

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence includes

- Letters
- Memos
- E-mails

Readers

- Readers usually react emotionally to correspondence.
- They can be one person or more than one person.

It is very important to consider tone and organizational strategy from the perspective of how your readers will respond emotionally as well as logically.

Writing Process

Correspondence calls for the implementation of the same principles and practices in the writing process as is necessary for other genres of writing. Give the same careful attention to readers, purpose, context, pre-writing, drafting, and editing that you do in all writing.

Letters:

Letters are written primarily to people outside the organization and cover a variety of situations, such as,

- Requests
- Claims
- Adjustments
- Orders
- Sales
- Credit
- Collections
- Goodwill messages
- Announcements
- Records of agreements
- Follow-ups to telephone conversations
- Transmittal of technical documents
- Job applications

Memos:

Memos are written primarily to people inside the organization. With the exception of job applications, memos cover the same topics as letters. In addition, many internal reports, such as, trip reports, progress reports, and short proposals may take memo form.

E-Mails:

E-mails allow transmission of letters memos, and other documents. Millions of people use e-mails today because of speedy transmission. Managers can reach dozens of employees quickly. In very formal and crucial scenarios, e-mails must be used with caution.

Essentials of Business Correspondence:

1. **Developing Effective Tone:** Business correspondence should have a tone that sounds natural and conveys cooperation, mutual respect, sincerity, and courtesy. Create a pleasant and cooperative tone in your correspondence.
2. **Natural language:** Use simple, clear, and natural language. Avoid using old-fashioned phrases that sound artificial.

Out-of-date	Natural
Attached hereto.....	Attached is....
We beg to advise.....	We can say that.....
Hoping for the favour of the reply.....	I hope to hear from you.....
As per your request.....	As you requested.....
Prior to receipt of.....	Before we received.....
The undersigned will.....	I will.....

3. **Positive Language:** Keep the emphasis on positive rather than negative images. Stress on the positive rather than negative aspects of a situation.

Negative: When I received your complaint, I checked our records.

Positive: When I received your letter, I checked our records.

Negative: I am sending a replacement for the faulty coil.

Positive: I am sending a new coil that is guaranteed for one year.

Negative: Do not let carelessness cause accidents in the testing laboratory.

Positive: Please be careful when handling explosive compounds.

4. **You-Attitude:** The you-attitude refers to the point of view a writer takes when looking at a situation as the reader would. Information is presented from the standpoint of how it will affect or interest your reader.

Writer Emphasis: We are shipping your order on Friday.

Reader Emphasis: You will receive your order by Monday.

Writer Emphasis: I was pleased to hear that the order was completed.

Reader Emphasis: Congratulations on successfully completing the project.

For you-attitude, do the following:

- Emphasize reader's benefits in a situation.
- Be pleasant.
- Offer a helpful suggestion or appreciative comment when possible.

- Do not choose insulting or words for your readers.

Components of a Letter and the Format:

Date Line:

Spell out the names of the months. Write your address above the date line.

1290 W. Fairway Street
Dayton, OH 4556-9897
May 12, 2001
12th, May, 2001

Inside Address:

Place the reader's full name, title, company, and address 2-8 lines below the date. Avoid abbreviations and short forms.

Salutation:

The salutation or greeting appears two lines below the inside address. In business letters, the salutation is always followed by a colon. When writing to a group or to a particular company position, use descriptive titles in salutations. For example,

Dear Members of Committee:
Dear Project Director:
Dear Customer:

When writing to a company department, use an attention line with no salutation. Begin the letter two lines below the attention line:

Stanford Electric Corporation
Plaza Tower
Oshkosh, WI 54911-2855

Attention: Marketing Department

According to our records for 1999.....

Omit Salutations:

When writing to a company without directing the letter to a particular person or position, omit the salutation and begin the letter three lines below the inside address:

Stanford Electric Corporation
Plaza Tower
Oshkosh, WI 54911-2855

According to our records for 1999.....

Use Subject Lines:

Some writers prefer to use subject lines in letters to identify the main topic immediately. A subject line may also include specific identification, such as an invoice number, date of previous correspondence, or a shipping code.

Dear Ms. Valdez:

Subject: International Expo 2001

As you know, when the first contracts were.....

Body:

The body of a letter is typed single-spaced and double-spaced between paragraphs. It begins by telling why the writer is writing the letter. It explains all relevant points. It summarizes and ends with polite and standard expressions used to promote goodwill.

Conclusion:

It appears as a separate paragraph consisting of standard expressions.

Complimentary Closing:

It is two lines below the conclusion. Standard expressions along with the scenario in which they are used are indicated below:

Very truly yours [Formal/Am]

Yours truly [Less formal/Am]

Yours sincerely [If the addressee is addressed by name]

Yours faithfully [If addressee is addressed as Sir or Madam]

Yours respectfully [Shows power of the addressee over you]

Signature, Name, and Position of the Writer:

Sign before writing your name and designation details.

Note:

1. If the writer is not the typist, then place your initials in capital letters and the typist's initials in lowercase letters with the left margin two lines below the signature block. For example:

JSV:mt or JSV/mt

2. Next, if you are sending materials or documents with your letter, add an enclosure notation two lines below the typist's initials. For example,

Enclosure or Enclosures (2) or Enc: Photocopy of Cheque # 1023

3. If your letter consists of more than one page, do the following:

Ms Sally Queen
Page 2
July 23, 1998

Or
Ms Sally Queen

-2-

July 23, 1998

1 Read the three emails below and comment on their level of formality.

<p>Dear Ryan</p> <p>I am writing in response to your message on my voicemail. I'd be delighted to give a talk to your business students on the subject of Modern Management Practices. I'd be grateful if you could send me any days and times you have in mind so we can finalise the exact date.</p> <p>I look forward to hearing from you.</p> <p>Best regards Corinne</p>	<p>Hi</p> <p>I'm afraid my plane is delayed by two hours. Can you pick me up at around 2 instead?</p> <p>See you soon. (I hope!)</p>	<p>Dear Mr Baker</p> <p>With regard to your interest in the position of IT assistant, please find attached the full job description and application form. Please note that the closing date for applications is the 30th of this month. Unfortunately, due to the expected high number of applications for this post, we are only able to reply to those applicants who have been shortlisted.</p> <p>We thank you for your interest.</p> <p>Yours sincerely Alan Johnson</p>
---	--	---

2 The verbs 1–10 tend to be used in more formal correspondence. Match the formal verbs 1–10 to the less formal verbs in the box.

need	tell	change	say	sorry	get	ask	about	ask for help	stop	give
------	------	--------	-----	-------	-----	-----	-------	--------------	------	------

1 inform 6 enquire
2 request 7 alter
3 apologise 8 terminate

4 receive 9 require
5 assist 1 0 provide

3 How many of the verbs 1–10 have a noun form? e.g. inform – information

4 Find expressions in the texts in Exercise 1 to complete the table.

	Formal	Informal
Opening	1 _____	Hello 2 _____
Reason for writing / Reference	Further to your letter ... 3 _____ 4 _____	It's about ...
Enclosure or attachment	I'm enclosing 5 _____	Here is ...
Give good news	We're happy to inform you that ... 6 _____	Good news!
Apologise / Give bad news	Sadly ... 7 _____ We regret to inform you that ...	Sorry but ... 8 _____
Request	Would it be possible for you to ...? 9 _____	Could you ...? 10 _____
Thanks / Refer to future contact	11 _____ 12 _____ _____	13 _____ 14 _____ _____
Closing	Kind regards Yours 15 _____ _____	Bye Love

Positive and Neutral Messages

Positive, routine messages are messages meant to build a sense of goodwill with the purpose to foster, maintain, and solidify relationships. **Goodwill** is the positive emotion or feeling created to encourage people to maintain a good, working business relationship. Therefore, your goal in creating positive routine messages is to communicate good news, provide requested feedback, share relative and helpful information, etc. all while leaving your audience with a good impression of you. Not only are you fostering your business relationships, you are building your ethos.

Positive, Routine Message Examples & Helpful Hints

Use Positive Wording

“Effective business writers choose positive wording to communicate their messages, even in negative situations. *Positive wording* creates an optimistic, encouraging, and often more informative message. For example, consider the sentences [displayed here]. The sentences on the left are expressed as negative ideas. Note how, in each example, subtle changes in wording focus on the positive expression of the same ideas.

Negative

We will not be able to approve a new budget until the analysis is complete.

The board has not yet voted on the salary increases. If you do not sign the form before 5 p.m., we will not be able to fund your travel request.



Positive

We will be able to approve a new budget when the analysis is complete.

The board will vote on the salary increases at the next meeting.

If you sign the form before 5 p.m., we will be able to fund your travel request.



Though there are various schools of thought on the best way to individualize each one of the aforementioned message types, if you follow a few simple rules you will properly design your positive message to avoid errors, make your message easy to understand, and ensure your tone and expression is suited for your audience. This will also build your ethos to your audience. Remember, the message’s content should convey logic while building intentional, emotional appeal to your intended audience, as previously discussed using the rhetorical triangle.

You will find yourself writing many emails and letters in your career. Most will be positive or neutral in approach. Positive messages convey good news or work to establish good will, such as when announcing a new hire or confirming an agreement. Neutral messages are highly routine messages that carry little if any emotional content, such as when conveying updates to directives or procedures for processing manual account updates. These messages drive the day-to-day work of organizations, enabling new relationships to form, reinforcing existing ones, exchanging ideas and information, and responding to need and opportunity. Examples of these such messages include the following:

Positive messages examples: claim acceptances and adjustments, invitations, invitation confirmations, appreciation messages, good news announcements, recommendation letters

Neutral message examples: routine requests, directives or instructions (see the chapter on Instructions), policy or procedure updates, arrangement confirmations or follow ups, claims, general informational messages

Using the Direct Approach to Organize Ideas

How you organize information in your messages will be determined by the context and the receiver. As such, it is important to complete a thorough audience and context analysis so that you can adapt the content to achieve your communication goal. When you expect the reader to respond to your message with a positive or neutral attitude, you can organize your message using the direct approach.

The direct approach is created by placing the key idea in the opening paragraph, thus revealing to the reader almost immediately the purpose of the communication. As such, the message would be structured in the following way:

Positive and Neutral Message Structure

OPENING subject and key idea
BACKGROUND general circumstances or context
DETAILS explanation
CLOSE courteous close (with action statement if necessary)

Keep in mind that when the background information is so brief as it does not warrant a separate paragraph, you may include the background information in the opening paragraph.

This chapter will discuss a few positive and neutral message types that are frequently put to use in business contexts, highlighting key idea placement and message structure, along with a variety of formats: email, memo, and letter.

Business doesn't always go smoothly. In all such cases, customers or clients are likely to make your company aware of what went wrong and what they want to be done about it. A **claim** explains what went wrong and requests compensation from the offending party; whereas, a **complaint** explains what went wrong and merely requests correction or apology. For example, if you placed an order for MS Office software and received Norton Antivirus software instead, you would have reason to make a claim for full reimbursement or an exchange of products. The message you send to rectify the situation would be considered a claim message. Minor complaints are best communicated in person, on the phone, or by email (if it's important to have them in

writing), so they can be dealt with quickly. More serious complaints or claims are delivered as formal letters to lay down a paper trail in case they need to be used as evidence in a lawsuit.

Though some believe that a strongly worded complaint or claim is an effective way of getting what they want, it is better to be polite and neutral or objective when communicating your problem. If you are nice about communicating your problem regarding a situation or business transaction, the customer service representative (CSR) or manager dealing with it is more likely to give you what you want. Just because some customers have found success in bullying people who are only trying to do their jobs, not all such attempts will likewise succeed, nor is it right from a moral standpoint, especially when the abused CSR had nothing to do with the issue.

Ineffective complaints or claims often merely vent frustrations, issue threats, don't say what they want or only vaguely imply it, or demand completely unreasonable compensation. Such messages are usually aggressive (or passive-aggressive) in tone and therefore rude and offensive. The recipient may respond aggressively in turn, give the complainant much less than what they asked for (e.g., a mere apology rather than compensation or replacement), or ignore the complaint altogether. Often the reader of such messages is not the one at fault, so a hostile message would be especially ineffective and possibly even actionable in extreme cases—i.e., liable to cause damages that the recipient could pursue compensation for in court.

To contrast, effective complaints or claims are politely worded and motivated by a desire to right wrongs and save the business relationship. They're best if they remind the business that you've been a loyal customer (if that's true) and really want to keep coming back, but you need them to prove that they value your business after whatever setback prompted the complaint. If writers of such messages maintain equilibrium, they can end up getting more than they originally bargained for.

Claims used to be sent using a letter format; however, now claims are submitted by going to company websites and using the Contact Us form to submit the message, or you can call the customer service line. If you have created a relationship with a supplier or other partner, however, you may submit your claim via email to your contact. Either way is just fine.

A claims message is a type of routine request that consists of these basic components:

1. An opening that offers some background information and clearly states the request or claim as your key idea
2. An explanation of the claim in which you describe the circumstances leading to the claim, including specifics
3. An action close that reiterates the request.

Sample Email Claim

To: CustomerService@office.com

Cc:

Bcc:

From: Shasta Abenaki [sabenaki@solsticeyogastudios.com]

Subject: Office Chair Delivery Issues

Hello,

Solstice Yoga Studios recently purchased the Oh-So Comfy office chair from your online shop. After several attempts of having it delivered to our Markham location, we are requesting a full reimbursement due to non-delivery of the item.

We purchased the Oh-So Comfy office chair, model 01234, on January 5, 20XX with the understanding that it would be delivered within a week. It is now March 15, and we think that we have waited long enough. After several phone calls to the customer service hotline and delivery dates that have come and gone without the chair being delivered, we have decided that we would now prefer a full reimbursement.

Would you kindly issue a full reimbursement of \$230.56 to our account or by cheque as soon as possible. We would be pleased to answer any questions you may have and can be reached at 123-234-4567.

Thank you and have a great day,

Shasta Abenaki
Office Administrator
SolsticeYogaStudios.com
99 Orpheus Drive
Toronto, ON
1X1 X1X

Routine Request

Routine requests are frequently used to address any number of routine requirements that arise in the day-to-day operations of an organization. Requests can be as simple and brief as a request for a meeting with your manager or more developed such as a request for nominations for excellence awards (see the example below). Whatever the circumstance, the request must include enough information for the reader to understand the situation and follow through with what is needed. If the request does not include specific information, then the request may not be fulfilled in the manner that you would need it to be.

Like claims messages, routine requests can be organized using the direct method, as follows:

1. An opening that makes a clear request.
2. Background information that explains the context or situation.
3. An explanation of the subject matter so the reader understands what is required.
4. An action close that reiterates the request.

See the example below for an illustration of this structure.

Memorandum

Date: March 18, 20XX

To: Department Managers

From: Safiyya Dev, Store Manager

Subject: Customer Service Excellence Nominations

Help us identify great employees! Please submit your nominations for the quarterly Customer Service Excellence Award by April 8.

Do you have an employee who you feel fortunate to have in your department? Does this employee show a positive and professional attitude when helping customers? Do you get frequent comments about this person's friendliness and helpfulness? Now you have an opportunity to give this employee the recognition they deserve.

According to the nomination criteria, nominees must:

- demonstrate excellent customer service consistent with Variety Craft Supplies' policies;
- have worked at Variety Craft Supplies for at least six months;
- work 20 or more hours per week;
- not have received the Customer Service Excellent Award within the last year; and
- have a record clear of oral and written warnings for the last six months.

The winner of the award will receive a framed certificate and a \$100 check.

A nominating form is attached. Please complete and return it to me by Monday, April 8. Thank you for your help in identifying and rewarding excellent customer service representatives.

Figure: *Sample routine request in memo format*

Sample Positive Message

Positive messages are routinely used to build relationships, announce good news, express gratitude, and the like. As you can imagine, such messages can vary widely in terms of content depending on the type of organization and the situations that arise. Generally speaking, examples of positive messages include anything that transmits good news such as acceptances, confirmations, invitations, announcements, and gratitude among other types.

Positive messages can be organized using the direct method, as follows:

1. An opening that includes the key idea or an announcement.
2. Background information that explains the context or situation.
3. An explanation of the subject matter so the reader understands what is required.
4. A courteous close and/or an action statement.

Letter of Acceptance

Letter of Hire

Natalia Sarabia
98-045 19th Avenue
Toronto, ON 1X1 X1X

September 2, 20XX

Melissa Reyna
123 School Road
Toronto, On 2X2 X2X

Hello Melissa Reyna,

Congratulations, Ms. Reyna! It is with great enthusiasm that we accept your application of Visual Merchandising Lead (VML) at Target Toronto. We are excited to have you on board to lead our Visual Merchandising team!

Your background in visual merchandising and knowledge of guest trends are exactly what we are looking for in our prospective Visual Merchandising leaders! We were all very impressed with your previous work experience in this field, and we cannot think of a better fit for this role than you! The drive and passion to help guests that you show excites us, and we cannot wait to see how you bring that to our team.

Prior to your start date, September 20, 20XX, please come by our store to complete your application acceptance and the company profile. If you miss the deadline and fail to call, we will have to terminate your application. Once you enter the Team Resource Center, you can speak with a member of our HR team. They will direct you from there. Do not forget to bring your official documents and two forms of identification with you. This includes your social insurance card, two valid forms of ID, and birth certificate. Also, just a friendly reminder to keep masks on

at all times when in the building. If you forget one, we would be happy to provide you with one at the door.

I would like to congratulate you again on our acceptance of your application, and we would like to welcome you to our Target Toronto. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call the store to speak with our HR team member at (111) 234-2345, or do not hesitate to personally contact me at (111)123-12345.

Best regards,

Natalia Sarabia
ETL Specialty Sales

Figure *Sample good news message*

Whether you're writing thank-you notes, congratulatory messages, or expressions of sympathy, follow the "5 S" principles of effective goodwill messages illustrated in the following Figure:



Figure 7.3.4 an explanation of the 5 S's of goodwill messages

SAMPLE POSITIVE BUSINESS MESSAGES

Dear Sir:

Translation Brochure

I should be grateful if you would send us your brochure and price list about your translation services.

We are currently developing our sales literature and web sites and are interested in translating these into five languages apart from English.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Dear Mr. Doe,

I am writing to ask whether it would be possible for you to provide a reference for me.

If you were able to attest to my qualifications for employment, and the skills I attained during my tenure at ABC Company, I would sincerely appreciate it.

I am in the process of seeking employment and a positive reference from you would enhance my prospects of achieving my career goals.

Please let me know if there is any information I can provide regarding my experience to assist you in giving me a reference. I can be reached at jsmith@abcd.com or (111) 111-1111.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dear Professor Milton:

On behalf of the North American Society for Computers and Learning in Secondary Education, we would like to recognize and thank you for your valuable assistance with our recent annual conference, held in Boston, in May of this year.

We very much appreciate that you gave freely of your time to assemble and organize the panel on Demystifying the Major Search Engines. You may be interested to know that the overall conference survey results were very positive, particularly with regard to the panel discussion itself. We recognize that the contribution of that panel was a key event at the conference and will figure prominently into the summary of proceedings which we will publish next month.

For your information, I have attached a few of the comments we received about your panel from the survey of conference participants.

We trust that you enjoyed your time at the conference and we certainly look forward to your participation in next year's event.

Sincerely,

Dear Mabel

I am proud to let you know that the 30 day leave of absence that you previously requested has been approved.

Starting on July 1st, 2009, you will be able to take 30 consecutive days off, while still collecting 25% of your pay. Before you leave, you will be required to train an intern to complete your job for the duration of 3 days. Upon the completion of your 30-day absence, you will return to work in your normal capacity. Your full salary will resume the day you return to work.

Everyone here at Evergreen Corporation wishes you the best of luck while you participate in a humanitarian mission to Cuba, and we eagerly await your return!

Sincerely,

John Treliving
Evergreen Corporation

On March 17 I ordered a box of letterhead stationery for our central office in Springfield. We received your shipment within one week, but the letterhead carried another firm's address.

I am returning the stationery under separate cover, with the needed correction noted. I will appreciate your sending me the correct stationery as soon as possible. Also, I trust you will credit my account with \$4.86, the cost of returning the stationery.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Emporium Tea Ltd.
Golf Club Road, Tongi, Gazipur

25th July, 04,

Manger
State Tea Corner
25, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1211

Ref: Your letter dated July 21, 2015

Dear Sir,

We have received your letter of complaint dated July 21, 04 regarding shortage of quantity. It is probably first time that we get such complaint from a customer regarding shortage of quantity.

Where as you are our valued customer, we cannot deny any human error made by our dispatch workers. As a large concern in the country, we have to deal with large quantity each

day and therefore a sudden error is possible. We therefore, are dispatching the shortage quantity as per your order.

We expect your co-ordination as before.

With thanks.

Yours faithfully

Salam Ahmed
Sales Manager
Emporium Tea Ltd.

Negative Messages

At times in the usual course of work, we must convey messages that may not be well received by the audience. Bad news messages or messages containing information that the reader will resist call for the indirect approach whereby the key idea is placed near the close instead of in the opening. That way, you can create a buffer that prepares the reader for the negative news and add an explanation that promotes understanding before the key idea is conveyed. That buffer allows the reader to be prepared for the news that follows.

Business Communication for Success suggests seven goals you should consider when delivering negative news (University of Minnesota Libraries Press, 2015):

1. Be clear and concise in order not to require additional clarification.
2. Help the receiver understand and accept the news.
3. Maintain trust and respect for the business or organization and for the receiver.
4. Avoid legal liability or erroneous admission of guilt or culpability.
5. Maintain the relationship, even if a formal association is being terminated.
6. Reduce the anxiety associated with the negative news to increase comprehension.
7. Achieve the designated business outcome.

Using the Indirect Approach to Organize Ideas

When the bad news is personally upsetting

- Negative news involves the receiver personally (e.g., refusal of a promotion request, rejection of a grant proposal, a layoff notice).
- An organization makes a mistake that inconveniences or disadvantages a customer.

When the bad news will provoke a hostile reaction

- Message will irritate or infuriate the recipient.
- Giving reasons before the bad news is likely to defuse and soothe.

When the bad news threatens the customer relationship

- Indirect presentation of bad news can salvage the customer bond.
- Unfavourable news is revealed slowly and with reasons that explain it.

When the bad news is unexpected

- Readers who are totally surprised by bad news have more negative reactions.

Figure Determining when to use an indirect pattern is dependent on the communication situation (Business Communication, 2019)

Your thorough audience and context analysis will inform you on the probable emotional response your message will receive. With this information, you can adapt your message such that it is conveyed with tactfulness and empathy. If your document contains a negative message that will not evoke an emotional response, then you can use the direct approach to organize the content. However, when you expect the reader to respond to your message with an negative emotional response, you should organize your message using the indirect approach.

The indirect approach is created by placing the key idea near the closing paragraph, thus delaying the key message so that the reader has time to understand the rationale behind the decision or message as a whole. As such, the message would be structured in the following way:

Negative Message Structure

OPENING and BACKGROUND

begin with a common ground or understanding
establish good will
cover the circumstances
create a buffer

EXPLANATION

explain the situation
rationale for the negative news

KEY IDEA: NEGATIVE NEWS STATEMENT

state the negative news

choose between an implied or explicit bad news statement

OFFER ALTERNATIVES OR REDIRECT

focus on possible alternatives, solutions, or upcoming actions

CLOSE

good will close; end on a positive note that looks forward

include an action statement if necessary

The following, adapted from Arly Cruther's *Business Communication for Everyone* (2020), explains each of these parts.

1. Create a buffer statement

The first part of a negative news message, verbal or written, is a buffer statement. It provides neutral or positive information and establishes good will. It sets the tone and often serves as a cushion for the information to come. It is important that the buffer not be overly positive because this can be misleading or set up the reader to expect a positive news message instead. If necessary, review in an objective manner the key circumstances. Importantly, establish good will by finding common ground or acknowledging effort or previous good relations. This part of the document may be covered in one or two paragraphs.

2. Add an explanation

Next, an explanation discusses why there is an issue. This rationale may be relatively simple, quite complex, or uncomfortable. Here, include detail that would help the reader understand the “why” behind the negative news. To do so requires that you add enough concrete detail to enable the reader to understand but not so much as to overwhelm.

While an explanation is important, never admit or imply responsibility without written authorization from your company cleared by legal counsel. Try to avoid labeling the negative news, such as calling it inconvenient or disappointing, because this will assume the feelings of your reader and create an overly negative impression. The person receiving the message may not have felt badly about receiving the news until you pointed out that it was indeed inconvenient or disappointing.

3. Break the bad news

The third part of the negative news message involves the negative news itself, and the emphasis here is on clarity and accuracy. While you want to break the bad news clearly, try not to spotlight it. You have two options for stating the negative news: you may create an implied message or make an explicit statement.

Implied negative news message: An implied negative message is one that is embedded in the substance of the explanation. The detail would be such that the negative news is evident without need for an actual explicit statement. Such an approach requires a skillful approach to crafting the message, and usually creates an empathetic tone. See the example below:

We appreciate your interest in attending the Online Business Communication Conference from March 12-14; however, these dates coincide our department's deadline for the Dunbar Associates marketing plan. We need you on our team as we finalize the submission.

Explicit negative news statement: An explicit negative statement is usually contained in a single sentence. It clearly and undeniably delivers the bad news and is used in contexts where you as the writer want to ensure that there is no mistaking the message. A more direct statement places the bad news at the beginning of the sentence; a more empathetic approach involves using the passive voice and placing the negative news in the latter part of the message. See the examples below:

Direct negative news statement example:

Your request to pursue research into the accounting practices of Dunbar Associates has been denied due to tight departmental time constraints.

Passive and indirect negative news statement example:

Due to tight departmental time constraints, your request to pursue research into the accounting practices of Dunbar Associates cannot be approved.

4. Redirect or provide alternatives

The fourth part of a bad news message is the redirect, where you refocus attention on a solution strategy, possible alternatives, or the subsequent actions that will take place. The strategy here is to offer to the reader the sense that the matter at hand can be achieved or resolved using alternative methods. For example, in the case of the conference attendance refusal shown above, an alternative can be added to ensure that the receiver understands that other options are possible:

*We appreciate your interest in attending the Online Business Communication Conference from March 12-14; however, these dates coincide our department's deadline for the Dunbar Associates marketing plan. We need you on our team as we finalize the submission. **Would you consider attending the Business Marketing Conference instead? It runs from April 21-22 in Ottawa.***

5. End politely and forward-looking

Last, you want to end your message politely and looking to the future. Avoid mentioning the negative news again; rather, focus on the potential for future engagement or activities. Doing this extends the good will established in the opening. If the situation calls for a severing of ties altogether, simply end on a respectful and positive note without suggesting possible future engagement.

Following Figure shows an example of a negative news message delivered using this approach.

Thank you for submitting your request for 10 days of vacation (your maximum entitlement) in August.

Summer is traditionally a time when many employees are out of the office and demands on the servers are reduced. In order to minimize the disruption to staff throughout the company, the IT department will be rolling out a server replacement project during July and August. Because this project will need to be completed in a more compressed time frame, no vacation requests in July and August are possible for staff in the IT department. As a result, your request for vacation during August has not been approved.

However, you are welcome to take vacation before and/or after the project rolls out. As compensation, HR is providing IT staff with three extra days of paid vacation.

We look forward to receiving your revised vacation request soon.

Figure: *An example of a negative news message delivered using the indirect approach (Cruthers, 2020)*

Using the Direct Approach

The direct approach is used when the audience values brevity or if the situation will not evoke a strong emotional response. It is also used when the message needs to be concise, the message is very complex and might not be understood easily, the message is related to a known issue or problem (and bad news won't be a surprise), or you're terminating a business relationship.

As shown in the following **Figure**, the negative news is announced in the opening or introduction of the message.

Your request for vacation time from August 1-30 was not approved because it exceeds your vacation days entitlement of 10 days.

Please re-submit your request for vacation days (up to a maximum of 10) to HR as soon as possible.

Figure: *An example of a negative news message delivered using the direct approach (Cruthers, 2020)*

Sample Negative Messages

Claim Refusal

A claim refusal is one type of response to a routine claim (see [Chapter 7.3](#) for more on claims messages). A claim refusal serves to deny a claim usually made by a dissatisfied customer or client. For example, if you placed an order for MS Office software and received Norton Antivirus software instead and had opened the package, the retail outlet would have reason to deny your request for reimbursement or exchange even if it had sent you the incorrect software.

A claim refusal is a type of routine message that consists of these basic components:

1. A buffer that establishes good will
2. An explanation of the refusal
3. The refusal statement
4. The alternative or redirection
5. A close that reinforces good will along with an action statement if one is required.

See the example below for an illustration of this structure. Note how the bad news does not appear in the opening; in fact, it isn't even stated. This is an example of an implicit refusal. Since the message states that the chair had been delivered, there is no need to also outright refuse the reimbursement: It is evident.

Example of a Claim Refusal Email

Date: March 20, 20XX

To: Solstice Yoga Studios [solsticeyogastudios@amail.com]

From: Ace Office Supplies [aceoffice@amail.com]

Subject: Your claim for reimbursement: the Oh-So Comfy Chair

Dear Shasta Abenaki,

Thank you for reaching out to us regarding your claim for a reimbursement for the Oh-So Comfy office chair ordered in January 20XX (order # 9876OSCC). We pride ourselves on offering quality products to all our customers and always strive to provide excellent customer service.

Your message mentions that your company ordered the chair in January 2022, but as of March 18 you had not as yet received it. Delays of this extent are rare for our company, so we have searched our records to obtain more information about the matter. While we did initially experience a delay in restocking the Oh-So Comfy chair in January, by February 20, we were able to catch up with shipments of all orders.

Our records indicate that the chair was delivered to your Anywhere Street location on February 15. The delivery waybill was signed by Honoria Blint at 1:27 p.m.

We value our long-standing relationship with Solstice Yoga Studios. If, following your own internal query, you still have not found the chair, we would be pleased to discuss how we can further assist.

Sincerely,

Jane Cordial
Senior Customer Service Representative
416-123-4567 ext. 1298

Example of a negative news email.

Managing Negative News on Social Media

When someone complains about you or your company on social media, you might be tempted to ignore it. Unfortunately, the conversation about your company will continue whether or not you respond, so responding gives you an opportunity to control the message.

Let's say that a customer, Clint, posted on Twitter that the watch your company sold him broke within a week. Your goal is to help resolve Clint's complaint and also show that your watch company has great customer service. Getting into a back-and-forth exchange with Clint will make you look unprofessional, so the best thing to do is to reply to Clint with a short message like: "Thanks for bringing this to our attention. Please follow me so that we can DM (direct message) each other and find a solution. Or, you can email me at ____."

Hopefully, this will take the conversation offline so that you can resolve it. Maybe it will turn out that Clint's watch is under warranty, and you can repair or replace it. Or maybe Clint broke his watch in a way that's not covered. You can break the bad news using the strategies discussed above in a private manner.

SAMPLE NEGATIVE MESSAGES

We have enjoyed a positive and profitable working relationship between [reader's company name] and XYZ. Over the last ____ years, we have found your company to be a great help in fulfilling our clients' needs. Your assistance has been invaluable.

As you are aware, the economic climate is changing, and therefore we are forced to examine our current needs. Although we have enjoyed a successful working relationship in the past, we find that we are no longer in need of your services. This is no reflection of the quality of your goods -- we are simply going in a different direction.

We greatly regret the ending of our working relationship. If the current situation changes, we will gladly contact your company in hopes of resuming our use of your services. We wish your company continued success.

Parts of the Negative News Message	Example
Buffer or Cushion	Thank you for your order. We appreciate your interest in our product.
Explanation	We are writing to let you know that this product has been unexpectedly popular, with over 10,000 requests on the day you placed your order.
Negative News	This unexpected increase in demand has resulted in a temporary out-of-stock/backorder situation. We will fulfill your order, received at 11:59 p.m. on 09/09/2009, in the order it was received.
Redirect	We anticipate that your product will ship next Monday. While you wait, we encourage you to consider using the enclosed \$5 off coupon toward the purchase of any product in our catalog. We appreciate your business and want you to know that our highest priority is your satisfaction.

SAMPLE PERSUASIVE LETTER

Dear [Recipients Name],

The tax system review is of top priority for this year's agenda. As per my experience with the tax system, I would like to suggest that the level of taxation be reduced to an affordable amount. Value added taxes should also be more economically liberal. And most importantly, the tax system should be made more understandable to encourage the support and cooperation of the citizens.

I believe that the improvements that I stated earlier are beneficial to the majority and would most like gain support from the public. We are all one in our desire to maximize the taxes collected yet at the same time not leaving the people shortchanged.

Please do make the most of your intentions and efforts for an effective tax reform. Keep working on it as what you have promised during the campaign. I believe you are a man of integrity, and I look forward to the change that we have all been wanting to see in the government's tax system.

Sincerely,

Dear Ms. Powell

I am a senior at Forest View High School and am studying entrepreneurship. I recently saw an article in the newspaper about your new product and was fascinated by the story of how you got started.

To help us really get a feel for what entrepreneurs do, my teacher often asks local entrepreneurs to visit the classroom and tell their stories. The students love to hear from people who are out there already, doing what we are learning about in school. For all of us, visitor's day provides the best class of the week.

I was given an assignment to find a local entrepreneur and ask him or her to speak to the class. The date and time of this talk would be Friday, November 6, at 10:00 a.m. in room 110. We could arrange to have any necessary equipment, such as an overhead projector, available for the presentation.

We've never had a speaker from your field before, so it would be a thrill for us to hear from you. Please consider joining us on November 6 and telling us about your success. I look forward to hearing from you soon. You may reach me at 555-8467.

Sincerely