

B Tech I Year

SOFT SKILLS

BAS 105

UNIT III: READING AND WRITING SKILLS

READING STYLE

Reading skill is the ability of an individual to read, comprehend and interpret written words on a page of an article or any other **reading** material. The possession of a good **reading skill** will enable the individual to be able to assimilate a written work within a short period while **reading**.

Reading skills lead a person to interact and gain meaning from written language. There are several components one must master which lead to independently comprehending the intended message being relayed in the written content. First is phonemic awareness which is defined by the National Reading Panel as “recognizing and manipulating spoken words in language” (Whalon et al. [2009](#)). Next is phonics defined by the same group as “understanding letter-sound correspondences in reading and spelling” then oral reading fluency which is “reading text with speed, accuracy, and expression.” The forth component is vocabulary defined as “understanding words read by linking the word to oral vocabulary” and lastly is comprehension defined as “directly teaching students to be aware of the cognitive processes involved in reading”.

SKIMMING & SCANNING

Skimming and scanning are reading techniques that use rapid eye movement and keywords to move quickly through text for slightly different purposes. Skimming is reading rapidly in order to get a general overview of the material. Scanning is reading rapidly in order to find specific facts. While skimming tells you what general information is within a section, scanning helps you locate a particular fact. Skimming is like snorkeling, and scanning is more like pearl diving.

Use skimming in previewing (reading before you read), reviewing (reading after you read), determining the main idea from a long selection you don't wish to read, or when trying to find source material for a research paper.

Use scanning in research to find particular facts, to study fact-heavy topics, and to answer questions requiring factual support.

Skimming to save time

Skimming can save you hours of laborious reading. However, it is not always the most appropriate way to read. It is very useful as a preview to a more detailed reading or when reviewing a selection heavy in content. But when you skim, you may miss important points or overlook the finer shadings of meaning, for which rapid reading or perhaps even study reading may be necessary.

Use skimming to overview your textbook chapters or to review for a test. Use skimming to decide if you need to read something at all, for example during the preliminary research for a paper. Skimming can tell you enough about the general idea and tone of the material, as well as its gross similarity or difference from other sources, to know if you need to read it at all.

To skim, prepare yourself to move rapidly through the pages. You will not read every word; you will pay

special attention to typographical cues—headings, boldface and italic type, indenting, bulleted and numbered lists. You will be alert for key words and phrases, the names of people and places, dates, nouns, and unfamiliar words. In general, follow these steps:

1. Read the *table of contents* or *chapter overview* to learn the main divisions of ideas.
2. Glance through the main headings in each chapter just to see a word or two. Read the *headings of charts and tables*.
3. Read the entire *introductory paragraph* and then the *first and last sentence* only of each following paragraph. For each paragraph, read only the first few words of each sentence or to locate the main idea.
4. Stop and quickly read the sentences containing *keywords* indicated in boldface or italics.
5. When you think you have found something significant, stop to read the entire sentence to make sure. Then go on the same way. Resist the temptation to stop to read details you don't need.
6. Read *chapter summaries* when provided.

If you cannot complete all the steps above, compromise: read only the chapter overviews and summaries, for example, or the summaries and all the boldfaced keywords. When you skim, you take a calculated risk that you may miss something. For instance, the main ideas of paragraphs are not always found in the first or last sentences (although in many textbooks they are). Ideas you miss you may pick up in a chapter overview or summary.

Good skimmers do not skim everything at the same rate or give equal attention to everything. While skimming is always faster than your normal reading speed, you should slow down in the following situations:

- When you skim introductory and concluding paragraphs
- When you skim topic sentences
- When you find an unfamiliar word
- When the material is very complicated

Scanning for research and study

Scanning, too, uses keywords and organizational cues. But while the goal of skimming is a bird's-eye view of the material, the goal of scanning is to locate and swoop down on particular facts.

Facts may be buried within long text passages that have relatively little else to do with your topic or claim. Skim this material first to decide if it is likely to contain the facts you need. Don't forget to scan tables of contents, summaries, indexes, headings, and typographical cues. To make sense of lists and tables, skim them first to understand how they are organized: alphabetical, chronological, or most-to-least, for example. If after skimming you decide the material will be useful, go ahead and scan:

1. Know what you're looking for. Decide on a few key words or phrases—search terms, if you will. You will be a flesh-and-blood search engine.

2. Look for only one keyword at a time. If you use multiple keywords, do multiple scans.
3. Let your eyes float rapidly down the page until you find the word or phrase you want.
4. When your eye catches one of your keywords, read the surrounding material carefully.

Scanning to answer questions

If you are scanning for facts to answer a specific question, one step is already done for you: the question itself supplies the keywords. Follow these steps:

1. Read each question completely before starting to scan. Choose your keywords from the question itself.
2. Look for answers to only one question at a time. Scan separately for each question.
3. When you locate a keyword, read the surrounding text carefully to see if it is relevant.
4. Re-read the question to determine if the answer you found answers this question.

Scanning is a technique that requires concentration and can be surprisingly tiring. You may have to practice at not allowing your attention to wander. Choose a time and place that you know works for you and dive in.

CHURNING METHOD

Churning is also an integral part of reading while skimming and scanning are quick process churning is slower process of reading. The word churning related to the process of stirring up in our mind the ideas, context, structure etc. and grasping the contents of reading respectively.

After you skim and scan the text quickly to get the core idea and a general gist of the contents, you need to churn the ideas and words so as to get the gist or meaning of the text by thinking over the ideas and words, you have read.

ASSIMILATION METHOD

Assimilation refers to taking in or comprehending the text so that you can answer any question based on the text. It is the end product of skimming, scanning and churning processes of given text. It includes the understanding of the structure of the text, structure of paragraphs, punctuation, author's view point and summarizing.

WRITING SKILLS

Definition

Writing skills are those abilities where you take ideas and information and present them in a nice written format for others to read. Depending upon the type of writing you are doing, you present what you know in a format that conforms to the expectations of the reader.

There are a number of scholars who have different views and thoughts on writing and writing skill. Some of the important scholars' views on writing and writing skill are mentioned here for the better understanding of the writing skill.

Peter T. Daniels (1996) defines “writing as a system of more or less permanent marks used to represent an utterance in such a way that it can be recovered more or less exactly without the intervention of the utterer.”

According to **Sampon (1985:26)** “writing is a system for representing utterances of spoken language by means of permanent visible marks.”

Steven Roger (2001) stressed that no one definition of writing can cover all the writing system that exist and have ever existed. However, he says that the writing should fulfil some of the following criteria viz.,

- i. Writing must fulfil its purpose of communication.
- ii. Writing relates conventionally to articulate speech (the systematic arrangement of significant vocal sounds) or electronic programming in such a way that communication is achieved.

METHODS OF WRITING

- **Inductive**
- **Deductive**
- **Chronological**
- **Spatial**
- **Linear**
- **Interrupted**
- **Expository**

Inductive

- Arrangement of logical views.
- Concluding with topic sentence.

A hypothetical idea can be developed and it can be proved through the various examples. At the end of the paragraph, we reach to a conclusion. Such method of development of a paragraph is called inductive method.

For example: Right from our nuclear family to a large joint family we confront gender problem. We find the male child is more respected in comparison to the female child due to power of the parents. At political level also we find that that the powerful leader can get the work easily done in comparison to a layman. So, we can say that where there is a power there is a corruption and it means ‘Power Corrupts’.

Deductive

- Statement is made in the beginning.
- Beginning with topic sentence.

It flows from the specific to a general. The topic sentence is in the beginning of the paragraph and we provide a number of examples to prove the topic. For example: ‘Power Corrupts’. It means where there is a power there is a corruption. Right from our nuclear family to a large joint family we confront gender problem. We find the male child is more respected in comparison to the female child due to power of the parents. At political level also we find that that the powerful leader can get the work easily done in comparison to a layman.

Chronological

- Development of paragraph in terms of time.

For example- We are preparing a schedule of electric power cut off in the city of Ghaziabad. We find three times power cut off between 10.00a.m. and 12.00a.m.; Four times power cut off between 3.00p.m. and 5.00p.m.; once power cut off between 9.00p.m. and 11.00p.m.; no power cut off between 11.00p.m. and 10.00 a.m. of the following day.

Spatial

- Development paragraph in terms of space or areas.

For example-we are noting down the name of the areas where the frequency of the power cut of is high. We find the frequency of power cut off in Noida is higher the frequency of power cut off of Ghaziabad.

Linear

- Each sentence leads another sentence to forward the idea.

For example- In speech mechanism the lungs originate air for the speech, it goes up to the vocal cords and gets modulated then it subsequently passes through either nasal cavity or oral cavity.

Interrupted

- Topic sentence appears in the middle of the paragraph. Sometimes it is interrupted in the subsequent development of a paragraph.

Exposition

- Exposition is a literary device that is meant to relay background information about a main character, setting, event or other element of the narratives
- **Examples of Exposition.** Expositions are the place to show the reader a little bit of the location and what kind of time is involved in the story, along with some of the major characters.
- e.g., Tommy kicked angrily at the rocks in front of him as he walked to the little store up the road.

Meaning of Business Correspondence

Communication through exchange of letters is known as correspondence. We communicate our feelings, thoughts etc. to our friends and relatives through letters that may be called personal correspondence. A Businessman also writes and receives letters in his day to-day transactions, which may be called business correspondence. Business correspondence or business letter is a written communication between two parties. Businessmen may write letters to supplier of goods and also receive letters from the suppliers. Customers may write letters to businessmen seeking information about availability of goods, price, quality, sample etc. or place order for purchase of goods. Thus, business letters may be defined as a media or means through which views are expressed and ideas or information is communicated in writing in the process of business activities.

Importance of Business Correspondence

Now-a-days business operations are not restricted to any locality, state or nation. Today production takes place in one area but consumption takes place everywhere. Since the businessmen as well as customers live in far off places, they don't have sufficient time to contact each other personally. Thus, there arises the need for writing letters. In the past the situation was not so. Business letters were not essential in olden days. But now the importance of letters has increased because of vast expansion of business, increase in demand as well as supply of goods. Let us learn about the importance of business letters.

i) Helps in maintaining proper relationship

Now-a-days business activities are not confined to any one area or locality. The businessmen as well as customers are scattered throughout the country. Thus, there is a need to maintain proper relationship among them by using appropriate means of communication. Here business letters play an important role. The customers can write letters to the businessman seeking information about products and businessmen also supply various information to customers. This helps them to carry on business on national and international basis.

ii) Inexpensive and convenient mode

Though there are other modes of communication like telephone, telex, fax, etc. but business information can be provided and obtained economically and conveniently through letters.

iii) Creates and maintains goodwill

Sometimes business letters are written to create and enhance goodwill. Businessmen at times send letters to enquire about complaints and suggestions of their customers. They also send letters to inform the customers about the availability of a new product, clearance sale etc. All result in cordial relations with the customers which enhances the goodwill of the business.

iv) Serves as evidence

We cannot expect a trader to memorize all facts and figures in a conversation that normally takes place among businessmen. Through letters, he can keep a record of all facts. Thus, letters can serve as evidence in case of dispute between two parties.

v) Helps in expansion of business

Business requires information regarding competing products, prevailing prices, promotion, market activities, etc. If the trader has to run from place to place to get information, he will end up doing nothing. It will simply result in loss of time. But through business letters, he can make all enquiries

about the products and the markets. He can also receive orders from different countries and, thus enhance sales.

Essential Qualities of a Good Letter

A letter should serve the purpose for which it is written. If a businessman writes a letter to the supplier for purchase of goods, the letter should contain all the relevant information relating to the product, mode of payment, packaging, transportation of goods, etc. clearly and specifically. Otherwise, there will be confusion that may cause delay in getting the goods. Again, the quality of paper used in the letter, its size, colour etc. also need special attention, because it creates a positive impression in the mind of the receiver. We may classify the qualities of a good business letter as: a. Inner Qualities; and b. Outer Qualities

a) Inner Qualities - The inner qualities of a good business letter refer to the quality of language, its presentation, etc. These facilitate quick processing of the request and that leads to prompt action. Let us discuss the various inner qualities of a good business letter.

- (i) **Simplicity** - Simple and easy language should be used for writing business letters. Difficult words should be strictly avoided, as one cannot expect the reader to refer to the dictionary every time while reading letter.
- (ii) **Clarity** - The language should be clear, so that the receiver will understand the Business Studies message immediately, easily and correctly. Ambiguous language creates confusion. The letter will serve the purpose if the receiver understands it in the same manner in which it is intended by the sender.
- (iii) **Accuracy** - The statements written in the letter should be accurate to, the best of the sender's knowledge. Accuracy demands that there are no errors in the usage of language - in grammar, spellings, punctuations etc. An accurate letter is always appreciated.
- (iv) **Completeness** - A complete letter is one that provides all necessary information to the users. For example, while sending an order we should mention the desirable features of the goods, i.e., their quality, shape, colour, design, quantity, date of delivery, mode of transportation, etc.
- (v) **Relevance** - The letter should contain only essential information. Irrelevant information should not be mentioned while sending any business correspondence.
- (vi) **Courtesy** - Courtesy wins the heart of the reader. In business letters, courtesy can be shown/ expressed by using words like please, thank you, etc.
- (vii) **Neatness** - A neat letter is always impressive. A letter either handwritten or typed, should be neat and attractive in appearance. Overwriting and cuttings should be avoided. b)

Outer Qualities - The outer qualities of a good business letter refers to the appearance of the letter. It includes the quality of paper used, colour of the paper, size of the paper etc. Good quality paper gives a favourable impression in the mind of the reader. It also helps in documenting the letters properly. Let us discuss the various outer qualities of a good business letter.

- (i) **Quality of paper** - The paper used should be in accordance with the economic status of the firm. Now-a-days the cost of the paper is very high. Therefore, good paper should be used for original copy and ordinary paper may be used for duplicate copy.
- (ii) **Colour of the Paper** - It is better to use different colours for different types of letters, so that the receiver will identify the letters quickly and prompt action can be taken.

- (iii) Size of the paper - Standard size paper (A4) should be used while writing business letters. The size of the paper should be in accordance with the envelopes available in the market.
- (iv) Folding of letter- The letter should be folded properly and uniformly. Care should be taken to give minimum folds to the letter so that it will fit the size of the envelope. If window envelope is used then folding should be done in such a way that the address of the receiver is clearly visible through the transparent part of the envelope.
- (v) Envelope - The size and quality of the envelope also need special attention. The size of the letter should fit the size of the letters. The business firms use different types of envelopes i.e., ordinary envelope, window envelope, laminated envelope Business Correspondence 159 etc. In window envelope there is no need to write the address of the receiver separately on the envelope. It is clearly visible through the transparent part on the face of the envelope, which may be called as window. In laminated envelope a thin plastic sheet or cloth is pasted on the inner side that gives extra protection to letters from being damaged during transit. Intext

STRUCTURE OF LETTER

In letter writing there are various components which should be included by the letter writer. The essential parts of a business letter are as follows:

Different parts of a business letter-

1. Heading
2. Date
3. Reference
4. Inside Address
5. Subject
6. Salutation
7. Body of the letter
8. Complimentary close
9. Signature
10. Enclosures
11. Copy Circulation
12. Post Script

- 1. Heading** -The heading of a business letter usually contains the name and postal address of the business, E-mail address, Web-site address, Telephone Number, Fax Number, Trade Mark or logo of the business (if any)
- 2. Date** - The date is normally written on the right-hand side corner after the heading as the day, month and years. Some examples are 28th Feb., 2003 or Feb. 28, 2003.
- 3. Reference**- It indicates letter number and the department from where the letter is being sent and the year. It helps in future reference. This reference number is given on the left-hand corner after the heading. For example, we can write reference number as AB/FA Dept./2003/27.
- 4. Inside address** - This includes the name and full address of the person or the firm to whom the letter is to be sent. This is written on the left-hand side of the sheet below the reference number. Letters should be addressed to the responsible head e.g., the Secretary, the Principal, the Chairman, the Manager etc.

Example:

M/S Bharat Fans
Bharat Complex
Hyderabad Industrial Complex

The Chief Manager
State Bank of India
Utkal University Campus Bhubaneswar, Orissa- 751007

5. Subject - It is a statement in brief, that indicates the matter to which the letter relates. It attracts the attention of the receiver immediately and helps him to know quickly what the letter is about.

For example,

Subject: Your order No. C317/8 dated 12th March 2003.

Subject: Enquiry about Samsung television

Subject: Fire Insurance policy

6. Salutation - This is placed below the inside address. It is usually followed by a comma (.). Various forms of salutation are: Sir/Madam: For official and formal correspondence Dear Sir/Madam: For addressing an individual Dear Sirs/Dear Madam: For addressing a firm or company. SUNIL KUMAR.

7. Body of the letter - This comes after salutation. This is the main part of the letter and it contains the actual message of the sender. It is divided into three parts.

(a) **Opening part** - It is the introductory part of the letter. In this part, attention of the reader should be drawn to the previous correspondence, if any. For example, with reference to your letter no. 326 dated. 12th March 2003, I would like to draw your attention towards the new brand of television.

(b) **Main part** - This part usually contains the subject matter of the letter. It should be precise and written in clear words.

(c) **Concluding Part** - It contains a statement the of sender's intentions, hopes or expectations concerning the next step to be taken. Further, the sender should always look forward to getting a positive response.

At the end, terms like

Thanking you,

With regards,

With warm regards, may be used.

8. Complimentary close - It is merely a polite way of ending a letter. It must be in accordance with the salutation. For example: Salutation Complimentary close i. Dear Sir/Dear Madam Yours faithfully ii. Dear Mr. Raj Yours sincerely iii. My Dear Akbar Yours very sincerely (express very informal relations.)

9. Signature - It is written in ink, immediately below the complimentary close. As far as possible, the signature should be legible. The name of the writer should be typed immediately below the signature. The designation is given below the typed name. Where no letterhead is in use, the name of the company too could be included below the designation of the writer.

For example: Yours faithfully

(Signature)

SUNIL KUMAR

M/S Acron Electricals

10. Enclosures - This is required when some documents like cheque, draft, bills, receipts, lists, invoices etc. are attached with the letter. These enclosures are listed one by one in serial numbers. For example: Encl: (i) The list of goods received (ii) A cheque for Rs. One Thousand Feb. 27, 2003 (Cheque No.....) towards payment for goods supplied.

11. Copy circulation - This is required when copies of the letter are also sent to persons apart of the addressee. It is denoted as C.C.

For example:

CC.

i. The Chairman, Electric Supply Corporation

ii. The Director, Electric Supply Corporation

iii. The Secretary, Electric Supply Corporation

12. Post script - This is required when the writer wants to add something, which is not included in the body of the letter. It is expressed as P.S.

EXAMPLE OF OFFICIAL LETTER(SALES)

XYZ

Ajmer Road, Jaipur – 26

Reference no: 20XX/ABD/FN5/2567

November 12, 20XX

The Manager

Auto Boss Delhi– 25

Subject: New scheme for an automobile loan.

Dear Sir,

It provides us with immense pleasure to inform you that we have launched a new scheme for an automobile loan. As a respectable and trusted client, we are providing you with the details of this scheme. The rate of interest of this loan is comparatively lower to the schemes of other banks. The bank also provides an opportunity to buy or sell any of the automobiles.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any queries regarding the same. This service is fast and free and we will provide you with the service within 24 hours.

Looking forward to hearing from your side.

Thanking with warm regards.

Yours truly,

(Signature)

XYZ

(Bank Manager)

XYZ Ajmeri Road Jaipur

Points To Remember:

- **The language must be formal**
- **Avoid slang and use abbreviations**
- **The content must be clear, concise and understandable**
- **Pay attention to the targeted audience**
- **Provide proper details, features, and uses of a newly launched product**

NOTICE WRITING

Definition

A notice is a formal means of communication. The purpose of a notice is to announce or display information to a specific group of people. Notices are generally meant to be pinned up on specific display boards whether in schools or in public places. Notices issued by the government appear in newspapers.

Format:

A notice should be written in the following format:

- the name of the organisation issuing the notice
- the title 'NOTICE'
- a heading to introduce the subject of the notice
- the date
- the body of the notice
- the writer's signature, name (in block letters) and designation

Name of organisation/office issuing the notice	
Date	Notice
	Heading
	Body of letter
 Signature	
Name	
Designation	

Points to remember:

- A well-written notice must inform the readers about the 5 Ws:
 - What is going to happen, (that is, the event)
 - Where it will take place
 - When it will take place (that is, the date and time)
 - Who can apply or is eligible for it
 - Whom to contact or apply to (that is, the issuing authority)
- Only the most important points should be written.
- A.O.D. – that is, any other detail given in the question.
- One is free to add any relevant information not included in the question.
- The sentences should be short and grammatically accurate.

The essentials or elements or factors of a valid notice are given below:

Signature: The notice must be signed by the proper authority. Only the legal authority should serve the notice.

Proper time: The notice must be served in proper time. It should be circulated according to the rules and regulations of the company or the organization.

Time, date and place: The time, date and place of the meeting must be stated in the notice.

Unconditional: There must be no condition or complexity in the notice about attending meeting. Always a notice is unconditional.

Agenda: Agenda means topics to be discussed in a meeting. A valid notice should contain the agenda of the meeting.

Conciseness: The notice must be short in size. It should be clear, simple and easy.

Proper persons: Notice should be served to the proper persons who are entitled to attend the meeting.

Enclosure: An explanatory statement should be sent with the notice (if required).

Specimen of notice: Notice of statutory meeting of a company

Eastern Jute Mills Ltd.

102, New York C/A

New York-1000

Date: March 20, 2020

NOTICE FOR STATUTORY MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the statutory meeting of the company will be held on March 30, 2020 at 12 p.m. in the registered office of the company according to the section Of company Act. 1994.

Concerned shareholders are requested to attend the meeting.

(Signature)

Mr. Jagannath Oberoi

AGENDA

An agenda, also called a docket or a schedule, is a list of activities in the order they are to be taken up, from the beginning till the adjournment. An agenda helps in preparing for a meeting by providing a list of items and a clear set of topics, objectives, and time frames that are needed to be discussed upon.

An effective agenda sets clear expectations for what needs to occur before and during a meeting. It helps team members prepare, allocates time wisely, quickly gets everyone on the same topic, and identifies when the discussion is complete. If problems still occur during the meeting, a well-designed agenda increases the team's ability to effectively and quickly address them.

Here are some tips for designing an effective agenda/strategies for your next meeting, with a sample agenda and template below. You can use these tips whether a meeting lasts an hour or three days and whether you're meeting with a group of five or forty:

Seek input from team members. If you want your team to be engaged in meetings, make sure the agenda includes items that reflect their needs. Ask team members to suggest agenda items along with a reason why each item needs to be addressed in a team setting. If you ultimately decide not to include an item, be accountable — explain your reasoning to the team member who suggested it.

Select topics that affect the entire team. Team meeting time is expensive and difficult to schedule. It should mainly be used to discuss and make decisions on issues that affect the whole team — and need the whole team to solve them. These are often ones in which individuals must coordinate their actions because their parts of the organization are interdependent. They are also likely to be issues for which people have different information and needs. Examples might include: How do we best allocate shared resources? How do we reduce response time? If the team isn't spending most of the meeting talking about interdependent issues, members will disengage and ultimately not attend.

List agenda topics as questions the team needs to answer. Most agenda topics are simply several words strung together to form a phrase, for example: "office space reallocation." This leaves meeting participants wondering, "What about office space reallocation?" When you list a topic as a question (or questions) to be answered, it instead reads like this: "Under what conditions, if any, should we reallocate office space?"

A question enables team members to better prepare for the discussion and to monitor whether their own and others' comments are on track. During the meeting, anyone who thinks a comment is off-track can say something like, "I'm not seeing how your comment relates to the question we're trying to answer. Can you help me understand the connection?" Finally, the team knows that when the question has been answered, the discussion is complete.

Note whether **the purpose of the topic is to share information**, seek input for a decision, or make a decision. It's difficult for team members to participate effectively if they don't know whether to simply listen, give their input, or be part of the decision making process. If people think they are involved in making a decision, but you simply want their input, everyone is likely to feel frustrated by the end of the conversation. Updates are better distributed — and read — prior to the meeting, using a brief part of the meeting to answer participants' questions. If the purpose is to make a decision, state the decision-making rule. If you are the formal leader, at the beginning of the agenda item you might say, "If possible, I want us to make this decision

by consensus. That means that everyone can support and implement the decision given their roles on the team. If we're not able to reach consensus after an hour of discussion, I'll reserve the right to make the decision based on the conversation we've had. I'll tell you my decision and my reasoning for making it."

Estimate a realistic amount of time for each topic. This serves two purposes. First, it requires you to do the math — to calculate how much time the team will need for introducing the topic, answering questions, resolving different points of view, generating potential solutions, and agreeing on the action items that follow from discussion and decisions. Leaders typically underestimate the amount of time needed. If there are ten people in your meeting and you have allocated ten minutes to decide under what conditions, if any, you will reallocate office space, you have probably underestimated the time. By doing some simple math, you would realize that the team would have to reach a decision immediately after each of the ten members has spoken for a minute.

Second, the estimated time enables team members to either adapt their comments to fit within the allotted timeframe or to suggest that more time may be needed. The purpose of listing the time is not to stop discussion when the time has elapsed; that simply contributes to poor decision making and frustration. The purpose is to get better at allocating enough time for the team to effectively and efficiently answer the questions before it.

Propose a process for addressing each agenda item. The process identifies the steps through which the team will move together to complete the discussion or make a decision. Agreeing on a process significantly increases meeting effectiveness, yet leaders rarely do it. Unless the team has agreed on a process, members will, in good faith, participate based on their own process. You've probably seen this in action: some team members are trying to define the problem, other team members are wondering why the topic is on the agenda, and still other members are already identifying and evaluating solutions.

The process for addressing an item should appear on the written agenda. When you reach that item during the meeting, explain the process and seek agreement: "I suggest we use the following process. First, let's take about 10 minutes to get all the relevant information on the table. Second, let's take another 10 minutes to identify and agree on any assumptions we need to make. Third, we'll take another 10 minutes to identify and agree on the interests that should be met for any solution. Finally, we'll use about 15 minutes to craft a solution that ideally takes into account all the interests, and is consistent with our relevant information and assumptions. Any suggestions for improving this process?"

Identify who is responsible for leading each topic. Someone other than the formal meeting leader is often responsible for leading the discussion of a particular agenda item. This person may be providing context for the topic, explaining data, or may have organizational responsibility for that area. Identifying this person next to the agenda item ensures that anyone who is responsible for leading part of the agenda knows it — and prepares for it — before the meeting.

Make the first topic "review and modify agenda as needed." Even if you and your team have jointly developed the agenda before the meeting, take a minute to see if anything needs to be changed due to late breaking events. I once had a meeting scheduled with a senior leadership team. As we reviewed the agenda, I asked if we needed to modify anything. The

CEO stated that he had just told the board of directors that he planned to resign and that we probably needed to significantly change the agenda. Not all agenda modifications are this dramatic, but by checking at the beginning of the meeting, you increase the chance that the team will use its meeting time most effectively.

End the meeting with a plus/delta. If your team meets regularly, two questions form a simple continuous improvement process: What did we do well? What do we want to do differently for the next meeting? Investing five or ten minutes will enable the team to improve performance, working relationships, and team member satisfaction. Here are some questions to consider when identifying what the team has done well and what it wants to do differently:

- Was the agenda distributed in time for everyone to prepare?
- How well did team members prepare for the meeting?
- How well did we estimate the time needed for each agenda item?
- How well did we allocate our time for decision making and discussion?
- How well did everyone stay on-topic? How well did team members speak up when they thought someone was off-topic?
- How effective was the process for each agenda item?
- To ensure that your team follows through, review the results of the plus/delta at the beginning of the next meeting.

If you develop agendas using these tips, and the sample agenda and template below, your team will have an easier time getting — and staying — focused in meetings.

Format of an Agenda

An Agenda normally includes the following elements –

- Meeting Agenda Title – at the top; preferably center-aligned
- Meeting Information – Description of the purpose
- Objective – description of Agenda
- Date – for maintaining records of correspondence
- Location – the place of meeting
- Time – the actual time of commencement of the meeting
- Meeting Type – brainstorming or Discussion or Assessment

- Time of Arrival – time to begin the meeting
- Time of Adjournment – time the meeting ends
- Attendees – Number of people present, with their names
- Preparation for Meeting –
- Please Read – instructions to be followed
- Please bring – things supposed to be carried that day
- Action Items –
- Last Action Responsible Authority Due Date
- New Action Responsible Authority Due Date
- Other notes – other instruction or information to be taken down. Example - Agenda Writing

Meeting Agenda

Date: July 4, 2021

Time: 1:00 PM IST

Location: Conference Room

Agenda details

Goals: Examine last year's marketing efforts, identify seasonal slumps in product demand, plan methods to raise demand during these slumps and make sure we are ready for the next marketing campaign.

1. Examine last year's marketing initiatives

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: Share information

Leader: Raj Mehra

a. Showcase previous year's marketing initiatives

b. After each marketing campaign, review the sales figures

c. Determine which campaigns had the greatest impact

2. How can we effectively handle our product's evolving needs?

Time: 45 minutes

Purpose: Discussion

Leader: Bhanu Saxena

a. Examine sales figures from the previous four quarters

b. Recognise any patterns in the sales figures

c. Discuss ways to increase sales

3. Getting ready for the next marketing campaign

Time: 20 minutes

Purpose: Decision

Leader: Riya Gupta

a. How should we prepare for the upcoming marketing campaign?

i. Review the marketing campaign materials that are attached

ii. Assign duties to each member of the team

b. How will we measure the campaign's effectiveness?

c. Review the campaign's sales targets

4. Finalising of meeting

Time: 5 minutes

Purpose: Decision

Leader: Raj Mehra

a. What did we do well in this meeting?

b. How should we approach the next meeting?

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting minutes can be defined as written or recorded documentation that is used to inform people of what happened during the meeting and define the next step planned. **To write effective meeting minutes** you should include:

- The names of the participants
- Agenda items
- Calendar or due dates
- Actions or tasks
- The main points
- Decisions made by the participants
- Record what is the most important points
- Future decisions
- Documents: images, attached files