need to remove a word or add a word to make the quote make sense. If you make any change to quoted material, it must be formatted correctly using an **ellipsis** (**...**) or **brackets** (**[ ]**). Be sure not to use these alterations to change the meaning of the quotation. In the following, a portion of Hamlet's "To Be, or Not To Be" soliloquy[6] is used as the exemplar:

Original quote: "To be, or not to be, that is the question."

- Use an ellipsis (…) to indicate omissions in the middle of a quote:
  As Hamlet states, "To be, or not to be...is the question."
- Use brackets ([]) to change or add a word to the quote:
  As Hamlet states, "To be, or not to be, that is the [essential] question."

[6] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Norton Shakespeare, Vol II: Later Plays and Poems*, 3rd ed., eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzaane Gossett, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Gordon McMullan (New York and London: Norton, 2016), 3.1.55.

Paraphrasing, Summarizing, and Referencing

While quoting may be the first thing that many people think of when they think about integrating sources, paraphrasing, summarizing, and referencing data are also ways to incorporate information from outside materials into your essays or projects.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrases allow you to describe specific information from a source (ideas from a paragraph or several consecutive paragraphs) in your own words. Paraphrases of the text should be expressed in your own words, with your own sentence structure, in your own way. You should not simply “word swap” or replace a few words from the original text with synonyms. If you use a few of the author’s words within your paraphrase, place quotation marks around them.

Paraphrases are more common in number-driven fields such as sciences and social sciences than in text-based fields such as the humanities or sciences focusing on human subjects. However, while there is a difference between quoting and paraphrasing, how quotes and paraphrases are cited is really not that different at all. As with a quote, you need to explain to your reader why the paraphrased material is significant to the point you are making in your paper. You might also include signal phrases (also known as attributive tags) to let your readers know where the paraphrased material begins. Finally, as with quotations, paraphrased material should be followed by a parenthetical citation. Though APA only needs page numbers with quoted material, MLA requires page numbers for paraphrases as well (if the original source is paginated).

Summarizing

Summaries allow you to describe general ideas from a source. You do not express detailed information as you would with a paraphrase. If you are unsure whether you are summarizing or paraphrasing, compare your writing to the original. Can you identify a specific sentence, paragraph, or page number that discusses that information? If you are able to locate a specific point in the original text, then you are constructing a paraphrase and should include the appropriate page number or other marker. If your writing is dealing with a larger idea or argument that your source discusses throughout, then you have a summary. Therefore, there is no need to cite a specific page number, although you will, of course, attribute the summary to the source from which you are drawing it.

Like paraphrases, any summaries of the text should not include direct wording from the original source. All text should be in your own words, though the ideas are those of the original author. You should indicate the original source by using a signal phrase that identifies the author of the original text, or the title of the text if no author is available.

Referencing

A less commonly discussed but still ubiquitous method of using sources (especially in the sciences and social sciences) is called **referencing**. When you provide a reference in the main body of a document, you are signaling to the reader that the citation is an example of something you have just said without taking the time to analyze the content of the source. When a source is alluded to in this manner, the author signals that while this source is important in the chain of research, its particular findings or methods are not as relevant to the current document's purpose and audience.

Most often, you will see referencing early on as part of a literature review or introduction to the document. References are less common in analytical sections of reports and articles, but they may still appear if the author needs to make a quick point.

To employ a reference, observe the following guidelines:

1. Identify what the source or sources are doing as a whole.
2. Provide in-text parenthetical citations that support the claim made in part 1. These should go at the end of the claim.
3. Provide full citations in a Works Cited or References page at the end of the document.

   Example: Several studies on stress and engineering students focus specifically on intersectionality (Armani et al., 2003; Blackistone & Paige, 2010; Kim, 2015).

In the above example the writer offers a claim regarding the three sources provided in the in-text citation. The claim is that those three studies "focus specifically on intersectionality." Notice that the claim alludes to the general content of the cited articles and does not offer any additional analysis or page numbers. However, the combined claim and citations allow readers who are interested in this topic to more easily locate the three recommended sources. For the writer, referencing can show credibility and content expertise.

Integrating Information from Sources

Incorporating information from sources involves more than simply inserting quotations, paraphrase, or summary and including a bibliographic entry in your document. Introducing context for the information and integrating the information into your own sentences also forms a critical aspect of using sources successfully.

Signal Phrases

Academic writing requires the use of **signal phrases** (or attributive tags) to properly document quoted, paraphrased, and summarized material. Signal phrases require the use of the author's name and a strong verb. These phrases may also emphasize different types of information related to the source, such as the source's title or publisher, in order to further contextualize and guide your reader's response to the cited material.

When using MLA style, it is a good idea to provide a signal phrase as well as the author's first and last name when the author is first mentioned. Any future signal phrase should refer to the author by last name only, or with a pronoun when it is clear to whom the pronoun refers. For example, look at the three consecutive sentences below:

> Ellen J. Langer observes, "For us to pay attention to something for any amount of time, the image must be varied."[7]
>
> Langer continues, "Thus, for students who have trouble paying attention the problem may be that they are following the wrong instructions."[8]
>
> She then states, "To pay constant, fixed attention to a thought or an image may be a kind of oxymoron."[9]

Notice also how each signal phrase verb is followed by a comma, which is then followed by one space before the opening quotation mark.

In contrast, APA style guidelines require no reference to a first name at any point in a document and few, if any, gender-specific pronouns. In most instances, a signal phrase should contain only the last name of the author or authors of the source text (as opposed to the author's first and last name).

Using Strong Verbs in Signal Phrases

To avoid repetition, you will want to vary your verbs. Rather than simply using "states" throughout your entire document, offer a more specific verb that signals to the reader just how you are using the source. See Table 12.1 below for examples of strong signal-phrase verbs.

[7] Ellen J. Langer, *The Power of Mindful Learning*. (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1997), 39.
[8] Ellen J. Langer, *The Power of Mindful Learning*. (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1997), 39.
[9] Ellen J. Langer, *The Power of Mindful Learning*. (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1997), 39.

Table 7.1 Strong signal-phrase verbs.

Strong Signal-Phrase Verbs		
Acknowledges	Counters	Notes
Admits	Declares	Observes
Agrees	Denies	Points out
Argues	Disputes	Reasons
Asserts	Emphasizes	Refutes
Believes	Finds	Rejects
Claims	Illustrates	Reports
Compares	Implies	Responds
Confirms	Insists	Suggests
Comments	Maintains	Thinks
Contends	Mentions	Writes

Why Use Signal Phrases?

Signal phrases provide the audience with valuable insight into how you, the writer, intend the quoted material to be understood. In addition to setting up how you use the source and its reliability, signal phrases can also be used as meaningful transitions moving your readers between your ideas and those of your support.

While providing the author's credentials is the most common type of signal phrase, there are others you should be aware of. Table 12.2 below offers examples of common types of signal phrases and why you might use them in a document.

Table 7.2 Common signal phrases.

Type of Signal Phrase	Purpose	Example
Author's credentials are indicated.	Builds credibility for the passage you are about to present.	Grace Chapmen, Curator of Human Health & Evolutionary Medicine at the Springfield Natural History Museum, explains…
Author's lack of credentials is indicated.	Illustrates a lack of source's authority on the subject matter and persuades the audience not to adopt the author's ideas. Pointing to an author's lack of credentials can be beneficial when developing your response to counterarguments.	Matthew Smythe, whose background is in marriage counseling and not foreign policy, claims…
Author's social or political stance, if necessary to the content, is explained.	Helps a reader to understand why that author expresses a particular view. This understanding can positively or negatively influence an audience. ***Note:*** Be careful to avoid engaging in logical fallacies such as loaded language and ad hominems. See Chapter 4 for more information.	Employing nonviolent civil disobedience, Roland Hayes, prominent civil rights activist, preaches… Richard Spencer, who takes credit for the term "alt-right," denies…
Publisher of the source is identified.	Reinforces the credibility of the information presented by utilizing the reputation and credibility of the publisher of the source material. ***Note:*** When only referencing the publisher, make sure to include a parenthetical in-text citation identifying the author (or title, if no author is available) at the end of the cited material.	According to a recent *CNN*
Title of the Source is included.	Informs the reader where the cited passage is being pulled from. This is especially useful if the author has multiple publications or if the publication is particularly well-known.	In "Understanding Human Behavior," Riley argues …

Information that establishes context is presented.	Clarifies the author's purpose. Offers more information on the original circumstances for the quotation.	In a speech presented during the Boston Free Speech Rally, Elaine Wallace encourages…

Integrating Quotations, Paraphrase, and Summary into Your Writing

As the author of your document, you should explain the significance of information you cite to your reader. This practice goes beyond simply including a signal phrase. Explaining the significance means indicating how the quoted, paraphrased, or summarized material supports the point you are making in that paragraph. Remember, just because you add a source does not mean that you have made your point. Raw data, whether in numbers or words, never speak for themselves. When referring to outside material, ask yourself how and why that information makes the point you think it does. Below are some helpful phrases for explaining referenced materials ("X" represents the author's last name):

- **Signal phrase + content (quoted/paraphrased/summarized material).** X demonstrates that __.
- **Signal phrase + content.** Here, X is not simply stating _____; she is also demonstrating ______.
- **Signal phrase + content.** This [point/concept/idea] is an example of _____because _________.
- **Signal phrase + content.** This [statement/example] clearly shows _______because _________.

Allow your voice—not a quote from a source—to begin each paragraph, precede each quote, follow each quote, and end each paragraph. In other words, never start a sentence or end a paragraph in someone else's words. Quotes that are integrated well into a document allow you to control the content. That is what a reader wants to see: your ideas and the way that you engage sources to shape and discuss your ideas.

Citations

Citations can be confusing. There are many different citation styles and not many concrete rules about when to use a particular style. Your professor may indicate which citation style you should use. Generally, certain citation styles tend to correspond with certain fields of study, though sometimes specific areas within a discipline or field will choose differently—linguistics, commonly grouped with English departments, for instance, will often use APA, despite most English literature and rhetoric journals using MLA or Chicago. Table 12.3 provides some general guidelines for correlation between citation styles and disciplines.

Table 7.3 Citation styles commonly used in disciplines

Citation Style	Associated Disciplines
American Psychological Association (APA)	Social sciences and education
Modern Language Association (MLA)	Humanities and arts
Chicago	Humanities and arts
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)	Engineering
Council of Science Editors (CSE)	Science
American Medical Association (AMA)	Biomedical sciences

The formatting of these citation styles is not arbitrary; each format reflects the values and priorities of their corresponding fields. For example, the year of publication is emphasized much more heavily in APA because that indicates how current the research is. For instance, research on treating cancer from the 1970s may not hold up today. MLA, by contrast, does not emphasize the year, because this is not as important a concern as the text's title for fields like literature. The final arbiter of the citation style to use is the target audience: check with your professor or your intended publisher.

Citation Tip: You can find detailed information about how to format a citation in these styles by consulting the latest Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, for APA citations, the most recent copy of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, or the current Chicago Manual of Style. You should be able to find copies of these publications in the reference section of your library. You can also obtain guidance on formatting citations from the Texas A&M University Libraries' "Citing and Writing" guides.[10]

However, just knowing what citation style is used doesn't always clear up the confusion. Each different form of information is cited differently. The most common forms that you will encounter are books, chapters in books, journal articles, and websites.

Take a look at the citations on the following pages. You can see that there are differences between citation styles. You can also see that each information format contains different elements. When you try to determine whether a citation is for a book, book chapter, or journal, think about the elements inherent in each of these formats. For example, a journal article appears in a journal that is published in a volume and issue. If you see volume and issue numbers in the citation, you can assume that the citation is

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[10] 10 "Citing and Writing," Texas A&M University Libraries: Research Guides, https://tamu.libguides.com/citingandwriting?b=g&d=a&group_id=12426

for a journal article. A book chapter in a volume of collected essays is usually written by a different author from the editors of the whole book. Finally, a whole book is often the easiest citation to decipher. It contains the fewest elements.

APA Quick Reference

Properly formatted APA citations include two main elements: the reference list entry and the in-text citation. Below you will find sample citations for a variety of commonly used reference types. For additional questions, consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.) [11]

Reference List

The reference list is found at the end of your document, and it includes all of the sources used when developing your paper or project. References are listed in alphabetical order by the author's last name, and each reference will have a hanging indent to make it easier to visually distinguish between each reference.

No Author

If there is no author, the title moves into the place of the author. The reference should then be alphabetized by the first word in the title within the reference list. If the first word is an article ("a," "an," or "the"), alphabetize according to the second word. If the first word is a number, alphabetize according to the spelling of the number. (For example, if the first word is "665," you would alphabetize it as if it were "six-hundred and sixty-five."

Example:

Down the Line. (1895). In *The Olio: An Annual* (pp. 54-58). The Corps of Cadets of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas.

Single Author

In APA style, when there is a single author, you should list them with the last name first, followed by the first and (if available) middle initial.

Example:

Clark, D. T. (2009). Lending Kindle e-book readers: First results from the Texas A&M University project. *Collection Building*, *28*(4), 146-149. https://doi.org/10.1108/01604950910999774

Two Authors

When there are two authors, list both and connect them with an ampersand (&). Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

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[11] American Psychological Association, "The Official Guide to APA Style," *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th Ed. (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2019).

Example:

Rutledge, L., & LeMire, S. (2016). Beyond disciplines: Providing outreach to underserved groups by demographic. *Public Services Quarterly*, *12*(2), 113-124. https://doi.org/10.1080/15228959.2016.1157565

Three to Twenty Authors

When there are between three and twenty authors, list each one and use an ampersand (&) before the final author. Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

Example:

LeMire, S., Graves, S. J., Hawkins, M., & Kailani, S. (2018). Libr-AR-y Tours: Increasing engagement and scalability of library tours using augmented reality. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, *25*(3), 261-279. https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2018.1480445

Twenty-One or More Authors

When there are more than twenty authors, list the first 19 authors, then add an ellipsis (…) and the last author's name. The ellipsis (…) will take the place of author names between author number 19 and the final author. Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

Example:

Agnese, R., Anderson, A. J., Asai, M., Balakishiyeva, D., Thakur, R. B., Bauer, D. A., Beaty, J., Billard, J., Borgland, A, Bowles, M.A., Brandt, D., Brink, P.L., Bunker, R., Cabrera, B., Caldwell, D.O., Cerdeno, D.G., Chagani, H., Chen, Y., Cherry, M., ... Zhang, J. (2014). Search for low-mass weakly interacting massive particles with SuperCDMS. *Physical Review Letters*, *112*(24), 241-302. https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevLett.112.241302

Institutional Author

Sometimes the author isn't a person–instead, the source is authored by an organization. In this case, you'll list the organization as the author.

Example:

Texas A&M University. (2019). *Aggie traditions.* https://www.tamu.edu/traditions/index.html

Book

Books list the author, followed by the year, and then the title in italics. The title is in **sentence case**, which means that you only capitalize the first word, any proper nouns, and the first word after a colon or period. APA also includes the publisher's name. If the book is accessed electronically, also include the digital object identifier (doi). Figure 12.1 illustrates the components of a book citation in APA format.

Example:

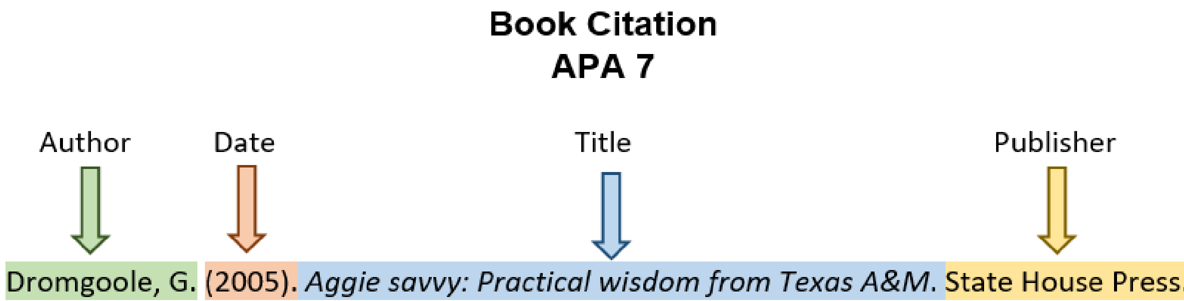

Figure 7.1. Book citation.[12]

Article from a Database

Articles from online databases like Google Scholar or EBSCO include the author names, year of publication, and article title in sentence case. For the journal title, follow the capitalization provided by the journal itself. The journal title and the volume number are in italics. The issue is in parentheses, followed by the page range.

To help the reader access the article, always include the doi (permanent url) if one is available. It is generally listed near the top of the article. It may appear as doi: or https://dx.doi.org/ followed by a sequence of numbers and/or letters. The doi number typically starts with the number 10, as in the example below. If there is a doi available, include it in your citation using the format https://doi.org/[insert doi number]. Figure 12.2 illustrates the components of a journal article citation in APA format.

Example:

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[12] Adapted by Sarah LeMire from Deborah Bernnard, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, and Daryl Bullis, *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, edited by Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson. (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), 56, http://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

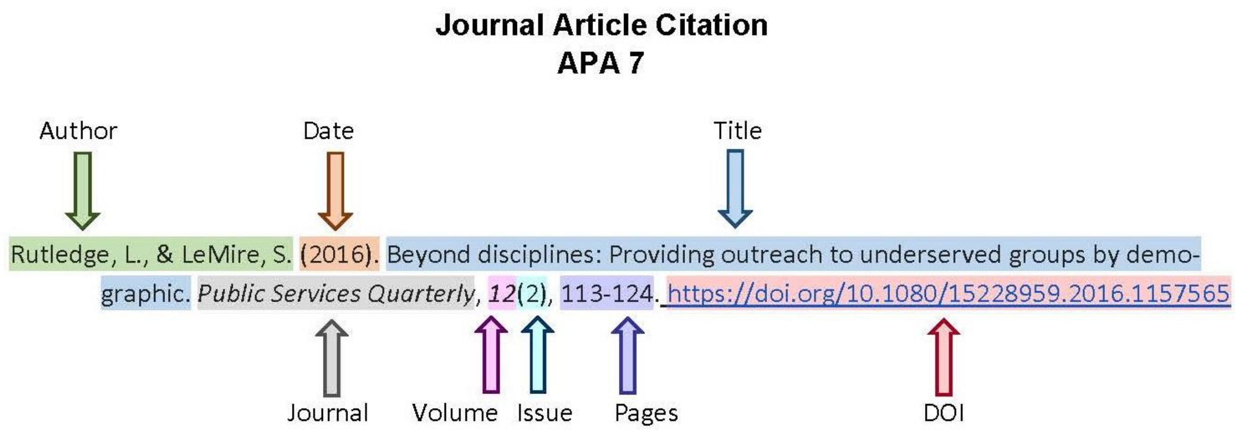


Figure 7.2. Journal article citation.[13]

Newspaper article

If a newspaper article is found in a database such as *Newspaper Source* or *Access World News*, do not include the database name or URL. If the article is found through the open web, include the URL.

If an article is from an online newspaper (for example, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*), italicize the name of the newspaper. If the article is from an online news website (e.g. BBC News, CNN, Reuters), italicize the name of the article and not the site.

Example from an online newspaper:

Boren, C. (2018, November 25). It took seven overtimes for Texas A&M to beat LSU in the craziest college football game of the year. *Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2018/11/25/it-took-seven-overtimes-texas-am-beat-lsu-craziest-college-football-game-year/

Example from an online news website:

[13] Adapted by Sarah LeMire from Deborah Bernnard, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, and Daryl Bullis, *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, edited by Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson. (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), 57, http://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Holcombe, M. (2019, July 18). *Texas A&M's new program opens the door to college education for students with disabilities.* CNN. (https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/18/us/texas-am-program-disabilities/index.html)

Website

Example:

Texas A&M University Division of Student Affairs. (2019). *Residence life*. https://reslife.tamu.edu/

YouTube video

Example:

Texas A&M University. (2019, September 8). *Fearless on every front* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlRup0e8kTk

Interview

In APA format, an unpublished interview is not included in the reference list. This is because the interview is not available for the reader to view. Instead, interviews are cited only in-text.

Lecture

In APA format, if you are citing your professor's lecture slides or content, you should point the reader to a digital copy of that content if possible. If housed in a course management system, direct the reader to the login page for that system.

Example:

Pantuso, T. (2019, September 10). *Visual rhetoric* [PowerPoint slides]. eCampus. https://ecampus.tamu.edu/

In-Text Citations

APA in-text citations use the last name(s) of the author(s), followed by a comma and the year of publication. If using a direct quotation, also include the page number where that quotation can be found. The abbreviation "p." precedes any page numbers. These items are all separated by commas.

In APA format, you can also embed the in-text quotation directly into your sentence (e.g. Smith (2001) found that…), which then obviates the need for a parenthetical at the end of the sentence, except in the case of a direct quotation.

No Author

As with the reference list, the in-text citation will use the title if there is no author available. Use the first few words of the title if it is long and place it in quotation marks.

Example:

(“Down the Line,” 1895).

Single Author

Example 1 (no direct quotation):

(Clark, 2009)

Example 2 (direct quotation):

(Clark, 2009, p. 42)

Two Authors

When there are two authors, list the last names of both connected by an ampersand (&). Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

Example:

(Rutledge & LeMire, 2016).

Three or More Authors

When there are three or more authors, list the first author’s last name, followed by *et al*. This is a Latin phrase meaning “and others” and used in some citation formats as a way to abbreviate a list of names. Notice that the switch to “et al.” occurs after three authors when using in-text citations. In your References list, you will include up to twenty authors.

Example:

(Tribble et al., 2002).

Institutional Author

As with the reference list, you’ll list the organization as the author in the in-text citation.

Example:

(Texas A&M University, 2019).

MLA Quick Reference

Just like APA format, properly formatted MLA citations include two main elements: the Works Cited entry and the in-text citation. Below you will find sample citations for a variety of commonly-used reference types. For additional questions, consult the *MLA Handbook (8th ed.).*[14]

Works Cited

The Works Cited page operates just like the Reference list in APA format. It is found at the end of your paper or project, and it includes all of the sources used when developing your paper or project. References are listed in alphabetical order by the author's last name, and each reference will have a hanging indent to make it easier to visually distinguish between each reference.

No Author

If there is no author, the title moves into the place of the author. The reference should then be alphabetized by the first word in the title within the reference list.

Example:

"Down the Line." *The Olio: An Annual,* The Corps of Cadets of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, 1895, pp. 54-58.

Single Author

In MLA style, when there is a single author, you should list them with the last name first, followed by the full first and (if available) middle name or initial.

Example:

Clark, Dennis T. "Lending Kindle e-Book Readers: First Results from the Texas A&M University Project." *Collection Building*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2009, pp. 146-149. *Google Scholar*, doi:10.1108/01604950910999774.

Two Authors

When there are two authors, list the first author with their last name first, followed by their first name and (if available) middle name or initial. The name order is reversed with the second author, and the word *and* connects the two. Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

[14] The Modern Language Association of America, *MLA Handbook*, 8th edition (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2016).

Example:

Rutledge, Lorelei, and Sarah LeMire. "Beyond Disciplines: Providing Outreach to Underserved Groups by Demographic." *Public Services Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2016, pp. 113-124. *Library and Information Science Source*, doi:10.1080/15228959.2016.1157565.

Three or More Authors

When there are more than three authors, list the first author's last name, then first name, followed by *et al*. This is a Latin phrase meaning "and others" and is used in some citation formats as a way to abbreviate a list of names.

Example:

LeMire, Sarah, et al. "Libr-AR-y Tours: Increasing engagement and scalability of library tours using augmented reality." *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2018, pp. 261-279. *Google Scholar*, doi:10.1080/10691316.2018.1480445.

Institutional Author

Sometimes the author of a document isn't a person—instead, the text is produced by an organization or institution. In this case, you will list the organization as the author. If the organization and the publisher are the same, only list the organization as the publisher and omit the author entirely. The title will be the first item listed and will also be used for any parenthetical citations. Do not put the institution in Last Name, First Name format.

Example (different author and publisher):

Texas A&M ENGL 210 OER Committee. *Howdy or Hello?: Technical and Professional Communication*. Texas A&M University Department of English and Texas A&M University Libraries, 2020.

Example (same author and publisher):

MLA Handbook. Modern Language Association of America, 2016.

Book

In MLA format, books list the author, followed by the title in italics. The title should be in **title case**, which means that all major words are capitalized. MLA, unlike APA, does not typically include the place of publication. If the book is accessed electronically, note that it is an e-book (usually after the title). Figure 12.3 illustrates the components of a book citation in MLA format.

Example:

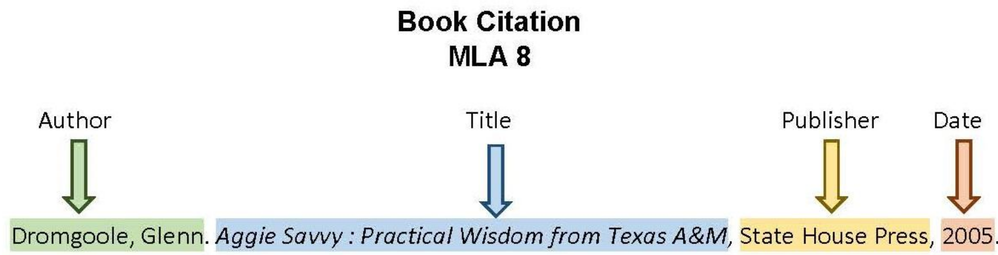
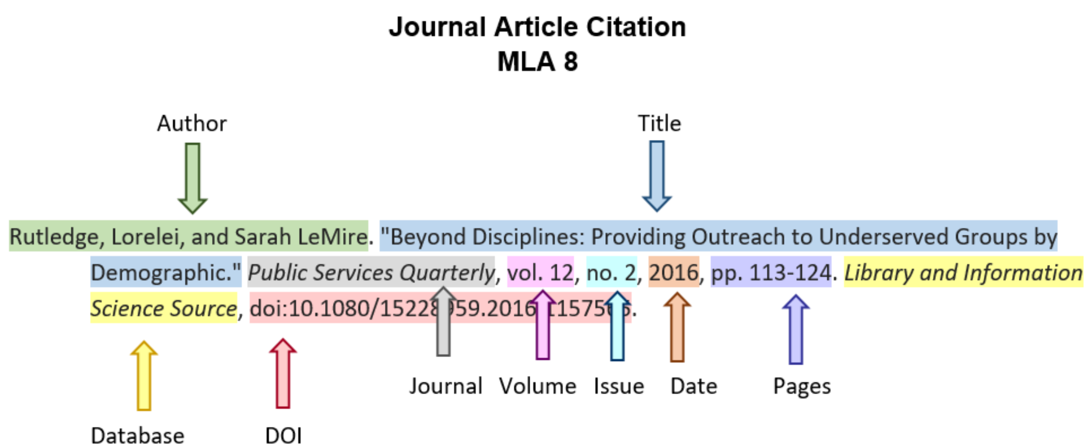


Figure 12.3. Book citation MLA 8. [15]

Article from Database

You will commonly access articles from online databases like Google Scholar or EBSCO, as opposed to finding them directly via a journal or in print. In this case, MLA format requires that you include the name of the article, the name of the journal, *and* the name of the database in your citation. Figure 12.4 illustrates the components of a journal article citation in MLA format.

Example:



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[15] Adapted by Sarah LeMire from Deborah Bernnard, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, and Daryl Bullis, *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, edited by Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson. (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), 56, http://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Figure 7.4. Journal article citation MLA 8.[16]

> ***Note:*** It can be tricky to figure out which database your source came from. As depicted in Figure 12.5, if you're searching in the Texas A&M University Libraries' Quick Search, the database name will appear in your results list.

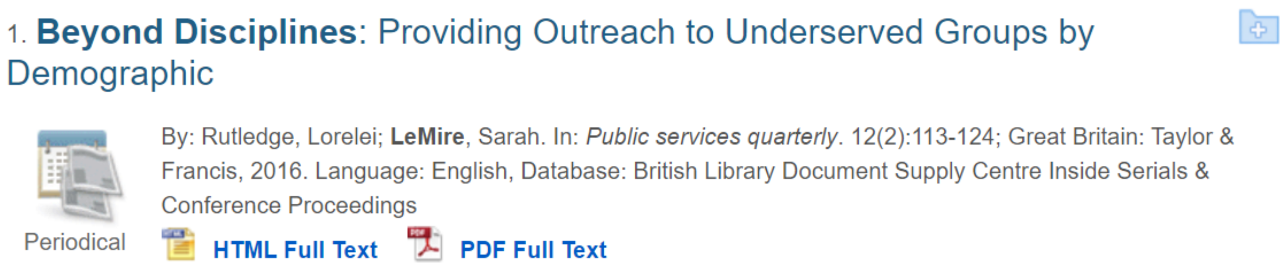

Figure 7.5. Database name in TAMU Libraries search results.[17]

Newspaper article

Example:

Boren, Cindy. "It Took Seven Overtimes for Texas A&M to Beat LSU in the Craziest College Football Game of the Year," *Washington Post*, 15 Nov. 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2018/11/25/it-took-seven-overtimes-texas-am-beat-lsu-craziest-college-football-game-year/ Accessed 6 Jul. 2019.

Website

Example:

"About us." *Aggie Shields*, 2019, www.aggieshields.org/about-us/

YouTube video

Example:

"Fearless on Every Front." *YouTube*, uploaded by Texas A&M University, 8 Sept. 3016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlRup0e8kTk

Interview

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[16] Adapted by Sarah LeMire from Deborah Bernnard, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, and Daryl Bullis, *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, edited by Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson. (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014), 57, http://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

[17] "Database Name in TAMU Libraries Search Results" is a screen capture of the Texas A&M University Libraries catalog search results listing at https://libcat.tamu.edu/vwebv/searchAdvanced.

Unlike APA style, MLA does include unpublished interviews in the Works Cited. Key details to include are the name of the person interviewed and the date of the interview.

Example:

Anders, Kathy. Personal interview. 14 Jul. 2019.

Lecture

MLA format also includes lectures and lecture slides in the Works Cited.

Example:

Pantuso, Terri. "Visual Rhetoric." English 104, 10 Sept. 2019, Texas A&M University. Lecture.

MLA In-Text Citations

MLA in-text citations use the last name(s) of the author(s)—up to two—followed by a space and the page number for the source material, when available. Do not use commas to separate this information. Only use the page number if the source is paginated (e.g. a book chapter or article that has a page number in the corner). Do not include a page number for web sources that are not paginated.

In MLA format, you can also embed the author name directly into your sentence (e.g. Smith found that…), in which case the parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence should include only the page number.

No Author

As with the Works Cited entry, the in-text citation will use the title if there is no author available. Use the first few words of the title if it is long, and place it in quotation marks.

Example:

("Down the Line" 56).

Single Author

Example:

(Clark 146)

Two Authors

When there are two authors, list the last names of both connected by the word *and*. Be sure to keep the authors in the order in which they appear on the source.

Example:

(Rutledge and LeMire 113).

Three or More Authors

When there are more than three authors, list the first author's last name, followed by *et al*. This is a Latin phrase meaning "and others" and is used in some citation formats as a way to abbreviate a list of names.

Example:

(LeMire et al. 261).

Institutional Author

As with the reference list, you'll list the organization as the author in the in-text citation.

Example 1 (document is paginated):

(Texas A&M University 14).

Example 2 (document is not paginated):

(Texas A&M University).

This text was derived from

Deborah Bernnard, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, and Daryl Bullis. *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, edited by Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson. Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014. http://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Pantuso, Terri, and Sarah LeMire and Kathy Anders, eds. *Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University, 2019. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Deborah Bernnard, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, Daryl Bullis, Yvonne Bruce, Claire Carly-Miles, Kathy Anders, Nicole Hagstrom-Schmidt, Kalani Pattison, and Matt McKinney

Deborah Bernnard, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, and Daryl Bullis. *The Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open, Online Textbook*, edited by Greg Bobish and Trudi Jacobson. Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, Milne Library, 2014). http://textbooks.opensuny.org/the-information-literacy-users-guide-an-open-online-textbook/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Pantuso, Terri, and Sarah LeMire and Kathy Anders, eds. *Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University, 2019. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Bruce, Yvonne. "Using Sources Ethically." *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, Eds. Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel, ebook, MSL Academic

Endeavors. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/9-1-what-is-plagiarism/ Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Kathryn Crowther, Lauren Curtright, Nancy Gilbert, Barbara Hall, Tracienne Ravita, Kirk Swenson, Robin Jeffrey, Amanda Lloyd, John Lanning, Melanie Gagich, Matt McKinney, Nicole Hagstrom-Schmidt, Kalani Pattison, and Claire Carly-Miles

Gagich, Melanie. "Quoting," licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. In Gagich, Melanie and Emilie Zickel. *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*.

MSL Academic Endeavors. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Lanning, John, and Amanda Lloyd. "Signal Phrases and Attributive Tags," licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. In Gagich, Melanie and Emilie Zickel. *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*. MSL Academic Endeavors. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Jeffrey, Robin. "Paraphrasing and Summarizing." In Gagich, Melanie and Emilie Zickel. *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*. MSL Academic Endeavors. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Crowther, Kathryn, Lauren Curtright, Nancy Gilbert, Barbara Hall, Tracienne Ravita, and Kirk Swenson. *Successful College Composition*. 2nd ed. (English Open Textbooks, 2016). https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/english-textbooks/8/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Pantuso, Terri, and Sarah LeMire and Kathy Anders, eds. *Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University, 2019. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Deborah Bernnard, Greg Bobish, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney, Daryl Bullis, Sarah LeMire, Matt McKinney, Nicole Hagstrom-Schmidt, and Kalani Pattison

Chapter 9

Communicating Across Cultures

The goal of this chapter is to consider the current cultural perspective where you have been writing and begin to think about readers and colleagues from another culture. This is a start of the conversation, to be sure; it is not meant to be an exhaustive examination of culture(s). Rather, the intent is to start where you are—with a product of technical communication you have created this term, for context, with your own current cultural understanding(s)—and to reconsider your own perspective and how it affects your technical writing process.

This chapter begins with understanding culture as a construct and then examines your own influences and contexts. Later in the chapter, the focus is looking at relationships between cultures and, at times, considering cultural revisions in context of your own writing.

Understanding Culture

Let us begin with this working definition:

Culture consists of the shared beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, values, and assumptions shared by an identified group of people.

In technical writing context, an "identified group of people" could be as identified through prewriting work. After you read each of the following five items. As you do, think about these in terms of classroom expectations. Then, think about these in terms of any workplace experiences you have. Are there any difference or similarities? How did you learn these conventions?

As you work through this chapter, remember these five things about culture:

1. **It is learned.** Geert Hofstede views culture as consisting of mental programs, calling it *softwares of the mind*, meaning each person "carries within him or herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting which were learned throughout their lifetime." Similarly, Peter Senge argues that mental models lock individuals and groups into a specific perception about the world. Like a computer, we are programed to act or behave in certain ways. The conscious and unconscious learning we undergo, over time, turns into beliefs that we consider to be valid. We then teach each other that these beliefs are cultural norms, and they are then expressed in our daily lives as behaviors and actions.
2. **It is shared.** Although you may think of yourself as an individual, you share beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, traditions, and assumptions with people who grew up or live in similar cultural backgrounds. It is easier for you to relate to someone who has shared value systems and ways of doing things than someone who does not share the same values. The patterns of culture bind us together and enable us to get along with each other.
3. **It is dynamic.** Culture is dynamic and thus complex. Culture is fluid rather than static, which means that culture changes every day, in subtle and tangible ways.

Because humans communicate and express their cultural systems in a variety of ways, it can be hard to pinpoint exactly what cultural dynamics are at play. It is important to pay attention to the cultural context of a communication to understand the depths of its dynamic properties.

4. **It is systemic.** In systems theory, systems are interrelated interconnected parts that create a whole. There are patterns of behavior, deeply rooted structural systems, which are beneath the waterline. What we see at the top of the iceberg are the behaviors; we do not see what contributes to those behaviors. To address the system, one must be able to address the underlining patterns. These patterns, because they are deeply embedded in the system, will take up significant effort, time, and resources. Changes to the system are slow and gradual; visible changes may not appear until months, or even years, later.
5. **It is symbolic.** Symbols are both verbal and nonverbal in form within cultural systems, and they have a unique way of linking human beings to each other. Humans create meaning between symbols and what they represent; as a result, different interpretations of a symbol can occur in different cultural contexts.

Understanding Cultural Context

Before you move forward in addressing other cultures, take a quick survey to see where you identify individually. Erin Meyer, in her book *The Culture Map: Breaking through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business*, explores not just expectations and understandings informed by culture but also how different cultural context thresholds affect transcultural communication.

For starters, you might take Meyer's self-assessment questionnaire: What's Your Cultural Profile.

Take a moment to reflect on your results. Is there anything you learned that you did not know about your cultural profile? Is there anything you do not understand about the results? This is a good place to share via discussion with your colleagues about what you found and see if you have any obvious similarities with anyone in your class that you may not have known before.

Now that you have a partial idea of your cultural profile, take a moment to watch these two videos. First, in this YouTube video, Meyer discusses context: "Low Context vs High Context Societies." Next, view this video from Meyer's webpage that discusses "upgraders" and "downgraders" and their role in culture and disagreement: "Lost in Translation."

In technical writing, we often conduct a piece of communication for a given reader, but how often do you think about the primary reader's culture? What would you change in the communication if the reader has a different cultural threshold? How much thought do you put into colors, layout, and language? Are there different instances where you need to build a relationship or be more direct, more visual?

Deepening Cultural Understanding

In technical writing, it is further important to understand cultural communication because, like other cultural systems, organizational culture controls the behavior, values, assumptions, and beliefs of organizational members. It is a combination of organizational members' own beliefs and the values, beliefs, and assumptions of the organization. It is the role of the organizational leader, as a change agent, to help create a positive organizational culture that meets the demands of a competitive environment, board and shareholder expectations, and employee career satisfaction.

As a professional communicator in contemporary society, you need to be aware that the very concept of community is undergoing a fundamental transformation.

Think about two different times you have been part of two different communities concurrently (for example, even different classes in the same term). What were some of the differences in how communication functioned in the respective environments? What affected those differences? Subject? Instructor? Peers? Style of class?

Intercultural and international business communication has taken on a new role for students as well as career professionals.

Global business is more than trade between companies located in distinct countries; indeed, that concept is already outdated. Intercultural and international business focuses less on the borders that separate people and more on the communication that brings them together. Business communication values clear, concise interaction that promotes efficiency and effectiveness. You may perceive your role as a communicator within a specific city, business, or organization, but you need to be aware that your role crosses cultures, languages, value and legal systems, and borders.

However, it is important to know we are still working with human constructs. From the building we erect that represents design values to the fences we install that delineate borders, our environment is a representation of culture, but it is not all that is culture. Culture involves beliefs, attitudes, values, and traditions that are shared by a group of people, as well as the psychological aspects of our expectations of the communication context.

Pick an assignment from this class that you think might fit for a cultural revision. This might be something you do as an individual or something you select from work a colleague has done.

- Through research, discussion, or any other method, select a culture that you will want to amend this piece of communication for. In other words, change the culture of the primary reader of your communication.
- Conduct any other research that will allow you to learn more about the changes you might need to make to better allow your new primary reader to take action.
- What would you change about that document to fit a primary reader from a different culture?

Defining Intercultural Communication

In defining intercultural communication, there are eight components of communication to work with and yet the writer still must represent holistic meaning. It may be tempting to consider only the (1) source and (2) receiver within a transaction as a representation of intercultural communication, but doing so could mean missing the other six components—(3) message, (4) channel, (5) feedback, (6) context, (7) environment, and (8) interference—in every communicative act. Each component influences and is influenced by culture. Culture is represented in all eight components with every communication. In this context, all communication is intercultural.

It may be tempting to think of intercultural communication as interaction between two people from different countries. While two distinct national passports may be artifacts, or nonverbal representations of communication, what happens when two people from two different parts of the same country communicate? From high and low Germanic dialects, to the perspective of a Southerner versus a Northerner in the United States, to the rural versus urban dynamic, geographic, linguistic, educational, sociological, and psychological traits influence communication. It is not enough to say that someone from rural Southern Chile and the capital, Santiago, both speak *Castellano* (the Chilean word for the Spanish language), so that communication between them must be intracultural communication, or communication within the same culture. What is life like for the rural Southerner? For the city dweller? Were their educational experiences the same? Do they share the same vocabulary? Do they value the same things? To a city dweller, all the sheep look the same. To the rural Southerner, the sheep are distinct, with unique markings; they have value as a food source, a source of wool with which to create sweaters and socks that keep the cold winters at bay, and in their numbers they represent wealth. Even if both Chileans speak the same language, their socialization will influence how they communicate and what they value, and their vocabulary will reflect these differences.

Take this intranational comparison a step further. Within the same family, can there be intercultural communication? If all communication is intercultural, then the answer would be yes. Imagine a three-generation family living in one house. The grandparents may represent another time and different values from the grandchildren. The parents may have a different level of education and pursue different careers from the grandparents; the schooling the children are receiving may prepare them for yet another career. From music, to food preferences, to how work is done may vary across time; Elvis Presley may seem like ancient history to the children.

The communication across generations represents intercultural communication, even if only to a limited degree. But suppose you have a group who are all similar in age and educational level. Do gender and the societal expectations of roles influence interaction? Of course. And so among these students not only do the boys and girls communicate in distinct ways but also not all boys and girls are the same. With a group of sisters, there may be common characteristics, but they will still have differences, and these differences contribute to intercultural communication. We are each shaped by our upbringing and it influences our worldview, what we value, and how we interact with each other. We create culture, and it creates us.

Revisit the revised audience analysis exercise from the previous **Try This**. For the target assignment and primary reader of a new cultural context, **If you were to have to**

resubmit this document in a different culture with a different context threshold, what would you do in the revision?

Now, take it a step further: If you were a supervisor for this document, and the author / writer were of another culture, how would you make your revision suggestions? How would you communicate those decisions across a different context threshold?

Culture is part of the very fabric of our thought, and we cannot separate ourselves from it, even as we leave home, defining ourselves 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. We 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 behavior and interaction. Now, change that context of a piece of communication leaving your computer. Who will read it? Who could read it? What will your colleagues or readers of another culture take from it—intended or not?

Sometimes, the focus of technical communication is quite easy; the primary reader is clearly targeted through demographic research. But, think about how much more effective, more dynamic, a communication could be if the writer considered the potential cultural perspectives at work when the document is read.

Attribution:

This chapter was derived from:

Merck, Billy. Portland Community College.

Chapter 10.1

Progress Reports

You write a progress report to inform a supervisor, associate, or client about progress you have made on a project over a specific period of time. Periodic progress reports are common on projects that go on for several months (or more). Whoever is paying for this project wants to know whether tasks are being completed on schedule and on budget. If the project is not on schedule or on budget, they want to know why and what additional costs and time will be needed.

Progress reports answer the following questions for the reader:

- How much of the work is complete?
- What part of the work is currently in progress?
- What work remains to be done?
- When and how will the remaining work be completed?
- What changes, problems or unexpected issues, if any, have arisen?
- How is the project going in general?

Purpose of a Progress Report

The main function of a progress report is persuasive: to reassure clients and supervisors that you are making progress, that the project is going smoothly, and that it will be completed by the expected date — or to give reasons why any of those might not be the case. They also offer the opportunity to do the following:

- Provide a brief look at preliminary findings or in-progress work on the project
- Give your clients or supervisors a chance to evaluate your work on the project and to suggest or request changes
- Give you a chance to discuss problems in the project and thus to forewarn the recipients
- Force you to establish a work schedule, so that you will complete the project on time.

Format of a Progress Report

Depending on the size of the progress report, the length and importance of the project, and the recipient, a progress report can take forms ranging from a short informal conversation to a detailed, multi-paged report. Most commonly, progress reports are delivered in following forms:

- **Memo**: a short, semi-formal report to someone within your organization (can range in length from 1-4 pages)
- **Letter**: a short, semi-formal report sent to someone outside your organization
- **Formal report:** a long, formal report sent to someone within or outside of your organization

- **Presentation**: an oral presentation given directly to the target audience.

Organizational Patterns for Progress Reports

The recipient of a progress report wants to see what you've accomplished on the project, what you are working on now, what you plan to work on next, and how the project is going in general. The information is usually arranged with a focus either on time or on task, or a combination of the two:

- **Focus on time:** shows time period (previous, current, and future) and tasks completed or scheduled to be completed in each period
- **Focus on specific tasks:** shows order of tasks (defined milestones) and progress made in each time period
- **Focus on larger goals**: focus on the overall effect of what has been accomplished.

Information can also be arranged by report topic. You should refer to established milestones or deliverables outlined in your original proposal or job specifications. Whichever organizational strategy you choose, your report will likely contain the elements described below.

1. Introduction

Review the details of your project's purpose, scope, and activities. The introduction may also contain the following:

- date the project began; date the project is scheduled to be completed
- people or organization working on the project
- people or organization for whom the project is being done
- overview of the contents of the progress report.

2. Project status

This section (which could have sub-sections) should give the reader a clear idea of the current status of your project. It should review the work completed, work in progress, and work remaining to be done on the project, organized into sub-sections by time, task, or topic. These sections might include

- Direct reference to milestones or deliverables established in previous documents related to the project
- Timeline for when remaining work will be completed
- Any problems encountered or issues that have arisen that might affect completion, direction, requirements, or scope.

3. Conclusion

The final section provides an overall assessment of the current state of the project and its expected completion, usually reassuring the reader that all is going well and on schedule. It can also alert recipients to unexpected changes in direction or scope, or problems in the project that may require intervention.

Attribution

This chapter was derived from:

Chapter 10.2

Recommendation Reports

A recommendation report starts from a stated need. From there, it offers a selection of solution options, presents a detailed comparative analysis of the options, and then recommends one, some, or none. For example, a company might be looking at grammar-checking software and want a recommendation on which product is the best fit for them. As the report writer on this project, you could study the market for this type of application and recommend one particular product, two or three possible products (differing perhaps in their strengths and their weaknesses), or none (maybe none of them are appropriate for the client's specific needs). The recommendation report answers the question "Which option should we choose?" (or in some cases "Which are the best options?) by recommending Product B, or maybe both Products B and C, or none of the products. These recommendations might arise from questions such as

- What should we do about Problem X?
- What is the best way to provide Function or Service A?
- Should we use Technology X or Technology Y to perform Function Z?

In this chapter you will learn how to compose a recommendation report. Specifically, you will learn about the expected content and format for a recommendation report, and a related genre, the feasibility report. This chapter also includes a breakdown and discussion of typical sections of recommendation reports. Finally, the chapter concludes with advice on how to use criteria, decision matrices, and decision trees to objectively evaluate solutions, products, or services in recommendation and feasibility reports.

Typical Contents of Recommendation and Feasibility Reports

The major difference between recommendation and feasibility reports is whether you are researching and devising potential solutions to a problem, or evaluating a variety of predetermined solutions for logistics, efficiency, efficacy, and cost-effectiveness. Both recommendation and feasibility reports end in a section that makes a recommendation for a decision or course of action. Whatever variety of feasibility or recommendation report you write, most of the sections and the organization of those sections are roughly the same.

In the research-based type of recommendation or feasibility reports, you provide not only your recommendation, choice, or judgment, but also the data, analysis, discussion, and conclusions leading to it. Your readers can use this information to check your findings, your logic, and your conclusions, thus ensuring that your methodology was sound and that they can agree with your recommendation. Your goal is to convince the reader to agree with you by using your careful research, detailed analysis, rhetorical style, and documentation. Without sufficient understanding of your project design and methods, your audience may not trust your final conclusions and recommendations, or they may do at least some of the work over again before making a decision or implementing your recommendation.

The general problem-solving approach for a Recommendation Report entails the steps shown in Table 9.1 below.

Table 9.1 Typical recommendation report elements.

Typical Recommendation Report Elements	
1. Identify the need.	What is the situation that needs to be improved?
2. Establish the criteria for responding to the need.	What is the overall goal? What are the specific, measurable objectives any solution should achieve? What constraints must any solution adhere to?
3. Determine the solution options you will examine.	Define the scope of your approach to the problem. Identify the possible courses of action that you will examine in your report. You might include the consequences of doing nothing.
4. Study how well each option meets the criteria.	Systematically study each option, and compare how well they meet each of the objectives you have set. Provide a systematic and quantifiable way to compare how well two solution options meet the objectives (often using criteria and a decision matrix/weighted objectives chart).
5. Draw conclusions based on your analysis.	Based on the research presented in your discussion section, sum up your findings, and give a comparative evaluation of how well each of the options meets the criteria and addresses the need.
6. Formulate recommendations based on your conclusion.	Indicate which course of action the reader should take to address the problem, based on your analysis of the data presented in the report.

Formatting a Technical Report

While formatting may seem to be of lesser importance than content, the way that something looks conveys the first impression your reader has of your work. Making sure that your formatting is clear, logical, and consistent can be compared to dressing professionally for a job interview. You want your first impression to be a strong one. Use formatting to ensure that your reader knows you are serious about and proud of your work: you care enough about your own ideas to make sure that they are easy to navigate, that they are ordered logically, and that they are polished visually.

Page Numbering

Page-numbering (or pagination) is an expectation for any major written source that uses pages. Depending on your style, you may use a combination of Roman numerals (i, ii, iii…) and Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3). Below are key points to remember when paginating your document.

- All pages in the report (within but excluding the front and back covers) are numbered; but on some pages, the numbers are not displayed. Word allows you to present the page numbers in this way, but Google Docs may require you to compose the report's parts in different documents, save them as PDFs, and then combine the PDFs.
- On special pages, such as the title page and page one of the introduction, page numbers are not displayed.
- If you place page numbers at the top of the page, you must hide them on chapter or section openers where a heading or title is at the top of the page.
- In the contemporary design, all pages throughout the document use Arabic numerals; in the traditional design, all pages before the introduction (or the first page of the body of the report) use lowercase Roman numerals.
- Page numbers can be placed in one of several areas on the page. Usually, the best and easiest choice is to place page numbers at the bottom center of the page. (Remember to hide them on special pages!)

Headings

In all but the shortest reports (two pages or less, and often even then), use headings to mark off the different topics and subtopics covered. Headings are an important feature of professional and technical writing: they alert readers to upcoming topics and subtopics, help readers find their way around in long reports and skip what they are not interested in, and break up long stretches of text.

Headings are also useful for writers. They keep you organized and focused on the topic. Indeed, headings are like the parts of an outline that have been pasted into the actual pages of the document. When you begin using headings, your impulse may be to add in the headings after you've written the rough draft. Instead, visualize the headings before you start the rough draft, and incorporate them as you write.

Here are a number of helpful tips for ensuring your headings are as clear and useful as possible for your readers:

- **Make the phrasing of headings self-explanatory.** Instead of “Background” or “Technical Information,” make it more specific, such as “Physics of Fiber Optics.”
- **Make headings parallel in phrasing.** That is, use the same syntax and word forms for each heading. Parallelism sends readers important clues as to whether the section is similar in nature to the preceding ones.
- **Make headings indicate the range of topic coverage in the section.** For example, if the section covers the design *and* operation of a pressurized water reactor, the heading “Pressurized Water Reactor Design” would be incomplete and misleading.
- **Avoid "lone headings.”** That is, avoid only including one subheading in a section. This is the same concept as having an "A" without a "B" or a "1" without a "2" in outlines.
- **Avoid “stacked” headings**. This occurs when there are any two consecutive headings without intervening text.
- **Avoid pronoun reference to headings.** For example, if you have a heading “Torque,” don't begin the sentence following it with something like this: “This is a physics principle...”

- **Omit articles from the beginning of headings, when possible.** For example, “The Pressurized Water Reactor” can easily be changed to “Pressurized Water Reactor” or, better yet, “Pressurized Water Reactors.”
- **Don’t use headings as lead-ins to lists or as figure titles.** Headings are for sections of text. Lists and figures should be integrated into their appropriate section and should not stand alone.
- **Avoid “orphan” headings.** An orphan heading occurs at the bottom of a page and the text it introduces starts at the top of the next page. Keep at least two lines of body text with the heading, or force it to start the new page with a page break.

If you manually format each individual heading using the guidelines presented in the preceding list, you’ll find you’re doing quite a lot of repetitive work. The styles provided by Microsoft Word, Open Office Writer, Google Docs, Pages, and other software save you this effort. You simply select Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3, and so on. You’ll notice the format and style are different from what is presented here. However, you can design your own styles for headings.

Information Sources and Documentation

Documenting your information sources is all about establishing, maintaining, and protecting your credibility in the profession. You must **cite** (or “document”) borrowed information regardless of how you present it. Whether you directly quote it, paraphrase it, or summarize it—it’s still borrowed information. Whether it comes from a book, article, a diagram, a table, a webpage, a product brochure, or an expert whom you interview in person—it’s still borrowed information. Typically, citing outside information requires you to include an in-text citation and a corresponding bibliographic entry in a References, Works Cited, or Bibliography section.

Documentation systems vary according to professionals and fields. For a technical writing class in college, you may be using either MLA or APA style.

Front Matter

The “front matter” of a report refers to portions of the report that summarize and inform the reader of the contents of the report. These documents all appear prior to the report itself. Common components of front matter include a letter of transmittal, a title page, some form of summary, a table of contents, and lists of figures and/or tables. While they come first in order, these components are usually composed last as it is difficult to summarize what is not written, and even harder to assign page numbers for it.

Letters of Transmittal

The letter of transmittal is a cover letter that is attached to the outside of the report. Traditionally, printed reports would have the letter of transmittal attached with a paperclip or bound within the report. Thus, this letter is not considered when assigning page numbers to the report.

A transmittal letter is a communication from you—the report writer—to the recipient, the person who requested the report and who may even be paying you for your expert consultation. Essentially, it says “Here is the report that we agreed that I would complete by a certain date. Briefly, it contains this and that, but does not cover this or that. Let me know if it meets your needs.” The letter of transmittal also explains the context, or the events that brought the report about.

In the example of the letter of transmittal that follows in Figure 9.2, notice the standard business-letter format. If you write an internal report, use the memorandum format instead. In either case, the contents and organization are the same:

First paragraph. Provides the name of the report, putting it in italics. It also mentions the date of the agreement to write the report.

Middle paragraphs. Focuses on the purpose of the report and gives a brief overview of the report's contents

Final paragraph. Encourages the reader to get in touch if there are questions, comments, or concerns. It closes with a gesture of goodwill, expressing hope that the reader finds t he report satisfactory.

As with any other element in a report, you may have to modify the contents of this letter (or memo) for specific situations. For example, you might want to add another paragraph listing questions you'd like readers to consider as they review the report.

Tompkins Hall 225
Box 8105, NCSU
Raleigh, NC 27695-8105

May 15, 2018

Dr. Jane Doe
Director of the Certificate Program
Department of English
Box 8105, NCSU
Raleigh, NC 27695-8105

Dear Dr. Jane Doe:

As you know, students within Professional Writing courses in the Spring semester of 2017 were assigned to conduct interviews and surveys of professionals in various fields. The subsequent report, *Communication in the Workplace: What Can NC State Students Expect?*, which we agreed to complete in the Fall semester of 2017, is submitted here.

The purpose of the report was to synthesize the information gathered by the many students taking the course and to investigate the importance of writing to various professions and some of the characteristics and purposes of writing within the workplace. In addition, the report specifically addresses attention to audience, conventions, document design, oral communication, electronic media, and collaborative work in the following fields:

- Education
- Engineering
- Finance, Accounting, and Banking,
- Management,
- Marketing and Sales
- Programming
- Research

Overall, the report demonstrates that written and spoken communication are both fundamental to successful businesses.

Thank you for the opportunity to complete this study. We are hopeful that the contents will encourage students to value the experience and knowledge gained through their Professional Writing courses. If you have any further questions regarding our study, methods, or would like a more thorough look at our methods and data, please do not hesitate to ask.

Regards,

John Doe
Representative of the Professional Writing Program Team

Figure 9.1 An example of a letter of transmittal.[1]

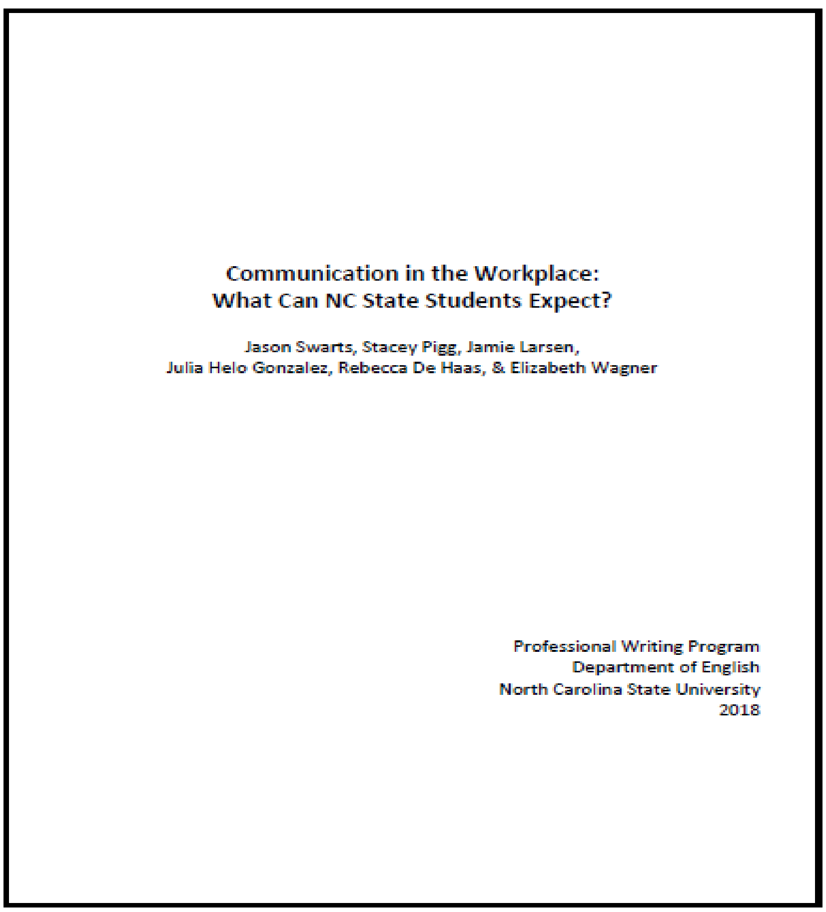
Title Pages

The next item in a report is the title page. Remember, without a title page, a report is anonymous; it gets ignored.

There are no standard requirements for the title page, although your company or organization should have its own requirements. However, most reports include the following:

- The report title
- The author's/authors' name(s)
- The name of the author's organization
- Date of delivery.

An example of a report cover is shown below in Figure 9.2.



Communication in the Workplace:
What Can NC State Students Expect?

Jason Swarts, Stacey Pigg, Jamie Larsen,
Julia Helo Gonzalez, Rebecca De Haas, & Elizabeth Wagner

Professional Writing Program
Department of English
North Carolina State University
2018

[1] Kalani Pattison, "Example of a Report Title Page," 2020. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International license. Derived from Swarts, Jason, Stacey Pigg, Jamie Larsen, Julia Helo Gonzalez, Rebecca De Haas, and Elizabeth Wagner, *Communication in the Workplace: What Can NC State What Can NC State Students Expect?* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University Professional Writing Program, 2018), https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pMpVbDRWIN6HssQQQ4MeQ6U-oB-sGUrtRswD7feuRB0/edit#heading=h.n2a3udms5sd5. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Figure 9.2 Example of a report title page.[2]

Types of Summaries

In most technical reports, you will encounter one of three types of summary in the front matter: executive summaries, abstracts, or the generic "pure" summary. These types all have one important similarity: they are distillations of a larger document's key components. However, each of them serves a distinct purpose based on the needs of their audiences and the rhetorical contexts in which they are situated. Understanding these purposes and the rhetorical situations that shape executive summaries, abstracts, and pure summaries will help you craft each of them more effectively.

Executive Summaries

This section summarizes the key facts and conclusions contained in the report. Think of this section as if you used a highlighter to mark the key sentences in the report, then siphoned them onto a separate page, and edited them for readability. Typically, executive summaries are one-tenth to one-twentieth the length of reports ten to fifty pages long. For longer reports, ones over fifty pages, the executive summary should not go over two pages. The point of the executive summary is to provide a summary of the report—something that can be read quickly.

Executive summaries are typically found in business reports. While they do provide some description of the subject and how it was investigated for the sake of context, executive summaries emphasize results and recommendations above all else. Unlike abstracts and pure summaries, they are designed to be read by audiences who will not read the full report, but still have an interest in the report's findings and

any recommendations for taking a specific action.

- **Example:** You write a recommendation report for your organization that offers a strategy for shifting to more diverse hiring practices. Your immediate supervisor will read the report in full, but the board of directors will need the executive summary to make a quick decision on whether to adopt your strategy.

Abstracts

Abstracts are typically found in scientific and academic articles. Rather than standing in for the full document, like an executive summary would, the abstract's primary function is to convince the audience to read the full document. Additionally, its content tends to mirror the IMRaD structure (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion), instead of focusing primarily on results or actionable items. Most electronic databases show an article's abstract in the search results, so researchers will likely be perusing multiple abstracts when deciding

[2] Kalani Pattison, "Example of a Report Title Page," 2020. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International license. Derived from Swarts, Jason, Stacey Pigg, Jamie Larsen, Julia Helo Gonzalez, Rebecca De Haas, and Elizabeth Wagner, *Communication in the Workplace: What Can NC State What Can NC State Students Expect?* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University Professional Writing Program, 2018), https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pMpVbDRWIN6HssQQQ4MeQ6U-oB-sGUrtRswD7feuRB0/edit#heading=h.n2a3udms5sd5. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

what to include in their own papers. As a result, you need to make sure that your abstract stands out and fulfills your audience's needs.

- **Example:** You write a peer-reviewed article for a medical journal on clinical trials you conducted for a cancer drug. Now that the article is published, you want other scientists to replicate and/or respond to your study (and better yet, cite it in their own publications). To help ensure this happens, you emphasize your study's focus and its operational definitions of key terms, outline your forms of data collection, report the data you collected, and then offer a brief interpretation.

Pure Summaries

Pure summaries are the most nebulous of the three in terms of audience and context. This type of summary is often used simply to introduce a larger document or speech and to provide some initial signposting to help the audience navigate it.

Since executive summaries and abstracts are typically found in more specific rhetorical situations, the best way to distinguish a pure summary from these is to check it against the characteristics of each. In other words, is the summary meant to be read instead of the full report? Is the summary meant to convince the reader to keep reading; or, is it meant to help them navigate content as they read further? If the last question seems like the best fit, it is likely a pure summary.

- **Example 1:** The Writer's Memos you will write for the major assignments in this class feature a pure summary section. Your instructor will read the full memo, but will expect an overview of each subsequent section.
- **Example 2:** When you are giving an oral presentation, it is traditionally good practice to open with a pure summary of your talk. Since the audience cannot go back and review your ideas as they could with a document, outlining your structure up front and then repeating it helps them anticipate and retain your points

Summary Tip: If the executive summary, introduction, and transmittal letter strike you as repetitive, remember that readers do not always start at the beginning of a report and read page by page to the end. They skip around. For example, they may scan the table of contents; skim the executive summary for key facts and conclusions; or read carefully only a section or two from the body of the report, and then skip the rest. For these reasons, reports are designed with some duplication so that readers will be sure to see the important information no matter where they dip into the report.

Case Study: Applying All Three Summary Types to One Report

To understand the differences between executive summaries, abstracts, and pure summaries, let's look at how each could be drafted for the same project: improving a student organization's recruitment strategy so that they attract a more diverse membership. Keep in mind that these are just examples, and that some research projects are more complex than others. Also note that these examples are split into smaller paragraphs to enhance readability.

> **Executive Summary.** Over the last three years on campus, the Texas A&M chapter of Future Coders of America has struggled with increasing diversity in its membership. This lack of diversity has become noticeable in comparison to other student organizations and the demographics of the university as a whole. Using triangulated

forms of data collection, including interviews with faculty and researching other university organizations, our team conducted research on this issue in order to improve diversity in the FCA over the next three years.

Results show that to attract a diverse membership, a student organization must establish close ties with campus diversity centers and resources, form partnerships with other student organizations, and encourage diversity within its own leadership. We therefore recommend that the FCA reach out to the campus diversity center and promote future events there, reach out to the Society of Women Coders and collaborate on hosting an event, and focus on leadership diversity long-term, when these initial strategies result in a more diverse membership.

Abstract. This study investigates the issue of diversity in the Texas A&M Future Coders of America's recruitment strategies. Over the past three years, the FCA's focus on recruitment has resulted in a membership that is disproportionately white and male in comparison to other student organizations and the demographics of Texas A&M as a whole.

For the purposes of this study, we define diversity in terms of race and gender. Using this definition, we collected data through a variety of methods. These methods include surveying students who are active in organizations with more diverse membership, interviewing the faculty advisors for the university Diversity Office, interviewing the leaders of student organizations with more success recruiting diverse members, and researching FCA chapters in other universities.

Through these methods, we discovered that partnerships with campus diversity offices and other organizations are the best strategies for improving diversity in recruitment. A recurring pattern among surveyed students reveals that diverse leadership is also important. We discuss how these findings can be applied by the FCA in subsequent years.

Pure Summary (for a verbal presentation). Today we are going to discuss the issue of diversity in recruitment for the TAMU chapter of the Future Coders of America. We will begin with a review of the status quo, illustrating how the FCA is behind other student organizations at Texas A&M. From there, we will clarify our decision to define diversity in terms of race and gender, and how that led to our methods.

We will then discuss the process we undertook interviewing organization leaders and the Diversity Office faculty advisors, surveying active organization members, and researching FCA chapters on other campuses. With each method of data collection, we will discuss trends in the data and how we shifted our expectations. Finally, we will conclude by reviewing our proposed solutions, which are to form a partnership with the Diversity Office and host joint events with other student organizations.

Note the shift in focus for each summary type. The executive summary, for example, highlights the results and actions the FCA can take to resolve the issue, without going into the methods. The abstract, by contrast, highlights how the focus of the study is reflected in its definition of key terms and the methods of data collection it employs. While the pure summary also addresses these points, it does not give more weight to any section over the others, and it frames itself as a signpost for the rest of the presentation.

Table of Contents

You are likely familiar with tables of contents (TOC) but may never have stopped to look at their design. The TOC shows readers what topics are covered in the report, how those topics are discussed (the subtopics), and on which page numbers those sections and subsections start. In creating a table of contents, you have a number of design decisions:

Levels of headings to include. In longer reports, consider including only the top two levels of headings. This keeps the TOC from becoming long and unwieldy. The TOC should provide an at-a-glance way of finding information in the report quickly.

Alignment and spacing. Levels of headings and page numbers should align.

Capitalization. Main chapters or sections use all capital letters or small caps (the letters are all capitalized, but the first letter is larger); first-level headings capitalize the first letter of each main word (this is also referred to as “title case”); lower-level sections capitalize the first word only (this is also called “sentence case”).

Vertical spacing. Notice that the first-level sections have extra space above and below, which increases readability. Second-level sections, however, are single spaced.

Using the automatic TOC creator in your word processor can help you produce a clean, professional document. If you prefer to make your own, learn to use right-aligned tabs (dot leader tabs when possible) in order to line up the page numbers correctly.

One final note: Make sure the words in the TOC are the same as they are in the text. As you write and revise, you might change some of the headings—don’t forget to change the TOC accordingly.

Table of Contents

Figure 9.3 Example Table of Contents[3]

[3] Kalani Pattison, "Example Table of Contents," 2020. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International license. Derived from Jason Swarts, Stacey Pigg, Jamie Larsen, Julia Helo Gonzalez, Rebecca De Haas, and Elizabeth Wagner, *Communication in the Workplace: What Can NC State Students Expect?* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University Professional Writing Program, 2018), https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pMpVbDRWIN6HssQQQ4MeQ6U-oB-

List of Figures and Tables

If your document has more than two figures or tables, you need to create a separate list of figures and tables or a list of illustrations. The list of figures and tables follows many of the same design considerations as the table of contents. Readers use the list of figures and tables to quickly find the illustrations, diagrams, tables, and charts in your report.

Complications arise when you have both tables and figures. Strictly speaking, figures are illustrations, drawings, photographs, graphs, and charts. Tables are rows and columns of words and numbers; they are not considered figures.

For longer reports that contain dozens of figures and tables each, create separate lists of figures and tables. For documents with only a few figures and tables, you can combine the two lists under the heading, “List of Figures and Tables” or “List of Illustrations” as long as you continue to identify them with the appropriate labels in the list. If there are no tables, it should be only a “List of Figures,” and if there are no figures, it should be only a “List of Tables.”

List of Figures

List of Tables

Figure 9.4 Examples of a list of figures and a list of tables.[4]

Introductions

The body of the report includes the main text of the report, the sections ranging from the introduction to the conclusion. Different types of reports contain different sections depending on their purpose and audience needs.

An essential element of any report is its introduction, where you clearly state your report's purpose and contents. In a technical report, the introduction prepares the reader to read the report's main body.

Keep in mind that while this section's function is similar to the front matter, the introduction's purpose is a bit different. Instead of providing a brief but comprehensive overview of subsequent sections, the introduction covers essential information about the issue in more thorough detail (i.e., what the reader needs to know about the issue to understand its seriousness and your motivation to research it).

One organizational strategy that can work well for introductions is John M. Swales' CARS (Create A Research Space) Moves,[5] which consists of three steps:

1. **Establishing a territory**. This is where the writer discusses general facts about the topic or recent developments surrounding it. For example, if your research is investigating the effects of a new policy on a business's productivity, this is where you would describe the policy and what it entails in a neutral manner. If you are conducting medical research, this is where you might discuss recent developments in the field.
2. **Establishing a niche.** Also referred to as "finding the gap," having provided a neutral overview of important or recent facts on the topic, the writer then moves into a more specific gap in the overview. In other words, you are moving from what people are saying about your issue to what has not been said, and why this niche is important. In the business internal research report, this might be an unintended consequence of the new policy. In the medical research report, this could be a variable that contemporary studies have not addressed.
3. **Occupying the niche.** In this final step, the writer explains the focus of their research and frames it in response to the niche outlined in Step 2. Since the reader at this point has a basic understanding of what information the writer finds important and how the writer understands the problem, this move can be made relatively quickly. In the business internal research report, Step 3 might be the writer explaining how they are going to investigate the problem in the policy, or even test the feasibility of a new one. In the medical research report, Step 3 might be the writer's research question and stated hypothesis and goal in conducting their study.

[4] Kalani Pattison, "An Example of a List of Tables and a List of Figures," 2020. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International license. Derived from Jason Swarts, Stacey Pigg, Jamie Larsen, Julia Helo Gonzalez, Rebecca De Haas, and Elizabeth Wagner, *Communication in the Workplace: What Can NC State Students Expect?* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University Professional Writing Program, 2018), https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pMpVbDRWIN6HssQQQ4MeQ6U-oB-sGUrtRswD7feuRB0/edit#heading=h.n2a3udms5sd5. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

[5] John M. Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 141.

Swales' Moves is not the only way to structure the introduction, but it is a helpful strategy for scaffolding this section's function in the report. It also helps the writer to create a smooth transition into the methods section, where the focus shifts from what your study is investigating or responding to, to how this investigation or response will be carried out.

Methods

The methods section is the beginning of the "meat" of a report, because it is the first section where you describe how you investigated the subject or issue in detail. Specifically, you are walking the reader through the different forms of data collection you have designed, now that they have read your introduction and have a contextual understanding of the problem you are trying to investigate and/or solve.

Project proposals typically demonstrate the writer's thoroughness and dedication to the project by addressing potential methods of data collection and investigation (see Chapter 18: Proposals). By the time you are drafting your recommendation report, however, any methods you initially proposed may have changed quite a bit. Consequently, if you are adapting parts of your proposal to the recommendation report, you will need to make sure that you have updated your discussion of each form of data collection where appropriate. Whatever initial ideas you had are only important in terms of contextualizing your final decisions.

- **Example:** I conducted interviews with Dr. Nguyen and Dr. Doyle to learn more about the curriculum design for upper-level courses in the social sciences. My original intention was to interview the dean and associate dean of the college, but they were attending an international conference during the dates I had scheduled and were thus unavailable.

When discussing your data collection design, it is important that you provide as much detail as possible. This will not only help the reader understand your thinking but also justify your decisions.

As you compose this section of the document, consider the following questions:

- Are you clarifying in subheadings and topic sentences how data was collected?
    - **Example:** Did you create surveys, use interviews, and/or conduct secondary research on scholarly databases, etc.? If you did, you might begin one methods step like this:

      Task 1: Gather information on lab usage

      Initially I created a survey to gather information on the use of lab facilities; however, because of the global pandemic, few students are currently using these labs, so I changed the survey to investigate how virtual labs are being created and utilized.

- Are you reviewing the logistics of each form of data collection through the use of concrete detail so that the reader understands how each form of data collection was carried out, the rationale for any significant changes in design that may have occurred, and how you addressed potential obstacles? Are you justifying how and why each form of data collection was an effective way to investigate and/or solve the problem being researched?

  - **Example:** Clarifying how many people you intended to survey and why; identifying and justifying the dates, times, and locations of field observations, etc.

    Our new survey focused strictly on junior and senior chemical engineering majors, of which there are 500. We chose to restrict the survey to this group because they have had more experience in conventional labs and are better able to assess the changes occurring in the shift from those labs to virtual ones.
- Are your data collection methods objective and removed from bias (i.e., not skewed towards justifying my initial hypothesis)?
  - **Example:** Surveying a random population instead of your own friends, researching articles on an academic database instead of on a popular website or on social media.
- Are you explaining how your forms of data collection are triangulated with one another to address any potential limitations?
  - **Example:** Exploring a potential course redesign by surveying students and interviewing faculty, not just one or the other.

Composing your methods section effectively will strengthen your ethos as a researcher in the eyes of the reader. It will also prepare them for analyzing the data you collected, which will likely be covered in the next section (the results) of your report.

Results

Having detailed your research and project design choices for data collection in the methods section, results focuses on the actual collected data. As Chapter 19 notes when discussing lab reports, the results section typically provides brief descriptions of collected data and little else. However, some recommendation reports do not emphasize research (i.e. methods and results) to the same degree. Consequently, when you determine what to include in this section (or whether to include it at all), be mindful of your audience's expectations and the conventions of your field or organization.

Unlike the introduction and methods sections of this recommendation report model, which focus heavily on your thoughts and choices as a researcher in framing your topic and investigation, your interpretations and thoughts on collected data should not be present in the results. Separating data and researcher interpretations presents the former objectively and allows the audience to observe any trends or patterns without the researcher's influence. In some cases, such as scientific studies, this can make replication of the study easier; in other cases, it can be even more persuasive if the audience independently comes to the same conclusions as the researcher.

Survey Results

Overall, professionals perceive that the quality of their writing matters to the performance of their jobs, and 75 percent of professionals rated writing as extremely important or very important to job performance. Only one percent of participants reported that the quality of their writing was not at all important.

When we break down the responses further, we can see some variation across professions in how employees understand the importance of writing quality to everyday job performance. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, between 70 and 85 percent of participants from most fields surveyed indicated that writing quality was very important or extremely important to their jobs, with professionals from the fields of management, finance, and research representing the three highest categories. The field of computer programming included the lowest percentage of participants who rated writing quality as extremely or very important to job performance, with 48 percent of participants choosing one of these two responses.

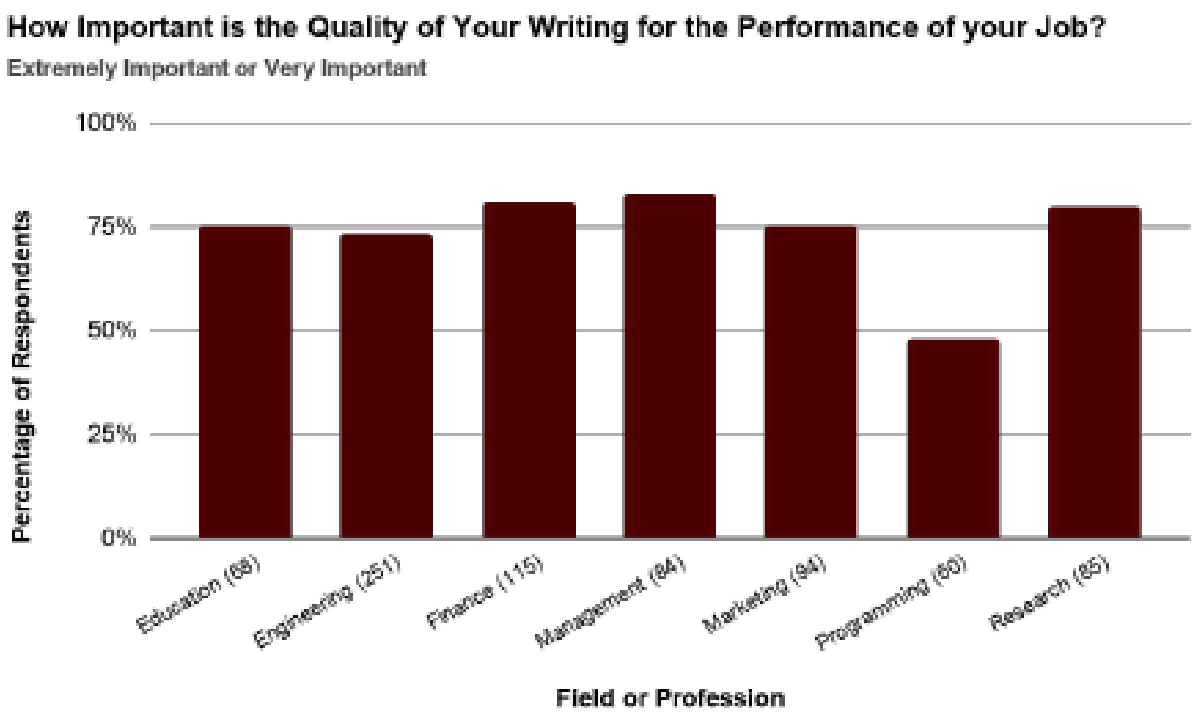


Figure 1.1

Figure 9.5. Excerpt from the body of a technical report describing results from research.[6]

Conclusions

Writers sometimes use the word “conclusion” to refer to the last section or paragraph of a document. However, this term refers to one of a few specific types of sections. In the case of a report with a results or findings section, the conclusion is often the section that contains the analysis and synthesis of those reported results. There are at least four ways to end a report: a “true” conclusion, a summary, an afterword, or a combination of these types.

[6] Figure derived from Jason Swarts, Stacey Pigg, Jamie Larsen, Julia Helo Gonzalez, Rebecca De Haas, and Elizabeth Wagner, *Communication in the Workplace: What Can NC State Students Expect?* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University Professional Writing Program, 2018), https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pMpVbDRWIN6HssQQQ4MeQ6U-oB-sGUrtRswD7feuRB0/edit#heading=h.n2a3udms5sd5. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

In a recommendation or feasibility report, often the conclusion will not be the last section of the document, but a section made up of "true" conclusions that precedes the final recommendation.

"True" Conclusions

"True" conclusions are based on logic. For example, in the body of a report, you might present conflicting theories and explore the related data. Alternatively, in a researched report structured similarly to an IMRaD report, you most likely have both methods and results sections. In a "true" conclusion, you present your resolution of the conflicting theories or the logical conclusions you can draw from the results you presented.

In a "true" conclusion section within a researched report, you will likely be able to draw multiple conclusions from your research tasks, methods, and results. In fact, if you are triangulating your sources during the research phase, you may have multiple research methods that lead to the same conclusion. The secondary sources you find and the results of a survey you conduct, for instance, may lead to the same single logical conclusion or point.

On the other hand, one research task may also lead to multiple conclusions. An interview with a primary source, for instance, may give you enough details about various aspects of a project to allow you to draw multiple conclusions from the data you are given.

To write a strong "true" conclusion section, you need to step back from both results and any other sections (such as the "Recommendation" section within a recommendation report) and ask, "What do the results here imply? What do they mean?" *without* proceeding to the point of suggesting what action or decision should be made in response.

Summary-Conclusions

Another common way to wrap up a report is to review and summarize the key points. A summary is in order if your report is long, complex, and heavily detailed, as well as if you want your readers to come away with a certain perspective. For short reports, summaries can seem absurd—the reader thinks "You've just told me that!" Summaries need to read as if time has passed and the writer is viewing the subject after reflection. These summary-conclusions are different from the summary often included at the beginning of a report, as they do not cover the whole of the document (introduction and context, methods, etc.) but merely summarize the findings or what the writer wants the reader to remember.

What Did We Learn from this Study?

As with previous studies (beginning in 1996 and most recently in 2013), communication is clearly essential to daily operations at most businesses. Written and spoken communication is a crucial part of the workplace for many of our respondents, as 94% of our respondents said that writing was at least moderately important for their jobs, while 75% labeled writing as Very and Extremely Important. 83% of respondents stated that writing was important for their performance appraisals. In short, communication, both written and verbal, continues to be an important part of any graduate's job.

Written communication can happen between coworkers, between an employee and a boss, between a company and a customer, and any combination of those groups. In its most generalizable form, written communication serves a transactional function by supplying information or perspective that addresses problems of knowledge or action across domains of professional practice. The culture of the organization does set what written and spoken communication looks like; for example, a programming business might use Slack for quick updates among employees, while an engineering business may rely on proposals for clients. Spoken communication in the form of presentations can be used for customers/clients or for other employees. Still other writing can happen in a collaborative environment, and that collaboration can happen between coworkers, between coworkers and supervisors, and between the company and the client.

Afterwords

A rarer possibility for ending a report involves turning to some related topic but discussing it at a very general level. Imagine that you had written a background report on some exciting new technology. In the final section, you might broaden your focus and discuss how that technology might be used or the problems it might bring about. However, the key is to keep it general—do not force yourself into a whole new detailed section.

Suggestions for Further Research

Like most ends of projects, we are left with avenues to explore in addition to the results we have found. One avenue is to study younger workers further. Some respondents indicated that younger workers seem less comfortable with in-person communication. In the next study, we could review the relationship between age and various communication preferences. Another question about communication preferences could consider how and when professionals use other devices for work, even when they are not at the workplace. Professionals indicated a trend toward more incorporating phones and other handheld devices into workplaces, and we also wonder about how these devices are shaping processes of invention, review, and revision. The mere presence of tablets, phones, and other handheld devices as mediators of writing practice point to interesting input/output issues regarding readability and usability of documents as well as the challenges of writing (thumb typing, swiping, writing as managing componentized content).

Combinations

In practice, the preceding ways of ending reports are often combined. You can analyze final sections of reports and identify elements that summarize, elements that conclude, and elements that discuss something related but at a general level (afterwords).

No matter the type of conclusion, however, avoid conclusions for which there is no basis (i.e., discussion or support) in the body of the report.

Finally, in certain types of reports, especially in recommendation or feasibility reports, conclusions are not the last section, but are rather a transition between data in a report and the final section which presents applications, recommendations, and suggestions for next actions to readers.

Recommendation or Final Opinion

In a feasibility or recommendation report, the final section (after the conclusions) states the recommendation or final opinion. Remember that some readers may skip right to the recommendation section, so this section must anticipate their needs and preferences. Also, there will be some cases where there may be a best choice based on your criteria, but you would not want to recommend it. For example, early in their history, laptop computers were heavy and unreliable; there may have been one model that was better than the rest, but even it was not worth having.

The recommendation section should echo or briefly make connections to the most important conclusions leading to the recommendation, and then state the recommendation emphatically. Often, you may need to recommend several options based on different possibilities. In a recommendation report, this final section states a final opinion or judgment based on clear evidence, criteria, and conclusions. Below is an example recommendation that concludes that Options 1 and 2 may be worthwhile choices for the audience to pursue:

- Option 1 would be the most effective way to achieve the goal, but it is also expensive and on the upper end of the budgetary limits.

- Option 2 is not quite as good but much more affordable.

The following two suggestions are also legitimate recommendations to make, as long as you can show that your research was thorough and valid:

- None of the options researched is worth the risk and cost—readers should keep the status quo.
- We recommend a specific type of device to fix the problem, and recommend more research to determine the best brand, style, and choice.

References

Your references section contains the complete bibliographic information for any sources you have cited in the report. Depending on your citation style, this section may be titled "References" (APA) or "Works Cited" (MLA). Other citation styles will have their own preferred title, or your organization may have a house style that they prefer.

Regardless of whether you are using APA or MLA, organize your sources alphabetically. Use the first word of the entry for alphabetization purposes, whether that first word is from a title, an author's last name, or the first word of an organization. You should not organize sources according to when they appear in the report.

For formatting, use a hanging indent. A hanging indent is the reverse of a normal indent. Your first line of a reference entry should be fully left aligned. All subsequent lines in an entry should be one half-inch (or one tab) over. You can set up a hanging indent in Word or Google Docs rather than manually inserting a tab for each line. Using formatting rather than tabbing yourself is recommended, as the format will stay consistent even if you need to make revisions to the entry.

Appendices

Appendices (singular: appendix) are optional supplementary sections following the body of a report. Each appendix is assigned a letter and title: Appendix A: Title, Appendix B: Title, and so on. All are listed at the end of the Table of Contents in a section under the heading "Appendices" (if there are more than one; "Appendix" if there is only one). For each appendix, the page number is indicated (page numbers continue on from the main body of the report).

Appendices contain anything that does not comfortably fit in the main part of the report but cannot be left out of the report altogether. An appendix is commonly used for large tables of data, copies of survey questions and results, big chunks of sample code, fold-out maps, background that is too basic or too advanced for the intended readers of the report, or large illustrations that do not fit in the body of the report.

Anything that you feel is too large for the main part of the report, or that you think would be distracting and interrupt the flow of the report, is a good candidate for an appendix. Any data that is crucial to your argument, however, should be included in the appropriate section of the body of your report. In other words, your report should be complete and persuasive without the “extra” information found in appendices, but if readers were interested in more information, they could easily find it in the appendices.

Decision-Making and Criteria

The previous parts of this chapter have mostly dealt with expectations regarding the sections of a recommendation or feasibility report. However, underlying the report as a whole, a decision-making process is taking place. Presenting a clear recommendation or suggestions to your audience depends on you clearly informing your readers how you reached your decision.

Depending on the structure of your report and the delineation of your research tasks within your results, conclusions, recommendations, or all of these sections, you will have to justify evaluations, comparisons, and decisions that you made in the course of your research. Below are several common places where you may make crucial decisions that affect the content and results of your entire report:

- If one of your research tasks is to determine the best product to buy, and another task is to determine where to install it, you will have to evaluate multiple options as part of the results of those tasks.
- If you administer a survey, conduct interviews, and find secondary resources about website builders, you may have to determine the most important information to include in your conclusion in order to draw your results or findings together into logical conclusions.
- If you find that a suggested course of action isn’t actually going to improve a situation, a decision-making tree or a decision matrix in the recommendation might help support your recommendation of keeping the status quo.

In all of these cases, and in almost all recommendation or feasibility reports, you need to be able to clearly explain your decision making processes to your audience in an objective way. Three tools that you can use to do so are criteria, decision matrices, and decision trees.

Criteria

Criteria (singular: criterion) are the quantitative and qualitative categories and standards you use to judge something. If your technical report requires you to make a judgment of some sort—is the project feasible? What is the best option? Did the item pass or fail a test?—describe and define the factors that guide your decision. Common examples of decision-making criteria include costs, schedules, popular opinions, demonstrated needs, and degrees of quality. Here are some examples:

- If you are recommending a tablet computer for use by employees, your requirements are likely to involve size, cost, hard-disk storage, display quality, durability, and battery life.
- If you are looking into the feasibility of providing every student at Austin Community College with an ID on the ACC computer network, you need to define the basic requirements of such a program: what it would be expected to accomplish, problems that it would have to avoid, and so on.
- If you are evaluating the logistics of the free bus public transportation program in Bryan/College Station for Texas A&M students, you need to know what is expected of the program and then explore costs, locations, and other factors in relation to those requirements.

Criteria may need to be defined on a very specific level. For example, "chocolate flavor" may be a criterion for choosing among brands of chocolate truffles, but what defines a desirable chocolate flavor? Do you want a milk chocolate flavor? A dark chocolate flavor? White chocolate? A high or low percentage of cacao? Sweet, bitter, or spicy? Single-origin cacao beans or a blend? If single-origin, do you want Ghanian, Venezuelan, Honduran, Ecuadorian, or Filipino? The more you know about a criterion, the more precise you can be in your evaluation.

Criteria may also be referred to as **requirements** and can be defined in three basic ways:

- **Numerical values.** Many requirements are stated as maximum or minimum numerical values. For example, there may be a cost requirement, such as the tablet computer for employees should cost no more than $900.
- **Yes/no values.** Some requirements are simply a yes-no question. For instance, does the tablet come equipped with Bluetooth? Is the car equipped with voice recognition?
- **Ratings values.** In some cases, key considerations cannot be handled either with numerical values or yes/no values. For example, your organization might want a tablet that has an ease-of-use rating of at least "good" by some nationally accepted ratings group. In other situations, you may have to assign ratings yourself.

The criteria section should also discuss how important the individual requirements are in relation to each other. Picture the typical situation where no one option is best in all categories of comparison. One option is cheaper; another has more functions; one has better ease-of-use ratings; another is known to be more durable. Set up your criteria so that they dictate a "winner" from a situation where there is no obvious winner.

Decision Matrices

One useful tool for decision-making based on criteria of varying importance is a decision matrix (plural: matrices). Decision matrices allow for numerical calculations and comparisons of different choices with criteria that have varying levels of importance.

To create a decision matrix, you start with the options to be compared, the criteria to be used to evaluate the options, and the relative weight or importance of each criterion in the decision. Table 9.2 shows how a generic decision matrix would be set up:

Criteria	Weight	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Criterion 1				
Criterion 2				
Criterion 3				
Criterion 4				
Totals:				

Table 9.2 Generic decision matrix example[7]

In the weight column, each criterion would be given a number within a certain range—from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important), or 1 to 10, depending on how much the levels differ in importance. Some writers may be more comfortable with using percentages out of 100 when considering weight. Criteria can share the same weight or importance. The options would then be scored along a similar scale according to how well they perform in the particular criterion. The weight and score would then be multiplied and the whole column added together to give a total.

The following Table 20.3 is a decision matrix reflecting different options for communicating to students in an online course. The weights are given in the shaded columns, the score each option earns for each criterion are shown in bold, and the maroon multiplication next to the score shows how the weight and score are multiplied. These totals are then added for a total of the whole column:

Criteria (Scored 1-5)	Weight (1-5)	Email	Canvas Announcements	Piazza
Ease of Student Access	4	**5** (x4=20)	**3** (x4=12)	**5** (x4=20)
Frequency of Student Attention	5	**1** (x5=5)	**4** (x5=20)	**3** (x5=15)
Ease of Professor Use	3	**5** (x3=15)	**5** (x3=15)	**3** (x3=9)
Formatting Flexibility	1	**5** (x1=5)	**4** (x1=4)	**2** (x1=2)
Totals:		45	51	46

Table 9.3 Example decision matrix with randomly generated data.[8]

As you can see in Table 9.3, if you went strictly by the *number* of criteria that an option excelled in, you might determine that emails are the best way to contact students. However, if

[7] Kalani Pattison, "Generic Decision Matrix Example," 2020. This image is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

[8] Kalani Pattison, "Example Decision Matrix with Randomly Generated Data," 2020. This image is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

you use the more nuanced decision matrix, then you could conclude that Canvas Announcements are the best way to communicate with students. The varying weights of each criterion and the score each option earns should be based on solid research. This matrix, then, allows you to quantify the reasons for choosing one option over another, despite the weights and scores being a little subjective.

Decision Trees

In addition to making a recommendation based on criteria or on weighted criteria, sometimes recommendations can be made after following a decision tree. Creating a visual representation of a decision tree can be useful in illuminating your thought process so that readers can follow your reasoning. Such decision trees can also be useful in communicating procedures for others to follow, especially in problem-solving situations.

The following decision tree (Figure 9.8) illustrates how someone might come to a decision on whether to recommend that a student organization should host an additional new fundraiser during the Fall semester. As you can see, most decision trees are based on a series of Yes/No, Either/Or limited choices. There may be a choice out of three or four options at a particular step, but that isn't as common, or depicted in the example.

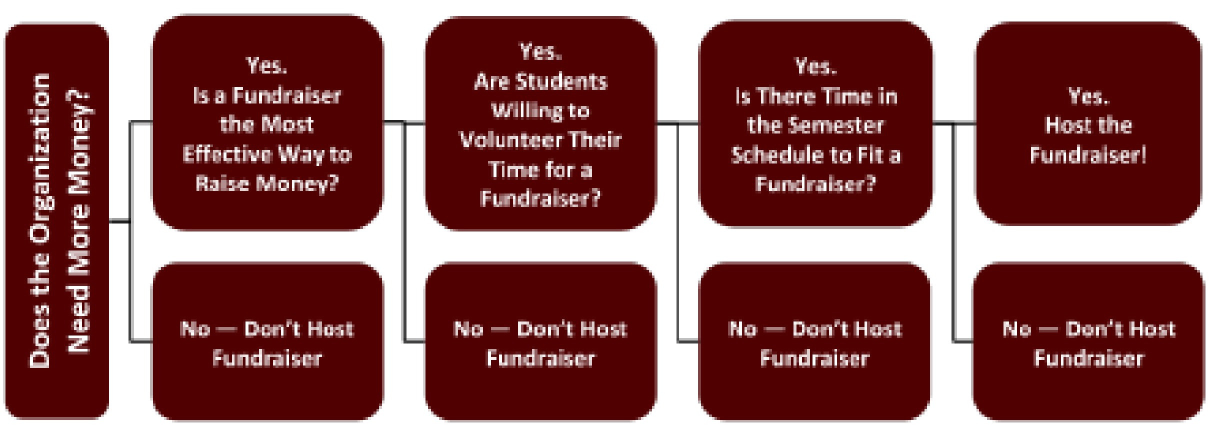


Figure 9.8 Example of decision tree[9]

Crafting Recommendation and Feasibility Reports: What to Remember

Recommendation and feasibility reports are among the most intricate and comprehensive documents you will craft as a technical writer. They often contain a variety of sections with different and specific purposes. Sections in recommendation and feasibility reports typically convey new information while also strategically repeating key information. Further still, these reports are written for multiple audiences, and therefore must effectively guide each of them

[9] Kalani Pattison, "Example of Decision Tree," 2020. This image is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

through the same content with differing levels of detail based on their needs. Finally, the writer usually needs to explore a variety of options and potential decisions based on data and research, and account for their decision-making process in a reader-friendly manner.

When you are writing a recommendation or feasibility report, you can use what you have learned about analyzing rhetorical situations to focus your efforts specifically in framing content and structure. Some points you might reflect on include:

- The scope and purpose of your project.
  - **Example:** Conducting research and deriving potential solutions from your data (a recommendation report) vs. testing a number of predetermined solutions to see which one is most viable (a feasibility report).
- The audience(s) you are writing for, what they will find most interesting, and what section(s) they are most likely to read.
  - **Example:** A non-profit organization's president may be most interested in your final recommendation, while a scientist who wants to replicate your research will likely be more interested in your data collection design.
- The genre and design conventions of recommendation reports in your field.
  - **Example:** If you are writing a recommendation report for a company you work for, you need to pay attention to how reports in the organization are typically formatted. This will help your coworkers and your boss understand how to read your document for their respective purposes.
- The part of the report you draft first.
  - **Example:** Waiting to write the Executive Summary until after you are satisfied with the sections that are more detail specific, such as Methods or Recommendations.
- The specific differences between each section's purpose, so that sections repeating information are easier to distinguish from one another.
  - **Example:** Executive Summaries and Introductions both describe the issue or topic being investigated, but Introductions provide much more detail and contextual information on this, since it's their only focus. By contrast, Executive Summaries also review other sections of the report, with a functional emphasis on results and recommendations.
- The level of detail you are using to showcase your thought process to the reader (Hint: be generous.)
  - **Example:** A thorough Methods section helps the reader understand why the researcher's forms of data collection are well-suited to addressing the issue, any logistics regarding data collection, and how forms of data will be triangulated.
- The incorporation of visuals into your document to facilitate reader comprehension of key findings and conclusions.

- **Example:** Using a decision matrix to offer a criteria-based side-by-side comparison of multiple options vs. Using a decision tree to help the reader see the processes executing different options entail, as well as how they overlap and diverge.

Despite the challenges crafting a recommendation or feasibility report can present, the strategies for doing so apply to most complex documents: understand what is expected of you, break up the task as much as possible, and spend as much time or more prewriting and revising as you do drafting.

Attribution

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Gross, Allison, Annemarie Hamlin, Billy Merck, Chris Rubio, Jodi Naas, Megan Savage, and Michele DeSilva. *Technical Writing*. Open Oregon Educational Materials, n.d. https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/technicalwriting/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

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Chapter 11

Creating and Integrating Graphics

When and Why to Use Graphics and Visuals

Visual elements capture your readers' attention and help them to understand your ideas more fully. Like the illustrations used to help tell a story, visuals augment your written ideas and simplify complicated textual content. Common visuals for professional and technical writing include:

- graphs
- charts
- tables
- photographs
- diagrams
- maps

Graphics and visuals such as these can help the reader understand a complicated process or visualize trends in the data. They can also draw attention to key points or present information quickly. The key concept to remember here is that visuals *clarify, illustrate,* and *augment* your written text; *they are not a replacement for written text*. The old adage "a picture is worth a thousand words" does not hold true in technical writing, but adding visuals may save you a hundred words or so of additional explanation and clarification.

If you have visual elements in your document, they must be based on your written content and supplement your ideas. Adding graphics just to decorate or take up space may confuse your reader. Therefore, it is important to choose the right kind of visual to convey the story you want your readers to understand. If visuals are poorly chosen or poorly designed for the task, they can actually confuse the reader and have negative consequences.

Before getting into details on creating, formatting, and incorporating graphics, consider the different kinds and their functions. You can use graphics to represent the following elements in your technical writing:

> **Objects.** If you are describing a fuel-injection system, you will probably need a drawing or diagram of that system. If you are explaining how to graft a fruit tree, you will need illustrations of how that task is done. **Photographs**, **drawings**, **diagrams,** and **schematics** are the types of graphics that show objects.
>
> **Numbers.** If you are discussing the rising cost of housing in College Station, you could use a table with the columns marking five-year periods since 1970; the rows could be for different types of housing. You could also 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.
>
> **Relationships.** If you want to show how your company is organized in terms of the relationships between different departments and officials, you could set up an

organization chart using boxes and circles connected with lines that show how everything is hierarchically arranged and related. This organization chart is an example of a graphic for a concept: this type depicts nonphysical, conceptual things and their relationships.

Words. Finally, graphics are used to emphasize written text. You may have noticed how textbooks put key definitions in a box, maybe with different colors. The same can be done with key points or extended examples. In addition to **callout boxes**, other word-driven graphics include **word clouds**, company or brand **logos**, and **word art**.

Tables vs. Figures

Visual elements in a report are referred to as either **Tables** or **Figures**. Tables are made up of **rows** (horizontal) and **columns** (vertical), which in turn create boxes or **cells**. Cells usually have numbers in them (but may also have words or images). In contrast, figures refer to any visual elements—such as graphs, charts, diagrams, photos—that are not tables. Both figures and tables may be included in the main sections of the report, or if they contain supplemental material, they may be contained in an appendix. Try to ensure that figures and tables are not broken over two pages. Tables that require a full page might be best placed in an appendix.

Often, if a more formal report is long enough to contain a Table of Contents, it will also contain a **List of Figures and Tables** or a **List of Illustrations** if the document has both tables and figures, or a **List of Figures** or **List of Tables** if the document contains only one type of visual element. The list of tables and figures or list of illustrations is similar to a table of contents, in that it lists the *pages* on which the visual elements can be found. Strong lists of figures include more than a label such as “Figure 2” — they contain the concise and clear titles of the figures or tables, so that a reader will easily be able to identify the contents of the visual element. For instance, the first table in this chapter would be designated, “Figure 10.1. Table of domestic weekend box office revenues, July 3-5, 2020.”

Tables

Tables are made up of rows and columns that contain data, usually in numerical form. They permit rapid access to and relatively easy comparison of information. If the data is arranged chronologically (for example, sales figures over a ten-year period), the table can show trends (e.g. patterns of rising or falling activity). Of course, tables are not necessarily the most vivid or dramatic means of showing such trends or relationships between data—that's why we have charts and graphs. These figures are discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

Uses for Tables

Tables are used to organize detailed data and information into categories for comparison. The most typical use of tables is for large amounts of numerical data, so tables should be used when exact figures are important. Tables also have an added advantage over charts and graphs by being able to compare multiple factors, whereas a 2D chart can only compare two variables. For example, imagine that you are comparing different models of laser printers in terms of physical characteristics such as height, depth, length, weight, and so on. A table is perfect for demonstrating and allowing comparison of the exact measurements of these specific printer models.

However, tables are not only used for numerical data. They may also be used to organize multiple qualitative categories that are best expressed using words. A qualitative category could be something like color, a ranking such as “Good” or “Ineffective,” or even a definition of a concept. Imagine again that you are comparing several models of a laser printer. As part of your evaluation, you will be using different categories (such as cost, print speed, cost of ink, warranty) as criteria. These criteria are ideal content for a table that uses words rather than numbers.

Effective Table Format and Design

When formatting your tables, there are several guidelines you should follow in order to increase their usability for your audience.

Title. Traditionally, the title of a table is placed on top of the table or is the first row of the table, rather than below. This is because tables are usually read from top to bottom, so it makes sense that the title would be in the first place a reader looks. To provide a title for your table, first include an identifier. This identifier will usually be the label “Table” combined with a number. Tables should be numbered sequentially, with the first table appearing in your report being labeled as Table 1, the second table labeled as Table 2, and so on. Conclude the label with a period. After the label, provide a descriptive title that identifies the content of the table. This title may be formatted in “sentence case,” with only the first word and any proper nouns capitalized, or in “title case,” with all words other than non-primary articles or prepositions being capitalized. Whichever you choose, make sure it is consistent across all tables. For an example of how to title a table and other figures, see “Captions (Labels, Titles, and Citations)” later in this chapter.

Headings. Another major formatting feature of tables is the use of headings. Headings are used at the top of each column (where they are called **box heads**) and on the leftmost-side of each row (where they are called **stubs**). These headings are used to identify the content being provided in their given row or column. When providing a heading for a column that has numerical data, include the units for that column in the header rather than in each individual cell.

When it comes to headings, formatting becomes more complicated when rows or columns must be grouped or subdivided. In such cases, you have to create row or column subheadings. Figure 10.1 illustrates a way to handle this challenge. In this table, there are twelve total columns. Ten of these columns are given headings in cells of the same height. The Distributor information is first identified in an eleventh column. This information is immediately sub-divided into two separate columns and given headings below. Combined, these cells make up the same height as the rest of the row with headings.

Alignment. Left-align or center-align words and phrases in table columns (including the column heading). Right-align numeric data in table columns.

Footnotes and Citation. The final item to consider when formatting a table is whether to add a note or caption below the table itself. There are three types of notes you may use for a table: general, specific, and probability. General notes refer to general information included in a table, such as an explanation of the data source or a citation. Citations are formatted as in-text citations that follow your chosen style guide. General notes appear first and include a label such as "Note:"; "Source:"; or "Data from" (without quotation marks). Specific notes are reserved for specific details about a column, row, or cell. These notes go below any general notes and are labeled with a superscript number or letter that corresponds to a specific place on the table. Finally, probability notes provide information on probability testing. These notes appear last, after any general or specific notes. They do not contain a label. When there is some special point you need to make about one or more of the items in the table, use a footnote instead of clogging up the table with the information.

Table 4. Domestic (U.S.) weekend box office: July 3-5, 2020

Rank	LW[1]	Release	Gross ($)	%± LW	Theatres	Change	Average Per Theatre ($)	Total Gross ($)	Weeks in Release	Distributor	
										IFC Films	Vertical Enter-tainment
1	-	**Relic**	192,352	-	69	-	2,787	192,352	1	✓✓	
2	3	**The Wretched**	25,215	-36.3	62	-35	406	1,684,854	10	✓✓	
5	6	**Miss Juneteenth**	11,883	-32.7	6	-5	1,980	70,224	3		✓✓
6	4	**Infamous**	2,462	-93.3	4	-5	615	427,407	4		✓✓
7	-	**The Truth**	2,200	-	10	-	220	2,200	1	✓✓	

Source: boxofficemojo.com
(https://www.boxofficemojo.com/weekend/2020W27/?ref_=bo_wey_table_1).
[1] LW = Last Week

[1] James Francis, "Table of Domestic Weekend Box Office Revenues, July 3-5, 2020," 2020. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Created using data derived

Figure 10.1. Table of domestic weekend box office revenues, July 3-5, 2020.[1] Format for tables with grouped or subdivided rows and columns.

Effectively Integrating Tables into Your Document

In order to integrate tables into your document effectively, include text that precedes the table and explains the general significance of the data in the table. Don't expect readers to figure out the table entirely for themselves. Also, be sure that you don't overwhelm your readers with extremely large tables; include only the amount of data needed in order to illustrate your point.

Occasionally, rough drafts of technical reports present information in regular running-text form that could be better presented in table (or tabular) form. When revising, review your rough drafts for material that can be transformed into tables. Figure 10.2 below shows an example of how to revise a draft by converting information into a table format. Note how the writer pulls the specific data points from the paragraphs and places them into a table for easy reference. Note also that in the revised paragraphs below, the points in the text also clearly introduce and link to the information in the table. These details help fully integrate the table into the document and make the overall text easier to quickly read and understand.

Original text:

A lot of the data points between the 2013 report and the 2017 data are similar; most respondents are in the engineering or "other" category (oftentimes, "other" means they fulfill two or more roles at the company). Also, a hefty percentage of our respondents, almost 62%, work for companies with more than 500 employees; that is up from 57% working for companies with more than 500 employees in the 2013 data. Also similar was that approximately 62% of respondents indicated that a technical, business, or science writing course was taken in college, up only slightly from 60% in the 2013 report.

A notable difference was that the number of respondents who were required to take a technical, business, or science writing course went up from 51% in 2013 to 87% in the 2017 data. Another notable difference is the metric about writing being important to a job. In 2013, 91% of respondents said that writing was either "very important" or "essential" to their job. In 2017, though, only 75% indicated that writing was "extremely" or "very important." Some of this variance could be that the

[1] from Box Office Mojo, "Domestic 2020 Weekend 27," accessed August 14, 2020, (https://www.boxofficemojo.com/weekend/2020W27/?ref_=bo_wey_table_2).

2013 metric gave the options “Essential,” “Very Important,” “Not Very Important,” “Unimportant,” and “Irrelevant.” However, in 2017, the metric options were “Extremely Important,” “Very Important,” “Moderately Important,” “Slightly Important,” or “Not at all Important.” While that’s a slight shift in language, the change from “Not Very” to “Moderate” opened a new avenue. In this respect, 94% of 2017 respondents indicated that writing was at least moderately important to their job, which is much closer to the 91% reported for the 2013 study. In short, what we can take from each of these studies is that writing/written communication continues to be important in technical, business, and scientific contexts. In a related topic, 86.5% of respondents in 2013 said that their writing was important to their career advancement, while 91% of the 2017 respondents said that writing was at least moderately important to their career advancement. As in the previous example, the metric options were different, but we can still draw the conclusion that writing and the quality of writing are indeed important to career advancement.
Revised text with added table: Many of the data points between the 2013 report and the 2017 data are similar; most respondents are in the engineering or “other” category (oftentimes, “other” means they fulfill two or more roles at the company). As can be seen in Table 1.1, there are also similarities between the numbers of respondents who work in companies with over 500 employees, who indicated that a technical, business or science writing course was taken in college, and who indicated that writing was important to their career advancement. Some notable differences were between the percentages for whom a technical, business, or science writing course was required, and the metric of those who indicated that writing was important to their job. Some of the variance in indicated writing importance could be due to variations in the metric. The 2013 metric gave the options “Essential,” “Very Important,” “Not Very Important,” “Unimportant,” and “Irrelevant.” However, in 2017, the metric options were “Extremely Important,” “Very Important,” “Moderately Important,” “Slightly Important,” or “Not at all Important.” While that’s a slight shift in language, the change from “Not Very” to “Moderate” opened a new avenue. See Table 1.1 for details of the differences in responses.

Table 1.1 Compared results of the 2013 report and 2017 data	**2013 Report**	**2017 Data**
Work in Companies with More than 500 Employees	57%	62%

Table 1.1 Compared results of the 2013 report and 2017 data	2013 Report	2017 Data
Took a Technical, Business, or Science Writing Course	60%	62%
Stated that a Technical, Business, or Science Writing Course was Required	51%	87%
Indicated that Writing was “Very Important” or “Essential” in 2013 **OR** “Extremely” or “Very Important” in 2017	91%	75%
Indicated that Writing was at Least Moderately Important	91%	94%
Indicated that Writing was Important to Career Advancement	86.5%	91%

Figure 10.2. Format for tables.[2]

Figures

Figures comprise several types of visuals. Examples include nearly any visual that is not text-heavy or a table, such as graphs, charts, maps, and diagrams. The following sections will cover the most common types of figures in detail, as well as their potential utility in technical and professional writing.

Types of Figures and Appropriate Uses

Different figure types have different strengths and uses. For example, you would not use a pie chart if you were presenting data that could not add up to 100%, and you would not use a bar graph to show the layout of a community garden. Table 10.1 lists common figure types used in technical writing, along with their general purpose or description.[3]

Table 10.1. Common types of illustrative graphics.

[2] Kalani Pattison, “Format for Tables,” 2020. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercialShareAlike 4.0 International license. Derived from Jason Swarts, Stacey Pigg, Jamie Larsen, Julia Helo Gonzalez, Rebecca De Haas, & Elizabeth Wagner, *Communication in the Workplace: What Can NC State Students Expect?* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University Professional Writing Program, 2018). (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pMpVbDRWIN6HssQQQ4MeQ6U-oBsGUrtRswD7feuRB0/edit#heading=h.n2a3udms5sd5). Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
[3] For a detailed discussion of how and when to use these kinds of visuals, see H. Graves and R. Graves, “Communicating through Visuals,” in *A Strategic Guide to Technical Communications*, 2nd ed. (Peterborough, ONT: Broadview Press, 2011), 137-148.

Type of Visual		Description and Purpose
Graphs	**Bar Graph**	Compares and contrasts two or more subjects at the same point in time, or compares change over time.
	Column Graph	Reveals change in a subject at regular intervals of time.
	Line Graph	Shows the degree and direction of change relative to two variables; compares items over time, shows frequency or distribution, or shows correlations.
Charts	**Pie Chart**	Displays the number and relative size of the divisions of a subject; shows relation of parts to a whole (parts must sum to 100% to make sense). Typically pie charts will include between three and eight slices.
	Organization Chart	Maps the divisions and levels of responsibility or hierarchy within an organization.
	Flow Chart	Shows the sequence of steps in a process or procedure.
	Gantt Chart	Indicates timelines for multi-stepped projects, especially used in proposals and progress reports.
Illustrations	**Diagram**	Identifies the parts of a subject and their spatial or functional relationship; emphasizes detail or shows dimensions.
	Photo	Shows what a subject looks like in realistic detail or shows it being used.
	Animation	Simulates a process, operation, or incident.
	Film Clip	Depicts a process, operation, or incident in realistic detail.

Note: Notice the "box heads" on the top and "stubs" on the left are bolded and centered to enhance readability.

Common Uses of Graphics in Technical Documents

As with any writing decision, use your audience as your guide. Where in technical documents (such as instructions, reports, and proposals) could your reader benefit from visual clarification? Table 10.2 below reviews common types of information that may be clarified by the use of graphics.

Table 10.2. Common places for graphics in technical documents.

What You Are Writing About	Graphic Ideas
Results of a survey question	Table, chart, or graph
Lots of numeric data in relation to two or more things	Table, chart, or graph
Definitions of multiple terms	Table
Chain of command or relationships in an organization	Organization chart
A complex process or procedure	Flow chart
A timeline for completing a project	Gantt chart
An important piece of equipment	Photograph or diagram
A specific geographic location	Map

If you're not sure where you could incorporate a figure, remember that charts and graphs are just another way of presenting the same data that is presented in tables. The advantage of graphs and charts is that they are more dramatic and interesting; however, this strength may come at the cost of detail or precision, where tables excel. Imagine the difference between a table of sales figures for a ten-year period and a line graph for that same data. In the graph, you get a better sense of the overall trend but not of the precise dollar amount.

Drawings, diagrams, photos

To depict objects, places, people, and the relationships between them, you can use photos, drawings, diagrams, and schematics.

Major types of illustrations and photographs run from minimal detail to maximal. A simple line drawing of how to graft a fruit tree reduces the detail to simple lines representing the hands, the tools, the graft stock, and the graft. Diagrams are more abstract, schematic views of things; for example, a diagram of a car engine hardly resembles the actual physical thing at all. Photographs, of course, provide the most detail of all. These graphics, supplying gradations of detail as they do, have their varying uses. Here are some examples:

- In instructions, simple drawings (often called line drawings because they use just lines, without other detail such as shading) are the most common. They simplify the situation and the objects so that the reader can focus on the key details.
- In descriptions, you would want to use drawings, but in this case drawings with more detail, such as shading and depth perspectives.
- In feasibility, recommendation, and evaluation reports, photographs are often used. For example, if you are recommending a photocopier, you might want to include photos of the leading contenders.

Effective Formatting and Design for Figures

When you create charts and graphs, keep these requirements in mind (most of these elements are illustrated in Figure 10.3 below):

Labels. Certain figures contain labels—words and phrases—with pointers to the parts of the things being depicted. In bar charts and line graphs, don't forget to indicate what the x- and y- axes represent. One axis might indicate millions of dollars; the other, five-year segments from 1960 to the present.

Keys or Legends. If the illustration has certain shadings, colors, line styles, or other details that have a special meaning in the illustration, these should be indicated in a key or a legend—an area in an unused corner of the illustration that deciphers their meaning.

Titles. Except in special cases, illustrations should have titles, and these titles should be numbered (Figure 1, Figure 2, and so on). The exceptions are these:

- If you have lots of illustrations (for example, in certain instructions, there are illustrations practically after every paragraph) and if there is no benefit from the titles
- If you only have one or two illustrations and they are not cross-referenced
- If you do not cross-reference your illustrations.

In some of these cases, you might want to keep the title but discard the word "Figure" and the number following it. The title of a figure goes in a caption below the figure.

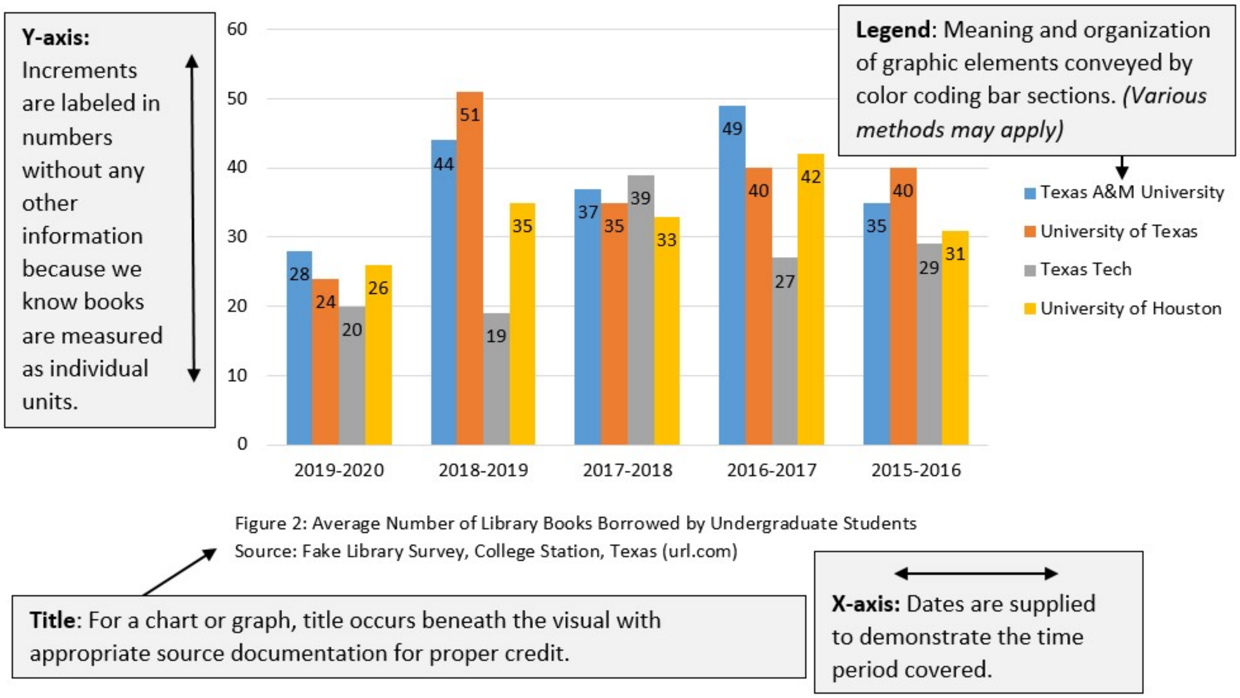


Figure 10.3. Example of a graph.[4]

Cross-references. Almost all illustrations should be referred to from the relevant point in the discussion. Prior to providing the graphic, identify its purpose and explain any relevant details for your readers.

Location within the report. Figures should be placed just after the point where they are needed. However, sometimes because of the pagination (the way the text falls on the pages) and the size of the illustrations, this close placement is not possible. If this occurs, place the graphic at the top of the next page. Your figure numbers and cross-referencing will make it clear what information the graphic is associated with.

Size of illustrations. Ideally, you want illustrations to be between one-quarter to one-half of the vertical size of the page. You also want them to fit on the page with other text. In fact, that's what you really want—to intersperse text and graphics in a report. Extremely large figures may need to be resized, revised to focus on specific information, or placed on their own page.

Placement within margins. Make sure that your illustrations fit neatly and comfortably within standard (usually one-inch) margins. You don't want the illustration spilling over into the right or left margins. You want to allow the equivalent of at least two blank lines above and below the illustration.

[4] James Francis and Sarah LeMire, "Example of a Graph," 2020. Licensed under a [Creative Commons AttributionNonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

Level of technical detail. Design your figures to be at the right technical level for your readers. For example, a chip circuitry diagram for an audience of computer beginners would likely be too complex.

Design. Avoid unnecessarily convoluted, distracting, or misleading design elements. For instance, don't use 3D for figures such as pie charts or bar graphs. A 3D pie chart can distort the impression that the size of the slices makes, and 3D bar graphs can make it difficult for the reader to tell whether to read from the "front" or the "back" of the bar. See Figure 10.4 for a good example of a pie chart with clear slices, labelling, and design.

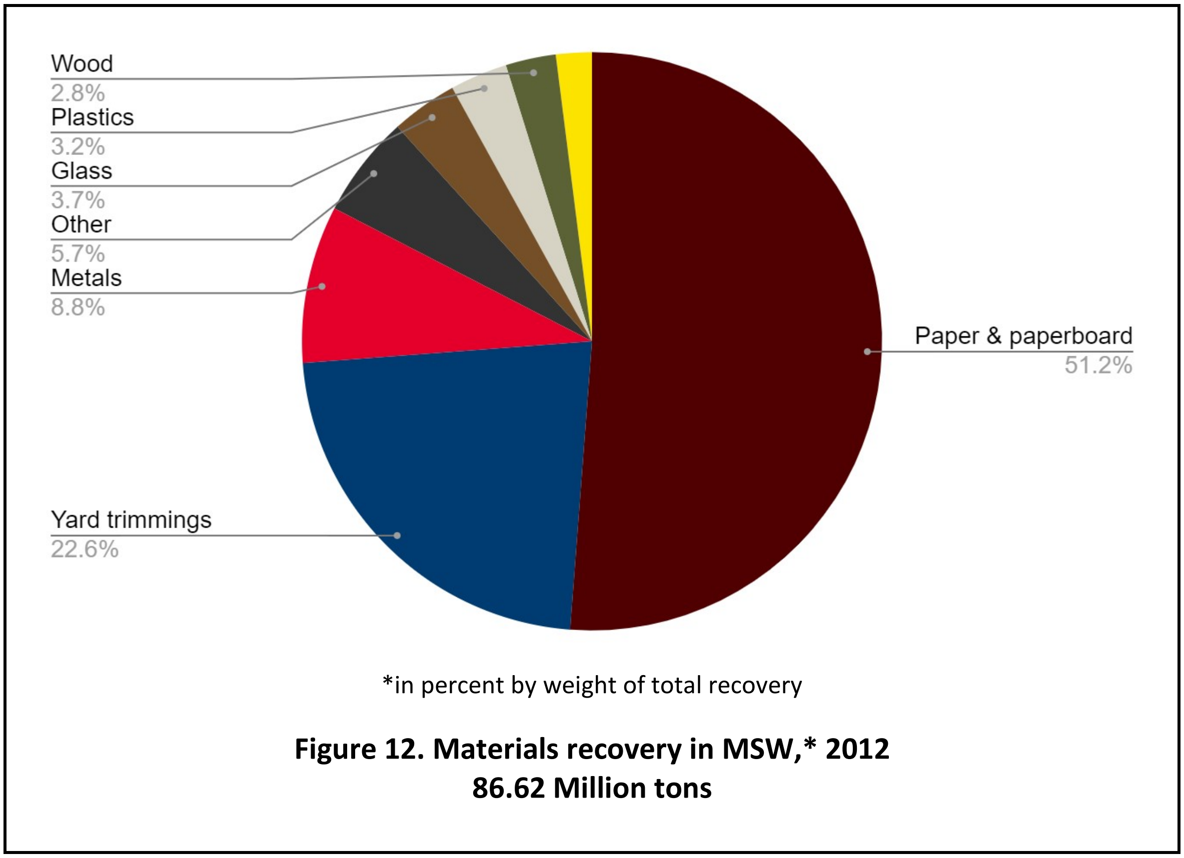


Figure 10.4. Example of a pie chart.[5] Notice that the slices go clockwise from largest to smallest (roughly).

Accessibility/Usability. Be sure that your figures are accessible to a wide variety of readers and in a variety of formats. In addition to using actual text

[5] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery, "Figure 12. Materials recovery in MSW,* 2012 86.62 Million tons," in *Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States Tables and Figures for 2012*, February 2014, 46. (https://archive.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/web/pdf/2012_msw_dat_tbls.pdf)

rather than pictures of text, choose your colors wisely. While different shades of the same color may look nice, those shades may be easily misread if they are too similar. Combinations of red and green or yellow and blue may make it difficult for those with the most common types of color-blindness to determine the figure's meaning. Remember that clear communication is the most important consideration in design choices.

Integrating Visuals

In technical business writing, visuals are utilized in conjunction with written content to deliver a variety of information to a reader. When incorporating visuals into a document, consider the 12 guidelines below to ensure that the combination of text and graphics is complementary and effective.

12 Rules for Integrating Graphics into your Document

1. **Create purposeful graphics.** Graphics should be used to clarify and emphasize information that is difficult to convey concisely in written form. A pie chart that illustrates a 50% "Yes" and 50% "No" response from a survey is something that can be easily expressed in writing without visual representation. If a graphic's purpose is not immediately clear, it may need to be revised or removed.
2. **Label your graphics.** Give each visual a numbered caption that includes a clear descriptive title. For tables, this numbered caption and title should go above the graphic. For figures and illustrations other than tables, place these captions below.
3. **Introduce the graphic by label in your document**. Refer to the caption number within the body text and discuss its content. You do not need to repeat specific information from the graphic, but you should explain what the reader should be looking for. You should also highlight key information from the graphic.
4. **Cite any copied graphics and/or data sources.** If you did not create the graphic yourself, or if you used data from another source, include that information in a caption below the graphic.
5. **Review graphics for accuracy and clarity.** Once you have drafted your graphic, make sure you review it critically. Are all numerical values correct? Are all words spelled correctly? Does the graph accurately and fairly represent the data?
6. **Utilize consistent font style and sizing.** Your graphics should use the same typeface as the body text of your document. All figures and tables should also follow a consistent structure and design choice. For example, if your first row header on a table is in bold white text with a maroon background, all first-row headers for tables should follow this same format.
7. **Arrange the visual image in the same direction as the body text.** While it can be tempting to flip or invert an image so that it fits better on a page, this approach ends up distracting a reader who then has to switch their screen view, which results in the inability to quickly compare the figure with the text where it is introduced.

8. **Avoid crowding the page with too many graphics.** Graphics work best, at least visually, when they are interspersed and integrated with texts. This contrast creates balance on a page while also drawing attention to specific information. When graphics are all one page together, especially if they are unrelated, their significance is diminished.
9. **Provide sufficient spacing between graphics and text.** Graphics should not overlap text and vice-versa. Aim for at least 1-2 full lines of space between a figure or table and body text.
10. **Consider how assistive technologies may interpret the graphic and/or its descriptive text.** When designing and integrating graphics, remember that certain users may be encountering them through a screen reader or other application. To make your graphics accessible, make sure that any text is typed rather than presented as an image. For photographs and other images, offer an “alt-text” description.
11. **Make sure all visual elements are clear.** For all graphics, make sure that the print size is readable. This means that the graphic should not be too small or blurry due to copy and pasting. If a copied graphic is unclear, you may need to recreate it, with proper attribution, of course.
12. **Incorporate color coding.** Use complementary color systems or colors associated with your organization to offer visual interest, distinguish different types of information, and add to the professionalism of your document.

Cross-referencing

Any figures or tables you use in your document must be discussed in your text. Use the following guidelines when discussing and referring to tables and figures (as illustrated in Figure 10.5):

- Whenever you use a chart or graph, provide some explanation of what is going on in the graphic, how to interpret it, what its basic trends are, and so on.
- Place the table/figure close to where it is first referred to in the text (preferably immediately below the paragraph in which it is first mentioned).
- Refer to tables and figures in your text by their numbers, not their placement in the text. For example, “See Figure 9 for a detailed schematic” (not “see the figure below”); “the test results are summarized in Table 1.”
- When referring to a figure or table in your body text, it is helpful to place the reference in bold font.

In an annual survey, Texas A&M students reported several popular study spaces on campus. In the three years studied, over 50% of students indicated that they spent time studying in Evans Library (Figure 2). Evans Library proved to be more popular than its closest competitors, the MSC and Rudder.

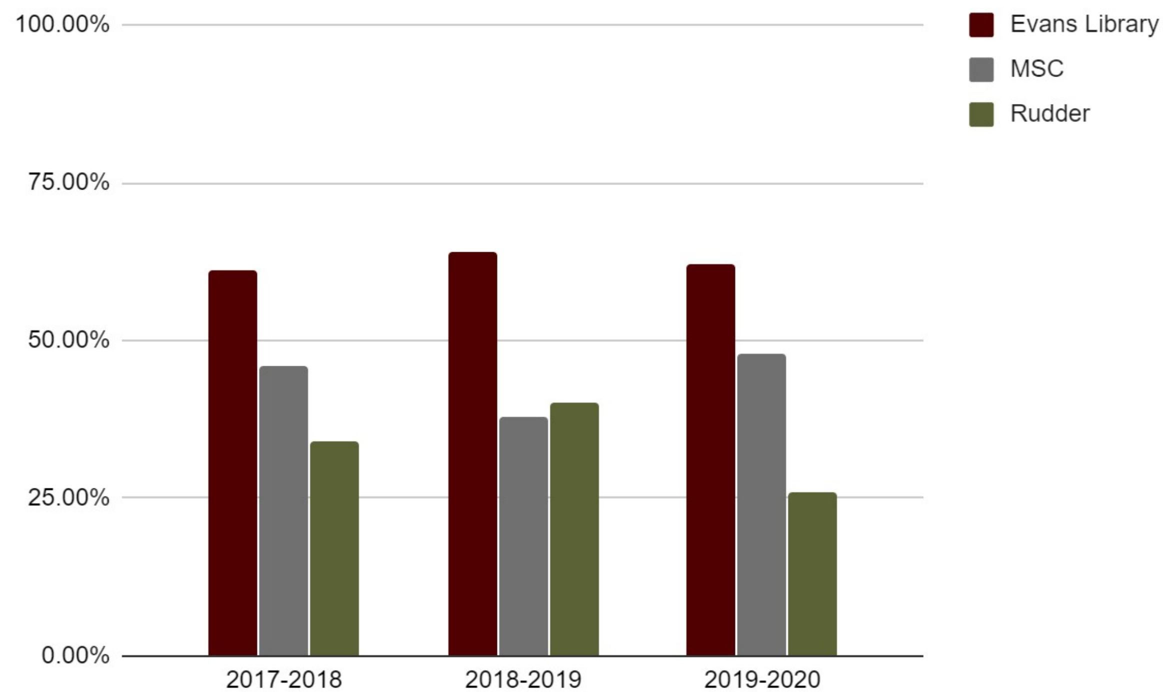


Figure 2: Popular Texas A&M Study Spots

The survey did not ask students about popular off-campus study locations, so it is unclear if other area locations are even more popular.

Figure 10.5. Example of a column chart.[6] Notice that text above and below the chart calls attention to the chart and briefly indicates its significance. Please note that figure does not represent the results of an actual survey.

Captions (Labels, Titles, and Citations)

Tables and figures must all be labeled with numbered captions that clearly identify and describe them. Captions should immediately identify what the figure or table represents for the reader. Table captions must be placed above the tables because we generally read tables from the top down, and therefore want to see the caption at the top. In contrast, figures are not always read from top to bottom, so figure captions are generally placed below the figures. If you choose to place figure captions above the figures, however, do so consistently throughout your document.

Use the following conventions to assist the reader in understanding your graphics:

[6] Sarah LeMire, "Example of a Column Chart," 2020. Licensed under a Creative Commons AttributionNonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Numbering. Tables and figures are numbered sequentially but separately. For example: Table 1, Table 2, Figure 1, Figure 2, Table 3, etc.

Figure and Table titles. For most figures and tables, you'll want to include a title. Readers need some way of knowing what they are looking at and a convenient way of naming and discussing the illustration other than by its number alone.

Captioning. After the figure or table number, add a descriptive title that clearly indicates what the figure or table illustrates without having to read anything else on the page. Be sure to cite the source of any information you borrowed to create the graphic or to cite the source of the graphic itself.

There are two systems for numbering figures and tables within your document:

Simple Consecutive Numbering. All figures and tables are numbered consecutively (Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, etc.) throughout the document regardless of which section they are in.

Section-based Numbering. Within each section, figures and tables may be numbered sequentially through each section (e.g. Table 1.1 refers to the first table in section 1; Table 2.4 refers to the fourth table in section 2).

If a large number of illustrations are presented, section-based numbering is the better choice; however, this can become confusing when the sections of text include sub-sections. Carefully weigh and choose which of the above systems of numbering figures and tables will be the clearest one to use for your particular document.

Finally, alter the font of your captions to distinguish them from body text. Caption font is usually the same type of font (such as Calibri or Times New Roman), but it is slightly smaller than body font and sometimes italicized. The label and number (for example, “**Figure 1**; **Table 3.5**”) are often both bolded in their corresponding graphic’s caption and in the body text.

Figures 10.6 and 10.7 demonstrate the difference that clear labeling, titles, captions, and key/legends can make in clarifying the meaning of a figure.

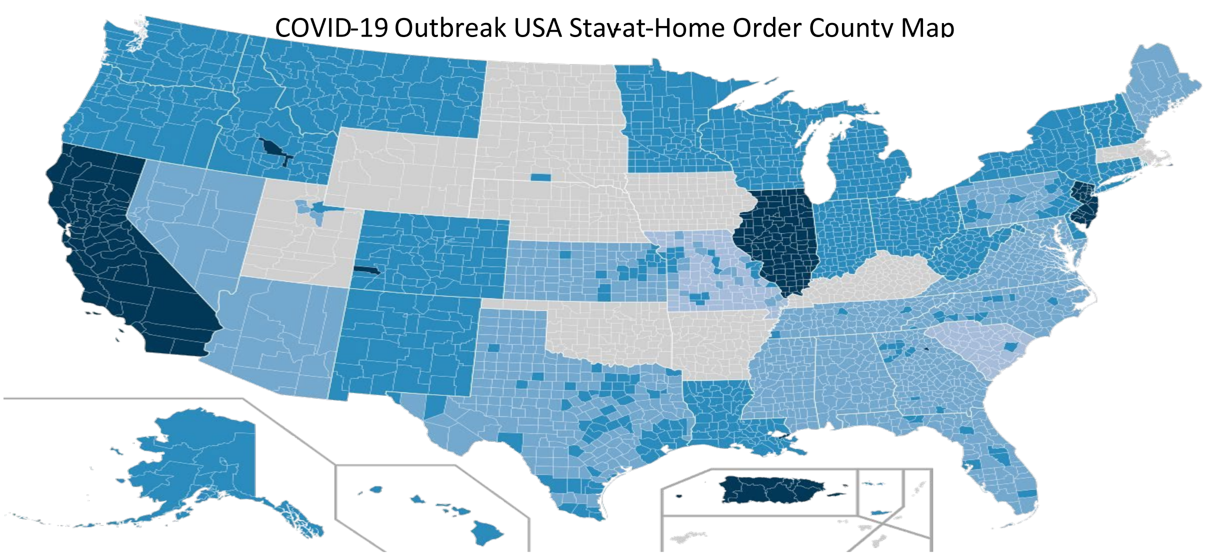
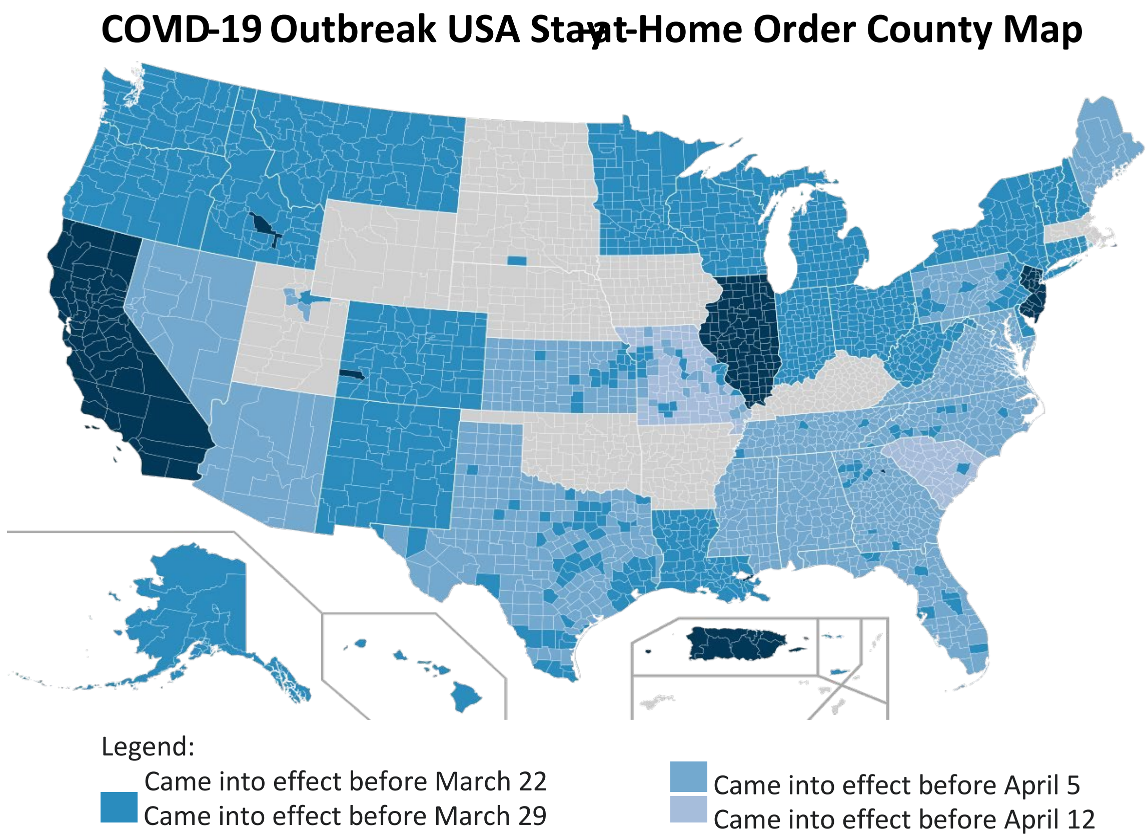


Figure 10.6. COVID-19 outbreak USA stay-at-home order county map.[7]

Can you understand what Figure 10.6 is trying to say? You may know the United States well enough to recognize state lines and the lighter county lines. Could you do the same if it was a map of South America or Europe? Some might be able to, but many would not. In addition, what do the colors actually mean? When during the pandemic is this information from? When was the information on this map accurate? What limitations or restrictions apply to the information here?

Consider this version of the map:



Th

Figure 10.7. COVID-19 outbreak USA stay-at-home order county map, as of May 4, 2020.[8] A map of states, counties and county equivalents in the United States that imposed mandatory stay-at-home orders (sometimes as "shelter-in-place orders" or "safer-at-home orders") as part of U.S. state and local government responses to the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, color-coded by the week during which each order went into effect. This map does not show numerous cities, towns, and sovereign tribal lands.

[7] Mihn Nguyen, "COVID-19 Outbreak USA Stay-at-Home Order County Map," Wikimedia Commons, uploaded May 4, 2020, (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:COVID-19_outbreak_USA_stay-at-home_order_county_map.svg) Made available under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

[8] Kalani Pattison added a legend to Mihn Nguyen, "COVID-19 Outbreak USA Stay-at-Home Order County Map," Wikimedia Commons, uploaded May 4, 2020, (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:COVID-19_outbreak_USA_stay-at-home_order_county_map.svg). Made available under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

Figure 10.7 has a numbered label, a descriptive title, an explanatory caption, and a properly labelled legend. The caption also cites the source the graph was retrieved from, using an in-text citation that is linked to a full reference below. The original image has not been distorted in any way. Altogether, the title, explanatory caption with appropriate citation, and the clear legend make the figure readable, useful, and credible, unlike the previous figure.

Documenting Graphics

If the table or figure that you present in your report was not created by you and instead comes from other sources, you must include a reference for the original source in your caption, such as “Figure 1. Network Design (Smith, 2015).”

Data used from outside sources to create a figure or table must also be cited. You must ensure that all figures and tables represent data accurately and ethically, and that they do not distort data to create bias. You need to cite the original dataset because it’s important for readers to be able to understand where the data being represented in a graphic originate, and it’s expected ethically that you credit the source of your data.

When using graphics in your text, it’s important to consider the ethics of doing so. Many images that you find on the Internet are protected by copyright. Copyright is the category of intellectual property that covers original works such as software, images and displays, web designs, music, movies, works of art, literature, and sound recordings, among other creations. Authors who create those works have legal rights with regard to them, such as the right to reproduce, display, or perform them. When using someone else’s work, like graphics, pictures, or artwork, it’s important to note if you have the right to do so or if you need to obtain permission or a license. Copyright is a complicated subject, so you may need to check with company policies or leaders about your use of copyrighted works, particularly in cases where you are selling items or distributing or displaying them to large audiences. Regardless of copyright status, you're obligated to cite your sources for tables, charts, and graphs just as you are for the words you borrow. Normally, this is done in either the table title or in a footnote just below the table. Check the example in Figure 10.3 shown previously.

Use of Color

People love color, and understandably your audience will appreciate the visual stimulation of a colorful presentation. If you have ever seen a car painted a custom color that just didn’t attract you, or seen colors put together in ways that made you wonder what people were thinking when they did that, you will recognize that color can also distract and turn off an audience.

Color is a powerful way to present information, and that power should be used wisely. You will need to give some thought and consider what impact you want to make, how color will contribute or possibly distract, and what colors will work well for you to produce an effective and impressive presentation. You will be selecting which color you want to use for headers, graphics, and background illustrative elements and determining how they relate to the colors in other visuals such as drawings or photographs. Together, the use of color in your images, keywords, headings, backgrounds, tables, and graphs can have a significant impact on your audience.

There are inherent relationships between colors, and while you may have covered some of this information in art or design classes you have taken, it is valuable to review here. According to the standard color wheel, colors are grouped into primary, secondary, and tertiary categories (see Figure 10.8 for an image of the color wheel). Primary colors are the colors from which other colors are made through various combinations. Secondary colors represent a combination of two primary colors, while tertiary colors are made from combinations of primary and secondary colors. The different categories of colors are listed below:

- **Primary colors.** Red, blue, and yellow
- **Secondary colors.** Green, violet, and orange
- **Tertiary colors**. Red-orange, red-violet, blue-violet, blue-green, yellow-orange, and yellow-green

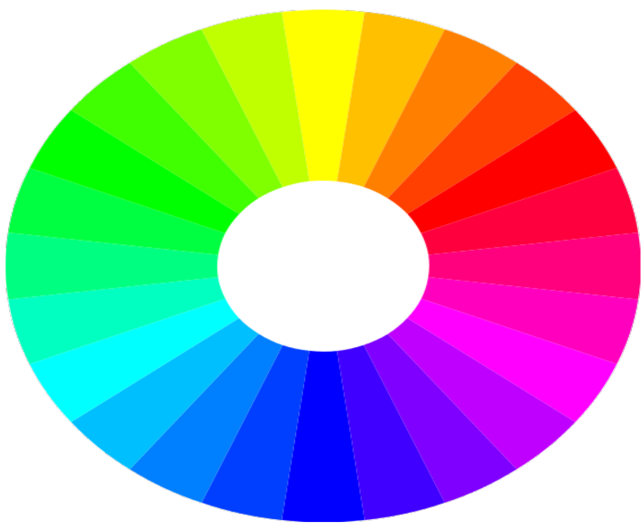


Figure 10.8. RGB color wheel with 24 colors.[9]

Colors have relationships depending on their location on the wheel. Colors that are opposite each other are called complementary. Complementary colors, such as blue and orange, contrast, creating a dynamic effect. Analogous colors are located next to each other and promote harmony, continuity, and a sense of unity.

Here are some specific suggestions concerning color:

Use color minimally in text-driven documents. While color works well for image-driven documents such as slide presentations or advertisements, most writers avoid using an abundance of color for texts with long word counts. For example, if you have black text on a white background, you might select another color for headings. You might use that same color for figure and table titles as well as the tags for notices (the actual "Note," "Warning," "Caution," and "Danger" labels on notices).

[9] László Németh, "RGB Color Wheel with 24 Colors," Wikimedia Commons, June 25, 2013. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RGB_color_wheel_24.svg). This image is made available under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

Avoid unusual combinations of background and text colors. For example, purple or red text on a black background is very difficult to read. For body text and documents, stick with black text on a white or gray background unless there is a strong functional reason for some other color combination, though headings can be more colorful. For websites, both light text on a dark background or dark text on a light background may be acceptable, depending on the anticipated website use.

Be mindful of individuals who are color blind. Being color blind does not usually mean that an individual does not see color at all. Rather, color blindness refers to a condition where an individual does not visually distinguish between certain colors—they appear similar to them.

The most common types are red-green color blindness and blue-yellow color blindness. Especially when you want to provide contrast, you can improve clarity for your readers by avoiding the use of these color combinations.

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Chapter 12

Writing Proposals

Proposals and progress reports) are some of the most common types of reports you will likely compose in the workplace. Proposals are especially common in grant driven fields, such as academia, public health, and nonprofits.

A proposal, in the technical sense, is a document that tries to persuade the reader to implement a proposed plan or approve a proposed project. Most businesses rely on effective proposal writing to ensure successful continuation of their business and to get new contracts. In a proposal, the writer tries to convince the reader of the following:

- The proposed plan or project is worth the time, energy, and expense necessary to implement or see through.
- The author represents the best candidate for implementing the idea.
- The proposed project or plan will result in tangible benefits for the reader.

Example scenarios where a proposal might be called for are listed below:

- A company has a problem or wants to make some sort of improvement. The company sends out a request for proposals; you receive one and respond with a proposal. You offer to come in, investigate, interview, make recommendations, and present all this information in the form of a report.
- An organization wants a seminar in your expertise. You write a proposal to give the seminar and provide a guide or handbook that the people attending the seminar will receive.
- An agency has just started using a new online data system, but the user's manual is technically complex and difficult to read. You receive a request from this agency for proposals to write a simplified guide or startup guide.
- A nonprofit organization focused on a particular issue wants a consultant to write a handbook or guide for its membership. This document will present information on the issue in a way that the members can understand. The organization asks you to submit a proposal detailing how you would set about fulfilling this need.

Fig 11.1 Not that kind of proposal.[1]

[1] [Proposal image]. [Online]. Available: (https://pixabay.com/en/couple-love-marriage-proposal-47192/). Pixabay License. ↲

Proposals are often written in response to a **Request For Proposals** (RFP) by a government agency, organization, or company. The requesting body receives multiple proposals responding to their request, reviews the submitted proposals, and chooses the best one(s) to go forward. Thus, your proposal must **persuade** the reader that your idea is the one most worth pursuing. Proposals are persuasive documents intended to initiate a project and get the reader to authorize a course of action proposed in the document. These might include proposals to

- Perform a task (such as a feasibility study, a research project, *etc.*)
- Provide a product
- Provide a service

Proposals can have various purposes and thus take many forms. It may include sections such as the following:

- Introduction and/or background
- Problem statement
- Purpose/motivation/goal/objectives
- Definition of scope and approach
- Review of the state of the art
- Technical background
- Project description
- Schedule of work/timeline
- Budget
- Qualifications
- Conclusion

The Four Kinds of Proposals

1. **Solicited Proposals:** an organization identifies a situation or problem that it wants to improve or solve and issues an RFP (Request for Proposals) asking for proposals on how to address it. The requesting organization will vet proposals and choose the most convincing one, often using a detailed scoring rubric or weighted objectives chart to determine which proposal best responds to the request.
2. **Unsolicited Proposals:** a writer perceives a problem or an opportunity and takes the initiative to propose a way to solve the problem or take advantage of the opportunity (without being requested to do so). This can often be the most difficult kind of proposal to get approved.
3. **Internal Proposals:** these are written by and for someone within the same organization. Since both the writer and reader share the same workplace context, these proposals are generally shorter than external proposals, and usually address some way to improve a work-related situation (productivity, efficiency, profit, *etc.*). As internal documents, they are often sent as memos, or introduced with a memo if the proposal is lengthy.
4. **External Proposals**: these are sent outside of the writer's organization to a separate entity (usually to solicit business). Since these are external documents, they are usually sent as a formal report (if long), introduced by a cover letter

(letter of transmittal). External proposals are usually sent in response to a Request for Proposals, but not always.

Proposals written as an assignment in a Technical Writing classes generally do the following:

1. Identify and define the problem that needs to be solved or the opportunity that can be taken advantage of. You must show that you clearly understand the problem/situation if you are to convince the reader that you can solve it. Rubrics that assess proposals generally place significant weight (~20%) on clarity and accuracy of the problem definition.
2. Describe your proposed project, clearly defining the scope of what you propose to do. Often, it is best to give a general overview of your idea, and then break it down into more detailed sub-sections.
3. Indicate how your proposed solution will solve the problem and provide tangible benefits. Specifically, indicate how it will meet the objectives and abide by the constrains outlined in the problem definition. Give specific examples. Show the specific differences between “how things are now” and “how they could be.” Be as empirical as possible, but appeal to all appropriate persuasive strategies. Emphasize results, benefits, and feasibility of your proposed idea.
4. Include the practical details: propose a budget and a timeline for completing your project. Represent these graphically. Your timeline should include the major milestones or deliverables of the project, as well as dates or time frames for completion of each step.
5. Conclude with a final pitch that summarizes and emphasizes the benefits of implementing your proposed idea – but without sounding like an advertisement.

Additional Proposal Elements to Consider

1. Describe your qualifications to take on and/or lead this project; persuade the reader that you have the required skills, experience, and expertise to complete this job.
2. Decide what graphics to use to illustrate your ideas, present data, and enhance your pitch.
3. Include secondary research to enhance your credibility and the strength of your proposal.
4. Choose format; is this a memo to an internal audience or a formal report to an external audience? Does it require a letter of transmittal?

All proposals must be convincing, logical, and credible, and to do this, they must consider audience, purpose and tone.

Sample Proposal Organization

Each proposal will be unique in that it must address a particular audience in a particular context and for a specific purpose; however, a fairly standard organization for many types of proposals is detailed below in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1. Proposal organizational structure.

	Proposal Organizational Structure
Summary	Covers all essential information in the proposal, either to encourage your audience to continue to read the full proposal, or for the convenience of a specific audience who does not have the time or need to read the whole document. Since the writer has not yet begun the project, they would most likely use a pure summary here. This type of summary ascribes equal weight to all sections of the proposal. In a proposal, this includes methods of data collection, which enables the writer to present their project design persuasively. See Chapter 15: Correspondence and Chapter 20: Recommendation Reports for more discussion on summary types.
Introduction/ Background	Clearly and fully defines the problem or opportunity addressed by the proposal, and briefly describes how the project will address that need. Convinces the reader (consider persuasive writing strategies) that there is a clear need for and a clear benefit to the proposed idea.
Project Description	Describes the project in detail and explains how the project will improve the situation: 1. Confirms feasibility (is it doable?) with consideration to time. What makes the project realistically achievable? 2. Explains the specific benefits of implementing the project and the consequences of not doing it. 3. Gives a detailed description or explanation of your proposed project plan or methodology and the resources needed to achieve goals. 4. Addresses potential obstacles or objections; concedes where appropriate.
Credentials	Establishes writer's qualifications, experience, and authority to lead this project. What is your connection to the problem or opportunity?

	Proposal Organizational Structure
Timeline	Provides a detailed timeline for completion of project. Uses a Gantt chart—See "Timelines and Gantt Charts" below—to indicate when each stage of the project will be complete.
Budget	Provides an itemized budget for completing the proposed project.
Conclusion	Concludes with a final pitch that summarizes and emphasizes the benefits of implementing your proposed idea—but without sounding like an advertisement.
References	Lists your research sources to document and credit appropriately; this clarifies and authenticates the project work and avoids fallout of plagiarism.

Depending on the type of your proposal and your audience expectations, some of these sections may either be in a different order or not present at all. The Credentials, Timeline, and Budget sections, for example, can be found in a different order than listed above. Certain sections may also use different headings or subheadings to more precisely convey the content in their section. These differences are most common in the Project Description portion of the proposal.

Timelines and Gantt Charts

There are several different types of timelines or schedules that can be used to convey a planned schedule for a project or research. The simplest are lists of dates and deadlines. More complex projects, in which tasks vary in duration, can be worked on simultaneously, or depending on the completion of other tasks, may more clearly convey their schedule or timeline through the use of a **Gantt chart**.

Gantt charts are a way of visually depicting the timelines of tasks within a planned project. They are created by using the table format. Typically, the columns represent units of time such as weeks, days, or even months, depending on the duration of the project. Each row represents a specific task or sub-task, presented in order of anticipated completion. Sometimes complex Gantt charts may also depict subtasks within other tasks, as well as how tasks are dependent on each other. Consider the following simple example of a Gantt chart in Table 11.2, which gives the steps in planning an international trip.

Table 11.2 is a simple Gantt chart where the length of the tasks in weeks has been determined by factors such as the average time for passport renewal. If the actions were to take place over a shorter period of time, it would be more practical to include dates with increased frequency. In addition, this chart only presents a relatively simple outline of tasks. For instance, the task of buying airline tickets could be broken into multiple steps or subtasks, including looking at specific websites, trying different days and nearby airports, and so on.

Table 11.2. Gantt chart for planning an international trip.[2]

#	Task	Week 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Apply for Passport Renewal												
2	Determine Destination												
3	Apply for Visa												
4	Buy Airline Tickets												
5	Book Hotel												
6	Plan for Transportation												

Note: Darker cells indicate completed tasks, while lighter cells indicate tasks yet to be started.

The following list presents a series of thoughts concerning the tasks and their timelines, and how they may overlap or need to wait for a previous task to be finished. These logical steps are necessary to consider as Gantt charts convey the expected duration for each task.

- **Task One.** Several weeks are allotted for renewing a passport, which, under normal circumstances, takes 6-8 weeks.
- **Task Two.** It is possible to determine the destination of the trip even before the passport returns, hence that task operating concurrently with passport renewal.
- **Task Three.** However, you would need to wait for the passport before applying for a visa.

[2] Kalani Pattison, "Gantt Chart for Planning an International Trip," 2020. This image is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

(Depending on your destination, obtaining a visa ahead of time may or may not be necessary.)

- **Task Four.** Airline tickets might have to wait until the visa is confirmed or may need to be purchased before applying for the visa, depending, again, on the destination.
- **Task Five.** Since changing flights a few days earlier or later may change ticket prices, and since some flights may only operate on certain days of the week, it is best not to book a hotel until after tickets have been bought.
- **Task Six.** Finally, the location of the hotel and its proximity to the areas you are interested in would strongly determine whether you rented a car, relied on public transportation, budgeted for a Lyft or Uber, or walked while visiting.

This Gantt chart also lets viewers know the status of the tasks by using colors and shades purposefully. In Table 11.2, the creator used darker colors for completed tasks and lighter colors for work yet to be completed. You may also consider using colors or shades to indicate which team member or group is working on a particular task or if a task is in-progress.

Here, in Figure 11.2, is an example of a more complicated Gantt chart with lines indicating task dependencies on each other, and organizations and colors depicting how larger stages are broken down into subtasks.

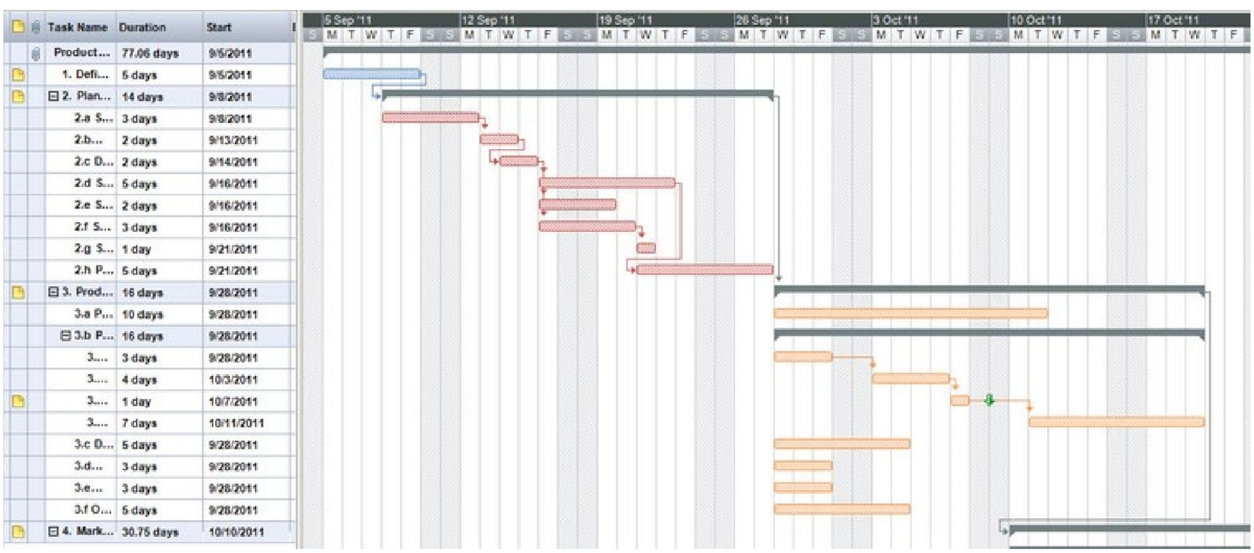

Figure 11.2. Illustration of a more complex Gantt chart.[3] Though the figure is a bit too small to read, the form of the chart aspect should be relatively clear.

A Few Last Things To Consider

- Decide what graphics to use to illustrate your ideas, present data, and enhance your pitch.

[3] Matchware Inc., "MindView-Gantt Chart," Wikimedia Commons, May 27, 2013. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MindView-Gantt_Chart.png)

- Include secondary research to enhance your credibility and the strength of your proposal.
- Choose format. Is this a memo to an internal audience or a formal report to an external Proposals are fundamentally persuasive documents, so paying attention to the rhetorical situation—the relational position of the audience (upward, lateral, downward, or outward communication), the purpose of the proposal, the form, and the tone—is paramount. When drafting and revising your proposal, consider the following tonal elements:
    - Clearly define your purpose and audience before you begin to write.
    - Conduct preliminary research so that you know what you are talking about.
    - Remain positive and constructive: you are seeking to improve a situation rather than critique it.
    - Be solution oriented; don't blame or dwell on the negative.
    - Make your introduction logical, objective, and empirical; don't start off sounding like an advertisement or sounding biased; avoid logical fallacies.
    - Use primarily logical and ethical appeals; use emotional appeals sparingly.

As always, adhere to the 7 Cs by making sure that your writing is

- **Clear and coherent.** For maximum clarity, provide a logical overall structure with clear headings and subheadings. Review your document with at least one other reader to ensure that all the content makes sense.
- **Concise and courteous.** Don't annoy your reader with clutter, unnecessary padding, inappropriate tone, or hard-to-read formatting.
- **Concrete and complete.** Provide specifics, especially in relation to your sources and methods. Don't leave out necessary information such as the timeline.
- **Correct.** "Correctness" refers not only to mechanical issues such as grammar or spelling but also to proper formatting and the accuracy of information. When writing a proposal, make sure to verify all sources, claims, and any information provided on the RFP. Further review any formatting guidelines, especially if you are completing an internal proposal. Finally, to ensure mechanical accuracy, review your proposal at least twice with two trusted peers or supervisors.

The Life Cycle of a Project Idea

A great idea does not usually go straight from proposal to implementation. You may think it would be a great idea to construct a green roof on top of the Clearihue building, but before anyone gives you the go ahead for such an expensive and time-consuming project, they will need to know that you have done research to ensure the idea is cost effective and will actually work. **Figure 7.2.1** breaks down the various stages a project might go through, and identifies some of the typical communications tasks that might be required at each stage.

Most ideas start out as a proposal **to determine** if the idea is really feasible, or **to find out** which of several options will be most advantageous. So before you propose the actual green roof, you *propose to study whether or not it is a feasible* idea. Before you recommend a data storage system, you *propose to study 3 different systems to find out which is the best one for this particular situation*. Your proposal assumes the idea is worth looking into, convinces the reader that it is worth spending the time and resources to look into, and gives detailed information on *how* you propose to do the "finding out."

Figure 11.3 *Phases of a project and some accompanying communications tasks*. [4]

Once a project is in the implementation phase, the people who are responsible for the project will likely want regular status updates and/or progress reports to make sure that the project is proceeding on time and on budget, or to get a clear, rational explanation for why it is not.

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Chapter 13

Oral and Visual Presentations

Oral presentations may be one of the most anxiety-inducing prospects for many students and professionals alike. Yet the ability to speak clearly and confidently in public is an important competency in the workplace.

Public Speaking Anxiety

For many of us, speaking in front of a group is terrifying. In a written document, we have the opportunity to revise and edit until we are ready for readers. In a speech or presentation, however, we only have one chance to impress, and we do not have control over the situation. We may also feel embarrassed about things we cannot help such as a stutter, an accent, or involuntary movements. We may have to "code switch" from how we speak with our families and friends. We may be a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) facing a room of people who are not of our race or heritage. All of these factors and more lead to anxiety over public speaking.

While there are many helpful practices for those dealing with the nervousness that accompanies public speaking, some of us may have deeper anxieties. In these cases, it may be worthwhile to seek out counseling and other support resources. These services, along with family, friends, and instructors, can help us identify and implement coping strategies, supports, and accommodations for living with anxiety, thus putting us on an even playing field with our peers.

Just as you consider the different elements of the rhetorical situation when writing and reading texts, these same elements also apply to preparing for oral communication and presentations. This section discusses rhetorical devices as they specifically apply to these forms of technical and professional communication.

Consider Your Audience

In addition to precise words and clear definitions, contextual clues are important to guide your audience as they listen. Spoken contextual clues are words or short phrases that clarify complex ideas or unfamiliar words, as well as indicate where the speaker is in their speech.

For example, if you are speaking to a general audience and choose to use a word in professional jargon that may be understood by many—but not all—of the people in your audience, follow it by a common word or short explanation that clearly conveys its essential meaning. With this positive strategy, you will be able to forge relationships with audience members from diverse backgrounds.

Another useful spoken guide for your reader is the summary. Summaries can not only be placed at the beginning of a speech, thus signaling what information is to come, but also at the end of a speech to remind the audience what they have heard. Internal summaries, which occur within the speech, combine these uses by telling listeners what they have heard and forecasting what is to come. It's not just the words, but also how people hear them that counts.

One of the best ways to display respect for your audience is to keep to the expected time in a presentation or length in a document. Also note that if you say the magic words "in conclusion," you set in motion a set of expectations that you are about to wrap up. If, however, you then introduce a new point and continue to speak, the audience will perceive an expectancy violation and hold you accountable. You said, "in conclusion," but did not honor the implied promise these words made. Your careful attention to contextual clues will demonstrate that you are clearly considering your audience.

Check for Understanding

When speaking to someone face-to-face, you have the advantage of seeking and receiving immediate feedback. Many listeners will offer visual cues signaling when they are excited, upset, or perplexed. If your listeners are confused, you can ask questions and clarify right away. That gives oral communication, particularly live interaction, a distinct advantage. Use this immediacy to gain beneficial feedback. When preparing for a presentation, allow time to specifically practice and collect feedback from multiple people who share characteristics of your anticipated audience.

If you were presenting to a group who you knew, in advance, was of a certain age, sex, or professional background, it would only make sense to connect with someone from that group prior to your actual performance to check and see if what you have created and what they expect are similar. In oral communication, feedback is a core component of the communication model; we can often see it and hear it, and it also requires less effort to assess.

Using Signposts in a Presentation

Plan carefully for the **spoken headings** you will use in your presentation. These verbal signposts indicate you are moving from one subtopic to the next, or they announce a new subtopic. They help your listeners understand how your presentation is organized. Spoken headings may also be turned into written headings on a slide or handout.

Signposts are keywords that alert the audience to transitions that occur in a document. These transitions can vary in form, including a change in topic, a tangential explanation, an example, or a conclusion. Especially in longer sections of documents and speeches, readers and listeners can sometimes forget what point is being made or lose track of where the speaker or writer is. You can help your audience avoid losing their place by signaling to them when a change is coming.

Verbal signposts serve the same function as headings in printed documents. Common signposts include "on the one hand," "on the other hand," "the solution to this problem is," "the reason for this is," "for example," "to illustrate," and "in conclusion" or "in summary." Signposts can also use strategic repetition to achieve the same effect as traditional transitions or organizational words. Some speakers, for example, use a series of questions to indicate new subtopics. Take a look at Figure 12.1 to review the verbal headings and signposts from an oral report.

Excerpts from the Oral Report	Suggested Verbal Headings
“*As you can see from the preceding information*, our fairly average-size city produces a surprisingly large **amount** of solid	The first sentence refers to the topic (“**amount**”)—what the
waste. What is the **cost** of getting rid of it? I can tell you from the start that it is not cheap...”	speaker has just finished talking about. The next sentence indicates that the speaker is moving on to a new topic (“**cost**”).
“Not only are the **costs** of getting rid of our garbage high, *as I have shown*, but it’s getting harder and harder for city officials to find disposal sites. The **geographical problems in disposal**....”	At the beginning of the next section, the first half of the first sentence refers to the previous topic—this time, it’s “**costs**.” The second half of the same sentence indicates that we are moving on to another new topic—”**geographical problems in disposal**.”

Figure 12.1..[1] Verbal headings are indicated in bold; transitional signposts are italicized.

Internal Summaries and Foreshadowing

Like signposts, internal summaries and foreshadowing help the audience to keep track of where they are in the presentation. These strategies work by reviewing what has been covered and by highlighting what is coming next.

As a simple example, suppose you are presenting information on how to assemble a home emergency preparedness kit. If you begin by stating that there are four main items needed for the kit, you are foreshadowing your message and helping your audience to watch or listen for four items. An internal summary, by contrast, refers back to content that has been addressed. For example, as you cover each of the items, you can say, “Now we’ve got X and Y in our kit; what else do we need?,” and so forth. This

[1] David McMurrey, “Example of Spoken Headings in an Oral Presentation,” Oral Presentations: Stand Up and Tell 'Em How It Is!” Accessed July 15, 2020. Licensed under [a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. (https://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/oral.html)](https://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/oral.html)

internal summary helps your audience keep track of progress as your message continues.

With this strategy, you reinforce relationships between points, examples, and ideas in your message. This can be an effective strategy to encourage selective retention of your content.

Developing Presentation Skills

Like any kind of advanced communication skill, the art of giving effective presentations is not in-born; it requires deliberate practice. An excellent way to learn more about delivering effective presentations is to follow a systematic process:

1. Observe others
2. Study their strategies and reflect on their effectiveness
3. Select and practice strategies that will work for you; reflect and get feedback from others.

Step 1: Observation

You can learn a lot simply by observing how successful public speakers “work the room” and engage their audience. Observe what they do. How do they use their voice to make it work as a tool of communication? How do they deploy tone, pausing, pacing, and projection? What do they do with their hands? How do they make use of the physical space around them? Take note of how speakers physically operate, either in person or on media: identify what they do, make note of what you feel works well and what doesn’t, then put what you’ve learned into practice.

As a student, you might start by observing your professors. Aim to identify what makes one professor a great lecturer and another less engaging. Compare what they do with their voice, their hands, their gestures, their movements. Pay attention to how they pace their talk to draw you in and create emphasis. Reflect on what they do to convey a sense of enthusiasm for what they’re talking about—or fail to do so. You want to know what kinds of things to avoid—a dull monotonous tone, for example—as well as what kinds of things to adopt to ensure your voice comes across as a powerful tool for communicating your ideas clearly and emphatically.

Step 2: Study and Reflect

Learning from experts who lay out a set of simple techniques is a confidence builder because it shows that great speakers are made, not born. With deliberate practice, anyone can do this. There are no mysteries, just specific, applicable strategies *that anyone can adopt* to establish rapport with an audience and make a meaningful impact.

Here are some more great online resources to help you develop further:

- Advanced Public Speaking Institute (Tips)
- Toastmasters 5 tips for public speaking (YouTube)
- 10 Most Common Rookie Mistakes in Public Speaking – Terry Gault (Prezi Blog)
- The Power of your Hands – Allan Pease (TED)

- How to Sound Smart in your TED Talk – Will Stephen (TED)
- How I Overcame my Fear of Public Speaking – Danish Dhamani (TED)

Step 3: Select, Practice and Assess your Progress

Now that you have identified strategies that you find effective and think might work for you, try putting them into practice. See if they add some extra "oomph" to your presentation style. Afterwards, either by engaging in self-reflection, or by asking for feedback, consider how well these strategies worked for you and whether you need to further hone, adapt, or change the way you used them.

Videos are helpful because they not only provide information, but visually demonstrate the ideas (both showing and telling); however, you can also learn from many books on the subject. Here are four classic books by public speaking experts designed to help you develop your own strong presentation skills. By focusing on aspects such as"voice," or by getting you to create effective slideshows, they offer a range of practical, "tried and tested" approaches designed to help you build confidence, speak fluently, and hold an audience's attention with relevant, well designed visuals.

- Lilyan Wilder, ***7 Steps to Fearless Speaking*** offers a lively, straightforward "how to" approach to public speaking, paying special attention to what to do before you even get on stage to deliver your talk. In short, according to Lilyan Wilder, it's all about preparation. Wilder's seven steps have been used by many successful public figures, including George H.W. Bush, Oprah Winfrey, Fortune 500 CEO's, as well as network anchors at CNN, CBS, and more!
- Lee LeFever, ***The Art of Explanation: Making your Ideas, Products, and Services Easier to Understand*** invites you to become an "explanation specialist" by using simple elements to motivate your audience and inspire them to say "yes!" to your designs and ideas.
- Garr Reynolds, ***PresentationZen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery*** provides a clear, easy-to-read set of tips for cutting through the noise and blather of modern life and reaching an audience through simple, pared-down slides and story-telling: two techniques that can help you connect with and inspire your audience in an authentic, genuine way.
- Nancy Duarte, ***Slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations*** looks to the role of presentation software in the visualization of ideas and information. Its goal is to turn you into a "visual thinker" so you can design presentation graphics that enable your audience to easily and effectively process data—an especially valuable skill for technical presenters who often have to convey complex data in meaningful ways to non-technical audiences.

Visual Aids – PowerPoint Basics

Even the most dynamic speakers often make use of visual aids to accompany their presentation and help illustrate their ideas. Having well designed visuals as part of your presentation is one way for beginners and those honing their skills can add interest and audience engagement to their talks. PowerPoint is probably the most common form of visual aid used in presentations, so much discussion has been focused on the pros and cons of this medium. Indeed, a Google search of “death by PowerPoint” brings up over 90 million results!

While there are many other presentation tools out there that you should explore (and perhaps present to your classmates or colleagues in your own presentation!), PowerPoint is a standard workplace tool, so it would be wise to gain proficiency with it. The key concept to remember is that your visual aids should *supplement* and *illustrate* what you want to say to your audience.

Purpose of Visual Aids

Your audience naturally will want to know why you are presenting the visual aid. The purpose for each visual aid should be obvious.

Visual aids accomplish several goals; they

- Communicate complex information in a short period of time
- Help the audience understand and retain the information
- Reinforce your verbal message
- Enhance your credibility as a speaker
- Make your speech more interesting

If you cannot quickly identify the purpose of a visual aid in a speech, you must consider whether it should be used at all. To determine whether a visual aid should be used, try to assume the audience’s perspective and consider what is helpful for retaining information when listening to a speech, as opposed to reading a document.

One of the inherent disadvantages of (unrecorded) oral communication is its impermanence. The speaker must find a way to reiterate their key points effectively, since the audience cannot simply backtrack on their own, as is possible with a text. Visual aids can supplement this weakness in oral communication by conveying key points as the speaker elaborates.

For example, imagine that you want to highlight a trend between two related issues, such as socioeconomic status and educational attainment. A line graph on a slide or handout might effectively show how as socioeconomic status rises, educational attainment also rises. This use of a visual aid can provide emphasis, effectively highlighting keywords, ideas, or relationships for the audience.

Visual aids can also provide necessary support for your position. Returning to the example above, let’s say your audience members question your assertion of the relationship between socioeconomic status and educational attainment. To support your argument, you might specify the origin of your evidence using phrases on a slide (“According to the U.S. Department of Education Study no. 12345”); images (a screenshot of the Department of Education webpage); or tables or infographics synthesizing several sources (a table including specific findings from five studies supporting your point).

Clarity is key in the use of visual aids. One way to improve clarity is to limit the number of words on a slide. Aim for ten or fewer words per slide, with a font large enough to be read at the back of the room or auditorium. Key images that have a clear relationship to the verbal message can also improve clarity. You may also choose to illustrate the same data successively in two distinct formats, such as a line graph followed by two pie graphs. Your central goal is to ensure that your visual aid is clear.

Media and Materials

A visual aid can take several different physical (or digital) forms. Here are some ideas for the form or "medium" to use for your visuals:

> **Presentation software slides.** Projecting images ("slides") using software such as PowerPoint, Google Slides, or Keynote has become the standard. Using slides is common across several types of presentations in business, the sciences, and the humanities.
>
> **White board or chalkboard.** In this method, you write or draw key information on a large board in a presentation space. This medium is most commonly used in educational contexts or when showcasing equations.
>
> **Posters.** Another possibility is to use a poster to convey the key sections of your presentation, as well as how these sections are connected and arranged. Posters are common visual aids used in conference presentations, whether scientific, academic, or industry-based.
>
> **Handouts.** Handouts are usually page-length documents that contain key quotations or visuals. Ideally, each audience member should receive a handout. Many audiences appreciate having a hard copy to take notes on and remind them of your presentation. Handouts are most effective when the speaker draws verbal attention to the handout and has the audience engage with it as part of the presentation. They are also an effective “backup” visual in cases where technology is not available or working properly. Similar to posters and other visual aids, handout content should mostly be limited to the speaker’s contact info, key points, and the presentation's structure. Otherwise, the handout is likely to be a distraction rather than a supplement in getting the audience’s attention.
>
> **Objects.** If you need to demonstrate certain procedures, you may need to bring in actual physical objects. Rehearse what you are going to do with these objects; sometimes they can take up a lot more time than you expect.

Types of Presentation Visuals

As with reports and other written documents, presentations use visuals to illustrate data, add emphasis, and clarify complex concepts (see Chapter 8: Graphics for additional information on implementing visuals in written documents). Below are some common visuals and how you might incorporate them in a presentation.

> **Drawing or diagram of key objects**. If you describe or refer to any objects during your talk, try to get visuals of them so that you can point to different components or features.

Tables, charts, graphs. If you discuss statistical data, present it in some form of table, chart, or graph. Many members of your audience may prefer seeing such data as opposed to “hearing” it.

Timelines. If you want to show a progression of events, you might use a chart or diagram to show a timeline of events to date, from the first meeting about the proposed product to the results from the latest focus group.

Video clips. If you are looking to add credibility or show visuals that cannot be replicated as part of an in-person presentation, brief video clips from YouTube or recorded video from other sources can be great supplements to a presentation. Introduce the clip and state out loud what will happen, point out a key aspect of it to the audience while it plays (overlap), and then make a clear transitional statement as you turn it off.

Outline of your talk, report, or both. If your presentation is complex, you might introduce an outline near the beginning of the presentation and refer back to it—visually and verbally— throughout.

Key terms and definitions. Providing a definition, especially for a field-specific or complex term, is a great option for improving the clarity of your presentation. Another variation is a twocolumn list of key terms you use during your presentation with their definitions in the second column.

Key concepts or points. Similarly, you can list your key points and show them on a slide or in key locations on a poster.

Preparing and Presenting Visual Aids

Once you have chosen an appropriate medium and drafted your visual aids, you will need to test them for visibility and clarity. If you can, rehearse in the same room in which your presentation will take place. If that particular room is unavailable, find a space similar to it. Ask a friend to stand at the back of the room and read or interpret your visual aid. If you are using computer-generated slides, try them out in a practice setting, not just on your computer screen. The slides will look different when projected. Allow time for revision based on what you learn.

Your visual aids should meet the following criteria:

- **Big.** They should be legible for everyone, from all sides of the room.
- **Clear.** Your audience should understand the purpose and message of the visual the first time they see it.
- **Simple.** They should serve to simplify the concepts they illustrate.
- **Consistent.** They should reinforce continuity by using the same visual style.

Becoming proficient at using visual aids takes time and practice, and the more you practice before your speech, the more comfortable you will be with your visual aids and the role they serve in illustrating your points.

Presentation Tips*:* Here are three general guidelines to follow when using visual aids:

- Do make a clear connection between your words and the visual aid for the audience.
- Do not distract the audience with your visual aid, blocking their view of you or adjusting the visual aid repeatedly while trying to speak.

Do speak to your audience—not to the whiteboard, the video, or other visual aids.[2]

Using PowerPoint as a Visual Aid

PowerPoint and Google Slides are slideware programs that, no doubt, you have seen used in class or work. You have likely used these yourself. PowerPoint and similar slideware programs provide templates for creating electronic slides to present visual information to the audience, thus reinforcing the verbal message. In PowerPoint, you can import words, images, or video clips to create slides to represent your ideas. You can even incorporate Web links. When using any software program, it is always a good idea to experiment with it long before you intend to use it, explore its many options and functions, and see how it can be an effective tool for you.

Designing Effective Slides

The first point to consider is what is the most important visual aid? The answer is you, the speaker. You will facilitate the discussion, give life to the information, and help the audience correlate the content to your goal or purpose. You don't want to be in a position where the PowerPoint presentation is the main focus and you are on the side of the stage, simply helping the audience follow along. It should support you in your presentation, rather than the other way around. Do not use PowerPoints as a read-aloud script for your speech. Slides should amplify and illustrate your main points, not reproduce everything you are going to say.

Your pictures and graphics are the second area of emphasis you should consider. Slides will allow you to show graphs and charts that illustrate relationships that words may only approach in terms of communication, but your verbal support of the visual images will make all the difference. Dense pictures or complicated graphics will confuse more than clarify. Choose clear images that have an immediate connection to both your content and the audience, tailored to their specific needs.

After images, consider only key words that can be easily read to accompany your pictures. After all, most audiences do not would not want to read a page of text—as you might see in a book—on the big screen. They are more likely to glance at the screen and assess the information you present in relation to your discussion. Therefore, it is key to consider one main idea, relationship, or point per slide. The fewer words, the better: try to keep each slide to a total word count of less than ten words. Do not use full sentences; instead, use keywords. These can serve as signposts or signal words related to key ideas and will provide support for your verbal discussion, guiding you as well as your audience.

2 McLean, Scott. The Basics of Speech Communication. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2003.

Using Color Effectively on Slides

When considering your choice of colors to use, legibility must be your priority. To reduce visual noise, try not to use more than two or three additional colors. Contrast between background color and text color can help the audience read your key terms more easily. Also, focus on the background color and its relation to the images you plan to incorporate to insure they complement each other. Consider repetition of color, from your graphics to your text, to help unify each slide.

Be aware that many people are blue-green colorblind, and that red-green color blindness is also fairly common. With this in mind, choose colors that most audience members will be able to differentiate. If you are using a pie chart, for example, avoid putting a blue segment next to a green one. Use labeling so that even if someone is totally colorblind they will be able to tell the relative sizes of the pie segments and what they signify.

Color is also a matter of culture. Some colors may be perceived as formal or informal, or masculine or feminine. Recognize that red is usually associated with danger in the USA (while it is associated with happiness and good fortune in China), while green signals "go." Make sure the color associated with the word is reflected in your choice. If you have a keyword about nature, but the color is metallic, the contrast may not contribute to the rhetorical situation and instead may confuse the audience.

Seeking a balance between professionalism and attractiveness may seem to be a challenge, but experiment and test your drafts with friends to see what works for you. Also consider examining other examples, commonly available on the Internet, but retain the viewpoint that not everything online is effective, nor should it be imitated. PowerPoint also has some predetermined color schemes that you can rely on for your presentation.

Slide Font and Typeface

Remember to keep in mind these aspects of PowerPoint/slide design when it comes to font/typeface size and selection. PowerPoint will have default settings for headlines and text, but you will need to consider what is most appropriate for your rhetorical situation.

- The title size should be at least forty points, and the body text (used sparingly) should be at least thirty-two points.
- Sans serif fonts such as Arial work better than serif fonts like Times New Roman for images projected onto a screen.[3] The thin lines and extra aspects of serif font may not portray themselves well on a large screen or contribute to clarity.

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[3] Charles Kostelnick and David D. Roberts, *Designing Visual Language: Strategies for Professional Communicators* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1998). See also Center for Teaching, "Multimedia Presentations, Vanderbilt University, 2009, (https://cdn.vanderbilt.edu/vu-cft/resources/teaching_resources/technology/presentations.htm.

[12] Charles Kostelnick and David D. Roberts, *Designing Visual Language: Strategies for Professional Communicators* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1998).

- Use grouping strategies to improve the communication of information.[12] Bullets, the use of space, similarity, and proximity all relate to the process of perception, which differs from one person to another.

Helpful Hints for Visual Aids

As we've discussed, visual aids can be a powerful tool when used effectively, but they can also run the risk of dominating your presentation. As a speaker, you will need to consider your audience and how the portrayal of images, text, graphics, animated sequences, or sound files will contribute or detract from your presentation. Here is a brief list of considerations to keep in mind as you prepare your presentation.

- Keep visual aids simple.
- Use one key idea per slide.
- Avoid clutter, noise, and overwhelming slides.
- Use large, bold fonts that the audience can read from at least twenty feet from the screen.
- Use contrasting colors to create a dynamic effect.
- Use analogous colors to unify your presentation.
- Use clip art with permission and only sparingly.
- Edit and proofread each slide with care and caution.
- Have copies of your visuals available as handouts after your presentation.
- Check the presentation room beforehand.
- With a PowerPoint presentation, or any presentation involving technology, have a backup plan, such as your visuals printed on transparencies, should unexpected equipment or interface compatibility problems arise.

Becoming proficient at using visual aids takes time and practice. The more you practice before your speech, the more comfortable you will be with your visual aids and the role they serve in illustrating your message. Giving thought to the placement of visual aids before you speak will help, but when the time comes to actually give your speech, make sure you reassess your plans and ensure that they work for the audience as they should.

Presentation Structures

To get your presentation off to a good start, plan on doing the following:

1. Introduce yourself and say a bit about yourself.
2. Indicate the topic and purpose of your presentation.
3. Find some brief way to indicate the importance of your topic—spark some interest.
4. Provide a brief in-sentence list of what your presentation will cover (i.e. a roadmap).

Take a look at how these elements are handled in the example in Figure 12.2.

Oral Presentation: Enhancement of the Current Recycling Program	
Valerie and I represent the Austin Coalition for Recycling, a group that was founded in the late 1960s, partly in response to rising utility bills and partly out of a concern for the environment and its resources. High utility bills not only hurt each of us in our pocketbooks but also hurt the quality of life of our city as a whole. We are all particularly proud of what a fine city we live in and what wonderful citizen involvement there is here in a whole range of civic activities. These things make our city special and ought to be the force that enables us to make a recycling program an integral part of the city's waste management program. Backed by the city, a new powerful recycling program will contribute enormously to keeping Austin the wonderful place it is.	**Opening:** Establishes who they are, what they represent, and why they are here. Attempts to build some interest and identification with the audience.
Valerie and I want to talk to you about how recycling works currently, how it will work once integrated with the city's waste management program, how this integration will benefit our city, and what you can do to support this plan.	**Purpose and scope:** Explains the purpose of the presentation and provides an overview of the topics to be covered— in one sentence.

Figure 12.2. Introductory remarks in an oral presentation.[4]

While your organizational structure will vary from speech to speech, there are nonetheless five main parts of any speech:

1. Attention statement
2. Introduction
3. Body
4. Conclusion 5. Residual message.

These are basic elements of the rhetorical process and you will see time and time again, regardless of audience or culture, these same elements in some form used to communicate in public. They will serve to guide you and possibly even save you should you get a last minute request to do a speech or presentation.

[4] David McMurrey, "Example of Spoken Headings in an Oral Presentation," Oral Presentations: Stand Up and Tell 'Em How It Is!" Accessed July 15, 2020. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. (https://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/oral.html)

Think of the five-pointed star in the Texas state seal. Associate each point of that star with these five elements. Each point on the star is independently quite weak, just a dot, but linked together they make a powerful symbol. The top point of the star is its focal point. It's a lot like your attention statement. If you don't gain the audience's attention, the rest of the speech will be ineffective.

Each successive point on the Texas star can represent the remaining four parts of any speech. One day you will be asked to speak with little or no time for preparation. By focusing on this organizational model and thinking about the Texas star, you can quickly and accurately prepare your speech. With the luxury of time for preparation, each step can be even further developed. Remember this model, as summarized in Table 14.2 "Five-Point Model of Public Speaking," and you will always stand out as a more effective speaker.

Table 12.1. Five-point model of public speaking.

Point	Description
Attention Statement	The attention statement is the way you focus the audience's attention on you and your speech.
Introduction	Your introduction introduces you and your topic; it should establish a relationship with your audience and state your topic clearly.
Body	In the body, or main content area of your speech, you will naturally turn to one of the organizational patterns (see the section "Organizing Principles for Your Speech" later in this chapter).
Conclusion	Your conclusion should provide the audience with a sense of closure by summarizing the main points and relating the points to the overall topic.
Residual Message	The residual message is an idea or thought that stays with your audience well after the speech.

Sample Speech Outlines

Chances are you have learned the basic principles of outlining in English writing courses. An outline is a framework that organizes main ideas and subordinate ideas in a hierarchical series of Roman numerals and alphabetical letters. The center column of Table 14.3 "Speech outline A" presents a generic outline in a classical style. In the left column, the five main structural elements of a speech are tied to the outline. Your task is to fill in the center column outline with the actual ideas and points you are making in your speech. Feel free to adapt this and tailor it to your needs, depending on the specifics of your speech. Next, fill in the right column with the verbal and visual delivery features of your speech.

Table 12.2. Speech outline A.

Attention Statement	Device	Verbal and Visual Delivery
Introduction	• Main idea • Common ground	"These issues have a significant impact on the company, and we need to investigate possible answers." (**Visual:** PowerPoint title slide with key terms from the main idea in large font) "Even though these issues affect some of us more than others, we all want _____." **(Visual:** Creative commons image of individuals at work site shaking hands or making other agreeable gestures).
Body	• I. Main idea: Point 1 ○ A.1 specific information 1 ○ A.2 specific information 2 • II. Main idea: Point 2 ○ B.1 specific information 1 ○ B.2 specific information 2 • III. Main idea: Point 3	I. "First and foremost, these issues have reduced ____ over time." (**Visual:** Line graph showing a negative trend) "Our competitors report similarly that…" II. "In addition, research shows that this change decreases _____." "One study by Smith et al. examined…"

Attention Statement	Device	Verbal and Visual Delivery
	○ C.1 specific information 1 ○ C.2 specific information 2	(**Visual:** Slide that shows the Results table from a peer-reviewed study) III. “Finally, we need to examine these issues because the majority of our employees are concerned about them.” “According to our employee survey...” (**Visual:** A bar graph that shows the results of an employee survey).
Conclusion	Summary, main points 1–3	“To recap, there are several indicators that these issues are serious and need to be addressed. They are____, ____, and ____.” (**Visual:** A slide that lists 3 points in key terms)
Residual Message	Main idea	“Ultimately, taking these issues seriously and investigating them will benefit everyone in the company. Please share your feedback if you have any, and thank you for your time.” (**Visual:** A slide with your contact information)

There is no law that says a speech outline has to follow a classical outline format, however. Table 14.4 “Speech outline B” is an alternate outline form you may want to use to develop your speech. As you can see, this outline is similar to the one above in that it begins with the five basic structural elements of a speech. In this case, those elements are tied to the speech’s device, thesis, main points, summary, and recap of the thesis. In the right column, this outline allows you to fill in the cognate strategies you will use to get your points across to your audience. You may use this format as a model or modify it as needed.

Table 12.3. Speech outline B.

Attention Statement	Device	Verbal and Visual Delivery
Introduction	• General purpose statement (or thesis) • Common Ground	"In order to address these issues in our company, I propose that _____" (**Visual:** PowerPoint title slide of your thesis) "As I review my proposed solution in detail, keep in mind that we all want _____."
Body	• Point 1 • Point 2 • Point 3	Point 1: "First and foremost, companies that have adopted this solution show an increase in ______." (**Visual:** Line graph showing a positive trend) Point 2: "In addition, research shows that this change increases _____." (**Visual:** Slide that shows the Results table from a peer-reviewed study) Point 3: "Finally, the majority of our employees feel strongly that we should adopt this solution." (**Visual:** A bar graph that shows the results of an employee survey)
Conclusion	Summarize main points and reinforce common ground	"To conclude, my findings reflect that (Points 1-3). These points illustrate that this solution is not only a viable approach to the problem, but fulfills everyone's expectation that _____." (**Visual:** A slide that lists 3 points in key terms)

Attention Statement	Device	Verbal and Visual Delivery
Residual Message	Reiterate thesis	"As we decide whether or not to adopt this solution, it's important that we do ____ and remember ____." (**Visual:** PowerPoint slide with a bulleted list of actionable items)

Organizing Principles for Your Speech

There are many different ways to organize a speech, and none is "better" or "more correct" than the others. The choice of an organizing principle, or a core assumption around which everything else is arranged, depends on the subject matter, the rhetorical situation, and many other factors, including your preference as speaker.

The left column of Table 14.5 "Sample organizing principles for a speech" presents seventeen different organizing principles to consider. The center column explains how the principle works, and the right column provides an applied example based on a sample speech about the rise of Netflix and its global market share among streaming service providers. For example, using a chronological organizing principle, you might start with Marc Randolph and Reed Hastings's founding of Netflix in 1997, its introduction of streaming media in 2007, its expansion into international markets in 2010, and the debut of its original content with *House of Cards* in 2013. As another example, using a problem-solution organizing principle, you might start with the challenges Netflix faces with an increasing number of competitors and then go into potential responses to those challenges.

As you read each organizational structure, consider how the main points and subheadings might change or be adapted to meet each pattern.

Table 12.4. Sample organizing principles for a speech.

Organizing Principle	Explanation	Applied Example
1. Time (Chronological)	Structuring your speech by time shows a series of events or steps in a process, which typically has a beginning, middle, and end. “Once upon a time stories” follow a chronological pattern.	Before Netflix, people primarily consumed media at home through VHS and DVD players, and rented titles from corporations like Blockbuster and Hollywood Video. Netflix initially started as a rent-bymail company in 1997, then switched to its subscription model shortly after. Blockbuster had the chance to purchase Netflix for $50 million in 2000, but declined.
2. Comparison	Structuring your speech by comparison focuses on the similarities and/or differences between points or concepts.	A comparison of Netflix and its competitors such as Hulu and Amazon Prime, focusing on available original content and platform design.
3. Contrast	Structuring your speech by using contrasting points highlights the differences between items and concepts.	A contrast between Netflix’s share of the streaming services market 5 and 10 years ago versus today.
4. Cause and Effect	Structuring your speech by cause and effect establishes a relationship between two events or situations, making the connection clear.	Netflix changed the way people consume and purchase media. Rather than renting or purchasing individual titles, people now purchase a monthly subscription to a library of content that changes regularly. Advertising shifted from commercials to product placement and viral marketing. Netflix also gave rise to “binge-watching” habits of media consumption.

Organizing Principle	Explanation	Applied Example
5. Problem and Solution	Structuring your speech by problem and solution means that you state the problem and detail how it was solved. This approach is effective for persuasive speeches.	Netflix enjoyed a head-start in the streaming service market, but major companies like Amazon, Disney, and Apple have started to offer increasing competition. Netflix can stay ahead of the competition by rebooting
		franchises popular with its primarily millennial and Gen Z audience, continuing to produce creative original content, etc.
6. Classification (Categorical)	Structuring your speech by classification establishes categories.	Netflix features competitive original content in several categories: television shows, film, stand-up comedy specials, and documentaries. A focus on these categories allows us to see which type of content has the most potential for increasing market share.
7. Biographical	Structuring your speech by biography means examining specific people as they relate to the central topic.	Marc Randolph and Reed Hastings founded the company in 1997. Randolph served on the board of the company until his retirement in 2004. In 2019, Netflix negotiated a massive content deal with Benioff and Weiss, the showrunners for *Game of Thrones*.
8. Space (Spatial)	Structuring your speech by space involves the parts of	A description of the layout of Netflix's website and platform.

Organizing Principle	Explanation	Applied Example
	something and how they fit to form the whole.	
9. Ascending and Descending	Structuring your speech by ascending or descending order involves focusing on quantity and quality. One good story (quality) leads to the larger picture, or the reverse.	The browsing habits of a streaming service consumer. Major technological advancements and shifts in marketing strategy over time expressed through visuals such as graphs and charts.
10. Psychological	Also called "Monroe's Motivated Sequence."[5] Structuring your speech on the psychological aspects of the audience involves focusing on their inherent needs and wants.[6] The speaker calls attention to a need, then focuses on the satisfaction of the need, visualizes the solution, and ends with a proposed or historical action. This is useful for a persuasive speech.	The millennial and Gen Z generations craved media that reflected their own experiences and circumstances, which cable television was not providing. These experiences and circumstances include an increasing emphasis on intersectionality and diversity, exploring topics previously too controversial for television, etc.

[5] Joe Ayres and Janice Miller, *Effective Public Speaking*, 4th ed. (Madison, WI: Brown & Benchmark, 1994), 274.

[6] For more information on interpersonal psychology, and human needs and wants, see Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1970); and William Shutz, *The Interpersonal Underworld* (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1966).

Organizing Principle	Explanation	Applied Example
11. Elimination	Structuring your speech using the process of elimination involves outlining all the possibilities.	Netflix pioneered the streaming service model that now dictates how content is created and purchased. Tracing the company's evolution from DVDs-by-mail to streaming content, as well as the progression of its competitors from Blockbuster to Amazon, reveals the outsized influence this corporation has had. By reviewing this progression, we can come to see which factors are most important to consider in implementing fresh changes to our business model.
12. Ceremonial: Events, Ceremonies, or Celebrations	Structure your speech by focusing on the following: 1. Thank dignitaries and representatives. 2. Mention the importance of the event. 3. Mention the relationship of the event to the audience. 4. Thank the audience for their participation in the event, ceremony, or celebration.	Many thanks to all of the marketing strategists, content creators, and software engineers for maintaining the quality and integrity of Netflix as a platform. Without your contributions, this company would not be as successful as it is today.

Organizing Principle	Explanation	Applied Example
13. Awards	Structure your speech by focusing on the following: 1. Thank everyone for coming together. 2. Discuss the history and importance of the award. 3. Give a brief biography of the person who will receive the award (often nonspecific to keep people guessing and to build suspense). 4. Announce the name of the award recipient. 5. Present the award (present award with left hand, shake with right). 6. Award recipient may give a speech 7. Transition to the next item or thank everyone for participating.	Thank you all for gathering here today. The Emmys are the most prestigious award in television, and Netflix has secured an unprecedented number of wins this year. The content creators and specialists who earned them need no introduction, and we are excited to hear some of them say a few words on this historic occasion.
14. Toast: Weddings or Similar Gatherings	Structure your speech by focusing on the following: 1. Thank everyone for coming together. 2. Discuss the importance of the event (wedding). 3. Mention the relationship of the couple to the audience or the speaker to the person being celebrated. 4. Add one short sentence. 5. Optional: Conclude, thanking the audience for	Thank you everyone who came here today. I've known Reed for over two decades, since we were mailing DVDs to ourselves to see if our new venture could work. In all that time, and even with the success of our company, I've never seen him happier than with (X)

Organizing Principle	Explanation	Applied Example
	participation in the event, ceremony, or celebration.	
15. Speaker Introductions	Structure your speech by focusing on the following: 1. Thank everyone for coming together. 2. Provide a brief biography of the person who will speak or establish their credibility. 3. Discuss the speaker and their topic. 4. Announce the name of the speaker; once their speech has concluded, possibly mention it again. 5. Transition to the next item or thank everyone for participating.	Thank you, everyone, for coming here today. Our first speaker is one of the two founders of the world's most successful streaming service: Netflix. Today, he will address the lessons he learned from his successes and failures, and what new entrepreneurs should know as they explore their ideas. Please help me welcome Reed Hastings. (Optional after speech: Thank you, everyone. Next we have…)

Organizing Principle	Explanation	Applied Example
16. After-Dinner Speech	Structure your speech by focusing on the following: 1. Thank everyone for coming together. 2. Provide a fun or humorous attention statement. 3. Discuss the topic in a lighthearted manner with connected stories, anecdotes, or even a joke or two. 4. Connect the humor to the topic of importance.	Thank you for coming together to celebrate the international debut of Netflix. There have been many challenging moments along the way that I would like to share tonight (stories, anecdotes, or even a joke). While it's been a long journey, we've made it. Thank you for coming tonight.
	5. Thank everyone for participating.	
17. Oral Interpretation	Structure your speech by focusing on the following: 1. Draw attention to the piece of literature. 2. Explain its significance, context, and background. 3. Interpret the manuscript for the audience. 4. Conclude with key points from the reading. 5. Reiterate the main point of the piece of literature.	Today I would like to share with you the letter Blockbuster sent us when they rejected our offer to buy Netflix decades ago. (Interpret the letter, using your voice to bring the written word alive.) Had Blockbuster known then what we know now, things would have turned out very differently.

Modes of Oral Communication

Pick the method of preparing for the talk that best suits your comfort level with public speaking, with your topic, with your discipline, and with the presentation context. However, do some sort of preparation or rehearsal—some people assume that they can just jump up there and ad lib for the expected time frame and be relaxed or informal. It doesn't often work that way—drawing a mental blank is the more common experience.

Aspects of Context to Take Into Consideration

No matter the situation, there are universal elements to take into consideration.

Language and Communication

What are the spoken languages at the event? Speaking to your audience means ensuring all people understand your message. Never assume all people in attendance speak the same language as you. If your first language is French, some members of the audience may speak Portuguese or communicate with ASL. Learn as much as you can about your audience's language systems and what jargon is appropriate to communicate effectively.

Are your audience members written, oral, aural, and/or visual learners? Knowing this information helps you decide how to present your material to best communicate with people in attendance. If you plan to use visual aids, textual components, or other, you must consider that audience members have a diverse means of accessibility to comprehend the information from your speech.

Consider the rhetorical situation:

- Who is your audience?
    - academic/administrative group, schoolchildren, city council, peaceful protest gatheringRevised Pilot Edition - Spring 2021 14.25
- What is your purpose/message?
    - facilitate, propose, inform/educate, request, call to action
- How much time is allotted and when?
    - 30-minute meeting, start of class, queue of speakers, unlimited time
- How does your ethos relate to the topic?
    - Relevant credentials, personal experience, positive or negative prior connections with audience
- What is the audience's relationship to the topic?
    - May be receptive, neutral, or hostile to the speaker and their message; may be deeply vested in the topic or uninvolved; may be familiar or unfamiliar with it
- What is the venue?
    - enclosed boardroom, playground, town hall, parking lot
- What resources are available?
    - Computer and projector, cue cards, public microphone, megaphone/bullhorn

Each of these questions factor into making a decision about how to deliver your message, depending on the type of communication: formal speech, extemporaneous vs. scripted talk, project discussion, skills training, or other.

Delivery

Though it seems obvious that an in-person speech is different from one given via digital platform like Zoom, the two share qualities to help the presenter reach their audience. The following tips address both in-person and digital speech delivery.

Dress the part. Appearances are important to match the content of the speech and the makeup of the audience. Never judge a book by its cover; however, the way you appear for a speech allows an audience to welcome or reject you. If you show up to a formal board meeting in a Tshirt and jeans to present a financial analysis report, your appearance informs the board members that you do not consider the presentation important or a serious matter. On the other hand, if you arrive to a high school classroom in formal dress attire to discuss future career opportunities in culinary arts, the audience may feel that your appearance is disconnected from the speech subject matter. When delivering a speech digitally in front of a camera, the same guidelines apply to considerations of clothing, hairstyling, and more. The way you deliver the speech and interact with the audience is influenced by how you physically prepare yourself.

Speak clearly. Depending on the venue, you may need to project so that everyone can comprehend your words. If using a microphone (in-person vs. digital), consider the distance from the device to maintain audible levels that are neither too low nor too high. A great way to connect with the audience is to ask them about the volume levels when you start the speech and to provide them a way to offer feedback during the talk if the volume changes (i.e., having someone point a finger up or down to indicate a need to talk louder or softer).

Modes

A scripted or formal speech may allow (or require) the chance to utilize notecards, a teleprompter, and/or memorization skills. Although resources are available, avoid simply reading information, since this hinders the important connection you make with your audience. Eye contact is necessary to engage with those in attendance. Pacing depends on time provided and using it wisely. An advantage for a prepared speech is practicing/rehearsing the material. Outline the various points of the talk to estimate how much time to spend on each segment, and factor in the possibility for audience questions and technical difficulties to develop a presentation that is not rushed to confuse the audience, nor presented at a snail’s pace to bore the audience.

An extemporaneous or impromptu speech requires organization of thought without much time dedicated to planning (a.k.a. “on the fly” or “on the spot”); furthermore, this means the speech has a type of preparation that is ongoing during its delivery. Without the aid of material resources, your focus must be directed toward presenting relevant and related content in a smooth manner to avoid straying from the purpose of the communication. Think of keywords that highlight your message in order to maintain consistency in the delivery of information as you navigate from one point to the next.

Discussions involve leading conversation. You are responsible for maintaining a relevant thread of content while people in attendance pose questions, provide information, and analyze the subject matter being covered. This is a facilitator role in which what you say is equally important to listening to foster a consistent discussion. Prior knowledge of the topic at hand and inquiries that may arise during the discussion help create a positive experience for the audience.

No matter what mode of communication, preparation is the key to a successful delivery of information, as well as audience engagement and satisfaction. The presenter must make a series of decisions based on the rhetorical situation in order to craft a viable speech.

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