Business Writing for Budding Professionals

Facilitated by Mosedimosi Business Training

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FASSET

Make the future count

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To learn is to change. Education is a process that changes the learner.

George B Leonard

Module 1

1. Planning and constructing documents

After attending this module delegates will be able to:
- Understand the need and importance of written communications
- State the purpose, scope, audience and context of the proposed document
- Adopt the analyse/visualise/organise planning technique
- Compile a plan for the process of conceiving and writing the document
- Follow the required steps to gather information
- Analyse and process information
- Propose a potential solution
- Prepare the outline of a draft document
- Capture the reader's attention with a powerful introduction
- Formulate the body of the document
- Discover 10 ways to shatter writer's block.

1.2 The importance of written communication

1.1.1 Methods of communicating

The most practical ways to communicate with other persons in business are:
- Face to face
- By telephone
- In writing.

Most of us prefer talking face to face or on the telephone because we are more practised at it. Feedback is also quicker and more effective – we can make certain that the listener understands the message. Writing has the benefit of forcing us to "think the matter through". Writing encourages us to gather the facts before we communicate an idea, instruction or message. It prompts us to present the facts in a logical fashion.

1.1.2 Value of the written word

The written word is vitally important in business:
- It provides a permanent record of the communication
- It can be shared among many people
- It is readily accessible when stored on paper or magnetic media (memory stick, hard disk)
- It can be re-used and be expanded upon for new ideas.

1.1.3 Resistance to writing

Writing requires:
- A disciplined mind
- Taking responsibility; an attitude of "do it now"
- Being creative
- An understanding of the needs of the reader
- Proper planning and a good command of language.

1.1.4 Cultivate your writing skills

- Discover your brain power:
  Both the "left" and "right" side of the brain are engaged in writing. "Left" brainers tend to produce precise, structured, procedural writing – (non-fiction). "Right" brainers tend to produce imagery, fantasy, drama, comedy – (fiction). Whether you are "left" or "right" orientated, YOU CAN WRITE
- Initially force yourself and practise
- Critically analyse the writing of others
- Sharpen your language skills through extensive reading, particularly books, magazines and articles on websites and blogs related to your field of expertise
- Witness the power of your writing: people act upon your ideas, requests, commands, expression of appreciation, etc.
- Discover your own creativity (even if it is producing a "dry" procedure manual). Soon you will produce valuable new ideas from your own "think-tank"
- The written word is mightier than the sword
- The most brilliant ideas cannot be implemented if they are not reduced to writing.

1.1.5 Reasons for writing

What is your objective with your writing? What do you want to achieve? What do you hope your audience or reader will think, feel, know or do afterwards? We write for many reasons. It is good to identify a main objective. Sometimes we have additional objectives. But if you have too many, you may weaken your piece of writing by trying to achieve too many things at once. Your audience can end up feeling overloaded and confused if your objective is not clear, or there are too many. So why do people write?

People write, amongst other reasons, to advocate, educate, entertain, debate, inform, mobilise, persuade, promote particular action, raise awareness, train.

1.1.6 What are you writing?

What have you written in your organisation? You can probably think of many different types of writing. They could include:

Short pieces of writing, like:	**Longer pieces of writing, like:**
• Job applications	• Appraisals
• Email messages	• Articles
• Fax massages	• Evaluations
• Letters	• Funding proposals
• Memos	• Newsletters
• Minutes	• Planning documents
• Notices	• Policy
• Opinion pieces and pamphlets	• Reports of different kinds
• Posters	• Reviews
• Presentations	• Speeches
• Press statements	• Strategy documents

1.2 How to get started?

1.2.1 Thinking tools

Too often we sit down to write and stare at a blank page or computer screen, or we try to start writing a first draft straightaway. It takes us ages because we try to make it perfect before we have even planned it. Starting off with some thinking tools encourages and unlocks your creative and original ideas and helps you to plan your piece of writing. Here are some ideas:

- Think, talk and read about your topic before you even attempt a first draft
- Keep a journal for jotting down thoughts
- Use freewriting, especially to get you started. It is a thinking tool. You can use it throughout the writing process too
- Use mindmaps. A mindmap is a thinking tool. It helps to generate ideas, prioritise and lay the foundation for the rest of your writing process.

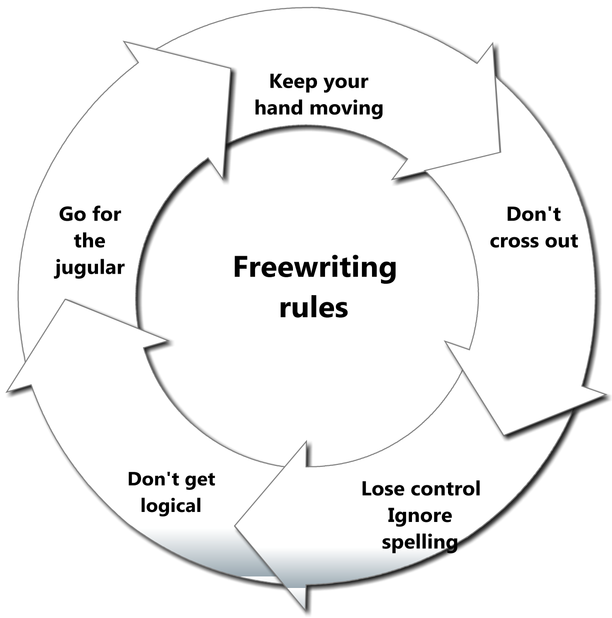
1.2.1.1 Freewriting

1.2.1.1.1.1 What is freewriting?

Freewriting is a tool to use at the beginning of your writing process as well as at points where you have blocks or need to think out something. Freewriting is private writing. You write only for yourself.

When you freewrite, you put aside the grammar book and dictionary. You concentrate on writing without boundaries. Freewriting has many uses. Because you write only for yourself, it helps you to build confidence, unlock creativity, get rid of your internal censor and editor, capture your first thoughts, get a flow going and remove writing blocks. However, to use freewriting to its best effect, you need to follow some rules!

1.2.1.1.1.2 The freewriting rules



1.2.1.1.1.3 How to go about freewriting

You need:

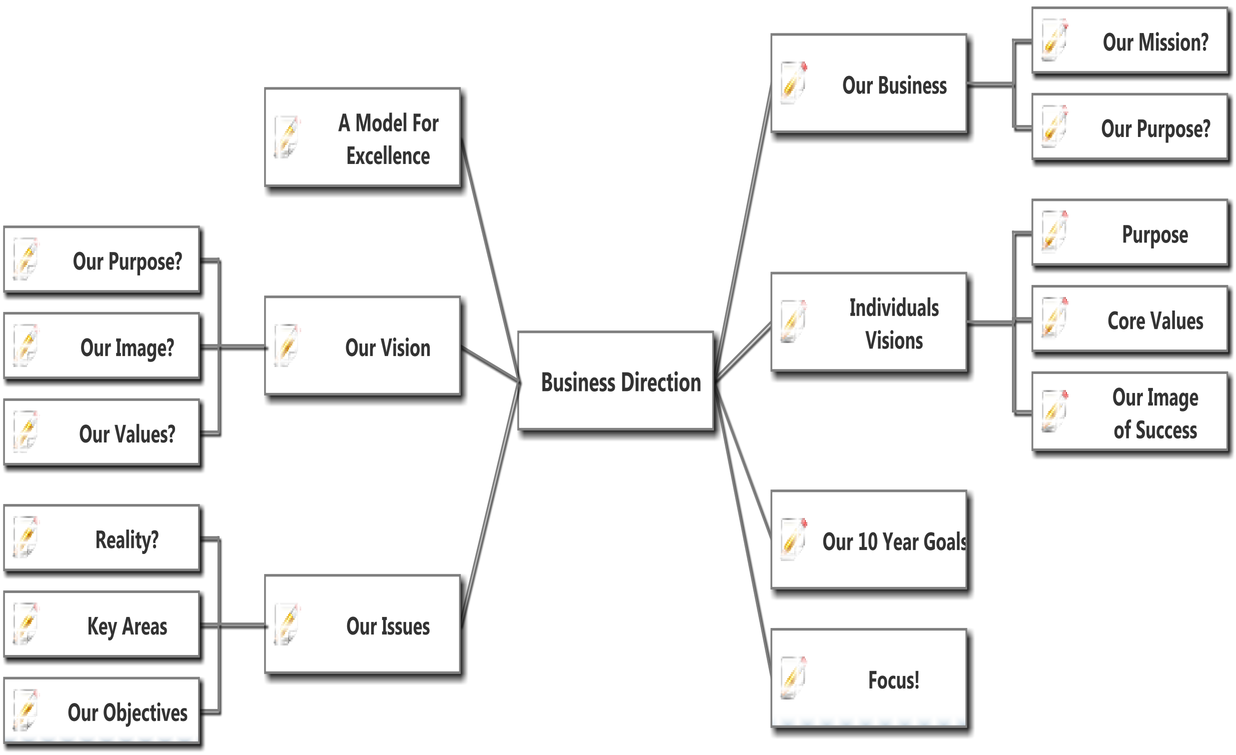
- Paper and pencil or pen
- A topic for your freewrite
- A specific writing time goal, like 20 minutes
- To write without stopping
- To re-write your topic over and over if you go blank – you do this until a new thought comes
- To follow whatever thought comes next, even if you think it is "off" your topic – your brain is making a connection to it
- To be relaxed and embrace the space freewriting gives you to reflect in a private way.

Exercise 1

Here are some topics that will get your creative writing started:

- Motivate your boss to purchase a new notebook (or iPad) to replace your existing 10 year old laptop
- Provide management with a justification to purchase a company car for your exclusive use instead of paying you a car allowance to cover the cost of travelling on company business with your own car
- Why you should get promoted to the management position that has become vacant
- Extend the working hours during Monday to Thursday to enable staff to start the weekend earlier on Friday
- A topic on any issue you feel strongly about.

1.2.1.2 Mindmaps



1.2.2 The writing process

To reap the benefit of your creativity and help you plan, we offer this writing process:

1. Get started using tools like thinking, talking and reading, freewriting and mindmaps. Basically brainstorming. Stay loose and relaxed. You can use these tools throughout the rest of your writing process.

2. Work out why you are writing and what are you writing. Keep loose and relaxed.

3. Do an audience analysis. This helps you prioritise what you want to write about - your content.

4. Start to plan your writing from your mindmap. Organise your thoughts into an outline. Include what further work you need to do, for example, research. Include a writing process schedule and a rough introductory statement.

5. Start writing your first draft. Let it flow. Don't edit. Concentrate on getting your ideas down. Complete your first draft and then take a break from it. Let it breathe. Let your mind work on it unconsciously for a while.

6. Go back to your first draft. Revise it. Look back at your audience analysis. Remind yourself of your objective. Has it stayed the same? Will you achieve it if you follow the route you are going?

7. Rework your drafts into stronger drafts. Cut out what you do not need. Add in what's missing. Work at it until you feel ready for feedback. Scan for correcting grammar and spelling. Do necessary changes.

8. Get feedback on your writing. Strengthen your writing through revising into new drafts. Write the introduction and conclusion. Read it aloud to yourself and or others. Write you final draft before editing.

9. Edit your writing. This means standing away from it and changing hats from writer to editor. This is a different mode. Put yourself in your readers' shoes. Make it powerful and easy to read by using editing techniques. Check your language, style and tone.

10. The final polish. Make sure your writing is proofread, looks good and is easy to read.

11. If necessary, follow on the design and layout - another proofreading and checking then distribution.

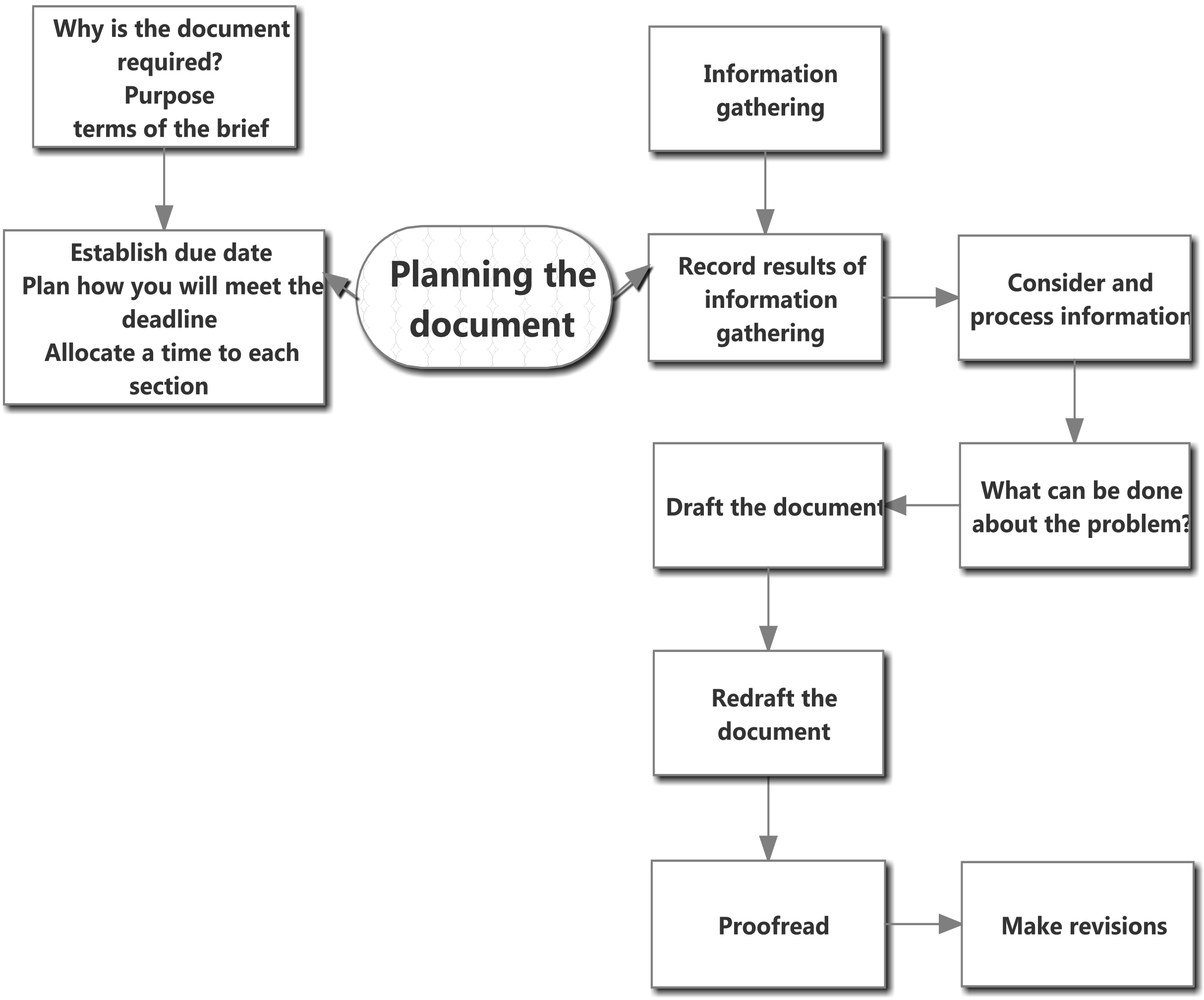
1.3 The three phases of the writing process

- Planning – 60%
- First Draft – 20%
- Final Touches - 20%

1.3.1 Planning the document

Before you start to write, you need to be clear about what you want to achieve and what you want to say. This will involve proper planning. If you plan a letter, agreement, proposal, report; etc. well, it will save time and will save much drafting and re-drafting.

1.3.2 The planning process



1.4 Clarify the purpose and scope

Get the purpose clear to make sure that you communicate most effectively and efficiently with the reader. Always get the IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE WHAT? … quite clear in your mind. This forces you to focus on the result rather than being content with the reason.

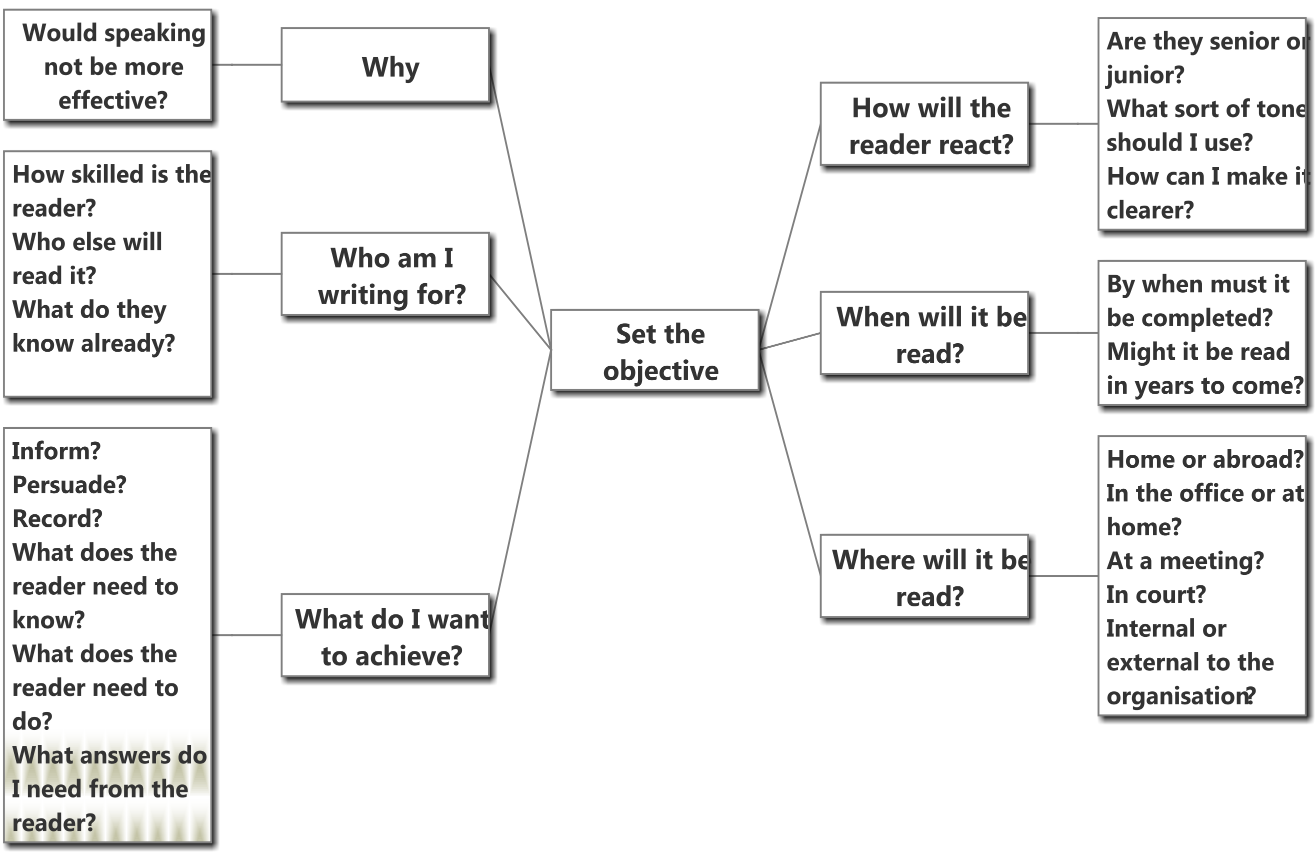
Ask the “objectives” questions given in paragraph 1.2 above.

It is also necessary, when requesting or undertaking a report, to be clear about how wide an area needs to be covered. If the brief is "What are the implications for medical aid fund administrators of the government’s intention to introduce a national health insurance scheme", the brief is wide and the report a huge undertaking. If the brief is "Jane, find out why Mary Lekabe is again absent from work", Jane simply needs to find out what the story is with Mary and get it onto a single sheet of paper. She does not have to investigate the organisation’s sick leave policy and recent Labour Court judgements on that topic.

1.5 Set the objective(s) – Think of the reader

In the finance related professions, a host of documents need to be compiled, e.g. letters, emails, contracts, proposals, reports, minutes. While each one has its own format and structure, the essence of communication is the same: providing information on which decisions can be based.

Formulate the “what”, “who”, “how”, “when”, “why”, “where”. **Here are some questions to ask.**



1.6 Consider the audience

Even before starting to gather information, it is imperative that you consider your readers. Unlike letters and memos, reports and proposals usually have a far wider distribution. Many people may be involved in a decision-making process and need to read the information in the document. Your job is to make it easy for the reader. In order to make reading your document easier, think in terms of the reader.

Each audience has unique needs. Some audience considerations include:

- Need (for the information)
- Education level
- Position in the organisation
- Knowledge of your topic or area
- Responsibility to act
- Age
- Biases
- Preferences
- Attitudes.

To avoid making these false assumptions, writers should identify everyone who might read the document; characterise those readers according to their professional training, position in the organisation and personal traits, and determine how and when the reader might use the document.
There are basically three kinds of audiences:

Primary	People who have to act or make decisions on the basis of the document
Secondary	People who will be affected by actions the primary audience is going to take in response to the document
Intermediate	People responsible for evaluating the document and passing it on the right people

Exercise 2

You have been given the task to investigate the installation of a new centralised high-speed printer to replace a variety of old stand-alone printers. For the report you intend to write, who are your audiences?

Primary ______________________________

Secondary ______________________________

Intermediate ______________________________

Now insert the details in the table below:

Audience	What does my audience know about my topic? What do they not know?	What do I know about my topic that they do not know? What research do I need to do, if any?	What are my audience's attitudes, values and beliefs about my topic?	What does my audience expect and need from my piece of writing?
Primary				
Secondary				
Intermediate				

The closest to perfection a person ever comes is when he fills out a job application form.

Evan Esar

1.7 Gather required information

Once you have a clear understanding of the purpose and scope of your document and whom you are writing for, you are ready to gather information. It is necessary to identify the information sources and to determine the organisational procedures for obtaining and distributing information. The information you gather can be of two types: Secondary and Primary. Secondary refers to information gathered and recorded by others. Primary refers to information you gather and record yourself.

1.8 Analyse your information

Now that you have information, you need to analyse it. The purpose of the analysis is to make sense, objectively, out of the information you have gathered. You will not want personal bias of any kind to enter into the analysis. Information is compared and contrasted in an effort to find new ideas or select the best ideas. Separate facts and figures need to be interpreted by explaining what they mean --what significance they have.

1.9 Determine the solution

Based on your analysis, you will be ready to offer a solution (or solutions) to the problem you have been studying. Your conclusions have to reflect your findings. Personal integrity demands that you put aside your favourite opinions and leave behind your pride and your prejudices. Let your conclusions reflect exactly what you found - even if you don't like them. Therefore the gathered information should be the basis for making this decision. There is also a tendency in business report writing to "slant" information to lead the reader to the decision the writer wants. Make sure you report all pertinent information--good and bad. The credibility of the document (and your credibility) is at stake.

- Generate as many possible solutions or courses of action as you can think of to deal with any problems you have uncovered
- Go back and work out which of the solutions you thought of are possible
- Of the possible courses of action, which do you think would be best? This could be a single action or a number of actions. These are your recommendations.

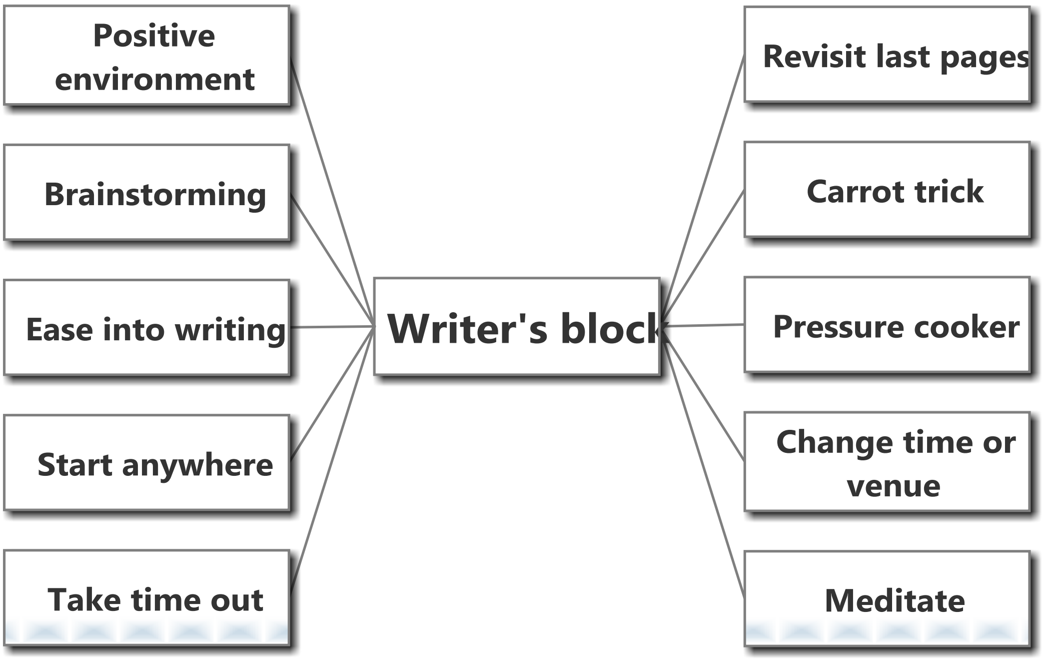
1.10 Organise your document

You've got your topic, your information and your proposal/recommendation. Now you're ready to determine how to present your information. Before actually writing, organise your information into an outline form. You can formulate an outline for your document by choosing the major and supporting ideas, developing the details and eliminating the unnecessary ideas you've gathered. This outline becomes the basic "structure" of your document.

1.11 Refine the structure of the document

Once you have created an outline of your document, it is necessary to convert it into the appropriate structure. For example, an email, a letter, report, notice of meeting, minutes, etc. each has a particular format in which it must be rendered. We will illustrate the various structures when dealing with the relevant documents later in the course.

1.12 Ten ways to shatter writer's block



Education is when you read the fine print.
Experience is what you get if you don't.

Pete Seeger

Module 2

2. Avoiding common errors and grammar mistakes

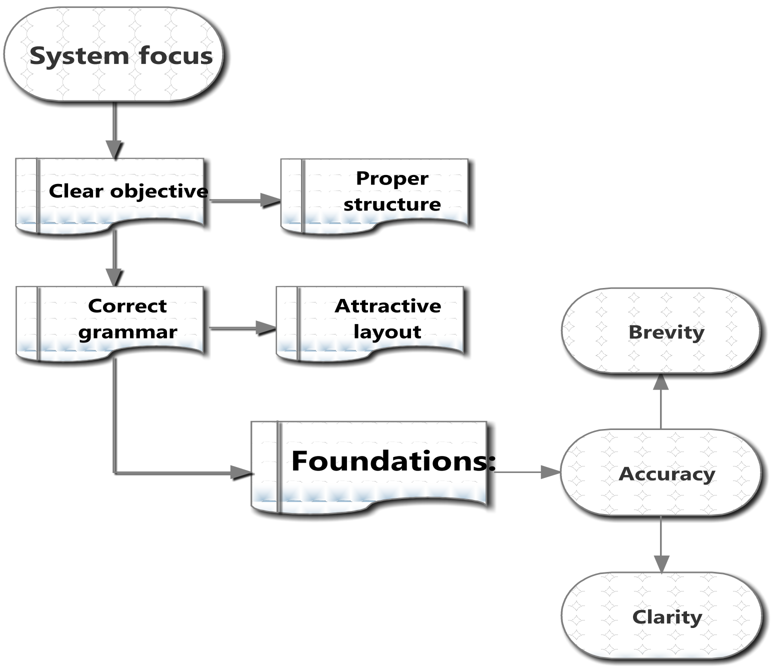
At the end of this module delegates will be able to:

- Resort to accuracy, brevity, clarity: the ABC of business writing
- Apply the clarity checklist
- Avoid “impressive” vocabulary
- Avoid vagueness, ambiguity and pomposity
- Avoid verbiage and oxymorons
- Prevent dangling and misplaced modifiers
- Distinguish between active and passive voice
- Differentiate between the concrete and the abstract
- Apply the rules of number
- Apply the rules for listing a series of items in a sentence
- Achieve flow by means of simple language, short sentences, good paragraphing and descriptive headings
- Use appropriate male/female terminology
- Apply appropriate punctuation
- Identify common errors
- “Write as you would speak.”

2.1 The foundations of your writing skills

In writing, your major task is to create a message that is clearly understood and will induce the reader to take the desired action. Readers should not be left with questions or irritations in their mind.

Writing, to be professional, requires working to a system.



2.1.1 English is a complex language

For many people who will be reading your documents, English will be their second or third language. If you do not know your reader, assume always that her/his home language is different from yours. We live in a country with 11 official languages. Co-workers may speak Sesotho, Afrikaans, Tshivenda, isiZulu, Setswana, or isiXhosa. If you assume that the person receiving your letter, memo, email, report or minutes is not a first language English speaker, you will probably be right. It is therefore vital that you keep vocabulary and sentence structure simple in all the documents you produce.

What you are up against learning English:

If **GH** stands for **P** as in hiccough
If **OUGH** stands for **O** as in dough
If **PHTH** stands for **T** as in phthisis
If **EIGH** stands for **A** as in neighbour
If **TTE** stands for **T** as in gazette
If **EAU** stands for **O** as in beau

Then **POTATO** would be spelt **GHOUGHPHTHEIGHTTEEAU**

(FROM James Clark, Stoep Talk, The Star, Thursday 25 November 1993)

2.2 H. Schultz v The New York Cleaning Department

2.2.1 A saga in three acts!

Act 1

Dear Sir.

I find Hydrochloric Acid fine for cleaning pipes. Is this OK?

Signed. H Schultz – Plumber

Dear Mr Schultz

In response to your enquiry regarding the use of Hydrochloric Acid for cleaning pipes, it should be clearly recognised that this is not efficacious. The Hydrochloric Acid interacts with a variety of metals to produce salts of various natures, depending on the composition of the metals involved, which would be more than mildly toxic to any person or persons (or animals) that might ingest the substance in question. The precise result, which would stem from such ingestion would depend, amongst other less crucial matters, on the proportion of Hydrochloric Acid and metallic radical to other dilutory substances in the original combination of substances that induces the salt producing reaction initially.

Signed. B Pearson, New York Cleaning Department

Act 2

Dear Mr Pearson

Thank you for your interesting letter. Can you please now tell me if it is OK to use Hydrochloric Acid to clean out pipes?

Signed. H Schultz – Plumber

Dear Mr Schultz

As was explained in our previous letter to you, it is the opinion of this Department that the use of Hydrochloric Acid for cleaning would increase the susceptibility of the population at large to varying degrees of virulence. The precise degree of virulence in any specific case would depend, of course, on the total amount and percentage of toxic content in that total amount, of debilitating solution imbibed and naturally the frequency of such reflections by the person or persons in question.

We trust the position is now clear to you.
Signed. B Pearson, New York Cleaning Department

Act 3

Dear Mr Pearson

It's real nice of you to trust me. I am now cleaning many more pipes with Hydrochloric Acid.

Signed. H Schultz – Plumber

Dear Mr Schultz

Don't use Hydrochloric Acid for cleaning pipes. It poisons the water.

Signed. B Pearson

The moral of this story is ….?

2.3 Grammar

TENSES	PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
SIMPLE (Regular or frequent action – a permanent or long term state of affairs)	**I wrote** **I worked at Game** – Permanent or long-term career plans or prospects that existed in the past **I phoned a client** – Sometime that happened in the past (used for narrative)	**I write** **I work at Game** – Permanent or long term career plans or prospects	**I will write** **I will phone a client** – at some point in the future, I intend to phone a client
CONTINUOUS (Action in progress – either at a particular moment in time, or a particular point in one's life - "busy with)	**I was writing** **I was working at Game** – These were my temporary or short-term career plans or prospects at the particular point in my past life in which my story is set **I was phoning a client** – At the particular past moment in which my story is set, I was phoning a client	**I am writing** **I am working at Game** – Temporary or short-term career plans or prospects **I am phoning a client -** At this moment in time I am busy phoning a client	**I will be writing** **I will be phoning a client** – At a specified point in the future, I will be phoning a client
PERFECT (Completed action)	**I had written** **I had phoned a client** – I had phoned a client further back in time than the past moment in which my story is set. The phoning was completed on or near the past moment in which my story is set – i.e. its completion is still relevant at the time of that past moment	**I have written** **I have phoned a client** – I phoned a client in the past and the phoning was completed in or near the present moment – i.e. its completion is still relevant	**I will have written** **I will have phoned a client** – At a specified point in the future, I will have completed the phoning of a client. The phoning process may have begun at any time before that – at a nearer point in the future, in the present, or even in the past
PERFECT CONTINUOUS Action in progress, but interrupted or incomplete	**I had been writing** **I had been phoning a client** – I was busy phoning a client further back in time than the past moment in which my story is set. At the past moment in which my story is set the phoning was interrupted or not yet completed.	**I have been writing** **I have been phoning a client** – I was busy phoning a client in the past. At the present moment the phoning is interrupted or not yet completed	**I will have been writing** **I will have been phoning a client** – At a specified point in the future the phoning process will be interrupted or not yet completed. The phoning process may have begun at anytime before that – at a nearer point in the future, in the present or even in the past By 15:00, I will have been phoning a client for ten minutes – at the specified point in the future (15:00), the interrupted/incomplete process will have been proceeding for the specified length of time (ten minutes).

2.3.1 Words

2.3.1.1 Introduction

The rule is to be natural and human, not pompous and unnatural. If in doubt, ask: "What would I say to this person face to face?" Writing should be more like speaking. Letters and documents become difficult to read if they contain:

- Long words
- Long sentences
- Long paragraphs.

2.3.1.2 Short words

Short words are easier to read than long words because they are easier to recognise and interpret. We get more practice in using the words we speak; so, when we see a word that we do not use in conversation, it is harder for us to understand.

- Do not impress the reader by deliberately using long words
- Use words whose meanings are precise and not open to doubt
- Use a short word (or even two or three) instead of one long one. However, at times we may need to use some long word for variety and precision. Try to keep long words below 10% of the total by cutting out the unnecessary ones
- Write to express not impress!

What does "hot" mean?

One factory has this accident recorded: An electrician put a sign "hot" on a bare and protruding piece of metal. A workman was "careful" to equip himself with metal tongs before trying to pick it up. He got the shock of his life.

- To an electrical engineer "hot" means alive with electric current
- To a metallurgist it may mean simply high in temperature
- To some physicists, the first meaning would be "radioactive"
- To some of the men around the office, the first meaning of "hot" is sexy.

"The dictionary is the only place where success comes before work."

Mark Twain

2.3.1.3 The Express – Don't Impress

Exercise 3

Why say ………

1. Cease ________	2. Reside ________	3. Concerning ______	5. Amend ________
5. Forward ________	6. Interim ________	7. Repudiate ______	8. Affix ________
9. Endorse ______	10. Prevailing ______	11. Grace ________	12. Furnish ________
13. Prior to ________	15. Periodic ______	15. Remit ________	16. Expeditious ____
17. Anticipate ______	18. Render ________	19. Expedite ______	20. Participate ______
21. Peruse ________	22. Reflect ________	23. Require ________	24. Request ________

When you mean ………

a. Send	m. Change
b. Expect	n. Return
c. Before	o. Sign
d. Live	p. Please let me know
e. About	q. Share
f. Pay	r. Extra
g. Show	s. Present
h. Ask	t. Read
i. Attach	u. Quick
j. Meantime	v. Time to time
k. Unable to pay	w. Need
l. Reply	x. Stop

2.3.1.4 Be precise, avoid jargon and clichés

Cliché	Better expression
Correspondence	i.e. letter
Communication	e.g. report, memo, telephone call
Illustration	Graph or diagram
A large proportion of	Many
Concerning	About
At the present time	Now
Currently	Now
Despite the fact that	Although
Furnish particulars	Give details
In conjunction with	With
In the course of	During
On account of the fact that	Because
Assuring you of our best attention	NOTHING. Leave it out!
Enclosed please find	I enclose
Trust this meets with your approval	NOTHING. Leave it out!

But remember – ultimately, *Accuracy* and *Clarity* are more important than Brevity.

"Yesterday is history
Tomorrow is a mystery
Today is a gift – That is
Why it is called a present!"

2.3.1.5 Useless words

Edit out the weasel words in your writing

CAUTION

There are several "weasel" words in the English language. These are words that do not add anything to your writing. They are also called "meaningless qualifiers'"

- It appears that Customer Service will
- It should be noted that we will
- There are some departments that will.

You will be left with:

- Customer Service will……………………………………………
- We will ……………………………………………………………….
- Some department will ……………………………………………..

Other weasel words that should be edited out of writing

• Actually	• Definitely
• Hopefully	• Fortunately
• Carefully	• Pretty sure
• Quite sure	• To some degree
• Real	• Rather
• Somewhat	• Really
• Slightly	• Very
• Relatively	• Extremely
• Sometimes	• Usually
• Frequently	• etc.
• Generally	• Largely

For example: He is rather intelligent. It is very large, very high, very clear.

2.3.1.6 Insulting Inserts

- It should be obvious that …
- Needless to say …
- It can be clearly seen …
- As we all know….
- It goes without saying ….

2.3.1.7 Slang

- Hard nosed
- Touch base
- Trade-off
- Ballpark figures
- Stone walling
- Ducks in a row
- Gut reaction
- Bottom line
- Play hardball

2.3.1.8 Long-winded Expressions

Example

Rather:

"I enclose your policy document" (5 words)

Than:

"Hereby enclosed please find your policy document" (7 words)

CHECKLIST:

Within the realm of possibility	Possible
At the present writing	Now
Due to the fact that	Due to
Enclosed herewith please find	Enclosed
In the vicinity of	Near
For the reason that	Because, since
In the event that	If
For the purpose of	To
Is not in a position to	Cannot
Will be utilised	Will be used
It is our understanding that	We understand
In the near future	Promptly, soon
At this point (moment) in time	Now
As of this date	Today

2.3.1.9 Outdated phrases

Write as you speak

By writing in today's language, the reader will:

- Feel that what you have to say is sincere
- Know exactly what you mean as the language you use is simple and direct
- Feel that he/she is dealing with a progressive company.

Exercise 4

Suggest an alternative for the business terms

19th century	21st century
Apologise for the inconvenience caused	
Acknowledge receipt of	
Awaiting your further notice	
Herewith attached please find	
Your communication of recent date	
Enclosed herein	
Contents duly noted	
Assuring you of quality service	
Beg to call your attention to	
Thanking you in anticipation	
Refer to your letter dated	
It has been brought to my attention	
Be so kind as to forward	
Trusting that you will approve of the above	

Exercise 5

Delete the unnecessary words from the sentences below:

It appears that we will be closing early tomorrow

There are some departments that will work late

I am pretty sure that you will not work late

Come to my office together with your assistant

We empty the waste paper basket on a daily basis

Please refer back to my letter of the 15th May

Kindly be advised that you need to contact the supplier directly yourself

The mouse pads are oval in shape

Will you please repeat the sentence before I continue on with my typing?

We will be able to complete the report if we combine together the two sections

He jumped off of the table and stepped on each and every one of the tiles

2.3.1.10 **Avoiding Verbiage** (use of many unnecessary words)

Redundancy checklist:

Visible to the eye	Small in size
Red in colour	Little tiny speck
Combine together	First originated
Many in number	Rectangular in shape
Month of December	Sufficient enough
Specific example	Advance planning
Close proximity	But nevertheless
Refer back	Completely filled
Might possibly	Period of time
Still remains	Recur again
As yet	As to whether
At the present time	At a later date
Consensus of opinion	The exact opposites
Estimated at about	True facts
First of all	Absolutely essential
For a period of 10 days	Written down
When and if	Sincere apology
My personal opinion	Off of
Thorough investigation	Misposted in error

Creative" pomposity

Judy Wallman, a professional genealogical researcher, discovered that **Hillary Clinton's** great-great uncle, Remus Rodham, was hanged for horse stealing and train robbery in Montana in 1889. The only known photograph of Remus shows him standing on the gallows. On the back of the picture is this inscription: "Remus Rodham; horse thief, sent to Montana Territorial Prison 1885, escaped 1887, robbed the Montana Flyer six times. "Caught by Pinkerton detectives, convicted and hanged in 1889."

Judy allegedly emailed Hillary Clinton for comments. Hillary's staff sent back the following biographical sketch: "Remus Rodham was a famous cowboy in the Montana Territory. His business empire grew to include valuable equestrian assets and intimate dealings with Montana railroad. Beginning in 1883, he devoted several years of his life to service at a government facility, finally taking leave to resumé his dealings with the railroad. In 1887 he was a key player in a vital investigation run by the renowned Pinkerton Detective Agency. In 1889 Remus passed away during a function held in his honour, when the platform on which he was standing collapsed."

That's how history is re-written. (Source: Space, Barry. Untitled. Sunday Times Magazine: p3).

Exercise 6

2.3.2.11 Nice words

Find a more descriptive adjective as a substitute of "nice"

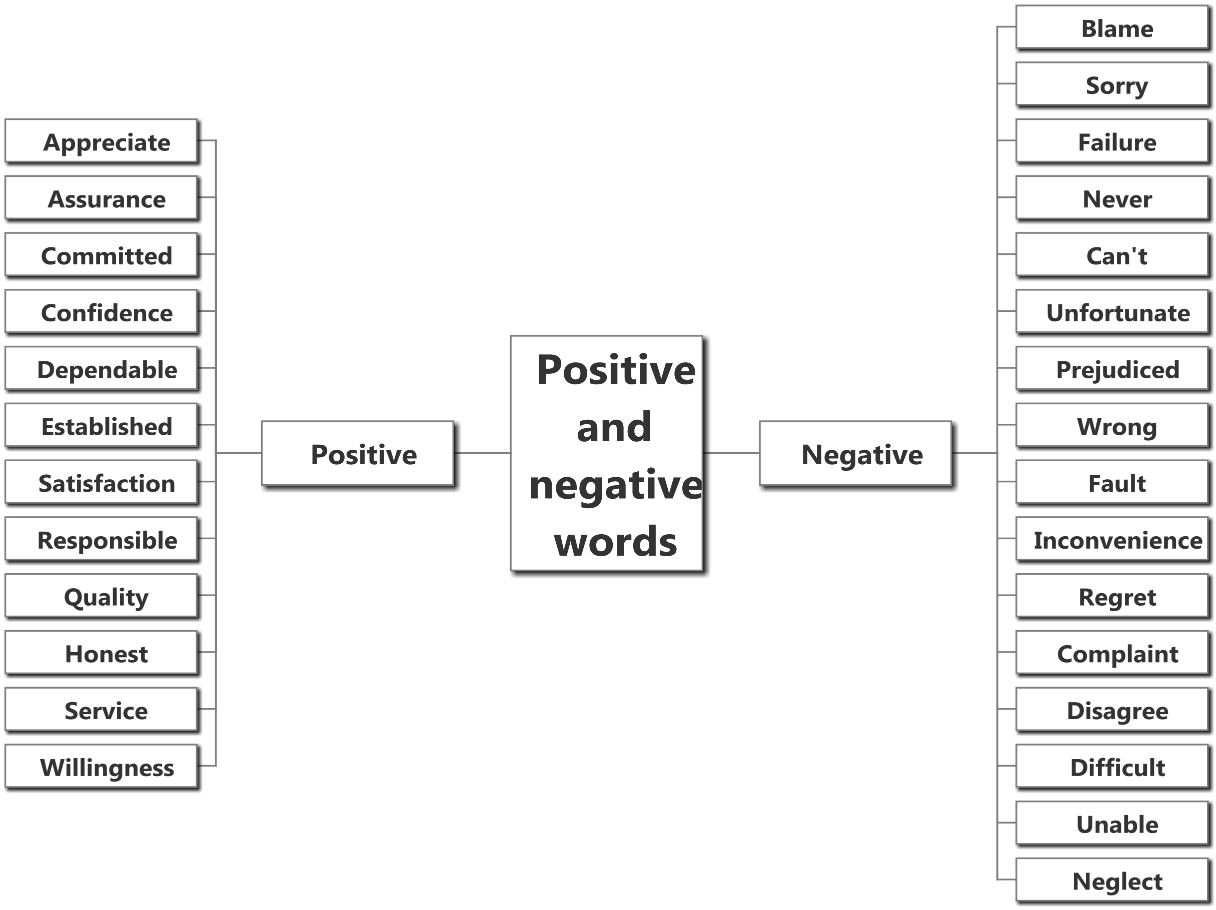
Nice car	**Nice music**
Nice film	**Nice book**
Nice game	**Nice holiday**

The word "people" is equally abused. Be precise and find the appropriate description in the context it is used, e.g. employee, staff member; passenger, patient, customer, client, patron, learner, delegate, audience, spectator, congregation, shareholder, stakeholder, etc.

2.3.2.12 Positive and negative words

Analyse words for positive and negative emotional meanings. For example, “efficient” is positive, so is “punctual”; “you must” is negative, so is “impossible” or “incorrect”.

A positive tone encourages a favourable, desirable association with a product or service. A negative tone is a “red flag” word. It plants seeds of doubt or conveys an image that is unfavourable, undesirable, unattractive or even frightening. However, too positive a tone will lead to accusations of “pushy”.



2.3.2.13 The importance of being positive

It is difficult to write a letter when you have to say “no” or have to reply to a demanding/unhappy client.
By using positive words, the reader is more likely to be left with a favourable impression of your company. People react positively to words like “can” and “able”. Words like “hope” “trust” and “try” do not reassure your readers that they can be confident in you. Words like “cannot” and “unable” create a negative impression.

Exercise 7

This exercise gives you the opportunity to select the response you believe creates a more positive impression. Place a "+" in the block if you think this is the better way to say something. Place a "-" in the box if you think this response creates a negative impression.

- ☐ "We regret to inform you that your application for a policy was not accepted"
- ☐ "Thank you for applying for a policy" (reason for rejection) (empathy statement)
- ☐ "Upon reviewing your application, we find that we cannot issue a policy unless you are willing to pay a higher premium rate"
- ☐ "We can issue a policy, if you are willing to pay a higher premium rate"
- ☐ "Your disability benefits came into effect on 23rd April, 20…."
- ☐ "Your disability benefits did not become operative until 23rd April, 20…."
- ☐ "I hope you will enjoy your trip to Italy"
- ☐ "Enjoy your trip to Italy"
- ☐ "I will try my best to ensure you have this information by next week"
- ☐ "I will ensure that you have this information by next week"
- ☐ "Unfortunately, your application for a loan of R15 000 has been refused/denied
- ☐ "Your policy has been in force for 18 months. To qualify for a loan of R15 000 it needs to be in force for five years"
- ☐ "I apologise that you were sent the incorrect information"
- ☐ "I'm sorry for the inconvenience caused"
- ☐ Complaints department
- ☐ Customer service

2.3.2.14 Oxymorons

Checklist

Assistant supervisor	Genuine veneer	New classic
New tradition	Full-time day care	Sweet sorrow
Original copy	Death benefits	Childproof
Plastic glass	Holy war	"Now, then …"
Uninvited guest	Friendly fire	Synthetic natural gas
Highly depressed	Act naturally	Passive aggression
Live recording	Found missing	Taped live
Authentic reproduction	Resident alien	Clearly misunderstood
Partial cease-fire	Advanced BASIC	Peace force
Elevated sub way	Genuine imitation	Extinct life
Dry lake	Airline food	Temporary tax increase
True replica	Good grief	Plastic glasses
Forward lateral	Same difference	Terribly pleased
Standard options	Almost exactly	Computer security
Mandatory options	Government	Political science
Mutual differences	Organisation	Tight slacks
Non-dairy creamer	Sanitary landfill	Definite maybe
Open secret	Alone together	Pretty ugly
New York culture	Legally drunk	Diet ice cream
Silent alarm	Silent scream	Rap music
Sport sedan	British fashion	Working holiday
Wireless cable	Living dead	Exact estimate
Mercy killing	Small crowd	Yes no
Lethal assistance	Business ethics	Ja nee
Soft rock	Military intelligence	Friendly fire

2.4 The rules of number

A verb must agree with its subject in number and person. A pronoun must agree in number, person and gender with the noun it refers to. Here are the most commonly needed rules. The verbs in the examples are in bold type.

RULE	**EXAMPLE**
Singular subject, singular verb.	The woman **is** singing.
Plural subject, plural verb.	The women **are** singing.
Plural subjects joined by 'and' take a plural verb.	The woman, boy and the dog **are** walking down the road.
If two subjects form a single concept use a single verb.	My trainer and friend **arrives** tomorrow. (one person, not two.)
Nouns that are plural in form but singular in meaning take the singular form of the verb.	Mathematics **is** my least favourite subject.
Plural subjects that indicate a quantity or number take a singular form of the verb when the subject is regarded as a unit.	Five months **is** too long to wait for my certificate. Twelve from twenty **leaves** eight.

RULE	**EXAMPLE**
Two or more plurals subjects joined by ‘or’ or ‘nor’ take the plural verb.	Either the teachers or the exams **are** wrong. Neither the classes nor the teachers **were** there.
Two or more singular subjects joined by “or” or “nor” take the singular verb.	Either the teacher or the exam **is** wrong. Neither the class nor the teacher **is** there.
When the subject varies in number or person, the verb agrees with the nearer subject.	Neither Mary nor my sisters **swim**. Neither my sisters nor Mary **swims**.
When the subject and the complement of the verb ‘to be’ are different in number, the verb must agree with the number of the subject.	What is needed **is** candles on the tables. Candles **are** needed.
Use a singular verb after the expletive ‘it’	It **is** up to you. It **is** up to the boys who are there.
After ‘there’ use a singular verb if the subject that follows is singular and a plural verb if the subject is plural.	At the airport there **is** a lovely shop. There **are** now policies that can help us.
Singular pronouns take singular verbs.	Always singular: each, everyone, everybody, anyone, someone, somebody, no one, nobody, one, many a one, another, anything, either, neither. Each of my friends **has** a dog. Someone **is** going to help me.
“None” can be singular or plural depending on the number of the noun that follows.	None of the tea **has** been taken. None of the cars **has** been damaged.
A pronoun must agree in number, person and gender with the noun or pronoun it refers to.	Everybody **is** expected to contribute his or her share.
Pronouns must always agree.	He will bring **his** camera with him. She must **have** her teeth cleaned herself.

2.5 Strategies for listing

2.5.1 General rules

When listing items within a sentence, it is correct usage to precede the list with a complete sentence and a colon. The colon is used incorrectly when it separates major sentence parts from each other, e.g. most frequently verb from object.

INCORRECT:	He will need to buy: paper clips, pens stamps, file folders and tape
CORRECT:	He will need to buy the following: paper clips, pens, stamps, file folders and tape.

When items are listed, use parallel structure. If the first item listed is in fragment form, the subsequent items must also be fragments. If the first item appears in complete sentence form, subsequent items must also appear in complete sentences.

INCORRECT:	Fred based his health care programme on the following beliefs: jogging is good aerobic exercise; swimming at least once a week, too many eggs and too much beef adds cholesterol.
BETTER:	Fred based his health care programme on the following beliefs: Jogging for good aerobic exercise, swimming at least once q week, eating fewer eggs and less beef to avoid excess cholesterol.
OR:	Fred based his health programme on the following beliefs; jogging is good aerobic exercise, swimming once a week stimulates circulation; and eating fewer eggs and less beef lowers cholesterol.

2.5.2 Suggested methods

Generally, it is safer to resort to using bullets or indentations for the items if there are 3 or more items to be listed. Where there are three or more items listed, with each listed item being several words to several lines long, indent each listed item; follow the guidelines of parallel structure; and punctuate the items in the manner described below:

If the listed items are complete sentences in themselves, punctuate them as such, each with its own full stop.

Example:
Clare Walker listed several career ambitions in her journal:

- She wants to earn a promotion by 31 August.
- She plans to run for president of the After Hour Club.
- She wants to increase to 25 the number of reports she edits each week.

If a complete sentence precedes a list of fragments, the fragments do not require end punctuation.

Example
Clare Walker listed several career ambitions in her journal:

- Earning a promotion by 31 August
- Running for president of the After Hours Club
- Increasing her editing goals to 25 reports each week.

Note that the first word of the listed items in the examples above is capitalised, not because of any specific rule, but because capitalising has more visual appeal.

Should you lead with a fragment, make sure that each item in the list follows the fragment in accordance with parallel structure.

Example

The chairperson emphasised:

- Correction of errors
- Improvement of morale
- Contributions to the goal.

Incorrect and confusing:

Ramsey expected his supervisors to:

- Be praising an employee for a job well done
- Notifying Ramsey of any morale problems
- To recommend outstanding employees for raises and promotions
- Oversee payroll operations in their departments.

Correct and clear:

Ramsey expected his supervisor to do the following tasks:

- Praise an employee for a job well done
- Notify Ramsey of any morale problems
- Recommend outstanding employees for raises and promotions
- Oversee payroll operations in their departments.

Bullets can also be used with a limited number of items and with items that need to be highlighted.

2.6 A note about numbers

Traditionally, the use of digits and words denoting numbers is split at ten / 11.

The following exceptions are noteworthy:

1. A sentence is always stared with the word:
   Eleven people attended the 12th congress.
2. Digits are used as parts of dates or similar constructions:
   5 September 2012. (Notice the th, nd and st are not essential any more)
3. Amounts might need to be re-written in financial reports:
   R 3 000,00 (Three thousand Rand).

2.7 Concrete vs Abstract

We often use terms in letters and memos, which are so abstract they can be interpreted in a variety of ways. For instance, when I tell you I will get back to you right away, you don't know if I mean within five minutes or sometime this week. Watch for abstractions in your writing and replace them with concrete terms

Abstract	**Concrete**
As soon as possible	by 15:00
A substantial saving	R5 000 saving
Increased efficiency	200% more efficient

Exercise 8

Make each of the following sentences more concrete

We have had lots of phone calls this week about the design for the new pump.

____

A huge group of people attended the service Management seminar.

____

Thank you for the information you sent recently.

____

Please submit a short report on your inspection of the well.

____

Herewith pursuant to your request, the appended notices attest to the gross wastage of time during the month of December.

____

____

We are in receipt of your complaint and intend to respond by offering you a voucher of substantial value.

____

____

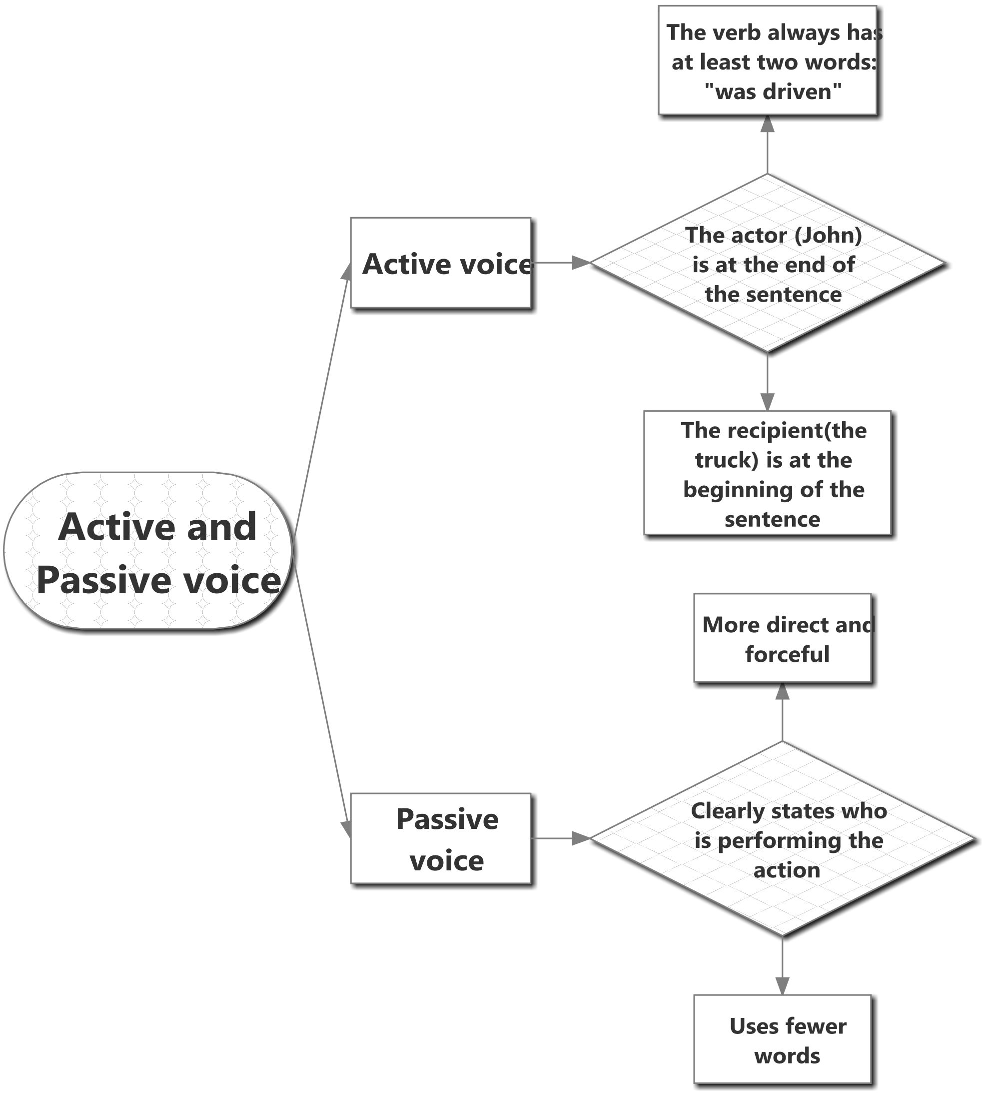
2.8 Verbs

2.8.1 Active and Passive

It is usually better to use the active rather than the passive voice as verbs are strongest when they are in the active voice.

Active voice means that you have an actor at the beginning of the sentence that is responsible for the verb.

Active Verb:	John drove the truck.	Direct and clear
Passive Verb:	The truck was driven by John.	Longer with less impact
Verbal Noun:	The driving of the truck was done by John.	Dull, wordy, to be avoided



Although passive writing can confuse and makes for heavy reading, there are some instances when it is necessary to write in the passive voice. Passive voice can be a good choice if used for one of these three reasons:

To hide the actor's identity when you want to be diplomatic or confidential.
"A mistake was made."

When the actor is unimportant or unknown.
"A further meeting will be held next week." We know who will be holding the meeting.

To emphasise who or what was acted upon.
"The dog was hit by a truck." The sentence is about what happened to the dog.

Example

Passive
The need for revision of stock taking procedures was discussed last year. It was pointed out that no responsibility could be accepted for the inadequacy of the system at that time.

Active
We discussed the need to revise your stock taking procedures with Mr Brian Dawes last year. We believed the system was inadequate then and we could not accept responsibility for it.

When the passive voice feels like "passing the buck" avoid using it.

Exercise 9

Re-write the following sentences in the active voice. One of these sentences must be left in the passive voice, as it cannot be written in the active voice.

The secretary was praised by the Manager.

At our meeting last week, it was agreed that the old software must be replaced.

It is recommended by this committee that the complaint be brought before the directors.

Standards of safety have been allowed to deteriorate.

Twenty five people were interviewed by the Human Resources Department.

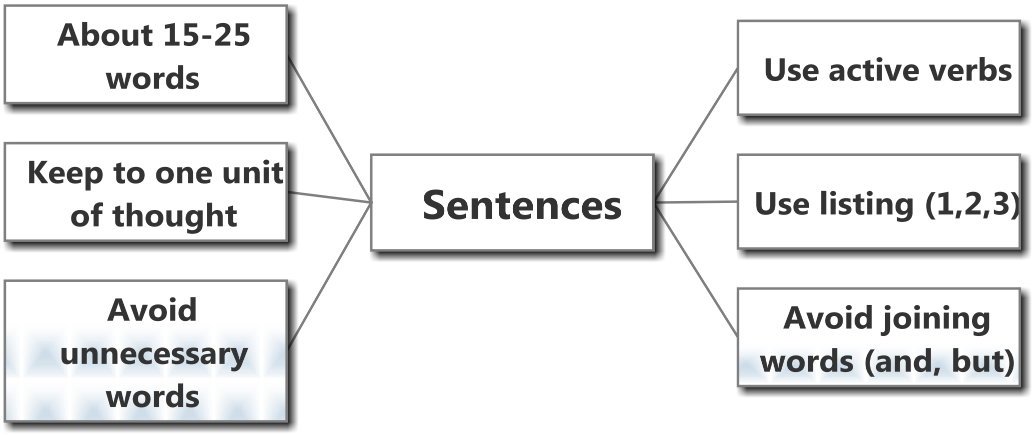
The report was typed by Jane.

2.9 Sentences

A 'sentence' is a unit of thought. It should be able to stand on its own. Sentences are separated by major punctuation marks.

2.9.1 Sentence length

Sentences should on average be about 15 - 25 words long – more than this and ideas can become clouded. But it is best to vary the length of sentences; it is often dull and tiring if all sentences are of the same length. In contrast, if the sentences are too short it is difficult to make the piece flow.



2.9.2 Sentence structure

Sentence structure is just as important as length

- The more difficult a text is, the simpler its structure should be.
- The best order for a sentence is: subject, verb, direct object, e.g. "The company secretary writes the minutes".
- The essence of the message should be in the first part of the sentence, as the reader always retains this part better.

2.10 Paragraphs

2.10.1 Signposts

Every paragraph should begin with a brief statement of theme. This topic sentence acts as a signpost to help the reader. The first sentence should not be more than 15 – 20 words. Efficient readers use the signposts when they skim a document to decide how closely they need to read it.

2.10.2 A new idea or development needs a new paragraph

- Paragraphs are there for your **reader** - to show him/her that you are beginning a new point.
- There should be one, clear idea per paragraph.
- Every paragraph has a controlling idea. This is called the topic sentence and is the thought or vital piece of information from which the rest of the paragraph flows.

2.10.3 Introduce a paragraph with the topic sentence

When writers compose long, unstructured sentences and the ideas in them ramble on and merge into the next idea, this usually means that they did not plan what they wanted to say in the first place. If a writer decides on the central idea of a paragraph before writing it, he or she will usually put the topic sentence first. This will make it easier for the reader to understand immediately what the paragraph is about.

Exercise 10

In the following example, please underline the topic sentence and then work out how you could restructure the passage so that it comes first.

"After our discussions, I thought about the matter and felt that I needed advice. I have always felt that our Personnel Officer is a competent woman who has often shown integrity in staff matters. So I decided to make an appointment and to discuss the matter with her. She was very helpful and I finally decided to accept the transfer to Cape Town, partly because of the educational opportunities for my children and partly because of the promotional prospects the transfer will offer me."

2.10.4 Use the order of your paragraphs properly

In a letter, paragraph 1 should refer to any previous communication, action etc. and should set your letter in context.

The middle paragraph(s) should deal clearly with the matter(s) you are writing about.

The closing paragraph should look to the future, explaining exactly what action you are taking now or what you want the receiver to do. **Be specific**. Do not write, "Please let me know" - rather say, "Please send me the cheque by close of business on Friday, 17 August 2012"

2.10.5 A paragraph is a theme – a cluster of related sentences

- Separate the themes into paragraphs and the reader will be able to get an understanding of the central message. Do not include more than one theme per paragraph.
- Good paragraphing helps to make reading easy and clear.
- If the paragraphs are short, the reader can concentrate easily on each aspect of the report. If, on the other hand, the paragraphs are long and heavy, the reader will very soon get confused and give up. Short paragraphs make reports look easier to read.

A good 'rule of thumb' is that paragraphs should on average be 6 sentences or fewer. Sometimes a one-sentence paragraph is very effective to grab the reader's attention or to make a key point.

2.11 Male/Female Terminology

Consistency is the key to this issue. Try, whenever possible, to use non-gender terms such as chairperson, police officer, salesperson, etc. Using "he/she" and "his/her" breaks up the flow of your text, although it does eliminate gender bias and is sometimes unavoidable. Often, you can get round this by putting your point into the plural and using "they" and "their". For example, rather than saying "Each manager should explain the new product features to his/her sales staff", say "Managers should explain the new features to their sales staff."

2.12 Punctuation

2.12.1 Function

Its object is to help in making the sentence and grammatical relationships easier to understand and thus to avoid ambiguity. Below are some sentences where incorrect punctuation has changed the meaning of the sentence.

I was asked to stand at the entrance and call the delegates names.
I was asked to stand at the entrance and call the delegates' names.

The company I work for usually employs fifty odd men and women.
The company I work for usually employs fifty-odd men and women.

Don't mix your bread or roll in your dinner.
Don't mix your bread, or roll, in your dinner.

The fleeing criminal dropped a bullet in his leg.
The fleeing criminal dropped, a bullet in his leg.

Thank you to my husband, John.
Thank you to my husband John.

The following are some punctuation marks that always give problems.

Full Stop

- Marks the end of a sentence.
- Used after abbreviations. A full stop is not used in abbreviations when the abbreviation ends in the same letter as the word which has been abbreviated.

Example: Prof. would have a full stop, as the abbreviated word Professor does not end in "f" but Dr would not have a full stop, as Doctor ends in "r".

Comma

A comma separates words, phrases and clauses from the main clause or sentence. Use commas sparingly and only to clarify issues.

- Used between each item in a series.
- Used around non-essential material: material that would not change the meaning of the subject.

  Example: Natalie, who loves to dance, broke her leg.

- Indicates a pause within a sentence.

  Example: As you know, nothing came of the meeting.

- Indicates words in apposition.

  Example: I went to visit June, my aunt.

- Used before or after a participial phrase, where the sentence would be confusing without it.

  Example: If you are leaving, I will come with you.

- Used to separate two sentences that are joined by, and, but, or, so, yet, etc.

  Example: He wanted to take leave, but was afraid to ask for it.

Commas with "And"

The easy rule is that when the items in the sentence go together, don't use the comma with "and" – My sisters Jane, Lisa and Michelle. If they don't go together use the comma – My sisters Jane, Lisa, Michelle, and the neighbour.

- Used in a series that is long or complex.

  Example: We had milk and biscuits, peanut butter and jam sandwiches, and cake and ice cream.

- Used in a compound sentence to avoid confusion.

  Example: Maria wrote to Mom and Dad, and Jeff wrote to Aunt Kathryn.

.

- Used to show clearly which items are grouped together.

  Example: The cities we are considering for the conference are New York, USA, and Milan, Italy.

- Used to avoid confusion in instructions.

  Example: When you leave the campsite, don't leave litter, and recycle everything possible.

Semicolon

The semicolon is more formal than the colon and the dash. Professional writers tend to use it much less than writers of several decades ago. Some people think of the semicolon as a "strong comma" – something between a comma and a full stop.

- Used to replace a conjunction between two clauses.

  Example: She likes apples, but he likes bananas could be re-written She likes apples; he likes bananas.

- When items in a series are complex and contain commas it is often best to separate them with a semicolon.

  Example: We elected the following: Jane, President; Peter, vice-president; Sue, Secretary; and Michael, treasurer.

- Used before some connectives in a sentence – however, also, instead, for example, otherwise, therefore, consequently, moreover.

  Example: We could have stayed with Mary; instead we stayed with John.

- In front of e.g. and i.e.

  Example: Sample one worked; i.e. it yielded positive results.

.
Colon

Think of the colon as an arrow that comes at the end of a complete sentence, pointing to some more useful information about what you have just said. The colon can point to a word, to a list, to a sentence, even to a series of sentences or paragraphs.

- Introduces a list or series of ideas.

  Example: I have made some changes to your writing: added a comma, used capital letters, and corrected your spelling.

- Used to point to a single word.

  Example: He started the business for one reason: money.

The Dash

The dash tells the reader that you are saying something more about what you just said – an example, an elaboration, a contradiction, whatever.

- Used as you would a colon: as an "arrow" that comes at the end of a complete sentence, pointing to some more useful information about what you just said. Notice that the dash gives a slightly more informal feel to the sentences than a colon does.

  Example: He started the business for one reason – money.

- Used to emphasise the last idea in a sentence.

  Example: He robbed the bank for adventure, fame – and greed.

.
The Hyphen

The hyphen tells the reader not to stop – that this part of the word is connected to the first part.

- Used to separate a word at the end of a line of text.

  Example: The manager communicated his feelings to the staff.

- Used in certain compound words (a word that is made up of two separate words.)

  Example: The salesman sent a follow-up message to his proposal. The hyphen tells the reader to connect the words follow and up. Other examples of this are: Three-story building; nuclear-free zone; four-door vehicle.

  - Confusion can arise because the expressions are not hyphenated when they come after the word they describe, like these:
    - I sent a message to follow up.
    - The vehicle has four doors.
    - This zone is nuclear free.
    - The building has three stories.

  - Used in new expressions or "buzz-words". However, the need for hyphens in particular expressions changes over time. Once the expression or compound word is commonly understood, the hyphen is no longer needed.

  Example: We used to write micro-wave oven, but we now use microwave.

Apostrophe

- Used to indicate possession.
- If the noun is singular, the apostrophe is put before the "s".

  Example: That is John's car.
- If the noun is plural, the apostrophe is put after the "s"

  Example: These are the directors' offices.
- If the noun ends in "s" you add an apostrophe and "s".

  Example: Mr Jones's car
- If the noun ends in the "ziz" sound only add the apostrophe.

  Example: Jesus' teachings, Moses' rod.
- Do not add an apostrophe for plurals of Acronyms.

  Example: ATMs
- Used when two words are contracted (where a letter is left out).

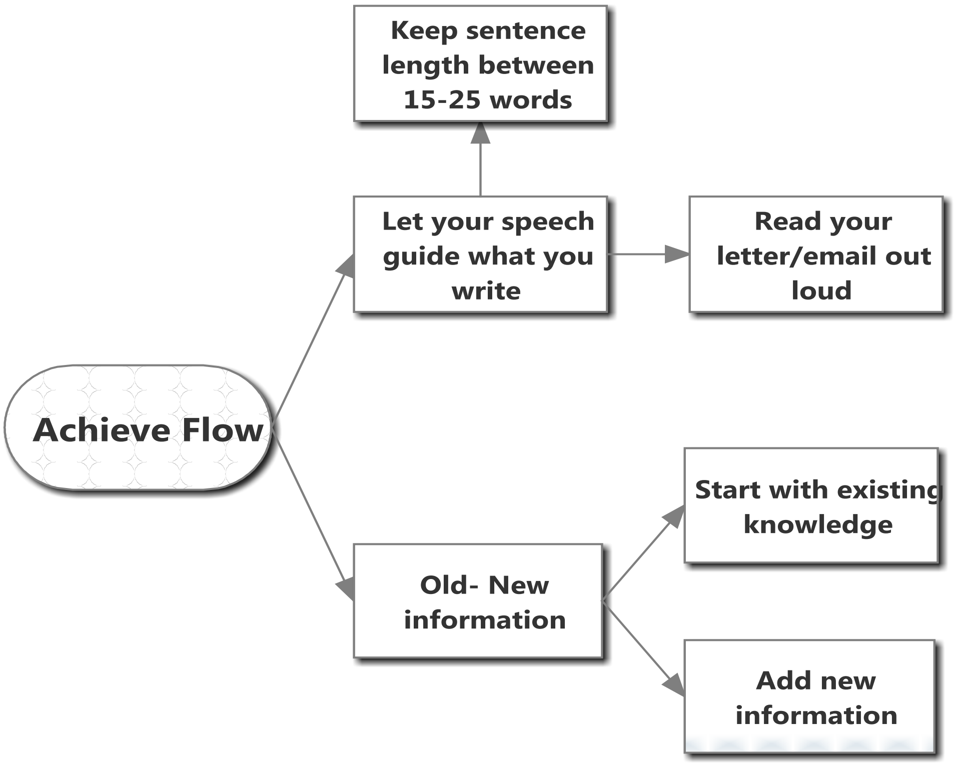
  Example: don't, can't, aren't

Exercise 11

Punctuate the following sentences.

1. James car broke down however he borrowed his friends.
2. I called his secretary to make an appointment and I sent her an email to confirm.
3. Before the meeting we had to do 3 things arrange the chairs and tables make copies of the agenda and order the refreshments.
4. She said I want to go to town tomorrow
5. Cape Town is my favourite city therefore I plan to spend two weeks there this summer.
6. The dog growling and snarling snapped at me.
7. The table which is in the dining room has been restored.
8. I had to complete the assignment by Friday otherwise I would have failed the course.
9. My fiancée and I chose the following attendants Sue bridesmaid Rebecca flower girl James best man and Peter groomsman.

2.13 Achieve flow



Most conversation is rambling, unfocused and unorganised. Do you really want to be writing this way? Probably not. On the other hand, we don't want to write dry, complicated sentences either. Some people love to use big words and complex sentences to prove how smart they are. We need to let our speech guide what we write. This will let our words connect with our audience and ensure we don't sound like a robot. So how do we do that?

One tactic you can use is to read your letter or email out loud once you have completed writing it. Once your attention gets distracted because of complicated technical terms or overcrowded sentences, you need to re-write it. Remember, you want to be professional but you also want to let your humanity shine through.

One way to make your writing flow is to keep your sentence length between 15 - 25 words (see paragraph 2.8).

Another helpful technique is called Old-New Information Flow. Writing is often difficult because, although we know what we are talking about, most of the time our readers don't. Sometimes we forget our readers have no understanding of our subject. Or they might know a little bit, but we may not explain ourselves well enough to improve their understanding.

The Old-New Information Flow is easy to start using. All you do is start each sentence with old, familiar information, and finish it with new information. One way to make Old-New Information Flow easier is to use explicit connections. This means we need to repeat a word, phrase or idea from one sentence to the next.

Here's an example of how this works.

"Insura's revenue from some of its outsourcing contracts depends on the number of participants in the clients' benefit plans. (Old) Those participants may decline due to slow economic growth." (New) The old, familiar concept is the revenue of the fictional company, Insura. The new idea is the number of participants in the clients' benefit plans.

Module 3

3. Producing documents which are clear, effective and professional

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At the end of this module delegates will be able to*:*

- Avoid ambiguity
- Express ideas concisely
- Select and develop a positive style and courteous tone
- Adopt the attention, interest, desire and action (AIDA) technique
- Understand the legal definition of "plain language" in terms of the Consumer Protection Act
- Apply techniques for plain language drafting
- Name 10 things effective writers do that ineffective writers do not.

3.1 Ambiguity

Ambiguity results whenever a word or phrase can have more than one distinct and valid meaning. Avoid ambiguity – write as clearly and accurately as possible. An ambiguous word or phrase can have disastrous results.
For instance, bi-monthly. Do we mean twice a month or once every two months? Similarly, please explain the frequency of bi-annually.

Please read the following phrases and work out their various meanings.

I promise I will give you a ring tomorrow.
I can't recommend this book too highly.
Union demands increased unemployment.
"Thank you for dinner. I have never seen potatoes cooked like this before."

3.2 Dangling and misplaced modifiers

Exercise 12

Re-write the following sentences to correct the modified errors.

1. On arriving at Johannesburg, his friends met him at the airport.

---

2. He saw a woman, accompanied by two children, walking slowly down the road.

---

3. I just met a man with a wooden leg named Fred.

3.3 Style

3.3.1 Introduction

The kind of language, writing style and tone you use when you write will be guided by your objective, your audience, what you are writing and where your piece of writing will go.

You would adopt a different style, for example in a:

- Memo
- Progress report
- News story
- Opinion piece
- Proposal
- Pamphlet.

But you do not have to stick to traditional ways of writing, so long as your style is appropriate and will help you to achieve your objective.

One of the best ways to reflect on different writing styles is to specifically gather and read different kinds of writings and the range of styles that people have chosen to write in. Reflect on what you think works well and what doesn't.

Being sensitive to your audience is of vital importance. There is no point in writing in an abstract, academic way for a popular readership. You will bore and probably even alienate them.

3.3.2 What is language, writing style and tone?

As you begin to write and then again when you edit your work, remind yourself of you audience and your objective. Make sure that your language, writing style and tone suit your audience. You can do this by testing it out first.

By *language* we mean the words and sentences you use in your material; e.g. uncomplicated sentences, familiar words or unfamiliar words which are explained, etc. We would include jargon here. (Jargon: the technical or specialised language used by a particular profession, e.g. information technology.)

By *style* we mean your approach, e.g. the use of humour, being conversational, using stories examples, etc.
By *tone* we mean how your material 'sounds' to the reader, e.g. is it too simplistic? Or patronising? Talking comrade to comrade? etc."

3.3.3 Different styles of writing

Two writers may write about the same event in completely different styles. One might describe entrepreneurship using lots of statistics and government and economists' comments. Another may describe entrepreneurship by writing about a day in the life of a small business owner.

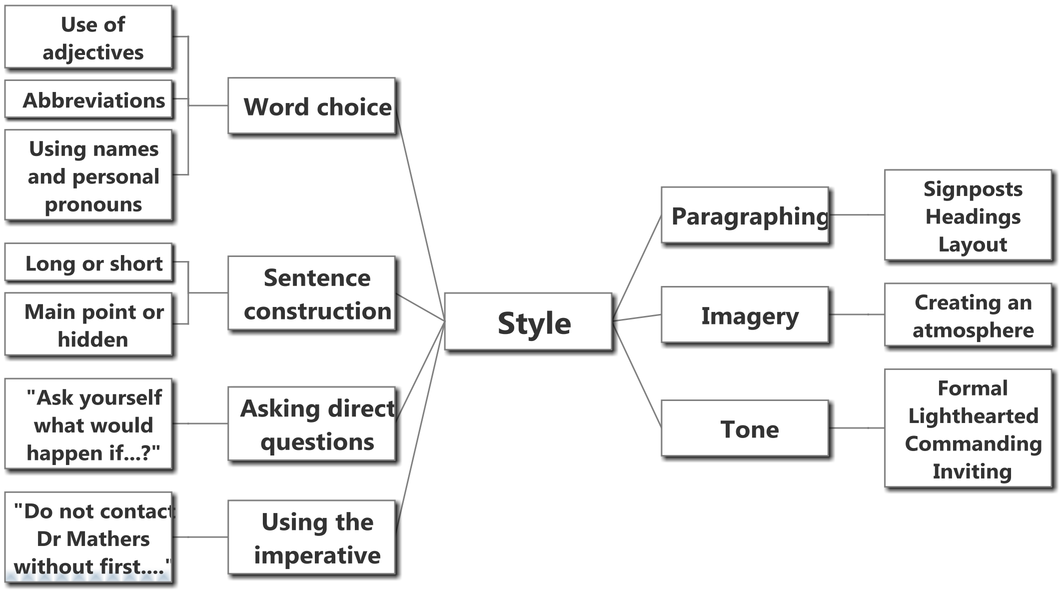
3.3.4 Use an interesting and appropriate style

Your job as a writer is to keep your reader interested. Think about what style will do this, whilst at the same time meeting your objective.

Just because you are writing a report, it does not mean that you have to use a dusty, formal style that prompts more yawning than interest. You can write a report in a modern, engaging style, using interesting examples, quotes and illustrations.

3.3.4.1 What constitutes style?

Style is the personal aspect of writing. It is hard to pin down precisely but the following factors will certainly influence our style.



3.3.4.2 Should we vary our style?

A novelist is likely to have a distinctive style of writing. In the context of "literature", this is important – professional writers often work hard to perfect a distinctive style. In business writing, people will also have their own natural style. However, in business it is a great advantage to be able to adapt style to the needs of the situation. We do not want an inappropriate style to prevent our message achieving the desired result.

The style will depend on the AIM – particularly WHO we are writing to and for what PURPOSE. Clearly different styles are required for a factual, scientific or technical report and a persuasive memo asking for an increase in your budget. Remember, writing is a creative activity – so think about the style you use.

3.3.4.3 A positive personal style

This style is appropriate when we want to appear enthusiastic or confident – e.g. giving good news, action requests (especially from superior to less senior people), and getting people to take note of a proposal. If the right balance is struck, it will create a positive and favourable impression. If over-done, it can appear too flamboyant or pushy.

To be positive:

Use the active voice, stand up and be counted. Be precise.
"I will present the results at the next committee meeting on 22 May".

Rather than:
"The results will be presented at a future meeting of the committee".

- Avoid weakening words and phrases such as possibly; maybe; perhaps;

"It would be concluded that …"

- Use names and personal pronouns to make it friendlier.
- Try to write more like you speak.
- State your opinions and the facts clearly.

3.3.5 Technical and scientific reporting style

Traditionally, technical and scientific reports have been written in the passive voice. All the evidence shows scientists prefer to read a simple style, yet they tend not to write it themselves, since they are afraid they will be accused of ignoring scientific objectivity and injecting too much opinion into their writing.

Recent surveys have shown that scientific colleagues regard a simple active style as not only easier to read, but also as evidence of greater technical competence. This esteem is due to the writer's apparent dynamism, thoughtfulness and enthusiasm for the subject. It also shows regard for the ordered and objective way they communicate. Consequently the style in which we report enhances the image of our work.

The message is clear: if we wish to gain recognition for our technical expertise – we must write in simple terms.

In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock.

Thomas Jefferson

3.4 Tone in business writing

3.4.1 Attitude

Tone in writing refers to the writer's attitude toward the reader and the subject of the message. The overall tone of a written message affects the reader just as one's tone of voice affects the listener in everyday exchanges.

Business writers should consider the tone of their message, whether they are writing a memo, letter, report or any type of business document. Tone is present in all communication activities. Ultimately, the tone of a message is a reflection of the writer and it does affect how the reader will perceive the message.

You can use the same kind of tone for most business messages. The business writer should strive for an overall tone that is confident, courteous and sincere, that uses emphasis and subordination appropriately; non-discriminatory language, that stresses the "you" attitude; and that is written at an appropriate level of difficulty. The only major exceptions to these guidelines are when you need to write a negative business message, such as when you deny a job-offer or a customer request.

3.4.2 Show confidence

You can feel confident if you have carefully prepared and are knowledgeable about the material you wish to express. The manner in which you write should assume a confident tone as well. As you prepare business documents, you want the reader to do as you ask or to accept your decision. In order to make the document effective, you must write confidently.

Consequently, a confident tone will have a persuasive effect on your audience. The reader will become more inclined to accept your position and will notice the confidence that you have.

This does not mean however, that you should appear overconfident. This can easily be interpreted as arrogant or presumptuous.

3.4.3 Be courteous and sincere

A writer builds goodwill for him or herself by using a tone that is polite and sincere. It is important to strive for sincerity in tone because without sincerity, politeness can sound condescending.

Consider the words and phrases you use in your document and how your reader will likely receive them. If you are respectful and honest, readers will be more willing to accept your message even if it is negative.

3.4.4 Use non-discriminatory language

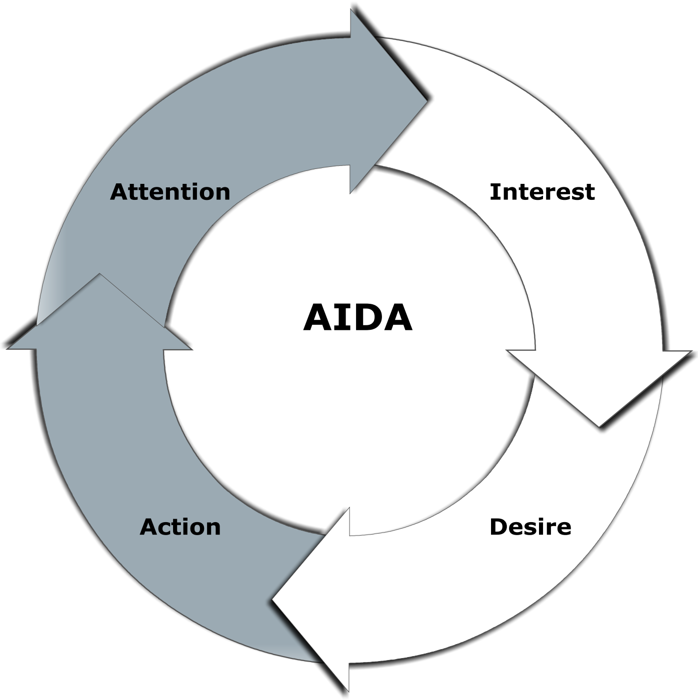
Non-discriminatory language is language that treats all people equally. It does not use any discriminatory words, remarks or ideas. It is very important that the business writer communicates in a way that expresses equality and respect for all individuals. Discriminatory language can come between your message and your reader. Make sure your writing is free of sexist language and free of bias based on such factors as race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation and disability.

3.4.5 What kind of tone should I use for a negative message?

It is especially important to consider tone when you are writing a negative message, such as a document that rejects a job offer or denies a request. Be sure to assume a tone that is gracious and sincere. Thank the reader for their input or involvement and carefully state that you cannot comply with their wishes. Follow this response with an explanation as necessary.

It is best not to draw attention to the person performing the action that will likely displease the reader. Therefore, you may want to avoid using active voice when delivering negative messages. You might also avoid stressing the reader's benefits, unless there are clear benefits to the negative message. It can sound insincere to stress reader benefits in a negative message.

3.5 AIDA



The acronym AIDA is a handy tool for ensuring that your advertising copy, or other writing, grabs attention. The acronym stands for:

- Attention (or Attract)
- Interest
- Desire
- Action.

These are the four steps you need to take your audience through if you want them to buy your product or visit your website, or indeed to take on board the messages in your report.

How to Use the Tool

Use the AIDA approach when you write a piece of text that has the ultimate objective of getting others to take action. The elements of the acronym are as follows:

3.5.1 Attention/Attract

In our media-filled world, you need to be quick and direct to grab people's attention. Use powerful words, or a picture that will catch the reader's eye and make them stop and read what you have to say next.

With most office workers suffering from email overload, action-seeking emails need subject lines that will encourage recipients to open them and read the contents. For example, to encourage people to attend a company training session on giving feedback, the email headline, "How effective is YOUR feedback?" is more likely to grab attention than the purely factual one of, "This week's seminar is on feedback".

3.5.2 Interest

This is one of the most challenging stages. You have the attention of a chunk of your target audience, but can you engage with them enough so that they'll want to spend their precious time understanding your message in more detail?

Gaining the reader's interest is a deeper process than grabbing their attention. They will give you a little more time to do it, but you must stay focused on their needs. This means helping them to pick out the messages that are relevant to them quickly. So use bullets and subheadings and break up the text to make your points stand out.

3.5.3 Desire

The Interest and Desire parts of AIDA go hand-in-hand. As you're building the reader's interest, you also need to help them understand how what you're offering can help them in a real way. The main way of doing this is by appealing to their personal needs and wants.

So, rather than simply saying "Our lunchtime seminar will teach you feedback skills", explain to the audience what's in it for them: "Get what you need from other people and save time and frustration, by learning how to give them good feedback."

3.5.4 Action

Finally, be very clear about what action you want your readers to take; for example, "Visit www.fasset.org.za for more information on the 2012 Lifelong Learning Programme."

3.6 Legal definition of plain language

In terms of both the NCA and the CPA, a notice, document or visual representation is in plain language if it is reasonable to conclude that an ordinary consumer of the class of persons for whom the document is intended, with average literacy skills and –

- minimal credit experience (in the context of the NCA); or
- minimal experience as a consumer of the relevant product or service (in the context of the CAP), could be expected to understand the content, significance and import of the document without undue effort, having regard to the
  - context, comprehensiveness and consistency of the document;
  - organisation, form and style of the document;
  - vocabulary, usage and sentence structure of the text; and
  - use of any illustrations, examples, headings or other aids to reading and understanding.

Consequences if a consumer document is not drafted in plain language

Both the NCA and CPA provide that a consumer may file a complaint of non-compliance with the relevant ombud or other designated body, such as the National Credit Regulator (in the NCA) and the National Consumer Commission (in the CPA). The CPA, in particular, purports to protect the consumer from what it defines as 'unconscionable', 'misleading' or 'deceptive' business practices or contractual terms that are unfair and unjust (s 52).

In terms of the Act, agreements will have to be drafted in plain and understandable language. If agreements are drafted in such a way that the consumer is not clearly aware of the obligations and rights of both parties, the agreement may be unconscionable and the consumer may be entitled to cancel the contract, or the contract could be set aside by the court (see s 51 and 52). Courts are also given wide powers to redraft contractual terms that infringe on consumer rights created by the Act (see s 76).

3.7 Tips and techniques for plain language drafting

When drafting a document in plain language, it may be useful to use the following questions:

3.7.1 Who is the audience?

It is important to remember that the document is not being prepared for a judge who will look at it in the event of litigation. The document is being drafted for the person who will sign it and who wants to know what his rights and obligations are. Think about what kind of language they will most likely respond to. What tone and way of speaking are they most likely to appreciate? Put yourself in the shoes of those persons and write for them.

3.7.2 How am I going to write for this specific audience?

Look at the type of document to be drafted. Is there jargon that needs to be explained? Will the audience understand the difficult terms? How am I going to deal with the legalese if I am dealing with a legal document? Chances are that, unless you are writing for other attorneys, you need to pay special attention to legal phrases and terms that have become stale and archaic and are cut and pasted into thousands of documents. Start writing mindfully and ensure that the document makes sense for its audience.

3.7.3 Does what I have drafted make sense?

After ensuring that the document has not been watered down or that legal implications have not been changed, make sure that a reader will be able to understand what is meant. Get someone else to read it and get their input.

3.7.4 Does a person from my intended audience understand the drafted document?

Testing is very important for larger important documents to determine how well the document will reach its intended reader. There are many ways of testing plain language, but the best way seems to be testing documents on actual readers. Nothing can replace the human element in testing and it is one of the best tests of readability.

3.7.5 Cut out jargon and legalese as much as possible

There are instances when jargon cannot be replaced with plain language. If this is the case, a drafter can make use of a plain language glossary at the end of a document. Another way of clarifying jargon is to put a plain language explanation next to a technical or legal term that clarifies what it means.
For example: *The property is sold voetstoots (as is).*

3.8 Ten things effective writers do that ineffective writers don't

Several studies have pointed out the different working habits of effective and ineffective writers. By looking at these differences, you may be able to improve the way you go about writing. Here is what the research tells us:

Effective writers	**Ineffective writers**
Know the importance of revision.	Think of revising as admitting that the draft was problematic.
Think editing is making changes based on the purpose of the document and the reader's needs.	Think revision is only grammar and word changes.
Count on revision, work and thinking.	Wait for external motivation.
Use rules as guidelines that can be modified.	See rules as commandments that can't be broken.
See effective writing as accomplishing goals.	Think effective writing equals correct writing.
Imagine their reader making decisions based on their writing.	Imagine a judge reading their writing.
Save changes in vocabulary, grammar and spelling until last.	Stop often during the first draft to look up words and follow rules.
Use a different approach when stuck. Anticipate problems.	Panic when stuck. Put off writing.
Take more time to plan. Think, jot down notes, outline, talk, doodle, freewrite.	Start writing without brainstorming.
Re-read for overall effect.	Seldom re-read. If they re-read, it is only to see if the sentence "sounded" right and to make corrections.

Module 4

4. Writing for a specific readership and for different circumstances

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After attending this module delegates will be able to:

- Plan the content and layout of the business letter
- Draft templates for various routine letters
- Formulate written responses to complaints
- Convey “bad news” to clients, staff or other stakeholders
- Plan the content and layout of the office memo
- Adopt appropriate “netiquette”
- Acknowledge previous email interaction
- Pass the “so what” test in writing emails
- Embark upon précis writing.

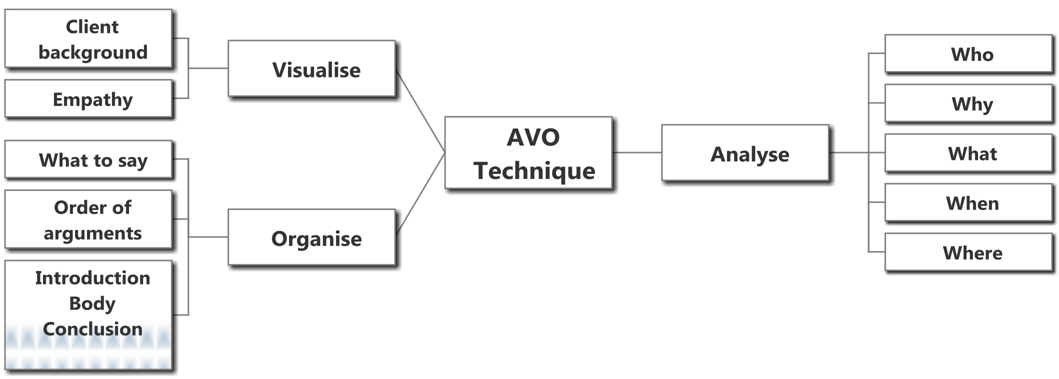
4.1 Planning

> **“IF YOU FAIL TO PLAN – YOU PLAN TO FAIL”**
>
> Peter Drucker

4.1.1 AVO Technique – A planning method

Before you begin to write a letter, an orderly outline is essential. The following three procedures will help you plan your correspondence:

- **Analyse**
- **Visualise**
- **Organise.**



4.1.1.1 Analyse – Assess what the letter is about

It is essential to analyse the situation using all the facts that are available to you BEFORE you start writing. Underline important parts or questions in the client's letter that should be answered. This will ensure that you meet all the client's requirements the first time every time.

When you write a letter you need to ask yourself:

- Who? - The person who wrote the letter (your client)
- Why? - Why the client is writing (reason)
- What? - What the client wants (specifics)
- Where? - Where the letter must be sent (address)
- When? - When the client wrote the letter (date).

4.1.1.2 Visualise the reader – seeing the situation from client's perspective

Letter writers often lose sight of the fact that their letters are read by people from different walks of life.

Once you have an outline of the situation (analyse) you need to get clearer picture of your reader by:
- Referring to your client's style of writing (language, vocabulary and length of sentences)
- Establishing age, sex, cultural background (This can be done by referring to previous correspondence, files, etc.)
- Establishing how the reader is feeling.

Once you have visualised your client use:
- Appropriate vocabulary and style of writing
- Relevant and, where possible, personal examples, to illustrate concepts and quotes.

Empathy – placing yourself in the client's shoes
The three parts of empathy are:
- Emotion (What the reader is feeling)
- Situation (Why the reader is feeling this way)
- Implication (How this situation affects the reader).

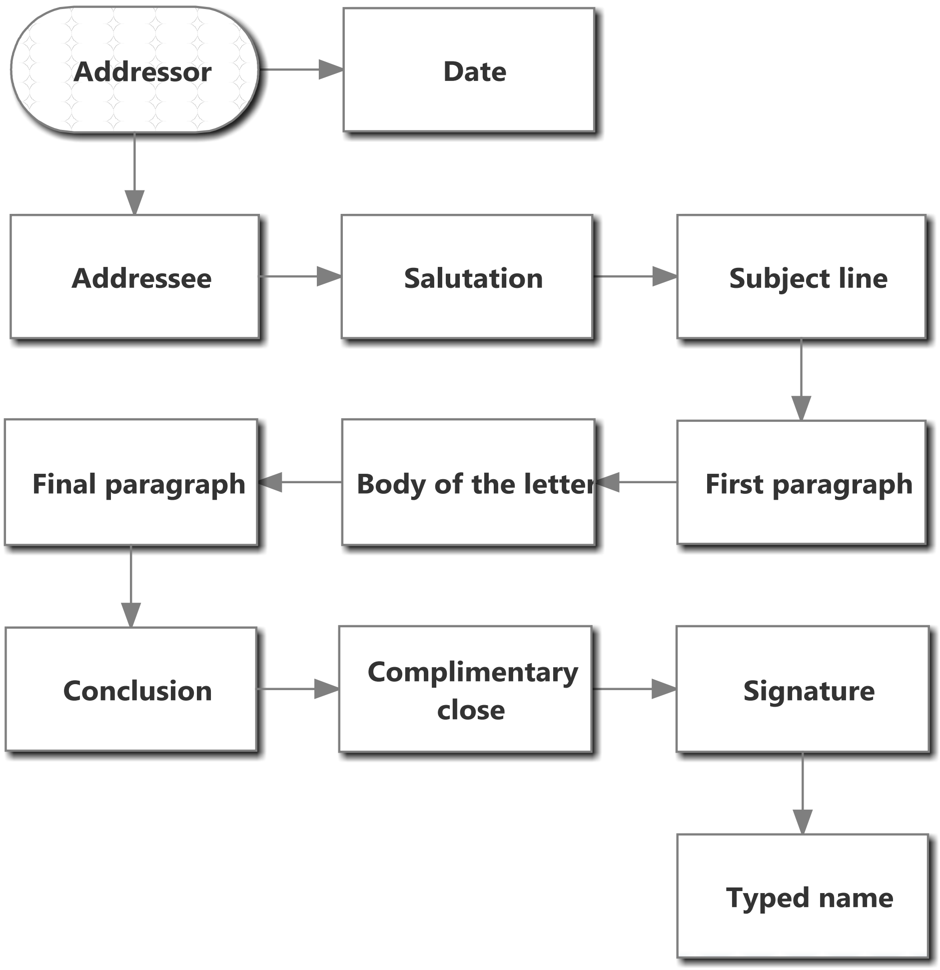
Benefits
The benefits of using empathy are:
- It shows you are dealing with an individual.
- It gets the reader on your side.
- It shows that we are human and not cold and indifferent.

4.1.1.3 Organise – Arrange contents in a logical way

The final step in planning covers:
- Deciding what you want to say – sentence order
- Deciding on the order in which you want to say it – premises
- Choosing appropriate introduction, body and conclusion.

4.2 Letters

4.2.1 Structure of a letter



Business letters today are written in the block format. The sections used are as follows:

Writer's Address
The address of the writer is written on the right-hand side of the page or a business letterhead can be used, which includes the name of the organisation and the address.

Reference
Some companies give reference numbers. This is placed just below the writer's address or letterhead.

Date
This is the date on which the letter is written. The writer may choose to place the date on either the left or right-hand side. In the full-block format the date should be placed on the left-hand side above the recipient's address.

Recipient's Address
The name and address of the recipient are written on the left-hand side of the page and gives the full name and address of the person or organisation to which the letter is being sent.

Salutation
The name of the addressee should always be used if known, i.e. Dear Mr Johnson,
It is courteous to try to identify the recipient of the letter but if this is not possible, then Dear Sir or Dear Madam should be used. If the recipient is an organisation, use Dear Sir/Madam. Messrs is no longer in use.

Subject-line or Heading
This is placed after the salutation and tells the reader what the letter is about. Use capital letters and avoid one-word subject-lines. “Re” to introduce the heading is no longer used, i.e. Re YOUR COMPLAINT ABOUT POOR SERVICE.

First Paragraph
This is the reader’s introduction to your letter and gives an overview of what you are writing about and why.

The Body
This section should fulfill the main purpose of the letter. This is the most important part of your letter and should be easy to read with no room for misunderstanding. If you have a number of paragraphs of text, you may consider using lists to draw attention to specific details. Lists are visually pleasing and effective. When creating a list, write phrases or fragments; this makes your information more concise.

Example
To receive a degree in engineering, you must complete the following:

- Core Courses
- Elective Courses
- Senior Design.

Each new paragraph should have a separate thought or argument.

Conclusion
The final paragraph should tell the reader what is to happen next. You must express your expectations (what the reader should do) or intentions (what you are going to do). Your reader should be left in no doubt as to what will happen next.

Complimentary Close
If you have addressed the letter to a specific person, you should end it with Yours sincerely. If you started with Dear Sir then you should end with Yours faithfully.

Signature
The writer signs above the typed name.

Typed Name
The full name or just the initials and surname of the writer are typed after the complimentary close, leaving enough space for the writer’s signature. A woman usually gives an indication of her marital status by adding Mrs, Miss or Ms in brackets after her typed name. The writer’s status or title may be typed after the name. The occupational responsibility may be added below the typed name.

Example

A J Smith	J Green (Mrs)	K Johnson (Prof.)
Managing Director	Executive	

Enclosures
If there are any other items attached to the letter, identify the number of enclosures, i.e. Enclosure (1). If there are a number of enclosures, these can be listed.

Copies
The symbol cc: followed by the names of those who should receive copies can be used.

Some other factors to consider when setting out your letter are:

- Margins – These should be at least 2.5 cm all round and should frame the writing. Text with left justified margins (text ending with a ragged right edge) is easier to read than fully justified or blocked text.
- Indentations – Try to block as much of your writing as possible. Too many indentations can give your letter an untidy appearance.
- Font size and style. This should be consistent throughout your document.
- White space – Too much print on the page can make the document difficult to read. Try to leave as much white space as possible.
- Headings – Every business letter should have a main heading in capital letters and bold type. Minor headings can also be added if your letter contains more than one topic within the main topic. These are usually underlined in lower case.
- Paragraph spacing – Double spacing between paragraphs is pleasing to the eye and makes the document more readable.
- Numbering – Keep this as simple as possible and stick to one system throughout. If you only need two stages of numbering, the simplest is:-

Example of Layout for Business Letter

South Coast Printing Works (Pty) Ltd

	{Writer's Address}	25 South Coast Road Durban P O Box 35 Jacobs 4026
Reference: 354/06		
14 August 2012	{Date}	
Mr J T Smith Creative Kitchens 12 Seaview Road MARGATE 4275	(Recipient's Address)	
Dear Mr Smith	{Salutation}	
COMPLAINT – POOR SERVICE	{Subject-line}	
Thank… …	{First Paragraph}	
We… … …	{Body}	
We…	{Conclusion}	
Yours sincerely	{Complimentary Close}	
	{Signature}	
MIRIAM KHUMALO (Ms) Sales Manager	{Typed Name} {Status} {Position Held}	

4.2.2 Content of business letters

Business letters are written on a wide variety of topics. Some of the more common topics and guidelines for each are outlined in the table below:

The letter of enquiry or request	Write this letter in a way that encourages the recipient to reply. You can do this by stating exactly what it is that you need or want. Be precise and clear – use point form if this helps. Clearly state the topic of your enquiry in the subject line. *Example* Our company is currently in the market for a number of notebooks. Please send brochures of your available models and the price list. Mr Phiri would like to meet with you at 12:30 on Friday 17 August. Please call me to confirm the appointment.
The letter of acknowledgement	A letter of acknowledgement is a response to a letter of enquiry or request. This letter must respond clearly and specifically to the request received. Often the recipient will use this letter to make a decision. Bear in mind that this letter may result in business for your company and should create a good impression of the company. *Example* Thank you for your enquiry. I have enclosed thee brochures of the notebooks currently available and the latest price list. Please note that a 5% discount applies, should your order exceed an amount of R120 000. My secretary will call and confirm the appointment.
The letter of complaint	A complaint should always be taken seriously by the company receiving it. To ensure this, you must use the correct tone and style. A letter of complaint aims to get the company concerned to take action. Even if you are angry, never insult or swear in a letter of complaint and do not use sarcastic or abusive language. Be assertive but not aggressive. *Example* I cancelled my contract with you six months ago. Despite three phone calls in this regard, my account has still not been closed and my bank account continues to be debited. By my calculations, you owe me R932,55. Please arrange for this amount to be debited into my account by Friday 17 August 2012.
The letter of collection	A letter of collection is written when there is an outstanding debt or an unpaid account. Many companies use computer generated letters to perform this function, however, in some instances, a letter will still have to be written. It is important to remember that the recipient deserves respect and politeness, even though he or she has an outstanding debt. Avoid threatening language.

The letter of collection	*Example* According to our records, the amount of R567,00 had not been paid by 15 August 2012. If you have already paid this amount, please disregard this letter. If, however, the account has not yet been paid kindly make payment by 25 August 2012.
The letter of adjustment	Adjustment means the same as apology. In this kind of letter, you should always give the customer the benefit of the doubt. At the same time, if the customer is in the wrong, you will have to find a polite way of saying so. Do not be too apologetic or too aggressive in this kind of letter. *Example* Thank you for emailing the receipt for the payment you made on 27 July 2012. However, the lawyer's letter had already been sent before the notice of payment was received. Kindly ensure that all future payments are made before the 20th of the month.
The letter to the press	These are letters that are sent to the editor of a magazine or newspaper. Although these letters are addressed to the Editor, the audience is the general public. Your address must go at the end of this letter and not at the beginning. Try to begin the letter with an interesting sentence. *Example* I feel sorry for the unfortunate individual who has to write a business letter nowadays. There are so many rules and regulations to be followed. I think we should do away with business letters altogether and try to get everyone connected to the internet.

4.2.3 Answering complaints and enquiries

Welcome the letter of complaint. It gives you one of your best opportunities to improve your organisation's goodwill. To take advantage of the opportunity, your attitude must be positive and helpful – not miserable or grudging.

Every complaint is important to the person who makes it, so don't be offhand. Answer promptly and show that you are trying to be fair. Don't argue or criticise; don't antagonise with such phrases as "you claim" or "you state".

4.2.3.1 If you are in the wrong

Take the attitude that the reader is trying to help you. Don't run your own organisation down by writing about "poor results" or "failures" or remind the reader that the incident is "unfortunate" or that he/she has "complained".

Acknowledge frankly that you are at fault and apologise for any trouble that your reader has suffered (but if you suspect a law suit may result: beware).

Explain the cause of the trouble as honestly as you can; then state what you are doing to put matters right and try to build goodwill.

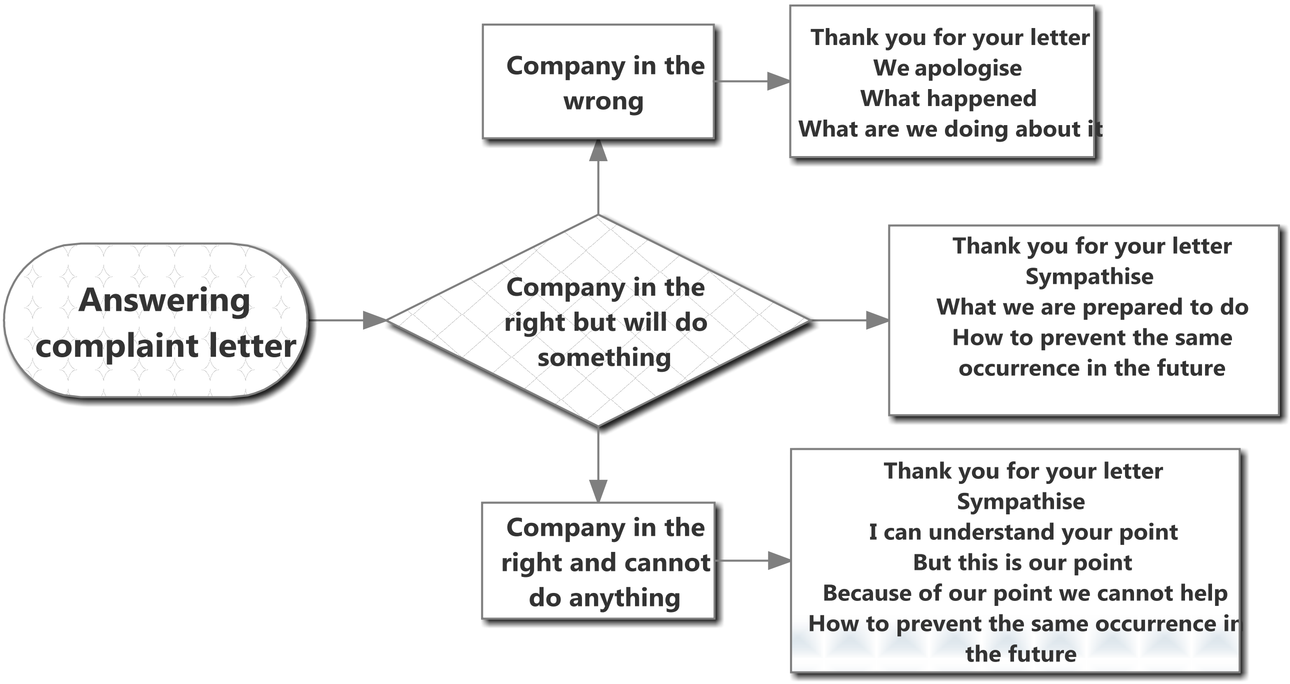
4.2.3.2 If you are in the right – but will give way

Don't try to make the correspondent feel small. Aim to get the maximum goodwill out of the situation.
Thank the reader for writing and sympathise. Then say what you are going to do: don't sound grudging! Finally, suggest how similar trouble can be avoided in the future – be constructive, not critical of the past.

4.2.3.3 If you are in the right – and cannot give way

A difficult letter to write. Your aim is not only to save your organisation money; it is also to keep goodwill.

Try to educate the reader to use your product. Begin by getting on to some common ground, agree with something in the letter, thank them for writing and sympathise. Then state your point of and either say that you cannot accept responsibility or say what you can do to help; try to convince them that you are being fair. Suggest how similar trouble could be avoided in the future. Finally, regain their confidence in your organisation.



4.2.4 Breaking Bad News Tactfully

This is also a difficult letter to write but keep it short and simple and follow these guidelines:

- Thank the reader for the application or request.
- Advise with regret that the request cannot be fulfilled.
- Give reasons or an explanation.
- You can also include a suggestion of an alternative.
- Friendly close.

Consider the following:

We will consider your claim if you provide us with a written reason why you could not file the verification of your loss within the time period stipulated in the policy. If you fail to provide this additional information within the next 30 days, consider this letter a denial of your claim by virtue of your failure to submit it within the time period required.

However, your aim should always be to provide a service to your customer and create goodwill for your company. This could be re-written using language that offers to help your customer solve a problem.

We're sorry that we were unable to consider your claim as submitted. Our goal is to help you receive the protection you expect when you file a claim. Here's how you can help us process your claim quickly.

We've enclosed a form that makes it easier to provide the information we need to process your claim. Please bear in mind that we won't be able to approve your claim if we receive this information after (date). Therefore, we suggest you give this your immediate attention.

Exercise 13

Compose an email that can be used by HR to inform a candidate that s(he) has been unsuccessful in her/his application for a position.

To:
From:
Date:
Subject:

Inter-Office Memos

The main difference between a business letter and a memo is that letters are usually sent outside the organisation, whereas memos are intended for persons within the organisation. Although the memo is more friendly and informal it is just as important to follow the same steps for planning a memo as for a business letter. Memos are usually used for the following purposes:

- To advise readers about a meeting or event within the organisation
- To communicate the same information to a group of people
- To confirm, as a matter of record, a decision or agreement.

Tips on Memos

1. Define your topic and state it accurately.
2. Consider your reader when you determine the tone of the memo. In most cases, use a friendly informal style.
3. Put the main point of your memo in the first sentence.
4. Use the body of the memo to provide necessary details and background information. All sentences should be directly related to the topic stated in the subject line.
5. Memos should be specific, to the point, and contain simple, direct language. They must evoke response and action.
6. Keep copies of the memos you write. They are often useful for future reference.
7. Do not use a salutation or a complementary close. However, if you wish to, it is permissible to use the name of the person you are writing to in the beginning of the body.
8. Keep your paragraphs short and crisp. If necessary number them.
9. Only write a memo when a telephone call is not sufficient, when a written record is needed, or when you have to reach many people.
10. Be sure your terminology, sentence length and structure, and paragraph length and structure all make for quick, clear, easy reading.

Example of Layout for Memo

Memo

To: Julie Jones

From: Peter Adams

cc: Mark Shepstone

Date: 22 February 2009

Subject: **Wage Increases**

Opening Paragraph
...

Body
…
…
…
PETER ADAMS

4.4 Email messages

4.4.1 Emails are the most popular method of communication

An email tends to be less formally written than a letter or memorandum. Make email messages meaningful by adhering to these guidelines:

- Include the name of the person to whom the email is directed in the message.
- Include the purpose of the email in the subject line.
- Ask for a specific action or the specific response you require.
- Include your telephone number and when it is best to reach you.
- State the urgency of your message.
- Be sure to include your name.

4.4.2 Email etiquette

In email, usual standard social rules still do and should apply. By adhering to them, you not only enhance your email communications – you could keep yourself and your company out of legal and regulatory trouble.

Be careful using email at work
Companies are increasingly establishing guidelines regarding the use of email. This is to protect themselves legally and to ensure resources are not abused. Employees need to be familiar with these policies. An adequate policy should spell out what is appropriate and inappropriate use of email.

Short emails communicate better
In the age of the Internet, attention span is limited. A short email message that goes straight to the point is more likely to be read than a long message. If a longer message is necessary, then attach a file.

When you are addressing a number of issues in an email, consider writing separate emails for each issue, each containing just one point. This facilitates effective reply, follow-up, reminding and prompting on each separate item. For ease of response, number the paragraphs in your email. Also, specify the response you want.

Use a clear and descriptive subject line
Most email users see only the address of the sender and the subject line of incoming email. The subject line could be the difference between an email being read and ignored. A good subject line clearly describes the content and avoids words all in upper case and exclamation marks.

For instance, the subject line “Meeting” is not adequate. Rather state: “Reminder of 10:00 meeting 13 August on Business Writing.”

By providing a descriptive subject line, you may be able to suffice with just that and not be required to write anything in the text portion of the email. You would the use the acronym “EOM” – end of message. For example: “Subject: 13 August meeting, 10:00 conf room A. Business Writing. EOM.”

If an email needs a response, insert in the subject line: “Please reply by 6 August.”

Respond rapidly
Reply quickly to an email, even if it is to say that you will provide the detail requested at a later stage.

Spelling and grammar still applies
Write to your audience. Poor writing can leave a negative impression of the writer and the writer's organisation. To avoid this, you can set up Outlook to automatically spell check emails before sending them out.

Limit the number of recipients
Make sure only appropriate people receive a copy. You will not only be doing recipients a favour, you'll be increasing the likelihood of your email being read.

Use a signature
It is standard polite practice to identify yourself. Email programmes have an option to automatically append information to identify the sender. This file can also include your name, organisation, job title and any other relevant information. Include a telephone number to the signature of the email. This will give the recipient the chance to telephone if necessary. It is not necessary to include your email address as the recipient can just reply to the email. When replying, eliminate all the information that is not necessary. Only leave the sections of text that are related to your reply. This will save your reader time when reading your email.

Respect the privacy of email addresses
When sending emails to multiple recipients, do not insert an email address in the **To** or **Cc** field if one or more recipients have no need to know that address. If sending an email to multiple recipients and you don't want the recipients to see any other address, then put the list of addresses in the **Bcc** field.

4.4.3 The "so what" test

How many times have you read an email only to discover the most important information was buried half-way down the text? If you want to make sure your emails actually do their job, make sure your opening sentence passes the "So what?" test.

All you need to do is write your opening sentence. Then, read it over and ask "So what?" You want to make sure the information you just wrote is relevant to your reader.

Here is an example of a sentence that fails the "So what?" test.

Hi Bob,
I'm Sam King and I'm not sure you remember but I work in the HR department.
Who cares, right? Here is how that sentence could be re-written so that it passes the "So what?" test.

Hi Bob,
When we met at the investment conference last week, you asked me to contact you about any open job opportunities in our HR department.
That second sentence is much better because it immediately tells your reader what you want and why they should care.

A quick grasp of the content of the email is also achieved by dividing the text up with bold subheadings. Subheadings are not only for books or reports, but may really help the reader grasp concepts and digest the information in an email. e should make sure those subheads are focused on why the reader should care about what we have to say. This helps guide the reader through the text and convinces them that they should keep reading.

4.4.4 AAAAA Rating for Email

- Accurate subject line (not outdated, not too general)
- Action is requested near the beginning (not at the end)
- Accessible information (not buried in thick paragraphs)
- Answers reader's questions (doesn't leave out essentials)
- Any attachment is actually attached!

Before clicking SEND, check to be sure your message deserves an AAAAA rating.

Exercise 14

Write an e-mail to your clients to invite them to the launch of a new investment product.

To:
From:
Date:
Subject:

4.5 Précis Writing

4.5.1 Introduction

Précis writing is one of the most useful skills you can acquire for your work as a professional (the 'executive summary' of a report is an example of a précis).

Précis writing involves summarising a document or several documents to extract the maximum amount of information, then conveying this information to a reader in the minimum number of words. The condensed version usually reduces the report to one third of the original by paraphrasing from the original document.

Paraphrasing simply means the expressing of ideas from the original document(s) in your own words. When you paraphrase, you should try to write as concisely as possible, cutting out all the unnecessary verbiage, but you must always be very careful not to lose or distort the original meaning.

4.5.2 Guidelines for writing an effective précis

Identify the reader and purpose of the précis
This determines how much detail should be included and how formal the précis needs to be.

Read the original document
Skim-read the document to get an overview, then read it again more slowly to identify the main themes and to distinguish the key ideas and concepts from the unimportant ones. Identify an explicit statement as the main topic of each paragraph or large portion of text. Place incidents, processes or actions in the correct order. This is of particular importance when more than one document needs to be précised. Compare information by identifying similarities and differences and sort in logical order in appropriate categories.

Underline the key ideas and concepts
Note the important points. Be careful to follow the train of thought of the original. Each paragraph should have one key topic, which the rest of the paragraph clarifies, supports and develops.

Prepare a draft summary
Use the words of the original document, but omit all irrelevant material. Do not worry if it appears too long at this stage. Check your summary against the original. Have you noted all the salient points?

Write a précis
Paraphrase (expression of the same thing in different words) to express the summarised points more concisely and to develop them into coherent sentences, expressing all important points in a generalised form. Eliminate any repetitions or irrelevant details. If you have too many words, look for opportunities to reduce sentences to clauses, clauses to phrases and phrases to single words. Attempt to put the précis in your own words if possible.

Review and edit

Again, compare your précis with the original document and make sure that it emphasises the same points. Ensure that the précis is clear, concise and coherent. Check your sentence structure, grammar, punctuation and spelling. Consolidate information from texts from multiple sources into a synthesised text.

Exercise 15

Write a précis from the following passage

The food habits of birds make them especially valuable to agriculture. Because birds have higher body temperatures, more rapid digestion, and greater energy than most other animals, they require more food. Nestling birds make extremely rapid growth, requiring huge amounts of food. They usually consume as much or more than their own weight in soft-bodied insects every day. Young robins have been observed to gain eight times their original weight the first eight days of their life.

Insect-eating birds must fill their stomachs five to six times daily because they digest their food so fast and because of the large amount of indigestible material in insects. One young robin, weighing three ounces, consumed 165 cutworms weighing 150 grams in one day. If a 4,5 kg baby ate at the same rate, he would eat more than 8 kg of food in a day.

Of course, birds cannot control insects completely, but they are of great value. By using soil and water-conserving practices, farmers and game rangers could probably double the population of helpful birds. Field and farmstead windbreaks, living fences, shrub buffers, grass waterways, and farm ponds are only a few of the many land-use practices useful in attracting and increasing beneficial forms of wildlife.

Module 5

5 Writing for a specific readership and for different circumstances (Continued)

After attending this module delegates will be able to:

- Apply mind mapping skills as the basis of a draft report
- Structure contents of a report in a logical sequence
- Uphold the integrity of the facts in conclusions and recommendations
- Develop a framework for a routine report
- Develop a framework for an investigative report
- Explain the concept and content of the executive summary
- Interpret financial and statistical information on behalf of the reader
- Develop an outline for a proposal
- Construct the content and layout of a notice of meeting
- Organise the content and layout of an agenda
- Explain the structure and contents of a set of minutes
- Develop an outline of a resumé.

5.1 Mind Maps

A powerful approach to brainstorming and drafting your document

5.1.1 Introduction

How to use the tool:

Mind Maps are very important techniques for improving the way you brainstorm content and drafting your document. By using Mind Maps, you show the structure of the subject and linkages between points, as well as the raw facts contained in normal notes. Mind Maps hold information in a format that your mind will find easy to remember and quick to review.

Mind Maps abandon the list format of conventional brainstorming. They do this in favour of a two-dimensional structure. A good Mind Map shows the 'shape' of the subject, the relative importance of individual points and the way in which one fact relates to the other.

Mind Maps are more compact than conventional notes, often taking up one side of the paper. This helps you to make associations easily. If you find out more information after you have drawn the main Mind Map, then you can easily integrate it with little disruption.

5.1.2 Mind Maps are useful for:

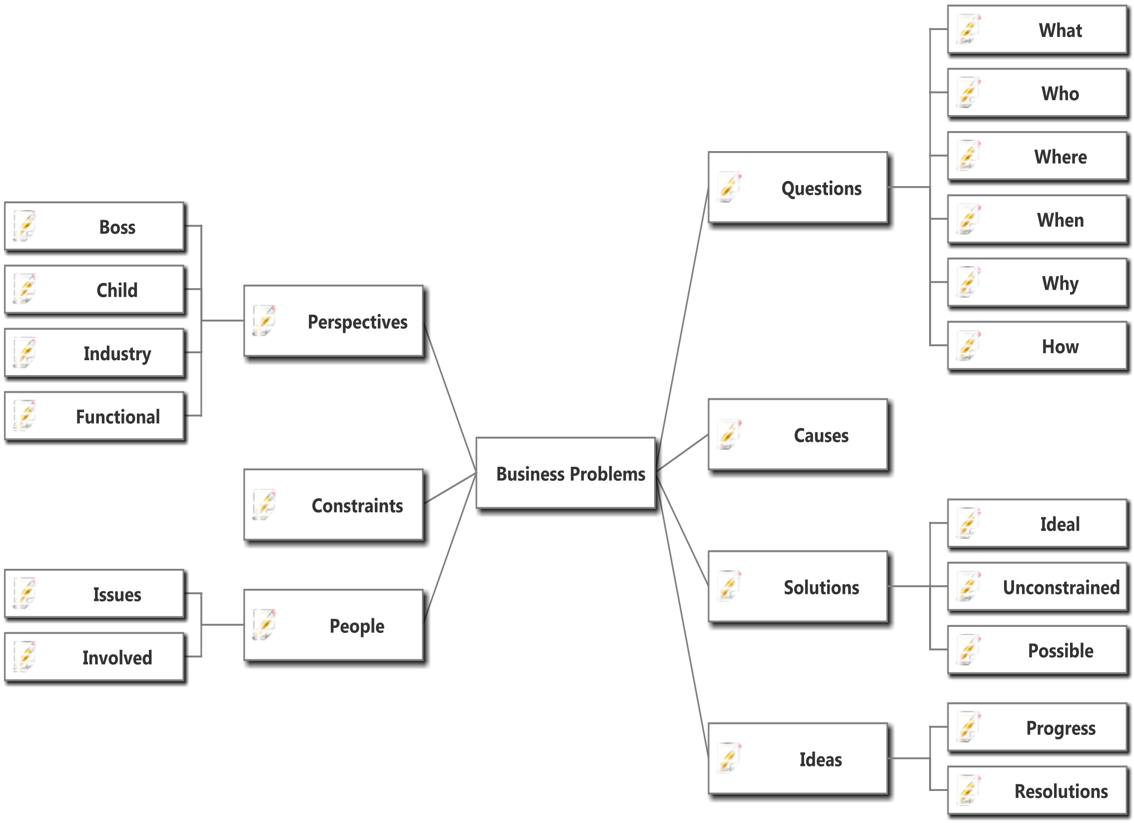
- Summarising information
- Consolidating information from different research sources
- Thinking through complex problems

- Presenting information that shows the overall structure of your subject.

Mind Maps are also very quick to review, as it is easy to refresh information in your mind just by glancing at one.

Mind Maps can also be effective mnemonics (a word intending to help your memory). Remembering the shape and structure of a Mind Map can provide the cues necessary to remember the information within it. They engage much more of the brain in the process of assimilating and connecting facts than conventional notes.

5.1.3 Drawing Basic Mind Maps



To make notes on a subject or preparing your draft document using a Mind Map, draw it in the following way:

- Write the title of the subject in the centre of the page and draw a circle around it.
- For the major subject subheadings, draw lines out from this circle. Label these lines with the subheadings.
- If you have another level of information belonging to the subheadings above, draw these and link them to the subheading lines.
- Finally, for individual facts or ideas, draw lines out from the appropriate heading line and label them.

A complete Mind Map may have main topic lines radiating in all directions from the centre. Sub-topics and facts will branch off these, like branches and twigs from the trunk of a tree. You do not need to worry about the structure produced, as this will evolve of its own accord.

5.2 Reports

5.2.1 Definition

A report is a formal, detailed account of an investigation. It is aimed at a specific audience/person.

Purpose
To communicate the results of an investigation and to persuade the audience to consider or accept specific conclusions and recommendations when making decisions.

- To give facts and information

To help decision-making

- To persuade some form of action
- To recommend courses of action
- To act as a record.

Tense
Written in the past tense.

Voice
Passive voice used for most of the report, e.g. “It has been found …” “Three samples have been selected from …”

Pronouns
First person (I) and second person (you/we) should only be used in the recommendation section.

Diction
Objective, neutral diction should be used. No emotive diction.
Technical diction is appropriate depending on the subject matter.

Sentences
Short, concise and brief = clarity.

Paragraphs
Each paragraph should contain one distinct idea that is clear and coherent.

Layout
Clear heading, consistent numbering system and logical progression.

5.2.2 Format

An extensive investigative report would contain the following sections apart from the main body of the report:

1. Heading/Title page
2. Acknowledgements
3. Executive summary
4. Table of contents
5. List of illustrations
6. Glossary
7. Symbols
8. Bibliography.

NB. Not all of these sections will be equally important in a particular report. It depends on the purpose of the report. A convenient way of structuring the contents of your report is

- Terms of reference
- Introduction and background
- Procedures
- Findings
- Conclusion
- Financial implications
- Recommendation
- Appendices.

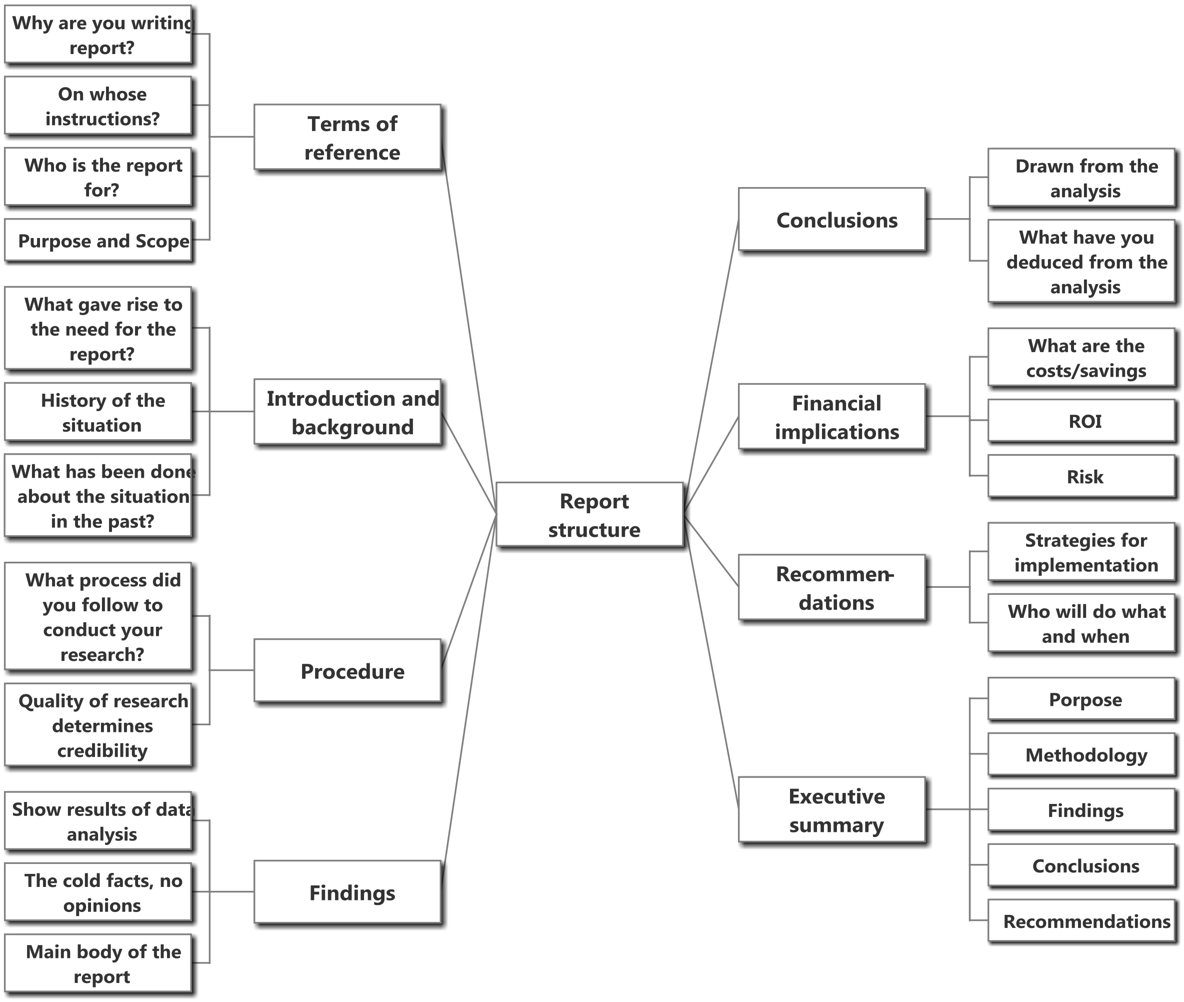
Group Exercise 16

Prepare a draft investigative report on a topic you have agreed upon in your group, using a mind map as its foundation, structured along the content headings listed below.

Work in groups – use flip chart paper

1. compile a mind map,
2. draft your report using the example on the next page (an investigative report). You can borrow from this approach to compile other documents such as proposals and agreements.

5.2.3 Content structure



5.2.3.1 Terms of Reference

This section sets the scene for your report. It should define the scope and limitations of the investigation and the purpose of the report. It should say who the report is for, on whose authority the report was undertaken, any constraints (for example, your deadline, permitted length) - in other words, your aims and objectives - the overall purpose of your report and more specifically what you want to achieve.

Write down the answer to the following questions:

- To whom is the report to be addressed?
- Why are you writing the report (What is the "tip of the iceberg"?)
- What is the objective of the report?
- How wide is your brief?
- When must the report be ready?

5.2.3.2 Introduction/background

This will help to tune your readers in to the background of your report. It is not another name for a summary and should not be confused with this. They can be two separate sections or combined: background detail could include details of the topic you are writing about. You could take the opportunity to expand on your Terms of Reference within the introduction and give more detail as to the background of the report.

5.2.3.3 Procedures

This section outlines how you investigated the area. How you gathered information, where from and how much (e.g. if you used a survey, how the survey was carried out, how did you decide on the target group, how many were surveyed, how were they surveyed - by interviews or questionnaire?)

For example

- Call a meeting, visit information sources or arrange interviews?
- Speak to people who have already expressed views on the problem areas or on possible solutions?
- Send out questionnaires or set up a telephone "hot-line"?
- Search the web for topics published internationally?
- Research business custom, regulations, industry standards?
- Consult other offices that have undertaken similar projects?

5.2.3.4 Findings

Explain to your reader what you did with the raw material you have collected. Clearly show the result of your data analysis in tables/graphs. It reflects the current situation - it describes the size, shape and nature of the "iceberg below the water line".

This is the main body of the report, where you develop your ideas. The nature of this section will depend on the brief and scope of the report. The sections should deal with the main topics being discussed - there should be a logical sequence, moving from the descriptive to the analytical. It should contain sufficient information to justify the conclusions and recommendations that follow. Selection of appropriate information is crucial here: if information is important to help understanding, then it should be included; irrelevant information should be omitted.

Findings are facts which arise out of your investigation. They are reported in clear and objective terms. No opinions are expressed in this section.

5.2.3.5 Conclusions

These are drawn from the analysis in the previous section and should be clear and concise. They should also link back to the Terms of Reference. At this stage in the report, no new information can be included. The conclusions should cover what you have deduced about the situation - bullet points will be satisfactory. Use words such as “therefore”, “because”, “as a result”.

5.2.3.6 Financial implications

What are the benefits *vs.* costs and risks from the suggested solution?

5.2.3.7 Recommendations

Recommendations always look forward, to the future, and each point which you make under Recommendations is a "should". Once again, your recommendations must arise logically from your conclusions. Summarise the key strengths and weaknesses of the resources. Discuss strategies that can be implemented to minimise the risk factors. Suggest starting off with a test market, for instance. Use the active voice: words like “should” and “must”. You need to be firm. If matters are already satisfactory – say so. If your report does not achieve its objectives suggest modifications or propose further investigation.

5.2.3.8 Executive summary

This is a most important part of many reports and may well be the only section that some readers read in detail. It must contain the main point that you want to get across. It should be carefully written and should give a complete overview of the message in the report, with a clear summary of your recommendations.

Report writing - example of an executive summary

The purpose of this report was to examine the implications on university teaching raised in the article by Joe Gelonesi in the Education Supplement of The Age (27/2/02). Research for this report included a review of current literature on web-based tuition and interviews with three experienced academics.	***Purpose*** ***Methodology***
The major findings indicate that while there is a need for some caution: e-learning should be seen as a way of enriching the teaching and learning currently being offered in universities.	***Findings***
While it is clear that student needs will vary, this report recommends that Beacon University continue to develop and implement its e-learning approach if it wishes to continue providing quality education for traditional on-campus students as well as those who for work, family, geographic location or other reasons choose to study through distance education.	***Conclusion & Recommendations***

5.3 Financial and statistical reports

5.3.1 Presentation

One of the most important functions of directors, departmental heads and managers is to exercise financial control of their departments. It is essential that financial reports are provided frequently and at regular intervals with up-to-date and reliable information. It is vital that these reports are made available to the boards, committees and other decision-making bodies with the least possible delay.

It is important to emphasise that this information should not only be laid before the committee or board timeously, but also that members should be able to comprehend and appreciate its significance. For this reason, the use of such visual aids as highlighting noteworthy items and the presentation of simple graphs and diagrams to reveal trends that are not so easily identifiable from schedules or figures greatly enhances the value of the data submitted. The resourceful report writer will use every opportunity to assist executives by devising such graphs and diagrams.

Moreover, since comparison is an essential element here in using management data, comparative figures for the corresponding period - be it a month, a quarter or a year - should always be provided. For ease of comparison also, the manner in which data is presented and illustrated should, wherever possible, follow the same pattern as was previously adopted.

The resourceful report writer may well add to the usefulness of the diagrams and graphs by appending a brief report emphasising the salient features and significant movements in the figures presented. This will assist the members in rapidly comprehending the full significance of the data laid before them on which they must make their decisions.

In drawing up any report involving recommendations, it is essential that the costs involved in implementing the recommendations, both short-term and long-term, be carefully and dispassionately examined. A payback analysis or explanation of total cost of ownership comes to mind.

Poorly presented figures, far from making the point, can actually obscure it. Figures can be very daunting and graphs can be difficult to interpret without a struggle; so it is not surprising that some people “switch off” when faced with quantitative information. Communication breaks down at that point. So we must try to present figures in such a way that they communicate their meaning easily.

5.3.2 Numbers

Here are some tips which help the reader to get the “numbers message” more clearly:

Comparison – the key to understanding
Put figures in a comparative context whenever possible.

Put the smaller figures below the bigger one. We are used to subtracting in our head this way and it is easier for the reader.

Columns
Arrange figures to read down columns rather than across rows if possible. They are easier to compare like that.

Decimals
The use of decimals should reflect the accuracy of measurement. The numbers 5, 5,0 and 5,00 indicate different degrees of precision.

Values less than one a zero should be placed before the decimal point (0,25 not ,25). Modifying words such as "about", "more or less" should not be used with decimals.

Consistency

Be consistent

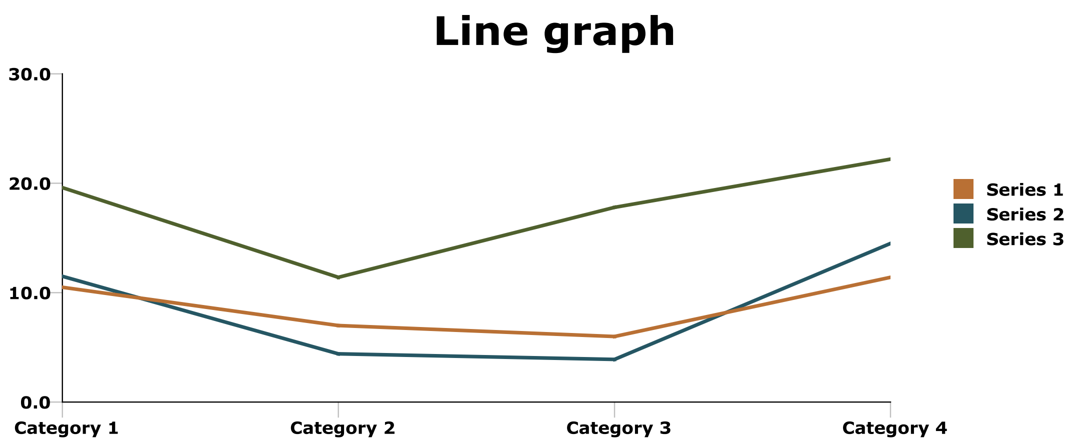
- Same numbers of decimal places
- Same units use signs + - or ( )
- Make sure totals add up!

5.3.3 Charts and Graphs

"A picture is worth a thousand words." This is certainly true when you're presenting and explaining data. You can provide tables setting out the figures, you can talk about numbers and percentages and relationships forever. However, the chances are that your point will be lost if you rely on these alone. Put up a graph or a chart and suddenly everything you're saying makes sense! Graphs or charts help people understand data quickly. Whether you want to make a comparison, show a relationship, or highlight a trend, they help your audience "see" what you are talking about. A spreadsheet programme such as Excel makes it easy to present data in graphic format. The following types are available:

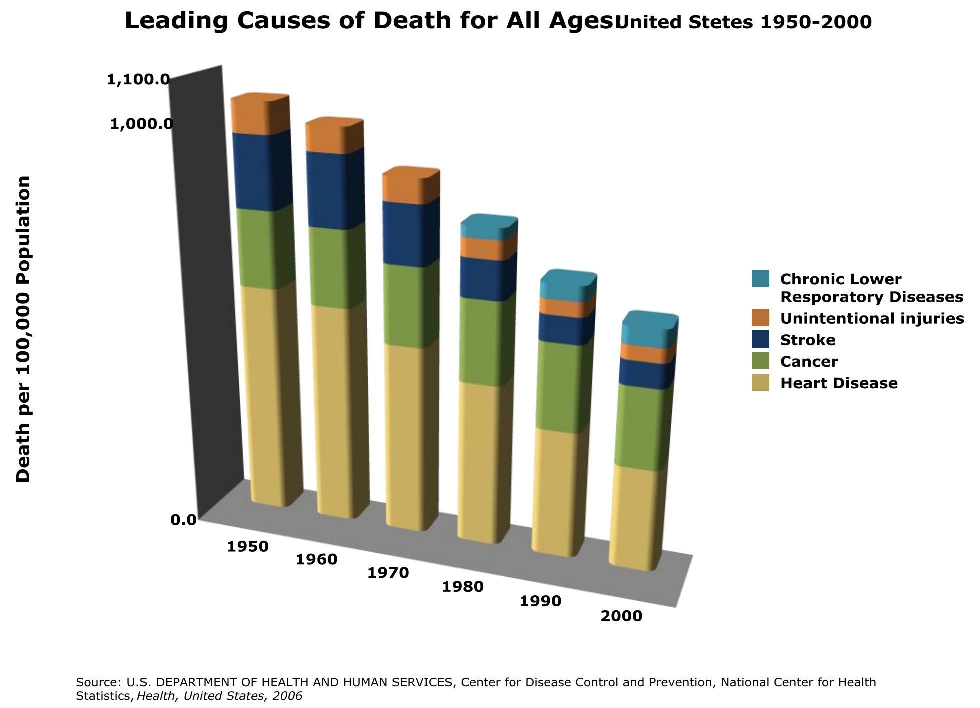
The Line graph

It uses a line to connect the data points that you plot. It is most useful for showing trends and for identifying whether two variables correlate with one another.



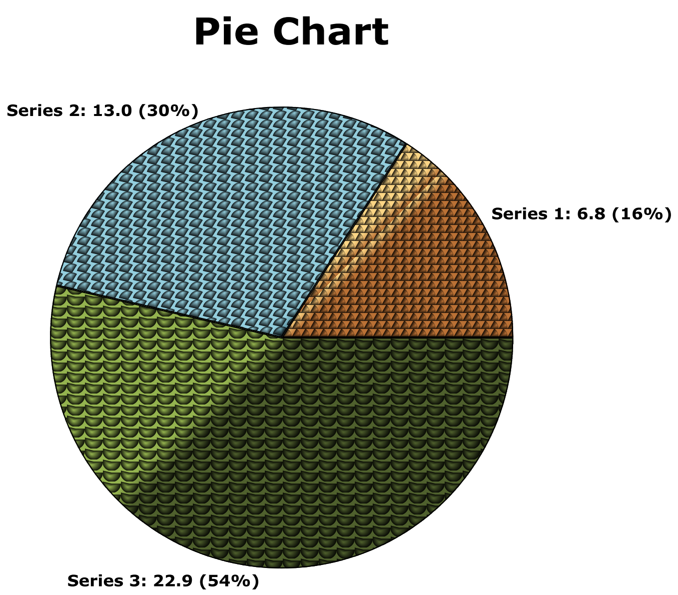
The Bar graph

It also shows relationships between different data series. Here the height of the bar represents the measured value or frequency: the higher or longer the bar, the greater the value.



The Pie chart

A pie chart compares parts to a whole. As such, it shows a percentage distribution. The entire pie represents the total data set and each segment of the pie is a particular category within the whole.



Colours

Use more than one colour if possible, in tables and diagrams. Colours do two things which help the reader:

- They distinguish one part from another.
- They highlight important aspects.

5.4 What makes a good report?

Leads to action

The value of the report lies in the message it needs to get across. It has no other purpose than providing the information requested by the party concerned and it is mostly compiled to form the basis of a decision. A report must convey to the reader what he is supposed to do. A good report achieves that quickly and easily.

Gets to the point

Don't expect the recipient to read every word. Structure your report in such a fashion that by browsing, the reader gets an immediate grasp of the salient points. Therefore, put your conclusion and recommendation right up front. If they need the detail, make it easy for the readers to locate it.

Is user friendly

It must have a structured layout which displays

- A descriptive title
- A table of contents
- Identifiable chapters
- Headlines
- Spacious presentation
- Logical sequence of arguments
- Clear findings
- Simple language
- Correct grammar.

Needless to say, a good report is one that is produced at the stipulated frequency and is delivered to the designated persons timeously.

5.5 Informal reports

It is often necessary, within an organisation, to put information on paper. It can be to update other members of staff (e.g. to prepare them for a meeting), report back to a departmental head or other manager, explain situations, record information, etc. The matters are usually fairly simple and do not justify carefully impersonal language, conventional headings, etc. Such reports are usually done in a flexible format, similar to that of a memorandum.

5.5.1 Layout of an informal report: example

To: From: Date: HEADING OF REPORT First paragraph(s) briefly give an introduction - this may refer to the background of the matter or the situation that led to the report being written. Middle paragraph(s) outline the information or findings that the report is communicating. Last paragraph(s) give any conclusions or outline any recommendations or action required. As with formal reports, the date and name/position of the writer can appear at the start or the end of the report.

5.5.2 Language and tone of informal reports

Informal reports must still keep the neutral, logical tone of a communication whose main objective is to inform. They still obey all the rules of good business communication - clear, simple language - vocabulary and sentence construction, good logical structuring of ideas, clear, concise communication, in accordance with a clear objective, etc. However, the impersonal language of formal reports is not necessary and using "I, me, my, we, our," etc. is appropriate.

5.5.2.1 Example

Study the format of the following example of an informal report

REPORT

To: Mr J Naidoo - Manager: Client Relations

From: Precious Sondala - Administrative Officer

Date: 14 August 2012

Backlog of Policy Alterations

Minute No 352 of the Management Committee meeting of 16 July 2012 requires me to report on the cause of the policy alteration backlog experienced during 2012.

I established the number of arrear policy alteration applications and I discussed the reasons for the backlog with the head of the Policy Alteration Department, Ms Martha Breed.

During the first two weeks of June a larger than normal flow of policy alteration applications occurred. The average number is 120 per month, but during the period I – 14 June alone, 90 applications were received.

At the same time, three out of 12 staff members were off sick during the period 1 – 21 June. In addition, two staff members were seconded to the Surrenders Department which had to cope with a 20% increase in surrender applications.

The increase in both surrender and policy alteration applications is largely due to the volatility on the JSE and negatively affects the attitude of holders of policies linked to share portfolios.

I suggest the following solutions to clear up the backlog and prevent future arrears:

- Request staff in the Policy Alterations Department to work overtime for the next two weeks.
- Deploy two junior staff members from the Actuarial Department to Policy Alterations for a period of two weeks.
- Recruit three additional staff members in the Policy Alterations Department as the high volume of applications is likely to continue for an extended period. Should volumes return to normal experienced policy alteration staff can be deployed in our Marketing Department.

I have had a discussion with our HR manager, Ms Thandi Dakamelo who has assured me that the redeployments and the proposed recruitment are feasible.

(Signature and designation/position of the writer)

5.5.3 "Rapid Reports"

After every flight, Qantas pilots fill out a form, called a 'Gripe Sheet' which tells mechanics about problems with the aircraft.

The mechanics correct the problems; document their repairs on the form and then pilots review the Gripe Sheets before the next flight.

Here are some actual maintenance complaints submitted by Qantas' pilots (marked with a P) and the solutions recorded (marked with an S) by maintenance engineers.

What makes these even funnier is that they are real!!

In case you need a laugh: Remember, it takes a college degree to fly a plane but only a high school diploma to fix one. Never let it be said that ground crews lack a sense of humour.

By the way, Qantas is the only major airline that has never had an accident.

P: Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.
S: Almost replaced left inside main tire.

P: Test flight OK, except auto-land very rough.
S: Auto-land not installed on this aircraft.

P: Something loose in cockpit.
S: Something tightened in cockpit.

P: Dead bugs on windshield.
S: Live bugs on back-order.

P: Autopilot in altitude-hold mode produces a 200 feet per minute Descent.
S: Cannot reproduce problem on ground.

P: Evidence of leak on right main landing gear.
S: Evidence removed.

P: DME volume unbelievably loud.
S: DME volume set to more believable level.

P: Friction locks cause throttle levers to stick.
S: That's what friction locks are for.

P: IFF inoperative in OFF mode.
S: IFF always inoperative in OFF mode.

P: Suspected crack in windshield.
S: Suspect you're right.

P: Number 3 engine missing.
S: Engine found on right wing after brief search.

P: Aircraft handles funny
S: Aircraft warned to straighten up, fly right and be serious.

P: Target radar hums.
S: Reprogrammed target radar with lyrics.

P: Mouse in cockpit.
S: Cat installed.

P: Noise coming from under instrument panel. Sounds like a midget pounding on something with a hammer.
S: Took hammer away from midget.

Exercise 17

Please write a submission to your manager proposing that a new colour printer be purchased for your department (you need to convince her/him that you really need this printer). Assume that your current laser printer is 10 years old, prints black and white only, regularly breaks down requiring technician intervention and spare parts are difficult to source.

A mind map to draft your report may be useful.

5.6 Proposals

A proposal is a written document that aims to motivate another person to take a proposed or suggested course of action. A proposal must be

- Well written in a formal yet simple style
- Persuasively written
- Logically set out with clear sections, numbering and headings
- Sufficiently detailed to allow the reader to make a decision.

5.4.1 Structure of a proposal

The solicited proposal should contain some or all of the following sections:

- A title page or a title
- Terms of reference – This is a statement of the question or request to which the proposal is a response
- Objectives – This section outlines what the proposal aims to achieve
- Summary – A summary of the most important features of the proposal, including the most important cost, steps to be taken and time frame
- Background – This section outlines the context in which the proposal takes place and should answer the questions below:
    1. What is the problem that needs to be solved?
    2. Why is there a need for this problem to be solved?
    3. What is the purpose of this proposal
    4. How was the material or information for the proposal collected or how did the author go about writing the proposal?
    5. How is the proposal structured or set out?

- Proposal – This section outlines the detail of the proposal and should answer the questions below:
    1. The scope of the problem – what is the nature of the problem; whom it affects
    2. How does this proposal approach the problem? Which particular aspect(s) does it tackle?
    3. What are the limitations of the proposal?
    4. What methods will be used to put the proposal into place?
    5. What are the tasks that need to be done?
    6. Who has the responsibility for these tasks?
    7. What are deadlines for the completion of these tasks?
    8. What costs are involved in the execution of this proposal?

- Justification - It is in this section that you try to persuade the reader to adopt your proposal. Use the question below to guide your writing of this section.
    1. What are the benefits of the proposal?
    2. How realistic or feasible is the proposal?
    3. How successful will it be?

- Attachments – Many proposals contain attachments or appendices. The attachment contains information that is important to the proposal, but for ease of reading, should not be included in the body of the document. Some examples of attachments are:
    1 Figures, graphs and diagrams of costs or other similar information
    2. Technical data such as calculations or specifications
    3. Other supporting documentation such as employment history, company profile, etc.

5.7 Perfecting documentation for meetings

5.7.1 Definition of a meeting

A meeting is "an assembly of persons, a coming together for a common lawful purpose of two or more persons." Requirements for a gathering to be regarded as a lawful meeting are:

- At least two persons must be coming together
- There is common purpose, e.g. discuss issues and decide on a course of action.

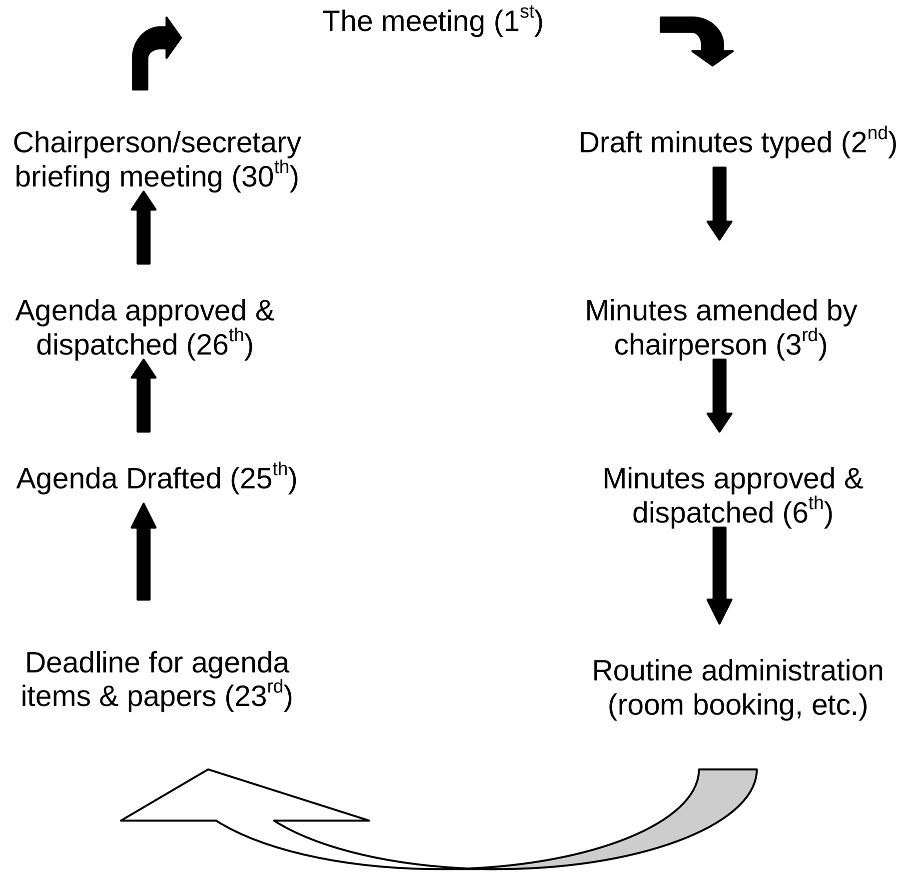
5.7.2 Cycle of a Meeting

This cycle is for a monthly meeting assuming it is held on the 1st of each month. Numbers in brackets are target dates for each action.

For less frequent meetings, the principle of an agenda sent out a week before, minutes sent out within the week after, should still be applied. For weekly meetings, the dates change from a week to a couple of days. This cycle may seem to set very tight deadlines, but:

- If you don't enjoy typing up your minutes, they only get worse with procrastination.
- If you have to phone a participant and ask for clarification on content, it is better to do it while s/he can still remember what was said.
- If the minutes are not circulated quickly, the action points are a waste of time – it will be too late for participants to take action.
- You look inefficient if the minutes are not circulated until the next meeting.

Cycle of a Monthly Meeting



5.7.3 The stages in the cycle

First draft of minutes – One day after the meeting
The first draft should be the minutes, typed as the secretary perceives the discussion. They may well contain gaps where the chairperson's guidance is needed, but should be as near complete as possible.

Chairperson's approval – Two to three days after meeting
The chairperson should check the minutes for factual accuracy and 'political correctness' – phrasing that may cause offence or that does not represent the view of the group. The chairperson should not add any extra information or change the minutes to suit personal views.

Minutes dispatched – Five days after meeting
The minutes should be sent to all committee members and anyone else who gets a copy. Any papers that were distributed at the meeting should be attached for those who did not attend.

Routine administration
Booking of venue, catering arrangements, etc.

Deadline for agenda items – Around eight days before next meeting
Under 'Date of next meeting' in the minutes, a deadline for agenda items should have been given. Anything that is received after this can be dealt with under 'Any other business'.

All papers for discussion at the meeting must be submitted by this date so they can be included with the agenda. In reality, the secretary is usually left to ring or email to nag participants for agenda items and papers.

Draft agenda – Seven days before next meeting
The secretary should put together the agenda and pass it to the chairperson for approval.

Agenda Dispatched – One week before next meeting
Each participant should receive an agenda and all papers to be discussed. The agenda should be cross-referenced to indicate which papers relate to each agenda item. Hints as to other preparation may be included (Objectives Agenda).

Briefing – One or two days before next meeting
The chairperson and secretary should meet to discuss the content of the meeting, identify any problem areas and deal with any concerns either party has about the meeting. This is seldom a formal event, but is often a brief chat before, or on the way to, the meeting.

The formality will be influenced by the style of the people involved and the importance of the meeting.

The meeting
If the rest of the cycle of the meeting is in place, the event itself should be efficient and successful.

5.7.4 Preparing the Notice

A few days prior to the meeting, a notice will be sent to each of the directors, unless they have agreed to hold meetings at regular intervals at a fixed time and place and to dispense with the necessity of notice being served on them. It is not usual to set out in the notice details of the business to be considered at the meeting, but it is strongly recommended that secretaries circulate the agenda with the notice in order that directors may be aware of the matters which are to come up for discussion and may take such preparatory steps as they may consider desirable or necessary.

Where special business is to be transacted, a brief intimation of the nature of the business should be embodied in the notice. Further, where a director has undertaken to present any information or a report to the meeting, the secretary should include the director's written report in the agenda papers for the meeting.

5.7.5 Specimen of notice of board meeting

VUKA ENGINEERING SOUTH AFRICA LIMITED

Catalyst Building
SANDTON
2250
15 August 2012

Dear Mr Nkosi

I wish to inform you that a meeting of the directors of the company will be held in the Board Room, Catalyst Building, Sandton on Friday 15 September 2012 at 10:00.

Yours sincerely

J JONES
SECRETARY

"Meetings are cul-de-sacs down which ideas are lured and then quietly strangled"

5.7.6 Preparing the Agenda

The agenda sets out the headings of the business to be transacted at the meeting, in the order in which it is anticipated that each item will be taken. In drawing up the agenda, the secretary should work in close collaboration with the chairperson, to ensure that no item of importance is overlooked.

The agenda for board meetings is generally typed on loose sheets, sufficient copies being taken to provide each of the directors with a copy. It is a good practice to set out the business on the left-hand side, leaving a wide margin on the right-hand side, on which the chairperson, secretary and each of the directors may make his/her own notes of the decisions arrived at.

The notes made by the secretary on his copy will constitute the basis of the preparation of the minutes, while the chairperson and directors may use their notes as a check on the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting when these are submitted for verification at the next meeting.

The business to be transacted at the meeting should be set out in logical order in the agenda, so that it will not become necessary for the chairperson to vary that order. Moreover, routine matters should be placed first, while special business requiring careful consideration will be dealt will thereafter, matters of a similar nature being grouped together.

5.7.7 A specimen agenda of a routine board meeting

VUKA ENGINEERING SOUTH AFRICA LIMITED
AGENDA
For a meeting of directors to be held in the Board Room on
Friday 15 September 2012 at 10:00

Result

1. Apologies.
2. Approve and sign minutes of board meeting held on 10 August 2012.
3. Matters arising out of the minutes.
4. Appoint Mrs P Tshabalala as director in place of Mrs B Toto, resigned.
5. Produce summary of the cash book for the month ended 31 August 2012 together with certificate of bank balance and reconciliation statement and confirm the transaction reflected in the summary.
6. Submit income statement for the month ended 31 August 2012 together with unaudited balance sheet at that date and supporting schedules.
7. Submit production director's report on operations for the month of August 2012 as circulated.
8. Submit a report of the company's consulting civil engineers dated 31 August 2012 and authorise the following:

Vote No 200	Extensions to the Midrand factory	R5 207 350
Vote No 201	Novice CAD equipment	R1 700 000
Vote No 202	Armada Punching machine	R1 500 000
Total		R7 507 350

9. Correspondence:
    (a) Letter from Computer Resources (Pty) Limited.
    (b) Request from AIDS Prevention Care Group.
10. General

5.7.8 Note-taking skills

5.7.8.1 Get the complete picture

In addition to learning how to listen effectively during a meeting, it will be important for you to develop the ways in which you record your information. Many ineffectively organised notes resemble a simple "shopping list" of points with no apparent relationships between the ideas noted and this usually reflects a note-taker's lack of understanding of these relationships. The effective listening skills outlined below will assist you in comprehending the discussions.

First Step – PREPARATION

Use a laptop/computer rather than paper and prepare a template. If you don't have access to a computer/laptop, use a large, loose-leaf notebook. Use only one side of the paper (you then can lay your notes out to see the direction of a discussion). Draw a vertical line 60 mm from the left side of your paper. This is the recall column. Notes will be taken to the right of this margin. Later key words or phrases can be written in the recall column.

Second Step - DURING THE MEETING

Don't record notes in paragraph form. Use a new line for every thought and use a "-" to indicate a new thought. Capture general ideas, not illustrative ideas. Skip lines to show end of ideas or thoughts. Using abbreviations will save time. Write legibly.

Third Step - AFTER THE MEETING

Read through your notes and make them more legible if necessary. Now use the column. Jot down ideas or key words which give you the idea of the discussions. (REDUCE) You may have to re-read the discussions and translate them in your own words.

5.7.8.2 Suggestions

Think over the following suggestions and improve your note-taking system where needed:

- Listen actively - if possible, think before you write - but don't get behind.
- Be open minded about points you disagree on. Don't let arguing interfere with your note-taking.
- Raise questions if appropriate.
- Develop and use a standard method of note-taking including punctuation, abbreviations, margins, etc.
- Use a laptop/computer rather than paper.
- If using a computer is out of the question, take and keep notes in a large notebook. The only merit to a small notebook is ease of carrying and that is not your main objective. A large notebook allows you to adequately indent and use an outline form.
- Leave a few spaces blank as you move from one point to the next so that you can fill in additional points later if necessary. Your objective is to take helpful notes, not to save paper.
- Do not try to take down everything that the speakers say. It is impossible in the first place and unnecessary in the second place because not everything is of equal importance. Spend more time listening and attempt to take down the main points. If you are writing as fast as you can, you cannot be as discriminating a listener. There may be some times, however, when it is more important to write than to think.
- Listen for clues as to important points, transition from one point to the next, repetition of points for emphasis, changes in voice inflections, enumeration of a series of points, etc.

- Many speakers attempt to present a few major points and several minor points in a discussion. The rest is explanatory material and examples. Try to see the main points and do not get lost in a barrage of minor points which do not seem related to each other. The relationship is there if you will listen for it. Be alert to cues about what the speaker thinks is important.
- Make your original notes legible enough for your own reading, but use abbreviations of your own invention when possible. The effort required to recopy notes can be better spent in re-reading them and thinking about them. Although neatness is a virtue in some respect, it does not necessarily increase your learning.
- If a motion to be proposed at the meeting is complex it should be reduced to writing. It must then be included in the notice and agenda. It must be clearly expressed.
- Be prepared with a book (not pieces of paper – they get lost) to write in. Have two pens, the minutes of the previous meeting for amending/signing etc. If you are tape recording, set it up well before the meeting and test your system. Have more tapes than you think you will need. If you take minutes on a laptop, save to the hard drive **and** to a removable disk as you go along.
- Sit in the correct chair – the secretary in a meeting should sit at the right hand side of the chairperson. REFUSE to sit in a corner (Photocopy this instruction and give it to your chairperson!).
- Concentrate on the discussion. Ask yourself - what is the main point that Person X is making? What is the core issue in Person Y's objection to this idea? You need only make a note of these main ideas.
- Take GOOD, full notes of things which people agree to do – try to write down exactly what they must do, by when, whom they must give it to, etc. Make careful notes of any dates, times or amounts agreed in the meeting. Your minutes are a reminder service to the participants. Make sure that they are accurate.
- Take all motions and resolutions down verbatim and record who proposed and seconded and how the vote was taken. If someone disagrees strongly with a decision, record this.
- Assertiveness is a key skill when taking minutes. Interrupt the meeting calmly, clearly, in adult-business-professional style if you do not have any information which you need. If you are not sure of something, simply say "I have minuted ____________ (read out your note). Is this correct?"
- Type up minutes as soon as possible after a meeting. NEVER put them away for another day – you will forget what your notes meant and then you become anxious and put them off even longer. Eventually you will hate doing minutes.
- Get help wherever possible – tape record very formal/serious meetings if you feel you need to – but still take notes. If someone presents a report, ask for a copy of his/her notes.
- Don't fuss over minutes. You are not writing a nation's constitution – just a record of a meeting with a focus on what people need to do as a result of the decisions taken at the meetings. Get them done and get them **distributed quickly.**
- People like short, clear minutes which are easy to read and easy to work from.
- Full but short sentences are best and clear layout will make your minutes "user friendly."
- Like any business writing, minutes can only be judged against their objective. Ask yourself what job your minutes are supposed to do. Then assess whether they do this job effectively. If they do, they are good minutes.

5.7.9 The minutes of a meeting

- Minutes are a brief, summarised record of the procedure followed at a meeting.
- Minutes record discussions and decisions taken.
- Minutes must be a factually correct report of a meeting.
- The secretary who takes down the minutes must be objective and not allow personal reactions or the mood of the meeting to influence his/her report.
- Decisions made and instructions given should be minuted verbatim.
- Minutes are written in the past tense.

5.7.10 Format

Heading:
- The name of the organisation, place, date and time of the meeting
- Capital letters are used
- The heading need not be underlined.

Attendance register
- The names of all the members who attended the meeting are recorded
- The chairperson's name is usually given first
- The designation, e.g. managing director, may be written after the names of members who fulfil a role.

Apologies

Opening and welcome

Minutes of the previous meeting
The secretary confirms that the minutes of the previous meeting were read, accepted and signed by the chairperson.

Matters arising
Matters arising from the previous meeting may now be discussed.
The facts are carefully minuted by the secretary.

New business
(This item is the most important part and the actual reason why the present meeting is being held).
The secretary carefully minutes what is important about each discussion. Vitally important is recording what has been agreed and resolved.

General

Closing
Only the time when the meeting ended is minuted.
The secretary may minute the chairperson's thanks to the people who arranged the meeting and who served refreshments.

Signature
The chairperson's initials and surname are typed at the end of the minutes with enough space for his/her signature and the date.

5.7.11 Necessity of minutes

The principal uses and value of minutes may be summarised as follows:
- They constitute the permanent official record of the business transacted at meetings.
- They are available for inspection by interested parties, e.g. the directors, the secretary and the auditors.
- They can be produced as evidence in legal proceedings.
- They provide a written reminder of what members have undertaken to do and by when.

It is interesting to note that if it can be proven that a resolution was indeed passed but was left out of the minutes, it can be deemed valid.

However, there is no common-law rule that minutes must be kept and an unincorporated association need not keep minutes of the proceedings of its meetings unless it is required to do so by statue or by its constitution.

For example, there is no statute applicable to sporting bodies and they are not obliged to keep minutes unless the rules of the particular club so require. It is, however, highly desirable that every association of persons should record proceedings of its meetings in a minute book as this would eliminate much argument in the event of a dispute.

It should be noted that the signature of the chairperson to the minutes of both general meetings and of board and managers' meetings not only makes them evidence but constitutes them *prima facie* correct.

5.5.12 Minutes of narration

Formalities

The minutes of every meeting should set out the following:

- The nature of the meeting
- The date, time and place at which it was held
- How the meeting was constituted, for example, who occupied the chair and what other persons were present, i.e. either their individual names or a reference to the attendance register in which their names are to be found, or, in the case of a general meeting at which an attendance register was not kept, a statement of the number of members present (which will, of course, need to be in excess of the necessary quorum)
- Any apologies for absence that have been received by the chairperson or the secretary
- The names of persons attending as ex officio, e.g. attorneys, auditors, etc., who may have been present and of all paid officials who were in attendance
- A statement that the chairperson declared the meeting duly constituted
- A record of the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting, if indeed they were approved at the meeting.

5.7.13 Minutes of resolution

Decisions

- Each decision should be recorded in a separate sentence commencing: 'it was RESOLVED: That', the exact wording of the resolution (as amended, if such was the case) being reproduced.
- These decisions should be recorded in the order in which they were agreed to at the meeting.
- A motion that was submitted to the meeting but was not adopted should normally not be included. unless the member moving it expressly requests that it be recorded as submitted but defeated.
- Where important matters are being decided, the objections of individual members, particularly at board meetings, should be recorded, especially when there is a request for such record to be made.
- In addition to the decisions taken at the meeting, the minutes should explicitly record full details of all contracts, matters of a financial nature, appointments and other actions that were approved or authorised, but trivial matters should be rigidly excluded.
- Whilst brevity is desirable and unnecessary detail is to be avoided, care must be exercised to ensure that the exact intention of the meeting is accurately, explicitly and unequivocally recorded.

- Where a draft agreement or other important document is submitted to a meeting of members for their approval, the nature and, if practicable, the main terms of the agreement should be stated in the minutes or the document should be otherwise identified.
- A method of identifying a document is to refer to it in the minutes as 'the draft agreement of 15 August 2012 which is initialled by the chairperson for purposes of identification.'
- It is advisable to attach a copy of the agreement to the minutes that record the approval thereof, unless this is too bulky to be practicable.
- The minutes will usually conclude with a statement that the chairperson declared that the business of the meeting was completed, or that the proceedings terminated.
- This will be followed by some such formula as 'Signed as correct record..'

………………… 2012 ……………………………………

Chairperson

Resolutions are drafted by the secretary in consultation with the chairperson. The chairperson may get the advice of the members while the meeting is in progress for the sake of clarity on the motion before the meeting.

A well-formulated resolution will have the following characteristics.

- It is concise, clear with the minimum of words.
- It is contained in a single sentence.
- It is worded in the positive.
- If lengthy, it is broken down in distinct components, particularly where sub-clauses are introduced.
- It starts with the word "That."

Where a decision becomes immediately effective, the words "and is hereby" are added to the resolution.

5.7.14 Specimen minutes of a monthly board meeting

VUKA ENGINEERING SOUTH AFRICA LIMITED
Minutes of monthly meeting of Directors held in the Board Room,
Catalyst Building, Sandton
on Friday 15 September 2012 at 10:00

Present: **Mr L King (Chairperson)**
Mr P Nkosi
Mr J Prince
Mr F Gatsha
Mrs P Tshabalala

In attendance: Mr K Watchman, Secretary

The chairperson declared the meeting duly constituted.

1. *Apologies:* There were no apologies.

2. *Minutes:* The minutes of the board meeting held on 10 August 2012 as circulated, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

3. Matters arising out of the Minutes: Nil.

5. Directorate: It was RESOLVED:

That Mrs P Tshabalala be and she is hereby elected a director of the company to fill the casual vacancy caused by the resignation of Mrs B Toto.

The chairperson thereupon welcomed Mrs Tshabalala to her first meeting of the Board.

5. *Finance:* A summary of the Cash Book for the month ended 31 August 2012 showing a balance of R3 265 521 together with certificate of bank balance and reconciliation statement was submitted. The transactions reflected in the summary were duly confirmed.

6. *Accounts:* An Income Statement for the month ended 31 August 2012 together with an unaudited Balance Sheet as at that date and various supporting schedules, was submitted and discussed.

7. *Operations:* The production director's report on operations at the Midrand factory for the month of August 2012 as circulated was tabled and the salient features noted.

8. Consulting engineer's report: The report of Greenfield Consulting Civil Engineers, dated 31 August 2012 was considered and it was

RESOLVED:

That vote No 200, extensions to the Midrand factory be proceeded with at a total expenditure of R5 207 350

It was further RESOLVED:

That the following votes for capital expenditure be and they are hereby authorised:

Vote No 200	Extensions to the Midrand factory	R5 207 350
Vote No 201	Novice CAD equipment	R1 700 000
Vote No 202	Armada Punching machine	R1 500 000
Total		R7 507 350

9. *Correspondence:* A letter from Computer Resources (Pty) Limited was considered and it was RESOLVED:

That no further action be taken in the matter.

A letter from the Aids Prevention Care Group was considered and it was RESOLVED:

That the matter be referred to Mr P Hanson, the Human Resources manager, for consideration.

10. *General:* There was no further business.

The chairperson then declared the meeting terminated.

Signed as correct record.

12 October 2012

L King
Chairperson

5.8 Ten tips for an interview winning resumé

An employer can receive hundreds of resumés in response to an advertised position. For every hundred resumés an employer receives, only a few resumés stand out from the crowd. Want your resumé to shine in the eyes of the employer you want to attract? Start by including a well-written resumé cover letter with the resumé.

Then, follow these resumé guidelines to create an interview winning resumé that is head and shoulders above the crowd.

- **Formatting and feel, on a mailed-in resumé, matter.** Your resumé, at first glance, can impress or depress the employer. Lots of open space, a clear, easy-to-read font such as 12 point Arial and easy-to-find and skim information, entice the employer to read on.
- **Correct spelling, appropriate grammar, no missing words and no typing mistakes** make your resumé an employer-pleaser from the start. An error-free resumé is rare. Indeed, some hiring managers will not further consider your candidacy if they find even one mistake.
- **Contact Information:** In this era of instant messaging, email and cell phones, there is absolutely no reason to make contacting you difficult for the potential employer.
- **Write and customise an "objective" for each job and employer.** The objective is your opportunity to connect your skills, experience, traits and job requirements with those the employer is seeking. Read the job posting carefully and you can pick out exactly what the employer believes he/she needs. Don't settle for a lame, "I seek a challenging opportunity to use my skills with a progressive employer who will provide opportunities for growth."
- **Include a customised section called "Career Highlights / Qualifications."** This section of the resumé is usually a series of bulleted points that emphasise your most important career experience, your skills, your personality traits and characteristics and some key accomplishments from your work history as they relate to the job for which you are applying.
- **For each former employer, clearly indicate the company name, your position and the dates of your employment.** Provide a brief overview that says what the company does, its sales, products and customers. Then state exactly what you did for the company in a brief statement.
- **For each employer, include a list of "key contributions" or "key achievements."** You need to highlight key measurable achievements and successes such as: "I reduced the time for order fulfilment from 2 days to 12 hours." "I reduced accounts receivables by 80 percent." "My marketing campaign for the new product won two industry awards for effectiveness."
- **Education statements matter.** State dates of attendance, degrees, certificates, diplomas and from which institutions.
- **Include a section that lists awards and other recognition:** Head prefect, finalist in debate competition, national/provincial colours.
- **Also include a personal section that highlights accomplishments** and anything else that will raise the value of you, as a potential employee, in the eyes of the employer. In this section, list volunteerism; involvement with philanthropic causes; publications; team and individual sports participation; leadership positions in school or community organisations.

Zandile Ndlovo
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Gardens
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6850
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Customer Service Representative
10 Years' Experience in Call Centre Settings

- Polished, professional customer service rep offering:
- 10 years of experience providing customer support in busy call centre environments for public utility and insurance industry employers.
- An unwavering commitment to customer service, with the ability to build productive relationships, resolve complex issues and win customer loyalty.
- Strategic-relationship/partnership-building skills -- listen attentively, solve problems creatively, and use tact and diplomacy to find common ground and achieve win-win outcomes.

Experience

Customer Service Representative
May 2005 - Present, ABC UTILITY COMPANY, Paarden Eiland, Cape Town

Handle customer enquiries, complaints, invoicing questions and payment extension/service requests. Calm angry callers, repair trust, locate resources for problem resolution and design best-option solutions. Interface daily with internal partners in accounting, field services, new business, operations and consumer affairs divisions.

Key Accomplishments:

- Managed a high-volume workload within a deadline-driven environment. Resolved an average of 550 enquiries in any given week and consistently met performance benchmarks in all areas (speed, accuracy, volume).
- Became the lead "go-to" person for new reps and particularly challenging calls as one of the company's primary mentors/trainers of both new and established employees.
- Helped company attain the highest customer service ratings (as determined by external auditors) -- earned 100% marks in all categories including communication skills, listening skills, problem resolution and politeness.
- Officially commended for initiative, enthusiasm, tenacity, persuasiveness, intense customer focus and dependability in performance evaluations.
- Completed voluntary customer service training to learn ways to enhance customer satisfaction and improve productivity.

Customer Service Agent
Febr 2001 – May 2005, SMART INSURANCE COMPANY, Belleville

Handled incoming calls from policyholders, responding to enquiries, resolving problems and correcting policy errors. Provided quotes and executed online policy changes for auto, home and excess liability. Used consultative selling techniques to provide leads for telesales personnel.

Key Accomplishments:

- Recognised as "No 1 Customer Service Rep" (out of 20 reps in division) in Autumn 2004. Ranking was based on accuracy, customer service, duration of calls and availability.
- Co-developed on-the-job training programme that reduced training time from eight weeks to five.

- Contributed to an 8% sales increase in 2004 by improving lead-generation and sales-tracking techniques

Education

April 2001- June 2001, Action College Customer Service Skills Training, Cape Town

- Completed five 4-hour modules of customer service training. Topics included how to:
- Greet transfer and hold calls
- Build rapport, listen, clarify and manage conversational flow
- Manage upset customers, conflicts and challenging situations
- Deliver outstanding service, exceed expectations and build long-term loyalty
- Work in teams and in a self-directed environment

January 1996- Nov 2000, Prestige High School, Worcester

Skills

Skill Name	Skill Level	Last Used/Experience
Customer Service	Expert	Currently used/10 years
Call Centre Service Operations	Expert	Currently used/10 years
Complaint Handling / Dispute Resolution	Expert	Currently used/10 years
Sales Lead Generation	Expert	Currently used/10 years
Data Entry / Records Management	Expert	Currently used/10 years
Multiline Phone Use	Expert	Currently used/10 years
MS Word, Excel and Access	Intermediate	Currently used/8 years

Awards

- Head Prefect, Prestige High School, Worcester
- Provincial colours in canoeing

Achievements

Founded and currently chairing the Board of Trustees of a centre for AIDS orphans in Mitchells Plain. The centre opened with three orphans and one part time staff member and has grown to one providing shelter and food for 24 orphans. It is staffed by four full time staff members.

Module 6

6. Analysing and editing your own documents

After attending this module delegates will be able to:

- Ensure accuracy with spell checks and proof reading
- Follow a logical approach to editing
- Provide guidelines for presentation and layout
- Understand and apply the Fog Index.

6.1 Proofreading

6.1.1 Introduction

Proofreading differs from revising or editing. Revising requires you to consider and possibly reorganise your ideas. Editing makes sure your writing is as clear, accurate and stylistically consistent as possible. Proof-reading pays particular attention to the conventions of grammar, mechanics and punctuation and to spelling errors that may have slipped through the editing process. Proofreading also checks for and corrects layout errors and serves as a final check to make sure all necessary revising and editing have been done. The first step of proofreading is to make use of your computer's spell-checker. Thereafter it is necessary to perform a manual proofreading process to ensure faultless presentation. Remember, even the most professional piece of writing loses value if it contains mistakes.

Source: the Writer's Harbrace Handbook

6.1.2 Proverbs for Proofreading

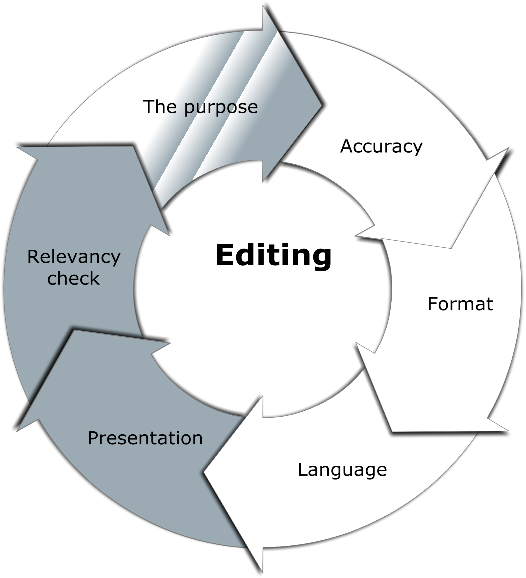
These proverbs play with language. I have taken some well known proverbs and adapted them.

1. **You can't see the forest for the trees.** Ask someone else to do the final proofread as you will not always see your own mistakes.
2. **Familiarity breeds content.** When you see the same writing again and again you will miss errors. Again it is important to get someone else to read through.
3. **If it is as plain as the nose on your face, everybody can see it but you.** Where is the reader most likely to notice errors? In a headline; in a title; in the top line of a new page. These are precisely the places proofreaders are most likely to miss.
4. **When you changes horses in midstream, you can get wet.** It's easy to overlook an error set in type that is different from the previous typeface. Watch out when type changes to all caps, italics, bold face.
5. **The footbone connected to the kneebone?** Numerical and alphabetical sequences often go awry. Check for omissions and duplications in page numbers and numbered lists.
6. **It takes two to boogie.** An opening parenthesis needs a closing parenthesis. Brackets and quotations belong in pairs. Catch the bachelors.
7. **Numbers can speak louder than words.** Misprints in figures can be catastrophic. Take care with rand figures and numbers in dates, etc.
8. **Two plus two is twenty-two.** The simplest math can go wrong. Use your calculator and watch out for misplaced decimal points.

6.2 Editing

It can be useful to put your draft report aside for a few days before re-reading it. This will allow you to become more detached from it and be able to spot errors more easily.

This checklist may help you in editing your report - could you tick off each item?



6.3 Checklist for Editing a Report

The Purpose	
Is my purpose clear?	
Have I identified my readers' needs/characteristics?	
Information	
Have I included the main points?	
Are my points supported by evidence?	
Is the information relevant to the purpose?	
Accuracy	
Are there spelling mistakes?	
Do the figures add up?	
Are the references correct, in the text and at the end?	
Are all sources of information listed in the References section?	
Are abbreviations consistent?	
Graphics	
Are graphics relevant and to the point?	
Are they clear?	

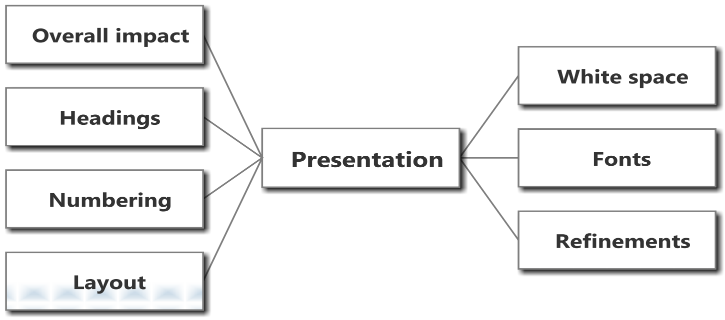
Format	
Is there balance between sections?	
Do the most important items have the most space?	
Is the report logical and easy to follow?	
Is it easy to find information in the report?	
Are headings and numbering clear?	
Are arguments followed through?	
Language	
Is it clear, direct, easy to read?	
Will the readers understand it?	
Can unnecessary words/phrases be deleted?	
Is the grammar/punctuation correct?	
Is there any repetition?	
Presentation	
Is the layout appealing?	
Does it highlight important points?	

Relevancy check
Once the report has been written, it is vital that it be checked with the relevant parties to establish that the reported information is in accordance with requirements.

It is advisable to draw up a table to list each of the relevant recipients of the reports and a space for comments and an overall rating of the report in terms of whether it meets the information requirements and purposes. The form needs to be distributed to recipients and their comments evaluated to determine the usefulness of the report. Possible amendments to reports are made in line with suggestions from recipients.

(Source: The Student Skills Guide, Sue Drew and Rosie Bingham)

6.4 Presentation



Good presentation can make a report clearer. Consider the following points when writing your report:

Overall impact
Make use of templates in the organisation and templates available in word processing software. Your final product should be presented in a folder or plastic wallet - whatever you think is suitable.

Headings
Headings should be clearly ranked. Restrict yourself to three styles of headings: one for main sections, one for sub-sections and one for further sub-sections.

Numbering
Numbering your sections makes the report easier to follow. A common system is to number a main section, then for sub-sections to place a dot after the main section number and begin to number again. You can continue to a further level. This makes it easier to refer the reader to a specific part of the report, e.g. paragraph 3.2.2, rather than to say "about half way down page 5".

Layout
It is vital to use a clean spacious layout that clearly displays the main points.

Plenty of white space
- Makes report inviting and user friendly
- It lets headlines and graphics stand out
- Draws attention to key paragraphs
- Enhances readability
- Don't economise on paper: it only forms a small part of overall costs
- Saves time in reading and comprehending.

White space can be achieved in a variety of ways:
- Short words, sentences and paragraphs
- Appropriate punctuation
- Wide margins and "ragged-right" margins
- Headings and subheadings
- Bullet lists
- Graphics (Photos, illustrations, charts, graphs, tables)
- Easy-to-read type sizes and styles
- Underlining and boldfacing (used sparingly)
- Avoid widows and orphans.

The right fonts

- Stick to one or two fonts in a single report
- Abstain from using fancy fonts which are difficult to read
- Limit headings to three types/sizes
- Beware of too many combinations of bold, italics, underline, bullets, windings, etc.

Other factors enhancing layout

- Avoid THE USE OF CAPITAL LETTERS EXCEPT FOR PROPER NOUNS. Capital letters are harder to read and "shout".
- *Use italics as little as possible, it is harder to read.*
- Use underlining as little as possible because it can dazzle
- **Use bold as little as possible because it is also rather dazzling.**
- Keep the size of the lettering comfortable to read.
- Use lots of headings and subheadings.
- Use uncomplicated numbering.
- Allow for uncluttered space, wide margins; let the text breath.
- Headers and footers contribute to a professional appearance.
- Use boxes to highlight something.
- Use photos graphics, cartoons.
- Page numbering
- Right hand margin justification
- Tables
- Spacing
- Numbering.

Exercise 18

Editing written work from a check-list.

You should work from a very specific check-list, examining particular aspects of language and style to make sure that the whole passage is just the way you want it. Once you have made the necessary correction, you then proof-read again to see whether more editing is needed.

Here is a 'well-intentioned' check-list that may be useful once you have made some adjustments to it!

1. Don't never use no double negatives
2. Concord between verbs and their subjects are vital
3. Be alert when you proof-read, to make sure that you don't any words out, or write any words words twice
4. Be careful to never split an infinitive
5. Use a dictionary to look up difficult words
6. Because every sentence needs a main clause
7. Writing correctly, unrelated participles must be avoided
8. Punctuation, is important, but avoid the temptation, to use, too many commas
9. Remembering to check carefully for a finite verb in every sentence
10. Conjunctions can be used to join sentences, however sentence adverbs cannot
11. Not ending a sentence with a preposition is another convention that attention must be paid to
12. Your teacher and me insist that the correct pronouns should be selected; sorry, I mean your teacher and myself insist
13. Eliminate the utilisation of unnecessarily complex vocabulary
14. Limit the Use of Capital Letter to the Beginning of Sentences and for Proper Nouns
15. The bottom line is, don't use clichés at this point in time; basically, always look for a viable alternative
16. Do not begin a sentence with 'and'. And do not begin a sentence with 'but' either
17. At all times and under all circumstances avoid repetitive, unnecessary redundancies, which often appear here, there and everywhere
18. Remember that American spelling is out of favor
19. Inappropriate use of hyperbole is a stylistic flaw that should be punishable by death
20. Grow your writing skills by avoiding irregular verb forms that are impacting the language these days
21. Paint your writing colourfully with a variety of flavours, but be careful not to mix your metaphors
22. Do not 'use' too many "inverted 'commas'"
23. Never use more than one exclamation mark!!
24. Sentences must be joined with conjunctions; they can never be spliced together with commas
25. Use a thesaurus, which will help you not to use the same word repeatedly
26. For consistency of style and register, don't chuck colloquial stuff into a formal sentence
27. Do not write long, rambling sentences, avoiding particularly those in which long strings of prepositional phrases follow interminably one upon the other, like a weary line of exhausted hikers staggering through the narrow pass at the top of steep hill at the end of a long day
28. If you proof-read your work carefully, looking for repetition that can be removed, you will find many examples of unnecessary repetition that can be eliminated by proof-reading and editing
29. Express yourself simply and concisely on a daily basis
30. Ellipsis is fine, but we always have and always will insist that it must be controlled carefully
31. … The other kind of ellipsis must also be used sparingly and purposefully …
32. Elect words that are seemly in the context in which you are wielding them.

6.5 Gunnings Readability Index (The fog index)

Two factors affect the readability of any document:

- The length of sentences (i.e. how many word per sentence)
- The number of words used, which have three syllables or more.

To apply the Gunnings Readability Index, you need to do the following:

1. Select a passage of as close to 100 words as possible.
2. Divide the number of sentences into the total number of words (if there are 100 words and 5 sentences, you average 25 words per sentence.)
3. Count the number of words that consist of 3 syllables or more.
4. Add these two figures (2 & 3.)
5. Multiply the total by 0.5.

For example:

With internet connectivity and mobile phones, many young South Africans have access to free media, free expression and easy access to information – a comparative privilege to the generation of the seventies who only got exposure to television in 1976. In the media, celebrated youth leaders are in politics, sports and entertainment and many of their achievements are notable but they do not provide sustainable, integrated examples of what the young generation can learn or aspire to. Leadership is not just about technical knowledge and competence or about charisma, it is also about courage, practising good judgement, emotional intelligence, empathy and passion.

Result

18
17 Very difficult
16
15
15
13 Difficult
12
DANGER LINE

11
10 Fairly difficult
9
EASY READING RANGE
8
7 Standard level

6
5 Very easy level (may sound patronising)

6.6 Where do you go from here?

- Put the principles you have learnt on this course into effect immediately.
- Practise these principles every day and you'll soon see an improvement.
- If you postpone the changes because you "haven't got time", you most probably will forget all you have learnt.
- Write and keep on writing, until competent writing becomes second nature to you.
- Learn from others. Read with a critical eye the letters and memos you receive.
- Edit other peoples' letters. What can you learn from them? Can you say it better?
  When editing the letters of your subordinates, don't edit with a closed mind. If a subordinate says it differently – that's quite permissible. There's no single right way. The English language allows for many variations.
- Set aside some time, perhaps once a month, to review your writing. Ask yourself whether it has improved.
- Pass on what you know.
- It is good to go on a refresher course every few years to keep up to date and learn the change in trends.
- Remember, you are the cornerstone of good business writing.

Module 7

7. Planning and constructing presentations

After attending this module delegates will be able to:

- Understand the importance of determining a presentation objective
- Identify the target audience
- Read their audience (including non-verbal behaviour)
- Structure their presentations in a logical manner
- List visual aids and their uses
- Assess their own presentation styles
- Develop vocal and non-verbal aspects of delivery
- Understand the principles of public speaking
- Explore the concept of “thinking on your feet”
- Describe ways of overcoming nervousness
- Understand the importance of their own appearance
- Put everything together to create a winning presentation
- Explore various methods to enhance presentations

7.1 Determine the presentation objective

7.1.1 Objective clarity

With all communications, consider your objective first. Do you want to inform or persuade your delegates? A presentation is ofter factual, informative matter, yet you want to have a certain impact on your delegates, to affect them in such a way that you will have influence on their actions. Your objective must be CLEAR. Write it down, as this will force you to formulate them clearly. You al need to think of what your delegates need to know, want or expect from your presentation.

Your clear objectives will help you to include relevant material, and exclude unnecessary things. You must present a focused, logic relevant learning experience, not a vague, diffuse ramble around your subject!

Setting objectives will help you decide when you have arrived at your goal. Try for an active goal. A passive goal may be: "T delegates will understand/know that...." An active goal may be: delegates will be able to:

- List the key elements of the vision and mission.
- Explain the role of the call centre in the business process.
- Agree the key objectives of a Microsoft Programmer’s position.

7.1.2 The process of planning and organising you presentation

- Develop objectives for your presentation
- Analyse the audience
- Brainstorm the main points and sub points
- State the benefits (in a persuasive presentation)
- State the main idea preview/review sentence
- Structure introduction and conclusion
- Design your visual aids.

Make your presentations people centred, not media centred. Often presenters use too many visual aids to impress their audience put too much information on the slide. Visual aids alone cannot communicate enthusiasm and make a presentation lively a interesting – your delivery will always be the major factor.

Plug into a pattern of presentation and split your topic into components. The following are examples of how you can break your topi

- Past, present and future
- Topic 1, 2 and 3
- The pro's and con's of an issue

7.2 Reaching your audience

Analysis – who are they? How many will there be?

Understanding – what is their knowledge on the subject?

Demographics – what is their age, gender, educational background?

Interest – why are they there? Who asked them to be there?

Environment – where will I stand? Can they all see and hear me?

Needs – what are their needs? What are your needs as a speaker?

Customised – what specific needs do you need to address?

Expectations – what do they expect to learn from you?

Thorough delegates' analysis is essential before any planning takes place. This analysis has many benefits:

- It saves time.
- It ensures the right message for the right audience.
- It makes the customisation of your training session easier.
- It identifies the delegates' key objectives.
- It helps you to choose the right material for the training session.
- It helps you to choose the right style/approach for the training session.
- It increases your own comfort level.

Know your delegates!

- How many people will there be?
- What experience and knowledge do they have? In general? In your subject area? (Never talk down to delegates.)
- Educational level? Technological sophistication? Interests, attitudes, needs, behaviour patterns?
- Target the leaders, and be prepared for the dangers e.g. demotivated delegates, those with a "chip on the shoulder", or tho whom you know are picky, argumentative and ready to disagree with whatever methodology you used, conclusions you draw e Many delegates think that a workshop is an excuse for a "moan-and-whine" session, and you will need your group to move aw from the "bitching" of a few towards positive solutions.

Can you think of ways in which you can deal with a "moan-and-whine" session? Or a session which is valuable but seems to take y away from the learning objective? Look around this room for a clue!

Remember that generally your delegate has invested time and energy coming to your workshop, and so they WANT to be interest and to learn from it. Assume that they are on your side...and do not kill their good will by boring or annoying them with half-thoug out waffle or endless talking! If you remember that each person is thinking "what's in it for me?" you'll be on guard for delegate-appe at all times.

Network before the workshop presentation date to get information on your delegates. Colleagues may be willing to help y brainstorm - it is not shameful to ask someone to join you in a "two heads are better than one" approach. You will also win friends publicly acknowledging such help.

7.3 Delivering your presentation

If you use the following five steps, it provides structure to your presentation and you will feel more relaxed.

1. Give a few introductory remarks

Before you launch into the meat of your topic, give yourself time to get collected. Make general introductory comments such "I pleased to be here today to help provide some information/clarity on this topic."

2. Wait for complete silence before you begin.

A joke (if you're an easy joke teller), a question, a story or an outline of your workshop can catch your delegates' attention. Try GRAB THEIR ATTENTION AT THE BEGINNING as their concentration/interest is at its highest then. However, interactive worksho often warm up gradually – as the delegates find that they are involved and active all the way through, they usually start to enj themselves and participate willingly in making the workshop a success.

3. Develop a clear preview sentence of your main points

You will want to verbalise to yourself and your audience what your key points are. This is ideal to put on a separate slide to give overview of where you are going with your presentation.

4. Deliver the body of the presentation

Talk through each point from your preview sentence. Use the pattern of organisation and use your cue cards or presentation to gui you and the audience.

5. Review the main points

Reinforce the main ideas you've touched upon by briefly restating them.

6. Conclude the presentation

Do not leave your presentation high and dry. Conclude it with a strong, positive statement. Take questions here. Finish each secti strongly, on a clear firm note, if possible with an action statement.

Do not say "finally" "in conclusion" – and then go on talking and talking. These words are a signal for people to start wriggling a getting their things together and your conclusion will be lost.

If a stream of questions straggles on and on, and you are running late or boring most of the people present, ask those people w further questions to talk to you about it afterwards.

Have you been to a workshop which ends…? "I'm sorry I've rabbitted on so long, and please accept my apologies for the overhea being so unclear, but I suppose we must stop now because we're run out of time... unless of course there are any more questions.. NO!

Finish strongly, on time! Do not thank the delegates. If you gave them what they came for, they should thank you. Do not end w long summaries, or "Well, that's all…" or long rambling discussions which end in "I'm sorry, we've run out of time..."

Do not apologise for any mistakes, or for yourself, or your AVs or your workshop. They probably didn't notice and you weak yourself by putting yourself down. Do not drag if you finish ahead of time. Be done with it and let them have longer for questions or them go home or get back to work.

7. General points for the "bits where you have to talk".

- Relax: careful preparation, arriving early, knowing your topic and equipment, having all handouts ready etc; helps.
- Smile
- Stand naturally, on both feet, move normally and avoid nervous mannerisms. Do not fidget or brandish your pointer (never poin at the delegates!) and avoid other aggressive or submissive postures or gestures.
- When speaking, vary your voice pitch - a monotone is boring! Let your voice tone and pitch, and your movements, give intere and emphasis to what you are saying. Use questions even when you reach a section which you need to "lecture".
- Slow down - try lowering your voice slightly to make yourself speak slower.
- Make sure your voice is easily audible and clear, firm and confident. PRACTISE -even if you feel a twit in front of your sister your mirror.
- Silence is golden. A pause gives the delegates time to digest your points, and the break in rhythm wakes those who concentration is dropping.

7.4 Assess your own presentation style

Planning for your presentation starts with preparing to project a positive image. Your self-image determines how other people s you. Your posture is important. People will look differently at you if you slouch than if you walk confidently with a good posture.

- What does your image say about you? A professional image includes:
- A well groomed, neat appearance
- Confident walk and posture
- Varied and pleasing voice
- The use of direct eye contact.

A great presenter has two unique qualities:

- Appropriate presentation skills
- Personal confidence

This confidence comes from knowing what you want to say, and being comfortable with your public speaking and communicati skills. In this public speaking workshop, you will master the skills that will make you a better speaker and presenter.

Stage presence is the quality which allows us to hold a very public position in a relaxed manner. It is the quality which allows us remain ourselves under intense scrutiny from others. Individuals with a high level of stage presence have a distinct advantage in variety of professional and social situations.

Do your knees feel like Gumby's when you have to get up and speak in front of a group? Do you feel like the next words out of yo mouth are going to be the dumbest words ever uttered by a human being?

According to the book of lists, the fear of speaking in public is the number one fear of all fears. The fear of dying is number seve Over 41% of people have some fear or anxiety dealing with groups. People who have this fear can experience all kinds of symptom sweaty palms, accelerated heart rate, memory loss and even difficulty in breathing.

Everyone, even experienced speakers, has some anxiety when speaking in front of a group of people. This is perfectly normal. T best way to deal with the fear is accepting that anxiety is perfectly normal! The best way to overcome this fear is proper preparation.

7.5 Dealing with anxiety

Anxiety is a natural state that exists any time we are places under stress. Giving a presentation normally will cause some stres When this type of stress occurs, physiological changes take place that may cause symptoms such as a nervous stomach, sweatin tremors in the hands and legs, accelerated breathing and /or increased heart rate.

Don't worry! If you are having any of these symptoms before or during a presentation, you are normal. If none of these things happe you are one in a million. Almost everyone experience some stress before presentations.

The trick is to get the butterflies in your stomach to all fly in one direction!

7.5.1 Tips for reducing anxiety

Organise
A lack of organising is one of the major causes of anxiety. Knowing that your thoughts are well organised will give you mo confidence, which will allow you to focus your energy on your presentation.

Visualise
Imagine walking into a room, being introduced, delivering your presentation with enthusiasm, fielding questions with confidence a leaving the room knowing you did a great job. Mentally rehearse this sequence with all the details of your particular situation, anc will help you focus on what you need to do to be successful.

Practice
Many speakers rehearse a presentation mentally or just with their lips. You should rather practice standing up as if an audience is front of you. If possible, get somebody to listen to your presentation and give feedback. There is no better preparation than this.

Breathe
When muscles tighten and you feel nervous, you may not be breathing deeply enough. The first thing to do is to sit up; erect b relaxed, and inhale deeply a number of times.

Focus on relaxing
Instead of thinking about the tension, focus on relaxing. As you breathe, tell yourself to inhale deeply and say "I am "when you inha and "relaxed" when you exhale.

Release tension
As tension increases and your muscles tighten, nervous energy can get locked into your limbs. This unreleased energy may cau your hands and legs to shake. Do this simple unobtrusive isometric exercise:
Starting with your toes and calf muscles, tighten your muscles up through your body finally making a fist. Immediately release all the tension and take a deep breath.

Move
Speakers who stand in one spot and never gesture, experience tension. Allow your muscles to flex and talk with your hands. Y should be able to take a few steps to the left or the right without seeming to be pacing the room nervously. If you have to stay behi a lectern, you can take the occasional half step to the side.

Eye contact with the audience
Try to make your presentation similar to a one-on-one conversation. Visualise this. Relate to your audience as individuals. Althou you have to look at all the people sometime, make brief eye contact with individuals from time to time. Start with the friendly face the audience. Avoid looking only at one or two individuals. This happens often when "senior" people attend the presentation and t presenter considers him/her more important than the other members.

Dare to be happy

Many people do not allow themselves the luxury of being enthusiastic, light-hearted, inspired, relaxed or happy – especially duri presentations. Unhappy people are often held back by the misery or stress, which distracts them from success

Become less controlling
To be controlling means that you are pre-occupied with the actions of others and how these actions affect you. A person who controlling carries a great deal of stress because he has an overrated sense of responsibility. Let people take responsibility for th own lives! You cannot control a person who looks bored or fidgets, but you can use this body language as a warning sign.

Stop worrying!
It is said that 90% of the time we "worry" about things that never happen. By worrying you are occupying your mind with negati thoughts. Think realistically, be pro-active and do not procrastinate!

Remember to acknowledge
All people love and appreciate being acknowledged. In fact people resent not being acknowledged. By acknowledging people you a elevating yourself and your self-esteem. You will build good relationships that might be useful next time when you have presentation! Use body language like a nod if you agree or acknowledge.

Brighten up your presentation
It creates a positive impression if you try something new. An interesting quote, cartoon character, or graph will enhance yo presentation. What can you do to brighten up your presentations? Dare to be different!

7.6 Tips to create a winning presentation

Start Small: If you're new to the world of speaking, start small.
Find a few friends and family to practice on. Begin by speaking to smaller groups and build up from there. The size of the audien makes no difference. If you know your topic, you're pre-speaking fears will quickly evaporate.

Prepare: Nothing helps ease the speaking fears than knowing your material. The ability to connect with your audience comes fro having the confidence you won't get lost during your delivery. Rehearse several times before the big talk. Time your presentation a always have back up material in case time is left over.

Do not memorise: Mastering the art of public speaking comes not from memorising word for word your entire speech. The real pr know their material by remembering key points and prompts on sub topics and examples to cover.

Avoid boring visuals: The majority of business presentations and speeches are boring monologues filled with endless PowerPo slides and bullet points. Make your material the focal point of the talk. If you do use PowerPoint, take the approach of using visua that quickly convey your message.

Reduce stress: The most fearful moment of any presentation is the one minute before your stage entrance. Use the tactic of el athletes by visualising a positive outcome and using deep belly breathing to reduce stress and build confidence.

Find a friend: Prior to your public speaking on stage introduce yourself to a few members of the audience in the front row. Duri your talk look these people in the eye to ease your nerves and connect with your audience.

Engage the audience: Creating a monologue presentation puts the entire task of informing and entertaining the audience on yo Make your talk a two-way interaction with questions and participation to reduce boredom and speak with ease. Having the gro involved also gives you time to reorganise your thoughts if things are going off track.

7.7 Thinking on your feet

Presenters are sales people – and like a salesperson, a question or objection is your friend. Welcome questions and objections! Never fe threatened by them – even if you do not know the answer. The most common mistake presenters make with questions is … they answ them. Questions are much more useful if you refine them and then make them into more questions yourself….

Try the following techniques – thinking of a question as ammunition – as a "learning bullet":

Throw it back - the recoil … (especially useful when the question comes from a difficult delegate) – "that is a very good question, Jane what do you think the answer is?"

Pass it on – the ricochet – "Jane is asking… should a CSE put up with x behaviour from a caller?… Joe, what do you think about that?"

Spread it around – the buckshot – "Joe makes a good point … what does the rest of you guys think?"

Focus it on one person – the rifle shot – "Jason, we have heard several opinions on this – please will you summarise the group positi here?"

Your listener MAY:

- Not really know what his/her problem is.
- Lack the language skills to explain a problem (this may include a well-educated person who does not know the jargon of yo industry).
- Speak or think at a different pace from you.
- Have a complex problem, a number of problems or a new problem.

It is therefore your job, as a presenter to:

- Ask for information.
- Probe your caller's problems with open questions. (A closed question usually has three answers "yes" "no" "maybe"… op questions are usually how? where? why? who? which? when? what?)
- Wait for/listen to answers and do not interrupt them.
- Acknowledge that you have heard what the delegate says.
- Check that you have understood clearly - usually by restating the problem in your own words.

The facilitation skills which are weakest in most training environments, is the skill of asking questions, probing the delegate's situati or needs and listening to the answers.

Presenters listen to the first few sentences which the delegate speaks - and then make up their minds what the problem is and how fix it. No wonder the delegate often finds that the problem or learning area is NOT fixed - and complains that the presenter did r listen.

Questioning, probing and listening are not just about facts - they are the tools you will need to hear when your delegate is ang frustrated or upset. Many happy, satisfied presenters LIKE to use their skills to pick up such feelings (or subtexts) in a conversatio and to then fix the problem. Often, presenters who try to ignore such information (instead of actively going looking for it) are a lot le happy and fulfilled in their work, because they miss a huge area of skill and satisfaction.

People say: "But I do not have time to ask a whole lot of questions....!!!!" In fact, you do not have time NOT to ask questions. You c make them efficient, and guide and control the conversation to get the information you need, but you will SAVE time through cle communication with your delegates.

7.8 Vocal and non-vocal aspects of delivery

7.8.1 Body language

This is a term for communication using body movements or gestures instead of, or in addition to, sounds, verbal language or oth communication. It forms part of the category of paralanguage, which describes all forms of human communication that are not verb language. This includes the most subtle of movements that many people are not aware of, including winking and slight movement the eyebrows. In addition body language can also incorporate the use of facial expressions.

Although they are generally not aware of it, many people send and receive non-verbal signals all the time. These signals may indica what they are truly feeling. The technique of 'reading' people is used frequently. For example, the idea of mirroring body language put people at ease is commonly used in interviews. It sets the person being interviewed at ease. Mirroring the body language someone else indicates that they are understood.

7.8.2 Recognise the signals

- One of the most basic and powerful body-language signals is when a person crosses his or her arms across the chest. This c indicate that a person is putting up an unconscious barrier between themselves and others. It can also indicate that the persor arms are cold which would be clarified by rubbing the arms or huddling. When the overall situation is amicable, it can mean tha person is thinking deeply about what is being discussed. But in a serious or confrontational situation, it can mean that a person expressing opposition. This is especially so if the person is leaning away from the speaker. A harsh or blank facial expressi often indicates outright hostility. Such a person is not an ally, and may be considering contentious tactics.
- Consistent eye contact can indicate that a person is thinking positively of what the speaker is saying. It can also mean that t other person doesn't trust the speaker enough to "take his eyes off" the speaker. Lack of eye contact can indicate negativity. (the other hand, individuals with anxiety disorders are often unable to make eye contact without discomfort. Eye contact is ofter secondary and misleading gesture because we are taught from an early age to make eye contact when speaking. If a person looking at you but is making the arms-across-chest signal, the eye contact could be indicative that something is bothering t person, and that he wants to talk about it. While making direct eye contact a person is fiddling with something, it could indica the attention is elsewhere.
- Disbelief is often indicated by averted gaze, or by touching the ear or scratching the chin. So is eyestrain, or itchiness. Wher person is not being convinced by what someone is saying, the attention invariably wanders, and the eyes will stare away for extended period.
- Boredom is indicated by the head tilting to one side, or by the eyes looking straight at the speaker but becoming sligh unfocused. A head tilt may also indicate a sore neck, and unfocused eyes may indicate ocular problems in the listener.
- Interest can be indicated through posture or extended eye contact.
- It should be noted that some people (e.g., people with certain disabilities, or those on the autistic spectrum) use and understa body language differently, or not at all. Interpreting their gestures and facial expressions (or lack thereof) in the context of norm body language usually leads to misunderstandings and misinterpretations (especially if body language is given priority ov spoken language). It should also be stated that people from different cultures can interpret body language in different ways.

How prevalent is non-verbal behaviour?
Some researchers put the level of nonverbal communication as high as 80 percent of all communication. More reasonably it could at around 50-65 percent. That's exactly what Mehrabian discovered in his communication study. He found that only 7 percent communication comes from spoken words, 38 percent is from the tone of the voice, and 55 percent comes from body language. basic terms, if you aren't conscious of what is happening nonverbally, then you are missing out on the vast majority of what is goi on during a typical conversation.

7.9 Presentation aids and equipment

7.9.1 Ten tips for visual aids

- Use visual aids sparingly
- Use visual aids pictorially
- Present one key point per visual
- Make text and numbers legible
- Use colour carefully
- Make visuals big enough to see
- Graph data
- Make pictures and diagrams easy to see
- Make visuals attractive
- Avoid miscellaneous visuals

7.10 Top tips for creating successful business presentations

Business is all about selling -- a product, topic or concept. When making a business presentation, the most important thing is to **kno** **your material**. If *you* do not know everything about what you are selling, it is not likely that the audience will be buying.

Keep your audience focused and interested. Making effective business presentations takes practice, but with a few tips up yo sleeve, you are ready to take on the challenge.

Use key phrases about your topic
Note - These business presentation tips refer to PowerPoint (any version) slides, but all of these tips in general, can be applied to a presentation.
Seasoned presenters use key phrases and include only essential information. Choose only the top three or four points about yo topic and make them consistently throughout the delivery. Simplify and limit the number of words on each screen.

Slide layout is important
Make your slides easy to follow. Put the title at the top of the slide where your audience expects to find it. Phrases should read left right and top to bottom. Keep important information near the top of the slide. Often the bottom portions of slides cannot be seen fro the back rows because heads are in the way.

Limit punctuation and avoid all capital letters
Punctuation can needlessly clutter the slide and the use of all caps makes statements more difficult to read and is like SHOUTING your audience.

Avoid fancy fonts
Choose a font that is simple and easy to read such as Arial, Times New Roman or Verdana. Avoid script type fonts as they are hard read on screen. Use, at most, two different fonts – perhaps one for headings and another for content. Keep all fonts large enough (at lea 24 pt and preferably 30 pt) so that delegates at the back of the room will be able to read what is on the screen.

Use contrasting colours for text and background
- Dark text on a light background is best, but avoid white backgrounds -- tone it down by using beige or another light colour that w be easy on the eyes. Dark backgrounds are effective to show off company colours or if you just want to dazzle the crowd. In th case, be sure to make text a light colour for easy reading.
- Patterned or textured backgrounds can reduce readability of text.
- Keep your colour scheme consistent throughout your presentation.

Use slide design templates effectively
When using a design template, choose one that is appropriate for the audience. A clean, straightforward layout is best if you a presenting to business clientele. Select one that is full of colour and contains a variety of shapes if your presentation is aimed young children
.
Limit the number of slides
Keeping the number of slides to a minimum, ensures that the presentation will not become too long and drawn out. It also avoids t problem of continually changing slides during the presentation that can be a distraction to your audience.

Use photos, charts and graphs
Combining photos, charts and graphs and even embedding digitised videos with text, will add variety and keep your audien interested in the presentation. Avoid having a majority of text only slides.

Avoid excessive use of slide transitions and animations
While transitions and animations can heighten your audience's interest in the presentation, too much of a good thing can distra them from what you are saying. Remember, the slide show is meant to be a visual aid, not the focus of the presentation.
Keep animations consistent in the presentation by using animation schemes and apply the same transition throughout t presentation.

7.11 Audio-Visual Aids (AVAs)

7.11.1 Written handouts

Often, workshops have supplementary handouts. You may see an interesting article or receive a relevant diagram (e.g. of how a c can be escalated depending on the problem). If you include these, make sure they are well written, well presented, neatly typed a clearly photocopied WELL BEFORE the workshop date.

Any hand-out must be tightly focused and relevant to the workshop - do not simply take any "interesting or related stuff" and slap through the photocopier to make your workshop look more impressive. You will waste people's time and you will have less credibil when the time comes to deliver your next workshop.

7.11.2 Chalkboards, whiteboards etc.

- Practice your board use - do not use it as a giant scribbling pad.
- Face the delegates, not the board, when speaking.
- Use large, legible writing - if possible do not rub out - gradually build up a complete diagram/set of notes and offer it finally to t delegates as a final summary.
- Consider using a board if you fidget - it gives you something to do. Weigh this against the more polished impression of prepar visual aids.
- Test elevation and visibility BEFORE your presentation. You will avoid disasters like red chalk on a green board.
- Try putting up items with magnets on steel boards.

7.11.3 Flip charts:

- Suitable for groups 15 - 20 maximum.
- Can be prepared in advance and you simply turn the pages as you need each one.
- Can be prepared in advance in yellow crayon, invisible to the delegates. (Use an OHP to project complex artwork or diagrar onto the page and draw in yellow - then simply copy with black etc. to stun the delegates!)
- Ask your training department administrator to purchase flip-charts which are “tear-friendly” i.e. those that have a perforated li on every sheet.
- Use max 6 lines on one page - letters min 5 cm high.
- Use a variety of colours, consistently.
- Sheets can be torn off and attached to the wall in a seminar if you still want them displayed.
- Flip charts are useful when you have to report to different branches of your organisation, as they are portable - but use a b elastic band as charts curl when transported. (Roll the side which you will use OUTWARDS so it curls back when it is displayed

7.11.4 Videos

- If you decide to add videos into this course, check that they are fully relevant and fit them SMOOTHLY into your presentation.
- Have all your equipment set up, tuned etc.
- Do not take other people’s assurances. They may set up a perfect PAL system and you have NTSC
- Have your video ready set - when you push "PLAY" it must go straight into the meat of the matter.
- Summarise the video BEFORE the delegates see it, and tell them why you are showing it to them. Alert them to specific featur they must watch for.

7.11.5 Environment

View the facilities before your presentation

- Check acoustics.
- Check the visibility of all AVAs. Do you need bigger writing on the OHP?
- Is there space for your equipment? Plugs/extension cords needed? Do you need a microphone? Can you darken the room f slides without much fuss?
- Is the light/seating/ventilation adequate? If you are responsible for arranging the venue, check YOURSELF that suitab refreshments etc. are organised.
- Is the layout right? A "V" or a "U" works well. Rows are only suitable for big seminars, not for workshops like this.
- Sometimes you will want to use brain-storming or discussion groups. If you want to divide people up into syndicates or discussi groups, you can set the size of such groups by setting out tables with the right number of chairs for a group.
- If you want a low profile workshop, a round table or circular set-up is useful. Set out the chairs in a ring, let people sit where th want to and take the last empty seat yourself.

There is nothing worse than having the right message for the wrong audience. There is nothing better than having the rig message for the right audience.

Dave Carey

8. Acknowledgements and resources

8.1 Acknowledgements

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Hurt, K. *Writing effectively and powerfully*. Civicus. Available from : < http://www.civicus.org> [Accessed 18 June 2012]
Jordan, K. *Effective Writing Skills for Staff and Managers*.
Meyer, M.M. *Business Writing for Office Professionals.*
Porteus, J. *Professional Business Writing.*

8.2 Resources

8.2.1 Kenneth Beare – About.com English second language (ESL) Guide.

Sign up for their weekly newsletter. http://esl.about.com

8.2.2 Business English – Communication: www.ego4u.com/en/business-english/communication

8.2.3 Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/english

8.2.4 English grammar 4 u: www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/tests

8.2.5 Purdue University: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/sitemap

8.2.6 Legal Write. Software of templates for compiling legal agreements in South Africa www.pastel.co.za

8.2.7 "Business in a box." More than 1 200 templates, but designed in USA.

Internet download: www.business-in-a-box.com

Commit yourself to lifelong learning. The most valuable asset you will ever have is your mind and what you put into it.

Brian Tracey