



Solving Communication Problems in the Workplace

Learning Objectives

- L01-1** Explain the importance of skillful communication to you and to your employer.
- L01-2** Explain the ways in which communication in the workplace is a form of problem solving.
- L01-3** Describe the communication skills that are needed in today's workplace.
- L01-4** Define professionalism and its importance to communication in the workplace.
- L01-5** Describe the three main categories of business communication.
- L01-6** Define organizational structure and describe its influence on the organization's communication.
- L01-7** Define organizational culture and describe the main factors that influence an organization's culture.
- L01-8** Describe the contexts for each act of communication in the workplace.
- L01-9** Describe the steps of a problem-solving approach to business communication.



As head of his own talent-consulting company and former Director of Learning for Facebook, Stuart Crabb knows what it takes to be an attractive job candidate and a successful employee. He has over 30 years' experience helping companies hire the right people and develop their talent for peak performance.

What does it take to flourish in today's workplace? According to Crabb, the answers are "critical thinking," "problem solving," "creativity," and "performance." It also takes bringing your authentic self to work and

helping to create a workplace where others are encouraged to do the same.

These happen to be key traits of successful business communicators, too. They understand that communicating well takes analysis, imagination, judgment, and integrity. It takes being attuned to people and to each communication situation. And it takes not only verbal skill but many other skills as well. Like the workplace itself, workplace communication can be challenging. But the challenge can be fun, and solving communication problems can bring enormous rewards. This book will help prepare you for

an exciting future as both a professional and a communicator.



Hiring and Leadership Consultant
Stuart Crabb



Problem-Solving Challenge

Demonstrating Your Value on a High-Profile Team

You landed a job a few months ago as a project scheduler for an environmental services firm that specializes in post-disaster cleanup, removal of hazardous materials, and construction safety. The position will exercise your computer skills as well as your ability to communicate with all levels of employees in the company, from the other office staff to the engineers and technicians to the managers. This is your first professional job, and you intend to make a great impression.

The company is doing well. In 12 years, it has grown from a five-person business into one that employs 75 people and has three locations in the area. But this growth has created a problem: The

extensive face-to-face communication that helped the company thrive has, in many cases, become difficult or impossible. It is clear that phone calls, emails, and instant messaging are not sufficient to keep employees engaged and well informed, and this is a problem the company can't afford in a competitive service industry.

The CEO has formed a task force to find an internal communication solution. Will it be an intranet? An electronic newsletter? A secure social networking site? Virtual meetings? A combination? Which would the employees be most likely to read and use? How should the solution be implemented, and what will it cost?

To your surprise, you were asked to help find the answers. The CEO felt that your fresh pair of eyes and your familiarity with various online communication platforms could be an asset to the team. As a team member, you'll need to help research the pros and cons of different media, acquire employees' opinions, write progress reports, share ideas, and ultimately help present the team's recommendation to the top executives.

What will you need to know about communicating in business to meet this challenge? This chapter will give you a good grounding for answering this question thoroughly and well.

The Role of Communication in the Workplace

Your work as a professional, whether for a business, a nonprofit organization, or some other kind of employer, will involve communication—a lot of it—because communication is critical to every area of an organization's operations. The overview that follows will help you prepare for the communication challenges ahead.

L01-1 Explain the importance of skillful communication to you and to your employer.

The Importance of Communication Skills

What assets will you need to bring with you into the job market? The first answer that might pop into your head is “everything I learned in my major.” Not a bad answer. You’re working hard to master an area of study, and that knowledge will certainly assist your entry into a profession. But check out **Communication Matters: Take It from Today’s Executives**. The knowledge needed for many jobs is changing so fast that employers are looking for skills that transcend particular jobs, industries, times, and places. Written and oral communication skills, along with critical thinking, analytical ability, and other related skills, are thus considered very important by employers.

Why is the ability to communicate effectively so highly valued? As one professional trainer explains, “You will need to request information, discuss problems, give instructions, work in teams, and interact with colleagues and clients” to achieve cooperation and team efficiency. To advance, you’ll also need to be able to think for yourself, “take initiative,” and “solve problems.”¹ On the managerial level, you’ll find that communication skills are even more essential. In the words of an international business consultant, “nothing puts you in the ‘poor leader’ category more swiftly than inadequate communication skills.”² Strong managerial-communication skills are especially important during times of crisis and major change. During the coronavirus pandemic, for example, employees needed more open and honest, frequent, informative, and compassionate communication from their organizations’ leaders.³

Unfortunately, employees’ communication skills, including those of recent grads, often fall short, as the chart in **Communication Matters: Take It from Today’s Executives** shows. According to a recent study, US employees in professional-level jobs spend half of their workweek (20 hours) on writing, and 93% of business leaders agree that “communication is the backbone of business.”⁴ But the surveyed employers estimate that they lose 7.4 hours per week per employee because of ineffective communication. The cost of this wasted time would be around \$6,253,000 a year for a company with 500 employees. And then there’s the cost incurred by missed deadlines, eroded brand reputation, decreased productivity, and lowered employee morale and retention. Businesses in the United States may be losing as much as \$1.2 trillion per year as a result of communication breakdowns.⁵

The communication shortcomings of employees and the importance of communication in the workplace explain why you should develop your communication skills. Whatever position you hold, your performance will be judged largely on the basis of your ability to communicate. If you perform and communicate well, you are likely to be rewarded with advancement. And the higher you advance, the more you will need your communication ability. The evidence is clear: Improving your communication skills makes you a better contributor and a more successful professional.

Business Communication as Problem Solving

L01-2 Explain the ways in which communication in the workplace is a form of problem solving.

Communication is involved in everything organizations do. Even in businesses based largely on manual work rather than on knowledge work, somebody has to inform the employees how to run the machinery or perform their jobs, and the employees need to be able to explain their needs and describe problems. Communication is thus a huge problem solver in the workplace; indeed, almost no workplace problem could be solved without it.

But there’s another way in which communication is problem solving. Every communication challenge you will face will involve factors that require at least a somewhat unique solution. For this reason, workplace communication itself—that is, figuring out what to say or write—is a form of **problem solving**.

Researchers in many fields—management, medicine, writing, psychology, and others—have studied problem solving. In general, they define a *problem* as a gap between where you are now and where you want to be.⁶ Defining *problem* in this way allows for both **reactive** and **proactive** problem solving. When problems are negative situations that need to be addressed, the problem solving in such cases will be reactive. Examples of communication problems of this type would be responding to a critical review of your company’s products, alerting customers to a security breach in your company’s accounts,



Communication Matters

Take It from Today's Executives: What You Can Do Is Even More Important Than What You Know

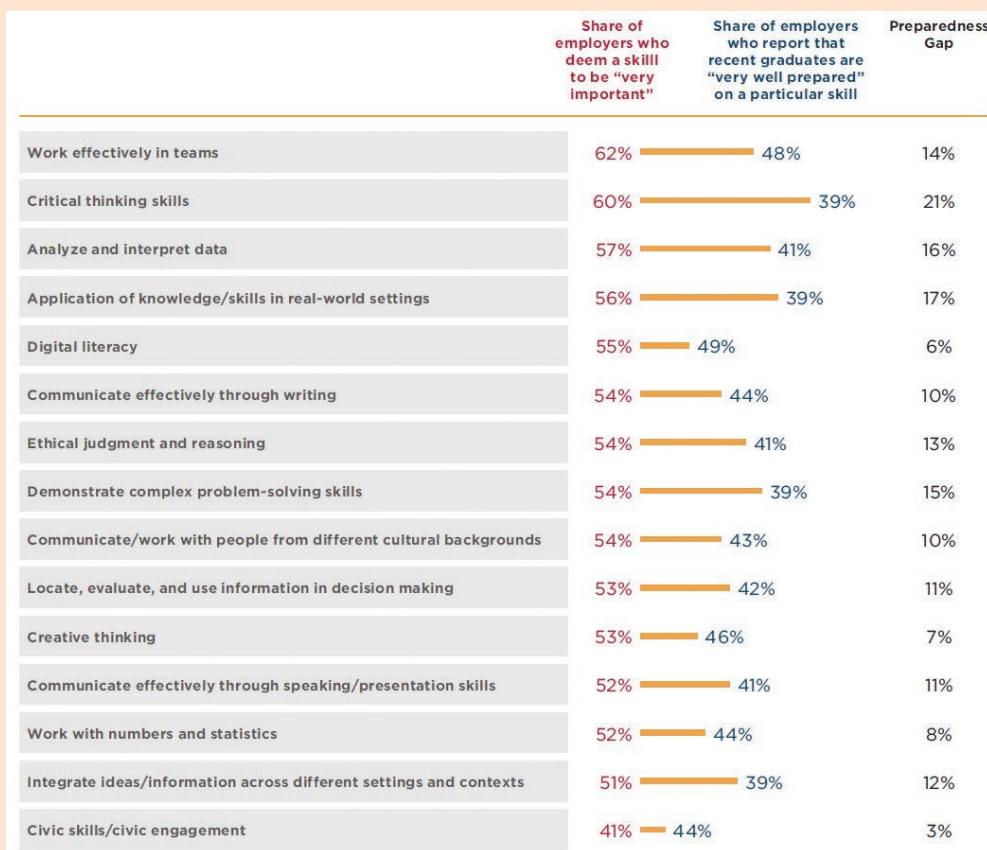
In its latest four surveys of executives and hiring managers, the Association of American Colleges and Universities found that cross-cutting capacities like communication skills are more valued than a particular choice of major. While the top-ranked outcomes vary from year to year, critical thinking and analysis, problem solving, teamwork, and communication through writing and speaking have consistently been ranked high.

The chart below shows the skills that executives and hiring managers rated the most highly in the 2020 survey. It also shows the extent to which they regard recent graduates as insufficiently prepared in each area (see the “Preparedness Gap” column).

The coronavirus pandemic elevated the need for some of these capacities by causing a massive spike in remote work. In addition to the ability to learn and use new technologies, people who work

from home need especially strong self-motivation as well as collaboration, communication, and time-management skills.

Sources: Ashley Finley, *How College Contributes to Workforce Success: Employer Views on What Matters Most*, AACU, 2021, www.aacu.org/research/how-college-contributes-to-workforce-success; Stephanie Vozza, “5 Skills You Need to Demonstrate to Land a Remote Job,” *FastCompany*, April 17, 2020, www.fastcompany.com/90490491/5-skills-you-need-to-demonstrate-to-land-a-remote-job.



American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)

or developing a policy to cut down on employees’ use of social media on the job. Simply not having enough information to make good decisions is also a negative problem that often needs to be solved.

But problems can also be opportunities to prevent negative situations or to enhance an organization’s performance. In these cases, the problem solving will be proactive. Proposing an employee volunteer program, a way to conduct business in a more environmentally friendly way, or a new

Exhibit 1-1 Well-Defined vs. Ill-Defined Problems

Well-Defined Problems	Ill-Defined Problems
Characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have clear parameters• Can be solved with a formula or flowchart• Have a correct answer	Characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have unknown and/or unmeasurable factors• Require developing a problem-solving strategy• Have unpredictable outcomes
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting a message into correct full-block letter format• Filling in a form to report how much money you have left in your budget	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping a customer's goodwill while rejecting their request for a refund• Persuading your boss to pay for you to attend a professional meeting
Your goal: Find the answer	Your goal: Develop a good solution

means of communication that can make customers or donors happier would be examples of proactive communication. Organizations are always looking for ways to be more successful. You will be more highly valued as an employee if you are actively thinking about how to contribute to this goal rather than only reacting to negative communication problems that arise.

Another important point to understand about communication tasks is that most of them involve **ill-defined problems**; that is, they cannot be successfully completed by following a standard set of steps. As Exhibit 1-1 explains, **well-defined problems** have clear parameters, so if you know the appropriate problem-solving procedure, you can easily achieve the correct outcome. But communication problems involve too many unmeasurable factors and allow for too many possible options to be routinely solved.

With such ill-defined problems, you cannot *find* the answer; you have to *develop* one by gathering information, analyzing it, and making decisions. In fact, you often have to construct a definition of the problem before you can construct the solution.

One reason so many communication tasks are ill defined is that communication is a transaction between people—and people are both complex and unique. But the workplace itself is complex, often presenting you with multiple ways to handle a situation. For example, if a customer has complained, what will you do about it? Nothing? Apologize? Imply that the customer was at fault? Give a conciliatory discount? Refuse to adjust the bill? Even a “simple” ill-defined problem like this one requires thinking through not only how to solve the business problem (what to do with an unhappy customer) but also how to solve the communication problem (what to say and how to say it).

Fortunately, once you’ve studied this book, you’ll have several **heuristics** in your toolbox that’ll help you meet any communication challenge. Heuristics are tools to think with. They’re basic guidelines, rough models, previous scenarios, and other aids that keep you from having to treat each problem as a brand-new problem. Good problem solvers rely on heuristics. When facing a problem, the first thing they ask is, “Have I seen this kind of problem before?” And then, depending on the answer, they consider strategies they’ve learned from other situations to see if some of those might apply. This is the kind of problem solving we encourage you to use. The concepts, structures, and strategies offered here are meant to save you time when planning communication solutions, but you must use your own good judgment to figure out how and when to apply them.

Of course, people will handle communication tasks differently depending on who they are, how they interpret the situation, and who they imagine their recipients to be. Does this mean that all communication solutions are equally good? Absolutely not. While there is no one perfect solution, there can be many bad ones that have been developed without enough effort. Analysis, research, thinking, and planning will not guarantee success, but they will make your chances of success as high as possible. Following the advice in this book, you can generate effective solutions for many common communication problems.

Communication Skills—A Breakdown

L01-3 Describe the communication skills that are needed in today’s workplace.

When you approach communication as problem solving, you draw on skills that you may not have realized are necessary for effective workplace communication. Take a look at Exhibit 1-2 to see the different abilities that are involved.

Certainly **verbal literacy** is a core component of communication skill. The more words and sentence patterns you’re familiar with and the stronger your knowledge of grammar and mechanics,

the better you can communicate appropriately with a given audience. Chapter 2, Chapter 6, and Reference Chapter A will help you craft a correct, reader-focused style.

But these days, **visual literacy** is almost as important. Extensive exposure to the internet, with its graphics-rich content, has led readers to expect all types of written communication to look inviting and easy to read. Anything that doesn't look this way is likely to be ignored. Visuals are also critical to conveying information. Research indicates that 80 to 85% of all our perception is mediated through vision, and visually enhanced text has been proven to generate more effective learning than text alone.⁷ Chapters 4 and 5 will explain how to boost your communication's effectiveness through purposeful visual design.

Exhibit 1-2

Communication-Related Skills for Today's Workplace

- Verbal and visual literacy
- Interpersonal/collaboration skills
- Analytical ability (computational thinking, interpretive skill)
- Digital literacy/social intelligence
- Cultural awareness/cross-cultural competency
- Ethical awareness

Interpersonal Skill Every organization, even a one-person business, is a social enterprise. Someone has to make, acquire, or design the product or service that is being offered, someone has to promote it, and someone has to manage the whole operation. Whatever the size and type of organization, considerable interaction will be needed for it to do its work. **Interpersonal skills** are thus highly prized in the workplace. Such skills involve not only written and oral expression but also listening, analysis of the situation and audience, and use of body language.

Of particular value to employers now is their employees' ability to work as part of a team. The respondents to the latest employer survey conducted by the American Academy of Colleges and Universities ranked this skill first, and it came in third on the 2022 employer survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.⁸ There is good reason for this: As the hierarchical structure that characterized 20th-century businesses has given way to flatter, more shifting organizational shapes, the work-group approach to business has become widespread. The pandemic has also increased the need for effective teamwork, as geographically dispersed employees have come to rely heavily on virtual collaboration.⁹

Many workplace groups manage a functional area of the company, such as sales or tech support. But others are cross-functional teams set up on a temporary basis to solve particular problems or pursue particular initiatives. And you'll notice that even large companies sometimes refer to their employees as the "team." Enabling people with different kinds of expertise to work together has become essential to most organizations' success. Chapter 13, which discusses interpersonal communication, will help you become a valued contributor in this environment.

Analytical Ability When you communicate on the job, you will often be presenting your analysis of a situation or a set of information. Adapting to a quickly changing business landscape requires being able to scan the available facts, focus on the relevant ones, and interpret them reliably and usefully.

As technology has increased, so has the ability to yield large amounts of data. Smart machines—devices with data-gathering ability—have now become commonplace, and they range from digital watches to cash registers to interconnected computing devices. Today they are capable of generating **big data** as well as enabling **artificial intelligence (AI)**. The term *big data* refers to large and complex data sets that are mined by companies to find insights and make decisions. What differentiates big data from other data is its volume (the size of the data set), velocity (the speed at which it is gathered and processed), and variety (the types of data).¹⁰ Advancements in data storage, computing power, and data-processing software have enabled most major companies to rely on big data, making large data sets so common that the term has become somewhat outdated.

Complex data sets require a sophisticated type of analysis, often more than traditional processors can handle. This is where artificial intelligence comes into play. AI uses algorithms that enable a computer to identify patterns in data and then become progressively better at making predictions as it takes in more data. This process, which resembles how humans make decisions, is generally

referred to as *machine learning*. Deep learning, a subcategory of machine learning, involves the use of multiple algorithms and a multilayered computer network to analyze and respond quickly to vast amounts of incoming data.¹¹ ChatGPT uses deep learning, as well as technologies that can perform natural language processing (the ability to “interpret” natural speech), context analysis, and text generation.

Even if you have never used ChatGPT, you have most likely seen machine learning at work and not even known it. Most customer service chatbots use a form of deep learning by using raw data over time to get “smarter” based on the analysis of patterns in customer inquiries and concerns. Machine learning is also used in many of the business communication tools we see marketed today such as AI voice assistants like Microsoft’s Cortana or programs that detect the sentiment or tone of written text like IBM’s Watson.

However, computers can’t do all of this on their own. Many jobs in business now require humans to interact with AI and make decisions using big data, whether a financial analyst looking for market trends or a supply chain specialist predicting future inventory patterns (see **From the Tech Desk: Will Artificial Intelligence Take Your Job?**). Thus, the need for **computational thinking**—the ability “to interact with data, see patterns in data, make data-based decisions, and use data to design for desired outcomes”¹²—has grown, and, with it, the need for the ability to create and interpret data-based graphics.¹³

But your **interpretive skills** need to go beyond interpreting numbers. Being able to “determine the deeper meaning or significance” of situations and people’s comments and behavior is critical.¹⁴ As one expert put it, “high-value work” has “an *imaginative component*.¹⁵ This quality is required to discern and evaluate the key facts, to explore “what ifs,” and to choose the best solution—all central components of successful business communication. Every communication task in this book draws on such analytical skills.

Digital Literacy When email arrived on the scene in the late 1980s, it created something of a revolution. Instead of being restricted to letters, memos, and printed reports and proposals, business writers could now correspond electronically. As a result, many tasks formerly conducted via print documents—memos in particular—were performed through email instead, and email replaced many phone and face-to-face conversations as well.



From the Tech Desk

Will Artificial Intelligence Take Your Job?

Tom Davenport, the President’s Distinguished Professor of Information Technology and Management at Babson College, poses just such a question in his book *Only Humans Need Apply: Winners and Losers in the Age of Smart Machines*. The answer is no—as long as you work in a job where your uniquely human skills are needed.

As Davenport explains, every job has features that can be automated, and your job may be at risk if it consists mostly of these features.

But most jobs, especially on the professional level, require many of the following kinds of intelligence, which machines will never have:

- The “ability to imagine new ways of solving problems.”
- Communication that requires more than data transfer.
- Comprehension of the bigger picture.
- The ability to use good judgment in cases where sufficient data can’t be collected.

- The ability to “tap into the human condition” to use humor and empathy, creativity, courage, conviction, ethical reasoning, emotions, and integrity, as well as “taste, vision, and the ability to inspire.”

Source: Thomas H. Davenport and Julia Kirby, *Only Humans Need Apply: Winners and Losers in the Age of Smart Machines* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016).

As you know, we now have many additional media options for our communication. In addition to instant messaging and text messaging, businesses are now using blogs, tweets, podcasts, virtual meetings, videos, animation, simulations, e-books, and even online games. Collectively referred to as **digital media**, these forms of communication and the mobile devices with which people access them have caused another revolution.

The impacts of this change are many and far reaching. It is easy now to network with others, even on the other side of the world, and to tap the intelligence of those outside the boundaries of the organization. Familiarity with these different ways to communicate and collaborate enhances employees’ “performance and productivity, increase[s] their general knowledge, and [enables them to] acquire a greater sense of empathy for their colleagues.”¹⁶ Digitally literate employees are also “more efficient because they readily identify essential data/information/patterns and utilize them effectively.”¹⁷ But these media increase the need for employees with **social intelligence**—the ability “to quickly assess the emotions of those around them and adapt their words, tone, and gestures accordingly.”¹⁸

With information coming in so fast and from so many sources, organizations have become more brainlike, with each employee acting as a kind of sensor. As a result, front-line employees have a higher level of decision-making power than ever before.¹⁹ Performing well in such an environment takes “novel and adaptive thinking,”²⁰ a willingness to “embrace change,” and “fierce problem-solving skills.”²¹ Chapter 4 and many of the later chapters will help you choose your media wisely and strengthen your ability to use them well.

Cultural Awareness Countries and cultures continue to grow more interconnected as businesses expand around the world. The United States itself is a conglomeration of regional and social cultures, and each generation of US workers has grown more ethnically diverse, with the youngest generation having the most ethnic diversity (nearly half are racial or ethnic minorities).²² You need to be ready to work with people whose backgrounds are different from yours and to understand why businesses have embraced the diversity movement not just as a matter of inclusion but as a strategic advantage²³ (see **Communication Matters: The Benefits of Workplace Diversity** for the top business-related reasons).

Cross-cultural competency should thus be a part of your skillset. You will need to be aware that your assumptions about business and communication are not shared by everyone everywhere. As Chapter 3 explains, businesspeople from other countries as well as from US cultures that are different from yours may have different attitudes about schedules and deadlines. They can also differ from you in their preference, or lack thereof, for directness and the show of emotion. And the core features of their culture—such as their preference for individualism or collectivism, their religious beliefs, their political environment, their ideas about social hierarchy, and their attitudes toward work itself—can make their view of how to do business quite different from yours.

Now more than ever, professionals in the workplace have an opportunity, as well as a responsibility, to develop their cultural awareness and learn from people with diverse backgrounds.

Ethical Awareness One more widespread trend in business today will likely affect your work and the goals of the organization you work for: an increased focus on ethical, socially responsible behavior.

Ethical scandals have plagued businesses throughout modern history, but several have caused particular concern:

- In the 1990s, a series of articles about Nike’s outsourcing its manufacturing operations to Asian countries focused the public’s attention on the widespread problem of exploitation of foreign labor.
- In 2001, Enron and WorldCom were found to have falsified their accounting statements, which cost their shareholders and employees millions of dollars and ultimately led to these



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The Benefits of Workplace Diversity

Appreciating those who are different from us is important to ethical behavior and personal growth. But it also brings these documented business benefits:

- Better results on nonroutine tasks (solving problems, predicting outcomes, designing policies, undertaking research)
- More successful efforts to capture new markets
- Better financial performance overall
- Higher emotional intelligence in the company overall
- Stronger employee engagement and lower turnover
- Increased attractiveness to today's job seekers

- Increased appeal to diverse customers

- Higher cross-cultural skill

Increased diversity can also help companies avoid reputational crises caused by inappropriate communication. Companies with poor diversity run a high risk of making culturally insensitive ads and other public comments, which some say can be the result of an "echo chamber" effect caused by having employees who are too much alike. Increased diversity helps provide the alternative perspectives that are needed for inclusive communication.

Sources: Scott E. Page, *The Diversity Bonus: How Great Teams Pay Off in the Knowledge Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2017); Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship, "Diversity and Inclusion: Making the Business

Case," *The Corporate Citizen*, Winter 2019, <https://bc-ccc.uberflip.com/i/1071912-corporatecitizen-issue27-2019/0/>; Vivian Hunt, Dennis Layton, and Sara Prince, "Why Diversity Matters," McKinsey & Company, February 2015, [www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/why-diversity-matters](http://mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/why-diversity-matters); Vivian Hunt et al., "Delivering Growth through Diversity," McKinsey & Company, January 2018, [www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity](http://mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity); Mary-Francis Winters, *We Can't Talk about That at Work! How to Talk about Race, Religion, Politics, and Other Polarizing Topics* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2017); Jennifer Miller, "For Younger Job Seekers, Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace Aren't a Preference. They're a Requirement," *The Washington Post*, February 18, 2021, www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/02/18/millennial-gen-z-workplace-diversity-equity-inclusion/; Haley Smith, "Advantages of Cultural Diversity in the Workplace," Global LT, March 21, 2017, <https://global-lt.com/cultural-diversity-workplace/>; Christopher Lombardo, "Diversity Can Help Prevent Brand Reputation Crises," *strategy*, May 7, 2019, <https://strategyonline.ca/2019/05/07/diversity-can-help-prevent-brand-reputation-crises/>.

companies' bankruptcy (as well as to the downfall of one of the former "big five" US accounting firms, Arthur Andersen).

- In 2008 came unprecedented discoveries of mismanagement, predatory lending, and fraud on the part of many of the United States' largest financial institutions—practices that caused the Great Recession, global economic panic, and the loss of countless homes and jobs.
- The explosion of a BP oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, caused by construction shortcuts taken by the company, created the worst oil spill in US history.

More recent scandals include Facebook's (now Meta's) providing a data analytics firm with subscribers' personal information without their permission, as well as enabling uses of the platform that are known to be harmful to the public; Google's, Uber's, 21st Century Fox/Fox News', and Ford Motor's sexual-harassment cases; Purdue Pharma's fueling of the opioid crisis with its aggressive marketing of OxyContin; Wells Fargo's creation of fraudulent accounts; Volkswagen's use of software to generate incorrect emission test results for its vehicles; and false advertising on the part of Uber, Dannon, L'Oréal, and other companies. Numerous companies have been sued for racial discrimination, and racist, sexist, homo/transphobic, and other kinds of biased remarks have ended the careers of many high-profile businesspeople.

On a moral level, doing business in a way that harms others is wrong. On a practical level, doing so undermines trust, which is critical to the success of business. The more an organization builds trust among its employees, its shareholders, its business partners, and its community, the better for the organization and for economic prosperity overall. This helps explain why businesses place a high premium on the ethical integrity of their members and on honest, trustworthy, inclusive communications. (See Chapter 2's guidelines for ethical communication.)

But there's another reason. The internet and social media have brought transparency to companies' business practices, with negative information traveling quickly and widely. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as CorpWatch, Consumer Federation of America, and Greenpeace can exert a powerful influence on public opinion and even on governments. Businesses now operate in an age of social accountability, and one of their responses has been the



The practice of speaking out on social issues is becoming more common for businesses that once would have carefully avoided controversy. Here you see a portion of Procter & Gamble’s webpage on its “We See Equal” campaign, an effort to combat gender bias through social messaging, TV ads, and programs and partnerships that support educational and economic opportunities for women (<https://us.pg.com/gender-equality/>). P&G promotes the social good in many other ways, including advocating for people with disabilities, the environment, and LGBTQ+ rights.

Procter & Gamble

widespread development of **corporate social responsibility (CSR)** departments and initiatives. Accountability to the various groups affected by your organization, including society as a whole, will—and should— influence how you work and communicate.

Many companies, in fact, are moving beyond CSR to **brand activism** (also called *cause marketing* or *social marketing*), using their communications and actions to take a stand on widespread social issues. Procter & Gamble’s “We See Equal” campaign, begun in March 2017, is an example. By explicitly targeting gender bias and working to reduce it around the globe, the company puts its power behind a values-based cause (see **Communication Matters: CSR and Brand Activism** for additional examples). Participating in such activities may turn off some investors and potential customers who think businesses should just stick to doing business, but today’s consumers have come to expect companies to engage in **ESG** (environmental, social, corporate governance) activities. As of August 2022, more than 90% of S&P 500 companies were publishing ESG reports in some form, as were approximately 70% of Russell 1000 companies. While ESG is drawing criticism for distracting companies from generating shareholder wealth and for being too vague as an investment/spending practice, most consumers want to see evidence that companies are paying attention to their effects on society and the environment.²⁴

Other businesses have exposed themselves to greater risk by entering into more divisive public conversations. Nike’s featuring of Colin Kaepernick in its advertisements, for example, explicitly aligned the company with one side of a controversial social cause. By supporting this football player who knelt during the playing of the national anthem and who has vocally opposed police brutality toward Blacks, Nike drew both high praise and heavy criticism from its customers. Ultimately, though, its decision paid off: Despite a boycott against the company, the value of its stock soared, increasing the company’s overall value by \$6 billion in just three weeks.²⁵

When weighing in on one side of an ESG issue, companies need to do so in a way that aligns with their practices and values. Some companies who have joined conversations related to social issues have been accused of “woke-washing,” or taking a public stance on an issue when their own internal practices reflect different beliefs or values.²⁶ For example, Whole Foods found themselves in a crisis when employees at one of their stores were sent home because they refused to remove



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CSR and Brand Activism: Not Just Empty Talk

There's more pressure on businesses than ever to be—not just appear to be—socially responsible, and companies are responding. A recent global survey found that 64% of people of all age groups expect CEOs to take the lead on effecting social change when governments aren't doing enough, and 56% reported no respect for CEOs who remain quiet on important issues. The following examples suggest the range of environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) activities that companies have undertaken:

- The killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in 2020 led countless companies to support the Black Lives Matter movement and to strive for better diversity and inclusion in their own business practices.
- Lyft and Airbnb began inclusiveness campaigns in response to President Trump's closing of the US borders to refugees in 2018.
- Adidas released a collection of rainbow-colored footwear and clothing, Pride Pack, that

celebrates the LGBTQ+ community and promotes diversity.

- With environmental concerns growing, 80% of the leading companies around the world now track and report on their sustainability efforts.
- Land O'Lakes has continued its efforts, started during the global pandemic, to close the digital divide by helping to provide broadband access in rural areas.
- Starbucks set a goal to hire 25,000 military veterans by 2025, and it has already reached that goal. It now hires 5,000 veterans a year.
- Lego works to create a better world for children by promoting play in libraries, museums, and communities at large and by enforcing ethical employment practices and high standards for health and safety at their factories.
- The Marc Jacobs brand works with a nonprofit to rescue abandoned and abused dogs.

As Salesforce's CEO Marc Benioff has commented, "Today's CEOs need to stand up not just

for their shareholders, but [for] their employees, their customers, their partners, the community, the environment, schools, everybody" (Chatterji and Toffel). It should be noted, though, that companies have different interpretations of this responsibility. Chick-fil-A publicly sided with those opposed to same-sex marriage and donated to anti-LGBTQ+ organizations, and Hobby Lobby brought a suit against the US government to challenge the inclusion of mandated birth-control coverage in the Affordable Care Act. Brand activism can fall anywhere on the political/social spectrum.

Sources: A. Costigan and V. Hughes, "CEO Activism: Trend Brief," *Catalyst*, February 23, 2021, www.catalyst.org/research/ceo-activism-trend-brief/; Sean McCabe, "KPMG Study: 80% of Top Companies Now Report on Sustainability," *Accounting Today*, December 1, 2020, www.accountingtoday.com/news/eighty-percent-of-top-companies-now-report-on-sustainability-kpmg-study; Aaron K. Chatterji and Michael W. Toffel, "The New CEO Activists," *Harvard Business Review*, January–February 2018, <https://hbr.org/2018/01/the-new-ceo-activists>.

their Black Lives Matter masks. This prompted outrage from many consumers, who saw the action as contradictory to Whole Foods' socially conscious image.²⁷

Today's consumers want to know what values a given company stands for and will make buying decisions based on how well the company walks its talk. The massive boycott arising from Anheuser-Busch's use of a transgender influencer to promote Bud Light indicates the power of this fact. Job applicants, too, especially those in the younger generations and in historically marginalized groups, strongly consider whether an organization's social values align with their own. Whether you are searching for a job or working as an employee, you will need to be attuned to this dimension of the contemporary workplace.

Professionalism 101

L01-4 Define professionalism and its importance to communication in the workplace.

There's one more highly valued trait to mention, and it should come into play during every interaction you have. It's **professionalism**.

Like communication, professionalism seems to be a simple concept until you start to unpack it. What exactly is professionalism?

Surely a part of it is **business etiquette**. This is the set of behaviors that's expected from you as an employee when you're in social situations, whether with your colleagues, your superiors, or such outsiders as partners and customers. Good table manners, polite conversation, and appropriate



Communication Matters

How to Spot a Professional

You've seen them, and probably worked with them—they're the ones who are responsible, easy to work with, and under control without being stuffy or unfriendly. They're professionals. Here are some of their most noticeable communication behaviors:

- When responding to others, especially in sensitive situations, they do not blurt out the first thing that comes to mind. Instead, they listen and think and then give a considered response.
- They realize that they represent their organization. They don't say anything to an external

party that they wouldn't want their boss to overhear.

- They do not needlessly make work for other people. They answer messages appropriately and efficiently, come through with their part of a project, pay attention to instructions and feedback, and try to find the information they need before asking others for it.
- They're willing to go beyond their own job description to contribute something that will help the team. When they pick up the slack for a co-worker, they don't call undue attention to it;

they realize that everyone is expected to give extra occasionally and that, at some point, a co-worker will return the favor.

- When in important meetings or at important presentations, they put their phones on silent and do not look at them unless they've been invited to tweet their feedback to the speaker, they're researching something for the group, or it's clear that using one's phone in such situations is okay.

What else do they do? See how many other professional behaviors you can add to this list.

attire are part of business etiquette, but it goes deeper than this. As one source puts it, the ultimate goal of good manners "is to build positive relationships that enable a working environment to function in the most favorable way to all concerned."²⁸

Courtesy is a part of business etiquette. In terms of communication, this means that you allow others to speak, you listen carefully, you don't interrupt, and you keep your tone of voice under control. Respect also plays a role. You demonstrate awareness of and appreciation for others' expertise and accomplishments, as well as their cultural norms.

But professionalism goes beyond etiquette because it extends beyond behavior in social situations. It means being responsible, conscientious, cooperative, and inclusive in every area of your work. It means being loyal to the organization that pays you, having a strong work ethic, and adapting gracefully to change as needed. It also means having high standards for your communications. As one blogger put it, "professionalism results in carefully prepared reports, accurate presentation of information, and constantly bearing in mind that the company exists for its customers."²⁹

Research shows that young employees are job-hopping much more often than their older counterparts, with Millennials staying at one organization only 2 years and 9 months and Gen Zers only 2 years and 3 months.³⁰ As you plot your upward path, be a professional in whatever job you hold. It will lead to better learning on your part, more impressive accomplishments, and stronger letters of reference, as well as rewarding relationships and a personal sense of pride. Remember that people will know you largely through your communication. Make sure your content, your wording, and the look of your written work all convey your professionalism.



You Make the Call

Think of a time when you observed unprofessional behavior. What was unprofessional about it? What kind of damage might this behavior have caused?

The Business Communication Environment

Seeing the big picture is an important part of professional success. It helps you connect your work to your organization's larger goals, which in turn helps you prioritize more effectively, work more efficiently, and make better decisions.³¹ The Project Management Institute reports that one of the main reasons projects fail is that the team members don't understand how the project fits into the

company's larger business strategy.³² Trying to grasp a situation in its entirety before figuring out how to act is also what effective problem solvers do.³³

Efficiency is highly prized in the workplace, but not taking the time to gather and think through all the important facts will lead to inefficiency, as well as to decisions that backfire. The discussions that follow will help you identify communication factors that may be lurking behind the more obvious ones.

Main Categories of Business Communication

L01-5 Describe the three main categories of business communication.

A way to make sense of the big communication picture is to view all communications as being one of three types: internal operational, external operational, or personal. This categorizing scheme is an oversimplification, of course. For example, a blog or Instagram post can fall into all three categories if it is read by people both inside and outside the company and has a distinctive personal voice. Many business messages and work-related conversations also include brief personal comments to help build goodwill.

Still, an understanding of these three primary categories, listed in Exhibit 1-3, can help you see what communication networks you are a part of and how to participate in them.

Internal-Operational Communication All work-related communication that occurs within an organization is internal operational. This is the communication among the employees that is conducted to achieve the goals of the organization and track its success.

Internal-operational communication takes many forms. It includes the ongoing discussions that senior management undertakes to determine the goals and processes of the organization. It includes the orders and instructions that supervisors give employees, as well as written and oral exchanges among employees about work matters. It includes reports that employees prepare concerning sales, production, finance, maintenance, and other parts of the organization's operations. It includes the messages that they write and speak in carrying out their assignments and contributing their ideas. It includes all the collaborative activity that takes place in online team meetings. And it includes all the contents of an organization's intranet or other internal news channel.

Most internal-operational messages should use the conversational style discussed in Chapter 2. This style is pleasant without being too chummy and professional without being stiff. Another style can be appropriate depending on what kind of communication you're engaging in—for example, a chat with a co-worker can be more casual, while a report to your boss can be more formal. But none of your internal messages should lapse into profanity, goofiness, or poor grammar.

External-Operational Communication The work-related communicating that the organization does with people and groups outside its internal operations is **external-operational communication**.

Exhibit 1-3

The Main Categories of Workplace Communication

- Internal-Operational Communication
- External-Operational Communication
- Personal Communication

This category of communication includes all of the organization's promotional efforts—from sales or fundraising letters, emails, social media posts, and phone calls to internet and television ads, trade-show displays, the company website, and customer visits. Also included is everything the organization does to gain positive publicity, such as promoting its community service activities, preparing appealing materials for current and prospective investors, writing press releases for the media, and contributing expert insights at professional meetings and on webinars.

In addition, organizations rely on external-operational communication to coordinate with contractors, consultants, suppliers, and industry or nonprofit partners.



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Companies often use carefully designed intranets, such as this award-winning one from the Estée Lauder Companies, to communicate with employees and enable them to communicate with each other.

Unily

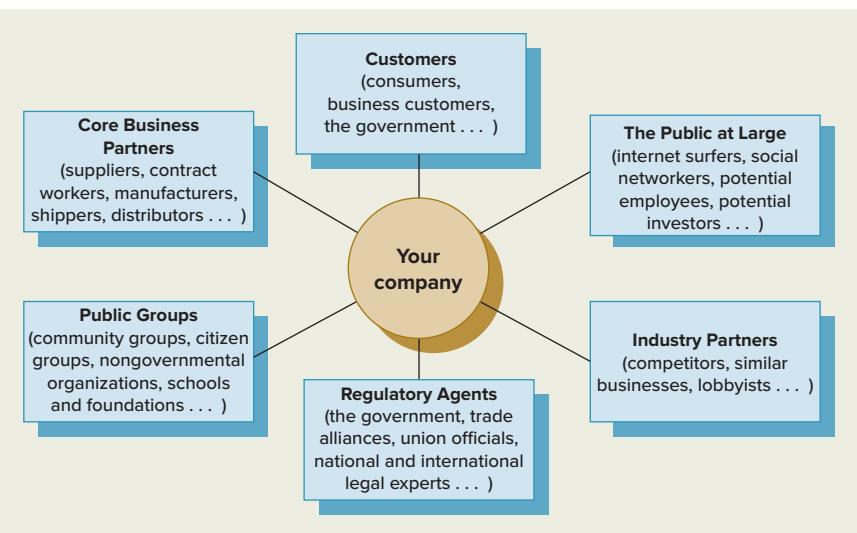
Every organization must also communicate to some extent with such external parties as government agencies, community leaders, and public-interest groups.

Some likely external audiences for today's businesses are illustrated in Exhibit 1-4. A nonprofit organization's external audiences would look somewhat different in that they would likely include sponsors, donors and potential donors, and volunteers.

Communication with such parties can be friendly, but it is typically more formal than internal communication unless you know your co-communicator well. When conversing with outsiders, you'll want to be especially aware that you are representing your organization. Be sure to do so with discretion and professionalism.

Personal Communication Much of the communication that occurs in the workplace is interpersonal dialogue that has no clear connection to the organization's operations. But do not underestimate its importance. **Personal communication** helps make and sustain the relationships upon which organizations depend.

Exhibit 1-4 Likely External Audiences for Today's Businesses



You Make the Call

What are some examples of personal communication that would probably be inappropriate in the workplace?

The employees' attitudes toward the organization, one another, and their assignments directly affect their productivity, and the nature and amount of personal talk at work affect those attitudes. Wise managers understand the importance of chitchat at doorways, around the water cooler, and in the break room; it encourages a team attitude and can often help spark more effective business solutions. If you work remotely or in a virtual team, you will want to be intentional about how you can foster these types of personal communication interactions with your colleagues as, unlike working in a face-to-face environment, you will lack the type of proximity that leads to unscheduled, informal interactions in the workplace. “Bumping into” colleagues builds relationships and often prompts substantive workplace conversation, so you will need to make an effort not to miss out on these benefits if you are working virtually.

Using both online and face-to-face networking, you will also cultivate connections with professionals outside your organization. These relationships will not only help you do your current job but also be an important resource as you change jobs or even careers.

As with operational communication, the personal communication you engage in as an employee should have boundaries. Undue familiarity with colleagues can be distracting, offensive, or even in violation of company policies, and too much complaining can lead others to regard you as a negative influence. Be careful about what you say about yourself and about other employees, since stories have a way of getting around and getting distorted via the **grapevine**, the company's informal communication network. Do not say anything that would undermine the inclusiveness of your work environment, and blow off steam only with your most trusted work friends (as Chapter 4 points out, never do this via email, chat, or social media!).



Personal communication can help employees work better together and contribute to a cohesive company culture.

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The Influence of Organizational Structure and Culture on Communication

An important part of seeing the big picture in your communication environment is understanding your organization's structure and culture. These will heavily influence whom you communicate with, what you say, and how you say it.

Organizational Structure Except for the smallest and most informal organizations, every organization has an **organizational structure**, whether it has developed by accident or been carefully designed.

The structure is how the organization's various components fit together.³⁴ More specifically, it is a work pattern determined by the employees' different levels of authority, assumed or assigned responsibilities, and typical lines of communication.

The most formal structure is that of the traditional hierarchical, or bureaucratic, organization. Represented by the top chart in Exhibit 1-5, it is based on a rigid chain of command, clear boundaries for each person's responsibilities, and highly restricted lines of communication. This kind of

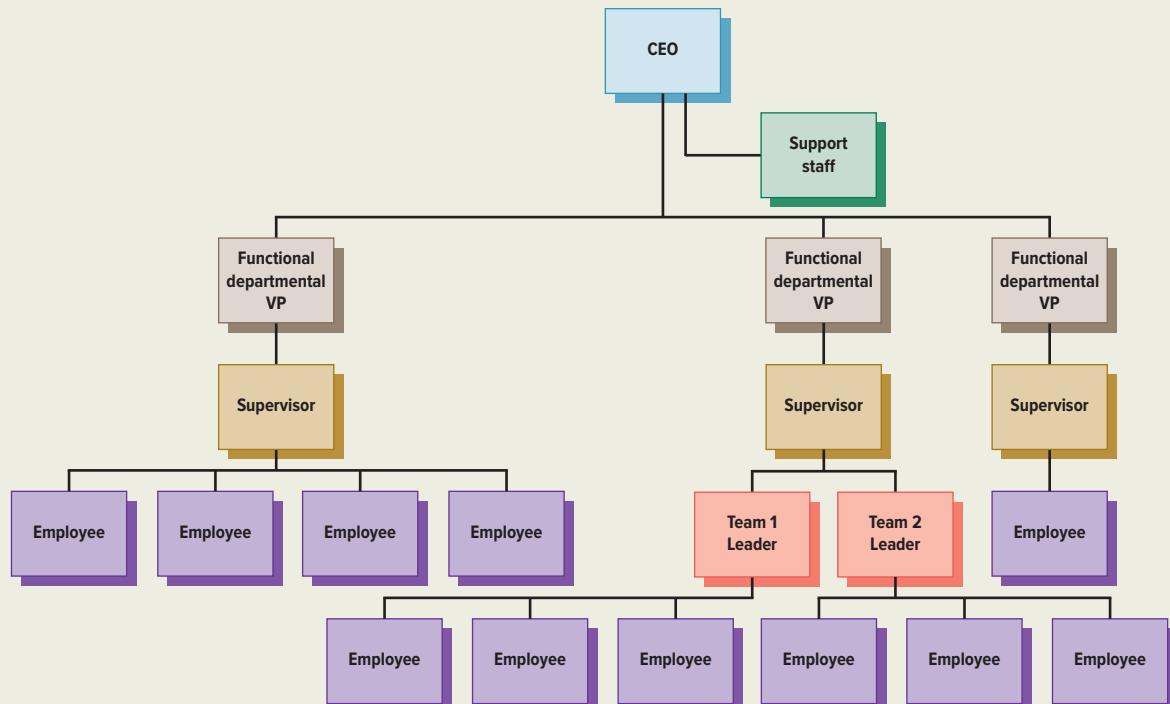
LO1-6 Define organizational structure and describe its influence on the organization's communication.

Exhibit 1-5 Three Common Types of Organizational Charts

Organizational structures can take many forms, depending on the factors discussed in the text. Three of the most common types are variations of the hierarchy, the matrix, and the flat structures.

The Hierarchy

The hierarchical organization developed during the Industrial Revolution and was the most common form in the heyday of manufacturing. In a way, the hierarchical structure resembles a machine (hence one of its alternate names, the mechanistic structure) in that responsibilities are divided among all the parts that must work together in prescribed ways.

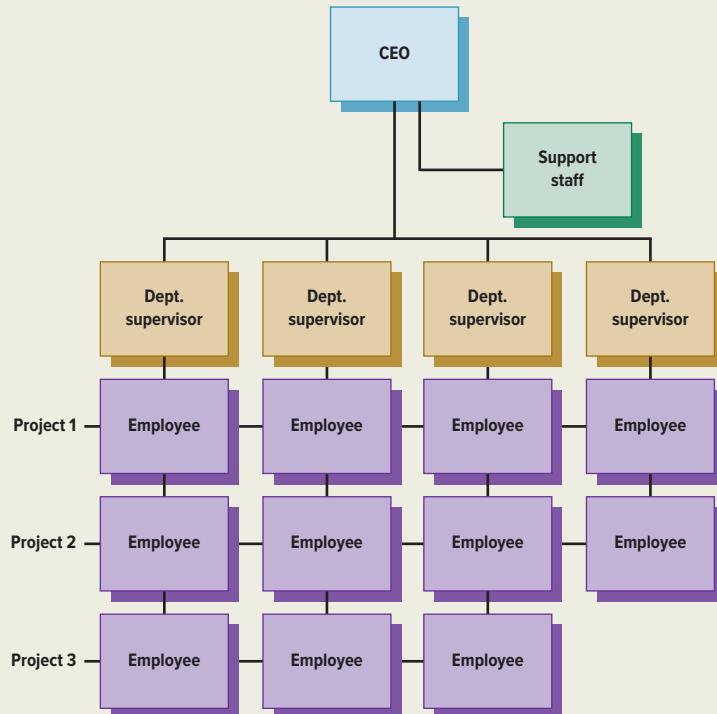


(Continued)

Exhibit 1-5 Three Common Types of Organizational Charts (*Continued*)

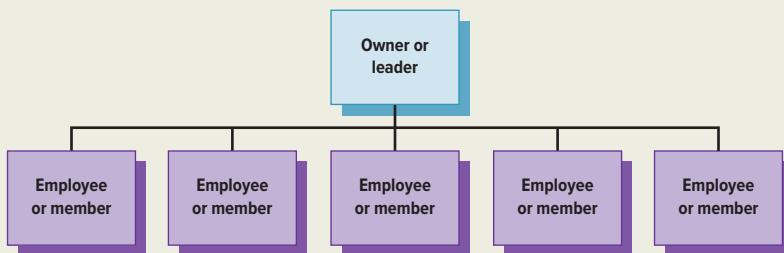
The Matrix

As organizations needed to change to be able to respond more quickly to changing markets, a more team-based approach developed. In this type of workplace, employees with the needed areas of expertise are assigned to different project groups. As the groups complete their work and the organization takes on new projects, the employees are assigned to new groups as appropriate. Note that, in this configuration, the employees answer to two bosses: the heads of their functional areas and the leader of the project. Also note that not every project will always require the same number and type of employees.



The Flat Organization

This type of organization is well suited to relatively small businesses in the knowledge economy (e.g., a PR firm) and organizations in the nonprofit sector (e.g., a charity). Here, a leader and a lean operations staff provide direction and support for the employees, who are essentially at the same level.



structure is best suited to an organization that is unlikely to need to respond quickly to changes in its environment and whose employees need clearly delineated job roles. Banks, large grocery chains, manufacturing plants, and government agencies are examples.

At the other end of the spectrum is the organic or flat structure, represented by the third chart in the exhibit. This kind of structure has few levels of authority and reporting, loose boundaries

around the different employees' responsibilities, and open channels of interaction among the employees. Start-ups and other small organizations tend to have this structure.

In between are many different configurations, the most common of which is the matrix structure, represented by the middle graph. In this kind of organization, employees report not only to their functional bosses (e.g., finance VP or IT director) but also to a project supervisor. Project-based companies, such as engineering, IT consulting/development, and architectural firms, rely on this kind of structure if they need to be able to form and disband cross-functional teams relatively quickly.

The available lines of communication in an organization cause certain stable forms of communication, or **genres**, to exist (you can read more about genres in Chapter 4). For example, in a hierarchical company, the executives may hold monthly staff meetings, and supervisors may require routine operational reports from those they manage. In a company that is more project based, the project leaders may require brief, relatively informal reports from their team members each week. The members of a flat organization will do a lot of random communicating in the form of emails, phone calls, and face-to-face conversation but will still be likely to use some stable forms, such as meetings and various kinds of reports to the rest of the team. Whatever the established form and medium, it will bring with it certain expectations about what can and cannot be said, who may and may not say it, and how the messages should be structured and worded. You will need to understand these expectations in order to communicate appropriately and well.

Organizational Culture When people come together in an organization and spend many hours a day there, they form a social world with its own goals, values, behaviors, and idiosyncrasies. This is its **organizational culture**.

You can think of a company's culture as its customary, but often unstated, ways of perceiving and doing things. Employees at a craft brewery, for example, are expected to behave differently from those at a large corporation like Google or any bank or insurance agency, but only some of the behavioral rules are spelled out. As you know from your own experience, the ins and outs of each workplace's culture can take quite a while to learn. Making this effort is essential to successful communication in that environment.

Organizational culture is strongly influenced by the leaders at the top, but they do not have full control. While they may promote a certain culture through such communications as mission statements and mottoes, the actual culture of a company is a living medium constructed daily through countless behaviors and communications at all levels of the organization.

Several factors strongly influence the kind of culture that an organization will have. What follows are the main ones; you may be able to think of others.

- **The purpose of the organization.** What the organization does and why has an enormous influence on its culture. If its purpose is to help others, it will have a more openly caring culture than if its primary goal is to increase shareholder wealth. If it is a business, its industry will help govern its purpose and therefore its culture.
- **The customers or clients whom they serve or with whom they do business.** Closely related to the organization's purpose is whom they serve or market their goods and services to. If something causes these to change, it can create the need for the organization's culture to change.
- **The organization's size and structure.** A small organization is likely to have a flat culture that encourages informality, whereas a large organization will need several layers of hierarchy that will make the culture more formal and the employees' power less evenly distributed.
- **The geographical and physical characteristics of the organization.** Obviously, internal communication in an organization with multiple locations will differ from that of an organization where everyone is in the same office or building. This difference can have an effect on how informal and cohesive the organization is. As researcher Deborah Andrews points out, the type of layout an office or building has can also affect an organization's culture. For example, an open floor plan will encourage more informal collaborations than a room filled with cubicles.³⁵

L01-7 Define organizational culture and describe the main factors that influence an organization's culture.



Communication Matters

How to Scope Out an Organization's Culture

The Chartered Management Institute, a UK-based certification firm for managers, advises paying attention to the following 10 clues to an organization's culture:

1. The way the organization represents itself in its vision, mission, and value statements as well as its other documents and its digital media.
2. The sector (public/private and for-profit/not-for-profit) and the industry (e.g., financial advising) that the organization is in, and its organizational structure.
3. What the people who work for the organization say about it and what kind of information is and isn't shared with them.
4. What the observable physical features of the organization (e.g., its offices, its decor, how people dress) say about it.
5. The communication styles and channels in the organization.
6. How decisions are made, in terms of both participants and priorities.
7. How much employees are expected to work and how rigorously they must stick to a schedule.
8. What employee groups exist and the degree to which employees can work and communicate with other groups.
9. How meetings are conducted.
10. The strength and types of organizational boundaries (e.g., between majority and minority groups, around the organization's identity).

Source: Chartered Management Institute (CMI), *Understanding Organisational Culture*, accessed June 22, 2023, www.managers.org.uk/~media/Files/PDF/Checklists/CHK-232-Understanding-organisational-culture.pdf.

- **How diverse the organization is.** An organization whose employees are similar in background and who come from the same local area will have a culture that outsiders will have difficulty breaking into, whereas a multicultural organization or one with extensive diversity is likely to have a wider range of accepted values and more openness to different viewpoints.
- **The values and management style of the organization's leaders.** While an organization's leaders can't control the culture, they can strongly influence it through their behavior, their decisions and decision-making style, their internal communications, and the image they present to the public. Sometimes a change in leadership will effect major changes in an organization's culture.

When you are researching organizations you might like to join or when you join a new organization, you'll need to pick up on all the available cultural cues. **Communication Matters: How to Scope Out an Organization's Culture** tells you the key places to look. The more attuned you are to the nature of your organization, the more effective your communication as an employee will be.

The Business Communication Process

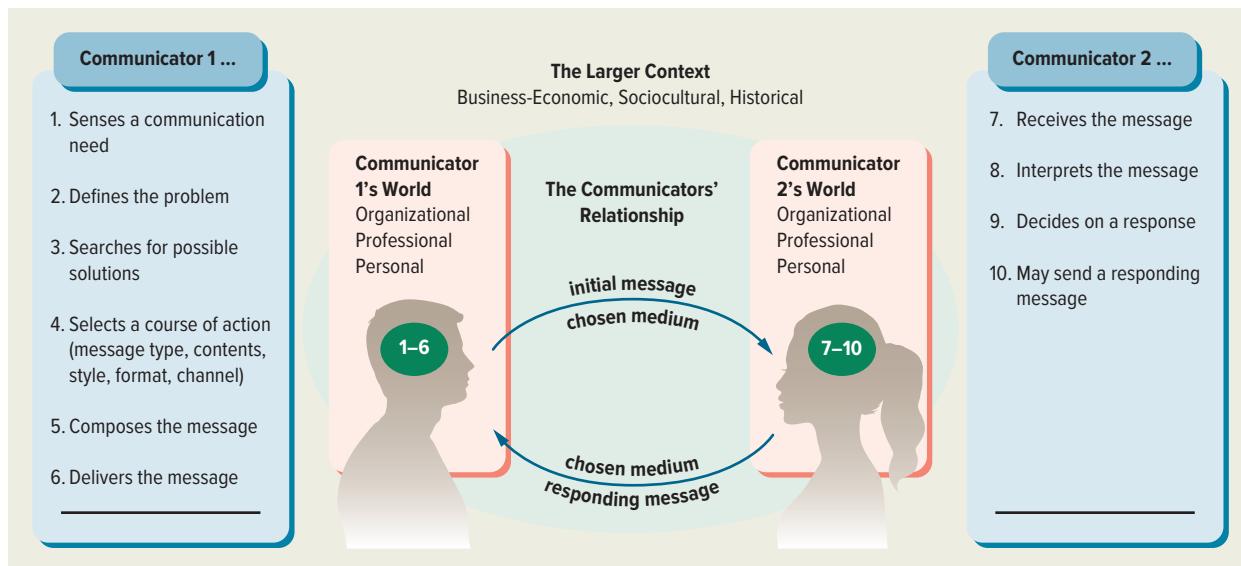
So how do you solve communication problems? Just throw yourself in there and hope your intuition steers you in the right direction? Or is there a better way?

Even though such problems are often not clear-cut, you can take a systematic approach to solving them. The exhibits and discussion in this section will help you do so.

A Model of the Business Communication Process

Numerous textbooks offer models of the communication process in business. Most of these are still based on a model created by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver in the 1940s in which a sender encodes information and sends it through a channel (where noise could interfere) to a receiver, who decodes the message and may give feedback (a concept added to the model later). But this was actually a model for how telephones and other devices, not people, communicate.³⁶ It thus presents the communication process as much more linear and out of context than it really is. Their concepts of "encoding" (putting concepts into words) and "decoding" (extracting meaning from words) are

Exhibit 1-6 A Model of the Business Communication Process



also problematic since they imply that thinking and language are separate. But each communicator will draw on their particular stock of words and meanings to decide what to say and to understand what others are saying. Our model, presented in Exhibit 1-6, is roughly based on Shannon and Weaver's model in that it is about conveying information, but it aims to adapt the model to human communication by incorporating contexts and interpretation. It also incorporates the problem-solving approach that this book uses in that the communication event begins with a communicator sensing a communication need and then going through a problem-solving process, discussed in detail in Exhibit 1-7, to generate an appropriate solution.

Note that the communicators in the model are represented as individuals, but they could be writing or speaking as a team. Note also that, especially in the case of oral communication, this process might be repeated several times as the communicators talk back and forth. This is why we've chosen the labels "Communicator 1" and "Communicator 2" instead of Shannon and Weaver's "sender" and "receiver," because senders and receivers can switch roles during a communication event.

The Contexts for Business Communication As the model shows, certain features of the communication situation are already in place before Communicator 1 starts solving the communication problem. Thinking about these contexts will be a key part of creating a successful solution.

The **larger communication context** includes the general business-economic climate; the language, values, and customs in the surrounding culture; and the historical moment in which the communication is taking place.

When you think about how these contexts might influence communication, surely the first example that might come to mind is the coronavirus pandemic, which damaged economies around the world, disrupted the physical locations where people worked, and brought virtual-communication technology to the fore. All these developments influenced the content and tone of workplace communication. But even during more normal times, fluctuations in the economy or a particular industry can affect an organization's communication in both minor and major ways. The sociocultural context also affects how workplace professionals communicate. Whether they are communicating within the culture of a particular region or country or across cultures, their communication choices will be affected. The particular historical context of their communication can also be a factor. Consider how financial scandals, an increased focus on the environment, and different social issues have influenced the language of business. The skillful communicator is sensitive to these larger contexts, which always exert an influence and, to some extent, are always changing.

L01-8 Describe the contexts for each act of communication in the workplace.



You will often need to adapt your communication when speaking to those whose areas of expertise are different from your own.

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The **communicators' relationship** also forms an important context for communication. Certainly, communication is about moving information from point A to point B, but it is also about interaction between human beings. Your first correspondence with someone begins a relationship between the two of you, whether as individuals, people in certain business roles, or both. All future messages between you will continue to build this relationship.

The communicators' particular contexts—the unique “worlds” that they each inhabit—exert perhaps the strongest influence on their business communication. Their circumstances have the tendency to act as interpretive **filters**, or attitudes and assumptions that the communicator is predisposed to have. Often the filters are appropriate and helpful, but sometimes they are not. Whether sending or receiving a message, be sure to consider how your own filters might be affecting your understanding.

Three main contexts make up each communicator's particular world:

- **Organizational contexts.** As we've discussed, the type and culture of the organization you represent will shape your communication choices in many ways, and the organizational contexts of your audiences will, in turn, shape theirs. In fact,

in every act of workplace communication, at least one of the parties involved is likely to be representing an organization. What you communicate and how you do so will be strongly shaped by the organization for whom you speak. In turn, the organization to which your audience belongs—its priorities, its current circumstances, even how fast or slow its pace of work—can strongly influence the way your message is received.

- **Professional contexts.** You know from school and experience that different professionals—whether physicians, social workers, managers, accountants, or those involved in other fields—possess different kinds of expertise, speak differently, and have different perspectives. What gets communicated and how can be heavily influenced by the communicators' professional roles. Be aware that internal audiences as well as external ones can occupy different professional roles and therefore favor different kinds of content and language. Employees in management and engineering, for example, have been demonstrated to have quite different priorities, with the former focusing on financial benefit and the latter on technological achievement.³⁷ Part of successful communication is being alert to your audiences' different professional contexts.
- **Personal contexts.** Who you are as a person comes from many sources: the genes you inherited, your family and upbringing, your life experiences, your schooling, the many people with whom you've come in contact, and the culture in which you were reared. Who you are as a person also depends to some extent on your current circumstances. Successes and failures, personal relationships, financial ups and downs, the state of your health, your physical environment—all can affect a particular communicative act. Even though most workplace communication is still between individuals occupying organizational roles, it has become more common now to share personal information as part of building professional relationships. Such information can help you tailor your messages to the particular person with whom you're communicating. If you're aware, for example, that the intended recipient of your message is under stress, you can adapt your communication accordingly. You can also be mindful of how your own situation may be affecting your interpretation of others' messages.

One more important context for communication isn't represented in the model: the **intertextual context**. Most workplace communications are not isolated events; instead, they take place in the context of related communications. As Stephen Bremner explains,

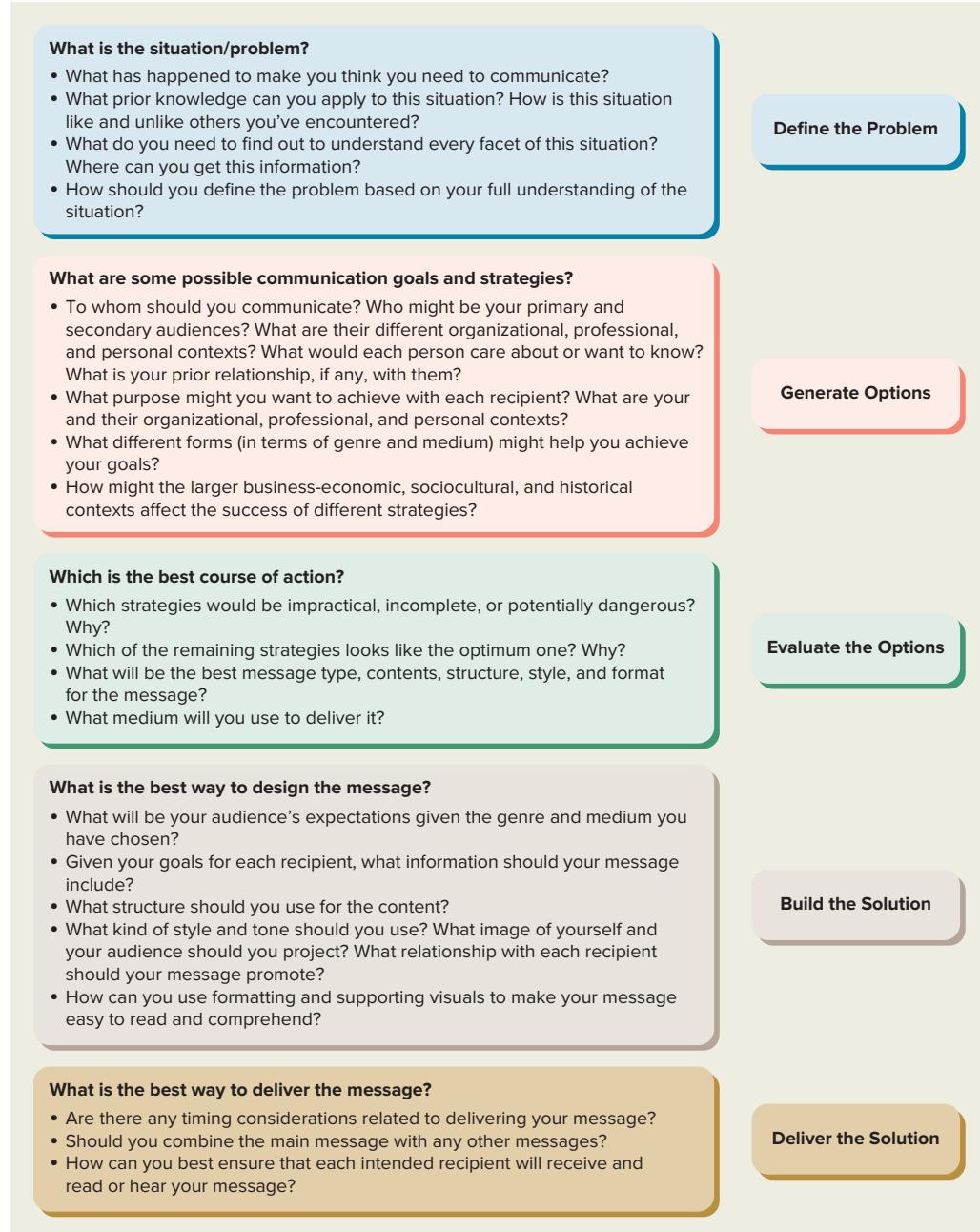
Texts composed in professional settings draw on—and are shaped by—other texts in a variety of ways, whether referring specifically to other documents, taking shape within a chain of emails or other interactions, incorporating the work of colleagues as part of the collaborative process, or being informed by the templates, practices, and traditions that are specific to an organizational setting.³⁸

This fact is difficult to incorporate into classroom assignments, but it will play a huge role in your decision-making when you're communicating on the job.

The Steps in the Problem-Solving Process Exhibit 1-7 lists the main questions to consider when taking the problem-solving approach to business communication represented in Exhibit 1-6, and Exhibit 1-8 gives an example of how to go through the process.

LO1-9 Describe the steps of a problem-solving approach to business communication.

Exhibit 1-7 Planning Your Communication Strategy: A Problem-Solving Approach





You Make the Call

Think about a recent communication situation you handled that didn't go well. Where did your problem-solving process go wrong?

While these steps tend to be linear, the communicator often needs to revisit earlier steps while moving through the different activities. In other words, the process of solving a communication problem is usually **recursive**. For example, you might begin with a certain view of the situation and then decide, with additional research and thinking, that this view needs to be revised. Or you might begin designing your message as an email and then decide that a phone call would probably work better. Let yourself revisit earlier steps when a little alarm bell in your head is telling you that part of your strategy is off track.

Study the response from every message you deliver, and learn from it. If you have a chance to respond to your audience's response, your assessment can help you meet the current communication challenge more successfully. If the dialogue has ended, the practice of assessing the results of your communication decisions will still help you develop stronger skills for meeting future challenges.

Exhibit 1-8

Sample Application of the Problem-Solving Approach

What is the situation/problem?

- I am interning in the PR and marketing office of our local zoo. The marketing director, my supervisor, has asked me to draft a sales message that will encourage senior citizens who once had family memberships to become members again. They likely let these memberships lapse because their kids or grandkids lost interest in the zoo once they'd reached a certain age. My supervisor has given me the names and addresses of lapsed members who had family memberships between 2005 and 2015. In addition to creating a sales message, I'll need to create a mailing list based on this information.
- I wrote fundraising email messages when I worked part time for the city's nature center. These messages needed to include appealing visuals and persuasive points (like what the nature center does for the community and what it could do with the money). The zoo message will be similar. But I doubt that an email is the best choice of medium for these seniors, and I think the message they'll get should emphasize what the zoo can do for them, not what the zoo needs or does for the city.
- I'll ask my boss for some former sales messages the zoo has sent out and see if she has any other useful information on my intended readers. Then I'll study the zoo's website carefully to find out what the zoo has to offer to the older demographic and what their membership will cost (I'm pretty sure we offer a senior discount—though grandparents in this audience may also be interested in a family membership). I'll also look at how some other popular zoos cater to senior citizens.
- The likely problem is that these seniors are thinking of the zoo mostly as a place where parents bring their young children and don't realize how much they could keep enjoying the zoo themselves. Plus, if they haven't been here in a while, they won't know how much the zoo has been enhanced in recent years.

Define the Problem

What are some possible communication goals and strategies?

- My main audience is former members of the zoo who are 65 and older. They are likely retired from professional-level jobs (since a zoo membership isn't cheap). They may be disabled, have grandkids, and/or be looking for fun things to do. They are probably also interested in learning and in animal care/preservation. The marketing director and others who do PR messaging for the zoo are my secondary audiences. They'll want to see if I can be resourceful and communicate well, and they're hoping that I can save them some work by coming up with a useful draft.
- My message's main purpose will be to persuade senior citizens who once held family memberships to rejoin. My secondary purpose will be to do a professional-quality job on this message so that I will be entrusted with additional challenging work and will get a strong letter of evaluation from my supervisor.
- The message will need to get my readers' attention and motivate them to consider returning to the zoo as members. I could send a printed sales letter (my first thought), but sales postcards, brochures, email messages, the "donation" page on the zoo's website, and of course social media posts are also options.

Generate Options

Exhibit 1-8 Sample Application of the Problem-Solving Approach (Continued)

Which is the best course of action?

- I think all the options besides a sales letter have problems. A postcard can be enticing, but the zoo has many benefits to offer this demographic, and a postcard wouldn't enable me to cover these well enough. A colorful brochure is a possibility, but it would be more expensive to print than sales letter, and it wouldn't seem like a very personal invitation. An email message would be cheap and direct, but we don't have these former members' current email addresses. Social media posts or a general message on the zoo's website wouldn't be direct/personal enough, and social media posts also don't allow for sufficient development of all the value a zoo membership would bring.
- The printed sales letter seems to be the best option. My readers will be comfortable with the conventional sales-letter format, and it will give me room to list and describe many of the zoo's appealing amenities, as well as include attractive visual elements. The downside is the postage cost, but if a significant number of readers rejoin, it'll be worth the cost.
- I plan to write a one-page sales letter. I think a page is sufficient space to generate interest, and we want to motivate the readers to visit the zoo's website to get the full picture of what they could be enjoying and purchase a membership there.

Evaluate the Options

What's the best way to design the message?

- To entice readers to open the letter, the envelope should contain a short, appealing message. Readers will expect the letter itself to use the standard elements (e.g., salutation, complimentary close), but since the envelope will indicate that this is a sales message, they'll also expect a catchy opening, short paragraphs, perhaps a bulleted list, and colorful visual elements, as well as a clear call to action (and clear instructions on how to perform that action).
- My selling points should take into account the likely needs and interests of this demographic. The content should focus on the features of the zoo that are most likely to appeal to them and overcome any objections they might have (e.g., the zoo has excellent disability access).
- The structure will be that of the sales letters I studied in class: Some kind of attractive visual and tagline at the top that set the theme/central selling point for the letter, followed by the salutation, an opening paragraph, a paragraph or two focusing on the features that the readers will find most interesting, a bulleted list of addition features with brief descriptions, a clear call to action, a persuasive final paragraph, and a complimentary close/signature (my boss's). The message could also include a testimonial or two in a boxed feature to the right of the main message, and it should include the zoo's website address, in a colored font, at least twice.
- The style of the message will be friendly, enthusiastic, and upbeat. This won't be the kind of message that is asking for financial help or emphasizing need. It will instead share the writer's excitement about all that the zoo has to offer. It will also show that the writer has considered the readers' likely interests. It won't focus on money, other than to mention the senior membership discount. Instead, it will let the zoo's attractive features do the selling and imply that a zoo membership is a great entertainment bargain.

Build the Solution

What is the best way to deliver the message?

- If we have a special event or exhibit coming up, it might be good to time the mailing of the letter to coincide with that, perhaps even mentioning it on the envelope. For example, our Festival of Lights over the winter holidays is a huge draw for families, and the zoo shop is a great place to buy gifts (in fact, zoo memberships make great gifts), so sending the letter late in November might work. Otherwise, perhaps the best time to send the letter will be in the warmer months, since seniors aren't likely to take much advantage of their membership in the cold months.
- I don't think we will need an insert of any kind with the letter. I considered a detachable coupon at the end of the letter, but I don't think it would be that motivating for these readers. I think the space will be better used for attractive points about the zoo.
- I will need to look up the addresses of all the lapsed members on the list my supervisor gave me to be sure I have current addresses and to remove any on the list who have moved away or are otherwise not likely or able to enjoy a membership.

Deliver the Solution

Business Communication: The Bottom Line

The theme of this chapter might be summed up this way: The goal of communication in the workplace is to create a shared understanding of situations that will enable people to work successfully together.

Organizations depend on the timely and clear transfer of information to achieve their goals. Figuring out what kind of information to send, who should receive it, how to send it, and what form to use requires good decision-making. But effective management of workplace relationships is just as essential. Every act of communication conveys an image of you and of the way you regard those to whom you're speaking or writing. Successful professionals pay careful attention to the human relations dimension of their messages.

Yes, business communication can be challenging. It can also be extremely rewarding because of the results you achieve and the relationships you build. The advice, examples, and exercises in this book will jump-start you toward success. But it will be your ability to analyze and solve specific communication problems that will take you the rest of the way there.

Power Charge Your Professionalism: Use the Right Word (Part I)

Select the word that completes each sentence below. The choices are pairs of words that are sometimes confused. You'll find these and other misused words listed in Reference Chapter A. To be sure you use them accurately, consult a dictionary.

1. The performance of our stock will (**affect/effect**) our shareholders' willingness to continue investing in our company.
2. The company features (**its/it's/its'**) logo in the top-left corner of every webpage.
3. Jeanette knew she had to raise more (**capital/capitol**) before starting her new business.
4. We will be conducting interviews on (**cite/sight/site**) next Thursday.
5. Jorge and Mira work well together because their skills are (**complimentary/complementary**).
6. The CEO asked for everyone's (**cooperation/corporation**) as we moved through the software conversion.
7. Guests always receive (**deferential/differential**) treatment when they visit our company.
8. Good team members do not (**desert/dessert**) their teams just because the work isn't going well.

Choosing the right word is important because . . .

- Using the wrong word can confuse readers or even make them completely misunderstand your meaning.
- Using the wrong word can make you appear to be poorly educated and/or careless, neither of which is an impression you want to convey.

Key Terms

problem solving 4	digital media 9	personal communication 15
reactive problem solving 4	social intelligence 9	grapevine 16
proactive problem solving 4	cross-cultural competency 9	organizational structure 17
ill-defined problems 6	corporate social responsibility (CSR) 11	genres 19
well-defined problems 6	brand activism 11	organizational culture 19
heuristics 6	ESG 11	larger communication context 21
verbal literacy 6	professionalism 12	communicators' relationship 22
visual literacy 7	business etiquette 12	filters 22
interpersonal skills 7	internal-operational communication 14	organizational contexts 22
big data 7	external-operational communication 14	professional contexts 22
artificial intelligence (AI) 7		personal contexts 22
computational thinking 8		intertextual context 22
interpretive skills 8		recursive process 24

Critical-Thinking Questions

1. Why do you think employers value transferable skills more highly now than in the past? What changes in business over the last 20 years or so might account for this change? **LO1-1**
2. “If there’s no definitive solution, then all ways of handling a workplace communication problem are equally good.” Using the discussion of communication problem solving in this chapter, explain why this statement is false. **LO1-2**
3. Find an example of artificial intelligence that is currently being used or developed. In what ways is human help needed to make this technology work successfully? **LO1-2, LO1-3**
4. Look ahead a few years and imagine yourself in a job that you would love. What kinds of situations might arise that would require reactive communication on your part? In what ways might you communicate proactively to help your organization perform better? **LO1-2**
5. In what ways is imagination important in workplace communication? **LO1-2, LO1-3**
6. Think of a time when insufficient verbal skills on the part of someone in the workplace or in the public sphere led to a negative result. What kind of wording mistake did this person make, and what kind of damage did it cause? **LO1-3**
7. Think of or find an example of a time when someone used a visual effectively to make a point. Why does the visual work so much better than words, or words alone? **LO1-3**
8. Think back through your work history and any team projects you’ve been on, and identify someone who, in your opinion, was a great team player. What qualities made this person skillful at working with others? **LO1-3**
9. To get a feel for the importance of digital literacy on the part of business communicators, make a list of all the information technologies (devices, media platforms, and applications) that you’ve used over the last two years. What kind of knowledge is required to be able to use each of these technologies well? **LO1-3**
10. “People need to leave their cultures and values at the door when they come to work and just focus on their jobs.” Discuss the possible merits and flaws of this attitude. **LO1-3**
11. Being professional involves far more than coming to work on time each day. What are some other kinds of professional behavior that you’ve seen? In what ways should workplace communication, even casual comments, be professional? **LO1-4**
12. How might people’s definition of “professional behavior” depend on which industry or type of company they’re in? **LO1-4**
13. “Never mix business with personal matters—it just leads to damaged relationships, poor business decisions, or both.” In what ways might this be a fair statement? In what ways is it unwise advice? **LO1-5**
14. Look again at the three types of organizational structures displayed in Exhibit 1-5. What would be the advantages and drawbacks of each? **LO1-6**
15. Describe the lines of communication in an organization, division, or department with which you are familiar (preferably a simple one). In what ways do you think the organization’s structure has determined who communicates with whom? Do you think these lines of communication are successfully meeting the organization’s needs, or do you think they need changing? **LO1-6**
16. As noted in this chapter, companies develop specific forms of communication, or genres, that enable them to get their work done. In a place where you have worked or another organization you have been a member of, what were the main forms of communication with the employees or members? To what extent were these uniquely adapted to the needs of the organization? **LO1-6**
17. Think of a place where you’ve worked or an organization you know well. How would you describe its culture? What role did the main factors that influence organizational culture play in creating this particular culture? **LO1-7**

18. Think of a recent transaction you had with a businessperson or with a staff member at your school. Describe the contexts of your communication, from the larger context (business-economic, sociocultural, and historical) down to the personal (to the extent you know them). How did these likely influence the outcome of your communication? **LO1-8**
19. Using this chapter's discussion of communication, explain how two people reading or hearing the same message can have very different responses. **LO1-8**
20. Think of a current trend relating to social/political issues. In what ways is this trend likely affecting organizations' communications? **LO1-8**
21. Let's say that you would like to ask your boss for funding to attend an online workshop that costs \$79. What communication options come to mind? What criteria would you use to decide which one to choose? **LO1-9**
22. A news outlet recently featured a story about a boss who sent his employees a message saying that they should not use personal devices, including their cell phones, at work. In what ways might this poorly thought-out communication backfire? What might have been a better solution to the problem the boss was trying to solve? **LO1-9**

Skills-Building Exercises

1. Interview a successful professional in an area of business you're interested in to find out how they feel about the importance of communication skills. See how this person defines such skills and their importance. Ask for a positive and a negative example of a time when communication influenced a significant outcome for them or their organization. **LO1-1**
2. You purchased two pairs of expensive shoes (or substitute another product) about six months ago at a specialty store located 20 miles from where you live. One of the pairs needed to be ordered from the manufacturer because the store did not have the color you wanted. The manager told you that he would call you when that pair came in, but three months passed, and you heard nothing. So you called the store and left a message. The manager called you back to say that those shoes wouldn't be available for another three months and asked if you wanted to wait for them. You said yes—but then four more months passed, with no word from him. You called again and left a message, but, so far, no one has called you back. Use Exhibit 1-7 to help you decide how to use communication to solve this problem. Explain which communication solution you think would be best and why. **LO1-2, LO1-8, LO1-9**
3. Find and research an artificial intelligence technology that is common in the workplace. In what ways is it claimed to improve performance? Efficiency? What are some possible problems that individuals and teams may encounter when adopting this type of AI technology? **LO1-3**
4. Choose a certain country's general culture or one of its regional cultures, or a regional culture in your own country (one different from your own), and find out what values and traits the people in this culture are generally known for. Consult several sources, and, if possible, speak with someone in the group you chose. How might working or doing business with a person from this group pose certain challenges and require you to adapt your own values and communication style? **LO1-3**
5. Using the internet, find a company that has a corporate social responsibility or ESG program and study what the company's website says about that program. What kind of image as a corporate citizen is the company trying to project, and how? How convincing is this effort, in your opinion, and why? **LO1-3**
6. Find an instance of brand activism on the internet or social media, analyze it, and assess it. What cause is the organization supporting? What makes its support "activism"? Did the organization choose an appropriate cause to support? How big a risk do you think the organization took in weighing in publicly on this issue? Do you think the benefits of this activism outweighed or are outweighing the costs? **LO1-3**

7. Customers, potential customers, and the general public aren't the only ones putting pressure on companies to do better on their ESG activities: shareholders, too, are using their influence to shape companies' behavior. Do some research on "shareholder (or investor) activism" to be able to explain what it is and discuss some recent examples. What kind of backlash has this caused, and why? **LO1-3**
8. Analyze the website of Game Day Communications (www.gamedaypr.com/), a PR firm in Cincinnati, OH. What kind of structure and culture would you say this company has? Now look at the website of another Cincinnati PR firm, Vehr Communications (<https://vehrcommunications.com/>). How do its structure and culture seem to differ from those of Game Day? What factors do you think account for the differences? **LO1-6, LO1-7**
9. Imagine it is your first day in a new internship. What types of things would you look for to help you understand the communication conventions of that organization? What might help you determine the right level of formality to use in an email to your colleagues? Your manager? Customers? **LO1-7**
10. What do you think would be the most professional and effective way to handle the following situations? **LO1-4, LO1-5, LO1-8, LO1-9**
 - a. You're the lead student employee of your school's technology help desk. Each day, you field questions from faculty, staff, and students about their email account, the internet, and other tech topics. The volume of calls and emails is high, so you're worn pretty thin by the end of your shift each day. Today, late in the day, you get an email from a faculty member expressing interest in having her students design a tutorial to help faculty and students learn one of the school's tech tools better and asking which IT person would be best to contact about this idea. You have no idea. How do you answer?
 - b. You're the chair of the employee volunteerism committee at your workplace. After three years in this role, you're ready to step down. At your latest meeting, one of the committee members eagerly volunteered to be the next chair. The thing is, this person actually hasn't done much of the work, and you suspect that he wants the job just to make himself look good to the company's leaders. You didn't say anything right then, but now the HR director, in whose area this committee falls, has come to your desk to ask if the person who wants the job should be appointed to it. What do you say? How do you say it?
 - c. You recently served on a team that prepared an important proposal for your company. During the presentation of the proposal to management, one of your teammates indicated that she had done most of the work, when in fact she had done very little compared to you. Do you say or do anything in response or just let it slide?
 - d. You've had a long, successful relationship with the supplier of some of the materials that your company uses in its products. The company is reliable, and the quality of their products is solid. But the sales rep you usually dealt with at this company was recently replaced by someone who isn't very pleasant. She seems to regard each phone call or email from you as an annoyance and is quick to become defensive when you call any little issue to her attention. What, if anything, would you do about this situation?
11. Find an online article in the business press or general news about a recent incident involving a company—for example, a merger or acquisition, a scandal or crisis, or the launching of a new product. What kind of communication challenges might this event have posed for the company, both internally and externally? What kinds of messages probably needed to be prepared, and for whom? **LO1-5, LO1-9**
12. Find an online article from a reputable source (or a series of social media posts) that criticizes how a company's leadership handled the communication involved in a recent incident—for example, a large layoff of employees or an incident involving racial or gender bias. In the writer's/writers' view, what was objectionable about the communication? What parts of the leadership's communication problem-solving process went wrong? **LO1-3, LO1-9**



Problem Solver to the Rescue

Arranging a Consultant's Visit

Instructions: Read the communication scenario that follows and then evaluate the sample solution using the five steps for communication problem solving.

Scenario: Jeff Saluda was recently brought on board as an administrative assistant to the head of Human Resources at Healthcare Safety Net, a company headquartered in Chicago that consults with hospitals and other medical centers to devise health care solutions for uninsured and under-insured patients. The organization is conducting a search for a new member of their consulting team, and Jeff has been given the task of lining up a visit by the top candidate, Dr. Sally Harmon. Jeff's job is to arrange the logistics of Dr. Harmon's trip and send her all the travel information she will need. He emailed her to find out which flight times would work best for her and has now arranged her flights through American Express Global travel, who'll be emailing Dr. Harmon with her flight information. He has also worked with his boss to plan the overall schedule

for her visit. It's time to let Dr. Harmon know what she'll need to know to have a smooth trip.

Below is Jeff's first effort to prepare this message. In what stages of the process do you think his decision-making went wrong? As your instructor directs, critique the message, rewrite it, or both.

Hi, Sally,

It's Jeff again. I've reserved your flight to and from Chicago, based on the time preferences you gave me. We book all company-related trips through American Express Global travel, so you'll be getting an email from them soon.

Our address is 2012 Riverside Plaza. We'll be expecting you to arrive from O'Hare Airport at 10:00. When you arrive, just check in at the security desk, and the attendant will direct you to our office.

After a brief welcome and refreshments, you'll meet with the head of our consulting team, our human resources director, and our VP of operations. Following that you'll have a

chance to meet with our Uninsured Product Development team to get a sense of the solutions we currently recommend to medical-care facilities and new ones that are being developed. After lunch, you'll have a meeting with several members of the consulting team to learn more about our clients and their needs. Around 2:00, we'll take you on a brief tour of the office and then wind up in the human resources office, where you can talk further with our HR director about employment at Safety Net. We'll conclude at 3:30 to give you plenty of time to get back to O'Hare for your return flight.

Just let me know if you have any questions. Otherwise, I hope you have a great interview!

Best,

Jeff Saluda

Administrative Assistant

Healthcare Safety Net

P: (630) 444-0411

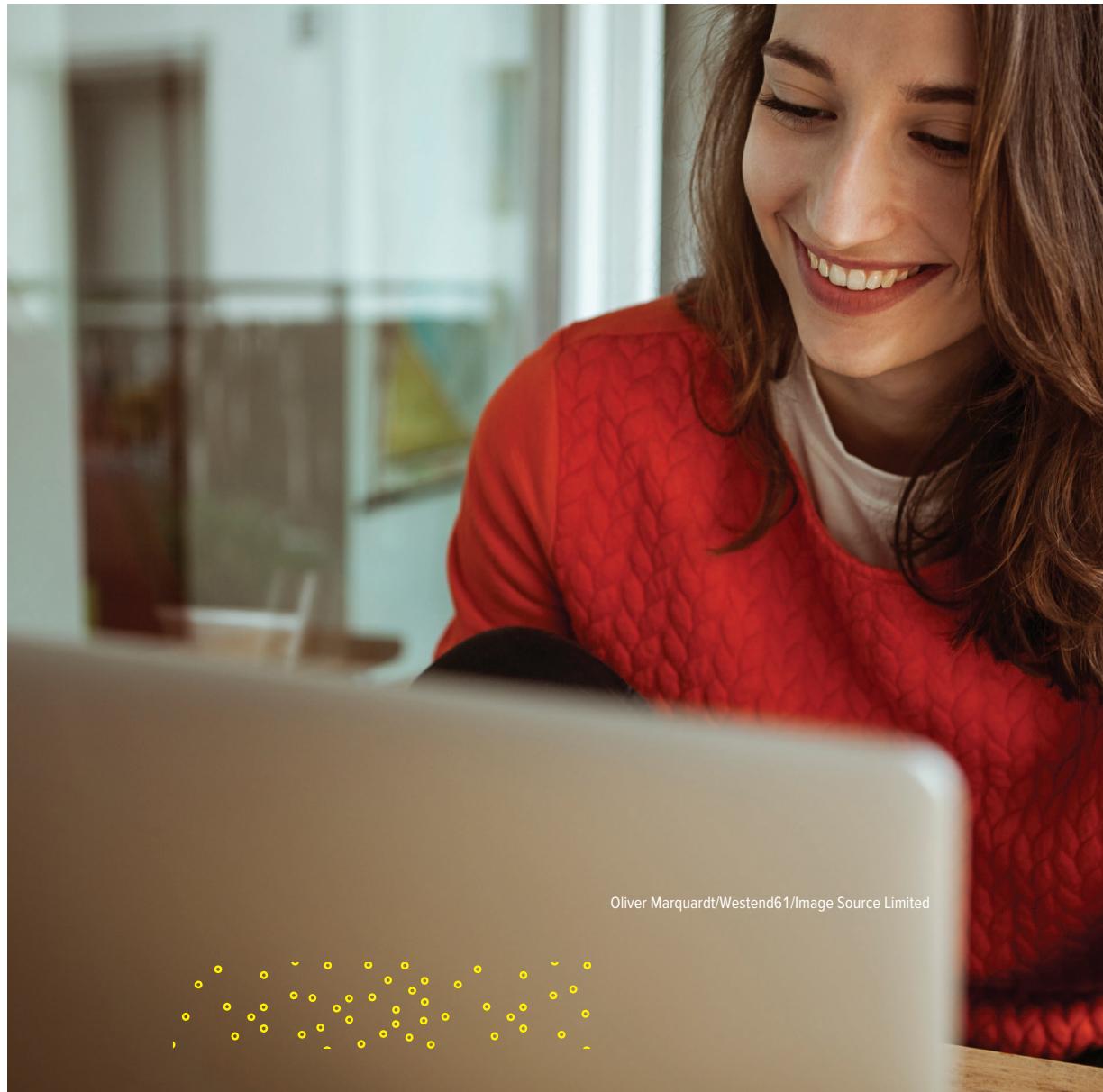
Jeff.Saluda@hcsn.com



Getting Positive Responses to Your Communication

Learning Objectives

- LO2-1** Use the you-viewpoint to build goodwill.
- LO2-2** Use a conversational style that has the appropriate level of formality and avoids overused expressions.
- LO2-3** Describe ways to be courteous beyond using polite expressions.
- LO2-4** Employ positive language to achieve goodwill and other desired effects.
- LO2-5** Use the three major techniques for emphasizing the positive and de-emphasizing the negative.
- LO2-6** Avoid unethical communication practices.
- LO2-7** Cultivate personal qualities that promote ethical behavior.
- LO2-8** Use your own values, professional codes of conduct, and established approaches to ethical reasoning to help you make ethical decisions.



Oliver Marquardt/Westend61/Image Source Limited

As Chapter 1 points out, conveying information is not your only communication goal. Communication involves a human relations dimension, and if you neglect it, you will lose customers, alienate your co-workers, and lose the support of your superiors. The “people” content of your messages often needs as much attention as the informational content—and in some cases, it will be your primary consideration. Sure, it’s easier to fire off a curt email to a complaining customer or an annoying co-worker than to slow down and take that

person’s feelings into account. But messages written or spoken in haste have a way of coming back to haunt you. Think of a time you felt mistreated by someone in business. Perhaps you got an insensitive reply from an insurance company or an impersonal rejection letter from a company you were hoping to work for. Perhaps you even felt misled or lied to. Such interactions leave you with negative feelings about the company that will probably last a long time. Plus, you may spread those feelings to other potential customers or

employees—or even go onto social media to broadcast your displeasure.

This chapter will help you see how to communicate in a way that elicits positive responses. In other words, it will help you build **goodwill** with your business associates and customers. Businesses cannot survive without goodwill, and you will not last long in business if you do not value it. Courteous, pleasant, ethical behavior is part of being a professional. Read on to see how to make your communications meet this professional standard.



Problem-Solving Challenge

Affecting Human Relations through Writing

To prepare yourself for this chapter, play the role of Customer Service Director at a large office supply company. You asked your latest hire, a new college graduate named Jason, to draft a reply to a complaint you received about one of your products. Here is the message he wrote:

Dear Mr. Domingo:

Your December 3rd complaint was received and contents noted. After reviewing the facts,

I regret to report that I must refuse your claim. If you will read the warranty brochure, you will see that the shelving you bought is designed for light loads—a maximum of 800 pounds. You should have bought the heavy-duty product.

I regret the damage this mistake caused you and trust that you will see our position.

Hoping to be of service to you in the future,

Jason Abbott

Customer Service

If this message were to go out, it would be a customer relations disaster. Jason’s words are blunt, selfish, and unfriendly. Overall, they leave a bad impression—the impression of a writer and a business unconcerned about others’ feelings.

After you read this chapter, play the role of Jason’s manager and rewrite the message. Then plan how you would explain to Jason why your version is better.

Showing Consideration for Your Message Recipients

Every chapter in this book emphasizes considering your audience, because doing so is essential for effective communication. The sections that follow will help you show your workplace associates and those outside your organization that you have considered their interests.

Use the You-Viewpoint

Communicating from the **you-viewpoint** (also referred to as using the **you-attitude**) is a powerful tool for building goodwill. It means thinking beyond your own goals to consider the communication situation from the recipients’ perspective.

L02-1 Use the you-viewpoint to build goodwill.



The first step toward creating goodwill with your communication partners is to put yourself in their shoes.

Kasper Ravlo/123RF

Using the you-viewpoint often means emphasizing *you* and *your* and de-emphasizing *I*, *we*, and *our*, but such is not always the case. *You* and *your* can appear in a selfish, harsh sentence—for example, “If you do not pay by the 15th, you must pay a penalty.” Likewise, *we* and *our* can appear in a sentence that emphasizes the you-viewpoint, as in this example: “Our number-one goal is to protect your investment.”

The you-viewpoint thus goes beyond choice of pronouns. It’s an attitude of mind that places the recipient at the center of the message. Sometimes it just involves being friendly and treating people the way they like to be treated. Sometimes it involves skillfully managing people’s response with carefully chosen words in a carefully designed order. How you apply it will depend on each situation and your own judgment.

You-Viewpoint on the Sentence Level Although the you-viewpoint involves much more than word selection, you can often find opportunities for building goodwill by carefully considering your sentences.

For example, compare the wording in each pair of sentences below:

I-centered: I am happy to tell you that your proposal has been accepted.

You-centered: Congratulations! Your proposal for a professional development grant has been accepted.

We-centered: We are pleased that you have opened a charge account with Lowe’s.

You-centered: Your new Lowe’s charge account is now open!

Would the readers be offended if you used the less reader-centered wording in these examples? Probably not. But you would convey more genuine interest in the reader by keeping the focus off yourself.

The following additional examples demonstrate the different effects that changes in viewpoint are likely to produce at the sentence level:

We-Viewpoint

We are happy to have your order for Hewlett-Packard products, which we are sending today by UPS.

Our policy does not permit outside groups to use our facilities unless they pay a rental fee.

We have received your report of May 1.

You-Viewpoint

Your Hewlett-Packard printers were shipped by UPS today and should reach you by noon tomorrow.

Outside groups are welcome to rent our facilities. Your rental will enable your guests to enjoy the park’s full range of services.

Thank you for your report of May 1.

You-Viewpoint on the Message Level Put yourself in the place of Adina Bryan. Her family members, who are spread across the eastern, southern, and midwestern United States, put her in charge of finding a venue for a family reunion. After a great deal of internet searching, she found two large, nice houses on Lake Michigan. The rest of the family approved the choice—though the cost for the week was quite steep (\$10,600), and some of the family would have significant travel expenses. The representative of the rental company, though pleasant, was firm about receiving the fee in advance, so Adina worked with the other family members to gather the money and make the payment on time.

Then, three weeks before the scheduled reunion, Adina received the following email message from her contact at the rental company:

Good afternoon, Adina,

I wanted to touch base with you because I visited the properties you are renting and noted that the private beaches for the properties are not as sandy as they are in the public beach area. As this is an act of nature and has only affected the *private* beaches, there will be no reimbursements, relocations, or other compensation applied as this is clearly outside of Lakeside Vacations' and the homeowners' control. Parking passes for the public beach will be provided in the homes.

I have attached a photo of the beach to give you a visual of what I observed.

As always, thank you for vacationing with Lakeside Vacations.

Beth

The attached photo showed a “beach” that was about 10 feet deep and completely covered with rocks. There was no sandy area anywhere.

This communication actually occurred (with the parties’ names changed). Adina was not happy, but she decided to follow through with the reunion plans. However, she learned several months later that this rental company had gone out of business. She wasn’t really surprised.

Consider the difference it might have made had the rental company’s message gone like this:

Good afternoon, Adina,

I’m writing to let you know that severe spring storms in the St. Joseph area have eroded the beaches of the lakefront rental properties in the area. The attached photo shows the current condition of the beaches. The winds and currents can have this effect, and while they sometimes restore the sand, we can’t guarantee that this will happen by the time of your family’s visit.

Fortunately, St. Joseph has an extensive public beach that is only about a mile from your rental properties (click [here](#) to see beach photos). You will find complimentary parking passes for your family inside the homes. The beach has a jungle gym, a concessions stand, and umbrellas and chairs for rent. The boat and jet ski rental office is also there.

Of course, your magnificent view of the lake, your swimming pool, and the opportunity for walks along the beach have not been affected! You may also enjoy exploring the downtown area, taking one of the winery tours, or going on other excursions in this popular vacation spot.

Please let us know if we can assist you further with your planning. We look forward to your visit.

Beth

As you can see from this example, using the you-viewpoint not only consists of using reader-centered pronouns when appropriate; it also means supplying helpful information and making the reader feel good about the decision to do business with you.

Ethical Use of the You-Viewpoint Be careful that your use of the you-viewpoint is genuine, not insincere or manipulative. We’ve probably all encountered businesspeople—and others—who used flattery or fake friendliness to try to get their way. Such a practice leads to distrust, which undermines relationships and thus hinders your business goals.

To use the you-viewpoint ethically, be sincerely interested in your reader. Develop an understanding of the importance of goodwill and an appreciation for the positive relationships that it helps build. Remember how you like to be treated, and treat others that way.

You can also keep in mind that the you-viewpoint helps readers see quickly in what ways a given message applies to them. This “translation” work supports both clarity and courtesy. When sincerely applied, the you-viewpoint benefits both the writer or speaker and the recipient.



You Make the Call

How would you have felt if you’d gotten this message? Why?



You Make the Call

Would you have revised the original message differently? For example, do you think the tone in the revised message is *too* positive?

L02-2 Use a conversational style that has the appropriate level of formality and avoids overused expressions.

Use a Conversational Style

Another technique that helps build goodwill is to write in **conversational language**. Conversational language is warm, natural, and personable. It engages the reader, and it is also the language that is most easily understood.

In business, a conversational style does not always mean being colloquial. It does mean tailoring your language to your reader and avoiding stiff, impersonal wording.

Choose the Right Level of Formality Business relationships are much more casual than they used to be. As recently as the early 20th century, routine business letters would contain such expressions as “beg to advise,” “enclosed herewith,” and “thank you in advance, I remain” But companies have flatter organizational structures now, and the business world in general has a friendlier tone. Many top executives promote a relaxed company culture, and some wear T-shirts and blue jeans to work.

Still, a certain formality is expected in many business situations, just as many businesspeople still wear suits. When to be formal and when to be casual will depend on whom you’re communicating with, what genre you’re using, and what you’re saying. If you choose the wrong **level of formality** for the situation, you run the risk of offending your reader. A too-formal style can sound impersonal and parental, but a too-informal style can make you sound unprofessional.

The more formal style is appropriate when you are

- Communicating with someone you don’t know.
- Communicating with someone at a higher level than you.
- Using a relatively formal genre, such as a letter, long report, or external proposal.
- Preparing a ceremonial message, such as a commendation or inspirational announcement.
- Writing an extremely serious message, such as a crisis response or official reprimand.

When you are communicating in less formal situations, you can bring your formality down a notch. Co-workers and other associates who know each other well and are using an informal medium, such as texting, often joke and use emojis and initialisms (e.g., BTW) in their correspondence. When appropriate, such touches add goodwill.

Adjusting your level of formality can sometimes be as simple as substituting one word or phrase for another. Compare these examples of more and less formal wording:

More Formal	Less Formal
Studied, investigated, analyzed	Looked into
Rearranged	Juggled
Ensure	Make sure
Exceptional, superior	Great, terrific
As a result, therefore	So
Confirm	Double check
Consult with	Check with
Correct, appropriate	Right
Thank you	Thanks
We will	We'll
I am	I'm
Let me know	Keep me posted

A message using the wording on the left would convey a more formal image but would still sound like a person speaking naturally.

In your effort to sound more formal, do not use stilted or unnecessarily difficult words. You can sound conversational while also being respectful and clear, as these contrasting examples illustrate:

Stiff and Dull

Enclosed please find the brochure you requested.

Please be advised that you must include your receipt in order to receive a refund.

This is in reply to your email expressing concern that you do not have a high school diploma and asking if a GED would suffice as prerequisite for the TAA Training Program.

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 5 May 2016.

Conversational

Enclosed is the brochure you requested.

Please note that a receipt is required for all refunds.

Yes, a GED qualifies you for the TAA Training Program.

We received your May 5 letter and have forwarded it to the claims department for immediate attention.

Avoid Overused Expressions **Overused expressions** are expressions used by habit every time a certain type of situation occurs. Because their wording is the same for all similar situations, they communicate the message that, in the writer's eyes, the recipient is interchangeable with many other recipients. In contrast, words specially adapted to the situation demonstrate the writer or speaker's interest in the specific recipient.

Chapter 6 discusses the problems that slang and popular clichés can cause. Here, we focus on the type of business clichés that are more routine and less colorful than those—the kind of wording that makes a message sound like a form letter. One common example is the “thank you for your letter” opening. Its intent may be sincere, but its overuse makes it seem impersonal. Another is the closing comment “if I can be of any further assistance, do not hesitate to call me.” Other examples are the following:

This is to inform you that . . .

Your cooperation is appreciated.

It has come to my (or our) attention that . . .

Thank you for your time.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you in advance.

Please respond at your earliest convenience.

Perhaps you're asking yourself, “What's wrong with thanking the reader for their time or offering to answer questions?” The answer is that such overused expressions are not specific enough. They signal that you have quit thinking about *this* reader and their situation. A better ending is one that thanks the reader for something in particular or that offers to answer questions about a particular topic.

You do not need to know all the overused expressions to stop using them. You just need to communicate in the language of good conversation, addressing your comments to a real person in a specific situation.

Be Courteous

A major contributor to goodwill in business communication is courtesy. By **courtesy** we mean respectful and considerate treatment of others. Courtesy produces friendly relations between people, and the result is a better human climate for doing business.

L02-3 Describe ways to be courteous beyond using polite expressions.



Communication Matters

Business Etiquette—It Depends on Where You Are

Most people are aware that certain unwritten rules for professionalism govern people's business interactions. Those with whom we do business expect us to show respect through our actions, words, and even appearance.

But what is considered appropriate will vary among situations, industries, and countries. For example, in a small informal company, relatively casual clothing and relaxed behavior would be expected, and anyone behaving too formally would be considered stiff and rude. In a more formal setting, such as a bank or the executive offices of a

large organization, what one should wear, say, or even laugh at would be more constrained.

Doing business with those in or from another country requires additional considerations. For example, Chinese people are offended by large hand movements, being pointed at while spoken to, or being casually touched. It's also important to let the most senior person present enter a room first and to use courtesy titles (e.g., "Mr. Wang") unless the business relationship has become a friendship.

To learn good business etiquette, consult such sources as Barbara Pachter's *The Essentials*

of *Business Etiquette* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2013) and Jeanette S. Martin and Lillian H. Chaney's *Global Business Etiquette: A Guide to International Communication and Customs*, 2nd. ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2012). And then adapt their advice to your specific situation.

Sources: Nicole Eberhard, "7 Gestures to Avoid in China," *Listen & Learn USA* (blog), February 5, 2016, www.listenandlearnsusa.com/blog/7-gestures-to-avoid-in-china/; Josh Summers, "Traveling in China: Business Etiquette and Culture," *China Briefing*, May 9, 2019, www.china-briefing.com/news/doing-business-china-etiquette-culture-travel/.

As with every other facet of your communications, how to be courteous depends on the situation (see **Communication Matters: Business Etiquette—It Depends on Where You Are**). Including "please," "thank you," "we're sorry," and other standard expressions of politeness do not necessarily make a message courteous. Rather than focusing on stock phrases, consider what will make the recipient feel most comfortable, understood, and appreciated. A message with no overtly polite expressions whatsoever can still demonstrate great courtesy by being easy to understand, focusing on the recipient's interests, and conveying the author's feelings of goodwill.

Using the you-viewpoint and conversational language are two ways of being courteous. Below are three additional ways.

Avoid Blaming the Reader Customers, co-workers, bosses, and others you work with are going to make mistakes—just as you will. When they do, your first reaction is likely to be disappointment, frustration, or even anger. After all, their mistakes will cost you time, energy, and possibly even money.

But you must avoid the temptation to blame the reader when you are resolving a problem. No one likes being accused of negligence, wrongdoing, or faulty thinking. It is better to objectively explain the facts and then move on to a solution.

The following examples illustrate:

Blaming Language

You failed to indicate which fabric you wanted on the chair you ordered.

If you had read the instructions that came with your cookware, *you would have known* not to submerge it in water.

Your claim that we did not properly maintain the copier is *false*.

Your request for coverage is denied because *you did not follow* the correct appeals procedure.

More Objective Language

To complete your order, please check your choice of fabric on the enclosed card.

The instructions explain why the cookware should not be submerged in water.

Listed below are the dates the copier was serviced and the type of service it received.

We need additional information to be able to process your appeal. Please supply [the needed information] and resubmit your request to . . .

Notice two helpful, related strategies in the better language above. One is to avoid using *you* when doing so would blame the reader. In these situations, you will actually have better you-viewpoint if you do not use *you*. The second strategy is to keep the focus on the facts rather than on the people. Sometimes these strategies will require using passive voice, but as Chapter 6 notes, doing so is not only acceptable but desirable in cases when it will keep you from assigning blame.

A more general strategy that can help you maintain good relations is to blow off steam before you handle a negative situation. Try never to send a message composed in anger. Tempting as it can be to do so, you will almost always regret it. Take the time to calm down and use a reasonable tone. A good relationship with your communication partner is worth much more than a moment's self-indulgence.

Refrain from Talking Down to Your Readers You can help make your communications courteous by avoiding any wording that might insult your readers' intelligence.

One type of insulting comment is to tell your readers something that they are already well aware of. The italicized middle sentence in the paragraph below makes this mistake. It is from the beginning of a report that a human resources director asked her assistant to write.

As you requested, I surveyed the employees to assess their current level of engagement. *Employee engagement has been proven to reduce turnover and enhance performance.* The findings indicate that employees feel somewhat engaged in the company's goals but would be more engaged if there were better company-wide communication.

The writer's boss does not need to be told the business benefits of employee engagement. She obviously understands those benefits because she asked her assistant to survey employees on this topic.

Also potentially insulting are statements that tell the reader how to feel, such as "you'll be happy to know" and "you won't want to miss." Likewise, statements that include such phrases as "you need," "you want," "you should," and "you must" suggest that the reader isn't capable of making intelligent decisions.

Do More Than Is Expected One sure way to gain goodwill is to do more than you have to do for the recipient of your message. When we're in a hurry, it's tempting to communicate as tersely and quickly as possible, but such an approach can damage goodwill. Taking the time to give your reader a little extra help makes a lasting positive impression.

Here are some simple things professionals do to be extra helpful and considerate:

- Include an internet link in an email message rather than making the readers find the site on their own or copy and paste the web address into their browsers.
- Offer an alternative solution when saying "no" to a request.
- Tell readers about additional products or services they might like.
- Include tips on how to make the most of a product or service that they've just purchased.
- Anticipate readers' questions and supply the information rather than waiting until the readers ask for it.
- Attach a map, schedule, report, or other document that will come in handy when readers are trying to do or understand something.
- Write a congratulatory note when a reader or their company has been in the news for a special achievement.

From the Tech Desk: Courtesy in the Age of Mobile Devices provides additional advice on professional politeness.

Remember that your goal is both to communicate *and* to build positive human relations, and go the extra mile for your readers.



From the Tech Desk

Courtesy in the Age of Mobile Devices

In the United States, the name “Emily Post” has been synonymous with good manners for decades. With the publication of *Etiquette in Society, in Business, in Politics, and at Home* in 1922, Post became the undisputed authority on the topic, and she continued to be so the rest of her life. Her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren have carried on her tradition. *Emily Post’s Etiquette*, now in its 19th edition, includes a chapter about polite use of personal communication devices. Here are some excerpts from the chapter:

Cell Phones

- Without exception, turn your device off in a house of worship, restaurant, or theater; during a meeting or presentation; or anytime its use is likely to disturb others.
- If you must be alerted to a call, put your device on silent ring or vibrate, and check your notifications or voice mail later. (Put it in your pocket; a vibrating phone, skittering across a tabletop, is just as disruptive as a ring.)

- Wherever you are, if you must make or take a call, move to a private space and speak as quietly as you can.
- Keep calls as short as possible around others; the longer the call, the greater the irritation to those who have no choice but to listen.
- On airplanes, it’s a courtesy to everyone on board to quickly wrap up your call when the flight crew instructs passengers to turn off all electronic devices before takeoff. When cell phone use is permitted after landing, keep your calls short, limiting them to information about your arrival. Save any longer calls for a private spot in the terminal.
- Think about what your ring tone says about you. Is the Fun House tone the right ring for your new job as a trainee at an accounting firm?

Text Messaging

- Text messaging is a strictly casual communication. You shouldn’t use text messaging when informing someone of sad news, business matters, or urgent meetings unless it’s to set up a phone call on the subject.

- Be aware of where you are. The backlight will disturb others if you text in a theater or house of worship.
- Keep your message brief. If it’s going to be more than a couple of lines, make a call and have a conversation.
- Don’t be a pest. Bombarding someone with texts is annoying and assumes they have nothing better to do than read your messages.
- Be very careful when choosing a recipient from your phone book; a slip of the thumb could send a text intended for a friend to your boss.
- Whenever you have a chance, respond to text messages, either by texting back or with a phone call.
- Don’t text anything confidential, private, or potentially embarrassing. You never know when your message might get sent to the wrong person or be forwarded.

Source: Based on Lizzie Post and Daniel Post Senning, *Emily Post’s Etiquette: Manners for Today*, 19th ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2017).

Accentuating the Positive

LO2-4 Employ positive language to achieve goodwill and other desired effects.

As you know, one can say anything in different ways, and each way conveys a different meaning. In most cases, positive or neutral wording will succeed better than negative wording.

Use Positive Words

As Chapter 6 points out, many words have emotional associations. Because people generally prefer positive to negative feelings, **positive words** are usually best for achieving your communication goals. This is not to say that you should avoid negative words entirely; sometimes you must clearly call a problem a problem or frankly state a negative point. But positive wording is usually more appropriate. It tends to put the reader in a receptive frame of mind and helps create the goodwill on which positive relationships depend.

Be particularly wary of strongly negative words, such as *mistake, failure, refuse, cannot, blame, and fault*. They have unpleasant associations that usually detract from your goal. If possible, use more neutral alternatives.



Communication Matters

Exaggeration Will Get You Nowhere

When striving for positive wording, be careful not to exaggerate. If readers detect that you are being overly positive, the result will be distrust rather than goodwill. The following examples stretch the boundaries of believability:

(In a response to a note of congratulations from your boss:) My deepest thanks, Ms. Porto. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your support.

(In a message to a customer:) We treasure your business and will do everything in our power to continue to deserve your confidence in us.

(In a sales message:) Everywhere coffee drinkers meet, they are talking about the amazing whitening power of Rembrandt toothpaste.

Many exaggerated statements use superlatives, such as *greatest, most amazing, finest, healthiest, and strongest*. Others use words like *extraordinary, incredible, delicious, sensational, terrific, and revolutionary*. Such language will usually cause readers to doubt rather than believe.

Focus on What You Can Do

Oftentimes when we have to convey negative news, the fact that we must say “no” dominates our thinking. This reaction leads us to communicate in a style that is more defensive and selfish than it has to be. In many cases, you will be able to help solve the reader’s problem even if you cannot do exactly what they want.

Let’s consider the case of an employee who needs to respond to a local civic group’s request to use the company’s auditorium. The auditorium won’t be available for their use, but the conference room will be. If the employee were unduly focused on the negative, they might write this response:

We *regret* to inform you that we *cannot* permit you to use our auditorium for your meeting, as the Sun City Investment Club asked for it first. We can, however, let you use our conference room, but it seats *only* 60.

Look how the italicized words tilt the whole message toward the negative. The positively intended opening, “We *regret* to inform you,” is an unmistakable sign of coming bad news. “*Cannot* permit” is unnecessarily harsh. Even the good-news part of the message contains the negative word *only*. Because the writer focused only on the negative aspects of the situation, that is what the reader is being asked to focus on as well.

Had the employee considered the situation more positively, they might have written this instead:

Although another organization has reserved the auditorium for Saturday, we can offer you our conference room, which seats 60.

Not a single negative word appears in this version, even though it essentially says the same thing. The reader’s response to this message would be much more likely to be positive.



When you handle a sensitive situation in person, you can use body language and tone of voice to help convey goodwill. When you’re writing, you can’t. This makes careful word choice in written messages especially important.

LWA/Larry Williams/Getty Images

Here are a few more examples that show what a difference positive wording can make (the negative words are in italics):

Negative	Positive
Smoking is <i>not</i> permitted anywhere except in the lobby.	Smoking is permitted in the lobby only.
We <i>cannot</i> deliver your order until Friday.	We can deliver your order on Friday.
We <i>regret</i> that we <i>overlooked</i> your coverage on this equipment and apologize for the <i>trouble</i> and <i>concern</i> it must have caused you.	Our apologies—your policy does cover the performance of this equipment. We have now credited your account for...
We <i>regret</i> to inform you that the guest room is <i>not available</i> on the date you requested.	The guest room is already booked for the evening of August 7. Would August 8 be a possibility? We would be able to accommodate your party at any time on that date.

L02-5 Use the three major techniques for emphasizing the positive and de-emphasizing the negative.

Manage Emphasis for a Positive Effect

Getting the desired response often involves giving proper emphasis to the items in the message. As Chapter 6 discusses, every message contains a number of facts and ideas that must be presented. Some of these items are more important than others, and some will be received more positively than others. A part of your job as a writer is to determine which items to emphasize in your message. The three ways to manage **emphasis** for a positive effect are to use position, sentence structure, and space.

Emphasis by Position The beginnings and endings of your communications will carry more emphasis than the center parts. This rule of emphasis applies whether the unit is the message, a paragraph of the message, or a sentence within the paragraph (see Exhibit 2-1).

In light of this fact, you should put your more positive points in the beginning and ending and, if possible, avoid putting negative points in these positions. If you were to use this technique in a paragraph turning down a suggestion, you might write it like this (the negative point is in italics):

Given the current budget crunch, we approved those suggestions that would save money without incurring any significant costs. While *your plan is not feasible at this time*, we hope you will submit it again next year when we should have more resources for implementing it.

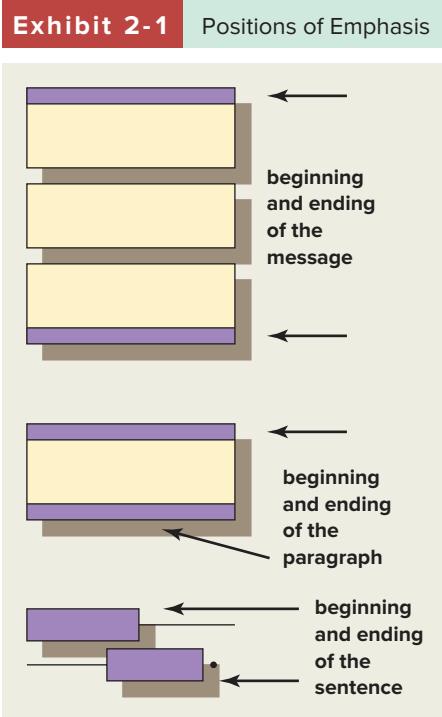
As you can see, putting information in the middle tends to de-emphasize it. Note, though, that it also makes that information easier to overlook. In cases where it is especially important that the reader receive your negative point (e.g., a consultant the customer is used to working with has left the business, a service is being discontinued, or a manufacturer has discovered that a product has a safety issue), you will need to lead with this information and then move on to the more positive information.

Sentence Structure and Emphasis Closely related to the technique of using position to manage emphasis is that of using sentence structure. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, short, simple sentences and main clauses call attention to their content. To de-emphasize negative points, see if you can subordinate them by putting them into dependent clauses and modifying phrases. This sentence from the previous example illustrates the point (the negative point is in a dependent clause):

While your plan is not feasible at this time, we encourage you to submit it again next year when we are likely to have more resources for implementing it.

Here's another example:

Your budget will be approved *if you can reduce your planned operating expenses by \$2000*.



Space and Emphasis The less space you devote to a point, the less you emphasize it. You should therefore focus on the negative as little as possible. Look again at the ineffective message about the eroded beach in the section “You-Viewpoint on the Message Level.” One reason the message is so negative is that the company’s stern legal warning occupies more space in the message than any other topic.

When we say not to spend much space on negative news, we mean the actual negative point. As Chapter 8 explains, you will often need to preface such news with explanatory, cushioning words in order to prepare your readers to receive it as positively as possible. For this reason, it often takes longer to say “no” than to say “yes,” as in these contrasting openings of a message responding to a request:

A Message That Says “Yes”

Your new A-level parking sticker is enclosed.

A Message That Says “No”

Your new University Hospital parking sticker is enclosed. As always, we had many more applicants for A-level passes than we had spaces. Your B-level sticker will enable you to park in the Eden Garage, which is connected to the hospital by a covered skywalk. If you would like to discuss additional options, please contact Ann Barnett, Director of Parking Services, at 555-6666 or ann.barnett@uh.com.

The “no” version certainly took longer. But notice that the space actually devoted to the negative news is minimal. In fact, the negative news isn’t even stated; it is only implied in the positive second sentence (“Your B-level sticker . . .”). Look how much of the paragraph focuses on more positive things. That is the allocation of space you should strive for when minimizing the negative and emphasizing the positive.

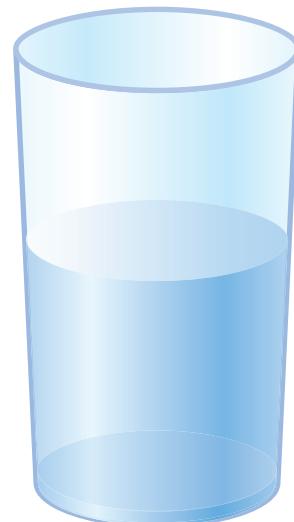
Use Positive Emphasis Ethically

As with use of the you-viewpoint, emphasis on the positive, when overdone, can lead to fake and manipulative messages. As mentioned earlier, the technique is especially questionable when it causes the recipients to overlook an important negative point.

During the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic, people considered their employers the most trusted source of information about what was happening. Business leaders shared information from creditable sources, took responsible actions, provided frequent updates, and clearly explained changes to workplace policies.¹ This straightforward communication led employees to pull together to support each other and their companies.

At the same time, business leaders relied on positive communication to inspire employees to move forward. Reaffirming the organization’s purpose, linking it to a new strategic direction, having conversations about how to get there, and showcasing successes reinforced employees’ trust and helped them stay optimistic.²

The topics we discuss in our communication—whether data, events, people, or situations—can be presented in different ways. In your quest to achieve your communication purpose, think carefully about how positive or negative to be. You will often be able to depict the glass as half full rather than as half empty, and you will probably find that your own perspective has improved in the process.



When ethical and appropriate, view the glass as half full, not as half empty.

Communicating Ethically

As Chapter 1 points out, people’s trust in business has been damaged by corporate wrongdoing. At the same time, the internet and social media make the risk of public scandal greater than ever. Many dedicated businesspeople are working hard to restore people’s faith in business by ensuring that the conduct of their employees, suppliers, and contractors is above reproach. But no one’s



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LO2-6 Avoid unethical communication practices.



In today's diverse workplaces, mutual respect among different identities is key.

Thomas Barwick/Stone/Getty Images

behavior can be thoroughly monitored. That is why employees who monitor their own behavior are highly prized. They can be depended on to do the right thing and bring credit to the organizations they work for.

Ethical dilemmas often arise in the area of workplace communication. This fact makes sense because communication requires human interaction, and **ethics** is about how people treat each other. It is the study of principles that guide, or should guide, human conduct.

Awareness of common ethical issues that arise, cultivation of certain personal qualities, and familiarity with resources for ethical reasoning will help you make ethical communication decisions.

Communication-Related Ethical Issues

You won't be able to anticipate all the ethical issues you might face when communicating in the workplace, but this section will familiarize you with some common ones to look out for.

Dishonesty Lying is probably the first topic that comes to mind when people think about unethical communication. We probably all agree that lying is wrong, and "Don't lie" appears to be a simple ethical rule to apply. Sometimes it is; sometimes it isn't.

A **lie of commission** (an outright falsehood) is usually ethically wrong. For example, if a company that sells back braces has its computer call potential customers to say, "This is the callback you requested regarding the ad you recently watched about back braces" when in fact the customer did not request a call, this is a lie of commission (this example is real, by the way).

But what if the "lie" is an edited photo of your company's building? Or a photo of someone who looks like a doctor but isn't? Now you'd be getting into territory where you need ethical reasoning.

A **lie of omission** (leaving out information) is often wrong as well. If an energy supplier were to sell you a year's worth of service at a low price and not make clear that the price would go up at the end of that year, this would be a lie of omission. (This is a real example, too.) But if you were selling a food slicer, would it be wrong not to mention that it doesn't work well with certain foods that people would likely want to slice (like cheese)? Here again, you'd be getting into a gray area.

Whatever course of action you decide is justified, you should keep in mind that it's bad for business, and for society as a whole, to undermine people's ability to trust each other's words. The more cynical and suspicious we become, the less good we can achieve together.

Biased Language As the workforce has grown more diverse, it has become increasingly important to avoid **biased language**. This is language that either refers negatively to groups of people or fails to take their needs into account because of their gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, social class, age, disability, or some other trait. Such wording does not promote good workplace ethics or good business. The following advice will help you avoid it. For more extensive advice, consult the American Psychological Association's online guidelines for bias-free language.



Communication Matters

Ways to Avoid Sexist/Gendered Pronouns

As the chapter says, the use of the gender-marked pronouns (*he, his, him, she, hers, her*) when discussing something that applies to both sexes or neither sex in particular is considered noninclusive. You can use the following strategies to avoid this problem.

1. Reword the sentence to avoid using a pronoun. Here are some examples:

Sexist	Gender-Neutral
If a customer pays promptly, <i>he</i> is placed on our preferred list.	A customer who pays promptly is placed on our preferred list.
If an unauthorized employee enters the security area, <i>he</i> is subject to dismissal.	Any unauthorized employee who enters the security area is subject to dismissal.

2. Make the reference plural. The plural pronouns in English (*they, their, them*) are not

gender marked, so using these instead of the singular pronouns will correct the problem.

If customers pay promptly, *they* are placed on our preferred list.

If unauthorized employees enter the security area, *they* are subject to dismissal.

Note that many individuals who identify as nonbinary prefer the pronoun *they* to *he, she, or he or she*. For this reason, it has become widely acceptable to use *they, their, and them* as singular pronouns, as in these examples:

Anyone who hasn't completed *their* application for reimbursement needs to do so by May 10.

The manager we hire will need to be able to demonstrate *their* ability to work with a diverse team.

Use the singular *they* when referring to those who have indicated this preference and when the other solutions discussed here won't enable you to capture your intended meaning as well.

3. Substitute such gender-neutral expressions as *you, one, and person*. Using neutral expressions in the problem sentences, we have these revisions:

If *you* pay promptly, *you'll* be placed on our preferred list.

Anyone who enters the security area without authorization will be subject to dismissal.

For additional advice about inclusive use of pronouns, see Appendix A, PN2. For advice about the use of gendered titles and salutations in letters, see Chapter 4.

Use Gender-Neutral Wording. To avoid words that discriminate on the basis of gender, follow these guidelines:

- Avoid assuming someone's gender identity. Most people today identify as cisgender (that is, their gender preference aligns with their birth sex), but many do not. If in any doubt, do your best to find out the chosen gender of those you are communicating with. The growing practice of adding one's preferred pronouns to one's signature is a big help in this regard. You'll see that many cisgender and transgender individuals prefer the singular gender pronouns based on *he or she*, while many individuals who identify as nonbinary (or who support the effort to avoid gendered language) prefer the plural pronouns based on *they* (see **Communication Matters: Ways to Avoid Sexist/Gendered Pronouns**).
- Avoid the use of masculine or feminine pronouns to refer to a group of people that can include both genders and/or those who do not identify with a certain gender, as in this sentence: "The typical IT student completes his co-op in the junior year." Since some of the co-oping students are female and others may not identify with either gender, the use of *his* is discriminatory. (See **Communication Matters: Ways to Avoid Sexist/Gendered Pronouns** shows how to avoid gender-marked pronouns.)
- Avoid words derived from masculine words that are intended to apply to people of either or no preferred gender. Some examples are *manmade, manpower, chairman, fireman, and freshman*. The more inclusive alternatives are *manufactured, personnel, chair or chairperson, firefighter, and first-year student*.
- Avoid wording that calls undue attention to a person's gender or implies that one gender has more status than the other. Using first names to refer to female employees but not male employees would be an example of this type of discriminatory wording. So would expressions like *waitress, stewardess, male nurse, and female engineer*. Better wording would be *server, flight attendant, nurse, and engineer*.



Communication Matters

Understanding the Different Generations in the Workplace

Five generations now comprise the US workforce: the Traditionalists (born before 1946), the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979), Generation Y or the Millennials (born between 1980 and 1994), and Generation Z (born after 1994). Different social and historical forces have shaped these generations, with the result that their values and work habits are noticeably different. The four main groups—Boomers, Gen Xers, Gen Yers, and Gen Zers—have these major traits and preferences:

- The *Boomers* have the wisdom of experience that can provide historical perspective. Their work ethic and perseverance can help the organization meet new challenges, and they are good contributors on a team. They like to make decisions and don't want to be micro-managed. They tend to accept hierarchy in the workplace, and since they paid their dues to move up the corporate ladder, they expect others to do the same.

- *Gen Xers* value work-life balance, are socially conscious, are impatient with bureaucracy, and want to move ahead based on merit, not on schmoozing or seniority. They want to be free to bring their own style to work but also want clear, fair, timely feedback on their performance. This pre-internet generation grew up during the time when personal computers (PCs) were becoming widespread and video gaming was in its infancy.
- *Gen Yers* like to work in supportive environments like the ones that most of them grew up in. Thus, they react better to being coached than to being told what to do, and they like frequent reassurance that they are on the right track. Like Gen Xers, they are willing to work hard but not overly hard; they want to understand the value of the work; and they like creativity. They are diversity-friendly and tend to be more fun-loving and less anxious than Gen Xers. Having grown up with the internet and sophisticated video games, they are even more comfortable with communication technologies than

Gen Xers are and may need to be encouraged to use other forms of communication (e.g., face-to-face and phone conversations).

- Gen Zers use their smartphones more than any other type of device and social media more than any previous generation. They are more entrepreneurial and creative than the previous generation and are “empathetic self-starters who want to stand out and make a difference in the world.”

Yet, having come of age during events and forces that have created widespread uncertainty (the Great Recession, school shootings, super storms caused by global warming, and the pandemic), they also tend to be pragmatic and risk averse.

While you shouldn't jump to conclusions about a person based on their age, generational differences are real. Keep them in mind as you interpret how people are communicating with you and decide how to communicate most effectively with them.

Source: Matt Kleinschmit, “Generation Z Characteristics: 5 Infographics on the Gen Z Lifestyle,” *Vision Critical* (blog), April 27, 2019, www.visioncritical.com/blog/generation-z-infographics.

Avoid Words That Stereotype by Race, Nationality, Sexual Orientation, or Perceived Social Class.

Words or comments that characterize all members of an identity group, whether based on race, nationality, sexual orientation, or some other trait, as being the same can be especially harmful because they frequently reinforce negative stereotypes about this group. The same applies to references to people from a perceived social class. As has recently been pointed out by many scholars and business consultants, the United States, while historically regarded as an egalitarian society, has social classes that can incur bias based on people's wealth, education, appearance, or even speaking accent.³ Members of any identifiable group vary widely in all characteristics, so avoid broad generalizations. You should also avoid calling unnecessary attention to personal traits with such expressions as “a Black police officer” or “the Indian CEO.”

You probably will have no trouble avoiding this kind of wording in your writing because you know better. But it can sneak into your oral communication, especially your informal communication. Watch what you say, and be sure that calling attention to someone's racial or social group is warranted by the purpose of your communication. Otherwise, keep such references out of your remarks.

Avoid Words That Stereotype by Age. Generational differences are real, and understanding them will help you interact more successfully with people of different ages (see **Communication Matters: Understanding the Different Generations in the Workplace**). But these

differences do not apply to everyone in every age group, so avoid generational stereotyping in your communication. For example, do not assume or imply that older workers are forgetful, technologically inept, or out of step with the times. Likewise, do not assume or imply that young employees have short attention spans, are averse to hard work, or have poor face-to-face communication skills. And when tempted to call attention to someone's age ("young accountant," "older CEO"), be sure you have a legitimate reason for doing so.

Also, be careful when using one of the popular generational labels in your writing. While it makes sense for the popular management literature to use such labels as *Baby Boomer* and *Gen Z* as shorthand references to different generations, the same labels can seem discriminatory in workplace messages. Use such labels only when they're relevant and appropriate.

Avoid Words That Typecast Those with Disabilities. Like those in other minority groups, people with disabilities run the risk of having others exclude them, treat them as strange, or minimize their abilities. But they are the largest minority group in the world; according to the latest census data, over 26%—more than one in every four persons—of the population in the United States has a disability.⁴ People with disabilities currently make up 5% of the US workforce, which many regard as much too low a number.⁵ Major business news outlets have lately championed the cause of neurodiversity and advocated for employment practices that are more inclusive of those with cognitive disabilities.⁶ These inclusiveness efforts remind us that all of us have different levels of ability in different areas.

It is important to keep these facts in mind when choosing your words. For example, negative descriptions such as *crippled*, *confined to a wheelchair*, *wheelchair bound*, and *handicapped* should be avoided. Instead, use *wheelchair user*, *developmentally disabled*, or whatever term the person with the disability prefers. In general, that also means saying "those with disabilities" rather than "the disabled" to avoid suggesting that the disability is the only noteworthy trait of people in this group.

Other Unethical Communication Practices Dishonesty and discrimination are the two main areas of unethical communication to watch out for, but there are many others. Unfortunately, some of them, like the ones listed below, are quite common.

- **Wasting others' time.** Perhaps you're surprised to see this item in this list, but think about it: When you waste people's time with unnecessary or unclear communications, you are robbing them of their most precious resource—a resource on which their professional and personal success depends.
- **Playing political games.** There's nothing wrong with a desire for professional success, but when it comes at others' expense, it has been achieved unethically. "Throwing your colleagues under the bus" (unexpectedly changing sides to curry favor with your boss) and spreading harmful rumors (or letting them spread) fall into this category.
- **Undermining your employer.** Lots of people have issues with their bosses and/or the places where they work. But when you sign on to receive a paycheck in return for your labor, you owe a duty of care to the organization you work for, however imperfect it may be. Trashing your company (or even a company you worked for in the past) on Facebook or other social media, sharing company secrets, or spending hours on the internet for personal reasons while you're on the job is unethical. If it is discovered, it will probably also get you fired.
- **Taking advantage of others.** Sometimes businesspeople deliberately use language that people won't understand, unduly emotional language, or other wording that keeps readers or listeners from being able to make a well-informed decision. In the earlier example regarding the selling of back braces, it's likely that the company was hoping that the older people who answered the sales call would believe they'd actually asked for the call and just couldn't remember doing so. Be sure your communications give people a fair chance to determine what would actually be best for them.



You Make the Call

Which generation described in **Communication Matters: Understanding the Different Generations in the Workplace** do you fall within?

Evaluate the description of your generation. Do you think it's accurate? What would you add or revise?

LO2-7 Cultivate personal qualities that promote ethical behavior.



You Make the Call

Do you think it is ever appropriate to show anger in the workplace? If so, in what kind of situations? How do you think the anger should be displayed?

Qualities to Cultivate

To be an ethical communicator, you can cultivate certain personal qualities that make ethical behavior the natural choice. Four of the most important ones follow.

Trustworthiness Your **credibility**—the personal trait that inclines people to trust you—is arguably your most valuable business asset. Business relationships, and thus business itself, are impossible without it. Professional success requires taking a disciplined approach to telling the truth, saying what you mean, and doing what you say you'll do.

Closely related to credibility is **integrity**. This is the quality of being true to your ethical principles in all situations (that is, aligning all your behaviors with your core values). It also means speaking the truth to yourself and being willing to admit when you have fallen short of your principles. If you become known as someone with integrity, others will regard you as a person who can be counted on to use good judgment and do the right thing, even when no one else is watching. Organizations place high value on such employees because their behavior reflects positively on the organization and indicates that the organization itself has integrity.

Restraint Successful professionals exercise **restraint**. Instead of acting impulsively or blurting out remarks, they take a moment to consider whether the behavior is appropriate. Doing so is certainly important for ethical behavior. When faced with an ethical challenge, you need to think before you act.

An infographic developed by psychologist Daniel Goleman, the inventor of the concept *emotional intelligence*, identifies “self-regulation” as a crucial component of the soft skills managers are looking for in their young hires. The reflective attitude, impulse control, and openness to change that go along with restraint help keep your comments moderate and inoffensive.⁷

Ethical Bravery As important as restraint is, it is also important to speak up when your ethical principles require it. Sometimes it may take considerable courage to do so. But people will respect you for standing up for your principles, and you will develop a reputation as someone with strong integrity.

Professor James R. Detert at the University of Virginia’s Darden School of Business offers this helpful advice about how to be “competently courageous” when standing up for your principles:⁸

- Be sure that you have developed your credibility as an employee by excelling at your job, supporting your organization, and demonstrating a reasonable attitude.
- Choose the battles that are the most worth fighting. Objecting to everything that may rub you the wrong way will make people less likely to listen to you when you are weighing in on something important.
- When making your point, frame it in terms of values and goals that your audience will share, be sure you have data to back it up, and keep your emotions under control.
- Follow up on your action by managing your relationships with those involved and taking the next steps to bring about the desired change.



Cultivating the habit of reflection will help you behave ethically and appropriately.

gstockstudio/123RF

Communication Savvy As indicated in the list above, doing the right thing doesn’t mean doing it in a dumb way. Use your communication problem-solving skills to figure out how to steer people in an ethical direction. Sometimes you may be able to show that the shady behavior being considered isn’t likely to work, will cost money, or is potentially dangerous. Other times you may be able to help develop a new plan that is ethically sound. Confrontation and whistleblowing should be your last resorts, not your go-to strategies for helping your company avoid questionable behavior.

Resources for Ethical Reasoning

Fortunately, you do not have to start from scratch when trying to resolve an ethical dilemma. You can consult your own values, the code of conduct for your field or business, and established models of ethical reasoning.

Your Own Core Values You may hear a company talk about its **core values**, but have you ever stopped to think about your own? As you develop professionally, you will need to make decisions that may not have a clear right or wrong answer, and you will need to rely on your own guiding principles to help you act. Making decisions based on your personal values can build your sense of integrity and help you navigate uncertainty when trying to select the right path forward.⁹

Individuals tend to develop their core values through their experiences and those of the groups and communities they are affiliated with, such as family, religion, and other community groups. Take a look at the examples of core values in Exhibit 2-2. Which ones resonate most with you? Which ones take priority over others? For example, which three core values would you consider to be the most important? Do you know people who would choose differently?

In addition to helping you solve ethical issues on your own, an understanding of your core values can help you explain your viewpoint to teammates who have values different from yours, or explain an ethical dilemma you are having to your manager.

LO2-8 Use your own values, professional codes of conduct, and established approaches to ethical reasoning to help you make ethical decisions.

Exhibit 2-2 Examples of Core Values

accountability	diversity	kindness
achievement	empathy	loyalty
commitment	fairness	power
compassion	happiness	professionalism
creativity	humor	punctuality
cooperation	inclusiveness	reliability
decisiveness	individuality	selflessness
dependability	intelligence	wealth

Adapted from <https://www.taproot.com/live-your-core-values-exercise-to-increase-your-success/>

Professional Codes of Conduct Almost every large company and professional organization has a **code of conduct**. Such codes typically describe the core values of the organization and behaviors that are and aren't considered ethical (see Exhibit 2-3).

Exhibit 2-3 Excerpt from the International Association of Business Communicators' (IABC's) Code of Ethics

As a professional communicator, you have the potential to influence economies and affect lives. This power carries with it significant responsibilities. The International Association of Business Communicators requires its members to agree to the IABC Code of Ethics. This code serves as a guide to making consistent, responsible, ethical, and legal choices in all of our communications.

IABC's Code of Ethics

1. **I am honest.** My actions bring respect for and trust in the communication profession.
2. **I communicate accurate information** and promptly correct any errors.
3. **I obey laws and public policies;** if I violate any law or public policy, I act promptly to correct the situation.
4. **I protect confidential information** while acting within the law.
5. **I support the ideals of free speech**, freedom of assembly, and access to an open marketplace of ideas.
6. **I am sensitive to others'** cultural values and beliefs.
7. **I give credit to others for their work** and cite my sources.
8. **I do not use confidential information** for personal benefit.
9. **I do not represent conflicting or competing interests** without full disclosure and the written consent of those involved.
10. **I do not accept undisclosed gifts or payments** for professional services from anyone other than a client or employer.
11. **I do not guarantee results** that are beyond my power to deliver.

IABC's Code of Ethics in practice

IABC requires its members to embrace these ethical guidelines in their work and to sign the following statement as part of the application and renewal processes: I have reviewed and understand the IABC Code of Ethics.

Source: International Association of Business Communicators, accessed March 15, 2023, www.iabc.com/about-us/purpose/code-of-ethics/. Copyright © by International Association of Business Communicators British Columbia. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Exhibit 2-4 The Three Main Approaches to Ethical Reasoning

- Aristotelian: What would the virtuous person do in this situation?
- Kantian: What if everybody did it?
- Utilitarian: What will yield the greatest good for the greatest number?

Familiarity with the code of conduct for your profession and/or company can alert you to potential ethical issues that you hadn't even thought about, and many of them will be related to communication. To find the codes that apply to your situation, you can simply Google the name of your company or organization and "code of conduct" or "code of ethics."

Established Approaches to Ethical Reasoning You can also use popular models of ethical reasoning to inform your judgment. Three are particularly well known: **Aristotelian ethics**, **Kantian ethics**, and **utilitarian ethics**.¹⁰ Even though businesspeople may be unaware of it, they often rely on one or more of these approaches when deciding what to do (see Exhibit 2-4 for a quick summary).

Aristotelian Ethics. The ethical philosophy of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle is still widely applied today in the form of "virtue ethics." His approach is based on the belief that the purpose of life is to achieve happiness through right acting. One must use one's reason to act the right way, and the more one does so, the more virtuous one's character becomes, which thus leads to more right acting. When faced with an ethical dilemma, a person attempting to use Aristotelian ethics would ask, "What would a virtuous person do?"

Aristotle granted that ethical decisions sometimes needed to be settled through debate, but he felt that, through reasoned argument, the innate goodness of one action over another would become clear. As idealistic as this sounds, he also believed that people needed to use their practical wisdom, or a wise interpretation of each situation, to determine how best to live by the moral ideals.

If you were sitting with other employees in the break room and they were criticizing a co-worker or boss unfairly, you might apply Aristotelian thinking to decide whether to speak up. Feeling that the comments were unjust, you might feel compelled to say something. But using your practical wisdom, you'd consider whether this was the right time to do so. If you decided it was, you'd speak up in a way that would help your co-workers develop a fairer attitude.

Kantian Ethics. The Kantian approach, developed by Immanuel Kant during the Enlightenment (late 1600s through early 1800s), is similar to the Aristotelian approach, but with an emphasis on one's moral duty as a member of society rather than on promoting the good for its own sake. The assumptions supporting this approach are that human beings are rational, that we are rational in the same way, that we have a duty to act reasonably, and that, if we do so, we will all arrive at the same "right actions." This ethical approach leaves little room for consideration of specific circumstances.

Kant's most famous "categorical imperative" states that we should act a certain way only if the ethical principle behind our action could be made a "natural law"—that is, if it could be used to govern everyone else's behavior. In other words, you must apply the "What if everybody did it?" test. Let's say that you wanted to lie about something you did or said to make yourself look good in your boss's eyes. Would this be ethical? Kant would say no, because if everyone used lying to promote their own interests, the whole fabric of the business—and of society itself—would unravel, and in the long run their interests wouldn't be served. How about if you wanted to misrepresent your products in order to sell them? Again Kant would say no, because if everyone did that, it would cause a breakdown in the whole system of buying and selling, jeopardizing everyone's ability to make sales.

In reality, few people find it possible or desirable to live strictly by this code. There are often extenuating circumstances or potential drawbacks that they feel must be considered. But the Kantian approach is a good starting place for ethical reasoning. It can help you identify the core principles that apply and then consider why a departure from those principles might be justified.

Utilitarian Ethics. A third popular approach to ethical reasoning, utilitarianism, was developed by Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and others at the time of the Industrial Revolution (1800s). It



You Make the Call

If you were in the situation described here, would you speak up? If so, how? If you wouldn't, why not? Would you handle it some other way?

takes a somewhat technical approach in that it asks, “What will yield the greatest good for the greatest number?” Faced with an ethical dilemma, a person would try to calculate the consequences of the available actions and then choose the action that would have the most desirable consequences for the most people.

Employers often use this type of reasoning when deciding to lay off employees. Certain individuals’ welfare is sacrificed so the company can survive and the others will keep their jobs. But let’s say that you’re a salesperson who desperately needs to make your quota this quarter so you can keep your job and support your family. Would utilitarian ethics justify selling someone a product that you knew the person didn’t need or using a somewhat deceptive sales approach? Yes, it might.

This is why the utilitarian approach is rarely used all by itself. Calculating the consequences—which can be difficult to do—often runs people up against their sense of right and wrong.

A Process for Ethical Reasoning Equipped with an awareness of your own core values, relevant codes of conduct, and the three major approaches to ethical issues, you have a good chance of reasoning your way to ethically responsible communication. Note the word “chance” in the previous sentence. As with other ill-defined problems, ethical problems cannot be solved with simple formulas that yield predictable results; ethical situations are too various and have too many variables for that. But the steps in Exhibit 2-5 will help you bring some order to your ethical problem solving.

While discussing ethical dilemmas with others can be helpful, it will ultimately be up to you to decide whether and how to act. Gather as much information as you can, reason as well as you can, and then be brave enough to do what you feel you must do. Even if you experience a setback, your integrity will serve you well.

Exhibit 2-5 A Three-Step Process for Ethical Reasoning

- **What makes me think this situation raises an ethical issue?**
 - The behavior in question may violate a professional code of ethics.
 - The behavior in question may violate a general ethical principle.
 - The behavior in question runs the risk of harming others.
- **What does the situation, in all its details, look like from the three main ethical perspectives?**
 - Aristotelian
 - Kantian
 - Utilitarian
- **Using one or more of these perspectives, what should I do or say—if anything—to help ensure an ethical outcome?**

Power Charge Your Professionalism: Use Apostrophes Correctly

Many writers throw up their hands in defeat when it comes to apostrophes, feeling that they can’t possibly remember the rules. You don’t have to! You can use Reference Chapter A or a grammar handbook (in print or online) to help you. But, in truth, the rules are not that hard to learn. You could probably master them in 30 minutes or less.

Using your memory or a guide, choose the correct answer in the following sentences. Then explain why you made the choice you did for each one.

1. This report has eight entries in (its/it’s/its’) list of illustrations.
2. All the (figure’s/figures/figures’) titles in this report are missing the figure number.
3. The report did not identify (whose/who’s) error caused the problem.
4. All of the upper-level (manager’s/managers/managers’) requested a copy of the report.
5. The reports produced by this research firm are regarded as the (industries/industries’/industry’s) best.
6. In some (people’s/peoples’) opinion, an executive summary should always be in the direct order.
7. The report described (men’s/mens’) shopping habits.
8. The report represented two (week’s/weeks/weeks’) worth of work.

Using apostrophes correctly is important because . . .

- Sometimes a misused apostrophe can cause your readers to take a misstep (until they figure out that there’s an apostrophe error).
- Incorrectly used apostrophes are distracting and convey a negative impression of you as a writer.

For further instruction and practice, do the “Apostrophes” activities in Adaptive Learning Assignment under McGraw Hill Adaptive Reading, Grammar, and Research Assignment in the Module “Punctuation and Mechanics.”

Key Terms

goodwill 33	positive words 40	integrity 48
you-viewpoint 33	emphasis 42	restraint 48
you-attitude 33	ethics 44	core values 49
conversational language 36	lie of commission 44	code of conduct 49
level of formality 36	lie of omission 44	Aristotelian ethics 50
overused expressions 37	biased language 44	Kantian ethics 50
courtesy 37	credibility 48	utilitarian ethics 50

Critical-Thinking Questions

1. Discuss this comment: “Using the you-viewpoint is ethically shady since, as everyone knows, businesspeople are communicating to achieve their own goals. Your communication should be up front about that.” **LO2-1**
2. In what way, if any, could using the you-viewpoint when writing to a colleague or client you don’t like (e.g., someone who has complained unreasonably about something) be justified? Wouldn’t that be dishonest? **LO2-1**
3. “A message can’t sound official unless it has an impersonal style and uses business clichés.” Discuss. **LO2-2**
4. “If common business phrases apply to a situation, why not use them? Such phrases save time, and in business time is money. Plus, people are used to these expressions.” Discuss. **LO2-2**
5. “Please submit your payment at your earliest convenience.” Is this a courteous sentence? Why or why not? **LO2-3**
6. What would be a way of doing more than would be necessary in the following situations? **LO2-3**
 - a. You work as a sales clerk in a retail store. A customer asks you if your store carries a brand that it doesn’t carry.
 - b. You have invited someone to give a talk at your company, and she has just sent you an email in which she said yes. You email her back to say thank you.
 - c. You’ve just finished doing a team project, for which you were the leader, and you were really impressed with the members’ work.
7. “I’m nervous about deliberately employing positive wording. I think people like writers who shoot straight, and I worry that they’d think I was being deceptive.” Discuss. **LO2-4**
8. In response to a woman’s complaint that her husband, who was having complications from COVID, received no medical attention when the couple visited a hospital’s emergency room (they left after waiting three hours), a patient services representative sent two letters saying that the couple’s concerns were being taken seriously and were going through the grievance process. The third and final letter said that the case had been reviewed by “the appropriate administrative and physician leadership,” and as a result, she had “been notified that their follow-up is complete and that they have administratively addressed [the writer’s] concerns. As of the date of this letter the grievance is considered closed.” The final paragraph of the letter thanks the writer for sharing her concerns, talks about the hospital’s commitment to patient care, and offers to be of assistance in the future. What do you think of the way this complaint was handled, especially the wording of the response to the complaint (that the issue had been “administratively handled”)? Is this a brilliant way to avoid including negative details, or do you think the representative should have been more specific? If the latter, what other wording might she have used while not being negative or casting the hospital in a bad light? **LO2-4**
9. You work for a mail-order business, and you’re emailing a customer to say that the item they want is not only out of stock but also discontinued. How might you use the three ways of de-emphasizing negative news in your message? **LO2-5**

10. Imagine that a customer has written to complain about the lack of attention that she received when visiting a paint store. The manager's responding message explains why the sales staff was so busy, offers to make a special appointment with the customer to discuss her decorating needs, and then ends with the following paragraph:

We do apologize again for any inconvenience that this situation caused you. We thank you for your understanding. Please do not hesitate to contact us again if we ever fall short of the superior service that you have come to expect from us.

If the manager asked for your feedback on this message, what would you say? It's full of polite expressions. Is it a good concluding paragraph? **LO2-1, LO2-2, LO2-3, LO2-4, LO2-5**

11. Consider each of the following communication-related behaviors and decide whether or not you think it is ethically defensible. Could any of the established approaches to ethical reasoning help you make your decision? Would the circumstances influence your answer? **LO2-6, LO2-7, LO2-8**
- Referring to a female staff person by her first name (e.g., "See Joan at the front desk") but to the higher-ranking employees by their first and last names (e.g., "Nailah Smith in Tech Support can answer your question").
 - Sending a male member of the sales team (or an Anglo-American) to give an important presentation because you know the client is gender (or racially) biased.
 - Remaining silent at a lunch or dinner when a manager or important customer makes a critical remark about transgender people.
 - Using your company email account to plan a family reunion.
 - Using your company's instant messaging platform to comment on a co-worker.
 - Studying up on hockey (even though you have no interest in it) before meeting with a potential client (or having a job interview with a potential boss) who loves the sport.
 - Waiting to see how everyone else weighs in on a dicey issue (e.g., whether someone should be fired) before giving your opinion.
 - Telling your boss that your co-worker held up their end on a team project when they really didn't.
 - Complaining about the boss to your co-workers rather than discussing the issue directly with the boss.
 - Criticizing your current or past workplace on Facebook, Twitter, or an internet site.
 - Letting others do more than their share on a group project (but still getting full credit) because you had unavoidable family issues to deal with.
12. Do some internet research to find out the current status of including one's preferred pronouns in one's professional signature. How widespread is the practice? What are the business benefits? Do some companies require or forbid this practice? Be ready to share your findings with the class or your team. **LO2-6**
13. Study the following case and then assess the fairness of the intern's conclusions about the two job candidates. **LO2-6**

Your company was conducting job interviews to fill a business analyst position. As your company's human resources director, you attended the interviews. You also asked your intern to sit in, and as a learning exercise, you asked your intern to summarize each candidate's responses and offer their thoughts on the candidates' qualifications.

Below are the summaries the intern submitted to you:

Candidate: Carrie Wright	Candidate: Marc Chavez
Question: Tell us about a time when you had to overcome an obstacle to achieve a goal.	
Summary: Carrie told about a time in college when she missed a lot of class and had to postpone an internship because she was ill. She said she proactively worked with her professors to make up the work. She was able to finish her degree requirements because one professor whom she worked with got her an even better internship. Because of him, she was able to graduate on time. She seems like the kind of person who finishes something she starts but is someone who will always be needing help.	Summary: Mr. Chavez is older than Carrie and has much more experience to draw on. He told about his goal of earning an MBA with a perfect GPA. Not only did he persuade his previous employer to pay for the degree, he completed the degree and earned a 4.0 despite working full time and having family obligations in the evening and on weekends. He definitely earned his MBA, and being able to do all of this while working and supporting his wife with childcare is impressive. He seems like he could be very forceful.

Question: Tell us why you left your last position.

Summary: Carrie was a stay-at-home mom for her two children until they went to school. She said it was rewarding to be her children's primary teacher and to witness their "firsts." She said it was also rewarding to organize the neighborhood watch, her children's annual preschool fundraisers, and a story hour in collaboration with the library. She is really devoted to her children. How committed will she be to this job? Also, it doesn't seem like the experiences she had in her time off to stay home with her kids is relevant for this job. Would she be able to step up and get into a new role quickly?

Question: Tell us why you are interested in this position.

Summary: Carrie says she is interested because she held a similar job before she stopped working to be with her children. She says she was excellent in her role as a business analyst and wants to get back to work now that her children are in school full time. She says she likes the creativity involved in data analysis and communication. She also likes that this is a company with many opportunities, but it makes me question how committed she is to the business analyst role. Does she have trouble focusing? Sticking to one thing?

Conclusions

Either candidate could do the job, and each comes with certain strengths. Mrs. Wright is personable and engaging. She seems like she can focus on the job at hand and accomplish what she is assigned. My concern is that she is still young in her career and may be a flight risk if something more attractive comes her way. I am also concerned that she won't be able to balance her family and job priorities. Mr. Chavez is older and more experienced, which makes him more stable. My concern is that he seems set in his ways. I'm not sure how flexible or relatable he is.

Summary: Mr. Chavez told about staying home with his son after his wife's parental leave ended. It was supposed to be a short-term plan, but he liked it so much, it lasted three years. Like Carrie, he said being at home for his son's first steps, etc. was rewarding. He is definitely a committed family man, who seems to embrace the role of homemaker. He was fortunate that his wife was able to support the family financially so that he could stay at home with their son and seems genuinely grateful for the experience. Even though he embraces his role, I question why he didn't also use the time off to stay current in his job skills, but he seems like a quick learner.

Summary: Mr. Chavez is interested because he worked as a business analyst before leaving the workforce to raise his son. He enjoys the challenge of making data-based business decisions and improving the work of a company. He has also done research on our company and knows that we have an international presence, which shows that he is interested in staying with the company and growing into additional roles. He also likes that this is a family friendly company.

Skills-Building Exercises

Using the You-Viewpoint LO2-1

Rewrite the following using the you-viewpoint. You may need to add additional material.

1. As required by company policy, I am denying your refund request because you did not purchase our Extended Protection Plan, and the standard warranty on your air fryer has expired.
2. We will be pleased to deliver your order by the 12th.
3. We have worked for 37 years to build the best lawn mowers on the market.
4. Today we are shipping the goods you ordered February 3.
5. Instead of stopping us in the hallway to ask for IT support, send us an email, or else we will have trouble keeping track of your service request.
6. (From an email to employees) We take pleasure in announcing that, effective today, the Company will give a 20% discount on all purchases made by employees.
7. We are happy to report approval of your application for membership in our club.
8. We do our best to provide the best customer service possible.
9. Since we no longer stock this item, we must give you store credit instead of a refund.
10. We give a 2% discount when payment is made within 10 days.

11. I am pleased to inform you that I can grant your request for payment of travel expenses.
12. We cannot permit you to attend classes on company time unless the course is related to your work assignment.

Using a Conversational Style LO2-2

Rewrite the following in a conversational style.

1. I hereby acknowledge receipt of your July 7 letter.
2. Please be so kind as to reply at your earliest convenience.
3. Attached please find the receipt requested in your May 1st inquiry.
4. In reply to your letter of July 13, permission to quote from our report is hereby granted.
5. I would deem it a great pleasure to accept your kind offer to chair the committee.
6. Please be advised that, with regard to above invoice, a payment of \$312 has been credited to your account.
7. Kindly advise the director as to your availability for participation in the program by May 12.

Using the Right Level of Formality LO2-2

Reword the following sentences to achieve a more appropriate level of formality. (You may need to recast the whole sentence.)

1. (In a report that several managers will read) The customers' evaluations of our service were pretty mixed, with some being really positive and others not so great.
2. (In an email message to your division head—whom you do not know well—to congratulate her on receiving a prestigious award from a professional society) Way to go, Melissa! You do us all proud!
3. (In a sales message) Our products are awesome, and they're super cheap compared to other brands.
4. (In a response to a proposal from a vendor who wants to be your company's HR contractor) I got your proposal. I'll give it a look-see and get back to you ASAP.
5. (In a complaint letter to your health insurance provider) No way should I have to pay this bill out of my own pocket!
6. (In an email to an employee about missing a deadline) I need your information, Jane! Our project is gonna be a fail if we can't pull it together by the end of the month.
7. (In a thank-you message to a CEO for letting you interview her for a class project) Thanks again, Ms. Adams, for the super-useful information.

Rewriting for Courtesy and a Positive Effect LO2-3, LO2-4, LO2-5

Underline all negative words in these sentences. Then rewrite the sentences for a more positive effect. Use your imagination to supply contextual information when necessary.

1. Your misunderstanding of our January 7 email caused you to make this mistake.
2. We hope this delay has not inconvenienced you. If you will be patient, we will get the order to you as soon as our supply is replenished.
3. We regret that we must call your attention to our policy of prohibiting refunds for merchandise bought at discount.
4. Your negligence caused the damage to the equipment.
5. You cannot visit the plant except on Saturdays.
6. We were disappointed to learn from your July 7 email that you are having trouble with our Model 7 motor.

7. Our Stone-Skin material is less skimpy than the fabric used by our competitors.
8. Even though you were late in paying the bill, we still allowed the discount.
9. We were sorry to learn of the disappointing service you have had from our salespeople, but we feel we have corrected all mistakes by firing the incompetent personnel.
10. We have received your claim that our product was defective and have thoroughly investigated the matter.
11. We have received your undated letter, which you sent to the wrong office.
12. I regret to have to say that I will be unable to speak at your conference, as I have a prior commitment.
13. Do not walk on the grass.

Avoiding Unethical Communication Practices LO2-6, LO2-7, LO2-8

Prepare a short report for your instructor on a company or other type of organization that was recently involved in an ethical scandal. What behavior caused the scandal? What pressures, if any, were on the organization to behave this way? How easy/desirable would it have been for them to have avoided this behavior? Was this a cut-and-dried case of bad ethics, or do you think it was more complex than that? Be sure to cite your sources in the report.

Avoiding Biased Language LO2-6

Change these sentences to avoid biased language.

1. We are collecting money for a gift for our postman, who'll be retiring this month.
2. A successful writer adapts his or her communication style to different audiences.
3. The committee consisted of a businessman, a banker, and a female lawyer.
4. A good administrative assistant screens all telephone calls for her boss and manages his schedule.
5. If Ms. Adams is not in, Joe at the front desk can help you.
6. Any worker in violation of this rule will have a letter of reprimand put in his personnel file.
7. Two company representatives attended the conference: a Hispanic engineer and one of our younger managers.
8. Our new ad needs to appeal not only to the Karens in the Hamptons but also to the Bubbas in their white pick-ups.
9. Three people applied for the job, including a Baby Boomer and a Gen Xer.
10. These parking spaces are strictly for use by the handicapped.
11. He is one of the best gay designers in the city.
12. We should look for a Gen Zer for this position because they are very social-media savvy.
13. The position was filled by a well-educated housewife who was returning to the workforce.

Using Resources for Ethical Reasoning LO2-8

1. A recent book titled *Bring Your Whole Self to Work* has generated considerable dialogue about the extent to which it is desirable for employees to be themselves on the job. Research this issue to see what people are saying about it and then develop your own opinion on the matter. Does trusting your personal values include feeling free to behave as you would in your personal life? Be ready to share your opinion, with examples, with the class.
2. Can your employer tell you what to wear, outlaw decorated fingernails, or forbid the display of such body art as tattoos and piercings? Research this issue to find out the extent to which expressing your personal values through your appearance might or might not be allowed.

(You might start with Jennifer G. Prozinski and Karel Mazanec's article, "Dress Codes in the Modern Workplace" at www.venable.com/insights/publications/2021/08/dress-codes-in-the-modern-workplace.) How do you think your findings might influence your appearance on the job or your future job searches?

3. Find the code of conduct for professionals who work in the area you hope to work in or the code of conduct for a company you'd like to work for. Read it carefully, and then write a short report for your instructor in which you summarize and comment on its contents. Did anything about it particularly impress or surprise you? Was anything left out that you thought should be included? Do you think it would actually help people in the field or the company behave in the right way? Attach a copy of the code of conduct to your report.



Problem Solver to the Rescue

Selling Your Company's Services to Professors

Instructions: Read the communication scenario that follows and then evaluate the sample solution using the problem-solving advice in Chapter 1 and the advice in this chapter. Then, if your instructor directs, revise the message.

Scenario (it's real): Kathy Rentz is a university professor who teaches professional writing. In her in-box today was the following message:

Hi Charles,

My name is [name withheld] and I work for an online course production company called [name withheld].

I wanted to ask you if you have an online course based on your work in Project Management & Writing area?

This space is honestly something that could be a great fit for a successful online course. I checked some other pieces of your

work and there's a lot of great material for an online course.

I usually talk with people that start the conversation with us with one of 4 sentences.

- A. *"I want to build my online course but I'm not sure where to start. I have a draft of my ideas."*
- B. *"I know exactly what needs to be done. I just need help executing the plan."*
- C. *"I already have a course. I just want more people to know about it."*
- D. *"This is totally irrelevant to me. I have no interest in building courses or training programs (No hard feelings!)"*

If you're A, B or C then honestly you should ping me back.

We've worked with more than a 100 course creators and I feel that we could help you build something really amazing around your niche.

Having an online course generally helps our customers to build a product version of the topic that they speak on so they can reach more people and don't need to travel so much to get the word out.

Thanks, and please ping me back to schedule a 15-minute call with me.

Here's a 5-minute video showing various samples of our work.

PS:

And if you feel that the last scenario reflects your situation the most then just reply 'D' and I won't be emailing you again :)

Three



Communicating with Culturally Diverse Audiences

Learning Objectives

- LO3-1** Explain why cross-cultural awareness is important for today's workplace communicators.
- LO3-2** Describe three major factors that influence a country or region's culture.
- LO3-3** Describe cultural differences regarding body positions and movements and apply this knowledge when communicating across cultures.
- LO3-4** Describe the impact of culture on views and practices concerning human relationships and apply this knowledge when communicating across cultures.
- LO3-5** Describe language issues that can cause trouble for nonnative speakers.
- LO3-6** Describe ways to prepare for effective cross-cultural communication.



Equipped with the advice in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, you may think you're ready to tackle any communication situation you encounter at work. But there's another factor to think about: the cultural backgrounds that have formed your and your audience's values and communication styles. These days, global interconnectedness is a fact of life for all of us. Even if we don't encounter people from other cultures on a daily basis, our media feeds us information about them. And we all experience the effects of globalization, including such positives as broader goods and services to choose from and lower prices as well as such negatives as increased pollution, global warming, economic inequality, and social instability.¹

Increasing awareness of cultures within the United States—whether based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, region, or some other set of values or experiences that a specific group has in common—has also become a fact of life. The women's, MeToo, and gay rights movements continue to fight for equality, with transgender people also seeking fair treatment. The Black Lives Matter movement has re-galvanized the civil rights movement and again made racism a national issue. Our politicians fight about the proper response to immigration, and the election of President Trump in 2016 brought attention to the large number of economically struggling white citizens. Members of many marginalized groups are

working to have their voices and concerns heard.

Adapting your words, sentences, and overall messages to your audience is especially challenging in cases where you are communicating across cultures, but building connections with different kinds of people will enrich both your professional and personal life. You also have many resources at your disposal. This chapter draws on several of the most helpful ones, especially those regarding international communication. These will give you a foundation on which you can build by doing your own learning about different cultures and subcultures.



Problem-Solving Challenge

Preparing for Cross-Cultural Communication

Assume that you're a recently hired trainer for a US company that has a new branch office in Sweden. You've been sent to the office to facilitate the training of new employees.

After a fruitful brainstorming session with the leadership team, you ask the Swedish head manager, Andreas, to appoint a contact person in the group to help you launch the training project. Andreas turns to the HR manager, Prasan, who is from India, and says that he will be your key contact from here on out. You describe the process you want to follow and the documents you'll need in order to go forward.

Then you ask Prasan if you can expect the documents by the next day.

Hesitating, Prasan replies, "Yes, I can send everything to you by the end of the day tomorrow." His boss suddenly intervenes: "That's too short a time frame since you have a lot of other work going on right now." Turning to you, the Swedish manager continues, "You can expect the material you need within a week." Prasan looks somewhat embarrassed but nods in agreement.

Back in Andreas's office, you ask, "What just happened? Why did Prasan agree to an unrealistic deadline?" Andreas explains that Prasan, who

comes from a traditional Indian background, wanted to save face by giving a pleasing answer. Such an answer would keep you from appearing to be demanding and would keep him from appearing to be slow. "He values face-saving more than frankness," the Swede says—implying that he himself does not.

You wonder if such clashes of cultural preference could be handled more gracefully than the one you just witnessed. This chapter will introduce you to cross-cultural communication issues that may arise in business situations and help prepare you to meet them successfully.

The Importance of Cultural Awareness to Workplace Communication

Practically every day, we see people from different identity groups on TV, read about them in magazines and newspapers, watch them in videos, and read their social-media posts. They're in our classes, workplaces, churches, and other organizations. All this casual contact can lead one to think that understanding across cultures can just happen naturally.

LO3-1 Explain why cross-cultural awareness is important for today's workplace communicators.

While this exposure to different kinds of people can lead to broader appreciation of others' values, concerns, and circumstances, it doesn't always do so. The United States is currently experiencing racial turmoil, heated arguments about immigration, sexual-harassment/abuse scandals, hate crimes and hate speech, and other ills stemming from prejudice against any identity group that is not one's own. At the same time, the US workplace is championing diversity like never before, and many customers and potential customers are demanding it.

You also need to be ready to work with those in or from other countries. As you will read later in this section, even small to medium-sized companies often do business internationally, and US workplaces often bring together employees from different countries. It is your job—not that of the non-US clients and colleagues you will encounter—to understand how to adapt your communication accordingly.

Explain the Importance of Cultural Awareness within the United States

Did you know that Generation Z—those born after 1994—is the most diverse generation in US history? And that 48% of this generation who were born in the United States identify as non-white?²

Given that figure, it is hard to believe that as recently as 2010, the United States was 63.7% white (and in 2000, that number was 75%).³ The racial composition of the United States has changed quickly, and each year brings a more diverse population. This means that familiarity with different US cultures will only grow in importance as you develop your workplace communication skills.

Make an Effort to Learn about Different US Cultures While today's young people are the most diversity-friendly in US history, they tend not to know much about other cultures or different US cultures. Give yourself this little test: How much do you actually know about the US culture that is represented or suggested by the following:

- A young woman wearing a burka?
- A man who wears a yarmulke on Jewish holidays?
- The Indian physician in the medical office where your primary care doctor works?
- A young white woman in a Lilly Pulitzer dress?
- The Black woman in charge of your organization's community projects?
- The forty-something white man driving a pickup truck and wearing a John Deere baseball cap?
- An individual wearing a gay-pride T-shirt?
- A person using sign language to communicate?

Diversity-friendly as you may be, goodwill will take you only so far in understanding people whose identity groups are different from yours. Especially if your personal world is populated mostly by people who share your values and experiences, you will need to seek out ways to gain exposure to those who are “other” from you, educate yourself on the cultures they represent, and cultivate cross-cultural empathy—the ability to put yourself in others’ shoes.⁴

Inevitably, you will make some missteps in your efforts to connect with those in groups that you aren’t yet that familiar with. Sometimes well-meaning remarks can actually come across as **microaggressions**, as the examples in **Communication Matters: Microaggressions** show. Becoming inclusive is an ongoing effort for everyone. When you inadvertently offend, acknowledge, apologize, and learn.

Use the Preferred Terms to Refer to Different US Cultures One way to show respect for the diversity of US cultures is by using the appropriate term when referring to groups of people. Many of the terms used to reference groups of people were historically imposed by individuals outside of that group. Recently, there has been a movement to support groups having agency over their own labels, and as a result, we’re seeing more identity groups’ preferred terms of reference change as more individuals from those groups say how they’d like to be referred to.



Communication Matters

Microaggressions: Small Actions with a Big Impact

Often when we think about biased communication, we think of blatant stereotyping or racist or culturally insensitive language. But some biased remarks take a more subtle form—so subtle that you may not even notice the bias unless you’re a member of the group being discriminated against. Such microaggressions are often unintentional, but they have a significant impact. When experienced frequently in day-to-day interactions, these insults or slights toward marginalized groups can be damaging to the recipients’ mental health and have negative consequences for building trust and community.

The following are just some examples of microaggressions that you may have encountered:

- A white woman tells a Black colleague that she understands what racism feels like because, as a woman, she has experienced discrimination. (The assumption that racism and gender discrimination are the same minimizes the effects of race-related bias that the Black person has likely experienced.)
 - A speaker confuses the names of two individuals from the same ethnic group. (This sends the message that the speaker thinks all people from a particular group are the same and shows a lack of care for the audience.)
 - A female physician in clinical attire is mistaken for a nurse in a medical setting. (This reveals the assumption that doctors are typically male and nurses are typically female.)
 - A member of your team tells someone with a disability that they are inspiring just for showing up at a meeting. (This is patronizing and suggests that expectations should be lower for individuals with disabilities.)
- What should you do if you see or experience a microaggression in the workplace? A recent *Harvard Business Review* article on racial microaggressions recommends that you first evaluate the situation carefully. While you should not feel pressured to respond to every incident, you need to be aware that when left unaddressed, microaggressions will damage the workplace experience for employees from marginalized groups.
- When choosing to respond to a microaggression,
- Decide whether to respond to it immediately or address it later. Consider whether addressing the speaker immediately, potentially in a group of people, will make the situation worse for the person experiencing the microaggression. Bear in mind that if you wait until later, you may run the risk of the speaker forgetting the incident or failing to understand the impact.
 - Consider other important factors like your relationship with the parties involved, your own feelings, and the consequences of raising the issue.
 - Approach the topic in a way that would make the speaker less defensive. You may start with something like, “This might be uncomfortable for you, but what you just said made [me/someone else] uncomfortable.” You may ask the person to ask what they meant by their words and be prepared to explain the impact.
- If it is brought to your attention that you are committing a microaggression, you should listen and apologize. Try to avoid getting defensive and understand that your lack of any intention to offend does not lessen the negative impact of the microaggression. Further, use the situation as a way to better understand the experiences of your colleagues. Treating your transgression as a learning opportunity is one effective approach that can help you avoid making the same mistake again.

Sources: Hahna Yoon, “How to Respond to Microaggressions,” *The New York Times*, March 3, 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/03/03/smarter-living/how-to-respond-to-microaggressions.html; Ella Washington, Alison Hall Birch, and Laura Morgan Roberts, “When and How to Respond to Microaggressions,” *Harvard Business Review*, July 3, 2020, <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/product/H05Q4G-PDF-ENG>.

These group preferences can be expressed in the labels that are used (e.g., *Latino* or *Latina* vs. *Latin* vs. *Latinx*)⁵ or the style, such as capitalization, of those labels (e.g., *Black* vs. *black*).

One example of the way the language of race and ancestry continues to evolve is the term we use to describe Black Americans. Beginning in the 1980s, many Black activists supported using the term *African American*, which first appeared on the US Census in 2000,⁶ to emphasize the Americanness of Black individuals in the United States.⁷ Over time, however, more and more Black Americans have chosen other terms to express their lineage and identity. *African American* is still used in this country by individuals who identify as Americans with African lineage, but the term *Black* is used by most as a general umbrella adjective to describe people of a multitude of identities including African American, Caribbean American, and Afro-Caribbean.

Most identity groups also have a preference when it comes to capitalization. For example, in the United States, those who identify as Black tend to prefer the capitalized term, and that is why most major style guides advise capitalizing the first letter of this term of reference as well as others that refer to race, ethnicity, and national origin.⁸ However, when it comes to the adjective *white*, style guides are more mixed.⁹

When referring to a particular identity group, first be certain that calling attention to that specific group is warranted. If the reference is necessary, check the major style guides as well as any guides your organization has to find the preferred term.

Educating yourself about different US cultures and the terms of reference they prefer will help ensure that your language is respectful and inclusive. Keep in mind, too, that people in any country who identify with a particular culture within that country will do so to varying degrees. Some may proudly embrace their differences from dominant/mainstream cultures, some may seek assimilation into these cultures, and many others will fall somewhere in between. So pay attention, be flexible, and try to treat people the way they want to be treated (see **Communication Matters: Should You Be “Color Blind”?**). If you do make a mistake and are corrected by your audience, take some time to reflect on the situation and consider how you can do better the next time. We will all make mistakes in our effort to use inclusive communication, but the effort will result in increased fairness, more productive collaborations, and other benefits.



Communication Matters

Should You Be “Color Blind”?

When young people in the 1960s and 1970s were rebelling against the Vietnam War and US culture in general, one of their credos was to treat everyone as if the color of their skin didn't matter. This was a well-intentioned, and somewhat successful, effort to combat racist attitudes.

Treating others with acceptance and respect is still at the core of cross-racial/ethnic harmony, but according to today's diversity experts, it doesn't go far enough. As Mary-Francis Winters explains, we need to move from the Golden Rule—treat others the way you'd like to be treated—to the Platinum Rule: Treat others the way they'd like to be treated.

Doing so means seeing and respecting others' differences from you. As different minority groups have come to embrace their unique histories and traits, acknowledging people in these groups means also acknowledging—and

learning about—the US cultures to which they belong.

It also means realizing that white people in the United States tend to share, and benefit from, the cultural identity that began with the white settlement of America and whose values still comprise the dominant US culture. The founders of the United States were white male entrepreneurs, religious dissenters, and political leaders steeped in Enlightenment thinking. As explained by Judith Katz, one of the pioneers in diversity training, these founders put an indelible stamp on US culture. Here are some key strands of their legacy:

- Rugged individualism (as opposed to interdependence of family and community)
- Competitiveness (as opposed to community-mindedness and sharing)
- A strong belief in the Protestant Work Ethic (and productive use of time)

- Emphasis on scientific approaches to knowledge (and distrust of emotion)
- Seeing wealth as a determiner of personal worth
- A belief that the nuclear family (father, mother, children) is the ideal social unit
- Adherence to the Judeo-Christian tradition

As the US has grown more diverse, these values have weakened and sometimes been explicitly criticized. But they still exert a strong influence on the national culture. Understanding the country's historical and cultural origins can help foster a more inclusive attitude and the realization that, oftentimes, different values are just that: different.

Sources: Mary-Francis Winters, *We Can't Talk about That at Work! How to Talk about Race, Religion, Politics, and Other Polarizing Topics* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2017); Judith H. Katz, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training*, 2nd ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

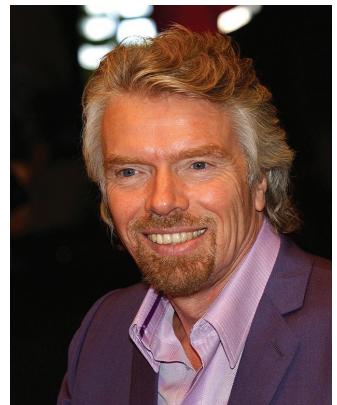
Explain the Importance of Understanding Other Countries' Cultures

Globalization is one of the distinguishing traits of business in the 21st century. And it isn't just big businesses who are employing people from other cultures and doing business around the world. According to data published by the US Census Bureau, there were 264,366 small to medium-sized US companies (companies with 500 or fewer employees) exporting goods and services in 2020. These accounted for over 93% of the exporting companies and 32.6% of the overall value generated by US exports.¹⁰

Being able to communicate cross-culturally will help you understand your international customers' needs and persuasively explain how your company can meet these needs. This skill will also come into play when you need to work with suppliers, transportation managers, and government officials in different countries.

Another reason to be culturally agile is that you will be a more effective employee within your company. In 2021, 17.4% of the US workforce—almost 28 million—were born outside the United States to non-US parents.¹¹ If you can work harmoniously with those from other cultures, you will help create a more comfortable and productive workplace. Furthermore, if cultural barriers are minimized, your company will be able to hire a wider variety of talented people.

A final reason is that interaction with those from other cultures will help you develop professionally. A full-time employee in the United States spends approximately 8.28 hours a day on work and work-related activities, and those in competitive industries like technology and finance often work over 60 hours a week.¹² This means that you're likely to spend a large percentage of your life at work. You'll want to be challenged, to grow, and to feel that your work has made a difference. Broadening your global perspective will help you with all these goals.



"Communication is the most important skill any leader can possess."

Sir Richard Branson
Founder of the multinational conglomerate
Virgin Group

John Li/Stringer/GettyImages

Dimensions of Cultural Difference around the Globe

Dutch sociologist Geert Hofstede, probably the most influential expert on cross-cultural differences, defines **culture** as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another” and national culture as “that component of our mental programming which we share with more of our compatriots as opposed to most other world citizens.”¹³ In other words, cultures are “shared ways in which groups of people understand and interpret the world.”¹⁴

Our dominant culture affects almost everything about us—from the way we think and communicate to the way we hold our bodies or establish our personal space. Certainly the spread of capitalism, advances in technology and science, and the explosive growth of electronic media have eroded national differences. By 2005, a popular book on international business was already claiming that “the world is flat,”¹⁵ and international interactions have increased exponentially since then. But cultural differences are still strong in many places and situations. See **Communication Matters: Your Communication Habits Aren’t Universal!** for real examples of how cross-cultural communicators have learned the hard way that their own communication styles are culture specific, not “natural.”

Of course, one country’s culture, as in the United States, can contain many cultures. Plus, the person with whom you are communicating may be unrepresentative of his or her culture of origin. National borders are more permeable and workplaces more diverse than they have ever been. Still, an understanding of your communication partner’s cultural roots will greatly enhance your interpretive and interaction skills.



You Make the Call

In what ways is it good that communication technologies, ease of travel, and business alliances are reducing differences between cultures? Is there a downside to this trend? How are your thoughts on this topic likely to affect your cross-cultural behavior?

Three Major Factors That Affect Culture

When learning about the culture of another country or a region within that country, you’ll be tempted to start by researching such surface features as a culture’s typical greeting or preferred

LO3-2 Describe three major factors that influence a country or region’s culture.



Communication Matters

Your Communication Habits Aren't Universal!

Erin Meyer, author and consultant in the field of cross-cultural business communication, offers numerous instructive stories about missteps communicators have made when not being aware of communication norms in other countries. Here are just a few examples:

- A US speaker expected her Chinese presentation partner to speak up during her talk. When she finally asked him why he wasn't speaking, he explained that he hadn't been invited to. In China, it would have been rude for the lower-ranking participant to speak without an invitation.
- A British businessman attended a meeting with a group of his France-based employees. To his surprise, no one recapped the meeting at the end to sum up what had been said; instead, the French just said "Et voila!" (there it is!).
- In the United States and United Kingdom, it is considered polite to respond to an email message within 24 hours, if only to say, "I got your message and will get back to you." In Spain, the recipient typically doesn't respond until they have the information being asked for.
- In Indonesia, a strong relationship makes it unnecessary for an agreement to be put in writing. So when an Indonesian manager received an email message from his German boss recapping their recent conversation, the Indonesian interpreted the act as sign that the boss didn't trust him.
- A German manager, used to using direct words when giving negative feedback, misunderstood an important message from his British boss. When the boss advised him in a one-on-one meeting to "think about" doing something differently, the German didn't realize that this was a nice way of saying "change your behavior or else." When his behavior didn't change, his angry boss had another meeting with him to set him straight.
- One American presenter organized an oral recommendation report for a German audience in the same pattern she had used for US and Australian audiences: getting right to the recommendations and then sharing the supporting data. But as soon as she began sharing her recommendations, the German clients interrupted to ask how she had come up with them. German presenters have had the opposite problem presenting to US audiences, who prefer to hear the recommendations first rather than have the speaker present the evidence first.
- In the United States and Brazil, businesspeople tend to freely share personal information with those they've just met. But they typically do not consider this the beginning of a personal or business friendship—a fact that can confuse businesspeople who take personal sharing seriously. On the other hand, businesspeople from Russia, Germany, Poland, or France can seem unfriendly and cold but will then become warm and open once they take you into their trust.

A way to prevent such problems, Meyer says, is to openly acknowledge the cultural differences in play and have the parties agree to a set of ground rules for communicating. But cultural differences may still trip you up, even when you've done your best to anticipate them. In such cases, be ready to listen and adapt.

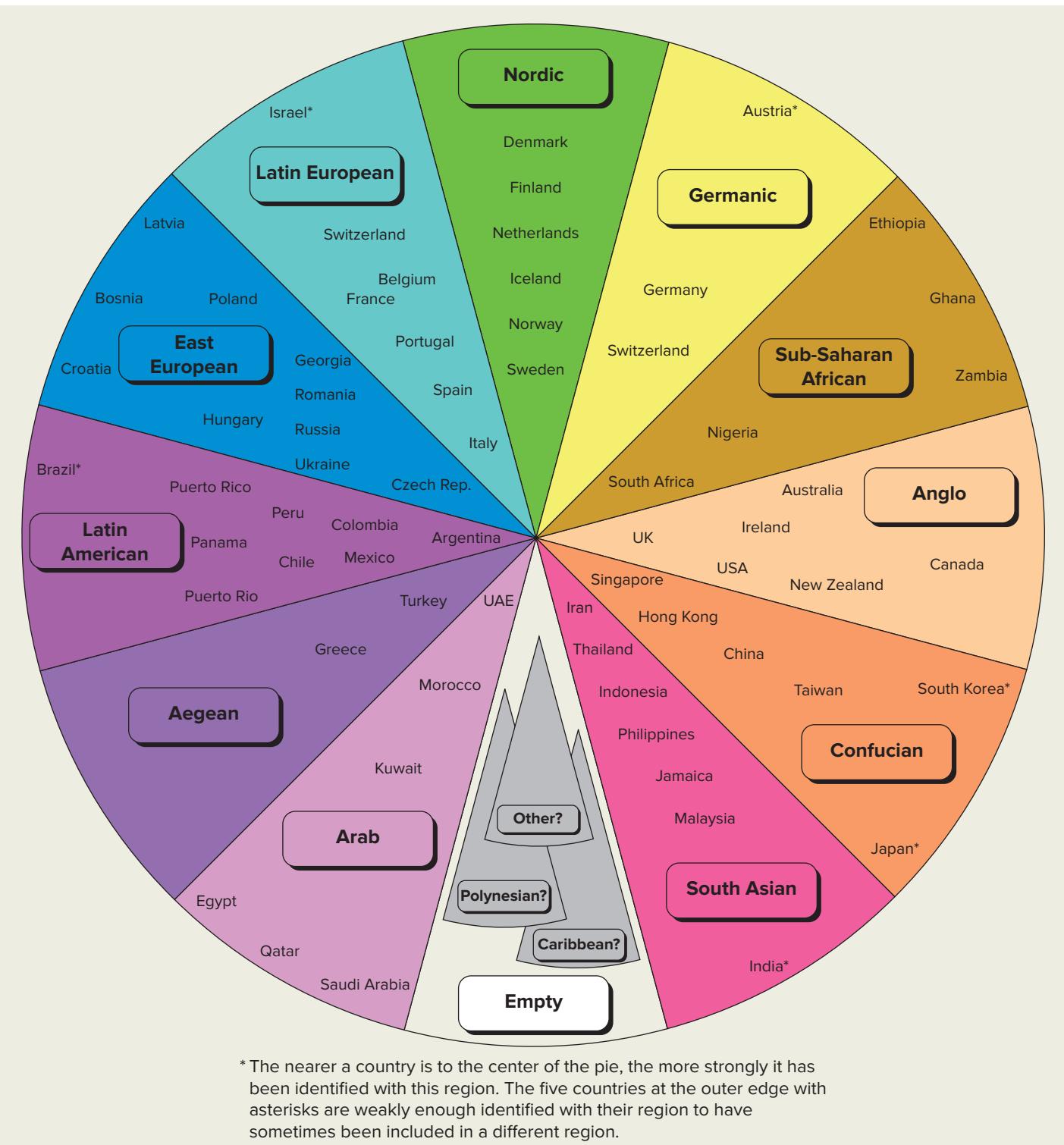
Sources: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done across Cultures* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014).

body language. But studying the culture this way will leave you with significant gaps in your understanding. We recommend beginning instead with these basic questions:¹⁶

- What is the *geography* of the country you are studying? In this age of electronic interconnectivity, it may be difficult to believe, but location, weather, and features of the land still have a profound influence on what types of people live in a certain place. For instance, many natural borders around a country make for a more insular culture than changing, indistinct borders, and life under a broiling sun creates different habits and values than life in a darker, colder environment.
- What is the country's *history*? Have there been certain events (e.g., immigration, types of conflict) or systems of government that have affected the national memory? And what is the country's history with your country?
- What role does *religion* play in the culture? Think for a moment about how religious values have shaped the Middle East, different Asian countries, or the United States. Even when many of a country's people have stopped observing traditional religious practices, the influence of religion can linger, surfacing in certain behaviors and attitudes.

Consolidating all the major studies of these factors and others as they relate to the groupings of the world's cultures, Simcha Ronen and Oded Shenkar have grouped 96 countries into 11 clusters, with a 12th cluster for countries in regions that don't align with any particular group. A simplified version of this map is shown in Exhibit 3-1. As you study the exhibit, consider how geography,

Exhibit 3-1 Ronen and Shenkar's Country Clusters with Examples



* The nearer a country is to the center of the pie, the more strongly it has been identified with this region. The five countries at the outer edge with asterisks are weakly enough identified with their region to have sometimes been included in a different region.

history, and religion might account for the similarities among the countries in each group and for major differences between the clusters.¹⁷

Keep in mind, though, that businesspeople the world over share many goals and problems. All are interested in keeping their businesses financially viable, hiring and retaining good employees, developing marketable products, finding reliable suppliers, and so forth. Your efforts to understand your cross-cultural audience—like those to understand communication partners from your own culture—can lead to many mutually beneficial relationships.

The next two sections will assist you in these efforts by discussing important dimensions of cultural difference, starting with physical differences and then moving to mental and social ones. Sensitivity to these dimensions will help you avoid **ethnocentrism**—the tendency to see only your own cultural programming as “normal”—and make you a better cross-cultural communicator.

Body Positions and Movements

LO3-3 Describe cultural differences regarding body positions and movements and apply this knowledge when communicating across cultures.

One might think that the positions and movements of the body would be much the same for all people. However, physical behaviors differ by culture, and the differences can affect communication.

For example, people from the United States who visit certain Asian countries may view the fast, short steps taken by many of the inhabitants as peculiar and their own longer strides as normal. And when people from those countries encounter US citizens who do not bow when meeting and leaving each other, they may interpret the omission as rude. Similarly, people from the United States see standing up as the appropriate thing to do on certain occasions (as when someone enters the room), whereas people from some other cultures do not. Different cultures also have different expectations about who should enter and leave the room first.

Body language is an important feature of all face-to-face communication, but it says different things in different cultures. In the United States an up-and-down movement of the head means “yes” and a side-to-side movement of the head means “no.” But these movements may mean nothing at all or something quite different to people from other cultures. For example, the “yes” gesture in Greece, Bulgaria, and Albania resembles a head shake, and the “no” gesture resembles a nod.¹⁸

Hand gestures can have many different meanings. The two-fingered sign that means “victory” or “peace” in the United States is considered vulgar in Australia, and the “OK” sign is insulting in such diverse countries as Russia, Germany, and Brazil.¹⁹ Even the use of fingers to indicate numbers can vary by culture. In the United States, most people indicate “1” by holding up the forefinger, whereas in parts of Europe, “1” is the thumb, “2” is the forefinger, and so forth. To point to themselves, the Japanese point to their face, while the Chinese point to their nose and Americans point to their chest.²⁰

Even meanings of eye movements vary by culture. Those from Canada, the United States, Britain, and Germany tend to prefer sustained eye contact, whereas in Indonesia, other Asian countries, and most Middle Eastern, African, and Latin American countries, looking directly at people, especially those who are older or in higher positions, is considered disrespectful. Unless one understands these cultural differences, how one uses eye movement can be interpreted as being impolite on the one hand or shy on the other.

Handshaking preferences are important indicators of cross-cultural differences. Though the pandemic significantly reduced the practice of shaking hands, this popular form of greeting has made a strong comeback. When doing business with those from other countries, you will encounter many situations in which you need to



The physical dimensions of greetings can vary significantly across cultures. Consult authoritative resources, including people with international experience, to keep track of the preferred ways of interacting in different cultures—and take a cue from your communication partner as well.

Lai Leng Lam/123RF



From the Tech Desk

Web Tools for Cross-Cultural Communication

The internet offers many free tools to help you communicate across cultures. Three of the most useful are time-zone calculators, currency converters, and translation tools built right into your web browser.

Time-zone calculators show you what time it is anywhere in the world, enabling you to plan your virtual meetings, phone calls, and live webinars accordingly. On timeanddate.com or its app, for example, you can enter the name of a city or country and see exactly what time it is there and where the time zone is (as in the first screenshot, which shows the current time in Gaborone, Botswana). If you hover over the face emoji in the bottom right corner of the entry, you can find out if the time is generally considered to be during working hours there. If you click the three vertical dots to the right of the emoji, you can find more information about the city (as shown in the second screenshot).

Time and Date AS

Time and Date AS

Xe.com Inc.

Google LLC

Currency converters show you how one country's currency translates into another's. In the screen shot provided, you can see how the US dollar compares to the euro. Such converters are free, and they are programmed to use regularly updated exchange rates.

The web also offers free **translation tools**. For example, you can open Google Translate and paste in text that you'd like to have translated into another language. In the example shown here, we copied the first part of a French email and pasted it into the left window. We then clicked "English" above the right window to have the text translated into English. Clicking on the Documents and Websites tabs at the top will enable the tool to translate longer documents and websites for you. Clicking on the little speaker icons at the bottom of each window will enable you to hear how the message sounds.



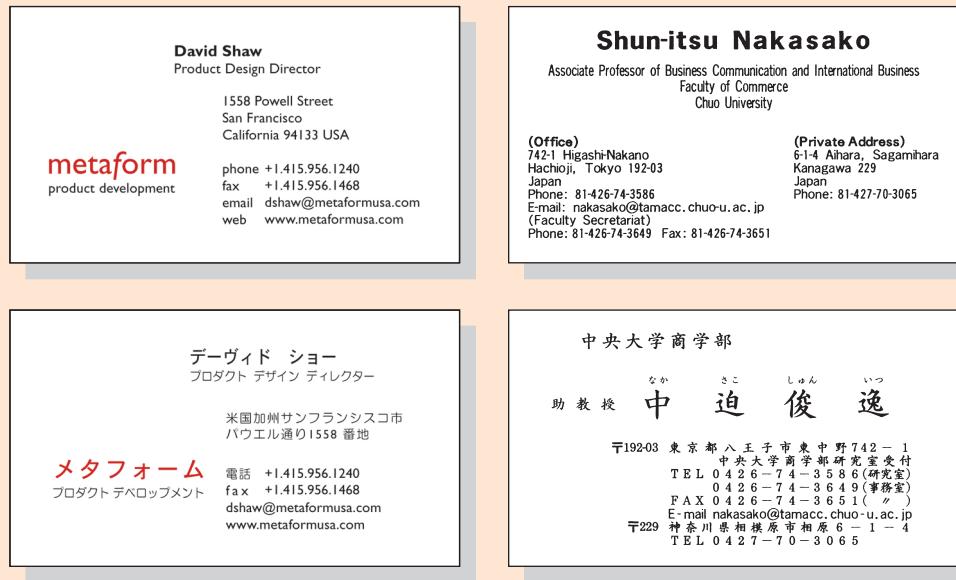
Communication Matters

Carefully Present and Receive a Business Card in Japan

In Japan, it's considered bad manners to go to a business meeting without a business card, or *meishi*. There are a number of ways to present the card, but receiving it is an art, too. If you want to

make a good impression on the presenter, receive it in both hands, especially when the other party is senior in age or status or a potential customer. Be careful not to fiddle with the card or put it in your

rear pocket—that is considered crude. Put it in a distinctive case. Those who do business in both countries often have their business cards translated on the back, as the examples here show.



know the different cultural norms for shaking hands. The following examples will help prepare you for such situations and also give you some insight into the different cultures' interpersonal styles:

Culture	Handshakes
Brazil	Vigorous (between men), with back-slapping not uncommon; for women, air kisses to each cheek
China	Gentle, with a slight bow and no eye contact; shake the eldest person's hand first
France	Light, quick; will include a double kiss for friends
Germany	Firm and short with eye contact
India	Medium firmness; use the right hand and offer it only if the most senior person offers theirs
Mexico	Moderate grasp, repeated frequently; shake hands with a woman only if she extends her hand first
Morocco	Light with a soft shake; wait for women to offer their hands first
Saudi Arabia	Strong (between men), with the right hand only; may include kisses on both cheeks; little to no physical contact with women
Thailand	Light (and between men only); wait for the other person to bow in a "wai" first
United Kingdom	Light, with little eye contact if meeting for the first time; widen personal space afterward
United States	Very firm, with direct, prolonged eye contact

www.thejobnetwork.com/different-handshakes-in-19-countries-around-the-world-102016/

How people use body language is a major indicator of their social norms. Instead of critically judging others because of their different physical customs, seize the opportunity to gain insight into their cultures.

Views and Practices Concerning Human Relationships

Probably causing even more miscommunication than differences in body positions and movements are the attitudes of different cultures toward various factors of human relationships. To illustrate, we'll review five of these factors: time, space, frankness, social hierarchy, and expression of emotions. You can read about additional cultural dimensions in **Communication Matters: Dimensions of Culture**.

LO3-4 Describe the impact of culture on views and practices concerning human relationships and apply this knowledge when communicating across cultures.

Time In the United States, people tend to be **monochronic**. They regard time as something that must be planned to be used as efficiently as possible. They strive to meet deadlines, to be punctual, to conduct business quickly, and to work on a schedule. Germany, Switzerland, Japan, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom also fall on the monochronic end of the time spectrum.

In some other cultures (e.g., Mexico, Brazil, China, Saudi Arabia, India, and Nigeria), people are **polychronic**, viewing time in a more relaxed way. In business negotiations, the people in these cultures move at a deliberate pace, engaging in casual talk before getting to the main issue and valuing relationships over efficiency. It is easy to see how such different views of time can cause people from different cultures to have serious communication problems.²¹

Space When traveling to new countries or meeting those from a new country you've never visited, you will notice that people from different cultures manage the space around themselves differently. For example, in southern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East, communicators may stand quite close and even touch, while those in the United States tend to prefer about two feet of distance. To take another example, Brits, Americans, Swedes, and the Japanese typically stand in line and wait their turn, while people from France, China, and India tend to jostle for space when boarding trains, standing at ticket counters, or shopping. In encounters between people whose cultures have such different attitudes toward space, misunderstandings will occur unless those involved understand and respect such differences.

Frankness Countries can fall in many different places on the frankness spectrum. Communicators in the United States, England, Australia, Germany, and Israel tend to be direct in their relationships with others, quickly getting to the point and perhaps being blunt in the process. The French, on the other hand, tend toward indirectness, and those from Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and the Philippines tend to be the most indirect, sometimes going to great lengths not to offend.

In addition, the United States has a **low-context culture**, in which different traditions inform the national culture and where individualism is highly valued. In this type of culture, the communicators explicitly share all relevant background information when communicating. Asian countries, on the other hand, tend to have a **high-context culture**, one with coherent, stable traditions and a strong group orientation.²² In such a context, the communicators limit background information and rely on shared assumptions to provide the unspoken content.

Thus, Asians may appear evasive, roundabout, and indecisive to North Americans, and North Americans may appear verbose, impolite, and aggressive to Asians. Similar misunderstandings can occur between the low-context cultures of Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK and the higher-context cultures of Spain, Italy, France, India, Russia, and Iran.²³

Social Hierarchy In many cultures, overt social classes exist, and class status determines how intimately people are addressed and treated in communication. For this reason, a person from such a culture might ask you about your professional and social standing and that of your colleagues. Different attitudes toward class are also illustrated by differences in the familiarity of address. Some Americans are quick to use first names, but this practice is offensive to people from some other cultures, notably the English and the Germans, who expect such intimate address only from long-standing acquaintances.



Despite cultural differences, businesspeople around the world share many of the same goals.
oneinchpunch/Shutterstock



Communication Matters

Dimensions of Culture: From Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede to David Livermore

With *Beyond Culture* (1976) as well as two earlier books (*The Silent Language* [1959], about perceptions of space and time, and *The Hidden Dimension* [1966], focusing on the use of space), US anthropologist Edward T. Hall essentially launched the field of cross-cultural communication. The other great pioneer in this field was Dutch sociologist Geert Hofstede, whose book *Culture's Consequences* (1980) identified four main dimensions of culture, with two more being added later.

Hall's and Hofstede's concepts have proven to be foundational for those studying global cultures. For example, David Livermore, who helped found Michigan State University's Cultural Intelligence Center, coined the term *cultural intelligence* (CQ), and runs a global consulting firm, carries on their legacies in his 10 cultural value dimensions:

- **Individualism versus collectivism (Hofstede's concept/terminology).** An individualistic culture is one in which people are expected to look after themselves and their families, whereas a collectivist culture promotes strong identification with social groups.

- **Power distance (Hofstede's concept/terminology).** To what extent do the less powerful members of a culture or organization expect that power will be distributed unevenly? If this is a normal expectation, it means that the company or culture exhibits "high power distance" and values hierarchy and obedience. If not, the company or culture has "low power distance."

- **Uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede's concept/terminology).** This label refers to the extent to which a culture's members feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Uncertainty-avoiding cultures try to prevent such situations with strict rules and core values. Uncertainty-accepting cultures

tend to be more relaxed, more tolerant of differences, and less rule bound.

- **Cooperation versus competition (a gender-free reworking of Hofstede's masculine versus feminine dimension).** Those with a cooperative orientation "emphasize nurturing, supportive relationships as a better way to get things done" (Livermore, 110). Those oriented toward competition are more individualistic, assertive, and results driven.
- **Long-term versus short-term orientation (Hofstede's concept/terminology).** People with a long-term orientation see the present as connected to the past and the future. They value such qualities as persistence, thrift, and durability. Those with a short-term orientation focus on the present and on achieving quick results.

- **Direct versus indirect/high versus low context (Hall's concept/terminology).** Low-context communicators do not depend much on the context to provide their communication partners with interpretational cues; their messages tend to state the point directly and include all the additional information one needs to understand it. High-context communicators tend to come from countries with a strong shared history, and they rely on that history to help convey their meaning. Rather than putting everything they mean into words, they use eye movements, body language, tone of voice, and other nonverbal elements to give interpretational cues.

- **Being versus doing.** This dimension refers to how people in a culture use their time. Those focused on being see work as one part of a full life, which also includes an emphasis on leisure, ongoing personal growth, and rewarding relationships. Those focused on doing tend to value being busy, productive, and professionally successful.

- **Universalism versus particularization.** In cultures that are strongly universalist, everyone is expected to abide by agreed-upon social standards, which take precedence over personal relationships. Those in particularist cultures are more flexible; their personal obligations and the particular context may take precedence over established rules.

- **Neutral versus affective.** This dimension refers to the extent to which those in a culture are comfortable with shows of emotion. Even when they feel emotional, those from a country that is neutral on this scale will carefully regulate their expressiveness. Those who like and expect shows of emotion will freely use their body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions to convey how they feel.

- **Monochromatic versus polychromatic (Hall's concept/terminology).** Those with a monochromatic orientation think of time as linear and punctuality as important. Those with a polychromatic orientation do not see work time as the only kind of time; they may interrupt a meeting or miss a deadline because they are tending other obligations.

It is tempting to see whole cultures as falling at one end or the other on these dimensions and to assume that everyone in a given national culture is the same. But as with other models for analyzing cultures, one must use these only as rough guides. As one business executive said about using Hofstede's research, "In my own practice, I look upon Hofstede's data as would an airplane passenger looking down upon mountain ranges. . . . These represent country cultures. Smaller ranges represent subcultures within countries. But to understand individuals, you have to land at the nearest airport and meet them at the ground level, taking into account their unique qualities."

Sources: David Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success*, 2nd ed. (New York: AMACOM, 2015); John W. Bing, "Hofstede's Consequences: The Impact of His Work on Consulting and Business Practices," *Academy of Management Executive* 18, no. 1 (2004): 80–87.



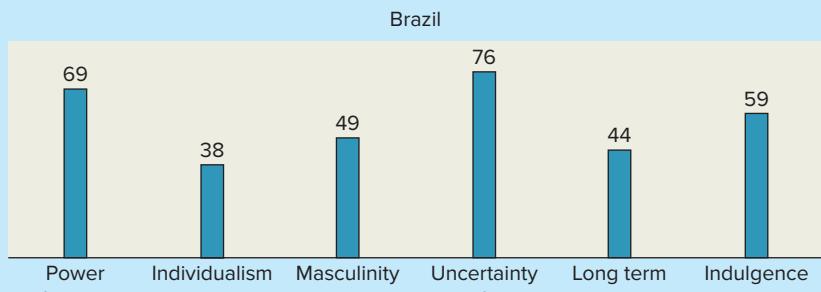
From the Tech Desk

Get a Snapshot of Countries' Cultural Dimensions from Hofstede Insights

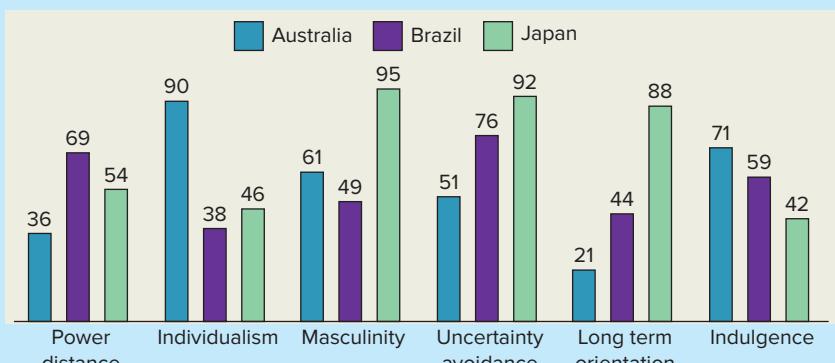
A great starting point for learning the basics about any country's culture is the website of Hofstede Insights. Go to www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/ and type the name of the country you'd like to learn about in the search field. The website will bring up a graph of the country's ratings on Hofstede's six cultural dimensions, followed by explanations of those ratings. The first screen shot here shows the information that came up for Brazil. You can click a button below the chart to read more about each dimension.

The site will even graph countries' differences for you. The second graph shows what you'd see if, after searching for Brazil's traits, you added "Australia" and "Japan" to the search box.

Here again, though, bear in mind that these are rough approximations and do not capture the cultural differences within any given country. Use these findings only as a starting point for your research.



"Country Comparison." Hofstede Insights. <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/brazil/>.



"Country Comparison." Hofstede Insights. <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/australia,brazil,japan/>.

Similarly, how people view superior-subordinate relations can vary by culture. Hofstede called this dimension **power distance**. The dominant arrangement in Latin America, for example, is a strong boss with weak subordinates doing as the boss directs. In other words, these cultures tend to exhibit "high power distance." In contrast, Israel, New Zealand, Sweden, and Denmark have "low power distance," which means that authority is widely shared and decisions are often made by consensus. The United States falls somewhere in between.²⁴ These widely differing practices have led to major communication problems in joint business ventures involving people from these cultures.

Communicators from different cultures can bring their views of human relations to online communication, too. In one study, social networking preferences were found to line up with cultural differences. The US users who were studied formed connections that were much broader and more casual than those of their Chinese and South Korean counterparts, who cultivated online relationships more carefully and maintained them longer.²⁵ Another researcher found that Asians, fearful of overstepping their authority and reluctant to speak to strangers, can be hesitant to offer comments during online conversations.²⁶

Expression of Emotions From culture to culture, norms for personal expression differ. To illustrate, people in China, Korea, and Japan as well as those from the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany tend to frown upon public displays of emotion, whereas those from Israel, southern Europe (e.g., Greece, Italy), Brazil, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia openly demonstrate how they feel.²⁷ Depending on where you are, you may need to control the volume of your voice, your facial expressions, your gestures, and even your laughter.



Communication Matters

They Have a Word for That!

Take a look at these words that have no precise equivalent in English. Why do you think the other languages have these words and English doesn't?

Hygge (Danish):

The act of relaxing cozily with loved ones and good friends, usually while enjoying food and drink.

Komorebi (Japanese):

The interplay between light and leaves when sunlight shines through trees.

Litost (Czech):

A feeling that synthesizes grief, sympathy, remorse, and longing.

Culaccino (Italian):

The stain left on a table from a cold glass of water.

Click the link in the first source note below to see more examples, and then see if you can guess why the English terms listed in the second source have no equivalent in other languages.

Sources: "23 Fascinating Words with No Direct English Translations," *Huffington Post*, December 6, 2017, www.huffpost.com/entry/english-translation-words_n_4790396; Ariel Zeitlin, "10 Common Words That You'll Only Find in English," *Readers Digest*, July 27, 2021, www.rd.com/list/english-words-no-other-language/.

LO3-5 Describe language issues that can cause trouble for nonnative speakers.

Sometimes a word in one language has no corresponding word in another. The French have no word to distinguish between *house* and *home*, *mind* and *brain*, and *man* and *gentleman*. The Spanish have no word to distinguish between a *chairman* and a *president*, while Italians have no word for *wishful thinking*. And Russians have no word for *science* or *having fun*. It goes the other way around, too (see **Communication Matters: They Have a Word for That!**).

One explanation for the lack of language equivalency is that there are grammatical and syntactic differences among languages. For example, while English verbs have multiple tenses, Japanese has only past and present tense, whereas German verbs have more tenses than English verbs do.²⁹ Not surprisingly, even the best translators often cannot find literal equivalents between languages.

Adding to these equivalency problems is that of multiple word meanings. Like English, other languages have more than one meaning for many words. Think, for example, of our numerous meanings for the simple word *run* (to move fast, to compete for office, a score in baseball, a routinely scheduled journey, a break in a stocking, and many more). Unless one knows a language well, it is difficult to know which of the meanings is intended.

Many more such differences exist. It is common in some cultures to combine business and social pleasure; in others, the two are kept separate. Businesspeople in some cultures expect to engage in aggressive bargaining in business transactions; others prefer straightforward dealings, and yet others prefer a slow, indirect approach. Some businesspeople are comfortable with open confrontation, and others find it extremely uncomfortable. Some are quick to trust, and others slow.

There are countless differences between cultures. Thankfully, you do not need to learn them all. But you do need to recognize their existence, respect them, and study them. Only then can you adapt your communication style accordingly.

Problems of Language

English has become the global language of business, and numerous multinational companies have declared that it is the official language of their companies.²⁸ While having a lingua franca (common language) for business is certainly convenient, it has doubtless led to the decline in the number of native English speakers who have studied another language, especially in the United States. It can also generate a false confidence that people from different countries who are using the same language to converse will easily understand each other. But language and cultural differences can still cause miscommunication, as discussed in this section.

Lack of Language Equivalency

The different concepts, experiences, and values of different cultures are reflected in their languages. This means that precise translations can be difficult. Even a word that may seem to be the same in two languages may have different meanings. For example, people in the United States use the word *entrée* to mean the main course of a meal, but in France, it means appetizer. Brits call a sweater a *jumper* and an athletic shoe a *trainer*.

Similarly, words can be used in different ways in different cultures. For example, as one business communication scholar explains, “The Chinese yes, like the Japanese yes, can often be understood by Americans and British as their English yes” when, in fact, that was not the intended meaning. “The Chinese yes often means ‘I am listening.’” And it may even mean “no.” For example, “when an American says to a Chinese counterpart, ‘I see you don’t agree with this clause,’ the Chinese will usually reply ‘Yes,’ meaning a polite agreement with the negative question, ‘Yes, you are right. I do not agree with the clause.’”³⁰

Overcoming such language problems is difficult. The best way would be to learn your partner’s language well, but when this is impractical, you can be aware that translation problems exist and ask questions to determine what the other person means or understands you to mean. For very important messages, you might consider using a procedure called **back translating**. This procedure involves using two translators, one with first-language skills in one of the languages involved and one with first-language skills in the other language. The first translator translates the message into their language, and the second translator then translates the message back into the original. If the translations are good, the second translation matches the original.

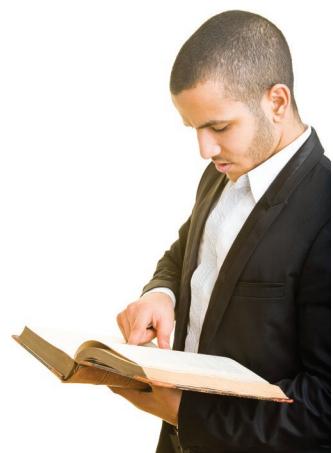
Difficulties with English

In business, English is not the primary language of many who use it. Since these communicators have had to learn it as a second language, they may use it less fluently than native speakers and have certain comprehension problems. Two of the more troublesome areas for them are our use of two-word verbs and our colloquialisms.

Two-Word Verbs One of the most problematic traits of English for nonnative speakers is its heavy use of two-word verbs. By **two-word verb** we mean a phrase consisting of (1) a verb and (2) a second element that, combined with the verb, produces a meaning that the verb alone does not have. For example, take the verb *break* and the word *up*. When combined, they have a meaning quite different from the meanings the words have alone. And look how the meaning changes when the same verb is combined with other words: *break away*, *break out*, *break in*, *break down*. Exhibit 3-2 lists additional examples.

Of course, nonnative English speakers will have learned some of these word combinations, but many of them are not covered in language textbooks or listed in dictionaries. For this reason, you may need to substitute one-word alternatives when communicating with nonnative speakers of English, as in these examples:

Two-Word Verbs	Suggested Substitutes
give up	surrender
speed up, hurry up	accelerate
go on, keep on	continue
put off	defer, delay
take off	depart, remove
come down	descend
go in, come in, get in	enter
go out, come out, get out	exit, leave
blow up	explode
think up	imagine
figure out	solve
take out, take away	remove
go back, get back, be back	return



The more careful you are to use English terms and expressions that nonnative speakers are likely to find in a translation dictionary, the greater your chances of communicating successfully.
style-photographs/iStock/Getty Images

Exhibit 3-2 Some Two-Word Verbs That Can Confuse Nonnative Speakers

Verb Plus Away	Verb Plus In	Verb Plus Out	Verb Plus Up
give away	cash in	blow out	blow up
keep away	cave in	clean out	build up
lay away	close in	crowd out	call up
pass away	dig in	cut out	catch up
throw away	give in	die out	cover up
	run in	dry out	dig up
Verb Plus Back	take in	even out	end up
cut back	throw in	figure out	fill up
keep back		fill out	get up
play back	Verb Plus Off	find out	hang up
read back	break off	give out	hold up
take back	brush off	hold out	keep up
turn back	buy off	lose out	look up
win back	check off	pull out	mix up
	clear off	rule out	pick up
Verb Plus Down	cool off	tire out	save up
calm down	cut off	wear out	shake up
die down	finish off	work out	shut up
hand down	let off		slow up
keep down	mark off	Verb Plus Over	wrap up
let down	pay off	check over	
lie down	run off	do over	Verb Plus Miscellaneous Words
mark down	send off	hold over	bring about
pin down	show off	pass over	catch on
play down	shut off	put over	get across
put down	sound off	roll over	pass on
run down	start off	run over	put across
shut down	take off	stop over	put forth
sit down	write off	take over	set forth
wear down		talk over	
		think over	
		win over	

Slang and Colloquialisms As Chapter 6 points out, slang and colloquialisms can cause problems when your reader or listener is unfamiliar with them. The odds of this being the case are dramatically increased in cross-cultural communication.

For example, will non-US communicators understand the expressions *nerd*, *control freak*, *24/7*, *pumped*, or *basket case*? Such expressions are sometimes defined on English as a Second Language (ESL) websites but rarely in dictionaries. They would be risky to use except with those very familiar with US English. See Exhibit 3-3 for more examples of colloquialisms to avoid.

In the United States, we tend to use colloquial expressions frequently in our everyday communicating. Such expressions are colorful, and they can communicate clearly to those who understand them. But when communicating with nonnative English speakers, try to replace them with

Exhibit 3-3

Examples of Colloquialisms to Avoid with Nonnative Speakers

head for home	shoot from the hip	in a rut
seal the deal	over the top	blow things out of proportion
grasp at straws	on the same page	make heads or tails of it
slap on the wrist	back to the drawing board	six of one, half dozen of the other
on target	start at square one	countdown
in the ballpark	a flop (or bust)	shortcut
do the trick	call it a night	educated guess
learn the ropes	a toss-up	all ears
pitch in	twist someone's arm	add fuel to the fire
between a rock and a hard place	in the ballpark	break the ice

words that are clearly defined in the dictionaries that these people are likely to use. Following are some examples:

Not This

This is just off the top of my head.
He frequently shoots from the hip.
We would be up the creek without a paddle.
They couldn't make heads or tails of the report.
The sales campaign was a flop.
I'll touch base with you on this problem in August.
I'll share our research with the committee so they won't have to start from scratch [or reinvent the wheel].
We will wind down manufacturing operations in November.
Your prediction was right on target.
Don't let him get to you.

But This

Here's a quick idea.
He frequently acts before he thinks.
We would be in a helpless situation.
They couldn't understand the report.
The sales campaign was a failure.
I'll talk with you again about this problem in August.
I'll share our research with the committee to save them some work.
We will end manufacturing operations in November.
Your prediction was correct.
Don't let him upset you.

Advice for Communicating across Cultures

As the preceding sections make clear, communicating across cultures, and even across the cultures within your own country, is fraught with potential misunderstandings. Despite your best effort, not every act of cross-cultural communication will succeed. Like other kinds of communication, cross-cultural communication involves people—and people are unpredictable. In every culture, some persons are uncooperative, deceitful, prejudiced, or insensitive, while others are respectful, welcoming, sincere, and harmony seeking. You can only make sure that you are as prepared as possible. Keeping in mind the following advice will help.

LO3-6 Describe ways to prepare for effective cross-cultural communication.

Do Your Research

Exhibit 3-4 lists helpful resources on different countries' cultures and their communication practices. Before any international business encounter, be sure to do your homework. Learn something about the topography, climate, and location of your potential partners' country, as well as the likely impact of religion and history on their culture. Study descriptions of their customs, their

Exhibit 3-4 Resources for Cross-Cultural Communication

Websites:

state.gov. The US government's main diplomatic website. The "Countries and Areas" tab on the main menu bar takes you to a list of countries, and clicking on a country gives you access to a link at the left labeled "View Fact Sheet." At the bottom of the fact sheet are links for learning more about the country and its relations with the United States. There is also a news feed for each country.

cia.gov/the-world-factbook/. The US Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook. The site "provides basic intelligence on the history, people, government, economy, energy, geography, environment, communications, transportation, military, terrorism, and transnational issues for 266 world entities."

export.gov/. Website of the International Trade Administration, offering assistance of all types on international trade. Of particular value are its Country Commercial Guides, regularly updated for each country (to access these, click Research Center > Research by Country and then click on Country Commercial Guides). Guides are provided for over 125 countries.

oecd.org/index.htm. Website for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)—an organization of 38 member countries that share their knowledge and resources on over 200 countries (click the "Countries" tab).

NationMaster.com. A popular educational website started by an Australian statistics enthusiast. Scroll down to "Overview by Country" and use the alphabetical list of the 305 countries covered to find maps, flags, and all kinds of stats about each country.

news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country_profiles/default.stm. This BBC site provides profiles of countries as well as territories and international organizations, with an emphasis on history, government, and news articles about the country.

Selected Books:

Jag Bhalla, *I'm Not Hanging Noodles on Your Ears and Other Intriguing Idioms from around the World* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2009). A compilation of colorful expressions in different languages.

Martin J. Gannon and Rajnandini Pillai, *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys through 30 Nations, Clusters of Nations, Continents, and Diversity*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013). An insightful, innovative approach that interprets cultures through their popular metaphors, such as "the Japanese garden" and "the Finnish sauna."

David Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success*, 2nd ed. (New York: AMACOM, 2015). Uses Hall's and Hofstede's cultural dimensions and additional research to generate 10 dimensions of cultural difference.

Jeanette S. Martin and Lillian H. Chaney, *Global Business Etiquette: A Guide to International Communication and Customs* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2012). Comprehensive guide to world business communication and behavior.

Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done across Cultures* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014). An interesting, story-filled book that discusses where various countries fall on eight scales: communicating, evaluating, persuading, leading, deciding, trusting, disagreeing, and scheduling.

Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway, *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: How to Do Business in Sixty Countries*, 2nd ed. (Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2006). An alphabetically arranged country-by-country guide describing the overall culture, behavioral styles, negotiating techniques, protocol, and business practices of each country.

Mike Nicks and Barry Tomalin, *The World's Business Cultures and How to Unlock Them*, 3rd ed. (London: Thorogood, 2014). Provides an introduction to culture and covers 14 important business cultures in depth.

Simcha Ronen and Oded Shenkar, *Navigating Global Business: A Cultural Compass* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), <https://doi-org.uc.idm.oclc.org/10.1017/9781316107034>. Uses extensive research to group the countries of the world into 11 cultures.

Kirk St. Amant and Sigrid Kelsey, *Computer-Mediated Communication across Cultures: International Interactions in Online Environments* (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2012). A collection of studies on such topics as different cultures' use of social networking sites, international gaming communities, and cultural influences on online conversations.

Craig Storti, *The Art of Doing Business Across Cultures: 10 Countries, 50 Mistakes, and 5 Steps to Cultural Competence* (Boston, Intercultural Press, 2017). The "50 mistakes" referred to in the title are demonstrated in 50 short conversations in which flawed communication occurs. Storti analyzes each conversation to explain how cultural differences caused the problem.

Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012). A great introduction to cultural differences and their likely impact on doing business and managing cross culturally.

values, their manners, and even their food and recreation. Research the differences between their language and yours and familiarize yourself with any important terms and concepts in their culture that have no equivalent in yours.

Besides doing library and online research, talk with people who have had experience with those in other cultures, and if they have writing samples, ask to see them. You can also take an intercultural business course, pursue opportunities to socialize or do teamwork with nonnatives in your own country, and attend cultural festivals near you.

When getting to know people who are different from you in your own country and workplace, you will need to make an effort to reach out beyond your own culture as well. Tap the internet's abundant resources for understanding such groups, and make an effort to notice and socialize with people who had different upbringings. As Mary-Frances Winters says, the way to develop smooth relations with people from different identity groups is to "face your fears and choose courage." Realize that we all have biases and that you will make some mistakes.³¹ Your efforts will be appreciated, and each encounter will strengthen your knowledge and versatility.



This float in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, CA, celebrates those of Chinese heritage.

Chon Kit Leong/123RF

Know Yourself and Your Company

As several books by international communication experts point out, a frequent mistake made by those preparing to do business abroad is that they focus all their research on people in the culture they're about to engage with and forget to research themselves. Yet knowing yourself is a good way to anticipate and prevent likely frustrations. For example, if you know you tend to be a "low-context," "low power distance," "cooperative," "long-term goals" kind of person, you will be less caught off guard by people at the opposite ends of these spectrums. You can remind yourself to watch and listen carefully for visual and vocal cues, to be patient, to show respect, and to act with due dignity yourself.

It is also important to understand the business you represent. Is yours a rules-bound, procedure-governed operation or one that is more loose and trusting? Do you solve problems by leaving them to management, by hiring an expert, or by pooling everyone's ideas? Does your company avoid mixing business with pleasure? Do employees socialize only with their peers, or does everyone in the company feel free to relax together? Does your company tend to take a straight, efficient route to its goals or learn and adjust as it goes? Just as you will view your international business partner as representative of their company, so they will view you. Be sure you send accurate signals.

The same advice applies when you're communicating with someone within your country who identifies with a cultural group that is different from yours. When you catch yourself being taken aback by someone's comments or behavior, think before you take a negative view: It may be an opportunity for you to discover something valuable about others and perhaps even something about yourself that you'd be better off without.

Be Aware—and Wary—of Stereotypes

One of the most sensitive issues in cross-cultural communication is the extent to which generalizing about a culture perpetuates **stereotypes**. We have come to regard stereotyping as negative, with good reason: Stereotyping can prejudice us and blind us to others' true natures. But the reason stereotypes are powerful is that they are based to some degree on observable likenesses within groups of people. They appeal because they are tempting and often useful mental shortcuts.

The problem is that this is also their downside. As the international experts at Canning explain, they "are fixed and conventionalized" and for that reason "suggest a failure to learn from experience." Well-researched cultural stereotypes can be useful as basic models that you should



You Make the Call

Sometimes we stereotype those from different parts of the United States. What comes to mind when you think of a New Yorker? Or someone from Texas? Or Los Angeles? Or Mississippi? What do you think has given rise to these regional stereotypes, and what evidence have you seen that they can be false?

then adjust as you accumulate additional information. The generalizations can be a beginning point of reference, but you should quickly let them go when someone clearly doesn't represent the general type.³²

Another reason it is important to be aware of stereotypes is that your prospective international business partners, as well as those from different US groups, are likely to see *you* through the lens of a cultural stereotype. The more familiar you are with the way people from your culture are seen by those in another, the better prepared you will be to show them the ways in which you differ from or align with the stereotype.

Be Considerate to Nonnative English Speakers

Your communication partners from other countries will have varying levels of skill with English. Some may have a better grasp of English vocabulary and grammar than you do, while others may have only the barest grasp of the language. As we have suggested, erring on the side of simplicity is your best bet for clear communication. Write or talk simply and clearly. Talk slowly and enunciate each word. Remember that because most nonnative speakers learned English in school, they are acquainted mainly with dictionary meanings and are not likely to understand slang words or words with subtle connotations.

Be aware, too, of the emotional dimension of interchanges between native and nonnative English speakers. Many nonnative English speakers are sensitive about their English proficiency, sometimes to the point that they experience what researchers call *foreign language anxiety* when trying to communicate with native English speakers.³³ One study of a Chinese multinational company that required managers and employees to use English when communicating with non-Chinese speakers found that the uneven language proficiency generated stress, shame, and a feeling of indebtedness (because of not being able to share equivalent amounts of information) on the part of the Chinese communicators and resentment, frustration, and even anger on the part of the native English speakers, whose direct and efficient style did not work well with the Chinese.³⁴ The fact that everyone is using the same language can mask such problems if the communicators are not attuned to each other's communication styles and levels of proficiency.

Listen carefully, be patient, and be willing to reword or explain something you've said. Your goodwill will go a long way toward achieving mutual understanding.

Choose an Appropriate and Inclusive Communication Medium

When communicating virtually with colleagues from other countries, be sure that the communication and collaboration medium you choose is accessible to all involved.

Communication media and technologies are used with different frequency and purpose in different countries. In businesses in the United States, despite increases in the use of asynchronous technologies, email is still the dominant mode of communication. However, in China, due to their late adoption of email and early adoption of synchronous messaging, most of the workplace communication that would be an email in the US happens in WeChat, the government-approved instant-messaging platform.³⁵ As a result, you should know that sending an email to a colleague in China may not be the most effective way to get a timely response. And, considering the you-viewpoint in this scenario, this choice could be very inconvenient to your colleague.

This conscientiousness applies to other communication technologies, too. According to data from Alexa and Google Trends, Facebook was the leading social-media platform worldwide in January 2022, but Russians favored VKontakte, Japan favored Line, South Korea relied mostly on KakaoTalk, and Orkut was strong in India and Brazil.³⁶ Such facts can help you understand that it might be difficult for people in other countries to use the media channels you prefer or to access what you post on those channels. When arranging virtual meetings, choosing an appropriate platform for all participants is as important as choosing the features to use in your meeting

(e.g., camera, recording, transcripts). Zoom dominates the market worldwide, but Skype dominates in France and India, and Google Meet is preferred in Denmark and Italy.³⁷

As you go through your problem-solving process when communicating globally, ask yourself if your use of a certain communication medium would disadvantage any members of your group. When in doubt, ask other participants if they have technology and communication media preferences.

Be Open to Change

Communicating across cultures can be a broadening experience if you approach it with openness and tolerance. In addition to learning about new and better ways to do business, you can also grow personally and enlarge your world.

With that said, you need to realize that sometimes your practices and values will simply not mesh with those of people with different backgrounds. And sometimes it would actually be unethical to do what they want you to do. For example, Jean-Claude Usunier lists several practices to avoid in international negotiations, including bribing, buying information, buying influence, giving misleading information, exploiting the other party's ignorance, undermining the competition by buying out their people, and negotiating without intending to keep any promises.³⁸ Unfortunately, these unethical practices are all fairly widespread, even though some have been made expressly illegal by such acts as the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. You may encounter other ethical problems as well—racism, sexism, homophobia, disregard for the environment, exploitation of labor, and so forth.

If put in a situation where you must choose between making a deal or behaving ethically and legally, seek advice from others in your company. You are likely to be advised to do the ethical thing—not only because most businesspeople are honorable but also because, these days, news about scandalous company dealings travels fast, often with disastrous results.

If approached with curiosity, humility, and sincerity, forming cross-cultural business relations can be incredibly rewarding. Skillful cultivation of such relations will take you far—both literally and figuratively.

Power Charge Your Professionalism: Use the Right Pronoun

Use Reference Chapter A to help you select the word that correctly completes each sentence below. Then explain why you chose the word you did.

1. The representatives from our company will be Janet, Javier, and (me/I/myself).
2. The Chinese representatives have signed off on the deal proposed by Dalil and (me/I/myself).
3. Allison was a coauthor of the report, so (she/her) and I will present it.
4. The agreement (which/that) we reached will be beneficial to both parties.
5. The international vendors (whose/who's) proposals we read all looked capable and competitive.
6. The CEO with (who/whom) we met seemed skeptical.
7. The Indian service representatives (who/whom) we hired speak excellent English.
8. The Danish executives (that/who) attended the conference would like to join our organization.

Using the right pronoun is important because . . .

- Most of your international business associates will speak English, which means that they will have studied English grammar extensively. You do not want them to catch you making mistakes in your own language!
- Errors involving the personal pronouns (e.g., *I, me, he, him, they, them*) are especially damaging to your professional image because they suggest a low level of literacy.

For further practice using the right pronoun, see the activities on using the right pronoun case and using the right relative pronoun in Adaptive Learning Assignment under McGraw Hill Adaptive Reading, Grammar, and Research Assignment in the module “Grammar and Common Sentence Problems.”

Key Terms

microaggressions 60
culture 63
ethnocentrism 66
monochronic 69

polychronic 69
low-context culture 69
high-context culture 69
power distance 71

back translating 73
two-word verb 73
stereotypes 77

Critical-Thinking Questions

1. If you were trying to persuade your boss to implement some form of cross-cultural or diversity training in the company, what kinds of evidence might help you make a convincing case? **LO3-1**
2. As Communication Matters: Microaggressions points out, microaggressions (e.g., not looking at or speaking to someone attending a meeting, repeatedly interrupting someone's comments, referring to someone by the wrong name or mispronouncing the name, or showing lack of interest with one's body language) make people feel they're invisible or not valued. Think of a situation in which you felt you were the recipient of or witnessed such treatment. What was the microaggression? How did you respond at the time? Would you handle the situation differently now? **LO3-1**
3. You are working on a group project for class, and you assigned the first draft of your written component to your classmate June, who is Asian American. When she circulates the draft for review, one member of the group, Jake, says, "Wow, June, you're really good at writing in English!" You know June grew up in Chicago, so you recognize this comment as potentially offensive to June. How do you address this microaggression? **LO3-1**
4. In their book *Corporate Tribalism: White Men/White Women and Cultural Diversity at Work* (2009), diversity consultants Thomas Kochman and Jean Mavrelis discuss the impact of race and gender on workplace behavior. See if you can find the gist of this book on the internet or in a book review. What are their main observations, especially about the communication differences between white men, white women, Black men, and Black women? How might you incorporate these observations into your own workplace behavior? **LO3-1**
5. Study how close to the center of the pie chart the countries appear in Exhibit 3-1. What factors might account for some countries being strongly associated with their regions and other countries (especially the five with asterisks) less so? **LO3-2**
6. Put yourself in the shoes of the trainer described in this chapter's Problem-Solving Challenge. What might have been a better way to handle the situation? How might the trainer have prepared better for the situation? **LO3-2, LO3-3, LO3-4, LO3-5, LO3-6**
7. What are the prevailing attitudes in US culture toward the following, and how might these vary within different US cultures? Across different countries' cultures? **LO3-3**
 - a. Behaviors when greeting others
 - b. When/where people sit and stand
 - c. Body positions, movements, and use of gestures during business meetings (face to face and online)
8. Study the 10 dimensions of cultural difference in Communication Matters: Dimensions of Culture. Choose one and imagine a scenario in which this dimension might cause a misunderstanding if the two parties in a communication situation represented the two different ends of the dimension. **LO3-3, LO3-4**
9. In his book *When Cultures Collide* (1996), Richard Lewis groups the cultures of the world into three broad categories based on whether they are "linear-active," "multi-active," or "reactive." Find a description of this approach on the internet or in a review. Do you think his model seems valid? Could familiarity with this approach be helpful when doing business with those from other countries? **LO3-3, LO3-4**

10. What are the prevailing attitudes in US culture toward the following, and how might those attitudes affect Americans' communication with those from other cultures? **LO3-4**
 - a. Negotiation methods
 - b. How to sell a product or service
 - c. Employee loyalty
 - d. Chatting with strangers
11. Assume that you've just been made manager of a team of young employees that includes two recent hires from China. This country, like several Asian countries, has a high power-distance rating, meaning that people from this country tend to consider it inappropriate to bother their boss or express dissatisfaction. How might you encourage your Chinese team members to ask you questions, let you know when they are having difficulties, and bring any concerns to your attention? (If you're an Asian student and can identify with this example, what would encourage you to communicate more with your boss?) **LO3-4**
12. Is a conversational style as appropriate in cross-cultural communication as it is in the United States? Discuss. **LO3-4, LO3-5**
13. On a recent trip to India, Mr. Yang, a prominent Chinese executive, dined with his client, Himanshu Jain. Mr. Yang commented that the food was spicy, which Mr. Jain interpreted as an opportunity to discuss Indian cuisine. After lengthy explanations, Mr. Yang commented again that the food was spicy. What's happening here? What barrier is likely getting in the way of clear communication? (Adapted from Danielle Medina Walker, Thomas Walker, and Joerg Schmitz, *Doing Business Internationally: The Guide to Cross-Cultural Success* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003], 237.) **LO3-4**
14. Think of English words or US expressions (other than this chapter's examples) that probably do not have precise equivalents in other languages. How would you attempt to explain these to nonnative English speakers? **LO3-5**
15. The words listed below capture an important and unique cultural concept in the countries in which they're paired. Research one of these terms, write an English definition for it, and be ready to explain to your classmates why understanding the concept would be helpful to those who are doing business with people in this country. (Discussed in Craig Storti, *The Art of Doing Business Across Cultures: 10 Countries, 50 Mistakes, and 5 Steps to Cultural Competence* [Boston, Intercultural Press, 2017]). **LO3-4, LO3-5**
 - a. *duscha* (Russia)
 - b. *ringi* (Japan)
 - c. *personalismo* (Mexico)
 - d. *quanxi* (China)
16. Compare the two email messages below. Both were written to inform the reader that the writer's company had been charged too much for an ad published in the reader's magazine. The first (with both Japanese and English versions displayed) was written by a Japanese author to a Japanese reader. The second was written by a US author to a US reader. What differences in the two approaches do you see? What cultural differences might account for these writing differences? **LO3-4, LO3-5**

Japanese version in Japanese:

料金についての問い合わせ

トラベルジャパン雑誌広告部

吉田一郎様

この度は貴誌トラベルジャパンの4月号32ページに弊社の広告を掲載して頂き、ありがとうございました。

本日広告料37万円引き落としの連絡を受取りました。しかしこの金額はフルページ用のものようです。弊社の広告は2／3ページでしたので、貴社の広告料リストによれば29万円のはずです。

御参照のため注文書の写しを添付いたしました。ご確認のうえ、ご対応頂けますよう、お願い申し上げます。

多摩リゾート 経理部

鈴木美智子

Japanese version in English:

Subject: Inquiry about the charge

Dear Mr. Yoshida,

Thank you for putting our advertisement on page 32 in the April issue of your magazine, *Travel Japan*.

We received today a notice that ¥85,552 was charged to our account for the ad. However, this amount seems for a full-page ad. Since our ad covers 2/3 of the page, the amount should be ¥57,003 according to your list of the advertising rates.

I have attached a copy of the purchase order for our 2/3 page ad for your reference. We would appreciate your checking into the matter and making a necessary adjustment as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Michiko Suzuki

US version:

Subject: Adjustment needed for the Hocking Hills account

Dear Mr. Dugan,

As the attached purchase order shows, The Hocking Hills Resort & Spa submitted a request for a 2/3 page ad to run in the March issue of *Travel Ohio*. Our 2/3 page appeared on page 32 of that issue, but the receipt we just received indicates that we were charged for a full-page ad.

Will you please credit our account for \$800, the difference between the two ad rates?

Thank you,

Charlotte Stant

(Source for Japanese message: Yukie Aoyagi, Language Education Center, Seitoku University, Japan.)

17. Following is a real message written from a US marketing professional to a potential client in Germany. After researching German business communication on the internet, explain why the US author wrote the message the way she did for this audience. Consider how the message might have been different had she written it to a prospective client in the United States. **LO3-4, LO3-5, LO3-6**

Dear Herman:

Meeting you and the other members of the product selection team last Friday was a sincere pleasure. We are honored not only that you took the time to explain the current dynamics and structure of General Telekom but also that you gave us your entire day. Thank you for your generosity.

I understand that you have graciously offered to share some of United Plorcon's key product qualities with the other executives in your company. We are most appreciative that you have offered to help in this way. Based on our discussions at the meeting, we will summarize the main points of interest and send them to you.

To make the cost-benefit charts more self-explanatory, I will slightly condense the material and add some notes. They will not be confidential, so please share them if you wish. I will send the revised charts to you by the end of the week. After I send them, I will follow up with you to ensure that you have all the material you need to explain who we are and what we offer.

Finally, thank you for your hospitality. Staying in an ideally located hotel, having coffee at a beautiful castle, viewing some of the world's best art, and sharing an exquisite meal made my first visit to Stuttgart a most memorable one. I hope that between our two companies, we can create many opportunities for our United Plorcon team to return to your beautiful city.

I look forward to talking with you again soon.

Respectfully yours,

18. Driving home from school, you see a thin white guy walking along with a thin white girl behind him. Both of them have unkempt hair, tattoos, metal adornments, and ragged clothes. What automatic interpretations would you make about them? Would you consider this stereotyping? If so, is it wrong? When is stereotyping bad? **LO3-6**

Skills-Building Exercises

1. Choose a culture within the United States to research (it can be based on ethnicity, region of origin, sexual orientation, gender and gender identity, or any other type of category that your instructor approves). What should people in other US cultures know about this culture to be able to communicate effectively with those who identify with it? **LO3-1**
2. Diversity training is becoming widespread, but it is not always effective. What strategies seem to work? Which ones don't? Why? Be ready to share your findings with the class. **LO3-1**
3. Research a company scandal that involved cultural insensitivity or dubious international business practices. What ethical principle did the company violate? What was the cost of this mistake? **LO3-1, LO3-6**
4. Research Denmark or another country and analyze the likely impact of its geography on its culture. **LO3-2, LO3-3, LO3-4**
5. Research France or another country to assess the likely impact of its history on its culture. **LO3-2, LO3-3, LO3-4**
6. Research India or another country and analyze the likely impact of its religious background on its culture. **LO3-2, LO3-3, LO3-4**
7. Research how US geography, history, and religious background have influenced its different cultures and its culture overall. **LO3-2, LO3-3, LO3-4**
8. Study a country's culture and then infer its people's likely attitudes toward American values and behaviors. **LO3-2, LO3-3, LO3-4**
9. You're chair of an important committee in your professional organization, and the committee has just acquired its first non-US member, a citizen of the United Arab Emirates. What factors should you be aware of as you conduct your communications with the committee? (Or, do this exercise substituting Japan, Romania, or another country your instructor assigns.) **LO3-2, LO3-3, LO3-4**
10. Compare the use of smiling or gift-giving in three countries from different parts of the world and explain why this knowledge is important. **LO3-2, LO3-3, LO3-4**
11. Research the extent to which the younger adults in a country of your choice are breaking away from its traditional cultural values and practices. What accounts for the changes, and what are the implications for business communication? **LO3-2, LO3-3, LO3-4**
12. Interview a student or business professional whose country of origin is not the same as yours about differences between their country and yours. Use this person's insights, as well as the information and references in this chapter, to write a short report on your findings and their implications for business communication. **LO3-2, LO3-3, LO3-4**
13. From a newspaper, magazine, or website, find and bring to class three sentences containing words and expressions that a nonnative English speaker might have difficulty understanding. Rewrite the sentences for this reader. **LO3-5**
14. What word choices in the following email message might give a nonnative speaker trouble? Rewrite the memo to avoid such wording. **LO3-5**

Dear conference-planning team, High-fives to you for an awesome conference! I heard tons of compliments from the participants. You've definitely set a new high for our annual conferences! The schedule you set up couldn't have worked out better. The seven-minute downtime between sessions gave people plenty of time to get to the next session without

having to hustle. The receptions were great icebreakers, and the catered food was out of this world. The sushi bar was an especially big hit—I saw many people coming back for seconds at that table. Sincere thanks to you for all the time and effort you invested in this labor of love. Your organization is in your debt.

15. Review the cross-cultural thank-you message in Critical-Thinking Question 17 and rewrite it as if it were going to an executive at Verizon in New York City. **LO3-4, LO3-5**
16. Choose a country quite different from your own and, after studying its culture and business practices, write a short report on the kinds of ethical issues that might arise in doing business with those from this country. (For starters, you might read the article “Building Ethical Business Cultures: BRIC by BRIC” at europeanbusinessreview.com.) Which of these issues might be relatively easy to deal with? Which would be more difficult? Which might be deal-breakers? **LO3-6**



Problem Solver to the Rescue

Recruiting a Committee Member

Instructions: Read the communication scenario that follows and then evaluate the sample solution using the problem-solving advice in Chapter 1 and the advice in this chapter. You may want to consult resources on the internet as well. If your instructor directs, rewrite the message.

Scenario: Play the role of Kevin Wills, newly appointed chair of the Association for Business Communication’s (ABC’s) International Issues Committee. You haven’t been on the committee long, but your eagerness to take on the leadership role led the committee to recommend that you be their next leader.

At the last annual conference of the ABC, you met a delightful first-time attendee, Kobayashi Hasegawa. He was introduced to you by your

friend Hiro Kawakami, who has been coming to the conference for many years. You think Kobi (the name Hiro used when introducing you to him) would make a great addition to the committee, especially since he indicated that he would like to become more involved in the association. Below is the email you wrote to invite him to join your committee (the link is the real link for ABC’s International Issues Committee).

Dear Kobi,

In my capacity as chair of the Association for Business Communication’s International Issues Committee, I’m writing to invite you to join our committee.

As you may know, our committee assists the Association with its internationalization efforts,

including sponsoring a panel at the annual conference and recruiting more international members. You can check out a complete list of our duties here: www.businesscommunication.org/page/international-issues.

At present, we do not have anyone from Japan on our committee, so you would fill that gap. You could add a lot, especially in terms of sharing your knowledge of business communication in Japan. I hope you’ll come on board.

Sincerely,

Kevin Wills Chair, ABC International Issues Committee



Designing the Right Type of Message: From Letters to Social Media

Learning Objectives

- L04-1** Understand the importance of skillful writing in business.
- L04-2** Describe the writing process and effective writing strategies.
- L04-3** Describe the purpose and form of letters.
- L04-4** Describe the purpose and form of memorandums (memos).
- L04-5** Describe the purpose and form of emails.
- L04-6** Understand the nature and business uses of text messaging, instant messaging, and social media.
- L04-7** Describe the use of computer tools to facilitate planning messages.
- L04-8** Describe the use of computer tools to facilitate drafting messages.
- L04-9** Describe the use of computer tools to facilitate revising messages.
- L04-10** Describe how technology will continue to impact communication in the future.



Much of this book focuses on writing in business. Is oral communication important? Absolutely. How about visual communication? Definitely. We focus on written communication because experienced businesspeople tend to place writing skills ahead of other communication skills when asked what they seek in job

applicants. In fact, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers 2023 *Job Outlook*,¹ written communication skills are among the top skills employers value in new employees, along with problem solving, team, quantitative, and analytical skills. Also, as employees advance, they do more knowledge work, which often requires expertise in

written forms of communication. Therefore, your written communication skills are ones you want to continuously develop as a business professional.

Developing your oral communication skills is essential as well, and you'll likely find that many of the strategies for developing written messages apply to oral messages as well.



Problem-Solving Challenge

Managing Your Communication Choices

Introduce yourself to this chapter by shifting to the role of Julie Evans, a recent college graduate in her first job as an accounts manager at a small company that manufactures windows. You are amazed (and sometimes overwhelmed) by the types of messages you send each day. Every day you process dozens of internal email messages. Occasionally you write and receive memorandums. Then there are the more formal communications you exchange with people outside the

company—both email and letters. You also write messages for social media sites and daily rely on text messaging and instant messaging for quick communication.

With so many audiences and so many ways to send messages with your co-workers, you often wonder if you're making good choices. Are you choosing the right channel for your communication? Are your messages accomplishing your business and communication goals? Are

you using communication and computer technologies effectively and efficiently? Are your readers able to understand your messages and act on them?

Keep these questions at the front of your mind as you read this chapter and answer them as you learn more about ways you can ensure your business messages are right for your audience, purpose, and context.

The Importance of Good Business-Writing Skills

Writing is in some ways more difficult to do well than other kinds of communication because the words primarily communicate the message. Certainly, the visual presentation of a document can help communicate your message, but you also can't rely on your facial expressions, body language, or voice to set the tone for a message. To be an effective business writer, then, you must develop the ability to capture a complex reality in words, which requires you to use ingenuity, critical thinking, and problem solving.

Your ability to write well will be critical to your and your organization's success. Grammarly's *The State of Business Communication Report* provides some interesting statistics regarding the need for good business writing skills. According to the report, knowledge workers spend about 20 hours per week on writing, and 93 percent of business leaders agree that "communication is the backbone of business." At the same time, business leaders report that their teams lose over seven hours per week due to poor communication—almost an entire workday! However, time and productivity are not the only losses; 20 percent also report lost business, with 86 percent of those business leaders estimating losses exceeding \$10,000.²

Of course, you want to develop writing skills that make you an asset to your organization. The first major section of this chapter will help you capture the complex nature of writing by showing you

LO4-1 Understand the importance of skillful writing in business.

how to divide the writing process into parts. You will also learn tips for using technology to be more efficient in each part of the writing process. The remainder of the chapter will discuss the features and conventions associated with the main forms of business messages.

The Writing Process as Problem Solving

L04-2 Describe the writing process and effective writing strategies.

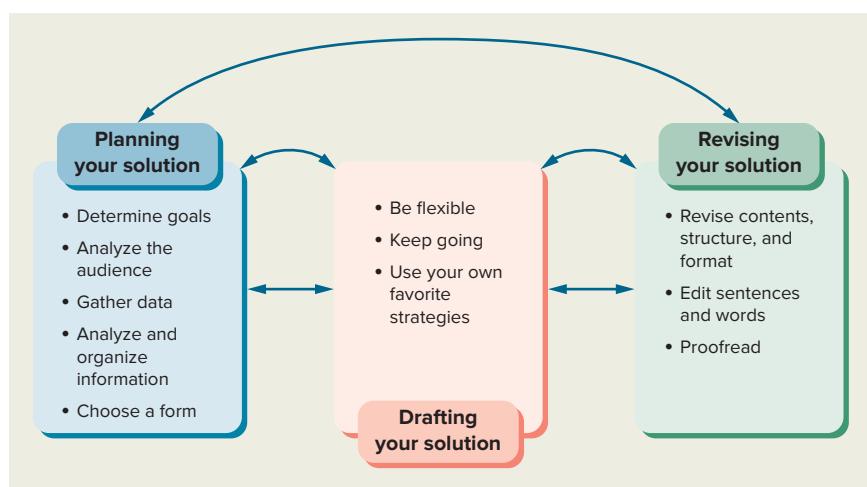
The writing process is really the process of problem solving and critical thinking. Familiarizing yourself with this basic process and using it for eventually developing your own process will help you write messages efficiently to audiences that appreciate your professionalism and helpfulness.

Because the writing process is both an extension of your problem solving as well as a process in itself, you may become so focused on writing that you lose sight of the problem-solving purpose of your message, which we discussed in Chapter 1. As Exhibit 4-1 shows, you must keep your problem-solving purpose in mind as you engage in your writing process, which involves three stages: **planning**, **drafting**, and **revising**. In other words, you figure out what you want to say, you say it, and then you polish it, always asking yourself if your process is moving you toward your problem-solving goal.

Each of these stages in the writing process can be divided into various activities. However, as the arrows in the figure suggest, you should not think of the three stages as strictly chronological or separate. In practice, the stages are interrelated. Like the steps for solving business communication problems described in Chapter 1, they are **recursive**. For example, you may start writing pieces of the draft during the planning stage. Or you may find when drafting that gathering more information is necessary. Or you may decide to revise a piece of the document carefully before continuing with the drafting. In other words, you should make sure your process is flexible if you want to achieve the best results in creating your messages.

A good practice for beginning business writers is to spend roughly one-third of the writing time in each of the three stages. A common mistake that writers make is spending too much time on drafting and too little on the other two stages—planning and revising. Preparing to write and improving what you have written are as critical to success as the drafting stage, and careful attention to all three stages can actually make your drafting process, as well as your entire writing process, more efficient. Once you have become an experienced business writer, you will be able to write many messages without as much planning and revising. Even so, some planning and revising will still be essential to getting the best results with your messages.

Exhibit 4-1 The Writing Process



Planning the Message

Planning a good message takes time, especially when you are writing to an audience you may not know all that well. The investment of your time pays dividends when you are able not only to achieve the goal of your message but also to enhance your professional image by writing a coherent, concise message. Because business writing, as we have discussed, is a problem-solving endeavor, you want to start with the problem.

As Exhibits 1-7 and 1-8 indicate, once you have defined your problem, you can plan your message by answering several questions regarding your context and audience. As you plan your message, you can make the process

more manageable by thinking about it in five smaller steps: determining goals; analyzing the audience; gathering information; analyzing and organizing the information; and choosing the form, channel, and format the document will take.

Determining Goals Because business communication is largely performed in response to a certain situation, one of your main planning tasks is to figure out what you want to do about that situation. Bear in mind that in business communication “what to do” means not only what you want your communication to achieve but also any action related to solving the larger business problem.

Let’s say, for example, that you manage a hotel where the air-conditioning has stopped functioning. You will need to decide what to communicate to your guests about this problem. However, this decision is related to other decisions. How and when will you get the air-conditioning problem solved? In the meantime, will you simply apologize? Make arrangements for each guest to have a free continental breakfast or complimentary beverages? Rent fans for meeting rooms and any guest rooms upon request? You may also have to text the hotel’s repair technician. It’s likely that you will have to inform your boss, too.

As Exhibit 4-2 shows, solving the business problem is closely related to both your communication goals and business goals. You will need to bring your **business goals** (e.g., increase profits, ensure customer satisfaction) to bear on your **writing goals** (e.g., communicate your message, promote your professional image, build goodwill), and clarifying your writing goals will help you generate business solutions.

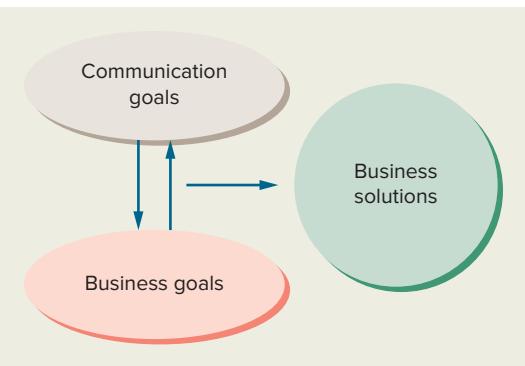
Analyzing the Audience Once you know your purpose—what you want your message to do—you need to **analyze the audience** (or audiences) who will read your message. Who will be affected by what you write? What organizational, professional, and personal issues or qualities will affect the audience’s response to your message? What organizational, professional, and personal issues or qualities do you have that affect how you will write your message? What is your relationship with your reader? Are you writing to your superior? Your colleagues? Your subordinates? Clients? Answers to these questions and others (see Exhibit 4-3) will influence your choices regarding your channel of communication, tone, style, content, organization, and format. Remember that, as you answer the questions in the Audience Analysis Checklist, you want to be thinking about both the audience who will read your message as well as others who might be impacted by it.

In the hotel manager scenario, for instance, how might your approach in an announcement to guests who are currently at the hotel differ from your approach in a response to a guest’s complaint letter a week after the incident? How might your message to your boss differ from your text to the repair technician? How might any of your messages to one audience impact another audience? Though you should take time to analyze your audience early in the planning process, you should continue to think of your audience as you proceed through the rest of the planning stage and through the drafting and revising stages, too. Always be thinking about what kind of information will matter most to your audience. If you fail to meet your audience’s needs, you compromise your professional image, your ability to meet your business and communication goals, and your ability to solve your problem.

Gathering Information Once you have a sense of what you want your message to achieve and what the audience needs to know, you may need to do some research. In many cases this research can be informal—finding past correspondence; consulting with other employees or with outside advisers; or reviewing sales records, warranties, and product descriptions. In other cases, you will do formal research such as conducting surveys or reviewing the literature on a certain subject. In general, you will collect any information that can help you decide what to do and what to say in your message.

Exhibit 4-2

The Interrelated Nature of Business Goals and Communication Goals



You Make the Call

If you were the hotel manager, how would your responses to the guests differ?

Exhibit 4-3 Audience Analysis Checklist



Your relationship to your audience

What is my relationship **to** my audience?

- Colleague or someone of equal rank
- Manager or someone of superior rank
- Client or customer
- Other: _____

What is my relationship **with** my audience?

- Friendly and informal. I know my audience well. We communicate often and have a social business relationship.
- Friendly and formal. We've met and have a cordial, business-like relationship.
- Neutral or no relationship. I don't know my audience personally.
- Unfriendly or hostile.
- Other: _____



Your audience's reaction

What is my audience's likely reaction to my message?

- Positive
- Negative
- Neutral

What do I want my audience to **think, feel, do, know, or believe** as a result of my message?

- _____
- _____
- _____

What factors in **my company culture** or other background information should I consider?

- _____
- _____
- _____

What factors in **my audience's culture** or background should I consider?

- _____
- _____
- _____

What does my audience need to know?

- _____
- _____
- _____

What does my audience already know?

- _____
- _____
- _____



Your communication channel

What is the best way for your reader to receive your message?

- _____ would be the best channel for delivering the message.
- This channel is best because _____.



Communication Matters

Do I Need to Write It?

When you have a substantial message to convey—that is, one not suitable for a quick text or instant message—is it better to write it or speak it?

You'll probably want to write it if one or more of the following applies:

- You want a written record of the communication.
- You want the communication to be perceived as somewhat formal.
- You think you can explain better in writing, and you don't want the recipient to interrupt you until you're done.
- Your reader will want to be able to review what you said.
- You have to reach a lot of people at once with the same message.
- The situation isn't so sensitive or timely that it requires an oral communication channel such as a phone call or in-person conversation.

Gathering information by using your memory, problem-solving skills, and creativity is also important. For example, you can visualize your readers to determine their interests. Likewise, you can list pertinent facts and then **brainstorm** (generate possible solutions without censoring them) to develop creative solutions to the problem you are trying to solve. You might also diagram your ideas to collect your thoughts.

Analyzing and Organizing the Information Once you have ideas, you can analyze them. If your data are numerical, you will do the calculations to see patterns and meaning in the numbers. You will put other kinds of data together as well to see what course of action they might indicate, weighing what the parties involved stand to gain or lose from each possible solution.

As you think about what to say in your message, you will, of course, keep your readers in mind. What kind of information will matter the most to them? In our scenario, will the hotel guests want information about what caused the air-conditioning problem or about when it will be fixed and what they can do to stay comfortable? As always, your intended readers are your best guide to what information to include.

The readers are also your guide for organizing the information. Whatever order will draw the most positive reaction from your readers is the best order to use. If you have information that your readers will consider routine, neutral, or positive, then put it first. This plan, called the **direct order**, is discussed in Chapter 7. On the other hand, if you think your information could run the risk of evoking a negative response, you will employ an **indirect order**, using your message's opening to prepare the reader to receive the news as positively or neutrally as possible. As you will see in Chapter 8, such a message usually requires a more skillful use of organization and word choice than one written in the direct order.

Choosing a Form, Channel, and Format Students typically produce writing of two types: essays or research papers, but on the job you have a wide range of established forms of communication (**genres**) from which to choose. Which one you use has a significant impact on your planning. For instance, if you want to advertise your company's services, how will you do it? Write potential customers a letter? Email them? Create a website? Post a message on your company's social media sites? Use some combination of these? Each form of communication (genre) has its own formatting, stylistic, and content conventions. As a businessperson, you want to start your writing tasks with some sense of the genre you are using. The genre itself helps you know what to say and how to say it. Furthermore, in terms of helping you solve your business problem, using the right genre and observing the conventions of that genre help you present yourself professionally, which, in turn, lends credibility to the ideas you express in your message.

You can make decisions about a document's format or visual design at any point in the writing process, but usually the planning stage involves preliminary decisions about how your document will look. How can you make the information easily readable and accessible to your audience? Will you be dividing the contents with headings? Could a bulleted or numbered list help your reader? Will you use any visual elements such as a logo, picture, or diagram? Anticipating the format can help you plan an inviting and readable message.

Formatting and visual appeal impact readers' reactions. For example, Exhibit 4-4 shows the text of an email from a human resources professional whose goal is to set up a meeting. The reader needs to be aware of several specific details. If you were the audience for this message, how inviting would you find the format, and how easy would it be to immediately understand what you need to do to be ready for this meeting?

Exhibit 4-4

Illustration of the Difference That Formatting Makes

Study the original and revised messages below to see how use of formatting devices can improve readability.

Original Message:

Subject: Meeting to Discuss Your Position Approval

Hi, Kranti:

Now that your hiring request has been approved to hire an internal communications specialist, are you available next Wednesday at 2 p.m. CST to discuss how you will proceed? During this meeting we will establish a timeline for the recruiting process, review employment laws you should be aware of as you screen candidates, create a strategic plan to identify qualified candidates, and review company policy for bringing candidates here for interviews. Please be prepared to discuss the job description, which includes position details (minimum qualifications, background, etc.); salary data based on market studies, which include salary range and any benefits other companies are offering as they recruit for similar positions; and recruitment resources, which include a list of competitors, professional organizations, and publications or other outlets that will help recruit potential candidates. We can also talk about any possible internal or external candidates you are aware of who may be qualified and whom we may want to recruit. If this meeting time does not work with your calendar, please suggest alternatives, and we can work from there to schedule the meeting. Congratulations on your approval to hire! I look forward to helping you find the best candidate for this position.

Regards,

Matt

Matt Gullickson

Senior Human Resources Generalist

Schull Ridge Industries

Phone: 932.487.9301

Revised Message:

Hi, Kranti:

Now that your hiring request has been approved to hire an internal communications specialist, are you available next Wednesday at 2 p.m. CST to discuss how you will proceed?

Here is our agenda for the meeting:

- Establish a timeline for the recruiting process.
- Review employment laws you should be aware of as you screen candidates.
- Create a strategic plan to identify qualified candidates.
- Review company policy for bringing candidates here for interviews.

When we meet, please be prepared to discuss the following topics:

- The **job description**, which includes position details (minimum qualifications, background, etc.).
- Market-based **salary data**, which include a salary range for this position and any benefits other companies are offering as they recruit for similar positions.
- Recruitment **resources**, which include a list of competitors, professional organizations, and publications or other outlets that will help recruit potential candidates.
- Any **possible internal or external candidates** you are aware of who may be qualified and whom we may want to recruit.

If this meeting time does not work with your calendar, please suggest alternatives, and we can work from there to schedule the meeting.

Congratulations on your approval to hire! I look forward to helping you find the best candidate for this position.

Regards,

Matt

Matt Gullickson

Senior Human Resources Generalist

Schull Ridge Industries

Phone: 932.487.9301

Drafting

In the problem-solving model, this is the stage at which you can make your first attempt at drafting the solution you have built to solve the problem at hand. Flexibility is the key to creating drafts of your business documents. Writers often hinder themselves by thinking that they have to write a finished document on the first attempt with all parts in their correct order and with perfect results. The following suggestions can help you draft your messages as painlessly and effectively as possible.

Avoid Perfectionism when Drafting Trying to make your first draft perfect causes two problems. First, spending too much energy perfecting the early parts can make you forget important pieces and purposes of the later parts. Second, perfectionism can make drafting frustrating and slow and thus keep you from wanting to revise your message when you're done. You will be much more inclined to review your message and improve it if you have not agonized over your first draft.

Keep Going When turning your planning into a draft, don't let minor problems with wording or grammar distract you from your main goal—to generate your first version of the document. Have an understanding with yourself that you will draft rather quickly to get the ideas down on paper or onto the screen and then go back and carefully revise. Expressing your points in a somewhat coherent, complete, and orderly fashion is hard enough. Allow yourself to save close reexamination and evaluation of what you've written for the revising stage.

Use Your Own Favorite Strategies The idea with drafting is to keep moving forward at a reasonably steady pace with as little stalling as possible. Do anything you can think of that will make your drafting relatively easy. For example, write at your most productive time of day, write in chunks, start with a favorite part, talk aloud or write to yourself to clarify your thoughts, take breaks, let the project sit for a while, create a setting conducive to writing—even promise yourself a little reward for getting a certain amount accomplished. Your goal is to get the first orderly expression of your planned contents written just well enough so that you can go back and work with it.

Revising

Getting your draft ready for your reader requires going back over it carefully—again and again. Do you say what you mean? Could someone misunderstand or take offense at what you have written? Is your information organized effectively? Is each word the right one for your goals? Are there better, more concise ways of structuring your sentences? Can you move the reader more smoothly from point to point? Does each element of format enhance readability and highlight the structure of the contents? When revising, you become your own critic. You challenge what you have written and look for better alternatives. Careful attention to each level will result in a polished, effective message.

Any given message has so many facets that using what professional writers call **levels of edit** may be helpful. The levels this term refers to are **substantive editing**, **stylistic editing**, and **proofreading**.

When revising, you begin with a substantive edit in which you look at top-level concerns: whether or not you included all necessary information, whether the pattern of organization is logical and as effective as possible, whether the overall meaning of the message comes through, and whether the formatting is appropriate and helpful. You also want to consider whether the design and content of your message are accessible to the audience or audiences who will read your message. Chapter 5 discusses principles for document design that can help you ensure accessibility.

You then move to stylistic editing in which you focus on your writing style. You examine your sentences to see whether they place the information in such a way that the reader can easily follow



Communication Matters

Why Accurately Proofreading Your Own Work Is Difficult

You have likely had the experience of writing what you think is the perfect document only to have someone point out a misspelling or other error. You are not alone. Proofreading your own work is difficult, and there is a reason for it.

Psychologist Tom Stafford explains that when you write and edit, your brain engages in a high-level process called “generalization.” That is, it generalizes the simple parts of the message such

as letters and words so that it can spend its time on more complex parts of the message such as content. As a result, when you proofread your own work, your brain leads you to see words as you expect to see them, not to see what is typed on the page. When you proofread others’ work, you have no expectations regarding what you will see on the page, which makes it easier for you to pay attention to details and see errors.

Stafford says that to improve your ability to proofread your own work well, you need to make it visually unfamiliar so that your brain does not draw on what it has generalized—that is, change the color or the font or print the document and proofread by hand rather than on screen.

Source: Nick Stockton, “What’s Up with That: Why It’s So Hard to Catch Your Own Typos,” *Wired*, August 12, 2014, <https://www.wired.com/2014/08/wuwt-typos/>.

their meaning, whether they emphasize the right things, and whether they combine pieces of information coherently. You also look at your word choices to see whether they are right for your audience and purpose.

Finally, you proofread, looking at mechanical and grammatical elements—spelling, typography, punctuation, and any grammar problems. Editing functions in your word processing program can help you with this task.

Effectively giving and receiving feedback from others is an important component of the revision process and an important professional skill you can practice as part of your communication process.

As you may know, finding weaknesses or errors in your own work is difficult. Seeking assistance from willing colleagues can help you strengthen your message and help you identify strengths and areas of development in your writing. While you are not obligated to integrate any feedback you receive, you should receive it with an open mind and use it whenever it is helpful. Hearing this feedback from colleagues is better than hearing it from your intended readers when costly mistakes may have already been made.

Conversely, you may be asked to provide thoughtful and effective feedback to your colleagues. You can use some of the same problem-solving techniques you are learning in this book to help your colleagues communicate successfully. When helping a colleague revise a message, for example, use the questions in Exhibit 1-7: Planning Your Communication Strategy: A Problem-Solving Approach to ask the author the right questions to get them to better understand the situation and make appropriate choices in their message. You might also ask the writer to review Exhibit 4-3: Audience Analysis Checklist to ensure that the message is appropriate for the audience.

As you develop your ability to constructively receive feedback and give feedback to others, you will become a more valuable member of any team.

You will use what we have discussed thus far about the writing process when you write in a variety of business genres. The next section of this chapter introduces you to five main genres of business writing: the letter, the memorandum (memo), email, synchronous messaging, and social media.



Successful writers often seek others' perspectives on important documents.

Image Source/Stockbyte/Getty Images

Appropriate Use of Letters

Of the genres we discuss in this chapter, letters are the oldest. For many centuries, the letter has been and continues to be a primary genre that companies use to coordinate business activities, even today with countless communication technologies available. Although the purpose and use of the business letter have evolved as other business communication genres have developed, it is still the best choice for many communication tasks.

LO4-3 Describe the purpose and form of letters.

Letters Defined

Generally, a writer will choose to use a business letter in contexts that require a formal message to the reader. Occasionally, people use letters to communicate with others in their organizations about formal topics, such as a letter of resignation, or about serious matters, such as a disciplinary warning. However, **letters** are used primarily for corresponding with people outside an organization. The reason letters are used for communication with audiences external to your organization is that you are likely to have a formal relationship with readers you do not communicate with frequently or with whom you do not share the connection of being in the same company; in fact, you may not know the audience at all.

When you write to customers, suppliers, citizens and community leaders, and other external audiences, you can present a formal, polished image of your company by choosing the letter format, complete with an attractive company letterhead and the elements of courtesy built into this traditional genre. Once you have established a less-formal relationship with your audience, you may find you conduct your business through emails, phone calls, instant or text messaging, and social media. However, especially when corresponding with an external party whom you do not know well, a letter is often the most appropriate form to use.

Letter Formality

As formal as letters can be, they are not nearly as formal as they used to be. Business messages in general have grown more conversational, and this is true of letters as well as of other forms of correspondence.

For instance, in the past, women were always addressed as “Mrs.” Today, women are addressed as “Ms.” unless you know the reader prefers “Mrs.” In the past, too, if writers did not know the reader’s name, wrote to a mass audience, or wrote to someone whose gender could not be determined by the reader’s name (e.g., Pat Smith), they might have used a salutation such as “To Whom It May Concern,” “Dear Sir/Madame,” or “Dear Ladies and Gentlemen.” These expressions are now considered impersonal and old fashioned. Some of these expressions also assume a binary understanding of gender, which may not be inclusive of the reader. More modern options include “Dear Human Resources” or “Dear Pat Smith.” Alternatively, writers can omit the salutation, perhaps adding a subject line (a brief phrase stating the writer’s main point) instead, much in the same way they would create a subject line in a memorandum or email.

Some business writers consider the use of the terms “Dear,” “Sincerely Yours,” and even “Sincerely” outdated or excessively formal. These writers will omit “Dear,” replace “Sincerely yours” with “Sincerely,” omit the complimentary close, or use “Regards” or some other cordial phrase. Your audience and company culture will determine what is appropriate for you.

Regardless of its formality, the letter should always be regarded as a personal exchange between people as well as a strategic means for accomplishing business goals and building business relationships.

Letter Form

The layout of a letter will often be the first impression a reader has of you as a businessperson. Therefore, showing that you know standard business letter formats will speak to your professional credibility.

Exhibit 4-5 Components of a Business Letter

 **RALSTON'S PLUMBING AND HEATING**
2424 Medville Road, Urbana, OH 45702 | P: 555.555.5555 | E: ralstons@rph.com

March 15, 2025

Ms. Diane Taylor
747 Gateway Avenue
Urbana, OH 45702

Dear Ms. Taylor:

SUBJECT: Your Recent Service Appointment

Thank you for allowing one of our certified technicians to serve you recently and for your positive online review. Serving our customers with integrity is one of our company's core values, so we are thrilled that you saw our technician Jeff demonstrating that value when he visited your home.

I have enclosed is a coupon for \$25 toward your next purchase or service call from Ralston. It's just our way of showing that we appreciate your business.

We look forward to serving you again. Please be sure to visit our website (www.ralstonheatingandplumbing.com) or our Facebook page for our latest products, services, and sales.

Sincerely,

Jack Ralston

Jack Ralston
Owner and President
Ralston's Plumbing and Heating

Enclosure

Although some variations in format are generally acceptable, typically these items are included: date, inside address, salutation (e.g., Dear Ms. Smith or Dear Dr. Smith), body, and complimentary close (Sincerely). Other items sometimes needed are an attention line, subject line, return address (when letterhead is not used), and notation information. Exhibit 4-5 presents one option for using letterhead, a salutation, a complimentary close, and several of the letter elements discussed below.

Layouts for the content of a business letter vary based on individual or organization preferences. Exhibit 4-6 illustrates four common letter formats. As you review the examples, pay special attention to the differences in alignment among the formats and the use of a salutation and a complimentary close. You will also want to note that in all formats, single spacing in paragraphs and double spacing between paragraphs is the general rule.

Letterhead The **letterhead** is a visual rendering of your company's address and general contact information. It may contain a company's logo, phone number, email address, website address, and social media addresses. The information is usually at the top of a letter.

Exhibit 4-6 Illustration of Letter Formats

Full Block



June 10, 2025

Mr. Cuyler Semingson
1298 Elm Street
Eau Claire, WI 54701

Dear Mr. Semingson:

On behalf of ECCO Board of Directors, thank you for your generous donation to Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra. Your support is vital to the viability of this organization, and we very much appreciate your partnership with us in bringing chamber music to the Chippewa Valley. Your tax statement is enclosed.

Your support not only enables us to deliver beautiful music but also to provide an annual free family concert to the community. Ticket revenue only accounts for approximately a 40% of the production cost for each concert. The balance must be covered by grants, corporate sponsorships, and individual donation.

We hope to see you this season! Visit eauciare chamberorchestra.org or befriend us on Facebook for more details.

Best regards,

Elizabeth Hart
General Manager
Enclosure

Modified Block, Blocked Paragraphs



June 10, 2025

Mr. Cuyler Semingson
1298 Elm Street
Eau Claire, WI 54701

Dear Mr. Semingson:

On behalf of ECCO Board of Directors, thank you for your generous donation to Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra. Your support is vital to the viability of this organization, and we very much appreciate your partnership with us in bringing chamber music to the Chippewa Valley. Your tax statement is enclosed.

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We hope to see you this season! Visit eauciare chamberorchestra.org or befriend us on Facebook for more details.

Best regards,

Elizabeth Hart
General Manager
Enclosure

Modified Block, Indented Paragraphs



June 10, 2025

Mr. Cuyler Semingson
1298 Elm Street
Eau Claire, WI 54701

Dear Mr. Semingson:

On behalf of ECCO Board of Directors, thank you for your generous donation to Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra. Your support is vital to the viability of this organization, and we very much appreciate your partnership with us in bringing chamber music to the Chippewa Valley. Your tax statement is enclosed.

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We hope to see you this season! Visit eauciare chamberorchestra.org or befriend us on Facebook for more details.

Best regards,

Elizabeth Hart
General Manager
Enclosure

Simplified



June 10, 2025

Mr. Cuyler Semingson
1298 Elm Street
Eau Claire, WI 54701

YOUR GENEROUS DONATION TO ECCO

On behalf of ECCO Board of Directors, thank you for your generous donation to Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra. Your support is vital to the viability of this organization, and we very much appreciate your partnership with us in bringing chamber music to the Chippewa Valley. Your tax statement is enclosed.

Your support not only enables us to deliver beautiful music but also to provide an annual free family concert to the community. Ticket revenue only accounts for approximately a 40% of the production cost for each concert. The balance must be covered by grants, corporate sponsorships, and individual donation.

We hope to see you this season! Visit eauciare chamberorchestra.org or befriend us on Facebook for more details.

ELIZABETH HART, General Manager

Enclosure

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Return Address The **return address** is the writer's (your or your company's) address. Your letters should always contain a return address. In business letters, the return address appears in your company letterhead. In personal letters, the return address goes at the top of the page. It does not contain your name, just your street address, city, state, and zip code.

Date Line You should use the **conventional date form**, with month, day, and year spelled out for the reader (September 7, 2025). The conventional date form is preferred because abbreviated date forms such as 9-7-25 or Sept. 7, '25 are informal. Further, 9-7-25 in the United States is September 7; in other countries where the month commonly appears before the date, people will read the date as July 9. Spelling out the date is the surest way to be clear. Most word processors allow you to set up your preference and will use that preference when you use the date feature.

Inside Address The **inside address** is your reader's mailing address, complete with **courtesy title** (e.g., Mr., Ms., or Dr.). In business correspondence women are addressed as "Dr." or "Ms." Courtesy titles such as "Miss" or "Mrs." are not used unless you know that your reader prefers this title. The reason for using "Ms." is a practical one. You may not know whether your audience is married, but if you use "Miss" or "Mrs.," you assign a marital status. Even if you know a woman is married, she may not wish to use a courtesy title that ties her business or personal identity to her marital status, especially when her male counterparts have no courtesy title that is the masculine equivalent of "Miss" or "Mrs."

Also keep in mind that, as Chapter 2's discussion of biased language points out, gender is not a binary construct in which the masculine "Mr." and feminine "Ms." uniformly apply to all readers who have traditional male or female names, so be sure to use the courtesy title your reader prefers. If you do not know your reader's preference, you can ask, or you can omit the courtesy title or salutation. A current practice is for businesspeople to add a list of the pronouns they use after their names (e.g., Tessa Rae, they/them/their; or Rex Steward he/him/his). If you are responding to a message, you can always check to see if your reader has indicated pronouns and use those as a guide for selecting "Ms." or "Mr." The *Oxford English Dictionary* also suggests the use of "Mx." as a nonbinary pronoun,³ although its use may not yet be widespread.



Because business letters are read by audiences external to a company, they must convey a professional image for you and your company.

Dragon Images/Shutterstock

Attention Line Some businesspeople prefer to use the company name rather than an individual name in the inside address. Thus, they address the letter to the company in the inside address and then use an **attention line** that directs the letter to a specific office or department. The attention line is placed two lines below the inside address and two lines above the salutation. The typical form of the attention line is

Attention: Mr. Donovan Price, Vice President

Salutation The **salutation** is your opening greeting to your reader. It is the equivalent of "Hello" and is followed by a colon, not a comma. The salutation should reflect your familiarity with the reader and the formality of the situation. If you know you are on a first-name basis with your reader, you can address the reader by first name (e.g., Dear Ursula). If not, you use the reader's courtesy title and last name (e.g., Dear Mr. Baskin). As with the inside address, you should use "Mr." or "Ms." or "Dr." as a courtesy title before the reader's name if you are sure of your reader's preference.

If you do not know and cannot find out the name of the person to whom you are sending the letter or if you are not sure of your reader's preference for a courtesy title or your reader's pronouns, you may use a position title instead. By directing your letter to Director of Human Resources or Public Relations Manager, you are helping your letter reach the appropriate person. As we have mentioned, avoid greetings such as "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir," as these are considered outdated and not audience centered. If you don't know the person or position title, you can omit the salutation and use a subject line.

Subject Line So that both the sender and the receiver may quickly identify the subject of the correspondence, many writers use the **subject line** in their letters. The subject line tells what the letter is about. In addition, it contains any specific identifying material that may be helpful such as the date of previous correspondence, invoice number, or order number. It is usually placed two lines below the salutation.

Subject lines are generally written as fragments. They may be capitalized as book titles (every important word capitalized), or they may be capitalized as sentences (the first word and proper nouns capitalized). Remember that using all capital letters in a subject line may create the impression that you are shouting at your reader, so use this style judiciously. Using all capital letters in a subject line such as "CONGRATULATIONS on Your Promotion" conveys a much different impression than "Submit timesheets IMMEDIATELY."

The subject line is usually formatted in one of two ways:

Subject: Your July 2 inquiry about an estimate

RE: Invoice H-320 Clarification

Mixed or Open Punctuation The punctuation following the salutation and the closing is either mixed or open. **Mixed punctuation** employs a colon after the salutation and a comma after the complimentary close. **Open punctuation**, on the other hand, uses no punctuation after the salutation and none after the complimentary close. These two forms are used in domestic communication. In international communication, you may see letters with **closed punctuation**—that is, punctuation distinguished by commas or periods after the salutation and a period at the end of the complimentary close.

Second-Page Heading When the length of a letter exceeds one page, you should set up the following page or pages for quick identification. Always print pages 2 and onward on plain paper (no letterhead). These two forms are the most common:

Ms. Helen E. Mann p. 2 May 7, 2025

Ms. Helen E. Mann
May 7, 2025
Page 2

Be sure there is no number on the first page. In Microsoft Word, you can omit the number on the first page by clicking in the header area of your document and then from the Design ribbon, checking the "Different First Page" box.

Complimentary Close By far the most commonly used **complimentary close** is *Sincerely*. *Sincerely yours* is also used, but in recent years the *yours* has been used less frequently, as some see it as too personal. Such closes as *Cordially*, *Regards*, *Best regards*, and *Respectfully* are appropriate when their meanings fit the writer-reader relationship. A long-standing friendship, for example, would justify *Cordially*; the writer's respect for the position, prestige, or accomplishments of the reader would justify *Respectfully*.

The writer's signature appears in the space between the closing and the printed signature. The **signature block** usually appears under the writer's signature. It contains the writer's name and



You Make the Call

How many letter components can you find in Exhibit 4-5?

title usually on the same line, though if either the name or title is long, the title appears on the following line, blocked under the name. It may also contain the company name when the letter continues on a second page without the company letterhead, as well as contact information not found on the letterhead. As we have mentioned, some writers include a list of the pronouns they use.

Information Notations Below the signature block and aligned to the left are **information notations** for the reader regarding the document. *Enclosure*, *Enc.*, *Enc.-3*, and so on indicate materials enclosed with the letter. If the writer and the typist are not the same person, the initials of the writer and the typist may be noted. For example, if Walter Hass is sending a letter, but Walter's assistant George Anderson types the letter for Walter, then the notation would read *WEH:ga*. Indications of copies prepared for other readers also may be included: *cc:* (or *bcc:*) *Sharin Garbett, copy to: (or blind copy:) Sharin Garbett*.

Postscripts **Postscripts**, commonly referred to as the PS, are placed after any notations. While rarely used in most business letters because they look like afterthoughts, they can be effective for adding promotions in sales letters.

Paper In the United States, standard business paper size for a letter is 8.5 by 11 inches; international business A4 paper is sized slightly narrower than 8.5 inches and slightly longer than 11 inches. Occasionally, half-size (5.5×8.5) or executive size (7.25×10.5) is used for short messages. Other than these standards, you have a variety of choices to make regarding color, weight, and texture.

The most conservative color choice is white. The color you choose should also be the color you use for the second and continuing pages.

The weight and texture of your paper also communicate. While "cheap" paper may denote control of expenses to some readers, other readers may associate a high-quality paper with a high-quality product or service. Usually businesses use paper with a weight of 16 to 20 pounds.

The Fold The carelessly folded letter creates a bad first impression with the reader. Neat folding will complete the planned effect by (1) making the letter fit snugly in its cover, (2) making the letter easy for the reader to remove, and (3) making the letter appear neat when opened.

The two-fold pattern is the easiest. It fits the standard sheet for the long (No. 10) envelope as well as some other envelope sizes. As shown in Exhibit 4-7, the first fold of the two-fold pattern is from the bottom up, taking a little less than a third of the sheet. The second fold goes from the top down, making exactly the same panel as the bottom segment. (This measurement will leave the recipient a 0.25-inch thumb hold for easy unfolding of the letter.) Thus folded, the letter should be slipped into its envelope with the second crease toward the bottom and the center panel at the front of the envelope.

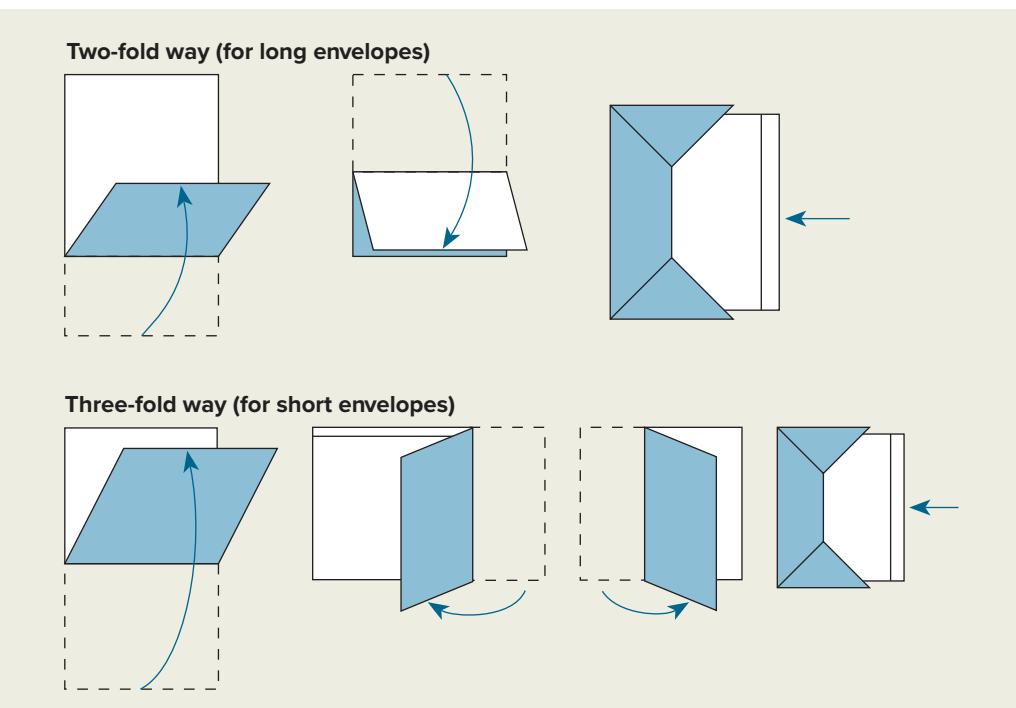
The three-fold pattern is necessary to fit the standard sheet into the commonly used small (No. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$) envelope. Its first fold is from the bottom up, with the bottom edge of the sheet riding about 0.25 inch under the top edge to allow the thumb hold. (If the edges are exactly even, they are harder to separate.) The second fold is from the right side of the sheet toward the left, taking a little less than a third of the width. The third fold matches the second: from the left side toward the right, with a panel of exactly the same width. (This fold will leave a 0.25-inch thumb hold at the right, for the user's convenience.)

So that the letter will appear neat when unfolded, the creases should be neatly parallel with the top and sides, not at angles that produce irregular shapes. In the three-fold form, the side panels produced by the second and third folds must be exactly the same width; otherwise, the vertical creases are off-center and tend to throw the whole carefully planned layout off-center.

The three-fold letter is inserted into its cover with the third crease toward the bottom of the envelope and the loose edges toward the stamp end of the envelope. From habit, most recipients of

Exhibit 4-7

Two Ways of Folding and Inserting Letters (See Text Descriptions for Dimensions)

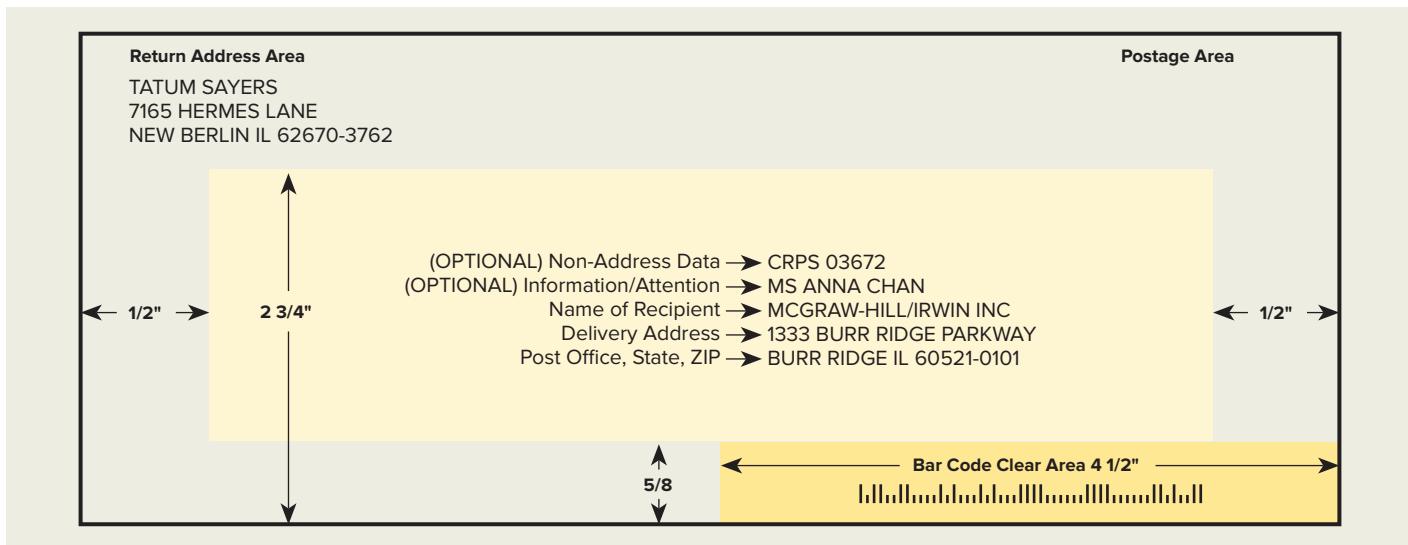


business letters slit envelopes at the top and turn them facedown to extract the letter. The three-fold letter inserted as described thus gives its reader an easy thumb hold at the top of the envelope to pull it out by and a second one at the top of the sheet for easy unfolding of the whole.

Envelope Address So that processing equipment can read information on an envelope, the US Postal Service requests that all envelopes be typed as follows (Exhibit 4-8).

Exhibit 4-8

Form for Addressing Envelopes Recommended by the US Postal Service, Publication 28



- Place the address in the scannable area as shown in the shaded area in Exhibit 4-8. It is best to use a sans serif font in 10 to 12 point.
- Use a block address format.
- Use single space.
- Uppercase letters are preferred.
- Do not use punctuation, except for the hyphen in the nine-digit zip code.
- Use the two-letter abbreviations for the US states and territories and the Canadian provinces. Use other address abbreviations as shown in the most recent edition of the *Post Office Directory* (see www.usps.com for the most updated version). When sending mail to a foreign country, include only the country name in uppercase on the bottom line.

States and Possessions of the United States

Alabama	AL	Kentucky	KY	Ohio	OH
Alaska	AK	Louisiana	LA	Oklahoma	OK
American Samoa	AS	Maine	ME	Oregon	OR
Arizona	AZ	Marshall Islands	MH	Palau	PW
Arkansas	AR	Maryland	MD	Pennsylvania	PA
California	CA	Massachusetts	MA	Puerto Rico	PR
Colorado	CO	Michigan	MI	Rhode Island	RI
Connecticut	CT	Minnesota	MN	South Carolina	SC
Delaware	DE	Mississippi	MS	South Dakota	SD
District of Columbia	DC	Missouri	MO	Tennessee	TN
Federated States of Micronesia	FM	Montana	MT	Texas	TX
Florida	FL	Nebraska	NE	Utah	UT
Georgia	GA	Nevada	NV	Vermont	VT
Guam	GU	New Hampshire	NH	Virginia	VA
Hawaii	HI	New Jersey	NJ	Virgin Islands	VI
Idaho	ID	New Mexico	NM	Washington	WA
Illinois	IL	New York	NY	West Virginia	WV
Indiana	IN	North Carolina	NC	Wisconsin	WI
Iowa	IA	North Dakota	ND	Wyoming	WY
Kansas	KS	Northern Mariana Islands	MP		

Canadian Provinces and Territories

Alberta	AB	Newfoundland	NF	Prince Edward Island	PE
British Columbia	BC	Northwest Territories	NT	Quebec	PQ
Manitoba	MB	Nova Scotia	NS	Saskatchewan	SK
New Brunswick	NB	Ontario	ON	Yukon Territory	YT

- Type the return address in the left corner, beginning on the second line from the top of the envelope and three spaces from the left edge of the envelope.
- Print any on-arrival instructions (Confidential, Personal) four lines below the return address.
- Place all notations for the post office (Special Delivery) below the stamp and at least three lines above the mailing address.

Appropriate Use of Memorandums (Memos)

Another business genre is the **memorandum** (or **memo**). The memo emerged in the late 1800s and early 1900s largely as a response to changes in managerial theories and practice. These practices required written communication not only for internal purposes but also for controlling and accomplishing an organization's work internally.⁴

Memorandums Defined

Originally, memos were used only in hard copy, but their function of communicating internally in a business has been largely replaced by email. Even so, they still are a part of many companies' internal communications, for communicating with employees who do not use computers in their work.

Memos can be used for a wide range of communication tasks. For example, as Chapter 11 points out, some memos communicate factual, problem-related information and can be classified as reports. As with the letter, the purpose and use of the memo have evolved as other business communication genres have emerged, but the memo is still an important means for communicating within many organizations.



Businesses with multiple locations send many of their internal messages by email as well as by instant and text messages.

Ryan McVay/Photodisc/Getty Images

LO4-4 Describe the purpose and form of memorandums (memos).

Memorandum Formality

Because memos usually are messages sent and received by people who work with and know one another, they tend to use casual or informal language. Even so, some memos use highly formal language. As in any business communication, you will use the level of formality appropriate to your audience and writing goals.

Memorandum Form

Memorandums (memos) have basic components, but their form varies widely across organizations. Because memos are sent internally, they do not contain a return address or inside address. The basic components are the heading and body.

Memo Headings The heading has four elements: *To*, *From*, *Date*, and *Subject*. These elements can be arranged in various orders, but they should all be present. Optional headings include the *cc:* or *bcc:* notation if others are copied on the memo. The information after each heading should align with the information that appears after the other headings (Exhibit 4-9). You sign your initials after your names in the *From* heading.

Memo Body Unlike a letter, a memo does not contain a salutation. A memo moves directly from the *To*, *From*, *Date*, and *Subject* to the body, which is single spaced with double spacing between paragraphs. Usually, all text is aligned at the left margin. Headings in the body of the memo are frequently used in long memos.

A complimentary closing and signature block are not included in a memo. A memo concludes once the body is finished unless you need any notations, such as for the typist. In addition,



You Make the Call

Even if all employees have email access, can you think of instances when you would send a memo instead?

Exhibit 4-9 Illustration of Alignment in Memo Headings

Incorrect Alignment	Correct Alignment
To: All G-11 Employees	To: All G-11 Employees
From: Kari Mendez	From: Kari Mendez
Date: March 18, 2025	Date: March 18, 2025
Subject: Employee Parking Update	Subject: Employee Parking Update

enclosures are included just as they are in letters, but they are noted as *Attachment* or *Att.* rather than *Enclosure*. The reason for this notation is that items sent with a letter are enclosed in the envelope with the letter; items sent with a memo are attached to (e.g., stapled, paper clipped) to the memo. Exhibits 4-10 and 4-11 show standard memo format.

Exhibit 4-10 Illustration of a Memo in a Word Template

Ralston's Plumbing and Heating

Memo

To: All Employees
From: Jack Ralston *JR*
Cc: Joyce Severson
Date: August 31, 2025
Re: Change in Distributors Effective October 1

As you all know, we have been looking for a supplier due to the impending closure of Dickson Distributors.

After much hard work, our Purchasing Department has decided to go with Great Lakes Distributors (GLD) as our new supplier. With over 30 locations in our tri-state service area, GLD will provide us with quick and convenient access to all the supplies, materials, and services we need, and we will find that their prices are similar to (and in some cases less than) those of Dickson.

Joyce Severson, our purchasing director, will arrange information sessions to orient all of us on the changes we will need to be aware of as we transition from Dickson to GLD.

Thank you for your patience as we undergo this change. The GLD crew is knowledgeable and friendly, and I am sure that we will enjoy working with them.

The illustration shows a memo on company letterhead. The letterhead features a blue and green circular logo followed by the company name "RALSTON'S PLUMBING AND HEATING". The memo is titled "MEMORANDUM" and includes the following details:

To: All Employees
From: Jack Ralston JK
Cc: Joyce Severson
Date: August 31, 2025
Subject: Change in Distributors Effective October 1

Store: All Locations
Territory: All Territories

The body of the memo reads:

As you all know, we have been looking for a supplier due to the impending closure of Dickson Distributors. After much hard work, our Purchasing Department has decided to go with Great Lakes Distributors (GLD) as our new supplier. With over 30 locations in our tri-state service area, GLD will provide us with quick and convenient access to all the supplies, materials, and services we need, and we will find that their prices are similar to (and in some cases less than) those of Dickson.

Joyce Severson, our purchasing director, will arrange information sessions to orient all of us on the changes we will need to be aware of as we transition from Dickson to GLD.

Thank you for your patience as we undergo this change. The GLD crew is knowledgeable and friendly, and I am sure that we will enjoy working with them.

Appropriate Use of Email

Technology impacts business communication genres in many ways, and the development of email is one obvious example of this impact. From its earliest days a half century ago to its widespread use in the 1990s and beyond, email, as a genre, responds to the need to communicate quickly. While it is true that many technologies enable communication faster and more immediately, email remains effective and efficient for many communication tasks.

Email Defined

In contrast to a letter and memo, an **email** can be used with either internal or external audiences and can vary widely in terms of content and levels of formality. Email addresses are readily available, and anyone can send a message to any email address (or multiple addresses simultaneously), regardless of who provides the email account. The speed at which readers receive a message can also make email more attractive than a letter or a memo; and, while text and instant messaging also allow for quick communication, too, email is a more robust medium if you need to share files, format your message, maintain a record of a conversation, or communicate with a group of people.

Consequently, businesses continue to use email as a low-cost, quick, and efficient means of communicating with both internal and external audiences either formally or informally.

Email, however, also presents communication challenges. Sometimes people use email to avoid having difficult face-to-face or phone conversations, which is not a good way to accomplish communication goals or cultivate the audience's goodwill. Emails are also easily forwarded and therefore can never be considered confidential. Further, many businesspeople deal with **spam**—unsolicited messages or mass emails that are not relevant to their work. In addition, as we discuss later in this section, email accounts are susceptible to **phishing**—attempts by hackers to steal your personal or company data or infect your computer with viruses or other malware. Moreover, some

LO4-5 Describe the purpose and form of emails.



You Make the Call

What are some ways you can manage your email more efficiently?

writers may assume that an informal email message is not held to the same standards of professionalism, clarity, or correctness as a more formal message might be; as a result, their messages are not received well by their audiences.

In addition, the amount of time you devote to email impacts your productivity. Employees spend about 28 percent of their workweek (2.5 hours each day) reading and answering emails. In fact, employees check their messages an average of once every 37 minutes (15 times a day) and as a result spend approximately 21 minutes per day over-checking their email. Furthermore, once you have been distracted, you may need anywhere from 64 seconds to 23 minutes to get your focus back to the task you were working on before you checked your email; even notifications for email messages can distract you from your work.⁵ The trick is to control your email so that it does not control you: closing your email and turning off notifications when you really need to focus; scheduling the times you check your email; and using filters, rules, and folders to organize and sort messages are simple and effective ways to use email productively.

Email Formality

A discussion of email formality is complicated by the fact that email messages are extremely diverse. They run the range from highly informal to formal. The informal messages often resemble face-to-face oral communication; some may even sound like text or instant messaging between acquaintances and friends. Others have the formality of a business report.

A helpful approach is to view email language in terms of three general classifications: **casual**, **informal**, and **formal**.⁶ Your audience should determine which type of language you choose, regardless of your personal style or preference.

Casual By casual language we mean the highly informal language we use in talking with close friends in everyday situations. It includes slang, colloquialisms (informal expressions), contractions, and personal pronouns. Its sentences are short—sometimes incomplete—and it may use mechanical emphasis devices and initialisms (e.g., LOL, BTW) freely. Casual language is best limited to your communications with close friends. Following is an example of casual language:

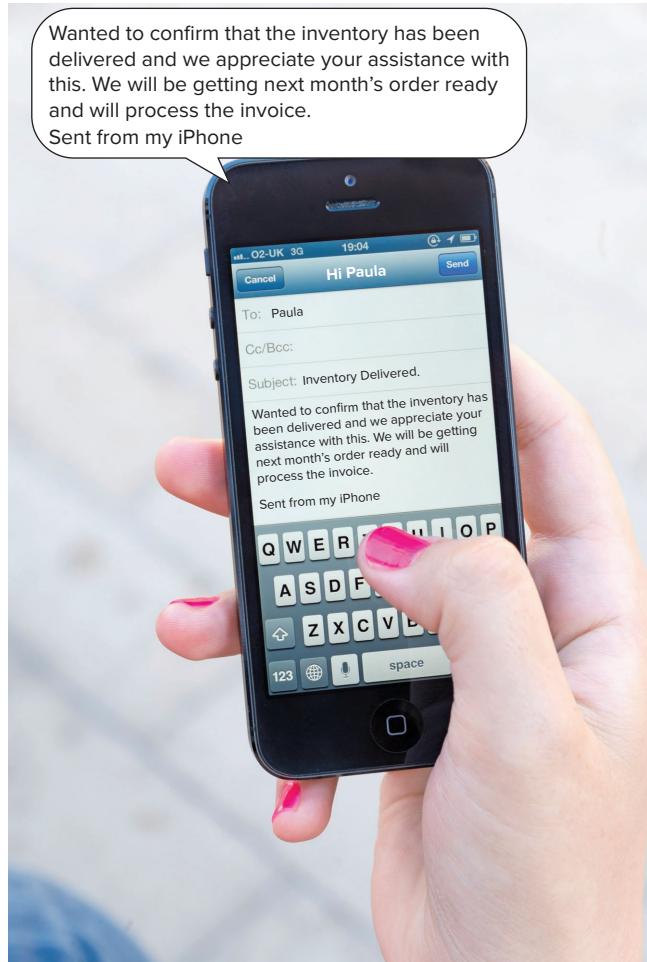
Hey Rajdip,

Yay, for us! Just back from meeting with the reps from Ryan Tech Solutions. We totally nailed it . . . plan due ASAP. Meet, my office, 10 AM, Wed?

Christa

Use casual language only when you know your readers well—when you know they expect and prefer casual communication. You should also use slang, initialisms, emphasis devices, or other casual elements only when you are certain that they will communicate clearly. Remember, too, that “casual” does not mean “unprofessional.” When you are sending messages in a work environment, make sure your language is appropriate for the workplace.

Informal Informal email language retains some of the qualities of casual writing. It makes some use of personal pronouns and contractions. It occasionally may use colloquialisms but more selectively than in casual writing. It has the effect of conversation, but it is polished conversation. Its sentences are short, but they are well structured and organized. They have varied patterns that produce an



Many businesspeople use their phones to send and receive emails and text messages. With such a small display screen, conciseness and clarity are especially important.

Alex Segre/Alamy Stock Photo

interesting style. In general, it is the writing that you will find in most of the illustrations in Chapters 7 to 9. You should use it in most of your business email messages, especially when writing to people you know only on a business basis. An example of an email message in informal language is the following:

Rajdip:

The management team from Ryan Tech Solutions has approved our marketing plan. They were very complimentary. As you predicted, they want a special plan for the large accounts. They want it as soon as possible, so let's get together to work on it. Can we meet Wednesday, 10 AM, in my office?

Christa

Formal A formal style of writing maintains a greater distance between writer and reader than an informal style. It avoids personal references and contractions, and its sentences are well structured and organized. Formal style is well illustrated in the examples of the more formal reports in Chapter 11. It is appropriate to use in email messages resembling formal reports, in messages to people of higher status, and to people you do not know.

As with any business message, formal or informal, your emails should achieve your business goal and your communication goal to communicate your message, promote goodwill, and present a professional image. Your emails should also reflect the problem-solving approach to whatever the business situation is. To do this, follow the advice in Chapter 2 and Chapter 6 for writing clear, courteous messages. You will also want to follow the guides in Reference Chapter A to ensure your messages are expressed correctly.

Email Etiquette

Using proper email etiquette is as easy as applying a bit of empathy to your messages: Send only what you would want to receive, and remember that if you're forwarding emails, you can bet others are forwarding yours, too. There is no such thing as a private email, regardless of your intent in sending a message. Also, this content lives on your computer, phone, and other devices even after you delete it. The following additional etiquette questions will help you consider more specific issues when using email.

- Does the recipient really need your message?
- Is your message for a routine rather than a sensitive message?
- Are you sure your message is not spam?
- Have you carefully checked the accuracy of the email address you are sending the message to?
- Has your wording avoided defamatory or libelous language?
- Have you complied with copyright laws and cited sources accurately?
- Have you avoided humor and sarcasm that your reader may not understand as you intend it to be understood?
- Have you proofread your message carefully?
- Is this a message you would not mind having distributed widely?
- Does your signature block avoid offensive quotes or illustrations, especially those that are religious, political, or sexual?
- Is your recipient willing or able to accept attached files?
- Are attached files a size that your recipient's system can handle?
- Are the files you are attaching virus free?

Email Form

When you look at an email, you likely notice that its form contains elements of both memos and letters. For example, emails generally contain a *Date*, *To*, *From*, *Subject* heading structure similar

to that of a memo. They may also contain salutations and complimentary closes similar to those found in letters.

Although the various email systems differ somewhat, email format includes the following:

- **To:** This is where you include the email address of the recipients. Be sure the address is accurate.
- **Cc:** If someone other than the primary recipient is to receive a *courtesy copy*, this person's address goes here. Before people used computers, cc: was called a *carbon copy* to reflect the practice of making copies of letters or memos with carbon paper.
- **Bcc:** This line stands for *blind courtesy copy*. This line is also for email addresses of recipients. However, each recipient's address in the bcc field will not show in the sent message; that is, recipients will not know who else is receiving a copy of the message.
- **Subject:** This line describes the topic of the message. The subject line does not need to be a complete sentence and may contain only a few words, but the reader should get from it a clear idea of what the message is about. Always include a subject line to get your reader's attention and indicate the topic of the message. In the absence of a subject line, a reader may think your message is junk mail or unimportant and delete it.
- **Attachments:** In this area you can attach a file that you want to send with the message. Attach only files the reader needs so that you do not take up unneeded space in the reader's inbox.
- **The message:** The information you are sending goes here. Typically, email messages begin with the recipient's name. The salutations commonly used in letters (Dear Mr. Dayle, Dear Jane) are sometimes used, but something less formal ("Hi Rick") or no salutation at all is also common. If you know the recipient well, you can use the reader's first name. If you would normally address the reader by using a courtesy title (Ms., Dr., Mr.), use the title in an initial email. You can change the salutation in subsequent messages if the person indicates that you are on a first-name basis. A friendly generic greeting such as "Greetings" is appropriate for a group of people with whom you communicate. As we discussed in the section on letters, you'll want to avoid outdated expressions such as "To Whom It May Concern."
- **Complimentary Close and Signature Block:** Like a letter, an email message often ends with a complimentary close followed by a signature block containing the writer's name, job title, company, and contact information. Many people will also include a list of the pronouns they use. Some writers also use the signature block as an opportunity to promote a sale, product, or service. Exhibit 4-12 shows a standard email format.



Knowing how to protect your and your company's data is important for guarding against data breaches and identity theft.

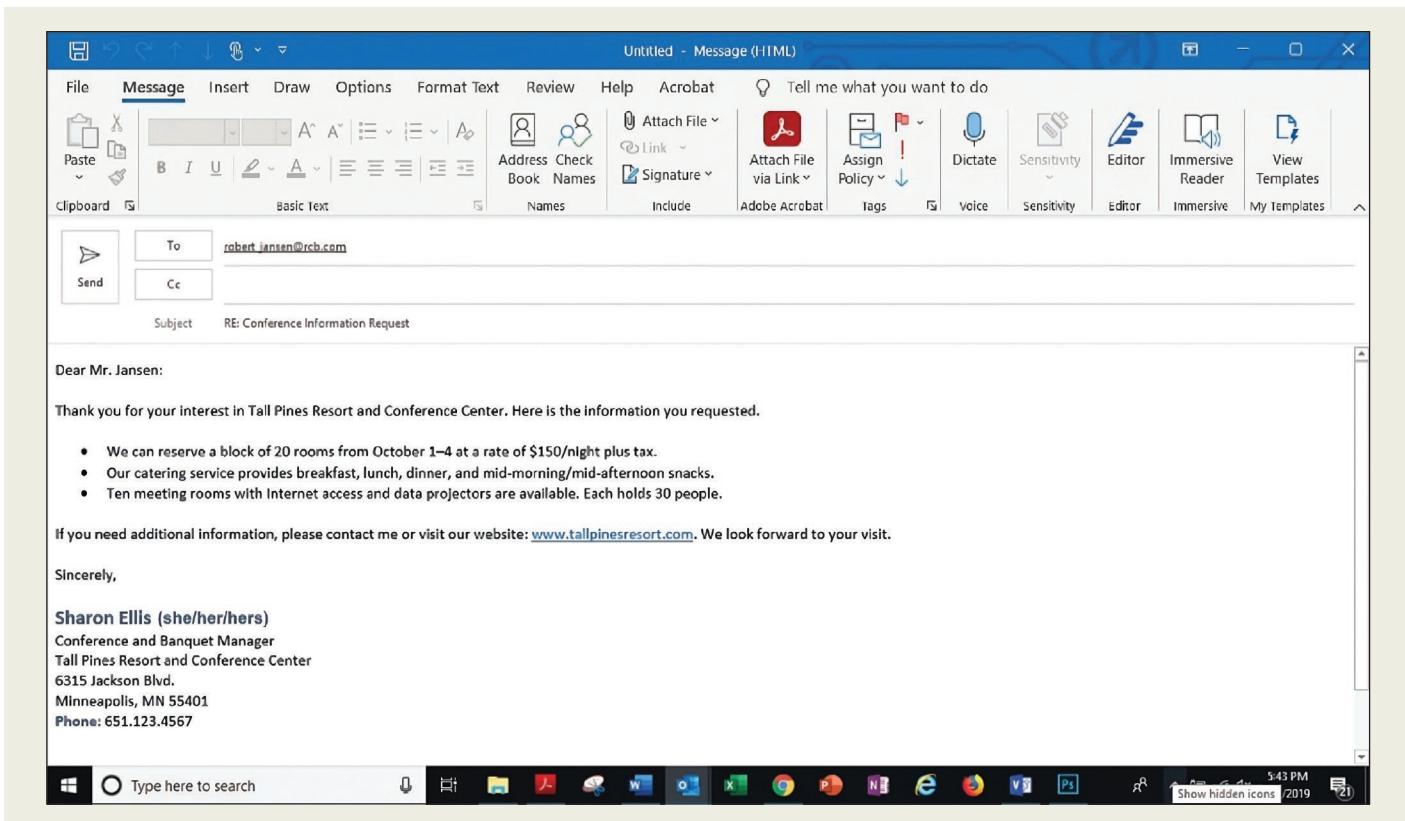
rawpixel/123RF

Phishing Emails: Your Role in Organizational Cyber Security

Understanding the characteristics of email as a genre won't just help you communicate more effectively and appropriately in your emails; it will also protect you and your colleagues from potential scams that can lead to data breaches.

Data breaches are on the rise, and many times, through phishing, lost credentials, or insecure passwords, unsuspecting individuals are often responsible. It's easy to think you would never fall for a phishing scam or that your passwords and credentials are safe. You can, of course, be vigilant about reporting lost credentials and using secure passwords, but when it comes to phishing scams, it's not quite so simple. Perpetrators have information about you and your organization, and they use this information to demonstrate credibility and garner a response—and many times they are persuasive enough to succeed. In fact, they are so successful that the average cost of a data breach for an organization in the United States in 2022 was \$9.44 million USD; the global average was \$4.35 million USD.⁷

Exhibit 4-12 Illustration of Email Form Using Microsoft Outlook



Interface: Microsoft Corporation

One way to protect against phishing scams is by being able to identify a malicious email or communication and responding appropriately to limit the impact.

Phishing emails usually operate on principles of urgency and fear to encourage a hasty response from the recipient. Your best defense is to take the time to look at your emails closely before you act, especially if they seem suspicious.

Features of phishing emails to look out for include the following:

- A suspicious email address of the sender or a sender/reply to email addresses that don't match.
- A generic greeting and/or signature that are not specific to the recipient.
- A suspicious request from a colleague (often a manager) to open a link, purchase something, or provide information you would not usually share with this person.
- Incorrect spelling in the email address, subject line, or message and poor or odd document design.
- Unsolicited attachments or requests to download.
- Anything that is too good to be true (e.g., you've won a sum of money, you are the recipient of a settlement).

What should you do if you receive a phishing email?

- Stop and take your time. Don't feel you need to respond immediately to an email, especially one that feels suspicious. Take your time to determine the best course of action. Remember, scammers often rely on our instinct to respond quickly in a professional setting.
- If you are unsure whether the email is legitimate, you should try to verify the sender's identity by checking the accuracy of the email address or looking up the company in channels other



Communication Matters

Creating an Out-of-Office Message

In the workplace, you will likely be required to create an automatically generated out-of-office (OOO) email that responds to messages for you when you are on vacation, away from your desk, or otherwise unable to respond to emails in a timely manner. The message you create must be a polite, helpful message that lets your readers continue in their work even when you are not available. When you write this message, you want to analyze your audiences to know what information will be most helpful to them in your OOO.

Robert Half, a global staffing firm, offers these dos and don'ts for crafting your OOO:

Do

- Provide the exact dates that you will be out of the office.
- Give the general reason (e.g., vacation, a conference) for your absence.
- Offer contact information for sources of help.

Don't

- Try to be funny or brag about why you are absent. Making jokes or bragging about the reason you are gone may not translate well to your readers.
- Offer contact information for sources of help without securing permission from the sources first.
- Make promises that you can't keep. Saying that you will respond immediately upon your return

may not be possible if you have a lot of messages requiring a response.

Using these tips, your out-of-office message might look like the following:

Thank you for your message. I am attending the Society for Human Resources Management conference from June 11–14. I will respond to your message when I return. If you need immediate help, please contact my executive assistant Merri Sing at ksing@shhs.org; 715-932-4281.

Source: Robert Half, "How to Write an Effective Out of Office Message," Robert Half Talent Solutions, *Blog* July 11, 2022, www.roberthalf.com/blog/salaries-and-skills/vacation-time-how-to-craft-an-effective-out-of-office-message.

than ones sent in the message (e.g., your own Google search). If it is a request from a manager or colleague, you can verify its authenticity through another channel, such as a phone call or by creating a new email (not hitting “reply” to the suspicious message) using the address you know to be correct for this person.

If you cannot see the sender's email address, you can check for a match by hovering over the sender's name and viewing the email address. For example, let's say you receive frequent legitimate emails from your colleague Katie Smith, whose email is smithk@yourcompany.org, but have received an email from Katie Smith that looks suspicious. You might hover your cursor over the name “Katie Smith” in the “From” line only to discover that the email address is, in fact, from reggie483@gmail.com and know that it's a scam.

- Do not provide any information about yourself or your organization to anyone you do not recognize. Reputable organizations will not ask you for passwords or other personal/financial information through email.
- Contact someone in your organization's IT department who can help. Know what resources and security measures your organization offers to protect against malicious data breaches.

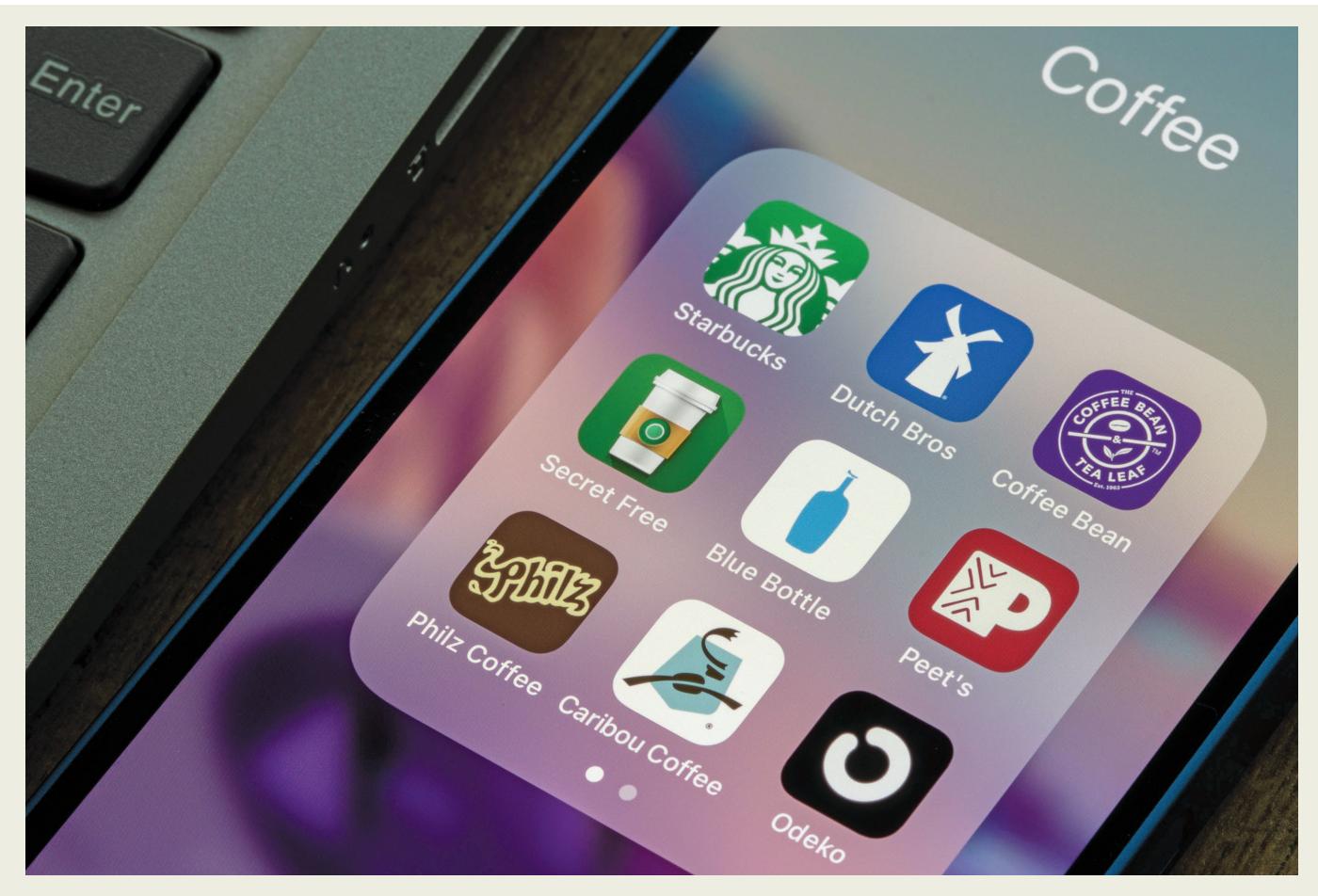
Unfortunately, data breach attacks are only getting more sophisticated, so it is best to educate yourself on the common features of these types of attacks and ways to protect yourself and your organization. Resources like the National Cybersecurity Alliance (<https://staysafeonline.org/>) offer useful resources to help you.

Appropriate Use of Synchronous Messaging and Social Media

Sometimes people in today's fast-paced, global business world need to communicate more immediately and quickly than a letter, a memo, or an email will allow. To respond to this need, several

L04-6 Understand the nature and business uses of text messaging, instant messaging, and social media.

Exhibit 4-13 Illustration of Apps Available to Customers of Popular Coffee Chains



Ted Hsu/Alamy Stock Photo

genres that enable synchronous messaging and social media have emerged, including text messaging, instant messaging, interactive websites, apps, and social networking. Exhibit 4-13 illustrates how companies use apps to communicate with customers who may find app features such as ordering, paying, or accessing customer rewards attractive.

However, as with more traditional business writing genres such as letters, memos, and emails, the use of these more immediate channels should be driven by audience needs and expectations as well as the writer's goals and purposes.

Text Messaging

Text messaging, also called short message service (SMS), is, as its name suggests, used for sending short messages, generally from a mobile device. Because the purpose of a text message is to convey a quick message, text messages are much shorter than messages conveyed by more traditional forms. Also, mobile service providers may limit the number of characters in a text message.

The need for brevity has led to the use of many abbreviations. In fact, a dictionary of more than 1,400 text-messaging abbreviations has been compiled at Webopedia, an online computer

technology encyclopedia (www.webopedia.com/quick_ref/textmessageabbreviations.asp). Some examples are the following:

b4 (before)

gr8 (great)

CU (see you)

u (you)

BTW (by the way)

NP (no problem)

FBM (fine by me)

TC (take care)

HRY (how are you)

TYT (take your time)

At one time, in addition to abbreviations, writers used typed symbols to convey emotions, nouns, or other concepts (emoticons):

:-) standard smiley

;) winking smile

:-0 yell

:-! foot in mouth

:-{ sad or frown

((H))) hugs

It is more common, however, to use emojis, which have largely replaced the use of typed symbols. In fact, as you likely know, mobile devices and computers will sometimes automatically replace typed symbols with pictures (emojis) when you type a message or give you the option to change your text to an emoji. As the **Communication Matters: How Do You Feel about Emojis?** box discusses, the use of emojis will depend on your audience, your context, and your purpose in communicating.

Good business writers will compose text messages that not only convey the writer's message but also allow for brief responses from the receiver. Let's say, for example, you've learned that an important visiting customer is a vegetarian and you have reservations for lunch at Famous Dave's Bar-B-Que. You need to let your boss know this location is not going to work before the lunch meeting. However, the boss is leading an important meeting in which a phone call would be disruptive and inappropriate, so you decide to send a text message.

Marina Smith is a vegetarian. Where should we take her for lunch today?

Although your message does convey the major fact and is only 77 characters counting spaces, it forces the recipient to enter a long response—the name of another place. It might also result in more message exchanges about availability and time.

A better version might be this:

Marina Smith is a vegetarian. Shall we go to 1) Fish House, 2) Souplantation, 3) Mandarin House? All are available at noon.

This version conveys the major fact in 130 characters and allows the recipient to respond simply with 1, 2, or 3. As the writer, you took the initiative to anticipate your reader's needs, identify appropriate alternatives, and then gather information—steps that are as important with text messaging as they are with other messages. If your text messages are clear, complete, and concise and have a professional and pleasant tone, you will find them a valuable tool for business use.



Communication Matters

How Do You Feel about Emojis?

Many of us are frequent users of emojis in text messages and emails to family and friends. We might use them to save time, convey emotions if we think our tone will be misconstrued, or inject some humor into our messages.

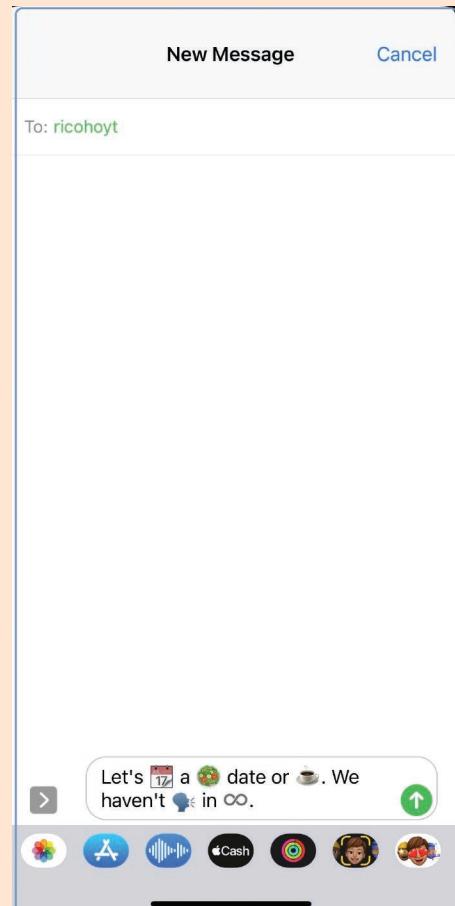
But what about using emojis in the workplace? One recent study suggests that the use of smileys in the workplace does not create the impression that the writer is a warm, friendly person. Instead, the use of smileys creates the impression that the writer is incompetent.

That said, as we have discussed in this chapter, the impact of what you should say and how you should say it depends on your audience, context, and purpose. Grammarly, for example, advises that using emojis in messages to audiences with whom you have an informal relationship or with whom you have an equal relationship or using them in instant-messaging apps may be appropriate. In fact, *Harvard Business Review* states that, when used appropriately, emojis can help build feelings of connectedness among team members because of the physical and emotional cues they offer. However, Grammarly advises that

using emojis in formal contexts, with clients, or in bad-news messages is not likely to be appropriate. You also want to avoid emojis when doing so will compromise the clarity of your message. Using an emoji might be a quick and efficient way to communicate, but above all, your message must accomplish its communication goals and be received well.

Before you type a message with emojis like the one here ("Let's schedule a lunch date or coffee. We haven't talked in forever."), be absolutely certain that your audience, context, purpose, and business goals all indicate that it's a good idea. Tech tip: You can use your computer keyboard to call up a list of emojis. On a PC, press the Windows key + the period key. On a Mac, press Ctrl + Cmd + the spacebar.

Source: Ella Glikson, Arik Cheshin, and Gerben A. van Kleef, "The Dark Side of a Smiley: Effects of Smiling Emoticons on Virtual First Impressions," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 9, no. 5 (July 2018): 614–25, doi:10.1177/1948550617720269; Joanna Cutrara "Can You Actually Use Emojis in Work Emails?," *Grammarly*, June 2, 2022, www.grammarly.com/blog/work-email-emojis/; Tomoko Yokoi and Jennifer Jordan, "Using Emojis to Connect with Your Team," *Harvard Business Review*, May 30, 2022, <https://hbr.org/2022/05/using-emojis-to-connect-with-your-team>.



Interface: Apple Inc.

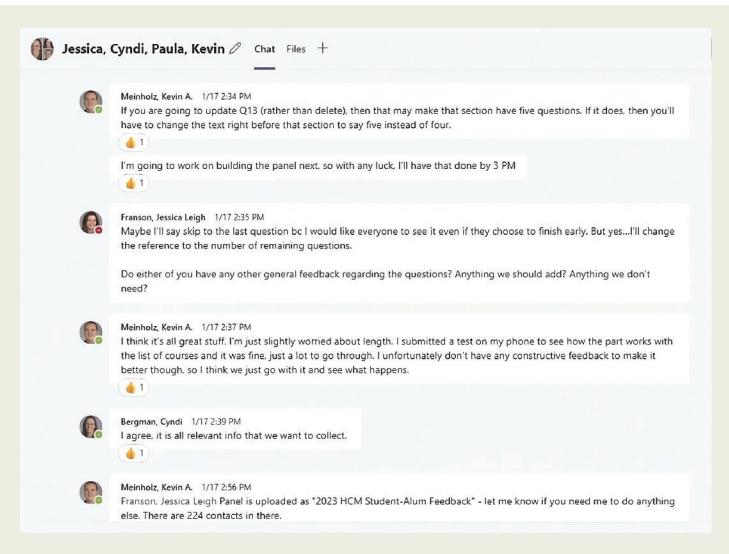
Instant Messaging

Instant messaging, commonly referred to as IM-ing or online chatting, is much like telephone conversation in that parties can communicate in real time (instantly). It differs primarily in that it is text-based (typed) rather than voice-based communication, though voice-based instant messaging is possible. Many writers will use the same abbreviations and emoticons when instant messaging as they would in text messaging. Here again, the use of these devices depends on your audience and purpose. Exhibit 4-14 shows the Microsoft Teams chat tool.

Because **instant messages** are similar to phone conversations, you can write them much as you would talk in conversation with another person. Whether the person is a friend or your business associate, your language should reflect this relationship. In business situations you should consciously direct the flow toward your objective and keep your language and content professional.

Exhibit 4-14

Example of the Microsoft Teams Instant Messaging Tool



Courtesy of Jessica Leigh Franson. Interface: Microsoft Corporation.

Social Media

You are probably familiar with such **social media** sites as Facebook, X, formerly known as Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, or LinkedIn. Perhaps you even have a blog where you keep an online diary or journal that you share publicly. Although you may use these sites to connect with friends, family, or classmates, many business writers also use them to connect with clients, customers, colleagues, and supervisors, as they answer questions, promote products, network with other professionals, or interact briefly with co-workers. Business professionals, then, are using social networking sites for purposes that are likely very different from your purpose in using them (see the corporate blog in Exhibit 4-15). Business professionals, then, are using social networking sites for purposes that are likely very different from your purpose in using them. The Dell Technologies blog serves two purposes. One purpose is to inform customers and potential customers of news about technology innovations that may impact their organizations. A second purpose is to market Dell as their resource for their technology needs. (See Chapter 9 for additional

information about how companies use multimedia selling strategies, such as content marketing, to persuade customers to use their products and services.)

Exhibit 4-15

Illustration of a Customer-Facing Corporate Blog

The screenshot shows the Dell Technologies Blog homepage. The main banner features a circular graphic with the word "INNOVATION" and the text "Achieving Energy Efficiency and Sustainability Goals with Dell PowerEdge". Below the banner, there is a "Featured" section with an article titled "Celebrating Data Privacy Week with Dell's Chief Privacy Officer" under the "CUSTOMER" category. The article was published on Jan 23, 2023. Another section below is titled "DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION" with the text "Leveraging Integration as a Service (INaaS) for Your Business". The top navigation bar includes links for "Search Dell", "Sign In", "Contact Us", and "US/EN". The main menu categories are "APEX", "Products", "Solutions", "Services", "Support", "Deals", "Financing", and "About Us". The header also includes "Company Updates", "Products", "Technology Solutions", and "Service and Support".

Dell Inc.

Generally, the messages on social networking sites are brief; X, for example, restricts messages to 280 characters. As with text messaging, messages must not only be brief but concise and clear. If you have only so much space for your message, you need to make sure your reader immediately knows your point and has enough detail to act on your message. Therefore, messages on social media sites should begin with your main point (what you need your reader to do, think, feel, or believe as a result of reading your message) and then follow with details in order of importance.

Whatever form of social media you use, you want to be sure you analyze your audience, purpose, and context before you write. You wouldn't, of course, want to spend much time posting to Instagram if your audiences primarily use X and Pinterest. And you want to be sure your tone and style are appropriate.

In addition, because the messages on these sites are public, you never want to use language or a tone or writing style that you would be embarrassed to have your boss see, that may have legal implications, or that might get you fired. If you currently have a page on a social networking site where family and friends are your audience, you will want to remove any pictures or language that you wouldn't want a prospective employer, current employer, co-worker, customer, or client to see. No matter how private you believe your page to be, you can never know what your friends and family are sharing with other people.

In fact, cleaning up your social media accounts may actually help you during the job search. In one study, 70 percent of the employers surveyed said they check social media sites during the hiring process, 67 percent said they search for candidates using social media, and 55 percent said that the content of someone's social media factored into hiring decisions. Respondents in the study also noted that a positive social media presence can be a useful tool for creating a professional presence.⁸

Regardless of the type of business messages you send, remember that on the job, companies often monitor employees' computer activity. They can detect excessive use, inappropriate or unethical behavior, disclosure of proprietary information, use of sexually explicit language, and attachments with viruses. Companies' monitoring systems also have features that protect the company from legal liabilities. As a business professional, you must know your company's computer use policy and avoid writing anything that would reflect poorly on you or your company or put you or your company at risk.



You Make the Call

Should companies allow employees to use social media at work for personal reasons?

Computer Tools in Business Communication

Planning, drafting, and revising a message or writing project can be a daunting task, whether that task is large or small. Fortunately, you have several tools available not only to make your writing and planning process efficient but also to help you write clear and impactful messages.

Using Computer Tools to Plan a Writing Project

Sometimes, a writing project requires significant planning. Other times, writing a document is part of a larger project, and you need to schedule the writing among the other tasks in the project. It could also be that you are writing short documents that have specific deadlines or timelines associated with them, and you want to make sure you have allotted enough time in your schedule to write them.

LO4-7 Describe the use of computer tools to facilitate planning messages.

Whatever the case, you may find it helpful to use **project planning tools** such as those available in Microsoft Teams. Project planning tools are a great way to visualize the scope of a project and see how all of the pieces will come together to create a final product or achieve a business goal. Exhibit 4-16 shows how a tool, such as Microsoft Teams, can be used to create and assign tasks, map a project timeline, and track the progress toward task and project completion.

Exhibit 4-16

Illustration of the Microsoft Teams Planning Tool

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Teams Planning Tool interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with tabs like Posts, Files, Onboarding, Contracts, Scheduling To-Do, and more. Below the navigation is a toolbar with Group by Progress, Filter, List, Board (which is selected), Charts, and Schedule.

The main area is divided into three columns: Not started, In progress, and Completed. Each column has a header with a '+ Add task' button. Under 'Not started', there are two tasks: 'Add David Duncombe & Melaney Barba to MBA website' (due 01/16) and 'Assign MBA 700 instructor' (due 02/03). Under 'In progress', there's one task: 'Gather Alumni Speaker Recommendations' (Speaker Series, due 02/03). Under 'Completed', there are two tasks: 'Enter MBA Courses in CampS for Fall 23' (due 02/03) and 'Enter Alliance Courses in CampS for Fall 23' (due 02/03).

Below the columns is a circular progress meter labeled '7 Tasks left'. To its right is a priority matrix with columns for Status (Not started, In progress, Late, Completed), Bucket (To do, New Faculty, Speaker Series, Done), and Priority (14, 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2, Urgent, Important, Medium). The matrix shows the distribution of tasks across these categories.

Interface: Microsoft Corporation

Finding time for writing, of course, is one of the major challenges for businesspeople. By using an annotated **electronic calendar**, you can plan time for completing your writing projects. One such desktop tool is Microsoft Outlook. Exhibit 4-17 shows an Outlook calendar, which allows you to view your calendar in multiple formats, see others' shared calendars, schedule meetings, set appointment reminders, and perform many other functions to manage your time.

Good business writers always take the time to plan, using whatever tool helps their planning process. Using the powerful features that both project management and electronic calendars provide will give you the potential to produce high-quality work in a timely fashion.

Using Computer Tools to Gather and Organize Information

As we've discussed in previous chapters, before you can write, you need to know what information you require to accomplish your business and communication goals. Gathering information is one of the business writer's most important jobs.

Both in school and in the workplace, you will likely have databases, reference materials, library catalogs, company webpages, listservs, professional organizations, social networking sites

Exhibit 4-17 Illustration of a Calendar in Microsoft Outlook

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Outlook calendar interface. At the top, there's a ribbon menu with tabs like File, Home, Send / Receive, Folder, View, Help, and Bitdefender Antispam. Below the ribbon are various icons for creating new items (Appointment, Meeting, Items), connecting to Microsoft Teams, and navigating through the calendar (Today, Next 7 Days, Day, Work Week, Week, Month, Schedule). On the right side, there are buttons for Groups, Share Calendar, Add Calendar, Manage Calendars, and Find.

The main area displays a weekly calendar for July 7 - 11, 2025. The days of the week are Monday through Friday. Each day has a grid from 9 AM to 6 PM. Several events are listed:

- Monday:** Support Staff Weekly Check-in at 9 AM, Fiscal Year Recap at 10 AM, Team Lead Meeting at 11 AM.
- Tuesday:** Work time - Finalize Materials for Launch Meeting at 1 PM.
- Wednesday:** Launch: Website Revision at 9 AM, Cameron - Weekly Check In at 3 PM.
- Thursday:** Send Intern Midterm Reviews to Schools at 10 AM, Lunch with Choj Smiling Goat at 1 PM.
- Friday:** Vacation from 10 AM to 6 PM.

On the left sidebar, there are links to My Calendars, Shared Calendars, Rooms, Other Calendars, and All Group Calendars. The status bar at the bottom indicates "Eau Claire, Wisconsin" and "Work Week".

Interface: Microsoft Corporation

(e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, and X), and other helpful websites that can provide you with any information you need. Apps such as Flipboard or Feedly pull content from around the web that is based on your interests. Less commonly used today are RSS (really simple syndication) readers that push content from a blog, for example, to your email.

Whatever method you choose to gather data, you want to be aware of the latest trends, news, and research in your field and have ready information for your writing needs. Chapter 10 introduces you to many resources that can help you gather information.

Organizing Your Information Once you have gathered the facts, you will want to store them in some organized fashion so you can retrieve them easily. **Database tools** will help you here. For instance, if your company is interested in developing a product for a newly defined market niche, you may want to collect information about the targeted market, potential suppliers of components of your new product, sites for producing the product, projected labor costs, and so on. You could organize your information by entering your notes about target markets, names of suppliers, and other data in an individually designed form created with database tools. The information you have collected will be available whenever you need it. You can search and sort it on any of the categories (fields) you set up in your database.

Variations of the generic database are specialty tools such as EndNote, ProCite, and RefWorks. These specialty programs allow you to transfer bibliographic information automatically from a wide variety of online databases.

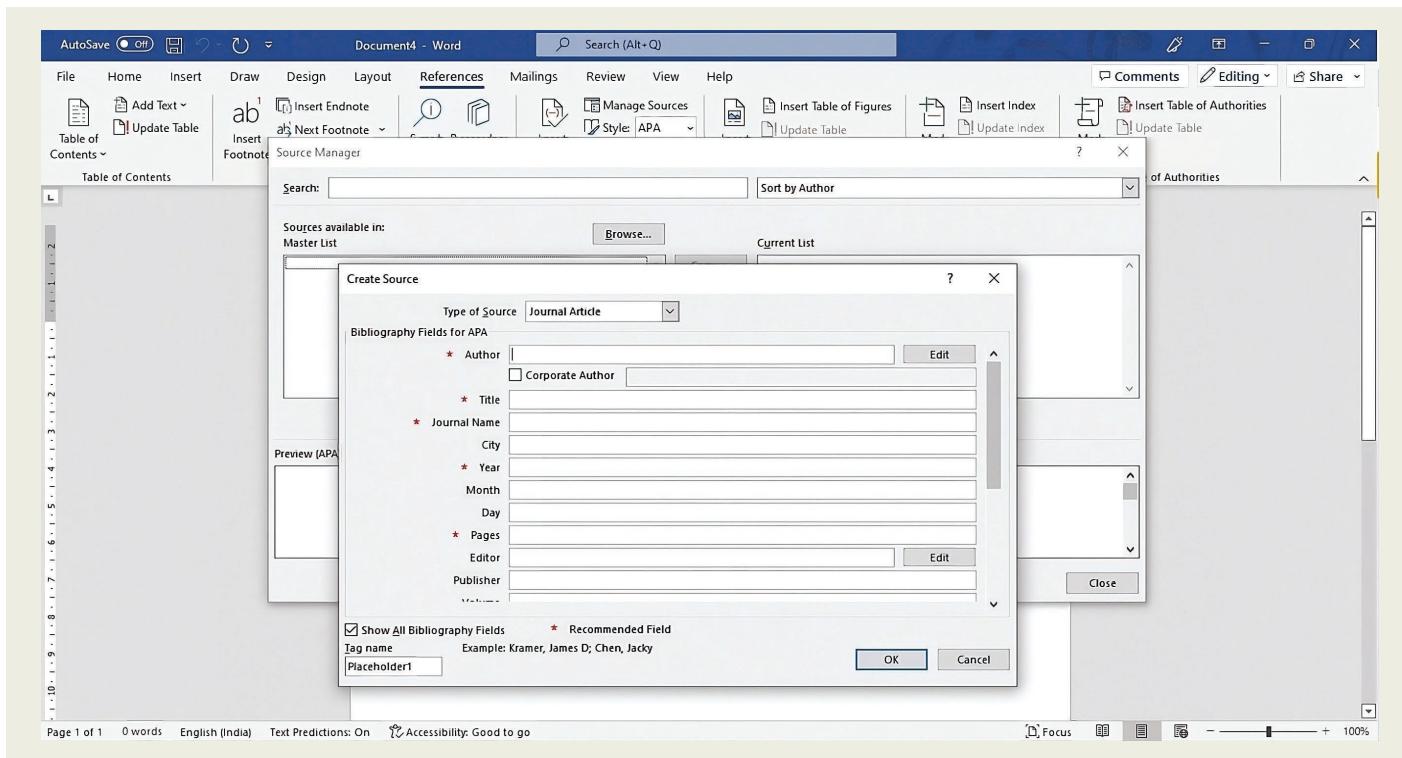


Technology can help a writer create effective business messages.

Paul Bradbury/OJO Images/Getty Images

Exhibit 4-18

Illustration of the References Tool in Word



Interface: Microsoft Corporation

Microsoft Word also provides a database for managing sources (Exhibit 4-18). To use the database, click References > Citations & Bibliography tab > Insert Citation. After you have inserted your citations, you can organize them by clicking the Manage Sources icon.

Note that the list for the kinds of citations that can be created in a given citation tool may not include your type of source—and that these tools do make mistakes (see Communication Matters: Citation-Creating Tools in Reference Chapter B). Be sure to check your citations against the style guide you’re using.

Organizing Your Ideas Organizing your ideas is essential for writing a clear message. You may find it helpful to organize ideas using an **outlining or concept-mapping program** such as Microsoft Visio (Exhibit 4-19). Some programs, such as Edraw, have both free and at-cost programs available. Once you have captured your ideas and grouped related ideas, you can rearrange them into an order that will be meaningful to your audience.

Using Computer Tools to Present Information

Once you’ve gathered and organized your information, you need to think about how you will present the information to your audience. Deciding how to present your data requires that you think about how you will organize your data and content to best meet your audience’s needs.

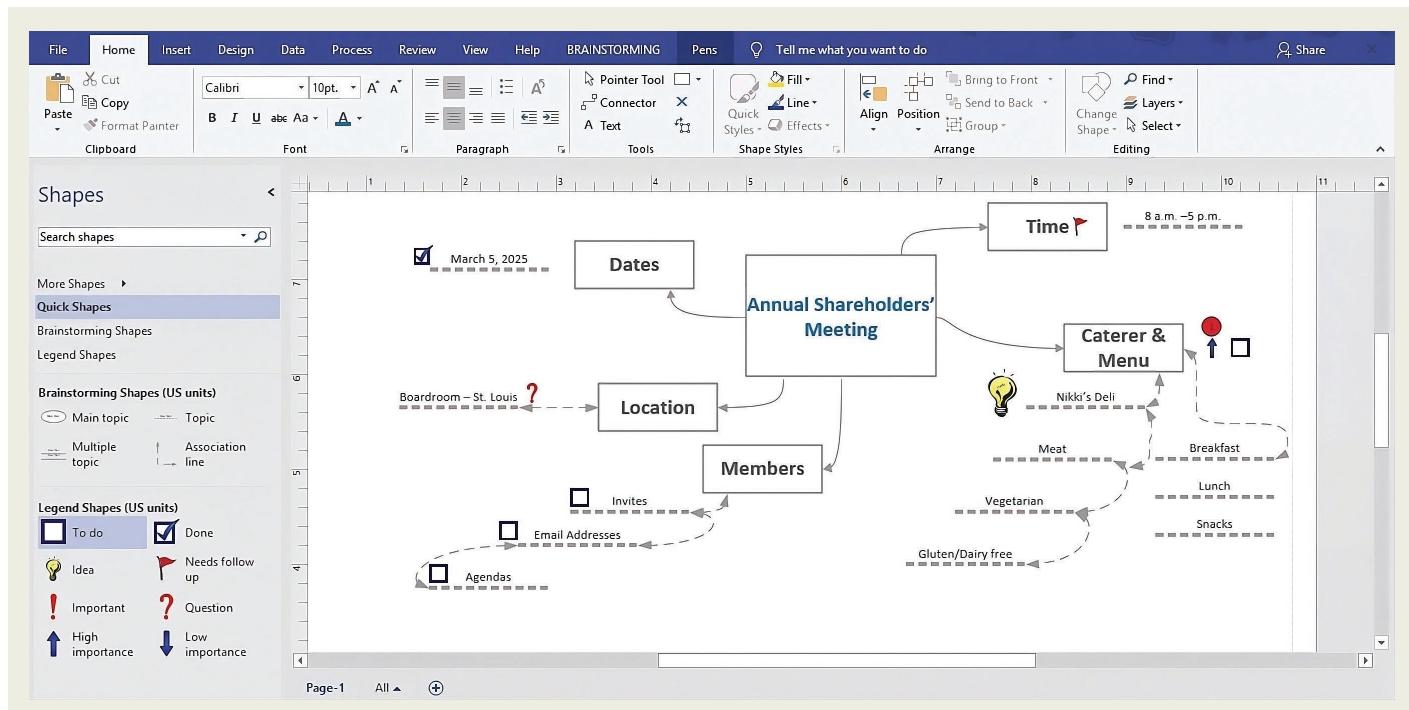
Statistical programs such as SPSS and SAS are now user friendly, allowing writers to organize raw numbers into meaningful pictures of their data. In addition, spreadsheet programs such as Excel and Tableau will compute a broad range of data to help writers interpret the data and make it visually accessible. Chapter 5 discusses the best practices for the visual communication of information.

Using Computer Tools to Draft Messages

You are likely familiar with Microsoft Word or another word processing program as a technology for creating your documents. In addition to the basics of using the software to open files, draft, edit, cut

LO4-8 Describe the use of computer tools to facilitate drafting messages.

Exhibit 4-19 Illustration of the Concept Mapping Created in Microsoft Visio



Interface: Microsoft Corporation

and paste, change a font size and style, and print a document, this software offers many more options for helping you with the drafting process. Because of its popularity, we reference Microsoft Word, but many of the tools we discuss are readily available in other word processing programs as well.

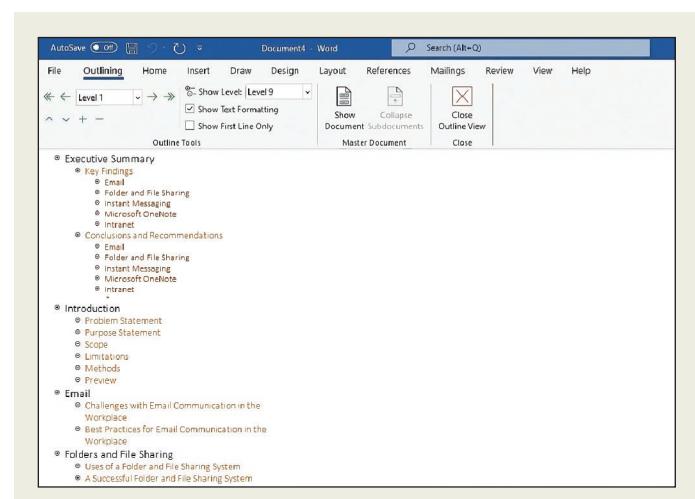
Use the Help Feature When using your software, be sure that you control the software rather than letting it control you. That is, if you need your software to do something, look for a way to accomplish the task. “The computer wouldn’t let me” is really not an issue anymore. For example, in Microsoft Word, the default line spacing is 1.08 spaces, and the default paragraph spacing is 8 points. If you are not a proficient user of Microsoft Word, you may think that you are stuck with this spacing. However, if you use the Help feature located on the Microsoft Word toolbar or think logically that the controls for line and paragraph spacing would be the *Paragraph* settings (found on the *Home* ribbon), you can make changes quickly.

Take Advantage of Built-In Styles and Themes

Word processing programs also offer a variety of styles, document themes, and templates that you may use to ensure consistency in your documents. The built-in styles in Microsoft Word (Home ribbon > Styles) are particularly useful not only to ensure consistency but also to create a table of contents. If you use the styles (or create your own using the *Styles* tool), Microsoft Word can use them to automatically generate a table of contents. Styles also lets you use Microsoft Word’s outline view (Exhibit 4-20) to move text just by clicking and dragging the heading to a new location in the outline. If you

Exhibit 4-20

Illustration of Microsoft Word's Styles Presented in Outline View



Interface: Microsoft Corporation

use the themes and templates, though, be aware that many of these have specially set formatting for line and paragraph spacing, bullets, and alignment. You can manipulate these settings to meet your preferences, but if you are not comfortable doing so, you may find it easier to create your own formatting. Again, the Help feature can show you how to make these changes.

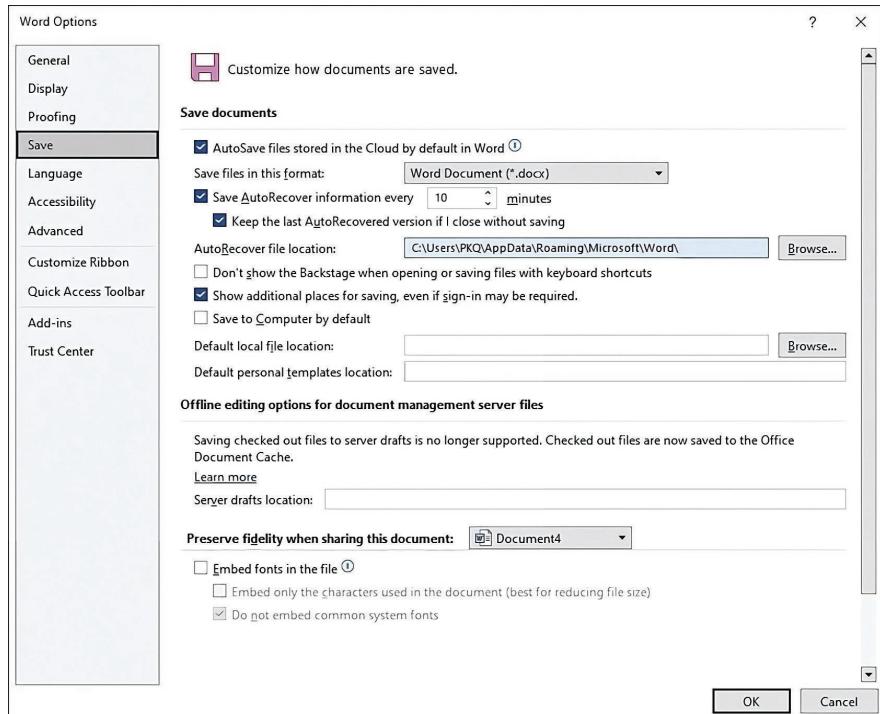
Use Speech Recognition Tools If you have mobility issues or find it easier to talk through your thoughts as you draft, you may want to consider using a speech recognition tool. You train the software to recognize your voice and speech patterns so that it can enter text in your document as you speak. Some programs, such as Dragon Naturally Speaking, can be purchased, whereas Google Chrome's Dictation App or Microsoft's Windows Speech Recognition (All Programs > Accessories > Ease of Access > Windows Speech Recognition) can be accessed from your computer without an additional purchase.

Explore Other Interesting Features Microsoft Word offers the following additional features. If you use other word processing software, you may have access to similar features as well.

- Equation builder: Lets you write equations.
- Quick Parts (also called Quick Words and AutoText in other software): Lets you create a collection of information that you frequently use in documents so that you do not have to retype the information every time you create a document.
- Word count: Allows you to keep track of your document's length.
- Collaboration: Enables you to merge, view, or compare multiple documents.
- Digital signature: Validates the authenticity of the writer much like the signature on a printed document.
- Smart Art, Clip Art, Charts: Lets you create appealing, informative visuals.
- Multiple Save options: Allows you to save your document as a Word file, a .pdf, or an .html file.

Save Your Document Correctly If your readers are getting printed copies of your document, you can save your file in whatever software format you are using. However, if your readers will view your document electronically, you need to save it in a format that your reader's software will recognize. For instance, Microsoft Word files save as .docx files, and if your readers are also using Microsoft Word to open the file, the file should look exactly like the one you sent. Sometimes, especially with documents that contain a lot of formatting and visuals, your Word document may look different when opened by another reader. If you want to preserve your formatting or if your reader does not have access to Microsoft Word, you can save your document as a .pdf (portable document format) file. To save your document as a .pdf, you just need to go to File > Save As > Browse > Save as type and select PDF. As with the writing process itself, saving your documents is an audience-centered effort. You don't want your reader to be angry and frustrated at not being able to open your documents, nor do you want to spend time (and the reader's time) backtracking to save the document in another format and then resending it.

Likewise, you want to save your work frequently. Most writers know how difficult it is to create a document, much less re-create it, so they are willing to spend a little time to protect their investment. In the Save Options dialog box of Microsoft Word (File > Options > Save > Save Documents), you can set up the program to have Microsoft Word always create a backup file, to run these backups every 10 minutes, and to do it in the background. This backup helps protect you from losing your work if your computer goes down unexpectedly whether from crashes, power outages, accidents, or viruses.



Interface: Microsoft Corporation

Using Computer Tools to Revise and Edit

Word processing software also offers several tools for proofing and editing your documents. If your editing consists of reading from the computer monitor or printing a document and simply reading it, you may be missing issues or errors that could be quickly fixed. Again, we use Microsoft Word as our reference to illustrate helpful editing tools, but these tools are readily available in other software as well. Remember, though, that while your software may help you identify some of the things you need to revise, you still need to be able to revise for issues your software does not detect.

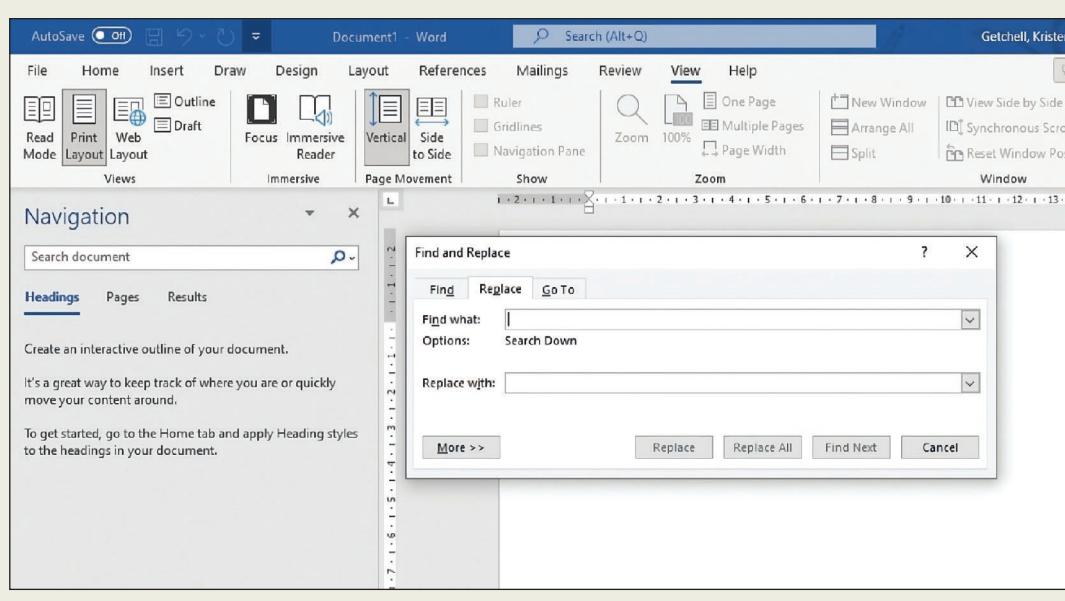
LO4-9 Describe the use of computer tools to facilitate revising messages.

The Find Feature The Find feature (Ctrl+F, or Home > Find) can search for and highlight parts of the text you want to check. Let's say that you are writing a letter, and you know you have a problem with comma splices. You could have the software find and highlight every comma in the letter. Then, you can review the highlighted commas and fix any errors.

The Find and Replace Feature This feature (Ctrl+H, or Home > Replace) allows you to make multiple changes simultaneously (Exhibit 4-21). You can find and replace words or text formatting. If, for example, you spelled *internet* with a lowercase *i* and want to capitalize it instead, you would tell Microsoft Word to search for all instances of *internet* and replace them with *internet*. You can also find and replace line spacing, paragraph formatting, tabs, styles, and special characters much more efficiently than selecting all individual instances of a word, sentence, or paragraph and making changes one at a time.

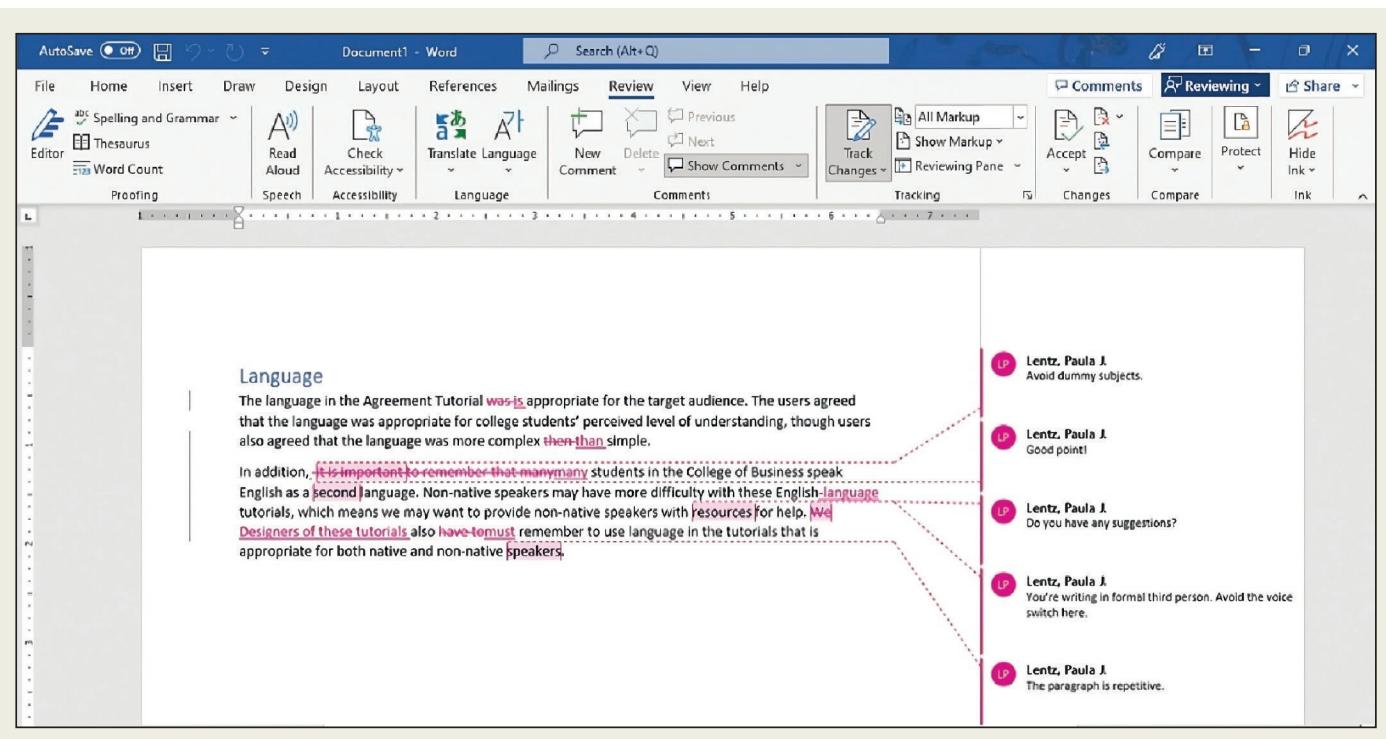
Comments and Track Changes Features Though these features can be used separately, they are often used together when writers collaborate on documents, as Chapter 10 explains. However, you may also want to use them to leave comments for yourself (e.g., "Check the date of this source") or to keep a record of your changes (Exhibit 4-22). Because you can accept or reject the changes, you are not committed to them, and because you still have a record of your earlier work, you can simply reject a change and revert to your original version.

Exhibit 4-21 Illustration of the Find and Replace Feature in Microsoft Word



Interface: Microsoft Corporation

Exhibit 4-22 Illustration of the Comments and Track Changes Features in Microsoft Word



Interface: Microsoft Corporation

AutoCorrect Features The AutoCorrect feature lets you enable the software to recognize common errors you may make. For example, if you type quotation marks inside a period (e.g., ".), you can set the AutoCorrect feature to always correct your text to read ." instead.

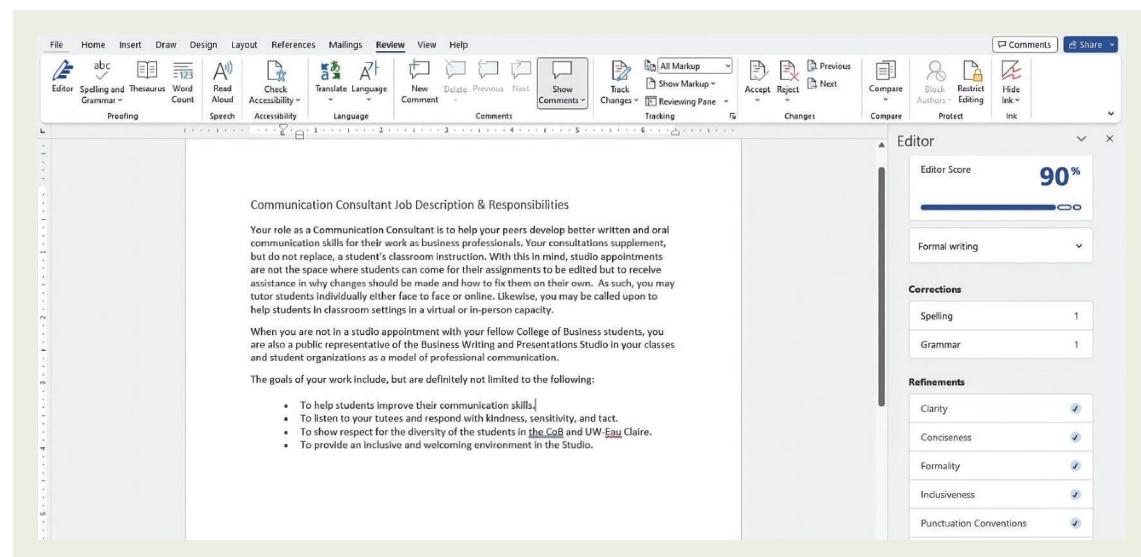
Spelling Checkers Along with Quick Parts, AutoText, and QuickWords, spell-checkers are tools business writers rely on daily. However, they are only effective at identifying words that are not in their dictionary. Therefore, spell-checkers will not identify as errors words that are spelled correctly but used in the wrong sense. For example, a spell-checker will not identify wrong-word errors such as *compliment* for *complement* or *imply* for *infer*. A spelling checker also may miss errors such as *desert* for *dessert* or misused words such as *good* for *well*. Therefore, careful proofreading is still in order after a document has been checked with a spelling checker. To access the spell-checker in Microsoft Word, select the Review ribbon and then “abc Spelling and Grammar,” or select “Editor,” or press F7.

Thesaurus Software Microsoft Word also includes a thesaurus that you can access by going to the Review ribbon and selecting “Thesaurus.” You can also find a thesaurus online. The Merriam-Webster website (www.m-w.com) includes a free online thesaurus, as well as a dictionary and other tools.

Grammar and Style Checkers Grammar and style checkers identify possible problems and give suggestions for revision. Your responsibility is to decide whether the possible problem is a problem and whether the suggestion is the best solution. Making this decision requires that you have a good understanding of basic grammar (see Reference Chapter A).

In addition to checking grammar, style, word usage, and punctuation, Microsoft Word reports readability indexes (see an example in this From the Tech Desk feature in Chapter 6). It also analyzes sentence structure, suggesting that you use simpler sentences, vary the sentence beginnings, use more or fewer prepositional phrases, and make various other changes. Grammar and style checkers also identify possible problems with specific words that might be slang, jargon, misspelled, misused, negative, or difficult for readers to understand. A complementary feature, Microsoft Word Count, reports statistics for number of pages, words, characters, paragraphs, and lines. An example of the interactive use of Microsoft Word’s spelling and grammar checker is shown in Exhibit 4-23.

Exhibit 4-23 Illustration of the Editor Feature in Microsoft Word



Interface: Microsoft Corporation



From the Tech Desk

Microsoft Office 365: The Differences between Online and Desktop Applications

As you may know, Office 365 lets you access popular applications such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint in multiple ways: on the internet, on your desktop, and on your phone or other mobile devices. You have likely discovered that some of the benefits of the online versions of these applications are that you have 24/7 access to your work and can easily collaborate with others who also have access to your files.

At the same time, you may have noticed that, when working online or in a mobile app, you do not have access to some features to generate a table of contents, conduct a robust find-and-replace search, modify styles, generate references, use advanced layout options, create pivot tables, or have access to a lot of options for customizing animations and shapes, and so on. If you need these more advanced features, you will need to use the desktop version of Microsoft Office 365.

Whether you use online, mobile, or desktop versions of Microsoft Office 365's apps may come down to what you are willing to pay for a license or subscription, but your use of any or all options is also determined by your needs. Even the free online version offers sufficient features for many of your individual or group projects. Compare the two images in this From the Tech-Desk box. Can you spot the differences between the online version and the desktop version?

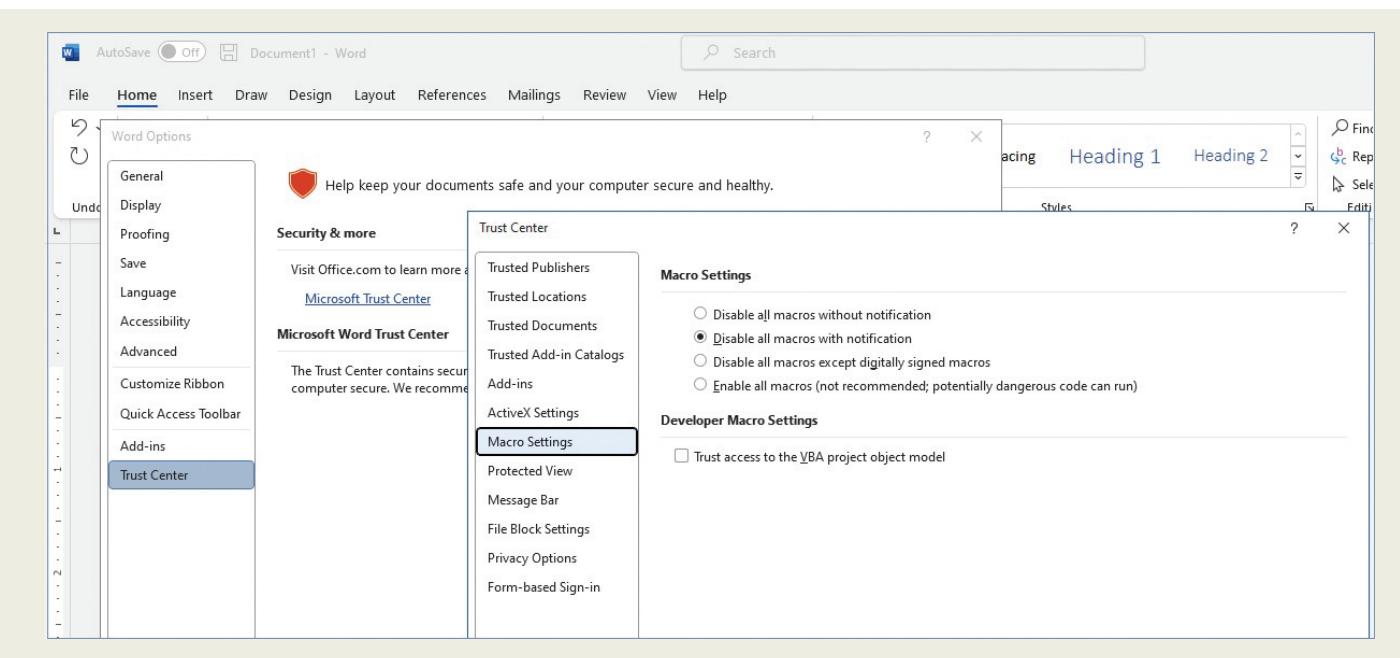
The screenshot shows the Microsoft Word online version interface. The top navigation bar includes 'File', 'Home' (which is underlined), 'Insert', 'Layout', 'References', 'Review', 'View', and 'Help'. A search bar at the top right says 'Search (Alt + Q)'. Below the ribbon is a toolbar with icons for Undo, Paste, Clipboard, Font (set to Calibri Body 11pt), Paragraph (with alignment and spacing controls), Styles (with a dropdown menu for 'Editing'), Editing (with a dropdown menu for 'Reuse Files'), Dictate (with a dropdown menu for 'Voice'), Editor (with a dropdown menu for 'Editor'), and Designer (with a dropdown menu for 'Designer'). The main content area contains a single paragraph of text: 'Thank you for meeting with me yesterday and for sending your follow-up questions regarding the Print Anywhere system. I've responded to each of your questions below:'. At the bottom of the content area, there is a note: 'Are department heads automatically assigned to manage printing accounts for their...'. The overall layout is clean and modern, typical of cloud-based office software.

Microsoft Word online version
Interface: Microsoft Corporation

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Word desktop app interface. The top navigation bar includes 'File', 'Home' (underlined), 'Insert', 'Draw', 'Design', 'Layout', 'References', 'Mailings', 'Review', 'View', 'Developer', 'Help', and 'Acrobat'. A status bar at the top right indicates 'Last Modified: February 19'. Below the ribbon is a toolbar with icons for AutoSave (off), Paste, Clipboard, Font (set to Calibri Body 11pt), Paragraph, Styles, and a 'Create and Share Adobe PDF' button. The main content area contains the same paragraph of text as the online version. The desktop interface includes a vertical scroll bar on the right side of the content area. The overall layout is similar to the online version but includes additional desktop-specific features like the Acrobat tab and the 'Create and Share Adobe PDF' button.

Microsoft Word desktop app
Interface: Microsoft Corporation

Exhibit 4-24 Illustration of the Security Options in Microsoft Word



Interface: Microsoft Corporation

Recent versions of grammar and style checkers are much more flexible than older versions. In Microsoft Word you can customize your grammar and style settings to fix common errors or to adapt your writing to your company's style preferences. To customize your settings in Microsoft Word, go to File > Options > Proofing.

Grammar and style checkers are definitely important for the business writer. As with all tools, the more appropriately you use them, the better the job they do for you.

Information Rights Management (IRM) Many writing programs now give writers the ability to specify how their documents are shared, controlled, and used. As you can see in Exhibit 4-24, Microsoft Word offers several levels of security for a document.

Writers can determine how their documents are shared by specifying who can read, change, or have full control over them. Additionally, the writer can set an expiration date on these permissions. Not only do these features help businesses prevent sensitive information from getting into the wrong hands either accidentally or intentionally, but they also give writers control over documents once they leave their computers. If only certain people have permissions, forwarded and copied files will be protected from unauthorized use.

IRM tools have prompted many businesses to establish practices or policies on the kinds of permissions required for various types of information to protect their intellectual property. These tools also help decrease inbox clutter because they force writers to think about who really needs the document and for how long.

Technology is certainly an important tool for constructing messages. While word processing is the writer's primary tool, a wide variety of other tools can help with the planning, gathering and organizing, presenting, drafting, and revising and editing. By using the tools discussed in this section, you will find that your writing process is more efficient and your writing more polished.

Technology provides many handy tools for helping you create, draft, and revise your messages. No matter what you are writing or what technology you are using, taking time to make careful decisions during your writing process will significantly enhance your chances of achieving your communication goals.

A Look to the Future

LO4-10 Describe how technology will continue to impact communication in the future.

Given the recent explosion of communication-related technologies, you can anticipate further rapid advancements in how businesses use technology to support or enhance communication.

Cloud computing continues to change the way business communicators access and store their software and their work. For instance, because software and information are stored on websites—in the **cloud**—rather than on the computer, nearly everyone has access to the software programs (e.g., Microsoft Word) used most frequently to communicate in business. In addition, cloud computing enables synchronous and asynchronous group work. Chapter 10 discusses more thoroughly how technology has increasingly facilitated collaborative writing in the workplace and provides you with suggestions of how to use technology to manage group writing projects effectively. Because cloud applications have no system requirements and require no software on the user’s computer, a current challenge for businesspeople is remembering to back up data just as they would if they were working locally from their own computers.

As we mentioned in Chapter 1, organizations are adopting artificial intelligence (AI) tools to help with efficiency. Some of these tools are used as part of the writing process to create and revise business documents. For example, Grammarly is a popular cloud-based software application that is used to help writers address a variety of writing issues from small spelling and punctuation errors to improvements in sentence structure and clarity. Many newer tools rely on a form of artificial intelligence known as **natural language processing** (NLP), which aims to provide computers with the ability to understand text in the same way a human would.⁹ Companies such as Monkeylearn use NLP to offer sentiment analysis, a form of analysis that indicates the tone of a message. Some of the newer tools, like Textio, generate text on their own.¹⁰ Chapt GPT is also a popular content generator. You have probably already seen NLP at work if you have a phone that predicts your reply to a message. Organizations are starting to use these tools to inform both internal and external messages; however, while these tools can be useful and increase productivity, they are not always perfect and need to be checked by a human user. Further, as a student and as a business professional, you want to be aware of policies regarding academic integrity and intellectual property use before using AI tools in academic and professional settings.

Whatever technologies develop, human minds will still need to control communication using good judgment and skill. As Chapter 1 points out, the need for effective problem solving through the skillful use of technology is dramatically increasing. Businesspeople who use technologies in ways that promote clear, professional communication will be assets to their companies and increase their odds of success in their careers.



Cloud computing and artificial intelligence are significant factors that impact business communication.

metamorworks/Shutterstock

Business professionals use more genres than we have discussed in this chapter, but the ones we have discussed here are the main ones that we use today. You will discover that, even as these genres remain relatively constant, they too may evolve in big and small ways, and new genres will continue to emerge to enable people to meet their business and communication goals. In addition, new technological features will change genres. Your ability to remain aware of and curious about business communication genres and new technologies will serve you well.



Power Charge Your Professionalism: Use the Right Word (Part II)

In Chapter 1, you completed the first word-choice exercise. Now it's time for another review with a new set of commonly misused words. Select the word that completes each sentence below. The choices represent words that are sometimes confused, but as a savvy businessperson, you will want to know how to use them to project your best professional image. You'll find these words listed in Reference Chapter A, but to find the definitions, you will want to use a dictionary.

1. Ling is conducting the training sessions to (ensure/insure/assure) all employees know how to use the new intranet portal.
2. Once you (except/accept) the terms of the license agreement, you can download your new software.
3. Even though the instructions did not (implicitly/explicitly) provide a deadline, everyone assumed the forms were due at the end of the month.
4. Did Rick's email (imply/infer) that we would all be getting a raise this year?
5. Last Thursday Kerstin (lead/led) the hospital's board of directors on a tour of the remodeled emergency room.
6. Business letters are usually sent on company letterhead, but personal letters are usually sent on (plane/plain) paper.
7. Paying extra on a loan (principal/principle) each month can help you pay off the loan more quickly.
8. Even though we send most of our messages electronically, we still use (stationary/stationery) for our printed messages.

Choosing the right word is important because . . .

- Using the right word is essential if you want your sentences to be clear.
- Using the right word lets you portray yourself as an educated, competent businessperson.

For further practice using the right pronoun, see the activities on using the right word in Adaptive Learning Assignment under McGraw Hill Adaptive Reading, Grammar, and Research Assignment in the Module "Word Choice."

Key Terms

planning 88
drafting 88
revising 88
recursive 88
business goals 89
writing goals 89
analyze the audience 89
brainstorm 91
direct order 91
indirect order 91
genres 91
levels of edit 93
substantive editing 93
stylistic editing 93
proofreading 93
letters 95
letterhead 96

return address 98
conventional date form 98
inside address 98
courtesy title 98
attention line 98
salutation 98
subject line 99
mixed punctuation 99
open punctuation 99
closed punctuation 99
complimentary close 99
signature block 99
information notations 100
postscripts 100
memorandum (or memo) 103
email 105
spam 105

phishing 105
casual email 106
informal email 106
formal email 106
text messaging 111
instant messages 113
social media 114
project planning tools 115
electronic calendar 116
database tools 117
outlining or concept-mapping program 118
statistical programs 118
cloud computing 126
cloud 126
natural language processing (NLP) 126

Critical-Thinking Questions

1. Explain why writing can be more difficult than other forms of communication. **LO4-1**
2. Describe ways in which the writing process might be recursive. **LO4-2**
3. Describe the features of each of the main genres of business writing discussed in this chapter. What features distinguish one genre from the others? What purposes do these genres serve? Why do you think differences in genre features are necessary? **LO4-3, LO4-4, LO4-5, LO4-6**
4. Explain how technology can help the writer with both creative and tedious writing tasks. **LO4-6, LO4-7, LO4-8**
5. Identify specific software tools that assist with constructing written messages. Explain what each does. **LO4-6, LO4-7, LO4-8**
6. Word processing programs are the writer's primary tool. Identify five basic features and two advanced features useful to business writers. **LO4-6, LO4-7, LO4-8**
7. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of spelling checkers and grammar and style checkers. **LO4-8**
8. Brainstorm some practices or policies that businesses might develop for using the information rights management (IRM) tool effectively. **LO4-8**
9. How have text messaging or other technologies affected your writing? **LO4-2, LO4-9**
10. How will technology continue to affect business writing? **LO4-10**
11. What might be potential ethical or legal issues that arise from using artificial intelligence to create business messages? **LO4-10**

Skills-Building Exercises

1. Find an article in a print or online publication that relates to the importance of good written communication in business. As your instructor directs, write a one-paragraph reaction to it and post it to a blog, post it to the "Comments" section of an online discussion, or submit your reaction in memo format. **LO4-1**
2. Investigate sources of information you might use when gathering information for business messages. You might check your school and/or local libraries to determine what current (or future) electronic resources will help you find information about businesses. You might also find sources on the internet or websites with links to good sources of business information. Report your findings to the class. **LO4-2**
3. Think about your own writing process in light of what you have read in this chapter. What are your strengths as a writer? In what areas do you struggle? As your instructor directs, write a memo, email, or discussion post. **LO4-2**
4. Think about the various audiences you engage with at home, at work, and at school. How are they similar? How are they different? What might be some topics you would talk about (or write about in an email, text message, or social media post) with one audience that you would not talk or write about with another audience? As your instructor directs, write a memo, email, or discussion post or give a short presentation to your class that answers these questions. **LO4-2**
5. You are a shift leader at a busy pizza place. It's Friday night, and you are swamped. One of your regular customers calls in an order for six pizzas to be delivered to a party at 8 p.m. Another customer (a new one) orders two pizzas to be delivered at the same time. Unfortunately, something got mixed up in making and packaging the order, and the second customer's two pizzas were switched with two pizzas for the regular customer. What are you going to do? This is the second time in three weeks that you have messed up the regular customer's order, and while the regular customer has been patient, you know this latest

mix-up will only further damage your customer's goodwill. You will have to break this news about the pizza mix-up to the regular customer, the new customer, and eventually your store manager. You will also have to talk to the employees regarding the mix-up to ensure they are more accurate in the future. Analyze all of these audiences. How will you explain the news to each audience? What can you do to communicate your message, preserve each audience's goodwill, and project a professional image? What will be different in your communication with each audience? What will be similar? What channel will you use? As your instructor directs, write a memo, email, or discussion post or give a short presentation to your class that answers these questions. **LO4-2, LO4-3, LO4-4**

6. Find a spam or phishing email in your inbox. If you can't find one in your main inbox, look in your junk mail folder. Without responding to or clicking on anything in the message, examine the message for its features. What is the purpose? What is the writer trying to get you to do? (Is there a call to action?) Is there a sense of urgency to the message? What are some overall features of the message (e.g., subject, organization)? What sentence-level features (e.g., word choice, spelling, grammar, and punctuation) do you notice? As your instructor directs, compose a phishing email that tries to get college students to provide the writer with personal information such as birth date or address. **LO4-9, LO4-10**
7. Pick one of your favorite corporate social media sites that you follow on Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram, or other platforms. Analyze yourself as one member of the company's audience for posts to these sites. What does this company do that keeps you, as the audience, engaged with this content? As your instructor directs, write a memo, email, or discussion post or give a short presentation to your class that answers this question. **LO4-9**
8. Find a company that uses at least three online genres to communicate with its audiences (e.g., a website, Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, TikTok). If you can find other types of communication genres this company uses (e.g., email, letter, promotional flyer), include those as you complete this exercise, too. As your instructor directs, answer these questions in a memo, email, discussion post, short report, or presentation: What are the features of each genre that distinguish it from the others? What features do any of the genres share? What is the purpose of each genre? Who is the audience for each genre? How are the tone, style, and content for the messages similar or different in these genres? How is the writing similar or different in these genres (e.g., sentence fragments vs. complete sentences, use of punctuation, use of abbreviations)? **LO4-3, LO4-4, LO4-5, LO4-6**
9. Find a recent news article about a company's unsuccessful use of social media. As your instructor directs, write a memo or email in which you describe the situation, analyze what led to the failure of the message, and offer suggestions for what the company should have done differently. **LO4-4, LO4-5, LO4-9**
10. Choose a feature from Microsoft Word (such as index, table of contents, templates, or citation manager) that you have not used much. Learn how to use it and create an example of its use in a business document. Write a brief description of its application and then teach your classmates to use the feature. **LO4-6, LO4-7, LO4-8**
11. Identify a communication technology that enables companies and businesspeople to achieve their business or communication goals. Do some research on this technology. Who developed this technology? What business or communication problem was this technology designed to solve, or what need was this technology designed to meet? Who was this technology designed for? How well does this communication technology fulfill its purpose? If you could improve upon this technology, what would you do? How would your improvements enable a better experience for its users? You will want to think beyond the users of the technologies and consider the users' audiences as well when you answer these questions. As your instructor directs, write a memo, email, or discussion post or give a short presentation to your class that answers some or all of these questions. **LO4-9, LO4-10**
12. Identify one technology that uses natural language processing (NLP). How might this tool help you as a businessperson? What are its limitations? What ethical uses of the technology should you and others consider when using this technology? As your instructor directs, write a memo, email, or discussion post or give a short presentation to your class that answers these questions. **LO4-10**



Problem Solver to the Rescue

Informing Customers about a New Layer of Security for Their Accounts

Instructions: Read the communication scenario that follows and then follow the instructions to revise the message using the problem-solving advice in Chapter 1, the steps in the writing process, and other advice in this chapter.

Scenario: Congratulations! You were selected to be the internal communications specialist intern at Glenloch Credit Union's (GCU) main office in Lexington, KY. GCU has over 100,000 members in Kentucky and Tennessee. You have been with GCU for three months.

Your supervisor has asked you to write a message to all GCU members explaining new security measures for your online banking services, which will require members to use a two-factor authentication process to log in and access their accounts. Essentially, once members log in to a site, they will receive an alert on their phone. Once members use their phones to verify their identity, they will have access to their online accounts. If they do not have a mobile phone, they can use a landline, other computer, or a free token available from GCU to access their accounts. It sounds cumbersome, but added security is necessary in a world where it's so easy for people to access online data.

To write this message, you have already analyzed your audience and created a rough draft. Here is what you have so far:

Audience Analysis:

- **Relationship:** Client or customer. No relationship. I don't know my audience personally.
- **Audience's Reaction:** I expect most people will have a positive or neutral reaction, knowing it's something that will assure them we are protecting their data or that it's just something we have to do in today's world. Some people may react negatively and wonder if it's necessary or think it's cumbersome. Some audience members may be

nervous that they won't be able to use the two-factor authentication technology.

- **Audience's Action:** Upon reading the message, I want the audience to sign up for two-factor authentication. I also want readers to know whom to contact if they have questions.
- **Company Culture Factors:** Our company has core values that it lives by, which include doing the right thing and making our members' lives better.
- **Audience's Culture:** Some audience members may be nervous that they won't be able to use the two-factor authentication technology. Others will see it as just another piece of technology to use and be comfortable with it.
- **What the Audience Knows/Needs to Know:** The audience needs to know what two-factor authentication is, what steps they need to take to set up two-factor authentication for themselves, why it's important, how to access and use it, and where to go for help. They already know that the security of their accounts is important but may not know that two-factor authentication makes their accounts secure.
- **Best Channel:** Because readers who use online banking are required to have an email address, email would be a good primary channel for this message. Posting it on GCU's website would be good, too.

Your Draft of the Message

Glenloch Credit Union

5610 Main Street

Lexington, KY 40510

1-800-354-0987

www.gcu.org

January 5, 2025

<Insert Member Name>

<Insert Member Address>

To Whom It May Concern:

SUBJECT: Online Theft and Member Accounts

To assure that your accounts are secure, prevent identity theft, and protect your privacy, we have partnered with Duo Security to implement

two-factor authentication. All members will be required to use two-factor authentication beginning February 1 to access their accounts online.

Two-factor authentication means that whenever you log in to your GCU account, you will receive an alert on your mobile phone. Once you use your phones to accept the notification and verify your identity, you will have access to your accounts. If you do not have a mobile phone, you can use a landline, other computer, or a free token available from GCU to access your accounts.

The two-factor authentication applies only to your accounts online. You will not need to use two-factor authentication if you are accessing your accounts at a teller station at a branch office.

This added layer of security is one way we live the principals established in our core values: caring for our members and doing the right thing.

Thank you.

Keith, GCU Intern

Your Next Step: Revision

You have created a pretty good draft of your message, but a good business writer always revises.

1. Read your draft again.
2. Review your audience analysis.
 1. Are your tone and style right for the audience, context, and purpose of your message?
 2. Did you include all of the necessary information? What did you forget?
 3. Does your audience know what to do upon reading this message or where to go for help?
 4. Is the document in the right format?
 5. Do you see any word-choice errors?
3. As your instructor directs, work alone or with a partner to revise the message in a Microsoft Word document and submit it for evaluation.

Communicating Your Messages Visually

Learning Objectives

- LO5-1 Describe the principles of document design: contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, and accessibility.
- LO5-2 Understand the impact of color on business documents.
- LO5-3 Choose typefaces and fonts that enhance readability and visual appeal.
- LO5-4 Design documents for reading in printed format.
- LO5-5 Design text for online reading.
- LO5-6 Plan which parts of your document or presentation should be communicated or supported by visuals.
- LO5-7 Explain the factors that are important in the effective presentation of visuals.
- LO5-8 Select and use textual visuals such as tables, pull quotes, flowcharts, and organizational charts.
- LO5-9 Select and use visuals such as bar charts, pie charts, line charts, scatter diagrams, pictographs, and maps.
- LO5-10 Place and interpret visuals effectively.
- LO5-11 Avoid common errors and ethical problems when constructing and using visuals.



Many times when people talk about communication in the workplace, they refer to communication in its written and oral mediums. Visual communication, however, is just as significant a communication medium as written and oral communication. For example, the appearance of a letter, memo, email, report, or any other business is important. It gives an impression of competence and care; it builds your credibility; and it helps you communicate solutions to business problems in a way that makes your message clear and promotes goodwill

with the audience. Further, attention to the visual presentation shows you understand formatting conventions associated with a genre.

However, visual communication is so much more than the way a message looks. Communicating your message requires you to think beyond its visual appeal and focus on what you are communicating with visual elements. **Visual rhetoric** is the way you use visual features and visuals to communicate your message. These features include not only photos, drawings, charts, graphs, and tables but also fonts, colors, the

placement of text on a page, and even paragraph length and the use of headings.

The first part of this chapter offers advice for using principles of document design, color, and fonts that applies to both print or printable documents and online text. The next sections show you how to use principles of document design to enhance your ability to communicate your messages in print or online. The final part of this chapter extends the discussion of visual communication to include the communication of data using tables, charts, graphs, and other visuals and their integration into your business documents.



Problem-Solving Challenge

Promoting a Professional Look

Assume that you are a mid-level manager at Masterson Insurance Agency, an agency with several offices in the Midwest region of the United States. At a recent meeting of managers and agents, Reid Knuth, one of your best agents, raised a question about the correspondence between the company and its clients and among employees within the agency.

Reid noted that whenever he receives interoffice messages from other branches, the messages are not consistently formatted. In fact, he said that if he were not familiar with the employees' names, he might think the messages had been sent from another company. Plus, he says, the writing itself does not look good—long paragraphs,

inconsistent formatting, multiple fonts—which does not entice employees or customers to look at the messages they receive. He also noted that customer-facing communication such as Masterson's webpage, Facebook page, and letterhead/letters do not have a consistent look. In addition, he frequently finds tables, charts, figures, and other graphics that are not appropriate for the data they represent or that are unclear or misleading.

You agree. You just read an article on the importance of visual communication and have noticed, too, that visual communication is a challenge for many in your company.

Because you and Reid spoke up, you are assigned the job of establishing standards for

communicating visually with internal and external audiences and creating a uniform look for Masterson's social media platforms and website. In addition, you need to include content in the standards that addresses best practices for using visuals such as tables, charts, and graphics when communicating quantitative and qualitative data. While you do not have to do the design work yourself, you do have to communicate with a graphic designer regarding your company's desired look and brand. In addition to creating company standards for visual communication, you and Reid will lead a company-wide webinar about visual communication. The information in this chapter will help you make good decisions as you work through these tasks.

Applying Principles of Document Design

You do not have to be a graphic designer to create attractive business documents or use visuals to communicate your message. All you need is an understanding of a few principles that will guide the decisions you make when you write or present information to an audience. Of course, your audience, communication goals, and business goals will drive your choices, but these principles will help you make informed decisions about presenting your documents in a way that best meets your audience's needs.

LO5-1 Describe the principles of document design: contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, and accessibility.

Exhibit 5-1 Illustration of Good Contrast in a PowerPoint Slide

Graphic designers frequently communicate about design using four principles that also apply to the design and presentation of business documents: contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. We extend this list of principles to include accessibility, which will be discussed throughout the chapter.

Contrast

Contrast means that you use conventions of typography, layout, color, or other visual elements to ensure that your audience quickly sees your most important content. Contrast could mean that you use dark text on a light background in a PowerPoint presentation so that the text stands out. Contrast could also mean that you use bold, italics, or color to make your main points obvious, or it could mean that you use a different font or capital letters to make headings more recognizable in a document such as a long report.

Keep in mind that the secret to effective formatting is simplicity. For example, if you bold or italicize too many items, your page becomes visually messy, and nothing stands

out to the reader. Exhibit 5-1 illustrates a good contrast. Notice how the dark bars contrast with the light background and how the red line, blue bars, and green bars are distinct from one another.

Repetition

Repetition includes the repeated use of elements such as color, placement, fonts, or visuals to help audiences easily recognize where they are in a document. For example, if you consistently use the same formatting for the major headings of a report and consistent but different formatting for subheadings, your reader will easily recognize where major and minor sections of your document begin and end. Or you may create repetition, for instance, by using one icon to indicate a warning and another to indicate a tip or shortcut. Exhibit 5-2 provides examples of repetition that are evident in the US government's National Archives website. Note that the home page provides distinct formatting to link readers to the major sections of the website: Research Our Records, Veterans' Service Records, Education Resources, Visit Us, and America's Founding Documents. When you land on any page on the website, such as "The Government Publications and Library Materials," you can see the repetition of elements from the home page. In addition, you can see the repetition of formatting conventions in the section headings within the publications and materials page itself. The repetition across and within pages on the site helps the reader navigate this vast website and readily find information.

Alignment

Alignment refers to the positioning or placement of text and other elements on a page so that every element looks intentionally, rather than randomly, placed on the page.

You are most likely familiar with text alignment, which is also called text justification (Exhibit 5-3). Left-, right-, or center-justified text is appropriate for headings. Generally, left-justified text and full-justified text are appropriate for paragraphs. When using full-justified text, you want to keep in mind that this alignment requires extra spaces within lines of text so that the text aligns at the left and right margins. The result is that these extra spaces may be distracting. For this reason, many writers prefer left-justified text for paragraphs. Full-justified text, though, may create a formal or traditional look for a report or book.

Aligning visual elements (e.g., charts, graphs, tables) to the left, right, or center is also a consideration for business writers. These visual elements should be aligned so that their connection to the text around them is obvious to the audience.

Exhibit 5-2 Illustration of Repetition Across and Within Pages on a Website

The image displays two side-by-side screenshots of the National Archives website.

Left Screenshot (Home Page):

- Header:** NATIONAL ARCHIVES
- Top Navigation:** Blogs · Bookmark/Share · Contact Us | Search Archives.gov | Search
- Section Headers:** RESEARCH OUR RECORDS, VETERANS' SERVICE RECORDS, EDUCATOR RESOURCES, VISIT US, AMERICA'S FOUNDING DOCUMENTS.
- Content:** Promotional banner for "ALL AMERICAN THE POWER OF SPORTS". Below it, a section titled "Archives News" featuring news about African American History Month and International Day of Women and Girls in Science.
- Footer:** hives.gov/locations American: The Power of Sports – Now Open!

Right Screenshot (Research Our Records Page):

- Header:** NATIONAL ARCHIVES
- Top Navigation:** Blogs · Bookmark/Share · Contact Us | Search Archives.gov | Search
- Section Headers:** RESEARCH OUR RECORDS, VETERANS' SERVICE RECORDS, EDUCATOR RESOURCES, VISIT US, AMERICA'S FOUNDING DOCUMENTS.
- Content:**
 - Information About Holdings:** A list including "Information About Holdings", "NARA Publications", "The NARA Library and book collections in the Presidential Libraries", and "Other Resources".
 - Information About Holdings:** A detailed description of holdings, mentioning "The holdings of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) are comprised of documentary materials in all formats, including textual (paper) records, photographs, motion pictures, cartographic and architectural records and electronic records. In general, published materials are considered to be 'non-record' material and NOT included among records holdings of NARA. NARA is a source of last resort for a record of U.S. Government publications, and publications of individual Federal agencies are considered to be a permanent record of the Federal government and therefore among NARA's holdings. The record of U.S. government publications is served by NARA's Center for Legislative Archives, accessioned into Publications of the U.S. Government (Record Group 287)."
 - How to Obtain U.S. Government Publications:** Instructions for ordering copies of U.S. Government Publications.
 - The NARA Library and book collections in the Presidential Libraries:** Description of the library's mission and services.
 - Other Resources:** A list including "Most of NARA's finding aids are not yet online" and "Send us your request."

(both): The US National Archives and Records Administration.

Exhibit 5-3 Illustration of Types of Text Alignment

The image shows four rectangular boxes arranged horizontally, each containing text demonstrating a specific type of text alignment.

Left Justification: The text is aligned to the left margin.

Full Justification: The text is aligned to both the top and bottom margins, creating a tight, even appearance.

Centered Justification: The text is centered within the available space.

Right Justification: The text is aligned to the right margin.

Exhibit 5-4 Illustration of the Proximity Principle

<p>Our advisory board meeting is in six months, so we need to meet to discuss the following details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sending invitations• Sending a follow-up message and thank you• Planning for refreshments• Moderating the discussion• Reserving projectors and technology• Creating the meeting agenda• Assigning staff roles for the meeting• Reserving a meeting room• Incorporating guests and student speakers• Distributing the minutes	<p>Our advisory board meeting is in six months, so we need to meet to discuss the following details:</p> <p>Before the Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sending invitations• Planning for refreshments• Reserving a meeting room• Reserving projectors and technology• Creating the meeting agenda <p>During the Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assigning staff roles for the meeting• Moderating the discussion• Incorporating guests and student speakers <p>After the Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sending a follow-up message and thank you• Distributing the minutes
<p>Before applying the principle of proximity</p>	<p>After applying the principle of proximity</p>

Proximity

Proximity is the idea that similar elements appear together in a document, while text or other visual elements that are not similar are separated from each other by space or other means. Exhibit 5-4 shows the effect that the proximity principle can have on making a document more readable.

Accessibility

The above four principles (contrast, alignment, repetition, and proximity) are commonly held standards for good design. However, none of these principles will matter if your content is not accessible to everyone who needs to use it. **Accessibility** refers to the ability of all people to access all content in your business messages (including visuals) regardless of their physical abilities. As a businessperson, you have a responsibility to ensure that your messages are inclusive of your audiences, and paying attention to the accessibility of your communication is one way to do so. Later in this chapter, we address specific ways you can make your documents and online texts accessible.

Taken together the principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, and accessibility can help you create professional and effective documents or presentations. As you go through this chapter, you will learn how to achieve these principles by making informed choices regarding your text and visual elements.

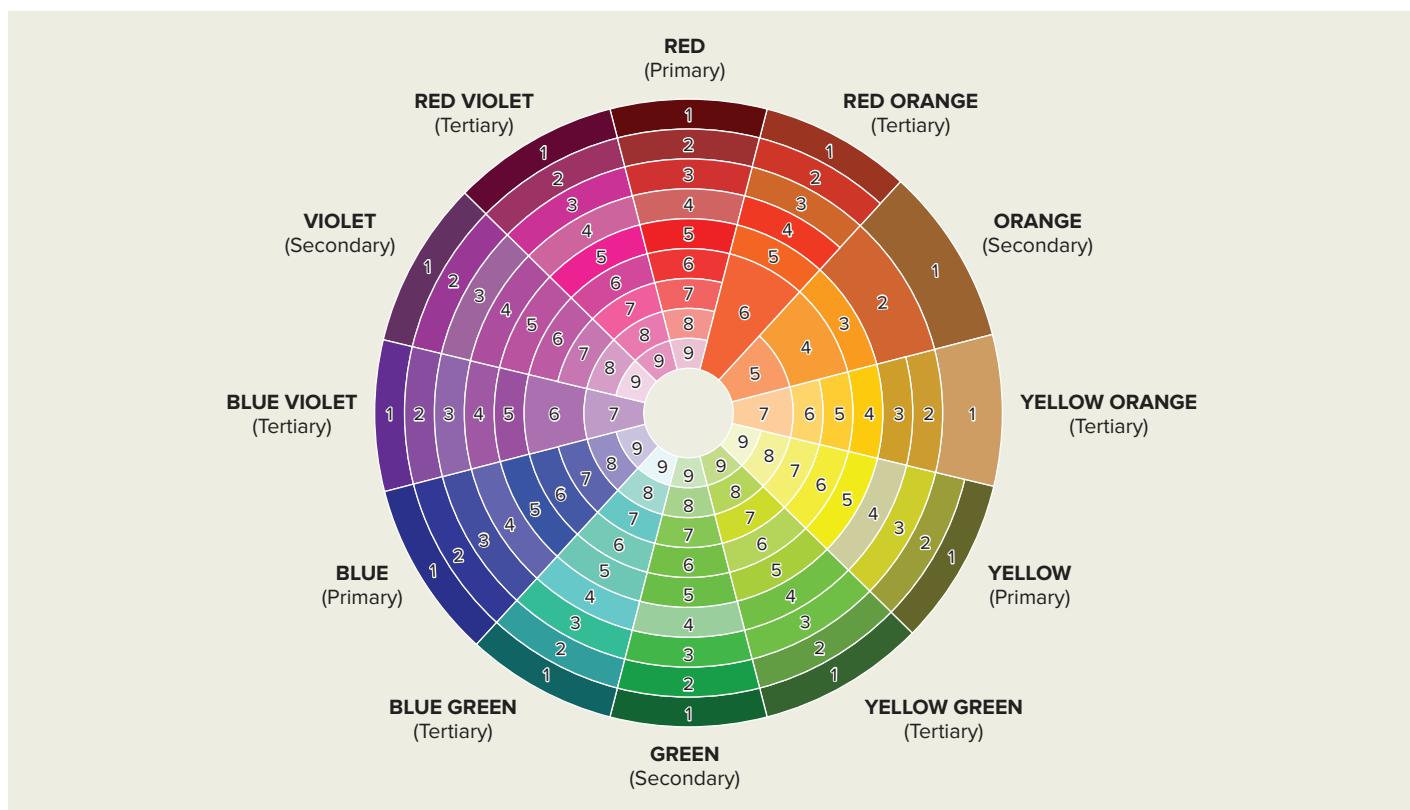
Using Colors Effectively

Color is an important tool, especially for achieving contrast and repetition in business documents. Many times the colors you choose will be determined by colors found in your company's logo or by specifications in your company's style guide. Many other times, however, you will have to select the colors you use. In these cases, it is important for you to know a little bit about color theory so that the colors you choose help you present a professional, readable, and visually appealing business document.

L05-2 Understand the impact of color on business documents.

Exhibit 5-5

Illustration of a Color Wheel



Color Theory

Before combining colors, you should know some basic terminology. **Primary colors** (red, blue, and yellow) are the colors from which all other colors originate. **Secondary colors** are created when you combine two primary colors (e.g., mixing blue and yellow creates green). **Tertiary colors** are created when you mix a primary color with a secondary color. From these three types of colors, you can create a variety of colors.

One of the easiest ways to see the variety of color possibilities is to look at the color wheel (Exhibit 5-5). Colors that are next to each other on the wheel are called **analogous colors**; those across the wheel from each other are called **complementary colors**. If you struggle to choose colors for your document, you can always start by choosing analogous or complementary colors, as these colors generally form good color combinations. Of course, Microsoft Office 365 programs such as Word, PowerPoint, and Excel all provide color palettes that you can use, and many web resources such as Session College's **Color Wheel Color Calculator** (www.sessions.edu/color-calculator/) can help you choose a palette as well.

Color and Meaning

Although color theory and the color wheel can help you pick a color palette, you should be aware that color can have emotional, social, or cultural meanings as well. For example, in some cultures, the color black can signify death, while in others the color white has this same meaning. And even within cultures, the same color can have different meanings. For example, in the United States, the color green can signify wealth, money, nature, or environmentally safe practices; yet we often describe someone who is ill as "looking a little green."

**You Make the Call**

What colors do you react positively to? Negatively to? Why?



Communication Matters

The Role of Color in Brand Recognition

Think about some of your favorite food or clothing brands or perhaps some of the social media platforms you use. How much attention do you pay to the colors in the brand's corporate logo or other marketing materials? The odds are that you pay more attention than you realize.

A team at Reboot Online Marketing conducted two studies. In one, the researchers asked consumers to identify a company when provided only with the company's color scheme. Consumers were able to identify several of the brands with high levels of accuracy using only colors as their guide:

Facebook (73%), Starbucks (80%), McDonald's (84%), and Google (91%).

The team also examined the logos of the top 100 global brands and found that the most popular color brand colors were as follows:

- 34 percent used black in their logo
- 30 percent used blue in their logo
- 30 percent used red in their logo
- 9 percent used yellow in their logo
- 7 percent used green in their logo
- 6 percent used gray/silver in their logo
- 5 percent used orange in their logo
- 2 percent used brown in their logo

The color choice, however, appears to be industry specific, with the most successful tech companies using blue, auto companies using red, and luxury brands using black.

While people's own color preferences certainly impact their reaction to color, understanding the impact color generally can have is something you want to consider when analyzing your audience and making choices about the visual appearance of any business document.

Source: Abby Chinery, "What Is the Importance of Colour in Brand Recognition?," August 24, 2022, Reboot, www.reboot-online.com/blog/what-importance-colour-brand-recognition/#.

Keep in mind that some people cannot see color and that those who can see color do not all see color in the same way. If you are using color to indicate meaning, for example, in a chart or graph, you want to take special care to ensure you use colors the readers can see and readily distinguish, or select alternative formatting such as different degrees of shading to create contrast (see Exhibit 5-15). To learn more about color and accessibility, be sure to read the sections of this chapter on "Designing Print and Printable Documents" and "Designing Online Texts," where we talk more extensively about this topic.

Choosing Appropriate Typefaces and Fonts

L05-3 Choose typefaces and fonts that enhance readability and visual appeal.

Of all the design elements a writer considers when writing an effective business message, the typeface and fonts are among the most important. Simply put, a **typeface** encompasses the design or appearance of letters and characters. For example, Arial, Calibri, and Times New Roman are all typefaces. A **font** is a variation within a typeface, such as size, bold, and italics (e.g., Calibri, 10 pt., italics; or Arial Narrow). A typeface is essentially a collection of fonts, and many times the terms "typeface" and "font" are used interchangeably in informal or casual contexts. As a businessperson, knowledge of the difference between a typeface and a font will enable you to have informed conversations about document design and visual communication.

Serif and Sans Serif Fonts

A **serif** refers to the "tails" or "feet" that appear on characters in a typeface. Generally, business writers use **serif fonts**, which are typefaces with serifs (e.g., Times New Roman, Cambria) or **sans serif fonts**, which are typefaces without serifs (e.g., Arial, Calibri). Exhibit 5-6 shows the difference between serif and sans serif fonts. You can see that the serif font has tails and feet (circled) that the sans serif font does not.



Communication Matters

One Space or Two after a Period?

Few issues have created more debate recently than the spacing after the period. Should a period be followed by one space or two? In truth, it's not an issue of whether one or two spaces is right or wrong but an issue of whether the second space is necessary.

When businesspeople had only the typewriter to write their documents, they had few fonts available and these fonts, such as Courier, were monospaced fonts. Each letter in a monospaced font occupies the same amount of space on the page. For example, the wide “w” and the narrow “l” or the small period take the same amount of space, even though the “w” is wider than either of the other two. The result is that

the white space within and between words and sentences is fairly uniform. Adding the second space after the period makes the white space between sentences clearer and, as a result, improves readability.

Today, businesspeople use computers with proportional fonts, which means that each letter takes up exactly as much room as it requires. The result with proportional fonts is that white space within and between words is sufficient for clarity and readability.

Because the second space after a period is no longer needed for clarity and readability, some business writers believe its use is unnecessary. Furthermore, typesetters and graphic designers

have always had monospaced fonts to use and have traditionally used only one space after the period. Thus, writers feel as though using only one space creates the look of a more professionally designed document.

Others feel the use of the second space is a defining element of business genres that provides a traditional and professional look.

When you start a job, you will want to know your company's preferences. If you have to change your practice, just know that Microsoft Word's AutoCorrect features or Find and Replace features (see Chapter 4) can help you easily change the spacing after the period.

The presence or absence of serifs is an important design consideration for business writers. Serifs connect letters, which makes the space between words more distinguishable and the individual words therefore more readable—at least in printed or printable documents. For online documents, however, sans serif fonts are generally a better choice because the serifs may actually hinder readability depending on the font size and monitor resolution. Sans serif fonts work well for online text because they allow for more white space, which may make letters and words clearer in online text.

Number of Typefaces per Document

Another consideration when choosing typefaces and fonts for your documents is how many you should use. Generally, limit yourself to no more than two typefaces. It's fine to use only one typeface or font, either serif or sans serif. However, if you use more than two, you may have a document that looks cluttered and visually confusing. Because serifs help connect letters and thus emphasize white space between words, some writers will use a sans serif font for headings and a serif font for body (paragraph) text.

If you decide to use two typefaces in a document, make sure that one uses a sans serif font and one uses a serif font. Choosing one of each type means that the fonts will complement each other. If you choose two serif fonts or two sans serif fonts, the fonts will compete with each other.

Font Sizes

Yet another consideration in choosing a font is the font size for headings and body text. The font size you choose depends on the font. The point size of a font is determined by **x-height**—the size of the letter “x” in that font.

Exhibit 5-6

Illustration of a Serif Font and a Sans Serif Font

Serif Font

Sans Serif Font



Communication Matters

What Are Your Typeface and Fonts Really Communicating?

With so many choices, you can easily become overwhelmed when selecting typefaces and fonts. One way to choose is to recognize that typefaces and fonts elicit feelings and emotions from your readers, just as words, colors, or other visual elements do. Therefore, you want to choose typefaces and fonts that are consistent with the tone, style, and formality of your message.

CrazyEgg, a company that offers website optimization software, offers this infographic showing the emotional associations of popular fonts. The next time you struggle with making a choice, you may want to include typeface and font selection in your audience analysis as you consider what you want your audience to think, do, or believe as a result of reading your message. Your choices could be key to achieving that goal!

Source: Ted Hunt, "A Pro Designer Shares the Psychology of Font Choices [Infographic]," The Daily Egg, July 5, 2013, <https://www.crazyegg.com/blog/psychology-of-fonts-infographic/>.



Crazy Egg, Inc.



You Make the Call

What are your favorite typeface and font? Would you use them in a business document? Why?

This is why a sans serif font such as Arial appears bigger at 10 points than a serif font such as Times New Roman. To start, you can choose a font at 9 to 12 points for the body of your document. Then you can choose a font for your headings that is 2 points larger than your body text. Whatever size you choose, be sure the text is readable and looks professional. Fonts that are too small are hard to read. Fonts that are too big look amateurish and visually shout at the reader.

Font Choices

The typefaces and fonts you choose will depend on what kind of document you're writing and to whom. Which would be more appropriate in a print ad for party supplies? In an annual report to

investors? In an invitation to a formal event? Your company's website or logo? Is the font accessible for screen readers and other devices that make text accessible to people who have physical disabilities? Choose your font carefully to match your audience and context. Many companies will have preferred fonts for their documents. These companies will frequently collect font requirements as well as other writing and design requirements in a style guide. As a new employee, you will want to be familiar with your company's requirements, so be sure to ask about a style guide. If your company does not have a style guide, you may want to develop your own list of fonts that you like to use for the various messages you send. That way you will not have to take a lot of time to pick your font when the time comes to write.

Designing Print and Printable Documents

In this section of the chapter, we examine design conventions and visual communication as they pertain to printed documents or documents that are printable but may be read online (e.g., a Word document or PDF attached to an email).

L05-4 Design documents for reading in printed format.

To achieve effective contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, and accessibility in print or printable documents, you need to create a good layout of the text and other page elements. A good layout will help your audience easily move through your document to find your main points and understand your message.

Gutenberg Diagram and Z-Pattern

Two common ways of laying out text on a page require you to follow the **Gutenberg diagram** or the **Z-pattern**. These patterns are similar in that they both account for how people read and process text. The Gutenberg diagram, however, uses a grid to explain this process and assumes that the eye automatically moves diagonally from the document's start to its finish. The Z-pattern explains the process using the letter Z to show how a reader's eye moves across the page, eventually stopping at the end of a document.

Essentially, the most visually critical areas of your documents are the beginning and ending points. Readers who read from left to right will start at the top left, move across or through the page, and then end in the bottom right corner. It's not that readers ignore information in the middle of a document; they simply attend more to the beginning and ending unless you've given some type of emphasis to the information in the middle.

Exhibits 5-7 and 5-8 illustrate how both the Gutenberg diagram and Z-pattern can

Exhibit 5-7

Illustration of the Gutenberg Diagram Applied to a Business Message

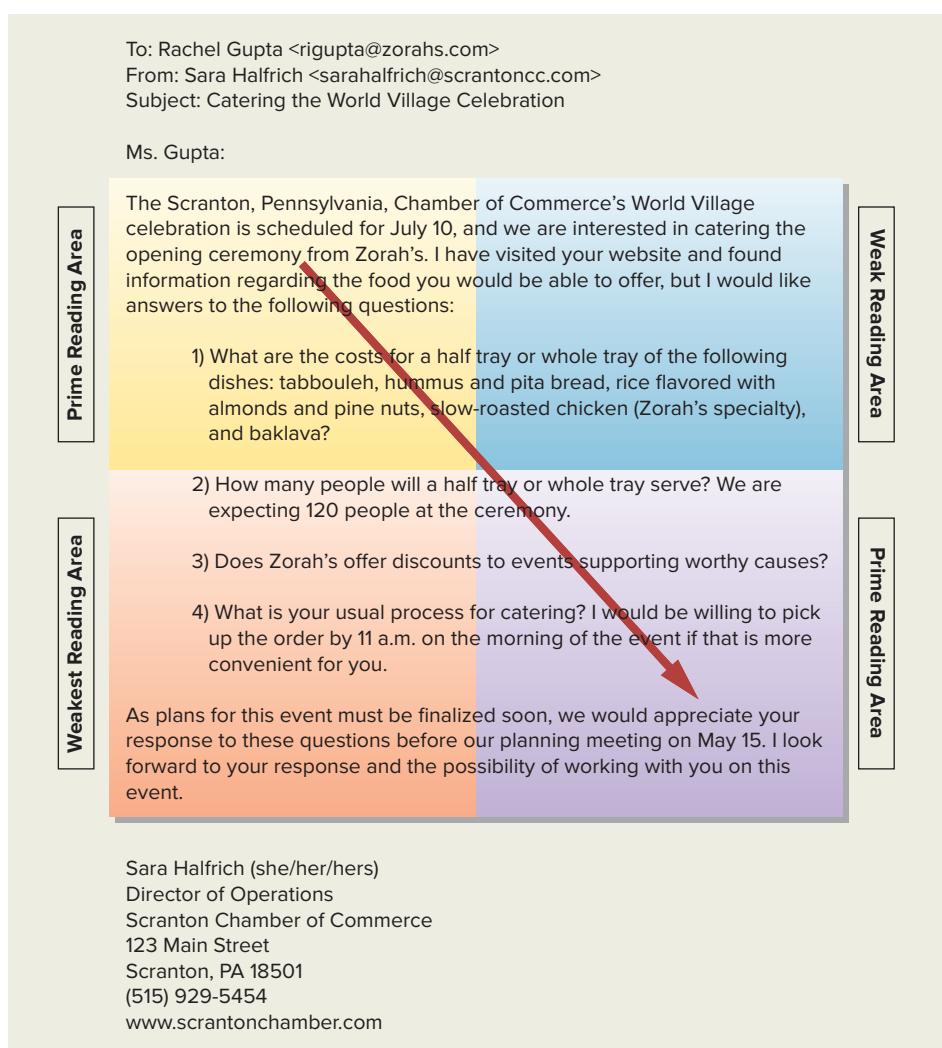


Exhibit 5-8

Illustration of the Z-Pattern Applied to a Business Message

To: Rachel Gupta <rigupta@zorahs.com>
From: Sara Halfrich <sarahalfrich@scrantoncc.com>
Subject: Catering the World Village Celebration

Ms. Gupta:

The Scranton, Pennsylvania, Chamber of Commerce's World Village celebration is scheduled for July 10, and we are interested in catering the opening ceremony from Zorah's. I have visited your website and found information regarding the food you would be able to offer, but I would like answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the costs for a half tray or whole tray of the following dishes: tabbouleh, hummus and pita bread, rice flavored with almonds and pine nuts, slow-roasted chicken (Zorah's specialty), and baklava?
- 2) How many people will a half tray or whole tray serve? We are expecting 120 people at the ceremony.
- 3) Does Zorah's offer discounts to events supporting worthy causes?
- 4) What is your usual process for catering? I would be willing to pick up the order by 11 a.m. on the morning of the event if that is more convenient for you.

As plans for this event must be finalized soon, we would appreciate your response to these questions before our planning meeting on May 15. I look forward to your response and the possibility of working with you on this event.

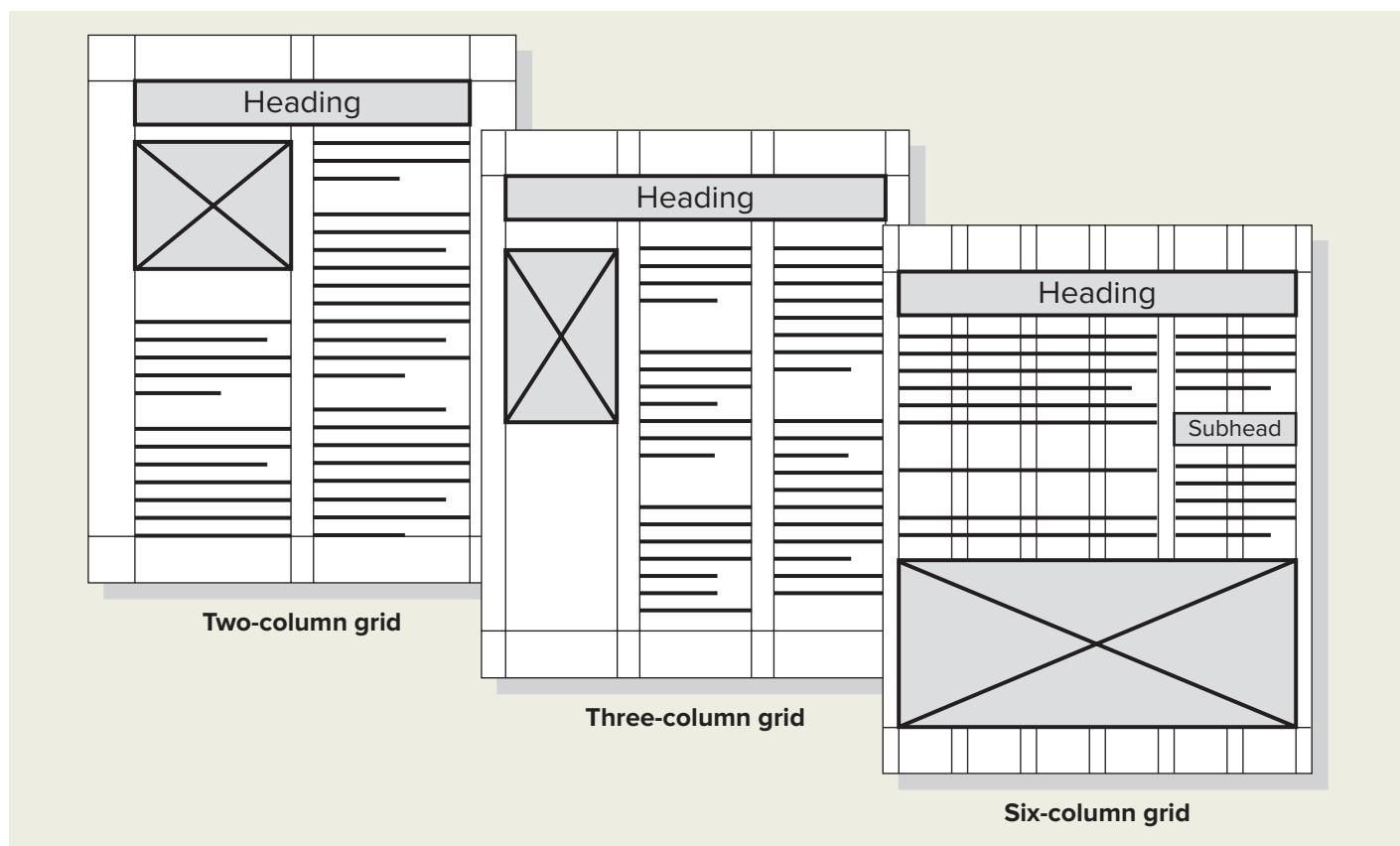
Sara Halfrich (she/her/hers)
Director of Operations
Scranton Chamber of Commerce
123 Main Street
Scranton, PA 18501
(570) 348-5454
www.scrantonchamber.com

be applied to a routine message. In Chapter 7, you will learn more about routine messages, but in general, a routine message begins with the main point, provides relevant details, and ends with any deadlines or actions the reader must know about. You can see in Exhibits 5-7 and 5-8 that laying out text according to the Gutenberg diagram or Z-pattern helps the reader see two critical pieces of information: the request for help and the deadline for response.

As you will learn as you go through this chapter and others, how you map information according to the Gutenberg diagram and Z-pattern will depend on the conventions of the genre for which you are writing. Beyond the direct approach of the routine message, for example, you will learn later in this chapter about the application of the inverted pyramid applied to the writing of online texts, and in Chapter 8, you will learn about writing in an indirect approach, where the use of the Gutenberg diagram and Z-pattern help mitigate the impact of the bad news and end on a forward-looking note. Understanding how people read and process information will help you map information in these genres and any others you encounter in this text and beyond.

Grids

Sometimes you will work with documents that require both text and visuals. When creating these documents, using a grid can be helpful in making sure that your placement of visuals and text on



the page comply with the design principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, and accessibility.

Grids are nonprinted horizontal and vertical lines that help you place elements of your document precisely on the page. The examples shown in Exhibit 5-9 illustrate the placement of text on two-, three-, and six-column grids. You can readily see how important it is to plan for this element. When you place information on a page, you'll want to consider whether multiple columns (such as in a newsletter) will better present information to your audience. Programs such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel let you view gridlines as you work so that you can easily map and align your text. Remember that according to the principle of alignment, your text and visuals should not look randomly placed on the page.

Spacing

To make your document look its best, you must consider both external and internal spacing. **External spacing** is the white space on a page. Just as the amount of text denotes importance in writing, so, too, does white space. Surrounding text or a graphic with white spaces sets it apart, emphasizing it to the reader. Used effectively, white space also has been shown to increase the readability of your documents. Thus, white space should be a careful part of the design of your document.

Internal spacing refers to both vertical and horizontal spacing. Currently, many still refer to spacing in business documents as single or double spacing, but you have many more options for fine-tuning your spacing to make your text readable and accessible. The spacing between lines is called **leading** (pronounced “ledding”). If your lines of text are too close together or too far apart, your page may seem crowded or the ratio of white space to text on the page may not seem balanced.

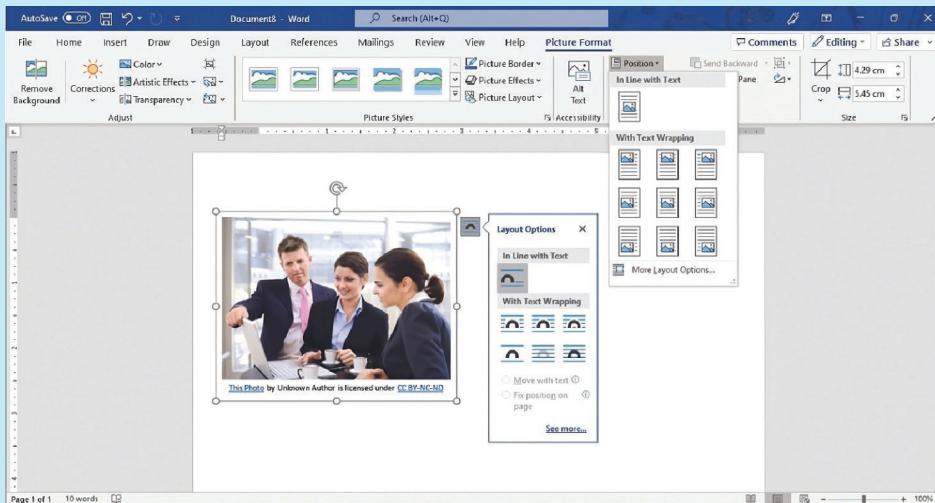


From the Tech Desk

Using Microsoft Word's Insert, Position, and Text Wrap Features to Place Visuals on a Page

The principle of alignment requires that visuals, like text, do not look randomly placed on a page. Fortunately, Microsoft Word can help you position your visuals for the best effect:

1. From the Insert ribbon, select Pictures.
2. Select the picture you want, and click Insert to put the visual in your document.
3. Click the visual.
4. Click the tab for the Format ribbon.
5. Click the Position dropdown arrow to select where you want your visual to appear on the page.
6. Click either the Wrap Text icon next to your picture or select Wrap Text from the Format ribbon to locate your visual relative to the text around it.



Interface: Microsoft Corporation

Another type of internal spacing is **kerning**, which refers to the spacing between letters. For example, in some font sizes, a “cl” (lowercase “c” and lowercase “l”) may appear so close together that they look like a lowercase “d.” In this case, assuming you didn’t want to adjust your font size, you could increase the space between these two letters by kerning them.

You can adjust both the leading and the kerning in many programs, including Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Outlook. The **From the Tech Desk: Fine-Tuning the Line Spacing in Microsoft Word** and **From the Tech Desk: Kerning in Microsoft Word** boxes provide

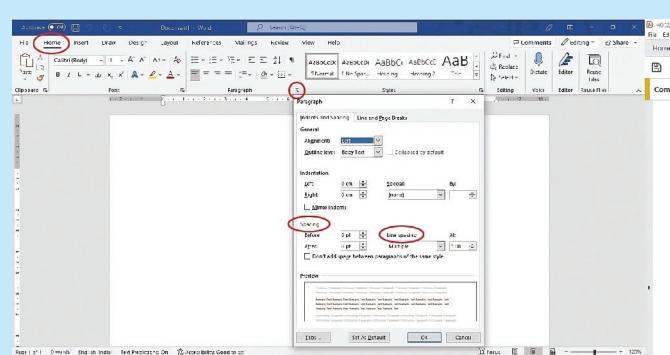


From the Tech Desk

Fine-Tuning the Line Spacing in Microsoft Word

You can adjust the line spacing (leading) in your documents by accessing Microsoft Word’s paragraph tools:

1. Click the Home ribbon.
2. From the Paragraph tools, click the arrow to open the Paragraph dialog box.
3. Under Spacing, select the amount of space you want before or after a paragraph of text and deselect the check box for “Don’t add space . . .”
4. Under Line Spacing, select the type of space you want between lines of text. If you select At Least, Exactly, or Multiple, use the At: box to indicate how much space you want between lines.



Interface: Microsoft Corporation



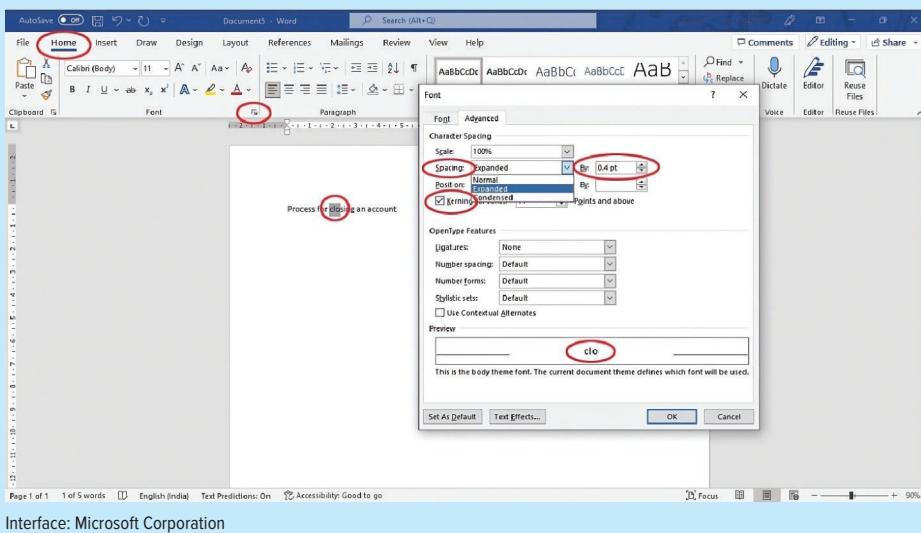
From the Tech Desk

Kerning in Microsoft Word

You can adjust the kerning in your documents by using Microsoft Word's font tools.

1. Select the letters in your document you want to kern.
2. Click the Home ribbon.
3. From the Font tools, click the arrow to open the Font dialog box.
4. Click the Advanced tab.
5. Click either Spacing > Normal, Expanded, or Condensed or Kerning for fonts.

6. Use the By: dialog box to enter the amount of spacing you want between letters.
7. Check the Preview box to see what the spacing will look like in your document.



Interface: Microsoft Corporation

instructions for managing leading and kerning. The best spacing for your document depends on the typeface (e.g., Calibri) and your font size (e.g., Calibri 10 pt. or Calibri 12 pt.). You will need to use your best judgment in using the right amount of internal and external spacing to ensure visual clarity, readability, and the right emphasis of your ideas.

Margins

Another aspect of layout is the setting of your margins. Ideally, you want your document to look like a framed picture. One-inch margins are standard, though you can always adjust your margins to any width that creates the look you want.

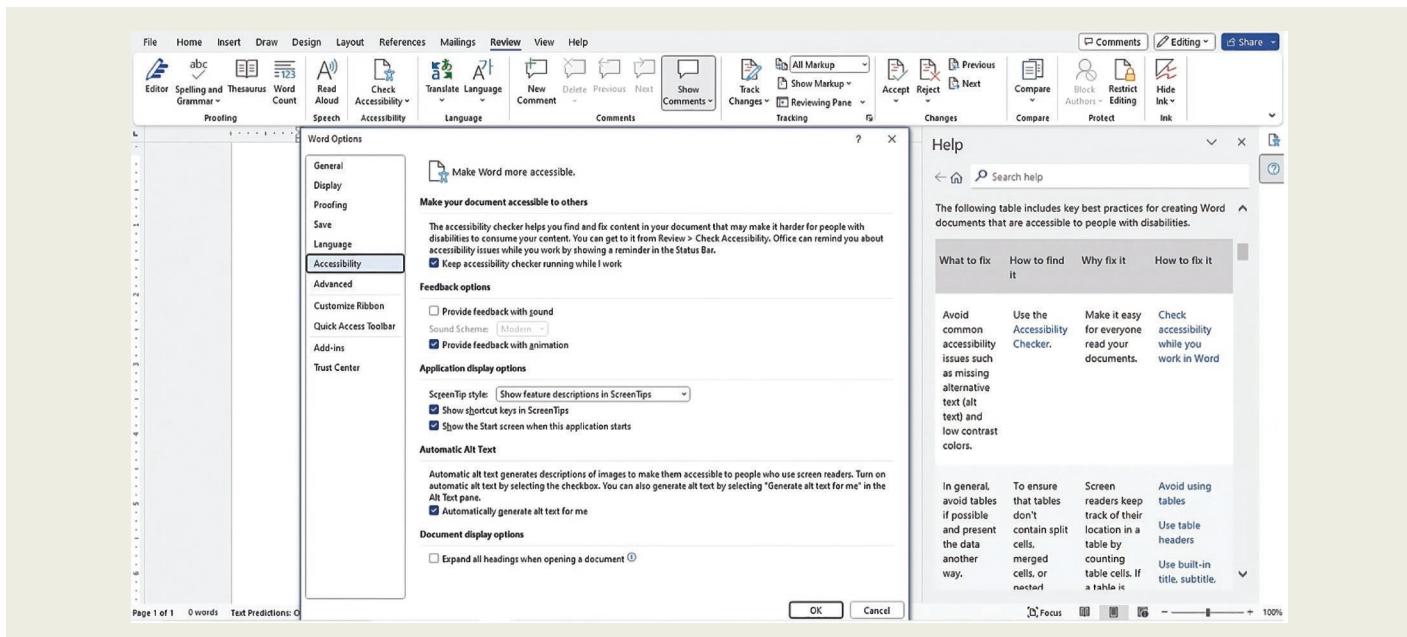
You can also balance the white space above and below the text on a page by centering the document vertically. In Microsoft Word, you can do this by going to the Layout ribbon, clicking the Page Setup dialog box launcher, selecting the Layout tab, and selecting “center” from the Vertical Alignment options. Although all margins will not be exactly equal, the page will still have horizontal and vertical balance.

Considerations for Format and Readability

As Exhibits 5-5 and 5-6 illustrate, using a list is a good way to achieve contrast or proximity in a document. In addition, many designers will use boxes or rules (lines) to call attention to text or visual elements in a document. Likewise, headings and subheadings can help guide readers through your content, and short paragraphs under those headings can help create white space that makes documents visually inviting. You also want to consider how the use of typefaces, fonts, and color discussed earlier in this chapter can help you create a visually accessible document that helps your reader quickly and clearly understand your message.

Exhibit 5-10

Illustration of Word's Check Accessibility Feature



Interface: Microsoft Corporation

Accessibility

As we have discussed throughout this chapter, making sure that your text is accessible to your reader is critical in communicating your message and shows respect for our reader. Microsoft Office 365 apps, including Word, PowerPoint, and Excel have accessibility checkers that you can find in each app by going to the Review tab and selecting “Check Accessibility.” As Exhibits 5-10 shows, Microsoft Word’s accessibility checker provides suggestions for making documents accessible; it can also take you directly to options that let you control how you want to use accessibility features.

If you are creating a printed document or a document that might be printed, you will want to design your document using these tips.¹

- Use a common font such as Arial.
- Use an 18-point font to create large-print material.
- Use upper- and lowercase letters.
- Use bold to emphasize text, rather than italics or underlining.
- Use high-contrast colors and then print your document in black and white to check the contrast.
- Left-align text rather than centering it or using full justification.
- Ensure that margins and line spacing create enough white space to clearly see the text.
- If you print on both sides of the page, use paper heavy enough so that the text on one side of the page doesn’t show through to the other side.

As we have said, printable documents may be read in hard copy or online. Microsoft provides the following tips for making your printable documents accessible for screen readers:²

- Make sure your bulleted lists are consistent in terms of punctuation and grammatical structure, and make sure all items in the list are related.
- Add captions, also known as **alt text** or “alternative text” to visuals, and make sure the captions are descriptive, not just “photo” or “image.” In Word, you can select the photo and then go to the Picture Format tab to access the Alt Text feature.

- Select colors wisely. Choose colors with high levels of contrast. If you are color-coding information, consider adding a textual element, such as a letter or number, that is unique to each color. These unique textual elements will be read by screen readers if the document is viewed online.
- Design tables for accessibility: use column headers; avoid empty cells, rows, and columns; avoid tables within tables, and use built-in table and header styles. You may also want to consider whether a table is necessary at all.
- Use Word's built-in styles for document headings.
- Avoid putting critical information in the header or footer area.
- If you include hyperlinks, make sure they are descriptive of the webpage the reader should land on rather than something such as “click here.”

Even in the workplace where much of the communication is done electronically, print and printable documents are still common, so it is important to use best practices for their design. In the next section of the chapter, we continue this discussion of designing documents to include the design of online texts. As you think about the design of both print/printable and online texts, you will want to consider what we have learned about the problem-solving approach to business communication presented in Chapter 1, Exhibit 1-7 “Planning Your Communication Strategy: A Problem-Solving Approach.” In doing so, you will likely see that when you get to the stage of delivering a message (print/printable or electronic), being able to map your information clearly and logically will be critical to achieving your business and communication goals.

Designing Online Texts

Designing online texts is similar in many ways to designing print and printable documents: both require you to analyze your audience and your business and communication goals; both require you to consider design principles regarding contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, and font and color choices; and both require that you make your message accessible to the audiences who will read it.

L05-5 Design text for online reading.

Beyond these shared considerations, online texts are found in many genres, including those discussed in Chapter 4, such as websites, blogs, text and instant messaging, and popular social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Because texts for these genres are each written for their particular audience, context, and purpose, we cannot cover them all in this chapter. We can, however, provide general advice for approaching the writing of these texts for you to keep in mind as you work through later chapters in writing routine messages (Chapter 7), bad-news messages (Chapter 8), and persuasive documents such as sales messages and content marketing (Chapter 9).

Considering Online Texts as Conversations

As a businessperson, you may never be called on to design a website, but you are likely to write the content that appears on a website or to work with the designers who put your content online; therefore, an understanding of how to create that content is important. Creating content begins by understanding your audience. Janice Redish, a pioneer in the study of writing for the web, says, “Understanding your site visitors and their needs is critical to deciding what to write, how much to write, the vocabulary to use, and how to organize the content on your website.”³ She advocates for approaching the creation of web content as you would approach a conversation. That is, you cannot approach the writing of online texts by considering only what you want to say. You have to think not only of what you want to say but also about how and whether the audience will be able to respond to you; you have to anticipate your reader’s goals for engaging with your content just as much as you consider your own goals. Using the Audience Analysis Checklist in Chapter 4, Exhibit 4-3 may be helpful as you structure this conversation, as might a review of the communication process discussed in Chapter 1. Redish advises that you will know whether your conversation is successful when you “[allow] people to find what they need, understand what they find, and use it appropriately.”⁴ In other words, to write the text, you have to play out the conversation with your audience first.

Exhibit 5-11

Illustration of the F-Pattern of Online Reading



Jacob Nielsen, "F-Shaped Pattern for Reading web Content," <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/f-shaped-pattern-reading-web-content-discovered/>. Used with permission.

Organizing Online Texts

Additional pioneering research on how people access and read online content, conducted by Jakob Nielsen and others from the Norman Nielsen Group, found that online reading followed an **F-pattern**. Using an F-pattern, online readers generally skimmed the text across the top of a webpage twice and then read vertically down the left side of the page. Exhibit 5-11 shows these patterns in Nielsen's heat maps, with the reds and yellows indicated as the strongest areas of reader focus.

Since that original research, though, the number and types of devices on which people read online text have increased significantly, and as a result, the way people read online has changed, too. In fact, more recent research suggests that if users are reading online content in an F-pattern, it may be a sign that the content contains too much text and not enough formatting (headings, lists) and/or that the reader is skimming but not reading page content; this research also reveals several other patterns readers are likely to use on desktop and mobile devices, including

- A layer-cake pattern, where readers scan headings and subheadings but skip the text below them.
- A spotted pattern, where readers scan for specific information and skip chunks of text.
- A marking pattern, when readers (usually on mobile devices) focus on one place while scrolling or swiping.
- A bypassing pattern, where people skip the first words of a line if those words are repeated on multiple lines.
- A commitment pattern, where people read everything because they are interested in or need the content.⁵