**Chapter 1**

**Communicating in Today's Workplace**

**Highlights**

* The **distinctive characteristics of business communication** are as follows:
  + **Purposeful:** Every time you communicate-in writing or in speech-there is a specific goal to accomplish (e.g., to give your supervisor a status update on your project or to ask for permission to attend a conference). This is different from other types of writing, such as a diary for self-expression, where others may not have a *need* to know your thoughts.
  + **Economical:** In business communication, economy-that is, using as few words as possible to convey maximum information-is highly valued. Compare these two versions of the same message: 1) "I am writing this memo to you with the intent of making you become aware of the fact that our weekly staff meeting, which is usually held on Monday mornings at 10:00, will be held this Tuesday morning at 10:00 instead" (41 words!); 2) "Our weekly staff meeting will be held this Tuesday at 10:00" (11 words). Which version would you rather read? (Perhaps a better question would be, which version would you be able to finish reading without falling asleep?)
  + **Reader-oriented:** This entails finding out *what information the reader needs* and provide the information that's *needed*. We do not want to bore the reader with information that he already has. In marketing, the No. 1 principle is, *Find a need and fill it*. So, give the recipient what he wants. Understand and *follow directions*. Following directions (including those for our assignments) is especially important as you start out in the business world. Certainly you can propose new ways of doing things if you have better ideas, but obtain permission before implementing your ideas.
* **Critical-thinking** ability is essential: Assembling data is useful, but we need to go beyond that. We need to be able to analyze data and draw our own conclusions based on sound reasoning.
* **Flattened management hierarchies:** Businesses are becoming leaner and meaner (the latter, unfortunately, is too often true as well). This means there will be fewer layers of management, and as a result, employees will increasingly be handling communication tasks themselves. In other words, don't expect a secretary or administrative assistant to compose or even type your documents for you; you do it all yourself. Thus, good writing skills are essential, which leads to our next point.
* **Workplace promotions are often dependent on good communication skills.** This is true. A company president said sometimes writing is the only skill that separates a candidate from his competition (see page 4). In fact, being able to write well is generally regarded as an indication of logical thinking.
* **The communication process**, diagrammed on page 12, consists of the following steps:

* 1. *Sender forms an idea:* You have an idea that you want to convey to someone else.
  2. *Sender encodes the idea into a message form:* You apply all the grammatical rules (phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics)-oftentimes subconsciously-to transform the idea into a "coded" form, such as a sentence. Remember a language is a system of conventions, that is, a shared set of codes.
  3. *Message travels through a channel:* Common business communication channels include memos, letters, e-mail, face-to-face conversations, phone calls, meetings, etc. When the message travels through a certain channel, our goal is to eliminate, or at least reduce, "channel noises." Such noises could be either *literal* (e.g., background noise) or *figurative* (e.g., poor organization, inappropriate format), both of which will impede the effectiveness of communication.
  4. *Recipient decodes the message:* The recipient will now try to make sense of your message, i.e., interpret the message for himself. [Note: Throughout the course, all uses of "he," "she," and other pronoun forms are meant to be neutral.]
  5. *The next step is optional:* If the recipient wishes to ask a question or make a comment, then he returns to step 1, and the process will repeat itself. Otherwise, the communication process ends with step 4 (i.e., when there are no questions or comments).

* **Internal vs. external communication:** Different audiences will require  different approaches. An internal audience tends to share the same background, and thus fewer explanations may be needed.
* **Functions of business communication:**
  + *To inform* (e.g., the steps to follow to sign up for automatic deposit).
  + *To persuade* (e.g., you should switch to our wireless service).
  + *To promote goodwill* (e.g., send greetings to partners to maintain a good working relationship; don't try to sell *every* time you contact someone).
* **Pros and cons of oral vs. written communication:** See Figure 1.7 on page 18. The most important advantage of oral communication is immediate feedback; for writing, it is the ability to revise a message, leading to a more careful (or refined) message.
* **Ethical and legal considerations:** See pages 22-26. Good ethics will pay off in the long run.

**Assignments**

* Watch the video for this chapter (see link below).
* Do Ex. 1.3 on p. 29 ([click here if you don't have a book yet](https://uic.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/pid-3266014-dt-content-rid-43175197_1/xid-43175197_1)), proofread it carefully to ensure proper capitalization, etc., and post it to the discussion board.
* Comment on one or more classmates' posts.

**Chapter 2**

**Developing Team, Listening, and Etiquette Skills**

**Highlights**

* *Why* **TEAM:** **T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore.
* **Essential difference between a "team" and a "group":** Members of a team have *frequent interactions* whereas members of a group may work independently.
* Teamwork skills are essential for getting hired, for keeping the job, *and* for getting promoted.
* **Primary advantages of teamwork:**
  + Different perspectives
  + Efficiency
  + Complementary strengths
  + Wider acceptance
  + Higher morale
  + Shared responsibility
* **Team development phases:**
  + **Forming:** Team members get to know one another.
  + **Storming:** Conflicts arise. Different ideas compete for adoption.
  + **Norming:** Team members focus on their responsibilities for the project.
  + **Performing:** For the team to perform at its best, everyone must care about not only his or her own section of the project but also all the other segments of the project. Only frequent interactions can ensure that conflicts or inconsistencies can be satisfactorily resolved.
* **Conflict resolution procedure** (see page 39)
* **Reaching a team decision:**
  + Consensus (most ideal situation)
  + Majority rule (e.g., simple majority)
  + Compromise (for instance, you can work on the company history section, as you proposed, but you also need to draft the company overview and management sections as those are all minor sections of the report.)
  + Authority rule (If none of the above works, then the team leader, i.e., the authority, will make a decision.)
* **Groupthink** occurs when participants are overeager to agree with one anther in order to avoid disagreements. This situation is unhealthy as the participants are unable to benefit from different points of view.
* **Characteristics of successful teams** (see pages 40-42)
* **Typical leadership structures**
  + **Rotational:** Members take turns. You are the lead on this project. I'll be in charge of the next project, etc.
  + **Single leader:** Appointed or elected, this participant takes the lead role on all projects and may delegate responsibilities.
* **Productive meetings** (see pages 43-47)
* **Listening skills:** The ability to follow directions is essential, particularly for a new employee (see pages 50-54). *This is equally true for students.*
* All the **nonverbal messages** discussed on pages 56-59 are worth keeping in mind.

**Assignments**

1. Discuss your view of the role of teamwork in the workplace and support your argument with a concrete example, preferably from personal experience. The deadline for posting on Blackboard is specified in the syllabus.
2. Comment on two or more classmates' posts.
3. Watch the video below on teamwork.

**Chapter 3**

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| **Attached Files:** | * [[File](https://uic.blackboard.com/courses/1/2013.fall.ba.200.1/content/_3266020_1/language_challenge.JPG) language\_challenge.JPG](https://uic.blackboard.com/courses/1/2013.fall.ba.200.1/content/_3266020_1/language_challenge.JPG) (71.214 KB) |

**Communicating Across Cultures**

**Highlights**

* **Why is cultural sensitivity necessary?**
* **Globalized marketplace:** Many businesses have operations or partnerships overseas. In fact, almost all companies on our Chicagoland Top 50 list have international operations.
* **Technological advancements:** Due to the Internet and other means of communication, people can work remotely, even from Madagascar (without having to worry about pirates, either).
* **Multicultural workplace:** Look around UIC—we have students, faculty, and staff from about 80 countries.
* **Why do we need to be well informed about local cultures**? It's because businesses commit blunders without knowing the local culture.
  + An often-cited example is GM in Mexico. The company was dumbfounded when the locals refused to buy Chevy Novas. Later they found out why: *Nova* in Spanish meant "No go" (no wonder)!
  + Another example was when Swedish appliance maker Electrolux first introduced its vacuum cleaners in the U.S. market, it had this tagline in its TV ads: "Nothing sucks like an Electrolux." The company's marketing folks noticed that American shoppers always laughed when they heard the line, but they weren't buying the vacuums. When they eventually found out "sucks" had another meaning, they quickly pulled the ad.
    - There are many, many other funny examples like these, both in this chapter and elsewhere, but they wouldn't be so funny if you spent a lot of advertising dollars to learn such a lesson.
* **What is *culture*?** It is a system of values, beliefs, and practices.
  + **Values:** what's right and what's wrong. For instance, in China, people are normally expected to take care of their aging parents, so many parents live with their children after retirement.
  + **Beliefs:** Different cultures often have different beliefs (including superstitions). For example, in the U.S., the number 13 is considered unlucky; some people actually avoid traveling on Friday the 13th. In China, the number 4 is dreaded, because it sounds similar to the word for "death" in Mandarin (the official version of Chinese). On the other hand, Chinese love the number 8, because it sounds like the word for " prosperous" in Cantonese (a major southern dialect).
  + **Practices:** Americans tip in a restaurant, but Chinese don't (neither do Canadians). I once tried to tip a barber in Beijing; he had no idea what that extra money was for and insisted on giving it back to me! Another example: When Chinese students go to a restaurant, they don't just pay for their own meal; that would be considered miserly and unfriendly, so everyone fights—or at least pretends to fight—to pay for the entire party.
* **Culture is learned, not innate.** If you grew up in China, you'd think nothing of holding hands on the street with your college friends of the same gender (that's why many Chinese detect nothing unusual in San Francisco).
* **All cultures are logical.** If a culture considers something important, it will have an expression for it. The Eskimos have 12 different words for "snow" (denoting the snow's intensity, shapes, etc.). In China, relatives often live together or close by, so terms referring to people in extended families are elaborate and highly specific: *bobo* refers to your father's older brother, *laolao* refers to your maternal grandmother, whereas English speakers seldom distinguish whether an uncle is on your maternal or paternal side and whether he is older or younger than your mother or father (hence, the lack of specificity in the language).
* **High- vs. low-context culture**
  + **High-context culture:** highly dependent on the context, i.e., a lot of things are not said explicitly; instead, they are implied in the context (China a typical example).
  + **Low-context culture:** people tend to be more direct and are less concerned with confrontations or " saving face" (Germany a typical example).
  + See Figure 3.1 on page 75 and related text for details.
* **Ethnocentrism:** judging other cultures using one's own values. For example, in the U.S., punctuality is valued ("Time is money"). Thus, if an American businessman regards a South American colleague's tardy arrival at a party as rude behavior, he is judging someone from another culture using his own values. In this case, the American businessman needs to realize that in South America, many people tend to have a more relaxed sense of time.
  + A good way to show respect for another culture is to learn its language. This is particularly true when doing business abroad. Even though you may never gain native fluency, your effort will be viewed as a friendly or goodwill gesture.
  + Some useful basic expressions in eight foreign languages are listed in phonetic form on page 82. Why not memorize some of them?

**Assignments**

1. Describe one or more cultural differences between the U.S. and another country and post it to the discussion board. (This should be the first part of your post; the second part is in #2 immediately below).
2. Read the *Wall Street Journal* articles on cultural differences (links on our syllabus page under Chapter 3). You should **discuss your reactions to one or more of the WSJ articles in your discussion-board post**.
3. Read at least 10 examples of cultural differences on the discussion board and **respond to the post you found most interesting**.
4. *Extra-credit opportunity:* Memorize the foreign language expressions in Figure 3.2 on page 82 (one extra-credit point for four languages, two extra points for all eight). See syllabus for language challenge date.
5. Watch the video for this chapter.

**Chapter 3: Video**

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| **Attached Files:** | * [[File](https://uic.blackboard.com/courses/1/2013.fall.ba.200.1/content/_3266021_1/intercultural_comm.flv) intercultural\_comm.flv](https://uic.blackboard.com/courses/1/2013.fall.ba.200.1/content/_3266021_1/intercultural_comm.flv) (60.044 MB) |

* **Click on the following link to watch this week's video (posted to Google Docs):**

<https://docs.google.com/leaf?id=0ByX4vSCktq-eMWYwMmNjOTAtZTFjNC00YWUwLTkwM2EtZjQ5ODcwZDIxYTMz&hl=en&authkey=CJnum7oB>

* You should be directed to Google Docs. You can view the video there.
* If you'd like to download the file, intercultural\_comm.flv, you can right-click on the above file and save it to your desktop. You can use VLC to play the video file.
  + If you do not have VLC, a free video player, please go to <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/> and click on DOWNLOAD VLC. After installing the application, you will then be able to open the file from the VLC application and play it locally.

**Chapter 7**

**E-Mail Messages and Memos**

**Highlights**

* **Routine vs. formal documents:** Typical routine documents include memos and letters. Reports and proposals tend to be more formal.
* **Internal vs. external communication:** Memos (which are increasingly replaced by, or sent through, e-mail) are for internal communication, that is, communication among those belonging to the same organization (e.g., when I write to a colleague or student at UIC, the document should be a memo; however, I would write a letter to someone at DePaul or Motorola).
  + *Why distinguish between internal and external?* This is mainly because people working for the same organization tend to have similar background information. For instance, there is no need for me to define the acronym "UIC" or "CBA" when I write to you; however, this would be different if I were communicating with someone in, say, Texas. Another reason is when you write to an internal audience, you are more likely to know the recipient in person, thus potentially obviating the need for pleasantries, etc., whereas we usually need to be more courteous to an external party.
* **Characteristics of memos:** Compared to letters, memos tend to
  + *have a single topic*; in other words, it is not unusual to write more than one memo to the same recipient on the same day so long as the topics are different;
  + be *more conversational in tone*, because we are likely familiar with the recipient; and
  + *use more graphical highlighting*, because we tend to be more direct (i.e., cut to the chase) with colleagues.
* **Memo subject line:** The subject line of a memo should usually be a *noun phrase* (as opposed to a verb phrase or a sentence). It should not be too long (exceeding one line) or too short (excessively general, e.g., Meeting).
* **Format:** Most business documents, including memos, letters, proposals, and reports, are in single space in the *final version*; however, drafts are usually in double space. For academic writing, *double spacing is the norm*, and this applies to homework assignments, term papers, and even master's theses and Ph.D. dissertations. The margins should be approximately an inch on all four sides. Please refer to the memo format samples on our Web page and on page 179.
* **The 3 x 3 writing process:** The so-called 3 x 3 writing process consists of three phases, and each phase contains three steps.
  + The ***planning*** phase:
    - *Analyze:* Determine the purpose of the document: What do I hope to accomplish through this document?
    - *Anticipate:* What are potential questions that may arise in connection with my message? What is the recipient's likely response to my document?
    - *Adapt:* Find out how much information the reader already has on this topic and *provide only the information that he needs*. Do not bore him with obvious truths (e.g., saving time is of course a good idea) or information that he already has. Remember the No. 1 principle in marketing: *Find a need and fill it.*
  + The ***drafting*** phase:
    - *Research:* Gather all the information needed, including data from both *primary* (firsthand research, such as your own interviews and questionnaires) and secondary (research done by others, such as published reports) sources.
    - *Organize:* Sift through all the information collected, making sure the data you use are reasonable and consistent. Structure the document in a logical and easy-to-follow fashion.
    - *Compose:* Only after you have gone through the above steps are you ready to compose the first draft.
  + The ***finalizing*** phase:
    - *Revise:* Be willing to make major (structural) as well as minor (wording/punctuation) changes. Professionals usually go through multiple revisions before a document is finalized. Writing is a *discovery and learning* *process*.
    - *Proofread:* Make sure your document looks professional. Run a spell check and check the margins, widows and orphans, and other "minor" details. In business, *image matters.* The reader will likely trust the content less if a document looks unprofessional. It is always a good idea to have a second pair of eyes to double-check your writing. This is also where teamwork may yield the best result.
    - *Evaluate:* The final step is to evaluate the document *from the perspective of the reader*. Imagine if you were the recipient, would everything stated be clear to you? It would be best to do this evaluation at least a day or two after completing the draft because *people tend to fall in love with their own writing immediately after finishing it.*
* Many of the tips for dealing with e-mail on pages 181-183 are worth keeping in mind.

**Assignments**

1. Do Exercise 7.14 on page 196 ([click here for assignment](https://uic.blackboard.com/courses/1/2013.fall.ba.200.1/content/_3266023_1/embedded/memo1.JPG)) as a memo and prepare a hard copy (with proper initials on the From line) for submission on the due date specified in the syllabus. This memo can be written either individually (in which case you will need to meet with a tutor at the UIC Writing Center, located in 105 Grant Hall, to revise your drafts and submit both the drafts and the final version along with the tutor's name) or as a team (in which case each team member's name and initials should appear on a separate line in the "From" area). Please refer to the memo samples in Ch. 7 (e.g., on page 179) and on our Web site ([example](http://www.uic.edu/classes/ba/ba200w/wang/InfoRequest.doc)). Considering the context, it would make sense to use an early May date (e.g., May 1) for the memo.
2. Watch the videos for this chapter.

**Comments on memo assignment**

1. Date and time format: Although we read "May 2" as *May [the] second,* we should not write the date as "May 2nd." The *Wall Street Journal* format for time is "9:30 a.m." instead of "9:30AM," "9:30am," etc.
2. The subject line should be a noun phrase and initial-capped. "Rescheduled Interviews" would be a better subject line than "Rescheduling Interviews" as the interviews *have been rescheduled already* (not something to be done).
3. In the introductory paragraph, you should mention the new interview date, May 12. There is no need to bring up the old date, May 5, as it is no longer relevant. The opening paragraph should also indicate the job position in question: project manager. One way to phrase the opening paragraph can be: *The interviews with candidates for the project manager position have been rescheduled to May 12. Below is the information you requested.*
4. It would be best to present the candidate information in a *column format*. The headings could be Time, Candidate, and Background.
5. Ideally, you should use a *parallel structure* (i.e., all noun phrases or all verb phrases, etc.) for each candidate's background.
6. Spell out single-digit numbers, e.g., six years' experience.
7. Lower-case job titles (e.g., project manager) unless the title is used with a name, typically a last name (e.g., Governor Quinn). On that score, degrees and majors should also be in lower case unless you use an acronym (e.g., After I complete my bachelor's degree in finance, I plan to pursue an MBA).
8. Do not forget to inquire about Bertha Ho, the operations personnel officer, at the end (after you have provided candidate information). It would be prudent *not* to assume (remember what happens when you ass'u'me) that Michael Kaufman wants Bertha Ho to participate in these interviews (it's possible Bertha may have referred one of the applicants to the company and thus Michael wants to exclude Bertha from the interview process this time). Ask the question tactfully: *Please advise whether Bertha Ho should participate in the candidate selection process as usual.*

**Chapter 8**

**Positive Letters and Messages**

**Highlights**

* Letters are for **external** communication. Because the recipient is an external party, our diction—choice of words—becomes even more important compared to internal communication.
* **Direct vs. indirect pattern:** Choose a pattern based on your assessment of the reader's likely response to your message.
  + *Direct pattern:* For conveying positive or neutral news, use the direct pattern, i.e., let the reader know the topic of the document in the first paragraph. This technique is known as *frontloading*. Note the opening paragraph tends to be fairly short (often one to three sentences) because we do not want the topic to be buried in a lengthy passage.
  + *Indirect pattern:* If you expect the reader to react negatively to your message (e.g., bad news such as a layoff or a reprimand, or potentially unpleasant news such as a sales pitch), the indirect pattern may be more appropriate. We will discuss the structure of the indirect pattern in Chapter 10.

* **Characteristics of a well-constructed business letter:**
  + *Clear content:* For conveying positive or neutral news, use the direct pattern; in other words, let the reader know in the opening paragraph what the topic is. Save the details for the body of the letter. *Using concise language should also contribute to message clarity.*
  + *A tone of goodwill:* Because you are dealing with an external party, likely a stranger, you should pay even closer attention to word choice and the tone of your message . Remember the audience is unaware of your attitude toward them or your body language.
  + *Correct format:* In business, *image matters!* When your documents look professional, the positive image enhances your credibility.

* Two common **letter formats**: We will discuss the two most common letter formats, the traditional and the block format (there is a third one, called the modified block format, which combines the above two; to avoid confusion, we will leave that one out).
  + *Traditional:* In the traditional format, the return (i.e., your own) address begins from approximately the center of the page ( [see sample](http://www.uic.edu/classes/ba/ba200w/wang/traditional.pdf) ). The return address should include your phone number [format: 312-111-2222 or (312) 111-2222; if using the latter, do *not* forget the space after the close parenthesis] and e-mail (remove the link if printing a hard copy). You should indent five spaces (usually one tab) at the beginning of each paragraph. The signature block should align with the return address in the traditional format.
  + *Block:* In the block format, everything is flush left ( [see sample](http://www.uic.edu/classes/ba/ba200w/wang/block_format.pdf) ), including your return address, the date, the inside address, the salutation, the paragraphs, and the signature block. There is no indentation at the beginning of any paragraph.

* *Which format to use?* The traditional format tends to be more ... er ... traditional (and impressive) whereas the block format is more convenient.
* Other formatting tips applicable to both formats:
  + Business letters usually contain a subject line. The most common location for the subject line is between the inside (i.e., recipient's) address and the salutation (applicable to both the traditional and block format); when using this option, the subject line should be centered and underlined. A second option is to place the subject line right below the salutation (see sample on page 213); this applies to the block format.
  + Your signature should always appear *above* the printed version of your name.
  + Use a blue—not a black—pen to sign your name (if you sign in black ink, it'll be hard to distinguish between the original and a photocopy).
  + Your signature should align with the "Sincerely" above it and the printed name below it.
  + If the letter is longer than one page, use a header starting page 2. The header normally contains the following lines:
    - Line 1: Recipient's name
    - Line 2: Date (make sure it's the same as the date on page 1)
    - Line 3: Page #
    - Line 4: A blank line (so that the header won't be too close to the text)

**Assignments**

1. Write a letter to the company that your team has been assigned to request information for your final project ([click here for assignment directions](http://www.uic.edu/classes/ba/ba200w/wang/InfoRequest.doc)). Please submit a hard copy of this letter (one copy per team, with proper signatures) on our conference day.
2. Watch the video for this chapter (see link below).

**Chapter 9**

**Persuasive and Marketing Messages**

**Highlights**

* **Characteristics of effective persuasive messages**:
  + ***Feasible*** - not causing undue burden. For example, you can participate in Junior Achievement (JA) either once or twice during the entire semester; it is not a weekly or even monthly commitment.
  + ***Credible*** - gaining the audience's trust. JA has existed for nearly 100 years. Each year, more than 300,000 volunteers nationwide participate in the program. It is the largest organization dedicated to helping children. Many employers are Junior Achievement sponsors.
  + ***Beneficial*** - addressing the question "What's in it for me?" You can earn extra credit, enhance your résumé, and find out firsthand what it's like to be a teacher.

* **Structure of persuasive messages:**
  + ***Gaining attention.*** For example, you could start your JA announcement by saying, "Would you like to receive extra credit in BA 200? By participating in Junior Achievement, you can earn up to 4% in extra credit for the course."
  + ***Building interest.*** In addition to earning extra credit, you can also put this volunteer experience on your résumé. Employers-indeed people in general-are impressed by candidates who care more than merely financial rewards. It may also be viewed as an indication that you will not likely be a clock puncher at work.
  + ***Reducing resistance.*** No major time commitment is required of you. You only need to participate *once* for three extra-credit points. If you are wondering how you can get to a participating elementary school, transportation will be provided for you: The CBA will arrange for a bus to take the volunteers to the school and back to UIC.
  + ***Motivating action.*** Here's a flier with information on training sessions. When you come to the 11th floor of University Hall for your training session, the JA organizer will give you teaching materials (at no cost to you) as well as tips on how to work with elementary school students. You can sign up for a training session simply by sending an e-mail to [uicjuniorachievement@gmail.com](https://webmail.uic.edu/src/compose.php?send_to=uicjuniorachievement@gmail.com).

Look for the above elements in the sample documents in Chapter 9, for instances, the letter on page 243 and the memo on page 247.

* Considerations for composing **persuasive messages for a high- vs. low-context culture**: pages 257-259.

**Assignments**

1. Write a reflection on one or more key points covered in Chapter 9 and post it to the discussion board by midnight tonight (refer to the Chapter 1 reflection sample at the top of on the discussion board).
2. Post your responses to at least two classmates' reflections by midnight tomorrow.
3. Work on the *Wall Street Journal* presentation with your teammates (guidelines under Week 7 on the syllabus page).
4. Watch the video for this chapter (below).

**Chapter 10**

**Negative Messages**

**Highlights**

* The **indirect pattern** is often used for conveying negative, unpleasant, or disappointing news. It is "indirect" because the topic is not revealed at the opening. The pattern consists of four steps:
  + ***Buffer zone:*** Begin by saying something nice or complimentary about the recipient. For instance, in the case of declining a funding request from a charity, acknowledge the worthwhile nature of its cause and commend the organization for its achievements.
  + ***Reasons:*** Discuss the reasons that will gradually lead to the negative news. By doing so, you are preparing the reader for the bad news that's about to be conveyed. In fact, the reader may be able to sense from the explanations that a disappointing message is about to be conveyed.
  + ***Bad news:*** Unfortunately, you cannot get away from revealing the unpleasant news at some point; however, you can *soften* its impact by using one or more of the techniques discussed below.
  + ***Positive closing:*** End the document on a positive note. Do not remind the reader of the bad news at the end (e.g., Again, I am so sorry we had to let you go. We feel so bad for you...). Instead, give the reader a sense of hope (e.g., We hope the worst will soon be behind us and we'll be able to have you back...).

* **Techniques to reduce the impact of the bad news:**
  + ***Subordination:*** Put the bad news in the subordinate clause because research shows that people tend to pay more attention to the main (also known as the base) clause. Example: *Although I don't have the assignment with me now* [subordinate clause, which contains the disappointing news], *I would be glad to e-mail it to you after class* [main clause, which contains the positive aspect, i.e., I'll submit the assignment after class. Notice: "after class" doesn't necessarily mean immediately after class; it can be interpreted as "before next class"].
    - A subordinate clause is peripheral; it should not be a complete or independent sentence. Be sure to place the disappointing news in the subordinate clause-not in the main clause, which can be an independent sentence by itself.
  + ***Passive voice:*** Use the passive voice to avoid pointing a finger at someone in particular. Example: *I noticed the lights and air conditioning were left on over the weekend* [the passive construction avoids naming-and blaming-the person who worked late on Friday night and forgot to turn off the lights and air conditioning]. Compare this version to its *active voice* counterpart: *I noticed that John left the lights and air conditioning on over the weekend* [Do you really want to blame John after he showed dedication to his work?]
  + ***Focus on the positive aspect:*** Some students list "Major GPA" in addition to, or even instead of, their overall GPA on résumés because the former is more impressive. An athlete may list the gold medal he won this year without mentioning that in the same competition last year he did not win any award. How often do people offer or highlight negative information about themselves on their résumés?
  + ***Implication:*** To avoid embarrassment, rejection may be implied rather than explicitly stated. "Another candidate has been hired for the position" implies the message recipient did not get the job, which is a more tactful way than saying, "We did not hire you because we deemed you unqualified for the position." Why would you want to spend time and/or money to hurt an applicant's feelings?
  + ***Alternatives:*** If you have to decline a request or an invitation, could you suggest an alternative, such as a different date or a colleague who could take your place? (I'm engaged, but my brother is still available.... :-)

The examples on pages 284-287 are worth examining.

Sample memo conveying negative news: [neg\_memo.jpg](https://uic.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/pid-3266033-dt-content-rid-44470416_1/xid-44470416_1)

**Assignments**

1. In-class assignments to be announced.
2. Watch the video for this chapter (see link below).

**Chapter 11**

**Business Report Basics**

**Highlights**

* **Organizational patterns:**
  + ***Direct pattern:*** If you expect the audience to be pleased with or receptive to your message, use the direct pattern. Frontload the topic, i.e., reveal the purpose of the communication in the opening paragraph. This pattern is mainly used for conveying positive or neutral news.
  + ***Indirect pattern:*** If you expect the audience to be displeased with or resistant to your message, use the indirect pattern so as to provide the reader with a chance to understand the rationale behind the unpleasant news. The indirect pattern is often used for conveying negative news or sales messages. Put yourself in the shoes of the reader: How would you react to this opening line, "I want to sell you a product because I make a commission from it"?
* **Use levels of headings:** Headings will help the reader see the structure of the document better. In a multipage report, different levels of headings may be needed.
  + First-level headings can be centered, all-capped, boldfaced, and underscored.
  + Second-level headings can be centered, initial-capped, and bolded.
  + Third-level headings can be flush left and bolded.
* *Caution:* While it's desirable to have different levels of headings in a lengthy document, having too many levels will make it hard to keep track of where you are.
* *Example of levels of headings:* The following is a structural analysis of a routine report that appears on pages 314-315. Although the example as presented in the book already contains headings, the headings can be more logically arranged into three different levels.

*See pages 314-315:*

        Opening paragraph (no heading needed): The purpose of this paragraph is to identify the topic (how your homeowner's association can sponsor a legal services plan), and it provides a road map for the document (background info followed by three action steps).

**INTRODUCTION** [Level 1 heading]

        In the three paragraphs under the first Level 1 heading, the first paragraph gives a broad definition of legal services plans, the second paragraph talks about two common types of plans, and the third paragraph narrows down further to focus on the free plan, *which the reader is interested in* (since a traditional grammatical rule frowns upon ending a sentence with a preposition, we can change the last phrase to: *in which the reader is interested*).

**PLAN SETUP PROCEDURE** [Level 1 heading]

        The three three action steps to be taken (Determine..., Select..., Publicize...) should be Level 2 headings.

**Determine the Benefits Your Group Needs** [Level 2 heading]

        Notice that within the first Level 2, three are three Level 3 headings (all parallel in structure, in this case, noun phrases).

**Free consultation** [Level 3 heading]

**Free document review** [Level 3 heading]

**Discount on additional services** [Level 3 heading]

**Select the Attorneys for Your Plan** [Level 2 heading]

**Publicize the Plan to Your Members** [Level 2 heading]

**SUMMARY** [Level 1 heading]

The final paragraph provides a sense of closure and makes it easy for the reader to take action.

* **Work plan:** A work plan is a road map for all members of a team when they work on a project together. See [sample here](http://www.uic.edu/classes/ba/ba200w/wang/workplan.doc) and the example on page 321. A work plan typically contains the following sections:
  + *Statement of Problem:* Why is there a need to conduct this research? What problem does the project solve?
  + *Purpose of Project:* What are the goals of the project? What benefits can be gained from this investigation?
  + *Research Methodology:* How will data be collected (what primary and/or secondary sources will be used)?
  + *Tentative Outline:* What main questions will be addressed?
  + *Work Schedule:* What are the major sections of the report? Who will be responsible for each section? What are the due dates for the first draft and subsequent revisions?
  + *Consequence of violation:* It may also be a good idea to spell out what would happen if a team member fails to fulfill his obligations, such as attending team meetings, finishing his assigned section(s) on time, and offering feedback on other team members' sections. Potential consequences may range from a warning for the first infraction to expulsion from the team after the third violation.
* **Types of data:**
  + *Primary data:* from firsthand research or experience (such as a survey you conduct).
  + *Secondary data:* from research conducted and disseminated by others (such as publications).
* **Why provide documentation (i.e., cite references):**
  + *Establish authority:* Seeing that you have done adequate research and is familiar with the topic, readers tend to regard you as an authority in the subject area.
  + *Protect against plagiarism charge:* Others cannot accuse you of plagiarizing if you reveal the source of your information.
  + *Enable further research:* Should the reader wish to do so, he could go to your original source to gather additional information.
* **Documentation formats:**
  + *APA:* The American Psychological Association (APA) style is commonly used for business writing. Citation format: [APA.pdf](https://uic.blackboard.com/@@/13E9047197DF9D20CE46E2DC31DE338E/courses/1/ba200.jiewang.spring.2011/content/_2101527_1/embedded/APA.pdf).
  + *MLA:* The Modern Language Association (MLA) format used to be the norm, particularly for academic writing, but has largely been replaced by the APA format.
* **Paraphrasing:** One way to avoid the charge of plagiarism is to learn the art of paraphrasing, discussed on page 336.
* **Graphics:** It is essential to be able to produce professional-looking charts and tables for your presentations and documents.
  + Tables: best for showing exact numerical values.
  + Bar graphs: cross-period (e.g., 2007, 2008, 2009 sales results) or cross-category (U.S., China, Brazil GDPs) comparisons.
  + Line graphs: best for showing changes over time as a line is a continuum and has a value at every point (e.g., stock price fluctuations).
  + Pie charts: ratios (e.g., Among the six majors in the business college, what percentage of the student population does each major represent?)
  + Photos: We are all familiar with the adage: *A picture is worth a thousand words.* Need more be said?

**Chapter 13**

**Proposals and Formal Reports**

**Highlights**

* **Components of a formal report**: See Figure 13.3 on page 402 (also the report samples on pages 408-417 and on our Web site). Listed below are *required* as well as *optional* components for your term paper:
  + *Cover (optional):* Although a plastic or vinyl cover may add to the professional appearance of your paper, this component is optional for student projects.
  + *Title page (required):* See sample on page 408 and on our Web site.
  + *Letter or memo of transmittal (optional):* This is a short introductory letter (if sent to an external party) or memo (if internal) accompanying the full report. It briefly explains the purpose of the report, its methodology, key findings (and recommendations if applicable), and whom the reader should contact in case of questions. Since I am expecting the report from you and am familiar with its requirements, this introductory document is optional for your term paper.
  + *Table of contents (required):* Learn to create a table of contents automatically in Word (using levels of headings, then Insert-->Reference-->Index and Tables-->Table of Contents).
  + List of figures (required): See sample on page 410. This list makes it easy to locate a particular graphic.
    - *Figure/illustration placement:* First of all, choose a term--figure, table, or chart--and use it consistently throughout the report. All illustrations should be specifically referred to in the text, for example, "As Table 2 shows, ..." Ideally, an illustration should appear *after* its in-text reference, preferably on the same page. However, this may not always be possible. When an illustration has to appear on a different page, the page number should be provided, for example, "Table 3 on page 34 presents..."
  + *Executive summary (required):* You can view the executive summary as a synopsis of the full report for a busy executive who may not have the time to peruse the entire report. The executive summary, which is often limited to one page, should include the highlights and conclusions. Depending on the audience, it may also be a good idea not to make the synopsis too technical so that it will be a useful tool to the executive for making decisions. See samples on page 411 and on our Web site.
  + *Introduction/Body/Conclusions (required):* [See term paper instructions](http://www.uic.edu/classes/ba/ba200w/wang/termpaper.doc) for recommended information, broken down into sections.
  + Recommendations (optional): For your term paper, this section is optional. Your focus should be on reporting and analyzing factual information. If you wish to offer recommendations after doing thorough research on the company and its industry, you are certainly welcome to do so.
  + *Appendix (optional):* If necessary, you may append to the report any surveys, questionnaires, etc., that you think will be helpful for the reader. In most situations, summarize the findings for the reader instead of having them go through all the appendices, which could be time-consuming and cumbersome.
  + *Works cited (required):* The term "works cited" is more appropriate for our term project than "bibliography." The former refers to references specifically used in a report (which applies to our situation) whereas the latter includes all relevant works on the subject, whether actually used for this report or not.

* **Writing tips:** Pages 406-407 present some excellent tips for writing business documents.

**Chapter 14**

**Business Presentations**

**Highlights**

* **Overall structure of presentations** (as it applies to our term project):
  + Overview (listing the main topics to be covered in the presentation)
  + Body (history through outlook)
  + Summary of highlights (key points you want the audience to take away from your presentation).

Some people have referred to the above structure in a simplistic way as *1) tell the audience what you're going to tell them, 2) tell it to them, and 3) tell them what you told them.*

* **Why a seemingly repetitive structure:** The above structure may seem somewhat repetitive, but keep in mind research has shown that even under ideal circumstances, the audience can remember only about a quarter of the information orally presented to them. Thus, this structure reinforces the key points.
* **Nonverbal messages:** The nonverbal messages discussed on pages 432-433 play a vital role in determining the success of a presentation. In addition, the following points are relevant to us:
  + *Look professional.* In business, image matters. A general rule of thumb is *you can never overdress*; in other words, you would rather err on the side of being too formal than the opposite. Some even go as far as saying: In business, image is everything. Although this may be an overstatement, its underlying message is nonetheless helpful.
  + *No gum!* One of the worst things you could do while giving a presentation is chewing gum (or having gum in your mouth). This would signal you don't care about the audience's perception or your professional image; in other words, you disrespect the audience.
  + *What's with the hat?* It's never so windy in a classroom that you would have to wear a hat *(not even in the Windy City)*.
    - If your religion requires you to shield your face or head, please advise me in advance.
  + *Maintain good eye contact* with the audience. Pay attention to the *entire* audience, not just the powerful member(s); in other words, show respect to everyone.
  + *Use note cards;* it's a sign that you are prepared, i.e., you take the presentation seriously. People will respect you more if you take them seriously.
  + *Don't sound like a mouse* (actually, some mice *can* be quite loud). Your vocal level should be high enough that the audience can hear you easily. No need to roar either, although that's hardly ever the problem.
  + *Cell phone etiquette:* To show respect to others, *always* turn your cell phone off (or put it in silent mode) when you are in a meeting, a class, or a presentation. Should your cell phone go off at an inopportune time, you should at least do what this professor did: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hut3VRL5XRE>.
  + *Practice makes perfect.* So cliché, yet so true. Rehearse *at least twice* before the actual delivery. Jack Welch, GE's CEO for more than 20 years, said in his memoir that he sometimes rehearsed more than 10 times before giving a major speech. If Jack Welch could benefit from repeated rehearsals, couldn't we?
* **Use a parallel structure for bullet points.** In general, *avoid complete sentences in presentation bullets*. Instead, try to maintain a parallel structure for each slide. In other words, if the first bullet on a particular slide is a noun phrase, make the rest of the bullets on that same slide noun phrases as well.
  + Refer to the example on page 438, where the the "before" version contains a mixture of sentences, noun phrases, and verb phrases whereas the "after" version contains *only* verb phrases.
* **Consistent capitalization in bullets:** To be consistent in terms of capitalization, *initial-cap only the first word of each bullet*; in other words, do not initial-cap all the words (this way, you wouldn't have to worry about the convention of initial-capping content words but lower-casing function words, etc.).
* **Follow the 6 x 6 rule.** As a general rule, try not to exceed six words across or six lines from the top to the bottom of a slide. This also means we should generally avoid complete sentences on slides. Instead, just show key words using a parallel structure (see examples on pages 438-442).
* **Use note cards.** *Nothing can be as dull as reading a presentation.* Jotting down key points on note cards helps you stay on track.
* **Do not write everything down** on note cards because then you would be tempted to read verbatim. Spontaneity tends to give the impression you are familiar with your topic.
* **One turn per speaker.** Normally it would be best for each speaker to have just one turn at the podium. Thus, it would be ideal to assign adjacent sections of the presentation to the same speaker.
* **Names in speaking order:** The list of presenters' names on the cover slide should be in *chronological*--not alphabetical--order (i.e., the first speaker listed at the top, etc.).
* **Presentation tips:** The tips on what you should do before, during, and after the presentation on pages 445-447 are worth keeping in mind.

**Chapters 15 and 16**

**Employment Communication**

**Highlights**

* **Informational interviews are helpful:** You get to find out how business professionals got their jobs, what they like and dislike about their jobs, what their daily routines consist of, and, most importantly, how you could get your foot in the door.
* **Internships are highly valuable:** Internships will enable you to gain experience in your field, and most of all, they make you more valuable to employers. Students with relevant internship experience usually receive more job offers and higher starting salaries. In fact, our CBA Business Career Center's annual alumni survey consistently shows that students with internship experience tend to receive job offers that are $4,000 to $11,000 higher than those without such experience.
* Hint: The Business Career Center (BCC) is located on the 11th floor of University Hall. Its primary task is to help CBA students gain experience in their fields. Additionally, most internships are paid positions.
* Internships will also give you the opportunity to decide if a job is suitable for you. If you hate doing the work as an intern, what are the chances you'll love it as a career?
* It's also worth keeping in mind that a job that pays more isn't necessarily more fulfilling.
* The advice on choosing a career path on pages 465-466 is worth reading.

* **Research the company:** It has proven time and again that students who are knowledgeable about a company tend to impress prospective employers more. In fact, in my many years of teaching at UIC, students have told me numerous times that they were very glad to have done research on a Chicagoland-based company and they ended up working for that company.
  + At the end of an interview, the interviewer's typical final question is, "Do you have any questions about the company?" You should show your interest in and knowledge about the company by asking a pertinent question. The worst answer you can give is, "No, I don't have any."
* **Professional image:** Make sure that your résumé, cover letter, and thank-you follow-up message all look professional. A thank-you letter (or e-mail if a hiring decision will likely be made within a couple of days) is essential for demonstrating that you are courteous, pleasant, and team-oriented. Use 20-lb (or heavier) white bond paper for your application documents. On the day of your interview, be sure to wear formal business attire (yes, this would be a worthwhile investment).
* **Nonverbal messages:** The list of nonverbal messages on page 506 is worth keeping in mind when going on an interview.
* **Résumé formats:**
  + *Chronological:* focuses on relevant job experience (including experience gained through internships). This is the most common-and most impressive-format. See examples on pages 477-480.
  + *Functional:* focuses on your capabilities (i.e., what you are capable of doing instead of what you have actually done at a real job; for example, you may know how to analyze financial statements because of the classes you have taken, but the only job you have held-a bagger at a Jewel-Osco-did not expose you to financial analysis. For examples on page 481.
  + *Combination: focuses on . . . your desire to learn*. If you are not particularly strong in *either experience or skills* *in your field* but possess *other* work experience or skills, then this format, which lists your (unrelated) jobs and skills, will show that you are motivated and eager to learn.
* **Cover letters**:
  + Don't make it too long. Employers receive numerous applications, so if you expect them to read your letter, make it no more than a page. In fact, about three quarters of a page, single-spaced with one-inch margins, would be an ideal length.
  + From a structural perspective, around three paragraphs may be a good option:
    - In the opening paragraph, identify and position you are interested in and where you saw the ad (e.g.: I would like to be considered for the financial consultant position advertised in the *Chicago Tribune* on [date]).
    - In the second paragraph, highlight your relevant experience (e.g.: As my résumé indicates, I have had substantial experience in financial services. While working as an intern Goldman Sachs, I . . .).
    - In the third-potentially the last-paragraph, ask for an interview and offer to provide further information (e.g.: I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss how I may contribute to your Private Client Group. If you would like any additional information about me, please contact me at at (312) xxx-xxxx or xxxxx@uic.edu).