

Part II

Applying the Three-Step Writing Process

CHAPTER 4

Planning Business Messages

CHAPTER 5

Writing Business Messages

CHAPTER 6

Completing Business Messages

Chapter 4

Planning Business Messages

Learning Objectives

AFTER STUDYING THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

- 1 Describe the three-step writing process
- 2 Explain why it's important to define your purpose carefully, and list four questions that can help you test that purpose
- 3 Justify the importance of analyzing your audience, then list six ways of developing an audience profile
- 4 Identify five ways to satisfy your audience's information needs
- 5 List the factors to consider when choosing the most appropriate channel and medium for your message
- 6 Discuss six ways you can establish a good relationship with your audience

Because of permissions issues, some material (e.g., photographs) has been removed from this chapter, though reference to it may occur in the text. The omitted content was intentionally deleted and is not needed to meet the University's requirements for this course.

On the Job:

COMMUNICATING AT HOME DEPOT

DESIGNING A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

Whether you need a few tips on installing curtain rods or some expert guidance on kitchen remodeling, Home Depot wants to lend a helping hand. Co-founders Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank worked hard to create a retail culture that encourages homeowners to tackle their own home improvement and repair projects without hiring contractors. And now, says CEO Robert Nardelli, "The baby boomers are moving from do-it-yourself to do-it-for-me," so the company is

beginning to reorganize to better serve the needs of professional contractors. With more than 1,500 stores throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Puerto Rico, Home Depot's future success centers on the company's ability to communicate effectively with employees, customers, and suppliers.

To keep operations running smoothly, Nardelli and Home Depot managers need to establish good working relationships with all three audiences. They must find out what each audience needs to know, and they must determine the right way to communicate that information. For example, before Home Depot stores can stock a new product, the company must analyze the needs of its audiences and plan appropriate messages for each one. Management must assess customer demand, educate employees about product use, and seek vendors that can deliver the right amount of merchandise in a timely manner.

Planning effective messages wasn't as difficult when Marcus and Blank opened their first four stores in Atlanta. Working in the stores each day, they personally trained every employee, helped customers find the right tools and supplies for their projects, and dealt directly with every supplier. But opening a new store every 43 hours means that Nardelli can no longer depend on oral messages to communicate with the company's various audiences. Establishing relationships with 200,000 employees, 25,000 suppliers, and millions of customers has complicated matters. Plus, adapting messages to serve the needs of

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As the world's largest home improvement retailer, Home Depot keeps its operations running smoothly by carefully planning its communications and adapting its messages to meet the needs of its customers, suppliers, and employees.

each Home Depot audience requires careful planning.

For instance, the company uses a variety of media to educate their customers about various repair techniques. Management invites customers to attend small-group, in-store meetings, known as "how-to clinics," where live presenters demonstrate repair techniques and product installations. The company also distributes free product literature, installation instructions, and informational brochures throughout

its stores, in addition to offering a toll-free customer service number staffed by home improvement experts and company managers who are available to answer questions and handle customer complaints immediately. Customers can also review how-to articles, either in Home Depot's magazine, *Weekend*, or on a Home Depot CD-ROM. Home Depot's television program, *House Smart*, is a regular feature on the Discovery Channel, showing viewers how to handle home improvement projects and problems.

Nardelli and Home Depot use a different communication approach with the North American suppliers, who provide 40,000 to 50,000 kinds of building materials, home improvement supplies, and lawn and garden products. Twice each year, the company sponsors weeklong vendor conferences, holding the events in large arenas throughout the country. During these conferences, managers interact in small groups to become better acquainted with new suppliers and to learn about new product offerings from current suppliers. They also make presentations to large audiences, informing suppliers about which products customers want, which ones aren't selling, and which need to be changed or dropped.

Regardless of how Home Depot communicates with customers and suppliers, the company understands that each channel and medium has its advantages and disadvantages. The important thing is to find out what the audience needs to know and then select the best way to deliver that information.¹

www.homedepot.com

UNDERSTANDING THE THREE-STEP WRITING PROCESS

Like Home Depot's managers, you'll face a variety of communication assignments in your career, both oral and written. Some of your tasks will be routine, requiring little more than jotting down a few sentences on paper or keyboarding a brief e-mail message; others will be more complex, requiring reflection, research, and careful document preparation. Because your audience is exposed to an increasing number of business messages each day, your messages must be livelier, easier to read, more concise, and more interesting than ever before.

Of course, making your business messages interesting doesn't mean using the dramatic techniques of creative writing. Your purpose is not to dazzle your readers with your extensive knowledge or powerful vocabulary. Instead, your messages must be

To compete for attention, business messages must be purposeful, audience-centered, and concise.

- **Purposeful.** Business messages provide information, solve a problem, or request the resources necessary to accomplish a goal. Every message you prepare should have a specific purpose.
- **Audience-centered.** Business messages help audiences understand an issue, ask them to collaborate on accomplishing a goal, or persuade them to take some action. So every message you prepare must consider the audience's background, point of view, and needs.
- **Concise.** Business messages respect everyone's time by presenting information clearly and efficiently. Every message you prepare should be as short as it can be without detracting from the subject.

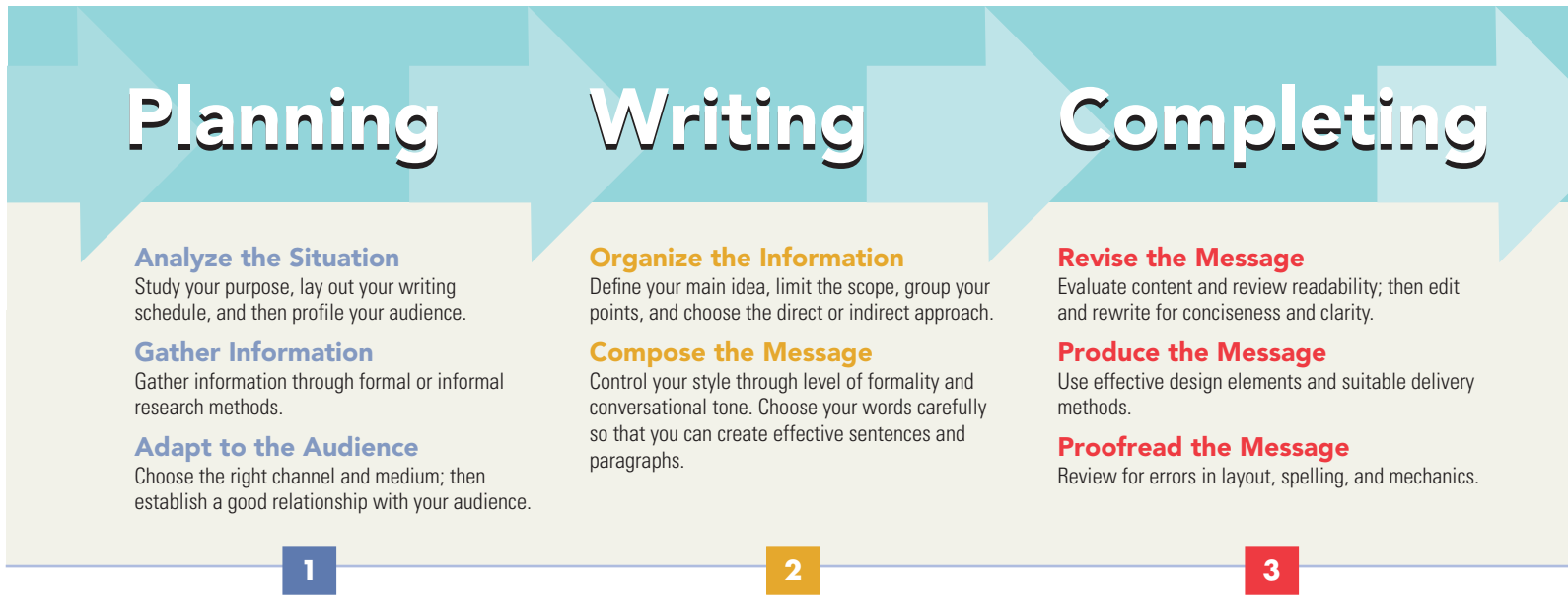
The goal of effective business writing is to express your ideas rather than to impress your audience. One of the best ways to do so is to follow a systematic writing process.

What Is the Three-Step Writing Process?

The specific actions you take to write business messages will vary with each situation, audience, and purpose. However, following a process of generalized steps will help you write more effective messages. As Figure 4–1 shows, this **writing process** may be viewed as comprising three simple steps: (1) planning, (2) writing, and (3) completing your business messages.²

The writing process has three steps.

- **Planning your message.** The first stage is to think about the fundamentals of your message. Study your purpose to make sure your reasons for communicating are clear and necessary. Schedule enough time to complete all three steps of the writing process. Analyze audience members so that you can tailor your message to their needs, and then gather the information that will inform, persuade, or motivate them. Don't forget to adapt your message: Select the best channel and medium and establish a good audience relationship. Planning messages is the focus of this chapter.
- **Writing your message.** Once you've planned your message, organize your information and begin composing your first draft. This is the stage when you commit your thoughts to words, create sentences and paragraphs, and select illustrations and details to support your main idea. Writing business messages is discussed in Chapter 5.
- **Completing your message.** After writing your first draft, step back to review the content and organization for overall style, structure, and readability. Revise and rewrite until your message comes across clearly and effectively; then edit your message for details such as grammar, punctuation, and format. Next, produce your message, putting it into the form that your audience will receive. Finally, proof the final draft for typos, spelling errors, and other mechanical problems. Completing business messages is discussed in Chapter 6.

**FIGURE 4-1**

The Three-Step Writing Process

How Does the Three-Step Writing Process Work?

Because so many of today's business messages are composed under pressure and on a schedule that is anything but realistic, allocating your time among these three steps can be a challenge. In some cases, your audience may expect you to get your message out in record time—sometimes only minutes after speaking with a client or attending a meeting. But whether you have 30 minutes or two days, try to give yourself enough time to plan, write, and complete your message.

As a general rule, try using roughly half your time for planning—for deciding on your purpose, getting to know your audience, and immersing yourself in your subject matter. Use less than a quarter of your time for writing your document. Then use more than a quarter of your time for completing the project (so that you don't neglect important final steps such as revising and proofing).³

Home Depot's managers understand that there is no right or best way to write all business messages. As you work through the writing process presented in this chapter and Chapters 5 and 6, try to view it not as a list of how-to directives but as a way to understand the various tasks involved in effective business writing.⁴ The three-step process will help you avoid the risky "rush in and start writing" routine.

Remember that the writing process is flexible. Effective communicators may not necessarily complete the steps in 1–2–3 order. Some jump back and forth from one step to another; some compose quickly and then revise; others revise as they go along. However, to communicate effectively, you must ultimately complete all three steps.

When writing a business message, schedule enough time to complete all three steps.

Effective writers complete all three steps, regardless of order.

ANALYZING THE SITUATION

When planning a business message, the first things you need to think about are your purpose, your schedule, and your audience. For a business message to be effective, its purpose and its audience must complement each other.

Your general purpose may be to inform, to persuade, or to collaborate.

To determine the specific purpose, think of how the audience's ideas or behavior should be affected by the message.

Defer a message, or do not send it at all, if it isn't worth pursuing.

Ask yourself some key questions about your audience:

- Who are they?
- What is their probable reaction to your message?
- How much do they already know about the subject?
- What is their relationship to you?

Define Your Purpose

All business messages have a **general purpose**: to inform, to persuade, or to collaborate with your audience. This overall purpose determines both the amount of audience participation you need and the amount of control you have over your message. To inform your audience, you need little interaction. Audience members absorb the information and accept or reject it, but they don't contribute to message content; you control the message. To persuade your audience, you require a moderate amount of participation, and you need to retain a moderate amount of message control. Finally, to collaborate with audience members, you need maximum participation. Your control of the message is minimal because you must adjust to new input and unexpected reactions.

Business messages also have a **specific purpose**. That purpose may be straightforward (such as placing an order or communicating survey responses), or it may be more encompassing (such as convincing management to hire more part-time employees during the holiday season). To help you define the specific purpose of your message, ask yourself what you hope to accomplish with your message and what your audience should do or think after receiving your message. For instance, is your goal simply to update your audience on an event, or do you want them to take immediate action? State your specific purpose as precisely as possible, even identifying which audience members should respond.

You must also consider whether your purpose is worth pursuing at this time. Too many business messages serve no practical purpose, and writing useless memos can destroy your credibility. So if you suspect that your ideas will have little impact, wait until you have a more practical purpose. To help you decide whether to proceed, ask yourself four questions:

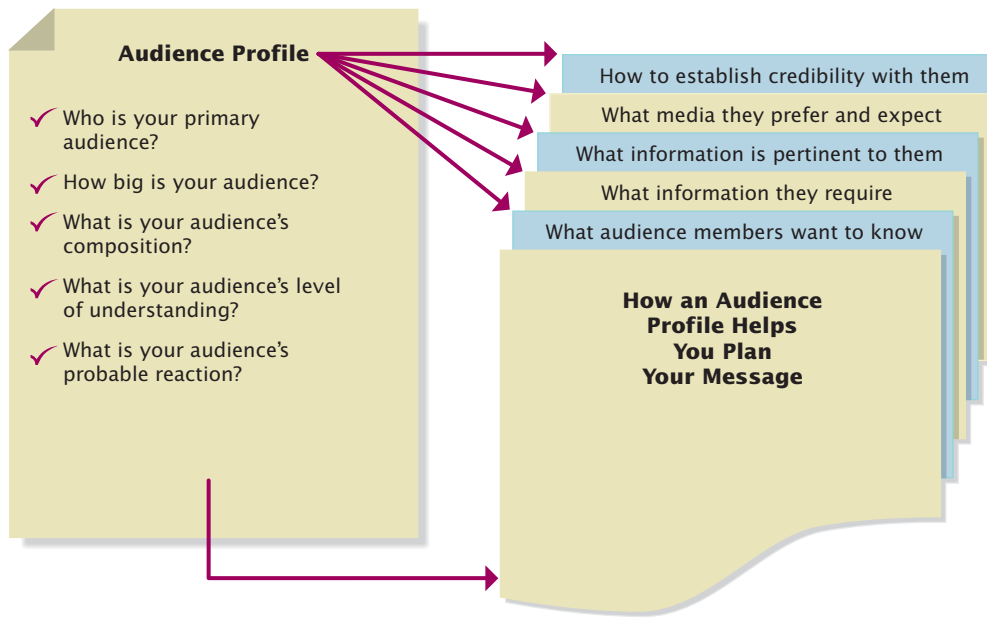
- **Is your purpose realistic?** If your purpose involves a radical shift in action or attitude, go slowly. Consider proposing the first step and using your message as the beginning of a learning process.
- **Is this the right time?** If an organization is undergoing changes of some sort, you may want to defer your message until things stabilize and people can concentrate on your ideas.
- **Is the right person delivering your message?** Even though you may have done all the work, achieving your objective is more important than taking the credit. You may want to play a supporting role in delivering your message if, for example, your boss's higher status could get better results.
- **Is your purpose acceptable to your organization?** If you receive an abusive letter that unfairly attacks your company, you might feel like firing back an angry reply. But your supervisors might prefer that you regain the customer's goodwill. Your response must reflect the organization's priorities.

Once you are satisfied that you have a legitimate purpose in communicating, remember to schedule your time so that you can comfortably complete all three steps in the writing process. Planning your message should take approximately half the time you have available. Now, take a closer look at your intended audience.

Develop an Audience Profile

Who are your audience members? What are their attitudes? What do they need to know? And why should they care about your message? The answers to such questions will indicate which material you'll need to cover and how to cover it.

If you're communicating with someone you know well, perhaps your boss or a co-worker, audience analysis is relatively easy. You can predict this person's reaction

**FIGURE 4-2**

Audience Analysis Helps You Plan Your Message

pretty well, without a lot of research. On the other hand, your audience could be made up of strangers—customers or suppliers you’ve never met, a new boss, or new employees. So just like Home Depot’s Robert Nardelli, you’ll have to learn about the members of your audience before you can adjust your message to their needs (see Figure 4-2).

- **Identify the primary audience.** If you can reach the decision makers or opinion molders in your audience, other audience members will fall into place. Key people often have the most organizational clout, but occasionally a person of relatively low status may have influence in one or two particular areas.
- **Determine audience size.** A report for wide distribution requires a more formal style, organization, and format than one directed to three or four people in your department. Also, be sure to respond to the particular concerns of key individuals. The head of marketing would need different facts than the head of production or finance would need.
- **Determine audience composition.** Look for common denominators that tie audience members together across differences in culture, education, status, or attitude. Include evidence that touches on everyone’s area of interest. To be understood across cultural barriers, consider how audience members think and learn, as well as what style they expect.⁵
- **Gauge your audience’s level of understanding.** If audience members share your general background, they’ll understand your material without difficulty. If not, you must educate them. But deciding how much information to include can be a challenge. As a guideline, include only enough information to accomplish your objective. Other

Be sure your audience profile is thorough.

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Nicola Shirley uses her Jamaican background and West Indian cooking talent to entice customers to eat at her restaurant or try her JaHut food products. But savory cooking is only one of her strengths. When it comes to communicating with customers, suppliers, or investors, Shirley gets results by making sure her message has a clear purpose and addresses her audience’s information needs.

material is irrelevant and must be eliminated; otherwise it will overwhelm your audience and divert attention from the important points. If audience members have varying levels of understanding, gear your coverage to your primary audience (the key decision makers).

- **Consider your audience's expectations and preferences.** Will members of your audience expect complete details, or will a summary of the main points suffice? Do they want an e-mail or will they expect a formal memo? Should the memo be a brief 1- to 3-page message or a comprehensive 10- to 15-page report?
- **Estimate your audience's probable reaction.** Chapter 5 discusses how audience reaction affects message organization. If you expect a favorable response, you can state conclusions and recommendations up front and offer minimal supporting evidence. If you expect skepticism, you can introduce conclusions gradually, with more proof. By anticipating the primary audience's response to certain points, you can include evidence to address those issues.

GATHERING INFORMATION

The process of gathering information can be formal or informal.

Informal methods of gathering information will probably be sufficient for most brief business messages.

Before you compose your message, you'll most likely need to gather some information to communicate to your audience. When writing long, formal reports, you'll conduct formal research to locate and analyze all the information relevant to your purpose and your audience. Formal techniques for finding, evaluating, and processing information are discussed in Chapter 10. Other kinds of business messages, however, require less formal information gathering.

Whether you're preparing for an informational interview with your supervisor, writing an e-mail message to a close colleague, or gathering opinions for an article to appear in your organization's monthly newsletter, you can gather information to satisfy your audience's needs by using these informal methods:

- **Considering others' viewpoints.** You might put yourself in others' positions to consider what they might be thinking, feeling, or planning.
- **Reading reports and other company documents.** Your company's files may be a rich source of the information you need for a particular memo or e-mail message. Consider company annual reports, financial statements, news releases, memos, marketing reports, and customer surveys for helpful information.
- **Chatting with supervisors, colleagues, or customers.** Fellow workers and customers may have information you need, or they may know what your audience will be interested in. Conducting telephone or personal interviews is a convenient way to gather information.
- **Asking your audience for input.** If you're unsure of what audience members need from your message, ask them—whether through casual conversation (face-to-face or over the phone), informal surveys, or unofficial interviews.

A good message answers all audience questions. If you don't discover what audience members need to know, you're likely to serve them fruit punch and peanut butter when they're expecting champagne and

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Gathering information from co-workers in conversations or informal interviews helps Levi Strauss editors determine how much detail about a project their audience expects in the company newsletter.

caviar. The key to satisfying your audience's information needs is finding out what questions your audience has and then providing answers that are thorough, accurate, ethical, and pertinent.

Find Out Exactly What Your Audience Needs to Know

In many cases your audience's information needs are readily apparent; for example, a consumer may send you a letter asking a specific question. In other cases, your audience may not be particularly good at telling you what's needed. When your audience makes a vague request, try restating the request in more specific terms. If your boss says, "Find out everything you can about Polaroid," you might respond, "You want me to track down their market position by product line and get sales and profit figures by division for the past five years, right?" Another way to handle a vague request is to get a fix on its priority. You might ask, "Should I drop everything else and devote myself to this for the next week?" Asking a question or two forces the person to think through the request and define more precisely what is required.

Also, try to think of information needs that your audience may not even be aware of. Suppose your company has just hired a new employee from out of town, and you've been assigned to coordinate this person's relocation. At a minimum, you would write a welcoming letter describing your company's procedures for relocating employees. With a little extra thought, however, you might include some information about the city: perhaps a guide to residential areas, a map or two, brochures about cultural activities, or information on schools and transportation facilities. In some cases, you may be able to tell your audience something they consider important but wouldn't have thought to ask. Although adding information of this sort lengthens your message, doing so creates goodwill.

By restating a vague request in more specific terms, you can get the requester to define his or her needs more precisely.

Include any additional information that might be helpful, even though the requester didn't specifically ask for it.

Provide All Required Information

Once you've defined your audience's information needs, be sure you satisfy those needs completely. One good way to test the thoroughness of your message is to use the **journalistic approach**: Check to see whether your message answers *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*. Many messages fail to pass the test—such as this letter requesting information from a large hotel:

Dear Ms. Hill:

I just got back from a great vacation in Hawaii. However, this morning I discovered that my favorite black leather shoes are missing. Since I wore them in Hawaii, I assume I left them at the Hawaii Sands Hotel. Please check the items in your "lost and found" and let me know whether you have the missing shoes.

The letter fails to tell Hill everything she needs to know. The *what* could be improved by a detailed description of the missing shoes (size, brand, distinguishable style or trim). Hill doesn't know *when* the writer stayed at the Hawaii Sands, *where* (in what room), or *how* to return the shoes. Hill will have to write or call the writer to get the missing details, and the inconvenience may be just enough to prevent her from complying with the request.

Test the completeness of your document by making sure it answers all the important questions: *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.

Be Sure the Information Is Accurate

There's no point in answering all your audience's questions if the answers are wrong. Your organization is legally bound by any promises you make, so be sure your company is able to follow through. Whether you're promising delivery by a given date or

Be certain that the information you provide is accurate and that the commitments you make can be kept.

agreeing to purchase an item, if you have any doubt about the organization's ability or willingness to back up your promises, check with the appropriate people *before* you make the commitment.

You can minimize mistakes by double-checking everything you write or say. If you are using outside sources, ask yourself whether they are current and reliable. If your sources are international, remember that various cultures can view accuracy differently. A German bank may insist on balancing the books to the last penny, whereas an Italian bank may be more lenient.⁶ Be sure to review any mathematical or financial calculations. Check all dates and schedules, and examine your own assumptions and conclusions to be certain they are valid.

Be Sure the Information Is Ethical

Honest mistakes are certainly possible. You may sincerely believe that you have answered someone's questions correctly, and then later realize that your information was incorrect. If that happens, the most ethical course of action is to contact the person immediately and correct the error. Most people will respect you for your honesty.

Messages can be unethical simply because information is omitted. Of course, as a business professional, you may have legal or other sound business reasons for not including every detail about every matter. So just how much detail should you include? Even though most people don't want to be buried in an avalanche of paperwork, include enough detail to avoid misleading your audience. If you're unsure about how much information your audience needs, offer as much as you believe best fits your definition of complete, then offer to provide more upon request.

Good ethics will help you determine how much detail to include in your message.

Be Sure the Information Is Pertinent


When deciding how to respond to your audience's information needs, remember that some points will be of greater interest and importance than others. If you're summarizing a recent conversation you had with one of your company's oldest and best customers, the emphasis you give each point of the conversation will depend on your audience's concerns. The head of engineering might be most interested in the customer's reaction to your product's new design features. The shipping manager might be most concerned about the customer's comments on recent delivery schedules. In other words, be careful to emphasize the points that will have the most impact on your audience.

If you don't know your audience, or if you're communicating with a large group of people, use your common sense to identify points of particular interest. Audience factors such as age, job, location, income, and education can give you a clue. If you were trying to sell memberships in the Book-of-the-Month Club, you would adjust your message for various types of people. Everyone would need to know the same facts about membership, but economy might be important to college students or retired people, and convenience might attract sales reps or homemakers. As Figure 4–3 shows, your main goal is to tell audience members what they need to know.

Try to figure out what points will especially interest your audience; then give those points the most attention.

ADAPTING YOUR MESSAGE TO YOUR AUDIENCE

By now you know why you're writing, you know the audience you're writing to, and you have most of the information you need. But you're not quite ready to actually begin writing your message. First, figure out how to tailor it to your audience and your



March 5, 2004

Dear Neighbors:

The Hot Light is on in Baltimore! Are you ready for a delicious, melt-in-your-mouth taste treat like no other in the world? Come to our new store on Bel Air Road and treat yourself to some Krispy Kreme Doughnuts.


The hottest sign of all times is our neon "Hot Doughnuts Now" sign, which tells you that our Original Glazed Yeast-Raised doughnuts are coming out "Right at This Moment." When you see the Hot Light, come on in and get some hot ones!

Of course, you'll find fresh doughnuts of all varieties at all other times of the day and night. In addition to our original glazed, you can enjoy mouth-watering delights such as

Chocolate Iced	Chocolate Iced with Sprinkles	Traditional Cake
Maple Iced	Chocolate Iced Crème Filled	Chocolate Iced Cake
Raspberry Filled	Chocolate Iced Custard Filled	Powdered Cake
Lemon Filled	Powdered Blueberry Filled	Glazed Blueberry
Glazed Cruller	Cinnamon Apple Filled	Glazed Devil's Food
Glazed Crème Filled	Glazed Sour Cream	Chocolate Iced Cruller
	Cinnamon Bun	

Krispy Kreme Doughnuts has been making taste treats of the highest quality since 1937, and we promise to continue making the best-tasting, highest-quality products because that's what you expect and deserve, and that's what we expect of ourselves.

Sincerely,



P.S. Besides their taste, quality, and simplicity, Krispy Kreme doughnuts are an affordable treat. Share some with your friends!

Krispy Kreme Doughnut Corporation
Post Office Box 85, Winston-Salem, NC 27102, Tel (336) 725-2981, Fax (336) 733-3791, www.krispykreme.com

Emphasizes audience focus by using the pronoun "you"

Informs potential customers of all the products they might be interested in trying

Closes with audience focus by emphasizing "that's what you expect and deserve"

Includes no title in the typed name

FIGURE 4-3

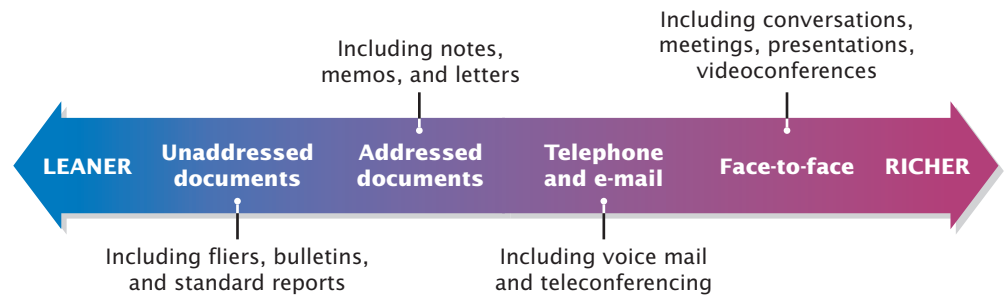
Effective Audience-Centered Letter

purpose. To adapt your message, select a channel and medium appropriate to audience members, and then plan out how you'll establish a good relationship with them.

Select the Appropriate Channel and Medium

Selecting the best channel and medium for your message can make the difference between effective and ineffective communication.⁷ A **communication channel** can be either oral or written. Each channel includes specific media. The oral channel includes media such as telephone conversations, face-to-face exchanges, and video-taped addresses. The written channel includes media such as letters, memos, e-mail messages, and reports. When selecting a channel and medium, you must consider how your choice will affect the style, tone, and impact of your message. To do so, you need to consider a number of important factors.

Different types of messages require different communication channels and media.

FIGURE 4–4
Media Richness

Factors to consider when choosing a channel and medium include the following:

- Media richness
- Formality
- Confidentiality
- Emotional commitment
- Feedback
- Urgency
- Cost
- Audience expectations

The first is **media richness**, the value of a medium in a given communication situation. Richness is determined by a medium's ability to

- Convey a message by means of more than one informational cue (visual, verbal, vocal)
- Facilitate feedback
- Establish personal focus

Face-to-face communication is the richest medium because it is personal, it provides immediate verbal and nonverbal feedback, and it conveys the emotion behind the message. But it's also one of the most restrictive media because you and your audience must be in the same place at the same time.⁸ At the other end of the continuum are unaddressed documents such as fliers (see Figure 4–4). Choose the richest media for nonroutine messages intended to extend and humanize your presence throughout the organization, communicate your caring to employees, and gain employee commitment to organizational goals. Use leaner media to communicate more routine messages such as those conveying day-to-day information. Home Depot uses a rich medium (satellite video broadcasts) to educate employees and to introduce new hires to the company's culture. The company educates customers in specific home improvement skills by using a leaner medium (how-to articles in its magazine, *Weekend*).

Other factors are also important to consider when selecting channel and medium. If you want to emphasize the formality of your message, use a more formal medium, such as a memo, letter, or formal presentation. If you want to emphasize the confidentiality of your message, use voice mail rather than a fax, send a letter rather than a memo, or address the matter in a private conversation rather than during a meeting. If you want to instill an emotional commitment to corporate values, consider a visual medium (a speech, videotape, or videoconference). If you require immediate feedback, face-to-face conversation is your best choice.⁹ However, if you'll need a written record, you'll probably want to write a memo or a letter.

Time is an important factor to consider when selecting a medium. If your message is urgent, you'll probably choose the phone, fax, or next-day mail. You'll also need to consider cost. For instance, you wouldn't think twice about telephoning an important customer overseas if you just discovered your company had erroneously sent the customer the wrong shipment, but you'd probably choose to fax or e-mail a routine order acknowledgment to your customer in Australia.

Finally, before choosing a channel and medium, consider what your audience expects or prefers.¹⁰ What would you think if your college tried to deliver your diploma by fax? It would seem a bit strange, wouldn't it? You'd expect the college to hand it to you at graduation or mail it to you. In addition, various cultures tend to favor one channel over another. For example, the United States, Canada, and Germany emphasize written messages, whereas Japan emphasizes oral messages—perhaps because its high-context culture carries so much of the message in nonverbal cues and implied meaning.¹¹

CHOOSING THE MOST APPROPRIATE CHANNEL AND MEDIUM**Table 4–1****Use the Written Channel When**

- You need no immediate feedback
- Your message is detailed, complex, or requires careful planning
- You need a permanent, verifiable record
- Your audience is large and geographically dispersed
- You want to minimize the distortion that can occur when messages pass orally from person to person
- Immediate interaction with the audience is either unimportant or undesirable
- Your message has no emotional component

Use the Oral Channel When

- You want immediate feedback from the audience
- Your message is relatively straightforward and easy to accept
- You need no permanent record
- You can assemble your audience conveniently and economically
- You want to encourage interaction to solve a problem or reach a group decision
- You want to read the audience's body language or hear the tone of their response
- Your message has an emotional component

Use Electronic Forms When

- You need speed
- You're physically separated from your audience
- Time zones differ
- You must reach a dispersed audience personally

From media richness to audience preference—all of these factors are important to consider before choosing a channel and medium. Every medium has limitations that filter out parts of your message, and every medium influences your audience's perception of your intentions. Consider carefully and do your best to match your selection to your audience and your purpose, whether that choice is an oral or a written medium.

Oral Media Oral media traditionally include face-to-face conversations, telephone calls, speeches, presentations, and meetings (see Table 4–1). In today's fast-paced world of technological solutions, oral media also include electronic media such as voice mail, audiotape and videotape, teleconferencing and videoconferencing, closed-circuit television, and many others. Your choice between a face-to-face conversation and a telephone call would depend on audience location, message importance, and your need for the sort of nonverbal feedback that only body language can reveal.

The chief advantage of oral communication is the opportunity it provides for immediate feedback. This is the channel to use when you want the audience to ask questions and make comments or when you're trying to reach a group decision. It's also the best channel if your message has an emotional component and you want to read the audience's body language or hear the tone of their response.¹² A major drawback of many of the media in the oral channel is the reduced ability to revise your message before your audience hears it. During telephone conversations, voice mail, meetings, and so on, you can't really delete a comment once you've said it out loud. Chapter 2 discusses meetings in detail, and Chapter 13 covers speeches and presentations in depth.

Before beginning to write, make sure your channel and medium match your audience and purpose.

In general, use an oral channel if your purpose is to collaborate with the audience.

A written channel increases the sender's control but eliminates the possibility of immediate feedback.

Use memos and e-mail messages for internal communication.

Use letters for external communication.

Letters, memos, and e-mail messages differ in format and formality.

Written Media Written messages take many forms, both traditional and electronic. At one end are the scribbled notes people use to jog their own memories; at the other are elaborate, formal reports that rival magazines in graphic quality. Regardless of the form, written messages have one big advantage: They let you plan and control the message. However, a serious drawback to written messages is that you miss out on the immediate feedback you would receive with many oral media. A written format is appropriate when the information is complex, when a permanent record is needed for future reference, when the audience is large and geographically dispersed, and when immediate interaction with the audience is either unimportant or undesirable. The most common written media are letters, memos, e-mail messages, instant messaging reports, and proposals, but this channel also includes faxing, computer conferencing (with groupware), and websites.

Letters, Memos, and E-Mail Messages You use memos and e-mail for the routine, day-to-day communication with people inside the organization. Such internal communication helps you do your job. It helps you and other employees develop a clear sense of the organization's mission, identify potential problems, and react quickly to ever-changing circumstances.

You use letters for communicating with outsiders. Letters not only convey a particular message but also perform an important public relations function. You may also use e-mail for external communication (1) in response to e-mail messages that you receive, (2) when the purpose of your message is informal, and (3) when your audience accepts e-mail as appropriate. External communication helps employees create a favorable impression of their company, plan for and respond to crises, and gather useful information (such as feedback from customers and other stakeholders).

Most letters, memos, and e-mail messages are relatively brief, generally less than two pages (often less than a page for e-mail). Letters are the most formal of the three. Memos are less formal, and e-mail messages are the least formal. For in-depth format information, see Appendix A: Format and Layout of Business Documents. But to distinguish between these three types of written documents, keep the following format differences in mind:

- **Letters.** Most letters appear on letterhead stationery (which includes a company's name and contact information). After the letterhead comes the date, followed by the inside address and the salutation (*Dear Mr. or Ms. Name*). Next is the message (often several paragraphs and sometimes running to a second page). After the message come the complimentary close (*Sincerely* or *Cordially*) and the signature block (space for the signature, followed by the sender's printed name and title).
- **Memos.** Less formal than letters, memos begin with a title (*Memo*, *Memorandum*, or *Interoffice Correspondence*) and use a *To*, *From*, *Date*, and *Subject* heading (for readers who have time only to skim messages). Memos have no salutation, discuss only one topic, use a conversational tone, and have no complimentary close or signature. Because of their open construction and delivery by interoffice mail or e-mail, they are less private than letters. However, to document all correspondence on a particular in-house issue, printed memos provide paper trails that e-mail messages do not.
- **E-mail messages.** Like memos, e-mail messages have a heading. Particulars depend on the software you use, but most programs include *To*, *From*, and *Subject* information, at minimum. Heading information is brief (the *To* and *From* lines sometimes show no names or titles, just e-mail addresses), and often includes information about copies and attachments. The software automatically inserts the date. After the salutation (optional but highly recommended) comes the message, followed by the complimentary close and the typed name of the sender. Contact information is sometimes included after the sender's name.

Chapters 7–9 discuss letters, memos, and e-mail messages in detail.

Reports and Proposals Reports and proposals are factual, objective documents that communicate information about some aspect of the business. They may be distributed to insiders or outsiders, depending on their purpose and subject. They come in many formats, including preprinted forms, electronic forms, letters, memos, and manuscripts. They can run from a few to several hundred pages, and they are generally more formal in tone than a typical business letter, memo, or e-mail. Chapters 10–12 discuss reports and proposals in detail.

Reports are generally longer and more formal than letters and memos, and they have more components.

When to Choose Electronic Media The availability of electronic media increases your communication options in both oral and written channels. The trick is to use the tool that does the best overall job in each situation. Choose an electronic medium when you need speed, when you're physically separated from your audience, when time zones differ, when you must reach a dispersed audience personally, and when you're unconcerned about confidentiality. Although no hard rules dictate which tool to use in each case, here are a few pointers that will help you determine when to select electronic over more traditional forms:¹³

In general, use electronic forms of oral and written communication for speed, to reach a widely dispersed audience personally, to overcome time zone barriers, and when confidentiality is not a concern.

- **Voice mail** can be used to replace short memos and phone calls that need no response. It is most effective for short, unambiguous messages. It solves time zone difficulties and reduces a substantial amount of interoffice paperwork.¹⁴ Voice mail is a powerful tool when you need to communicate your emotion or tone. It is especially useful for goodwill and other positive messages.
- **Teleconferencing** is an efficient alternative to a face-to-face meeting. Best for informational meetings, it is less effective for decision-making meetings and ineffective for negotiation. Teleconferencing discourages the “secondary” conversations that occur during meetings of more than four or five people. Although participants are better able to focus on a topic without such secondary conversations, they are prevented from sharing valuable information.
- **Videotape** is often effective for getting a motivational message out to a large number of people. By communicating nonverbal cues, it can strengthen the sender's image of sincerity and trustworthiness; however, it offers no opportunity for immediate feedback.
- **Computer conferencing** allows users to meet and collaborate in real time while viewing and sharing documents electronically. It offers democracy because more attention is focused on ideas than on who communicates them. But overemphasizing a message (to the neglect of the person communicating it) can threaten corporate culture, which needs a richer medium.
- **Faxing** can be used to overcome time zone barriers when a hard copy is required. It has all the characteristics of a written message, except that (1) it may lack the privacy of a letter, and (2) the message may appear less crisp—even less professional—depending on the quality of the copies output from the receiving machine.
- **E-mail** offers speed, low cost, increased access to other employees, portability, and convenience (not just overcoming time zone problems but carrying a message to many receivers at once). It's best for communicating brief, noncomplex information that is time sensitive, but its effectiveness depends on user skill (see Figure 4–5). Because the turnaround time can be quite fast, e-mail tends to be more conversational than traditional paper-based media.
- **Instant messaging (IM)** allows people to carry on real-time, one-on-one, and small-group text conversations. More versatile than a phone call and quicker than e-mail, IM is becoming a valuable business tool. You can send your boss a text message that is immediately displayed on her or his computer screen, and you can have your response within seconds. Similarly, co-workers in branch offices can use IM to

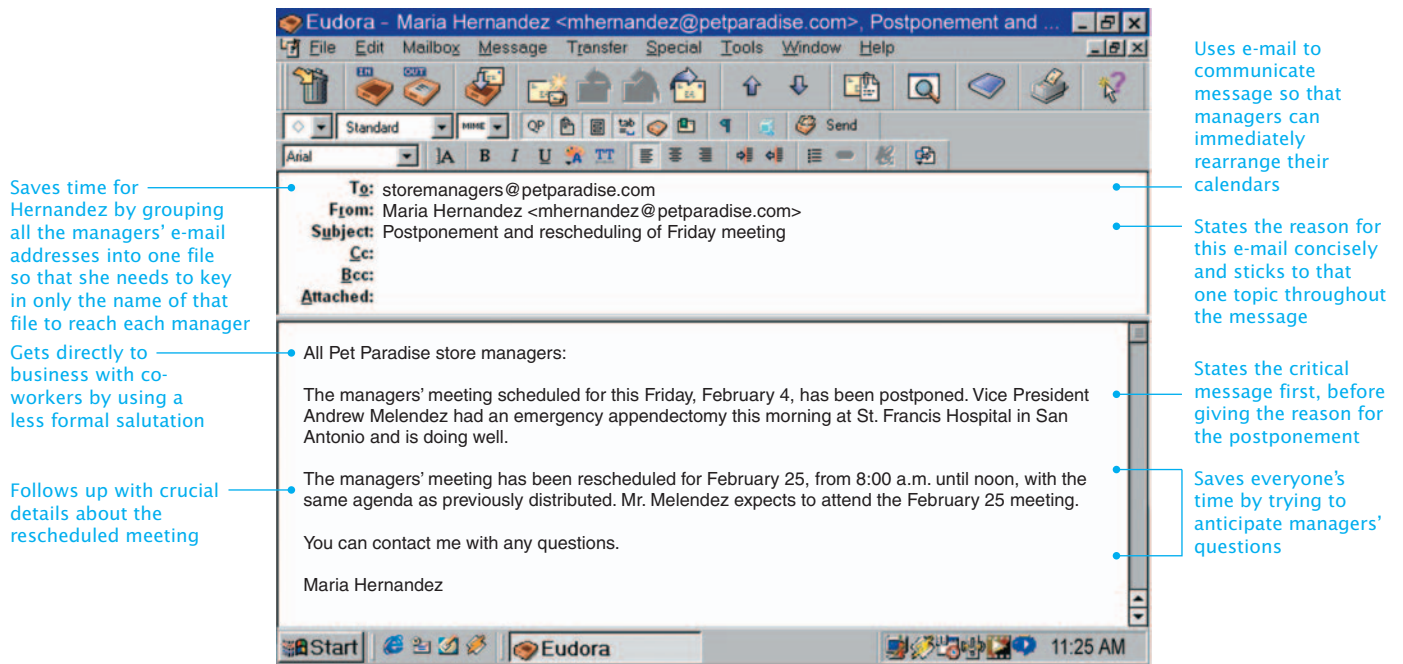


FIGURE 4-5
Effective E-Mail Message Conveying Time-Sensitive Material

exchange documents or hold a virtual meeting online in a private chat area. Because messages generated via instant messaging aren't recorded or saved, they don't clog the company's network system; however, they don't create a permanent record either.¹⁵

- **Websites** offer interactive communication through hyperlinks, allowing readers to absorb information nonsequentially; that is, readers take what they need and skip everything else. A website can tailor the same information for numerous readers by breaking up the information into linked pages. Writing for the web can be a specialized skill, as briefly discussed at the end of this chapter.

Electronic forms also have disadvantages:

- Tactless remarks causing tension
- Overuse leading to information overload
- Lack of privacy
- Reduced productivity

Even though electronic messages offer innumerable advantages, they aren't problem-free. Consider e-mail, for example. People sometimes include things in e-mail messages that they wouldn't dream of saying in person or typing in a document. So although e-mail's new openness can help companies get input from a wider variety of people, it can also create tension and interpersonal conflict. Furthermore, because e-mail is so cheap and easy to send, people tend to overuse it, distributing messages more widely than necessary and contributing to the hundreds of junk-mail messages that some executives receive every day. Overusing e-mail can also overload company networks, resulting in lost messages or even system crashes.

Another drawback is lack of privacy. Some people negate their own privacy by being careless about screening their electronic distribution lists and sending information to receivers who shouldn't have it or don't need it. Of course, even if your message goes only where you originally intended, any recipient can easily forward it to someone else. In addition, e-mail and voice mail can legally be monitored by employers, and both can be subpoenaed for court cases (see "Using the Power of Technology: Caution! E-Mail Can Bite").

Finally, employee productivity is constantly interrupted by instant messaging, e-mail, voice mail, conference calls, and faxes. Employees can also diminish their productivity by surfing the web and visiting non-business-related websites during working hours. In one report, 31 percent of the businesses surveyed cited financial losses from reduced employee productivity as a result of Internet misuse alone.¹⁶

USING THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY

Caution! E-Mail Can Bite

Gone are the days when memos were dictated, typed, revised, retyped, photocopied, and circulated by interoffice “snail” mail. Today, e-mail messages are created, sent, received, and forwarded in the blink of an eye and at the stroke of a key. Despite its benefits, this quick, efficient method of communication can cause a great deal of trouble for companies.

One of the greatest features—and dangers—of e-mail is that people tend to treat it far more informally than they do other forms of business communication. They think of e-mail as casual conversation and routinely make unguarded comments. Moreover, they are led to believe that “deleting” e-mail destroys it permanently. But that’s a dangerous misunderstanding of technology.

Even after you delete an e-mail message, it can still exist on the system’s hard drive and backup storage devices at both the sender’s and the recipient’s locations. Deleting files only signals the computer that the space required to store the message is no longer needed. The space is so marked, but the data that occupy it continue to exist until the computer overwrites the space with new data. Thus, deleted messages are recoverable—even though data recovery is an involved and expensive process—and they can be used as court evidence against you.

Embarrassing e-mail has played a big role in corporate battles. In the high-profile court battle between the U.S. Justice Department and Microsoft, for instance, e-mail emerged as the star witness. Other cases using e-mail as evidence include claims of sexual harassment, discrimination, employee productivity, information leaks, and more.

So how can companies guard against potential e-mail embarrassment and resulting litigation? Besides restricting the use of e-mail by employees, monitoring employees’ e-mail, developing company e-mail policies, and reprimanding or terminating offenders, they can train employees to treat e-mail as any other form of written communication. Perhaps one of the best ways to ensure that employees’ messages won’t come back to haunt the company is to teach employees that e-mail messages are at least as permanent as, if not more so than, letters and memos.

CAREER APPLICATIONS

1. Why do most people treat e-mail so casually? Explain in an e-mail message to your instructor.
2. What kinds of things should a company address in an e-mail policy? List and explain at least three items.

Still, the advantages of electronic media often outweigh the drawbacks, so businesses are selecting electronic forms over traditional ones more and more often (see the “Checklist: Observing E-Mail Etiquette”).

Establish a Good Relationship with Your Audience

Effective communicators do more than convey information. They make sure that they establish a good relationship with their audience. The first step is to think about who you are and who your audience is. Are you friends with common interests, or are you total strangers? Are you equal in status, experience, and education, or are you clearly unequal? Your answers to these questions will help you give the right impression in your message.

An important aspect of establishing a good relationship with your audience is to avoid trying to be someone you’re not. People can spot falseness very quickly, so just be yourself and be sincere. Home Depot’s managers will tell you that, as in any undertaking, a good relationship is based on respect and courtesy.

Some ways to establish good relationships in your business messages are to make use of the “you” attitude, emphasize the positive, establish your credibility, be polite, use bias-free language, and project the company’s image.

Use the “You” Attitude You are already becoming familiar with the audience-centered approach, trying to see a subject through your audience’s eyes. Now you want to project this approach in your messages by adopting a “**you**” attitude—that is, by speaking and writing in terms of your audience’s wishes, interests, hopes, and

To establish a good relationship, be yourself.

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

✓ CHECKLIST: Observing E-Mail Etiquette

Plan Your E-Mail Carefully

- ✓ Limit your purpose to sharing information such as goals, schedules, research, and company news—don't deliver tragic news or discipline via e-mail.
- ✓ Avoid personal messages at work.
- ✓ Follow the chain of command—don't abuse the convenience of e-mail by sending unnecessary messages straight to the top.
- ✓ Work offline to conserve network resources and cut the costs of Internet connect charges.

Respect Your Readers

- ✓ Send only necessary messages.
- ✓ Know who your audience is, who actually needs to hear what you have to say.
- ✓ Double-check addressees to include everyone necessary and no one else.
- ✓ Know your audience's culture before you begin composing.
- ✓ Use 24-hour military time in international e-mail (18:00 rather than 6:00 P.M.), and indicate the appropriate time zone.

- ✓ Respect your audience's schedule by making your e-mail worth reading and not sending jokes, chain letters, or derogatory comments.
- ✓ Don't send negative, insensitive, insulting, or critical e-mail: If you're upset about something or angry with someone, compose yourself before composing your e-mail.
- ✓ Don't use the *high priority* feature, unless your message is truly urgent.

Don't Let Incoming Mail Run Your Life

- ✓ Check your e-mail frequently, but don't become constantly distracted by overchecking it.
- ✓ Avoid checking e-mail while on vacation—everyone needs a little time away from the office now and again.
- ✓ Use appropriate filters to screen out unimportant or less-than-critical messages.
- ✓ Read e-mail in a last-in, first-out order; otherwise, you may respond to issues that have been resolved in later messages. The last e-mail may summarize all previous issues.

preferences. When you talk about the other person, you're talking about what most interests him or her.

Too many business messages have an "I" or "we" attitude, which make the writer sound selfish. The message loses the audience's interest by telling what the sender wants and then expecting the audience to go along with that desire. 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*:

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 the printer cartridges in three colors: black, blue, and green.

Use 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 printer cartridge from three colors: black, blue, and green.

The "you" attitude is more than replacing pronouns.

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 manipulative or insincere.¹⁷ The "you" attitude is an extension of the audience-centered approach. In fact, the best way to implement it is to sincerely think about your audience.

Far from simply replacing one pronoun with another, the "you" attitude is a matter of genuine empathy. You can use *you* 25 times in a single page and still ignore your audience's true concerns. Your sincere concern for your audience is what counts, not

the pronoun. If you're talking to a retailer, try to think like a retailer; if you're writing to a dissatisfied customer, imagine how you would feel at the other end of the transaction.

In fact, on some occasions you'll do better to avoid using *you*. For instance, using *you* in a way that sounds dictatorial is impolite. Or, when someone makes a mistake, you may want to minimize ill will by pointing out the error impersonally. You might say, "We have a problem," instead of "You caused a problem."

Instead of This	Use This
You should never use that type of paper in the copy machine.	That type of paper doesn't work very well in the copy machine.
You must correct all five copies by noon.	All five copies must be corrected by noon.

NOT AVAILABLE FOR
ELECTRONIC VIEWING

As you practice using the "you" attitude, be sure to consider the attitudes and policies of your organization and those of other cultures. In some cultures, it is improper to single out one person's achievements because the whole team is responsible for the outcome; thus, using the pronouns *we* or *our* would be more appropriate. Similarly, some companies have a tradition of avoiding references to *you* and *I* in their memos and formal reports. If you work for a company that expects a formal, impersonal style, confine your use of personal pronouns to informal letters and memos.

Emphasize the Positive Another way of establishing a good relationship with your audience is to emphasize the positive side of your message.¹⁸ Focus on the silver lining, not on the cloud. Stress what is or will be instead of what isn't or won't be. Most information, even bad news, has some redeeming feature. If you can make your audience aware of that feature, your message will be more acceptable.

Jenny J. Ming, president of Old Navy, oversees everything from store operations to marketing and advertising. Her passion for fashion has helped drive the company's record growth. So has her ability to communicate effectively with others. Ming recognizes that people's needs change as quickly as the latest fashion trend. So when communicating with others, she takes extra care to focus on her audience's changing needs.

Instead of This	Use This
It is impossible to repair your vacuum cleaner today.	Your vacuum cleaner will be ready by Tuesday.
We apologize for inconveniencing you during our remodeling.	The renovations now under way will help us serve you better.
We never exchange damaged goods.	We are happy to exchange merchandise that is returned to us in good condition.

Avoid using *you* and *yours* when doing so

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

Explain what you have done, what you can do, and what you will do—not what you haven't done, can't do, or won't do.

In addition, when you're criticizing or correcting, don't hammer on the other person's mistakes. Avoid referring to failures, problems, or shortcomings. Focus instead on what the person can do to improve:

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

Instead of This	Use This
The problem with this department is a failure to control costs.	The performance of this department can be improved by tightening cost controls.
You filled out the order form wrong.	So that your order can be processed, please check your color preferences on the enclosed card.

Show your audience 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	Use This
Please buy this book so that I can make my sales quota.	The plot of this novel will keep you in suspense to the last page.
We need your contribution to the Boys and Girls Club.	You can help a child make friends and build self-confidence through your donation to the Boys and Girls Club.

Avoid words with negative connotations; use meaningful euphemisms without hiding the facts.

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

Instead of This	Use This
cheap merchandise	bargain prices
toilet paper	bathroom tissue
used cars	resale cars
high-calorie food	high-energy food
elderly	senior citizen
pimples and zits	complexion problems

On the other hand, don't carry euphemisms to extremes. If you're too subtle, people won't know what you're talking about. "Derecruiting" workers to the "mobility pool" instead of telling them that they have six weeks to find another job isn't really very helpful. When using euphemisms, you walk a fine line between softening the blow and hiding the facts. It would be unethical to speak to your community about "relocating refuse" when you're really talking about your plans for disposing of toxic waste. Such an attempt to hide the facts would probably backfire, damaging your business image and reputation. In the end, people respond better to an honest message delivered with integrity than they do to sugar-coated double-talk.

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

Establish Your Credibility If you're unknown to your audience members, you'll have to earn their confidence before you can win them to your point of view. Their belief in your competence and integrity is important. You want people to trust that your word is dependable and that you know what you're doing.

Credibility (or your believability) is based on how reliable you are and how much trust you evoke in others. If you're communicating with a familiar group, your credibility has already been established, so you can get right down to business. Of course, even in this case some audience members may have preconceptions about you and may have trouble separating your arguments from your personality or your field. If they think of you as, say, a "numbers person," they may question your competence in other areas. Or, what if audience members are complete strangers? Or worse, what if they start off with doubts about you? In a new or hostile situation, devote the initial portion of your message to gaining credibility, and try the following techniques:

In a new or hostile situation, you need to work at gaining credibility.

- **Call attention to what you have in common with your audience.** For example, when communicating with someone who shares your professional background,

point out your connection: “As a fellow engineer [lawyer, doctor, teacher, etc.], I’m sure you can appreciate this situation.” Also, try using technical or professional terms that identify you as a peer.

- **Explain your credentials.** Being careful not to sound pompous, mention one or two aspects of your background. Your title or the name of your organization might be enough to impress your audience with your abilities.
- **Mention the name of someone your audience trusts or views as an authority.** You could begin a letter with “Professor Goldberg suggested that I contact you,” or you could quote a recognized authority on your subject, even if you don’t know the authority personally. The fact that your ideas are shared by a credible source adds prestige to your message.
- **Provide ample evidence.** Back up your arguments, especially any material outside your usual area of expertise. Make sure your evidence can be confirmed through observation, research, experimentation, or measurement. If audience members recognize that you have the facts, they’ll respect you.

On the other hand, if audience members find your evidence insufficient or lacking, your credibility will vanish. For example, avoid exaggerated claims. They are unethical and do more harm than good. A mail-order catalog promised: “You’ll be absolutely amazed at the remarkable blooms on this healthy plant.” Terms such as *amazing*, *incredible*, *extraordinary*, *sensational*, and *revolutionary* exceed the limits of believability, unless they’re supported with some sort of proof.

You also risk losing credibility if you seem to be currying favor with insincere compliments. Refrain from empty flattery. Support any compliments with specific points:

You risk losing your credibility if you

- Exaggerate claims
- Pay insincere compliments
- Lack confidence

Instead of This	Use This
My deepest heartfelt thanks for the excellent job you did. It’s hard these days to find workers like you. You are just fantastic! I can’t stress enough how happy you have made us with your outstanding performance.	Thanks for the great job you did filling in for Gladys at the convention with just an hour’s notice. Despite the difficult circumstances, you managed to attract several new orders with your demonstration of the new line of coffeemakers. Your dedication and sales ability are truly appreciated.

Another threat to credibility is too much modesty and not enough confidence. You express a lack of confidence when you use words such as *if*, *hope*, and *trust*. Try not to undermine your credibility with vague sentiments:

Instead of This	Use This
We hope this recommendation will be helpful.	We’re glad to make this recommendation.
If you’d like to order, mail us the reply card.	To order, mail the reply card.
We trust that you’ll extend your service contract.	By extending your service contract, you can continue to enjoy top-notch performance from your equipment.

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.

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 writing and when communicating with higher-ups and outsiders.

Be Polite Being polite is another good way to earn your audience's respect. By being courteous to members of your audience, you show consideration for their needs and feelings. Express yourself with kindness and tact.

You will undoubtedly be frustrated and exasperated by other people many times in your career. When that happens, you'll 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. Instead, be gentle when expressing yourself:

Instead of This	Use This
You really fouled things up with that last computer run.	Let's go over what went wrong with the last computer run so that the next run goes smoothly.
You've been sitting on my order for two weeks, and we need it now!	We are eager to receive our order. When can we expect delivery?

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

In general, written communication requires more tact than oral communication. 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. But written communication is stark and self-contained. If you hurt a person's feelings in writing, you can't soothe them right away. In fact, you may not even know that you have hurt the other person, because the lack of feedback prevents you from seeing your audience's reaction.

Keep these points in mind as you compare the two letters in Figure 4–6. Because of a death in the family, a restaurant owner closed his doors for three days over Labor Day weekend. Unfortunately, someone left the freezer door ajar, which burned out the motor and spoiled all the food stored there. The total cost to replace the motor and food was over \$2,000. The restaurant owner requested that Eppler Appliances cover these costs, but Eppler had to refuse. Note how the revised version is more diplomatic.

Another simple but effective courtesy is to be prompt in your correspondence. If possible, answer your mail within two or three days. If you need more time to prepare a reply, call or write a brief note to say that you're working on an answer. Most people are willing to wait if they know how long the wait will be. What annoys them is the suspense.

Use Bias-Free Language Most of us think of ourselves as being sensitive, unbiased, ethical, and fair. But being fair and objective isn't enough; to establish a good relationship with your audience, you must also *appear* to be fair.¹⁹ **Bias-free language** avoids unethical, embarrassing blunders in language related to gender, race, ethnicity, age, and disability. Good communicators make every effort to guard against biased language of any type (see Table 4–2 on page 114).

**NOT AVAILABLE FOR
ELECTRONIC VIEWING**

By showing consideration in your messages, you can help readers focus on what you're saying. "Courtesy is an important part of our high standards," says Elizabeth Tanis (center), manager of consumer affairs at Sara Lee Bakery. "We want everyone to understand about the high quality and high standards at Sara Lee—that's how we made our good name, and that's how we're going to keep it."

FIGURE 4-6**Poor and Improved Versions of an Audience-Centered Letter**

Dear Mr. Carpaccio:

Subject: Burned-out motor

We have received your request for reimbursement. Although your Crown Freezer is under warranty for two more months, you can't honestly expect us to be liable for the cost of a new motor and of your spoiled food when the problem clearly resulted from your own negligence. These freezers were not designed to operate at full capacity with the door ajar for any length of time, let alone for three days over Labor Day weekend in some of the hottest weather we've had in a decade.

Crown products were designed to endure everyday use in a typical commercial kitchen. They are constructed of top-quality materials, insulated with non-CFC in-place polyurethane foam, and are "performance rated" using environmentally safe refrigerants. Your top-mounted freezer model includes casters, heavy-duty lift-off hinges, durable locking stainless steel doors, and exterior dial thermometer.

However, we would like to offer to pay for the repairman's service call, in the spirit of good customer relations. I'm sorry, but that's the best we can do for you at this time.

Sincerely,

Lacks sufficient information

Omits specific date of warranty expiration


Emphasizes negative aspects and places blame on the reader by using the pronoun "you" incorrectly

Lacks any "you" attitude, focusing on what is important to Eppler rather than on what is important to the reader

Includes irrelevant, overly technical information

Shows bias by assuming the repairs were handled by a man

Fails to emphasize the positive, undercutting the offer being made and ending on an extremely negative note



EPPLER APPLIANCES
7142 Conrad Avenue, Lima, OH 45801
Voice: (419) 768-1927 Fax: (419) 768-1928

September 9, 2004

Mr. Joseph Carpaccio
Carpaccio's Ristoranti
847 Broadway
Lima, OH 45806

Dear Mr. Carpaccio:

Subject: Burned-out freezer motor, Invoice # 3770 46 010122

Thank you for your letter about your freezer repairs. Your Crown Freezer is under limited warranty until November 15, and to help you defray a portion of your unforeseen costs, we would like to pay the standard \$45 for the service call. The check is enclosed.

You received a copy of your warranty with your freezer, and I've enclosed another copy for your convenience. As you can see, Crown Freezers are designed to endure everyday use in a typical commercial kitchen. Their top-quality materials and performance rating guarantee that they will perform effectively and efficiently under normal operating conditions, which must exclude running for extended periods of time with the door open.

With only two months left on your limited warranty, you might consider purchasing an extended manufacturer's warranty. The basic warranty covers parts and labor for five years for only \$75. Plus, you can purchase additional business insurance for just \$135 more per year, which covers parts, labor, and damages—regardless of the cause. The enclosed brochure gives all the details, or visit our website at www.eppler.com.

Sincerely,
Kjiersten Lejunhud
Kjiersten Lejunhud
Customer Relations

Enclosures (3)

Provides enough information to identify the warranty, the customer, etc.

Includes specific date the warranty expires

Avoids bias by not mentioning the repair person as either male or female

Uses the "you" attitude to explain the warranty without blaming the reader

Emphasizes the positive, with helpful information, and ends on a friendly note

Uses the pronoun "you" correctly and emphasizes the positive by implying the refusal to pay for a new motor and any spoiled food

Includes relevant information in language that is easy for the reader to understand

Provides detailed information about what the reader might do to avoid such costs in the future

Table 4–2**OVERCOMING BIAS IN LANGUAGE**

Examples	Unacceptable	Preferable
Gender Bias		
Using words containing “man”	Man-made Businessman Salesman Foreman	Artificial, synthetic, manufactured, constructed Executive, business manager, businessperson Sales representative, salesperson, clerk, sales agent Supervisor
Using female-gender words	Authoress, actress, stewardess	Author, actor, cabin 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. the nurse/teacher . . . she	Most executives spend four hours a day in meetings. nurses/teachers . . . they
Identifying women by marital status	Phill Donahue and Marlo Phill Donahue and Ms. Thomas	Phill Donahue and Marlo Thomas Mr. Donahue and Ms. Thomas
Racial/Ethnic Bias		
Assigning stereotypes	My black assistant speaks more articulately than I do. Jim Wong is an unusually tall Asian.	My assistant speaks more articulately than I do. 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. An epileptic, Tracy has no trouble doing her job.	Workers with physical disabilities face many barriers on the job. Tracy's epilepsy has no effect on her job performance.

Replace words that inaccurately exclude women or men.

Eliminate references that reinforce racial or ethnic stereotypes.

Avoid references to an individual's age or physical limitations.

Always refer to people first and their disabilities second.

- **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. 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 has some other title (such as *Dr.*) or asks to be addressed as *Miss* or *Mrs.*
- **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.
- **Age bias** As with gender, race, and ethnic background, mention the age of a person only when it is relevant. When referring to older people, avoid such stereotyped adjectives as *spry* and *frail*.
- **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.²⁰ Present the whole person, not just the disability, by referring to the limitation in an unobtrusive manner.

Project the Company's Image Even though establishing a good relationship with the audience is your main goal, give some thought to projecting the right image for your company. 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 your entire company. Thus, your own views and personality must be subordinated, at least to some extent, to the interests and style of your company.

Say you've just taken a job with a trendy, young retail organization called Rappers. One of your first assignments is to write a letter canceling additional orders for clothing items that haven't been selling well. Here's your first draft:

Dear Ms. Bataglia:

Please cancel our purchase order 092397AA for the amount of \$12,349. Our contract with your organization specifies that we have a 30-day cancellation clause, which we wish to invoke. If any shipments went out before you received this notification, they will be returned; however, we will remunerate freight charges as specified in the contract.

I am told we have ordered from you since our inception in 1993. Your previous service to us has been quite satisfactory; however, recent sales of the "Colored Denim" line have been less than forecast. We realize that our cancellation may have a negative impact, and we pledge to more accurately predict our needs in the future.

We maintain positive alliances with all our vendors and look forward to doing further business with you. Please keep us informed of new products as they appear.

After reading the draft, you realize that its formal tone may leave a feeling of ill will. Moreover, it certainly doesn't reflect the corporate culture of your new employer. You try again.

Dear Ms. Bataglia:

We appreciate the relationship we've had with you since 1993. Your shipments have always arrived on time and in good order.

However, our recent store reports show a decline in sales for your "Colored Denim" line. Therefore, we're canceling our purchase order 092397AA for \$12,349. If you'll let us know the amounts, we'll pay the shipping charges on anything that has already gone out.

We're making a lot of changes at Rappers, but one thing remains the same—the positive relationship we have with vendors such as you. Please keep us informed of your new lines as they appear. We look forward to doing business with you in the future.

Document Makeover

IMPROVE THIS LETTER

To practice correcting drafts of actual documents, visit www.prenhall.com/onekey on the web. Click "Document Makeovers," then click Chapter 4. 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 message for the "you" attitude, positive language, politeness, bias-free language, and phrases that establish credibility.

Subordinate your own style to that of the company.

✓ CHECKLIST: Planning Business Messages

Analyze the Situation

- ✓ Determine whether the purpose of your message is to inform, persuade, or collaborate.
- ✓ Identify the specific behavior you hope to induce in the audience.
- ✓ Make sure that your purpose is worthwhile and realistic.
- ✓ Make sure that the time is right for your purpose.
- ✓ Make sure the right person is delivering your message.
- ✓ Make sure your purpose is acceptable to your organization.
- ✓ Identify the primary audience.
- ✓ Determine the size of your audience.
- ✓ Determine the composition of your audience.
- ✓ Determine your audience's level of understanding.
- ✓ Estimate your audience's probable reaction to your message.

Gather Information

- ✓ Decide whether to use formal or informal techniques for gathering information.

- ✓ Find out what your audience needs to know.
- ✓ Provide all required information, and make sure it's accurate, ethical, and pertinent.

Adapt Your Message to Your Audience

- ✓ Select a channel and medium for your message by matching media richness to your audience and purpose.
- ✓ Select the right medium for your message by considering factors such as urgency, formality, complexity, confidentiality, emotional content, cost, audience expectation, and your need for a permanent record.
- ✓ Consider the problems as well as the advantages of the media you select.
- ✓ Establish a good audience relationship with a "you" attitude, positive language, credibility, a polite tone, bias-free language, and a good impression of your company.

This version reflects the more relaxed image of your new company. You can save yourself a great deal of time and frustration if you master your company's style early in your career.

The planning step helps you get ready to write business messages. The "Checklist: Planning Business Messages" is a reminder of the tasks and choices you address during this stage of the writing process.

On the Job:

SOLVING COMMUNICATION DILEMMAS AT HOME DEPOT

At Home Depot, Robert Nardelli emphasizes the importance of carefully planning messages to all audiences: employees, customers, and suppliers. You have recently joined Home Depot's community relations department in the company's Atlanta headquarters (known as the Store Support Center). Two of your main functions are (1) helping store managers and other company executives plan effective business messages for a variety of audiences, and (2) responding to press inquiries about Home Depot. Choose the best alternatives for handling the following situations, and be prepared to explain why your choice is best.

1. You have received a phone call from Ann Mason, a reporter for a small Idaho newspaper. She is planning

to write an article about Home Depot's recent decision to open a store in her community, a small town in a rural area of Idaho. Mason has asked you for information about the economic impact of Home Depot stores in other small communities across the nation. When responding to Mason's request, what should the purpose of your letter be?

- a. The general purpose is to inform. The specific purpose is to provide Mason with a brief summary of the evolution of Home Depot over the past 20 years.
- b. The general purpose is to persuade. The specific purpose is to convince Mason that Home Depot creates hundreds of jobs within a community and

that small, existing merchants should not feel threatened by the arrival of the home improvement giant in rural Idaho.

- c. The general purpose is to collaborate. The specific purpose is to work with Mason to develop an article that examines the history of Home Depot's entry into new markets.
 - d. The general purpose is to respond. The specific purpose is to convey details requested by a journalist.
2. Assume that your purpose is to convince Mason of Home Depot's abilities to create new jobs and increase economic activity in small communities. Is your purpose worth pursuing at this time?
 - a. Yes. The purpose is realistic, the timing is right, you are the right person to send the message, and the purpose is acceptable to the organization.
 - b. Not completely. Realistically, many readers of Mason's newspaper may dread the arrival of Home Depot in their small community, fearing that the giant retailer may force small retailers out of business.
 - c. The purpose is fine, but you are not the right person to send this message. Home Depot's chief executive officer should respond.
 - d. The timing is right for this message. Stress Home Depot's involvement in small communities, citing contributions to social causes in other rural areas. Show how Home Depot cares about customers on a personal basis.
 3. When planning your reply to Mason, what assumptions can you make about your audience?
 - a. The audience includes not only Ann Mason but also the readers of the community's newspaper. Given their bias for a simple, rural lifestyle, the readers will probably be hostile to big business in general and to Home Depot in particular. They probably know little about large retail operations. Furthermore, they probably mistrust you because you are a Home Depot employee.
 - b. Ann Mason will probably be the only person who reads the letter directly. She is the primary audience; the readers of her article are the secondary audience. Mason will be happy to hear from Home Depot and will read the information with an open mind. However, she may not know a great deal about Home Depot. Although she is a stranger to you, she trusts your credibility as a Home Depot spokesperson.
 - c. Ann Mason is probably the sole and primary audience for the letter. The fact that she is writing an article about Home Depot suggests that she already knows a great deal about the company and likes the idea of Home Depot's entry into her community. In all likelihood, she will respond positively to your reply and will trust your credibility as a Home Depot representative.
 - d. Ann Mason may be an industrial spy working for a rival home improvement center. She will show your reply to people who work for your competitor; they will analyze the information and use it to improve their market share of the home improvement industry.
 4. A lightbulb manufacturer is unable to keep up with consumer demand for light bulbs in Home Depot stores. Customers and store managers are complaining about the shortage of light bulbs on the shelves. Home Depot's merchandising manager decides that the manufacturer must correct the supply problem within 30 days or Home Depot will have to find another, more reliable supplier that can meet the high demand. The merchandising manager asks you to suggest the best method of communicating this message to the lightbulb manufacturer. Which communication medium would you recommend?
 - a. Call the manufacturer on the phone to discuss the problem; then follow up with a letter that summarizes the conversation.
 - b. Call the manufacturer on the phone to discuss the issue, and inform the company of Home Depot's course of action if the problem cannot be corrected within 30 days.
 - c. Send a fax asking for correction of the problem within 30 days, explaining the consequences of noncompliance.
 - d. Send a form letter that states the consequences of failing to meet Home Depot's demand for products.²¹

Learning Objectives Checkup

To assess your understanding of the principles in this chapter, read each learning objective and study the accompanying exercises. For fill-in items, write the missing text in the blank provided; for multiple choice items, circle the letter of the correct answer. You can check your responses against the answer key on page AK-1

Objective 4.1: Describe the three-step writing process.

1. The first step of the three-step writing process is
 - a. Writing the first draft
 - b. Organizing your information
 - c. Planning your message
 - d. Preparing an outline

2. When using the three-step writing process, keep in mind that you should
 - a. Allot roughly half your time to the planning stage
 - b. Complete the steps in the order and as outlined in this chapter
 - c. View it as a list of “how-to” directives
 - d. Do all of the above

Objective 4.2: Explain why it's important to define your purpose carefully, and list four questions that can help you test that purpose.

3. If you were to write a letter to a manufacturer complaining about a defective product and asking for a refund, your general purpose would be
 - a. To inform
 - b. To persuade
 - c. To collaborate
 - d. To entertain
4. Which of the following is *not* a question to ask when considering whether to pursue your purpose?
 - a. Is the purpose realistic?
 - b. Is the right person delivering the message?
 - c. Is the purpose acceptable to your organization?
 - d. Have I chosen the right medium for delivering the message?

Objective 4.3: Justify the importance of analyzing your audience, then list six ways of developing an audience profile.

5. When developing an audience profile, it is important to identify the _____ audience.
 - a. Primary
 - b. Total
 - c. Marginal
 - d. Popular
6. If audience members will vary in the amount of information they already know about your topic, your best approach is to
 - a. Provide as much extra information as possible to make sure everyone gets every detail
 - b. Provide just the basic information; if your audience needs to know more, they can find out for themselves
 - c. Gear your coverage to your primary audience and provide the information most relevant to them
 - d. Include lots of graphics

Objective 4.4: Identify five ways to satisfy your audience's information needs.

7. Which of the following is *not* an informal way to gather information that will satisfy your audience's needs?
 - a. Read material in your company's files, such as reports and news releases.
 - b. Conduct an Internet search of material relevant to your topic.
 - c. Chat with supervisors, fellow workers, or customers.
 - d. Mentally put yourself in the audience's shoes and consider what they might be thinking, feeling, or planning.
8. To make sure you have provided all the necessary information, use the journalistic approach, which is to
 - a. Interview your audience about its needs

- b. Check the accuracy of your information
- c. Check whether your message answers who, what, when, where, why, and how
- d. Make sure your information is ethical
9. If you realize you have given your audience incorrect information, the most ethical action would be to
 - a. Say nothing and hope no one notices
 - b. Wait until someone points out the error, then acknowledge the mistake
 - c. Announce to the world that you have made a mistake and apologize to anyone who may have been affected
 - d. Contact the audience immediately and correct the error

Objective 4.5: List the factors to consider when choosing the most appropriate channel and medium for your message.

10. The “richest” communication medium for dealing with a co-worker would be
 - a. A face-to-face meeting
 - b. A personal letter
 - c. An e-mail message
 - d. An interoffice memo
11. If you needed to get an urgent confidential message to a colleague in Hong Kong, your best choice of communication medium would be
 - a. A fax
 - b. An airmail letter
 - c. An e-mail
 - d. A voice mail

Objective 4.6: Discuss six ways you can establish a good relationship with your audience.

12. Which of the following sentences best exemplifies the “you” attitude?
 - a. You made a mistake in the order you sent me.
 - b. Although the plaid shirt you ordered is currently out of stock, a new shipment is due next week, and you can expect to receive your shirt in 10 to 14 days.
 - c. I know I promised you the report by Tuesday, but you won't get it until Friday.
 - d. If you had packed the items correctly, they wouldn't have been damaged in shipping.
13. An employee made a major spelling mistake in an important brochure, and now the brochures must be corrected and reprinted. Your message to the employee should focus on
 - a. How much money the mistake has cost the company
 - b. What a poor speller the employee is
 - c. How the employee had better “shape up” or else
 - d. What the employee can do to prevent such mistakes in the future
14. When trying to establish credibility with your audience, it is important to
 - a. Use as much flattery as possible to “butter up” your audience
 - b. Provide as much evidence as possible, from reputable sources, to back up your arguments
 - c. Be as modest as possible to keep from seeming boastful
 - d. Inflate your reputation as much as possible so the audience will take you seriously

15. You need some promised sales data from a colleague for a report that's due tomorrow, but she hasn't responded to your e-mails over the past week. Which of the following would be the most effective message to leave?
 - a. "Hey, Jean, it's Lee. Can you get me those sales figures by 4 o'clock? I know you're busy, but I'll owe you one! Please call me back at extension 445."
 - b. "Hey, Jean, where the heck are you? Don't you ever read your e-mail? I really have to have those sales figures today. It's now or never!"
 - c. "Jean. It's Lee. I'm under the gun here for that report and you're not doing me any favors by waiting until the last minute with those sales figures. I need 'em now!"
 - d. "Jean. It's Lee. Please call me back as soon as you get this. It's very important that I talk to you."
16. Your company has hired Leo Martinez, a paraplegic veteran, to work in your department. In a memo to other members of the department, what is the best way to introduce him?
 - a. "Please welcome our new man, Leo Martinez, who will be wheeling his way onboard tomorrow."
 - b. "We have a new Mexican American joining the staff tomorrow, Leo Martinez. Please try not to call attention to his handicap."
 - c. "Joining us tomorrow will be new staffer Leo Martinez. Leo, a Gulf War veteran who uses a wheelchair, comes to us after five years in the marketing department at Dutton's."
 - d. "Tomorrow, be sure to say *Hola!* to Leo Martinez, our new disabled employee."

Apply Your Knowledge

1. Some writers argue that planning a message wastes time because they inevitably change their plans as they go along. How would you respond to this argument? Briefly explain.
2. As a member of the public relations department, what medium would you recommend using to inform the local community that your toxic-waste cleanup program has been successful? Why?
3. When composing business messages, how can you be yourself and project your company's image at the same time?
4. Considering how fast and easy it is, should e-mail replace meetings and other face-to-face communication in your company? Why or why not?
5. **Ethical Choices** The company president has asked you to draft a memo to the board of directors informing them that sales in the newly acquired line of gourmet fruit jams have far exceeded anyone's expectations. As purchasing director, you happen to know that sales of moderately priced jams have declined substantially (many customers have switched to the more expensive jams). You were not directed to add that tidbit of information. What should you do?

Practice Your Knowledge

DOCUMENT FOR ANALYSIS

Read the following document; then (1) analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each sentence and (2) revise the document so that it follows this chapter's guidelines.

I am a new publisher with some really great books to sell. I saw your announcement in Publishers Weekly about the bookseller's show you're having this summer, and I think it's a great idea. Count me in, folks! I would like to get some space to show my books. I thought it would be a neat thing if I could do some airbrushing on T-shirts live to help promote my hot new title, T-Shirt Art. Before I got into publishing, I was an airbrush artist,

and I could demonstrate my techniques. I've done hundreds of advertising illustrations and have been a sign painter all my life, so I'll also be promoting my other book, hot off the presses, How to Make Money in the Sign Painting Business.

I will be starting my PR campaign about May 2003 with ads in PW and some art trade papers, so my books should be well known by the time the show comes around in August. In case you would like to use my appearance there as part of your publicity, I have enclosed a biography and photo of myself.

P.S. Please let me know what it costs for booth space as soon as possible so that I can figure out whether I can afford to attend. Being a new publisher is mighty expensive!

Exercises

For live links to all websites discussed in this chapter, visit this text's website at www.prenhall.com/thill. Just log on, select Chapter 4, and click on "Student Resources." Locate

the page or the URL related to the material in the text. For the "Learning More on the Web" exercises, you'll also find navigational directions. Click on the live link to the site.

- 4.1 Message Planning Skills: Self-Assessment** How good are you at planning business messages? Use the following chart to rate yourself on each of the following elements of planning an audience-centered business

message. Then examine your ratings to identify where you are strongest and where you can improve, using the tips in this chapter.

Element of Planning	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Do you				
1. Start by defining your purpose?	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Analyze your audience before writing a message?	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Find out everything your audience needs to know?	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Check that your information is accurate, ethical, and pertinent?	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Consider your audience and purpose when selecting media?	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Adopt the “you” attitude in your messages?	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Emphasize the positive aspects of your message?	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Establish your credibility with audiences of strangers?	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Express yourself politely and tactfully?	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Use bias-free language?	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Take care to project your company’s image?	_____	_____	_____	_____

- 4.2 Planning Messages: General and Specific Purpose** Make a list of communication tasks you’ll need to accomplish in the next week or so (for example, a job application, a letter of complaint, a speech to a class, an order for some merchandise). For each, determine a general and a specific purpose.

- 4.3 Planning Messages: Specific Purpose** For each of the following communication tasks, state a specific purpose (if you have trouble, try beginning with “I want to . . .”).

- A report to your boss, the store manager, about the outdated items in the warehouse
- An e-mail message to clients about your booth at the upcoming trade show
- A letter to a customer who hasn’t made a payment for three months
- A memo to employees about the office’s high water bills
- A phone call to a supplier checking on an overdue parts shipment
- A report to future users of the computer program you have chosen for handling the company’s mailing list

- 4.4. Planning Messages: Audience Profile** For each communication task below, write brief answers to three questions: Who is my audience? What is my audience’s general attitude toward my subject? What does my audience need to know?

- A final-notice collection letter from an appliance manufacturer to an appliance dealer, sent 10 days before initiating legal collection procedures
- An unsolicited sales letter asking readers to purchase computer disks at near-wholesale prices

- An advertisement for peanut butter
- Fliers to be attached to doorknobs in the neighborhood, announcing reduced rates for chimney lining or repairs
- A cover letter sent along with your résumé to a potential employer
- A request (to the seller) for a price adjustment on a piano that incurred \$150 in damage during delivery to a banquet room in the hotel you manage

- 4.5. Meeting Audience Needs: Necessary Information** Choose an electronic device (videocassette recorder, personal computer, telephone answering machine) that you know how to operate well. Write two sets of instructions for operating the device: one set for a reader who has never used that type of machine and one set for someone who is generally familiar with that type of machine but has never operated the specific model. Briefly explain how your two audiences affect your instructions.

- 4.6. Adapting Messages: Media and Purpose** List five messages you have received lately, such as direct-mail promotions, letters, e-mail messages, phone solicitations, and lectures. For each, determine the general and the specific purpose; then answer the following questions: (a) Was the message well timed? (b) Did the sender choose an appropriate medium for the message? (c) Did the appropriate person deliver the message? (d) Was the sender’s purpose realistic?

- 4.7. Adapting Messages: Media Selection** Barbara Marquardt is in charge of public relations for a cruise line that operates out of Miami. She is shocked to read a letter in a local newspaper from a disgruntled passen-

ger, complaining about the service and entertainment on a recent cruise. Marquardt will have to respond to these publicized criticisms in some way. What audiences will she need to consider in her response? What medium should she choose? If the letter had been published in a travel publication widely read by travel agents and cruise travelers, how might her course of action differ?

- 4.8. Teamwork** Your team has been studying a new method for testing the durability of your company's electric hand tools. Now the team needs to prepare three separate reports on the findings: first, a report for the administrator who will decide whether to purchase the equipment needed for this new testing method; second, a report for the company's engineers who design and develop the hand tools; and third, a report for the trainers who will be showing workers how to use the new equipment. To determine the audience's needs for each of these reports, the team has listed the following questions: (1) Who are the readers? (2) Why will they read my report? (3) Do they need introductory or background material? (4) Do they need definitions of terms? (5) What level or type of language is needed? (6) What level of detail is needed? (7) What result does my report aim for? Working with two other students, answer the questions for each of these audiences:
- The administrator
 - The engineers
 - The trainers
- 4.9. Internet** More companies are reaching out to audiences through their websites. Go to the PepsiCo website at www.pepsico.com and follow the link to the latest annual report. Then locate and read the chairman's letter. Who is the audience for this message? What is the general purpose of the message? What do you think this audience needs to know from the chairman of PepsiCo? How does the chairman emphasize the positive in this letter? Summarize your answers in a brief (one-page) memo or oral presentation.
- 4.10. 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
- 4.11. Audience Relationship: The "You" Attitude** Rewrite these sentences to reflect your audience's viewpoint.
- We request that you use the order form supplied in the back of our catalog.
 - We insist that you always bring your credit card to the store.
 - We want to get rid of all our 15-inch monitors to make room in our warehouse for the 19-inch screens. Thus we are offering a 25 percent discount on all sales this week.
 - I am applying for the position of bookkeeper in your office. I feel that 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.
- 4.12. 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).
- 4.13. Audience Relationship: Emphasize the Positive** Provide euphemisms for the following words and phrases:
- Stubborn
 - Wrong
 - Stupid
 - Incompetent
 - Loudmouth
- 4.14. 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.
- 4.15. Ethical Choices** Your supervisor, whom you respect, has asked you to withhold important information that you think should be included in a report you are preparing. Disobeying him could be disastrous for your relationship and your career. Obeying him could violate your personal code of ethics. What should you do? On the basis of the discussion in Chapter 1, would you consider this situation to be an ethical dilemma or an ethical lapse? Please explain.
- 4.16. Three-Step Process: Other Applications** How can the material discussed in this chapter also apply to meetings as discussed in Chapter 2? (Hint: Review the section headings in Chapter 4 and think about making your meetings more productive.)

Expand Your Knowledge

LEARNING MORE ON THE WEB

Learn How Instant Messaging Works www.howstuffworks.com/instant-messaging.htm

No doubt the Internet has changed the way we communicate. But do you understand how all this electronic stuff works? Fret no more. Log on to Marshall Brain's How Stuff Works website and learn all about instant messaging and why the future of this form of communication is bright indeed. In fact, try using it next time you want to hold a virtual conference or collaborate on a project with teammates. You'll see why instant messaging is becoming a valuable tool in the workplace.

ACTIVITIES

Log on now to Marshall Brain's How Stuff Works website and learn all about instant messaging. Then answer these questions.

1. What are the key advantages of instant messaging?
2. What is the difference between a chat room and instant messaging?
3. Is instant messaging a secure way to communicate?

EXPLORING THE WEB ON YOUR OWN

Review these chapter-related websites on your own to learn more about achieving communication success in the workplace.

1. Learn more about the writing process, English grammar, style and usage, words, and active writing at Garbl's Writing Resources Online, www.garbl.home.attbi.com.
2. Plan your messages well, improve your organization, and learn how to write better with the sound advice and writing help at Writing Better, an electronic *Handbook for Amherst Students*, www.amherst.edu/~writing/wb_html/wb.html.
3. Discover how e-mail works and how to improve your e-mail communications by following the steps at About Internet for Beginners—Harness E-Mail, www.learnthenet.com/english/section/email.html.

Learn Interactively

INTERACTIVE STUDY GUIDE

Visit the Companion Website at www.prenhall.com/thill. For Chapter 4, take advantage of the interactive “Study Guide” to test your chapter knowledge. Get instant feedback on whether you need additional studying. Read the “Current Events” articles to get the latest on chapter topics, and complete the exercises as specified by your instructor.

This site offers a variety of additional resources: The “Research Area” helps you locate a wealth of information to use in course assignments. You can even send a message to online research experts, who will help you find exactly the information you need. The “Study Hall” helps you succeed in this course. “Talk in the Hall” lets you leave messages and meet new friends online. If you have a question, you can “Ask the Tutor.” And to get a better grade in this course, you

can find more help at “Writing Skills,” “Study Skills,” and “Study Tips.”

PEAK PERFORMANCE GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

To improve your skill with adjectives, use the “Peak Performance Grammar and Mechanics” module on the web. Visit www.prenhall.com/thill, click “Peak Performance Grammar and Mechanics,” then click “Adjectives.” 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. For an extra challenge or advanced practice, take the Advanced Test. Finally, for additional reinforcement, go to the “Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage” section that follows, and complete those exercises.

Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage

The following exercises help you improve your knowledge of and power over English grammar, mechanics, and usage. Turn to the “Handbook of Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage” at the end of this textbook and review all of Section 1.4 (Adjectives). Then look at the following 10 items. Underline the preferred

choice within each set of parentheses. (Answers to these exercises appear on page AK-3.)

1. Of the two products, this one has the (*greater, greatest*) potential.
2. The (*most perfect, perfect*) solution is *d*.

3. Here is the (*interesting, most interesting*) of all the ideas I have heard so far.
4. The (*hardest, harder*) part of my job is firing people.
5. A (*highly placed, highly-placed*) source revealed Dotson's (*last ditch, last-ditch*) efforts to cover up the mistake.
6. A (*top secret, top-secret*) document was taken from the president's office last night.
7. A (*30 year old, 30-year-old*) person should know better.
8. The two companies are engaged in an (*all-out no-holds-barred; all-out, no-holds-barred*) struggle for dominance.
9. A (*tiny metal; tiny, metal*) shaving is responsible for the problem.
10. You'll receive our (*usual cheerful prompt; usual, cheerful, prompt; usual cheerful, prompt*) service.