

**Study Unit**

# **Writing Effective Communications**

By

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# ***INSTRUCTIONS***

In this study unit, you're going to learn to use words to develop proper sentences, paragraphs, and finally, documents, including letters, memos, and emails.

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.

When you complete the lesson, 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 email. The directions for completing and submitting this assignment are at the end of the study unit, after the self-check answers.

# SECTION 1: THE ART OF THE SENTENCE

## *Objective*

When you complete this section, you'll be able to identify the elements of a well-written sentence.

## Composition of a Sentence

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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

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 stand alone as a sentence.

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.

The rules throughout this lesson apply to physical and formal documentation. It should be noted that with the prevalence of electronic communication, rules for sentence structure have become a bit more lax due to the restrictions of some platforms. In social media, character limits dictate how long your message is allowed to be, like with Twitter's 140-character or less limit. Text may also be cut off after a certain number of characters and replaced with a "show more" button like on Facebook or Instagram. In these instances, it should be noted that the important part is not necessarily forming a complete, grammatically correct sentence, but ensuring that your message is clear enough to be understood by your audience and able to be seen easily.

It's also becoming increasingly more acceptable to use things like sentence fragments and run-on sentences to convey a certain kind of tone or style in blog posts or even in less formal emails as long as the sentence is still well-written. However, these elements should never be used in traditional forms of business and technical writing. A resume, cover letter, or letter to an important business client is a space for you to make an impression with the person reading it, and that impression you want to make is that you're capable of communicating effectively and correctly. That's not to say social media isn't a place for this kind of impression as well, but it more heavily focuses on aspects of engagement and person-to-person contact does not. Remember: your message and your audience should help you in deciding the best way to communicate through all these different channels.

It should be noted that grammar is still a very important part of any kind of electronic communication. For more information on how grammar still plays a vital role in today's technology-ruled world, read <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jaysondemers/2014/07/15/is-bad-grammar-killing-your-brand/#67ab552727e1>

As you're reading through this lesson, keep these kind of situations in mind. Consider how the rules of grammar would apply to different kinds of business and technical writing and if there are any exceptions to those rules.

# Avoiding Sentence Fragments

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When you're writing any kind of business or technical document, make sure you use complete sentences. Even if sentence fragments seem to 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.

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.

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 typically, it's disruptive and confusing.

**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.

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

Of course, it may also be useful to rewrite the sentence to better incorporate the fragment.

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

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. Don't be fooled.

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.

**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 often overlooked.

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 often overlooked, came up with the best design.

If you feel like you're having trouble checking for fragments when revising your writing, read the "sentence" out loud to hear if it's a complete thought.

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.

## Avoiding Run-on Sentences

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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-on sentences* or *run-ons*.

**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.

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

### **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 subordinating conjunction that shows a relationship.

**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.

## **Using Action Verbs**

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

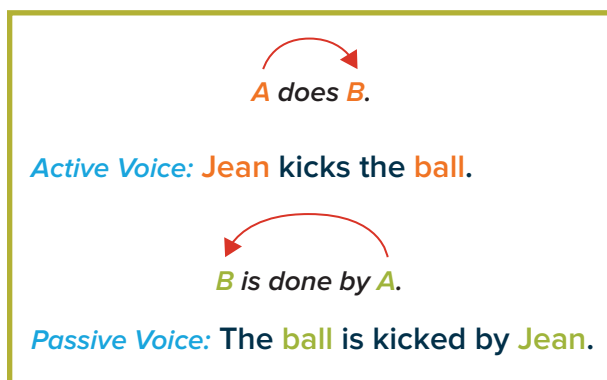
Read these examples several times until you can see how an action verb makes a sentence much more direct.

Think back to the last lesson where you learned about choosing your words carefully. Writing with strong, descriptive action verbs will help you ensure that your message is clear and understood by your audience. These terms are also helpful on social media platform where word count is a consideration and every word counts. Choosing a strong active verb in a resume or cover letter to describe your skills also helps strengthen your qualifications and highlights your particular skills. These kinds of verbs also help generate a kind of tone and style to the writing and can be chosen based on the tone and style of the rest of your writing.

## Active and Passive Voice

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*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. The active voice tends to be more interesting than the passive voice and, therefore, more likely to engage a reader’s attention. Always use the active voice unless you have a specific reason for using the passive voice.

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.

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 focus is on the person or thing that acts (*Jacob*, *worker*, and *tractor*) because it's 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.)

A verb immediately follows the subject in each of these sentences. 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 → A → O

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 → A → O. Examine these passive versions of the sentences you've already considered.

**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, the reader has another hurdle to clear since Mark becomes a false subject since he doesn’t actually perform the action described.

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, passive sentence structures 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

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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. Sometimes, 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 by being impersonal.** 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.

The passive voice can be effective in softening bad news or in concealing the culprit who made an error. However, if you're the one who has made the mistake, you shouldn't use the passive voice to avoid taking the responsibility.

## Placing Modifiers

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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.

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. (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

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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 grammatical 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 pause that interrupts their ability to understand your material.

In forms of writing such as resumes and cover letters, parallel construction can be a valuable tool. When expressing multiple ideas of equal importance, like listing your skills and qualifications on a resume, being consistent in structure and presentation gives your writing a balance and rhythm to help you deliver meaning.

Compare the following examples:

**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.

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

Take a look at the table below for some additional examples of parallel construction. You should be aware of parallel construction whenever you incorporate a series of items in your writing.

Faulty Construction	Parallel Construction
The warehouse staff used to take inventory by hand, but now a computer is used.	The warehouse staff used to take inventory by hand, but now they use 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.



# 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've 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.

Identify each of the 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.

1. While crossing the busy intersection.
2. A written report was required to obtain the necessary funding.
3. To start the machine.
4. The budget is too high we must make some reductions.
5. If the plan succeeds, we should be able to increase our sales force.

In each of the following sentences, change the verb *to be* to an action verb. (Note: You may have to do some rewriting.)

6. He was very happy when his friends arrived.
7. The president is going to reduce the budget.
8. She was secretary of the club for six years.
9. The jury was in deliberation for four hours.

*Continued*

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# Self-Check 1

**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.)**

10. The report was signed by the committee.
11. The building was constructed by H. B. Stratton Company.
12. The topic was determined by the moderator.
13. The shipment was delivered on time.
14. The radio was repaired by the new electronics technician.

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

15. The team only won by two points.
16. She almost lost 10 pounds.
17. Crossing the street, the truck nearly hit me.
18. Don't put those clothes on until ironed.
19. Dangling at the end of the sentence, she noticed a misplaced modifier.

**The following sentences contain faulty parallel construction. Rewrite them correctly.**

20. The department manager plans the daily schedule, but the workload is planned by the line supervisor.
21. My job duties include training new employees, writing job descriptions, and interviews.
22. She expects to be in the satellite office during July, during September, and November.
23. The computer, the printer, and scanner needed to be repaired.
24. Always remember to oil the machine twice a month and that its filter should be replaced every week.

**Check your answers with those in the back of this study unit.**

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# SECTION 2: GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR SENTENCES

## *Objective*

When you complete this section, you'll be able to use length, directness, emphasis, and variety to craft impactful sentences.

## Sentence Length

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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. In some forms of online media, they're essential. The trick is to include all the necessary information while keeping the sentences short.

Take a 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 non-standard 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 that this sentence clearly and effectively delivers its meaning. 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. Most likely, you'll have to supply a few additional words to make complete sentences from the information originally jammed 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 online writing, short but clear sentences are essential. Technology has altered attention spans, and readers of online content have grown accustomed to skimming more than in-depth reading. To be sure your message is getting across, be sure your sentences are short and sweet so your audience doesn't get distracted or bored.

In general, long, awkward sentences need cropping, pruning, and reordering into shorter sentences. On the other hand, the so-called *primer style* (Figure 2), which uses short, choppy sentences, presents a different kind of problem. The sentences may be clear and understandable, but they can be boring.



**FIGURE 2—** *The term primer style refers to the approach used in children's first reading books, or primers.*

Consider this example:

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

Choppy “Dick and Jane” sentences constantly disrupt a reader's flow. Furthermore, they're condescending, because they imply that the reader is incapable of understanding more complicated sentences that more closely resemble ordinary conversational language. You want your writing to be understood, but at the same time, you must treat your audience with respect. Never be condescending.

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 original 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

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In 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.

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 reorder 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 read and 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 and organizes, it may also prepare the readers for the material that follows the list. For example, read the following sentence:

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. A bulleted list is also a great place to include parallel construction, as discussed previously in this lesson.

## 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 draws the readers' focus.

**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. When this happens, it 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 is the most important information. Then, place that information at or very near the beginning of the sentence.

## Emphasis

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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. Take a look at each of these techniques.



All of the following highlighting devices attract the reader's eye and, in doing so, provide emphasis:

■ **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.

■ **Numbered List:**

Our new marketing approach should result in

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

■ **Bulleted List:**

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.

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.

You can also use your writing style to create emphasis in the following 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 *blog* is proving popular with *some people*.

**Concrete:** Our new *Soccer Freaks, Inc. blog* 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.

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.

## Sentence Variety

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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 sentence structure to make your material more interesting and easier to understand.

For example, read the following paragraph:

(1) We have been observing our customer service program. (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



## Self-Check 2

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

1. 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.

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

2. 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.

**Simplify the following complex sentence.**

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

**Simplify the following sentences by using lists.**

4. The crowd cheered for the conductor, they applauded loudly, and they insisted on an encore.
5. 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 in the back of this study unit.**

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# SECTION 3: GROUPING YOUR THOUGHTS: PARAGRAPHS

## *Objective*

When you complete this section, you'll be able to write paragraphs using topic sentences and logical development.

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'll 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

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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, your main idea. 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 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

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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.

Take a 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. In this example, 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. Instead, your reader has to work harder to understand what you have to say and, as a result, may simply give up and not read the material.

The English language has many words you can use to provide transitions for your readers. Take a look at the following list, which contains some of the many words and phrases you can use as transitional elements:

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	

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.

## Paragraph Length

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If there's agreement about anything in business and technical writing, it's this: Short paragraphs are usually better than long ones, although this is 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 as you develop 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.



## Self-Check 3

**Answer the following question in two to three sentences.**

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

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

2. (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.

**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 overall meaning. You may rewrite them as two sentences, or you may decide to combine them into one sentence.**

3. I decided not to go to the movies. I had already seen the show they had chosen.
4. The report was due first thing Friday morning. I stayed late Thursday night to finish it.
5. Sommerset has many different kinds of fruit trees. Apple, pear, peach, and cherry trees dot the landscape as far as you can see.
6. To ignite the grill, open the valve on the gas tank. Turn on the gas and press the ignite button.
7. Charles wanted to attend the celebration. He stayed home. He had promised to care for his two nephews.

**Check your answers with those in the back of this study unit.**

# SECTION 4: COVER LETTERS AND RESUMES

## *Objective*

When you complete this section, you'll be able to describe how to write an effective cover letter and resume.

## The Approach

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Cover letters and resumes have been mentioned briefly in your learning so far. Now, you'll learn a little more about them in-depth.

Cover letters and resumes have a very specific audience, and you're writing with a very specific goal. Both documents need to work together to accomplish several things:

- Catch the attention of the person doing the hiring
- Align your experiences with the job requirements
- Advertise your personal story
- Illustrate clearly that you're the person for the job

As you can imagine, a standardized cover letter and resume would have trouble accomplishing these things and would limit your opportunities to land that job. While it may be easy to save a cover letter and just change a few names and specifics to send out as part of your job search, this practice is really a disservice to yourself. Likewise, just putting out a standard resume with each job listing is doing more harm than good. Today, computers allow you to modify and specialize your resume in much less time. Simply put, it's time well spent to make yourself stand out.

Since you're going to spend more time personalizing cover letters and crafting resumes to highlight areas that serve you the best, take the time to proofread. Grammatical or spelling errors rarely go unnoticed; they make a bad first impression. Depending on the competition for the job opening, your opportunity may have ended right there.

Use time during the revision process to proofread your work. Read slowly. Read out loud. Have others read over your letter and resume. An error-free submission to the person doing the hiring shows the quality of your communication skills as well as the effort and value you put into your work.



# Cover Letters

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There's a school of thought that the cover letter is heading the way of the dinosaur. It's simply not true. Call it a cover letter or a letter of interest, but the formatting and the message stay the same.

You're looking for a way to stand out from your competition. Your cover letter can be a great tool for this. It's like your 30-second Super Bowl commercial. And while your resume is a listing of education and experience, your cover letter allows you to tell your story. Experts recommend being creative and allowing your personality to work through your words.

There are three stages to writing an exceptional cover letter:

1. **Research.** You should take the time to talk with others or get online and learn about the job position and the business environment. Who is doing the hiring? What does the company specialize in? Is there anything interesting in its past history? What are the company's business goals? Visit the website of the employer. Look for them on LinkedIn and Twitter and anywhere else. Really get to know the company, their goals, values, and culture. Pay attention to the language in their status updates, their newsletters, on their website, and in their blog posts. Look for "buzzwords" that they can effectively use. Does it say the company gives back to the community? Talk about a history of volunteer work (if you have it). Does it talk about the importance of culture? Talk about your experience with teamwork or whatever else they mention.
2. **Write.** Writing the cover letter combines the research you've done with your own experiences and skills. It's a pretty standard format each time. The cover letter allows you to relate everything that highlights your best qualities and gives the freedom to use your own personal style to do so. You should keep your cover letter short—about a page in length with all the most important information presented first.
3. **Revise.** Proofread carefully. Check your spelling. Look over the punctuation marks. Make sure the sentences all work and transition well from one to the other. Check to see that the transitions work well for the paragraphs and that the paragraphs all effectively deliver information.

Using the ABC writing strategy, take a closer look at how your cover letter gets put together.

## Abstract

Your opening paragraph, or *abstract*, should start with a personal touch. Gone are the days of “Dear Sir or Madam” and “To Whom It May Concern.” Today, you should always draft your cover letter to someone, even if that person isn’t initially specified. With online searches, business websites, and social media, it’s much easier to find who does the hiring. You can find who to address by using LinkedIn or an online company directory.

The goal with the abstract is to create a strong opening. You want to hook your reader and make him or her want to keep reading your cover letter. This gives you a chance to be creative and step away from the “I am applying for the (blank) position” mindset that dominates many letters.

Since you’re creating a paragraph that uses words powerfully to engage your reader, find a way to incorporate the following items in a clear, easily-understood manner:

- Introduce yourself.
- Identify the position you’re interested in.
- Add what you would contribute to the organization.

Write forcefully and professionally. Don’t talk about what you would contribute, talk about what you will contribute. Make them picture you in that role and make sure you talk about how your skills and knowledge benefits the company.

## Body

The body of the cover letter is the closest you get to speaking to the reader, as if you were in an interview setting. In one to three paragraphs, you can create the story that can’t be told in the format of a resume. Following a shorter opening paragraph, the body of your cover letter gives you the chance to really sell yourself.

You should write confidently, explaining why you’re the right choice for this position and a great addition to the organization. Now, sell it to others by

- Pairing your experiences to the job requirements
- Highlighting elements of your resume
- Emphasizing the value you bring to the organization

Instead of saying you’re dedicated, *show* the reader that you’re dedicated through previous experiences. Instead of saying you’re a good team member working on projects, prove it by highlighting some features of your work history.

## Conclusion

Don't lose focus now. The conclusion of the cover letter is brief, but it clearly has to tackle three important things:

1. **Express appreciation for the reader's time.** Thank him or her for taking the time to consider you for the job opening.
2. **Indicate any other materials you sent.** If there's a resume enclosed or attached, reference that here.
3. **Seek some type of action or response from the reader.** Typically, this involves contacting you to get further information or to set up an interview.

Now look at a sample cover letter that follows these strategies. This is just a model. Remember to personalize it to fit your personality and the position for which you're applying.

Another way to find samples of industry-specific cover letters is to search the Internet. Type "cover letter sample" and then the industry you're job searching for into a search engine and you'll be able to see many different examples.

**Sample Cover Letter**

117 W Sunnyside Dr.  
Dallas, PA 18612  
(570) 000-0000  
jaburns17@gmail.com

March 15, 2017

Mrs. Sandra Lyons  
Human Resources Director  
Ultra Marketing Group  
1719 Center Ave.  
Bethlehem, PA 18016

Dear Mrs. Lyons,

It is with tremendous interest that I write to you about the marketing associate opening with Ultra Marketing Group. If you are looking to strengthen your marketing team, I fully believe that my experiences and drive for success make me an outstanding candidate to fill this position.

During my final two years at Foster College, I embraced a passion for marketing and public relations. As a result, I found several opportunities to develop my marketing skills. Last summer, I accepted an internship with the Lake Placid Visitor's Bureau in New York. There, I was entrusted with updating web pages and developing a social media presence that featured summer events around the area. The overwhelming response led to additional events in August and the creation of a local blog to feature a new area artist each week.

Upon returning to Foster College, I was honored to be named a senior captain and leader of the Lady Warriors lacrosse team. Being able to balance athletics and academics was rewarding as our team captured our first league championship in 12 years and as I made the dean's list for the third consecutive semester. In the spring, I landed a part-time job with Foster College's athletic department and was responsible for coordinating officials, preparing press releases, and managing pregame and in-game promotions.

As an associate with the Ultra Marketing Group, I will be prepared daily to develop and design marketing programs, work with my peers to implement marketing initiatives, and strengthen my marketing skill set to benefit our clients and this organization as a whole. I pride myself on my dedication to marketing projects and my ability to listen to and work with others.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I will follow up within a week to confirm that my materials were received and hopefully arrange a time to meet for an interview.

Best Regards,

(If this is part of a written letter, a handwritten signature would go here.)

Jackie Burns

# Resumes

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The typical resume is reviewed for roughly 30 seconds. Not only does a strong cover letter help extend that, but so does a clearly organized and efficiently planned resume.

Traditionally, one-page resumes were the standard for most industries, but while those may still be preferred, two-page resumes are necessary at certain times, if there is enough quality information that needs to be provided.

There are four types of resumes:

1. **Chronological.** It works for virtually every business and level of experience. It's the most common type of resume, usually capturing employment in reverse chronological order.
2. **Functional.** It works to highlight skills over employment history. This may be helpful if you have holes in your employment history or are making a career shift.
3. **Combination.** It combines skill sets and a chronological work history. This works best for mid- to senior-level potential employees.
4. **Targeted.** It's specialized and caters to a specific profession. This tailors all the items in the resume to the job and is the most time-consuming type of resume.

Because they're the most widely used, you'll explore the chronological and functional resumes.

## Chronological Resume Format

Here is an outline of the chronological resume format:

- **Contact.** This includes your name and contact information.
- **Professional Experience.** This is the focal point of a chronological resume. List your employment experience in chronological order, starting with the most recent. With each entry, showcase achievements and qualifications with the help of action verbs.
- **Education.** List your educational experience in chronological order, starting with the most recent.  
(*Note:* Students may list this third, before Professional Experience.)
- **Additional Skills.** This is an optional section that can be used to list other relevant qualifications or skills.

Now, take a look at a sample chronological resume.

*Sample Chronological Resume*

**Justine Bing**

345 Jefferson Street  
Smithsville, PA 17402

(814) 555-4321  
J.Bing@domain.com

**Experience:** Juniata College Upward Bound M/S Program, Huntingdon, PA (2014-2017)

- \* Collaborated and developed new curriculum for Upward Bound program
- \* Taught a research writing course with a scientific focus
- \* Taught a college level argumentation course
- \* Coordinated with science department to help facilitate learning
- \* Mentored student groups as part of the presentation process

Educational Testing Services, Trenton, NJ (2011-2017)

- \* Scored SAT essays as a rater for SAT testing windows
- \* Managed time to work four and eight hour shifts for scoring essays

Wellsboro Area High School, Wellsboro, PA (1999-2013)

- \* Developed and implemented AP Language and Composition course
- \* Taught Public Speaking, Senior Institute, and Media Literacy
- \* Served on three Language Arts committees (2000, 2006, 2011)
- \* Worked as a district technology trainer for 11 years
- \* Taught transitional, general, college prep, and honors courses

SAT Prep Coordinator, Wellsboro, PA (2007-2011)

- \* Developed and implemented SAT Verbal classes
- \* Helped over 250 students prepare for the SAT
- \* Managed the SAT Prep program that served three school districts

**Education:** Lock Haven University, Lock Haven, PA (1997-1999)  
Teaching Certification Program

Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA (1992-1996)  
B.A. in Communications, Minor in Literature

- Skills:**
- \* Microsoft Office 365 Certificate (2016)
  - \* Adobe Suite proficiency
  - \* Basic HTML knowledge

## Functional Resume Format

Here is an outline of the functional resume format:

- **Contact.** This includes your name and contact information.
- **Qualifications Summary.** This attention-catching device leads off the resume with your skills and qualifications that are directly related to the job posting. It typically features a job title (*Administrative Assistant*), followed by three or four descriptive qualification words (*Dedicated – Efficient – Organized*). Below this, three to five bullet points are used to highlight the best aspects of your work history.
- **Relevant Skills.** Choose three skills that you possess that are tied to the job posting. For example, one of your skills might be oral communications. Then, below the skill, list three to five bullet points from your experience that support your skill.
- **Professional Experience.** List previous employers here. If there is a gap in your history, feel free to explain in your cover letter.
- **Education.** List of your educational experience in reverse chronological order. (*Note: Current students may list this after Relevant Skills.*)

Now, take a look at a sample functional resume.

## Sample Functional Resume

Cooper Stewart  
14 Stanley Ave.  
Mill Hall, PA 17751

Email: coopstewart646@gmail.com  
Phone: 570-555-6789

### QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY:

### MARKETING ASSOCIATE: EFFICIENT – TECHNICAL – DRIVEN

- Managed a business for three years
- Featured interest in branding ideas
- Developed communications with other employees through interoffice systems and social media
- Mastered advertising methods for community services

### SKILL SET:

#### EFFICIENT

- Skilled in oral and written communications
- Managed commitments as a full-time student-athlete
- Monitored shift times and staffing for retail business for three years

#### TECHNICAL

- Experience using Excel, Word, PowerPoint, and the Internet
- Competent with social media devices
- Detailed knowledge of AdWords
- Work with web writing and blog posting

#### DRIVEN

- Worked to earn a full athletic scholarship at a D1 program
- Became management in retail industry after eight months
- Joined Board of Directors at Camp Rockwell at the age of 24
- Earned the NEPA Marketing Award for volunteer agency work

### EDUCATION:

#### Clarion University

B.S., Business Management

Clarion, PA

May 2016

#### Spring Creek High School

High Honor Roll

Templeton, PA

June 2011

### EXPERIENCE:

#### High Time Clothing – Assistant Manager (2011-2013), Logan Mall, Clarion, PA

- Handled opening and closing procedures
- Managed store personnel with staffing and schedules
- Met sales goals set by corporate office
- Merchandized store and window displays seasonally
- Attended sales meeting with district and regional supervisors

#### Driver's Helper – Seasonal (2010-2011), UDAS, DuBois, PA

- Handled, organized, and loaded package trucks
- Delivered packages to residential and commercial stops and obtained signatures
- Ensured delivery and pick up for time-sensitive packages

#### General Laborer/Certified Flagger – (2009-2010), Stennett Development Company, Harmony, PA

- Supported the main line crew by rigging supplies to be hoisted
- Staged various materials for job crew
- Concealed finished concrete work inside manhole structure
- Directed traffic at intersections



## Additional Resume Formatting

No matter what kind of resume you decide to work with, there are a few points to keep in mind when formatting. When writing a resume, your font choice should be professional. Something traditional like Times New Roman will do just fine--you want your resume to be clean and easily understood. Decorative or wacky fonts may show more personality, but your important information may be lost in the presentation. Black, 10-12 point font is also appropriate.

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## Self-Check 4

**Going along with the ABC writing strategy for a cover letter, explain what elements you want to include in each of the following:**

1. Abstract
2. Body
3. Conclusion

**List the five elements of a chronological resume and the five elements of a functional resume.**

1. Chronological
2. Functional

**Check your answers with those in the back of this study unit.**

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# SECTION 5: STANDARD BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

## *Objective*

When you complete this section, you'll be able to format and write an interoffice memorandum, a routine business letter, and an effective email.

## **Interoffice Memos**

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Although emails 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 and distributed or posted as needed.

Take a look at the interoffice memorandum, which was written to inform.

## COMPUTECH COMPANY

### Interoffice Memorandum

DATE: February 15, 20XX  
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

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. 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.

DATE:	January 10, 20XX
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, that person 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.

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?

As mentioned earlier, emails are replacing hardcopy memos in most workplaces, but the drafting and organizational properties remain the same.

# Business Letters

---

Letters may contain the same kind of information as memos or emails. 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:

- **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.

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.

- **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 spell the recipient's name correctly.
  - 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.
  - If the person you're addressing holds a doctorate (Ph.D.) or is a physician, use *Dr.* as the professional 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, you can check with an assistant who works in the office of the person you're trying to contact or you can search online.
  - If you don't know the name or names of persons you're writing to, you can use *Dear Sir or Madam* or *To Whom It May Concern* (if you're writing a letter of recommendation). However, with today's technology, you should be able to personalize your salutation almost all of the time.

- **Body.** Before you begin the first paragraph in the body of a letter, insert a double space. The paragraphs in the body of the letter should be single-spaced, with a double space between paragraphs. Write well-crafted sentences and coherent paragraphs. 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.

There are different types of business communications, which are addressed at the end of this section. Here's an example of a positive business letter, one that gives good news of some kind—take note of the correct formatting and spacing:

#### ***Sample Positive Business Letter***

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

February 21, 20XX

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

## 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. 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.

Along those lines, don't choose "Full Justification" for your alignment. This evens your left and right margins, but it spaces the words unnaturally and is more difficult for the reader. For business letters, always align with "Left Justification."

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.

## Attention and Subject Lines

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, another option allows you to 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, or the names of months.
- Don't abbreviate words like *road*, *street*, or *avenue*.
- When writing letters, follow the same rules for capitalization as you would for any other kind of effective writing.
- 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.)

## Emails

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In today's world, email has become the workhorse of business communication. "Checking email" has become an office ritual that people repeat many times in a business day.

Memos and business letters have given way to emails because emails can be prepared quickly, sent instantly, forwarded, and replied to. Additionally, they may be used to transmit images, graphs, charts, tables, and presentations.

Because of the large volume of email traffic, the office computer has become a creature that needs managing. It may become very tempting to respond briefly and informally to emails that need "cleared out." It's also too easy to send ill-considered responses. For these reasons and others, email discipline is a skill demanded of all kinds of people in all kinds of organizations.



## Using Email Safely and Effectively

*Safety* in email use refers partly to your safety and partly to organizational security. An email that you send to one individual may end up on the computers of people you didn't intend to address. Emails that include company policies or strategies may end up in places you would rather they didn't. Furthermore, email 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 email correspondence will be monitored for quality assurance. In that way, you're more likely to be careful about what you have to say.

## Avoiding Email Viruses

A *virus* is a program or piece of computer code that gets into your computer without your knowledge. Viruses can do a variety of damage, from creating pop-ups to crashing systems to stealing personal information. As part of a cyber attack, an email can arrive at your computer carrying viruses with it, many times as part of an attachment. For that reason, it makes sense to follow some basic guidelines to avoid such an attack:

- **Be wary of attachments, even when you know the sender.** If you aren't expecting an attachment, check with the sender before opening.
- **Watch out for web links in emails.** Make certain that the URL is going to the site that you want.
- **Never reply to spam emails.** Once you reply or acknowledge spam emails, you confirm your email address and open yourself to more spam and possible cybercrimes.
- **Never enter personal or financial information.** Emails have a very low level of security, so if you or your organization considers the information to be private, don't send it in an email.
- **Don't be caught by "phishers."** Avoid entering personal information as a response to an email on a website to which you were directed. If you want to verify the communication, contact the organization by phone.

In fact, many companies and organizations not only provide training on safe email practices, they send "dangerous" emails periodically to employees to monitor the care (or lack thereof) with which employees handle email communication. Always be alert. One mistake on your part may cause or contribute to a catastrophic loss of information or even the collapse of a network.

## Email Guidelines

In the past several years, proper use of email communications has grown increasingly important. Here are several email standards you should follow when corresponding by email:

- Keep the emails you send concise and to the point. If you find yourself writing more than a few paragraphs, a phone call or face-to-face meeting might be more beneficial.
- Carefully create messages intended for external parties, and generally make them a bit more formal than those directed to people within your organization.
- Use standard grammar, punctuation, and word choices just as you would for any type of written communication. Always spell-check what you've written before you send it.
- Remember to use appropriate capitalization and typeface. The tone of an email can create confusion. All caps and boldface tend to indicate anger. Don't lead a reader into a false emotional state.
- Don't send anything you wouldn't want published. What you write and how you write will be accessible years later.
- Before sending large attachments, check to be sure your recipient's email system meets the size requirements.
- Be careful about expressing your emotions. Again, without a personal connection, humor may be read offensively and frustration can be viewed as anger, just to name a few.
- Compose the content of an email in a document program first if you're concerned about the message and how it may be received. Write and revise as needed before copying, pasting, and sending it out.
- Always include a subject line, and make sure it clearly states what the email is about.
- Never use offensive language or include vulgar, racist, or sexist comments.
- Remember that you're communicating with real people. Extend the same courtesy you would to someone in person or on the telephone. Once you hit the Send button, you can't change anything.
- CC (which stand for carbon copy) others who you're not addressing directly, but need to see your message. You can also BCC (blind carbon copy) certain individuals, which allows them to see your email, but does not allow the direct recipients to know that it was sent to that person.

## Formatting Email

Study the following sample of an email directed to a person outside the organization to get an idea of an effective formatting approach to email messages.

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

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.

In conclusion, always keep in mind that the way any business communication appears to a reader sends a message about you, the writer. Make certain that your work is error-free and conveys a clear, efficient meaning with the appropriate tone.

# Types of Business Letters and Emails

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Although every correspondence is unique in and of itself, the types of business letters and emails you'll have to write generally fall into four different categories: positive communications, negative communications, neutral communications, and sales communications.

## Positive Communications

Positive letters or emails 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 positive communications would be sent are:

- Informing a company that its bid has been accepted
- Writing a complimentary letter of recommendation
- Answering a customer's question about product quality

When you're developing a positive letter or email, 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.

Refer to the sample positive letter in the section Business Letters > Components for an example.

## Negative Communications

Negative letters or emails contain some type of bad news. They're more difficult to write and tougher to send or receive. Here are some situations in which you may have to write a negative letter or email:

- Informing a customer that his or her order will be delayed
- Complaining to another business about its service or product quality
- Informing an applicant that you can't use his or her services

When writing negative communications, 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 or email just as you would a positive one. Tell the person the news right in the beginning. State the information in a clear, straightforward, tactful manner so that the receiver understands what you're saying. 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.

***Sample Negative Business 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

## Neutral Communications

As their name implies, neutral letters or emails are neither positive nor negative. They're simply a necessary part of day-to-day business. Such situations could be:

- Preparing or responding to an inquiry
- Ordering materials or supplies from another company
- Inviting someone to a company-sponsored event

In writing a neutral letter or email, 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.

## Sales Communications

As you would expect, the intent of a sales letter or email is to convince the reader to purchase a particular product or service. In a sense, however, anything you write to a client is about sales. 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 opportunities:

- 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, 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, 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."



# Self-Check 5

**Questions 1–4: Answer the following questions in one to three sentences.**

1. In order, list the six components of every business letter.
2. What is meant by the concept of using email safely? Respond in a paragraph of four to six sentences.
3. Explain at least four sound practices to follow with writing emails.
4. Identify the four types of business communications, and give an example of a situation where you might use each one.

**Check your answers with those in the back of this study unit.**

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# SECTION 6: ONLINE WRITING

## Objective

When you complete this section, you'll be able to identify the different ways to write for blogs, the Internet, and social media.

## Networking

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The world of technology today makes reaching out to the consumer easier than it's ever been. Smart businesses are finding ways to connect with customers on a variety of levels. The popularity of networking has soared as the Internet offers a cost-effective way of promoting one's business.

The upside to using the Internet for business ventures continues to grow year after year. Wisely establishing communication offerings with technology can broaden your market reach, lead to more sales, and entrench your organization as a leading authority in the industry.

Product- or business-related blogs attract consumers and prospects alike. Web writing and design have become increasingly efficient and focused over the years. Social media networks, like Facebook and Twitter, are staples of companies and organizations. The common thread with writing for any or all of these brands of networking is simply this: Make your message clear.

## Blog Posting

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Many businesses are aligning themselves with blogs or developing their own. Writing a blog post for a business or organization should center on being helpful and constructive. In other words, write what you know.

Blog posts should occur on a regular basis, but not so frequently that they saturate the market and turn readers off. Consider your audience when determining how often you should post. Answer the questions your target audience is likely to have. With a blog, the goal is to be the go-to-authority in your industry, so planning a timely and effective schedule is key.

Planning is essential for overseeing a successful blog. Topics should be organized and scheduled in advance. Additionally, the first draft of a blog post should *not* be the published blog post. Like other business and technical writing, the hours dedicated to revising and proofreading is time well spent.

Search online for examples of an editorial calendar. There are different kinds of online writing calendars that can help you in this important planning for not only blog posts, but social media and other online writing as well.



It would be wise to also consider that search engine algorithms are changing all the time. Using keywords in your writing is considered a best practice, but your blog should also aim for interacting and engaging your audience in a friendly and conversational way.

Here are some other tips for writing and maintaining a blog:

- **Know your audience.** As you're writing, keep your readers in mind because your topic, approach, and style are all tailored to them.
- **A good title makes a world of difference.** You're out to attract potential readers. Use action verbs to help your title stand out and increase your presence in search engines.
- **Consider involving everyone at some point.** Instead of being the one employee writing a blog post each week, bring others in. Get people from different business areas and experiences writing and posting. The variety of styles and tone will serve to attract readers.
- **Be responsive.** Your readers are either customers or potential customers. When responding to comments and questions, be polite, civil, and dignified.

## Web Writing

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Content on websites faces its own set of challenges, the greatest being that more than 80 percent of viewers can be labeled as *skimmers* and *scanners*. Precious few people arrive at a website with the intention of reading the material. Visitors are hunting for information and are prepared to move on quickly.

Web writing is also commonly known as content writing.

As a result, web writing is its own special craft. First, the content must be written to be scanned instead of read. People are going to arrive at the page and guess whether the information is right for them. If the writer isn't prepared for this audience, the viewer will be onto the next search engine hit in a matter of seconds.

To write for scanners, review these helpful writing strategies:

- **Put the most important information first.** You don't have time to lay groundwork and build to a point. You need the primary focus to be your message, followed by support.
- **Don't make reading complicated.** First, use familiar words, which are easy to read (and big winners in search engines). Next, write short sentences and help them flow together by using clear transitions. Finally, write in small paragraphs. If the paragraph is more than five sentences, break it up.

- **Make the text appealing to the reader.** Simply, make your writing clear. A straightforward approach beats a creative one. Use subheadings and bullet points to organize the text and appeal to the reader.
- **Be conversational.** Refer to your readers as “you,” like you’re chatting with a friend over coffee. Write with an active voice to spark greater interest. Avoid jargon and overly technical language.
- **Make a visual impression.** Viewers like white space (think about Google’s home page). Text and design are geared to work together. Photos and videos can be helpful. Font sizes, highlighting, and boldface are just a few ways to capture readers’ attention.
- **Watch out for viewers coming from anywhere.** People might come through only the front door of a store, but they can show up anywhere on your website. Thus, there are rules with every page on your website:
  - Consistently follow the visual and writing guidelines for websites
  - Clearly title each page so people know where they are
  - Always include an element of action, directing people where to go next on your website.

With reaching out and attracting viewers to your website, keep in mind that this is business and you’re working to earn their trust. Make certain that your web writing is

- Factual and up to date
- Consistent with your branding and business goals
- Error-free

## Social Media

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The popularity of social media networks may fluctuate, but the overall impact of social media only continues to grow. Like other technology-based works, your goal with social media is to grow sales and expand your reach. In the world of social media, this means being shared. How does one increase that opportunity? Simple: Create and write share-worthy posts.

At the same time, don't forget to share others' posts. As a general rule, you should share three to five items for every post that you create. It validates others and develops a stronger network for your business.

Writing is more limited in social media, but maybe that gives it greater importance. Here are some tips:

- **Write and post with a purpose; that purpose is determined by your audience.** Keep your tone casual and friendly.
- **Be brief.** Set word counts aside and just say what you're there to say.
- **Start with a great headline (to hook your readers) and finish with social media share buttons at the bottom of the post.** If you want to be shared, make it easy for your readers.
- **Speaking of being shared, use visual images.** Posts with images are shared much more often than posts with text alone.
- **Cross-post.** Send out the same post with different social media outlets. You'll increase visibility and capture a larger audience.
- **Don't be afraid to ask questions.** You'll get others to join in the conversation, bringing greater depth and various perspectives to a topic.
- **Offer timely, helpful information to your readers.** All business and technical writing should be useful, but timeliness is the heart and soul of social media.
- **Familiarize yourself with the type of content that works best for social media platform.** For instance, learn how to effectively cultivate and use hashtags to maximize your Twitter or Instagram audience. Keep longer videos or content-heavy articles for Facebook.

Social media will continue to evolve, and your job as a business writer and contributor is to evolve with it. You can test similar posts to see what generates a better response. You certainly can look at data from past posts to improve future ones. In the end, you won't just be sharing posts; you'll be sharing in success.



## Self-Check 6

**Answer the following questions in one to three sentences.**

1. Explain how the common thread of “writing for your audience” applies to business and technical writing for blogs, websites, and social media.
2. What are three important elements to follow when writing or revising text for a website?
3. What is one element of social media writing that’s unique to that medium? Explain why your choice works for social media but not for other formats like emails, business letters, and so on.

**Check your answers with those in the back of this study unit.**

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# SELF-CHECK ANSWERS

## Self-Check 1

1. Fragment: While crossing the busy intersection, Charles realized he had taken a wrong turn.
2. Sentence
3. Fragment: To start the machine, you must press two buttons at once.
4. Run-on sentence: You can correct this sentence in at least four different ways:
  - a. The budget is too high; we must make some reductions.
  - b. The budget is too high. We must make some reductions.
  - c. Since the budget is too high, we must make some reductions.
  - d. The budget is too high; therefore, we must make some reductions.
5. Sentence

### Questions 6–9: Here are some possible revisions; yours may vary:

6. He smiled from ear to ear when his friends arrived.
7. The president has promised to reduce the budget.
8. She served as secretary of the club for six years.
9. The jury deliberated for four hours.
10. The committee signed the report.
11. H. B. Stratton Company constructed the building.
12. The moderator determined the topic.
13. The new company delivered the shipment on time.
14. The new electronics technician repaired the radio.
15. The team won by only two points.
16. She lost almost 10 pounds.
17. As I crossed the street, the truck nearly hit me.
18. Don't put those clothes on until you iron them. Or: Don't put those clothes on until they're ironed.
19. She noticed a misplaced modifier dangling at the end of the sentence.
20. The department manager plans the daily schedule, but the line supervisor plans the workload.

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

## Self-Check 2

1. The following answer is 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. The following answer is a suggestion; 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. The crowd cheered for the conductor, applauded loudly, and insisted on an encore.
5. 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, though you may have identified some different ones:
  - The second sentence uses the pronoun “These” to refer to elements. This technique connects the first two sentences.
  - The second sentence contains examples to illustrate the elements mentioned in the first sentence.
  - The fourth sentence includes the phrase “For example” to let the readers know they’re going to see an example of how atoms combine.

- The fifth sentence begins with “The result of the combination,” which refers to the combination mentioned in the previous sentence.
- 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).

Here are some possible revisions; yours may vary:

3. I decided not to go to the movies, since (or because) I had already seen the show they had chosen.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. To ignite the grill, open the valve on the gas tank. Then, turn on the gas and press the ignite button.
7. Charles wanted to attend the celebration. Nevertheless, he stayed home, since he had promised to care for his two nephews.

## Self-Check 4

### 1. Abstract:

- Introduce yourself
- Identify the position you’re interested in
- Add what you would contribute to the organization

### 2. Body:

- Pair your experiences to the job requirements
- Highlight elements of your resume
- Emphasize the value you bring to the organization

### 3. Conclusion

- Express appreciation for the reader’s time. Thank them for taking the time to consider you for the job opening.
- Indicate any other materials you sent. If there’s a resume enclosed or attached, reference that here.
- Seek some type of action or response from the reader. Typically, this involves contacting you to get further information or to set up an interview.

4. Chronological:
  - Contact
  - Statement
  - Professional Experiences
  - Education
  - Additional Skills/Achievements
5. Functional:
  - Contact
  - Qualifications Summary
  - Relevant Skills
  - Professional Experience
  - Education

## **Self-Check 5**

1. Any business letter has the following components:
  - Heading
  - Inside address
  - Salutation
  - Body
  - Complimentary close
  - Signature block
2. Your paragraph will be uniquely individual, but it should touch on some of the following items:
  - Be wary of attachments.
  - Watch out for web links in emails.
  - Never reply to spam emails.
  - Never enter personal or financial information.
  - Don't be caught by "phishers."
3. Choose any four of the following:
  - In general, keep the emails you send concise and to the point.
  - Carefully create messages intended for external parties.



- Use standard grammar, punctuation, and word choices just as you would for any type of written communication.
  - Remember to use appropriate capitalization and typeface.
  - Don't send anything you wouldn't want published.
  - Before sending large attachments, check to be sure your recipient's email system meets the size requirements.
  - Be careful about expressing your emotions.
  - Compose the content of an email in a document program first.
  - Always include a subject line, and make sure it clearly states what the email is about.
  - Never use offensive language or include vulgar, racist, or sexist comments.
  - Remember that you're communicating with real people.
4. The four types of business communications are as follows:
- a. Positive, which could be used for
    - Informing a company that its bid has been accepted
    - Writing a complimentary letter of recommendation
    - Answering a customer's question about product quality
  - b. Negative, which could be used for
    - Informing a customer that his or her order will be delayed
    - Complaining to another business about its service or product quality
    - Informing an applicant that you can't use his or her services
  - c. Neutral, which could be used for
    - Preparing or responding to an inquiry
    - Ordering materials or supplies from another company
    - Inviting someone to a company-sponsored event
  - d. Sales, which could be used for
    - 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

## Self-Check 6

1. Your response may differ from this sample response: With business and technical writing, it's important for writers always to consider their audience. With this method, your topic, your approach, and your style will all be tailored to the appropriate audience. This component may be even more important with blogs, websites, and social media because the audience needs to be "hooked" more effectively than with other types of writing. Web-based writing requires not just a knowledge of the audience but an understanding of how to attract them, sustain their interest, and share your message with them.
2. Any of the following work for writing or revising text as part of web writing:
  - Put the most important information first.
  - Don't make reading complicated.
  - Make the text appealing to the reader.
  - Be conversational.
  - Make a visual impression.
  - Watch out for viewers coming from anywhere.
3. The following writing elements apply primarily to social media and don't correspond with other business writing elements.
  - Be brief.
  - Finish with social media share buttons at the bottom of the post.
  - Use visual images, since posts with images are shared much more often than posts with text alone.
  - Increase visibility and capture a larger audience by cross-posting.

# GRADED PROJECT

## BACKGROUND

Phoenix Advertising, with its main headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina, serves clients that include banks, insurance companies and local businesses such as restaurants and shops. You're the vice president of human resources management at Phoenix, and you report directly to Gregory S. Forest, the president of the company.

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 Roanoke branch and its clients are vital to the overall success of the company.

Mr. Forest explains what he has learned about the situation at the Roanoke branch over the last three months. Three graphic designers and four copywriters have threatened to quit because their creative contributions on projects are being rejected or revised without their input. They want to be part of a collaborative team, not to simply produce work that the art directors and account executives can alter arbitrarily. These changes to projects have also caused tension between the creative teams and account managers, causing an art director and an account manager to leave the agency.

In addition to the four clients who complained, others have not renewed their contracts with Roanoke. Several have posted poor reviews of the Roanoke branch on social media sites, leading to a drop in profits.

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.

## ASSIGNMENT

### Part 1: Interoffice Memorandum to Executive Team

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Write an interoffice memo to the executive team of Phoenix Advertising

- Use the ABC method of development
- In one paragraph, summarize the situation at the Roanoke branch

- Explain how the situation affects Phoenix Advertising as a company and why it demands immediate attention.
- In a separate paragraph, assign each member of the team a different fact-finding task.
- Give the executives instructions for reporting back to you (memo, email, report, etc.) and a deadline.
- Conclude your email with an appropriate final line or two, thanking them for their cooperation in this matter.
- Copy the president

## Part 2: Email to Payroll Office at Roanoke Branch.

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Write an email to the person in charge of payroll at the Roanoke branch of Phoenix Advertising. If necessary, brainstorm further about your department, your staff, and the agency's policies about overtime.

- 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.
- Using the ABC method, draft an e-mail of three to four paragraphs.
- Briefly acknowledge that you are aware of the problems at the Roanoke branch.
- Assign the staff person in charge of payroll to provide you with payroll statements from the Roanoke branch for the last 12 months.
- 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. Do not use an email app for this part of the exam.

## Part 3: Letter to Phoenix Advertising's Social Media Director

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Write a business letter to the social media director of Phoenix advertising. If necessary, brainstorm further. Draw on your own experience reading reviews and other online content.

- Create Phoenix Advertising letterhead.
- Use proper business letter format and including an attention line, a salutation, three to four paragraphs using the ABC method, and a signature block. Use a script font to emulate a signature.
- Acknowledge the importance of the social media team's work for the company
- Briefly summarize the areas of concern at Roanoke that Mr. Forest has brought to your attention.
- Explain that you've read the clients' comments online, and create 2-3 examples of critical or negative postings.
- Ask the social media director to research these and any other posts, and to come up with a plan to respond and to rehabilitate the Roanoke branch's reputation in the business community.
- Give the director instructions for reporting back to you (memo, email, report, etc.) and a deadline.

# GRADING CRITERIA

The following rubric will be used to grade your project.

Writing Effective Communications Graded Project				
Skill/Grading Criteria	Skill Realized A / 100-90	Sufficient B / 89-80	Developing C / 79-70	Needs Improvement F / 69-0
<p><b>Interoffice Memo</b></p> <p><i>Content:</i> effectively summarized the situation; clearly explained how the problems at the branch affect the company; assigned appropriate tasks to the executive team; gave instructions and deadline for submitting reports</p> <p><i>Format:</i> Used correct heading in all caps; equal tab; appropriate subject line in title case; copied to president</p>	25-24	24-23	22-20	19-0

<p><b>Email</b></p> <p><i>Content:</i> briefly acknowledged the problems at the branch; included clear requests for necessary information; gave instructions and deadline for submitting information.</p> <p><i>Format:</i> used appropriate business email addresses; used appropriate subject line in title case;</p>	15-13	13-11	11-9	9-0
<p><b>Business Letter</b></p> <p><i>Content:</i> effectively acknowledged the importance of the teams work; effectively summarized the situation; included 2-3 appropriate negative online postings; clearly requested director to re-search negative reviews and create a plan to respond.</p> <p><i>Format:</i> created appropriate letterhead; included correct attention line and signature block.</p>	25-23	22-21	21-19	19-0

<p><b>Audience awareness, tone, and word choice:</b> Effectively used professional tone and correct word choice to convey information to each audience as appropriate.</p>	15-13	13-11	11-10	10-0
<p><b>Grammar, sentence structure, and mechanics:</b> Effectively edited and proofread to ensure correct application of standard written conventions for American English.</p>	15-13	13-11	11-10	10-0
<p><b>General format:</b> Applied correct font, justification, header info.</p>	5-4	4-3	3-2	2-0



# SUBMITTING YOUR PROJECT

Type your two emails and web announcement in the same document and save it as a Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) file. Be sure that the file contains the following information:

- Your name
- Your student ID number
- The lesson number (35001800)
- Your email address

To submit your graded project, follow these steps:

1. Go to <http://www.pennfoster.edu>.
2. Log in to your student portal.
3. Click on **Take Exam** next to the lesson you're working on.
4. Follow the instructions provided to complete your exam.

Be sure to keep a backup copy of any files you submit to the school!