Routine Correspondence— Memos, Letters, E-Mail Messages, Instant Messages, and Text Messages

COMMUNICATION AT WORK

In this scenario, a biotechnology company frequently corresponds through letters, memos, e-mail, instant messages, and text messages.

CompuMed, a wholesale provider of biotechnology equipment, is based in Reno, Nevada. CompuMed's CEO, Jim Goodwin, plans to capitalize on emerging nanotechnology to manufacture and sell the following:

- Extremely lightweight and portable heart monitors and ventilators
- Pacemakers and hearing aids, 1/10 the size of current products on the market
- Microscopic biorobotics, which can be injected in the body to manage, monitor, and/or destroy blood clots, metastatic activities, arterial blockages, alveoli damage due to carcinogens or pollutants, and scar tissue creating muscular or skeletal immobility

CompuMed is a growing company with over 5,000 employees located in two dozen cities and three states. To manage this business, supervisors and employees write on

Objectives

When you complete this chapter, you will be able to

1. Understand the differences among memos, letters, e-mail messages, instant messages, and text messages

2. Follow an all-purpose template to write memos, letters, and e-mail

3. Use memo samples as guidelines for memo components, organization, writing style, and tone

4. Evaluate your memos, letters, and e-mail messages with checklists

5. Correctly use the eight essential letter components: the writer's address, the date, an inside address for the recipient, a salutation, the body of the letter, a complimentary close, and the writer's signed and typed names

6. Write different types of letters, including the following:
   - Inquiry
   - Cover (transmittal)
   - Complaint
   - Adjustment
   - Bad news
   - Confirmation
   - Recommendation

7. Understand the components of successful e-mail messages

8. Use e-mail samples as guidelines for effective e-mail components, organization, writing style, and tone

9. Recognize techniques for successfully using instant messages and text messages in the workplace

10. Follow the writing process—prewriting, writing, and rewriting—to create memos, letters, and e-mail

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average over 5 letters, 10 memos, 50 e-mail messages, and numerous instant messages and text messages a day.

The letters are written to many different audiences and serve various purposes. CompuMed must write letters for employee files, to customers, job applicants, outside auditors, governmental agencies involved in biotechnology regulation, insurance companies, and more. They write

- Letters of inquiry to retailers seeking product information (technical specifications, pricing, warranties, guarantees, credentials of service staff, and so forth)
- Cover letters prefacing CompuMed's proposals
- Complaint letters written to parts-manufacturers if and when faulty equipment and materials are received in shipping and adjustment letters to compensate retailers when problems occur

CompuMed's managers and employees also write memos to accomplish a variety of goals:

- Document work accomplished
- Call meetings and establish meeting agendas
- Request equipment from purchasing
- Preface internal proposals

To accomplish the majority of their routine correspondence, CompuMed's employees write many e-mail messages each day. These messages serve different purposes. Some e-mail messages are conversational. Other e-mail messages, however, must be professional in their style, organization, and content. This is especially true for e-mail messages sent to clients, vendors, and customers outside the company. These e-mail messages focus on timelines, deadlines, prices for service, meeting arrangements, cost breakdowns, procedural steps, and a host of other topics.

Finally, when CompuMed employees are working at distant locations, on the road, in hotels, or at the airport, they will use instant messages or text messages to ask each other quick questions or to casually check on the status of a project.

Routinely, CompuMed employees spend a great deal of their time writing memos, letters, e-mail messages, instant messages, and text messages.

Check out our quarterly **newsletters** at www.pearsonhighered.com/gerson for dot.com updates, new case studies, insights from business professionals, grammar exercises, and facts about technical communication.

The Importance of Memos, Letters, E-Mail, Instant Messages, and Text Messages

On a day-to-day basis, employees routinely write memos, letters, e-mail messages, instant messages, reports, and text messages. The National Commission on Writing, in their *Writing: A Ticket to Work . . . Or a Ticket Out, A Survey of Business Leaders*, states that e-mail is "ubiquitous in the American economy," that "more than half of all responding companies also report the following forms of communications as required 'frequently' or 'almost always': technical reports (59 percent), formal reports (62 percent), and memos and correspondence (70 percent)" (11). Figure 6.1 shows the significance of e-mail, memos, reports, and letters in the workplace.

This National Commission on Writing survey of "120 major American corporations employing nearly 8 million people" (3) clearly tells us that you routinely can expect to write many e-mail messages, letters, memos, and reports on the job.

With the growing importance of mobile communication, instant messages and text messages also are written routinely on the job. In 2009, Nielsen Media Ratings stated that 240 million mobile phone users in the United States have text-enabled handsets. Every six months since 2003, text messaging volume has increased by 37 percent (Goforth D15).

Which Communication Channel Should You Use?

Memos, letters, and e-mail messages are three common types of communication channels. Other communication channels include reports, Web sites, blogs, PowerPoint presentations, oral communication, instant messages, text messages, and more. When should you write an e-mail message instead of a memo? When should you write a memo instead of a letter? Is an instant message or a text message appropriate to the situation? You will make these decisions based on your audience (internal or external), the complexity of your topic, the speed with which your message can be delivered, and security concerns.

> **Communication Channels**
>
> See Chapter 1 for more discussion of communication channels.

For example, e-mail is a convenient communication channel. It is easy to write a short e-mail message, which can be sent almost instantaneously to your audience at the click of a button. However, e-mail might not be the best communication channel to use. If you are discussing a highly sensitive topic such as a pending merger, corporate takeover, or layoffs, an e-mail message would be less secure than a letter sent in a sealed envelope. You might need to communicate with employees working in a manufacturing warehouse. Not all of these employees will necessarily have an office or access to a computer. If you sent an e-mail message, how would they access this correspondence? A memo posted in the break room or a text message sent to their handhelds would be better choices of communication channels.

FIGURE 6.1 Percentage of Employees Who Consider E-mail, Memos, Letters, and Reports "Extremely Important"
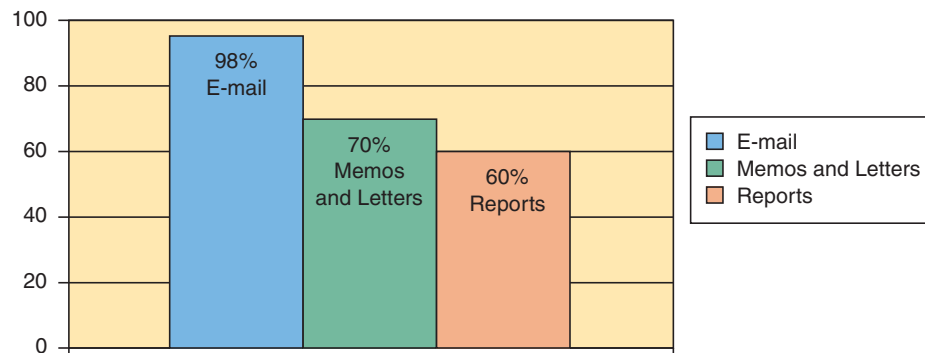
The Differences Among Routine Communication Channels

To clarify the distinctions among memos, letters, e-mail, instant messages (IM), and text messages (TM), review Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1 Memos vs. Letters vs. E-mail vs. Instant Messages and Text Messages

Characteristics	Memos	Letters	E-mail	IM/TM
Destination	Internal: correspondence written to colleagues within a company.	External: correspondence written outside the business.	Internal and external: correspondence written to friends and acquaintances, co-workers within a company, and clients and vendors.	Internal and external: correspondence written to friends and acquaintances, co-workers within a company, and clients and vendors.
Format	Identification lines include "Date," "To," "From," and "Subject." The message follows.	Includes letterhead address, date, reader's address, salutation, text, complimentary close, and signatures.	Identification lines: To and Subject. The Date and From are computer generated. Options include cc (complimentary copy), forwarding the e-mail message to others, and replying to numerous readers.	No format.
Audience	Generally high tech or low tech, mostly business colleagues.	Generally low-tech and lay readers, such as vendors, clients, stakeholders, and stockholders.	Multiple readers due to the internal and external nature of e-mail.	Multiple readers due to the internal and external nature of IM and TM.
Topic	Generally topics related to internal corporate information; abbreviations and acronyms often allowed.	Generally topics related to vendor, client, stakeholder, and stockholder interests; abbreviations and acronyms usually defined.	A wide range of diverse topics determined by the audience.	A wide range of diverse topics determined by the audience.
Complexity and length of communication	Memos usually are limited to a page of text. If you need to write longer correspondence and develop a topic in more detail, you might consider using a different communication channel, such as a short report.	Letters usually are limited to a page of text, though you might write a two- or three-page report using a letter format. If you need to develop a topic in greater detail than can be conveyed in one to three pages, you might want to use a different communication channel, such as a longer, formal report.	An effective e-mail message usually is limited to one viewable screen (requiring no scrolling) or two screens. E-mail, generally, is not the best communication channel to use for complex information or long correspondence. If your topic demands more depth than can be conveyed in a screen or two, you might want to write a report instead.	IM and TM are very brief communication channels. Text messages must be limited to 160 characters. The typical size of an instant message is around 200 characters. Generally, the maximum size for mobile messages is approximately 400 characters.
Tone	Informal due to peer audience.	More formal due to audience of vendors, clients, stakeholders, and stockholders.	A wide range of tones due to diverse audiences. Usually informal when written to friends, informal to co-workers, more formal to management or external readers.	Very informal due to the limits placed on size.

(Continued)

Characteristics	Memos	Letters	E-mail	IM/TM
Attachments or enclosures	Hard-copy attachments can be stapled to the memo. Complimentary copies (cc) can be sent to other readers.	Additional information can be enclosed within the envelope. Complimentary copies (cc) can be sent to other readers.	Computer word processing files, HTML files and Web links, PDF files, RTF files, or downloadable graphics can be attached to e-mail. Complimentary copies can be sent to other readers.	Attachments can be sent using IM. You can send photo attachments with TM. However, sending file attachments with TM is limited.
Delivery time	Determined by a company's in-house mail procedure.	Determined by the destination (within the city, state, or country). Letters could be delivered within three days but may take more than a week.	Often instantaneous, usually within minutes. Delays can be caused by system malfunctions or excessively large attachments.	Instantaneous.
Security	If a company's mail delivery system is reliable, the memo will be placed in the reader's mailbox. Then, what the reader sees on the hard-copy page will be exactly what the writer wrote. Security depends on the ethics of co-workers and whether the memo was sent in an envelope.	The U.S. Postal Service is very reliable. Once the reader opens the envelope, he or she sees exactly what was written. Privacy laws protect the letter's content.	E-mail systems are not secure. E-mail can be tampered with, read by others, and sent to many people. E-mail stays within a company's computer backup system and is the property of the company. Therefore, e-mail is not private.	The same problems with e-mail security exist with TM and IM.

FAQs: Memos vs. E-mail

Q: Why write a memo? Haven't memos been replaced by e-mail?

A: E-mail is rapidly overtaking memos in the workplace, but employees still write memos for the following reasons:

1. Not all employees work in offices or have access to computers. Many employees who work in warehouses or in the field cannot easily access an e-mail account. They must depend on hard-copy documentation like memos.
2. Not all companies have e-mail. This may be hard to believe in the twenty-first century, but still it's a fact. These companies depend on hard-copy documentation like memos.
3. Many unions demand that hard-copy memos be posted on walls, in break rooms, in offices, and elsewhere, to ensure that all employees have access to important information. Sometimes, unions even demand that employees initial the posted memos, thus acknowledging that the memos have been read.
4. Some information cannot be transmitted electronically via e-mail. A bank we've worked with, for example, sends hard-copy cancelled checks as attachments to memos. They cannot send the actual cancelled check via e-mail.
5. E-mail messages are very easy to disregard. We get so many e-mail messages (many of them spam) that we tend to quickly delete them. Memos, in contrast, make more of an official statement. People might take hard-copy memos more seriously than e-mail messages.

Memos

Reasons for Writing Memos

Memos are an important means by which employees communicate with each other. Memos, hard-copy correspondence written within your company, are important for several reasons.

First, you will write memos to a wide range of readers. This includes your supervisors, co-workers, subordinates, and multiple combinations of these audiences. Memos usually are copied (cc: complimentary copies) to many readers, so a memo sent to your boss could be read by an entire department, the boss's boss, and colleagues in other departments.

Because of their frequency and widespread audiences, memos could represent a major component of your interpersonal communication skills within your work environment. Furthermore, memos are very flexible and can be written for many different purposes:

- **Documentation**—expenses, incidents, accidents, problems encountered, projected costs, study findings, hiring, firings, and reallocations of staff or equipment
- **Confirmation**—a meeting agenda, date, time, and location; decisions to purchase or sell; topics for discussion at upcoming teleconferences; conclusions arrived at; and fees, costs, or expenditures
- **Procedures**—how to set up accounts, research on the company intranet, operate new machinery, use new software, apply online for job opportunities through the company intranet, create a new company Web site, or solve a problem
- **Recommendations**—reasons to purchase new equipment, fire or hire personnel, contract with new providers, merge with other companies, revise current practices, or renew contracts
- **Feasibility**—studying the possibility of changes in the workplace (practices, procedures, locations, staffing, equipment, missions/visions)
- **Status**—daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, biannual, yearly statements about where you, the department, or the company is regarding many topics (sales, staffing, travel, practices, procedures, or finances)
- **Directive (delegation of responsibilities)**—informing subordinates of their designated tasks
- **Inquiry**—asking questions about upcoming processes or procedures
- **Cover**—prefacing an internal proposal, long report, or other attachments

Criteria for Writing Memos

Memos contain the following key components:

- Memo identification lines (Date, To, From, and Subject)
- Introduction
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Audience recognition
- Appropriate memo style and tone

Figure 6.2 shows an ideal, all-purpose organizational template that works well for memos, letters, and e-mail.

Subject Line. The subject line summarizes the memo's content. One-word subject lines do not communicate effectively, as in the following flawed subject line. The "Before" sample has a *topic* (a what) but is missing a *focus* (a what about the what).

FIGURE 6.2 All-Purpose Template for Memos, Letters, and E-mail

Introduction: A lead-in or overview stating *why* you are writing and *what* you are writing about.

Discussion: Detailed development, made accessible through highlighting techniques, explaining *exactly what* you want to say.

-
-
-

Conclusion: State *what* is next, *when* this will occur, and *why* the date is important.

BEFORE	AFTER
Subject: Sales	Subject: Report on Quarterly Sales

Introduction. Once you have communicated your intent in the subject line, get to the point in the introductory sentence(s). Write one or two clear introductory sentences which tell your readers *what* topic you are writing about and *why* you are writing. The following example invites the reader to a meeting, thereby communicating *what* the writer's intentions are. It also tells the reader that the meeting is one of a series of meetings, thus communicating *why* the meeting is being called.

EXAMPLE ▶

> In the third of our series of sales quota meetings this quarter, I'd like to review our productivity.

Discussion. The discussion section allows you to develop your content specifically. Readers might not read every line of your memo (tending instead to skip and skim). Thus, traditional blocks of data (paragraphing) are not necessarily effective. The longer the paragraph, the more likely your audience is to avoid reading. Make your text more reader friendly by itemizing, using white space, boldfacing, creating headings, or inserting graphics.

BEFORE	AFTER
Example—Unfriendly Text	Example—Reader-Friendly Text

BEFORE — Example—Unfriendly Text

This year began with an increase, as we sold 4.5 million units in January compared to 3.7 for January 2012. In February we continued to improve with 4.6, compared with 3.6 for the same time in 2012. March was not quite so good, as we sold 4.3 against the March 2012 figure of 3.9. April was about the same with 4.2, compared to 3.8 for April 2012.

AFTER — Example—Reader-Friendly Text

Comparative Quarterly Sales (in Millions)

	2012	2013	Increase/Decrease
Jan.	3.7	4.5	0.8+
Feb.	3.6	4.6	1.0+
Mar.	3.9	4.3	0.4+
Apr.	3.8	4.2	0.4+

Conclusion. Conclude your memo with "thanks" and/or directive action. A pleasant conclusion could motivate your readers, as in the following example. A directive close tells your readers exactly what you want them to do next or what your plans are (and provides dated action).

EXAMPLE ▶

> If our quarterly sales continue to improve at the current rate, we will double our sales expectations by 2012. Next Wednesday (12/22/12), please provide next quarter's sales projections and a summary of your sales team's accomplishments.

Audience Recognition.   Since letters go outside your company, your audience is usually a low-tech or lay reader, demanding that you define your terms specifically. In memos your in-house audience is easier to address (usually high tech or low tech). You often can use more acronyms and internal abbreviations in memos than you can in letters.

Usually, you will write the memo to one reader, but you might "cc" (send a "complimentary copy") to other readers. Thus, you might be writing simultaneously to your immediate supervisor (high tech), to his or her boss (low tech), to your colleagues (high tech), and to a CEO (low tech). To accommodate multiple audiences, use parenthetical definitions, such as cash in advance (CIA) or continuing property records (CPR).

Style and Tone.   Because memos are usually only one page long, use simple words, short sentences, specific detail, and highlighting techniques. In addition, strive for an informal, friendly tone. Memos are part of your interpersonal communication abilities, so a friendly tone will help build rapport with colleagues.

In memos, audience determines tone. For example, you cannot write directive correspondence to supervisors mandating action on their part. It might seem obvious that you can write directives to subordinates, but you should not use a dictatorial tone. Though the subordinates are under your authority, they must still be treated with respect. You will determine the tone of your memo by deciding if you are writing vertically (up to management or down to subordinates) or laterally (to co-workers), as shown in Figure 6.3.

> **Audience**
>
> See Chapter 4 for more discussion of audience recognition and involvement.

> **Style, Development, Tone, and Highlighting Techniques**
>
> See Chapters 3 and 9 for more discussion.

| BEFORE	AFTER
Example 1—Unfriendly, Demanding Style	Example 2—Friendly, Personal Style
We will have a meeting next Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2012. Exert every effort to attend this meeting. Plan to make intelligent comments regarding the new quarter projections.	Let's meet next Tuesday (Jan. 11, 2012). Even if you're late, I'd appreciate your attending. By doing so you can have an opportunity to make an impact on the second quarter projections. I'm looking forward to hearing your comments.

FIGURE 6.3   Vertical and Lateral Communication Within a Company
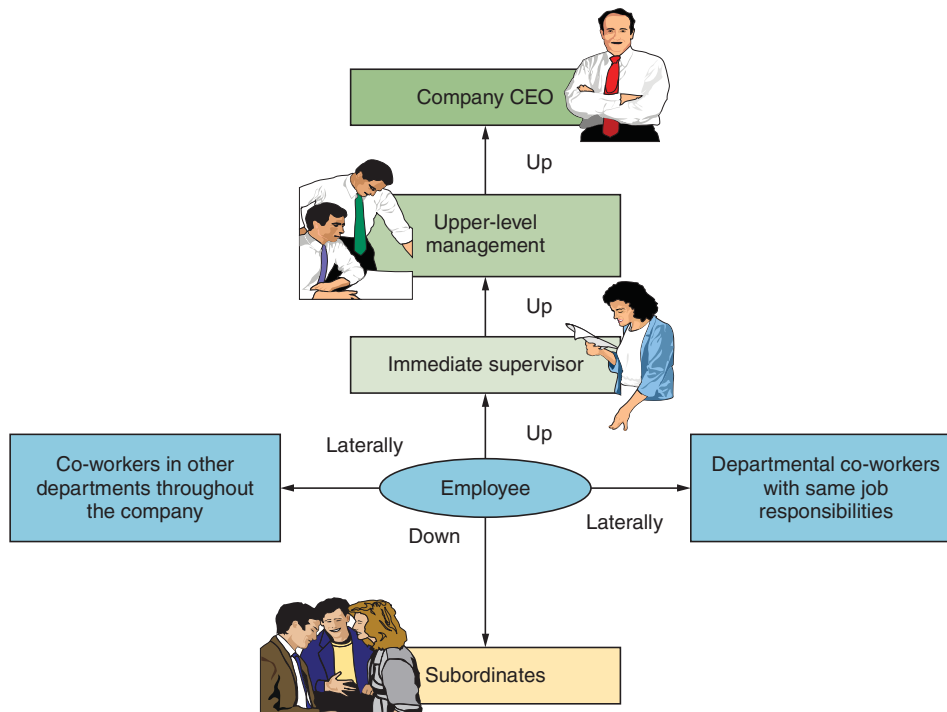
Web Resources

www.pearsonhighered
.com/gerson See our
companion website for
sample memos.

Sample Memos

See Figures 6.4 and 6.5 for sample memos.

FIGURE 6.4   Comparison/Contrast Feasibility Memo

The introduction states
the purpose of this
memo, purchasing
options, and intended
action.

The memo's discussion
analyzes the criteria
used to decide which
mobile phone to
purchase. Tables are
used to ensure reader-
friendly ease of access.

The conclusion
summarizes the
importance of the
action. It also ends in
a personalized and
positive tone to ensure
reader involvement and
to build rapport.

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 12, 2012
To: George Singh, Manager
From: Luann Brunson, Purchasing Department
Subject: Replacement of Mobile Phones

On December 5, the manufacturing department supervisor informed the purchasing department that our company's mobile phones were malfunctioning. Purchasing was asked to evaluate three mobile communication options (the RPAD, XPO 1690, and MX16). Based on my findings, I have issued a purchase order for 12 RPAD handhelds.

The following points summarize my findings.

1. Performance

During a one-week test period, I found that the RPAD outperformed our current XPO's features. The RPAD has built-in WiFi, multiple messaging capabilities, QWERTY keyboard, and 3.6 mega-pixel camera. Our current XPO does not have photo capabilities, nor does it allow for multiple messaging.

2. Specifications

The RPAD is easier to carry, because of its reduced size. More importantly, the RPAD is easier to read due to its larger screen size and it improved resolution.

	RPAD	XPO 1690	MX16
Screen Size and Resolution	3.5" (400 × 640 pixel)	3" (340 × 240 pixels)	2.8" (300 × 200 pixels)
Phone Size	4.1" × 2.2" × 0.3"	4.21" × 2.17" × 0.55"	4.4" × 2.4" × 0.4"

3. Cost of Equipment

The RPAD is our most cost-effective option because of quantity cost breaks and maintenance guarantees.

	RPAD	XPO 1690	MX16
Cost per unit	$300.00	$500.00	$295.00
Cost per doz.	$3,600.00	$6,000.00	$3,540.00
Guarantees	1 year	6 months	6 months

Purchase of the RPAD will give us improved performance and comfort. In addition, we can buy 12 RPAD handhelds for approximately the cost of 6 XPOs. If I can provide you with additional information, please call. I'd be happy to meet with you at your convenience.

FIGURE 6.5   Cover Memo Prefacing Attachments

MEMO

CompuMed

Date: November 11, 2012

To: CompuMed Management

From: Bill Baker, Human Resources Director

Subject: Information about Proposed Changes to Employee Benefits Package

As of January 1, 2013, CompuMed will change insurance carriers. This will affect all 5,000 employees' benefits packages. I have attached a proposal, including the following:

1. Reasons for changing from our current carrier   page 2

2. Criteria for our selection of a new insurance company   pages 3–4

3. Monthly cost for each employee   pages 5–6

4. Overall cost to CompuMed   page 7

5. Benefits derived from the new healthcare plan   page 8

Please review the proposal, survey your employees' responses to our suggestions, and provide your feedback. We need your input by December 1, 2012. This will give the Human Resources Department time to consider your suggestions and work with insurance companies to meet employee needs.

Enclosure: Proposal

Introduce your memo by stating the topic being discussed and leading into the itemized information.

Provide dated action and the reasons for this request to conclude your memo. This also tells the audience what to do next.

MEMO CHECKLIST

_____ 1. Does the memo contain identification lines (Date, To, From, and Subject)?

_____ 2. Does the subject line contain a topic and a focus?

_____ 3. Does the introduction clearly state
   • Why this memo has been written?
   • What topic the memo is discussing?

_____ 4. Does the body explain exactly what you want to say?

_____ 5. Does the conclusion
   • Tell when you plan a follow-up or when you want a response?
   • Explain why this dated action is important?

_____ 6. Are highlighting techniques used effectively for document design?

_____ 7. Is the memo concise?

_____ 8. Is the memo clear,
   • Achieving specificity of detail?
   • Answering reporter's questions?

_____ 9. Does the memo recognize audience, defining acronyms or abbreviations where necessary for various levels of readers (high tech, low tech, and lay)?

_____10. Did you avoid grammatical errors? Errors will hurt your professionalism. See Appendix A for grammar rules and exercises.

Using Memo and Letter Templates in Microsoft Word 2010

1. Click on the **File** button located on the top left of your toolbar and scroll to **New**.
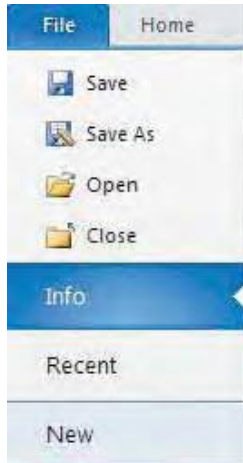
The following window will pop up.

2. Click on the type of document you want to write, such as Letters or Memos.
When you choose the communication channel, either of the following windows will pop up.
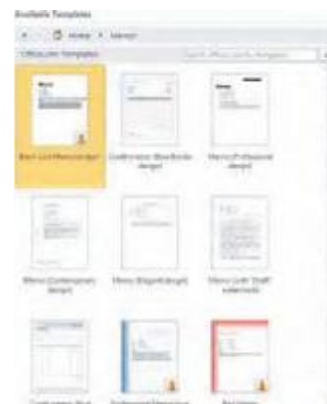
You can choose from one of twenty-three memo templates or one of hundreds of letter templates. Each of these templates gives you an already-designed letter format, complete with spacing, font selection, and layout. In addition, these templates provide fields in which you type the appropriate information (address, company name, date, salutation, complimentary close, your name and title, etc.).

These templates and wizards are both good and bad. They remind you which components can be included in a memo or letter, they make it easy for you to include these components, and they let you choose ready-made formats.

However, the templates also can create some problems. First, they are somewhat limiting in that they dictate what information you should include and where you should put this information. The content and placement of this information might contradict your teacher's or boss's requirements. Second, the templates are prescriptive, limiting your choice of font sizes and types. Our advice would be to use these templates and wizards with caution.

FAQs: Letters vs. E-mail

Q: Why write a letter? Haven't letters been replaced by e-mail?

A: Though e-mail is quick, it might not be the best communication channel, for the following reasons:

1. E-mail might be too quick. In the workplace, you will write about topics that require a lot of thought. Because e-mail messages can be written and sent quickly, people too often write hurriedly and neglect to consider the impact of the message.

2. E-mail messages tend to be casual, conversational, and informal. Not all correspondence, however, lends itself to this level of informality. Formal correspondence related to contracts, for example, requires the more formal communication channel of a letter. The same applies to audience. You might want to write a casual e-mail to a co-worker, but if you were writing to the president of a company, the mayor of a city, or a foreign dignitary, a letter would be a better, more formal choice of communication channel.

3. E-mail messages tend to be short. For content requiring more detail, a longer letter would be a better choice.

4. We get so many e-mail messages a day that they are easy to disregard—even easy to delete. Letters carry more significance. If you want to ensure that your correspondence is read and perceived as important, you might want to write a letter instead of an e-mail.

5. Letters allow for a "greater paper trail" than e-mail. Most employees' e-mail inboxes fill up quickly. To clean up these inboxes, people tend to delete messages that they don't consider important. In contrast, hard-copy letters are wonderful documentation.

Letters

Reasons for Writing Letters

Letters are external correspondence that you send from your company to a colleague working at another company, a vendor, a customer, a prospective employee, and stakeholders and stockholders. Letters leave your worksite (as opposed to memos, which stay within the company).

Because letters are sent to readers in other locations, your letters not only reflect your communication abilities but also are a reflection of your company. This chapter provides letter components, formats, criteria, and examples to help you write the following kinds of letters:

- Inquiry
- Cover (transmittal)
- Complaint
- Adjustment
- Bad news
- Confirmation
- Recommendation

Sales Letters, Letters of Application, and Job Acceptance Letters

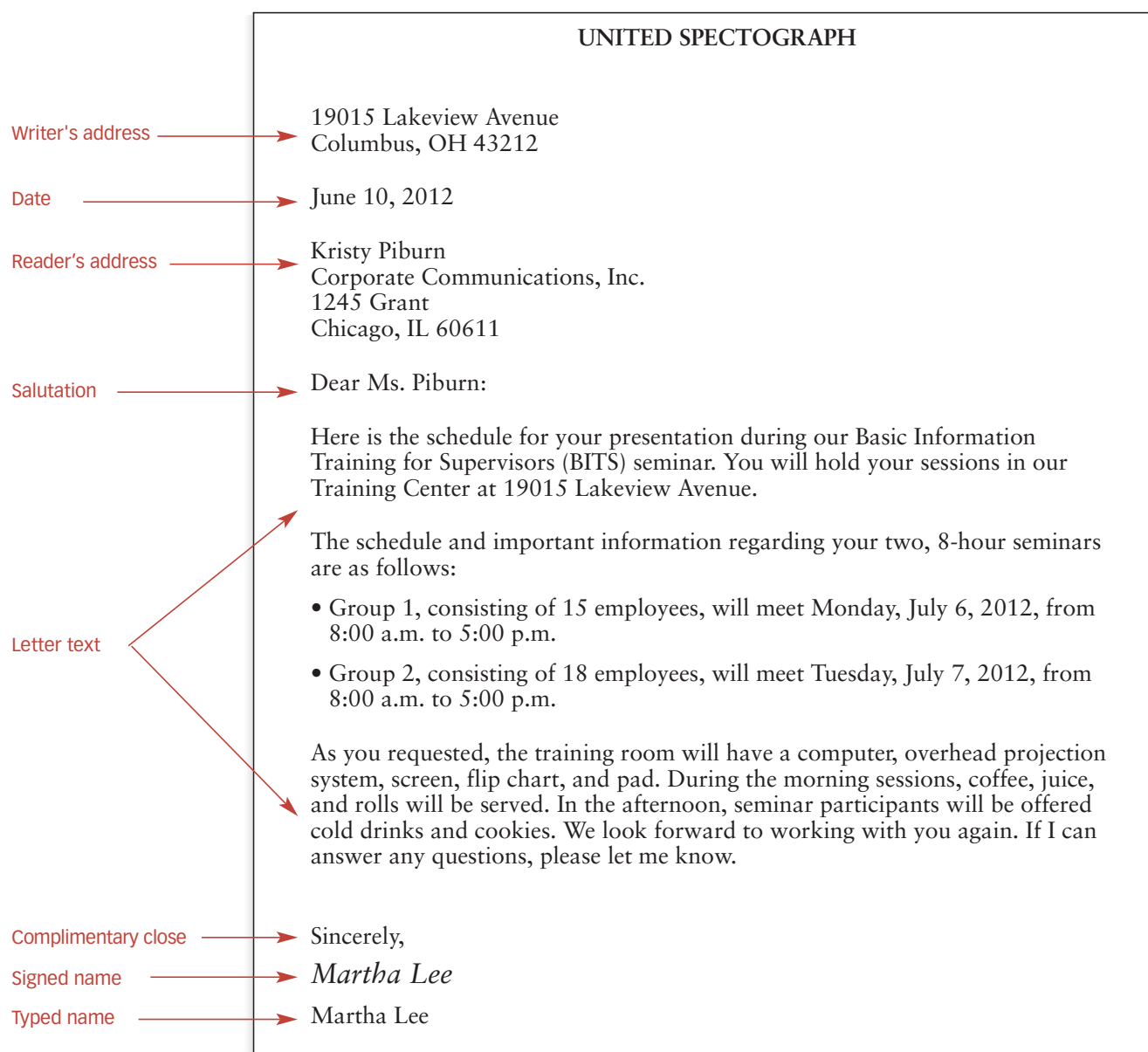See Chapters 8 and 11 for more discussion of letters related to persuasion and the job search.

Essential Components of Letters

Your letter should be printed on 8½" × 11" paper. Leave 1" to 1½" margins at the top and on both sides. Choose an appropriately business-like font (size and style), such as Times New Roman or Arial (12 point). Though "designer fonts," such as Comic Sans and Shelley Volante, are interesting, they tend to be harder to read and less professional.

Your letter should contain the essential components shown in Figure 6.6.

FIGURE 6.6 Essential Letter Components

UNITED SPECTOGRAPH

Writer's address →
19015 Lakeview Avenue
Columbus, OH 43212

Date →
June 10, 2012

Reader's address →
Kristy Piburn
Corporate Communications, Inc.
1245 Grant
Chicago, IL 60611

Salutation →
Dear Ms. Piburn:

Here is the schedule for your presentation during our Basic Information Training for Supervisors (BITS) seminar. You will hold your sessions in our Training Center at 19015 Lakeview Avenue.

The schedule and important information regarding your two, 8-hour seminars are as follows:

Letter text →

• Group 1, consisting of 15 employees, will meet Monday, July 6, 2012, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

• Group 2, consisting of 18 employees, will meet Tuesday, July 7, 2012, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

As you requested, the training room will have a computer, overhead projection system, screen, flip chart, and pad. During the morning sessions, coffee, juice, and rolls will be served. In the afternoon, seminar participants will be offered cold drinks and cookies. We look forward to working with you again. If I can answer any questions, please let me know.

Complimentary close →
Sincerely,

Signed name →
Martha Lee

Typed name →
Martha Lee

Writer's Address.   This section contains either your personal address or your company's address. If the heading consists of your address, you will include your street address, the city, state, and zip code. The state may be abbreviated with the appropriate two-letter abbreviation.

If the heading consists of your company's address, you will include the company's name, street address, city, state, and zip code.

Date.   Document the month, day, and year when you write your letter. You can write your date in one of two ways: May 31, 2012 or 31 May 2012. Place the date one or two spaces below the writer's address.

Reader's Address.   Place the reader's address two lines below the date. This would include the following:

- Reader's name (If you do not know the name of this person, begin the reader's address with a job title or the name of the department.)
- Reader's title (optional)
- Company name
- Street address
- City, state, and zip code

Salutation.   The traditional salutation, placed two spaces beneath the reader's address, is *Dear* and your reader's last name, followed by a colon (Dear Mr. Smith:).

You can also address your reader by his or her first name if you are on a first-name basis with this person (Dear John:). If you are writing to a woman and are unfamiliar with her marital status, address the letter *Dear Ms. Jones*. However, if you know the woman's marital status, you can address the letter accordingly: Dear Miss Jones *or* Dear Mrs. Jones.

Letter Body.   Begin the body of the letter two spaces below the salutation. The body includes your introductory paragraph, discussion paragraph(s), and concluding paragraph. The body should be single spaced with double spacing between paragraphs. Whether you indent the beginning of paragraphs or leave them flush with the left margin is determined by the letter format you employ.

Complimentary Close.   Place the complimentary close, followed by a comma, two spaces below the concluding paragraph. Typical complimentary closes include "Sincerely," "Yours truly," and "Sincerely yours."

Signed Name.   Sign your name legibly or use an electronic (digital) signature beneath the complimentary close.

Typed Name.   Type your name four spaces below the complimentary close. You can type your title one space beneath your typed name. You also can include your title on the same line as your typed name, with a comma after your name.

Optional Components of Letters

In addition to the letter essentials, you can include the following optional components.

Subject Line.   Place a subject line two spaces below the reader's address and two spaces above the salutation.

Dr. Ron Schaefer
Linguistics Department
Southern Illinois University
Edwardsville, IL 66205

Subject: Linguistics Conference Registration Payment

Dear Dr. Schaefer:

You also could use a subject line instead of a salutation.

Linguistics Department
Southern Illinois University
Edwardsville, IL 662051

Subject: Linguistics Conference Registration Payment

A subject line not only helps readers understand the letter's intent but also (if you are uncertain of your reader's name) avoids such awkward salutations as "To Whom It May Concern," "Dear Sirs," and "Ladies and Gentlemen." In the simplified format, both the salutation and the complimentary close are omitted, and a subject line is included.

New-Page Notations. If your letter is longer than one page, cite your name, the page number, and the date on all pages after page 1. Place this notation either flush with the left margin at the top of subsequent pages or across the top of subsequent pages. (You must have at least two lines of text on the next page to justify another page.)

Left margin, subsequent page notation	Across top of subsequent pages
Mabel Tinjaca Page 2 May 31, 2012	Mabel Tinjaca 2 May 31, 2012

Writer's and Typist's Initials. If the letter was typed by someone other than the writer, include both the writer's and the typist's initials two spaces below the typed signature. The writer's initials are capitalized, the typist's initials are typed in lowercase, and the two sets of initials are separated by a colon. If the typist and the writer are the same person, this notation is not necessary.

Sincerely,

W. T. Winnery

WTW:mm

Enclosure Notation. If your letter prefaces enclosed information, such as an invoice or report, mention this enclosure in the letter and then type an enclosure notation two spaces below the typed signature (or two spaces below the writer and typist initials). The enclosure notation can be abbreviated "Enc."; written out as "Enclosure"; show the number of

enclosures, such as "Enclosures (2)"; or specify what has been enclosed—"Enclosure: January Invoice."

Copy Notation. If you have sent a copy of your letter to other readers, show this in a copy notation. A complimentary copy is designated by a lowercase "cc." List the other readers' names following the copy notation. Type the copy notation two spaces below the typed signature or two spaces below either the writer's and typist's initials or the enclosure notation.

Sincerely,

Brian Altman

Enclosure: August Status Report

cc: Marcia Rittmaster and Larry Rochelle

Formatting Letters

Three common types of letter formats include **full block** (Figure 6.7), **full block with subject line** (Figure 6.8), and **simplified** (Figure 6.9). Two popular and professional formats used in business are full block and full block with subject line. With both formats, you type all information at the left margin without indenting paragraphs, the date, the complimentary close, or signature. The full block with subject line differs only with the inclusion of a subject line.

Another option is the simplified format. This type of letter layout is similar to the full block format in that all text is typed margin left. The two significant omissions include no

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SPOTLIGHT

Why are letters important in a governmental organization?

Dr. Georgia Nesselrode is Director of Government Training for Mid-America Regional Council's Government Training Institute (GTI). The GTI provides training workshops for local government officials (elected and appointed) and their employees. Dr. Nesselrode writes approximately 30 letters each month.

In fact, as Georgia says, she writes letters when other companies might write e-mail messages. Why not write e-mail for routine communication? "Letters are an integral part of our communication for several reasons:

- Local government is more traditional than many corporations.
- Letters provide a better paper trail of documentation.
- Letters are more formal and have greater impact than e-mail.
- Many of my letters preface large, hard-copy attachments.
- The letters convey information that does not always require immediate action (a benefit of e-mail). Instead, my letters often communicate content for future consideration."

Dr. Nesselrode writes cover letters prefacing contracts, letters of recommendation for colleagues, inquiries, responses to inquiries, sales letters promoting her programs, updates, letters of confirmation to potential clients and vendors, and on occasion, responses to seminar participants who were dissatisfied with a training workshop or facilitator.

Her audiences include her local government training liaisons and training workshop instructors. She writes to elected and appointed officials such as mayors, police chiefs, fire captains, city managers, and municipal employees who work in their city's health, accounting, tax, water, road, and parks and recreation departments.

Because she writes to governmental agencies, officials, and employees, Dr. Nesselrode ensures the correspondence is concise, informative, and presents a professional image. In fact, her letters must be perfect. She represents an entire metropolitan area's governmental training, and that's a reflection on city management.

FIGURE 6.7 Full Block Format

State Health Department

1890 Clark Road
Jefferson City, MO 67220

June 6, 2012

Dale McGraw, Manager
Elmwood Mobile Home Park
Elmwood, MO 64003

Dear Mr. McGraw:

On April 19, 2012, Ryan Duran and I, environmental specialists from the Health Department, conducted an inspection of the Elmwood Mobile Home Park Wastewater Treatment Facility. The purpose was to assess compliance with the following: the state's Clean Water Law, Clean Water Commission regulations, and your facility's plan for pollution control. The inspection also would allow the state to promote proper operation of Wastewater Facilities and to provide technical assistance where needed to the Elmwood Mobile Homes management.

Though the Elmwood Mobile Home pollution control plan had expired in 2011, a consent judgment was issued by the state's Attorney Generals Office. The county court stipulated a timeline for correction by connection to an available sewer system. Your mobile home park's wastewater system has continually discharged to the Little Osage River. A copy of the abatement order, which requires that monthly discharge monitoring reports (DMRs) be submitted by the 28th of the month following the reporting periods, is attached. All DMRs for the previous twelve months have been received, and reported pollution parameters are not within limits. Due to the plant's performance, the stream was placed on the 2010, 303 (d) stream for impairment by the Elmwood Mobile Home.

As part of the inspection, a review of the facility's DMR was conducted. Twenty-four-hour composite samples were collected using a composite sampler. Attached are the results of the 24-hour composite samples collected on April 20, 2012. Every one of the problems documented is an infraction that must be addressed.

Within 30 days of receipt of this letter, please submit to the Health Department written documentation describing steps taken to correct each of the concerns identified in the attachments. Also include engineering reports, and submit a timeframe to eliminate the problems. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Harvey Haddix

Environmental Manager

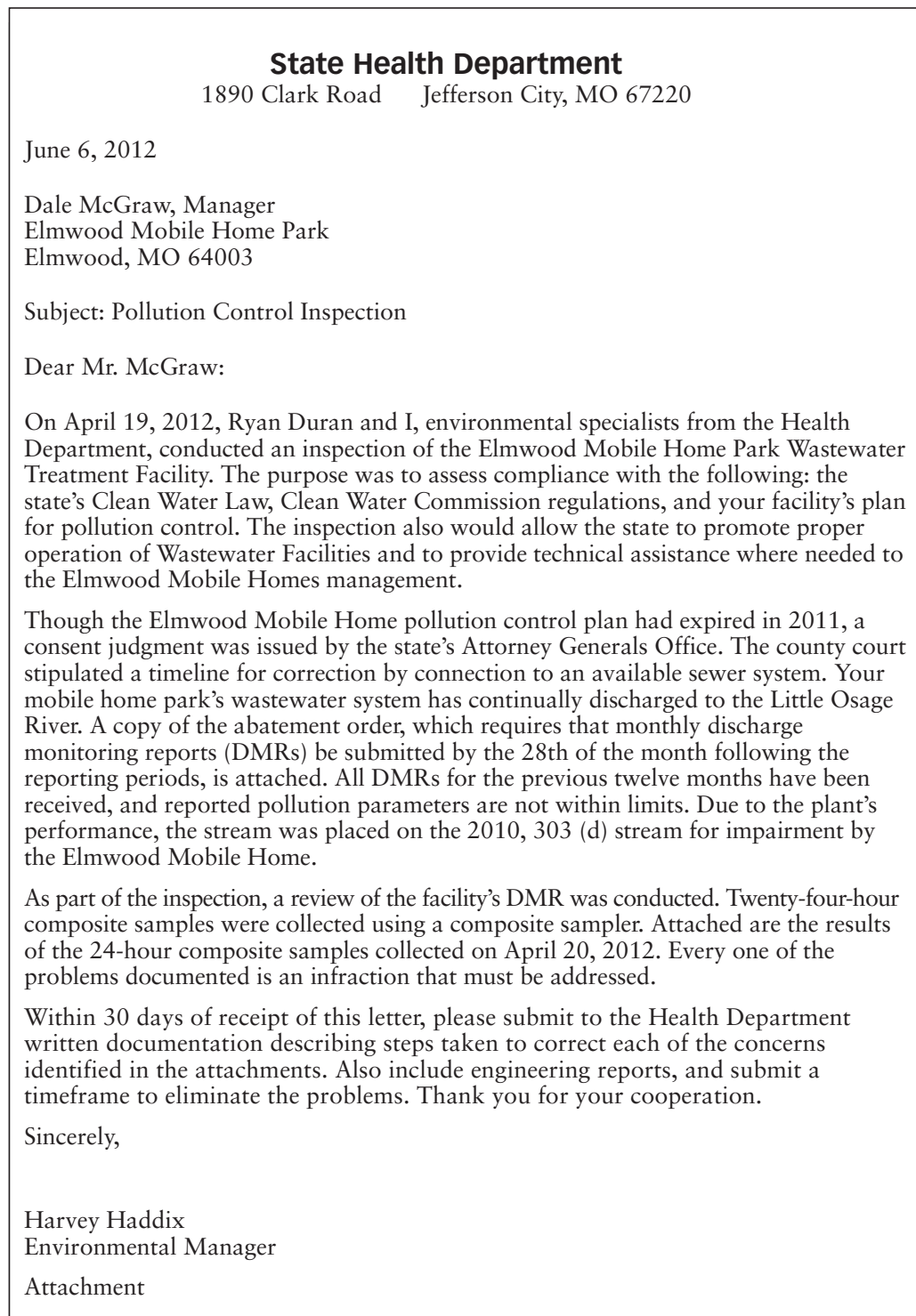Attachment

FIGURE 6.8   Full Block Format with Subject Line

State Health Department
1890 Clark Road   Jefferson City, MO 67220

June 6, 2012

Dale McGraw, Manager
Elmwood Mobile Home Park
Elmwood, MO 64003

Subject: Pollution Control Inspection

Dear Mr. McGraw:

On April 19, 2012, Ryan Duran and I, environmental specialists from the Health Department, conducted an inspection of the Elmwood Mobile Home Park Wastewater Treatment Facility. The purpose was to assess compliance with the following: the state's Clean Water Law, Clean Water Commission regulations, and your facility's plan for pollution control. The inspection also would allow the state to promote proper operation of Wastewater Facilities and to provide technical assistance where needed to the Elmwood Mobile Homes management.

Though the Elmwood Mobile Home pollution control plan had expired in 2011, a consent judgment was issued by the state's Attorney Generals Office. The county court stipulated a timeline for correction by connection to an available sewer system. Your mobile home park's wastewater system has continually discharged to the Little Osage River. A copy of the abatement order, which requires that monthly discharge monitoring reports (DMRs) be submitted by the 28th of the month following the reporting periods, is attached. All DMRs for the previous twelve months have been received, and reported pollution parameters are not within limits. Due to the plant's performance, the stream was placed on the 2010, 303 (d) stream for impairment by the Elmwood Mobile Home.

As part of the inspection, a review of the facility's DMR was conducted. Twenty-four-hour composite samples were collected using a composite sampler. Attached are the results of the 24-hour composite samples collected on April 20, 2012. Every one of the problems documented is an infraction that must be addressed.

Within 30 days of receipt of this letter, please submit to the Health Department written documentation describing steps taken to correct each of the concerns identified in the attachments. Also include engineering reports, and submit a timeframe to eliminate the problems. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Harvey Haddix
Environmental Manager

Attachment

FIGURE 6.9 Simplified Format Omitting "Dear . . ." and "Sincerely"

State Health Department
1890 Clark Road
Jefferson City, MO 67220

June 6, 2012

Dale McGraw, Manager
Elmwood Mobile Home Park
Elmwood, MO 64003

Subject: Pollution Control Inspection

On April 19, 2012, Ryan Duran and I, environmental specialists from the Health Department, conducted an inspection of the Elmwood Mobile Home Park Wastewater Treatment Facility. The purpose was to assess compliance with the following: the state's Clean Water Law, Clean Water Commission regulations, and your facility's plan for pollution control. The inspection also would allow the state to promote proper operation of Wastewater Facilities and to provide technical assistance where needed to the Elmwood Mobile Homes management.

Though the Elmwood Mobile Home pollution control plan had expired in 2011, a consent judgment was issued by the state's Attorney Generals Office. The county court stipulated a timeline for correction by connection to an available sewer system. Your mobile home park's wastewater system has continually discharged to the Little Osage River. A copy of the abatement order, which requires that monthly discharge monitoring reports (DMRs) be submitted by the 28th of the month following the reporting periods, is attached. All DMRs for the previous twelve months have been received, and reported pollution parameters are not within limits. Due to the plant's performance, the stream was placed on the 2010, 303 (d) stream for impairment by the Elmwood Mobile Home.

As part of the inspection, a review of the facility's DMR was conducted. Twenty-four-hour composite samples were collected using a composite sampler. Attached are the results of the 24-hour composite samples collected on April 20, 2012. Every one of the problems documented is an infraction that must be addressed.

Within 30 days of receipt of this letter, please submit to the Health Department written documentation describing steps taken to correct each of the concerns identified in the attachments. Also include engineering reports, and submit a timeframe to eliminate the problems. Thank you for your cooperation.

Harvey Haddix
Environmental Manager

Attachment

salutation ("Dear _____:") and no complimentary close ("Sincerely,"). Omitting a salutation is useful in the following instances:

- You do not know your reader's name (NOTE: avoid the trite salutation, "To Whom It May Concern:")
- You are writing to someone with a non-gender-specific name (Jesse, Terry, Stacy, Chris, etc.) and you do not know whether to use "Mr.," "Mrs.," or "Ms."

The Administrative Management Society (AMS) suggests that if you omit the salutation, you also should omit the complimentary close. Some people feel that omitting the salutation and the complimentary close will make the letter cold and unfriendly. However, the AMS says that if your letter is warm and friendly, these omissions will not be missed. More importantly, if your letter's content is negative, beginning with "Dear" and ending with "Sincerely" will not improve the letter's tone or your reader's attitude toward your comments.

The simplified format includes a subject line to aid the letter's clarity.

Criteria for Different Types of Letters

Though you might write different types of letters, including inquiry, cover (transmittal), complaint, adjustment, bad news, confirmation, and recommendation, consider using the all-purpose memo, letter, and e-mail template from Figure 6.2 (on page 158) to format your correspondence.

Letter of Inquiry

If you want information about degree requirements, equipment costs, performance records, turnaround time, employee credentials, or any other matter of interest to you or your company, then write a letter requesting that data. Letters of inquiry require that you be specific. For example, if you write, "Please send me any information you have on your computer systems," you are in trouble. You will either receive any information the reader chooses to give you or none at all. Look at the following flawed letter of inquiry from a biochemical waste disposal company.

BEFORE

Dear Mr. Jernigan:

Please send us information about the following filter pools:

1. East Lime Pool
2. West Sulphate Pool
3. East Aggregate Pool

Thank you.

The reader replied as follows:

Dear Mr. Scholl:

I would be happy to provide you with any information you would like. However, you need to tell me what information you require about the pools.

I look forward to your response.

The first writer, recognizing the error, rewrote the letter as follows:

AFTER

Dear Mr. Jernigan:

My company, Jackson County Hazardous Waste Disposal, Inc., needs to purchase new waste receptacles. One of our clients used your products in the past and recommended you. Please send us information about the following:

1. Lime Pool—costs, warranties, time of installation, and dimensions
2. Sulphate Pool—costs, material, and levels of acidity
3. Aggregate Pool—costs, flammability, maintenance, and discoloration

We plan to install our pools by March 12. We would appreciate your response by February 20. Thank you.

To compose your letter of inquiry, include the following:

Introduction. Clarify your intent in the introduction. Until you tell your readers why you are writing, they do not know. It is your responsibility to clarify your intent and explain your rationale for writing. Also tell your reader immediately what you are writing about (the subject matter of your inquiry). You can state your intent and subject matter in one to three sentences.

Discussion. Specify your needs in the discussion. To ensure that you get the response you want, ask precise questions or list specific topics of inquiry. You must quantify. For example, rather than vaguely asking about machinery specifications, ask more precisely about "specifications for the 12R403B Copier." Rather than asking, "Will the roofing material cover a large surface?" you need to quantify—"Will the roofing material cover $150' \times 180'$?"

Conclusion. Conclude precisely. First, explain when you need a response. Do not write, "Please respond as soon as possible." Provide dated action and tell the reader exactly when you need your answers. Second, to sell your readers on the importance of this date, explain why you need answers by the date given.

Figure 6.10 will help you understand the requirements for effective letters of inquiry.

Cover (Transmittal) Letters

In business, you are often required to send information to a client, vendor, or colleague. You might send multipage copies of reports, invoices, drawings, maps, letters, memos, specifications, instructions, questionnaires, or proposals.

A cover letter accomplishes two goals. First, it lets you tell readers up front what they are receiving. Second, it helps you focus your readers' attention on key points within the enclosures. Thus, the cover letter is a reader-friendly gesture to help your audience. To compose your cover letter, include the following:

Introduction. In the introductory paragraph, tell your reader why you are writing and what you are writing about. What if the reader has asked you to send the documentation? Do you still need to explain why you are writing? The answer is yes. Although the reader requested the information, time has passed, other correspondence has been written, and your reader might have forgotten the initial request.

Discussion. In the body of the letter, you can accomplish two things. You tell your reader either exactly what you have enclosed or exactly what of value is within the enclosures. In both instances, provide an itemized list or easily accessible, short paragraphs.

FIGURE 6.10   Letter of Inquiry Using the Simplified Format

Compu*M*ed

8713 Hillview   Reno, NV 32901   1-800-551-9000   Fax: 1-816-555-0000

September 12, 2012

Sales Manager
OfficeToGo
7622 Raintree
St. Louis, MO 66772

Subject: Request for Product Pricing and Shipping Schedules

My medical technology company has worked well with OfficeToGo (OTG) for the past five years. However, in August I received a letter informing me that OTG had been purchased by a larger corporation. I need to determine if OTG remains competitive with other major office equipment suppliers in the Reno area.

> In the introduction, explain why you are writing and introduce yourself to establish the letter's context.

Please provide the following information:

1. What discounts will be offered for bulk purchases?
2. Which freight company will OTG now be using?
3. Who will pay to insure the items ordered?
4. What is the turnaround time from order placement to delivery?
5. Will OTG be able to deliver to all my satellite sites?
6. Will OTG technicians set up the equipment delivered, including desks, file cabinets, bookshelves, and chairs?
7. Will OTG be able to personalize office stationery onsite, or will it have to be outsourced?

> In the discussion, specify your needs. To ensure accuracy of response, ask precise questions.

Please respond to these questions by September 30 so I can prepare my quarterly orders in a timely manner. I continue to expand my business and want assurances that you can fill my growing office supply needs. You can contact me at the phone number provided above or by e-mail (jgood@CompuMed.com). Thank you for your help.

> In the conclusion, state when you need a response and explain why this date is important. Providing contact information will help the reader respond.

Jim Goodwin
Owner and CEO

Conclusion. Your conclusion should tell your readers what you want to happen next, when you want this to happen, and why the date is important.

See Figure 6.11 for an example of a cover letter from a healthcare provider.

Complaint Letters

You are purchasing director at an electronics firm. Although you ordinarily receive excellent products and support from a local manufacturing firm, two of your recent orders have been filled incorrectly and included defective merchandise. You don't want to have to look for a new supplier. You should express your complaint as pleasantly as possible.

To compose your complaint letter, include the following:

Introduction. In the introduction, politely state the problem. Although you might be angry over the service you have received, you want to suppress that anger. Blatantly negative comments do not lead to communication; they lead to

FIGURE 6.11 Cover Letter in Block Format

AMERICAN HEALTHCARE
1401 Laurel Drive
Denton, TX 76201
November 11, 2012

Jan Pascal
Director of Outpatient Care
St. Michael's Hospital
Westlake Village, CA 91362

Dear Ms. Pascal:

Thank you for your recent request for information about our specialized outpatient care equipment. American Healthcare's stair lifts, bath lifts, and vertical wheelchair lifts can help your patients. To show how we can serve you, we have enclosed a brochure including the following information:

	Page
• Maintenance, warranty, and guarantee information	1–3
• Technical specifications for our products, including sizes, weight limitations, colors, and installation instructions	4–6
• Visuals and price lists for our products	7–8
• An American Healthcare order form	9
• Our 24-hour hotline for immediate service	10

Early next month, I will call to make an appointment at your convenience. Then we can discuss any questions you might have. Thank you for considering American Healthcare, a company that has provided exceptional outpatient care for over 30 years.

Sincerely,

Toby Sommers

Enclosure

A positive tone in the introduction builds rapport and informs the reader why this letter is being written: in response to a request.

An itemized body clarifies what is in the enclosure. Adding page numbers in the list helps readers find the information in the enclosed material.

The conclusion provides dated action, noting when a follow-up call will be made.

combat. Because angry readers will not necessarily go out of their way to help you, your best approach is diplomacy.

To strengthen your assertions, in the introduction, include supporting details such as the following: serial numbers, dates of purchase, invoice numbers, check numbers, names of salespeople involved in the purchase, and/or receipts. When possible, include copies documenting your claims.

Discussion. In the discussion paragraph(s), explain in detail the problems experienced. This could include dates, contact names, information about shipping, breakage information, an itemized listing of defects, and poor service.

Be specific. Generalized information will not sway your readers to accept your point of view. In a complaint letter, you suffer the burden of proof. Help your audience understand the extent of the problem. After documenting your claims, state what you want done and why.

Conclusion. End your letter positively. Remember, you want to ensure cooperation with the vendor or customer. You also want to be courteous, reflecting your company's professionalism. Your goal should be to achieve a continued rapport with your reader. In this concluding paragraph, include your contact information and the times you can best be reached.

See Figure 6.12 for a sample complaint letter to an automotive supplies company.

Creating a Positive Tone.   Audiences respond favorably to positive words. If you use negative words, you could offend your reader. In contrast, positive words will help you control your readers' reactions, build goodwill, and persuade your audience to accept your point of view. Choose your words carefully. Even when an audience expects bad news, they still need a polite and positive response.

FIGURE 6.12   Complaint Letter in Block Format

1234 18th Street
Galveston, TX 77001
May 10, 2012

Mr. Holbert Lang
Customer Service Manager
Gulfstream Auto
1101 21st Street
Galveston, TX 77001

Dear Mr. Lang:

On February 12, 2012, I purchased two shock absorbers in your automotive department. Enclosed are copies of the receipt and the warranty for that purchase. One of those shocks has since proved defective.

> The introduction includes the date of purchase (to substantiate the claim) and the problems encountered.

I attempted to exchange the defective shock at your store on May 2, 2012. The mechanic on duty, Vernon Blanton, informed me that the warranty was invalid because your service staff did not install the part. I believe that your company should honor the warranty agreement and replace the part for the following reasons:

1. The warranty states that the shock is covered for 48 months and 48,000 miles.
2. The warranty does not state that installation by someone other than the dealership will result in warranty invalidation.
3. The defective shock absorber is causing potentially expensive damage to the tire and suspension system.

> The body explains what happened, states what the writer wants done, and justifies the request. This letter develops its claim with warranty information.

I can be reached between 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays at 763-9280 or at 763-9821 anytime on weekends. You also can email me at cdelatorre12@hotmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for helping me with this misunderstanding.

> The letter concludes by providing contact information and an upbeat, pleasant tone.

Sincerely,

Carlos De La Torre

Enclosures (2)

TABLE 6.2 Positive Words

advantage	efficient	meaningful
asset	enjoyable	please
benefit	favorable	positive
certain	good	profit
confident	grateful	quality
constructive	happy	successful
contribution	helpful	thank you
effective	improvement	value

TABLE 6.3 Positive Verbs

accomplish	improve
achieve	increase
assist	initiate
assure	insure (ensure)
build	maintain
coordinate	organize
create	plan
develop	produce
encourage	promote
establish	satisfy
help	train

TABLE 6.4 Negative vs. Positive Sentences

Before	After
1. The error is your fault. You scheduled incorrectly and cannot complain about our deliveries. If you would cooperate with us, we would work with you to solve this problem.	1. To improve deliveries, let's work together on our companies' scheduling practices.
2. I regret to inform you that we will not replace the motor in your dryer unless we have proof of purchase.	2. When you provide us proof of purchase, we will be happy to replace the motor in your dryer.
3. The accounting records your company submitted are incorrect. You have obviously miscalculated the figures.	3. After reviewing your company's accounting records, please recalculate the numbers to ensure that they correspond to the new X44 tax laws (enclosed).
4. Your letter suggesting an improvement for the system has been rejected. The reconfigurations you suggest are too large for the area specifications. We need you to resubmit if you can solve your problem.	4. Thank you for your suggestions. Though you offer excellent ideas, the configurations you suggest are too large for our area specifications. Please resubmit your proposal based on the figures provided online.
5. You have not paid your bill yet. Failure to do so will result in termination of services.	5. Prompt payment of bills ensures continued service.

The positive words in Table 6.2 and positive verbs in Table 6.3 will help you create a pleasant tone and build audience rapport.

Table 6.4 gives you a *before* and *after* view of negative sentences rewritten using a positive tone.

Adjustment Letters

Responses to letters of complaint, also called adjustment letters, can take three different forms.

- **100% Yes.** You could agree 100 percent with the writer of the complaint letter.
- **100% No.** You could disagree 100 percent with the writer of the complaint letter.
- **Partial adjustment.** You could agree with some of the writer's complaints but disagree with other aspects of the complaint.

Table 6.5 shows you the differences among these three types of adjustment letters.

TABLE 6.5 Differences Among Adjustment Letters

	100% Yes	100% No	Partial Adjustment
Introduction	State the good news.	Begin with a buffer, a comment agreeable to both reader and writer.	State the good news.
Discussion	Explain what happened and what the reader should do and/or what the company plans to do next.	Explain what happened, state the bad news, and provide possible alternatives.	Explain what happened, state the bad news, and provide possible alternatives—what the reader and/or company should do next.
Conclusion	End upbeat and positive.	Resell (provide discounts, coupons, follow-up contact names and numbers, etc.) to maintain goodwill.	Resell (provide discounts, coupons, etc.) to maintain goodwill.

Writing a 100% Yes response to a complaint is easy. You are telling your audience what they want to hear. The challenge, in contrast, is writing a 100% No response or a partial adjustment. In these letters, you must convey bad news, but you do not want to convey bad news too abruptly. Doing so might offend, anger, or cause hurt feelings. Using a **buffer statement** delays bad news in written communication and gives you an opportunity to explain your position.

Buffers to Cushion the Blow.   Use the following techniques to buffer the bad news:

- **Establish rapport with the audience through positive words to create a pleasant tone.** Instead of writing, "We received your complaint," be positive and say, "We always appreciate hearing from customers."
- **Use persuasive facts to help your reader accept the bad news to come.** "In the last quarter, our productivity has decreased by 16%, necessitating cost-cutting measures."
- **Provide information that both you and your audience can agree upon.** "With the recession, many jobs in business and industry have been lost."
- **Compliment your reader or show appreciation.** "Thank you for your June 9 letter commenting on fiscal year 2012."
- **Make your buffer concise, one to two sentences.** "Thank you for writing. Customer comments give us an opportunity to improve service."
- **Be sure your buffer leads logically to the explanation that follows. Consider mentioning the topic, as in the following example about billing practices.** "Several of our clients have noted changes in our corporate billing policies. Your letter was one that addressed this issue."
- **Avoid placing blame or offending the reader.** Rather than stating, "Your bookkeeping error cost us $9,890.00," write, "Mistakes happen in business. We are refining our bookkeeping policies to ensure accuracy."

See Figures 6.13, 6.14, and 6.15 for sample adjustment letters.

Bad-News Letters

Unfortunately, you occasionally will be required to write bad-news letters. These letters might reject a job applicant, tell a vendor that his or her company's proposal has not been accepted, or reject a customer's request for a refund. Maybe you will have to write to a corporation to report that its manufacturing is not meeting your company's specifications. Maybe you will need to write a letter to a union documenting a grievance. You might even have to write a bad-news letter to fire an employee.

FIGURE 6.13 100% Yes Adjustment Letter, Complete with Letter Essentials

Positive word usage ("Thank you") achieves audience rapport.

The introduction immediately states the good news.

The discussion explains what created the problem and provides an instruction telling the customer what to do next.

The conclusion ("We appreciate your business") resells to maintain customer satisfaction.

1101 21st Street
Galveston, TX 77001
(712) 451–1010
May 31, 2012

Gulfstream Auto

Mr. Carlos De La Torre
1234 18th Street
Galveston, TX 77001

Dear Mr. De La Torre:

Thank you for your recent letter. Gulfstream will replace your defective shock absorber according to the warranty agreement.

The Trailhandler Performance XT shock absorber that you purchased was discontinued in April 2012. Mr. Blanton, the mechanic to whom you spoke, incorrectly assumed that Gulfstream was no longer honoring the warranty on that product. Because we no longer carry that product, we either will replace it with a comparable model or refund the purchase price. Ask for Mrs. Cottrell at the automotive desk on your next visit to our store. She is expecting you and will handle the exchange.

We appreciate your business, Mr. De La Torre. I'm glad you brought this problem to my attention. If I can help you in the future, please contact me at hlang@gulfstream.com.
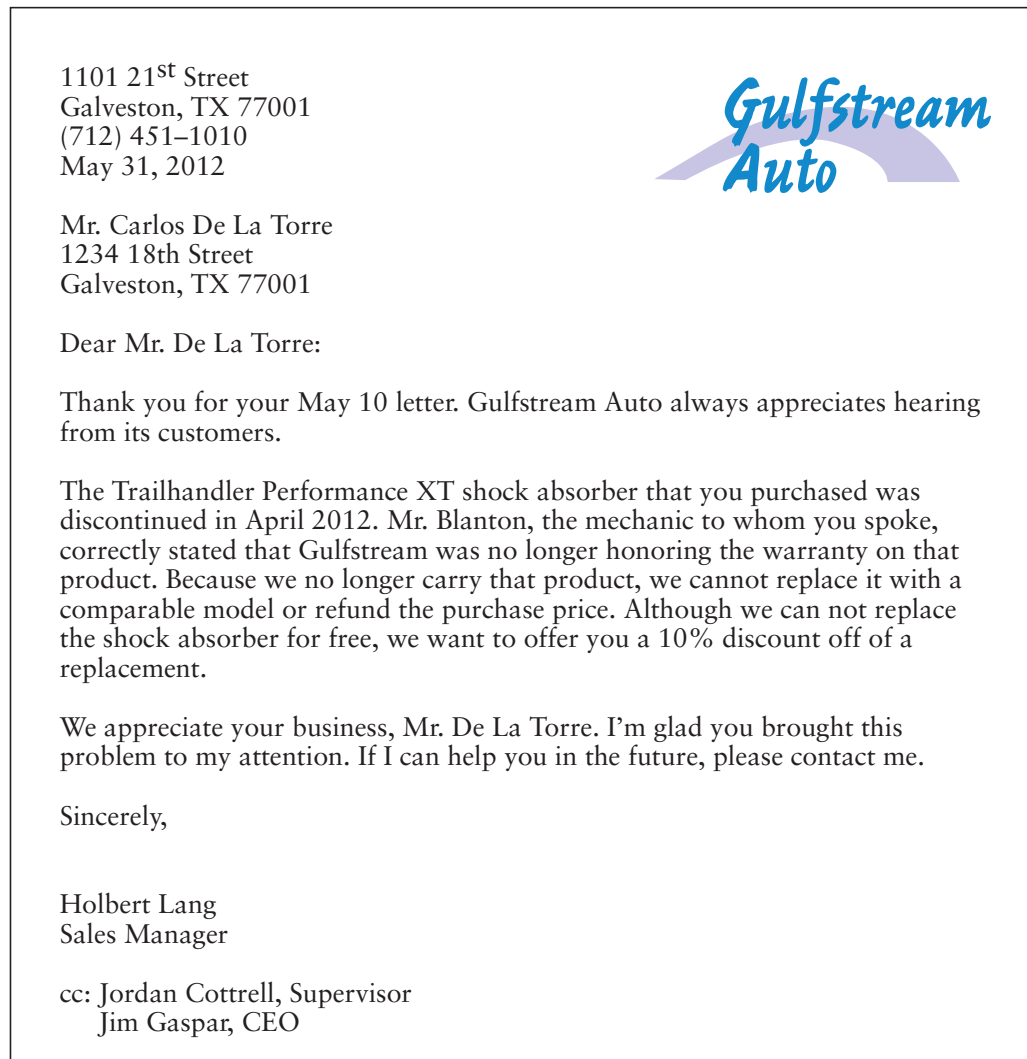
Sincerely,

Holbert Lang
Sales Manager

cc: Jordan Cottrell, Supervisor
     Jim Gaspar, CEO

In any of these instances, tact is required. You cannot berate a customer or client. You should not reject a job applicant offensively. Even your grievance must be worded carefully to avoid future problems. Because the point of a bad-news letter is bad news, you will need to structure your correspondence carefully to avoid offending your reader.

Introduction. We have suggested throughout this chapter that your introduction should explain why you're writing and what you're writing about. However, such conciseness and clarity in a bad-news letter would be harsh and abrupt. Therefore, to avoid these lapses in diplomacy, begin your bad-news letter with a buffer. Start your letter with information that your reader can accept as valid and will not disagree with but will sway your reader to accept the bad news to come.

Discussion. Once you have provided the buffer, swaying your audience to your point of view, you can no longer delay the inevitable. The discussion paragraph states the bad news. However, to ensure that the reader accepts the bad news, preface your assertions with quantifiable proof.

FIGURE 6.14   100% No Adjustment Letter, Beginning with a Buffer Statement

1101 21st Street
Galveston, TX 77001
(712) 451–1010
May 31, 2012

Gulfstream Auto

Mr. Carlos De La Torre
1234 18th Street
Galveston, TX 77001

Dear Mr. De La Torre:

Thank you for your May 10 letter. Gulfstream Auto always appreciates hearing from its customers.

The Trailhandler Performance XT shock absorber that you purchased was discontinued in April 2012. Mr. Blanton, the mechanic to whom you spoke, correctly stated that Gulfstream was no longer honoring the warranty on that product. Because we no longer carry that product, we cannot replace it with a comparable model or refund the purchase price. Although we can not replace the shock absorber for free, we want to offer you a 10% discount off of a replacement.

We appreciate your business, Mr. De La Torre. I'm glad you brought this problem to my attention. If I can help you in the future, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Holbert Lang
Sales Manager

cc: Jordan Cottrell, Supervisor
    Jim Gaspar, CEO

The introduction begins with a buffer. The writer establishes rapport with the audience through positive words to create a pleasant tone.

The discussion explains the company's position, states the bad news, and offers an alternative.

Conclusion. If you end your bad-news letter with the bad news, then you leave your reader feeling defeated and without hope. You want to maintain a good customer-client, supervisor-subordinate, or employer-employee relationship. Therefore, you need to conclude your letter by giving your readers an opportunity for future success. Provide your readers options which will allow them to get back in your good graces, seek employment in the future, or reapply for the refund you have denied. Then, to leave your readers feeling as happy as possible, given the circumstances, end upbeat and positively.

The example in Figure 6.16, from an insurance company canceling an insurance policy, shows how a bad-news letter should be constructed.

Confirmation Letter

In business, letters represent an official contract. Often, when clients and vendors make arrangements for the purchase of services or products, a letter of confirmation must be written. This confirmation letter verifies the details of the agreement. For example, as head of corporate training, you met with a consulting firm to discuss services they could provide

1101 21st Street
Galveston, TX 77001
(712) 451–1010
May 31, 2012

Gulfstream Auto

Mr. Carlos De La Torre
1234 18th Street
Galveston, TX 77001

Dear Mr. De La Torre:

Thank you for your recent letter. Gulfstream will replace your defective shock absorber according to the warranty agreement.

The Trailhandler Performance XT shock absorber that you purchased was discontinued in April 2012. Mr. Blanton, the mechanic to whom you spoke, incorrectly assumed that Gulfstream was no longer honoring the warranty on that product. However, we no longer carry that product. We will replace the shock absorber with a comparable model, but you will have to pay for installation.

We appreciate your business, Mr. De La Torre. I'm glad you brought this problem to my attention. If I can help you in the future, please contact me at hlang@gulfstream.com.

Sincerely,

Holbert Lang
Sales Manager

cc: Jordan Cottrell, Supervisor
     Jim Gaspar, CEO

(margin note) Begin your letter with the good news.

(margin note) Explain what happened, state the bad news, and provide a possible alternative.
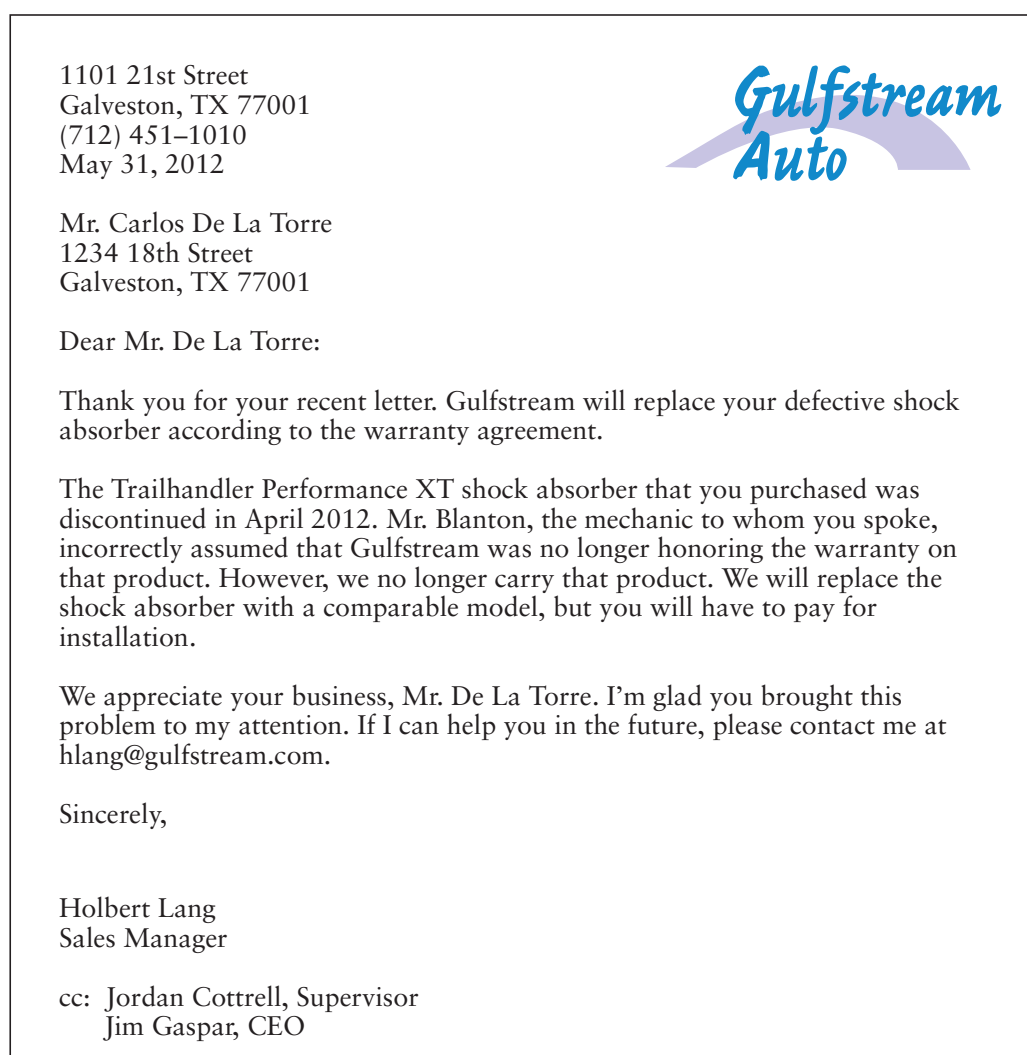
your company. After the meeting, you must summarize the results of the discussion, confirming payment, dates, and training content.

Maybe you are an accountant. A client has contracted with you to prepare documents for a complex divorce case. This will include reports of joint property, taxes paid, and cash and investments on hand. When you return to the office, you will write a letter confirming your responsibilities, fees, and turnaround time.

Introduction. In a confirmation letter's introduction, state the context of the letter so that the reader can relate to the discussion. This could include when you met, spoke on the telephone, or communicated by e-mail; where the meeting took place; what the topic of the letter is; and why this letter is being written.

Discussion. The letter's body clarifies the details of the agreement. Since this constitutes a legally binding document, you must specify anything agreed upon. Using highlighting techniques to make your content accessible, consider including any of the following:

FIGURE 6.16 Bad-News Letter in Block Format

State of Mind Insurance
11031 Bellbrook Drive
Stamford, CT 23091
213-333-8989

September 7, 2012

John Chavez
4249 Uvalde
Stamford, CT 23091

Dear Mr. Chavez:

Thank you for letting us provide you and your family with insurance for the last 10 years. We have appreciated your business.

However, according to our records, you have filed three claims in the past three years:

1. Damage to your basement due to a failed sump pump
2. Flooring damage due to a broken water seal in your second-floor bathroom
3. Fender repair coverage for a no-fault automobile accident

SMI's policy stipulates that no more than two claims may be filed by a client within a three-year period. Therefore, we must cancel your policy as of October 15, 2012.

If you have any questions about this cancellation, please call our 24-hour assistance line (913-482-0000). Our transition team can help you find new coverage. Thank you for your patronage and your understanding.

Sincerely

Darryl Kennedy

Darryl Kennedy

Begin with a buffer statement in a bad-news letter.

In the body, explain what happened and then state the bad news.

In the conclusion, give your reader follow-up options.

Date	Makes/models/ serial number	Locations	Retainer fess
Times	Personnel and certification requirements	Technology requirements	Length of agreement
Costs	Menus and decorations	Parking	Room setup

Conclusion. The conclusion of a confirmation letter tells the reader what to do next. You might include a request for signature, payment due dates, or method of payment.

See Figure 6.17 for a sample confirmation letter.

FIGURE 6.17 Confirmation Letter in Block Format

Metro Consulting
600 Broadway   Albuquerque, NM 23006
510-234-1818   www.metrocon.com

January 23, 2012

Mr. Justin Meyers
ProfCom
1999 Saguaro Dr.
Santa Fe, NM 23012

Dear Mr. Meyers:

In response to your request, this letter confirms our discussion from last week. Below I summarize the agreement we reached regarding the training services your company will provide and the fees contracted.

ProfCom is scheduled to offer the following workshops in 2012:

- Fifteen days of "Customer Service" training to Albuquerque municipal employees. The workshops will be held throughout the city at locations to be determined later. Each location will provide required technology, per your specifications. ProfCom will be paid $500 for each half-day workshop and $700 for each full-day workshop.
- Thirty days of "Managing Diversity" training to Albuquerque municipal employees. These workshops will be held in the Albuquerque Civic Center, 1800 Mountainview Dr. ProfCom will be paid $900 a day for each of these workshops. Please contact Mr. Silvio Hernandez, 1-800-ALCIVIC, to request your technical support needs.
- Ten days of "Supervisor/Management" training, leading to a "Supervisor/Management Certificate." These workshops will be held in the Albuquerque City Hall, Conference Room A. ProfCom will be paid $1,000 a day for each workshop. Please contact Mary O'Sullivan, 1-510-222-5150, to request your technical support needs.
- Undecided additional training workshops, including "Ethical Decision Making," "Accounting for Non-Accountants," and "Dynamic Presentation Skills." We will work with you to schedule these as enrollment figures are calculated. MetroConsulting will pay ProfCom a monthly retainer fee of $3,000 to ensure your availability for these workshops. The $3,000 retainer will be adjusted against complete payment for services rendered.

Thank you for agreeing to provide us these services, Mr. Meyers. MetroConsulting is excited about the prospect of working with your firm. By signing and dating this letter of confirmation below, you indicate your agreement with the assigned services and compensation.

Sincerely,

Rob Harken, Director
MetroConsulting

_____, Date: _____   _____, Date: _____

The introduction explains why the letter is being written ("in response to your request"), specifies the type of letter (confirmation), and clarifies the topic ("training services" and "fees contracted").

The letter's discussion provides specific details regarding the agreement: costs, locations, and contact.

The conclusion ends positively and instructs the reader, stating what must be done next to confirm the agreement.

Recommendation Letter

You might write a letter of recommendation for many reasons:

- An employee deserves a promotion
- An ex-employee asks for a reference for a new job
- A colleague is nominated for an award
- An acquaintance is applying for an education scholarship
- A governmental agency is checking references
- A consultant requests a reference for a new client

When someone asks you to write a letter of recommendation, consider the *Do's* and *Don'ts* in Table 6.6.

Introduction. In the introduction, include any of the following:
- Your position (or title)
- Your relationship with the person
- The length of your relationship
- The applicant's name
- The position, scholarship, or award

Discussion. In the body, include the specific details of the applicant's skills:
- Examples of the applicant's job performance
- Illustrations proving how and why the person will benefit the company
- Evaluations of the person's chances of success in the company or program
- Differences from other people
- Examples of projects the applicant worked on
- Projects supervised
- Team skills
- Communication abilities
- Names of classes attended or certifications acquired to enhance the applicant's skills
- Honors earned at work, school, or military

Conclusion. In the conclusion, sum up why this person is deserving of consideration for the job, award, or scholarship. Be sure to include contact information, such as your telephone number or e-mail address. This will help the recipient of the recommendation letter reach you for a follow-up discussion.

See Figure 6.18 for a sample recommendation letter.

TABLE 6.6 Do's and Don'ts of Recommendation Letters

Do's	Don'ts
• Agree to write the letter only if you can be supportive	• Avoid writing if you feel the candidate is weak
• Request a current resume	• Avoid writing if you cannot be positive
• Obtain information about the position, scholarship, or award the person is applying for	• Avoid writing letters longer than two pages
• Write the letter with that specific position in mind	• Avoid writing these letters if you have only vague memories of the person's work
• Study any information about the person to avoid omissions	• Avoid writing a reference letter if you cannot also talk with confidence about the person to the interviewer
• Keep your letter to a reasonable length of one to two pages	

FIGURE 6.18   Recommendation Letter in Simplified Format

MIDWEST TECHNOLOGICAL COLLEGE
15431 College Blvd.   Milwaukee, WI 32556   451-987-0101

March 15, 2012

Dr. Anne Cohen
University of Wisconsin Medical Center
1900 E. 39th Street
Madison, WI 35567

Subject: Letter of Recommendation for the University of Wisconsin Medical Center, Department of Health Information Management

The introduction gives the applicant's name, how the writer knows her, and the topic for this letter.

I am pleased to write this letter recommending Pekkahm Shoumavong for admission to the WU Department of Health Information Management. Pekkahm was a student in my Technical Communication class last semester (Fall 2011). She impressed me not only with her scholarship, but also with her team skills and her conscientious desire to excel.

Pekkahm earned an A in my class due to her excellent written and oral communication skills (letters, memos, reports, e-mail, instructions, and speeches accompanied by PowerPoint presentations). More importantly, I was impressed with her ability to work well with others and to take on leadership roles. My technical communication class emphasizes collaboration. Pekkahm's team was one of my more successful groups due to their ability to work in concert toward a team goal and to communicate professionally with each other—valuable skills in any environment. This was an especially impressive achievement since Pekkahm's team was multicultural and comprised of students with vastly different abilities.

The discussion specifies ways in which the applicant excels. These include grades, team projects, interpersonal communication abilities, and personality traits.

In addition, I remember that her team encountered a problem with lost computer files. Rather than become distressed, Pekkahm remained calm and worked through the problem professionally. Her even-keeled and congenial personality, interpersonal communication talents, and ability to get along with others while demanding high quality work helped her team succeed. Finally, Pekkahm attended all classes and turned in all assignments on time, evincing her discipline, conscientiousness, and dedication to excellence.

The conclusion sums up the candidate's assets, focusing on ways in which this person meets the needs of a specific program. The conclusion also provides contact information for follow-up.

Self-motivation, professionalism, problem-solving skills, and outstanding communication abilities suggest a high level of potential. I believe these traits distinguish Pekkahm and indicate her ability to succeed in the WU Department of Health Information Management. Pekkahm is deserving of your consideration for admission to your program. Thus, I am happy to recommend her and serve as a reference. If you would like to discuss her attributes further, please call me at 451-987-0101, ext. 59, or e-mail me at cescobar@mtc.edu.

Dr. Carmen Escobar
Technical Communication Professor

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FAQs: Professionalism in E-mail Messages

Q: Aren't e-mail messages just casual communication? Isn't it easy to write an e-mail message since you don't have to worry about grammar or correct style?

A: Nothing could be further from the truth. E-mail might be your major means of communication in the workplace. Therefore, you must pay special attention to correctness.

Listen to what managers at an engineering company say about e-mail messages:

- "Most workplace communication is now via e-mail. Business e-mail needs to be almost as formal and as carefully written as a letter because it is a formal and legal document. Never send an e-mail that you would not be comfortable seeing on the front page of a newspaper, because some day you may."

- "I see more and more new hires wanting to rely on e-mail. It is a totally ineffective way to resolve many issues on an engineering project. But they seem to feel it is OK for almost any communication. I suspect the general acceptance by their peers for this form of communication has led them to mistakenly assume the same is true for a business setting."

- "Many people tend to be very 'social' in e-mails. Your employer owns your e-mails written on your work computers. They are NOT private. They can be used not only against you, but against your firm in court. For example, if I send an e-mail to a co-worker that states in it somewhere what a lousy job Frank is doing on the such-and-such project and that project goes bad, it is possible that e-mail could end up in court and be used against my employer. In my mind all I was doing was venting my frustrations to an understanding friend and co-worker. But, in reality, I am creating a permanent record of anything I say."

(Gerson et al. "Core Competencies")

Web Resources

www.pearsonhighered.com/gerson See our companion website for sample e-mail messages

E-Mail

Why Is E-mail Important?

E-mail has become a predominant means of routine correspondence. Many companies are "geared to operate with e-mail," creating what the Harvard Business School calls "e-mail cultures" for the following reasons ("The Transition to General Management").

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Time. "Everything is driven by time. You have to use what is most efficient" (Miller et al. 10). The primary driving force behind e-mail's prominence is time. E-mail is quick. Whereas a posted letter might take several days to deliver, e-mail messages can be delivered within seconds.

Convenience. With wireless communication, you can send e-mail from notebooks to handhelds. Handheld communication systems combine a voice phone, a personal digital assistant, and e-mail into a package that you can slip into a pocket or purse. Then, you can access your e-mail messages anywhere, anytime.

Internal/External. E-mail allows you to communicate internally to co-workers and externally to customers and vendors. Traditional communication channels, like letters and memos, have more limited uses. Generally, letters are external correspondence written from one company to another company; memos are internal correspondence transmitted within a company.

Cost. E-mail is cost effective because it is paper-free. With an ability to attach files, you can send many kinds of documentation without paying shipping fees. This is especially valuable when considering international business.

Documentation. E-mail provides an additional value when it comes to documentation. Because so many writers merely respond to earlier e-mail messages, what you end up with is a "virtual paper trail" (Miller et al. 15). When e-mail is printed out, often the printout will contain dozens of e-mail messages, representing an entire string of dialogue. This provides a company an extensive record for future reference. In addition, most companies archive e-mail messages in backup files.

Reasons for Writing E-Mail Messages

E-mail is used to convey many types of information in business and industry. You can write an e-mail message to accomplish any of the following purposes:

- **Directive.** Tell a subordinate or a team of employees to complete a task.
- **Cover/transmittal.** Inform a reader or readers that you have attached a document, and list the key points that are included in the attachment.
- **Documentation.** Report on expenses, incidents, accidents, problems encountered, projected costs, study findings, and reallocations of staff or equipment.
- **Confirmation.** Inform a reader about a meeting agenda, date, time, and location; decisions to purchase or sell; topics for discussion at upcoming teleconferences; conclusions arrived at; fees, costs, or expenditures.
- **Procedures.** Explain how to set up accounts, research on the company intranet, operate new machinery, use new software, apply online for job opportunities through the company intranet, or solve a problem.
- **Recommendations.** Provide reasons to purchase new equipment, hire personnel, contract with new providers, revise current practices, or renew contracts.
- **Feasibility.** Study the possibility of changes in the workplace (practices, procedures, locations, staffing, or equipment).
- **Status.** Provide a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, biannual, or yearly report about where you, the department, or the company is regarding any topic (project, sales, staffing, travel, practices, procedures, or finances).
- **Inquiry.** Ask questions about upcoming processes, procedures, or tasks.

Techniques for Writing Effective E-mail Messages

To convey your messages effectively and to ensure that your e-mail messages reflect professionalism, follow these tips for writing e-mail.

How is e-mail used and misused in business today?

Michael Smith, PE, President of George Butler Associates, Inc., an architectural-engineering consulting firm, supervises 270 employees, located in Kansas, Missouri, and Illinois. These include architects, engineers, scientists, and administrative support staff in human resources, marketing, information systems, and accounting.

Mike receives about 40 "meaningful e-mail" a day—and about 60 spam e-mail, attempting to tell him how to lose weight, buy gifts for his loved ones, make cost-effective travel arrangements, and so on. Mike deletes the spam, which is obvious at a glance in his e-mail inbox, and responds to the business-related correspondence.

He says that e-mail has been essential at GBA for at least two reasons:

The Good News:

1. **E-mail is fast and efficient.** For example, Mike finds that e-mail is ideal for setting up meetings with groups of individuals, including co-workers and clients. Before e-mail, he had to make multiple calls to his staff or customers, usually missing them while they were off-site. Or, he'd have to walk down the halls and up the stairs to leave messages on desks. Instead, with e-mail, Mike knows that the message will arrive at its intended location and that the recipients will respond.

2. **E-mail provides an "electronic record."** When GBA used to rely more heavily on the telephone, people had trouble remembering to document conversations. With e-mail, you have a communication trail: multiple e-mail messages

reporting all communication that has occurred regarding a topic.

Unfortunately, Mike tells us that e-mail also has a few downsides.

The Bad News:

1. **E-mail lacks privacy.** Mike says that though phone calls made record keeping hard, they ensured privacy. All you needed to do was shut your office door or speak quietly. E-mail, in contrast, inadvertently can be sent to many people.

2. **E-mail can lead to inaccurate communication.** "Didn't I read somewhere that 65 percent of communication is body language?" Mike asks. This leads to a second problem. With e-mail, the people involved can't see each other's eyes, hand motions, shrugs, smiles, or frowns, nor can they hear the grunts, groans, or laughs. Much of this body language is lost with electronic communication.

3. **E-mail can be depersonalized.** Body language not only helps communication, but also it personalizes. E-mail, Mike notes, can be impersonal. In some instances, especially those regarding "contentious situations," Mike knows that a face-to-face discussion is the best way to solve a problem. In fact, Mike concludes that some people who are "conflict resistant" use e-mail as a way of avoiding person-to-person communication. To maintain good business relationships (with personnel as well as with customers), face-to-face talks often are needed.

Still, for speed and efficiency, e-mail is hard to beat.

Recognize Your Audience.   E-mail messages can be sent to managers, co-workers, sub-ordinates, vendors, and customers, among other audiences. Your e-mail readers will be high tech, low tech, and lay. Thus, you must factor in levels of knowledge.

If an e-mail message is sent internationally, you also might have to consider your readers' language. Remember that abbreviations and acronyms are not universal. Dates, times, measurements, and monetary figures differ from country to country. In addition, your reader's e-mail system might not have the same features or capabilities that you have. Hard-copy text will look the same to all readers. E-mail platforms, such as in AOL, Outlook, Gmail, HotMail, and Yahoo, display text differently. To communicate effectively, recognize your audience's level of knowledge, language, and technology needs.

> **Multicultural Audiences**
>
> See Chapter 4 for more discussion of multiculturalism.

Identify Yourself.   Identify yourself by name, affiliation, or title. You can accomplish this either in the "From" line of your e-mail or by creating a signature file or .sig file. This .sig file acts like an online business card. Once this identification is complete, readers will be able to open your e-mail without fear of corrupting their computer systems.

Provide an Effective Subject Line.   Readers are unwilling to open unsolicited or unknown e-mail, due to fear of spam and viruses. In addition, corporate employees receive

approximately 50 e-mail messages each day. They might not want to read every message sent to them. To ensure that your e-mail messages are read, avoid uninformative subject lines, such as "Hi," "What's New," or "Important Message." Instead, include an effective subject line, such as "Subject: Meeting Dates for Tech Prep Conference."

Keep Your E-mail Message Brief.   E-readers skim and scan. To help them access information quickly, "Apply the 'top of the screen' test. Assume that your readers will look at the first screen of your message only" (Munter et al. 31). Limit your message to one screen (if possible).

Organize Your E-mail Message.   Successful writing usually contains an introductory paragraph, a discussion paragraph or paragraphs, and a conclusion. Although many e-mail messages are brief, only a few sentences, you can use the introductory sentences to tell the reader why you are writing and what you are writing about. In the discussion, clarify your points thoroughly. Use the concluding sentences to tell the reader what is next, possibly explaining when a follow-up is required and why that date is important.

Use Highlighting Techniques Sparingly.   Many e-mail packages will let you use highlighting techniques, such as boldface, italics, underlining, computer-generated bullets and numbers, centering, font color highlighting, and font color changes. Many other e-mail platforms will not display such visual enhancements. To avoid having parts of the message distorted, limit your highlighting to asterisks, numbers, double spacing, and headings.

Proofread Your E-mail Message.   Errors will undermine your professionalism and your company's credibility. Recheck your facts, dates, addresses, and numerical information before you send the message. Try these tips to help you proofread an e-mail message:

- Type your text first in a word processing package, like Microsoft Word.
- Print it out. Sometimes it is easier to read hard-copy text than text online. Also, your word processing package, with its spell check and/or grammar check, will help you proofread your writing.

Once you have completed these two steps, copy and paste the text from your word processing file into your e-mail.

Make Hard Copies for Future Reference.   Making hard copies of all e-mail messages is not necessary because most companies archive e-mail. However, in some instances, you might want to keep a hard copy for future reference. These instances could include transmissions of good news. For example, you have received compliments about your work and want to save this record for your annual job review. You also might save a hard copy of an e-mail message regarding flight, hotel, car rental, or conference arrangements for business-related travel.

Be Careful When Sending Attachments.   When you send attachments, tell your reader within the body of the e-mail message that you have attached a file. Specify the file name of your attachment and the software application that you have used (HTML, PowerPoint, PDF, RTF [rich text format], Word, or Works); and use compression (zipped) files to limit your attachment size. Zipped files are necessary only if an attachment is quite large.

Practice Netiquette.   When you write your e-mail messages, observe the rules of "netiquette":
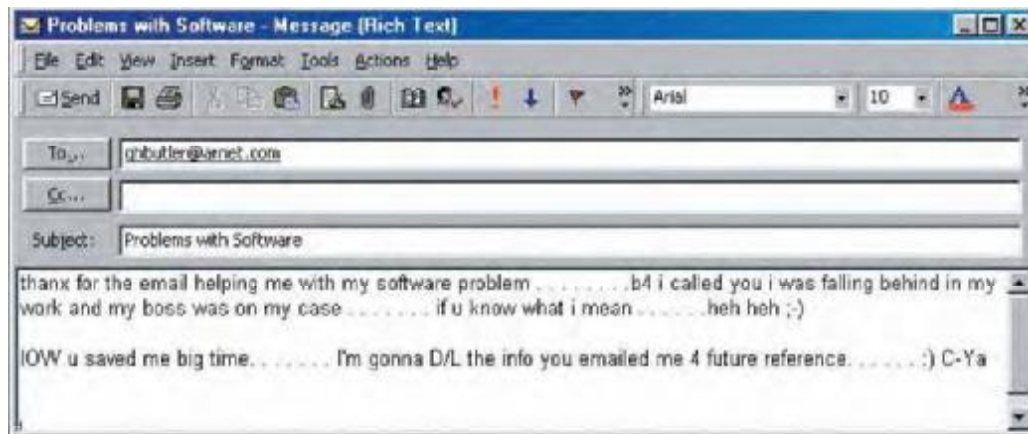
- **Be courteous.** Do not let the instantaneous quality of e-mail negate your need to be calm, cool, deliberate, and professional.
- **Be professional.** Occasionally, e-mail writers compose excessively casual e-mail messages. They will lowercase a pronoun like "i," use ellipses (. . .) or dashes instead of more traditional punctuation, use instant messaging shorthand

FIGURE 6.19   Flawed E-mail Message

This e-mail is flawed due to its use of instant messaging abbreviations, lowercase text, ellipses (…), slang, and emoticons. Though these techniques might be appropriate for personal communication, avoid overly casual e-mail messages for job-related communication.

language or "textese" such as "LOL" or "BRB," and depend on emoticons. These e-mail techniques might not be appropriate in all instances. Don't forget that your e-mail messages represent your company's professionalism. Write according to the audience and communication goal.

- **Avoid abusive, angry e-mail messages.** Because of its quick turnaround abilities, e-mail can lead to negative correspondence called flaming. Flaming is sending angry e-mail, often TYPED IN ALL CAPS.

Many e-mail messages only require a sentence or two. If you need to convey more information than can be accomplished in only a few sentences, use the all-purpose template for memos, letters, and e-mail provided earlier in this chapter, in Figure 6.2 (page 158).

Figure 6.19 is a flawed e-mail message. See Figure 6.20 for an example of a well-written e-mail message.

E-MAIL CHECKLIST

_____ 1. Does the e-mail use the correct address?

_____ 2. Have you identified yourself? Provide a sig (signature) line.

_____ 3. Did you provide an effective subject line? Include a topic and a focus.

_____ 4. Have you effectively organized your e-mail? Consider including the following:

- Opening sentence(s) telling why you are writing and what you are writing about.
- Discussion unit with itemized points telling what exactly the e-mail is discussing.
- Concluding sentence(s) summing up your e-mail message or telling your audience what to do next.

_____ 5. Have you used highlighting techniques sparingly?

- Avoid boldface, italics, color, or underlining.
- Use asterisks for bullets, numbers, and double spacing for access.

_____ 6. Did you practice netiquette?

- Be polite, courteous, and professional.
- Don't flame.
- Don't overuse textese.

_____ 7. Is the e-mail concise?

_____ 8. Did you identify and limit the size of attachments?

- Tell your reader(s) if you have attached files and what types of files are attached (PPt, PDF, RTF, Word, etc.).
- Zip large files.

_____ 9. Does the memo recognize audience?

- Define acronyms or abbreviations where necessary.
- Consider a diverse audience (factoring in issues, such as multiculturalism or gender).

_____10. Did you avoid grammatical errors?
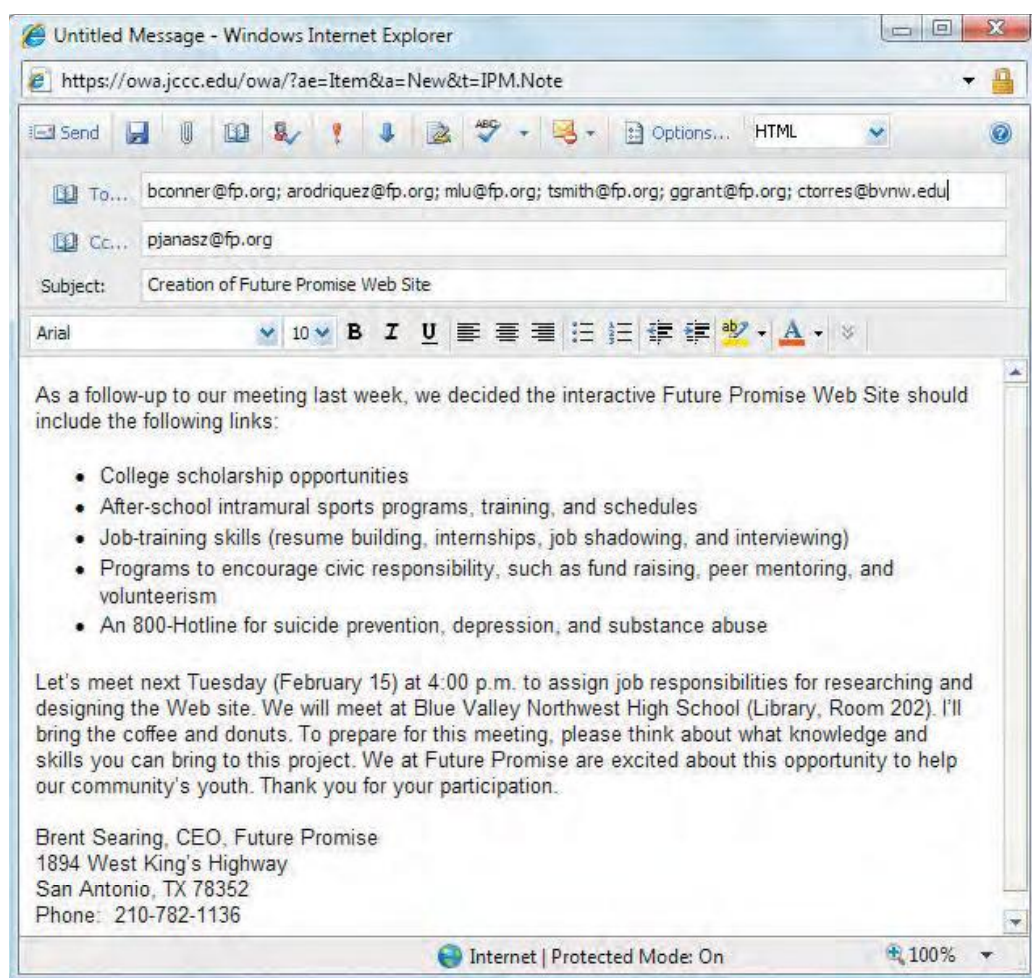
The e-mail's subject line clearly states the *topic* and the *focus*.

This e-mail message answers reporter's questions (who, what, when, where, why, and how) to develop its content.

The e-mail provides a sig. line which acts as an online business card to identify the writer.

In Figure 6.21 an information technology supervisor writes an e-mail to be distributed companywide to many different employees with varied levels of technical expertise. Note how the writer uses a simple style of writing, carefully omitting any technical terms. The e-mail only includes the information necessary to assure audience comfort with the new identification system.

In contrast to Figure 6.21 designed for an audience with multiple levels of expertise, Figure 6.22 is written for a high-tech audience. This high-tech audience is familiar with the technical terms included in the e-mail, so the writer does not have to define such terminology. In addition, the writer includes sophisticated details and content which the technically proficient audience can understand easily.

Instant Messages

E-mail could be too slow for today's fast-paced workplace. Instant message (IM) pop-ups are already providing businesses many benefits.

FIGURE 6.21   E-mail for Multiple Audience Levels

The e-mail's subject line clearly states the topic and the focus.

Untitled Message - Windows Internet Explorer

https://owa.jccc.edu/owa/?ae=Item&a=New&t=IPM.Note

Send | Options... | HTML

To... ncomlistserv

Cc... lhughes@ncomlistserv

Subject: Rollout of New Computer Security System

Arial | 10 | B I U

Our company is rolling out a new computer security system next week. This is an important step for the company for at least three reasons: to deter hackers from breaking into our company's computers, to minimize spam and viruses, and to ensure that our company's intellectual assets are secure from terrorists. This week, our information technology (IT) specialists will install the appropriate hardware and software needed to achieve this important security. Your workflow, however, will not be affected. Following are the key steps to this procedure:

1. To authenticate each computer user, we'll ask you to type in your 5-digit PIN (Personal Identification Number). If you have forgotten this number, just give us a call at 1-help-055.
2. Once the computer system verifies your identity, our new firewall system kicks in. This software will give you access to company data while denying the same access to others outside the company.
3. Finally comes protection from spam and viruses—"about time," you're probably saying. You'll never have to worry about this step. It's all taken care of for you by our network administrators.

Though our new system security should be seamless for end users, we're offering quick and easy hands-on demonstrations for interested employees. To make this convenient for you, look for our computer specialists in the company cafeteria from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. The staff wearing yellow shirts and sitting at the "FAQ" tables will answer your questions and walk you through the new procedures. As always, if you have any questions, just e-mail me (vpatel@ncom.net). We're here to help.

Veejay Patel
Supervisor, Information Technology
nCom
2134 Industrial Way
Sacramento, CA 22109
vpatel@ncom.net

Internet | Protected Mode: On | 100%

To communicate effectively to multiple audiences, this writer defines high-tech terms like "IT" and "PIN." The e-mail uses a conversational tone and simple instructions to make this challenging topic more friendly and informative. The emphasis is on helpfulness vs. depth of detail.

This e-mail message answers reporter's questions (who, what, when, where, why, and how) to develop its content.

Benefits of Instant Messages

Following are benefits of instant messages:

- Increased speed of communication
- Improved efficiency for geographically dispersed workgroups
- Collaboration by multiple users in different locations
- Communication with colleagues and customers at a distance in real time
- Avoidance of costly long distance telephone rates (Note: Voice over IP [VoIP] services, which allow companies to use the Internet for telephone calls, could be more cost-efficient than IM.)
- More personal link than e-mail
- Communication channel that is less intrusive than telephone calls

FIGURE 6.22 E-mail for High-Tech Audience
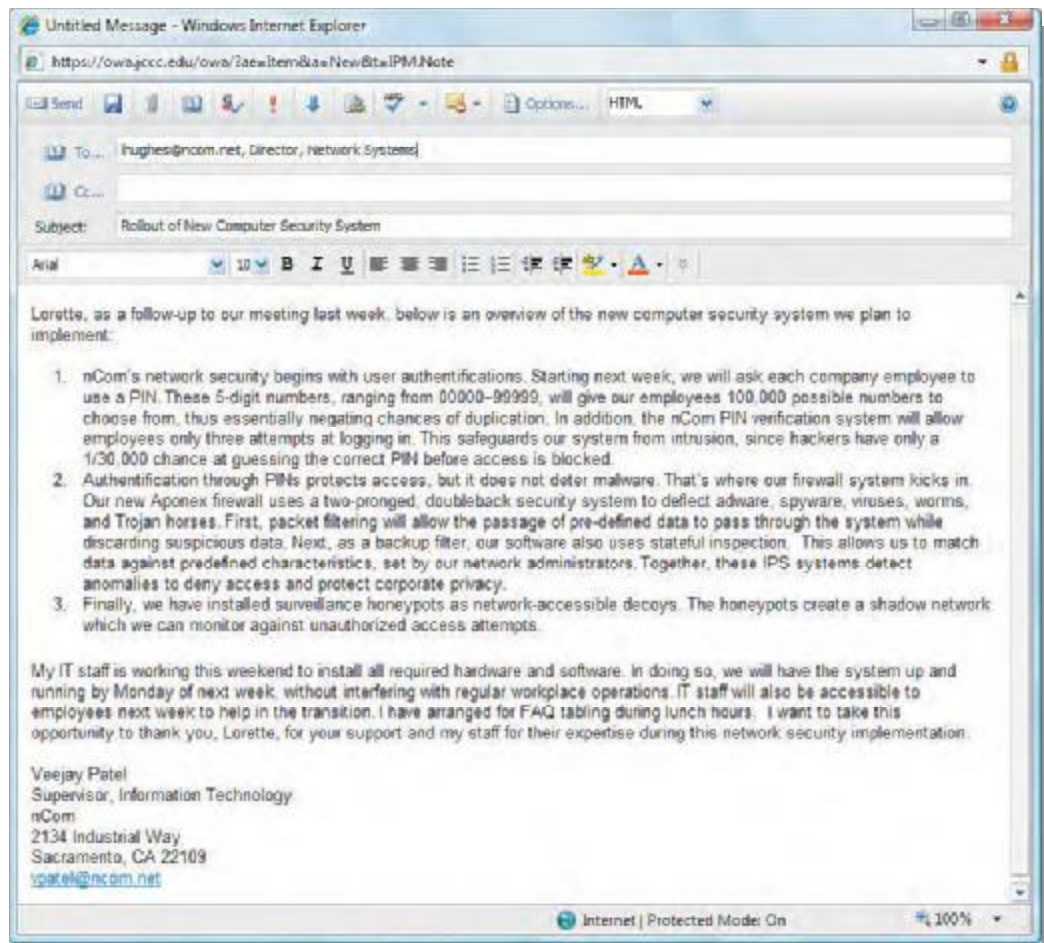
For a more high-tech audience, this e-mail does not define terms, such as "stateful inspection," "Trojan horses," "honeypots," "IPS" and "PIN." The e-mail contains technical information about system security that the audience both needs and will understand. The tone of this e-mail is businesslike, since the writer is a subordinate writing to management.

- Communication channel that allows for multitasking (With IM, you can speak to a customer on the telephone or via an e-mail message and simultaneously receive product updates from a colleague via IM.)
- Quick way to find out who is in the office, out of the office, available for conversation, or unavailable due to other activities (Hoffman; Shinder)

Challenges of Instant Messages

IM has potential problems in the workplace, including security, archiving, monitoring, and employee misuse (Hoffman; Shinder):

- **Security issues.** This is the biggest concern. IM users are vulnerable to hackers, electronic identity theft, and uncontrolled transfer of documents. With unsecured IM, a company could lose confidential documents, internal users could download copyrighted software, or external users could send virus-infected files.
- **Lost productivity.** Use of IM on the job can lead to job downtime. First, we tend to type more slowly than we talk. Next, the conversational nature of IM leads to "chattiness." If employees are not careful, or monitored, a brief IM conversation can lead to hours of lost productivity.

- **Employee abuse.** IM can lead to personal messages rather than job-related communication with co-workers or customers.
- **Distraction.** With IM, a bored colleague easily can distract you with personal messages, online chats, and unimportant updates.
- **Netiquette.** As with e-mail, due to the casual nature of IM, people tend to relax their professionalism and forget about the rules of polite communication. IM can lead to rudeness or just pointless conversations.
- **Spim.** IM lends itself to "spim," instant message spam—unwanted advertisements, pornography, pop-ups, and viruses.

Techniques for Successful Instant Messages

To solve potential problems, consider these ten suggestions:

1. **Choose the correct communication channel.** Use IM for speed and convenience. If you need length and detail, other options—e-mail messages, memos, reports, letters—are better choices. In addition, sensitive topics or bad news should never be handled through IM. These deserve the personal attention provided by telephone calls or face-to-face meetings.
2. **Document important information.** For future reference, you must archive key text, in compliance with SEC Rule 17a-4 and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.
3. **Summarize decisions.** IM is great for collaboration. However, all team members might not be online when decisions are made. Once conclusions have been reached that affect the entire team, the designated team leader should e-mail everyone involved. In this e-mail, the team leader can summarize the key points, editorial decisions, timetables, and responsibilities.
4. **Tune in, or turn off.** The moment you log on, IM software tells everyone who is active online. Immediately, your IM buddies can start sending messages. IM pop-ups can be distracting. Sometimes, in order to get your work done, you might need to turn off your IM system. Your IM product might give you status options, such as "on the phone," "away from my desk," or "busy." Turning on IM could infringe upon your privacy and time. Turning off might be the answer.
5. **Limit personal use.** Your company owns the instant messages you write in the workplace. IM should be used for business purposes only.
6. **Create "buddy" lists.** Create limited lists of IM users, including legitimate business contacts (colleagues, customers, and vendors).
7. **Avoid public directories.** This will help ensure that your IM contacts are secure and business related.
8. **Disallow corporate IM users from installing their own IM software.** A company should require standardized IM software for safety and control.
9. **Never use IM for confidential communication.** Use another communication channel if your content requires security.
10. **Remember that IM in the workplace is not confidential.** As with e-mail, IM programs can let systems administrators log and review IM conversations (Hoffman; Shinder).

See Figure 6.23 for an example of an instant message.

IM/TM Corporate Usage Policy

To clearly explain the role of IM and TM (text messages) in the workplace, a company should establish a corporate IM and TM usage policy. Many industries already have

Teamwork

See Chapter 1 for more discussion of collaboration.

FIGURE 6.23 Instant Message

In this box, the writer places the next message.

This link lets you block spam and unwanted guests.

The "Get Info" link acts like a virtual business card, for address, e-mail, phone, and more.

If someone sends you an unwanted instant message, you can warn this person. After excessive warnings, the sender can temporarily lose the ability to send messages.

This button allows the writer to add a person to his or her "buddy list," a select list of "secure" participants.

such policies in place, in relation to existing restrictions established by Sarbanes-Oxley or HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act). Consider a policy as follows:

- Train employees to use IM and TM effectively for business.
- Teach employees IM and TM security concerns.
- Explain which services are allowable in the workplace. For example, conversation between co-workers is acceptable, but chat between employees and outside individuals might not be advisable. File transfers of proprietary information need to be restricted and monitored.
- Do not allow employees to store IM or TM passwords on computer desktops or other sites easily accessed.
- Install appropriate security measures, including automated encryption, to protect against external threats, such as spam, spim, and viruses.
- Log and archive instant messages and text messages for compliance with company policy (Ollman; "How To"; Bradley).

Text Messages

Text messages, also known as SMS (short message service), are a growing presence in workplace communication. Billions of text messages are sent within the United States every month. "American cell phone users are sending more text messages than they are making phone calls, according to a Nielsen Mobile survey . . . . U.S. mobile subscribers sent and received on average 357 text messages per month, compared with making and receiving 204 phone calls a month, according to Nielsen. The new statistic is a clear indication that Americans have jumped onto the SMS text bandwagon" (Reardon).

A unique characteristic of TM is its demand for conciseness. Text messages over 160 characters are delivered in multiple segments. Each segment is billed as a separate message. That's why users try to limit messages to 160 characters—to save expenses.

"Pretty soon, you're going to have to teach text messaging in your classes," Robert Clark said. "Why's that?" we asked. He responded, "30% of my interaction with staff is through text messaging" (Clark). Robert, a facilities manager for a real estate company, drives between eight apartment complexes to supervise his staff at each location. Robert says that he depends on text messages instead of e-mail for the following reasons:
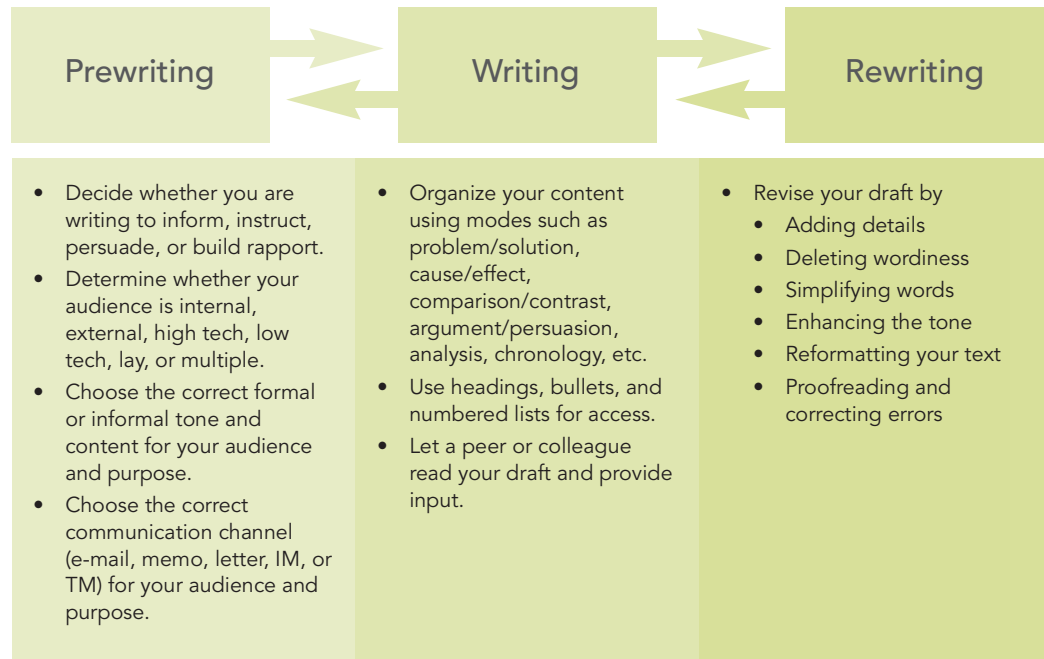
Reasons for Using TM

- **Cost.** Though Robert's cell phone is supplied by his employer, the people he supervises pay for their own cell phones. It's cheaper for them to use text messaging if their cell phone plans allow for unlimited TM.
- **Technological access.** Staff members who work under Robert do not have computers at their worksites, nor does Robert have a computer in his car as he drives around town. However, all of Robert's employees have access to a cell phone.
- **Speed.** TM is a quick and easy way to communicate short messages like, "John will be late for work today. Is it OK if I stay overtime?" That's 63 characters (counting the letters, spaces, and punctuation marks). Robert and his staff use other means of communication for longer correspondence.
- **Multitasking.** TM is a great way for Robert to multitask. Robert might be in a meeting, for example. He says, "If three of my staff need to attend training on a certain day, I can text all three employees right then and there and not disrupt the meeting. They'll respond quickly, allowing me to tell the meeting facilitator which of my employees can or can't attend. Then we can reschedule accordingly."
- **Decrease the "intimidation factor."** Many people don't like to write letters, memos, reports, or even e-mail messages. Many people don't like face-to-face communication, either. They're intimidated by writing or by bosses. Robert says that TM decreases this "intimidation factor" for his employees. With TM, they can avoid person-to-person situations.
- **Documentation.** Finally, TM allows Robert to document his conversations, something that's not always possible with phone calls. TM is an instant record of a dialogue. A TM account saves incoming and outgoing calls for a few days until it's full. This allows an employee to clarify any later misconceptions.

The Writing Process at Work

Effective writing follows a process of prewriting, writing, and rewriting. Each of these steps is sequential and yet continuous. The writing process is dynamic, with the three steps frequently overlapping. To clarify the importance of the writing process, look at how Jim Goodwin, CEO of CompuMed, used prewriting, writing, and rewriting to write a memo to his employees.

The Writing Process

Prewriting	→ ←	Writing	→ ←	Rewriting

• Decide whether you are writing to inform, instruct, persuade, or build rapport.
• Determine whether your audience is internal, external, high tech, low tech, lay, or multiple.
• Choose the correct formal or informal tone and content for your audience and purpose.
• Choose the correct communication channel (e-mail, memo, letter, IM, or TM) for your audience and purpose.
		• Organize your content using modes such as problem/solution, cause/effect, comparison/contrast, argument/persuasion, analysis, chronology, etc.
		• Use headings, bullets, and numbered lists for access.
		• Let a peer or colleague read your draft and provide input.
				• Revise your draft by
				  • Adding details
				  • Deleting wordiness
				  • Simplifying words
				  • Enhancing the tone
				  • Reformatting your text
				  • Proofreading and correcting errors

Prewriting

Prewriting

See Chapter 2 for more discussion of the writing process and prewriting techniques.

No single method of prewriting is more effective than another. Throughout this textbook, you will learn many different types of prewriting techniques, geared uniquely for different types of communication. The goal of all prewriting is to help you overcome the blank page syndrome (writer's block). Prewriting will allow you to spend time before writing your document, gathering as much information as you can about your subject matter. In addition, prewriting lets you determine your objectives. Jim used mind mapping/clustering to gather data and determine objectives (Figure 6.24).

Clarify Your Audience.   Before writing the draft, consider your audience. Are you writing laterally to colleagues or vertically up to management or down to subordinates? Is the audience multiple?

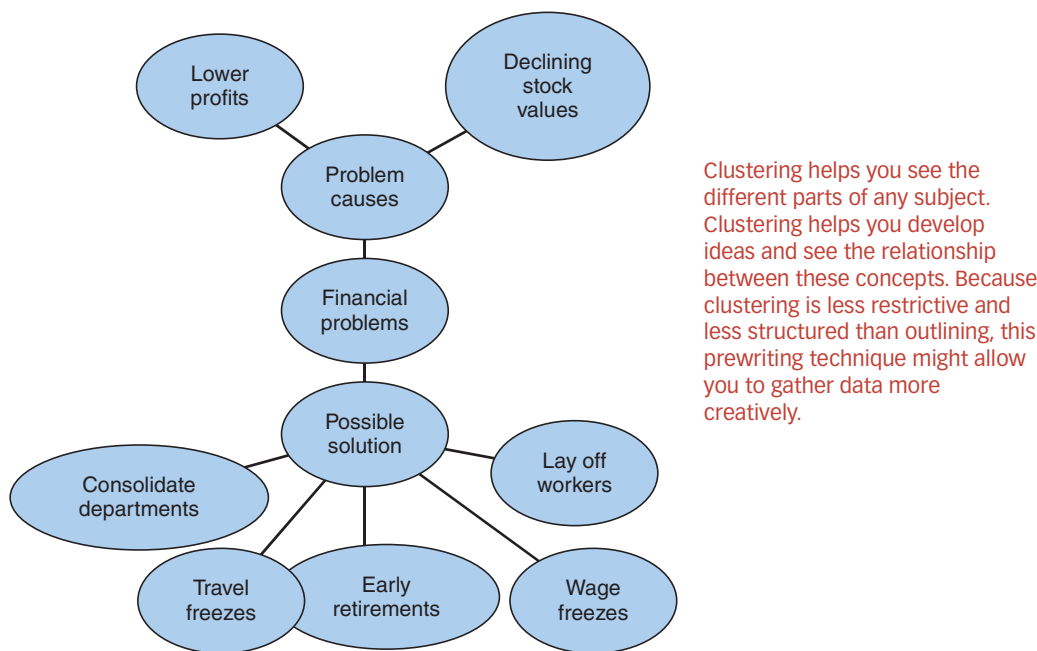**Gather Data.**   Prewriting allows you to discover information about your topic.

Determine Objectives.   Use prewriting to decide why you are writing. Are you writing to inform, persuade, build rapport, instruct, recommend, etc.?

Writing

Once you have considered audience, gathered data, and determined objectives in prewriting, your next step is to draft your document. In doing so, you need to organize content.

Organize Your Ideas.   If your supporting details are presented randomly, your audience will be confused. As a writer, develop your content logically. When you draft your document,

FIGURE 6.24   Mind Mapping/Clustering to Gather Data

Clustering helps you see the different parts of any subject. Clustering helps you develop ideas and see the relationship between these concepts. Because clustering is less restrictive and less structured than outlining, this prewriting technique might allow you to gather data more creatively.

choose a method of organization that will help your readers understand your objectives. This could include comparison/contrast, problem/solution, chronology, cause/effect, and more.

Jim drafted a memo, focusing on the information he discovered in prewriting and then received revision suggestions from his administrative assistant (Figure 6.25).

Rewriting

Jim considered his administrative assistant's suggestions and rewrote the memo. See Figure 6.26 for the finished product.

FIGURE 6.25   Rough Draft with Revision Suggestions

Date: October 14, 2012
To: CompuMed Employees
From: Jim Goodwin
Subject: Problems

As you know, we are experiencing some problems at CompuMed. These include lower profits and stock value declines. We have alot of unhappy stockholders. Its up to me to help everyone figure out how to solve our problems.

I have some ideas I want to share with you. I'm happy to have you share your ideas with me too. Here are my ideas: we need to consider consolidating departments and laying off some employees. We also might need to freeze wages and certainly its time to freeze travel.

The best idea I have is for some of you to take early retirement. If all of you who have over twenty years vested in the company would retire, that would save us around 2.1 million dollars over the next fiscal year. And, you know, saving money is good for all of us in the long run.

Add a focus to the subject line, such as "Problems with . . . "

I'd consider removing words like "as you know," "some," and "alot." Replace them with stronger words. Also, "alot" and "its" are spelled wrong.

List these problems and solutions to make them more accessible. Also, could you add more details?

Jim, I think you need to alter the tone of this memo. Is there some way to avoid talking about saving money by firing people?

Date: October 14, 2012
To: CompuMed Employees
From: Jim Goodwin
Subject: Suggestions for Improving Company Finances

CompuMed is experiencing lower profits and declining stock value. Consequently, stockholders are displeased with company performance. I have been meeting with the Board of Directors and division managers to determine the best course of action. Here are ideas to improve our company's financial situation.

1. Consolidating departments—By merging our marketing and advertising departments, for example, we can reduce redundancies. This could save CompuMed approximately $275,000 over a six-month period.
2. Reducing staff—We need to reduce employees by 15 percent. This does not necessarily mean that layoffs are inevitable. One way, for instance, to reduce staff is through voluntary retirements. We will be encouraging employees with over 20 years vested in the company to take our generous early-retirement package.
3. Freezing wages—For the next fiscal quarter, no raise increases will go into effect. Internal auditors will review the possibility of reestablishing raises after the first quarter.
4. Freezing travel—Conference attendance will be stopped for six months.

I encourage you to visit with me and your division managers with questions or suggestions. CompuMed is a strong company and will bounce back with your help. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

1. Memos, letters, e-mail, instant messages, and text messages are an important part of your interpersonal communication on the job.
2. Memos, letters, e-mail, instant messages, and text messages differ in destination, purpose, format, audience, tone, delivery time, and security.
3. Use an effective subject line including a topic and a focus.
4. Follow the all-purpose template for memos, letters, and e-mail including an introduction, a body or discussion section, and a conclusion.
5. In the template, the introduction states what you want and why you are writing.
6. In the discussion section, you state the details.
7. In the template, conclude by telling the reader what you plan to do next or what you expect him or her to do next. You also can date this action and thank the readers for their time.
8. Consider the audience whether you are writing a memo, letter, e-mail, instant message, or text message.
9. Wizards allow you to format your memos and letters but can be somewhat restrictive.
10. Follow techniques from this chapter to create effective instant messages and text messages.