

4

Writing Business Messages

From the Real World

“Receiving information in this form makes us feel hoodwinked, inferior, definitely frustrated and angry, and it causes a divide between us and the writer.”¹

—From an employee writing to the Plain English Campaign to complain about the confusing memos she received at work

www.plainenglish.co.uk

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- 1 Explain the importance of adapting your messages to the needs and expectations of your audience
- 2 Define the “you” attitude and its role in successful communication
- 3 Discuss four ways of achieving a businesslike tone with a style that is clear and concise
- 4 Explain the meaning of plain English and its value in business communication
- 5 Briefly describe how to select words that are not only correct but also effective
- 6 Explain how sentence style affects emphasis within your message
- 7 List five ways to develop coherent paragraphs
- 8 Identify the most common software features that help you craft messages more efficiently

The situation described in the quote to the left is all too common in business these days: murky, confusing messages that do more to anger and alienate than to communicate. Your success in business will depend to a large degree on how well you can inform and persuade others—how successful do you think you’ll be if your messages cause reactions like this? Fortunately, writing effective, audience-focused messages is within the grasp of every professional who is willing to learn a few basic concepts.

With a solid plan in place (see Chapter 3), you’re ready to choose the words and craft the sentences and paragraphs that will carry your ideas to their intended audiences. Figure 4.1 lists the tasks involved in adapting to your audience and composing your message.

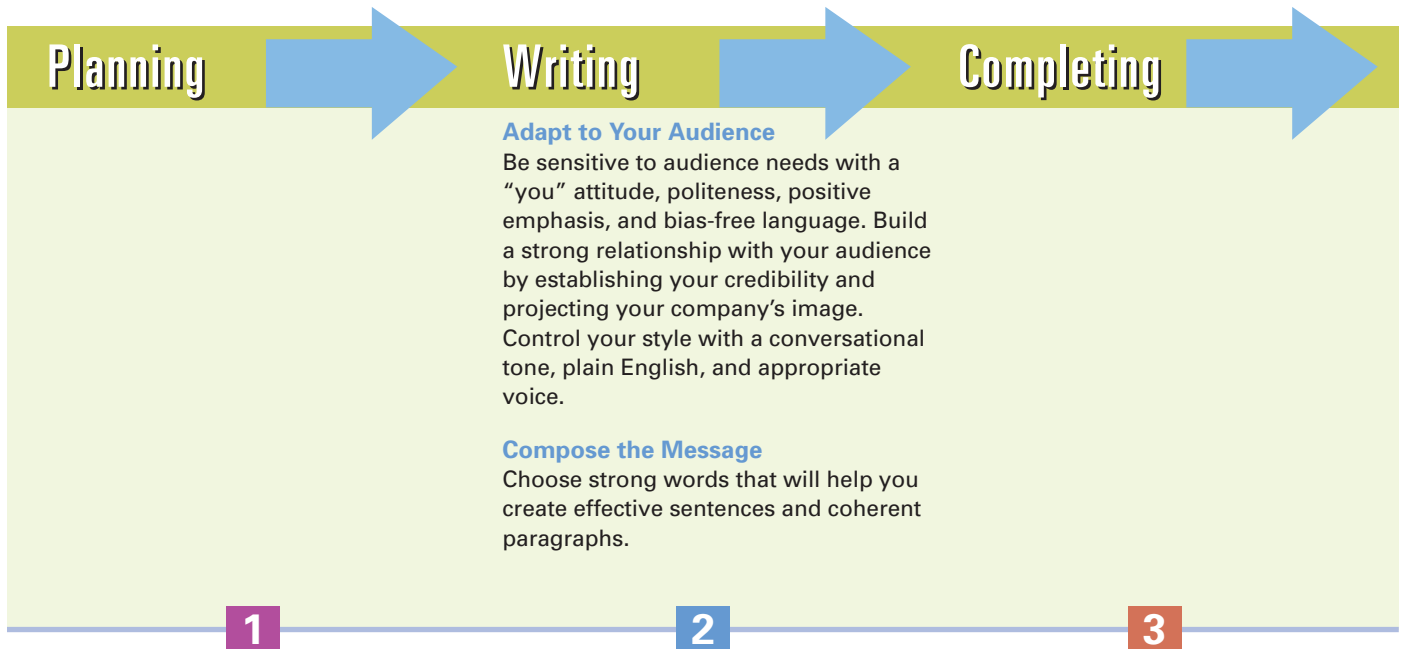
Adapting to Your Audience

Whether consciously or not, audiences greet most incoming messages with a question: “What’s in this for me?” If your intended audience thinks a message does not apply to them or doesn’t meet their needs, they’ll be far less inclined to pay attention to it. By adapting your communication to the needs and expectations of your audiences, you’ll provide a more compelling answer to the “What’s in this for me?” question and improve

Audiences want to know how your messages will benefit them.

FIGURE 4.1 Step Two in the Three-Step Writing Process: Writing Your Messages

The second step in the three-step writing process includes two vital tasks: adapting to your audience and composing your message.



the chances of your message being successful. To adapt your message to your audience, try to be sensitive to your audience’s needs, build a strong relationship with your audience, and control your style to maintain a professional tone.

Being Sensitive to Your Audience’s Needs

In any business message, you can use all the right words and still not be sensitive to your audience and their needs. To demonstrate true audience sensitivity, adopt the “you” attitude, maintain good standards of etiquette, emphasize the positive, and use bias-free language.

Using the “You” Attitude

You are already becoming familiar with the audience-centered approach, trying to see a subject through your audience’s eyes. Now you want to project this approach in your messages by adopting a “you” attitude—that is, by speaking and writing in terms of your audience’s wishes, interests, hopes, and preferences.

On the simplest level, you can adopt the “you” attitude by replacing terms that refer to yourself and your company with terms that refer to your audience. In other words, use *you* and *yours* instead of *I*, *me*, *mine*, *we*, *us*, and *ours*:

The “you” attitude is best implemented by expressing your message in terms of the audience’s interests and needs.

Instead of This

To help us process this order, we must ask for another copy of the requisition.

We offer MP3 players with 50, 75, or 100 gigabytes of storage capacity.

Write This

So that your order can be filled promptly, please send another copy of the requisition.

Select your MP3 player from three models with 50, 75, or 100 gigabytes of storage capacity.

You’ll find that using “you” and “yours” often requires some finesse to avoid creating awkward sentences or messages that sound like nonstop sales pitches.² Keep in mind that

Avoid using *you* and *yours* when doing so

- Makes you sound dictatorial
- Makes someone else feel guilty
- Goes against your organization's style

Although you may be tempted now and then to be brutally frank, try to express the facts in a kind and thoughtful manner.

Use extra tact when communicating with people higher up the organization chart or outside the company.

You can communicate negative news without being negative.

the “you” attitude is not intended to be manipulative or insincere. Nor is the “you” attitude simply a matter of using one pronoun rather than another; it’s a matter of genuine empathy. You can use *you* 25 times in a single page and still ignore your audience’s true concerns. In other words, it’s the thought and sincerity that count, not the pronoun *you*. If you’re talking to a retailer, try to think like a retailer; if you’re dealing with a production supervisor, put yourself in that position; if you’re writing to a dissatisfied customer, imagine how you would feel at the other end of the transaction.

Be aware that on some occasions it’s better to avoid using *you*, particularly if doing so will sound overly authoritative or accusing. For instance, instead of saying, “You failed to deliver the customer’s order on time,” you could minimize ill will by saying, “The customer didn’t receive the order on time,” or “Let’s figure out a system that will ensure on-time deliveries.”

Maintaining Standards of Etiquette

Good etiquette is not only a way to show respect for your audience, it also helps foster a more successful environment for communication by minimizing negative emotional reaction:

Instead of This

Once again, you’ve managed to bring down the website through your incompetent programming.

You’ve been sitting on our order for two weeks, and we need it now!

Write This

Let’s review the last website update so that we can find out how to improve the process.

Our production schedules depend on timely delivery of parts and supplies, but we have not yet received the order you promised to deliver two weeks ago. Please respond today with a firm delivery commitment.

Of course, some situations require more diplomacy than others. If you know your audience well, a less formal approach might be more appropriate. However, when you are communicating with people who outrank you or with people outside your organization, an added measure of courtesy is usually needed.

Written communication and most forms of electronic media generally require more tact than oral communication (Figure 4.2). When you’re speaking, your words are softened by your tone of voice and facial expression. Plus, you can adjust your approach according to the feedback you get. If you inadvertently offend someone in writing or in a podcast, for example, you usually won’t get the immediate feedback you would need to resolve the situation. In fact, you may never know that you offended your audience.

Emphasizing the Positive

Sensitive communicators understand the difference between delivering negative news and being negative. For example, when Alaska Airlines instituted surcharges for heavy luggage in an attempt to reduce injuries to baggage handlers, the company presented the change to passengers in a positive light with the message, “Pack Light & Save.”³ Never try to hide the negative news, but look for positive points that will foster a good relationship with your audience:⁴

Instead of This

It is impossible to repair your car today.

We wasted \$300,000 advertising in that magazine.

Write This

Your car can be ready by Tuesday. Would you like a loaner until then?

Our \$300,000 advertising investment did not pay off; let’s analyze the experience and apply the insights to future campaigns.

FIGURE 4.2 Fostering a Positive Relationship with an Audience

In the “poor” example, notice how the customer service agent’s unfortunate word choices immediately derail this instant-messaging exchange. In the “improved” example, a more sensitive approach allows both people to focus on solving the problem.

Poor

Customer Service - Microsoft Internet Explorer

HELLO
How can I help you?

Customer: Hi, I tried installing the FarCast wireless router in my apartment, but I'm not getting any signals out of it at all.

Agent: OK, tell me what steps you took, and we'll see what you did wrong.

Customer: What do you mean did wrong? I followed the instructions exactly. The router is obviously defective.

Agent: Well, we'll see. Did you install the software before connecting the LAN cable, as the manual says?

Customer: Of course I did. I just said I followed

Agent is typing a message...

SEND
END

Customer starts with a simple description of the problem

Agent immediately assumes that the customer is at fault

Agent's accusation puts the customer in a defensive, negative frame of mind

Agent is practically accusing the customer of lying

The conversation has needlessly degenerated into an argument by this point

Improved

Customer Service - Microsoft Internet Explorer

HELLO
How can I help you?

Customer: Hi, I tried installing the FarCast wireless router in my apartment, but I'm not getting any signals out of it at all.

Agent: I'm sorry you're having trouble. Let's go through your setup and see if we can find the problem.

Customer: Great, thanks.

Agent: First, can you tell me which of the small green lights on the front of the router are lit up?

Customer: Only the power light. All of the other lights are off.

Agent is typing a message...

OK, we have power but looks like the router isn't getting a network signal.

SEND
END

Agent expresses sympathy for the customer's plight, which establishes an emotional bond and encourages more effective communication

The conversation continues in a positive mood, with the focus on solving the problem, not on blaming the customer

Show your audience how they will benefit from complying with your message.

If you're trying to persuade the audience to perform a particular action, point out how doing so will benefit them:

Instead of This

We will notify all three credit reporting agencies if you do not pay your overdue bill within 10 days.

I am tired of seeing so many errors in the customer service blog.

Write This

Paying your overdue bill within 10 days will prevent a negative entry on your credit record.

Proofreading your blog postings will help you avoid embarrassing mistakes that generate more customer service complaints.

Try to avoid words with negative connotations; use meaningful euphemisms instead.

In general, try to state your message without using words that might hurt or offend your audience. Substitute *euphemisms* (mild terms) for those that have unpleasant connotations. You can be honest without being harsh. Gentle language won't change the facts, but it will make them more acceptable:

Instead of This

cheap merchandise

failing

fake

Write This

economy merchandise

underperforming

imitation or faux

Be aware that when using euphemisms, you walk a fine line between softening the blow and hiding the facts. It would be unethical to speak to your community about “relocating refuse” when you're really talking about your plans for disposing of toxic waste. People respond better to an honest message delivered with integrity than they do to a sugar-coated message filled with empty talk.

Using Bias-Free Language

Avoid biased language that might offend your audience.

Bias-free language avoids words and phrases that unfairly and even unethically categorize or stigmatize people in ways related to gender, race, ethnicity, age, or disability. Contrary to what some might think, biased language is not simply about “labels.” To a significant degree, language reflects the way people think and what they believe, and biased language may well perpetuate the underlying stereotypes and prejudices that it represents.⁵ Moreover, since communication is all about perception, being fair and objective isn't enough; to establish a good relationship with your audience, you must also *appear* to be fair.⁶ Good communicators make every effort to change biased language (see Table 4.1). Bias can come in a variety of forms:

- **Gender bias.** You can avoid sexist language by using the same label for everyone (don't call a woman *chairperson* and then call a man *chairman*). Reword sentences to use *they* or to use no pronoun at all. Vary traditional patterns by sometimes putting women first (*women and men, she and he, her and his*). Note that the preferred title for women in business is *Ms.*, unless the individual asks to be addressed as *Miss* or *Mrs.* or has some other title, such as *Dr.*
- **Racial and ethnic bias.** Avoid identifying people by race or ethnic origin unless such identification is relevant to the matter at hand—and it rarely is.
- **Age bias.** Mention the age of a person only when it is relevant. Moreover, be careful of the context in which you use words that refer to age; such words carry a variety of positive and negative connotations. For example, *young* can imply youthfulness, inexperience, or even immaturity, depending on how it's used.
- **Disability bias.** No painless label exists for people with a physical, mental, sensory, or emotional impairment. Avoid mentioning a disability unless it is pertinent. However, if

Table 4.1 Overcoming Bias in Language

Examples	Unacceptable	Preferable
Gender Bias		
Using words containing “man”	Man-made	Humanity, human beings, human race, people
	Mankind	Artificial, synthetic, manufactured, constructed
	Manpower	Workers, workforce
	Businessman	Executive, manager, businessperson
	Salesman	Sales representative, salesperson, clerk
	Foreman	Supervisor
Using female-gender words	Actress, stewardess	Actor, flight attendant
Using special designations	Woman doctor, male nurse	Doctor, nurse
Using “he” to refer to “everyone”	The average worker . . . he	The average worker . . . he or she
Identifying roles with gender	The typical executive spends four hours of his day in meetings.	Most executives spend four hours a day in meetings.
	the consumer . . . she	consumers . . . they
	the nurse/teacher . . . she	nurses/teachers . . . they
Identifying women by marital status	Norm Lindstrom and Maria	Norm Lindstrom and Maria Drake
	Norm Lindstrom and Ms. Lindstrom	Mr. Lindstrom and Ms. Drake
Racial/Ethnic Bias		
Assigning stereotypes	My African-American assistant speaks more articulately than I do.	My assistant speaks more articulately than I do.
	Jim Wong is an unusually tall Asian.	Jim Wong is tall.
Identifying people by race or ethnicity	Mario M. Cuomo, Italian American politician and ex-governor of New York	Mario M. Cuomo, politician and ex-governor of New York
Age Bias		
Including age when irrelevant	Mary Kirazy, 58, has just joined our trust department.	Mary Kirazy has just joined our trust department.
Disability Bias		
Putting the disability before the person	Crippled workers face many barriers on the job.	Workers with physical disabilities face many barriers on the job.
	An epileptic, Tracy has no trouble doing her job.	Tracy’s epilepsy has no effect on her job performance.

you must refer to someone’s disability, avoid terms such as *handicapped*, *crippled*, or *retarded*. Put the person first and the disability second.⁷

Building Strong Relationships with Your Audience

Focusing on your audience’s needs is vital to effective communication, but you must also attend to your own priorities as a communicator. You can address your own needs while building a positive relationship by establishing your credibility and projecting your company’s image.

Establishing Your Credibility

Your audience’s response to every message you send depends heavily on their perception of your **credibility**, a measure of your believability based on how reliable you are and how much trust you evoke in others. Whether you’re working to build credibility with a new

People are more likely to react positively to your message when they have confidence in you.

To enhance your credibility, emphasize such factors as honesty, objectivity, and awareness of audience needs.

audience, to maintain credibility with an existing audience—or to restore credibility after a mistake—emphasize the following:

- **Honesty.** Demonstrating honesty and integrity will earn you the respect of your audiences, even if they don't always agree with or welcome your messages.
- **Objectivity.** Show that you can distance yourself from emotional situations and look at all sides of an issue.
- **Awareness of audience needs.** Let your audience know that you understand what's important to them.
- **Credentials, knowledge, and expertise.** Audiences need to know that you have whatever it takes to back up your message, whether it's education, professional certification, special training, past successes, or simply the fact that you've done your research.
- **Endorsements.** If your audience doesn't know anything about you, try to get assistance from someone they do know and trust.
- **Performance.** Demonstrating impressive communication skills is not enough; people need to know they can count on you to get the job done.
- **Confidence.** Audiences also need to know that you believe in yourself and your message. If you are convinced that your message is sound, you can state your case confidently, without sounding boastful or arrogant.
- **Communication style.** Support your points with evidence, not empty terms such as *amazing*, *incredible*, or *extraordinary*.
- **Sincerity.** When you offer praise, don't use hyperbole, such as “you are the most fantastic employee I could ever imagine.” Instead, point out specific qualities that warrant praise.

Finally, keep in mind that credibility can take days, months, even years to establish—and it can be wiped out in an instant. An occasional mistake or letdown is usually forgiven, but major lapses in honesty or integrity can destroy your reputation. On the other hand, when you do establish credibility, communication becomes much easier because you no longer have to spend time and energy convincing people that you are a trustworthy source of information and ideas.

Projecting the Company's Image

Your company's interests and reputation take precedence over your personal communication style.

When you communicate with outsiders, on even the most routine matter, you serve as the spokesperson for your organization. The impression you make can enhance or damage the reputation of the entire company. Thus, your own views and personality must be subordinated, at least to some extent, to the interests and style of your company.

Many organizations have specific communication guidelines that show everything from the correct use of the company name to preferred abbreviations and other grammatical details. Specifying a desired style of communication is more difficult, however. Observe more experienced colleagues to see how they communicate, and never hesitate to ask for editorial help to make sure you're conveying the appropriate tone. For instance,

Document Makeover

Improve This Letter

To practice correcting drafts of actual documents, visit your online course or the access-code-protected portion of the Companion Website. Click “Document Makeovers,” then click Chapter 4. You will find a letter that contains problems and errors relating to what you've learned in this chapter about writing business messages. Use the Final Draft decision tool to create an improved version of this letter. Check the message for appropriate choice of approach, a conversational tone, correct use of active voice, and logical paragraphs.

with clients entrusting thousands or millions of dollars to it, an investment firm communicates in a style quite different from that of a clothing retailer. And a clothing retailer specializing in high-quality business attire communicates in a style different from that of a store catering to the latest trends in casual wear.

Controlling Your Style and Tone

Style is the way you use words to achieve a certain **tone**, or overall impression. You can vary your style—your sentence structure and vocabulary—to sound forceful or objective, personal or formal, colorful or dry. The right choice depends on the nature of your message and your relationship with the reader.

Using a Conversational Tone

The tone of your business messages can range from informal to conversational to formal. If you're in a large organization and you're communicating with your superiors or with customers, your tone would tend to be more formal and respectful.⁸ However, that formal tone might sound distant and cold if used with close colleagues.

Compare the three versions of the letter in Table 4.2. The first is too formal and stuffy for today's audiences, whereas the third is too casual for any audience other than close associates or friends. The second message demonstrates the conversational tone used in most business communication—using plain language that sounds businesslike without being stuffy or full of jargon. You can achieve a conversational tone in your messages by following these guidelines:

Most business messages aim for a conversational style that is warm but still businesslike.

- **Avoid obsolete and pompous language.** Most companies now shy away from such dated phrases as “attached please find” and “please be advised that.” Similarly, avoid

Table 4.2 Formal, Conversational, and Informal Tones

Formal Tone	Conversational Tone	Informal Tone
<p>Reserved for the most formal occasions</p> <p>Dear Ms. Navarro:</p> <p>Enclosed please find the information that was requested during our telephone communication of May 14. As was mentioned at that time, Midville Hospital has significantly more doctors of exceptional quality than any other health facility in the state.</p> <p>As you were also informed, our organization has quite an impressive network of doctors and other health-care professionals with offices located throughout the state. In the event that you should need a specialist, our professionals will be able to make an appropriate recommendation.</p> <p>In the event that you have questions or would like additional information, you may certainly contact me during regular business hours.</p> <p>Most sincerely yours,</p> <p>Samuel G. Berenz</p>	<p>Preferred for most business communication</p> <p>Dear Ms. Navarro:</p> <p>Here's the information you requested during our phone conversation on Friday. As I mentioned, Midville Hospital has the best doctors and more of them than any other hospital in the state.</p> <p>In addition, we have a vast network of doctors and other health professionals with offices throughout the state. If you need a specialist, they can refer you to the right one.</p> <p>If you would like more information, please call any time between 9:00 and 5:00, Monday through Friday.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Samuel G. Berenz</p>	<p>Reserved for communication with friends and close associates</p> <p>Hi Gabriella:</p> <p>Hope all is well. Just sending along the information you asked for. As I said on Friday, Midville Hospital has more and better doctors than any other hospital in the state.</p> <p>We also have a large group of doctors and other health professionals with offices close to you at work or at home. Need a specialist? They'll refer you to the right one.</p> <p>Just give me a ring if you want to know more. Any time from 9:00 to 5:00 should be fine.</p> <p>Take care,</p> <p>Sam</p>

using obscure words, trite expressions, and overly complicated sentences to impress others.

- **Avoid preaching and bragging.** Few things are more irritating than people who think that they know everything and that others know nothing. If you do need to remind your audience of something obvious, try to work in the information casually, perhaps in the middle of a paragraph, where it will sound like a secondary comment rather than a major revelation. Also, avoid bragging about your accomplishments or those of your organization (unless your audience is a part of your organization).
- **Be careful with intimacy.** Business messages should generally avoid intimacy, such as sharing personal details or adopting a casual, unprofessional tone. However, when you do have a close relationship with your audience, such as among the members of a close-knit team, a more intimate tone is sometimes appropriate and even expected.
- **Be careful with humor.** Never use humor in formal messages or when you're communicating across cultural boundaries. Humor can easily backfire and divert attention from your message. If you don't know your audience well or you're not skilled at using humor in a business setting, don't use it at all.

Using Plain English

What do you think this sentence is trying to say?

We continually exist to synergistically supply value-added deliverables such that we may continue to proactively maintain enterprise-wide data to stay competitive in tomorrow's world.⁹

If you don't have any idea what it means, you're not alone. However, this is a real sentence from a real company. This sort of incomprehensible, buzzword-filled writing is driving a widespread call to use *plain English*.

Plain English is a way of presenting information in a simple, unadorned style so that your audience can easily grasp your meaning—language “that the intended audience can read, understand and act upon the first time they read it.”¹⁰ You can see how this definition supports using the “you” attitude and shows respect for your audience. Murky, pompous, or unnecessarily complex writing is the very antithesis of the “you” attitude.

For all its advantages, be aware that plain English does have some limitations. For instance, it sometimes lacks the precision or subtlety necessary for scientific research, engineering documents, intense feeling, and personal insight.

Selecting Active or Passive Voice

Your choice of active or passive voice also affects the tone of your message. You are using **active voice** when the subject performs the action, and the object receives the action: “John rented the office.” You're using **passive voice** when the subject receives the action: “The office was rented by John.” As you can see, the passive voice combines the helping verb *to be* with a form of the verb that is usually similar to the past tense.

Using the active voice helps make your writing more direct, livelier, and easier to read (see Table 4.3). Passive voice is not wrong grammatically, but it can be cumbersome, lengthy, and vague. In most cases, the active voice is your best choice.¹¹ Nevertheless, using the passive voice can help you demonstrate the “you” attitude in some situations:

- When you want to be diplomatic about pointing out a problem or error of some kind
- When you want to point out what's being done without taking or attributing either the credit or the blame
- When you want to avoid personal pronouns (*I* and *we*) in order to create an objective tone

The second half of Table 4.3 illustrates several situations in which the passive voice helps you focus your message on your audience.

Audiences can understand and act on plain English without reading it over and over.

Active sentences are usually stronger than passive ones.

Use passive sentences to soften bad news, to put yourself in the background, or to create an impersonal tone.

Table 4.3 Choosing Active or Passive Voice

In general, avoid passive voice in order to make your writing lively and direct

Dull and Indirect in Passive Voice

The new procedure was developed by the operations team.

Legal problems are created by this contract.

Reception preparations have been undertaken by our PR people for the new CEO's arrival.

Lively and Direct in Active Voice

The operations team developed the new procedure.

This contract creates legal problems.

Our PR people have begun planning a reception for the new CEO.

However, passive voice is helpful when you need to be diplomatic or want to focus attention on problems or solutions rather than on people

Accusatory or Self-Congratulatory in Active Voice

You lost the shipment.

I recruited seven engineers last month.

We are investigating the high rate of failures on the final assembly line.

More Diplomatic in Passive Voice

The shipment was lost.

Seven engineers were recruited last month.

The high rate of failures on the final assembly line is being investigated.

Composing Your Message

With these insights into how you can adapt to your audience, you're ready to begin composing your message. As you compose your first draft, try to let your creativity flow. Don't try to draft and edit at the same time or worry about getting everything perfect. Make up words if you can't think of the right word, draw pictures, talk out loud—do whatever it takes to get the ideas out of your head and onto your computer screen or a piece of paper. You'll have time to revise and refine the material later.

The most successful messages have three important elements: strong words, effective sentences, and coherent paragraphs.

Choosing Strong Words

Effective messages depend on carefully chosen words, whether you select them during your first draft or edit them in later.¹² First, pay close attention to correctness. If you make grammatical or usage errors, you lose credibility with your audience—even if your message is otherwise correct. Poor grammar implies that you're uninformed, and audiences put less faith in an uninformed source. Worse still, poor grammar can imply that you don't respect your audience enough to get things right. If you have doubts about what is correct, look up the answer, and use the proper form of expression. Check the "Handbook of Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage" at the end of this book, or consult the many special reference books and resources available in libraries, in bookstores, and on the Internet.

Just as important as selecting the correct word is selecting the most suitable word for the job at hand. Naturally, using the right words is important in life-and-death situations. But even when you're dealing with less perilous circumstances, the right words can dramatically affect the success of your communication efforts. Compare these two sentences:

Talk Energy is a network of homeowners, engineers, architects, and designers [who] are interested in energy efficiency and renewable energy.¹³

Talk Energy is a group of homeowners, engineers, architects, and designers [who] are interested in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Both sentences are correct, but the word *network* in the first sentence does a much better job of conveying the notion of being connected and mutually supportive than *group* in the second sentence. Moreover, even though "network" is a noun here, it suggests action and energy because the very essence of networking is making connections, whereas "group" is a much more static concept.

Correctness is the first consideration when choosing words.

Effectiveness is the second consideration when choosing words.

The more abstract a word is, the more it is removed from the tangible, objective world of things that can be perceived with the senses.

Balancing Abstract and Concrete Words

Words vary dramatically in the degree of abstraction or concreteness they convey. An **abstract word** expresses a concept, quality, or characteristic. Abstractions are usually broad, encompassing a category of ideas, and they are often intellectual, academic, or philosophical. *Love, honor, progress, tradition, and beauty* are abstractions, as are such important business concepts as *productivity, profits, quality, and motivation*. In contrast, a **concrete word** stands for something you can touch, see, or visualize. Most concrete terms are anchored in the tangible, material world. *Chair, table, horse, rose, kick, kiss, red, green, and two* are concrete words; they are direct, clear, and exact. Incidentally, technology continues to generate new words and new meanings that describe things that don't have a physical presence but are nonetheless concrete: *software, database, signal, and code* are all concrete terms as well.

As you can imagine, abstractions tend to cause more trouble for writers and readers than concrete words. Abstractions tend to be “fuzzy” and subject to more than one interpretation. The best way to minimize such problems is to blend abstract terms with concrete ones, the general with the specific. State the concept, then pin it down with details expressed in more concrete terms. Save the abstractions for ideas that cannot be expressed any other way. In addition, abstract words such as *small, numerous, sizable, near, soon, good, and fine* are imprecise, so try to replace them with terms that are more accurate. Instead of referring to a *sizable loss*, talk about a *loss of \$32 million*.

Finding Words That Communicate

When you compose your business messages, think carefully to find the words that communicate exactly what you want to say (see Table 4.4).

Try to use words that are powerful and familiar.

- **Choose powerful words.** Choose words that express your thoughts most clearly, specifically, and dynamically. For instance, if find yourself using many adjectives and

Table 4.4 Finding Words That Communicate with Power

Avoid Weak Phrases	Use Strong Terms
Wealthy businessperson	Tycoon
Business prosperity	Economic Boom
Hard times	Slump
Avoid Unfamiliar Words	Use Familiar Words
Ascertain	Find out, learn
Consummate	Close, bring about
Peruse	Read, study
Circumvent	Avoid
Increment	Growth, increase
Unequivocal	Certain
Avoid Clichés and Buzzwords	Use Plain Language
An uphill battle	A challenge
Writing on the wall	Prediction
Call the shots	Be in charge
Take by storm	Attack
Cost an arm and a leg	Expensive
A new ballgame	Fresh start
Fall through the cracks	Be overlooked
Think outside the box	Be creative

adverbs, chances are you're trying to compensate for weak nouns and verbs. Saying that *sales plummeted* is stronger and more efficient than saying *sales dropped dramatically* or *sales experienced a dramatic drop*.

- **Choose familiar words.** You'll communicate best with words that are familiar to both you and your readers.
- **Avoid clichés and buzzwords.** Although familiar words are generally the best choice, beware of *clichés*—terms and phrases so common that they have lost some of their power to communicate—and *buzzwords*—trendy new terms often quickly fall out of style. When people use these terms frequently, it's often a sign that they don't know how to express themselves otherwise and don't invest the energy required for original writing.¹⁴
- **Use jargon carefully.** Handle technical or professional terms with care. Using them with the wrong audience can confuse and frustrate readers, but *not* using them with audiences that routinely communicate using such terms can label you as inexperienced or unaware.

Avoid clichés and trendy buzzwords in your writing, and use jargon only when your audience is completely familiar with it.

Creating Effective Sentences

Making every sentence count is a key step in creating effective messages. Start by selecting the optimum type of sentence, then arrange words to emphasize the most important point in each sentence.

Choosing from the Four Types of Sentences

Sentences come in four basic varieties: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. A **simple sentence** has one main clause (a single subject and a single predicate), although it may be expanded by nouns and pronouns serving as objects of the action and by modifying phrases. Here's a typical example (with the subject underlined once and the predicate verb underlined twice):

Profits increased in the past year.

A simple sentence has one main clause.

A **compound sentence** has two main clauses that express two or more independent but related thoughts of equal importance, usually joined by *and*, *but*, or *or*. In effect, a compound sentence is a merger of two or more simple sentences (independent clauses) that are related. For example:

Wages have declined by 5 percent, and employee turnover has been high.

A compound sentence has two main clauses.

The independent clauses in a compound sentence are always separated by a comma or by a semicolon (in which case the conjunction—*and*, *but*, or—is dropped).

A **complex sentence** expresses one main thought (the independent clause) and one or more subordinate thoughts (dependent clauses) related to it, often separated by a comma. The subordinate thought, which comes first in the following sentence, could not stand alone:

Although you may question Gerald's conclusions, you must admit that his research is thorough.

A complex sentence has one main clause and one subordinate clause.

A **compound-complex sentence** has two main clauses, at least one of which contains a subordinate clause:

Profits have increased in the past year, and although you may question Gerald's conclusions, you must admit that his research is thorough.

A compound-complex sentence has two main clauses and at least one dependent clause.

From these examples, you can see the power and variety that the different sentence types can bring to your writing. To make your writing as effective as possible, strive for variety and balance using all four sentence types. If you use too many simple sentences, you won't be able to properly express the relationships among your ideas, and your writing will sound choppy and abrupt. If you use too many long, compound sentences, your writing will sound monotonous. On the other hand, an uninterrupted series of complex or compound-complex sentences is hard to follow.

Writing is more effective if it balances all four sentence types.

Emphasize parts of a sentence by

- Devoting more words to them
- Putting them at the beginning or at the end of the sentence
- Making them the subject of the sentence

Using Sentence Style to Emphasize Key Thoughts

In every message, some ideas are more important than others. You can emphasize these key ideas through your sentence style. One obvious technique is to give important points the most space. When you want to call attention to a thought, use extra words to describe it. Consider this sentence:

The chairperson called for a vote of the shareholders.

To emphasize the importance of the chairperson, you might describe her more fully:

Having considerable experience in corporate takeover battles, the chairperson called for a vote of the shareholders.

You can increase the emphasis even more by adding a separate, short sentence to augment the first:

The chairperson called for a vote of the shareholders. She has considerable experience in corporate takeover battles.

You can also call attention to a thought by making it the subject of the sentence. In the following example, the emphasis is on the person:

I can write letters much more quickly using a computer.

However, by changing the subject, the computer takes center stage:

The *computer* enables me to write letters much more quickly.

Another way to emphasize an idea is to place it either at the beginning or at the end of a sentence:

Less Emphatic: We are cutting the *price* to stimulate demand.

More Emphatic: To stimulate demand, we are cutting the *price*.

In complex sentences, the placement of the dependent clause hinges on the relationship between the ideas expressed. If you want to emphasize the idea expressed in the dependent clause, put that clause at the end of the sentence (the most emphatic position) or at the beginning (the second most emphatic position). If you want to downplay the idea, position the dependent clause within the sentence.

Most Emphatic: The electronic parts are manufactured in Mexico, *which has lower wage rates than the United States*.

Emphatic: *Because wage rates are lower there*, the electronic parts are manufactured in Mexico.

Least Emphatic: *Mexico, which has lower wage rates*, was selected as the production site for the electronic parts.

In every writing project, a clear plan and strong knowledge of your audience will help you make the most effective sentence choices.

Crafting Coherent Paragraphs

Paragraphs organize sentences related to the same general topic. Readers expect each paragraph to focus on a single unit of thought and to be a logical link in an organized sequence of the thoughts that make up a complete message. As with sentences, controlling the elements of each paragraph helps your readers grasp the main idea of your document and understand how the specific pieces of support material back up that idea.

Placement of dependent clauses can determine emphasis.

Understanding the Elements of the Paragraph

Paragraphs vary widely in length and form, but most contain three basic elements: a topic sentence, support sentences that develop the topic, and transitional words and phrases.

Topic Sentence Every properly constructed paragraph is *unified*; it deals with a single topic. The sentence that introduces that topic is called the **topic sentence**. The topic sentence gives readers a summary of the general idea that will be covered in the rest of the paragraph. In business writing, the topic sentence is usually explicit and is often the first sentence in the paragraph. The following examples show how a topic sentence can introduce the subject and suggest the way that subject will be developed:

The medical products division has been troubled for many years by public relations problems. [In the rest of the paragraph, readers will learn the details of the problems.]

Relocating the plant in New York has two main disadvantages. [The disadvantages will be explained in subsequent sentences.]

Support Sentences In most paragraphs, the topic sentence needs to be explained, justified, or extended with one or more support sentences. These related sentences must all have a bearing on the general subject and must provide enough specific details to make the topic clear:

The medical products division has been troubled for many years by public relations problems. Since 2002 the local newspaper has published 15 articles that portray the division in a negative light. We have been accused of everything from mistreating laboratory animals to polluting the local groundwater. Our facility has been described as a health hazard. Our scientists are referred to as “Frankensteins,” and our profits are considered “obscene.”

The support sentences are all more specific than the topic sentence. Each one provides another piece of evidence to demonstrate the general truth of the main thought. Also, each sentence is clearly related to the general idea being developed, which gives the paragraph its unity. A paragraph is well developed when (1) it contains enough information to make the topic sentence convincing and interesting and (2) it contains no extraneous, unrelated sentences.

Transitional Elements In addition to being unified and well supported, effective paragraphs are *coherent*; that is, they are arranged in a logical order so that the audience can understand the train of thought. You achieve coherence by using transitions that show the relationship between paragraphs and among sentences within paragraphs. **Transitions** are words or phrases that tie ideas together by showing how one thought is related to another. They not only help readers understand the connections you’re trying to make but also smooth your writing. Ideally, you begin planning these transitions while you’re outlining, as you decide how the various ideas and blocks of information will be arranged and connected.¹⁵

You can establish transitions in a variety of ways:

- **Use connecting words:** *and, but, or, nevertheless, however, in addition,* and so on.
- **Echo a word or phrase from a previous paragraph or sentence:** “A system should be established for monitoring inventory levels. *This system* will provide . . .”
- **Use a pronoun that refers to a noun used previously:** “Ms. Arthur is the leading candidate for the president’s position. *She* has excellent qualifications.”
- **Use words that are frequently paired:** “The machine has a *minimum* output of . . . *Its maximum* output is . . .”

Some transitional elements serve as mood changers; that is, they alert the reader to a change in mood from the previous paragraph. Some announce a total contrast with what’s gone on before, some announce a causal relationship, and some signal a change in

Most paragraphs consist of

- A topic sentence that reveals the subject of the paragraph
- Related sentences that support and expand the topic
- Transitional elements that help readers move between sentences and paragraphs

Transitional elements include

- Connecting words (conjunctions)
- Repeated words or phrases
- Pronouns
- Words that are frequently paired

time. Here is a list of transitions frequently used to move readers smoothly between sentences and paragraphs:

Additional detail:	moreover, furthermore, in addition, besides, first, second, third, finally
Causal relationship:	therefore, because, accordingly, thus, consequently, hence, as a result, so
Comparison:	similarly, here again, likewise, in comparison, still
Contrast:	yet, conversely, whereas, nevertheless, on the other hand, however, but, nonetheless
Condition:	although, if
Illustration:	for example, in particular, in this case, for instance
Time sequence:	formerly, after, when, meanwhile, sometimes
Intensification:	indeed, in fact, in any event
Summary:	in brief, in short, to sum up
Repetition:	that is, in other words, as I mentioned earlier

Consider using a transition whenever it might help the reader understand your ideas and follow you from point to point. You can use transitions inside paragraphs to tie related points together and between paragraphs to ease the shift from one distinct thought to another. In longer reports, transitions that link major sections or chapters are often complete paragraphs that serve as summaries of the ideas presented in the section just ending or as mini-introductions to the next section.

Developing Paragraphs

A paragraph's coherence strongly depends on how you develop it, and the best way to do that is to use a structure that is familiar to your readers, appropriate to the idea you're trying to portray, and suited to your purpose. Five of the most common development techniques are illustration, comparison or contrast, cause and effect, classification, and problem and solution (see Table 4.5).

Five ways to develop paragraphs:

- Illustration
- Comparison or contrast
- Cause and effect
- Classification
- Problem and solution

Using Technology to Compose and Shape Your Messages

Take full advantage of your word processor's formatting capabilities to help you produce effective, professional documents in less time.

As with every phase of business communication, careful use of technology can help you compose and shape better messages in less time. As you probably know, today's software (including both word processors and online publishing systems for websites and blogs) provides a wide range of tools to help writers compose documents:

- **Style sheets and templates.** Most word processors offer some form of style sheets, which are master lists of predefined styles (typeface, type size, and so on) for headlines, paragraph text, and so on (here, the word *style* should not be confused with *writing style*, discussed earlier in the chapter). Many organizations provide employees with approved style sheets to ensure a consistent look for all company documents. Moreover, style sheets can eliminate hours of design time by making many of your choices for you. Templates can go beyond style sheets by defining such factors as page design, available fonts, and other features. Templates can include *boilerplate*, or sections of text that are reused from document to document. Like style sheets, templates save time by making choices for you in advance. (Depending on the version of Microsoft Word you're using, style sheets may have been replaced by templates.)
- **Autocompletion.** Software called *autocompletion* (or something similar) inserts a ready-made block of text when you type the first few characters. For example, instead of typing your company's name, address, phone number, fax number, e-mail address,

Table 4.5 Five Techniques for Developing Paragraphs

Technique	Description	Sample
Illustration	Giving examples that demonstrate the general idea	Some of our most popular products are available through local distributors. For example, Everett & Lemmings carries our frozen soups and entrees. The J. B. Green Company carries our complete line of seasonings, as well as the frozen soups. Wilmont Foods, also a major distributor, now carries our new line of frozen desserts.
Comparison or Contrast	Using similarities or differences to develop the topic	When the company was small, the recruiting function could be handled informally. The need for new employees was limited, and each manager could comfortably screen and hire her or his own staff. However, our successful bid on the Owens contract means that we will be doubling our labor force over the next six months. To hire that many people without disrupting our ongoing activities, we will create a separate recruiting group within the human resources department.
Cause and Effect	Focusing on the reasons for something	The heavy-duty fabric of your Wanderer tent probably broke down for one of two reasons: (1) a sharp object punctured the fabric, and without reinforcement, the hole was enlarged by the stress of pitching the tent daily for a week or (2) the fibers gradually rotted because the tent was folded and stored while still wet.
Classification	Showing how a general idea is broken into specific categories	Successful candidates for our supervisor trainee program generally come from one of several groups. The largest group, by far, consists of recent graduates of accredited business management programs. The next largest group comes from within our own company, as we try to promote promising staff workers to positions of greater responsibility. Finally, we do occasionally accept candidates with outstanding supervisory experience in related industries.
Problem and Solution	Presenting a problem and then discussing the solution	Selling handmade toys online is a challenge because consumers are accustomed to buying heavily advertised toys from major chain stores or well-known websites such as Amazon.com. However, if we develop an appealing website, we can compete on the basis of product novelty and quality. In addition, we can provide unusual crafts at a competitive price: a rocking horse of birch, with a hand-knit tail and mane; a music box with the child's name painted on the top; a real teepee, made by Native American artisans.

and website URL, you can set the software to enter all this information as soon as you type the first three letters of the company name.

- **Autocorrection.** Another automatic feature in some programs instantly corrects spelling and typing errors and converts text to symbols, such as converting (c) to the © copyright symbol. However, autocorrection may make changes that you *don't* want made, such as converting “nd,” “st,” or “th” to superscript characters when paired with numbers, as in “21st century.” (Although the use of such superscripts is common in word processing, many design professionals consider it poor typesetting.)
- **File merge** and **mail merge.** Today's software makes it easy to combine files—an especially handy feature when several members of a team write different sections of a report. For particularly complex reports, you can set up a master document that merges a number of subdocuments automatically when it's time to print. *Mail merge* lets you personalize form letters by inserting names and addresses from a database.
- **Endnotes, footnotes, indexes, and tables of contents.** Your computer can also help you track footnotes and endnotes, renumbering them every time you add or delete references. For a report's indexes and table of contents, you can simply flag the items you want to include, and the software assembles the lists for you.
- **Wizards.** Programs such as Microsoft Word offer *wizards* that guide you through the process of creating letters, résumés, and other common documents.

As with other forms of communication technology, using these tools efficiently and effectively requires some balance. You need to learn enough about the features to be handy with them, without spending so much time that the tools distract the writing process.

Reviewing Key Points

This chapter discusses the second step in the three-step writing process: writing business messages, including the two key tasks of adapting to your audience and composing your message. First, the chapter helps you adapt to your audience by explaining how to be sensitive to your audience's needs: using the "you" attitude, practicing good etiquette, emphasizing the positive, and using bias-free language. Next, it shows you how to build strong relationships with your audience by establishing your credibility and projecting your company's image. The final aspect of adapting to your audience is controlling your style and tone: using a conversational tone, emphasizing plain English, and making effective use of active and passive voice.

The second part of the chapter helps you compose your message. It explains how to select the best words by blending abstract and concrete words, choosing words that are strong and familiar, and avoiding clichés and jargon. The chapter shows you how to create effective sentences by using all four types, selecting active or passive voice, and emphasizing key thoughts. The chapter next explains how to develop coherent paragraphs by adapting paragraph length, using five development techniques, and using transitions to achieve both unity and coherence. The chapter concludes with advice on using communication technology wisely.

The next chapter focuses on the last step of the writing process: completing business messages. It discusses how to revise your messages for conciseness and clarity. It covers how to produce your message by choosing the right design elements, making those design elements effective, and using computers to improve your finished documents. In addition, you will learn how to proofread your business messages—what to look for and how to adapt the process.

Test Your Knowledge

1. Which writing characteristics should you avoid if you want to achieve a conversational tone?
2. How does an abstract word differ from a concrete word?
3. In what three situations should you use passive voice?

4. How can you use sentence style to emphasize key thoughts?

5. What functions do transitions serve?

Apply Your Knowledge

1. How can you apply the “you” approach if you don’t know your audience personally?
2. When composing business messages, how can you be yourself and project your company’s image at the same time?
3. What steps can you take to make abstract concepts such as *opportunity* feel more concrete in your messages?
4. Should you bother using transitional elements if the logical sequence of your message is already obvious? Why or why not?
5. **Ethical Choices** Seven million people in the United States are allergic to one or more food ingredients. Every year 30,000 of these people end up in the emergency room after suffering an allergic reaction, and 200 of them die. Many of these tragic events are tied to poorly written food labels that either fail to identify dangerous allergens or use scientific terms that most consumers don’t recognize. Do food manufacturers have a responsibility to ensure that consumers read, understand, and follow warnings on food products? Explain your answer.

Practice Your Knowledge

Exercises for Perfecting Your Writing

The “You” Attitude Rewrite the following sentences to reflect your audience’s viewpoint.

1. We request that you use the order form supplied in the back of our catalog.
2. We insist that you always bring your credit card to the store.
3. We want to get rid of all our 15-inch monitors to make room in our warehouse for the 19-inch screens. Thus we are offering a 25 percent discount on all sales this week.
4. I am applying for the position of bookkeeper in your office. I feel that my grades prove that I am bright and capable, and I think I can do a good job for you.
5. As requested, we are sending the refund for \$25.

Emphasizing the Positive Revise these sentences to be positive rather than negative.

6. To avoid the loss of your credit rating, please remit payment within 10 days.
7. We don’t make refunds on returned merchandise that is soiled.
8. Because we are temporarily out of Baby Cry dolls, we won’t be able to ship your order for 10 days.
9. You failed to specify the color of the blouse that you ordered.
10. You should have realized that waterbeds will freeze in unheated houses during winter. Therefore, our guarantee does not cover the valve damage and you must pay the \$9.50 valve-replacement fee (plus postage).

Emphasizing the Positive Revise the following sentences to replace unflattering terms (in italics) with euphemisms:

11. The new boss is _____ (*stubborn*) when it comes to doing things by the book.
12. When you say we’ve doubled our profit level, you are _____ (*wrong*).
13. Just be careful not to make any _____ (*stupid*) choices this week.
14. Jim Riley is _____ (*incompetent*) for that kind of promotion.
15. Glen monopolizes every meeting by being _____ (*a loudmouth*).

Courteous Communication Revise the following sentences to make them more courteous:

16. You claim that you mailed your check last Thursday, but we have not received it.
17. It is not our policy to exchange sale items, especially after they have been worn.
18. You neglected to sign the enclosed contract.
19. I received your letter, in which you assert that our shipment was three days late.
20. You failed to enclose your instructions for your new will.

Bias-Free Language Rewrite each of the following sentences to eliminate bias:

21. For an Indian, Maggie certainly is outgoing.
22. He needs a wheelchair, but he doesn’t let his handicap affect his job performance.
23. A pilot must have the ability to stay calm under pressure, and then he must be trained to cope with any problem that arises.

24. Candidate Renata Parsons, married and the mother of a teenager, will attend the debate.
25. Senior citizen Sam Nugent is still an active salesman.

Message Composition: Selecting Words In the following sentences, replace vague phrases (underlined) with concrete phrases. Make up any details you might need.

26. We will be opening our new facility sometime this spring.
27. You can now purchase our new Leaf-Away yard and lawn blower at a substantial savings.
28. After the reception, we were surprised that such a large number attended.
29. The new production line has been operating with increased efficiency on every run.
30. Over the holiday, we hired a crew to expand the work area.

Message Composition: Selecting Words In the following sentences, replace weak terms (in italics) with words that are stronger:

31. The two reporters _____ (*ran after*) every lead enthusiastically.
32. Even large fashion houses have to match staff size to the normal _____ (*seasonal ups and downs*).
33. The _____ (*bright*) colors in that ad are keeping customers from seeing what we have to sell.
34. Health costs _____ (*suddenly rise*) when management forgets to emphasize safety issues.
35. Once we solved the zoning issue, new business construction _____ (*moved forward*), and the district has been flourishing ever since.

Message Composition: Selecting Words Rewrite these sentences to replace the clichés with fresh, personal expressions:

36. Being a jack-of-all-trades, Dave worked well in his new selling job.
37. Moving Leslie into the accounting department, where she was literally a fish out of water, was like putting a square peg into a round hole, if you get my drift.
38. I knew she was at death's door, but I thought the doctor would pull her through.
39. Movies aren't really my cup of tea; as far as I am concerned, they can't hold a candle to a good book.
40. It's a dog-eat-dog world out there in the rat race of the asphalt jungle.

Message Composition: Selecting Words In the following sentences, replace long, complicated words with short, simple ones:

41. Management _____ (*inaugurated*) the recycling policy six months ago.
42. You can convey the same meaning without _____ (*utilizing*) the same words.
43. You'll never be promoted unless you _____ (*endeavor*) to be more patient.
44. I have to wait until payday to _____ (*ascertain*) whether I got the raise or not.
45. John will send you a copy, once he's inserted all the _____ (*alterations*) you've requested.
46. Grand Tree _____ (*fabricates*) office furniture that is both durable and attractive.
47. I understand from your letter that you expect a full refund, _____ (*nevertheless*) your warranty expired more than a year ago.

Message Composition: Selecting Words Rewrite the following sentences, replacing obsolete phrases with up-to-date versions. Write *none* if you think there is no appropriate substitute.

48. I have completed the form and returned it to my insurance company, as per your instructions.
49. Attached herewith is a copy of our new contract for your records.
50. Even though it will increase the price of the fence, we have decided to use the redwood in lieu of the cedar.
51. Saunders & Saunders has received your request for the Greenwood file, and in reply I wish to state that we will send you copies of Mr. Greenwood's documents only after Judge Taylor makes her ruling and orders us to do so.
52. Please be advised that your account with National Bank has been compromised, and we advise you to close it as soon as possible.

Message Composition: Creating Sentences Rewrite each sentence so that it is active rather than passive:

53. The raw data are submitted to the data processing division by the sales representative each Friday.
54. High profits are publicized by management.
55. The policies announced in the directive were implemented by the staff.
56. Our computers are serviced by the Santee Company.
57. The employees were represented by Janet Hogan.

Message Organization: Transitional Elements Add transitional elements to the following sentences to improve the flow of ideas. (*Note:* You may need to eliminate or add some words to smooth out your sentences.)

58. Steve Case saw infinite possibilities for the Internet. Steve Case was determined to turn his vision into reality. The techies scoffed at his strategy of building a simple Internet service for ordinary people. Case doggedly pursued his dream. He analyzed other online services. He assessed the needs of his customers. He responded to their desires for an easier way to access information over the Internet. In 1992, Steve Case named his company America Online (AOL). Critics predicted the company's demise. By the end of the century, AOL was a profitable powerhouse. AOL grew so big that it was able to merge with the giant traditional media company Time Warner. The merger was widely criticized. The merger did not live up to Case's expectations. He eventually left the company.
59. Facing some of the toughest competitors in the world, Harley-Davidson had to make some changes. The company introduced new products. Harley's management team set out to rebuild the company's production process. New products were coming to market and the company was turning a profit. Harley's quality standards were not on par with those of its foreign competitors. Harley's costs were still among the highest in the industry. Harley made a U-turn and restructured the company's organizational structure. Harley's efforts have paid off.
60. Whether you're indulging in a doughnut in New York or California, Krispy Kreme wants you to enjoy the same delicious taste with every bite. The company maintains

consistent product quality by carefully controlling every step of the production process. Krispy Kreme tests all raw ingredients against established quality standards. Every delivery of wheat flour is sampled and measured for its moisture content and protein levels. Krispy Kreme blends the ingredients. Krispy Kreme tests the doughnut mix for quality. Krispy Kreme delivers the mix to its stores. Krispy Kreme knows that it takes more than a quality mix to produce perfect doughnuts all the time. The company supplies its stores with everything they need to produce premium doughnuts—mix, icings, fillings, equipment—you name it.

Activities

For active links to all websites discussed in this chapter, visit this text’s website at www.prenhall.com/bovee. Locate your book and click on its Companion Website link. Then select Chapter 4, and click on “Featured Websites.” Locate the name of the page or the URL related to the material in the text. Please note that links to sites that become inactive after publication of the book will be removed from the Featured Websites section.

1. **Analyze This Document** Read the following document, then (1) analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each sentence, and (2) revise the document so that it follows this chapter’s guidelines.

I am a new publisher with some really great books to sell. I saw your announcement in *Publishers Weekly* about the bookseller’s show you’re having this summer, and I think it’s a great idea. Count me in, folks! I would like to get some space to show my books. I thought it would be a neat thing if I could do some airbrushing on T-shirts live to help promote my hot new title, *T-Shirt Art*. Before I got into publishing, I was an airbrush artist, and I could demonstrate my techniques. I’ve done hundreds of advertising illustrations and have been a sign painter all my life, so I’ll also be promoting my other book, hot off the presses, *How to Make Money in the Sign Painting Business*.

I will be starting my PR campaign about May 2005 with ads in *PW* and some art trade papers, so my books should be well known by the time the show comes around in August. In case you would like to use my appearance there as part of your publicity, I have enclosed a biography and photo of myself.

P.S. Please let me know what it costs for booth space as soon as possible so that I can figure out whether I can afford to attend. Being a new publisher is mighty expensive!

2. **Teamwork** Working with four other students, divide the following five topics and write one paragraph on your selected topic. Be sure one student writes a paragraph using the illustration technique, one using the comparison-or-contrast technique, one using a discussion of cause and effect, one using the classification technique, and one using a discussion of problem and solution. Then exchange paragraphs within the team and pick out the main idea and general purpose of the paragraph one of your teammates wrote. Was everyone able to correctly identify the main idea and purpose? If not, suggest how the paragraph might be rewritten for clarity.
 - a. Types of cameras (or dogs or automobiles) available for sale
 - b. Advantages and disadvantages of eating at fast-food restaurants
 - c. Finding that first full-time job
 - d. Good qualities of my car (or house, or apartment, or neighborhood)
 - e. How to make a favorite dessert (or barbecue a steak or make coffee)

Expand Your Knowledge

Exploring the Best of the Web

Compose a Better Business Message At Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab (OWL), <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>, you’ll find tools to help you improve your business messages. For advice on composing written messages, for help with grammar, and for referrals to other information sources, you’d be wise to visit this site. Purdue’s OWL offers online services and an introduction to Internet search tools. You can also download a variety of handouts on writing skills. Check out the resources at the OWL homepage, then answer the following questions.

Exercises

1. Explain why positive wording in a message is more effective than negative wording. Why should you be concerned about the position of good news or bad news in your written message?

2. What six factors of tone should you consider when conveying your message to your audience?
3. What points should you include in the close of your business message? Why?

Exploring the Web on Your Own

Review these chapter-related websites on your own to learn more about writing business messages.

1. Write it right by paying attention to these writing tips, grammar pointers, style suggestions, and reference sources at www.webgrammar.com.
2. Can’t find the right word to use when writing about specialized topics? Check out one of the hundreds of subject-area glossaries available at www.glossarist.com.
3. Need some advice about what’s legal to write about in your blog? Visit the Electronic Frontier Foundation’s Legal Guide for Bloggers at www EFF.org/bloggers/lg.

Learn Interactively

Interactive Study Guide

Visit www.prenhall.com/bovee, then locate your book and click on its Companion Website link. Select Chapter 4 to take advantage of the interactive “Chapter Quiz” to test your knowledge of chapter concepts. Receive instant feedback on whether you need additional studying. Also, visit the “Study Hall,” where you’ll find an abundance of valuable resources that will help you succeed in this course.

Peak Performance Grammar and Mechanics

If your instructor has required the use of “Peak Performance Grammar and Mechanics,” either in your online course, through the access-code protected portion of the Companion

Website, or on CD, you can improve your skill with adjectives and adverbs by using the “Peak Performance Grammar and Mechanics” module. Click on “Grammar Basics,” and then click “Adjectives and Adverbs.” Take the Pretest to determine whether you have any weak areas. Then review those areas in the Refresher Course. Take the Follow-Up Test to check your grasp of adjectives and adverbs. For an extra challenge or advanced practice, take the Advanced Test. Finally, for additional reinforcement in adjectives and adverbs, go to the “Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage” section that follows, and complete the “Level I: Self-Assessment” exercises.

Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage

Level 1: Self-Assessment—Adjectives

Review Sections 1.4 in the Handbook of Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage, and then look at the following 15 items.

In items 1–5, fill in the appropriate form of the adjective that appears in parentheses:

1. Of the two products, this one has the _____ (*great*) potential.
2. The _____ (*perfect*) solution is *d*.
3. Here is the _____ (*interesting*) of all the ideas I have heard so far.
4. Our service is _____ (*good*) than theirs.
5. The _____ (*hard*) part of my job is firing people.

In items 6–10, insert hyphens wherever required:

6. A highly placed source revealed Dotson's last ditch efforts to cover up the mistake.
7. Please send an extra large dust cover for my photocopier.
8. A top secret document was taken from the president's office last night.
9. A 30 year old person should know better.
10. If I write a large scale report, I want to know that it will be read by upper level management.

In items 11–15, insert required commas between adjectives:

11. The two companies are engaged in an all-out no-holds-barred struggle for dominance.
12. A tiny metal shaving is responsible for the problem.
13. She came to the office with a bruised swollen knee.
14. A chipped cracked sheet of glass is useless to us.
15. You'll receive our usual cheerful prompt service.

Level 2: Workplace Applications

The following items contain numerous errors in grammar, capitalization, punctuation, abbreviation, number style, word division, and vocabulary. Rewrite each sentence in the space provided, correcting all errors. Write *C* in the space after any sentence that is already correct.

1. Its time that you learned the skills one needs to work with suppliers and vendors to get what you want and need.
2. Easy flexible wireless calling plans start for as little as \$19 dollars a month.
3. There's several criteria used to select customer's to receive this offer.
4. PetFood Warehouse officially became PETsMART, Jim left the co. due to health reasons.

5. First quarter sales gains are evident in both the grocery store sector (up 1.03%) and the restaurant sector (up 3.17 per cent) according to Food Institute estimates.
6. Whatever your challenge, learning stronger “negotiating” tactics and strategies will improve the way people work and the results that comes from their efforts.
7. To meet the increasing demand for Penta bottled-drinking-water, production capacity is being expanded by Bio-Hydration Research Lab by 80 percent.
8. Seminars begin at 9 A.M. and wrap up at 4:00 P.M.
9. Temple, Texas-based McLane Co. a subsidiary of Wal-Mart has bought a facility in Northfield, Minn that it will use to distribute products to customers such as convenience stores, stores that sell items at a discount, and mass merchants.
10. The British Retail Consortium are releasing the 3rd edition of its Technical Standards on Apr. 22, reported The New York Times.
11. The reason SkillPath is the fastest growing training company in the world is because of our commitment to providing clients with the highest-quality learning experiences possible.
12. According to professor Charles Noussair of the economics department of Purdue University, opinion surveys “Capture the respondent in the role of a voter, not in the role of a consumer”.
13. The Study found that people, exposed to Purina banner ads, were almost 50 percent more likely to volunteer Purina as the first Dog Food brand that came to mind.
14. In a consent decree with the food and drug administration, E’Ola International a dietary supplement maker agreed not to sell any more products containing the drug, ephedrine.
15. Dennis Dickson is looking for a company both to make and distribute plaidberries under an exclusive license, plaidberries is blackberries that are mixed with extracts and they are used as a filling.

Level 3: Document Critique

The following document may contain errors in grammar, capitalization, punctuation, abbreviation, number style, vocabulary, and spelling. You will also find errors relating to topics in this chapter. Concentrate on using the “you” attitude, emphasizing the positive, being polite, and using bias-free language as you improve this memo. Correct all errors using standard proofreading marks (see Appendix C).

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10/19/07

Mrs. Bruce Crandall

1597 Church Street

Grants Pass, Oreg. 97526

Dear Mrs. Crandall,

Order no. 89-97526-277

We were so happy to receive your order—We know you'll be enjoying the dress you've selected from our fall catalog. We feel it's a popular number because it's so versatile and flatters our heavier customers. We think you'll get a lot of use out of it on your trip to San Francisco.

Unfortunately, you forgot to indicate what size you need. We can't ship your dress until you tell us your size. Plus, if you don't mail in the postage paid card that we've enclosed for you to use very soon we can't be guaranteeing that your attractive new dress will arrive in time for your trip!

Sincerely,