

GSP 1201/2201 USE OF ENGLISH

MODULE FOUR

WRITING SKILLS

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INTRODUCTION

The ability to write well is one of the most highly priced skills. It is a skill developed by practice, accompanied by a thorough knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling which we use to enable other people to understand what we want to say. Grammar is the order and style in which we arrange the words. Punctuation is the method of separating or linking words, phrases and sentences to make the meaning clear. Paragraphs are used to separate materials into topics.

WHAT IS WRITING?

Writing is a type of accepted, orderly written communication. It uses words; that is, it translates sounds into readable codes or symbols, which are known as alphabets. In writing, alphabets are combined into words and words into phrases, which are then developed into clause/sentences; the sentences are subsequently collated into paragraphs, essays, chapters and books. Writing must aim at conveying the inner thought of the writer to the reader in the simplest and most understandable language in an economical manner, such that the reader would not misinterpret the thought of the writer.

Types of Written Communication

There are various types of written communication. They are correspondence (letters), reports, minutes, summaries, curriculum vitae, speech writings, essays, articles, text

messages, email, etc. There are even more advanced technologies in the IT world in typewriting, publishing, word-processing, etc.

The Essentials of Good Writing

- Writing must satisfy the purpose of the writer and the reader.
- It must be well thought-out, such that the reader is able to identify its theme and purpose.
- A writer must choose a subject matter in which he/she is knowledgeable, or can find materials to develop.
- It must be organised in such a way that the reader can identify its trend.
- It must be coherent; all the parts must live together, as well as show a particular direction of thought. The writer must then use appropriate connective words to make the sequence clear.
- The words chosen must be sufficiently comprehensible for the reader to understand the contents of the writing.
- The grammatical structures must be correct, e.g. use of concord, spelling of words and correct punctuation.
- The writing must be legible (especially hand-written).
- It must be put in its right channel – report format, letter, minutes, article, memorandum, communique, etc.
- It must be logical; the thoughts and ideas must be sensible.
- It must be sequential.
- It should mix the sentence structures using simple, complex and compound sentences.
- As much as possible, it should express one idea in a paragraph; choosing a topic sentence and developing it in the paragraph; with the topic sentence containing the main idea.
- If it is not a fiction, it must be factual. Fiction allows imaginations; factual writing admits accuracy and verifiable truth.

- If possible illustrate ideas with data, visuals, e.g. charts, graphs, diagrams, pictures, etc.
- A good writing should be concise and precise, without wasting words, because of cost and time of the reader.
- If there is need to quote or use other people's original work, they must be acknowledged. Otherwise, the writer would be guilty of plagiarism or piracy (stealing of intellectual property).

PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

What is a Paragraph?

A paragraph is a group of sentences that express a single idea. The first sentence of the group is indented; that is, it begins a little bit more to the right of the margin than the rest of the sentences in the group. This is not enough, however; we should also consider how these sentences relate to one another, what constitutes a good paragraph; and how a paragraph begins and where it ends.

The Topic of a Paragraph

A paragraph may be defined as a group of sentences that develop one main idea. In other words, a paragraph develops a topic. A topic is basically the subject of the paragraph; it is what the paragraph is all about.

The Topic Sentence

The topic of a paragraph is usually introduced in a sentence. This sentence is called the 'topic sentence'. The topic sentence can do more than introduce the subject of the paragraph. A good topic sentence states an idea or an attitude, i.e. the controlling idea about the topic, as well as which controls what the sentences in the paragraph will discuss.

Example of a Topic Sentence

‘Smoking cigarettes can be an expensive habit’

Topic: The habit of smoking cigarettes

Controlling idea: Smoking can be expensive.

Test of a Topic Sentence

1. Drinking coffee is bad. (it is vague)
 - In what way is coffee bad?
 - For whom is it bad?
 - Is it drinking a little or a lot that is bad?
2. Drinking over four cups of coffee a day can be harmful to pregnant woman. (more precise)

Recognizing the Topic Sentence

Where should the topic sentence be placed in the paragraph?

As it does introduce the entire writing, it is a good idea to place the topic sentence at or near the beginning of the paragraph. It can be placed near the middle or end of a paragraph, depending on the type of paragraph it is. Sometimes both the topic and the controlling idea are not stated clearly in one sentence (but they are present); in this case both are implied, i.e. suggested in the development of the paragraph.

Paragraph development is among the problems encountered by the beginning writer. For instance, there is the tendency of mixing two paragraphs together that contain different ideas, in which case they should be separated from each other. Each paragraph should contain a ‘single’ idea and not more.

Paragraph development starts from choosing a topic on which you can write with knowledge and ease. Having chosen a suitable topic, ideas will occur to you; put these ideas on a paper, for such ideas are easily forgotten. You should next use these ideas or develop them to form the topic sentences, which you can later arrange and develop into

paragraphs. Begin the opening paragraph of your essay with an introduction. One paragraph is often enough for the introduction, as well as for the conclusion. More paragraphs are used in the body of the writing, because here details are given for enough comprehension.

ESSAY WRITING

What is an Essay?

Essay refers to any short piece of writing that analyses or interprets a situation in a personal way. Many class assignments call for an essay writing, because so much of what you write is likely to be in an essay form. Some essays contain the opinion of the writer; some classify or compare and contrast situations (show relationship between things or ideas); some describe a particular event; and in some, the writer tries to convince the reader to follow a course of action (persuasive essay).

The essay is a formal composition. It is a group of paragraphs that develops one central idea. Each paragraph in an essay has a designated function:

i. **Introduction**

The introduction is usually a one paragraph (sometimes two or more) that introduces the topic to be discussed and the central idea (the thesis statement of the essay).

ii. **Developmental Paragraphs (main body)**

The paragraphs develop various aspects of the topic and the central idea. They may discuss causes, effects, reasons, examples, process, classifications, or points of comparison and contrast. They may also describe or narrate.

iii. **Conclusion**

This paragraph concludes the thought developed in the essay. It is the closing statement.

Types of Essay

There are basically four (4) types of essay; thus:

- i. **Narrative Essay** tells a story of what happened in the past. It could be factual or created (fiction). The dominant tense used in the narrative essay is the past tense. If the narration is a typical experience (what people usually do) or it may be going on now, the present tense is used. In narrative essays, two types of details are presented to help the reader share the experience. These are narrative details (which relate to action events) and descriptive details (that give a description of people, places objects and so on).
- ii. **Descriptive Essay** gives a clear picture of a situation or an event: its outlooks, behavior etc. Here adverbs, adjectives, figures of speech: metaphor, simile, etc. are used. The description must be organised so that the reader can vividly imagine the scene, object, or person being described. You can have paragraphs of description within the narrative essay.
- iii. **Argumentative Essay** presents a point of view convincingly for the reader to share/agree. This kind of essay is meant to either persuade, prove a point or discuss problems by giving various sides of the argument, with or without solution. It uses facts where necessary. An argumentative essay, however, is one that attempts to change the readers' mind, to convince the reader to agree with the opinion of the writer; hence attempts to be highly persuasive and logical. For this, it has two elements, thus: supporting or opposing as well as proposing a course of action.
- iv. **Expository Essay** involves giving explanation or specific directives. It is a kind of essay that enlightens the reader through analysis, comparison and contrast, classification and exemplification. The aim is to instruct or inform. The most common approach to developing an expository essay requires using specific details and examples.

CORRESPONDENCES

What are Correspondences?

In any interpersonal or organisational relationship, it is very important to have an effective means of sharing information, so as to enhance the smooth running of the organization. This may, in turn, better lead to the accomplishment of the aims and objectives for which the organisation is set up. In order to achieve this, there is a need for effective and efficient means of correspondence. Correspondences simply refer to the different means of exchange of written communication between two or more parties. In other words, correspondence is the act of exchanging information and messages between individuals and/or organisations. This exchange of ideas could be in different forms of correspondence, such as letters, memoranda, emails, text messages, circulars, etc. It is important to note that a correspondence can take place between two or more individuals; between one organisation and another; or within a single organisation. That is why correspondence is classified as either personal or business.

Different Kinds of Correspondences

Correspondences are of different kinds, depending on the nature and purpose for which they are written. Individuals and organisations exchange information, by way of writing letters, emails, text messages, circulars, bulletins, memo and/or flyers. For the purpose of this module, the following modes of correspondences will be discussed:

- Letter
- Memorandum
- Email

LETTER WRITING

In spite of the relatively recent prevalence of emails and text messages, as alternative means of correspondence, letter writing still enjoys a pride of place in terms of utility; and is widely used by many people and organisations to correspond or communicate with other people or organisations. Letters are very much important in organisational activities; that is why companies employ highly trained and specialised secretaries and legal practitioners to help, among other responsibilities, in writing good letters for them. The quality of a letter often has a huge bearing on understanding the seriousness of the message, and conveying the level of business acumen and caliber of personnel involved in the communication (Ntia, 2008). Notwithstanding the importance of letter writing, it is distressing to observe that the quality of letters written by many students in tertiary institutions is decidedly dismal. Thus, there is an urgent need for students to learn how to write the different types of letters effectively.

Types of Letter Writing

There is a bit of a controversy among experts with regard to the types of letter writing that should be adopted in normal communication. While some scholars classify letters into two (Formal and Informal), others still retain the older classification of letters into three (Formal, Informal and Semi-formal). It is important to note that the type of a letter is determined by the tone, physical features and the purpose for which it is written.

Formal Letter

A formal letter, otherwise known as business letter or official letter, is the letter meant for official communication in business establishments, public institutions or private organisations. A formal letter may take the form of an application letter, letter of complaint, letter of request, letter of enquiry, letter of acknowledgements, etc. The language of formal letters should be accurate, concise, clear and strictly formal, without unnecessary greeting or show of familiarity. It is also advisable that a writer of a formal letter should avoid such mistakes as ambiguity, contraction, slangs, clichés, idioms, proverbs, wordiness, archaism, and abbreviation.

Format of a Formal Letter

- **Address:** Formal letters have two different addresses: the address of the writer (addresser) and that of the recipient (addressee). The address can be in a blocked or slanted form; and must be written in full with the exception of formal abbreviations (such as P.M.B. or P.O. Box). The address of the writer is written at the top right hand side of the first page, followed by the date. This is followed, at the left hand side of the page, by the address of the recipient, which starts at the first line following the last line of the address of the writer. Abbreviations such as St. for Street, Rd. for Road, etc are not allowed in both the two addresses. The name of the country should be written, if the letter is to be sent to another country.
- **Date:** This should be written below the address of the writer and before the address of the recipient, followed by a full stop. These are some of the ways of writing the date: 2nd April 2016, 02/04/2016, 02-04-2016, April 2nd, 2016, etc
- **The Salutation:** This is the kind of greeting with which the writer opens his or her letter. It is written at the left hand side of the paper, immediately below the address of the recipient. The salutation is always followed by a comma. For example, Dear Sir, Dear Madam, etc. Here, abbreviations are allowed with titles, such as Mr., Mrs., Miss., Dr. etc. However, one can decide to drop the full stop after each title.
- **The Title or Heading of the Letter:** This is written below the salutation and shows the subject matter of the letter. Titles or headings can be written in either upper or lower case. However, if written in lower case, titles must be underlined. Also, a writer may decide to write titles in bold print.
- **The Body of the Letter:** This section contains all the information which the letter aims to pass across. The section also contains the introduction, middle and the conclusion of the letter. The introductory part gives background information on and purpose of the letter. The middle part presents and develops the item of information the letter is intended for in short paragraphs. The concluding part

states the desire or hope about what should happen next. This is done in order to avoid abrupt ending of the letter.

- **The Complementary Close or Subscription:** This is written about two lines from the body of the letter, at the left or right of the page. The most acceptable form of Complementary Close or Subscription in formal letters is “Yours faithfully”, with “Y” in upper case and “f” in lower case. Other alternative ways of closing formal letters include, “Yours truly”, “Best regards” and “Sincerely yours”. Note that only the first letter of the Complementary Close is written in upper case. A comma should be used at the end of the Complementary Close, before the signature and the name of the writer.
- **The Signature and Name of the Writer:** The signature of the writer should follow the Complementary Close or Subscription, then his or her full name. A woman should identify her gender by indicating her marital status, putting “Miss”, if she is not married, and “Mrs” if she is married; or else “Ms” which applies to both married and unmarried women. All these titles should be written in bracket after her full name.

Example of Formal Letter

122 Waziri Gidado Road,
Gwale Local Government,
Kano.

April 2nd, 2016.

The Registrar,
Bayero University,
P.M.B. 3011,
Kano.

Dear Madam,

Letter of Request for Deferment of My Studies

I write to inform you that I am a returning level two student of the Department of English and Literary Studies. Due to financial problems, I was unable to pay for my registration fees. Thus, before the registration is closed, I write this letter to request for the deferment of my studies for this academic session, until next year. I can then continue from my current level of study.

In view of the unfortunate situation I have encountered, I pray that my request will receive your kind consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Signature

Full Name

INFORMAL LETTER

This is a letter written to family members, relatives, friends and acquaintances; as such, it is otherwise known as a friendly or personal letter. Informal letters can be written for a number of purposes, such as to congratulate someone on the birth of a new baby, to express sympathy, to offer greetings, etc. Due to the level of familiarity between the writer and the recipient of an informal letter, the language of the letter is expected to be relaxed, casual and chatty. However, the level of informality in these letters may differ from one person to another. This means that the language a person uses in writing to his father, uncle or a very senior brother could be quite different from the one he or she uses to write to a friend or colleague.

Format of Informal Letter

- **Address:** Informal letters only have the address of the writer, written at the top right hand side of the first page, followed by the date. Like in formal letters, the

address of informal letters can be in a blocked or indented form. The writer may decide to punctuate the address and the date or he/she may leave out the punctuation altogether (but one must be consistent).

- **The Date:** This should be written below the address.
- **The Salutation:** In informal letters, the salutation usually takes the form of “Dear Sani”, or “Dear Joseph”. For close relatives, one can use “My Dear Mother”, “Dear Daddy”, etc. Note that a writer may decide to write the salutation in upper and lower case as the above examples show, or he/she may capitalise only the first letter of the salutation, as in “My dear brother”. The salutation is always followed by a comma.
- **The Body of the Letter:** This is the stage where the writer explains the message he or she wants to convey to the reader. The tone of the language of informal letters is very important, as it shows the level of familiarity and closeness between the two parties. In these kinds of letters, a writer may share jokes, or use idioms and slangs. The language of informal letters may be used in its contracted forms such as “doesn’t” for “does not”, “you’re” for “you are”, “isn’t” for “is not”, “I’ve” for “I have”, etc. One may begin an informal letter by asking about the person’s health and family welfare.
- **The Complementary Close:** For informal letters, the Complementary Close or Subscription may include any of these forms: “Yours sincerely”, “Yours affectionately”, “Yours” and “Your loving daughter”. Complementary Close should be followed by a comma.
- **The Name of the Writer:** This should be written below the Complementary Close.

Example of an Informal Letter

35 Junjimi Street,

Sani Mainagge Quarters,
Kano State.

4th May, 2016.

Dear Sa'id

How are you getting on? How's the weather at your new place? It's terribly hot here in Kano. I hope you are hale and hearty. The main reason for writing this letter to you is to ask about how well you have settled in your new surroundings. You know since you were given a transfer of service from Kano to Edo, I've been unable to contact you, because of my hectic school schedule. For someone like you, who has never travelled to the southern part of this country, I am sure you are experiencing something of a culture shock. As you are witnessing it first-hand now, the norms, values and, to some extent, religion of the people in the south are completely different from those practiced largely in the north. This is not to talk of changes in weather and food. I know you are finding it very difficult to adjust to this new experience; however, since your work involves mingling with a lot of people, I am confident that in no time you will get acclimatized.

I would also want to tell you that my friend Bola had her convocation ceremony last month. It was quite a memorable occasion. Many important personalities had graced the occasion and we snapped a lot of pictures. I'm eagerly looking forward to ours next year. I know you will take some days off to attend it, huh? Lest I forget, Ahmad and Idris asked me to extend their greetings and well wishes to you. Thanks a lot.

Yours sincerely,

Dawood

SEMI-FORMAL LETTER

This is a letter, which shares some characteristics of both formal and informal letters; as such, it is regarded as a letter which is neither formal nor informal. A semi-formal letter is the letter one writes to someone he/she knows, but does not share cordial relationship or familiarity with. In other words, this type of letter is sent to adults as individuals on private or family issues. Also included as semi-formal letters are those letters written to a former school head or boss for information, letters to an adult family friend, letters to a father's or mother's friends and similar persons. This kind of letter contains only the address of the writer, followed by salutation (Dear Mr. Taiwo, Dear Sir, etc). This is

followed by the body of the letter, which should be written in a polite and respectful manner. However, the language should not be too serious to the extent that the letter looks more formal than semi-formal. The closing of a semi-formal may range from more formal to less formal. Thus, the letter can be closed with “Yours sincerely”, “Yours truly”, “Best regards”, “Cordially” etc. Finally, the writer should write his/her name in full, or his/her initials and the surname below the Complementary Close.

MEMORANDUM (Memo)

Another way through which information is shared within and outside organisations is through the memorandum. The memorandum is a form of correspondence meant to convey information to members of an organisations or to other organisations and bodies. In some disciplines like Law, a memorandum is regarded as a record of the terms of a transaction or contract, such as policy memo, memorandum of understanding (MoU), memorandum of association, etc. Memorandum is divided into two types: internal and external.

Internal Memorandum

This is a memorandum written and circulated to people within the same organisation. In other words, internal memorandum is a brief written communication aimed at passing information from an organisation to its various employees or between and among officials in the organisation. The topics of internal memorandum may range from general notification, request for action, to invitation for meetings.

Format of Internal Memorandum

The format of memorandum varies from one organisation to another. That is, in writing a memorandum, some organisations may have specific format peculiar to them. In general, an internal memorandum has the following format:

- **Heading:** This comes at the top of the page and shows the name of the organisation, as well as the caption “Internal Memorandum”.
- **From:** This comes at the left hand side of the page and shows the title of the officer writing the memorandum.
- **To:** This comes below “From” and indicates the designation of the recipients of the memorandum
- **Date:** This is written below the column “To”
- **Subject:** The subject or title of the message is written below the sections above. This can be written in upper case alone or in upper and lower cases.
- **The Body:** This is the actual information the memorandum intends to convey.
- **Name of the Writer:** These come at the end of the memorandum.

Sample of Internal Memorandum

Muzammil Travelling Agency

No. 233 Bompai, Kano

Internal Memorandum

From: General Manager

To: All Staff

Date: December 23rd, 2015

Notice of Meeting

This is to inform you that the annual end of the year meeting is scheduled to take place as follows:

Date: Monday, 28th, December 2015

Venue: Musa Abbati Room

Time: 10:00 am

The following Agenda will be discussed:

- Opening prayer.
- Brief remarks by the General Manager.
- Successes recorded in this outgoing year.
- Challenges and problems encountered.
- Way forward.
- Any Other Business.
- Closing prayer.

Muzammil Haruna

External Memorandum

This memorandum is usually written to send messages to the general public or other external organisations and bodies, in order to convey information on certain specific issues. In other words, an external memorandum is written for the people outside a company or organisation; and is written in a more formal approach. Like in most continuous writing tasks, external memorandum has an introduction, main body and conclusion. It is important to note that the format of external memorandum differs from one company to another; and depends on the person or organisation to which the memorandum will be sent. However, most of external memoranda are written in form of formal letters.

EMAIL

The Electronic Mail (Email) is one of the newest and most sophisticated forms of correspondence between individuals and organisations. An email is a message which may contain text, files, images or other attachments, sent through a network to an individual or group of individuals. In other words, an email is a digital message transmitted electronically from one computer user to one or more recipients through a network. Email has a number of advantages over other forms of correspondence, in that it is a faster and more instant way of sending and receiving information. Through an email, an individual can instantly transmit a large volume of information to a wide range of recipients. However, for someone to send or receive email messages, he or she must have an email address and connect to a server. An email address must contain a username and a password, which allows the user to access the email. Nearly all organisations, nowadays, have an email address and website, which they use to correspond with their employees, as well as the general public. Some of the commonly used online email services include Gmail, Yahoo and Hotmail.

How to Write an Email

Email can be viewed or received through a computer or a cellphone that has an internet connection. When sending an email, the individual must first access his or her email address. After accessing the email page, one should click on “compose” button and a panel will appear, which contains three options. The first is designated “To”; and it is where the email address of the recipient of the message should be written. The second, tagged “subject”, is optional; and it is where a brief description of the contents of the message can be given. The last is the “compose email” button, in which the actual message to be sent should be written. One advantage of email is that if a sender wants to attach pictures, audio/audio files, he or she can do so by clicking the “attach file” button, which leads the sender to different locations, where pictures, audio and video recordings are stored. After selecting the appropriate file, one should, finally, click on “send” and the

message is instantly transmitted to the recipient's inbox. Therefore, the recipient can easily open and view the contents of the message via his or her email address.

REPORT WRITING

According to Ubah (1998 p. 193), "A report is a document providing an account of events witnessed, work carried out, or investigation conducted, together with conclusion and often recommendation arrived at, as a result of the investigation. In other words, a report is a detailed account of events that someone has thoroughly observed, heard, done or investigated and presented as an official document. A report is usually written to guide organisations in policy formulation and decision making; it is usually written on the basis of some stated objectives and for a particular category of audience. A person who is tasked with writing a report is usually given instructions and guidelines on how to go about writing the report. This may include a clearly structured format, consisting of sections, headings and sub-headings, so that the location of information can be easily followed.

Qualities of a Good Report

- A good report must be clear, accurate and unambiguous.
- A good report must be well structured and highly organised. It should have sections and sub-sections
- A good report must be informative.
- A good report must have clearly defined objectives and a scope.
- A good report must consider the needs of potential readers.

Language of Reporting

The language of reporting is determined by the purpose and audience for which the report is written. Reports are usually meant to give analysis, evaluation or description, based on

research activity; as such, they are generally written in a formal style. The following usages should be avoided in report writing and other formal discourses:

- **Contraction:** This includes “isn’t” for “is not”, “can’t” for “cannot”, “don’t” for “do not”, “I’m” for “I am”, “I’ve” for “I have”, “You’re” for “You are”, etc.
- **Cliches:** These are overused phrases which lose their meaning and effect. For example, “in a nutshell”, “it is against this background that”, “at the end of the day”, “the fact of the matter”, “at this point in time”, “in the final analysis”, etc.
- **Idioms:** For example, “put all your eggs in one basket”, “a pain in the butt”, “bury the hatchet”, “call a spade a spade”, “flog a dead horse”, “icing on the cake”, etc.
- **Archaism:** These are words or phrases considered old-fashioned or obsolete. For example, “thee”, “thy”, “thou”, “nay”, “ain’t”, “doth”, “hath”, “dropt”, “dost”, etc.
- **Slang:** Slang is an expression, which is considered very informal and, therefore, not used in formal writing. For example, “affluent”, “frenemy”, “unreal”, “diss”, “blimey”, “cheers”, “chuffed”, “gobsmacked”, “gutted”, “haggle”, “wonky”, etc.
- **Uncommon Abbreviations and Acronyms:** There are abbreviations and acronyms which are regarded as standard, because they are commonly used in varieties of discourses. These include “govt.” for “government”, “sch.” for “school”, UNICEF, BUK etc. Apart from these kinds of approved abbreviations and acronyms, all others (especially those used in text messaging) should never be used in formal writing.

Types of Report

Reports can be classified on the basis of their nature, formality, purpose and functions. They can, therefore, be regarded as routine reports, eyewitness reports, investigative reports, progress reports and research project reports. However, all the above types of report can be grouped into two main types: Formal report and Informal report.

- **Formal Report:** This is other known as official report, as it is meant for official purposes. It is written to provide information, analyse issues and make recommendations on how to solve a problem or make a decision. Examples of formal reports include: research project report, police report, evaluation report, etc
- **Informal Report:** An informal report is a report that does not follow the rules and guidelines directed by an organisation. It can be written to send information to only one person or for a small number of individuals. Such reports are usually shared among co-workers within an organisation in form of a memorandum.

Structure of Formal Report

The structure of a formal report depends upon one's departmental or organisational requirement; however, the format explained below is largely used in writing formal reports.

- **Title Page:** This should contain the title of the report, the name of the reporter and the date in the report is compiled and submitted.
- **Table of Contents:** This should contain all the chapters or headings, together with their page numbers. This allows the reader to easily locate all parts of the report.
- **Executive Summary (Abstract):** This gives a very brief explanation on the contents of the report. It includes the purpose of the report, the method of investigation, the major findings, conclusion and recommendations (if any).
- **Introduction (Terms of Reference):** This sets the tone for the main body of the report. In this section, the reporter should clearly discuss all the necessary background information, aim and objectives of the report, as well as definition of all the abbreviations and acronyms used in the report.
- **Method of Investigation:** Here, the writer is expected to give a detailed description of all the methods he or she used to gather the data for the report. This may include a list of all the equipment used, explanation of data collection

procedures (such as questionnaire, interview, observation, discussion, etc.), limitations of the methods used, as well as all the problems encountered.

- **Findings and Conclusion:** This section deals with the logical presentation of the findings of the report. To further support the result of the investigation, the writer may decide to include diagrams, tables and graphs. This is followed by the conclusion, which may either take the form of highlighting the most important points of the report or show the overall significance of the research.
- **Recommendation:** This usually takes the form of a call to action. The recommendations given must be in line with the findings of the report.
- **Appendices (Annexes):** In this section, the reporter should include all the supporting document and information used, which have not been included in the report. This may include questionnaires, transcript, graphs etc.
- **Bibliography:** In this section, a reporter should list, in alphabetical order and by author, all published sources referred to in the report.

SPEECH WRITING

The *Longman Dictionary* defines ‘speech’ as a talk, especially a formal one, about a particular subject given to a group of people. Thus, public speaking is the verbal presentation of speech (written) to an audience of physical proximity, using a microphone or other voice equipment, or social proximity through radio or television. Formal speaking is undertaken at a specific time and for a specific reason. Formal speeches require thoughtful preparation. The process of preparing a formal speech is similar to that of writing a paper.

Types of Speeches

- i. **Informative speech** presents new information to an audience e.g. lecture, orientation, news broadcast, etc.
- ii. **Persuasive speech** aims at changing an attitude, belief or even move an audience to action, e.g. debate, advertisement and campaign speech.

- iii. **Special occasion speech** is meant to entertain, or amuse an audience. It is also used to acknowledge a special reason for the audience presence. Example of this is the speech honouring special personalities.

Features of a Formal Speech

i. **Structure**

The speech should be composed of three parts: introduction, body and conclusion (as discussed above).

ii. **Language**

The language you use should be appropriate for the audience; therefore, one should consider the following:

- Use formal Standard English.
- Use of technical terms should be sparingly; and one must be sure to define them.
- No use of slang, jargon and euphemisms.

iii. **Audience involvement**

One should make one's speech more listener-friendly by: using personal pronouns e.g. 'we believe' instead of 'people believe'; 'you may think' instead of 'one may think'; etc.

Using rhetorical questions instead of making statements.

Writing a Speech

In order to prepare a good formal speech, one should follow the steps below:

- i. Identify the purpose and task at hand.
- ii. Select a topic (consider the occasion/time).
- iii. Analyse the audience (consider their age, background and interest).
- iv. Gather materials and organise the contents.
- v. Determine the method of delivery (manuscript speech, memorized speech or extemporaneous speech).

- vi. Rehearse the speech (remember the use of verbal and nonverbal signals) and deliver it purposefully (focus on your purpose for speaking and pay attention to audience feedback).
- vii. Use audio-visual devices (if appropriate), like audio recordings, image/films, slides, charts, etc.

CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

When applying for a job, it is paramount for job seekers to give a good first impression to potential employers. This can only be achieved through writing a good Curriculum Vitae (CV). Also called resume, CV is a personal marketing document that job seekers use to sell themselves to potential employers. It is an important step in securing a job. As such, when it is written well, the candidate stands a good chance of securing his/her dream job. Conversely, when it is poorly written, the candidate may face rejection repeatedly from employers. A CV is expected to explain to your prospective employers a lot about you, including your professional history, skills, abilities and achievements, as well as why you are the best person for the job on offer.

The University of Southampton guide for writing a CV identifies the following ten (10) rules of writing a successful CV:

1. **Simplicity:** A successful CV should not be overcomplicated with too many categories or too many information than required.
2. **Highlights:** Because CV is a marketing tool, one should make sure it highlights all one's personal and professional achievements to date.
3. **Truthful:** Although it is important to highlight all one's achievements, one should not be overly boastful. Also, one should not fabricate or falsify any information in the CV, as it will become known to one's employer at some point.
4. **Unique:** The style and tone one uses in writing one's CV should be personal to one. In other words, one should be direct, positive and personal.

5. **Tailor:** The contents of one's CV should be tailored in line with the current job application requirements, as well as the job description. That is, one needs to be flexible when writing a CV.
6. **Word Processed:** A good CV must be word processed. It should be typed and spelling/grammar checked using a word processor. This will help correct all the possible errors in the CV. One also needs to avoid using slang, colloquialism and clichés.
7. **Succinct:** When writing a CV, one needs to be short and concise. Employers are never impressed with several pages of useless information. This, however, does not mean that many information should be lumped up together. One should always try to capture the attention of one's potential employer through the CV, by keeping them wanting to find more about one.
8. **Chronological:** In all the sub-headings of a CV, information is given in a reverse chronological order. In other words, the most recent events should come first; followed by the next; and so on.
9. **Review:** One should give one's CV to a respected colleague to critically proofread and review it. This way, some useful suggestions might be given to one on how to improve the CV.
10. **Quality:** A CV should be typed in an A4 sized paper, using an appropriate font size. Information should be well spaced so that the CV looks neat, qualitative, professional and easy to read. You can use bullet points to identify and separate information, but make sure to never use a coloured text in a CV.

Format of Writing a CV

Although a CV can be written in a variety of ways, based on the skill and experience of the writer, as well as the job requirements, there are particular sections that employers expect to see in a CV. These are explained below:

Personal Details

This is positioned at the top of the page. It includes name, professional title and contact details. Under no circumstance should you make the title of your CV as “Curriculum Vitae” or “CV”. Instead, your name should be taken as the title; and should be followed by your address, phone number(s) and email address.

Personal Profile

Also called personal statement, career profile or professional profile, this section is one of the most important parts of a CV. This is a short paragraph that gives your prospective employer an overview about who you are, your career goals and what you can offer to the company. Your profile should be tailored to every job you applied for, by highlighting the specific qualities that make you the most suitable candidate for the job.

Employment History

Employment history should start with the most recent or the most relevant employment information. Even if you are not involved in any paid employment, it is likely that you are doing something at the time from which you have learned new skills. For each previous position, state your job title, the organisation you worked for, dates employed, projects involved in, positions or responsibilities held, achievements and experience gained. If you have many years’ worth of experience, you can reduce the details of old or irrelevant roles.

Education and Qualifications

Like the preceding section, this should also be written in a reverse chronological order. One should include the name of the institutions one attended and the dates he/she attended them. This is followed by the qualifications and grades one achieved. In the case of examinations like WAEC or NECO, one needs not include details of all the subjects taken. They should be grouped together as “9 WAEC Credits” or “7 NECO Credits” and so on.

Additional Sections

There is a range of additional sections that may strengthen your CV and highlight your skills. The following are some sections that can be included:

Key Skills: This section may sometimes come before employment history. You can include your languages and computing skills, noting the level of fluency, as well as evidence of using them. Furthermore, you can include any other skills that you think are appropriate to the job you are applying for.

Hobbies and Interests

If you feel that your CV is still lacking, you can improve it by including your hobbies and interests. However, one must be careful not to include hobbies that may hinder one's chances of getting the job. Avoid mentioning hobbies that add no value to the CV. One should draw only on those that are relevant to the job.

Referees

Generally, people like to include two or three referees at the end of CV. In this section, try to identify reliable referees and include their names, job titles, contact details and their link to you. Alternatively, many people decide to omit this section or state that references are available on request. It is important, though, to seek prior permission from your referees.

What Not to Include in a CV

There are some details that should not be included in the CV. The following are the common ones:

A Headshot

In some countries, it is common to include your picture on your CV. In the Nigerian context, this practice is not allowed.

Age and Date of Birth

The only dates that should be on your CV are those about your employment and qualification information. Your age should not determine your ability to do the job you are applying for. These detail may even count against you in many instances.

Marital Status

Marital status is another information that should not be included in a CV, as it does not influence one's ability to do a job. Many a time, the marital status of an applicant may be used to discriminate against him/her.

MINUTES OF A MEETING

This is among the primary responsibilities of a secretary of a department or organisation. Minutes of a meeting is meant to take notes of what happens at any membership meeting. The notes are called 'minutes': a record of official business that occurs during a meeting. The secretary has to first study the agenda of the meeting which serves as a skeletal outline.

Characteristics of Minutes

- A minute should indicate the date, time and place of the meeting, the name of the chair of the meeting and the list of those present (attendance).
- It should record an explanation of any matter, including any motion made and action taken (resolution).
- It should show an indication of the next meeting, date, time and place (the time of adjournment), the writers' signature, name and date.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. The different means of sharing information between two or more individuals are collectively known as _____

- A. Memoranda B. Reports C. Fliers D. Correspondences

2. The following are different forms of correspondence except_____
- A. Email B. Essay C. Text message D. Letter
3. _____ is a kind of letter which is written to relatives and friends.
- A. Formal letter B. Informal letter C, Semi-formal letter D. None of the above
4. How many address(es) does an informal letter contain?
- A. 1 B. 2 C. 3 D. 0
5. Which of the types of letter has a title?
- A. Formal B. Informal C. Semi-formal D. All of the above
6. In which of the types of letter is the writer required to show familiarity or closeness with the recipient?
- A. Formal B. Informal C. Semi-formal D. All of the above
7. When writing _____ letter, the writer is required to put his/her signature before writing his /her name.
- A. Formal B. Informal C. Semi-formal D. All of the above
8. _____ is an expression of greeting, which writers normally begin a letter with?
- A. Subscription B. Address C. Salutation D. Greeting
9. A _____ letter contains features of both formal and informal letter?
- A. Formal B. Informal C. Semi-formal D. Semi-informal
10. Which of the following subscriptions is written correctly?
- A. Yours faithfully, B. Yours Faithfully, C. Yours' faithfully D. Yours' Faithfully

11. _____ is a brief written document meant to pass information among workers within an organisation.

A. Memorandum B. Circular C. Letter D. Correspondence

12. _____ is the difference between circulars and external memorandum.

A. Subject matter B. Purpose C. Audience D. All of the above

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