

# Technical Communication: Process and Product 6<sup>th</sup> Edition

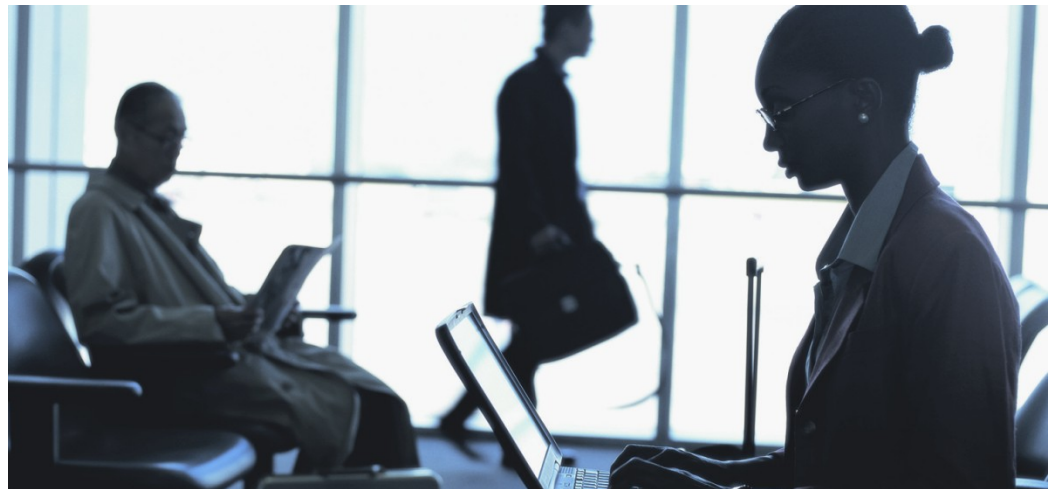
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# Chapter 6: Routine Correspondence: Memos, Letters, E-mail, and Instant Messaging

This chapter discusses the following:

- Memos
- Letters
- E-mail
- Instant Messaging



# What Are the Differences?

- Memos and Letters (hard copy) vs. E-mail and Instant Messaging (electronic)
- Memos and E-mail have similarities and differences.

See Table 6.1 for a comparison/contrast of memos, letters, and e-mail.

# Memos

- Purposes
  - Internal correspondence within a company
  - To inform, persuade, instruct, and build rapport

# Memos (cont.)

- Audiences
  - A wide range of readers, including your supervisors, co-workers, subordinates, and multiple combinations of these audiences



# Memos (cont.)

- Criteria for effective memos
  - Subject Line
  - Introduction
  - Discussion
  - Conclusion
  - Style
  - Grammar

# Memos (cont.)

- Subject Line
  - First line of communication
  - Includes a *topic* and a *focus*

Example:

Subject: Request for Month-end Expenditures

Focu  
s



Topic

# Memos (cont.)

- Introduction
  - Explain *why* you are writing.
  - Tell *what* you are writing about.

Example:

*Why* you are writing

To help me complete my monthly budget report, please send me a copy of your month-end expenditures.

*What* you are writing about



# Memos (cont.)

- Discussion
  - Explain *exactly* what you want.
  - Itemize your needs for easy access.

Example:

Be sure to include the following expenses:

- Mileage
- Food
- Hotel room charges

What exactly



# Memos (cont.)

- Conclusion
  - Tell what's next
    - *When* you expect a follow-up
    - *Why* that date is important

Example:

Please send your month-end expenditures by Wednesday at 3:00 p.m.  
This will allow me to complete the budget report by John's deadline.

When

Why

# Memos (cont.)

- Memo Style
  - Generally more casual than letters. Memos are internal correspondence written to people with whom you work.
  - Determined by audience, topic, and purpose
    - A memo written up to management might be more formal than one written laterally to co-workers.
    - A memo written to deny a raise request would be more formal and less friendly than a memo written to report a promotion.

# Memos (cont.)

- Grammar
  - All technical communication must be grammatically correct, regardless of audience, purpose, or topic.

# Letters

- Letters are *external* correspondence (unlike memos, which are *internal*).
- Letters reflect your communication abilities.
- Letters reflect your company's professionalism.



# Letter Components

- Essential Components
  - Writer's address
  - Date
  - Inside address (reader's address)
  - Salutation
  - Letter body
  - Complimentary close
  - Signed name
  - Typed name

# Letter Components (cont.)

- Optional components
  - Subject line
  - New page notations
  - Writer's and Typist's Initials
  - Enclosure notation
  - Copy notation

# Letter Wizards and Templates

- Wizards allow you to fill in blank fields to help you with your letter's format and content.
- Templates provide already-designed formats for “Contemporary Letters,” “Elegant Letters,” and “Professional Letters.”



# Letter Formats

- Full Block Format
  - Type all information at the left margin—no indentations.
- Modified Block Format
  - Indent paragraphs.
- Simplified Format
  - Type all information at the left margin—no indentations.
  - Omit the salutation.
  - Include a subject line.
  - Omit the complimentary close.

# Criteria for Different Types of Letters

- Learn how to write
  - Letters of Inquiry
  - Cover Letters
  - Good-news Letters
  - Bad-news Letters
  - Complaint Letters
  - Adjustment Letters

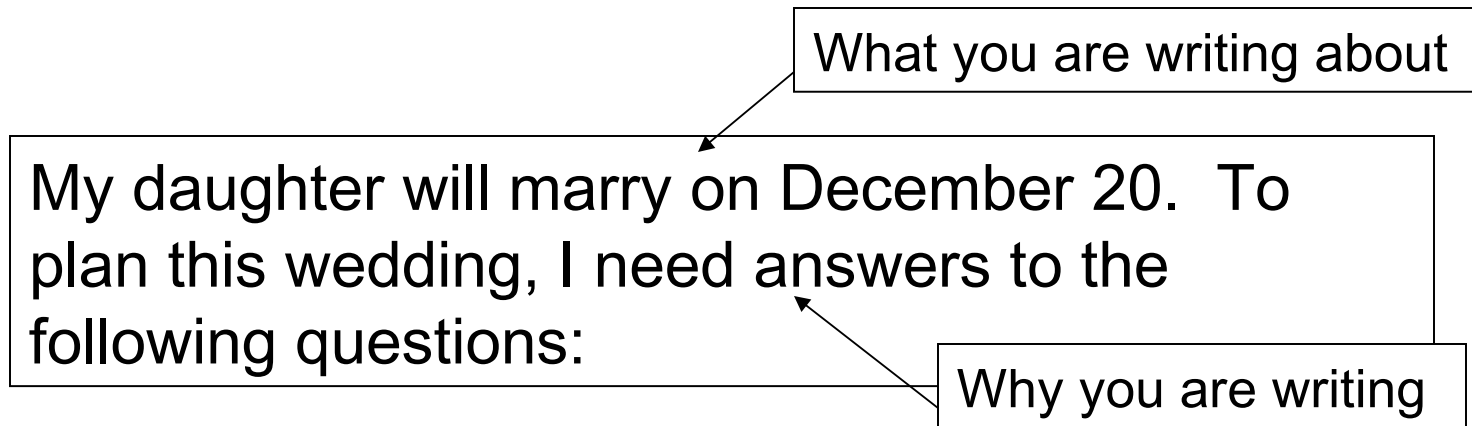
# Letters of Inquiry

- Letters of Inquiry allow you to ask questions.
- To write a Letter of Inquiry, provide an:
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Conclusion

# Letters of Inquiry (cont.)

- Introduction
  - Tell *what* you are writing about.
  - Tell *why* you are writing.

Example:



# Letters of Inquiry (cont.)

- Body
  - Specify your requests.
  - Itemize (when possible) for easy access.
    - If you itemize, be sure the points are grammatically parallel.

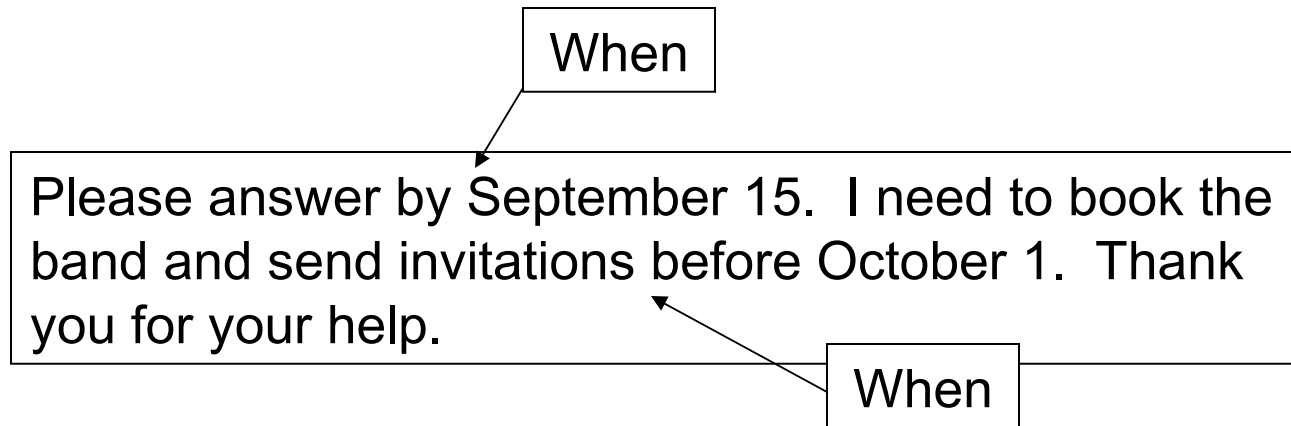
Example:

- Can you provide vegetarian meals?
- Can the room seat 150 people?
- Does the cost of the meal include cold drinks?

# Letters of Inquiry (cont.)

- Conclusion
  - Tell *when* you need answers.
  - Tell *why* that date is important.

Example:



# Cover Letters

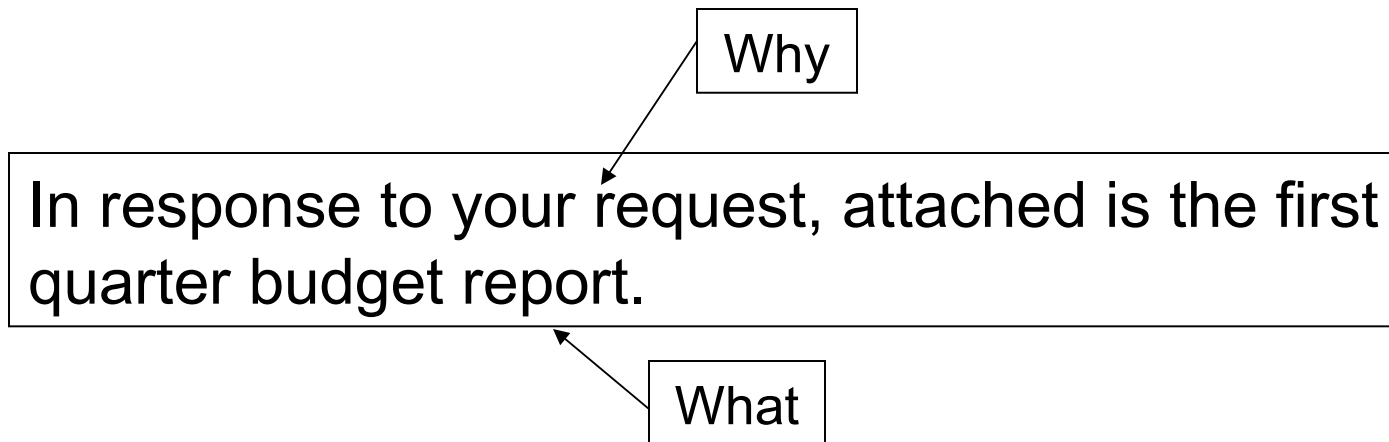
- Cover Letters preface attachments.
- To write a Cover Letter, provide an:
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Conclusion



# Cover Letters (cont.)

- Introduction
  - Tell *why* you are writing.
  - Tell *what* you are writing about.

Example:





# Cover Letters (cont.)

## ● **Body**

- Specify what is within the attachment of special interest to your reader.
- Itemize (when possible) for easy access.
  - If you itemize, be sure the points are grammatically parallel.

## **Example:**

Of special interest, the attachment contains the following:

- Rental car expenditures . . . p. 2
- Machinery upgrade costs . . . p. 5
- Maintenance fees . . . p. 7

Page #s can help your reader find the information more easily.

# Cover Letters (cont.)

- Conclusion
  - Provide desired follow-up action
    - Tell if you plan or need a response.
    - Tell when you plan or need a response.

Example:

What follow-up is needed

Please review the budget report and give me the approval for a go-ahead. My deadline to secure the machinery upgrade costs is February 12.

When follow-up is needed

# Good-news Letters

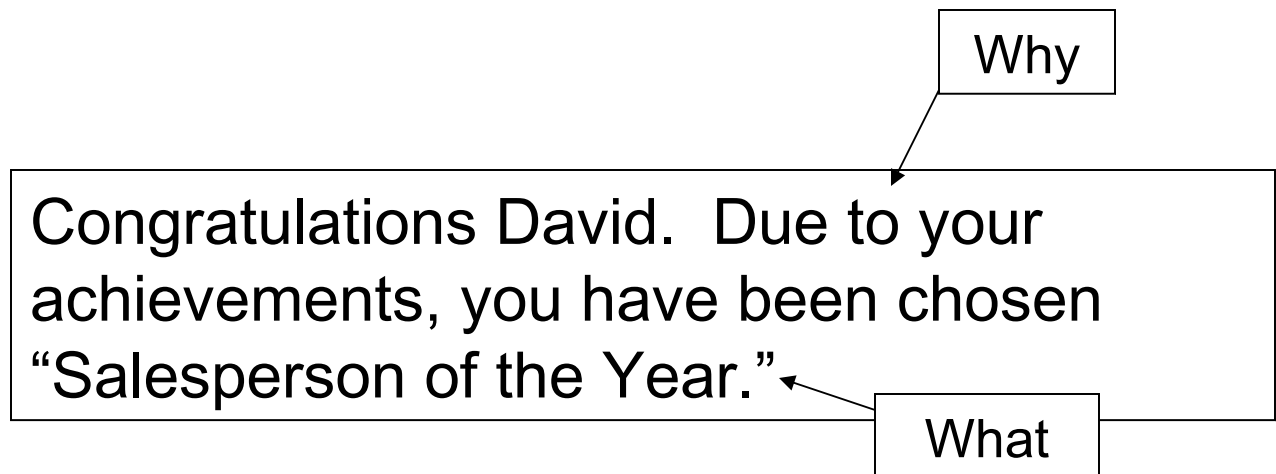
- Good-news letters convey good news (hirings, promotions, raises, etc.)
- To write a good-news letter, provide an:
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Conclusion



# Good-news Letters (cont.)

- Introduction
  - The point is good news, so get to the point.
    - Tell *why* you are writing.
    - Tell *what* you are writing about.

Example:



# Good-news Letters (cont.)

## ● **Body**

- Specify what has led to the good news.
- Itemize (when possible) for easy access.
  - If you itemize, be sure the points are grammatically parallel.

## **Example:**

You have earned this honor for the following reasons:

- You sold 122 computer systems in 2008.
- You were named salesperson of the month eight times.
- You trained 15 new employees.

# Good-news Letters (cont.)

- Conclusion
  - End upbeat.
  - Tell the reader what follow-up action is expected (if any).

Example:

David, you will receive a 15 percent raise starting today. Great work!

# Bad-news Letters

- Bad-news letters convey bad news (firings, layoffs, denied promotions or raises, suspensions, or probationary status)
- To write a bad-news letter, provide an:
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Conclusion



# Bad-news Letters (cont.)

- Introduction
  - Begin with a buffer to soften and lead up to the bad news.
    - State a fact that the reader can accept as valid.

Example:

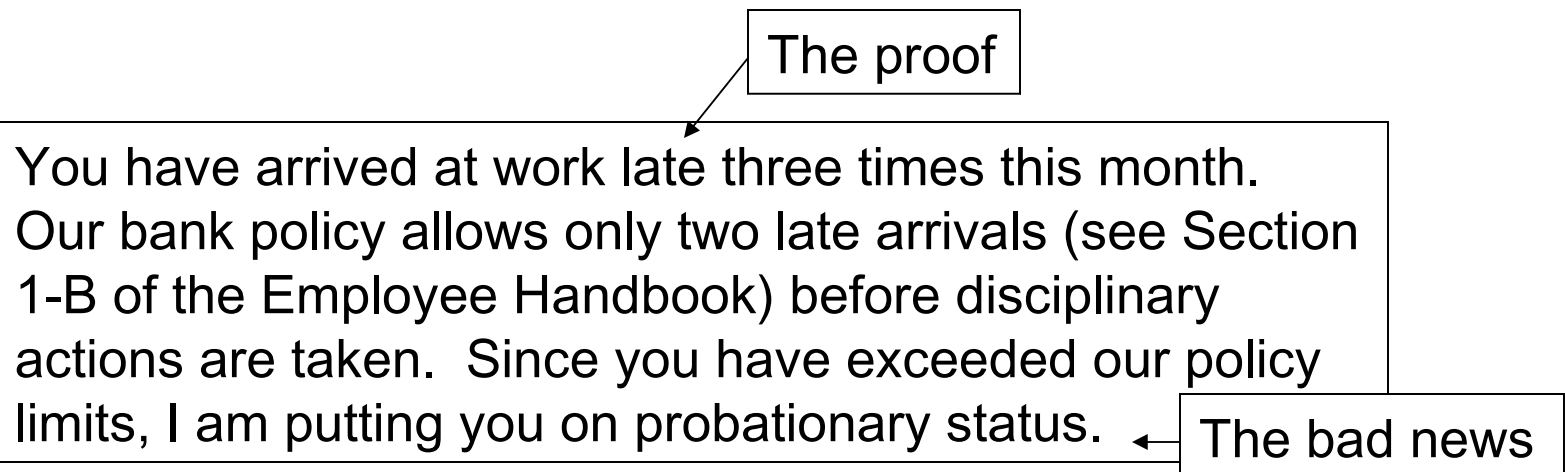
Beth, as you know, coming to work on time is mandatory. Clerks must be at the service windows by 8:00 a.m. to help customers.



# Bad-news Letters (cont.)

- Body
  - Provide proof, persuading your reader to accept the bad news.
  - Give the bad news.

## Example:



# Bad-news Letters (cont.)

- Conclusion
  - Provide options for future success
  - End upbeat

Example:

Options

If you incur no further late arrivals within the next three months, Beth, I will remove the probationary status from your records. This will allow you to work toward promotion points and earn a pay raise. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss this and other issues at your convenience.

# Complaint Letters

- Complaint Letters let you complain about bad service or products.
- To write a complaint letter, provide an:
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Conclusion

# Complaint Letters (cont.)

- Introduction
  - Politely state the problem.
  - Provide specific details (serial numbers, invoice numbers, receipts, check numbers, dates of purchase, customer contact names, etc.)

Example:

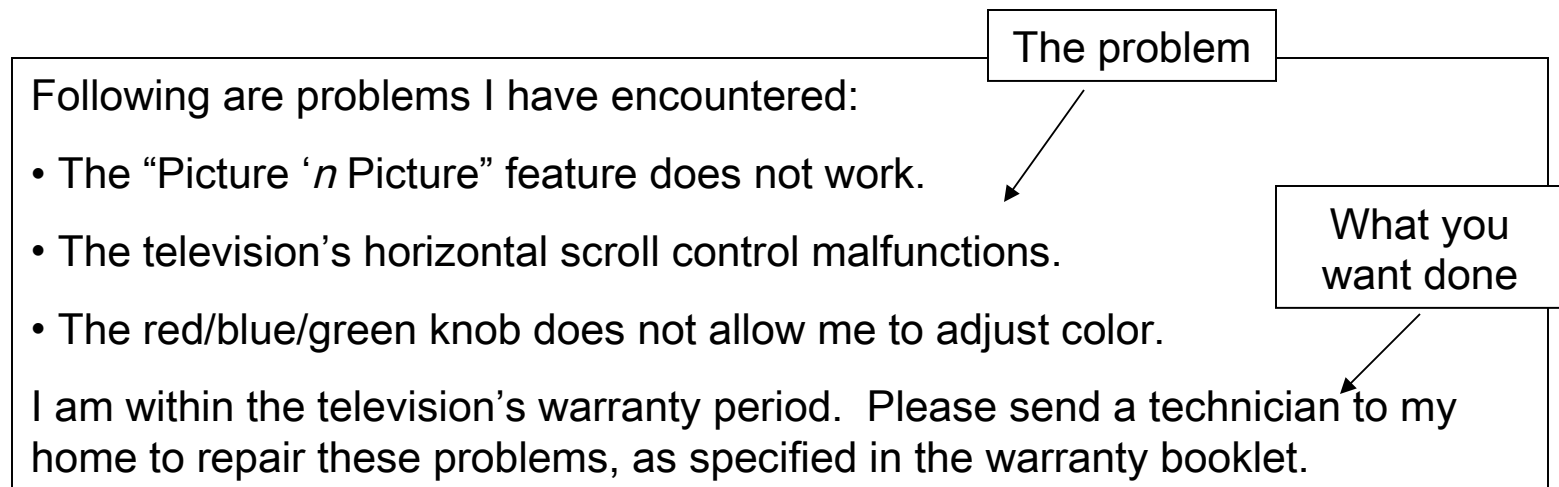
On August 13, I purchased a RaD<sup>x</sup> television (serial number 210993cxb) at your 9210 Oak Street store (copy of receipt attached). After six months of operation, the television has stopped working properly.

# Complaint Letters (cont.)

## ● Body

- Explain in detail the nature of your complaint.
- Itemize (when possible) for easy access.
  - If you itemize, be sure the points are grammatically parallel.
- State what you want done to solve the problem.

## Example:



# Complaint Letters (cont.)

- Conclusion
  - End your letter politely.
  - Provide contact information.

Example:

I have bought several RaD<sup>x</sup> televisions from your store in the past and enjoyed working with your sales help. Please call me at 1-888-555-2121 to set up an appointment with your repair service.

# Adjustment Letters

- When you respond to letters of complaint, you have three options:
  - 100 percent Yes
  - 100 percent No
  - Partial Adjustment

# Adjustment Letters—100 percent Yes Letters

- 100 percent Yes Adjustment Letters are like Good-News Letters.
- To write 100 percent Yes Letters, provide an:
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Conclusion



# Adjustment Letters—100 percent Yes Letters (cont.)

## ● Introduction

- The point is good news, so get to the point.
  - Tell *why* you are writing—in response to a complaint
  - Tell *what* you are writing about—to agree with the reader's request.

Example:

Why you are writing

Thank you for writing about your inoperable printer.  
We are happy to fix the equipment at no charge.

What you are writing about

# Adjustment Letters—100 percent Yes Letters (cont.)

- Body
  - Explain what happened.
  - Explain how the problem could be avoided in the future.

Example:

The printer you purchased was not compatible with your laptop. Our sales staff should have known this. Future training will avoid this problem. All you need is a new Pz123 cable. We're sorry for the inconvenience.

# Adjustment Letters—100 percent Yes Letters (cont.)

- Conclusion
  - End upbeat.
  - Resell for future customer satisfaction.

Example:

The new cable will be shipped to your delivery address. We have enclosed a 10% discount card for any future purchases. Thank you for your patience and your continued patronage of our store.

# Adjustment Letters—100 percent No Letters

- Not all complaints can be satisfied.
- Write a 100 percent No Letter when the customer is wrong.
- In a 100 percent No Letter, provide an
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Conclusion

# Adjustment Letters—100 percent No Letters (cont.)

- Introduction

- Like a Bad-news Letter, begin with a *buffer*, a fact that the reader can accept.

Example:

Thank you for contacting us about your printer problems. As you know, not all printer cables and computers are compatible.

The buffer



# Adjustment Letters—100 percent No Letters (cont.)

- Body
  - Explain the problem precisely.
  - State the bad news.

Example:

The explanation

Though you purchased the printer from our store, according to your letter, you purchased the extension cable at another store, Acme Discount Office Products. Acme's cable was last year's model. You needed the newer version cable. Therefore, we are not responsible for the printer problem.

The bad news

# Adjustment Letters—100 percent No Letters (cont.)

- Conclusion
  - End upbeat using positive words
  - Provide an alternative

Example:

If you have kept your cable receipt, we are sure that Acme will accept a product return. To help you solve the printer problem, please visit our nearest store to purchase the newer model printer cable. Please call me at 1-800-5552121, ext. 213 if I can provide additional information.

The  
alternative



A diagram consisting of a large rectangular box containing the example text and a smaller rectangular box to its upper right containing the text 'The alternative'. A horizontal line connects the right side of the large box to the left side of the small box. An arrow points from the bottom of the small box down to the word 'return' in the example text.

# Adjustment Letters—Partial Adjustment

- If your response to a complaint is neither completely positive nor negative, write a Partial Adjustment Letter.
- To do so, provide an:
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Conclusion



# Adjustment Letters—Partial Adjustment (cont.)

- Introduction
  - Explain *why* you are writing.
  - State the good news.

Example:

Why you are writing

Thank you for contacting us about your printer problems. We agree with you; the printer you purchased should be able to print in color. Please bring the printer to our service desk, and we will fix this problem while you wait.

The good news

# Adjustment Letters—Partial Adjustment (cont.)

- Body
  - Precisely explain the problem—what happened.
  - Give the bad news.

Example:

The explanation



However, the second problem relates to an incompatible printer cable. Though you purchased the printer from our store, according to your letter, you purchased the extension cable at another store, Acme Discount Office Products. Acme's cable was last year's model. You needed the newer version cable. Therefore, we are not responsible for the printer cable.

The bad news

# Adjustment Letters—Partial Adjustment (cont.)

- Conclusion
  - End upbeat using positive words
  - Provide an alternative

Example:

The alternatives

If you have kept your cable receipt, we are sure that Acme will accept a product return. To help you solve the printer problem, please visit our nearest store to purchase the newer model printer cable. Please call me at 1-800-5552121, ext. 213 if I can provide additional information.

# E-mail

- E-mail has these benefits:
  - Saves time
  - Is convenient
  - Can be written internally and externally
  - Is more cost-effective than “snail mail”
  - Leaves a paper trail for documentation
  - Allows for expanded discussions by multiple readers

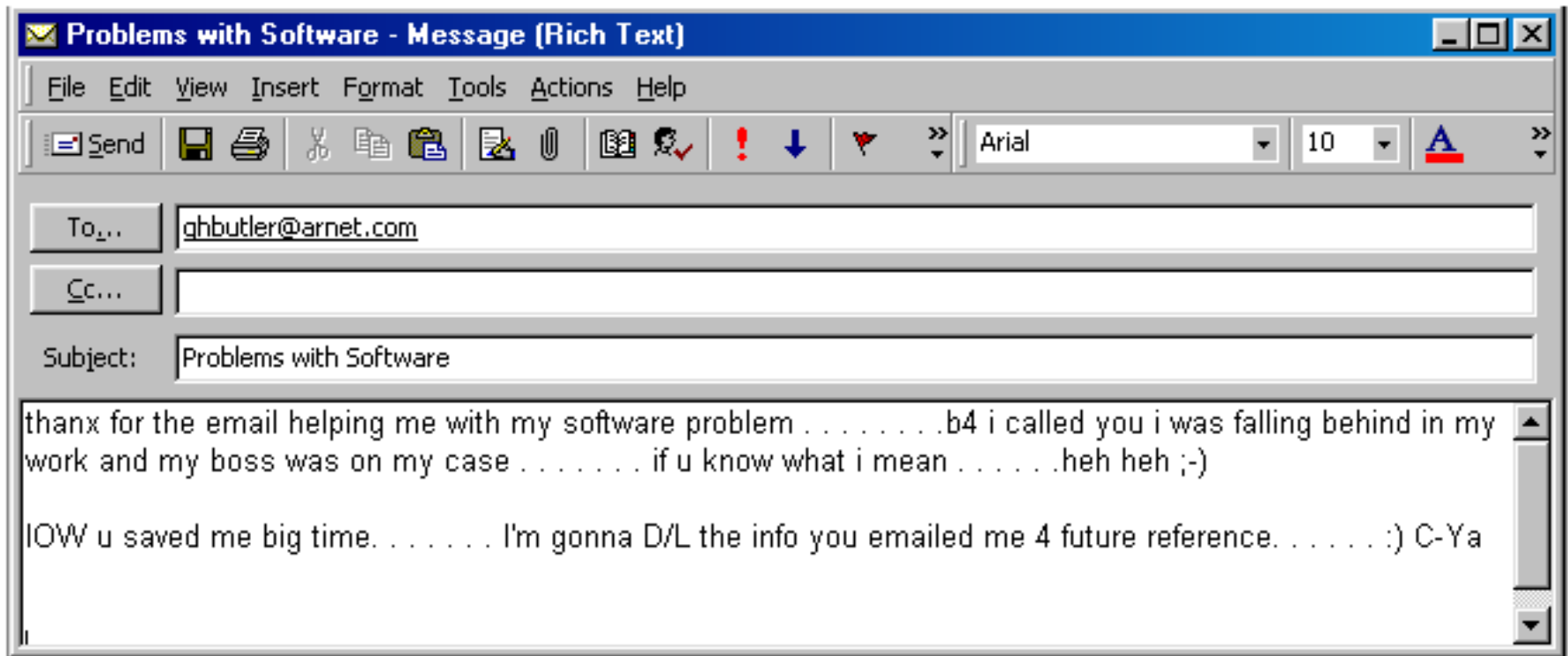


# E-mail Challenges

- Despite the benefits, E-mail presents challenges:
  - Computer incompatibilities
  - Lack of privacy
  - Casual tone leading to misunderstandings
  - Casual tone leading to lack of professionalism

# E-mail Challenges (cont.)

Where and how is this e-mail too causal and too unprofessional?



# Effective E-mail Techniques

- Recognize your audience.
  - Use the correct tone when writing laterally and vertically.
  - For international e-mail, be careful with abbreviations, acronyms, dates, times, measurements, and monetary figures.

# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Identify yourself.
  - Readers are cautious about opening unidentified e-mail, due to spam and viruses.
  - Use a “sig. file” to identify yourself.



# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Use the correct e-mail address.
  - The wrong e-mail address results in a “Message not sent” note.



# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Provide an effective subject line.
  - *Topic + Focus* (like memos)
  - Readers might not open e-mail with vague subject lines due to fear of spam and viruses.

# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Write concise e-mail messages.
  - Readers do not like to scroll endlessly.
  - Limit yourself to approximately 20 lines to “fit the box”—see Chapter 3.
  - Place important information early in the e-mail (practice the “top of the box” method of writing).

# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Organize the e-mail.
  - Provide an introduction, body, and conclusion (like memos).

# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Use highlighting techniques sparingly.
  - E-mail programs are not always compatible.
  - Avoid **boldface**, underlining, **colors**, and computer-generated bullets or numbers.
  - Use hyphens (-) or asterisks (\*) for bullets.

# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Proofread.
  - Don't hit the "send" button too quickly.
  - Errors hurt your professionalism.

# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Don't email confidential or copyrighted information.
  - E-mail is not private.
  - E-mail is “discoverable” under the law.
  - E-mail messages can be used in the courts.

# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Make hard copies for future reference.
  - Systems malfunction.



# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Be careful when sending attachments.
  - Say, “I have attached . . .”
  - Tell the reader what program you have used for the attachment (PDF, PPt, Word doc., etc.).
  - Don’t send large attachments. They can crash your reader’s system.

# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Don't automatically "reply to all."
  - To ensure confidentiality, select your readers carefully.

# Effective E-mail Techniques (cont.)

- Practice “netiquette.”
  - Don’t FLAME. Writing in all caps is perceived as SHOUTING.