Unit 401: Effective communication in business
Handout 7: Effective written communication for different business audiences

Know your audience
Audience analysis involves gathering and interpreting information about the recipients of oral, written, or visual communication.

Generally accepted audience types (for business communications) are discussed in the table below.

Audience type	Role
Initial	The initial audience members are the first to hear, read or see a business communication message before forwarding it or repeating it to others. Managers who assign communication tasks also are initial audience members. An example of an initial audience member would be a business owner who assigns the task of preparing a technical specification document to his engineering supervisor. The supervisor may send the draft presentation back to the owner for review, who may circulate the draft to other senior managers for feedback before agreeing to its publication.
Gatekeeper	Gatekeepers may agree to the release of a business communication message or prevent it from proceeding any further. Gatekeepers generally have positions of authority (such as executive assistant), often scanning incoming telephone calls and email messages before deciding which ones to forward to appropriate senior management. Executive Assistants may also serve as physical gatekeepers because they usually control their boss's diary.
Primary	The primary audience is the target of the message as determined by the message's originator. The primary audience members may decide to accept the content of the business communication message and act on it, ask the originator for more information, forward the message to someone who is a more appropriate recipient, or ignore the message altogether.
Secondary	The secondary audience may comment on the original message or be part of a discussion process about actioning the message. The secondary audience might include competitors, suppliers and customers who may comment on the message or decide to act independently of any other audience member.
Watchdog	Regulatory agencies, advocacy organisations and other watchdogs may not have the power to stop a message but they have regulatory and economic power. They become aware of the communication message but may not act on it until later. For example, the energy regulator may become aware of a communication discussing the increase in the price of gas or electricity and decide to request further information.

These audience types may appear to apply only to large corporations. However in small businesses, individuals may hold multiple roles and therefore belong to several audience types.

Other audience categories have been identified, as discussed in the table below.

Audience categories	
Stakeholders	This is recent terminology that is used to identify anyone who may be considered as 'having a stake' in the business. This does not necessarily imply a direct financial stake, but any interest at all (i.e. patients in a doctor's surgery are considered to be stakeholders of the practice). Stakeholders may be **internal** or **external** to the business or organisation. Different businesses and organisations will define their own categories or types of stakeholder according to their sphere of operations. Different groups of stakeholders may require their own form of communications (or 'communications channel'), according to the message to be communicated.
Technical audience or financial audience, etc.	This involves identifying an audience according to the broad type of communication message that it generally receives.