



TARTU UNIVERSITY

A HANDBOOK
ON BUSINESS WRITING

TARTU 1991

TARTU UNIVERSITY
Department of English

A HANDBOOK ON BUSINESS WRITING

Compiled by A. M. Veskis

Tartu 1991

Kinnitatud filoloogiateaduskonna nõukogus
23. jaanuaril 1991.

Retsenseerinud H. Liiv

KUSTUTATUD

Anh.

Tartu Olikooli
RAAMATUKOGI

11270

CONTENTS

Preface	4
Introduction	5
Reader-Focused Writing	6
Preparation Activities	8
The Writing Process	10
Style	15
Forms of Technical Writing	
Abstracts	17
Reviews	18
Business Letters	20
Principles of Letter Writing	24
Form of Business Letters	26
The Letter of Inquiry	34
The Letter of Application	34
Model Cover Letter and Resume	38
Memorandums	40
Proposals	43
Reports	45
Main Sources Used	51

PREFACE

The present advice on effective writing is intended to be a study aid for the students specializing in English who wish to improve their writing skills in the field of business.

The aim of the booklet is to provide the students with necessary material concerning business or technical writing. The booklet describes general principles of effective writing and discusses specific forms of business or technical writing such as abstracts, reviews, letters, memorandums, proposals, and reports.

The booklet can be used by anybody who knows English and wants to develop his skills in business writing.

Author

INTRODUCTION

The ability to write is not something we are born with, we learn gradually, improving as we grow older and become better educated. As adults, we should be able to write about many subjects and for many different kinds of readers.

There are several kinds of writing. One of them that is frequently used is business or technical writing. Business or technical writing is the writing we do in the field of work. Such writing is the only kind most individuals ever deal with. Since our business relations with other countries have increased, the need for business correspondence has also grown. In order to correspond effectively, one should follow certain principles and conventions. This study aid focuses on them.

There is no such thing as business English in the sense of a special mode of communication or any special use of language. Business English ought to be simply the best English a writer is capable of using— as simple, direct, clear, and forceful as he can make it.

The success of writing depends on several factors. It is important to take into account the reader's interests and know your objective in advance. The present study aid describes the preparation activities and the stages of the writing process. It also gives advice on style.

We often have to write for specific purposes. This booklet discusses how to write abstracts and reviews. A large section is devoted to business letters due to the need to correspond with Western countries. The form of business letters described in the booklet is the one used in the USA but also practiced in Scandinavian countries. Other forms of business writing such as proposals, memorandums, and reports are perhaps used not so often in our country yet, but may become more common with the changing of the economy. The given examples are of American origin.

Success in business and in any field of work greatly depends on the ways we write. The current study aid attempts

to help develop one's skills in performing different writing tasks.

READER-FOCUSED WRITING

The purpose of business writing is to inform your reader and to persuade the reader. Good writers do not simply express themselves, they design their writing to be understood and remembered. The writer's aim must be clear communication to his reader at the level of the reader's ability to understand. For example, most business letters are addressed to one individual. Many reports, too, are requested by one person and are prepared primarily for him. Abstracts and reviews are of particular interest to a relatively homogeneous and limited group.

The technical writer must know who his readers are and must direct every word and detail to them. Even when the writer knows his audience, he must constantly ask "For whom am I writing?". "How does my audience affect my presentation and style?", "What does my reader know?", and "How will my reader benefit from this writing?". He must adapt his writing to his readers' experience and need.

The ability to put yourself in another's place is crucial to writing effectively. You should think about your readers before you begin to write, because your writing will be shaped by your perceptions of what your readers need to know about your topic. Before starting to write, you must determine who your readers are and then adjust the amount of detail to their training and experience. Putting yourself in your readers' place should enable you to plan, right from the start, to answer any questions they might have about your topic or to explain things they are not likely to know. If you hope to get your readers to agree with you, or to change their minds on a controversial issue, you must be able to look at all sides of the issue and answer the objections of those with a different point of view.

As a technical writer, you must usually assume that your readers are less familiar than you are with the subject. You should give definitions of technical terms as well as clear explanations of principles that you, as a specialist, take for granted. When you write for many readers, try to visualize a single, typical member of that group and write for that reader. You might also make a list of characteristics (experience, training, and work habits for example) of that reader. This technique enables you to decide what should be explained according to that reader's needs. When you are writing to a group, it is usually best to aim at those with the least training and experience. When your readership includes people with widely varied backgrounds, however, such as in a report or proposal, consider aiming various sections of the document at different sets of readers.

The style and tone should also be suitable to the reader's need and understanding. The writer should use a technical vocabulary with which the reader is familiar, but using any sort of vocabulary just to exhibit it is always wrong. The use of pronouns and verbs and the whole stylistic point of view should be appropriate to the reader. The imperative mood and the so-called you-style are in order only when readers will actually carry out instructions. If the reader is merely an observer, seeking information for some purpose, the third person or a completely impersonal style is far better. Letters written to persons outside your organization also require a special tone. In such letters, you must concern yourself not only with the readers' understanding of your topic but with their reaction to it as well.

A business writer always writes for his reader and to his reader. In technical writing the writer-reader relationship is so vital that the success of the writing depends on it. No matter what your topic or format is, never forget that your readers are the most important consideration, for the most eloquent prose is meaningless unless it reaches its audience.

PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

Objective

An important question to be answered before you begin to write concerns your purpose for writing. First of all, you should define the objective of your writing by answering questions like "Why do I need this writing?", and "What do I want my readers to know or be able to do when they have read my finished writing project?". Defining your purpose in advance will help you choose what to include and how to approach your subject. For example, if you are writing for information on a product you are considering buying, you must be sure to explain your needs and expectations fully. If you are giving directions, you must include all the necessary information, and nothing that would distract.

It is of no use to state your objective in broad terms. The writer's objective is rarely simply to "explain" something, although on occasion it may be. You must ask yourself, "Why do I need to explain it?". In answering this question, you may find, for example, that your objective is also to persuade your reader to change his attitude toward the thing you are explaining.

If you answer these two questions exactly and put your answers in writing as your stated objective, you will be considerably more confident of ultimately reaching your goal. As a test of whether you have adequately formulated your objective, try to state it in a single sentence. If you find that you cannot, continue to formulate your objective until you can state it in a single sentence.

Even a specific objective is of no value, however, unless you keep it in mind as you work. Guard against losing sight of your objective as you become involved with the other steps of the writing process.

Scope

If you know your reader and the objective of your writing project, you will know the type and amount of detail to include in your writing. This is scope which may be defined as the depth and breadth to which you need to cover your subject. If you do not determine your scope of coverage in the planning stage of your writing project, you will not know how much or what kind of information to include.

Your scope should be designed to satisfy the needs of your objective and your reader. By keeping your objective and your reader's profile in mind as you work, you can determine those items that should be included in your writing.

Format has at least two distinct, but related, meanings: it can refer (1) to the sequence in which information is presented in a publication, and (2) to the physical arrangement of information on the page. The first meaning applies to the standard arrangement of information in many of the following types of job-related writing:

+ formal reports + proposals + reports
+ memorandums + correspondence + resumes

These types of writing are characterized by format conventions that govern where each section will be placed. In formal reports, for example, the table of contents precedes the preface but follows the title page and abstract. Likewise, letters typically are written according to the following standard pattern:

1. letterhead
2. date
3. inside address
4. salutation
5. body
6. complimentary close
7. signature
8. typed name and title
9. additional information (enclosure)

In recent years, a body of information has been published that expands the concept of format to encompass all typographic and graphic principles used to depict information in a document. **The** expanded scope of this notion now falls under the general term document design.

Document design principles help writers create publications that are visually distinct and attractive so that they are easier for readers to understand. Specific document-design goals include finding the best methods to accomplish the following:

- to distinguish primary from secondary ideas
- to set off examples from the text
- to call out headings
- to call attention to certain parts of a document
- to make information easy to find both the first and subsequent times it is looked for
- to provide visual relief
- to promote the reader's acceptance of material

THE WRITING PROCESS

The writing process can be divided roughly into seven stages, although these are not meant to be rigidly applied. The following are the seven steps in the writing process:

1. **Prewriting:** Generating ideas, deciding upon audience and focus, deciding what to include or leave out.
2. **Data gathering:** Collecting or recalling information.
3. **Organizing:** Deciding the order in which to make points or present information.
4. **Drafting:** Putting ideas into sentences and paragraphs.
5. **Revising:** Evaluating earlier drafts, rearranging to improve organization.
6. **Editing:** Checking correctness of facts, grammar, spelling, usage, punctuation, and mechanics.
7. **Proofreading:** Reading final copy for typing errors, handwriting legibility, and words left out.

Prewriting

Prewriting is the activity you engage in before beginning to write your paper. You must think about your topic and explore all the possible things you might say on the sub-

ject. The simplest form of prewriting is making a list of the things you know about the subject. Write your list rapidly, without arranging the items in any particular order. Jot down anything that occurs to you, even if it does not seem particularly useful at the time. It may lead you to think of still better ideas.

Brainstorming is similar to listing, but its purpose is to generate ideas rather than a list of objects or details. With this method, you jot down all your thoughts on the subject, without stopping to consider whether or not a particular idea will be useful. Later you can cross out the thoughts you do not plan to use, but do not rule anything out now, because even a weak idea may lead to other ideas.

Another kind of prewriting activity is questioning. Answering these questions may help you to realize that you have a great deal to say about your subject. These questions are particularly helpful for persuasive papers and reports. You might need to gather more information in order to write such papers authoritatively, and these questions can guide your research and notetaking.

During the prewriting stage, you make the important decisions about audience and purpose that were briefly discussed earlier.

Data Gathering

The amount of time you spend gathering data will vary according to your purpose. This step will require very little effort if you are writing about your own experiences and beliefs. However, when you write a business letter, make a report, write a persuasive paper, or do a research paper, this step may consume more time than all the others.

Data gathering can make the difference between bland, superficial writing and mature writing with substance. Your writing will have greater depth if you can discuss ideas you have read or heard about from authorities on your subject. Backing your own opinions with facts will make your points more convincing. Data gathering is essential for

keeping up-to-date and for making informed decisions or recommendations.

Organizing

The third step in the writing process is organizing your ideas. You should select the most important and cross out the unimportant ones. Once you have in mind all the points you intend to cover, decide the order in which they should be presented. Before beginning your outline, ask yourself how you can most effectively "unfold" your topic for your reader. An appropriate method of development will make it easy for your reader to understand your topic and will move the topic smoothly and logically from an introduction to a conclusion. There are several common methods of development, each best suited to particular purposes. A suitable method of development helps present the material in the clearest and most logical way.

If you are writing a set of instructions, for example, your readers need the instructions in the order that will enable them to perform some task. Therefore, you should use a sequential method of development. If you wished to emphasize the time element of a sequence, however, you could follow a chronological method of development.

If writing about a new topic ~~that is~~ in many ways similar to another, more familiar topic, it is sometimes useful to develop the new topic by comparing it to the old one - thereby enabling your readers to make certain broad assumptions about the new topic, based on their understanding of the familiar topic. In this case, a comparison method of development can be used.

When describing a mechanical device, you may divide it into its component parts and explain each part's function as well as how all the parts work together. In this case, you are using a division-and-classification method of development. Or you may use a spatial method of development to describe the physical appearance of the device from top to bottom, from inside to outside, from front to back, and so on.

You can use the cause-and-effect method of development to write a report dealing with the solution to a problem, beginning with the problem and moving on to the solution, or vice versa.

Methods of development often overlap and a writer rarely relies on only one method of development in a written work. The important thing is to select one primary method of development and then to base your outline on it. By organizing your points in **advance**, you will save time and **make** sure that you cover everything once and only once.

Writing a Draft

The next step in the writing process is writing a draft that follows your organizational plan. At this stage, you should concentrate on getting your ideas on paper. You may develop some new thoughts as you begin digging into your subject. This is one of the exciting rewards of writing, it not only expresses your thoughts, but also, in many cases, stimulates them.

Revising

Revising is literally a "re-vision", or a new look at the whole paper. You must put yourself in your reader's place and pretend that you have never seen the paper before. After you have written your draft, it is good to put away your writing for a day or so and then look at your paper freshly. This "cooling" period helps you be sure that you read what you have actually written on paper rather than hear in your mind the ideas that you intended to convey.

As you consider the substance in your paper, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is **my** main idea clear?
2. Have I considered what is important to my readers?
3. Have I answered all the questions **my** readers are likely to have on this topic and told them everything they need to know?
4. Have I stayed on the subject without rambling?

5. Does the paper flow smoothly and logically from point to point?
 6. Have I used specific details rather than vague generalities?
 7. Have I been consistent in tone and approach?
 8. Have I been honest with myself and credible to my readers?
- Be prepared to revise every paper you write until you can answer "yes" to each question on the checklist.

Editing and Proofreading

Editing involves checking facts and making sure of the technical correctness of your grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation, and other conventions such as neatness and margins. Proofreading means checking your final draft to correct errors in typing. To avoid blocking your flow of thought, it is usually best not to worry about these mechanical matters until you have your ideas in draft form. These are nevertheless important stages, because messy or error-filled writing will detract from your message.

Recursive Writing Process

The writing process is not always a single sequence of steps, but often a looping or recursive practice. That is, writers often loop back over a passage they have just written, revising while composing, mentally checking what they have on paper against the ideas still in their heads. If they find they are getting off the track, they may eliminate something they have written. They may think of a better word, or a better way of shaping an already written sentence, or a better way of approaching their point. Revising can be done at any time, and you may revise parts of your paper several times before you are satisfied.

STYLE

Style is not merely a matter of "decorating" what you have written. It is an integral part of what you write, a way of securing meaning for clear communication. There are three components of style: information (the thoughts expressed), structure (the way sentences are put together), and suggestiveness (the choice of words to create an effect).

In choosing the words with which you write, consider how appropriate they are to the particular writing situation. Generally speaking, for business writing, you should use standard English words, neither too new nor too old. Good writers generally prefer standard, well-established words to the words of slang, advertising, or business. At the same time, good writers avoid trite language and cliché expressions that have become dull through overuse.

Slang, a colourful informal language, is out of place for most kinds of business writing, reports, and academic writing.

The language of advertising is designed to get attention. Some advertising reflects excellent writing skill, but sometimes advertisers gain attention by being ungrammatical. It is not advisable to use the language of advertising in business writing.

Business and computer science have given several new terms to the language. These terms may have meaning in their original setting, but they tend to sound unnatural in other contexts. Beware of using words that have been coined too recently to be in the dictionary and do not use the jargon of a business or profession in papers written for a more general audience.

Cliches are expressions that once had great freshness and appeal, but have become meaningless and dull through overuse. Some examples of cliché expressions could be: cool as a cucumber, burning the candle at both ends, in one ear and out the other, bored to tears, etc. If a particular phrase comes too easily to mind, it is likely to be a

cliche. You should try to find a more straightforward way of expressing your thought.

All good writers pride themselves on clarity, conciseness, mastery of sentence structure, precise use of words, and standards of correctness, which are ingredients of style that can be taught and learned.

Expository Writing

Exposition is writing that shows, explains, informs, or teaches. Exposition is the kind of writing most often used in magazine articles, term papers, essays, research papers, business reports, business letters, and so on.

You can "show" that your main idea is valid by supporting it with examples, reasons, and details, or some combination of these. In a relatively short paragraph, you might put supporting details in order of climax, with the least important first and the most important last. For longer paragraphs, you might prefer emphatic order, placing your most important points at the beginning and at the end, where they will make the strongest first and last impressions.

A paragraph is a group of related sentences. The main idea is stated in one general sentence called the topic sentence. In expository paragraphs, the topic sentence is a generalization, and the other sentences constitute the support of that generalization. Your support will be more convincing if you provide an ample number of examples or reasons.

Persuasive Writing

Persuasion is sometimes classified as a subcategory of exposition, because the best way to persuade people is to inform them with facts, examples, and reasons. Persuasive writing often adds emotional appeal to exposition, but the best emotional appeals should be soundly based on evidence. All business writing is persuasive in some way.

FORMS OF TECHNICAL WRITING

ABSTRACTS

Condensation of material is useful in many kinds of business writing. One way to condense the material is to write abstracts. An abstract is a condensed version of all the essential material in a piece of writing. Useful abstracts may be made of articles or essays, of lectures, of theses or dissertations, of books, of reports, or of other documents.

The abstracter may or may not be the original writer. His job is to abstract from the original all essential parts in the order in which they appear in the original. An abstract is not a criticism of the original document, nor an **evaluation** of it. It is a condensation— a statement of the original in brief form. Specialists in every field need and use abstracts. These busy people lack the time to read the huge quantity of material appearing in professional journals, in books, in reports and bulletins. Abstracts help one find what he needs without waste of time and energy. The abstract serves two main purposes:

1. It is a guide to what should be read more completely.
2. It informs the specialist and others about new developments in his field.

The abstract preserves the order, the emphasis, the spirit, and the intention of the original. It should include nothing—either comment, interpretation, or evaluation— that does not appear in the original. It should always be written from the point of view of the original document and its writer. As a rule, the wording is that of the abstracter.

No rigid rule can be given for the length of an abstract, which may consist of one sentence or several paragraphs. Some arbitrariness in this matter is unavoidable. But the abstract should **always** be checked against the original to make certain that no essential ideas have been crowded out or distorted.

The relative importance and emphasis of points in the original are maintained in the abstract as rigidly as the order. Thus the significant meaning of the original is carried over.

Abstracting is a different process from taking notes or outlining. First of all, you should master the material. Read it over and over, if necessary. If you are also the first writer, you should already have a synoptic view of the whole and know the relation of the parts. If you are not the original writer, you must read carefully for the special purpose of abstracting.

A good rule is to begin an abstract with a topic sentence, which gives the central idea or topic of the whole article. The careful abstracter similarly formulates the topic sentence for each successive section. Doing so helps you keep clear the organisation of the whole piece in its main and subordinate headings, and it helps you note transitions and decide what supporting material may be omitted. The abstract should be checked against the original, point by point, after it is made. As the abstracter, you should not use a telegraphic style but write in complete sentences. You should try to keep the same tone and emphasis as that of the original.

No mistakes of any sort are permissible in an abstract, for a very good reason. The abstract will frequently be the only portion of a report that is seen. It must therefore be carefully prepared and revised. You should make the abstract clear, correct, and readable.

REVIEWS

A book review is a form of technical writing which describes and classifies, summarizes, and evaluates a book. A book review helps the reader keep up with current publications in his field of specialization. Today it has become an extremely useful service to busy people in science and technology, in business and industry, education, and the arts—in short, in almost every field of human endeavor.

No one can read everything published in his special field. Together with the abstract, the review provides a time-saving guide.

Many periodicals are devoted primarily to reviews. Every new publication of any importance is reviewed at least once or twice. Often a specialist will want to read several reviews of the same book, since a comparison is frequently of considerable value. Writing reviews both requires and provides special training.

Your job as a reviewer is to answer the more important general questions the reader may have about the book. You must report on the contents, purpose, use and quality of the book. You must inform the reader factually about the book, and you must formulate an evaluation. The review is far more casual than the formal critical article, although the reviewer provides information as expertly and intelligently as he can.

A good review conserves time and space. It should be entirely clear. The review must be adapted in style to a particular audience. The language should be as simple as the needs, training, and experience of its audience will permit.

The Brief Review. Some reviews consist of only the bibliographical note giving the facts of publication plus a short statement, often a single sentence, describing and perhaps evaluating the book. These brief reviews are sometimes termed book notices.

The Regular Review. A review is usually as long as the space allotted to the reviewer by the editorial policy or decision of a particular periodical.

The Composite Review. Several books related in subject or in some other respect may be reviewed together, in what is called a composite review.

The heading is a short bibliographical description of the book reviewed. Its purpose is to give the reader all the facts of publication: the exact title, the author or authors, the place and date of publication, the publisher, and the price. If the book is a revision or a new edition,

that fact is usually noted. The form and placing of this information is a matter of editorial policy and varies somewhat from periodical and periodical. As a reviewer you should follow the style of the publication for which you are writing.

One of the principal things a reader wants to learn from the review is precisely what kind of book it is that is being reviewed and what it is about. The classification of the book need not repeat the information already given in the heading, but it should supplement it to tell the reader exact nature of the book-its subject, purpose, scope, and perhaps method.

The summary, which is the body of the review, is a condensed discussion of the contents of the book. It should answer the reader's question about what the book deals with. The reviewer should stress both achievements and shortcomings of the book. Newness and originality of idea, treatment, and presentation may be pointed out and any special features of the book may be noted. The book, or parts of it, may be compared with the work of other writers. The summary must be given largely in the reviewer's own words, but brief quotations may be given to exemplify the author's style or thought.

The reviewer's final responsibility is to evaluate how well the author achieved his purpose or how significant a contribution the book makes to its field. The evaluation may be brief, but it should be as specific as possible.

BUSINESS LETTERS

In spite of more rapid means of communication, letters remain vitally necessary in a busy world. Besides conveying information, a letter records information for future reference and use. For most business and professional people, letters constitute their most frequent and most important writing.

Each letter has one definite purpose. It should be thoughtfully composed and accurately typed to achieve that

purpose. A careless or messy or inaccurate or incomplete letter, instead of accomplishing its purpose, will create a bad impression of the writer and even of the organization he represents.

Style in Letters. Letter-writing style may vary from informal, in a letter to a close business associate, to formal, or restrained, in a letter to someone you do not know. **INFORMAL** It worked! The new process is better than we had dreamed.

RESTRAINED You will be pleased to know that the new process is more effective than we had expected.

You will probably find yourself relying on the restrained style more frequently than on the informal one, since an obvious attempt to sound casual, like overdone goodwill, may strike the reader as insincere. On the other hand, using legalistic-sounding words in an effort to impress your reader will make your writing seem stuffy and pompous, and may well irritate your reader.

CHANGE In response to your query, I wish to state that we no longer have an original copy of the brochure requested. Be advised that a photographic copy is enclosed herewith. Address further correspondence to this office for assistance as required.

TO Because we are currently out of original copies of our brochure, I am sending you a photocopy of it. If I can help further, please let me know.

The excessively formal writing style in the original version is full of largely out-of-date business language. Good business letters today have a more personal style as the revision illustrates.

The revised version is also slightly more concise. Being concise in writing is important, but do not be so concise that you lapse into telegraphic style. If you respond to a written request that you cannot understand with "Your request was unclear" or "I don't understand", you will probably offend your reader. Instead of attacking the writer's ability to phrase a request, consider that what you are really doing is asking for more information.

EXAMPLE I will need more information before I can answer your request. Specifically, can you give me the title and the date of the report you are looking for?

This version is a bit longer, but it is both more polite and more helpful.

A letter should be as clear and simple and direct as possible. Paragraphs in a letter should be short. As a rule make a separate paragraph for each point in the letter. Similarly, most sentences in a letter should be short. But sentences should not be monotonously alike in length and structure. They must be well constructed and complete. Clarity is particularly important, because if you do not make your wishes clear, you may not get what you want.

Tone. Remember that your language sets the tone of your letter. It represents you to the reader, and if you are writing as an employee of an organization or business, it represents your employer as well. The tone of your letter can affect the results you get; the words you choose can sound warm and friendly, or angry, or just plain business-like. For most business purposes, choose words that sound courteous and reasonable. Your reader might react negatively to thoughtlessness, rudeness, or threats. Adjust your tone and your language as sincerely as you can to the accomplishment of your purpose.

Letters are generally written directly to another person who is identified by name. Letters are always more personal than are reports or other forms of business writing. Successful writers find that it helps to imagine their reader sitting across the desk from them as they write; they then write to the reader as if they were talking to him or her in person. This technique helps them keep their language natural. As a letter writer addressing yourself directly to your reader, you are in a good position to take into account your reader's needs. If you ask yourself, "How might I feel if I were the recipient of such a letter?" you can gain some insight into the likely needs and feelings

of your reader and thus try to satisfy them. Furthermore, you have a chance to build goodwill for your business or organization. You can put the reader's needs and interests at the centre of the letter by writing from the reader's perspective. You could use the words "you" and "your" rather than "we", "our", "I", and "mine". This technique has been referred to as the "you" viewpoint.

Obviously, both goodwill and the "you" viewpoint can be overdone. Used thoughtlessly, both techniques can produce an insincere tone, as in the followings:

CHANGE You're the sort of forward-thinking person whose outstanding good judgement is obvious from your selection of the word processor.

TO Congratulations on selecting the word processor. We believe it is one of the finest on the market.

Language that is full of false praise will seem insincere and thus be counterproductive.

Tone is usually defined as the attitude your writing reveals toward your subject, your audience, and sometimes yourself. The tone you select will depend largely on your purpose. Formal tone is one that would be appropriate on formal occasions. Contractions are generally avoided in formal prose. Words with neutral connotations generally sound more objective, so they are preferred over emotive words in business letters. Slang is out of place in formal letters, and so are abbreviations. Informal tone is appropriate when you wish to sound warm and friendly. Using the recipient's first name may sound friendly in a business letter, but you should actually know the person or have corresponded previously. Otherwise, this approach may seem presumptuous and offensive. Humor, too, contributes to a tone of informality, but it should be appropriate to the subject matter and should not appear strained or thrown in thoughtlessly. Also, addressing the reader as "you" is more personal than using third-person pronouns like "one" and "he" or "she".

Despite the trend toward informality today, you can offend some people by being overly familiar. For example, some people do not like to be called by their first names:

until a close friendship has developed. Be cautious about such an expression of informality until you are sure it would be welcome. Whatever tone you decide to convey, be consistent in your letter.

PRINCIPLES OF LETTER WRITING

Generally speaking, a good business letter follows the same principles as any other good piece of writing. Like any other composition, it has content, style, and form. To make it a good letter, you must consider each of these aspects of your letter.

Typing. In the modern business and professional world, letters must be typed.

Concentration. A good letter is usually intended to accomplish one thing. Every detail of the letter should be designed with this single purpose in mind.

Planning. A good letter is carefully planned. You should think out what you need to say before you write. The longer the letter, the more need there is for planning.

Neatness. The appearance of a letter is **very** important. Erasures, overprints, uneven margins, and poor spacing injure or defeat the writer's purpose. A letter with mistakes or blemishes should be retyped.

Spacing. Every letter is a problem in layout. The margins should be balanced. The page should attract the eye and make reading easy. Letters vary in length. A short letter will have wider margins. For an extremely short letter, a half sheet is preferable. With proper care and thought any letter, short or long, can be attractively spaced.

Conciseness. A good letter communicates its information as quickly as possible. You should make every sentence and every word count and tell the reader what he wants to know without waste of words. A business letter should be businesslike. In many organizations letters must be confined to a page or less.

Accuracy. A good business letter is clear and definite, as well as complete and accurate. It is a poor let-

ter that requires a follow-up letter to supplement or correct it. You should state the purpose of your letter in the opening sentence plainly and directly. Keep the reader constantly in mind and anticipate his questions. When you cannot obtain desired information at the moment, you should state that fact and make provision to supply the information later. An inaccurate or incomplete letter is inefficient.

Positive Statement. A good letter is positive rather than negative both in its form of statement and in its whole tone. A positive tone is evidence of strength of purpose and intention.

Postscripts. Since postscripts are **afterthoughts**, they give the impression that the writer is not sufficiently interested in his own business to plan his letter and to concentrate on its purpose. For this reason postscripts are generally to be avoided in business correspondence.

Answering Letters. When answering a letter, always have that letter before you. Read it over carefully before composing your reply. Answer points in the order in which they occur in your correspondent's letter.

Content of Business Letters. In deciding upon your content, apply the concept of unity. A business letter should deal with only one subject. If you write to a business about some matters that should be handled by two different departments, write two different letters to facilitate prompt handling of your requests. To create the best impression, put yourself in the place of your reader. Leave out any comments that are not related to your letter's purpose, and come straight to the point without roundabout introductory remarks.

Short letters are preferred by businesses, editors, and elected representatives. If you must write a long letter, make it more readable by keeping the paragraphs short. Short sentences are easier to grasp in a hurry, so try to keep your sentences fairly short, preferably under 20 words. But you should use variety in sentence structure, because

a letter composed only of very short, simple sentences might sound primitive and dull. Good sentences for business letters are like good sentences in any other kind of writing.

Form of Business Letters. Any business letter you write should follow the conventional form. Type the letter if at all possible, singlespaced with a blank space between paragraphs. A business letter consists of several parts.

Heading. The writer's full address and the date are given in the heading. Because your name appears at the end of the letter, it need not be included in the heading. If you are not using a printed letterhead, place your return address in the upper right-hand corner, flush with the right margin. The first line of the return address should be your street address, or post office box number. The second line should be your city or town, country and zip code. Words like "street" and "avenue" should be spelled out rather than abbreviated. The date usually goes directly beneath at the last line of the address. Do not abbreviate the name of the month. Align the heading on the page at the center line. If you are using company letterhead that gives the address, type in only the date, two spaces below the last line of printed copy.

The Inside Address. Leave one or more blank lines below the date, more if your letter is short. Flush against the left margin, place the name and address of the person who will receive the letter, just as this information would appear on the envelope. This address is called the inside address. The inside address should be aligned with the left margin. It is best to write to a person, rather than to a position, if you know the name. You may place a short title immediately after the name, or a long title on a separate line. You may also use a separate line for a department or division. Then continue with the name of the company or agency, its street address or post office box, and then the city, state and zip code.

EXAMPLE Ms. Gail Silver
Production Manager
Quicksilver Printing Company
14 President Street
Sarasota, FL 33546

The Salutation. Place the salutation, or greeting, two spaces below the inside address, also aligned with the left margin. Using the name is preferable to the more impersonal "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam." However, if you do not know the name, you may use "Dear Sir or Madam." If you know the person well, you may use the first name in a salutation. The titles Mr., Ms., Mrs., and Dr. may be abbreviated but other titles, such as Captain or Professor, should always be spelled out.

EXAMPLES Dear Ms. Silver:
Dear Dr. Lee:
Dear Professor Murphy:
Dear George:

In most business letters, the salutation contains the recipient's title and last name, followed by a colon. If you do not know whether the recipient is a man or woman, you may use a title appropriate to the context of the letter.

EXAMPLES Dear Customer:
Dear Manager:

If you are writing to a company rather than to an individual, you may use "Ladies and Gentlemen" or "Dear Sirs", but this is not very common any more. Today, writers who do not know the name or title of the recipient often address the letter to an appropriate department or identify the subject in a "subject line" and use no salutation.

EXAMPLE National Business Systems
50I West National Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55407

Attention: Customer Relations Department

I am returning three calculators that failed to operate ...

EXAMPLE National Business Systems
501 West National Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55407

Subject: Defective Parts for SL-100 Calculators

I am returning three calculators that failed to operate...

The Attention Line: Sometimes a letter is addressed to a firm or organization, but the writer wishes the letter to be handled by a certain individual within that organization. An attention line is included to declare the sender's wish or intention. Several forms of the attention line are in use, as follows:

Attention: Mr. Louis L. Symes, Credit Manager

Attention of Mr. Joseph L. Lerman, Chief Engineer

Attention: Mr. A. P. Grogan
Manager, Small Parts Division

Be sure that if the attention line is used the salutation is always in the plural form, since the firm is addressed, not the individual.

The attention line should be placed either two spaces below the inside address or two spaces below the salutation, centered or beginning at the left margin.

The Subject Line. A subject line has two purposes: instant reference to and identification of the contents of a letter, and space saving, since it makes unnecessary an opening sentence stating the purpose and subject of the letter. The subject line may begin at the left margin or it may be centered. It may be placed two spaces above the salutation, two spaces below the salutation, or on the same line with the salutation. If both an attention line and a subject line are included in a letter, the attention line should be placed between the inside address and the salutation.

EXAMPLE Western States Manufacturing Company
7052 North Plainview Blvd.
Denver 25, Colorado

Attention: Mr. O. R. Ramsden, Purchasing Agent
Subject: Invoice J888-2

The Body. The body of the letter should begin two spaces below the salutation. There is single-space within paragraphs, and double-space between paragraphs. If a letter is very short and you want to suggest a fuller appearance, you may instead double-space throughout and indicate paragraphs by indenting the first line of each paragraph five spaces from the left. The right margin should be approximately as wide as the left margin.

Two very important elements in the body are the opening and closing. One effective way to arrange your letter is to open with a short paragraph, followed by one or more longer paragraphs for the message and another short paragraph for concluding. Never underestimate the importance of the opening and closing; in fact, their positions of emphasis make them particularly significant.

In your opening you should identify your subject so as to focus its relevance for the reader. Your reader may not immediately recognize or see the importance of your topic- he or she may be preoccupied with some other business. Therefore, it is important to focus his or her attention on the subject at hand. Be particularly careful to get directly to the point; leave out any less important details.

The concluding paragraph should end on a positive note, perhaps reaffirming exactly what you wish to have done. Your closing should let the reader know what he or she should do next or establish goodwill- or often both.

EXAMPLE Thanks again for the report, and let me know if you want me to send you a printout of the tests.

Because a closing is in a position of emphasis, be especially careful to avoid cliches. Of course, some very commonly used closings are so precise that they are hard to replace.

EXAMPLES Thank you for your advice.

If you have further questions, please let me know.

The Complimentary Closing. The complimentary close and signature may be placed either at the left margin or toward

the right side. Only the first word of the complimentary close is capitalized, and a comma follows. Any of these would be acceptable:

Sincerely yours,
Yours truly,
Very truly yours,
Respectfully yours,
Sincerely,

More informal closings, for people you know, may include the following:

Warm regards,
Best wishes,
As ever.

Type your full name four spaces below, aligned with the closing at the left. On the next line you may type in your business title, if it is appropriate to do so. Write your signature in the space between the complimentary closing and your typed name. If you are writing to someone with whom you are on a first-name basis, it is acceptable to sign only your given name; otherwise, sign your full name.

EXAMPLE Sincerely,
 (signature)
 Thomas R. Castle
 Treasurer

Sometimes the complimentary closing is followed by the name of the firm. Then comes the actual signature, between the name of the firm and the typed name.

EXAMPLE Sincerely yours,
 VIKING SUPPLY COMPANY
 (signature)
 Laura A. Newland
 Controller

A Second Page. If a letter requires a second page, always carry at least two lines of the body text over to that page; do not use a continuation page to type only the letter's closing. The second page should be typed on plain pa-

per of quality equivalent to that of the letterhead stationery. It should have a heading with the recipient's name, the page number, and the date. The heading may go in the upper lefthand corner or across the page.

Additional Information. Business letters sometimes require the typist's initials, an enclosure notation, or a notation that a copy of the letter is being sent to one or more people. Place any such information at the left margin, two spaces below the last line of the complimentary closing in a long letter, four spaces below in a short letter.

The typist's initials should follow the letter writer's initials, and the two sets of initials should be separated by either a colon or a slash. The writer's initials should be in capital letters, and the typist's initials should be in lowercase letters. (When the writer is also the typist, no initials are needed.)

EXAMPLES CBG: pbg

APM/sjl

Enclosure notations indicate that the writer is sending material along with the letter (an invoice, an article, and so on). They may take several forms, as illustrated below; choose the form that seems most helpful to your readers.

EXAMPLES Enclosure: Preliminary report invoice

Enclosures (2)

Enc. (Encs.)

Enclosure notations are included in long, formal letters on in any letters where the enclosed items would not be obvious to the reader. But a enclosed notation cannot stand alone. You must mention the enclosed material in the body of the letter.

Copy notations tell the reader that a copy of the letter is being sent to one or more named individuals.

EXAMPLE cc: Ms. Marlene Brier

Mr. David Williams

The Outside Address. The address on the envelope should be in the center or slightly to the right of center and

should be in the form used in the letter. Included are the name of the person, firm, or organization for whom the letter is intended, the street and number of the building and room number or both street and building address, the city, zip code, state (in the USA), and country.

The Return Address. The name of the sender should be typed in the upper left hand corner of the envelope, together with his return address if that address is not printed on the envelope.

Letter Formats

The two most common formats of business letters are the full block style (shown in Letter 1) and the modified block style (shown in Letter 2). The full block style, though easier to type because every line begins at the left margin, is suitable only for business letters with business letterhead stationary. In the modified block style, the return address, the date, and the complimentary closing all begin at the center of the page, and the other elements are aligned at the left margin. All other letter styles are variations of these two styles.

Letterhead

EVANS & ASSOCIATES
520 Niagara Street
Lexington, KY 40502

Date May 15, 19...

Inside address Mr. George W. Nagel
Director of Operations
Boston Transit Authority
57 West City Avenue
Boston, MA 02110

Salutation Dear Mr. Nagel:

Enclosed is our final report evaluating the safety measures for the Boston Intercity Transit System.

Body We believe the report covers the issues you raised and that it is self-explanatory. However, if you have any further questions, we would be happy to meet with you at your convenience.

We would also like to express our appreciation to Mr. L. K. Sullivan of your committee for his generous help during our trip to Boston.

Complimentary close Sincerely,
Signature (signature)
Typed name Carolyn Brown, Ph. D.
Title Director of Research

CB/lb

Additional Enclosure: Final Safety Report
information cc: ITS Safety Committee Members

Letter I Full Block Style Business Letter

Heading just 3814 Oak Lane
right of center Lexington, KY 40514
December 8, 19...

Inside Dr. Carolyn Brown
address Director of Research
Evans & Associates
520 Niagara Street
Lexington, KY 40502

Salutation Dear Dr. Brown:

Body Thank you very much for allowing me to tour your testing facilities. The information I gained from the tour will be of great help to me in preparing the report for my class at Marshall Institute. The tour has also given me some insight into the work I may eventually do as a laboratory technician.

I especially appreciated the time and effort Steve Dement spent in showing me your facilities. His comments and advice were most helpful.

Again, thank you.

Complimentary
close aligned
with heading
Signature
Typed name

Sincerely,

(signature)
Leslie Warden

Letter 2 Modified Block Style Business Letter

THE LETTER OF INQUIRY

Sometimes it is necessary to ask for some information. The letter of inquiry serves this purpose. This information might be specifications on something **you** are considering buying, or details about how some organization or **group** has accomplished something. Letters of inquiry also might ask about employment opportunities or the needs of a publisher to whom you wish to submit an article or book. Because many organizations are reluctant to supply information for some unknown purpose, your first paragraph should explain who you are and why you want the information. Since your request may require time and money, **offer** to repay the recipient of the letter in some way if possible. If no repayment is possible, be sure to express appreciation for any help you might **receive**. Avoid saying "Thank you in advance for your help," however, because that may be interpreted as a demand or pressure tactics.

THE LETTER OF APPLICATION

When you apply for a job in a foreign country, you need to write a letter of application. A good letter does not necessarily guarantee that you will get the job you want, but a poor letter of application might spoil your chances. Most employers want to write your own letter of application, reflecting your own personality and skills in foreign language.

General Outline for a letter of Application

Addressee. Address a specific individual, by name and position, if at all possible. It is advisable to find out the name and exact title of the person responsible for processing your application.

The Application Itself. Apply for a specific position. As a rule the application should be made in the first sentence. State clearly your reason for applying. You should also say how you found out that an opening exists (from an advertisement in newspaper or professional journal, employment service, informant, or other source). Show an interest in the employer's business or agency, enough to have learned something about the company. Sound as if you want this particular job, not just any job. Consider the employer's needs and what you can do for the company, not just what the company can do for you.

Qualifications. You should state your qualifications for the specific position you want. Be more than just "interested in" the position. Outline, very briefly, your special fitness for the job. Show confidence in your ability, but not conceit. Include enough information to show that you are qualified, but not so much that your letter becomes tedious to read.

Salary. It may or may not be necessary to mention salary. If you know the salary offered by the company and are satisfied with it, you may say so. Circumstances pertaining both to the applicant and to the job will determine what you say, if anything, about salary.

Closing paragraph. Your letter should end with a brief paragraph stressing your desire to obtain the position. Suggest your willingness to appear for an interview as well as to supply and further information about yourself that may be required. Give your telephone number to make calling you easier. You should urge definite and early action as courteously as possible.

Data sheet. Unless the company or institution to which you are applying has provided an application form, you should use a data sheet to supplement a letter of the kind just outlined. The appropriate contents of a data sheet will vary, in some details, with different applicants and different jobs, but in general this sheet should include personal information, brief outlines of education and experience, a list of reference, and possibly a photograph.

Personal Information. Give details of age, height, weight, sex, condition of health, marital status, number of children, and military record or status.

Education. List, with dates, colleges or universities attended and degrees received. Give principal fields of specialization. Further details, such as specific courses, are appropriate only if they will help the prospective employer determine your qualifications for the position. You could also mention grade-point average, important student activities, and memberships of probable interest to the employer.

Experience. Give dates, names of employers, positions held (by title or by description of duties), and, when important, salaries. The order is usually chronological. However, some employers prefer reverse chronology, with the most recent job listed first. This arrangement permits an employer to read back only as far as he wants to.

References. Give full references, including names, titles, and addresses. Be sure that the persons you name know you well enough to give useful and necessary information about you. Often a specific number and kind of references will be required. Usually three to five are sufficient.

Photograph. A photograph may be required, or the applicant may wish to include one with his application. The photograph should be a recent one. It may be mounted on the data sheet, usually in the upper left corner. Immediately above or below the photograph give its date.

Suggestions for Writing Letters of Application

Correctness. A letter of application should be correct in every detail of form, style, and tone. Even a single error may lose you the position you seek.

Effective Beginning. If you begin badly, the reader may not even finish your letter. The first sentence should be clear and direct, stating effectively the purpose of your letter and setting the proper tone to accomplish your purpose.

The Proper Tone. It is difficult but necessary to adopt the right tone for a successful letter of application. Your tone should be dignified and rather formal, and it should express you and your personality as naturally and truthfully as possible. If your letter shows too much straining for some special effect, it will almost certainly impress the reader adversely. Give your prospective employer a proper understanding of your qualifications, your intelligence, your reliability, and your seriousness of purpose.

The Follow-up. A follow-up letter is desirable, sometimes necessary, either when an unreasonably long time has elapsed without a reply to your letter of application or when your application has been unsuccessful. In the first case, write briefly, stating the date and purpose of your former letter and inquiring courteously about any decision that may have been made concerning it. In the latter case, when the facts of the situation warrant your doing so, express your regret at not having been given the position and you may ask to be notified of future vacancies in order that you may reapply.

Application Forms. Many institutions and business firms have developed printed forms for both applications and references. Use these forms when they are provided. Do not leave any pertinent question unanswered.

MODEL COVER LETTER AND RESUME

You can also send your prospective employer a resume together with a cover letter. Your resume lists work experience, education or training, and general qualifications; your cover letter expresses your interest in the one job you want to be considered for right now.

Letter 3 is a sample cover letter. The return address and date appear in the upper right-hand corner. The inside address is placed on the left. The letter, with its return address and salutation, is approximately centered on the page.

The first paragraph states the purpose of the letter and asks politely to be considered for the position. The second paragraph summarizes relevant educational background. The third paragraph gives work experience and refers to the resume for further details. The fourth paragraph shows an interest in the hospital and its work. The last paragraph asks politely for an interview and gives the telephone number to make it easy to contact the applicant.

The resume gives more specific detail and is organized for easy review of qualifications. Most important information comes first, so you should list your recent work experience and education first, oldest last. Hobbies and interests may be included to show something of your personality. You may also include details of the work you have done, especially those that show you have taken responsibility.

Return
address
and date

4926 Center Street
Bakersfield, CA 93306
June 15, 19...

Inside
address

Judy N. Baker
Kern Medical Center
1830 Flower Street
Bakersfield, CA 93305

Salutation	Dear Ms. Barker:
Purpose of letter	In today's newspaper I noticed your advertisement for a registered nurse. Please consider me for the position.
Education and training	I am a graduate of California State College, Bakersfield, where I completed my training as a registered nurse last year. Prior to that I received my Associate in Arts degree from Bakersfield Community College.
Work experience, reference to resume	My nursing experience includes two years at a rest home and three years in private home care. I have also had other part-time jobs while attending school. The enclosed resume will provide further details.
Interest in the work	I am interested in working in a hospital and have a special interest in surgery and critical care. If you need me in other areas, however, I am willing to serve wherever the need is greatest. I love nursing, and I am confident that I can make a contribution to your staff.
Request for interview	May I have a personal interview at your convenience? If you wish to telephone me, my home telephone is 555-1872. I can be reached at home any afternoon after 1 p.m.
Complimentary close	Sincerely,
Signature	(signature)
Typed name	Janine B. Walters
	Enclosure: resume

Letter 3 Model Cover Letter

RESUME

Janine B. Walters
4926 Center Street
Bakersfield, CA 93306

Date: June 19...
Phone: 555-1872

WORK EXPERIENCE

1985'-present Worked part-time in Oak Knolls Nursing Home while completing college. Had responsibility for bathing, feeding, and other patient care.

1983-1985 Private nurse in home of Mrs. Abigail Rigby. Full time day shift. Provided prescribed medications, exercise, bathing, feeding.

1973-1983 Homemaker and part-time waitress and census taker.

EDUCATION

1986-1988 California State College, Bakersfield. Graduated with **honors**, B. S. degree.

1984-1986 Bakersfield Community College, A. A. degree.

1969-1971 South High School, graduated with **honors**.

INTERESTS Church activities, tennis, gardening.

REFERENCES Available upon request.

MEMORANDUMS

The memorandum is the most frequently used form of communication among members of the same organization. Memorandums are routinely used for internal communications of all kinds- from short notes to small **reports** and internal proposals. Among their many uses, memos announce policies, confirm conversations, exchange information, delegate responsibilities, request information, transmit documents, instruct employees, and report **results**.

Memos play key role in the management of many organizations. Managers must be clear and accurate in their memos in order to maintain credibility among their subordinates. Consider the unintended **secondary** messages the following notice conveys:

EXAMPLE It has been decided that the office will be open the day after Christmas.

The first part of the sentence ("It has been decided") not only sounds impersonal but also communicates an authoritarian tone. One solution is to remove the first part of the sentence.

EXAMPLE The office will open the day after Christmas. But even this statement sounds impersonal. A better solution would be to suggest both that the decision is good for the company and that employees should be privy to the decision-making process.

EXAMPLE Because we must meet the December 15 deadline to be eligible for the government contract, the office will be open the day after Christmas.

This version is forthright and informative and helps the employees understand the decision.

Writing Memos

It is particularly important to outline a memo, even if that means simply jotting down the points to be covered and then ranking them in a logical method of development. Adequate development is crucial to ensure clarity.

CHANGE Be more careful on the loading dock.

TO To prevent accidents, follow these procedures:

1. Check ...
2. Load only ...
3. Replace ...

Although the original version is concise, it is not as clear and specific as the revision. Some readers may provide their own interpretations if you are not as specific as possible. Memos should ordinarily deal with only one subject.

Memo Openings. A memo should normally begin with a statement of its main idea. If your reader is not familiar with the subject or the background of a problem, provide an introductory background paragraph. Longer memos or those dealing with complex subjects benefit most from developed **introductions.** However, even when you are writing a short memo and the recipient is familiar with the situation, you need to remind your reader of the context.

EXAMPLE As we decided after yesterday's meeting, we need to set new guidelines for ...

The only exceptions to stating the main point first are (1) when the reader is likely to be highly skeptical and (2) when you are disagreeing with persons in positions of higher authority. In such cases, a more persuasive tactic is to state the problem first and then present the specific points that will support your final recommendation.

Lists and Headings. It is often a good idea to use lists to emphasize your points in a memo. If you are trying to convince a skeptical reader, a list of your points—from most to least persuasive—will stand out rather than being lost in a lengthy paragraph. On the other hand, a memo that consists almost entirely of lists is difficult for readers to understand because they are forced to connect the separate items for themselves. Lists lose their impact when they are overused.

Another useful device, particularly in long memos, is headings.

1. They divide material to manageable segments.
2. They call attention to main topics.
3. They signal a shift in topic.

Writing Style. The level of formality in memos depends entirely on your reader and objective. A memo to an associate who is of equal rank and is a friend is likely to be informal and personal. However, a memo written as an internal proposal to several readers or a memo to someone at a higher level in your organization is likely to use the more formal style of a report.

CHANGE I can't agree with your plan because I think it poses logistical problems. (Informal, personal, and forceful)

TO: The logistics of moving the department may pose serious problems. (Formal, impersonal, and cautious.)

A memo giving instructions to a subordinate will also be relatively formal and impersonal, but more direct.

Format and Parts. Regardless of the parts included, perhaps the one requiring the most careful preparation is the subject line or the title of a memo. Subject lines are an important orientation when the reader first sees the memo. Therefore, it is important to make them accurate. The memo should deal only with the single subject announced in the subject line, which also should be complete.

The final step is signing or initialing a memo, which lets the reader know that you approve of its contents. Some writers sign at the end, and others sign initials next to their typed name.

PROPOSALS

A proposal is a document written to persuade someone to follow a plan or course of action. It may be internal to an organization or be sent outside the organization to a potential client. Proposals are divided into internal and external ones.

Since proposals offer plans to fill a need, your readers will evaluate your plan according to how well your written presentation answers their questions about what you are proposing to do, how you plan to do it, and how much it is going to cost.

To answer these questions satisfactorily, your proposal should be written at your reader's level of knowledge. If you have more than one reader, take into account all your readers.

Proposals usually consist of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction should summarize the problem you are proposing to solve and your solution. The body should explain in detail (1) how the job will be done, (2) what methods will be used to do it, (3) when work will begin, (4) when the job will be completed, and a (5) cost breakdown for the entire job. The conclusion should empha-

size the benefits for the reader and should urge him or her to take action. Your conclusion should have an encouraging, confident, and reasonably assertive tone.

Internal Proposals. The purpose of an internal proposal is to suggest a change or an improvement within an organization. An internal proposal, usually in a memo format, is prepared by a person or a department and is sent to a higher-ranking person who has the authority to accept or reject the proposal.

In the opening of a proposal, you must establish that a problem exists that needs a solution. The body of a proposal should offer a practical solution to the problem. In building a case for a solution, be as specific as possible. When it is appropriate, include (1) a breakdown of costs; (2) information about equipment, material, and personnel requirements; and (3) a schedule for completing the task. Such information can help your readers to think about the proposal and thus may stimulate them to act. The conclusion should be brief but must tie everything together.

External Proposals. The purpose of an external proposal, a sales proposal, is to present a product or service in the best possible light and to explain why a buyer should choose it over the competitors. It is a company's offer to provide specific goods or services to a potential buyer within a specified period of time and for a specified price.

Your first task in writing a sales proposal is to find out exactly what your prospective customer needs. Before preparing a sales proposal, you should know who your principal competitors are. Then compare your company's strengths with those of your competing firms, and emphasize your advantages in the proposal.

The introduction should state the purpose and scope of the proposal. It should indicate the dates on which you propose to begin and complete work on the project, any special benefits of your proposed approach, and the total cost of the project.

The body of a sales proposal should itemize the products and services you are offering. It should include, if applicable, a discussion of the procedures you would use to perform the work and any materials to be used. It should also present a time schedule indicating when each stage of the project would be completed.

The conclusion should express your appreciation for the opportunity to submit the proposal and your confidence in your company's ability to do the job. You might add that you look forward to establishing good working relations with the customer and that you would be glad to provide any additional information that might be needed. The conclusion should specify the time period during which your proposal can still be considered a valid offer.

REPORTS

A report is an organized presentation of factual information. It is prepared by one or more persons to present clearly and efficiently certain information about a given problem or situation. Generally speaking, reports are prepared for busy officials who need clearly presented and accurate information. Since these officials usually need the information for immediate use, it must be in a form they can grasp with the least expenditure of time. A report is prepared for a certain reader or a small group of readers who have requested specific information or recommendations to guide their decisions or actions.

Formal reports present the results of projects that may require months of work and involve large sums of money. They follow a stringent format. Informal reports normally run from a few paragraphs to a few pages and include only the essential elements of a report: introduction, body, conclusions, and recommendations. Informal reports are customarily written as a letter or as a memorandum.

The introduction announces the subject of the report, states its purpose, and gives essential background information. It should also summarize any conclusions, findings,

or recommendations made in the report. The body of the report should present a clearly organized account of the report's subject. The amount of detail to include depends on the complexity of the subject and on your reader's familiarity with it. The conclusion should summarize your findings and tell the reader what you think their significance may be. In some reports a final section gives recommendations.

Formal Reports. Formal reports are the written accounts of major projects. Projects that are likely to produce formal reports include research into new developments in a field, explorations of the advisability of launching a new product or an expanded service, or an end-of-year review of developments within an organization. Most formal reports—certainly those that are long and complex—require a carefully planned structure. Such aids as a table of contents, a list of illustrations, and an abstract make the information in the report more accessible.

Most formal reports are divided into three major parts— front matter, body, and back matter— each of which contains a number of elements. Just how many elements are needed for a particular report depends on the subject, the length of the report, and the kinds of material covered.

Order of Elements in a Formal Report. The number and arrangement of the elements in a formal report may vary. The following list includes most of the elements a formal report might contain.

Front Matter

Title Page
Abstract
Table of Contents
List of figures
List of tables
Foreword
Preface
List of abbreviations and symbols

Body

Executive summary
Introduction
Text
Conclusions
Recommendations
References

Back Matter

Bibliography
Appendixes
Glossary
Index

Front Matter. The front matter gives the reader a general idea of the author's purpose in writing the report; and it lists where in the report the reader can find specific chapters, headings, illustrations, and tables. Not all formal reports require every element of front matter. It depends on the scope of the report and its intended audience.

Title Page. The title should indicate the topic and announce the scope and objective of the report. Follow the following guidelines when creating the title:

- (1) Do not use "Report on..." in the title, since the fact that the information appears in a report will be self-evident to the reader.
- (2) Do not use abbreviations in the title.
- (3) Do not include the period covered by a report in the title; include that information in a subtitle.

The title page should include the name of the writer, or compiler. Frequently, contributors simply list their names and almost never list their academic degrees. It should also contain the date of the report, the name of the organization for which the writer works, and the name of the organization to which the report is being submitted.

Abstract. An abstract enables the prospective reader to decide whether to read the entire report. Abstracts must make sense independently of the works they summarize.

Table of Contents. A table of contents lists all the major headings or sections of the report in their order of appearance, along with their page numbers. By convention, the table of contents and the page number are not listed in the table of contents page. A table of contents aids a reader who may want to look at only certain sections of a report. For this reason, the wording of chapter and section titles in the table of contents should be identical to those in the text.

List of Figures. Figures include all illustrations- drawings, photographs, maps, charts, and graphs- contained in the report. When a report contains more than five figures, they should be listed in a separate section immediately following the table of contents. This section should be entitled "List of Figures" and should begin on a new page.

List of Tables. When a report contains more than five tables, they should be listed in a separate section entitled "List of Tables".

Foreword. A foreword is an optional introductory statement written by someone other than the author. The foreword may discuss the purpose of the report but generally provides background information about its significance or places it in the context of other works written in the field.

Preface. The preface is an optional introductory statement, usually written by the author, that announces the purpose, background, and scope of the report. It may contain certain acknowledgements of help received in the preparation of the report.

List of Abbreviations and Symbols. When the abbreviations and symbols used in the report are numerous and there is a chance that the reader will not be able to interpret them, the front matter should include a list of all symbols and abbreviations and what they stand for in the report.

Body (Text). The body is that portion of the report in which the author introduces the subject, describes it in

detail, demonstrates how results were obtained, and draws conclusions on which any recommendations are based. It explains how the writer arrived at his conclusions and gives enough data to convince the reader of their validity. In writing each of these major divisions the writer must be constantly aware of his purpose. You should convince the reader and make everything clear to him, but you should not impose a burden of needless detail.

Each division of the body should begin with a statement that (1) tells what the division is about and (2) relates it to the overall plan and purpose. Similarly, each subdivision should begin with a statement which helps explain or support a preceding generalization and which in its turn is explained, or supported by the material it introduces.

Executive Summary. The body of the report begins with an executive summary that provides a more complete overview of a report than an abstract does. The summary states the purpose and nature of the investigation and gives major findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The length of the executive summary should be approximately 10 percent of the length of the report.

A summary enables people who may not have time to read a lengthy report to scan its primary points and then decide whether they need to read the entire report. Like abstracts, summaries should not contain tables, illustrations, or bibliographic citations.

Introduction. The purpose of an introduction is to give the readers any general information they must have in order to understand the detailed information in the rest of the report. You need to state the subject, the purpose, the scope, and the way you plan to develop the topic. You may also describe how the report will be organized.

Text. The text presents the details of how the topic was investigated, how the problem was solved, or whatever else the report covers. This information is often clarified and

further developed by the use of illustrations and tables and may be supported by references to other studies. The text is ordinarily divided into several major sections, comparable to the chapters in a book.

Conclusions. The conclusion section pulls together the results of your study in one place. You should show how the results follow from the study objectives and method and also point out any unexpected results.

Recommendations. Recommendations state what course of action should be taken based on the results of the study. They advise the reader on the best course of action based on the researcher's findings.

References. If in your report, you refer to material in or quote directly from a published work or other research source, you must provide a list of references in a separate section entitled "References".

Back Matter. The back matter of a formal report contains supplemental information, such as **where to find** additional information about the topic (bibliography) and how the information in the report can be easily located (index), clarified (glossary), and explained in more detail (appendix).

Bibliography. A bibliography is a list, usually in alphabetical order, of all sources that were consulted in researching the report but that are not cited in the text. It may not be necessary, however, when the reference listing contains a complete list of sources.

Appendixes. An appendix contains information that clarifies or supplements the text. This type of information is placed at the back of the report because it is too detailed to appear in the text without impeding the orderly presentation of ideas. Material typically placed in an appendix includes long charts and supplementary graphs or tables, copies of questionnaires and other material used in gather-

ing information. A report may have one or more appendixes; generally, each appendix contains one type of material. Appendixes are ordinarily labeled Appendix A, Appendix B, and so on. If your report has only one appendix, simply label it Appendix, followed by its title.

Glossary. A glossary is an alphabetical list of selected terms that are defined and explained. Include a glossary only if your report contains many words and expressions that will be unfamiliar to your intended readers.

Index. An index is an alphabetical list of all the major topics discussed in the report. It is an optimal finding device in a report because a detailed table of contents usually gives readers adequate information about the topics covered.

MAIN SOURCES USED

1. Burke, David, Business writing. New York, 1987.
2. Gordon, Helen, Developing College Writing. St. Martin's Press, 1989.
3. Turabian, Kate, A Manual for Writers. The University of Chicago Press, 1987.
4. Turble, John, Writing with Style. New York, 1988.
5. Wicker, C. V., The American Technical Writer. New York, 1960.

Aire-Mae V e s k i s.
A HANDBOOK ON BUSINESS WRITING.
In English.
Tartu University.
Ülikooli 18. Tartu 202400, Estonia.
Vastutav toimetaja H. Liiv.
Paljundamisele antud 22.05.1991.
Formaat 60x84/16.
Kirjutuspaber.
Masinakiri. Rotaprint.
Tingtrükipoognaid 3,02.
Arvestuspooznaid 3,0. Trükipoognaid 3,25.
Trükiary 200.
Tell. nr. 285.
Hind rbl. 2.
TÜ trükikoda. EV, 202400 Tartu, Tiigi t. 78.