



Writing Business Messages

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- 1 Explain the importance of adapting your messages to the needs and expectations of your audience
- 2 Explain why establishing credibility is vital to the success of your communication efforts
- 3 Discuss four ways of achieving a businesslike tone with a style that is clear and concise
- 4 Briefly describe how to select words that are not only correct but also effective
- 5 Explain how sentence style affects emphasis within your message
- 6 List five ways to develop coherent paragraphs

COMMUNICATION CLOSE-UP AT CREATIVE COMMONS

www.creativecommons.org



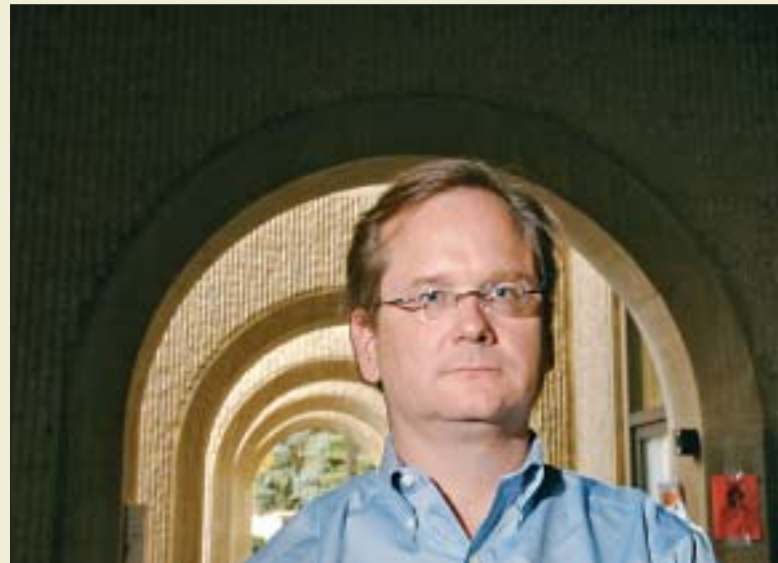
Have you ever noticed that tiny © symbol on books, DVDs, music CDs, and other media products? It means that the person or organization who created the item is granted *copyright* protection, the exclusive legal right to produce, distribute, and sell that creation. Anyone who wants to resell, redistribute, or adapt such works usually needs to secure permission from the current copyright holder.

However, what if you *want* people to remix the song you just recorded? Or suppose you need a few photos for a website? Other than for limited personal and educational use, a conventional copyright requires every person to negotiate a contract for every application or adaptation of every piece of work he or she wants to use.

The search for some middle ground between “all rights reserved” and simply giving your work away led Stanford University law professor Lawrence Lessig to co-found Creative Commons. This nonprofit organization’s goal is to provide a simple, free, and legal way for musicians, artists, writers, teachers, scientists, and others to collaborate and benefit through the sharing of art and ideas. Instead of the everything-or-nothing approach of traditional copyright, Creative Commons offers a more flexible range of “some rights reserved” options.

Through books, articles, and speeches, Lessig has been a tireless promoter of the Creative Commons concept, work-

ing to convince people that society benefits from the free exchange of art and ideas and that overuse of the copyright law is endangering not only creative expression but also important scientific research. The message is clearly getting through: Within the first year, more than a million of these innovative license agreements were initiated for musical works, short films, educational materials, novels, and more. This approach can’t solve the entire dilemma of copyrights in the digital age, but it has already created a better way for creative people to communicate and collaborate.¹



Lawrence Lessig, co-founder of Creative Commons, uses a variety of communication vehicles to convince copyright owners to explore new ways of sharing and protecting their creative works.

BRINGING YOUR IDEAS TO LIFE

As they work to persuade their audiences to consider new forms of copyright protection, Lawrence Lessig and his colleagues at Creative Commons (profiled in the chapter-opening Communication Close-Up) realize it takes more than just a great idea to change the way people think. Expressing ideas clearly and persuasively will be key to your success as well.

With a solid plan in place (see Chapter 4), you're ready to choose the words and craft the sentences and paragraphs that will carry your ideas to their intended audiences. Figure 5.1 lists the tasks involved in adapting to your audience and composing your message.

1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Explain the importance of adapting your messages to the needs and expectations of your audience

A good relationship with your audience is essential to effective communication.

ADAPTING TO YOUR AUDIENCE

Whether consciously or not, audiences greet most incoming messages with a question: "What's in this for me?" If your intended audience members think a message does not apply to them or doesn't meet their needs, they'll be far less inclined to pay attention to it. Follow the example set by the Creative Commons website, which addresses an extremely diverse audience of artists, lawyers, and business professionals but fine-tunes specific messages for each group of people. By adapting your communication to the needs and expectations of your audiences, you'll provide a more compelling answer to the "What's in this for me?" question and improve the chances of your message being successful.

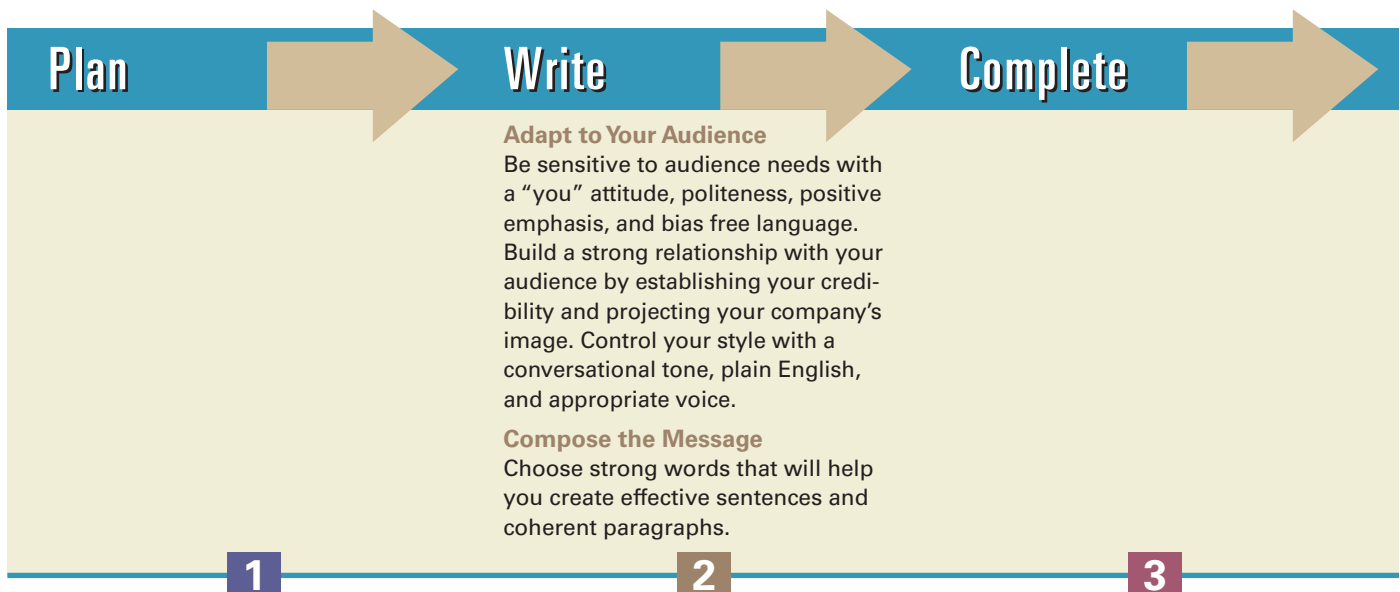
Note that adapting your message is not always a simple task. Some situations will require you to balance competing or conflicting needs—for example, when you're trying to convince people to change their minds or when you're delivering bad news. To successfully adapt your message to your audience, try to be sensitive to your audience's needs, build a strong relationship with your audience, and control your style to maintain a professional tone.

Being Sensitive to Your Audience's Needs

Even in simple messages intended merely to share information, it's possible to use all the right words and still not be sensitive to your audience members and their needs. You can improve your audience sensitivity by adopting the "you" attitude, maintaining good standards of etiquette, emphasizing the positive, and using bias-free language.

FIGURE 5.1 Step Two in the Three-Step Writing Process: Write Your Messages

The second step in the three-step writing process includes two vital tasks: adapting to your audience and composing your message.



Using the “You” Attitude

Chapter 1 introduced the notion of audience-centered communication and the “you” attitude—that is, by speaking and writing in terms of your audience’s wishes, interests, hopes, and preferences. On the simplest level, you can adopt the “you” attitude by replacing terms that refer to yourself and your company with terms that refer to your audience. In other words, use *you* and *yours* instead of *I*, *me*, *mine*, *we*, *us*, and *ours*:

The “you” attitude is best implemented by expressing your message in terms of the audience’s interests and needs.

INSTEAD OF THIS

To help us process this order, we must ask for another copy of the requisition.

We are pleased to announce our new flight schedule from Atlanta to New York, which is any hour on the hour.

We offer MP3 players with 50, 75, or 100 gigabytes of storage capacity.

WRITE THIS

So that your order can be filled promptly, please send another copy of the requisition.

Now you can take a plane from Atlanta to New York any hour on the hour.

Select your MP3 player from three models with 50, 75, or 100 gigabytes of storage capacity.

When business messages use an “I” or “we” attitude, they risk sounding selfish and uninterested in the audience. The message is all about the sender, and the audience is just expected to go along with it. Even so, using *you* and *yours* requires finesse. If you overdo it, you’re likely to create some rather awkward sentences, and you run the risk of sounding overly enthusiastic and artificial.²

The “you” attitude is not intended to be manipulative or insincere. It’s an extension of the audience-centered approach. In fact, the best way to implement the “you” attitude is to sincerely think about your audience when composing your message.

Nor is the “you” attitude simply a matter of using one pronoun rather than another; it’s a matter of genuine empathy. You can use *you* 25 times in a single page and still ignore your audience’s true concerns. In other words, it’s the thought and sincerity that count, not the pronoun *you*. If you’re talking to a retailer, try to think like a retailer; if you’re dealing with a production supervisor, put yourself in that position; if you’re writing to a dissatisfied customer, imagine how you would feel at the other end of the transaction.

Be aware that on some occasions it’s better to avoid using *you*, particularly if doing so will sound overly authoritative or accusing. For instance, instead of saying, “You failed to deliver the customer’s order on time,” you could minimize ill will by saying, “The customer didn’t receive the order on time,” or “Let’s figure out a system that will ensure on-time deliveries.”

Avoid using you and yours when doing so

- Makes you sound dictatorial
- Makes someone else feel guilty
- Goes against your organization’s style

INSTEAD OF THIS

You should never use that type of paper in the copy machine.

You must correct all five copies by noon.

WRITE THIS

That type of paper doesn’t work very well in the copy machine.

All five copies must be corrected by noon.

As you practice using the “you” attitude, be sure to consider the attitudes of other cultures and the policies of your organization. In some cultures, it is improper to single out one person’s achievements because the whole team is responsible for the outcome; in that case, using the pronoun *we* or *our* (when you and your audience are part of the same team) would be more appropriate. Similarly, some companies have a tradition of avoiding references to *you* and *I* in most messages and reports.

Maintaining Standards of Etiquette

Another good way to demonstrate interest in your audience members and to earn their respect is to demonstrate etiquette in your messages. You know how it feels to be treated inconsiderately; when that happens, you probably react emotionally and then pay less attention to the offending message. By being courteous to members of your audience, you show consideration for them and foster a more successful environment for communication.

Although you may be tempted now and then to be brutally frank, try to express the facts in a kind and thoughtful manner.

Use extra tact when communicating with people higher up the organization chart or outside the company.

You can communicate negative news without being negative.

On those occasions when you experience frustration with co-workers, customers, or others you deal with, you may be tempted to say what you think in blunt terms. But venting your emotions rarely improves the situation and can jeopardize your audience's goodwill. Demonstrate your diplomatic skills by controlling your emotions and communicating calmly and politely:

INSTEAD OF THIS

Once again, you've managed to bring down the entire website through your incompetent programming.

You've been sitting on our order for two weeks, and we need it now!

WRITE THIS

Let's review the last website update so that we can find out how to improve the process.

Our production schedules depend on timely delivery of parts and supplies, but we have not yet received the order you promised to deliver two weeks ago. Please respond today with a firm delivery commitment.

Of course, some situations require more diplomacy than others. If you know your audience well, a less formal approach may be more appropriate. However, when you are communicating with people who outrank you or with people outside your organization, an added measure of courtesy is usually needed.

Written communication and most forms of electronic media generally require more tact than oral communication (Figure 5.2). When you're speaking, your words are softened by your tone of voice and facial expression. Plus, you can adjust your approach according to the feedback you get. If you inadvertently offend someone in writing or in a podcast, for example, you usually won't get the immediate feedback you would need to resolve the situation. In fact, you may never know that you offended your audience.

Emphasizing the Positive

During your career, you will have many occasions to communicate bad news—maybe dozens or hundreds of times. As you rise through the ranks of management, you will encounter situations in which unpleasant news can significantly affect the personal and financial well-being of employees, customers, and investors. However, there is a big difference between delivering negative news and being negative. When the tone of your message is negative, you put unnecessary strain on business relationships, which can cause people to distance themselves from you and your ideas.

If you're facing a potentially negative situation, look for ways to soften the blow or emphasize positive aspects of a situation. For example, when Alaska Airlines instituted surcharges for heavy luggage in an attempt to reduce injuries to baggage handlers, the company presented the change to passengers with posters that said, "Pack Light & Save."³ By presenting the situation as an opportunity to save money rather than as an added cost of travel, Alaska worked to maintain a positive relationship with its customers. Never try to hide the negative news, but always be on the lookout for positive points that will foster a good relationship with your audience:⁴

INSTEAD OF THIS

It is impossible to repair your laptop today.

We apologize for inconveniencing you during our remodeling.

We wasted \$300,000 advertising in that magazine.

WRITE THIS

Your computer can be ready by Tuesday. Would you like a loaner until then?

The renovations now under way will help us serve you better.

Our \$300,000 advertising investment did not pay off; let's analyze the experience and apply the insights to future campaigns.

FIGURE 5.2 Fostering a Positive Relationship with an Audience

In the “ineffective” example, notice how the customer service agent’s unfortunate word choices immediately derail this instant messaging exchange. In the “effective” example, a more sensitive approach allows both people to focus on solving the problem.

Ineffective

Customer: Hi, I tried installing the FarCast wireless router in my apartment, but I'm not getting any signals out of it at all.

Agent: OK, tell me what steps you took, and we'll see what you did wrong.

Customer: What do you mean did wrong? I followed the instructions exactly. The router is obviously defective.

Agent: Well, we'll see. Did you install the software before connecting the LAN cable, as the manual says?

Customer: Of course I did, I just said I followed

Agent is typing a message...

SEND
END

- Customer starts with a simple description of the problem
- Agent immediately assumes that the customer is at fault
- Agent's accusation puts the customer in a defensive, negative frame of mind
- Agent is practically accusing the customer of lying
- The conversation has needlessly degenerated into an argument by this point

Effective

Customer: Hi, I tried installing the FarCast wireless router in my apartment, but I'm not getting any signals out of it at all.

Agent: I'm sorry you're having trouble. Let's go through your setup and see if we can find the problem.

Customer: Great, thanks.

Agent: First, can you tell me which of the small green lights on the front of the router are lit up?

Customer: Only the power light. All of the other lights are off.

Agent is typing a message...

OK, we have power but looks like the router isn't getting a network signal.

SEND
END

- Agent expresses sympathy for the customer's plight, which establishes an emotional bond and encourages more effective communication
- The conversation continues in a positive mood, with the focus on solving the problem, not on blaming the customer

When you are offering criticism or advice, focus on what the person can do to improve.

When you find it necessary to criticize or correct, don't dwell on the other person's mistakes. Avoid referring to failures, problems, or shortcomings. Focus instead on what the person can do to improve:

INSTEAD OF THIS

The problem with this department is a failure to control costs.

You failed to provide all the necessary information on the previous screen.

WRITE THIS

The performance of this department can be improved by tightening cost controls.

Please review the items marked in red on the previous screen so that we can process your order as quickly as possible.

Show your audience members how they will benefit from complying with your message.

If you're trying to persuade audience members to buy a product, pay a bill, or perform a service for you, emphasize what's in it for them. Don't focus on why *you* want them to do something. An individual who sees the possibility for personal benefit is more likely to respond positively to your appeal:

INSTEAD OF THIS

We will notify all three credit reporting agencies if you do not pay your overdue bill within 10 days.

I am tired of seeing so many errors in the customer-service blog.

WRITE THIS

Paying your overdue bill within 10 days will prevent a negative entry on your credit record.

Proofreading your blog postings will help you avoid embarrassing mistakes that generate more customer-service complaints.

Try to avoid words with negative connotations; use meaningful euphemisms instead.

In general, try to state your message without using words that may hurt or offend your audience. Substitute *euphemisms* (mild terms) for those that have unpleasant associations. You can be honest without being harsh. Gentle language won't change the facts, but it will make them more acceptable:

INSTEAD OF THIS

Cheap merchandise

Failing

Fake

WRITE THIS

Economy merchandise

Underperforming

Imitation or faux

On the other hand, don't carry euphemisms to extremes or your audience will view your efforts as insincere. And if you're too subtle, people won't know what you're talking about. If employees need to become 10 percent more productive to save the company from bankruptcy, don't tell them they need to "make positive performance adjustments"—tell them they need to become 10 percent more productive. Also, when using euphemisms, you walk a fine line between softening the blow and hiding the facts. It would be unethical to speak to your local community about "manufacturing by-products" when you're really talking about your plans for disposing of toxic waste. Such an attempt to hide the facts would likely backfire, damaging your business image and reputation. Even if it is unpleasant, people respond better to an honest message delivered with integrity than they do to a sugar-coated message that obscures the truth.

Using Bias-Free Language

Avoid biased language that may offend your audience.

Chapter 3 points out that you are often unaware of the influence of your own culture on your behavior, and this circumstance extends to the language you use. Any bias present in your culture is likely to show up in your language, often in subtle ways that you may not even recognize. However, chances are that your audience will.

Bias-free language avoids words and phrases that unfairly and even unethically categorize or stigmatize people in ways related to gender, race, ethnicity, age, or disability. Contrary to what some may think, biased language is not simply about "labels." To a significant degree, language reflects the way we think and what we believe, and biased language may

TABLE 5.1 Overcoming Bias in Language

EXAMPLES	UNACCEPTABLE	PREFERABLE
Gender Bias		
Using words containing “man”	Man-made	Artificial, synthetic, manufactured, constructed
	Mankind	Humanity, human beings, human race, people
	Manpower	Workers, workforce
	Businessman	Executive, manager, businessperson
	Salesman	Sales representative, salesperson, clerk
	Foreman	Supervisor
Using female-gender words	Actress, stewardess	Actor, flight attendant
Using special designations	Woman doctor, male nurse	Doctor, nurse
Using “he” to refer to “everyone”	The average worker . . . he	The average worker . . . he or she
Identifying roles with gender	The typical executive spends four hours of his day in meetings.	Most executives spend four hours a day in meetings.
	the consumer . . . she	consumers . . . they
	the nurse/teacher . . . she	nurses/teachers . . . they
Identifying women by marital status	Norm Lindstrom and Maria	Norm Lindstrom and Maria Drake
	Norm Lindstrom and Ms. Lindstrom	Mr. Lindstrom and Ms. Drake
Racial/Ethnic Bias		
Assigning stereotypes	My African-American assistant speaks more articulately than I do.	My assistant speaks more articulately than I do.
	Jim Wong is an unusually tall Asian.	Jim Wong is tall.
Identifying people by race or ethnicity	Mario M. Cuomo, Italian American politician and ex-governor of New York	Mario M. Cuomo, politician and ex-governor of New York
Age Bias		
Including age when irrelevant	Mary Kirazy, 58, has just joined our trust department.	Mary Kirazy has just joined our trust department.
Disability Bias		
Putting the disability before the person	Crippled workers face many barriers on the job.	Workers with physical disabilities face many barriers on the job.
	An epileptic, Tracy has no trouble doing her job.	Tracy’s epilepsy has no effect on her job performance.

well perpetuate the underlying stereotypes and prejudices that it represents.⁵ Moreover, because communication is all about perception, being fair and objective isn’t enough; to establish a good relationship with your audience, you must also *appear* to be fair.⁶ Good communicators make every effort to change biased language (see Table 5.1). Bias can come in a variety of forms:

- Gender bias.** Avoid sexist language by using the same label for everyone (don’t call a woman *chairperson* and then call a man *chairman*). Reword sentences to use *they* or to use no pronoun at all rather than referring to all individuals as *he*. Vary traditional patterns by sometimes putting women first (*women and men*, *she and he*, *her and his*). Note that the preferred title for women in business is *Ms.*, unless the individual asks to be addressed as *Miss* or *Mrs.* or has some other title, such as *Dr.*

- **Racial and ethnic bias.** Avoid language suggesting that members of a racial or an ethnic group have stereotypical characteristics. The best solution is to avoid identifying people by race or ethnic origin unless such a label is relevant to the matter at hand—and it rarely is.
- **Age bias.** As with gender, race, and ethnic background, mention the age of a person only when it is relevant. Moreover, be careful of the context in which you use words that refer to age. Such words carry a variety of positive and negative connotations—and not only when referring to people beyond a certain age. For example, *young* can imply youthfulness, inexperience, or even immaturity, depending on how it's used.
- **Disability bias.** No painless label exists for people with a physical, mental, sensory, or emotional impairment. Avoid mentioning a disability unless it is pertinent. However, if you must refer to someone's disability, avoid terms such as *handicapped*, *crippled*, or *retarded*. Put the person first and the disability second.⁷ Present the whole person, not just the disability, by showing the limitation in an unobtrusive manner.

Building Strong Relationships with Your Audience

Focusing on your audience's needs is vital to effective communication, but you also have your own priorities as a communicator. Sometimes these needs are obvious and direct, such as when you're appealing for a budget increase for your department. At other times, the need may be more subtle. For instance, you might want to demonstrate your understanding of the marketplace or your company's concern for the natural environment. Two key efforts help you address your own needs while building positive relationships with your audience: establishing your credibility and projecting your company's image.

2 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Explain why establishing credibility is vital to the success of your communication efforts

People are more likely to react positively to your message when they have confidence in you.

Establishing Your Credibility

Your audience's response to every message you send depends heavily on its perception of your **credibility**, a measure of your believability based on how reliable you are and how much trust you evoke in others. With colleagues and long-term customers, you've already established some degree of credibility based on past communication efforts, and these people automatically lean toward accepting each new message from you because you haven't let them down in the past. With audiences who don't know you, however, you need to establish credibility before they'll listen fully to your message. Whether you're working to build credibility with a new audience, to maintain credibility with an existing audience, or even to restore credibility after a mistake, consider emphasizing the following characteristics:

- **Honesty.** Demonstrating honesty and integrity will earn you the respect of your audiences, even if they don't always agree with or welcome your messages.
- **Objectivity.** Show that you can distance yourself from emotional situations and look at all sides of an issue.
- **Awareness of audience needs.** Let your audiences know that you understand what's important to them.
- **Credentials, knowledge, and expertise.** Audiences need to know that you have whatever it takes to back up your message, whether it's education, professional certification, special training, past successes, or simply the fact that you've done your research.
- **Endorsements.** If your audiences don't know anything about you, try to get assistance from someone they do know and trust.
- **Performance.** Demonstrating impressive communication skills is not enough; people need to know they can count on you to get the job done.
- **Confidence.** Audiences also need to know that you believe in yourself and your message. If you are convinced that your message is sound, you can state your case confidently, without sounding boastful or arrogant.
- **Communication style.** Support your points with evidence, not empty terms such as *amazing*, *incredible*, or *extraordinary*.

- **Sincerity.** When you offer praise, don't use hyperbole, such as "you are the most fantastic employee I could ever imagine." Instead, point out specific qualities that warrant praise.

Even though arrogance turns listeners off, displaying too much modesty or too little confidence can hurt your credibility. If you lack faith in yourself, you're likely to communicate an uncertain attitude that undermines your credibility. The key to being believable is to believe in yourself. If you are convinced that your message is sound, you can state your case with authority so that your audience has no doubts. Avoid vague sentiments and confidence-draining words such as *if*, *hope*, and *trust*:

INSTEAD OF THIS

We hope this recommendation will be helpful.

If you'd like to order, mail us the reply card.

We trust that you'll want to extend your service contract.

WRITE THIS

We're glad to make this recommendation.

To order, mail the reply card.

By extending your service contract, you can continue to enjoy top-notch performance from your equipment.

Finally, keep in mind that credibility can take days, months, or even years to establish—and it can be wiped out in an instant. An occasional mistake or letdown is usually forgiven, but major lapses in honesty or integrity can destroy your reputation. On the other hand, when you do establish credibility, communication becomes much easier because you no longer have to spend time and energy convincing people that you are a trustworthy source of information and ideas.

Projecting Your Company's Image

When you communicate with outsiders, on even the most routine matter, you serve as the spokesperson for your organization. The impression you make can enhance or damage the reputation of the entire company. Consequently, the interests and preferred communication style of your company must take precedence over your own views and personal communication style.

Many organizations have specific communication guidelines that show everything from the correct use of the company name to preferred abbreviations and other grammatical details. Specifying a desired style of communication is more difficult, however. Observe more experienced colleagues to see how they communicate, and never hesitate to ask for editorial help to make sure you're conveying the appropriate tone. For instance, with clients entrusting thousands or millions of dollars to it, an investment firm communicates in a style quite different from that of a clothing retailer. And a clothing retailer specializing in high-quality business attire communicates in a different style than a store catering to the latest trends in casual wear.

Controlling Your Style and Tone

Style is the way you use words to achieve a certain **tone**, or overall impression. You can vary your style—your sentence structure and vocabulary—to sound forceful or objective, personal or formal, colorful or dry. The right choice depends on the nature of your message and your relationship with the reader. Although style can be refined during the revision phase (see Chapter 6), you'll save time and a lot of rewriting if you use a style that allows you to achieve the desired tone from the start.

DOCUMENT MAKEOVER

IMPROVE THIS LETTER

To practice correcting drafts of actual documents, visit your online course or the access-code-protected portion of the Companion Website. Click "Document Makeovers," then click Chapter 5. You will find a letter that contains problems and errors relating to what you've learned in this chapter about establishing a good relationship with your audience. Use the Final Draft decision tool to create an improved version of this letter. Check the document for "you" attitude, positive language, communication etiquette, bias-free language, and phrases that establish credibility.



Whether you're blogging, updating a website, or even just exchanging IM with a customer, you are responsible for projecting your company's preferred image to the outside world.

3 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Discuss four ways of achieving a businesslike tone with a style that is clear and concise

Most business messages aim for a conversational style that is warm but still businesslike.

Using a Conversational Tone

The tone of your business messages can range from informal to conversational to formal. If you’re in a large organization and you’re communicating with your superiors or with customers, your tone would tend to be more formal and respectful.⁸ However, that formal tone might sound distant and cold if used with close colleagues.

Compare the three versions of the letter in Table 5.2. The first is too formal and stuffy for today’s audiences, whereas the third is too casual for any audience other than close associates or friends. The second message demonstrates the conversational tone used in most business communication—using plain language that sounds businesslike without being stuffy or full of jargon. You can achieve a conversational tone in your messages by following these guidelines:

- **Avoid obsolete and pompous language.** Business language used to be much more formal than it is today, but some out-of-date phrases still find their way into communication efforts. You can avoid using such language if you ask yourself, “Would I say this if I were talking with someone face-to-face?” Similarly, avoid using big words, trite expressions, and overly complicated sentences to impress others. Such pompous language sounds self-important (see Table 5.3).
- **Avoid preaching and bragging.** Few things are more irritating than people who think that they know everything and that others know nothing. If you do need to remind your audience of something obvious, try to work in the information casually, perhaps in the middle of a paragraph, where it will sound like a secondary comment rather than a major revelation. Also, avoid bragging about your accomplishments or those of your organization (unless your audience is a part of your organization).

TABLE 5.2 Three Levels of Tone: Formal, Conversational, and Informal Tones

FORMAL TONE	CONVERSATIONAL TONE	INFORMAL TONE
Reserved for the most formal occasions	Preferred for most business communication	Reserved for communication with friends and close associates
Dear Ms. Navarro:	Dear Ms. Navarro:	Hi Gabriella:
Enclosed please find the information that was requested during our telephone communication of May 14. As was mentioned at that time, Midville Hospital has significantly more doctors of exceptional quality than any other health facility in the state.	Here’s the information you requested during our phone conversation on Friday. As I mentioned, Midville Hospital has the best doctors and more of them than any other hospital in the state.	Hope all is well. Just sending along the information you asked for. As I said on Friday, Midville Hospital has more and better doctors than any other hospital in the state.
As you were also informed, our organization has quite an impressive network of doctors and other health-care professionals with offices located throughout the state. In the event that you should need a specialist, our professionals will be able to make an appropriate recommendation.	In addition, we have a vast network of doctors and other health professionals with offices throughout the state. If you need a specialist, they can refer you to the right one.	We also have a large group of doctors and other health professionals with offices close to you at work or at home. Need a specialist? They’ll refer you to the right one.
In the event that you have questions or would like additional information, you may certainly contact me during regular business hours.	If you would like more information, please call any time between 9:00 and 5:00, Monday through Friday.	Just give me a ring if you want to know more. Any time from 9:00 to 5:00 should be fine.
Most sincerely yours,	Sincerely,	Take care,
Samuel G. Berenz	Samuel G. Berenz	Sam

TABLE 5.3 Weeding Out Obsolete Phrases

OBSOLETE PHRASE	UP-TO-DATE REPLACEMENT
<i>We are in receipt of</i>	<i>We received</i>
<i>Kindly advise</i>	<i>Please let me/us know</i>
<i>Attached please find</i>	<i>Enclosed is or I/We have enclosed</i>
<i>It has come to my attention</i>	<i>I have just learned or [Someone] has just informed me</i>
<i>The undersigned</i>	<i>I/We</i>
<i>In due course</i>	(Specify a specific time or date.)
<i>Permit me to say that</i>	(Omit; just say whatever you need to say.)
<i>Pursuant to</i>	(Omit; just say whatever you need to say.)
<i>In closing, I'd like to say</i>	(Omit; just say whatever you need to say.)
<i>We wish to inform you that</i>	(Omit; just say whatever you need to say.)
<i>Please be advised that</i>	(Omit; just say whatever you need to say.)

- **Be careful with intimacy.** Most business messages should avoid intimacy, such as sharing personal details or adopting a casual, unprofessional tone. However, when you do have a close relationship with your audience, such as among the members of a close-knit team, a more intimate tone is sometimes appropriate and even expected.
- **Be careful with humor.** Humor can be an effective tool to inject interest into dry subjects or take the sting out of negative news. However, use it with great care: Humor can easily backfire and divert attention from your message. The humor must be connected to the point you're trying to make; business messages are not a forum for sharing jokes. Never use humor in formal messages or when you're communicating across cultural boundaries. If you don't know your audience well or you're not skilled at using humor in a business setting, don't use it at all. When in doubt, leave it out.

Using Plain English

What do you think this sentence is trying to say?

We continually exist to synergistically supply value-added deliverables such that we may continue to proactively maintain enterprise-wide data to stay competitive in tomorrow's world.⁹

If you don't have any idea what it means, you're not alone. However, this is a real sentence from a real company, written in an attempt to explain what the company does and why. This sort of incomprehensible, buzzword-filled writing is driving a widespread call to use *plain English*.

Plain English is a way of presenting information in a simple, unadorned style so that your audience can easily grasp your meaning, without struggling through specialized, technical, or convoluted language. Because it's close to the way people normally speak, plain English is easily understood by anyone with a basic education. The Plain English Campaign (a nonprofit group in England campaigning for clear language) defines plain English as language "that the intended audience can read, understand and act upon the first time they read it."¹⁰ You can see how this definition supports using the "you" attitude and shows respect for your audience.

On the Creative Commons website, for instance, licensing terms are available in two versions: a complete document that spells out contractual details in specific legal terms that meet the needs of legal professionals, and a second version labeled "human-readable," which explains the licensing terms in nontechnical language that anyone can understand.¹¹

Even though readers overwhelmingly appreciate plain English and its merits have been demonstrated in a variety of audience tests,¹² murky, pompous, and unnecessarily complex

Audiences can understand and act on plain English without reading it over and over.

writing is still more common than it should be. One reason is that writers are sometimes unsure about their own writing skills and about the impact their messages will have. They mistakenly believe that packaging simple ideas in complex writing makes their messages seem more impressive. Another reason is inadequate planning, which results in messages that meander in search of a conclusion. A third reason is that some writers intentionally try to create distance between themselves and their audiences. Whatever the cause, the result of unnecessarily complex writing is always the same: ineffective communication that wastes time, wastes money, and annoys everyone who comes in contact with it.

Even though plain English is intended for audiences who speak English as their primary language, plain English can also help you simplify the messages you prepare for audiences who speak English only as a second or even third language. For example, by choosing words that have only one interpretation, you will communicate more clearly with your intercultural audience (see “Communicating Across Cultures: Communicating with a Global Audience on the Web”).¹³

Bear in mind that plain English doesn’t have to be simplistic, dull, or imprecise. The point is to be clear, not lifeless. Also, be sure to consider the needs and expectations of your audience. For instance, scientific, technical, legal, and other specialized messages often require specialized terminology. Use these specific terms whenever you need to; just be sure to use them in clearly constructed sentences and well-organized paragraphs.

Selecting Active or Passive Voice

Your choice of active or passive voice also affects the tone of your message. You are using **active voice** when the subject performs the action and the object receives the action: “John rented the office.” You’re using **passive voice** when the subject receives the action: “The of-

Communicating Across Cultures

Communicating with a Global Audience on the Web

Reaching an international audience on the web involves more than simply offering translations of the English language. Successful global sites address the needs of international customers in five ways:

1. **Consider the reader’s perspective.** Many communication elements that you may take for granted may be interpreted differently by audiences in different countries. Should you use the metric system, different notations for times or dates, or even different names for countries? For example, German citizens don’t refer to their country as *Germany*; it’s *Deutschland* to them. Review the entire online experience and look for ways to improve communication, including such helpful tools as interactive currency converters and translation dictionaries.
2. **Take cultural differences into account.** For instance, because humor is rooted in cultural norms, U.S. humor may not be so funny to Asian or European readers. Avoid idioms and references that aren’t universally recognized, such as “putting all your eggs in one basket” or “jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.”
3. **Keep the message clear.** Use simple words and sentences and write in the active voice. Define abbreviations, acronyms, and words an international audience may not be familiar with.

4. **Complement language with visuals.** Use drawings, photos, and other visuals to help communicate when words can’t.
5. **Consult local experts.** Seek the advice of local experts about phrases and references that may be expected. Even terms as simple as *homepage* differ from country to country. Spanish readers refer to the “first page,” or *pagina inicial*, whereas the French term is “welcome page,” or *page d’accueil*.

CAREER APPLICATIONS

1. Visit Sony’s Global Headquarters website at www.sony.net and examine Sony’s music-oriented websites for Argentina, France, and Germany. How does Sony “localize” each country’s site?
2. Compare Sony Music’s international sites to IBM’s global webpages at www.ibm.com. How does Sony’s approach differ from IBM’s? Do both corporations successfully address the needs of a global audience? Write a two-paragraph summary that compares the international sites of both companies.

TABLE 5.4 Choosing Active or Passive Voice

IN GENERAL, AVOID PASSIVE VOICE IN ORDER TO MAKE YOUR WRITING LIVELY AND DIRECT	
Dull and Indirect in Passive Voice	Lively and Direct in Active Voice
The new procedure was developed by the operations team.	The operations team developed the new procedure.
Legal problems are created by this contract.	This contract creates legal problems.
Reception preparations have been undertaken by our PR people for the new CEO's arrival.	Our PR people have begun planning a reception for the new CEO.
HOWEVER, PASSIVE VOICE IS HELPFUL WHEN YOU NEED TO BE DIPLOMATIC OR WANT TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON PROBLEMS OR SOLUTIONS RATHER THAN ON PEOPLE	
Accusatory or Self-congratulatory in Active Voice	More Diplomatic in Passive Voice
You lost the shipment.	The shipment was lost.
I recruited seven engineers last month.	Seven engineers were recruited last month.
We are investigating the high rate of failures on the final assembly line.	The high rate of failures on the final assembly line is being investigated.

fice was rented by John.” As you can see, the passive voice combines the helping verb *to be* with a form of the verb that is usually similar to the past tense. When you use active sentences, your messages generally sound less formal and make it easier for readers to figure out who performed the action (see Table 5.4). In contrast, using passive voice de-emphasizes the subject and implies that the action was done by something or someone.

Using the active voice help makes your writing more direct, livelier, and easier to read. In contrast, the passive voice is not wrong grammatically, but it is often cumbersome, can be unnecessarily vague, and can make sentences longer. In most cases, the active voice is your best choice.¹⁴ Nevertheless, using the passive voice can help you demonstrate the “you” attitude in some situations:

- When you want to be diplomatic about pointing out a problem or error of some kind (the passive version seems less like an accusation)
- When you want to point out what’s being done without taking or attributing either the credit or the blame (the passive version shifts the spotlight away from the person or persons involved)
- When you want to avoid personal pronouns in order to create an objective tone (the passive version may be used in a formal report, for example)

For example, to explain its 90-day limit on product returns, Gap says the following on its website: “Merchandise returned more than 90 days after the purchase date will not be eligible for a return,”¹⁵ instead of saying something like “You cannot return products more than 90 days after the purchase date.” The second half of Table 5.4 illustrates several other situations in which the passive voice helps you focus your message on your audience.

Active sentences are usually stronger than passive ones.

Use passive sentences to soften bad news, to put yourself in the background, or to create an impersonal tone.

COMPOSING YOUR MESSAGE

With these insights into how you can adapt to your audience, you’re ready to begin composing your message. Composition is much easier if you’ve already figured out what to say and in what order (refer to the outlining advice in Chapter 4). However, you may also discover as you move along that you can improve on your outline. Feel free to rearrange, delete, and add ideas, as long as you don’t lose sight of your purpose.

As you compose your first draft, try to let your creativity flow. Don’t try to draft and edit at the same time or worry about getting everything perfect. Make up words if you can’t think of the right word, draw pictures, talk out loud—do whatever it takes to get the ideas

out of your head and onto your computer screen or a piece of paper. You'll have time to revise and refine the material later before showing it to anyone. In fact, many writers find it helpful to establish a personal rule of *never* showing a first draft to anyone. By working in this "safe zone," away from the critical eyes of others, your mind will stay free to think clearly and creatively.

If you get stuck and feel unable to write, try to overcome writer's block by jogging your brain in creative ways. The introduction is often the hardest part to write, so put it aside and work on whichever parts of the document you're most comfortable with at any given moment. In most cases, you don't need to write the sections in any particular order.¹⁶ Work on nontext elements such as graphics or your cover page. Revisit your purpose and confirm your intent in writing the message. Give yourself a mental break by switching to a different project. Sometimes all you need to do is start writing without worrying about the words you're using or how they will sound to the audience. Words will start flowing, your mind will engage, and the writing will come easier.

As you create and refine your messages, learn to view your writing at three levels: strong words, effective sentences, and coherent paragraphs.

4 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Briefly describe how to select words that are not only correct but also effective

Using correct grammar enhances your image.

Effectiveness is the second consideration when choosing words.

Functional words (conjunctions, prepositions, articles, and pronouns) express the relationships among content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs).

Choosing Strong Words

Effective messages depend on carefully chosen words, whether you select them during your first draft or edit them in later.¹⁷ First, pay close attention to correctness. The "rules" of grammar and usage can be a source of worry for all writers, because many of these rules are complex and can evolve over time. Even professional editors and grammarians occasionally have questions about correct usage, and they sometimes disagree about the answers. For example, the word *data* is the plural form of *datum*, yet some experts now prefer to treat *data* as a singular noun when it's used in nonscientific material to refer to a body of information.

Although debating the finer points of usage may seem like nitpicking, using words correctly is important. If you make grammatical or usage errors, you lose credibility with your audience—even if your message is otherwise correct. Poor grammar implies that you're uninformed, and audiences put less faith in an uninformed source. Worse still, poor grammar can imply that you don't respect your audience enough to get things right. Even if an audience is broad-minded enough to withhold such a judgment, grammatical errors are distracting.

If you have doubts about what is correct, look up the answer and use the proper form of expression. Check the "Handbook of Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage" at the end of this book, or consult the many special reference books and resources available in libraries, in bookstores, and on the Internet. Most authorities agree on the basic conventions.

Just as important as selecting the correct word is selecting the most suitable word for the job at hand. Naturally, using the right words is important in life-and-death situations. But even when you're dealing with less perilous circumstances, the right words can make all the difference in the success of your communication efforts. Word effectiveness is generally more difficult to achieve than correctness, particularly in written communication. Even professional writers with decades of experience continue to work at their craft to use functional and content words correctly and to find the words that communicate well (see Figure 5.3).

Using Functional and Content Words Correctly

Words can be divided into two main categories. **Functional words** express relationships and have only one unchanging meaning in any given context. They include conjunctions, prepositions, articles, and pronouns. Your main concern with functional words is to use them correctly. **Content words** are multidimensional and, therefore, frequently subject to various interpretations. They include nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. These words carry the meaning of a sentence. In your sentences, content words are the building blocks, and functional words are the mortar that holds them together. In the following sentence, all the content words are underlined:

Carlo Firenze noted that custom ringtones have generated several billion dollars in sales so far, but he isn't sure if this momentum will transfer to other mobile data services.



FIGURE 5.3 Choosing Strong Words

Through the use of such words as *adventures*, *escape*, *getaway*, *active*, and *undiscovered*, REI Adventures conveys a sense of excitement and discovery on its website.

Both functional words and content words are necessary, but your effectiveness as a communicator depends largely on your ability to choose the right content words for your message.

Denotation and Connotation Content words have both a denotative and a connotative meaning. The **denotative meaning** is the literal, or dictionary, meaning. The **connotative meaning** includes all the associations and feelings evoked by the word.

The denotative meaning of *desk* is “a piece of furniture with a flat work surface and various drawers for storage.” The connotative meaning of *desk* may include thoughts associated with work or study, but the word *desk* has fairly neutral connotations—neither strong nor emotional. However, some words have much stronger connotations than others. For example, the connotations of the word *fail* are negative and can carry strong emotional meaning. If you say that the sales department *failed* to meet its annual quota, the connotative meaning suggests that the group is inferior, incompetent, or below some standard of performance. However, the reason for not achieving 100 percent might be an inferior product, incorrect pricing, or some other factor outside the control of the sales department. In contrast, by saying that the sales department achieved 85 percent of its quota, you clearly communicate that the results were less than expected—without triggering all the negative emotions associated with *failure*.

Abstraction and Concreteness Words also vary dramatically in the degree of abstraction or concreteness they convey. An **abstract word** expresses a concept, quality, or characteristic. Abstractions are usually broad, encompassing a category of ideas, and they are often intellectual, academic, or philosophical. *Love*, *honor*, *progress*, *tradition*, and *beauty* are abstractions, as are such important business concepts as *productivity*, *profits*, *quality*,

Content words have both a denotative (explicit, specific) meaning and a connotative (implicit, associative) meaning.

The more abstract a word is, the more it is removed from the tangible, objective world of things that can be perceived with the senses.

In business communication, use concrete, specific terms whenever possible; use abstractions only when necessary.

and motivation. In contrast, a **concrete word** stands for something you can touch, see, or visualize. Most concrete terms are anchored in the tangible, material world. *Chair, table, horse, rose, kick, kiss, red, green,* and *two* are concrete words; they are direct, clear, and exact. Incidentally, technology continues to generate new words and new meanings that describe things that don't have a physical presence but are nonetheless concrete: *software, database, signal,* and *code* are all concrete terms as well.

You might assume that concrete words are better than abstract words because they are more precise, but that isn't always the case. For example, try to rewrite this sentence without using the underlined abstract words:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

As you can see, the Declaration of Independence needs abstractions, and so do most business messages. Abstractions let you rise above the common and tangible.

Even though they're indispensable, abstractions can be troublesome. They tend to be fuzzy and subject to multiple interpretations. Moreover, it isn't always easy to get excited about ideas, especially if they're unrelated to concrete experience. The best way to minimize such problems is to blend abstract terms with concrete ones, the general with the specific. State the concept, then pin it down with details expressed in more concrete terms. Save the abstractions for ideas that cannot be expressed any other way.

Because words such as *small, numerous, sizable, near, soon, good,* and *fine* are imprecise, try to replace them with terms that are more accurate. Instead of referring to a *sizable loss*, talk about a *loss of \$32 million*.

Finding Words That Communicate Well

By practicing your writing, learning from experienced writers and editors, and reading extensively, you'll find it easier to choose words that communicate exactly what you want to say. When you compose your business messages, think carefully to find the most powerful words for each situation (see Table 5.5).

Try to use words that are powerful and familiar.

- **Choose powerful words.** Choose words that express your thoughts most clearly, specifically, and dynamically. Nouns and verbs are the most concrete and should do most of the communication work in your messages. Verbs are especially powerful because they tell what's happening in the sentence, so make them dynamic and specific. For instance, you could replace *fall* with *plummet, drop,* or *decline* to suggest the magnitude of the decrease. Here's another helpful clue: If you find yourself using a lot of adjectives and adverbs, you're probably trying to compensate for weak nouns and verbs. Saying that *sales plummeted* is stronger and more efficient than saying *sales dropped dramatically* or *sales experienced a dramatic drop*.
- **Choose familiar words.** You'll communicate best with words that are familiar to both you and your readers. Efforts to improve a situation can be *ameliorative*, to be sure, but saying they are *helpful* is a lot more effective. Moreover, trying to use an unfamiliar word for the first time in an important document can lead to embarrassing mistakes.
- **Avoid clichés and buzzwords.** Although familiar words are generally the best choice, beware of terms and phrases so common or so trendy that they have lost some of their power to communicate. Because clichés are used so often, readers tend to slide right by them to whatever is coming next. Most people use these phrases not because they think it makes their message more vivid and inviting but because they don't know how to express themselves otherwise, they don't invest the energy required for original writing, or they worry too much about keeping up with the latest trendy language.¹⁸
- **Use jargon carefully.** Handle technical or professional terms with care. Although jargon has a bad reputation in general, it's usually an efficient way to communicate within specific groups that understand their own special terms. After all, that's how jargon develops in the first place, as people with similar interests develop ways to communicate

Avoid clichés and trendy buzzwords in your writing and use jargon only when your audience is completely familiar with it.

TABLE 5.5 Finding the Words That Communicate with Power

AVOID WEAK PHRASES	USE STRONG TERMS
Wealthy businessperson	Tycoon
Business prosperity	Economic boom
Hard times	Slump
AVOID UNFAMILIAR WORDS	USE FAMILIAR WORDS
Ascertain	Find out, learn
Consummate	Close, bring about
Peruse	Read, study
Circumvent	Avoid
Increment	Growth, increase
Unequivocal	Certain
AVOID CLICHÉS AND BUZZWORDS	USE PLAIN LANGUAGE
An uphill battle	A challenge
Writing on the wall	Prediction
Call the shots	Be in charge
Take by storm	Attack
Cost an arm and a leg	Expensive
A new ballgame	Fresh start
Fall through the cracks	Be overlooked
Think outside the box	Be creative
Run it up the flagpole	Offer for consideration
Eat our own dog food	Use our own products
Mission critical	Vital
Disintermediate	Get rid of

complex ideas quickly. For instance, when a recording engineer wants to communicate that a particular piece of music is devoid of reverberation and other sound effects, it's a lot easier to simply describe the track as "dry." Of course, to people who aren't familiar with such insider terms, jargon is meaningless and intimidating—one more reason it's so important to understand your audience before you start writing.

Remember, you improve your business writing skills through imitation and practice. As you read business journals, newspapers, and even novels, make a note of the words you think are effective and keep them in a file. Look through your file before drafting your next message, and try using some of these words in your document. You may be surprised how they can strengthen your writing.

Creating Effective Sentences

Arranging your words in effective sentences is the next step in creating powerful messages. Start by selecting the optimum type of sentence, then arrange words to emphasize the most important point in each sentence.

5 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Explain how sentence style affects emphasis within your message

A simple sentence has one main clause.

A compound sentence has two main clauses.

A complex sentence has one main clause and one subordinate clause.

A compound-complex sentence has two main clauses and at least one dependent clause.

Writing is more effective if it balances all four sentence types.

Emphasize parts of a sentence by

- Devoting more words to them
- Putting them at the beginning or at the end of the sentence
- Making them the subject of the sentence

Choosing from the Four Types of Sentences

Sentences come in four basic varieties: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. A **simple sentence** has one main *clause* (a single subject and a single predicate), although it may be expanded by nouns and pronouns serving as objects of the action and by modifying phrases. Here's a typical example (with the subject underlined once and the predicate verb underlined twice):

Profits increased in the past year.

A **compound sentence** has two main clauses that express two or more independent but related thoughts of equal importance, usually joined by *and*, *but*, or *or*. In effect, a compound sentence is a merger of two or more simple sentences (independent clauses) that are related. For example:

Wage rates have declined by 5 percent, and employee turnover has been high.

The independent clauses in a compound sentence are always separated by a comma or by a semicolon (in which case the conjunction—*and*, *but*, or—is dropped).

A **complex sentence** expresses one main thought (the independent clause) and one or more subordinate thoughts (dependent clauses) related to it, often separated by a comma. The subordinate thought, which comes first in the following sentence, could not stand alone as a valid sentence:

Although you may question Gerald's conclusions, you must admit that his research is thorough.

A **compound-complex sentence** has two main clauses, at least one of which contains a subordinate clause:

Profits have increased in the past year, and although you may question Gerald's conclusions, you must admit that his research is thorough.

When constructing a sentence, choose the form that matches the relationship of the ideas you want to express. If you have two ideas of equal importance, express them as two simple sentences or as one compound sentence. However, if one of the ideas is less important than the other, place it in a dependent clause to form a complex sentence. For example, although the following compound sentence uses a conjunction to join two ideas, they aren't truly equal:

The chemical products division is the strongest in the company, and its management techniques should be adopted by the other divisions.

By making the first thought subordinate to the second, you establish a cause-and-effect relationship. So, the following complex sentence is much more effective:

Because the chemical products division is the strongest in the company, its management techniques should be adopted by the other divisions.

To make your writing as effective as possible, strive for variety and balance using all four sentence types. If you use too many simple sentences, you won't be able to properly express the relationships among your ideas, and your writing will sound choppy and abrupt. If you use too many long, compound sentences, your writing will sound monotonous. On the other hand, an uninterrupted series of complex or compound-complex sentences is hard to follow.

Using Sentence Style to Emphasize Key Thoughts

In every message, some ideas are more important than others. You can emphasize these key ideas through your sentence style. One obvious technique is to give important points the most space. When you want to call attention to a thought, use extra words to describe it. Consider this sentence:

The chairperson called for a vote of the shareholders.

To emphasize the importance of the chairperson, you might describe her more fully:

Having considerable experience in corporate takeover battles, the chairperson called for a vote of the shareholders.

You can increase the emphasis even more by adding a separate, short sentence to augment the first:

The chairperson called for a vote of the shareholders. She has considerable experience in corporate takeover battles.

You can also call attention to a thought by making it the subject of the sentence. In the following example, the emphasis is on the person:

I can write letters much more quickly using a computer.

However, by changing the subject, the computer takes center stage:

The computer enables me to write letters much more quickly.

Another way to emphasize an idea is to place it either at the beginning or at the end of a sentence:

Less emphatic. We are cutting the price to stimulate demand.

More emphatic. To stimulate demand, we are cutting the price.

In complex sentences, the placement of the dependent clause hinges on the relationship between the ideas expressed. If you want to emphasize the idea, put the dependent clause at the end of the sentence (the most emphatic position) or at the beginning (the second most emphatic position). If you want to downplay the idea, bury the dependent clause within the sentence.

Dependent clauses can determine emphasis.

Most emphatic. The electronic parts are manufactured in Mexico, which has lower wage rates than the United States.

Emphatic. Because wage rates are lower there, the electronic parts are manufactured in Mexico.

Least emphatic. Mexico, which has lower wage rates, was selected as the production site for the electronic parts.

Techniques such as these give you a great deal of control over the way your audience interprets what you have to say.

Crafting Unified, Coherent Paragraphs

After arranging powerful words in effective sentences, your next step is to arrange those sentences into coherent paragraphs. Paragraphs organize sentences related to the same general topic. Readers expect each paragraph to focus on a single unit of thought and to be a logical link in an organized sequence of the thoughts that make up a complete message. By carefully arranging the elements of each paragraph, you help your readers grasp the main idea of your document and understand how the specific pieces of support material back up that idea (see Figure 5.4).

Elements of the Paragraph

Paragraphs vary widely in length and form, but the typical paragraph contains three basic elements: a topic sentence, support sentences that develop the topic, and transitional words and phrases.

Topic Sentence An effective paragraph is *unified*; it deals with a single topic. The sentence that introduces that topic is called the **topic sentence**. In informal and creative writing, the topic sentence may be implied rather than stated. In business writing, the topic sentence is generally explicit and is often the first sentence in the paragraph. The topic sentence gives

6 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

List five ways to develop coherent paragraphs

Most paragraphs consist of

- A topic sentence that reveals the subject of the paragraph
- Related sentences that support and expand the topic
- Transitional elements that help readers move between sentences and paragraphs

FIGURE 5.4 Unified Paragraphs

In two brief paragraphs, Whirlpool assured its trade partners (retailers and commercial laundries) that business would continue as usual after its acquisition of rival Maytag.

- Clearly identifies the target audience of this message
- Uses this one-sentence paragraph to summarize the purpose of Whirlpool's acquisition of Maytag
- Assures readers that the acquisition won't change Whirlpool's business operations and therefore won't disrupt its customers operations
- Provides links to additional information

Whirlpool completes acquisition of Maytag

Whirlpool

Customers Investors Employees/Retirees Media eStore/Investor Presentation

For Our Trade Customers

Today is the start of a great new day for Whirlpool Corporation.

Together, a combined Whirlpool and Maytag arrange a more compelling company positioned to deliver the most innovative portfolio of products and services to consumers around the world.

The fact that the acquisition is complete, however, does not change anything about our daily business operations. Our top priority is to continue to stay focused on delivering the innovative products our customers expect and deserve.

Kind Regards,

Sam Abdelhour

Sam Abdelhour
Vice President, Sales
Whirlpool North American Region

[Click here to read entire trade letter](#)

[Changes to North American Operations Announced](#)

Whirlpool Contact Information

- Contract Sales Support Team
800-952-2537
- Trade Partner Support
800-321-7013
- Trade Partner Financial Support
800-458-0271
- Commercial Laundry
800-482-3557
- Damage Claims
800-351-4821
- Rebates
800-310-5782
- National Parts
800-545-0470
- eStore online
800-843-3444

readers a summary of the general idea that will be covered in the rest of the paragraph. The following examples show how a topic sentence can introduce the subject and suggest the way that subject will be developed:

The medical products division has been troubled for many years by public relations problems. [In the rest of the paragraph, readers will learn the details of the problems.]

Relocating the plant in New York has two main disadvantages. [The disadvantages will be explained in subsequent sentences.]

To get a refund, please supply us with the following information. [The details of the necessary information will be described in the rest of the paragraph.]

In addition to helping your readers, topic sentences help you as a writer because they remind you of the purpose of each paragraph and thereby help you stay focused. In fact, a good way to test the effectiveness of your writing is to prepare a summary version that consists of only the first sentences of all your paragraphs. If this summary communicates the essence of your message in a sensible, compelling way, you've probably done a good job of presenting your information.¹⁹

Support Sentences In most paragraphs, the topic sentence needs to be explained, justified, or extended with one or more support sentences. These related sentences must all have a bearing on the general subject and must provide enough specific details to make the topic clear:

The medical products division has been troubled for many years by public relations problems. Since 2002 the local newspaper has published 15 articles that portray the division in a negative light. We have been accused of everything from mistreating laboratory animals to

polluting the local groundwater. Our facility has been described as a health hazard. Our scientists are referred to as “Frankensteins,” and our profits are considered “obscene.”

The support sentences are all more specific than the topic sentence. Each one provides another piece of evidence to demonstrate the general truth of the main thought. Also, each sentence is clearly related to the general idea being developed, which gives the paragraph its unity. A paragraph is well developed when (1) it contains enough information to make the topic sentence convincing and interesting and (2) it contains no extraneous, unrelated sentences.

Transitional Elements In addition to being unified and well supported, effective paragraphs are *coherent*; that is, they are arranged in a logical order so that the audience can understand the train of thought. You achieve coherence by using transitions that show the relationship between paragraphs and among sentences within paragraphs. Notice how this paragraph began; the transitional phrase “In addition to . . .” helped move you from the previous discussion to this new topic.

Transitions are words or phrases that tie ideas together by showing how one thought is related to another. They not only help readers understand the connections you’re trying to make but also smooth your writing. In fact, effective transitions are one of the hallmarks of polished, effective writing.

Ideally, you begin planning these transitions while you’re outlining, as you decide how the various ideas and blocks of information will be arranged and connected.²⁰ You can establish transitions in a variety of ways:

- **Use connecting words.** Use words such as *and*, *but*, *or*, *nevertheless*, *however*, *in addition*, and so on.
- **Echo a word or phrase from a previous paragraph or sentence.** “A system should be established for monitoring inventory levels. *This system* will provide. . . .”
- **Use a pronoun that refers to a noun used previously.** “Ms. Arthur is the leading candidate for the president’s position. *She* has excellent qualifications.”
- **Use words that are frequently paired.** “The machine has a *minimum* output of. . . . Its *maximum* output is. . . .”

Transitional elements include

- Connecting words (conjunctions)
- Repeated words or phrases
- Pronouns
- Words that are frequently paired

Some transitional elements serve as mood changers, alerting the reader to a change in mood from the previous material. Some announce a total contrast with what’s gone on before, some announce a causal relationship, and some signal a change in time. Transitional elements prepare your reader for what is coming. Here is a list of transitions frequently used to move readers smoothly between sentences and paragraphs:

Additional detail	moreover, furthermore, in addition, besides, first, second, third, finally
Causal relationship	therefore, because, accordingly, thus, consequently, hence, as a result, so
Comparison	similarly, here again, likewise, in comparison, <i>still</i>
Contrast	yet, conversely, whereas, nevertheless, on the other hand, however, but, nonetheless
Condition	although, if
Illustration	for example, in particular, in this case, for instance
Time sequence	formerly, after, when, meanwhile, sometimes
Intensification	indeed, in fact, in any event
Summary	in brief, in short, to sum up
Repetition	that is, in other words, as I mentioned earlier

Keep in mind that although transitional words and phrases are necessary, they’re not sufficient in themselves to overcome poor organization. Put your ideas into a strong framework first, and then use transitions to link them together even more strongly.

Consider using a transition whenever it could help the reader understand your ideas and follow you from point to point. You can use transitions inside paragraphs to tie related points together and between paragraphs to ease the shift from one distinct thought to another. In

longer reports, transitions that link major sections or chapters are often complete paragraphs that serve as mini-introductions to the next section or as summaries of the ideas presented in the section just ending. Here’s an example:

Given the nature of this product, our alternatives are limited. As the previous section indicates, we can stop making it altogether, improve it, or continue with the current model. Each of these alternatives has advantages and disadvantages, which are discussed in the following section.

This paragraph makes it clear to the reader that the analysis of the problem (offered in the previous section) is now over and that the document is making a transition to an analysis of alternatives (to be offered in the next section).

Five Ways to Develop a Paragraph

Unification and coherence strongly depend on how you develop your paragraphs. Use a structure that is familiar to your readers, appropriate to the idea you’re trying to portray, and suited to your purpose. Five of the most common development techniques are illustration, comparison or contrast, cause and effect, classification, and problem and solution (see Table 5.6).

TABLE 5.6 Five Techniques for Developing Paragraphs

TECHNIQUE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Illustration	Giving examples that demonstrate the general idea	Some of our most popular products are available through local distributors. For example, Everett & Lemmings carries our frozen soups and entrees. The J. B. Green Company carries our complete line of seasonings, as well as the frozen soups. Wilmont Foods, also a major distributor, now carries our new line of frozen desserts.
Comparison or contrast	Using similarities or differences to develop the topic	When the company was small, the recruiting function could be handled informally. The need for new employees was limited, and each manager could comfortably screen and hire her or his own staff. However, our successful bid on the Owens contract means that we will be doubling our labor force over the next six months. To hire that many people without disrupting our ongoing activities, we will create a separate recruiting group within the human resources department.
Cause and effect	Focusing on the reasons for something	The heavy-duty fabric of your Wanderer tent probably broke down for one of two reasons: (1) a sharp object punctured the fabric, and without reinforcement, the hole was enlarged by the stress of pitching the tent daily for a week or (2) the fibers gradually rotted because the tent was folded and stored while still wet.
Classification	Showing how a general idea is broken into specific categories	Successful candidates for our supervisor trainee program generally come from one of several groups. The largest group, by far, consists of recent graduates of accredited business management programs. The next largest group comes from within our own company, as we try to promote promising staff workers to positions of greater responsibility. Finally, we do occasionally accept candidates with outstanding supervisory experience in related industries.
Problem and solution	Presenting a problem and then discussing the solution	Selling handmade toys online is a challenge because consumers are accustomed to buying heavily advertised toys from major chain stores or well-known websites such as Amazon.com. However, if we develop an appealing website, we can compete on the basis of product novelty and quality. In addition, we can provide unusual crafts at a competitive price: a rocking horse of birch, with a hand-knit tail and mane; a music box with the child’s name painted on the top; a real teepee, made by Native American artisans.

In practice, you'll occasionally combine two or more methods of development in a single paragraph. For instance, you could begin by using illustration, shift to comparison or contrast, and then shift to problem and solution. However, when combining approaches, do so carefully so that you don't lose readers partway through the paragraph. In addition, before settling for the first approach that comes to mind, consider the alternatives. Think through various methods before committing yourself, or even write several test paragraphs to see which method works best. By avoiding the easy habit of repeating the same old paragraph pattern time after time, you can keep your writing fresh and interesting.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO COMPOSE AND SHAPE YOUR MESSAGES

As with every phase of business communication, careful use of technology can help you compose and shape better messages in less time. You're likely to use a variety of electronic tools to compose messages, from word-processing programs to software for creating web content, blogs, and instant messages (IM).

Careful and informed use of technology can help you compose and shape better messages in less time. As you probably know, today's software (including both word processors and online publishing systems for websites and blogs) provides a wide range of tools to help writers compose documents:

Take full advantage of your software's formatting capabilities to help you produce effective, professional messages in less time.

- **Style sheets and templates.** *Style sheets* are master lists of predefined styles (typeface, type size, and so on) for headlines, paragraph text, and so on (here, the word *style* should not be confused with *writing style*, discussed earlier in the chapter). Many organizations provide employees with approved style sheets to ensure a consistent look for all company documents. Moreover, style sheets can eliminate hours of design time by making many of your choices for you. *Templates* can go beyond style sheets by defining such factors as page design, available fonts, and other features. A template can include *boilerplate*, a section of text that is reused from document to document. Like style sheets, templates save time by making choices for you in advance. (Depending on the version of Microsoft Word you're using, style sheets may have been replaced by templates.)
- **Autocompletion.** A software feature called *autocompletion* (or something similar) inserts a ready-made block of text when you type the first few characters. For example, instead of typing your company's name, address, phone number, fax number, e-mail address, and website URL, you can set the software to enter all this information as soon as you type the first three letters of the company name.
- **Autocorrection.** Another automatic feature in some programs instantly corrects spelling and typing errors and converts text to symbols, such as converting (c) to the © copyright symbol. However, autocorrection may make changes that you *don't* want made, such as converting "nd," "st," or "th" to superscript characters when paired with numbers, as in "21st century." (Although the use of such superscripts is common in word processing, many design professionals consider it poor typesetting.)
- **File merge and mail merge.** Today's software makes it easy to combine files—an especially handy feature when several members of a team write different sections of a report. For particularly complex reports, you can set up a master document that merges a number of subdocuments automatically when it's time to print. *Mail merge* lets you personalize form letters by inserting names and addresses from a database.
- **Endnotes, footnotes, indexes, and tables of contents.** Your computer can also help you track footnotes and endnotes, renumbering them every time you add or delete references. For a report's indexes and table of contents, you can simply flag the items you want to include, and the software assembles the lists for you.
- **Wizards.** Many programs offer *wizards* that guide you through the process of creating letters, résumés, webpages, and other common documents.

As with other forms of communication technology, using these tools efficiently and effectively requires some balance. You need to learn enough about the features to be handy with them, without spending so much time that the tools distract the writing process. For a reminder of the tasks involved in writing your messages, see "Checklist: Writing Business Messages."



CHECKLIST: Writing Business Messages

A. Adapt to your audience.

- Use the “you” attitude.
- Maintain good etiquette through polite communication.
- Emphasize the positive whenever possible.
- Use bias-free language.
- Establish your credibility in the eyes of your audience.
- Project your company’s preferred image.
- Use a conversational but still professional and respectful tone.
- Use plain English for clarity.

B. Compose your message.

- Choose strong words that communicate efficiently.
- Make sure you use functional and content words correctly.

- Pay attention to the connotative meaning of your words.
- Balance abstract and concrete terms to convey your meaning accurately.
- Avoid clichés and trendy buzzwords.
- Use jargon only when your audience understands it and prefers it.
- Vary your sentence structure for impact and interest.
- Develop coherent, unified paragraphs.
- Use transitional elements generously to help your audience follow your message.

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES AT CREATIVE COMMONS



To achieve their mission of popularizing a new approach to copyrighting songs, artwork, literature, and other creative works, Lawrence Lessig and his staff at Creative Commons need to convince people that the traditional approach to copyright doesn’t meet the needs of today’s digital society. This is no small challenge: Not only do they need to convince people to reconsider more than 200 years of legal precedent and habit, they also need to communicate with an extremely diverse audience—everyone from lawyers and business managers to artists, writers, musicians, and scientists. After graduating with a business degree, you’ve joined Creative Commons as a communication intern for a year before entering law school. Apply your knowledge of effective writing to these scenarios.

Individual Challenge: Visit the licensing of the Creative Commons website at www.creativecommons.org/license and find the information on the Sampling licenses. Write a one- or two-sentence description that explains how the Sampling, Sampling Plus, and Noncommercial Sampling Plus variations of this license differ. Imagine that your audience is a group of music and art majors.

Team Challenge: A key aspect of the communication challenge for Creative Commons is translating legal documents into language that musicians, artists, and others with no legal training can easily understand. In a small group, brainstorm ways to rewrite the following legal phrase (which is part of the licensing contracts) into language for a general audience:

The above rights may be exercised in all media and formats whether now known or hereafter devised. The above rights include the right to make such modifications as are technically necessary to exercise the rights in other media and formats.

SUMMARY OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Explain the importance of adapting your messages to the needs and expectations of your audience.** By adapting your communication to the needs and expectations of your audience members, you provide more compelling answers to their questions and improve the chances that your messages will be received successfully.

If your intended audience members think a message does not apply to them or does not offer them anything useful or interesting, they’ll be far less inclined to pay attention to it.

- 2 Explain why establishing credibility is vital to the success of your communication efforts.** Your audience members' response to every message you send depends heavily on their perception of your believability, based on how reliable they think you are and how much trust you evoke in them. Even if you're trying to convey information that is correct in every way, audiences will be reluctant to accept your message if they don't think you are a trustworthy source. Conversely, if audiences already accept you as a trustworthy source, they are inclined to accept and believe all of your messages.
- 3 Discuss four ways of achieving a businesslike style that is clear and concise.** To ensure that messages are businesslike, clear, and concise, start by using a conversational tone: avoid obsolete and pompous language, avoid preaching and bragging, avoid intimacy unless you have a close relationship with the audience, and use humor with great care. Support this conversational tone by using plain English, which is easily understood by anyone with an eighth- or ninth-grade education. Then select the best voice for your message. Use the active voice to emphasize the subject of the message and to produce shorter, stronger sentences; use the passive voice to be diplomatic, to avoid taking credit or placing blame, and to create an objective tone.
- 4 Briefly describe how to select words that are not only correct but also effective.** To select the best words, first make sure they are correct by checking grammar and us-

age guides. Next, make sure they are effective by knowing how to use functional and content words. Choose words that have fewer connotations (to reduce the chance of misinterpretation) and no negative connotations (to reduce the chance of offending your audience). Blend abstract words with concrete ones, narrowing from the general to the specific, and select words that communicate clearly, specifically, and dynamically. Choose words that are strong, choose words that are familiar, avoid clichés and buzzwords, and use jargon only when your audience will understand it.

- 5 Explain how sentence style affects emphasis within your message.** The order and placement of words within each sentence affect the emphasis your audience perceives. You can employ the following techniques to focus emphasis on specific parts of the sentence: give the most important idea the most emphasis by dedicating more words to it, add an additional sentence to clarify the key idea from the first sentence, or put the key idea at either the beginning or the end of the sentence.
- 6 List five ways to develop coherent paragraphs.** Paragraphs can be developed by illustration (giving examples), by comparison and contrast (pointing out similarities or differences), by focusing on cause and effect (giving reasons), by classification (discussing categories), and by focusing on the solution to a problem (stating a problem and showing how to solve it).

Test Your Knowledge

1. Do you have to use the word "you" in order to demonstrate the "you" attitude? Why or why not?
2. Why is it important to establish your credibility when communicating with an audience of strangers?
3. How does using bias-free language help communicators establish a good relationship with their audiences?
4. How does the denotative meaning of a word differ from its connotative meaning?
5. What is style, and how do you decide on the appropriate style for a message?
6. How does an abstract word differ from a concrete word?
7. In what three situations is passive voice appropriate?
8. How can topic sentences help readers?
9. How can topic sentences help writers?
10. What functions do transitions serve?

Apply Your Knowledge

1. How can you apply the "you" approach when you don't know your audience personally?
2. When composing business messages, how can you be yourself and project your company's image at the same time?

3. What steps can you take to make abstract concepts such as *opportunity* feel more concrete in your messages?
4. Should you bother using transitional elements if the logical sequence of your message is already obvious? Why or why not?
5. **Ethical Choices** Eleven million people in the United States are allergic to one or more food ingredients. Every year, 30,000 of these people end up in the emergency room after suffering an allergic reaction, and hundreds of them die. Many of these tragic events are tied to poorly written food labels that either fail to identify dangerous allergens or use scientific terms that most consumers don't recognize.²¹ Do food manufacturers have a responsibility to ensure that consumers read, understand, and follow warnings on food products? Explain your answer.

Practice Your Knowledge

Message for Analysis

Read the following e-mail draft, then (1) analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each sentence and (2) revise the document so that it follows this chapter's guidelines. The message was written by the marketing manager of an online retailer of baby-related products

in the hope of becoming a retail outlet for Inglesina strollers and high chairs. As a manufacturer of stylish, top-quality products, Inglesina (based in Italy) is extremely selective about the retail outlets through which it allows its products to be sold.

Our e-tailing site, www.BestBabyGear.com, specializes in only the very best products for parents of newborns, infants, and toddlers. We constantly scour the world looking for products that are good enough and well-built enough and classy enough—good enough that is to take their place alongside the hundreds of other carefully selected products that adorn the pages of our award-winning website, www.bestbabygear.com. We aim for the fences every time we select a product to join this portfolio; we don't want to waste our time with onesy-twosey products that might sell a half dozen units per annum—no, we want every product to be a top-drawer success, selling at least one hundred units per specific model per year in order to justify our expense and hassle factor in adding it to the abovementioned portfolio. After careful consideration, we thusly concluded that your Inglesina lines meet our needs and would therefore like to add it.

Exercises

For active links to all websites discussed in this chapter, visit this text's website at www.prenhall.com/bovee. Locate your book and click on its Companion Website link. Then select Chapter 5, and click on "Featured Websites." Locate the name of the page or the URL related to the material in the text. Please note that links to sites that become inactive after publication of the book will be removed from the Featured Websites section.

5.1 Audience Relationship: Courteous Communication

Substitute a better phrase for each of the following:

- You claim that
- It is not our policy to
- You neglected to
- In which you assert
- We are sorry you are dissatisfied
- You failed to enclose
- We request that you send us
- Apparently you overlooked our terms
- We have been very patient
- We are at a loss to understand

5.2 Audience Relationship: The "You" Attitude

Rewrite these sentences to reflect your audience's viewpoint.

- Your e-mail order cannot be processed; we request that you use the order form on our website instead.
- We insist that you always bring your credit card to the store.
- We want to get rid of all our 15-inch LCD screens to make room in our warehouse for the new 19-, 23-, and 35-inch monitors. Thus, we are offering a 25 percent discount on all sales of 15-inch models this week.
- I am applying for the position of bookkeeper in your office. I feel my grades prove that I am bright and capable, and I think I can do a good job for you.
- As requested, we are sending the refund for \$25.

5.3 Audience Relationship: Emphasize the Positive

Revise these sentences to be positive rather than negative.

- To avoid the loss of your credit rating, please remit payment within 10 days.
- We don't make refunds on returned merchandise that is soiled.
- Because we are temporarily out of Baby Cry dolls, we won't be able to ship your order for 10 days.
- You failed to specify the color of the blouse that you ordered.
- You should have realized that waterbeds will freeze in unheated houses during winter. Therefore, our guarantee does not cover the valve damage, and you must pay the \$9.50 valve-replacement fee (plus postage).

5.4 Audience Relationship: Emphasize the Positive

Provide euphemisms for the following words and phrases:

- Stubborn
- Wrong
- Stupid
- Incompetent
- Loudmouth

5.5 Audience Relationship: Bias-Free Language

Rewrite each of the following to eliminate bias:

- For an Indian, Maggie certainly is outgoing.
- He needs a wheelchair, but he doesn't let his handicap affect his job performance.
- A pilot must have the ability to stay calm under pressure, and then he must be trained to cope with any problem that arises.
- Candidate Renata Parsons, married and the mother of a teenager, will attend the debate.
- Senior citizen Sam Nugent is still an active salesman.

5.6 Ethical Choices

Your company has been a major employer in the local community for years, but shifts in the global marketplace have forced some changes in the company's long-term direction. In fact, the company plans to reduce local staffing by as much as 50 percent over the next 5 to 10 years, starting with a small layoff next month. The size and timing of future layoffs have not been decided, although there is little doubt more layoffs will happen at some point. In the first draft of a letter aimed at community leaders, you write that "this first layoff is part of a continuing series of staff reductions anticipated over the next several years." However, your boss is concerned about the vagueness and negative tone of the language and asks you to rewrite that sentence to read "this layoff is part of the company's ongoing efforts to continually align its resources with global market conditions." Do you think this suggested wording is ethical, given the company's economic influence in the community? Please explain your answer.

5.7 Message Composition: Controlling Style

Rewrite the following e-mail to customer Betty Crandall so that it conveys a helpful, personal, and interested tone:

We received your order complaint via our website response system. Owing to the fact that you

neglected to include the size of the dress you ordered, please be advised that no shipment of your order was made, but the aforementioned shipment will occur at such time as we are in receipt of the aforementioned information.

- 5.8 Message Composition: Selecting Words** Write a concrete phrase for each of these vague phrases:
- Sometime this spring
 - A substantial saving
 - A large number attended
 - Increased efficiency
 - Expanded the work area
 - Flatten the website structure
- 5.9 Message Composition: Selecting Words** List terms that are stronger than the following:
- Ran after
 - Seasonal ups and downs
 - Bright
 - Suddenly rises
 - Moves forward
- 5.10 Message Composition: Selecting Words** As you rewrite these sentences, replace the clichés with fresh, personal expressions:
- Being a jack-of-all-trades, Dave worked well in his new general manager job.
 - Moving Leslie into the accounting department, where she was literally a fish out of water, was like putting a square peg into a round hole, if you get my drift.
 - I knew she was at death's door, but I thought the doctor would pull her through.
 - Movies aren't really my cup of tea; as far as I am concerned, they can't hold a candle to a good book.
 - It's a dog-eat-dog world out there in the rat race of the asphalt jungle.
- 5.11 Message Composition: Selecting Words** Suggest short, simple words to replace each of the following:
- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| a. Inaugurate | i. Consummate |
| b. Terminate | j. Advise |
| c. Utilize | k. Alteration |
| d. Anticipate | l. Forwarded |
| e. Assistance | m. Fabricate |
| f. Endeavor | n. Nevertheless |
| g. Ascertain | o. Substantial |
| h. Procure | |
- 5.12 Message Composition: Selecting Words** Write up-to-date, less-stuffy versions of these phrases; write *none* if you think there is no appropriate substitute:
- As per your instructions
 - Attached herewith
 - In lieu of
 - In reply I wish to state
 - Please be advised that
- 5.13 Message Composition: Creating Sentences.** Suppose that end-of-term frustrations have produced this e-mail message to Professor Anne Brewer from a student who believes he should have received a B in his accounting

class. If this message were recast into three or four clear sentences, the teacher might be more receptive to the student's argument. Rewrite the message to show how you would improve it:

I think that I was unfairly awarded a C in your accounting class this term, and I am asking you to change the grade to a B. It was a difficult term. I don't get any money from home, and I have to work mornings at the Pancake House (as a cook), so I had to rush to make your class, and those two times that I missed class were because they wouldn't let me off work because of special events at the Pancake House (unlike some other students who just take off when they choose). On the midterm examination, I originally got a 75 percent, but you said in class that there were two different ways to answer the third question and that you would change the grades of students who used the "optimal cost" method and had been counted off 6 points for doing this. I don't think that you took this into account, because I got 80 percent on the final, which is clearly a B. Anyway, whatever you decide, I just want to tell you that I really enjoyed this class, and I thank you for making accounting so interesting.

- 5.14 Message Composition: Creating Sentences** Rewrite each sentence so that it is active rather than passive:
- The raw data are entered into the customer relationship management system by the sales representative each Friday.
 - High profits are publicized by management.
 - The policies announced in the directive were implemented by the staff.
 - Our computers are serviced by the Santee Company.
 - The employees were represented by Janet Hogan.
- 5.15 Message Composition: Writing Paragraphs** In the following paragraph, identify the topic sentence and the related sentences (those that support the idea of the topic sentence):

Sync in a snap with Auto-Sync. By default, iTunes automatically copies your entire music library to iPod and deletes songs on iPod that are not listed in iTunes. Or you can use Playlist Sync and select the playlists you want to sync with your iPod. If you have more songs in your iTunes library than you can fit on your iPod, let iTunes create a playlist to fill your iPod, or just update your iPod by dragging over individual songs.²²

Now add a topic sentence to this paragraph:

Our analysis of the customer experience should start before golfers even drive through the front gate here at Glencoe Meadows; it should start when they phone in or log onto our website to reserve tee times. When they do arrive, the first few stages in the process are also vital: the condition of the grounds leading up to the club house, the reception they receive when they drop off their clubs, and the ease of parking. From that point, how well are we doing with check-in at the

pro shop, openings at the driving range, and timely scheduling at the first tee? Then there's everything associated with playing the course itself and returning to the club house at the end of the round.

- 5.16 Teamwork** Working with four other students, divide the following five topics among yourselves and each write one paragraph on his or her selected topic. Be sure each student uses a different technique when writing his or her paragraph: One student should use the illustration technique, one the comparison or contrast technique, one a discussion of cause and effect, one the classification technique, and one a discussion of problem and solution. Then exchange paragraphs within the team and pick out the main idea and general purpose of the paragraph one of your teammates wrote. Was everyone able to correctly identify the main idea and purpose? If not, suggest how the paragraph could be rewritten for clarity.
- Types of digital cameras (or dogs or automobiles) available for sale
 - Advantages and disadvantages of eating at fast-food restaurants
 - Finding that first full-time job
 - Good qualities of my car (or house, or apartment, or neighborhood)
 - How to make a dessert recipe (or barbecue a steak or make coffee)
- 5.17 Internet** Visit the Security and Exchange Commission's (SEC) plain-English website at www.sec.gov, click on "Online Publications," and review the online handbook. In one or two sentences, summarize what the SEC means by the phrase "plain English." Now read the SEC's online advice about how to invest in mutual funds. Does this document follow the SEC's plain-English guidelines? Can you suggest any improvements to organization, words, sentences, or paragraphs?
- 5.18 Message Organization: Transitional Elements** Add transitional elements to the following sentences to improve the flow of ideas. (Note: You may need to eliminate or add some words to smooth out your sentences.)
- Steve Case saw infinite possibilities in online business. Steve Case was determined to turn his vision into reality. The techies scoffed at his strategy of building a simple Internet service for ordinary people. Case doggedly pursued his dream. He analyzed other online services. He assessed the needs of his customers. He responded to their desires for an easier way to access information over the Internet. In 1992, Steve Case named his company America Online (AOL). Critics predicted the company's demise. By the end of the century, AOL was a profitable powerhouse. An ill-fated merger with Time Warner was a financial disaster and led to Case's ouster from the company.
 - Facing some of the toughest competitors in the world, Harley-Davidson had to make some changes. The company introduced new products. Harley's management team set out to rebuild the company's production process. New products were coming to

market and the company was turning a profit. Harley's quality standards were not on par with those of its foreign competitors. Harley's costs were still among the highest in the industry. Harley made a U-turn and restructured the company's organizational structure. Harley's efforts have paid off.

- Whether you're indulging in a doughnut in New York or California, Krispy Kreme wants you to enjoy the same delicious taste with every bite. The company maintains consistent product quality by carefully controlling every step of the production process. Krispy Kreme tests all raw ingredients against established quality standards. Every delivery of wheat flour is sampled and measured for its moisture content and protein levels. Krispy Kreme blends the ingredients. Krispy Kreme tests the doughnut mix for quality. Krispy Kreme delivers the mix to its stores. Financial critics are not as kind to the company as food critics have been. Allegations of improper financial reporting have left the company's future in doubt.
- 5.19 Ethical Choices** Under what circumstances would you consider the use of terms that are high in connotative meaning to be ethical? When would you consider it to be unethical? Explain your reasoning.

Expand Your Knowledge

Exploring the Best of the Web

Compose a Better Business Message

owl.english.purdue.edu

At Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL), you'll find tools to help you improve your business messages. For advice on composing written messages, for help with grammar, and for referrals to other information sources, you'd be wise to visit this site. Purdue's OWL offers online services and an introduction to Internet search tools. You can also download a variety of handouts on writing skills. Check out the resources at the OWL homepage, then answer the following questions:

- Explain why positive wording in a message is more effective than negative wording. Why should you be concerned about the position of good news or bad news in your written message?
- What six factors of tone should you consider when conveying your message to your audience?
- What points should you include in the close of your business message? Why?

Surfing Your Way to Career Success

Bovée and Thill's Business Communication Resources offers links to hundreds of online resources that can help you with this course, your other college courses, and your career. Visit www.buscomm-resources.com, then click on "Business Communication Web Directory." The "Working with Words" section connects you to a variety of websites and articles on abstract versus concrete words, abusive words, bias-free writing, euphemisms, obsolete language, plain English, and profane words. Identify three websites from this section that could be useful in your business career. For each site, write a two-sentence summary of what the site offers and how it could help you launch and build your career.

Learn Interactively

Interactive Study Guide

Visit www.prenhall.com/bovee, then locate your book and click on its “Companion Website” link. Select Chapter 5 to take advantage of the interactive “Chapter Quiz” to test your knowledge of chapter concepts. Receive instant feedback on whether you need additional studying. Also, visit the “Study Hall,” where you’ll find an abundance of valuable resources that will help you succeed in this course.

Peak Performance Grammar and Mechanics

If your instructor has required the use of “Peak Performance Grammar and Mechanics,” either in your online course or on CD,

you can continue to improve your skill with adjectives and adverbs by using the “Peak Performance Grammar and Mechanics” module. Click on “Grammar Basics,” and then click “Adjectives and Adverbs.” Take the Pretest to determine whether you have any weak areas. Then review those areas in the Refresher Course. Take the Follow-Up Test to check your grasp of adjectives and adverbs. For an extra challenge or advanced practice, take the Advanced Test. Finally, for additional reinforcement in adjectives and adverbs, visit the Companion Website, click on any chapter, then click on “Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage.”