PLANNING AND WRITING BUSINESS MESSAGE

**Types of audiences in technical Writing**

One of the first things to do when you analyze an audience is to identify its type (or types—it’s rarely just one type). The common division of audiences into categories is as follows:

* **Experts:** These are the people who know the business or organization (and possibly the theory and the product) inside and out. They designed it, they tested it, they know everything about it. Often, they have advanced degrees and operate in academic settings or in research and development areas of the government and technology worlds.
* **Technicians:** These are the people who build, operate, maintain, and repair the items that the experts design and theorize about. Theirs is a highly technical knowledge as well, but of a more practical nature.
* **Executives:** These are the people who make business, economic, administrative, legal, governmental, political decisions about the products of the experts and technicians. Executives are likely to have as little technical knowledge about the subject as non-specialists. For many of you, this will be the primary audience.
* **Non-specialists:** These readers have the least technical knowledge of all. They want to use the new product to accomplish their tasks; they want to understand the new power technology enough to know whether to vote for or against it in the upcoming bond election. Or, they may just be curious about a specific technical matter and want to learn about it—but for no specific, practical reason. Chances are, these readers will represent your secondary audience.

**Audience Analysis Background-knowledge, experience, training:**

One of your most important concerns is just how much knowledge, experience, or training you can expect in your readers. If you expect some of your readers to lack certain background, do you automatically supply it in your document? Imagine you're writing a guide to using a software product that runs under Microsoft Windows. How much can you expect your readers to know about Windows? If some are likely to know little about Windows, should you provide that information? If you say no, then you run the risk of customers' getting frustrated with your product. If you say yes to adding background information on Windows, you increase your work effort and add to the page count of the document (and thus to the cost).

Obviously, there's no easy answer to this question— part of the answer may involve just how small a segment of the audience needs that background information.

Audience Analysis Needs and interests:

To plan your document, you need to know what your audience is going to expect from that document. Imagine how readers will want to use your document; what will they demand from it. For example, imagine you are writing a manual on how to use a new microwave oven—what are your readers going to expect to find in it? Imagine you're under contract to write a background report on global warming for a national real estate association—what do they want to read about; and, equally important, what do they not want to read about?

Audience Analysis Other demographic characteristics: There are many other characteristics about your readers that might have an influence on how you should design and write your document for example, age groups, type of residence, area of residence, gender, political preferences, and so on.

Audience Analysis Problem: More than one audience.

You're likely to find that your report is for more than one audience. For example, it may be seen by technical people (experts and technicians) and administrative people (executives). What to do? You can either write all the sections so that all the audiences of your document can understand them. Or you can write each section strictly for the audience that would be interested in it, then use headings and section introductions to alert your audience about where to go and what to stay out of in your report.

Audience Adaptation

Add information readers need to understand your document. Check to see whether certain key information is missing—for example, a critical series of steps from a set of instructions; important background that helps beginners understand the main discussion; definition of key terms.

Omit information your readers do not need. Unnecessary information can also confuse and frustrate readers—after all, it's there so they feel obligated to read it. For example, you can probably chop theoretical discussion from basic instructions.

Change the level of the information you currently have.You may have the right information but it may be produced at too high or too low technical level. It may be at the wrong kind of audience—for example, at an expert audience rather than a technician audience.

Add examples to help readers understand. Examples are one of the most powerful ways to connect with audiences, particularly in instructions. Even in non-instructional text, for example, when you are trying to explain a technical concept, examples are a major help Audience Adaptation Change the organization of your information.

Sometimes, you can have all the right information but arrange it in the wrong way. For example, there can be too much background information up front (or too little) such that certain readers get lost. Sometimes, background information needs to woven into the main information.

Write stronger introductions— both for the whole document and for major sections. People seem to read with more confidence and understanding when they have the "big picture"—a view of what's coming, and how it relates to what they've just read.

Therefore, make sure you have a strong introduction to the entire document—one that makes clear the topic, purpose, audience, and contents of that document. And for each major section within your document, use mini introductions that indicate at least the topic of the section and give an overview of the subtopics to be covered in that section. Audience Adaptation Strengthen transitions.

It may be difficult for readers, particularly non specialists, to see the connections between the main sections of your report, between individual paragraphs. You can make these connections much clearer by adding transition words and by echoing key words more accurately. Words like "therefore," "for example," "however" are transition words— they indicate the logic connecting the previous thought to the upcoming thought. Audience Adaptation Use more or different graphics.

For non-specialist audiences, you may want to use more graphics—and simpler ones at that.

Writing for specialists and experts tends to be less illustrated, less graphically attractive—even boring to the eye! Graphics for specialists tend to be more detailed, more technical. In technical documents for non-specialists, there also tend to be more "decorative" graphics—ones that serve no strict informative at all. Audience Adaptation Break text up or consolidate text into meaningful, usable chunks. For non-specialist readers, you may need to have shorter paragraphs. Notice how much longer paragraphs are in technical documents written for specialists. (Maybe a 6- to 8-line paragraph is the dividing line.) Audience Adaptation Add cross-references to important information. In technical information, you can help non-specialist readers by pointing them to background sources. If you can't fully explain a topic on the spot, point to a book or article where it is.

Describe the three-step writing process.

Planning business messages: analyze the situation, gather information, select the right medium, and organize information

## Three-Step Writing Process

Of the many different forms of communication found throughout business, written communications are perhaps the most crucial because they allow an individual to effectively relate information in a detailed manner. Writing in business is often linear, meaning that a writing process in business communication is often essential to the success of an idea. The **three- step writing process** is a useful way for writers and business personnel to communicate ideas and ensure that their message has a clear purpose and direction.

The three-step writing process in business communication is a writing technique that involves the steps of planning or preparing, writing or drafting, and completing or revising. The purpose of the three-step writing process for persuasive messages and other business communications is to assist writers in outlining and researching their topic before populating the communication with vital information; the process is used most often for advertisements, instruction, and persuasion. It is important that a writer knows their audience well so that the medium of communication can best suit the needs of the audience and the idea being relayed. The three-step writing process is useful in this regard because it allows a writer to manage multiple smaller parts of the project while successfully delivering information through mediums such as email (electronic), letters or memorandums (written), phone calls (oral), and presentations (oral/visual). Compared to other writing methods, the three-step writing process is generally considered to be more formal and planned. One of the largest benefits of the writing technique is that it allows a writer to delve deeper into their intended meaning.

The remainder of this lesson will describe each step of the three-step writing process and explore an example of its usage in business; it should be noted that this is a general guide and there may be some overlap between topics, such as layout and design both being used during the "Write" and "Complete" stages and research or fact-checking occurring during all stages of the writing process.

## Three-Step Writing Process for Business Communications

**Effective business writing** is essential to a company because it creates efficient communication that leads to:

* Increased productivity
* Faster problem solving
* More decisive decision-making
* Increased profits

It also helps boost the organization’s credibility.

To some professionals, writing is a daunting task. So much so that they have a fear of penning ink on paper and often miss deadlines or poorly communicating company or marketing information. The writers writing paralysis ends up wasting company resources such as time and money. The truth is, writing, like any other skill, takes practice to master.

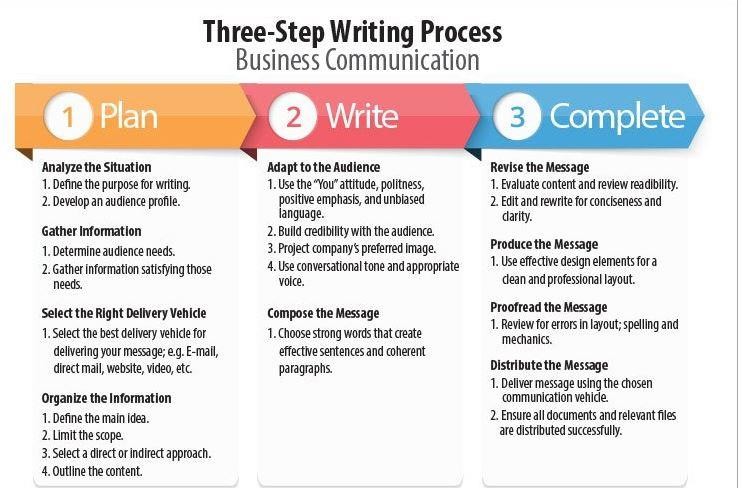
Business writing skills are a necessary skill-set for marketers to master. As part of the job, a marketing professional must write advertising copy, press releases, sales copy, internal reports, social media postings, blog posts, and much more content.

The **three-step writing** process helps [business writers,](http://study.com/articles/Business_Writer_Job_Description_Duties_and_Salary.html) like marketing professionals, create compelling messages in any medium. It allows them to communicate their message effectively while meeting their target audience’s needs. The three-step process also ensures that writers make the best use of their time and the audience’s time. As the writer gets more practice with the three-step writing process, it becomes easier to write.

Below are the steps to the three-step writing process (For a visual representation, *see the* ***Three- Step Writing Process*** *chart below.*).

Three-Step Writing Process

1. Plan
2. Write
3. Complete



## Three-Step Writing Process Details

1. Planning

## Analyze the Situation

Define the reason or purpose for writing and develop an audience profile.

## Gather Information

Determine the needs of the audience and gather the information required to satisfy those needs.

## Select the Right Delivery Vehicle

Determine the best medium (delivery vehicle) for communicating the message.

## Organize the Information

Define the main communication idea and select a direct or an indirect approach. Outline the communication content.

1. Write

## Adapt to the Audience

Connect with your audience by being sensitive to their needs and using a *“you”* attitude. (See explanation of the *“you”* attitude below.)

Build a strong relationship with the audience by establishing credibility and projecting your company’s brand image. Use a conversational tone, plain English, and an appropriate voice to deliver the message.

## Compose the Message

Choose strong words that create useful sentences and coherent paragraphs.

1. Complete

## Revise the Message

Evaluate the content and review it for readability. If required, edit the content and rewrite it for conciseness and clarity.

## Produce the Message

Use useful design elements for a clean and professional layout.

## Proofread the Message

Review the communication piece for errors in the layout. Check the spelling and mechanics as well.

## Distribute the Message

Deliver the message using the chosen communication vehicle. Make sure that all documents and files successfully distributed are relevant to the communication item.

While writing may seem challenging at first, practicing often and implementing the three-step writing process will help improve writing skills. The more a business professional writes and uses the three-step process, the more automatic their writing becomes.

THE "YOU" ATTITUDE

The ***“you” attitude*** is an audience-centered approach to communicating that involves understanding and respecting your audience and making every effort to get your message across in a meaningful way.

The “you” attitude contrasts messages in stark contrast to statements about “me.” The goal is to learn as much as possible about your audience. Learn things such as their biases, education, age, status, style, and personal and professional concerns. Using this information, you can satisfy their need through communication.

ANALYZE YOUR SITUATION

It's vital to communicate clearly and effectively. People don't have time to read book-length emails, and they don't have the patience to figure out the message of the content.

When writing is involved, identifying your purpose and your audience makes your writing more effective. This would help you to analyze different kinds of messages you can write according to your audience. Following are two things you should focus on before writing.

Who is the audience?

Audience Analysis is crucial for understanding what should go into each piece of writing. The first step for writing clearly is choosing the appropriate format. The format will define your "writing voice". This is how formal or relaxed the tone should be. Start by identifying who will read your message. For instance, if you write an email to a prospective client, should it have the same tone as an email to a friend?

## A Definition of Purpose

**Purpose is the reason why you are writing**. You may write a grocery list in order to remember what you need to buy. You may write a laboratory report in order to carefully describe a chemistry experiment. You may write an argumentative essay in order to persuade someone to change the parking rules on campus. You may write a letter to a friend to express your excitement about her new job.

Notice that selecting the **form** for your writing (list, report, essay, letter) is one of your choices that helps you achieve your purpose. You also have choices about style, organization, kinds of evidence that help you achieve your purpose

Focusing on your purpose as you begin writing helps you know what form to choose, how to focus and organize your writing, what kinds of evidence to cite, how formal or informal your style should be, and how much you should write.

## Types of Purpose

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I look at most scientific and technical writing as being either informational or instructional in purpose. A third category is documentation for legal purposes. Most writing can be organized in one of these three ways. For example, an informational purpose is frequently used to make decisions. Memos, in most circles, carry key information.

When we communicate with other people, we are usually guided by some purpose, goal, or aim.

We may want to [express](https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/purpose/#expressing) our feelings. We may want simply to [explore](https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/purpose/#exploring) an idea or

perhaps [entertain](https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/purpose/#entertaining) or amuse our listeners or readers. We may wish to [inform](https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/purpose/#informing) people or [explain](https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/purpose/#explaining) an idea. We may wish to [argue for or against an idea](https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/purpose/#arguing) in order to [persuade](https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/purpose/#persuading) others to believe or act in a certain way. We make special kinds of arguments when we are [evaluating](https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/purpose/#evaluating) or [problem solving](https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/purpose/#solving). Finally, we may wish to [mediate](https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/purpose/#mediating) or negotiate a solution in a tense or difficult situation.

Remember, however, that often writers [combine purposes](https://wac.colostate.edu/resources/writing/guides/purpose/#combining) in a single piece of writing. Thus, we may, in a business report, begin by informing readers of the economic facts before we try to persuade them to take a certain course of action.

## Expressing

In expressive writing, the writer's purpose or goal is to put thoughts and feelings on the page. Expressive writing is personal writing. We are often just writing for ourselves or for close friends. Usually, expressive writing is informal, not intended for outside readers. Journal writing, for example, is usually expressive writing.

However, we may write expressively for other readers when we write poetry (although not all poetry is expressive writing). We may write expressively in a letter, or we may include some expressive sentences in a formal essay intended for other readers.

## Exploring

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## Entertaining

As a purpose or goal of writing, entertaining is often used with some other purpose--to explain, argue, or inform in a humorous way. Sometimes, however, entertaining others with humor is our main goal. Entertaining may take the form of a brief joke, a newspaper column, a television script or an Internet home page tidbit, but its goal is to relax our reader and share some story of human foibles or surprising actions.

## Informing

Writing to inform is one of the most common purposes for writing. Most journalistic writing fits this purpose. A journalist uncovers the facts about some incident and then reports those facts, as objectively as possible, to his or her readers. Of course, some bias or point-of-view is always present, but the purpose of informational or reportorial writing is to convey information as accurately and objectively as possible. Other examples of writing to inform include laboratory reports, economic reports, and business reports.

## Explaining

Writing to explain, or expository writing, is the most common of the writing purposes. The writer's purpose is to gather facts and information, combine them with his or her own knowledge and experience, and clarify for some audience *who or what something is*, *how it happened or should happen,*and/or *why something happened*.

Explaining the whos, whats, hows, whys, and wherefores requires that the writer analyze the subject (divide it into its important parts) and show the relationship of those parts. Thus, writing to explain relies heavily on definition, process analysis, cause/effect analysis, and synthesis.

**Explaining versus Informing**: So how does explaining differ from informing? Explaining goes one step beyond informing or reporting. A reporter merely reports what his or her sources say or the data indicate. An expository writer adds his or her particular understanding, interpretation, or *thesis* to that information. An expository writer says this is the *best or most*

*accurate* definition of literacy, or the *right* way to make lasagne, or the *most relevant* causes of an accident.

## Arguing

An arguing essay attempts to convince its audience to believe or act in a certain way. Written arguments have several key features:

* *A debatable claim or thesis*. The issue must have some reasonable arguments on both (or several) sides.
* *A focus on one or more of the four types of claims*:**Claim of fact**, **claim of cause and effect**, **claim of value**, and/or **claim of policy** (problem solving).
* *A fair representation of opposing arguments* combined with arguments against the opposition and for the overall claim.
* *An argument based on evidence presented in a reasonable tone*. Although appeals to character and to emotion may be used, the primary appeal should be to the reader's logic and reason.

## Persuading

Although the terms *argument* and *persuasion* are often used interchangeably, the terms do have slightly different meanings.*Argument* is a special kind of persuasion that follows certain ground rules. Those rules are that opposing positions will be presented accurately and fairly, and that appeals to logic and reason will be the primary means of persuasion. *Persuasive writing* may, if it wishes, ignore those rules and try any strategy that might work. Advertisements are a good example of persuasive writing. They usually don't fairly represent the competing product, and they appeal to image, to emotion, to character, or to anything except logic and the facts--unless those facts are in the product's favor.

## Evaluating

Writing to evaluate a person, product, thing, or policy is a frequent purpose for writing. An evaluation is really a specific kind of argument: it argues for the merits of the subject and presents evidence to support the claim. A **claim of value**--the thesis in an evaluation--must be supported by criteria (the appropriate standards of judgment) and supporting evidence (the facts, statistics, examples, or testimonials).

Writers often use a **three-column log** to set up criteria for their subject, collect relevant evidence, and reach judgments that support an overall claim of value. Writing a three-column log is an excellent way to organize an evaluative essay. First, think about your possible criteria.

Remember: criteria are the standards of judgment (the ideal case) against which you will

measure your particular subject. *Choose criteria which your readers will find valid, fair, and appropriate*. Then, collect evidence for each of your selected criteria. Consider the following example of a restaurant evaluation:

*Overall claim of value*: This Chinese restaurant provides a high quality dining experience.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Criteria | Evidence |
| 1. Attractive setting | White table cloths, Soft lighting  Subtle glass etchings |
| 2. Good service | Waiter's service prompt |
| 3. [Additional criteria, etc.] |  |

## Problem Solving

Problem solving is a special kind of arguing essay: the writer's purpose is to persuade his audience to adopt a solution to a particular problem. Often called "policy" essays because they recommend the readers adopt a policy to resolve a problem, problem-solving essays have two main components: *a description of a serious problem* and an argument for *specific recommendations that will solve the problem*.

The thesis of a problem-solving essay becomes a **claim of policy**: If the audience follows the suggested recommendations, the problem will be reduced or eliminated. The essay must support the policy claim by persuading readers that the recommendations are feasible, cost-effective, efficient, relevant to the situation, and better than other possible alternative solutions.

## Mediating

*Traditional argument*, like a debate, is confrontational. The argument often becomes a kind of "war" in which the writer attempts to "defeat" the arguments of the opposition.

*Non-traditional kinds* of argument use a variety of strategies to reduce the confrontation and threat in order to open up the debate.

* *Mediated argument* follows a plan used successfully in labor negotiations to bring opposing parties to agreement. The writer of a mediated argument provides a middle position that helps negotiate the differences of the opposing positions.
* *Rogerian argumen*t also wishes to reduce confrontation by encouraging mutual understanding and working toward common ground and a compromise solution.
* *Feminist argument* tries to avoid the patriarchal conventions in traditional argument by emphasizing personal communication, exploration, and true understanding.

## Combining Purposes

Often, writers use multiple purposes in a single piece of writing. An essay about illiteracy in America may begin by expressing your feelings on the topic. Then it may report the current facts about illiteracy. Finally, it may argue for a solution that might correct some of the social conditions that cause illiteracy. The *ultimate purpose* of the paper is to argue for the solution, but the writer uses these other purposes along the way.

Similarly, a scientific paper about gene therapy may begin by reporting the current state of gene therapy research. It may then explain how a gene therapy works in a medical situation. Finally, it may argue that we need to increase funding for primary research into gene therapy.

To determine the specific purpose, think of how the audience’s ideas or behaviors should be affected by the message. Ask yourself some key questions about your audience:

1. Who are the most important people in the audience?
2. Will anything change?
3. Is your purpose realistic?
4. How much do they already know about the subject?
5. What is their probable reaction to your message?
6. Is the purpose acceptable?

After answering all the questions it would be easier to proceed in your writing.

## PROFILE YOUR AUDIENCE

This will encourage your message to be received as intended as well as the goals you set. You will need specific information about your audience, information about its understanding of and attitude toward your subject.

## Identify primary audience.

Identifying your primary audience would help you to decide the appropriate language, wether your tone is going to be formal or informal.

## Determine your audience size and geographic distribution

Identify cultural or language differences that exist.

## Level of understanding

Identify how much information or evidence would be useful, assume what your audience already knows, and how to get readers attention.

## Audience expectations or preferences

As a writer, you should anticipate the needs or expectations of your audience in order to convey information.