

Study Unit

Writing Effective Communications

By

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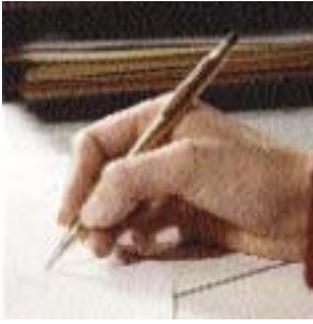
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In this study unit, you're going to learn to use words to develop proper sentences, paragraphs, and finally, documents (letters, memos, and e-mails).

You've already learned that revision should be the part of the writing process that demands most of your time and attention. Understanding how to craft sentences is a big part of the revision process.

In the last section of this unit, you'll apply what you've learned about practical grammar as you study how to format and write three kinds of routine business documents: a memorandum, a letter, and an e-mail.

When you complete this study unit, you'll be able to

- Differentiate between a complete sentence and a sentence fragment
- Avoid fragments and run-on sentences in your writing
- Use action verbs to provide clarity to your writing
- Use the active and passive voice properly
- Avoid placing descriptive phrases where they might cause confusion
- Use parallel construction where necessary
- Organize sentences correctly and effectively
- Explain how to construct a coherent paragraph
- Format and write an interoffice memorandum, a routine business letter, and an effective e-mail
- Describe safe and effective uses of e-mail

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Writing Effective Communications

THE ART OF THE SENTENCE

Composition of a Sentence

A *sentence* is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. Now, what exactly does that mean? A sentence is a group of words in which a noun or pronoun, called the *subject* of the sentence, expresses an action or a state of being (verb).

Example: Jason reads.

This is a sentence because it expresses a complete thought. It has a subject (Jason) and a verb (reads). In more complex sentences, the subject generally performs an action on some object.

Example: Jason reads the morning newspaper.

This, too, is a complete sentence that provides a little more information than the first one. Now the reader knows what Jason reads. The word *newspaper* is the object of the verb *reads*.

Sometimes, when words are added to a very simple sentence, it may cease to be a sentence because it no longer expresses a complete idea.

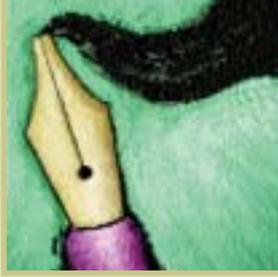
Examples: While Jason reads

As Jason reads

What Jason reads



A group of words that doesn't express a complete thought is called a *fragment*. It may or may not have a subject and verb.



To be a sentence, a group of words must

- Have a subject and a verb
- Express a complete thought

These examples are fragments, not sentences, because none of them expresses a complete thought. What happens while Jason reads or as Jason reads? What does Jason read? The thoughts are incomplete. A group of words that doesn't express a complete thought can't make sense. *Note:* Notice that each of these phrases contains a subject (Jason) and a verb (reads). They're fragments, however, because they don't express complete thoughts.

If you explain the *while*, *as*, and *what* of these three fragments, they may then become sentences.

Examples: While Jason reads, he makes notes of important points.

As Jason reads, he remembers his childhood.

What Jason reads encourages him to develop his interest in tennis.

You can see that a sentence needs a subject that does something and a verb that expresses some kind of action or state of being. In addition, a sentence must express a complete thought. When any one of these elements is missing in a group of words, they don't form a sentence; they form a fragment.



A *prepositional phrase* consists of a preposition, its object, and all related modifiers. For example, in the sentence *The celebrity arrived in a long, black limousine*, the words *in a long, black limousine* function as a prepositional phrase.

Avoiding Sentence Fragments

When you're writing any kind of business or technical document, make sure you use complete sentences. Even if sentence fragments make sense, you should never use them in your writing. Not only are they incorrect grammatically, but they may also detract from the information you're trying to convey.

Here are some common fragment errors you should watch for in your writing.

1. A prepositional phrase can't stand alone as a sentence.

Example: You should purchase a good fire extinguisher.
For use on every kind of fire.

The italicized words at the end of the example are three prepositional phrases grouped together. Although the phrase may seem to make sense, it contains no subject

and no verb, and it doesn't express a complete thought. Therefore, it's a fragment. Since the fragment is closely related to the sentence that precedes it, you can correct the error through a revision like this one:

Revision: You should purchase a fire extinguisher for use on every kind of fire.

2. Adjectives and adverbs can cause fragments when a writer separates them from the sentence in which they belong.

Example: We bought a new computer. *User ready and fully accessorized.*

The fragment, *user ready and fully accessorized*, can be connected to the previous sentence, using a comma to show the shift in thought.

Revision: We bought a new computer, user ready and fully accessorized.

Alternate revision: We bought a new user-ready and fully accessorized computer.

3. Using a noun as a sentence may seem dramatic, but it's not good writing.

Example: There was one thing missing from inventory. *A circuit board.*

This fragment can be attached to the previous sentence in several ways.

Revisions: There was one thing missing from inventory, a circuit board.

There was one thing missing from inventory: a circuit board.

There was one thing missing from inventory—a circuit board.

Of course, it may also be useful to insert such a fragment into the middle of a sentence.

Example: The item missing from inventory, *a circuit board*, also appears on the out-of-stock list.



The colon and dash create a stronger, more dramatic pause than the comma.



A *verbal* is a form of a verb used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

Example: Swimming is my favorite sport.

In this sentence, the word *swimming* is a verbal. It's a form of a verb, but it's used as a noun (the subject) in that sentence.

You can find a list of subordinating conjunctions in the study unit *Using Words Well*.

Notice that the noun phrase, *a circuit board*, has been placed close to the word it renames (item). That's a sound practice; remember to do it.

4. *Verbals* can sometimes make fragments look like sentences. Because they're taken from verbs, they often make a group of words seem to express a complete thought. They don't.

Examples: *Rounding the corner*

The *erased* word

To *drive* in the city

Each of these phrases contains a verb form, but none of them expresses a complete thought. To make these fragments into sentences, into complete thoughts, you must add something.

Revisions: *Rounding the corner, the car skidded into the telephone pole.*

The contract was considered void because of the *erased* word.

To *drive* in the city requires great skill.

5. Subordinating conjunctions are among the most common causes of fragments, because they introduce a group of words that would be a complete sentence without the conjunction.

Examples: *Although* we all attended the conference

Because the quality was inferior

If the words *although* and *because* are removed from these phrases, the remaining words would form complete sentences. (We all attended the conference. The quality was inferior.) However, notice that the conjunctions *although* and *because* set up expectations that aren't met. To make this sort of fragment into a sentence, you must add something to meet that expectation.

Revisions: *Although* we all attended the conference, only supervisors received a reimbursement.

Because the quality was inferior, consumer complaints began to increase.

6. Groups of words that begin with *who*, *whose*, *whom*, *which*, or *what* are probably fragments unless they're framed as questions.

Example: Whose work was commended

Since the word *whose* doesn't specify a subject, you should connect this fragment to words that express a complete idea.

Revision: Frank, whose work was commended, came up with the best design.

Avoiding Run-on Sentences

The opposite of a fragment is a sentence that's actually two or more sentences posing as one complete idea. Such word groupings are called *run-ons* or *run-on sentences*.

Run-on sentence: The company instituted a new safety procedure the old one was inadequate.

This run-on sentence is actually two sentences put together with no punctuation. It seems as if the easiest solution is to separate the two sentences with a comma, but this creates another kind of run-on sentence called a *comma splice*.

Comma splice: The company instituted a new safety procedure, the old one was inadequate.

The comma doesn't adequately separate what should be two complete sentences. Instead, the sentences should be divided into two completely separate sentences, or they should be joined with a semicolon.

Revisions: The company instituted a new safety procedure. The old one was inadequate.

The company instituted a new safety procedure; the old one was inadequate.

You can also join two such sentences with a comma and a subordinating conjunction.

Alternate revision: The company instituted a new safety procedure, *because* the old one was inadequate.

Some run-ons and comma faults may also be corrected with a coordinate conjunction and a comma.

Example: The employees wanted an increase in salary, *but* the owner of the company refused their request.



To avoid fragments, remember that a group of words offers a complete idea only when it includes a naming word (subject) and a verb that expresses action or state of being.



Use a semicolon to separate two complete sentences *only* if the two ideas are closely related.

Using Action Verbs

A *verb* is that part of a sentence which tells you something about the subject. A verb may show action or a state of being. In your writing, it's generally good practice to use action verbs to refer to your subjects.

Being verb: The department manager *is* the key participant in the budget process.

Action verb: The department manager *serves* as the key participant in the budget process.

Being verb: The key to this step *is* identifying a group of consumers who *are* similar in many ways.

Action verb: The key to this step *involves* identifying a group of consumers that *exhibit* similar characteristics.

When selecting verbs to express your thoughts, make sure you put the action in the correct place. Some writers weaken their sentences by using nouns to express the action. Consider these examples:

Noun to express action: Frequent disagreements occurred among the friends.

Action verb: The friends frequently disagreed.

Noun to express action: The consultant's investigation of our employee morale problem is in progress.

Action verb: The consultant is investigating our employee morale problem.

Read these examples several times until you can see how an action verb makes a sentence much more direct.

Active and Passive Voice

Voice is a term used to describe the relationship between a subject and its verb. As illustrated in [Figure 1](#), in the *active voice*, the subject (A) is doing the action to an object (B). In the *passive voice*, the subject is acted upon.

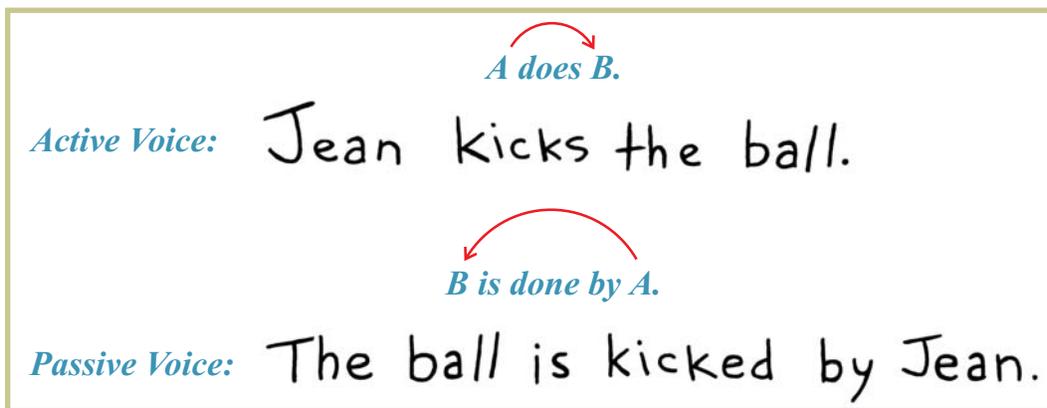


FIGURE 1—In the active voice, the subject of the sentence is performing the action; in the passive voice, the subject is receiving the action.

Active: The band plays “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Passive: “The Star-Spangled Banner” is played by the band.

In the first sentence, the subject (band) is performing the action (playing “The Star-Spangled Banner”). In the second sentence, the subject (“The Star-Spangled Banner”) is being acted upon (is played by the band).

In writing, the active voice emphasizes the action of the subject of a sentence; the passive voice de-emphasizes and depersonalizes the action of the subject.

Look again at the preceding example.

In the first sentence, the emphasis is on the band. In the second sentence, the important thing seems to be “The Star-Spangled Banner”; the band seems to be secondary.

Using the active voice in business and technical writing is a method of making sentences convey information in ways that are *direct*, *simple*, and *efficient*. Also, the active voice is often the most *logical* way to express a thought or an action (Figure 2).

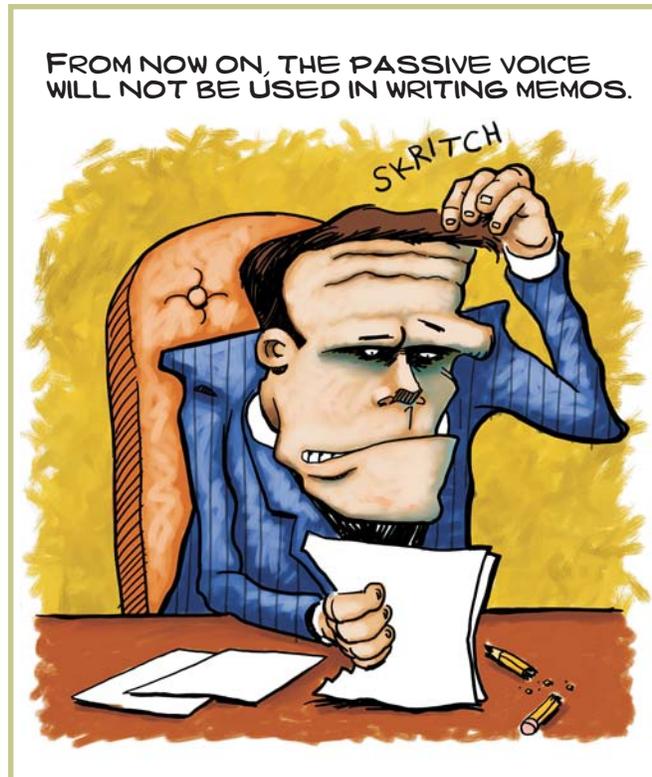


FIGURE 2—The sender of this memo forgot to follow his own instructions.

The following sentences illustrate the active voice.

Examples: Jacob explained the functions of his calculator.

The postal worker examined the mail.

The tractor hit the fence post.

In each of these sentences, the person or thing that acts (*Jacob, worker, and tractor*) is at the beginning of the sentence. That is, *the subject begins the sentence and performs the action.* (Note: In the second sentence, the word *postal* is an adjective that describes the noun *worker*. The word *worker*, therefore, is the subject.)

Immediately following the subject in each of these sentences is a verb, which expresses the action. In the sample sentences, the verbs are *explained, examined, and hit.*

Most verbs in the active voice require a final element to be complete—someone or something to receive the action. This receiver is called the *object* of the sentence. To identify the object in a sentence, ask the question “what” or “whom” about the verb.

Examples: Jacob explained the functions of his calculator.

(Jacob explained “what”? He explained the functions.

Therefore, *functions* is the object of the verb *explained*.)

The postal worker examined the mail. (The postal worker examined “what”? He or she examined the mail.

Therefore, *mail* is the object of the verb *examined*.)

The tractor hit the fence post. (The tractor hit “what”? It hit the post. Therefore, *post* is the object of the verb *hit*.)

These three examples illustrate sentences in the active voice. They record actions as they’re actually and logically accomplished. Active sentences follow a pattern

$$S \rightarrow A \rightarrow O$$

in which *S* is the subject, *A* is the action (verb), and *O* is the object of the action.

Sentences using the passive voice, on the other hand, tend to be illogical because they disrupt the sequence $S \rightarrow A \rightarrow O$. Examine these passive versions of the sentences we’ve already considered.



The active voice tends to be more interesting than the passive voice and, therefore, more likely to engage a reader’s attention.

Examples: The calculator functions were explained by Jacob.

The mail was examined by the postal worker.

The fence post was hit by the tractor.

Each of these examples illustrates a passive sequence in which the real object of the sentence becomes the subject. In a sense, the order is twisted out of shape and becomes $O \rightarrow A \rightarrow S$.

Most people are conditioned to expect the sequence $S \rightarrow A \rightarrow O$. Therefore, the sentence “Susie upstaged Mark” is much easier to read and understand than “Mark was upstaged by Susie.” Readers generally expect to find the actor named before the action. Therefore, when someone reads a sentence in the passive voice, he or she is forced to revise the passive version to figure out exactly what’s happening. Furthermore, in the passive sentence, Mark becomes a false subject since he doesn’t actually perform the action described. Susie, not Mark, was guilty of upstaging a fellow actor.

Using the passive voice is also very inefficient because you must use extra words to write such sentences. In the following examples, the extra words needed for the passive voice are shown in *italics*.

Active: Jacob explained the functions of his calculator.

Passive: The functions of his calculator *were* explained *by* Jacob.

Active: The postal worker examined the mail.

Passive: The mail *was* examined *by* the postal worker.

Active: The tractor hit the fence post.

Passive: The fence post *was* hit *by* the tractor.

All of these passive sentences add an extra word, which is a form of the verb *to be*. In this case, *were* and *was* are those extra words. In addition, the word *by* must be inserted to indicate who or what is performing the action.

Finally, passive sentences bury what should be the *real subject* of the action. In the preceding examples, the person or thing performing the action is actually the last word in the sentence.

In some cases, sentences may not even include the name of the person or thing that's performing the action. Consider these revisions of the sentences we're examining.

Examples: The calculator functions were explained.

The mail was examined.

The fence post was hit.

As you can see, these sentences focus on the receiver of the action and overlook or eliminate the person or thing doing the action.

The Value of the Passive Voice

You may be thinking that you should never use the passive voice in writing business or technical documents. That is definitely not the case. The passive voice does have its place in well-constructed sentences. For example, you may choose to use the passive voice when

1. You want to focus on the person or thing that's receiving the action—that is, the object. For example, the sentence "Police bullets killed two people" might be effective if you want to emphasize the police action. However, if the most important part of the sentence is the people who were killed, then the passive sentence "Two people were killed by police bullets" is probably the better option.
2. You're giving instructions. In such cases, you want to emphasize the action performed, not the person or thing performing the action. For example, the following sentences explain steps in two different procedures:
 - a. The animation is performed after storyboard production is complete.
 - b. The appetizer is then served.
3. You're writing conclusions or recommendations at the end of a report. In such cases, the passive voice may best highlight what you have to say. In some cases,

you may not know who is going to perform the action or has performed the action. Sometime, the person performing the action may not be important to the meaning of the sentence. In other cases (sentence c, for example), you may wish to avoid identifying the subject.

- a. Sales efficiency must be increased.
 - b. The budget was prepared in time for the meeting.
 - c. The brochure was printed on the wrong paper stock.
4. You wish to deny a claim or reject a request. Consider the following sentences.

Passive voice: Your order has not yet been filled.

Active voice: We have not filled your order.

Passive voice: An error was made in filling your order.

Active voice: We made an error in filling your order.

As you can see, the passive voice can be effective in softening bad news or in concealing the culprit who made an error (Figure 3). However, if you're the one who has made the mistake, don't use the passive voice to avoid taking the responsibility.



Always use the active voice unless you have a *specific* reason for using the passive



FIGURE 3—Using the passive voice can help a writer avoid placing the blame on someone. Instead of saying, "Igor damaged the crate in the warehouse," you can protect the guilty party by saying, "The crate was damaged in the warehouse."

Placing Modifiers

The position of modifiers can make a tremendous difference in the meaning of a sentence. Consider this sentence: *The supervisor signs the check*. If you were to insert the adverb *only* in various parts of that sentence, the meaning would change significantly.

Examples: Only the supervisor signs the check. (This means that no one else signs the check except the supervisor.)

The supervisor only signs the check. (This means that the only thing the supervisor does is sign the check. Someone else writes out the check, mails it, and so on.)

The supervisor signs only the check. (This means that the check is the only thing the supervisor signs—nothing else.)

What a difference placement makes! Learn to be a careful writer. Watch where you place your modifiers and how that placement affects the meaning you're trying to convey.

One type of modifier that's often misplaced and misused is a modifier that includes a verbal.

Example: Pressing the *on* button, the calculator becomes operable.

At first glance, you may think this sentence makes sense. If you reflect on it, however, you'll probably detect the problem. The sentence actually says that the calculator is pressing the *on* button. In this sentence, *pressing the on button* is an adjective phrase that includes the verbal *pressing*. The problem is that the word *pressing* has nothing to modify. Consequently, the modifier is left dangling. You can clarify the sentence in at least three ways.

Revisions: When the *on* button is pressed, the calculator becomes operable.

When you press the *on* button, the calculator becomes operable.

Pressing the *on* button makes the calculator operable.

Here's another example of a dangling modifier with a verbal.

Example: *To start the calculator, the on button is pressed.*
(Once again the calculator is self-operating.)

Revision: *To start the calculator, you must press the on button.*

When you use a modifier that includes a verbal, make sure to place it correctly in the sentence, and make sure it has something to modify (Figure 4).

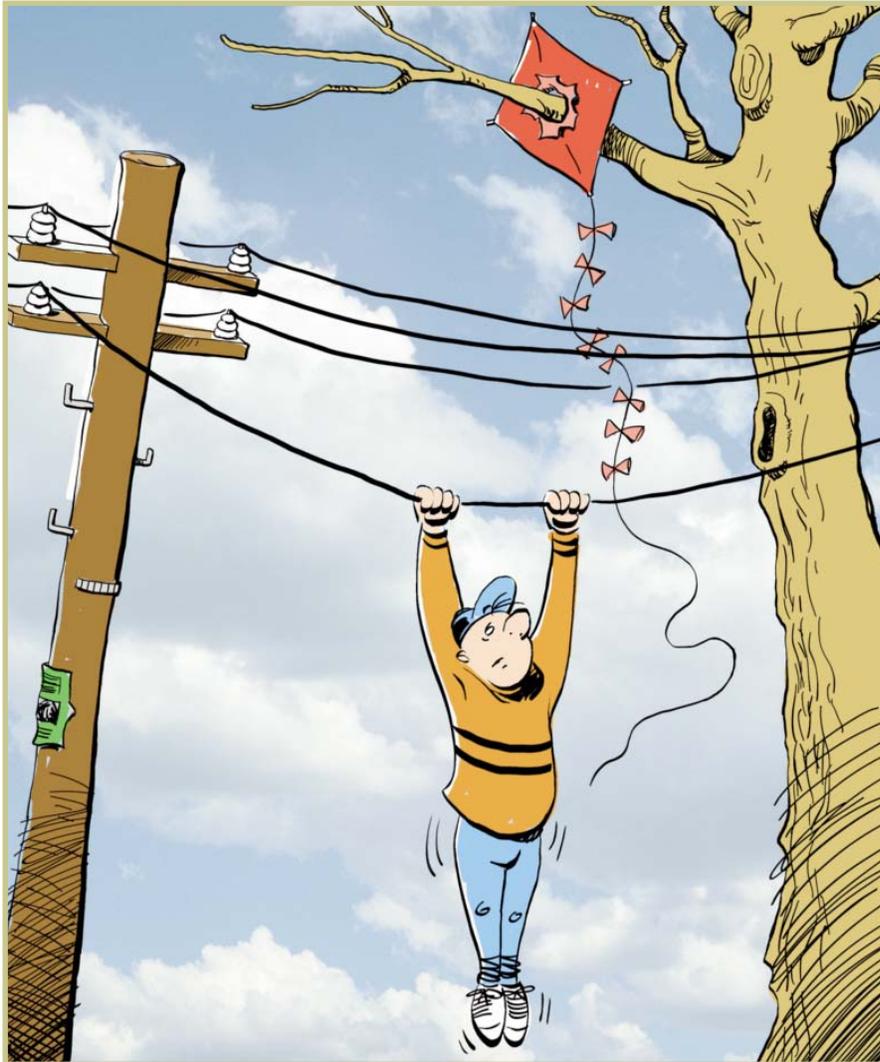


FIGURE 4—*“Hanging from the telephone wire, I saw my damaged kite.” Although the phrase “Hanging from the telephone wire” has something to modify (kite), its poor placement in the sentence creates an interesting mental picture.*

Any kind of descriptive phrase can be confusing if the writer misplaces it in a sentence or if the writer doesn't clarify what's being described.

Dangling modifier: Don't drive this vehicle *unless warmed up*. (Who has to warm up—the vehicle or the driver?)

Revision: Don't drive this vehicle until it has been warmed up.

Misplaced modifier: The Baker Brothers *almost* lost all of their accounts. (What does the writer mean? Did the Baker Brothers come close to losing all of their accounts, or did they lose most but not all of them?)

Revision: The Baker Brothers lost almost all of their accounts.

Misplaced modifier: We were asked *at the end of the day* to turn in our reports. (Are the reports to be turned in at the end of the day, or did someone ask them at the end of the day?)

Revision: We were asked to turn in our reports *at the end of the day*.

To avoid confusion with modifiers, place them as close as you can to the word being modified. Meanwhile, remember that the basic check for misplaced or dangling modifiers is to see that they refer *clearly and unambiguously* to what they're supposed to modify.

Parallel Construction

One of the best ways to keep your sentences flowing coherently is to use parallel construction. Whenever you have a series of words, phrases, or independent ideas, you should make sure that they have the same or similar grammatical construction.

The main reason for using parallel construction relates to your readers' expectations. When you, as the writer, establish a type of construction, your readers automatically expect other items to be in the same format. If you use a different grammatical form, you may confuse the readers and cause a mental halt that interrupts their ability to understand your material.

Awkward construction: This lesson covers *researching*, *writing*, and *how to revise* your memos and letters.

Parallel construction: This lesson covers *researching*, *writing*, and *revising* your memos and letters.

Awkward construction: Whether sick or when he was well, Charles always had a good disposition.

Parallel construction: Whether sick or well, Charles always had a good disposition.

Awkward construction: Jake is an accountant, but Carol manages a department.

Parallel construction: Jake is an accountant, but Carol is a department manager.

When you include lists in your writing, make sure to make all items in the list parallel. For example, study the following list of cautions for using a particular brand of curling iron:

1. Never use this appliance if your hands are wet.
2. Insert the plug only into a 120-volt outlet.
3. When the curling iron is on, the metal wand becomes very hot and may burn your skin.
4. Don't leave the curling iron on your hair for more than 10 seconds.

Notice that items 1, 2, and 4 are written as commands, but item 3 is a statement. Therefore, the items aren't parallel. To correct the problem, simply change item 3 to a command.

3. Don't touch the metal wand while the curling iron is on. It becomes very hot and may burn your skin.

Figure 5 presents some additional examples of parallel construction. Study them carefully. Be conscious of this construction whenever you incorporate a series of items in anything you write.

Faulty Construction	Parallel Construction
The warehouse used to take inventory by hand, but now a computer is used.	The warehouse used to take inventory by hand, but now it uses a computer.
The Production Department, the Sales Department, and Shipping Department are responsible for the budget.	The Production Department, the Sales Department, and the Shipping Department are responsible for the budget.
Juan sends copies of the report to Carolyn, to Jacob, and Eunice.	Juan sends copies of the report to Carolyn, to Jacob, and to Eunice.
The awards program was a long affair and very boring.	The awards program was long and very boring.
My plan was that we reorganize the department layout and to reschedule the work shifts.	My plan was to reorganize the department layout and to reschedule the work shifts.

FIGURE 5—Keeping items parallel in your writing is good grammar, and it helps your readers to follow your thoughts more easily.

So far in this study unit, you’ve examined some grammatical points in sentence structure. In the next section, you’ll continue your study of the sentence, this time focusing on some techniques you can use to make your sentences clearer and more direct for your readers. Before going on to that material, please complete *Self-Check 1*.



Self-Check 1

At the end of each section of *Writing Effective Communications*, you'll be asked to pause and check your understanding of what you have just read by completing a "Self-Check" exercise. Answering these questions will help you review what you've studied so far. Please complete *Self-Check 1* now.

1. Identify each of the following items as a sentence, a fragment, or a run-on sentence. If the item is either a fragment or a run-on sentence, correct it.
 - a. While crossing the busy intersection.

 - b. A written report was required to obtain the necessary funding.

 - c. To start the machine.

 - d. The budget is too high we must make some reductions.

 - e. If the plan succeeds, we should be able to increase our sales force.

2. In each of the following sentences, change the *to be* verb to an action verb. (*Note: You may have to do some rewriting.*)
 - a. He was very happy when his friends arrived.

 - b. The president is going to reduce the budget.

 - c. She was secretary of the club for six years.

 - d. The jury was in deliberation for four hours.

(Continued)



Self-Check 1

3. Change the following sentences from the passive voice to the active voice. (Note: You may have to create a subject for some of the sentences.)

a. The report was signed by the committee.

b. The building was constructed by H. B. Stratton Company.

c. The topic was determined by the moderator.

d. The shipment was delivered on time.

e. The radio was repaired by the new electronics technician.

4. Rewrite the following sentences, correcting the errors in misplaced or dangling modifiers.

a. The team only won by two points.

b. She almost lost 10 pounds.

c. Crossing the street, the truck nearly hit me.

d. Don't put those clothes on until ironed.

e. Dangling at the end of the sentence, she noticed a misplaced modifier.

(Continued)



Self-Check 1

5. The following sentences contain faulty parallel construction. Rewrite them correctly.
- a. The department manager plans the daily schedule, but the workload is planned by the line supervisor.

 - b. My job duties include training new employees, writing job descriptions, and interviews.

 - c. She expects to be in the satellite office during July, during September, and November.

 - d. The computer, the printer, and scanner needed to be repaired.

 - e. Always remember to oil the machine twice a month and that its filter should be replaced every week.

Check your answers with those on page 61.

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR SENTENCES

Sentence Length

The American author William Faulkner (1897–1965) was born in Mississippi. Some of his better known works are *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*

The great American writer William Faulkner was famous for his very long sentences. This may have worked well for him and the effect he wanted to create. However, in business and technical writing, shorter sentences are usually better. The trick is to include all the necessary information while keeping the sentences short. Let's look at a sentence from a warranty for a kerosene heater.

This warranty does not extend to any defect due to the negligence of others, failure to operate or maintain the heater in accordance with the operating and maintenance instructions furnished with each new heater, unreasonable use, accidents, alterations, ordinary wear and tear, the use of unauthorized or nonstandard parts or accessories, or the use of any fuel other than good quality kerosene.

It's unlikely that Faulkner or any other competent writer would think this sentence readable, clear, or in any sense, user friendly. Here's a revised version of that sentence, broken down into shorter, more understandable sentences.

This warranty does not extend to any defects caused by the operator's negligence. Nor does it extend to those who have failed to operate or maintain the heater according to the instructions provided. Accidents resulting from operating the heater improperly and problems with the heater caused by unreasonable use are not covered by this warranty. Alterations made to the heater, ordinary wear and tear, and the use of unauthorized or nonstandard parts will also result in the revocation of this warranty. The warranty does not cover damage or defects caused by the use of any fuel other than good quality kerosene.

As you can see, the revised version with the shorter sentences is easier to read. Usually, breaking long sentences into shorter, more readable ones isn't difficult. Start by finding where the first thought ends and placing a period there. Sometimes you may have to supply a few additional words to make complete sentences from the information originally run together into one long sentence.

Carefully compare the two warranty examples, paying attention to how the second one has been restructured. Where does the first sentence end? What words have been added to make complete sentences? Were any words changed? Although the information in both versions is roughly the same, the way in which the second one is presented makes it much easier to understand.

In general, long, awkward sentences need cropping, pruning, and reordering into shorter sentences. On the other hand, the so-called *primer style* (Figure 6), which uses short, choppy sentences, presents a different kind of problem. The sentences may be clear and understandable, but they can be boring. Consider this example:

Open the package carefully. Dispose of the wrapping. Be careful when removing the contents. The contents are fragile.

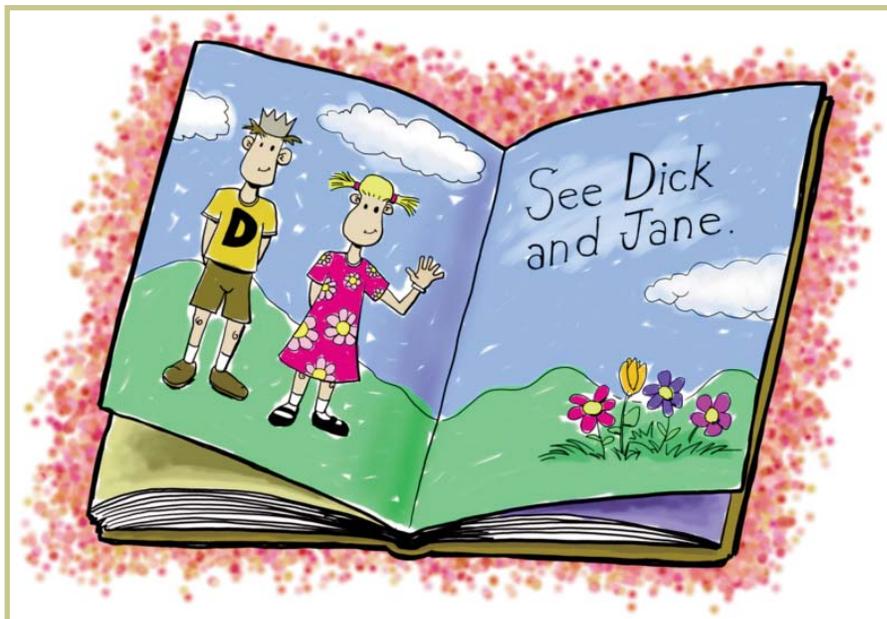


FIGURE 6—The term *primer style* refers to the approach used in children's first reading books, or primers. Although this style may be helpful in teaching children to read, it's generally not appealing to adults.



One definition of *condescending* is “assuming an air of superiority.” You want your writing to be understood, but at the same time, you must treat your audience with respect. Never be condescending.

Choppy “Dick and Jane” sentences tend to be boring. They’re also condescending, because they imply that the reader is incapable of understanding more complicated sentences that more closely resemble ordinary conversational language. The following revision is more readable and much less boring.

Open the package carefully and dispose of the wrapping. Because the contents are fragile, be careful when removing them.

In the revision, four choppy sentences have been replaced with two. Notice that the first two sentences in the first version are related. Both refer to the unwrapping of the package. Therefore, in revising this example, these two sentences were combined into one. The same is true of the second two sentences. The result is a conversational tone that isn’t condescending. In addition, the revision shows a clearer relationship between the ideas in the paragraph.

Directness

In sentence writing, *directness* means getting to the point and avoiding word clutter. Here are some techniques you can use to make your sentences direct:

- Reduce the complexity of your sentences when possible.
- Avoid oversimplifications that reduce clarity.
- Reduce wordiness.
- Begin the sentence with the subject—the person or thing that’s acting.

Let’s take a brief look at each of these techniques.

Reduce Complexity

Study the following examples of complex sentences and their simplified revisions.

Complex: After all of the data had been reported by the market researchers, they were still uncertain about whether or not the sample represented the target market.

Simplified: After reporting all of the data, the market researchers were still not certain if the sample represented the target market.

Complex: A series of tests that were made under conditions that were identical often produced results that were unpredictable.

Simplified: A series of tests made under identical conditions often produced unpredictable results.

In both examples, the simplified versions are shorter and more direct than the complex ones. One key to simplification is to eliminate, or reshape into a simpler form, all of the words that don't directly convey information. In the preceding example, the phrase "under conditions that were identical" was shortened to "under identical conditions." This change eliminated two words (*that* and *were*) and made the meaning more direct.

Avoid Oversimplifications

Be careful that you don't carry simplification to an extreme. For example, to shorten sentences, some overly efficient people may be tempted to use expressions that are hard to follow—even though they may be technically accurate. Compare these two sentences:

Oversimplification: The seven-step consumer decision process model serves as a decision-making map.

Revised sentence: The seven-step model for the consumer decision process serves as a map for those making the decisions.

As you can see, the slightly longer sentence is actually easier to read than the shorter one. In attempting to be brief and direct, the writer of the first sentence created the lengthy phrase "seven-step consumer decision process model," which is quite difficult to follow. In the revised sentence, this phrase becomes "seven-step model for the consumer decision process." Even though this phrase is longer, its construction is much easier to understand. In addition, the longer phrase "a map for those making the decisions" is clearer than the phrase "a decision-making map."

Reduce Wordiness

One way to simplify long sentences is to eliminate repeated phrases.

Repeated phrases: The new alloy is softer than the ones we've used in the past, less chemically resistant than those used in the past, and less effective than the ones used in the past.

Simplification: The new alloy is softer, less chemically resistant, and less effective than the ones used in the past.

In the first sentence, the phrase “than the ones used in the past” is repeated three times. Not only is this repetition unnecessary, it creates a sentence that's needlessly difficult to read. The simplification uses a parallel list of items in a series. The result is fewer words and a more readable sentence.

Another way to reduce wordiness in a complex sentence is to set up the items in a list with numbers or bullets. This method not only clarifies a communication, it may also prepare the readers for the material that follows the list. For example, read the following sentence:



To create a bullet on a personal computer, first make sure the **Num Lock** key is on. Then, as you hold the **Alt** key, type **0149**. When you release the **Alt** key, a bullet will appear.

We feel confident that our new ad campaign for the Bravo Skin Care line will appeal to younger women, increasing our market share in that demographic, highlight research results demonstrating the effectiveness of the line, showcase testimonial responses derived from our market trial, and be more appealing to women-oriented television cable channels.

Even if you just read the sentence quickly, you can see that it needs to be broken down into simpler sentences. The sentence also groups a variety of topics, making it difficult to understand the true meaning. Now look at a revision of this sentence, which uses a bulleted list of items.

We feel confident that our new ad campaign for the Bravo Skin Care Line will

- Appeal to younger women
- Increase our market share in that demographic
- Highlight research that demonstrates the effectiveness of the line
- Showcase testimonial responses from our market trial
- Be appealing to women-oriented television cable channels

When items are listed with either bullets or numbers, readers can easily identify the intent of the writer. This may not be the case when the items are strung together in a lengthy sentence.

Begin the Sentence with the Subject

To make your sentences both direct and clearly focused, start them with the subject. The *subject* of a sentence is the word that tells what the sentence is about.

Example: There were many employees who were interested in applying for the new position.

What's the subject of this sentence? To find out, ask yourself what the sentence is about. In this case, the sentence is about employees. The writer, however, placed two empty words, *There were*, right at the beginning of the sentence. The subject is buried in the middle of the sentence.

Revision: Many employees were interested in applying for the new position.

In the revision, the subject appears at the beginning of the sentence.

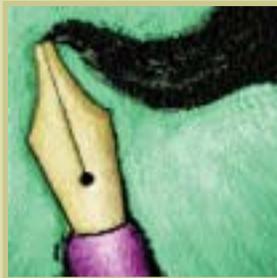
Note: Placing the subject at the beginning of a sentence generally results in a clear, direct statement. However, you may sometimes find it necessary to place the subject somewhere other than at the beginning. The point is this: To write clear, direct sentences, ask yourself what the most important information is. Then place that information at or very near the beginning of the sentence.



Look at the bulleted list on page 22 of this study unit. This list presents a series of techniques for making your sentences more direct. As a student, you should be helped by such devices. First, you have a concise list of some techniques you can use, which is immediately followed by an explanation of each of these techniques. As with any other technique, use bullets and numbers judiciously. Don't overdo it.



When using highlighting devices for emphasis, be careful not to overdo it. Too many highlighted words soon begin to lose their impact. Your reader will soon begin to ignore them. Highlight only logical and relevant information.



Repeated words or phrases can become confusing and monotonous. However, occasionally repeating an important word can provide the correct amount of emphasis. Just don't overdo it.

Emphasis

It's not always easy to emphasize your main points in writing. You can't raise your voice or use facial expressions, as you would in speaking. However, in your writing, you can draw attention to a particular word, phrase, or concept either by highlighting it or by creating emphasis through your writing style. Let's look at each of these techniques.

Highlighting devices include underlining, boldface, italics, lists, dashes, and colons. (You'll be learning more about dashes and other punctuation marks later in this course.) All of these devices attract the reader's eye and, in doing so, provide emphasis. **Figure 7** provides samples of each of these techniques.

You can also use your writing style to create emphasis in several ways.

1. Place your key idea at the beginning or end of your sentence:

Examples: *Profitability should increase* dramatically as shipping costs are reduced.

The result of reduced shipping costs will be a dramatic *increase in profitability*.

2. Use words that are concrete and specific rather than abstract and general. (*Note:* The italicized words in the following examples indicate the change from abstract to concrete.)

Abstract: At least *one business* has successfully adopted our inventory system.

Concrete: *Harmon Industries* has successfully adopted our inventory system.

Abstract: Our new *bakery item* is proving popular with *some people*.

Concrete: Our new *Frosted Twist* is clearly popular with *soccer moms and the after-school teenage crowd*.

3. Repeat important words.

Example: Our purpose is to satisfy *customers*, to make *customers* feel important, and to win the *customers'* loyalty.

Underlining

In the last fiscal year, our company increased profits by 25 percent.

Boldface

The survey revealed that totally satisfied customers are **ten** times more likely to repurchase a product than customers who are just mildly satisfied.

Italics

Demographics refers to the size, structure, and distribution of a population.

Tabulation

Our new marketing approach should result in

1. Reduced costs
2. Increased efficiency in delivery
3. Increased profitability for the line

As an alternative to a numbered list, you may prefer to use bullets.

Our new marketing approach should result in

- Reduced costs
- Increased efficiency in delivery
- Increased profitability for the line

Dash

We have but one goal—to develop a stronger and more durable product that outlasts our competitor's product.

Colon

Our objective is clear: to increase sales by 25 percent during the coming year.

FIGURE 7—Here are some techniques you can use to provide emphasis in your writing.

Sentence Variety

Monotony puts people to sleep; variety keeps them alert. That principle certainly applies to writing. In any kind of writing you undertake, try to vary your sentences to make your material more interesting and easier to understand.

For example, read the following paragraph:

(1) We have been observing our sales people.
(2) Unfortunately, we've found that some of you should remember to be more patient, more attentive, and more courteous in dealing with customers. (3) When you talk to customers, make courtesy a prime concern.
(4) Following the old saying "The customer is always right" may seem frustrating at times, but the alternative is not worth its cost. (5) Where courtesy is absent, sales are lost.

This paragraph is easy to read and it's interesting, because the writer varied the structure of the sentences. Notice how each sentence begins:

- (1) *We*, a pronoun, which is the subject of the sentence
- (2) *Unfortunately*, an introductory transition
- (3) *When*, a subordinating conjunction
- (4) *Following*, a verbal, which is the subject of the sentence
- (5) *Where*, a subordinating conjunction

In the next section of this study unit, you're going to move from writing sentences to constructing paragraphs. First, complete *Self-Check 2*.



Self-Check 2

1. Rewrite the following lengthy sentence, breaking it into several shorter sentences.

The football game, which began at 2:00 P.M., was between two old rivals, the West Side and the East Side, and the West Side usually won the game, but this year the East Side scored a game-winning touchdown in the final seconds and won the game for the first time in 15 years, and their fans were ecstatic.

2. Rewrite the following short sentences, combining them into fewer but longer sentences.

The batter came to the plate. He took some practice swings. The first pitch was a fastball. He hit it for a home run. The run won the game. He was a hero for the day.

3. Simplify the following complex sentence.

The mother who was worried cautioned her son who was a teenager to be careful driving in the weather that was snowy.

4. Simplify the following sentences by using lists.

- a. The crowd cheered for the conductor, they applauded loudly, and they insisted on an encore.

- b. The technician from our company tested the signal-to-noise ratio of the signal, the power output of the signal, and the percent modulation of each signal.

Check your answers with those on page 62.

GROUPING YOUR THOUGHTS: PARAGRAPHS

Have you ever listened to someone tell a story and had difficulty following it? Probably that person had problems organizing his or her thoughts. When you write, you have the luxury of having more time to think about what you want to say. You can take time to organize your thoughts into groups of ideas and present them in a logical order.

In this section, you're going to learn how to construct a paragraph. Generally speaking, a *paragraph* is a group of sentences about a related idea. Grouping sentences into paragraphs makes a document more readable. Think of a paragraph as a device for gathering sentences around a controlling or central idea.

The ABCs of Paragraphs

You've already learned about the ABCs of writing:

- A Abstract: Tell your reader what you're going to talk about.
- B Body: Present supporting details about your topic.
- C Conclusion: Summarize what you've said in the body.

You can use this same formula for developing a paragraph. The first sentence of the paragraph, called the *topic sentence*, is like the abstract. It should tell your reader what the paragraph is about. Following the topic sentence should be several sentences that support the concept presented in the topic sentence. These sentences are like the body of a manuscript. Finally, the closing sentence in a paragraph is like the conclusion. It should repeat the idea or concept presented in the topic sentence.

When you sit down to write, you may often find it difficult to know where to begin. The ABC formula can provide direction to get you started and to help you organize your material.

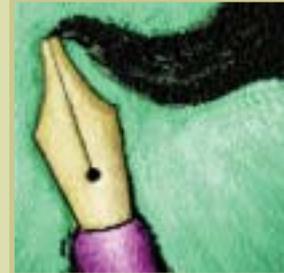
Coherence

A paragraph is *coherent* when its sentences hang together. The key idea of the topic sentence should flow logically and smoothly into the sentences that follow it. However, coherence doesn't just happen. To write coherent paragraphs, you must organize your document, repeat key ideas in the body of the paragraph, and use effective transitions from one sentence to another. Let's look at a sample paragraph to see how these concepts work.

Magnetism has been known to humankind for at least the last 2,000 years. Sailors first used its effects by placing a special stone on a piece of wood and then floating the wood in a bowl of water. No matter where the ship sailed or how it turned, the stone always pointed in the same direction. Because the sailors used the stone to guide them across the open seas, it became known as a lodestone, or guide stone. In fact, a lodestone is a sliver of magnetite, an iron oxide mineral, which has the natural ability to attract iron or other material that can be magnetized.

The key, or controlling, idea appears in the first sentence. You immediately know the paragraph will be about magnetism. Read the paragraph again, this time paying attention to how that key idea is referred to directly or indirectly in each sentence of the paragraph. This technique gives the paragraph coherence.

Another way to create cohesiveness in a paragraph is to provide transitions. A *transition* is a means by which a writer guides readers from one sentence to the next and from one paragraph to the next. For example, notice the word *sailors* at the beginning of the second sentence. This word connects the second sentence to the first one by naming a specific category of "humankind" mentioned in the first sentence. The second sentence elaborates on the first sentence by introducing an illustration. The second sentence also uses the word *its* to refer to magnetism in the first sentence, thereby tying the two sentences together.



Make sure you have smooth transitions between sentences; otherwise, your reader may not see the connections between your ideas.



If you don't use effective transitions in your writing, your reader must work harder to understand what you have to say. As a result, the reader may simply give up and not read the material.

The English language has many words you can use to provide transitions for your readers. **Figure 8** provides a list of just some of the many words and phrases you can use as transitional elements. Here's an example that illustrates how transitions help your writing.

Without transition: Miles received the statistics on April 19, the day after he had submitted his report. He was unable to use them to help his argument.

With transition: Miles received the statistics on April 19, the day after he had submitted his report. Therefore, he was unable to use them to help his argument.

The word *therefore* in the second example shows the relationship between the two sentences. In the first example, readers must determine the relationship on their own. Transitions make writing clearer and easier to read.

Look again at the paragraph on magnetism and try to identify the transitional expressions it contains. Some examples are *first*, *then*, *no matter*, *because*, and *in fact*. To help you understand how important transitional expressions are, cross all of them out and then read the paragraph without them.

Transitional Expressions

also	because	however	namely	otherwise
although	consequently	in conclusion	nevertheless	similarly
as a result	first	in fact	next	then
as soon as	for example	instead	no matter	
as well as	furthermore	in summary	on the contrary	

FIGURE 8—These are just some of the many expressions you can use in your writing to help your readers move smoothly from one sentence to the next. Make it a point to use them in your writing. You may even wish to add to this list as you come across other words you can use as transitions.

Paragraph Length

If there's agreement about anything in business and technical writing, it's this: Short paragraphs are usually better than long ones. We say *usually* because no fixed or set rules exist regarding the length of paragraphs. For example, you may choose to use a longer paragraph when you must provide explanations or illustrations to clarify your controlling idea. On the other hand, since business and technical writing should be practical, efficient, and logical, longer paragraphs may be counterproductive. As a general rule, strive for shorter paragraphs.

In summary, to write an effective paragraph, express your controlling idea in the first sentence. Use transitional expressions to link sentences in light of your controlling idea. Keep your paragraphs short unless—as in a complex report—a longer paragraph may seem the best option. In the final sentence of each paragraph, briefly summarize what the paragraph is about.

In the final section of this study unit, you're going to begin to build short documents like memos, e-mails, and letters. Before you go on to that section, however, please complete *Self-Check 3*.



Self-Check 3

1. Explain how the structure of a paragraph and a longer document are similar.

2. Read the paragraph below. Examine it to find the methods used by the author to provide coherence. The sentences are numbered for easy identification.

(1) There are only about a hundred different elements. (2) These include such common substances as hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, silicon, aluminum, and copper, as well as many substances that are known only to scientists. (3) Atoms of two or more elements combine to form most of the substances with which we are familiar. (4) For example, hydrogen and oxygen, two gases, combine to form water. (5) The result of the combination of two elements is called a *compound*. (6) Water is a compound that results from the combination of the elements hydrogen and oxygen.

(Continued)



Self-Check 3

3. Examine the following sets of sentences and try to determine a relationship between them. Then rewrite the sentences, adding a transition to help the reader understand their meaning. You may rewrite them as two sentences, or you may decide to combine them into one sentence.

a. I decided not to go to the movies. I had already seen the show they had chosen.

b. The report was due first thing Friday morning. I stayed late Thursday night to finish it.

c. Sommerset has many different kinds of fruit trees. Apple, pear, peach, and cherry trees dot the landscape as far as you can see.

d. To ignite the grill, open the valve on the gas tank. Turn on the gas and press the ignite button.

e. Charles wanted to attend the celebration. He stayed home. He had promised to care for his two nephews.

Check your answers with those on page 63.

MEMOS, LETTERS, AND E-MAILS

Interoffice Memos



The *body* of a memo, letter, or e-mail is that part which contains the message being sent.

Although e-mails have become the most commonly used form of interoffice communication, memos are still a basic way to convey information within an organization. The memo format may be used to convey routine information, but it's also employed for informal reports and proposals. Often, memorandum forms are standardized within an organization.

Figure 9 presents an interoffice memorandum used to inform. Examine the layout and appearance of the memo. At the top of the memo are the company name (COMPUTECH COMPANY) and the words Interoffice Memorandum. Directly below this heading is the standard format for any interoffice memo.

DATE:
TO:
FROM:
SUBJECT:

In some cases, the writer of a memo may have to add a reference block, which specifies or clarifies the nature of the subject line. When you include a reference block in a memo, the receiver or receivers immediately know what your memo is addressing.

DATE:	January 10, 2003
TO:	Troy Irons
FROM:	Marcia Gray
SUBJECT:	Delivery Dispute with Harper Brothers
REFERENCE:	Purchase Order J4-2140

The sender of a memo often writes his or her initials at the end of the "FROM" line. If someone other than the sender types the memo, the typist generally puts the sender's initials at the end of the memo, followed by a colon and his or her own initials. For example, if Sal Thomas typed this memo for Marcia Gray, he would type MG:st at the end of the memo.

COMPUTECH COMPANY
Interoffice Memorandum

DATE: February 15, 2003
TO: Product Development Personnel
FROM: Oliver Lewis
SUBJECT: Call for Proposals

The board of directors has approved the release of an extra \$250,000 in incentive funds for product development over the coming year. A board-appointed committee will accept proposals for new products through April 20, and the board expects to approve as many meritorious proposals as funding allows.

To propose a new product for development, an employee must have been with the company for at least six months.

This is a great opportunity to work on those exciting ideas you've all been suggesting in the past year. I have approved work-release time of 20 hours for proposal writing, so there's no reason why every one of you can't work up a project.

I would be happy to discuss your ideas with you at any time. Good luck!

Copies:

Board of Directors

W. Apperson
T. Cooley
P. Edgerly
F. Gregg
A. Munsen
J. Pooler
M. Preston

Proposal Committee

B. Jameson
D. Lewis
T. Roberts

FIGURE 9—A Memorandum That Informs

Now look at the *body* of the sample memo. Notice that it wastes no words. The first line of the first paragraph gets right to the point. The second paragraph explains who may submit a proposal, and the third paragraph is a lively call to action. Finally, the last one-line paragraph offers cordial support. In summary, the body of this memo follows this order:

- Here's what's happening.
- Here's whom it affects.
- Let's get going (a call to action).
- I'll help.

To help organize your memos, jot down the main idea of what you intend to say in each paragraph. You can use the following questions to get you started and to help organize your thoughts:

- What is the situation?
- Whom does the situation affect?
- Why does the situation demand attention?
- What action may be needed or desired?
- How may the action be achieved?

Letters

Letters may contain the same kind of information as memos. However, because they're usually directed to people outside an organization, they should be a bit more formal.

Components

Any business letter has the following components (Figure 10):

- Heading
- Inside address
- Salutation
- Body
- Complimentary close
- Signature Block

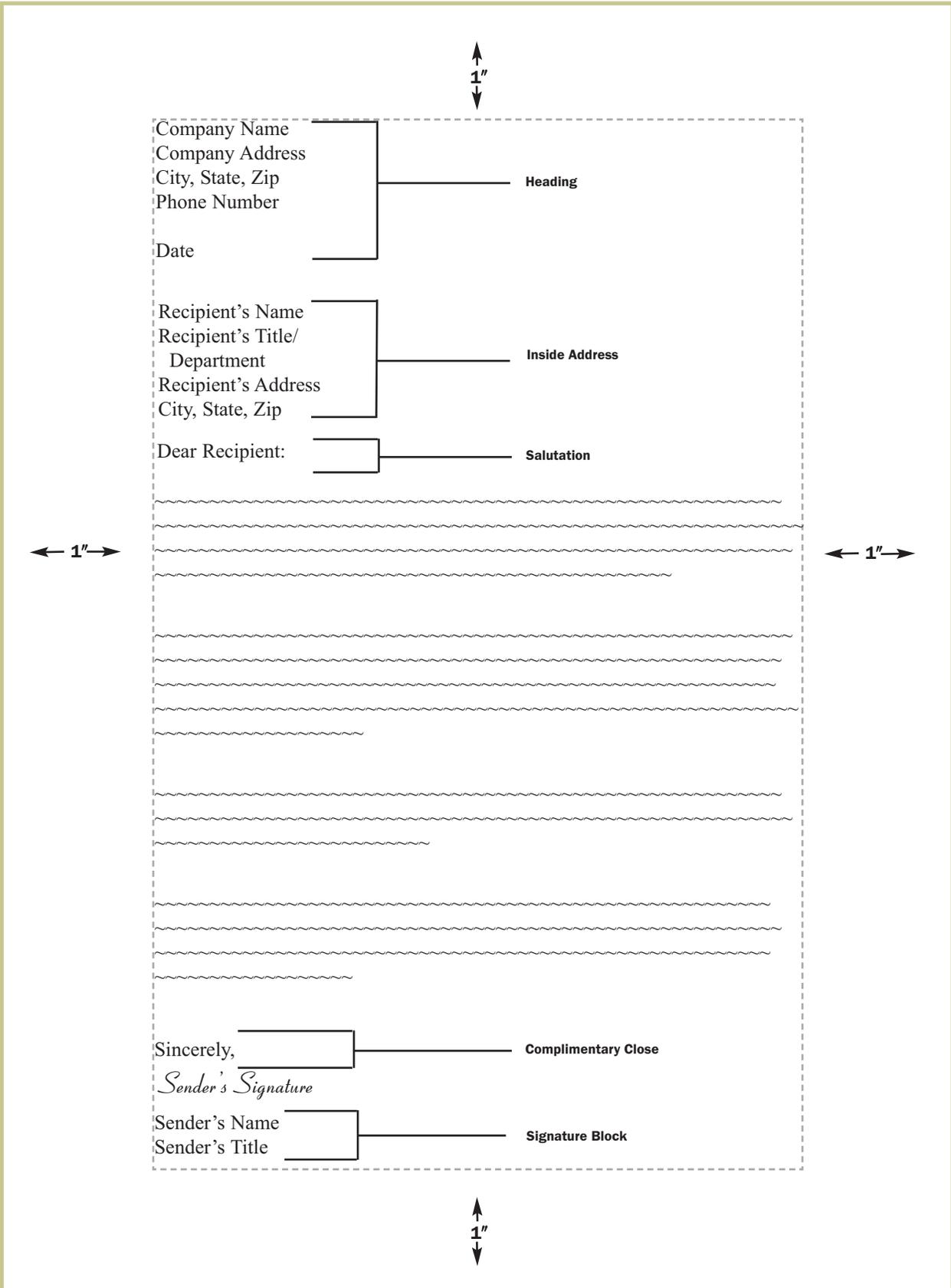


FIGURE 10—Components of a Full-block Standard Business Letter



As the sender of a business letter, don't include your name in the heading. That space is reserved for the name and address of the organization and the date.

Heading. The *heading* of a letter consists of the company address and the date. If your company uses printed letterhead, the heading is already present. All you have to do is add the date and the heading will be complete. However, if you're using plain paper, you must supply all of the elements in the heading.

Inside address. The *inside address* includes the name and address of the person to whom the letter is being sent. It should be two spaces below the heading and flush to the left margin. It should be identical to the address on the envelope.

Salutation. The *salutation* is that part of a letter in which you address the recipient. It should be two spaces below the inside address and flush to the left margin. In a business letter, the salutation should be followed by a colon (:).

Follow these guidelines when writing a salutation for a business letter:

- In general, make the salutation formal.
- Make sure you correctly spell the recipient's name.
- Use the appropriate courtesy title for the recipient. If you're addressing a woman, use *Ms.* rather than *Miss*. If the woman is married, use the title *Mrs.* only if you know she prefers and expects that title. As social change continues to alter gender role expectations, *Ms.* is by far the preferred feminine title.

If the person you're addressing holds a doctorate (Ph.D.) or is a physician, use *Dr.* as the courtesy title. If you're addressing a person in the military or a public official, use the person's specific title, as in *Dear Senator Moss*, *Dear Representative O'Reilly*, or *Dear Col. Byrd*. When in doubt regarding appropriate titles for public or military personnel, check with a secretary, a knowledgeable friend, or even your local librarian for up-to-date information.

If you don't know the name or names of persons you're writing to, use *Dear Sir or Madam*, *Dear Director of Personnel*, or in the case of letters of recommendation, *To Whom It May Concern*.

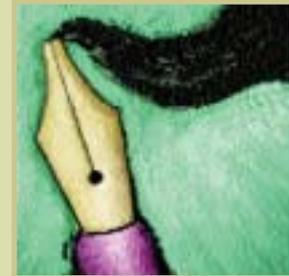
Body. Before you begin the first paragraph in the body of a letter, insert a double space. Then, single-space paragraphs in the body of a letter, but double-space between paragraphs. Write well-crafted sentences and coherent paragraphs. Remember, too, that the world of business is a hectic place. Whenever possible, write short, to-the-point letters.

Complimentary close. The complimentary close should appear two spaces below the last paragraph of the letter. Unless you know the person you're addressing quite well, close with something like *Sincerely*, *Most sincerely*, or possibly, *Very truly yours*. Reserve less formal closes, such as *Cordially* or *All the best*, for people you know quite well.

Signature block. The *signature block* is simply the typed name of the sender. Leave three or four spaces between the complimentary close and the signature block. That should be enough space for a written signature to be inscribed directly above the typed name.

Stationery for Business Letters

As a rule, business letters are written on 8½-by-11-inch white paper. Most businesses have their own company stationery (letterhead), which generally includes the company name and address. Although white and off-white are standard colors for business stationery, it may be beige, light blue, or even canary yellow. If the letter you're writing is longer than one page, use the company letterhead for the first page and matching blank paper for subsequent pages.



When sending a letter of application to a company, use white paper.

Types of Business Letters

Although every letter is unique in itself, the types of business letters you'll have to write generally fall into four different categories:

- Positive letters
- Negative letters
- Neutral letters
- Sales letters

Positive letters. Positive letters contain good news. Generally, they're easier to write than negative letters, because people usually enjoy sending—and receiving—good news. Some examples of situations in which a positive letter would be sent are

- Informing a company that its bid has been accepted
- Writing a complimentary letter of recommendation
- Notifying a customer that his or her order is on the way
- Answering a customer's question about product quality
- Solving a complaint in a favorable way

When you're developing a positive letter, always put the good news first—if possible in the first sentence, but definitely in the first paragraph. In the next paragraph or paragraphs, explain the news. Give details so the reader understands the message. Finally, in the last paragraph, end on a positive note. If necessary, tell the receiver what happens next.

(Figure 11 presents an example of a positive letter.)

A-One Supermarket
123 Downy Lane
Clearview, PA 12345
570-555-4321

February 21, 2006

C&R Asphalt Company
1616 Main Street
Newtown, PA 11111

Dear Mr. Jacobs:

We are pleased to inform you that your bid for repaving our parking lot has been accepted. We selected your company because of its excellent reputation and fair prices.

With the exception of a few minor changes, we plan to proceed as outlined in our specifications.

Please call me next week so we can set up a meeting to finalize the details and schedule the project. As you know, we would like to have it completed by April 30 of this year.

We are looking forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Patricia Neville

Patricia Neville
Director of Facilities

FIGURE 11—Positive Letter, Full-block Style

Negative letters. Negative letters contain some type of bad news. They're no fun to send or receive. And they're especially not fun to write. Here are some situations in which you may have to write a negative letter:

- Writing a negative letter of recommendation
- Informing a customer that his or her order will be delayed
- Refusing to accept someone's personal check
- Complaining to another business about its service or product quality
- Informing an applicant that you can't use his or her services

When writing a negative letter, you must present the bad news in such a way that you don't alienate the person. Even though you may not have positive things to say at present, you want to try to maintain a good rapport with this person.

Begin a negative letter just as you would a positive letter. Tell the person the news right in the beginning. State the information so the receiver clearly understands what you're saying, but try to temper it somewhat. In other words, try not to be blunt and abrupt with the bad news.

In the next paragraph, explain the reasons for the negative news. Present clear information as to why the situation is as it is. Finally, in the last paragraph, close on as much of a positive note as possible. Attempt to keep this person's goodwill. (Figure 12 presents an example of a negative letter.)

Communication Design Associates
167 Fairview Road
Buffalo, NY 14222
716-555-2040

August 21, 2006

Rebecca Neel
Director of Human Resources
The Wainwright Corporation
1603 Lakeside Avenue
Dexter, ME 04930

Dear Ms. Neel:

I received your letter of August 10, and I'm flattered by your request that I participate in your planned business writing seminar.

Unfortunately, my schedule for September is already rather full. As much as I'd like to attend, I will be unable to do so. I would be able to schedule time in either October or November, but I expect rescheduling the seminar might create difficulties for you.

Thank you again for the invitation and best of luck with your seminar. If I can be of assistance in directing you to other specialists in the writing field, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Lloyd Collins

Lloyd Collins, Ph.D.
Director

FIGURE 12—Negative Letter

Neutral letters. As their name implies, neutral letters are neither positive nor negative. They're simply the necessary letters of day-to-day business. Examples of situations in which you would write a neutral letter are

- Preparing letters of inquiry
- Responding to letters of inquiry
- Ordering materials or supplies from another company
- Inviting someone to a company-sponsored event

In writing a neutral letter, use the ABC approach you've already studied. Introduce your topic in the first paragraph, explain it in the next paragraph(s), and provide a conclusion in the last paragraph. Above all, be clear in the information you present. (Refer to [Figure 13](#) for an example of a neutral letter.)

Downtown Office Services
112 South Front Street
Blackmore, VA 33333
276-555-9876

September 12, 2006

Paper and More Office Supplies
Route 690
West Clinton, MA 22222

SUBJECT: Order for Office Supplies

I have received your catalog that I requested and would like to order the following items:

1. One (1) three-shelf metal bookcase (#2861J)
2. Three (3) stenographer's chairs (#6134P)
3. Two (2) 30-inch utility carts (#8951V)

Please send the items to the above address and forward the bill to my attention. We were very pleased with your catalog and prices and hope that this is the beginning of a good business relationship.

Sincerely,

Grant C. Berry

Grant C. Berry
Purchasing Agent

FIGURE 13—Neutral Letter, Semi-block Style

Sales letters. As you would expect, the intent of a sales letter is to convince the reader to purchase a particular product or service. In a sense, however, any letter you write to a client is a sales letter. In dealing with customers, you should always attempt to develop your relationship with them—in other words, to sell yourself to them. Here are some examples of sales letters:

- Introducing yourself to a potential customer
- Sending a thank-you note to someone who has purchased your product or service
- Preparing information on sales or special incentives
- Responding to inquiries from potential customers

In the first paragraph of a sales letter, you must get the readers' attention. Provide them with some information about your product or service that will make their lives easier or solve a problem they have. In the middle paragraphs of your letter, present details about your purpose for writing. And, as usual, in the last paragraph, conclude by encouraging a positive response in the reader. Tell the reader what will happen next—for example, "I'll be calling you within the next few days," or "I'll be mailing you another announcement by July 15." (Figure 14 presents an example of a sales letter.)

General Sealing Company
R.R. 6 Box 6234
Old Brook Village, TN 44444
615-555-4657

April 14, 2006

Old Brook Village High School
612 Academy Street
Old Brook Village, TN 44444

Attention: Mr. Jeremy Fitzwilliam

Dear Mr. Fitzwilliam:

Two years ago, our company had the privilege of resealing the parking lot for Old Brook Village High School. At that time, we recommended that you have this procedure done every two years. Therefore, it's time for you to consider sealing your lot again.

Over time, gasoline, moisture, and oils can make asphalt lose its cohesive properties. Parking lots such as that at the high school are particularly susceptible to these problems, which are costly to repair. Regular asphalt sealing can prevent these situations, while extending the life of your property and enhancing its appearance.

I would be pleased to meet with you at your convenience to discuss your sealing needs. I plan to call you during the week of May 1 so we can schedule a time for the meeting.

I look forward to talking to you soon and again providing an important service for you.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Coolidge

Carolyn Coolidge
Account Representative

FIGURE 14—Sales Letter



If the company you work for requires a particular formatting style, follow that pattern. Otherwise, you may use the one that best suits your needs.

Formatting Business Letters

Your objective in formatting a business letter should be to make it pleasing to the eye. The first thing you should consider is the amount of white space on the face of the letter. Leave margins of at least one inch all around—top, bottom, left, and right (Figure 10). In addition, make sure you don't try to cram too much information onto one sheet of letterhead. A cluttered letter is difficult to read.

In preparing a letter, you can choose between two formatting styles: block and semiblock.

Block style. In a strict block style, every component of a business letter is placed flush with the left margin. Figures 11 and 12 are shown in the block style. Although this style is very neat, it sometimes looks unbalanced and may not be quite as pleasing to look at as the semiblock style.

Semiblock style. In the semiblock style, some of the letter components are placed away from the extreme left margin to give the letter a look of balance. No strict format exists for the semiblock style. Rather, writers have several alternatives to choose from.

- In one version, the first line of each paragraph is indented. Also, the heading, the complimentary close, and the signature block are aligned on an *imaginary centerline* that runs vertically down the middle of the page, roughly 4.25 inches from the sides of the paper. Figures 13 and 14 are shown in this semiblock style.
- In another semiblock format, the heading and complimentary close are flush against the right margin, and the first line of each paragraph is indented.
- Still another semiblock format centers the heading, perhaps around a company logo. The first lines of the paragraphs are *not* indented, and the complimentary close and signature block are either flush left on an imaginary center line, flush right, or even flush left.

As you can see, a great deal of variety exists in the semiblock format. As a rule of thumb, unless some other format is specified, a modified semiblock style, like that shown in Figures 13 and 14, should serve you well.

Full Justification

Word processing programs have features that allow you to align paragraphs so that both the right and left margins are even. This feature is known as *full justification*. (This paragraph is formatted in full justification.) In general, selecting this option is a bad idea. To make the margins even, the full justification feature adjusts the spaces between letters, which often results in drawn-out or crowded words that simply aren't pleasing to the eye. Leave your right margin alone to be what editors call *ragged right*. Word processing programs call this style *left justifica-*

Attention and Subject Lines

When sending a business letter, always do your best to address it to a specific person. If you don't know the name of the person to whom you should send the letter, try to find out. If you're sending a letter to someone in a large organization, you may wish to include an *attention line*, which specifies a particular individual within the organization. Insert the attention line between the inside address and the salutation. Double-space before and after the attention line.

The Nelson Hunt Company
332 Ocean View Drive
Portland, Oregon 72509

Attention: Ms. Cindy Lacy

Dear Ms. Lacy:

If you're unable to obtain the name of the individual to whom you're writing, you may omit the salutation and include a subject line instead. Type "SUBJECT" in all capital letters and boldface, followed by a colon and the subject itself.

Forbes and Company
244 Apperson Drive, N.W.
Hyde Park, NY 11788

SUBJECT: File No. 7-332-80

According to our discussion of June 20, I've completed the wiring plans for sections A through C of the first floor

Abbreviation and Capitalization

Issues related to abbreviation and capitalization are treated in more detail later in this course. For now, however, examine these few standard guidelines:

- Use abbreviations cautiously in letters. The rule is “When in doubt, spell it out.”
- Don’t abbreviate names, professional positions, and the names of months.
- Don’t abbreviate words like *road*, *street*, or *avenue*.
- Use the two-letter postal abbreviations for the names of states. If you’re unsure of the abbreviation for a state, you may spell it out.
- When writing letters, follow the same rules for capitalization as you would for any other kind of effective writing.
- Capitalize the names of people, places, and organizations.
- Capitalize the first word of each component of your letter, such as *Dear* and *Sincerely yours*. (*Note: In the salutation To Whom It May Concern*, each word is capitalized because it stands in place of someone’s name.)

E-Mails

In today’s business world, *e-mail* (electronic mail) has become the workhorse of interorganizational communication. “Checking e-mail” has become an office ritual people repeat many times in a business day. Understanding how and when to use e-mail has become a critical skill in the modern office.

E-mail communication is distinctive in a number of ways. First, e-mail screens may be used to forward messages in either memo or letter format. In fact, they may be used to transmit images, graphs, charts, or tables. Second, unlike a written memo or letter, an e-mail is both the message and the medium. Written memos must be posted to employee mailboxes, and letters must be posted for mailing. E-mails, however, can be quickly prepared and instantly sent. Depending on the servers that handle them, e-mails arrive any place in the world within moments of when they’re sent. In effect, the world is now linked by an electronic nervous system.

The marketing of personal computers has emphasized e-mail as the new way to communicate messages, sentiments, and images across distances. For that reason, e-mails that clutter electronic mailboxes may be sales pitches, jokes forwarded from a friend, animated greeting cards, and so on.

Because of the large volume of e-mail traffic, the office computer has become a creature that needs managing. It may become very tempting to respond briefly and ever so informally to e-mails that need “clearing.” It’s also too easy to send ill-considered responses. For these reasons and others, e-mail discipline is a skill demanded of all kinds of people in all kinds of organizations in this new electronically linked twenty-first century.

Using E-Mail Safely and Effectively

Safety in e-mail use refers partly to your safety and partly to organizational security. An e-mail that you send to one individual may end up on the computers of people you didn’t intend to address. E-mails that include company policies or strategies may end up in places you would rather they didn’t. And e-mail messages get stored on hard drives for a long time. Ill-conceived or rash messages may end up creating a permanent record that you wish didn’t exist. To be safe, assume that all your e-mail correspondence will be monitored for quality assurance. In that way, you’re more likely to be careful about what you say.

Computer Viruses

A *virus* is a program or piece of computer code that gets into your computer without your knowledge. Even a simple virus can quickly use all of your computer memory and bring your system to a halt. E-mail arriving at your computer may bring computer viruses with it. For that reason, it makes sense to avoid opening e-mail messages that arrive from unknown senders. Be particularly suspect of e-mail with attachments, especially if you don’t know the person who sent it. The attachment itself may contain a virus that activates when the attachment is opened.

Computers have become central to day-to-day operations in business and industry. Pay attention to virus warnings, and remember that carelessness on your part may cause or contribute to a catastrophic loss of information or even the collapse of an electronic information network.

E-Mail Guidelines: Netiquette

The etiquette followed in e-mail is often referred to as *netiquette* (short for *Internet etiquette*). It consists of community-accepted standards you should follow when corresponding by e-mail. Most of them are common sense.

- In general, keep the e-mails you send concise and to the point. They shouldn't exceed three monitor screens in length.
- Differentiate between internal and external recipients. Carefully create messages intended for external parties, and generally make them a bit more formal than those directed to people within your organization.
- Check the electronic address carefully. Computers are totally unforgiving when it comes to address typos. To avoid mistakes and wasted time, store frequently used e-addresses in your on-line address book.
- Use standard grammar, punctuation, and word choices just as you would for any type of written communication. You may use contractions in e-mails, but avoid slang. Always spell-check what you've written before you send it.
- Use standard capitalization. Don't type in all capital letters—on the Internet, this practice is considered shouting. SHOUTING often provokes *flaming*.
- Don't encourage *flames*, and don't participate in *flame wars*. Flaming occurs when someone sends a message that provokes an angry—and often nasty—response. When others join in, a full-fledged flame war ensues. The point of the original e-mail usually gets lost in the heated exchange of flames.
- Don't forward or respond to electronic versions of chain letters, false warnings of impending Internet disasters, and so on. Don't encourage these time-wasting hoaxes by participating in them.

- Don't send anything you wouldn't want published. What you write and how you write it will be judged by the recipient and, for all you know, by people checking stored e-mails for years into the future.
- If you're responding to another person's message, keep any original quotations or excerpts from that message to a minimum. This courtesy will be especially welcomed when you're sending e-mail to a news group, bulletin board, or mailing list. Use only as much of the original message as you need to provide a sense of context for your response.
- Before sending any large attachments, be sure your recipient's e-mail system won't be overtaxed by the memory requirements.
- Be careful about expressing your emotions in a reply to an e-mail message. Irony, tongue-in-cheek humor, or a note written in anger may come back to haunt you. Remember that your reader can't see your face or your body language and therefore may misinterpret any subtle attempts at humor.
- When using an e-mail environment to send a memo or a letter, compose it off-line—on paper or with a word processing program, for example. Write and revise it; use your spell checker and, when in doubt, your grammar checker or thesaurus. When you're confident that your message is just the way you want it, copy and paste it into your e-mail screen. Check the copy again to make sure the transfer worked, and *then* send it.
- Always include a subject line, and make sure it clearly states what the e-mail is about. Today, e-mail inboxes are likely to be jammed with *spam* (promotional messages) and other kinds of irrelevant stuff. Busy people may simply delete e-mails with subject lines like "Quote for the Day" or "Hi, What's New." Use appropriate subject lines like "Pay Raises for 2003 Fiscal Year" or "Update on the South Street Project."

- Never use offensive language or include vulgar, racist, or sexist comments.
- Remember that you're communicating with real people, not machines. Extend the same courtesy you would to someone you talk to in person or on the telephone. Don't make any remarks you wouldn't make to the person's face. Take the time to put together a well-written message. Once you hit the **Send** button, you won't have another chance to revise what you've written.

Formatting E-Mail

Figure 15 shows a sample of an e-mail directed to a person outside the organization. Study the sample to get an idea of an effective formatting approach to e-mail messages. Pay particular attention to the following items:

- The subject line is specific and to the point.
- A standard, formal salutation is used, even though the tone of the message suggests that the sender and the receiver are well known to each other.
- The questions the sender wants answered are set up as a list.
- Double spacing is used between the salutation and the opening sentence, between paragraphs, and between the listed questions.
- The message has an informal, cordial complimentary close.
- For convenience, the sender's e-mail address is included directly below the name of the sender.

In conclusion, consider a few words about “dressing for success.” The way your letter, memo, or e-mail appears to a reader sends a message about you, the writer. Watch out for misspelled words, typos, and misused words. Don't send an e-mail you've not thought out. Remember that it may be stored on a hard drive for a long time. Don't send a memo or letter that's wrinkled, spotted with coffee stains, or smudged with corrections written in by hand as an afterthought.

To: carnold@TrendsAdvertising.com
cc:
bcc:

Subject: New Position for Graphic Designer

Dear Creighton,

In our last conversation, you mentioned that Brad Hillman is looking for work on the East Coast. As it turns out, we are in urgent need of an experienced graphic artist for our advertising department. In fact, we need someone on board by the end of April.

Since all of us here are familiar with Brad's work, I've proposed his name to our search team—contingent on what I can find out about his situation. Meanwhile, as you might have guessed, I have some questions for you:

- Do you feel a salary range of \$55,000 to \$62,000 will be acceptable to him?
- When would he expect to relocate?
- Has he set his mind on one of our competitors?

I'd be grateful if you would get back to me soon on this matter. If, based on what you can tell me, Brad seems a likely candidate for us, I'll get in touch with him immediately.

All the best,

Harvey Trent

hatrent@FreundInc.com

FIGURE 15—Formatted E-Mail

Sending a letter, a memo—or even an in-house e-mail—that's not neat and properly written is like showing up for an interview with mustard on your shirt, mud on your shoes, and spinach on your teeth.

You're just about ready to take the examination for this study unit. Before you do that, please complete *Self-Check 4* and review the material covered in this unit.



Self-Check 4

1. In order, list the six components of every business letter.

2. Change the following inside addresses, salutations, and complimentary closes so they conform to conventional usage. Make sure to consider punctuation, capitalization, and appropriate use of abbreviations.

a. Prof. Lawrence Smith
Dept. of Mathematics
State Univ. of New York
Binghamton, NY 13901

Dear Dr. Smith,

Sincerely, yours,

c. Financial Services Corp.
1008 Drew Avenue
Kansas City, Missouri 14630

Dear Mr. Frank,

Cordially,

b. Margaret Foster, President
The Delta Corporation
304 High St.
Lincoln, Neb. 17468

Dear Madam:

Very Truly Yours,

d. J. P. Lovering Company
1102 East Franklin Street
Milgrove, North Carolina 52086
Attention of Loans Officer

Loans Officer;

Very truly yours

(Continued)



Self-Check 4

3. What is meant by the concept of e-mail safety? Respond in a paragraph of four to six sentences.

4. Explain at least four sound practices to follow in writing e-mail messages.

Check your answers with those on page 64.

NOTES

Self-Check 1

1. a. Fragment: While crossing the busy intersection, Charles realized he had taken a wrong turn.
b. Sentence
c. Fragment: To start the machine, you must press two buttons at once.
d. Run-on sentence: You can correct this sentence in at least four different ways:
 - (1) The budget is too high; we must make some reductions.
 - (2) The budget is too high. We must make some reductions.
 - (3) Since the budget is too high, we must make some reductions.
 - (4) The budget is too high; therefore, we must make some reductions.
e. Sentence
2. Here are some possible revisions. Yours may vary.
 - a. He smiled from ear to ear when his friends arrived.
 - b. The president has promised to reduce the budget.
 - c. She served as secretary of the club for six years.
 - d. The jury deliberated for four hours.
3. a. The committee signed the report.
b. H. B. Stratton Company constructed the building.
c. The moderator determined the topic.
d. The new company delivered the shipment on time.
e. The new electronics technician repaired the radio.
4. a. The team won by only two points.
b. She lost almost 10 pounds.
c. As I crossed the street, the truck nearly hit me.
d. Don't put those clothes on until you iron them. Or, don't put those clothes on until they're ironed.
e. She noticed a misplaced modifier dangling at the end of the sentence.
5. a. The department manager plans the daily schedule, but the line supervisor plans the workload.

A
N
S
W
E
R
S

- b. My job duties include training new employees, writing job descriptions, and conducting interviews.
- c. She expects to be in the satellite office during July, September, and November.
- d. The computer, the printer, and the scanner needed to be repaired.
- e. Always remember to oil the machine twice a month and to replace its filter every week.

Self-Check 2

1. *Note:* This is just a suggestion. Your revision may be somewhat different.

The football game, which began at 2:00 P.M., was between two old rivals, the West Side and the East Side. The West Side usually won the game, but this year the East Side scored a game-winning touchdown in the final seconds. They won the game for the first time in 15 years. Their fans were ecstatic.

2. *Note:* Your revision may be somewhat different.

The batter came to the plate and took some practice swings. He hit the first pitch, a fastball, for a home run. Because the run won the game, he was a hero for the day.

3. The worried mother cautioned her teenage son to be careful driving in the snowy weather.
4.
 - a. The crowd cheered for the conductor, applauded loudly, and insisted on an encore.
 - b. Our company technician tested the signal-to-noise ratio, the power output, and the percent modulation of each signal.

Self-Check 3

1. The composition of well-written paragraphs and well-written documents is similar. Both should begin with an introduction to what the paragraph or document is about. This introduction is followed by details that support the information presented in the introduction. Finally, the paragraph or document ends with a summary or conclusion that restates the idea in the introduction.
2. Here are some of the ways in which the author has provided coherence in the paragraph. You may have identified some different ones.
 - a. The second sentence uses the pronoun *These* to refer to elements. This technique connects the first two sentences.
 - b. The second sentence contains examples to illustrate the elements mentioned in the first sentence.
 - c. The fourth sentence includes the phrase “For example” to let the readers know they’re going to see an example of how atoms combine.
 - d. The fifth sentence begins with “The result of the combination,” which refers to the combination mentioned in the previous sentence.
 - e. The sixth sentence ties together the fourth and fifth sentences by showing how the combination of hydrogen and oxygen (sentence 4) is a compound (sentence 5).
3. *Note:* Your transitions may be different from those shown here. These are just examples.
 - a. I decided not to go to the movies, since (or because) I had already seen the show they had chosen.
 - b. The report was due first thing Friday morning. Therefore, I stayed late Thursday night to finish it.
Or, Since the report was due first thing Friday morning, I stayed late Thursday night to finish it.
 - c. Sommerset has many different kinds of fruit trees. For example, apple, pear, peach, and cherry trees dot the landscape as far as you can see.
 - d. To ignite the grill, open the valve on the gas tank. Then, turn on the gas and press the ignite button.
 - e. Charles wanted to attend the celebration. Nevertheless, he stayed home, since he had promised to care for his two nephews.

Self-Check 4

1. Any business letter has the following components:

- Heading
- Inside address
- Salutation
- Body
- Complimentary close
- Signature block

2. a. Professor Lawrence Smith
Department of Mathematics
State University of New York
Binghamton, NY 13901

Dear Professor Smith:

Sincerely yours,

b. Ms. Margaret Foster, President
The Delta Corporation
304 High Street
Lincoln, NE 17468

Dear Ms. Foster:

Very truly yours,

c. Financial Services Corp.
1008 Drew Avenue
Kansas City, MO 14630

Dear Mr. Frank:

Very truly yours,

d. J.P. Lovering Company
1102 East Franklin Street
Milgrove, NC 52086

Attention: Loans Officer

Dear Loans Officer:

Very truly yours,

3. E-mail may inadvertently be sent to the computers of people who weren't intended to receive them, thereby compromising organizational plans or policies. E-mail may also bring unwanted information to a computer, including computer viruses. Because e-mail messages may be stored on hard drives for an indefinite period, rash, emotional messages may end up as part of your permanent employee record. It is also the case that e-mail correspondence is often actively monitored within an organization.
4. You should have listed four of the following:
 - a. Keep e-mails concise and to the point. They should not exceed three screens in length.
 - b. Carefully write messages intended for external parties. Make them a bit more formal than those directed to people within your organization.
 - c. Carefully check electronic addresses before you send a message. Store frequently used e-mail addresses in your on-line address book.
 - d. To protect yourself, don't send anything you would not want published.
 - e. Be careful about expressing your emotions in a reply to an e-mail. Angry messages in particular may cause you problems.
 - f. When the message you need to compose demands thought and reflection, compose it off-line. Write and revise it in your word processing environment. Use your spell checker and your grammar checker or thesaurus.
 - g. Make sure your subject line is actually about the subject. Busy people may simply delete e-mails with subject lines that don't seem relevant.

NOTES

EXAMINATION NUMBER:

05002100

Writing Effective Communications

General Instructions

Purpose

This examination will evaluate your ability to write an interoffice memorandum and an e-mail.

Preparation

Review the following sections in this study unit: “Interoffice memorandums,” “Negative letters,” and “E-mails.” Your e-mail should follow the format shown in Figure 15, with content appropriate to the assignment—that is, a negative letter written to solve a problem.

Background

Phoenix Advertising, with its main headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina, serves clients that include banks, insurance companies, and retail chains.

You’re the vice president of human resources management at Phoenix. You report directly to Gregory S. Forest, the company president. Mr. Forest advises you that in the last month, four clients have complained about the advertising work produced by the Roanoke, Virginia branch of the agency. He reminds you that the clients served from the Roanoke branch are vital to the overall success of Phoenix Advertising.

Mr. Forest also explains the little he has been able to learn about the situation at the branch: In the last three months, two of the top management people—an art director and an account executive—have left the agency. Three of the graphic designers and four of the copywriters are threatening to quit because they feel their creative efforts are being rejected

Examination

or revised without consultation. They want to be part of a collaborative team, not to simply produce work that the art directors and account executives can alter arbitrarily.

In an attempt to increase revenues, the branch is accepting new clients without evaluating the effects of the new accounts on the current project workload. As a result, without notice or compensation for the additional hours, all salaried employees are required to work long hours several days each week. Employee morale and productivity are declining day by day.

Process

Part A: Interoffice memorandum

Step 1

Begin by creating facts, figures, and people to flesh out the above background information and your position in the company. The following questions are provided to jumpstart your prewriting, but you must expand on them to brainstorm thoroughly. In addition to listing details, also freewrite about the Phoenix Advertising agency and its executive team.

- How large is the agency? How many branches does it have? Where are the branches located?
- What's the company's mission? How does each branch relate to that mission?
- What are the company's primary business goals?
- What do clients need from Phoenix Advertising?
- Who are the people on the executive team (other vice-presidents of other departments)?
- Who's in charge of the agency's accounts in all the branches?
- Who knows about policies for accepting and assigning new accounts?
- Who knows about the policies for collaborative work among account executives, art directors, graphic designers, and copywriters?
- Are any other branches losing clients?

Now brainstorm and freewrite more specifically about your own department and the people who work for you.

- What are their names and positions?
- What would an organizational chart of your department look like?
- What policies have you established for the agency about overtime for salaried employees? Are branches allowed to have different policies? Under what conditions?
- What are the compensation and benefits packages for the positions of art director and account executive at the branch level? Do they depend on the location of the branch and local competitors or is there a general agency package for each position?

Step 2

After your meeting with Mr. Forest, you realize you need information from other members of the executive team. Using the ABC method, draft one interoffice memo to be sent to the entire executive team. Briefly summarize in one paragraph the situation with the Roanoke Branch. Explain how the situation affects Phoenix Advertising as a company and why it demands immediate attention. In a separate paragraph explain the actions you need different team members to take (who must provide what information). Tell the team when (specific date) and how they should get the information to you (report, e-mail, etc.). Close your memo with an appropriate final line or two. Make sure you copy the president on the memo.

Part B: E-mail

Step 1

If necessary, brainstorm further about your department, your staff, and the agency's policies about overtime.

Step 2

Invent e-mail addresses for yourself and another person in your department. Use the company name as the "host" rather than general commercial providers like AOL or Yahoo. Include all necessary components such as the @ symbol.

Step 3

Using the ABC method, draft an e-mail of three to four paragraphs in which you assign the staff person in charge of payroll to provide you with payroll statements from the Roanoke branch for the last 12 months. Use your own judgment about what, if any, information that person needs to know about the Roanoke situation to complete the task. Include a request for a summary of the agency policies and the branch policies regarding overtime and compensation/benefits packages. Explain clearly what you need that person to do, the date you need the information, and how you want the person to convey the information to you.

Be sure you follow the format of the sample e-mail, using the new content you've written for the assignment. Use a specific subject line formatted in title case.

Step 4

Referring to the evaluation criteria for the exam, revise your work carefully. Check for directness, emphasis, sentence variety, and coherence, making appropriate word choices for your audience and the type of correspondence. Edit grammar, spelling, and punctuation carefully. Read through your revised memo and e-mail backwards, first word by word, then sentence by sentence, and then paragraph by paragraph.

Word by word. In this way you can locate spelling errors. Be alert—you may see the word *here* in your essay, a correctly spelled word. But also check the words on either side. Did you mean here in terms of location or did you mean the sense of hearing?

Sentence by sentence. By looking at each group of words separately from the context, you can more easily locate run-on sentences or fragments. Compare the length and structure of each sentence for variety. Also check the connections between sentences—are they coherent?

Paragraph by paragraph. Locate the controlling idea of each paragraph and compare them with your primary focus for the memo and e-mail. Does the paragraph help to develop that focus in some specific way? Compare it with the controlling ideas of the paragraphs before and after it. Do they follow in logical order?

Step 5

When you're satisfied with your revisions, type your final memo; begin a new page in the same document for the e-mail. Use Times New Roman, font size 12. Format your document for left justification, and leave a ragged right margin.

Evaluation Criteria

Your instructor will use the following criteria to evaluate your exam:

- **Development of memo (25 points)**
Did you appropriately summarize and release information, give details of needs related to the scenario, as well as apply ABC and coherence?
- **Memo format (10 points)**
Did you apply the format from the sample in the study unit with four headings in capital letters, equal tab, specific subject line, and copy the president?
- **Development of-mail (20 points)**
Did you appropriately summarize and release the information, give details of needs related to scenario, as well as apply ABC and coherence?
- **E-mail format (10 points)**
Did you use proper business-host addresses, specific subject line, salutation, and closing?
- **Audience, tone, and word choice (10 points)**
How well did you choose words to convey a professional tone in relation to your audience?
- **Grammar, sentence structure, and mechanics (20 points)**
How well did you edit and proofread your document to ensure correct application of standard written conventions for American English?
- **General format (5 points)**
Did you apply correct font, justification, and header information?

Submitting Your Exam

Include the following information at the *top of each page* of your document. The best way to ensure the information is on each page is to enter everything using the Header option (usually located on the View or Insert menu).

Name and Student Number Exam number Page X of Y
Your Mailing Address
Your E-mail Address

If you don't include the above information at the top of *each page* of your document, we can't guarantee that your exam will be processed for grading. If your exam is processed without the information, you'll lose at least 10 points from your overall exam grade for neglecting to include this information.

You may submit this exam (Part A: Memo and Part B: E-mail) for evaluation by the school in one of two ways:

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925 Oak Street
Scranton, PA 18515

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