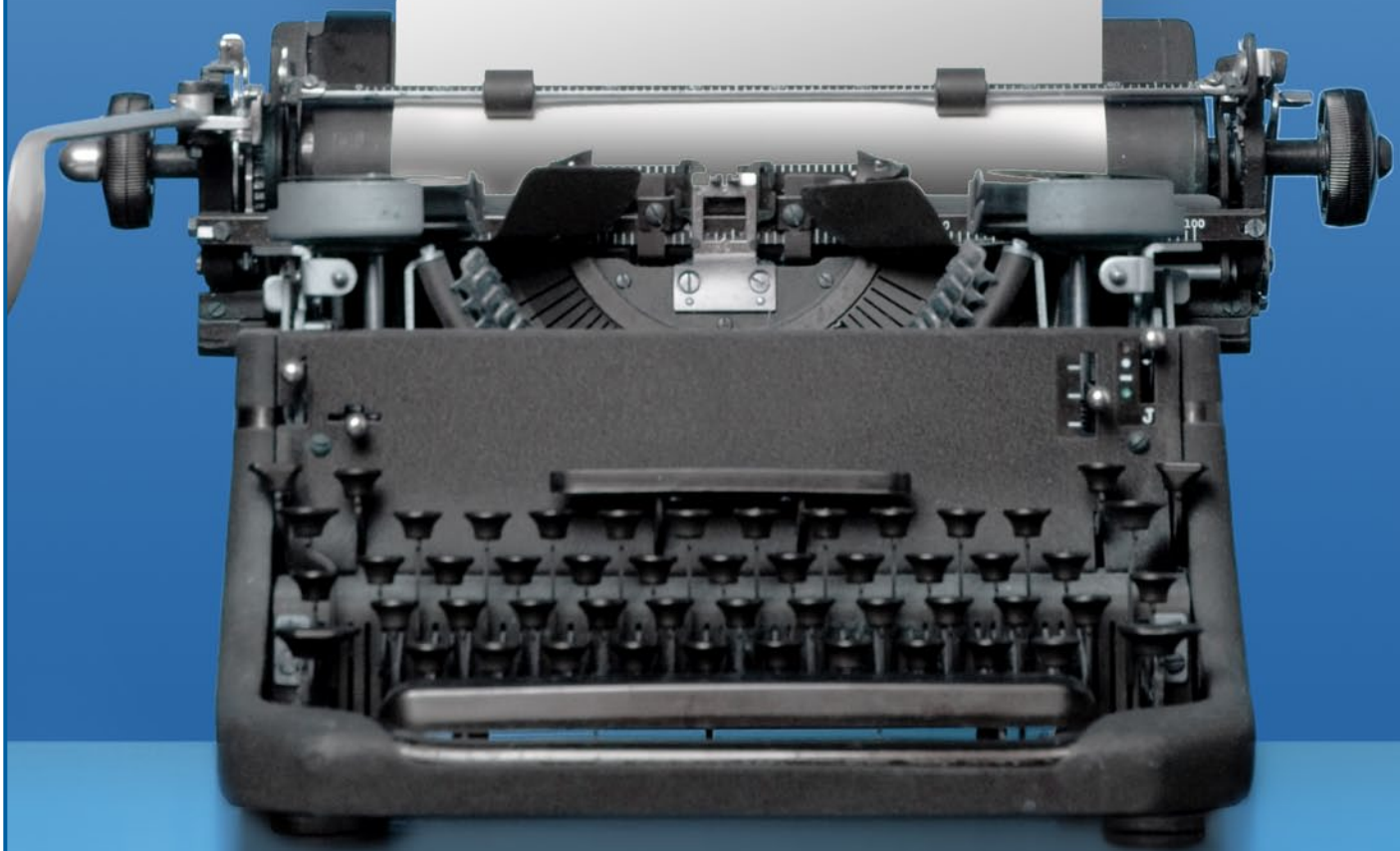# The CDC Correspondence Manual

**U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services**
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

THE CDC CORRESPONDENCE MANUAL

March 2012

**U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services**
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Control and Prevention

The CDC Correspondence Manual is a reference tool designed to help you create letters and memoranda (memos) that are clear, well written, and formatted according to CDC guidelines. This manual connects you to free web resources, checklists, and tips to make your writing process easier. We welcome your input, and will consider it for future editions of the manual. Please share comments or suggestions with Erika Jermé at vjh2@cdc.gov.

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SECTION I: WRITING EFFECTIVELY

Section I discusses the unique features of business writing. It also presents the elements of good writing and explains how to write more clearly while answering the following questions:

- Why is letter-writing important?
- How can I write more clearly?
- What is plain language and why should I use it?
- Where can I get additional help with my writing?
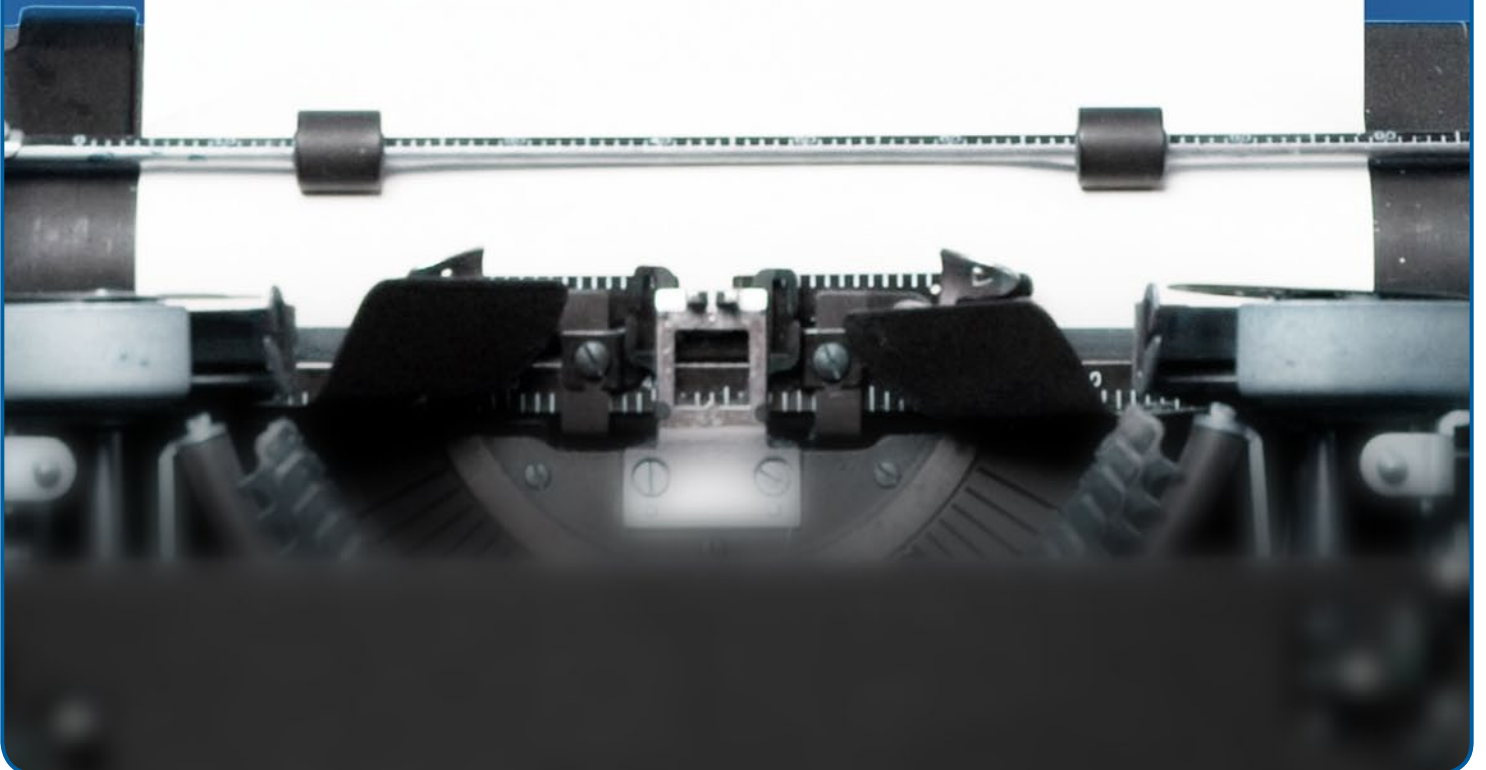
INTRODUCTION

Why is letter-writing important? CDC's Office of the Director receives between 2,500 and 4,000 letters and e-mails annually from policy makers, state and local health departments, partners, researchers, and ordinary citizens. Events over the past decade—including the September 11 terrorist attacks, the adoption of the Affordable Care Act, the SARS and H1N1 pandemics, and the recent budget cuts—have increased CDC's public profile. As a result, we receive correspondence from diverse audiences, often on highly technical issues for which the science is still evolving and the political implications are significant. Letters are often the first line of contact between our agency and our constituents, and directly represent the voice of CDC; therefore, these letters need to be well written and to accurately reflect the agency's mission. In addition, letters must be responsive to the concern of the correspondent and be written in a tone that makes the reader feel heard.

The individual's whole experience is built upon the plan of his language.

- Henri Delacroix

How Can I Write More Clearly?

The scientific and medical topics CDC covers are often highly technical and complex. Expressing these concepts in language that is understood by everyone without sacrificing accuracy can be particularly difficult.

You can create clear, simple, and accurate correspondence by applying the concepts of plain language to your writing.

What is Plain Language and Why Should I Use It?

The Plain Language Act of 2010 (H.R. 946 [111th]) states that "writing should be clear, concise, well-organized and [follow] other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience." For more on federal plain language standards, visit www.plainlanguage.gov/.

Writing in plain language means creating a document that is visually appealing, logically organized, and understandable the first time it is read. A plain language document presents the information in the simplest, clearest way, and leaves no room for misinterpretation by the reader.

The CDC Correspondence Manual will help you meet the federal mandate of plain language in government writing. You will learn how to write clear and effective letters and memos by using the appropriate style, tone, and format.

Where Can I Get Additional Help with My Writing?

Other reference tools are available to help you improve your writing skills. For example, the *Chicago Manual of Style, 16th Edition* answers questions about grammar, style, punctuation, preferred word usage, and citation styles.

LETTER OR MEMO?

Letters and memos are separate forms of correspondence. They serve different purposes and should not be used interchangeably. A letter is formal correspondence sent outside the agency. A memo is an informal letter distributed within the agency.

WRITING RESOURCES ON THE WEB

- *CDC Correspondence Manual*: http://intranet.cdc.gov/od/ocs/docs/CDC_Correspondence_Manual.pdf
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th Edition: www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/
- *Writing User-friendly Documents*: www.plainlanguage.gov
- *The Elements of Style*: www.bartleby.com/141/
- *The U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual*: www.gpoaccess.gov/stylemanual/browse.html

Writing clearly can be challenging at CDC because of our need to convey highly technical information about government rules and regulations, as well as complex medical and scientific concepts.

Fortunately, writing clearly is a skill you can learn through practice and by following the rules in this chapter.

Words of imagination should be written in very plain language; the more purely imaginative they are the more necessary it is to be plain.

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Assessing Readability

Ideally, you should aim your writing for a reading level of 6th grade or less, although this level might be hard to achieve. Writing to this level does not make the reading simplistic, just refreshingly clear.

To assess the readability of your document, use the following tests:

- T*he SMOG readability formula*, available at http://intranet.cdc.gov/od/oads/osi/hrpo/guides/consent/smog.htm.

- *The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Index*, a *Word 2010* option that automatically computes the reading level of your document.

ACTIVATING THE FLESCH-KINCAID GRADE LEVEL INDEX IN *WORD 2010*

1. From the **Review** Button in the top right side of your toolbar, select **Spelling and Grammar**, select **Options** and then select **Spelling & Grammar**.

2. In the section **"When correcting spelling and grammar in Word"** section, check the **Show readability statistics** box.

3. Click **OK**.

4. The readability statistics will show up automatically after the spell check is complete.

The Four Rules of Good Writing

BE CORRECT

Good writing is error-free and grammatically and stylistically correct. Incorrect grammar, confusing punctuation, erratic spelling, and awkward sentence construction will impede understanding, slow the reading process, and make your writing look careless and unprofessional. For a list of words that convey proper usage versus common usage, consult the *Chicago Manual of Style*, Chapter 5: Grammar and Usage, www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch05/ch05_sec220.html. You may also consult the "One word or two?" list in **Appendix A** for more commonly misspelled words.

BE PRECISE

Good writing is also precise and accurate. Using the correct words is especially important in the medical and scientific arenas. Your words can leave no room for error, ambiguity, or misinterpretation. Be sure to use the right word every time. Many of the challenges writers and editors experience relate to usage—or the collective habits of a language's native speakers. For a list of commonly misused words, consult the *Chicago Manual of Style*, Chapter 5: Grammar and Usage, www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch05/ch05_sec220.html.

BE CLEAR

Good writing is clear writing. If you want your message to be understood easily, choose simple, plain words whenever possible, instead of complicated ones. For a list of jargon and preferred alternatives, consult **Appendix B**.

BE CONCISE

William Strunk, Jr., captured the essence of good writing when he said, "Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts." For a list of unnecessary words and their preferred alternatives, consult **Appendix C**.

Suggested Language

The following table lists suggested sentences to use in correspondence.

IF…	THEN WRITE…
This is the opening sentence…	Thank you for your letter regarding…*
This is the opening sentence for a letter sent by a member of Congress on behalf of a constituent…	Thank you for your letter on behalf of your constituent, Mr. William Marsh, regarding…
This is the opening sentence for a referral by HHS Secretary…	On behalf of Secretary [last name], thank you for your letter regarding…..
This is the closing sentence (use whichever is appropriate)…	• Please contact [name] if you have any further questions. • I look forward to working with you on this issue. • Please feel free to contact me or my staff if we can be of further assistance.
The incoming letter was cosigned by more than one person…	This response is also being sent to the cosigner of your letter, Dr. [last name].†
The incoming letter requests the answer be mailed to congressional member's district office…	A copy of this correspondence is being mailed to your Washington office.†

*Do not use this opening for a "bad news letter." See **"Indirect approach"** (page 28) for more details on how to word the opening.
†This should be the last sentence in the letter.

WRITING TIPS

These tips are adapted from the *Elements of Style* by Strunk and White and are discussed in further detail in the next chapter and throughout this manual.

Before You Write

- Analyze your audience.
- Identify your audience's interests, education level, and other specifics.

While You Write

- Use the active voice whenever possible (*I sent the letter*, not *the letter was sent*).
- Avoid expletives (*there is*, *there are*, *it is*).
- Use positive terms and avoid negatives (*unable*, instead of *not able*).
- Use verbs instead of nouns (*announce*, not *make an announcement*).
- Use simple verb tenses (*will help*, not *will be helping*).
- Use personal pronouns (*I*, *you*, *we*).
- Treat one idea per paragraph, and write short paragraphs.
- Vary sentence length to avoid monotony.
- Omit unnecessary words (*because*, not *due to the fact that*).
- Be consistent in word use. If you call it a *widget* once, call it a *widget* throughout.
- Use simple words (*we used*, not *we utilized*), and avoid jargon, archaic words, and buzz words (*aspect*, *idea*, *absolutely*, *very*, *really*).
- Use bulleted or numbered lists.
- Avoid using too many capitals.

After You Write

- Use good design and layout.
- Insert plenty of white space.

Your challenge is to write in simple terms without being simplistic or sacrificing accuracy. The following are guidelines to help you write using plain and accurate language. For more on plain language, visit www.plainlanguage.gov.

Take advantage of every opportunity to practice your communication skills so that when important occasions arise, you will have the gift, the style, the sharpness, the clarity, and the emotions to affect other people.

- Jim Rohn

Use the Active Voice and Avoid the Passive Voice

A verb is in the active voice when the performer of the act is the subject of the sentence. A verb is in the passive voice when the performer of the act is the object of the sentence.

Active voice: The agency is releasing the report.

Passive voice: The report is being released by the agency.

As a rule, it is better to use the active voice. The active voice is more accurate, direct, precise, and interesting. It is also shorter and easier to read, and it flows better. The passive voice is generally more obscure, vague, and stilted than the active voice. Ideally, 80 to 90 percent of your sentences should be in the active voice. The passive voice is preferred only when:

- The subject is unknown.
   Example: A copy was circulated in the office.
- The subject is irrelevant to the matter or obvious.
   Example: The results are being analyzed right now.
- The emphasis needs to be on the object, not the subject.
   Example: Polio was eliminated in the Americas in 1997.
- The subject is better left unspoken.
   Example: Errors were made in the report (you don't want to name the person responsible for the errors).

Avoid Expletives

The word *expletive* has a few meanings, and does not always refer to "bad language." The words *there is*, *there are*, and *it is* are also called expletives. Starting a sentence with an expletive often results in unnecessary verbiage. To be clear and concise, avoid using expletives.

Avoid: There is evidence to suggest that stress causes many health problems.

Use: Evidence suggests that stress causes many health problems.

Avoid: It is often difficult to find links between diseases and the environment.

Use: Finding links between diseases and the environment is often difficult.

Put Statements in a Positive Form

Because people respond better to positive statements, always accentuate the positive and avoid negative statements. Bad news, especially, should be conveyed in a tactful manner. Avoid words such as *not, cannot, not possible, prohibit, refuse,* and *deny*. If you must use negatives, introduce them with words such as these:

- Unfortunately…
- We regret that…
- We are sorry…

You can rephrase many negative statements in a more positive way.

Avoid: We are **not able** to provide a response before August.

Acceptable: We are **unable** to provide a response before August.

Better: We will release the results in August.

Use Verbs and Avoid Nominalization

Nominalization is the use of nouns instead of verbs. Verbs are clearer and denote actions, whereas nouns derived from verbs are abstract, vague, and may weaken your point. Nouns derived from verbs are easy to spot: they usually end in -ance, -ment, and -ion. The sentence can often be changed to the verb form of the noun.

Avoid: CDC provided funding **for the expansion** of the program.

Use: CDC provided funding **to expand** the program.

Avoid: The committee will **make a decision** on the matter next week.

Use: The committee will **decide** on the matter next week.
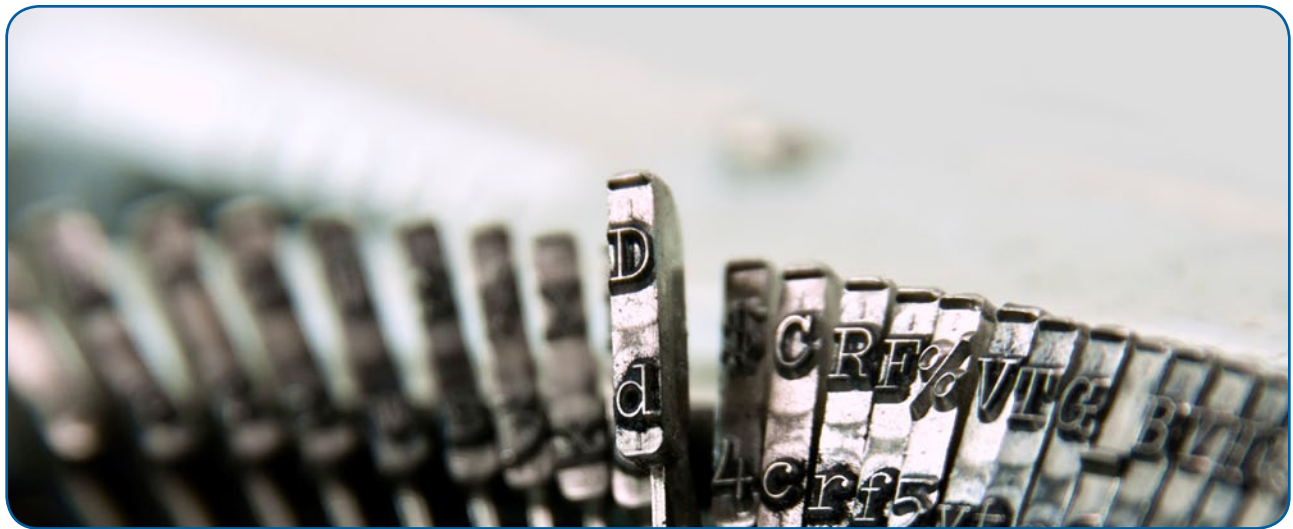
Use Simple Verb Tenses

Avoid: After **having considered** all options carefully, we **have changed** the meeting location.

Acceptable: After **considering** all options carefully, we **changed** the meeting location.

Better: After **careful consideration**, we **changed** the meeting location.

Use Personal Pronouns and Focus on the Reader

A letter is a formal, written communication from one person to another person. Even if you are writing on behalf of the agency, approach the writing process as if you personally are writing the letter to another person. Use this approach even if your letter is to a group of people. To achieve this effect, use pronouns (e.g., I, we, you), which personalize the letter by turning inanimate objects or anonymous entities into real people. Address the reader as *you*, the writer as *I*, and the agency as *we*. Also consider using the possessive forms of these pronouns (such as the adjective *our*).

Avoid: The **agency** will release the findings on **the** website.

Use: **We** will release the findings on **our** website.

Also, try to write from the perspective of the reader, not yourself.

Writer's perspective: **We** have posted the guidelines on our website.

Reader's perspective: **You** can find the guidelines on our website.

Treat One Topic per Paragraph

If possible, introduce the paragraph with a topic sentence, which describes what will be said in the paragraph. In addition, try to compose short paragraphs. One-sentence paragraphs are perfectly acceptable. Paragraphs longer than 10 lines are hard to absorb and require more of the reader's concentration.

Vary Sentence Length

Try to vary the length of your sentences to help delineate your ideas and keep your reader's interest. Sentences that are all the same length are monotonous, sentences that are too short produce a choppy effect, and sentences that are too long are hard to follow.

Beware of Wordiness

Effective writing is concise and to the point. Use the minimum number of words for the maximum effect. One key is to use strong verbs in the active voice and to limit your use of nouns, adverbs, adjectives, and jargon. However, be careful to still maintain an appropriate tone.

Weak: **It is very important** that we consider **each and every** alternative.

Better: We **must** consider **all** alternatives.

Weak: **A considerable number of** people **are utilizing** the test **at this time**.

Better: **Many** people **use** the test **now**.

Use Words Consistently

In general, if you refer to something as a *widget* the first time, call it a *widget* all the way through. This practice will avoid confusion. However, it does not mean that you should never use synonyms; just be sure the reader knows that the two terms refer to the same thing.

Avoid Jargon, Technical Terms, and Pompous-sounding Words

Simple words are usually preferable to complicated ones. The key is to adapt your writing to the reader. Only use jargon if the reader uses the same jargon and will understand it. Also, if you need to use technical terms for a lay audience, be sure to explain the terms. You can find a list of jargon and alternative words in **Appendix B**.
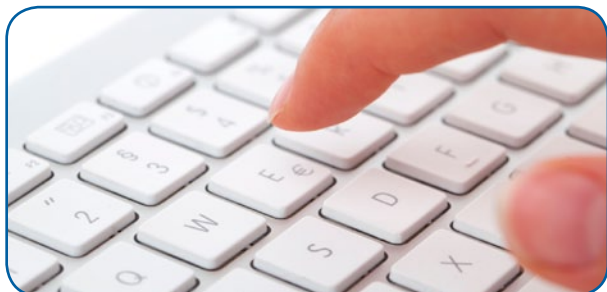
Use Lists

If the letter is lengthy, consider presenting some of the information in bulleted or numbered lists. Lists help highlight the information and speed up the reading process. The following guidelines will help you maximize the effectiveness of lists.

BULLETS OR NUMBERS?

Use numbered lists only if a hierarchy or steps are involved (e.g., step-by-step instructions on how to do something). Otherwise, use bullets.

IF YOU USE BULLETS, USE THE CORRECT ONES

Use appropriately sized and shaped bullets. If the bullets are unfamiliar or too big, they will distract from your content. Also, only use lists if you have at least two, and preferably three or more, items.

INTRODUCE THE LIST AND MAKE IT PARALLEL

An introductory statement should precede a list. In addition, the listed items must be parallel in structure, meaning the first item in all the bullets must be in the same grammatical category.

NOT PARALLEL

A healthy lifestyle includes the following:

- **Eating** well-balanced meals.
- **Avoidance** of all sweets.
- **Exercise** every day.
- **Getting** plenty of rest.

PARALLEL

A healthy lifestyle includes the following:

- **Eat** well-balanced meals.
- **Avoid** all sweets.
- **Exercise** every day.
- **Get** plenty of rest.

PUNCTUATE ACCORDING TO CDC STYLE

How to punctuate lists is largely governed by convention, not by set rules. Therefore, the rules vary depending on which manual you consult. The most important rule is to use sound judgment and be consistent throughout the document.

If the introductory statement uses words such as *the following* or *these*, insert a colon at the end of the statement (see example 1 below); otherwise, do not use any punctuation (see example 2 below). Capitalize the first word in each bullet, and insert a period after the last word in each bullet. However, if each list consists of only one or two words, consider omitting the periods (see example 2 below).

Following are two examples of how to punctuate lists.

EXAMPLE 1

A healthy lifestyle includes the following behaviors:

- **Eating** well-balanced meals.
- **Avoiding** all sweets.
- **Exercising** every day.
- **Getting** plenty of rest.

✓ *Insert a colon after the introductory expression.*

✓ *Capitalize the first word in each list.*

✓ *Insert a period at the end of each item.*

EXAMPLE 2

A healthy lifestyle includes

- **Eating** well
- **Avoiding** sweets
- **Exercising**
- **Resting**

✓ *Do not insert a punctuation mark after the verb.*

A Note about Commas

Many writers have strong feelings about the use of commas. CDC uses the serial (or Oxford) comma; that is, when a conjunction separates the last two items in a series, a comma precedes the conjunction. The serial comma helps to ensure clarity.

> **Example:** Risk factors include poor diet, tobacco use, and high blood pressure.

Tautologies and Redundancies

A tautology is a needless repetition of a word, idea, or statement, such as in "Five minutes before he died, he was still alive." Although this is an extreme example, we use many other tautologies without even realizing it. As Thomas Jefferson said, "The most valuable of talents is that of never using two words when one will do." See the table of tautologies and their alternatives in Appendix C.

Beware of "Alphabet Soup"

Government prose is rife with acronyms and abbreviations, and overuse may lead to an "alphabet soup." Therefore, use them wisely. The following two sections provide more information on acronyms and abbreviations.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS FINDER

For a list of acronyms and abbreviations, see www.acronymfinder.com.

Acronyms

For clarity, always spell out the term the first time it appears in a document, followed by the acronym in parentheses. After that, use the acronym.

> *Example:* Thank you for your letter to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concerning influenza. Please visit our website for information and updates on the disease.

Abbreviations

Use abbreviations sparingly in letters, and insert a period after most abbreviations.

> *Example:* Prof. Xavier will attend the meeting.

Web Addresses

Start the address with *www*. Only use the protocol *http://* if there is no www in the address (in the case of an intranet address, for example). Do not underline or italicize the address (see instructions in the box below on how to remove the hyperlink).

Incorrect:
Consult the CDC website at *http://www.cdc.gov*.

Correct:
Consult the CDC website at www.cdc.gov.

If possible, keep the address on one line.

REMOVING THE HYPERLINK IN *WORD 2010*

1. Highlight the hyperlinked address.

2. Right-click the mouse.

3. Select **Remove hyperlink**.

Symbols

Do not use mathematical symbols (+, =, ›, %) in the body of letters.

Avoid: Approximately **20%** of those infected develop a fever.

Use: Approximately **20 percent** of those infected develop a fever.

SECTION II: WRITING LETTERS

Section II presents specific guidelines for crafting letters that will address the needs of the target audience. It discusses how to develop the content of the letter and how to use the appropriate style and tone. This section also outlines the formatting guidelines for CDC letters. For a checklist of considerations for writing a letter, skip to Appendix D.

In this section you will learn how to decide on the following:

- The content   - The tone
- The style   - The format
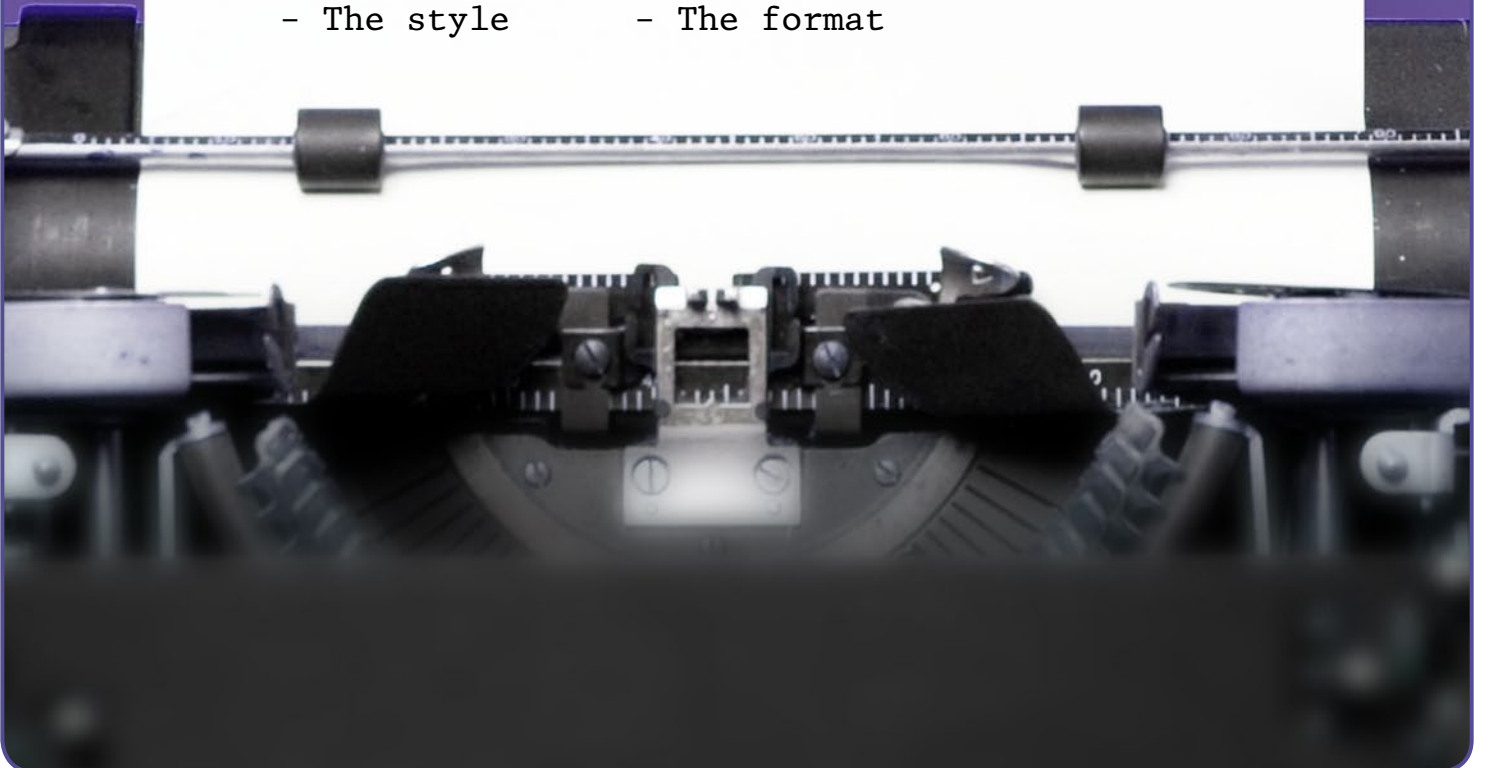
CHAPTER 3: DECIDING ON THE CONTENT

Before you start writing the letter, you need to decide its purpose (why you are writing it) and analyze the audience (who your reader is). Understanding the purpose and the audience ensures that you develop adequate, appropriate content.

To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use the understanding as a guide to our communication with others.

- Anthony Robbins

Purpose of the Letter

Analyzing the purpose of the letter helps you focus on the issue and identify your key message, thus ensuring that your message is on target. Ask yourself, "Why am I writing?" You may write for these reasons:

- To ask for information
- To convey information
- To answer a query
- To approve or deny a request
- To send a referral to someone

Keep in mind that sometimes you may write for more than one purpose. In addition, you need to find out why the correspondent contacted the agency. Knowing this information helps ensure that you craft an appropriate response. Ask yourself, "What does the correspondent want?" The correspondent may write for these reasons:

- To send information
- To request information or action
- To invite someone to an event

Audience Analysis

Understanding your reader's background helps you write a response that the reader will understand. It also ensures that your message will be read in its entirety and interpreted correctly. Ask yourself, "Who is my audience?" The reader may be one of these:

- Member of Congress or another politician
- Member of the public
- Person from another agency (local, state, or federal)
- Interest or advocacy group (nonprofit, industry)

Knowing the reader's background and level of expertise in the subject matter helps you tailor the language to the audience. For example, if the reader is a physician, you probably can use scientific and medical terminology without having to add lengthy explanations. However, if the reader is a member of the public, you might need to use simpler terms and explain unfamiliar concepts. In general, no matter who your reader is, it is best to write in plain language.

After you have identified the audience and decided on the information you want to convey, you need to present it clearly and accurately. The next chapters will guide you through the process of organizing and presenting content.

AS YOU COMPOSE THE LETTER, ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:

- Who is the reader?
- What does the reader need or want?
- Why am I writing this letter?
- What is my key message?
- Am I conveying my message accurately?
- Will the reader immediately understand my message?
- Can I summarize my point in a few short and precise sentences?
- Can I express myself more clearly?
- Am I using the right words?
- Have I included all the necessary elements?

CHAPTER 4: STYLE

Style refers to the manner in which writers express themselves through word choice and sentence construction. Style is the individual use of language that makes the content unique. In essence, style is concerned with the form rather than the substance of the message.

To get your message across and achieve maximum impact, your letter needs to be clear, concise, and written in the appropriate style. The style of the letter depends on the message you need to convey. Neutral or good news is generally best delivered directly, and bad news is best delivered indirectly.

Have something to say and say it as clearly as you can.

That is the only secret of style.

- Matthew Arnold

Direct Approach

The direct approach is the most efficient way to communicate, and this type of letter is the easiest to write. However, you should only use the direct approach if you know the reader will respond well to the letter. If the letter delivers good news, place the good news in the opening paragraph.

The direct approach typically contains the following elements:

1. **Opening Paragraph.** If the letter presents very good news, place it here.
2. **Main Point of the Letter.**
3. **Closing Paragraph.** If it is a good-news letter, reiterate the good news here.

Following is an example of a direct-approach letter.

March 1, 2011

Mr. Aaron S. Williams
Director, Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

Dear Mr. Williams:

Congratulations on the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy's executive order that created the Peace Corps. To date, over 200,000 volunteers have served in 139 countries, a significant accomplishment.

The Peace Corps and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) share a common goal of working to solve global public health problems. Programs such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Health Initiative (GHI) illustrate opportunities for CDC and Peace Corps to collaborate toward this end. Many of our employees themselves served as Peace Corps Volunteers, and credit the experience for sparking their careers in public health. We recognize the valuable breadth of experience Returned Peace Corps Volunteers bring to our organization, and are proud to actively recruit these individuals.

I applaud the work of the Peace Corps to promote peace and friendship around the world, and extend my best wishes for a memorable anniversary celebration.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Director, CDC, and
Administrator, Agency for Toxic
  Substances and Diseases Registry

Indirect Approach: How to Deliver Bad News

The indirect approach is harder to write. Use it to deliver bad news or if you know the reader will be hostile or resistant to your message.

Following are three factors to consider when crafting an indirect-approach letter.

STRESS THE POSITIVE

Stress the positive and avoid using negative terms, if possible. Many times, you can rephrase negative statements in positive terms.

Avoid: After reviewing the data on the potential health threats of the site, researchers concluded that the site does not pose a danger to the public.

Use: Researchers have reviewed the data on the potential health threats of the site. They have concluded that the site is safe for public use.

If you must use negative statements, preface them with words like these:

- Unfortunately…
- We regret that…
- We are sorry…

Avoid: We did not receive your application before the deadline.

Use: Unfortunately, we did not receive your application before the deadline.

Better: Unfortunately, we received your application after the deadline.

USE A BUFFER

Before addressing the main point of your letter, you need a buffer, a sentence or paragraph that shows you are sympathetic to the reader's cause or request. The buffer will ease the bad news, add perspective, and establish goodwill between the writer and the reader. However, do not bury, hide, or coat the bad news.

In the buffer, use terms that show you empathize with the reader's situation. Using a buffer does not mean that you necessarily have to agree with the reader's view.

Suggested terms include the following:

- I share your concern about…
- I understand that…
- I realize that…

CONTENTS OF AN INDIRECT-APPROACH LETTER

The indirect approach model usually contains the six following elements:

1. OPENING PARAGRAPH.

Avoid using the words *thank you* in the opening of a bad-news letter.

Avoid: Thank you for your letter complaining about the interim report.

Use: I appreciate your letter concerning the interim report.

2. BUFFER.

Show you understand the reader's perspective.

Example: I share your concern about the accuracy of the interim report.

3. PROCEDURE.

Show that you have examined all sides. Explain agency processes, if appropriate.

Example: I want to assure you that we have analyzed all the data in the interim report.

4. MAIN POINT.

This is where you present the bad news in a courteous, civil manner. If possible, avoid using negative terms.

Avoid: At this time, we cannot release an interim report.

Use: At this time, we are unable to release an interim report.

If possible, explain the reason you cannot fulfill the reader's request.

Example: Because we remain committed to science-based public health, it would be premature to release results that have not been verified through significant research or evaluation.

5. ACTION (IF APPROPRIATE).

This is where you mention future steps.

Example: We are working to complete the report as quickly as possible. Once we receive the needed records, we expect to publish the final report.

6. CLOSING PARAGRAPH.

Thank the reader for the input.

Example: Thank you for your interest in this important public health issue. I hope the enclosed information is useful.

The following table lists the differences between the direct and the indirect approach.

DIRECT APPROACH	INDIRECT APPROACH
The letter is easier to write.	The letter is harder to write.
Use this style to deliver neutral or good news.	Use this style to deliver bad news or to respond to a criticism or a complaint.
Start with *Thank you for your letter concerning…*	Start with *I appreciate your letter concerning…*
Deliver the main point in a direct, straightforward manner.	Use a buffer **before** delivering the main point. In the buffer paragraph, show empathy and acknowledge the reader's perspective.

Following is an example of an indirect-approach letter.

Dear Colleague:

Public health has been hit hard as a result of the recession, and budget cuts are straining the capacity of health departments across the country. I know that you are under tremendous pressure from the cumulative effect of state budget cuts and that the recent federal budget cuts further increase that pressure.

These abrupt cuts force difficult and painful decisions, and federal reductions could hardly come at a worse time. Many of you have seen measurable improvements in health in your states due to programs that are now being curtailed or eliminated.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) fiscal year (FY) 2011 budget was cut $740 million from the previous year, making this our lowest budget authority since FY 2003. Congress will undoubtedly consider significant additional budget cuts in FY 2012 and FY 2013. It has been agonizing for me to manage these cuts. Virtually every CDC-funded program has been affected, and we are cutting our internal costs to maximize program support. We are also seeking ways to maximize our support for our public health partners in the field.

I look forward to speaking with you soon about ways we can mitigate the impact of budget cuts on the public's health. Thank you for all of your hard work in meeting our shared goal of protecting and improving the nation's health.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Director, CDC, and
Administrator, Agency for Toxic
  Substances and Disease Registry

Tone refers to the particular style of writing that reflects the writer's feelings toward the issue and the reader. Tone is the way the letter "sounds" and comes across to the reader.

Tone is an often-neglected but crucial element of a letter: it is what the reader responds to first. The tone of the letter leaves a certain impression of the agency, and you want that impression to be positive, regardless of the type of news you deliver. Remember, how you say it is as important as what you say.

Correspondence should be polite, informative, and courteous. It should never be condescending, rude, or sarcastic. Government prose has been criticized for being rigid and bureaucratic. Your goal is to be professional without sounding too formal. Put yourself in the reader's place: would you enjoy receiving a stilted letter that starts with *Enclosed herewith, please find…?* However, be careful not to go to the other extreme; there is a fine line between approachable and familiar. Below are a few guidelines to help you use the right tone.

> *In a writer there must always be two people-the writer and the critic.*
>
> *- Leo Tolstoy*

Personal Pronouns

Use personal pronouns (e.g., I, we, you). These pronouns personalize the letter by turning inanimate objects or anonymous entities (e.g., the agency) into real people (e.g., I, we). In addition, pronouns save space and increase reading speed. Refer to the reader as *you*, the writer as *I*, and the agency as *we*. Also, consider using the possessive forms of these pronouns (such as the adjective *our*).

Avoid: The **agency** will investigate the matter and inform **the public** about **the** findings.

Use: **We** will investigate the matter and keep **you** informed about **our** findings.

You can increase the use of personal pronouns by using the active voice instead of the passive voice.

Avoid: Information about the condition can be found on the website.

Use: **You** can find information about the condition on **our** website.

Note: Be careful to avoid overuse of the personal pronoun "I."

Reader Emphasis

Write with the reader's perspective in mind (instead of your own), and stress the benefit to the reader. Try to use *you* more often than *I* or *we.*

Avoid: **I** will send you the report as soon as it is available.

Use: **You** will receive the report as soon as it is available.

Contractions

Because they are too familiar, do not use contractions (use *I am* instead of *I'm*, *we will* instead of *we'll*).

Inclusive Language

A respectful tone is free of biased and discriminatory language. To ensure the use of inclusive language, be careful when referring to gender, age, race, or ethnicity. In addition, use gender-neutral terminology. See "Bias-Free Language" (Chicago Manual of Style 5.221– 5.230, www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch05/ ch05_sec221.html) for more details. In addition, the federal government uses standard language to identify racial and ethnic groups (www. whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_1997standards).

Following is a short list of common gender-neutral terms:

Avoid	Use
chairman, chairwoman	chair, chairperson
congressman	member of Congress, representative, legislator
spokesman, spokeswoman	spokesperson

Bad News

When delivering bad news, buffer it with a sentence or paragraph that shows compassion. For more on this, see "Indirect Approach," in **Chapter 4**.

Courtesy

When answering criticism, resist the temptation to snap back. Always keep a civil and courteous tone. Avoid the following terms, which may come across as impatient, condescending, or presumptuous:

- As I told you before…
- As you are well aware…
- As you well know…
- I am sure you will agree…
- For your information…

Apology

If you must apologize, do it completely, and do not blame the correspondent.

Avoid: I apologize for the late response, but we received your application after the deadline because you did not include the correct mailstop.

Use: I apologize for the delay.

If you want to include an explanation, phrase it in positive terms.

> *Example:* For a prompt reply, please be sure to include the mailstop (ex: D-14) in the address.

In addition, use the active voice and assume responsibility for your mistakes.

Avoid: An error was made in the calculation.
  Use: We made an error in the calculation. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

However, consider using the passive voice to avoid blaming or embarrassing someone.

Avoid: Because the Board of Directors canceled the meeting, we could not reach a consensus.
  Use: Because the meeting was canceled, a consensus could not be reached.

Please and Thank You

Use *please* and *thank you*, when appropriate. However, using thank you in the opening of a letter is inappropriate when answering a complaint or writing a "bad news" letter. See "Indirect Approach," Chapter 4, for more details.

Avoid: **Thank you** for your complaint concerning the report.
  Use: **I appreciate your concerns** about the report.

In addition, do not thank someone in advance for an action that has not yet been accomplished.

Avoid: Thank you in advance for your help.
  Use: I look forward to hearing from you soon.
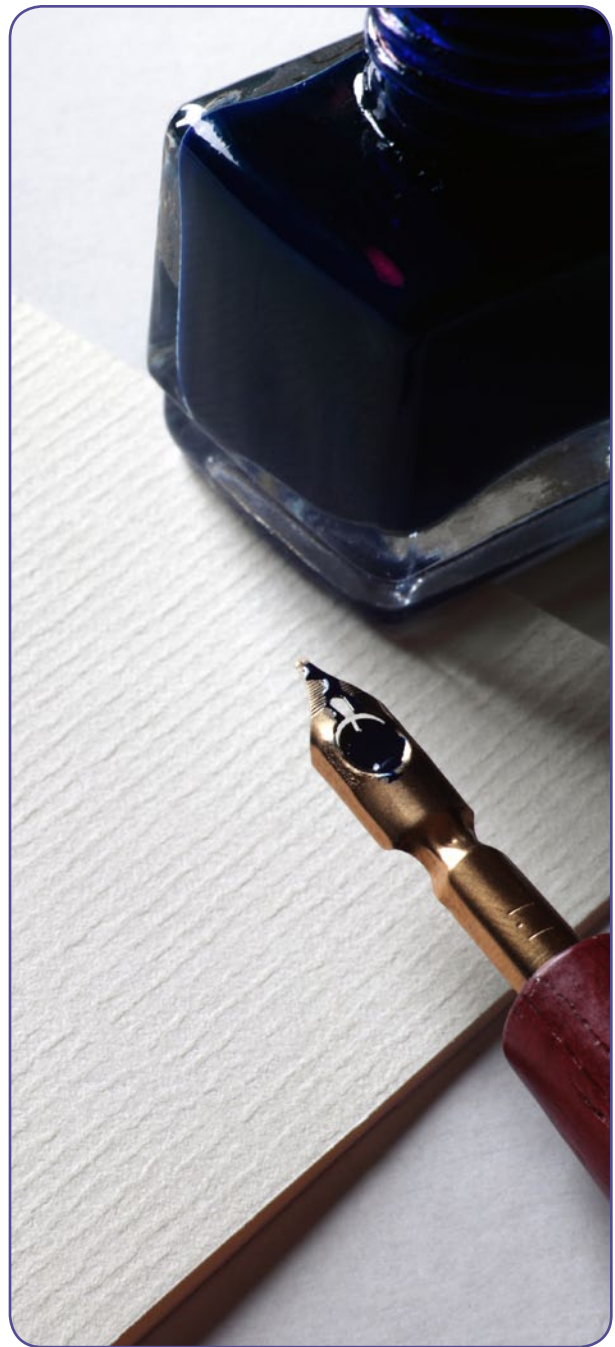
Thanking someone for a thank you letter may also pose difficulties.

Avoid: Thank you for your letter thanking me for speaking at the conference.
  Use: I appreciate your letter thanking me for speaking at the conference.

CHAPTER 6: FORMAT

Format refers to the manner in which the information appears on the page. Proper formatting makes the document visually appealing and easy to read, follow, and understand.

This chapter explains the formatting guidelines for letters.* Following these CDC conventions ensures that our agency's identity and message are presented clearly and consistently throughout our correspondence.

*Formatting varies between letters and memos. Please consult Chapters 7 and 8 for specific memo formatting guidelines.

A journalist and an information architect face exactly the same problem – how to give shape to the pile of information in front of you in a way that will make it easy and natural for people to comprehend.

- Jesse James Garrett

Features of a Well-designed Document

A well-designed document should:

- Be visually appealing.
- Be clutter-free.
- Highlight the different sections clearly.
- Help readers find critical information quickly.
- Convey the agency's role, whether directly or indirectly.
- Give readers a favorable impression of the agency.

TO ENHANCE READABILITY

- Write short paragraphs.
- Create plenty of white space (use 1" margins, start on line 9, insert a blank line between paragraphs).
- Use bulleted or numbered lists, if appropriate.

Formatting Letters

The following table will help you format your letters.

TOPIC	FORMAT
Font	Use Times New Roman, point size 12. If size 12 does not fit, adjust margins or use size 11.5.
Justification (Text Alignment)	• Align all text left, except for the signature block, which starts at 3" from the left margin. • Do not justify (make straight) the right margin.
Line Spacing	• *Draft:* double space the lines. • *Final:* single space the lines.
Margins	Use 1" margins all around. Note that margins may be adjusted to keep correspondence to one page.
Address	• Start the address on line 9 (at 2.5" from the top of the page). • Spell out the name of locators (e.g., Street, Avenue). • Spell out the state (*Georgia*, not *GA*). • Insert two spaces between the state and the zip code.
Page Numbers and Headers	• Omit the page number from the first page. • At the top of each subsequent page, place a header with the same information that appears on the first line of the address. *Example:* Page 2 – The Honorable Johnny Isakson *Note:* For instructions on creating a header, see **Appendix E.** For instructions on preparing correspondence signed by the HHS Secretary, see **Chapter 8**.
Paragraphs	• Do not indent paragraphs. • Insert a blank line between paragraphs.
Sentences	Insert one space after the period at the end of each sentence. *Note:* For instructions on setting the spacing, see **Appendix E**.
Enclosures	If appropriate, leave one blank line after the signature block and insert the word *Enclosure* or *Enclosures*. Be sure to mention the enclosure(s) in the body of the letter.

**The following sample letter highlights formatting guidelines.
Consult Appendix E for tips on formatting documents using Word 2010.**

[SAMPLE LETTER]

> Margins are 1 inch all the way around. The font is 12 point, Times New Roman-

December 5, 2011

The Honorable Marco Rubio
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

> Keep the letter concise and insert a blank line between paragraphs.

Dear Senator Rubio:

Thank you so much for your inspiring remarks at the World AIDS Day event at George Washington University last Thursday. You spoke eloquently of the importance of global health and HIV programs both to the global economy and to the United States.

As you know, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a major implementing agency of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). We use the latest science and evidence to focus our global HIV/AIDS efforts on the most effective and cost-effective interventions. As we work to achieve an AIDS-free generation, your support is invaluable.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in Washington, DC. My staff will contact your staff to offer additional information and assistance on these critical global health issues.

Sincerely,

> If the CDC and ATSDR acronyms are not spelled out in the letter, spell them out in the signature block.

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH,
Director, CDC, and
Administrator, Agency for Toxic
   Substances and Disease Registry

Parts and Features of a Letter

A letter usually contains the following parts:

1. **Heading** (letterhead and date)
2. **Opening** (address and salutation)
3. **Body** (main text)
4. **Closing** (complimentary closing, signature block, and title)
5. **References** (enclosures, copy notations)

1. HEADING.

The heading contains the letterhead and the date.

Letterhead

- Use CDC letterhead for the first page of the letter.
- Use plain bond paper for additional pages.

Date

- The date goes on the right side, slightly under *Atlanta, Georgia 30333*.

2. OPENING.

The opening contains the correspondent's address and salutation. Start typing on line 9 (2.5" from the top of the page) of the first page.

Correspondent's Address

- Include degree(s) after the name, if appropriate.
- Spell out all locator words (e.g., Road, Suite, Georgia). However, note that PO Box is not written out.
- Abbreviate titles (e.g., Mr., Ms.), degrees (e.g., MD, MPH), and directions (e.g., NW, SE).
- Insert two spaces between the state and the zip code.

Salutation

- Use *Dear* followed by the appropriate salutation and a colon.

  Examples: Dear Dr. McGraw:
  Dear Mr. Marsh:

The following example details some formatting guidelines for addresses.

No periods with abbreviations →

Robert Thomas, MD, MPH
Deputy Director
Center for Global Change
1235 Parker Lane, NW, Suite 200
Long Island, New York 11122

Spell out location words

Insert two spaces before Zip code

The following tables present the correct way to address correspondents in the opening section of the letter.

LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

PERSON	ADDRESS	SALUTATION
State Governor	The Honorable (full name) Governor of (State) (City, State, Zip)	Dear Governor (surname):
State Senator	The Honorable (full name) (State) Senate (City, State, Zip)	Dear Senator (surname):
State Representative	The Honorable (full name) (State) House of Representatives (City, State, Zip)	Dear Representative (surname):
Mayor	The Honorable (full name) Mayor of (City) (City, State, Zip)	Dear Mayor (surname):

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

PERSON	ADDRESS	SALUTATION
Cabinet Member	The Honorable (full name) Secretary of (Department) (address)	Dear Secretary (surname):
Senator (In Washington, DC)	The Honorable (full name) United States **Senate** Washington, DC 20510	Dear Senator (surname):
Senator (Local District/Office)	The Honorable (full name) United States **Senator** (address)	Dear Senator (surname):
Senator-elect	The Honorable (full name) United States Senator- elect (address, if given) *or* Care of the United States Senate Washington, DC 20510	Dear Senator-elect (surname):
Representative (In Washington, DC)	The Honorable (full name) US House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Representative (surname):
Representative (Local District/Office)	The Honorable (full name) Member, US House of Representatives (address)	Dear Representative (surname):
Representative-elect	The Honorable (full name) Representative-elect (office address) *or* US House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Representative-elect (surname):

UNIVERSITY DEGREE HOLDERS

PERSON	ADDRESS	SALUTATION
Physician	(full name), MD (address)	Dear Dr. (surname):
PhD Holder	(full name), PhD (address)	Dear Dr. (surname):
Professor	Professor (full name) Department of (name) (name of institution) (address)	Dear Professor (surname):

THESE REFERENCE MANUALS SHOW MORE SALUTATIONS:

- *Gregg Manual, 9th Edition* (pages 544–50)
- *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual 2008*, at www.gpoaccess.gov/stylemanual/browse.html

3. BODY.

The body contains the main idea or ideas you want your letter to convey. It typically has an opening paragraph, the main point(s) of the letter, and a closing paragraph. Highly technical or detailed information should be provided in an enclosure to keep the letter clear and concise.

Main Text

- Double space the lines in drafts.
- Single space the lines in final versions.

4. CLOSING.

This section contains the complimentary closing, signature, name, and job title of the writer. All text starts 3 inches (or 6 tabs) from the left margin.

Complimentary Closing

- Use *Sincerely* followed by a comma.

Signature

- Leave three blank lines for the signature of the CDC Director.
- Leave four blank lines for the signature of the HHS Secretary.

Writer's Name and Degree(s)

- Insert the writer's name and degree(s), if appropriate.

Writer's Job Title

- Insert the writer's job title right under the name (*Note:* do not insert the words HHS after the job title).

When to Use Copy Notation

If you send a copy of the final letter to people *outside* of CDC, use copy notation (cc:). This notation will indicate to the correspondent that these individuals will also receive a copy.

! KEEP A COPY OF THE LETTER FOR YOUR REFERENCE.

5. REFERENCES.

The references contain enclosures, copy notations, and blind copy notations (if appropriate).

Enclosure(s)

- If other documents are enclosed with the letter, type the word *Enclosure or Enclosures*.
- Be sure to mention the enclosure(s) in the body of the letter.

ENCLOSURE OR ATTACHMENT?

- Insert the word *Enclosure* at the bottom of a letter.
- Insert the word *Attachment* at the bottom of a memo.

Copy Notation (cc:) and Blind Copy Notation (bcc:)

These indicate who will get a copy of the letter.

General Rule for Indicating Blind Copy Notation

Drafts sent to the Division of Executive Secretariat should have a "bcc:" listing all those inside the agency who will receive a copy of the letter. This internal copy notation also includes other information such as file name and name of preparer (see samples on the next page). Omit this internal information from the final version.
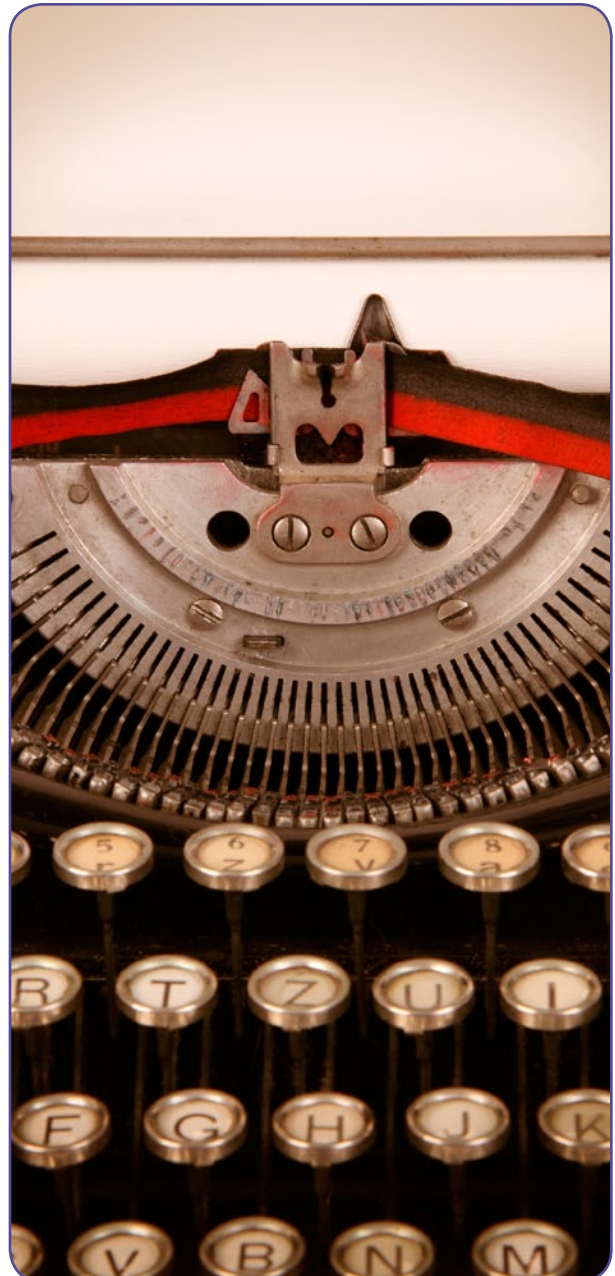
Following are two samples of internal copy notations.

SAMPLE 1: GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

bcc:

OD [the Office of the Director always gets a copy]

CDC/W [for congressional correspondence, the Washington Office gets a copy]

FMO [FMO gets a copy]

NCEH   [CIO preparing the response]

CDC ID: 12345; Doc. Name: pickaname.doc [tracking number provided by the Division of the Executive Secretariat, document name provided by the CIO]

Prepared by: LBell, ATSDR, (770) 488-4321 [first initial and last name of preparer, CIO, contact number]

Spelling verifier used by: BMarsh 11/27/11 [first initial and last name of person who spell-checked the letter, date prepared]

SAMPLE 2: CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY (OS), EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT (ES), HHS

bcc:

OD

OS/ES

NCHHSTP

OS No. 123456789

CDC ID: 12345; Doc. Name: pickaname.doc

Prepared by: SHaab, NCHHSTP, (404) 639-1234

Spelling verifier used by: LRyan 11/27/11

SECTION III: WRITING MEMOS AND OTHER CORRESPONDENCE

Section III presents writing and formatting guidelines for memos and other types of correspondence sent within CDC or going to HHS. This section will help you with guidelines for submitting the following types of correspondence:

- Memos sent within CDC
- Correspondence sent to HHS
- E-mail
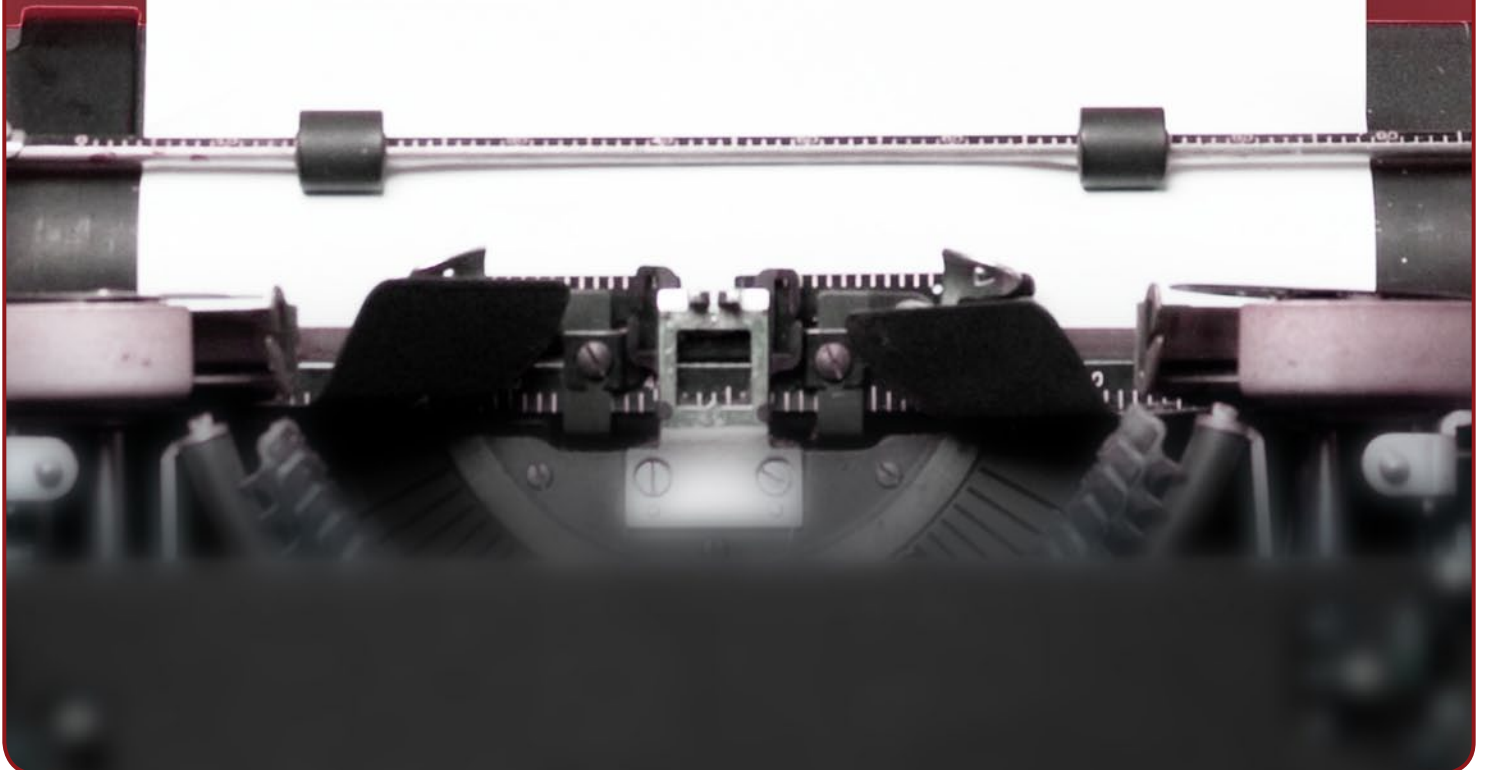
CHAPTER 7: MEMOS SENT WITHIN CDC

In addition to the writing guidelines discussed earlier in this manual, which also apply to memos, consider these tips for writing effective memos.

Tips for Writing Memos Sent Within CDC

- Address only one topic per memo. If you need to convey information about more than one topic, write a different memo for each one.

- Be short but specific in the Subject line (e.g., instead of writing *Restructuring*, write *CDC/ATSDR Senior Management Team Restructuring*).

- Be clear and concise but provide background information in the introductory paragraph, unless the recipients already know the topic of the memo.

- Use the word *Attachment*, not the word *Enclosure*, when attaching additional material to a memo.

  Note: Because they disseminate news to keep employees informed about CDC events or policies, certain types of e-mails—such as OD, CDC, or OHS announcements—also function as memos and should follow the same guidelines. For more on e-mail, see **Chapter 9**.

The great artist is the simplifier.

- Henri Amiel

Formatting Memos Sent Within CDC

The following table details the formatting conventions for memos sent within CDC.

TOPIC	FORMAT
Font	Use Times New Roman, point size 12. If size 12 does not fit, adjust margins or use size 11.5.
Justification (Text Alignment)	• Align text left. • Do not justify (make straight) the right margin.
Letterhead	Print on CDC letterhead (first page only).
Line Spacing	• *Draft*: double space the lines. • *Final:* single space the lines.
Margins	Margins should be 1-inch all around.
Page Numbers and Headers	• Omit the page number from the first page. • Place the page number and the name of the person to whom the memo is going in a header at the top of subsequent pages. *Example:* Page 2 – The Director *Note:* For information on how to create a header, see **Appendix E**.
Paragraphs	• Do not indent paragraphs. • Insert a blank line between paragraphs.
Sentences	Insert one space after the period at the end of each sentence. *Note:* For instructions on setting the spacing, see **Appendix E**.
Attachments	If appropriate, leave one blank line after the signature block and insert the word *Attachment* or *Attachments*. List the attachment(s) on the next line.

Following is a sample memo sent within CDC.

TO: Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

FROM: Director, National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention

DATE: July 21, 2011

SUBJECT: Invitation for Assistant Secretary for Health Howard Koh to Speak During the Opening Plenary Session at the 2011 National HIV Prevention Conference, August 14, 2011, in Atlanta, Georgia.

Issue

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention would like to invite Assistant Secretary Koh to provide a welcome address at the 2011 National HIV Prevention Conference on August 14, 2011, from 4:15 p.m. – 4:25 p.m.

Recommendation

We request that you sign the attached decision memo and letter inviting the Assistant Secretary to speak at the 2011 National HIV Prevention Conference.

BACKGROUND

CDC, in cooperation with other federal agencies and numerous private-sector organizations, is co-sponsoring the 2011 National HIV Prevention Conference, August 14-17, 2011, at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta and Marriott Marquis hotels in Atlanta, Georgia. Approximately 3,000 public health professionals, clinicians, community organization representatives, and advocates involved in HIV prevention have been invited to this conference. These groups, convened by CDC, represent public and private organizations whose interaction, cooperation, and coordination are crucial to successful efforts to prevent HIV and AIDS in the United States.

We would like to invite the Assistant Secretary to provide ten minutes of remarks during the opening ceremony of the 2011 National HIV Prevention Conference. We believe that the Assistant Secretary's participation will demonstrate HHS' support of efforts to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States. In the year since the publication of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, HHS has shown substantial leadership in its implementation and coordination across departments. Despite challenging economic times, the HHS fiscal year 2011 investments in HIV prevention, treatment, care, and research remain robust, further demonstrating HHS' commitment to making real gains in the fight against HIV at home and abroad. This conference would provide an opportunity for the Assistant Secretary to speak directly to our key constituents about his vision for our national HIV response and HHS' continued commitment to the fight against this disease.

Kevin Fenton, MD, PhD, FFPH

Attachments:
Tab A – Draft Agenda
Tab B – Letter of Invitation
Tab C – Decision Memo to Assistant Secretary Koh

Decision:
Approved: _____
No: _____
Would like to be briefed before signing: _____

Other/Comments:

_____
Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Director

CHAPTER 8: CORRESPONDENCE SENT TO HHS

From time to time you may have to send specific memos to HHS, such as decision (simple or complex), briefing, or information memos.

Writing Memos Sent to HHS

Following are guidelines for developing these memos. You can find sample memos in Appendix F.

SIMPLE DECISION MEMOS

Simple decision memos address a single, straightforward issue and should not exceed two pages. These memos can be used to seek approval to release a report or issue a non-controversial regulation, to invite a speaker to a conference, or other basic action. They can also be used to request approval to issue a lengthy report, plan, or other document. If doing so, include an abbreviated summary and two copies of the report. Submit lengthy background material, when necessary, as tabbed attachments.

The *Issue* section should contain a concise statement (preferably one sentence or a short paragraph) describing the issue or request. If the memo is an invitation, include the invitation in this section, along with details (e.g., dates, times).

The *Secretarial Action* section should state the action recommended by CDC, as well as the date the action is requested by.

The *Background* section should contain pertinent information regarding the origin, background, and implications of the issue or problem. It should also contain a brief statement explaining why the *Action Requested By* date should be met.

Below is an example of a simple decision memo. All other memos follow the same basic guidelines. You can find more samples in Appendix F.

TO: The Secretary
Through: DS _____
COS _____
ES _____

FROM: Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration
Director, National Institutes of Health

DATE: October 17, 2011

SUBJECT: Presidential Proclamation Recognizing November 14–20, 2011, as Get Smart About Antibiotics Week

Issue

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration, and the National Institutes of Health request submission to the White House of a presidential proclamation recognizing November 14–20, 2011, as Get Smart About Antibiotics Week.

Secretarial Action

We ask that you sign the attached memorandum and forward the presidential proclamation to the White House for approval.

BACKGROUND

Thousands of Americans will become ill with respiratory infections throughout the year and may unnecessarily use antibiotics. At this time of year, when many Americans are thinking about cold and flu season, it is particularly important to call attention to the appropriate use of antibiotics. The number of bacteria resistant to antibiotics has increased in the last decade and many bacterial infections are becoming resistant to the most commonly prescribed antibiotic treatments. Misuse of antibiotics jeopardizes the usefulness of essential drugs. Decreasing inappropriate antibiotic use is an important strategy in the fight to control antibiotic resistance.

Proclaiming the week of November 14–20, 2011, as Get Smart About Antibiotics Week will raise the profile of the important public health issue of antibiotic resistance—one of the world's most pressing public health problems—and improve antibiotic use behavior.

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH   Margaret A. Hamburg, MD   Francis S. Collins, MD, PhD

Attachments:
Tab A – Transmittal Memorandum to the White House
Tab B – Presidential Proclamation: Get Smart About Antibiotics Week

Decision:
Approved: _____
No: _____
Would like to be briefed before signing: _____

Other/Comments:

_____

Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary

COMPLEX DECISION MEMOS

Complex decision memos present an issue that is not straightforward and for which a variety of alternatives or options need to be presented. You should clearly present the issue(s) and relevant background information, with pros and cons for each option presented in bulleted form.

Present options in a neutral fashion so as not to favor any one side.

The *Issue* section should contain a concise statement (preferably one sentence or a short paragraph) describing the issue(s) or request(s).

The *Secretarial Action* section provides a recommendation regarding the suggested course of action, as well as the date the action is requested by.

The *Background* section should contain pertinent information regarding the origin, background, and implications of the issue(s) or request(s). It should also contain a brief statement explaining why the *Action Requested By* date should be met.

Each option should be listed clearly and concisely in its own numbered *Recommendation* section (i.e., *Recommendation 1*, *Recommendation 2*). Each option should be followed by a discussion that includes information about who would benefit if the option were chosen; who would be adversely affected; how those affected are anticipated to react; and how much the option will cost in terms of dollars, staff, and administrative responsibilities. The pros and cons of each option should follow, in bulleted form.

Following each *Recommendation* section, a *Decision* section should provide approval/disapproval lines for the addressee's use.

Following are items to include when drafting complex decision memos:

- A clear and concise explanation of the issue requiring a decision (preferably a short paragraph about the issue/request).
- A framework for the decision to be made in the form of chronological background information. Do not overwhelm the presentation with details.
- A minimum of two options.
- Anticipated reactions from external groups (e.g., Congress, industry, states) in the *Recommendation* section.
- A minimum of two pros and two cons for each option. Present them in a balanced fashion.
- Costs of options, if available/applicable.
- Date/time frame in which a decision is required only if a true time constraint exists (explain in the *Background* section).

BRIEFING MEMOS

Use briefing memos to brief HHS officials on a public health issue or to provide information for an upcoming event (e.g., meeting, speech, hearing). These memos should contain clear and concise information to familiarize HHS officials with the purpose of the briefing.

The *Background* section should contain information about the issue at hand. When appropriate, include questions that may be raised in the *Issues of Concern* section. The *Discussion* section should summarize HHS' current or previous responses to each of the issues addressed in the *Background* section. When appropriate, provide talking points.

Formatting Memos Sent to HHS

The following table details the formatting conventions for memos sent to HHS.

TOPIC	FORMAT
Font	Use Times New Roman, point size 12. If size 12 does not fit, adjust margins or use size 11.5.
Justification (Text Alignment)	• Align text left. • Do not justify (make straight) the right margin.
Letterhead	Print on CDC letterhead (first page only).
Line Spacing	• *Draft:* double space the lines. • *Final:* single space the lines.
Margins	Use 1" margins all around, with the first line of text starting on line 9 (at 2.5" from the top of the page).
Page Numbers and Headers	• Omit the page number from the first page. • Center the page number at the bottom of subsequent pages. *Example:* - 2 - *Note:* For information on how to create a header, see **Appendix E**.
Paragraphs	• Do not indent paragraphs. • Insert a blank line between paragraphs.
Sentences	Insert one space after the period at the end of each sentence. *Note:* For instructions on setting the spacing, see **Appendix E**.
Attachments	If appropriate, leave one blank line after the signature block and insert the word *Attachment* or *Attachments*. List the attachment(s) on the next line.

Writing Other Correspondence Sent to HHS

Following are guidelines for summary statements (in-house and secretarial correspondence).

RESPONSIVE SUMMARY STATEMENTS—SECRETARIAL CORRESPONDENCE

When HHS assigns a CIO a letter that requires the Secretary's signature, a responsive summary statement written by the CIO must accompany the draft response submitted to the Division of Executive Secretariat. The responsive summary statement serves as a cover page summarizing the response, and should serve as a stand-alone document that does not exceed one page. Responsive summary statements should include the following information:

- Name(s) of correspondent.
- Subject/issues raised by the correspondent.
- Major points in the response.
- Other pertinent information.
- Contact person(s).

TRANSMITTAL SUMMARY STATEMENTS—SECRETARIAL CORRESPONDENCE

When the CIO initiates communication with the Secretary, a transmittal summary statement written by the CIO accompanies the correspondence. Like a responsive summary statement, the transmittal summary statement serves as a cover page summarizing the draft memo the CIO submits to the Division of Executive Secretariat. It serves as a stand-alone document and does not exceed one page. Transmittal summary statements include the following information:

- Subject/issues/OPDIV
- Summary
- Recommendation
- Contact person(s)

IN-HOUSE SUMMARY STATEMENTS—CIO-ORIGINATED CORRESPONDENCE

An In-House Summary Statement is included with CIO-originated correspondence going to CDC's Division of Executive Secretariat for the signature of the CDC Director or the CDC executive leadership team. The in-house summary statement must include a one-paragraph justification explaining why the CIO is requesting the specific action or signature of the above-mentioned persons. The paragraph should include the following information:

- Subject
- Purpose
- Summary and concerns (if any)
- Recommended action(s)
- Contact person(s)
- Telephone number

HHS/IOS/ES TRANSMITTAL MEMOS

HHS/IOS/ES Transmittal Memos accompany all proposed regulations sent to HHS for review/clear. The transmittal memo, signed by the CDC Director, provides the issue, background or discussion, and a recommendation that the Secretary approve the *Federal Register* notice announcing the rule. In addition to the information typically included in a simple decision memo, an HHS/IOS/ES transmittal memo outlines the audience, purpose, distribution, and release date of the proposed rule. A summary statement accompanies the transmittal memo.

For more information about the Executive Secretariat clearance process, see **Appendix G**.

> **APPENDIX F** has examples of each type of correspondence discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 9: GUIDELINES FOR E-MAIL

E-mail is one of the most widely used means of communication at CDC. You should use the same care and caution drafting e-mails as you would writing letters or memos. Following are a few rules of "netiquette" to ensure that your e-mail is effective and professional.

Writing E-mails

Grammar. Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Be sure the **Always check spelling** option is checked and activated (see box for instructions).

Style. Compose brief single-topic messages.

Tone. Be courteous and respectful. Because e-mails cannot convey tone very well, it is easy to unintentionally offend your reader. Never be rude, sarcastic, or caustic.

Content. An e-mail is a public document. Only write messages that you would not be embarrassed to see disseminated in public. Even though you may think your message is private, *it is not*.

Topic. Do not send chain letters, doubtful humor, or anything else that is unprofessional.

ACTIVATING THE SPELL CHECKER IN *OUTLOOK*

1. On your *Outlook* toolbar, select **Tools**, **Options**.
2. Select the **Spelling** tab.
3. Check the first two options.
4. Click **OK**.

Formatting E-mails

Subject Line. Use a short, descriptive subject line. Never leave the subject line blank; your message may get deleted without being read.

Signature. Use a signature block. Include all pertinent information, such as your title, the name of your office, and your phone and fax numbers. You may also consider including your CIO's web address.

All Caps and Lowercase. Do not write in all caps or all lowercase letters. Both make your message hard to read, and writing in all caps is the equivalent of shouting.

Sending E-mails

Hostile Mail. Think twice before sending that scathing message. Before venting your anger, ask yourself:

- Would I say this to the person face-to-face?
- Will this put the reader in an awkward position?
- How would I feel if I received this message?

Forwarding. Do not forward messages indiscriminately. When forwarding someone else's e-mail, ask the original writer's permission if the message contains personal information.

Reply to all. When replying to a message that was sent to multiple readers, decide if you need to reply just to the sender or to everyone on the list.

Using cc:. Send copies (cc:) only to those who really need a copy.

Using bcc:. This feature allows you to copy a third party without the original correspondent knowing about it. Use it with care: if the original correspondent discovers you copied someone without their knowledge, it may put you in an unflattering light.

Attachments. Do not send attachments if the text is sufficient. Attachments take up space and increase downloading time.

Delaying, Recalling, or Replacing a Message

DELAYING DELIVERY OF A MESSAGE

You can compose a message that will be sent at a later time and date of your choice.

1. Compose your e-mail.
2. On your *Outlook* toolbar, click **Options**.
3. Under **More options**, select **Delay delivery**.
4. Check the **Do not deliver before** box.
5. Select the date and time you want the e-mail to be sent.
6. Click **Close**.
7. Click **Send**, just as you would any other message.

RECALLING OR REPLACING A MESSAGE

You can only use these features if the recipient is using Microsoft Outlook and has not yet read the message. When you send a recall notice, it will show up in the recipient's inbox. If the recipient does not open either the original message or the recall notice, both messages will disappear from the inbox within one minute of the recall notice.

1. Open the **Sent Items** folder.
2. Open the message you wish to recall.
3. Select the **Message** tab.
4. Under **Move**, click **Actions**, **Recall This Message**.
5. Select the appropriate option (you can either delete unread copies of the message or replace it with another message) and click **OK**.

SECTION IV: APPENDICES AND REFERENCES

Section IV contains a variety of useful resources that give specific technical and clearance guidance related to official correspondence, including:

after-school program
allover
anti-inflammatory
antitobacco
back-order (v)
backup (n), back up (v), back-up (adj)
bedbug
bed net (n), bed-net (adj)
birth weight*
bloodborne
breast-feed*
breakup (n), break up (v)
built-in (adj)
buy in
by-product
caregiver
case-patient
CD-ROM
checklist
checkup
chickenpox
childbearing
child care
cleanup (n)
clean-up (adj)
clear-cut
clockwise
coinfection
comorbid
counter marketing
coworker
crosscutting
cross section
cut off (v), cutoff (n, adj)
data set
database
day care (n), day-care (adj)
decision maker
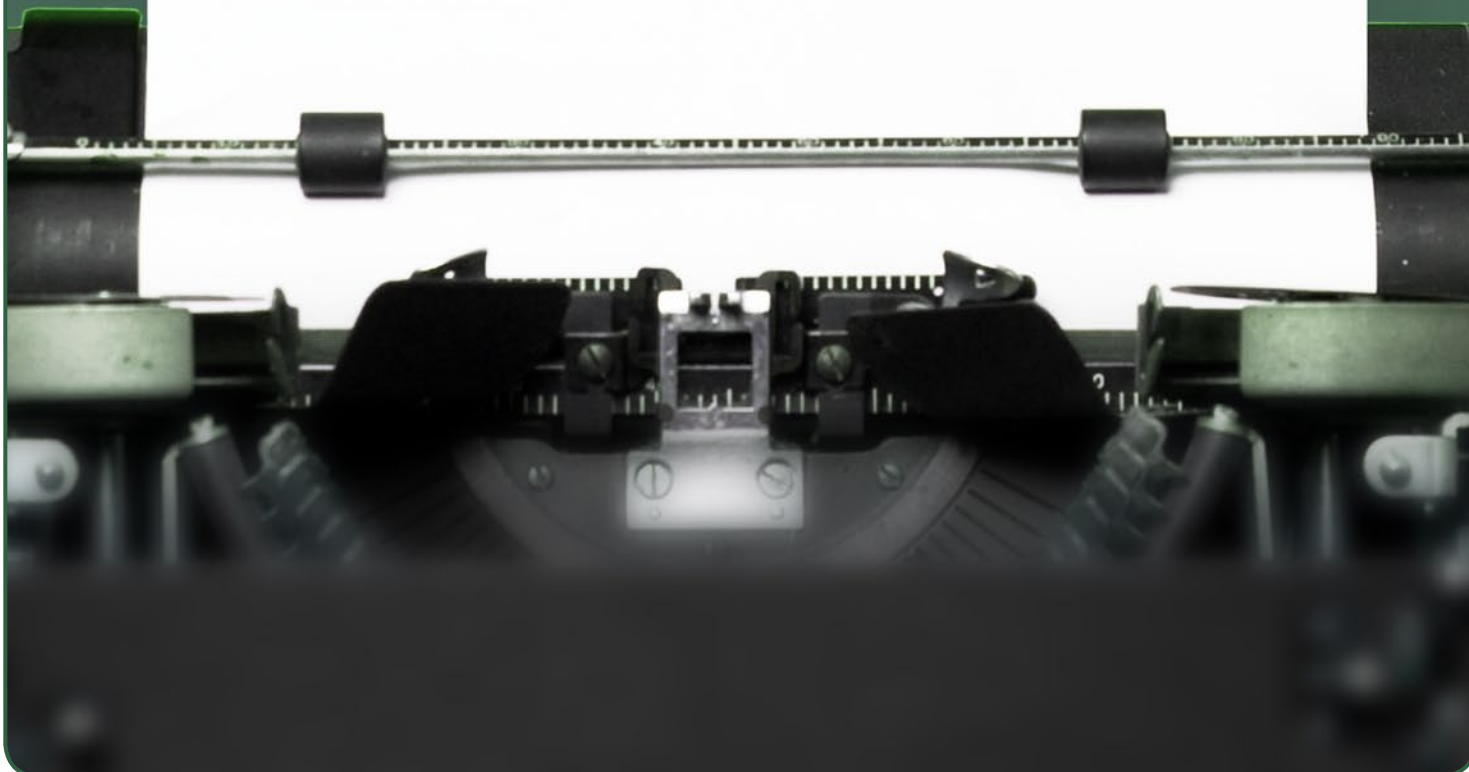
decision making (v), decision-making (adj)
dropout (n), drop out (v), drop-out (adj)
e-mail
end user
everyday (adj)
fact sheet
fade-out
fast-food (adj)
fieldwork
field-worker
fingerstick
flier (person)
flyer (fact sheet)
flip chart
follow-up (n), follow up (v)
foodborne
food service
fresh water (n), freshwater (adj)
frontline (adj), front line (noun)
fund-raiser
groundwater
hand-carry
hands-on (adj)
handwashing
health care
HIV-positive
hotspot
in-depth
in-house
in-kind
inpatient
in-store
in utero
kickoff (n), kick off (v), kick-off (adj)
kindergarten
kindergartner
life cycle
lifelong

lifetime

Listserv

live-born

lockup

longstanding

long-term

lunchtime

man-made

mosquito-borne

multiphase

nationwide

needlestick

non-English-speaking

occasional

off-line

onetime (adj)

ongoing

online

on-site/off-site

open-source (adj)

overall

outpatient

over-the-counter

pilot test

policyholder

policy maker

postcard

postmortem

postpartum

preexisting

preschool

preteen

preteen-ager

real-time

scale-up

secondhand

school-aged

schoolchildren

schoolwork

school yard

soundproof

standby (adj)

T cell (n), T-cell (adj)

tabletop

task force

tenfold (& two through ninefold)

tickborne

time line

time frame

tool box

tool kit*

top-down

troubleshoot

under way (adv), underway (adj)

up-front (adj), up front (adv)

vectorborne

walkathon

waterborne

webmaster

website

webzine

weekday

weekend

well-being

workbook

workday

work flow

workforce

work group

workload

workout (n), work out (v)

work-up (n), work up (v)

workplace

work plan

work sheet

workshop

work site*

worldwide

Birth weight: This is the CDC preferred spelling, but **birthweight** is also acceptable.

Breast-feed: This is the CDC preferred spelling, but **breastfeed** is also acceptable.

Tool kit: This is the CDC preferred spelling, but **toolkit** is also acceptable.

Work site: This is the CDC preferred spelling, but **worksite** is also acceptable.

Below is a list of common prefixes. Hyphenation is not necessary, except as noted.

ante	inter	over	sub
anti	intra	post	super
co	macro	pre	supra
counter	micro	pro	trans
de	mid	pseudo	ultra
extra	multi	re	un
infra	non	semi	

Exceptions are

- Before a capital letter (un-American, sub-Saharan).

- Before an abbreviation or acronym (non-mRNA).

- Before a numeral (pre-1970).

- To avoid confusion with a similar unhyphenated word (re-cover, re-creation).

- To avoid a confusing meaning, as in immunologic terms such as anti-rabbit, anti-goat, anti-mouse, anti-human. "Goat anti-rabbit IgG" means goat antiserum against rabbit IgG, not goat IgG that is anti-rabbit.

- Even if letters are doubled, common prefixes are usually not joined by hyphens.

  - antiinflammatory
  - intraabdominal
  - nonnegotiable
  - posttraumatic

- Always hyphenate after the prefixes "self-" and "cross-". self-aware, self-sticking, cross-react

- Most common suffixes are joined without a hyphen: -fold, -hood, -less, -like, -wide, and -wise, unless doing so creates an unclear or excessively long word, triples a consonant (bell-like), follows a proper noun (Whitman-like), or follows a number (10-fold, 2.5-fold).

- Do not hyphenate after an adverb ending in –ly, even when used in a compound modifier preceding the word modified.

  - The rapidly rising temperature caused…

- Do not hyphenate foreign phrases that are printed open in other circumstances (e.g., in vitro translation, in situ protein synthesis, in vitro–stimulated growth, in situ–synthesized proteins).

AVOID	PREFER
A	
a considerable amount	much
a considerable number	many
accomplish	do, achieve
accordingly	so
accumulate	gather
acquire	get
activate	begin, start
adequate number of	enough
adjacent to	next to, near
advantageous	useful, helpful
afford the opportunity	allow
allocate	give
along the lines of	like, as in
ameliorate	improve
an estimated	about
as consequence of	because
as a result of the fact that	because
as long as	if, since
as regards	about
as well as	and, also
at all times	always
at an early date	soon (or say when)
at the moment	now

AVOID	PREFER
at the present time	now
at the time that	when
attain	reach
augment	increase
B	
by means of	by
C	
close proximity	near
commence	begin, start
completion	end
comply with	follow, obey
components	parts
conceal	hide
concerning	about
construct	build
contrary to	against
cumulative	added
currently	now
customary	usual
D	
depict	show
demonstrate	show, prove
desist	stop
despite the fact that	although, though
detrimental	harmful
disconnect	cut off, unplug

AVOID	PREFER
disseminate	send, distribute, spread
due to the fact that	because
duplicate	copy
during the course of	during
during the time that	while
during which time	while
E	
effect (v)	make
effectuate	bring about, carry out
elucidate	explain
employ	use
endeavor to	try
enquire	ask
ensuing	following
equivalent	equal
evaluate	test
except when	unless
F	
facilitate	make easier, ease, help
facilities	building, laboratory, office
feasible	possible
feedback	comments, response
finalize	complete, conclude, finish
following	after
for the duration of	during, while
for the purpose of	for

AVOID	PREFER
for the reason that	because
formulate	work out, devise
frequently	often
functionality	function
fundamental	basic
G	
give rise to	cause
I	
illustrate	show
impact (v)	affect, influence
implement	carry out, do
in almost all instances	nearly always
in a number of cases	in some cases (or say how many)
in a timely manner	promptly, soon
in addition to	and , also
in advance	before
in case of	if
in conjunction with	and, with
in most cases	often, mostly
in order to	to
in reference to	about
in spite of the fact that	despite
in terms of	about
in the absence of	without
in the amount of	for
in the context of	in
in the course of	during, while
in the event of	if

AVOID	PREFER
in the near future	soon
in the neighborhood	about, around
in the vicinity of	near
is in position to	can
it is clear that	clearly
it is incumbent upon us	we must
in view of the fact	as, because
it would appear that	apparently
it is probable that	probably
inception	start
initial	first
input	comment
inquire	ask
institute (v)	begin set up, start
L	
large number of	many (or say how many)
linkage	link
listing	list
location, locality	place
M	
magnitude	size
manner	way
manufacturer	make
materialize	occur, happen, appear
methodology	methods, procedure
mitigate	moderate, ease, soften, relieve, reduce
moreover	besides, also, and

AVOID	PREFER
N	
necessitate	require, need
nevertheless	but, however
not in a position to	unable
O	
objective	aim, goal
observe	see
obtain	get
on a regular basis	regularly
on behalf of	for
on numerous occasions	often
on the condition that	if
on the grounds that	because
on the occasion that	when, if
on the part of	by
operate	use
operational	working, active, running
otherwise	or
output	product
P	
paradigm	pattern, example
parameter	boundary, limit, extent
partially	partly
permit	let
pertaining to	about
place (v)	put
portion	part

AVOID	PREFER
predominant	main
preparatory to	before
presently	soon, shortly
previous to	before
prioritize	rank
procure	get, obtain
prolonged	long
provided that	if
purchase	buy
R	
about, on	regarding
rule	regulation
rest	remainder
is	represents
ask	request (v)
need	require
live, stay	reside
home, house	residence
keep	retain
S	
solely	only
state (v)	say
statutory	legal, by law
strategize	plan
subsequently	later
subsequent	next
subsequent to	other
substantial	big
substantiate	prove

AVOID	PREFER
sufficient	enough
T	
take into consideration	consider
terminate	end, finish, stop
the majority of	most
thereafter	then
through the use of	by, with
transmit	send
transpire	happen, occur, take place
U	
ultimate	last, final
uniform	same, similar
unoccupied	empty
until such time	until
upon	on
utilization	use
utilize	use
V	
viable	possible
virtually	almost
visualize	see
W	
with regards to	about

SUPERFLUOUS	CORRECT
A	
absolutely complete	complete
absolutely essential	essential
actual, past/present experience	experience
added bonus	bonus
advance planning	planning, notice
already exist	exist
and also	and, also (but not both)
ask the question	ask
assembled together	assembled
at about	at, about (but not both)
B	
basic fundamental	basic, fundamental (but not both)
C	
cancel out	cancel
cd-rom disk	cd-rom
center around	center
clearly evident	evident
blue/red/yellow in color	blue/red/yellow
completely destroyed	destroyed
complete monopoly	monopoly
consensus of opinion	consensus
contributing factor	factor

SUPERFLUOUS	CORRECT
controversial issue	issue
cooperate together	cooperate
costs a total of	costs
current status	status
D	
doctorate degree	doctorate
E	
each and every	each, every (but not both)
exactly identical	identical
extremely minimal	minimal
F	
few in number	few
filled to capacity	filled
final outcome	outcome
first and foremost	first
foreign imports	imports
future plans	plans
G–H	
general public	public
hiv virus	hiv
I	
if and when	if, when (but not both)
it is clear	(omit)
it is obvious	(omit)

SUPERFLUOUS	CORRECT
J–L	
join together	join
large in size	together
M	
mixed together	mixed
month of January	January
more and more often	often
N	
new breakthrough	breakthrough
none at all	none
O	
over and over again	repeatedly
overexaggerate	exaggerate
P	
past history/ experience	history, experience
period of time	period, time (but not both)
point in time	now, today
postpone until later	postpone
R	
repeat again	repeat
S	
small in size	small
square in shape	square
still remains	remains
sum total	total

SUPERFLUOUS	CORRECT
T	
temporary loan	loan
time period	time, period, (but not both)
total number	total
true fact	fact
12 noon/ 12 midnight	noon, midnight
U	
unite together	unite
usual habit	habit
V	
visible to the eye	visible

APPENDIX D: CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to ensure that your letter is written and formatted correctly.

FORMATTING

✓ Are the margins correct (1" for letters)?

✓ Is the line spacing correct (single-spaced finals, double-spaced drafts)?

✓ Is there only one space after each sentence?

✓ Is the text justified on the left side only?

✓ Is there a blank line between paragraphs?

✓ Are the paragraphs flush left (not indented)?

✓ Are the pages numbered (no number for page 1, header for other pages)?

✓ Does the header have the correct information?

ADDRESS AND SALUTATION

✓ Does the address start on line 9 (at 2.5" from the top of the page)?

✓ Is the salutation correct?

✓ Are the necessary words spelled out (Street, not St.; Georgia, not GA)?

✓ Are there two spaces between the state and the Zip code?

SPELLING

✓ Did you use the spell checker (F7 key)?

✓ Did you avoid symbols (percent, not %)?

MECHANICS (CAPITALIZATION, ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS)

✓ Did you avoid unnecessary capitalization of words?

✓ Are acronyms spelled out the first time they appear in the text, followed by the acronym in parentheses?

APPENDIX E: *WORD 2010* HELP

Following are instructions and tips to help you use *Word 2010* more efficiently. You must be in *Word 2010* to perform the instructions below.

Setting Margins

The standard margin size for CDC correspondence is 1″ on all sides. However, the default margin settings in *Word 2010* are as follows: 1″ margins at the top and bottom of the page, and 1.25″ margins at the left and right of the page. To change the default settings to 1″ margins all around, follow the directions below.

1. On your toolbar, click **Page Layout**, **Page Setup**.
2. Select the **Margins** tab.
3. In the **Margins** section, select **1″** in the **Top**, **Bottom**, **Left**, and **Right** boxes.
4. Click **Set as Default** (bottom left of the window) and **Yes**.

Every document you open will now have 1″ margins all around.

Inserting a Header into a Document

Letters that have two or more pages need to have a header at the top of every page, except the first page, which should be CDC letterhead. The header contains information such as page number and title of document.

INSERTING THE HEADER

1. Place your cursor on the second page of your document.
2. On your toolbar, select the **Insert** tab.
3. Select **Header** and click **Edit header**.
4. A **Design** tab will appear.
5. Check the **Different first page** box.
6. Type the word **Page** in the Header box and insert a space.
7. Go to the **Header and Footer** tab and click the **Page Number** button.
8. Select **Current position** to automatically insert the page number in the header.
9. Insert another space, an *en* dash, another space, and then the title of your document.
   (*Note:* For more on inserting *en* dashes, see inset box and the section below.)
10. Click **Close Header and Footer** to go back to your document.

ELIMINATING THE HEADER

1. Double-click the header.
2. Highlight the text in the header and delete it.
3. Click **Close**.

Inserting the en or em Dash

1. Place the cursor where you want to insert the en or em dash in the text.
2. On the toolbar, click **Insert**.
3. Click **Symbol**, **More Symbols**.
4. Under **Font**, select (**normal text**).
5. Under **Subset**, select **General Punctuation**.
6. Double-click the – or — symbol.
7. Click **Close**.

Spacing between Sentences

The standard used for most documents (e.g.,
books, reports, newspapers) requires only one
space between sentences. This creates a tighter
text effect and makes words easier to read. You
can set the spell checker to check that you have
the desired spacing between sentences in your
document.

SETTING THE SPELL CHECKER TO CHECK
CORRECT SENTENCE SPACING

1. On your toolbar, click **Review, Spelling &
   Grammar**.
2. Click **Options**.
3. Select the **Proofing** tab.
4. Under the **When correcting spelling and
   grammar in Word** heading, click **Settings**.
5. Under **Require**, find the **Spaces required
   between sentences** line (third line) and
   select the number of spaces you want from
   the drop-down list.
6. Click **OK** and click **OK**.

Drafts and Watermarks

A draft is a work in progress that only reviewers
should see at this stage. You can identify the
document as a draft by inserting a watermark
on each page. A watermark can be a graphic or a
word that appears in grey behind the text.

INSERTING THE DRAFT WATERMARK

1. On your toolbar, go to **Page Layout** and
   click the **Watermark** drop-down tab.
2. Select **DRAFT** (or another text).

Note: To eliminate the watermark, repeat
Step 1, then click **Remove watermark**.

Converting a *Word 2010*
File into a PDF File

The Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF)
converts documents into a reliable format that
can be viewed and printed on various platforms
while preserving the look of the original
document. For example, if you want to share a
document that was created in *Word 2010* with
someone who does not have *Word 2010*, you can
convert the document into a PDF file, which
your correspondent will be able to read and
print (but not alter electronically).

1. Open the *Word 2010* document you want
   to convert.
2. From the **File** tab, select **Print**.
3. In the **Printer** drop-down box, select **CDC
   PDFWriter**.
4. Click **Print** to open the **Save PDF File As**
   window.
5. Choose a file name and location and click
   Save.
6. Exit *Word 2010* and open the PDF file
   from its current location.

Note: Do not try to open the PDF file in
Word 2010; you will be unable to view it.

Shortcut Keys

Using the keyboard shortcut keys instead of the mouse to execute commands will save you time, once you memorize the commands.

GENERAL

KEY	RESULT
F1	Open *Microsoft Help*
F4	Repeat the last action performed
F5	Open the **Find, Replace, and Go To** tabs
F7	Open the **Spelling and Grammar** window
F12	Open the **Save As** window

EDITING

KEY	RESULT
CTRL + A	Select (highlight) the entire document
CTRL + X	Cut the selected text
CTRL + C	Copy the selected text
CTRL + V	Paste the selected text
CTRL + Z	Undo the last action
CTRL + Y	Redo the last action

FORMATTING

KEY	RESULT
CTRL + B	Boldface the selected text
CTRL + I	Italicize the selected text
CTRL + U	Underline the selected text

OTHER

KEY	RESULT
CTRL + F	Open the **Find and Replace** window
CTRL + N	Open a new document
CTRL + O	Open an existing document
CTRL + S	Save
CTRL + P	Print

In addition to the list provided, you may visit www. keyxl.com/aaa2cd7/445/Microsoft-Word-2010-keyboard-shortcuts.htm for a comprehensive list of shortcut keys available in *Word 2010*.

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE CORRESPONDENCE

- Basic Letter
- Responsive Summary Statement
- Transmittal Summary Statement
- In-house Summary Statement
- Simple Decision Memo
- Complex Decision Memo
- HHS/IOS/ES Transmittal Memo

Sample Letter

March 21, 2011

Ms. Dorothy Gale
1193 Yellow Brick Road
Middleof, Kansas 67123

Dear Ms. Gale:

Thank you for your letter regarding traffic emissions-related deaths in Farm County, Georgia. Although there are academic studies available describing our understanding of the health effects of traffic emissions, CDC does not collect the information you have requested.

In any urban area, the air we breathe is made up of a complex mix of pollutants—both natural and man-made. Traffic emissions; industrial emissions; cigarette smoke; and natural sources including pollen, dust, and emissions from wildfires or volcanoes are only part of what mixes into our air, affecting our air quality. Traffic emissions represent a mixture of pollutants including carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, benzene, and many others. The pollutants from vehicle emissions can also differ depending on the type of vehicle. These complex mixtures make it very difficult to accurately measure a person's exposure to one specific source such as traffic emissions. As a result, estimating adverse health effects or potential deaths from specific air pollution sources can be very challenging.

Many studies have shown links between specific air pollutants—such as ozone—and various health effects, but the direct links between traffic pollution and health are still unclear. The level of risk can depend on factors including the amount of pollution in the air, the amount of air that we breathe at a given time, and our overall health status. One helpful resource is the Executive Summary from the recent state-of-the-science report by the Health Effects Institute, *Traffic-related Air Pollution: A Critical Review of the Literature on Emissions, Exposure, and Health Effects*, which provides a current review of what is known about traffic emissions and health. You can find this document at: http://pubs.healtheffects.org/getfile.php?u=552.

Thank you for your interest in this important public health issue. We hope this information will be helpful to you.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Director, CDC, and
Administrator, Agency for Toxic
 Substances and Disease Registry

Sample Transmittal Summary Statement

**TRANSMITTAL SUMMARY STATEMENT
SECRETARIAL CORRESPONDENCE**

SUBJECT/ISSUE/OPDIV:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention would like to invite White House Advisor Jeffrey Crowley to provide a 15–20 minute inspirational address and remarks at the 2011 National HIV Prevention Conference on August 14, 2011, from 5:00 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.

SUMMARY:

CDC is co-sponsoring the 2011 National HIV Prevention Conference. Approximately 3,000 public health professionals, clinicians, community organization representatives, and advocates involved in HIV prevention have been invited to this conference. These groups represent public and private organizations whose interaction, cooperation, and coordination are crucial to successful efforts to prevent HIV and AIDS in the United States.

As the President's lead advisor on HIV/AIDS policy, Mr. Crowley's participation will provide valuable insight into the White House perspective on the HIV National Strategy Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

We ask that the Secretary agree to invite Mr. Crowley to speak at the 2011 National HIV Conference.

CONTACT PERSON: J. Ronald Campbell, CDC/OD/DES, (404) 639-7120

Sample Responsive Summary Statement

RESPONSIVE SUMMARY STATEMENT
SECRETARIAL CORRESPONDENCE

NAMES OF CORRESPONDENTS:

Raymond Gist, DDS, President, American Dental Association, and Kathleen T. O'Loughlin, DMD, MPH, Executive Director, American Dental Association

SUBJECT/ISSUES RAISED BY CORRESPONDENTS:

Drs. Gist and O'Loughlin write to Secretary Sebelius expressing their concerns about the oral health organizational structure at the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

MAJOR POINTS IN THE RESPONSE:

- CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's (NCCDPHP) is fully committed to its Division of Oral Health's mission to prevent and control oral diseases and conditions and reduce disparities.

- CDC serves as the lead agency for the *Healthy People 2020* objective for oral health, is a full and active participant in HHS' 2010 Oral Health Initiative, and has publicly committed to developing a National Surveillance Plan in collaboration with the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research.

- HHS is committed to ensuring that oral health activities provide the maximum possible public health impact.

- NCCDPHP has successfully nurtured programs of similar size within a larger division for many years.

- CDC believes that the ability to focus limited staff and resources on programmatic efforts, rather than division infrastructure, enhances their public health impact.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION: None.

CONTACT PERSON: J. Ronald Campbell, CDC/ES, (404) 639-7120

Sample In-House Summary Statement

<u>In-House Summary Statement</u>

Invitation from Dr. Frieden to Ms. Danielle Gilbert, Office of Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL), to attend the upcoming meeting of the Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer in Young Women from September 21–23, 2011 at CDC headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We recommend that Dr. Frieden sign the memo. Contact J. Ronald Campbell, (404) 639-7120.

Sample Decision Memo to the Secretary, HHS

TO: The Secretary for Health and Human Services
                    Through: DS _____
                             COS _____
                             ES _____

FROM: Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
                    Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

DATE: February 22, 2011

SUBJECT: Invitation to Speak at the 45th National Immunization Conference on Monday, March 28, 2011, in Washington, D.C.
                    Action Requested By: March 4, 2011

Issue

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) would like to invite you to introduce the Surgeon General, Dr. Regina M. Benjamin, who is being invited to be the keynote speaker during the opening plenary session of the conference that will be held from 9:00 a.m. until 10:30 a.m., Monday, March 28, 2011. Your participation in the opening ceremony will demonstrate your support of the important role that CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) and its immunization partners play in providing comprehensive immunization coverage for all groups. This forum will provide an opportunity for you to personally address a group of health care workers and professionals who are on the front lines in this battle.

Secretarial Action

I recommend you join CDC and our global immunization partners on March 28, 2011, to celebrate our public health successes and re-invigorate our immunization efforts for the future.

BACKGROUND

Each year, local, state, federal, and private-sector immunization partners gather to share the latest scientific and programmatic information, with the ultimate goal of working collaboratively to achieve and maintain high immunization coverage levels among our nation's citizens. Approximately 1,600 participants—physicians, nurses, scientists, program managers, and other public health professionals representing all 50 states and territories—are expected to attend the conference.

In addition, we are issuing an invitation to the Surgeon General Regina M. Benjamin to give the keynote address during the opening plenary.

This year's 45th National Immunization Conference will be convened March 28–31, 2011, at the Washington Hilton, 1919 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20009. This conference is one of the largest public health events sponsored by CDC. The theme for this year's conference is "Immunization: Achieving Monumental Vaccine Coverage." Draft agendas are attached for your information (Tabs A and B).

CDC staff will be pleased to assist in the preparation of your remarks. Ms. Suzanne Johnson-DeLeon, Conference Manager, NCIRD, CDC, will be happy to answer any questions and provide additional information regarding the conference; your staff may contact her directly at (404) 639-8817 or (404) 639-8225.

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH

Attachments:
Tab A - Summarized Draft Agenda
Tab B - Full Draft Agenda of All Conference Events
Tab C - Formal Invitation Letter

Decision:
Approved: _____
No: _____
Would like to be briefed before signing: _____

Other/Comments:

_____
Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary

Sample Complex Decision Memo to the Secretary, HHS

TO: The Secretary for Health and Human Services
                 Through: DS ____
                          COS ____
                          ES ____

FROM: Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
                 Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

DATE: March 3, 2011

SUBJECT: Smokeless Tobacco Nicotine Report

Issue

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is pleased to present the Smokeless Tobacco Nicotine Report. This report provides an analysis of the quantity of nicotine in smokeless tobacco products, as reported by the tobacco industry. Additional information on moisture content, pH, and unionized nicotine (also known as "un-ionized" or "free base" nicotine) is also presented.

Secretarial Action

Please provide your approval or notification of non-approval of the Smokeless Tobacco Nicotine Report by March 31, 2011.

BACKGROUND

The Comprehensive Smokeless Tobacco Health Education Act (CSTHEA), 15 U.S.C. §4403, requires individuals who manufacture, package, or import smokeless tobacco products in the United States to report to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) the quantity of nicotine in each smokeless tobacco product. CDC's Office on Smoking and Health (OSH) has primary responsibility for the HHS tobacco and health program.

Pursuant to CSTHEA, 15 U.S.C. §4403, the information contained in the report must be treated as trade secret or confidential information subject to 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(4). Procedures for safeguarding the data and the report, Guidelines for Maintaining and Releasing Privileged Information Obtained in Accordance With Sec. 4(b)(2)(A) of Public Law 99-252 (15 U.S.C. 4403), were previously published in the February 1, 1994, Federal Register (59 FR 4714) (attached).

We hope that you find this report informative. CDC is available to meet with you to discuss future opportunities for using the scientific data contained in the report. Considering that tobacco regulation is a priority for HHS, this report could have important implications for other HHS agencies. CDC is also available to discuss additional steps for sharing this information outside of HHS, within the constraints of the legislative requirements. Additionally, CDC is interested in discussing future reporting schedules of these data.

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH

Attachments:
Tab A – Smokeless Tobacco Nicotine Report
Tab B – 15 U.S.C. 4403

Recommendation 1:
Approval of the report will allow… [Continue your recommendation here, including positive and negative impacts, if any.]

Decision:
Approved: _____
No: _____
Would like to be briefed before signing: _____

Other/Comments: _____

Recommendation 2:
Non-approval of the report will result in… [Continue your justification here, including positive and negative impacts, if any.]

Decision:
Approved: _____
No: _____
Would like to be briefed before signing: _____

Other/Comments:

_____
Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary

Sample HHS/IOS/ES Transmittal Memo

TO: The Secretary
                 Through: DS ____
                          COS ____
                          ES ____

FROM: Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

DATE: July 25, 2011

SUBJECT: Action: Review/Clear – Approval Tests and Standards for Closed-Circuit
                 Escape Respirators (CCERs) (42 CFR 84); Final Rule

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ACTION NEEDED
Review/clear of Approval Tests and Standards for Closed-Circuit Escape Respirators (CCERs) (42 CFR 84); Final Rule

SUMMARY
Audience: The regulated entities for this rule are respirator manufacturers (3) who make closed circuit respirators (CCERs) used for escaping atmospheres considered to be immediately dangerous to life and health.

Purpose: This final rule addresses problems that have been identified by NIOSH and users regarding CCERs. The rule will result in approved CCERs that provide improved protection over those currently approved under the existing regulatory provisions and will facilitate the introduction of new technologies.

Distribution: After approval by OMB, this rule will be published in the *Federal Register*.

Release Date: This rule is listed in the Spring 2011 Unified Agenda (RIN 0920-AA10). Anticipated publication date is December 30, 2011. This rule is not included in the retrospective review. The rule would become effective 60 days after publication in the *Federal Register*.

Background: Under 42 CFR Part 84, NIOSH conducts a testing and certification process to certify respirators manufactured for the protection of employees potentially exposed to hazardous atmospheres. NIOSH and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) jointly certify such respirators for use by U.S. coal miners, including a type of respirator known in the mining industry as a "self-contained self-rescuer," and more generally described by NIOSH as a CCER. Recent incidents in U.S. coal mines, while not necessarily implicating CCERs, have led to heightened concern about the safety of coal miners. This final rule is responsive to these concerns.

This rulemaking is not significant in terms of its potential economic impact. NIOSH has consulted with the Small Business Administration, which has approved the economic analysis presented in the final rule. However, the change from providing certification of the duration of breathing gas supplied to providing certification of a volume quantity of oxygen supplied is a significant policy

change. It will require changes in MSHA regulations governing CCER use in underground coal mining, which currently reference durations of breathing gas supply. It will also promote a shift in practices at coal mines, where miners and operators are accustomed to relying for emergency planning on the 1-hour duration certification of CCERs, which is required by MSHA for mine disaster escape use.

Public comments were generally positive about the rulemaking, but did reflect concerns about the need for new CCER standards; the change from duration to capacity ratings; and the decision to update CCER standards exclusively rather than all types of self-contained self-rescuers. Most significantly in response to public comments, NIOSH removed a provision that would have required all CCER purchasers to discontinue use of currently approved CCERs within six years of the rule's effective date. Concerns were raised about the ability of manufacturers to supply newly approved products in sufficient quantity to replace all currently deployed CCERs within the proposed six-year period. The Federal agencies with workplace safety regulatory authority (e.g., MSHA) govern the use of respirators in workplaces and would be in a superior position after implementation of this rule to consider product availability in allowing or curtailing the continued use of currently deployed CCERs.

RECOMMENDATION
I recommend that you sign the attached Final Rule: Approval Tests and Standards for Closed-Circuit Escape Respirators (42 CFR 84).

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH

Attachment:
Approval Tests and Standards for Closed-Circuit Escape Respirators (42 CFR 84) Final Rule

Decision:
Approved: _____
No: _____
Would like to be briefed before signing: _____

Other/Comments:

_____
Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary

APPENDIX G: THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT CLEARANCE PROCESS

Any correspondence requiring the signature of the Director or Deputy Directors, CDC; the Assistant Secretary for Health and Surgeon General, HHS; the Deputy Secretary, HHS; the Secretary, HHS; or the President of the United States must be reviewed and cleared by CDC's Division of Executive Secretariat.

When CIOs draft response letters or memoranda that have to be signed by any of these people, the drafts must be sent back to the Division of Executive Secretariat within the following time frames:

- **Director's signature**   5 days
- **Deputy Director's signature**   5 days
- **Secretary's signature**   3 days

If CIOs are asked to reply to the senders directly, they have 5 working days to respond. CIOs are responsible for obtaining the proper signature(s), dating the response, and mailing the document. CIOs should then forward a copy of the signed, dated, final copy to the Division of Executive Secretariat so that the file can be closed.

Also, when CIOs initiate letters or memoranda that have to be signed by the above-mentioned people, these documents must be submitted in draft form (i.e., double-spaced) to the appropriate Executive Secretariat contact person for clearance and processing. To find your CIO's contact person, visit http://intranet.cdc.gov/od/ocs/resources.htm or call (404) 639-7120. The draft must contain the proper approvals at the CIO OD level.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acronym. Word formed from the initial letters of a series of words, such as CDC. Acronyms do not have periods between the letters.

Active Voice. See *Voice*.

Alignment. See *Justification*.

Attachment. Additional material attached to a memo.

Audience. Person(s) who will read the document. Audience can be specialized and have considerable knowledge of the topic, generalized and have little or no knowledge of the topic, or a combination. Knowing the audience can help the writer craft a useful, understandable message.

Body. Main block of text in a document, as opposed to titles, addresses, and signatures.

Bullet. Small marker generally used instead of numbers to create lists. Bullets separate material into easily understandable chunks.
• This is a typical bullet.

Contraction. Word formed by combining two words and using an apostrophe, such as we'll. Because contractions are informal, they should not be used in correspondence.

Dash. Punctuation mark. There are two types of dashes: the en dash (–) and the em dash (—). An en dash indicates ranges (e.g., 1990–1995, 10%–20%). An em dash indicates a break in thought or sentence structure (e.g., He came to the meeting— for the first time ever—and spoke up). See also *Hyphen*.

Enclosure. Additional material enclosed with a letter.

Expletive. Word or phrase that brings no meaning to the sentence (i.e., there is, there are, and it is). Avoid using expletives.

Font. Complete set of letters, numbers, and symbols available in one type or typeface. See also *Typeface*.

Function Keys. Keys named F1 through F12 located on the top row of the keyboard. Function keys activate specific computer commands, and may also be referred to as F keys.

Header. Identifying information at the top of each page in a document. The first page usually does not have a header.

Hyphen. Punctuation mark (-) used between the parts of a compound word or name (e.g., high-fiber diet, Myers-Briggs type indicator). See also *Dash*.

Jargon. Technical language of a specialized group. Avoid jargon.

Justification. Text alignment on the page. Fully justified text is aligned at both the left and right margins. Text that is justified left or right means that the text is aligned at the left-hand or right-hand margin. A margin that is justified on the left side only is also called a ragged right margin.

Layout. Manner in which all the elements that make up a document are placed on a page. An effective layout guides the reader's eyes through the page smoothly, increasing readability and retention.

Letter. Formal correspondence sent outside CDC.

Memorandum/Memo. Brief communication that contains directive, advisory, or informative matter and that is distributed within CDC or sent to HHS. The plural is memorandums or memoranda.

Nominalization. Use of nouns instead of verbs (e.g., the document includes a list of all projects, instead of "the document lists all projects"). Avoid nominalizations.

Page Formatting. Elements affecting the look of the page, such as headers, margin size, and line spacing.

Paragraph. Sentence or group of sentences treating a single topic. Paragraphs are separated by blank lines and are not indented.

Passive Voice. See *Voice*.

Plain Language. Way of writing that is clear and simple because the document is visually appealing, organized logically, and understandable the first time it is read. The Plain Writing Act of 2010 requires that federal agencies communicate clearly.

Style. Way a document is written. Style is a combination of characteristics such as the choice and arrangement of words and ideas.

Tone. Manner of expression that reflects the writer's attitude toward the reader. The tone of a letter should always be courteous, respectful, and polite.

Toolbar. Row of buttons and icons at the top of the Word or Outlook screen. The toolbar lets you access frequently-used commands.

Typeface. Family of individual fonts. "Times New Roman" and "Arial" are the two standard typefaces used at CDC.

Voice. Attribute of a verb that indicates whether the subject is active (Mr. Marsh wrote the letter) or passive (the letter was written by Mr. Marsh).

Watermark. Text or graphic that appears greyed-out in the background of a document.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Reference Manuals

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The AMA is CDC's preferred reference for scientific writing. Online at www.amamanualofstyle.com.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 11th Edition. Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2008.
CDC's preferred dictionary. Abridged version available online at www.merriam-webster.com.

Sabin WA. *The Gregg Reference Manual*. 11th ed. New York (NY): McGraw-Hill; 2011.
This manual is the standard guide for correspondence rules.

Strunk M, White EB. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. New York (NY): Longman; 2000.
This essential classic reference book is also available at www.bartleby.com/141/.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 16th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
CMOS is CDC's preferred reference for non-technical writing. Online at www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/.

The U.S. Government Style Manual. 30th ed. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office; 2008. www.gpoaccess.gov/stylemanual/browse.html.
Although it differs at times from CDC style, the federal style guide is another helpful resource.

Useful Websites

www.plainlanguage.gov
Link to most recent federal plain language guidelines and other resources to help you improve your writing.

http://brandidentitystandards.cdc.gov/
Learn about CDC's brand and identity.

http://intranet.cdc.gov/cdcweb/usability/508/
Learn about Section 508 compliance for the Web.

www.yourdictionary.com
Check spelling and definitions.

http://oxforddictionaries.com/page/betterwriting_us/better-writing
Address questions pertaining to language, grammar, writing, and more.

www.chicagomanualofstyle.org
Use CDC's preferred reference for non-technical writing.

http://wsuonline.weber.edu/wrh/words.htm
Learn the difference between words that are often confused (e.g., critique/criticize, who/whom).