

SOFT SKILLS

(BAS 105)

Unit-3: Reading and Writing Skills:

Syllabus : Reading style: Skimming; Scanning; Churning & Assimilation, Effective writing tools and methods: Inductive Deductive; Exposition; Linear; Interrupted; Spatial & Chronological etc, Official and Business Letter writing, Agenda, Notices, Minutes of meeting

CO 3 - Students will be able to create substantial base by the formation of strong professional vocabulary for its application at different platforms and through numerous modes as Comprehension, reading and writing.

INTRODUCTION

According to Richard Steele, 'Reading is to mind what exercise is to body'. Akin to keeping one's body fit with regular exercises, reading helps to keep the mind active. Comprehending what we read is the most demanding aspect of our reading. Students and professionals need to read a variety of texts in order to understand concepts, enhance their knowledge and to know what is going on around them. However, if they are not aware of certain reading techniques they may feel that they are wasting time in reading texts. When they learn these techniques and practise them while reading, they may find that their reading is more meaningful, fruitful, and enjoyable.

TECHNIQUES FOR GOOD COMPREHENSION

As we have already discussed, poor comprehension skills are usually attributable to one or more factors: lack of interest, lack of concentration, failure to understand a word, a sentence, or relationships among sentences, or failure to understand how information fits together.

In this section, we will look at the underlying aspects of text you need to be aware of and the techniques you should develop and practise to hone your reading skills:

- Skimming and scanning • Non-verbal signals
- Structure of the text
- Structure of paragraphs • Punctuation

Scanning

Before starting to read a text in detail, you should take a moment to preview the text. Read quickly, without pausing to study the details. This is called skim reading or skimming. You should understand

- for which audience the text was written (general public, professionals, laymen . . .);
- what type of text it is (report, informal letter, formal letter, article, advertisement . . .);
- what the purpose of the author is (to describe, to inform, to explain, to instruct, to persuade); and
- the general contents of the text.

After having skimmed the text, you can study it in more detail, reading more slowly and carefully and looking for specific information that you are interested in. This is called scanning.

Non-verbal Signals

The meaning of a text is not only conveyed by means of words. All texts also contain non-verbal

signs. Non-verbal signs may include certain style features, such as different fonts, bold print, underlining, or italics. The meaning of these style features can vary from one text to another. In one text italics may be used to emphasize a word, in another text italics can be used for subtitles.

Skimming refers to the process of reading only main ideas within a passage to get an overall impression of the content of a reading selection.

How to Skim:

- * Read the title.
- * Read the introduction or the first paragraph.
- * Read the first sentence of every other paragraph.
- * Read any headings and sub-headings.
- * Notice any pictures, charts, or graphs.
- * Notice any italicized or boldface words or phrases.
- * Read the summary or last paragraph.

Scanning is a reading technique to be used when you want to find specific information quickly. In scanning you have a question in your mind and you read a passage only to find the answer, ignoring unrelated information.

How to Scan:

- * State the specific information you are looking for.
- * Try to anticipate how the answer will appear and what clues you might use to help you locate the answer. For example, if you were looking for a certain date, you would quickly read the paragraph looking only for numbers.

* Use headings and any other aids that will help you identify which sections might contain the information you are looking for.

* Selectively read and skip through sections of the passage.

Churning & Assimilation

Churning and assimilation are the integral part of reading. While skimming and scanning are the quick processes, and the churning and assimilation are slower. The words ‘churning and assimilation’ are related to the processes of stirring up in our mind the ideas, context, structure, etc., and grasping the contents of the reading text respectively.

There are several ways to present information when writing, including those that employ **inductive** and **deductive reasoning**. The difference can be stated simply:

- **Inductive** reasoning presents facts and then wraps them up with a **conclusion**.
- **Deductive** reasoning presents a **thesis statement** and then provides supportive facts or examples.

Which should the writer use? It depends on content, the intended **audience**, and your overall **purpose**.

If you want your **audience** to *discover new things with you*, then **inductive** writing might make sense. Here is an example:

My dog Max wants to chase every non-human living creature he sees, whether it is the cats in the house or rabbits and squirrels in the backyard. Sources indicate that this is a behavior typical of Jack Russell terriers. While Max is a mixed breed dog, he is approximately the same size and has many of the typical markings of a Jack Russell. From these facts along with his behaviors, we surmise that Max is indeed at least part Jack Russell terrier.

Within that short paragraph, you learned about Max’s manners and a little about what he might look like, and then the **concluding** sentence connected these ideas together. This kind of writing often keeps the reader’s attention, as he or she must read all the pieces of the puzzle before they are connected.

Purposes for this kind of writing include creative writing and perhaps some persuasive essays, although much academic work is done in deductive form.

If your **audience** is not likely going to read the entire written piece, then **deductive** reasoning might make more sense, as the reader can look for what he or she wants by quickly scanning first sentences of each paragraph. Here is an example:

My backyard is in dire need of cleaning and new landscaping. The Kentucky bluegrass that was planted there five years ago has been all but replaced by Creeping Charlie, a particularly invasive weed. The stone steps leading to the house are in some disrepair, and there are some slats missing from the fence. Perennials were planted three years ago, but the moles and rabbits destroyed many of the bulbs, so we no longer have flowers in the spring.

The reader knows from the very first sentence that the backyard is a mess! This paragraph could have ended with a clarifying conclusion sentence; while it might be considered redundant to do so, the scientific community tends to work through deductive reasoning by providing (1) a premise or argument – which could also be called a thesis statement, (2) then evidence to support the premise, and (3) finally the conclusion.

Purposes for this kind of writing include business letters and project documents, where the client is more likely to skim the work for generalities or to hunt for only the parts that are important to him or her. Again, scientific writing tends to follow this format as well, and research papers greatly benefit from **deductive** writing.

Whether one method or another is chosen, there are some other important considerations. First, it is important that the facts/evidence be true. Perform research carefully and from appropriate sources; make sure ideas are cited properly. You might need to avoid absolute words such as “always,” “never,” and “only,” because they exclude any anomalies. Try not to write questions: the writer’s job is to provide answers instead. Lastly, avoid quotes in thesis statements or conclusions, because they are not your own words – and thus undermine your authority as the paper writer.

EFFECTIVE WRITING TOOLS

Effective Writing is writing which has a logical flow of ideas and is cohesive. This means it holds together well because there are links between sentences and paragraphs. It is readable i.e., clear, accurate, and concise. When writing on a paper, try to get your ideas across in such a way that the audience will understand them effortlessly, unambiguously, and rapidly that is, in a straightforward way. The five features of effective writings are:-

Focus: Focus is the topic/subject/thesis established by the writer in response to the writing task. The writer must clearly establish a focus to fulfill the assignment of the prompt. The focus must be determined in light of the method of development chosen by the writer. If the reader is confused about the subject matter, the writer has not effectively established a focus. If the reader is engaged and not confused, the writer probably has been effective in establishing a focus.

- **Organization:** Organization is the progression and completeness of ideas. What the writer establishes for the reader is a well-organized composition, which exhibits a constancy of purpose through the development of elements forming an effective beginning, middle, and end.

- **Support and Elaboration:** Support and Elaboration form the extension and development of the topic. The writer provides sufficient elaboration to present the ideas or events clearly. The two important concepts in determining whether details are supportive are the concepts of relatedness and sufficiency.

- **Grammatical Conventions:** Grammatical conventions involve correctness in sentence formation and usage. The errors in the sentence formation will lead the reader's misunderstanding of the ideas conveyed.

- **Style:** Style is the control of language that is appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context of the writing. This refers to choices of words choice and sentence fluency. Skillful use of precise, purposeful vocabulary enhances the effectiveness of the composition through the use of appropriate words, phrases and description to engage the audience.

TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE WRITING:- To present process, methods and ideas in the most suitable and understandable format for the target audience. Hence, the content should be clear, correct, accurate and descriptive.

Clarity: this refers to the understanding of concepts and clearly ourselves first and then present it in a manner that offers clarity to the reader. The writer should try to understand the subject from the audience perspective. Words such as 'maybe', 'probably' not only

confuse the readers but also reflect a lack of clarity on the writer's part.

To achieve flow in writing : make sentence relationships apparent, use cohesive devices to join sentences (however, since, because, since, though), interlink sentences with proper ideas, arrange sentences in logical ideas and order (to achieve clarity), deep thoughts and development.

Spatial Pattern : it emphasizes the visual description of a particular idea, detail, related to location and direction etc. The description goes from inside to outside, left to right, bottom to top (varies from the process of the object). Example - 5 times higher than the other.

• **Linear Pattern** : linear or sequential fashion present logical progression of a process.

Example - the manufacturing process the production sugar is extracted or leached from sliced sugar beets (cossettes), after which juice is purified through a series of milk of lime and CO₂ process steps. The filtered juice is evaporated (thickened) and sugar is crystallized from it.

• **Chronological Pattern** : this refers to ideas organized in a paragraph in order of appearance in time, gives the importance of date and time, followed by records from earliest to recent. example - describing the education and achievement in an interview.

• **Exposition Pattern** : this refers to detail or explanation of a topic, called 'informative' followed up by examples and illustrations (figures) to support that information.

Example - Photosynthesis, the process by which green plants and certain other organisms transform light energy into chemical energy. During photosynthesis in green plants, light energy is captured and used to convert water, carbon dioxide, and minerals into oxygen and energy-rich organic compounds.

• **Explanation Pattern** : this means explanation of a central idea, a statement that makes something comprehensible by describing the relevant structure or operation or circumstances etc. followed by the topic sentence, main idea, supporting sentences

and adequate justification. Example - when introducing new methods of extracting metals from ores, we need to explain why this new method has been introduced or better than earlier.

● **Interrupted Pattern** : this refers to the use of punctuation marks like , (), -, !, “ “, etc.

to add emphasis to the sentence and interrupt the sentence in between. It also means

breaking the chunks of ideas primarily to elaborate and emphatic (clear understanding).

The pause/ interruption in the dialogue due to tonal variations, gaps or some vocalized

sound (like umm, hmm, ah etc.). Example- Watch out! “Our team is going to win”.

WRITING METHODS

Writing is a means of communication and an interpersonal skill to communicate ideas and thoughts in a readable form. We can use several different writing methods to make the writing more engaging and exciting and keep the audience reading until the end of the piece.

ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS:-

- Work on pronunciation.
- Watch native speakers in movies, plays, songs etc.
- Prepare and practice, to eliminate nervousness.
- Know your audience and speak accordingly.
- Organize thoughts in a purposeful manner.
- Be yourself. Show your personality.
- Use of humors and storytelling.
- Don't always read while speaking. Save the reading only for remembering points.
- Use appropriate gestures with a good voice.
- Make sure to be audible to everyone.
- Speak with apt rate i.e. not too slow/too fast.
- Get yourself updated with vocabulary.
- Always explain unfamiliar points/words etc.
- Talk to yourself or find a partner.

BUSINESS LETTERS

Business communications, to a large extent, depend on well-written letters. We become part of an organization by sending to them our job application along with résumé. Once selected, we write them an acceptance letter. After becoming an integral part of the organization, many business letters such as instruction, complaint, sales, tender, and collection letters are written on a daily basis. Some of the important business letters are discussed in this section along with samples.

Depending on their purpose, business letters can be classified into various types, as shown in Table 15.9. The table also lists the purposes of these letters. Among these, order, enquiry and claim, and adjustment letters are mostly informative. They either ask for information or provide information for further action. On the other hand, credit, collection, sales, fund-raising, and job application types of letters are persuasive, as they attempt to persuade or motivate readers toward a desired action. In the following sections, a few routine types of business letters are discussed.

Types of Business Letters

1. Cover Letters

First up, a cover letter is a one-page document that candidates submit along with their resumes. It takes the employer on a guided journey of their greatest career & life achievements.

No matter if you're a student or an experienced professional, a cover letter is an important document to show your skills, experience, and why you're fit for the position you are applying for.

Tips:

- Don't try to fit your whole career in your cover letter. It should have a carefully curated collection of stories.
- Don't state a skill that you don't actually have. You'll definitely regret it when you're asked to use that skill in the interview.
- Keep it concise and to the point. The employer does not have time to sit down and read an entire memoir.

2. Business Invites

These letters are a formal way to reach out to a company or an individual and invite them to attend an event hosted by your company.

As business events tend to be formal, an invitation letter is most likely to be formal as well. But, if you are organizing a casual event, it should be reflected in your invite and tone.

Tips:

- Write the letter in such a way that it builds anticipation about the event.
- Clearly mention the date, time, and venue.
- Set a friendly follow-up to remind them of the event.

3. Complaint Letter

This letter is a way to formally express your disappointment formally. You can report a bad experience, poor customer service, or let a company know that their products didn't meet your expectations.

The key to this letter is that it shouldn't sound like you are nagging, but also shouldn't lose its importance if you want to be taken seriously.

Tips:

- Don't get too emotional or over-the-top angry. Just state the facts.
- Be cordial and professional. Let them know the entire story and how'd you like them to rectify their mistakes.

4. Letter of Resignation

A letter of resignation is a document that notifies your employer that you're leaving your job. Whether you work at a coffee shop or a big-shot company, it's proper protocol to submit a letter of resignation before you leave.

Also, if you have an urge to send an incendiary letter of resignation, don't give in! You might cross paths with these people again.

Tips:

- Keep it simple, stick to the facts, and don't start complaining. Resignation letters are not the right place for complaints & critiques.
- Thank your boss and/or the company for the opportunities and describe some of the key things you learned on the job.
- If you're in a high-profile position, consider your words super carefully because your letter would likely be made public.

5. Order Letters

Also known as "purchase orders", these letters are used to order things or buy material. They act as a legal record, documenting the transaction between the buyer and seller.

These letters are generally written by one business to another business to make an order or to modify it.

Tips:

- Be concise and clear to avoid any misunderstanding or confusion.
- Include everything the seller would need to deliver the order and get the payment.
- Provide contact information for future conversations or follow-up.

6. Letter of Recommendation

These letters intend to recommend someone for an internship, job, fellowship, or other such opportunities.

Before hiring an employee, many employers ask for such kinds of letters. It tells why the person the letter is about is a good person to hire and describes their strengths & abilities.

Tips:

- Be honest and don't agree to write a letter to someone you don't know.
- Use specific examples to highlight the person's strengths, skills, and abilities.
- Include why you believe the candidate would excel in the role.

Many times, people overlook the importance of writing persuasive business letters because the concept just doesn't interest them. As a result of which, people don't know how to write a business letter.

Well, if you're in the same boat, we've got your back.

Writing a clear and concise business letter isn't a big deal, as long as you follow the established rules for layout and language.