

INSTITUTE OF LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT **ilm**

SUPERSERIES

Writing Effectively

FOURTH EDITION



INSTITUTE OF LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT **ilm**
SUPER**SERIES**

Writing
Effectively

FOURTH EDITION



Pergamon
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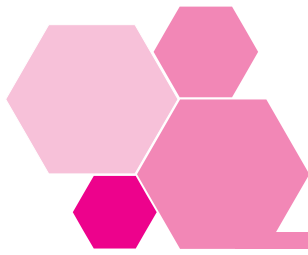
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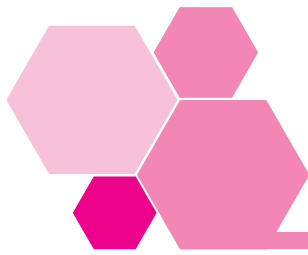
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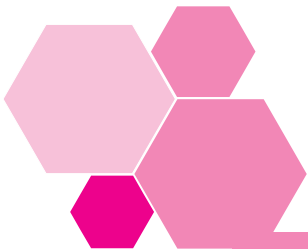


Workbook introduction



1 ILM Super Series study links

This workbook addresses the issues of *Writing Effectively*. Should you wish to extend your study to other Super Series workbooks covering related or different subject areas, you will find a comprehensive list at the back of this book.



2 Links to ILM Qualifications

This workbook relates to the following learning outcomes in segments from the ILM Level 3 Introductory Certificate in First Line Management and the Level 3 Certificate in First Line Management.

C9.6 Written Communication

- 1 Understand the need for written communications
- 2 Select the most appropriate format for effective written communication in specific situations
- 3 Produce effective written communication which responds to requests for information or generates actions
- 4 Use standard conventions when writing letters, memos, reports and e-mails
- 5 Use an appropriate tone and level of language in specific situations



3 Links to S/NVQs in Management

This workbook relates to the following elements of the Management Standards which are used in S/NVQs in Management, as well as a range of other S/NVQs.

D1.2 Inform and advise others

It will also help you develop the following Personal Competences:

- communicating;
- influencing others.



4 Workbook objectives

Communicating is what management is all about. You have to lead, motivate, instruct, advise and persuade your team, your own managers and your customers, and you do it by communicating. Research actually shows that communication takes up well over half of a manager's time.

Most of that communication consists of talking and listening to others. Writing plays a smaller, but highly significant, part because:

- it reaches more people;
- it goes on the record;
- it can travel through time and space;
- wherever it goes it carries an impression of you, your skills and your personality.

If you want to get on in life, your speaking skills will be extremely important, but so will your writing skills.

These are both skills that all managers and team leaders need to develop.

Take Stefan. He was famous for his blunt speaking and ability to 'get things done' but when he moved into a management role and had to do more of his communicating in writing, he was embarrassed. His spelling wasn't very good, and he somehow couldn't discover how to put things clearly without sounding aggressive.

Or take Rosie. She had spent a couple of years working in a solicitor's office, and never used a short word when a longer one was available. Her e-mails and memos became famous for agonizing complexity, which some people in her firm found very funny.

Both Stefan and Rosie suffered from their lack of skill in writing in that:

- they found it hard to get their messages through;
- their personal credibility was at risk.

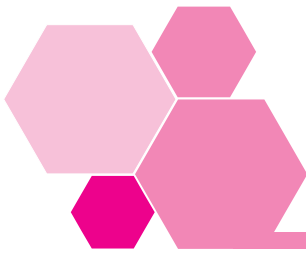
Written communication skill is not about learning to be a poet or a novelist. It is about becoming a more effective person. A person who can get through to other people, make them understand, and get results. A person who grows in stature by becoming a better communicator.

In this workbook we will think about where and why writing tends to work better than speech, and vice versa. We will explain how to make sure that written communications reach their target and get the reader's attention. We will also help you improve the impression your written material gives to the reader, which is just as important. As part of this, we'll consider how you can help your readers by keeping your writing short and simple, and using simple tables and graphics.

4.1 Objectives

On completion of this workbook you will be better able to do the following.

- Decide when it is more useful to write than to speak, and when a combination of the two is even more useful.
- Give your written communications a better chance of:
 - reaching their destination;
 - being noticed;
 - being read;
 - being understood.



5 Activity planner

The following Activities require some planning so you may want to look at these now.

- In Activity 11 you are asked to analyse the kind of written documents that you produce.
- Activity 25 asks you to start compiling your own 'writer's handbook'.



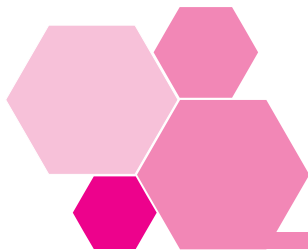
Some or all of the Activities may provide the basis of evidence for your S/NVQ portfolio. All portfolio activities and the Work-based assignment are signposted with this icon.

The icon states the elements to which the portfolio activities and Work-based assignment relate.



Session A

Why and when to write



I Introduction

We communicate because we need to. All of our social and economic structures depend on it. Our spoken languages are very powerful and flexible: before people invented writing, speech was the only way to pass on wisdom, history, stories, skills and ideas from one generation to the next. Human societies managed with speech alone for thousands of years.

Spoken language has its limits, however. As soon as humans got involved in large-scale activities, including business, they found they needed something more.

Suppose you have made a contract with a farmer to buy 20 pigs in six months' time, providing 100 lengths of timber in payment. How do you record the details that you have agreed? If there was only one such contract, you would probably state the terms in front of witnesses, so that everyone concerned would remember them. The room for disputes about what precisely was agreed would then be small.

But no-one would trust human memory to recall the exact details of 20, or 100, contracts.

That seems to be why writing was first invented, about 8000 years ago in the Middle East.



2 Writing versus speech

There are three main methods of communication – visual, spoken and written – written communication is the one we acquired most recently. It's still the one we need to work hardest at. Children learn to use their eyes and to speak their language without any difficulty, but learning to write is always a struggle. That's why people, in most situations, prefer to use speech rather than writing to send their messages, and prefer to receive them by listening or looking at images rather than reading.

Visual communication, including body language, is going on all the time, and we are hardly conscious of it, though probably we should be.

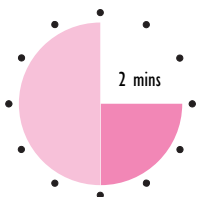
If you want to find out a great deal more about non-verbal communication of all types, see *Making Communication Work* in this series.

There are obviously some situations when it is vital to speak – and when it would be stupid to write. For example, if there was a fire and you had to evacuate the building, it would not be a brilliant idea to inform your workteam by pinning up a notice.

Here are some more situations where speaking would be better.

- When you want to ask someone the time.
- When someone in your workteam asks for help.
- When your views are requested at a meeting.
- When you are asked for a personal opinion 'off the record'.
- When you are showing someone how to perform a task.

Activity 1



Think about the situations I have just described. What can you say in general about situations where speech is better than writing?

You may have put it differently, but I hope you agree with me that there are three kinds of situation where speech is definitely the better choice.

- When you need to communicate **immediately**.
- When the person you need to reach is **readily available**.
- When there is **no** need to put your words **on record**.

If you don't have to write, there is no point in doing so, because in general speech has three advantages over writing.

Speech is quicker, but writing may save you time in the long run.

- It is more immediate.
- It has more impact.
- It is a lot quicker than writing.

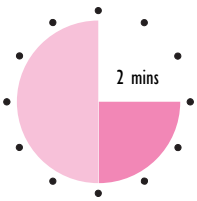
With e-mail and the Internet widely available, the written word has recently been gaining ground. But research into what managers do shows that, while they spend up to two-thirds of their time communicating (in meetings or with individuals), two-thirds of this time is spent listening and speaking. Only a small amount of their time is spent reading or writing.

Nevertheless writing has many uses, and some important advantages. I will use a few examples to show what I mean. The first example comprises notes of an 'incident'.

Don witnessed a nasty accident in the hospital canteen's delivery bay. Two employees were hurt when the tailgate of a lorry came unfastened. As soon as they had been taken around to Casualty, the Catering Services Manager called Don into her office and, after checking that he was personally all right, she asked him what he had seen. While Don talked, she took notes. When he had finished she said 'Right, Don. Nasty business. You'd better get all that down in writing now.'

There is more on notes in Session C.

Activity 2



What will be the advantages of having Don's statement in writing? Make a note of **two** advantages.

Evidence will be needed because there might well be a formal investigation by the Health and Safety Executive. At the very least, the two injured employees will probably want to claim compensation, and the case may go to a Tribunal. (There is also a legal requirement to enter this kind of incident in the Accident Book, but that is a separate matter.)

Human memory fades, and as time passes we become less and less able to recall events accurately; so it makes sense to get the facts down in writing at the first opportunity. Don's statement will be filed and used at a later date, and may be circulated to a number of different locations.

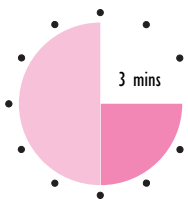
We can sum up the advantages of a written statement by saying:

- it creates a **permanent record**;
- it is more likely to be **accurate** than anyone's memory over time, so **errors are avoided**;
- it can **cross both time and space** to be used again.

The second example is a discussion paper.

Manjit had been reporting problems with a particular supplier since the beginning of the year. The Purchasing Committee was due to meet in a fortnight's time, and Manjit was asked to submit a full report about the problems that had occurred, giving precise details of dates, materials involved and any correspondence that had taken place. 'It needs to be completely accurate, so check your facts carefully', she was told. 'Your report will be the basis for deciding whether or not we go on using them.'

Activity 3



What were the advantages of having Manjit put her information in writing?
Make a note of **two** advantages.

A less efficient committee would just have asked Manjit to come along and tell them about the problems. However, this is an important business matter and it is not wise to rely on a verbal account alone as:

- it is likely to be incomplete;
- hard facts and definite evidence may be lacking;
- personal bias may creep in.

It is far better to ask for a written report, giving Manjit time to dig up facts, dates and copies of letters, and to send copies of the report to committee members in advance of the meeting.

They can then think about it beforehand, and prepare their questions and comments. Manjit can also be invited to attend the meeting, to answer these questions and add her own views. This is businesslike, fair and efficient.

So the advantages of having a written report in advance are:

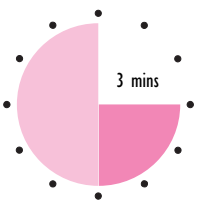
- it should provide a complete and detailed record of the facts;
- it should be reliable and credible, because there is time to prepare it properly;
- it can cross time and space to form the basis of a later discussion.

The third example is a quick reference card.

In Marie's section of a large mail-order firm staff turnover was high, and a lot of Marie's time was taken up with giving basic training in the correct procedures to newly recruited telephone clerks. These took time to sink in, and the clerks frequently made mistakes, or got stuck, and had to call on Marie to help.

Marie decided to deal with this by listing the main points of each procedure on sheets of card, and giving a set to each clerk after the initial training session. She told them to refer to the cards when they weren't sure what to do, and only to come back to her if there was a major problem. It took her several hours to work out what the key points should be, and how to put them, but she felt the effort was worth it.

Activity 4



What would be the advantages of using a 'quick reference card' rather than just telling staff what to do? Make a note of **two** advantages.

Marie and her clerks were wasting a lot of time when she relied on spoken instructions only. Using her new cards meant that inexperienced clerks made fewer mistakes and wasted less of Marie's time.

The advantages of writing in this example are:

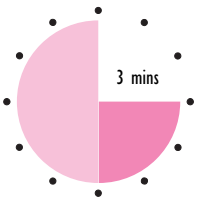
- it saves time and money;
- it helps new recruits learn the job more quickly;
- it ensures consistency, because everyone has the same instructions and it helps to avoid errors;
- it can cross time and space to form the basis of solving later problems and training new staff.

My final example is the minutes of a meeting.

When Steve read the minutes of the monthly management meeting he saw he was reported as saying 'There is no question of anyone from my team being sent on the Advanced Course as they do not have the intellectual ability.' He argued with the secretary: 'That's

wrong. I didn't say that!' but when he was asked whether his own notes of the meeting showed something different, he had to admit he hadn't made any. The secretary declined to change the minutes, though in the minutes of the next meeting, he did let Steve add a comment to the effect that 'he might have been hasty in his judgement'.

Activity 5



What are the advantages of having written minutes to record what was said at a meeting? Make a note of **two** advantages.

Dr Jones was absolutely fed up with his patient, Mrs W. One day he wrote on her file 'this woman is a complete idiot.' On her next visit, she happened to see the file – and promptly made a formal complaint to Dr Jones' managers.

'Minutes' are really only notes, though they are accurate and rather formal notes. They are essential for keeping track of what happened in earlier meetings, and for passing on views, facts and decisions. In committees, many people may speak, complicated arguments may arise and there may be disagreements. The committee must have an accurate record.

So the advantages of having written minutes are that:

- they provide an accurate record of past meetings;
- they can contain as much detail as needed (though it's a bad mistake to put in too much detail);
- they cross space and time to inform and guide other people's actions.

There are some other lessons from this example: it pays to make your own notes of what happens at meetings, in case a disagreement arises later. And where formal minutes are being taken, it pays to think before you speak.



3 The advantages of writing

The main practical difference between speech and writing is that speech is temporary. Like the ripples on a pond, speech soon fades away without a trace. Speech is fine for getting immediate action and communicating small amounts of information, but it is very ineffective when:

- the speaker tries to communicate a lot of information;
- the listeners have to remember it for a long time.

Human beings generally are not always good at listening and remembering. We often mis-hear, or misinterpret what we hear, and we have only a limited capacity for absorbing information through our ears. Too much, and it simply goes 'over our heads'.

We do have a large capacity for memory, but it is unreliable.

We remember some things all our lives, but a lot of what we hear and read fails to stick. As time passes, memories can crumble and fade, and get hopelessly muddled.

Writing can overcome these problems – and it serves some other uses too.

3.1 Writing as memory

The written word is a massive improvement on human memory – we use books, manuals, reports and all sorts of other documents to store information for future reference. Reference libraries and computer databases are memory substitutes on a vast scale (indeed, we often refer to 'computer memory'). But when you write a short confidential report on a member of your workteam, and someone in Personnel puts it in a file, that is basically the same process.

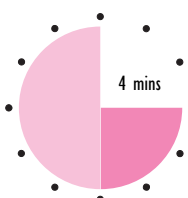
Writing can provide a permanent and reliable record of large amounts of detailed information that can be used for future reference.

3.2 Writing can cross time and space

Speech is best for a 'live' audience in the here-and-now. But writing can cross unlimited distances in space and distances in time.

Distance in time is really about the permanent record, or memory, aspect of writing. Once something is in writing, preserving it is fairly simple. Although many of the documents that you write at work will only have a limited life, and may be thrown away after a few weeks, others can have a much longer life.

Activity 6



Make a note of a few things you have recently written at work that will probably still exist somewhere, in someone else's files if not in yours, in a year's time.

If your job involves a lot of paperwork, then scores of things you have written will probably still be on file in a year's time. I certainly keep notes of meetings, copies of letters, and even time sheets, checklists and costings – and often for many years.

This is a good reason for trying to write well: some complete stranger may be reading through your words in ten years' time.

Writing also helps us communicate across distance in space – from site to site, town to town, and country to country.

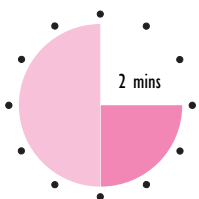
Of course, if the messages are urgent, simple and short, it may be better to speak across these distances on the phone. Many people now have the option of sending such short and urgent messages either by fax or by e-mail. This is communication in writing, but with something approaching the greater immediacy of the phone call. Fax stands for 'facsimile', a device that transmits

and receives documents via the telephone network. E-mail is a system for sending very fast and accurate messages between computers, using electronic transmission.

Certainly, where the messages are less urgent, but longer and more detailed, you need to write them down, or at least write 'back-up' notes to remind you of the circumstances. It is often wise to note the time, date and other details when:

- you receive an important message;
- a particular problem arises;
- you have a bright idea;
- you witness an incident of some kind.

Activity 7



Make a note of some of the things which you have to communicate, in writing, over substantial distances.

In my case, in the last few days, I have had to send several written communications across long distances.

- A ten-page report on a new training course, faxed to a company ninety miles away.
- A batch of survey questionnaires, posted to an office thirty miles away.
- A copy of a formal contract to an organization in Brussels.

Writing is ideal for communicating lots of detail – but if there's too much, no one will want to read it.

None of these could have been communicated satisfactorily in speech over the phone – there was simply too much detail. Actually, I did phone, but mainly to let the 'other side' know that the documents were on their way, and in the first case to give them the gist of what the report was saying.

3.3 Written documents can easily be copied

Another big advantage of written communications is that they can easily be copied – and copied exactly.

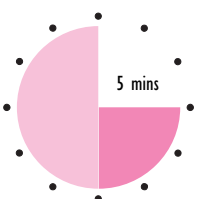
When you need to reach a large number of people all at the same time and with an identical message, the answer is simple: put your message in writing and copy it. This can be by means of a photocopier or a printer attached to a computer, or it can be by using the ‘copy to’ or ‘cc’ function on an e-mail.

Clinton Rollers Ltd needed to recall a faulty product. They checked their customer files and sent a standard letter to all 500 customers who had bought the product. The customers thus received an identical message, which was guaranteed to contain all the relevant information. This also had the benefits of being much cheaper and more convenient than making 500 phone calls, and of being permanent evidence that the company had done something about recalling the product. This could be important for legal reasons.

3.4 Writing as back-up

I do not want to give the impression that there is an ‘either–or’ choice between writing and speaking. As some of the examples showed, the best way to communicate may often be a combination of the two.

Activity 8



Callie held a briefing session to explain to her workteam the new proposals for flexible working hours. At the end of the session she handed each of them a sheet of paper listing the main points of the proposal.

Flexible working hours

- 1 In any four-week period you should work an average of 140 hours.
- 2 Daily hours can be worked between 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m.
- 3 Up to ten hours' credit or debit can be carried forward to the next four-week period.
- 4 Core time (11.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.) should be worked daily unless you are taking holiday or credit hours carried forward.
- 5 Hours to be worked daily should normally be arranged one week in advance, in co-operation with your first line manager, and workteam.

What would you say are the benefits of giving the workteam this list, and letting them take it away with them afterwards?

I think the main benefit is simply putting the proposal 'on the record'. As I have already said, people aren't always good listeners, and memories are unreliable. It is common for a group of people to come away from a verbal briefing with entirely different ideas about what was said and what was meant. Later, when they start to discuss the briefing among themselves, the 'story' will inevitably get even more muddled and inaccurate.

Writing and speech come together in 'discussion papers' – where someone writes down some ideas to give a focus for talking about the issues.

Giving them a written document will prevent confusion, because it ensures that everyone gets the same information.

Certainly, it will give rise to many questions, but at least everyone concerned has a written basis for that discussion, which will help keep it on the rails.

3.5 Writing to pass on a message

There is a party game called 'ghosts' or 'Chinese whispers', where the first person whispers a message to the next, who whispers it to the next, and so on. The point of the game is to see how mangled the message can get by the time it reaches the end of the chain.

Murphy's law applies to messages: if they can be overlooked or misunderstood, they will be.

This is how the wartime message 'Send reinforcements, we're going to advance' ended up as 'Send three and fourpence, we're going to a dance'.

Exactly the same thing can happen in reality when someone takes a verbal message for you and verbally passes it on in a mangled or incomplete form. It can cause a lot of damage, nuisance and expense, as this example shows.

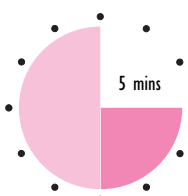
Alan is in the office at 12.45 p.m. when the telephone rings. It's Shar-Day Printers Ltd wanting to speak to Brenda, who is out, about a delivery of litho plates that they should have received three days ago. They can't afford to wait more than another 24 hours. If delivery can't be guaranteed in that time, they'll cancel the order and go elsewhere.

Alan goes off to meet another customer at 1.00 p.m. and asks the receptionist to keep an eye open for Brenda and tell her to phone the customer. When Brenda gets back at 1.30 p.m., he simply tells her 'someone phoned about an order'.

She is a busy woman, with a lot of urgent jobs to do, and the message doesn't sound all that important. Brenda does nothing.

Next morning an angry fax arrives, cancelling the order and demanding to know why no-one has phoned back.

Activity 9



What should Alan have done to make sure that Brenda dealt with the problem? Here's a clue: at least **three** things are involved.

If Alan took responsibility for answering the phone, he should also have taken responsibility for ensuring that the message got through to Brenda – and that Brenda understood it.

He couldn't relay the message directly to Brenda, who wasn't there. But he could easily have written it down accurately.

In fact, he should have made a written note while the person from Shar-Day was talking to him. Then when they rang off, he should have:

- rewritten it neatly and checked that all the details were included;
- marked it 'URGENT';
- put it where Brenda was bound to see it;
- checked later to see that she had done so.

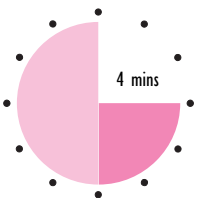
That is no doubt what you would like your colleagues to do for you – so make sure you do it for them.

3.6 Writing as a legal requirement

There are some situations where we need to put something in writing:

- because the law requires it;
- in order to protect ourselves if the law does get involved.

Activity 10



What sorts of thing are you required by law to put in writing, as part of your responsibilities at work?

The fact that you need to write something for legal reasons doesn't mean you have to write in 'legalese': always try to keep it plain and simple.

Obviously this will vary a great deal, but depending on what job you do, and how wide your responsibilities are, you might have to write, or draft for approval:

- contracts;
- entries in the accident book;
- statutory warning notices;

- statutory certificates and authorizations;
- statements required by police or courts;
- documents for tribunals;
- various legal documents, especially if you work in banking, finance or some aspect of the law.

There are also situations where employees are entitled by law to have something in writing (even if it isn't you personally who has to provide it) including:

- a written statement of terms and conditions of employment;
- a statement of the employer's health and safety policy;
- notification of changes in contractual terms;
- an explanation of deductions from pay.

But the biggest area where the law needs to be considered is all those situations where you are not legally required to put something in writing, but where it is a good idea to do so for your own protection – those 'covering your back' situations.

This includes anything where one day you may need to be able to prove what you did and what you said, so:

- if you refuse an **instruction** (or someone refuses an instruction from you), make a note of the time, the circumstances and what precisely happened;
- if you receive or reply to a **complaint** from outside the organization, put it in writing and keep a copy;
- if you write any document with **legal implications**, such as a purchase order or a contract, keep a copy;
- if an **unusual incident** occurs, note down the details.

It is particularly important to make a note of anything you say or do that **may affect another employee's legal rights**. Remember too that the law on race, sex and disability discrimination applies to people's treatment in respect of matters as diverse as promotion, access to training, holiday allocation, disciplinary measures and allocation of work.

3.7 Analysing your written communication needs

I don't want you to think that you should spend all your time on 'paperwork', or that you have to record every little thing that happens. No doubt most of the time you will continue to communicate in speech.

But I hope you can see now that there are quite a lot of situations where:

- either you should write rather than speak;
- or you should back up what you say in writing.

It is simply a matter of using your common sense. Next time you are wondering how to get your message through most effectively, just pause for a moment and ask yourself the following questions.

- 'Would it be better to put this in writing?'
- 'Should I use writing to back up my words?'

And whenever something happens which is out of the ordinary, ask yourself:

- 'Would it be a good idea to make a note of that?'

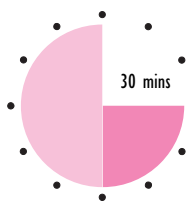
Finally, although writing takes more time and trouble than saying something out loud, even with computers around, always ask yourself:

- 'Will I save a lot more time and trouble later, if I take the time and trouble to put it in writing now?'

On the other hand, very often we end up putting something in writing simply because that is what our organization requires us to do. This may be for any one of the reasons that we have already covered, or it may not be for a clear reason at all that you can see. There are plenty of people who claim to be bogged down in 'pointless' paperwork.

If your organization requires you to communicate in writing then that is an instruction that you should follow. However, it can be useful to analyse the need for written communication a little more.

Activity 11



S/NVQ DI.2

This Activity may provide the basis of appropriate evidence for your S/NVQ portfolio. If you are intending to take this course of action, it might be better to write your answers on separate sheets of paper.

Try to analyse what you write over a period of, say, a week, under the following headings.

■ What?

Memo, notice, note, report, leaflet, e-mail, letter, handwritten note, file note, etc?

■ To whom?

Customer, staff, colleague, boss, team, general public, supplier, etc? To one person or copied to several?

■ Why?

To answer a request or inquiry, to warn, advise, inform, remind, request action or information, to put something on the record?

■ How?

Internal mail, external post, fax, e-mail?

■ Response?

If the communication required a response, did you get it?

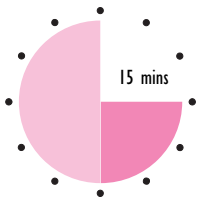
You should draw up five sheets of paper with these headings, and log every item that you send out, apart from routine forms (we will say something about these in Session C).

When you have collected a week's worth of items, sit back and consider them.

- What are the **three** most common kinds of item?
- Who do they most commonly go to?
- Are you getting the results you would like?
- Which items do you find most challenging?

Use these questions to work out ways of improving your written output. (You will also find it valuable to talk to a more experienced colleague about the quality and effectiveness of your written communications, and the impression that they create.)

Self-assessment I



- I In the seven situations below, say whether writing, speech, both or either would be the best way to communicate your messages.
 - a When a member of your team wants advice about a work problem. _____
 - b When a matter of legal significance may be involved. _____
 - c It is an emergency and you need action to be taken immediately. _____
 - d You need to communicate the same message to large numbers of people. _____
 - e You need to send your message across time and space. _____
 - f You need to communicate with people at a different location. _____
 - g You want to put forward some proposals for discussion at a committee. _____

- 2 Complete the following statements with a suitable word or group of words.
 - a Writing is the best choice if you need to put your words on _____.
 - b Communicating in _____ can be very ineffective when too much _____ is involved and the listeners have to _____ it for too long.
 - c An important advantage of communicating in _____ is that you can get exactly the _____ message to a large number of people.

- 3 Give **four** examples of situations where it would be useful to note in writing the time, date and other details.

- 4 What are the advantages of maintaining a set of quick reference notes for a team which is involved in a variety of different activities and processes?

- 5 When you are taking part in a meeting that is being minuted, why does it pay to think before you speak?

You may wish to read
Extension 1 before
answering question 6.

- 6 State **one** advantage and **one** disadvantage of communicating by the following methods.

a Fax.

b E-mail.

Answers to these questions can be found on pages 103–104.

4 Summary

- Writing is preferable to speaking when:
 - the communication needs to cross distances in space and time;
 - it needs to be put on permanent record (for example, for legal reasons);
 - the record needs to be accurate;
 - it contains large amounts of information;
 - a back-up to spoken messages is needed;
 - a reliable basis for later discussion is needed;
 - a consistent message needs to be sent to several people.
- Some things are required by law to be in writing.
- Messages passed from person to person in speech are unreliable: it's best to write them down.
- When you have the choice of whether to speak, to write, or both, you should ask yourself the following questions.
 - Would it be better to put this in writing?
 - Should I use writing to back up what I have said?
 - Would it be a good idea to make a note of that?
 - Will I save a lot of time and trouble later, if I take the time and trouble to put this in writing now?

Session B

Writing for results



I Introduction

The first rule for successful communicating is to give it a bit of thought. You should ask yourself the following questions.

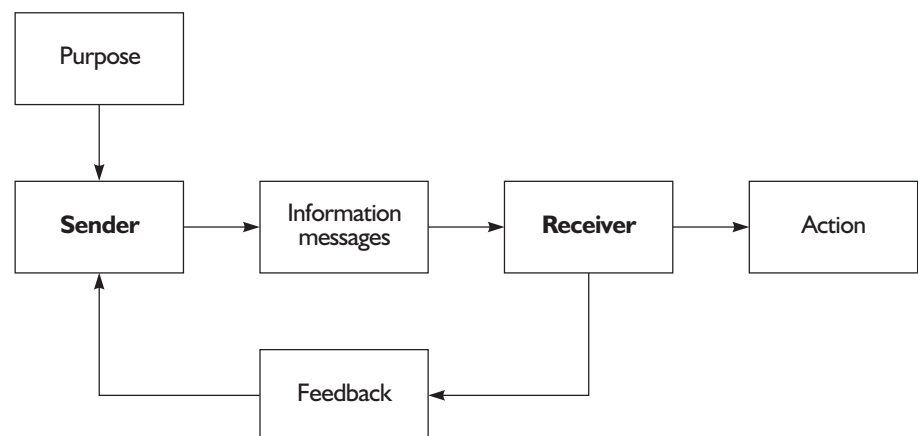
- Who do I need to communicate with?
- What result do I want to achieve?
- What impression do I want to give?

Apart from 'self-communication' (private diaries, personal notes, records placed on file, and so on) all communication is designed:

- to reach some other person;
- to achieve a result.

The result – the purpose – may be to ask, order or persuade the other person to do something; or it may be to provide them with information. Either way, the end result will be to generate action of some kind.

We can present all this as follows.

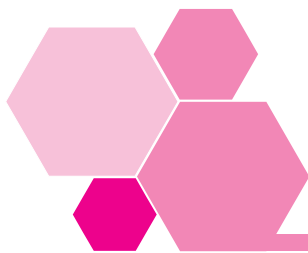


Often, as this diagram suggests, there is an exchange of some kind: the receiver becomes a sender, and feeds back information to the sender of the original message.

The trouble with communication is that there is such an awful lot of it going on. If you want your written communications to be effective and achieve the desired results, you need to do everything you can to make sure that:

- they reach their destination;
- the receiver notices them;
- the receiver understands and acts on them.

Some people are a lot more successful at communicating in writing than others. In this part of the workbook, we'll see why and how.



2 Reaching the destination

Whenever you are communicating in writing, your first priority should be to ensure that your message actually reaches its destination.

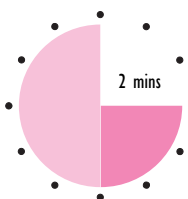
Suraj was asked to prepare a bid for County Council funds to allow the Multi-Racial Educational Resource Centre to open four evenings a week instead of two. He drew up what he thought was a very convincing case, and faxed the document through to the Equality Committee on 21 June, two days before the deadline.

When fax transmission was introduced in the early 1980s, receiving a fax was a rarity. When one arrived it was always given a high priority and rushed to the addressee. Nowadays faxing is so commonplace and routine that faxed documents are much more likely to be mislaid or ignored.

A fortnight later, having heard nothing, Suraj phoned the Committee secretary to ask if his bid had been considered. The secretary knew nothing about it: the fax had gone astray and, since the deadline was now past, the bid could not be considered.

The fax is an important channel of communication, but it has its drawbacks. For example, when someone sends a fax it does tend to disappear into an electronic void? Did it go to the right number? Did it get through at all? Did it reach the right person? A really important letter can always be posted by recorded delivery, with a guarantee of arrival, but this isn't the case with a fax.

Activity 12



How could Suraj have ensured that his bid got through to the right person?

When the document is both important and urgent, it's worth making the effort to check. I think that if I had been in Suraj's position I would have done the following.

- I would have checked that the number faxed was correct before sending it, and afterwards checked that transmission went ahead without errors.
- I would have telephoned the Committee secretary in advance:
 - to notify him that the document was coming;
 - to check the fax number;
 - to ask for confirmation of receipt.
- If I hadn't heard anything by, say, the day before the deadline, I would have phoned to check whether the fax had arrived.
- I would have put a copy of the document in the post by recorded delivery and made sure both that the fax stated that a 'hard copy' was on its way, and that a compliments slip with the hard copy stated that it had previously been faxed.

Where a fax is confidential, it may be wise to ask the person to whom it is being sent to stand by the machine to receive it personally.

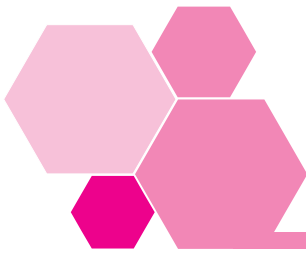
Note that very similar considerations would apply if Suraj had sent the document by e-mail.

The lessons are as follows.

- Make sure that your documents are clearly and correctly addressed.
- Send them by a suitably reliable channel and use a back-up if necessary.
- Use a guaranteed delivery method for high-priority documents.
- If necessary, check that they have actually arrived.

Even if it's just a matter of pinning a note on a noticeboard, it always pays to check that it's reaching the intended audience.

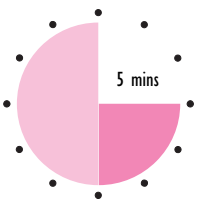
EXTENSION 1
For a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of fax and e-mail.



3 Getting the reader's attention

The best starting point is to put yourself in the shoes of the person you are trying to reach.

Activity 13



You are short of time, and you have a lot of written material to deal with.

When a document, letter, e-mail, note or memo reaches you, it places more demands on your time. What can the sender do to make your task easier?

Jot down **three or four** ideas.

If the sender is thinking about the receiver's needs (your needs) there are two main things he or she can do.

The first is to make it as easy as possible for you to:

- identify who sent the communication and what it is about;
- decide whether it is important or not.

The second is to make it as easy as possible for you to:

- read the communication, if important;
- work out what it is saying;
- decide what action you need to take as a result.

Managers often have problems dealing with the flood of incoming material. They need to be able to prioritize quickly: do I read it now, read it later, file it or 'bin' it?

The easier you make it, the more likely the receiver is to read it, and the more likely you are to achieve your objectives. What makes it easier? I would say:

- keeping it as short and simple as possible;
- using plain and simple language;
- making the 'key messages' – especially when you are trying to generate action of some kind – as visible as possible;
- laying the document out so that it's easy to read – again, we shall see more about this in Session C.

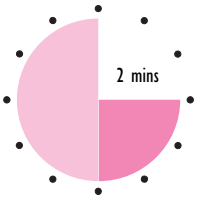
One of the biggest problems for anyone with responsibilities is the blizzard of paperwork they receive. We suffer from 'information overload': so much information and so many communications are flying around all the time that it's very hard to decide what's significant and what isn't.

Here's an example of a communication whose layout and language really help the reader.

To	R. Marley Disputed Claims Manager
From	Richard Longman <i>Region 12 Household claims section team leader</i>
Subject	<u>Investigation into claim by Ms Z. Pallavicini</u> This note explains why we were suspicious, how the claim was investigated, and the action I think should be taken. I would be grateful if you could let me have your decision by 18 February.
Attachment	Summary claim report

From the receiver's point of view, nothing could be clearer – even down to knowing when the decision needs to be made by.

Activity 14



Many organizations use standard layouts for documents such as letters, reports, memos, faxes and e-mails in order to make it as easy as possible for readers to identify them. However, there might perhaps be a disadvantage in standardizing everything. Can you think of one?

Suppose your particular memo is very urgent, and you want it to go straight to the top of the pile, but you will have to compete with lots of other identical-looking documents. How can you make your document stand out?

I'll leave you to think of some ways you could do so without breaking any of the accepted rules of your organization. But there is a word of warning: one organization I know always heads its faxes with the words 'VERY, VERY URGENT' in big black letters. To begin with, this gets them priority, but after you have received three or four of these, the headline starts to lose its power, and you ending up treating these messages exactly like all the rest.

3.1 Keeping it short and simple

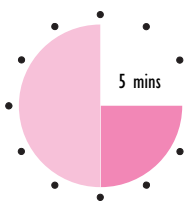
There are two issues here.

- What you say.
- How you say it.

What you say depends partly on whether you are simply responding to a request for information or are seeking to generate some action in response to your communication.

If you are responding to someone else's request for information, you can concentrate on communicating what that person wants to know, in the form that they want to know it.

Activity 15



Larry Anderson is the first line manager on the night shift in a shoe factory. He has five grades of staff working on each shift. He has received the following e-mail from his manager, Harriet.

Larry

Head Office is unhappy about the level of overtime incurred on the night shift last month. Can you prepare a list of overtime hours incurred by each grade of staff last month and for the same month last year? Please send it direct to k.grayson@head-office.org with a copy to me.

Harriet

Larry has the information easily to hand. How should he respond to this e-mail?

There is no need for Harry to acknowledge his receipt of this e-mail separately from providing the information. Larry's ideal response would be an e-mail to Head Office, 'cc'd' to Harriet, attaching a document which simply lays out the information required. The e-mail should just describe what the information is, and why he is sending it.

But what you say may depend on thinking about what the receiver needs to know if your objective in communicating is to generate some sort of action. Then it's counter-productive to say too little: the receiver will be unable to use the information properly, and will come back for more details, which will double the amount of time you've had to spend on the matter. On the other hand, if you say too much, you're wasting both your own time and the receiver's.

The note by Richard Longman to the Disputed Claims Manager dealt with quite a complicated subject. The company suspected the customer of having made a fraudulent claim, and this has been investigated.

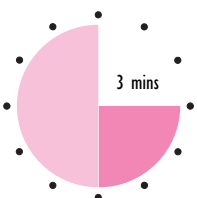
Richard Longman has a whole file on the case, containing dozens of memos, reports, notes and copies of forms. However, the Disputed Claims Manager didn't need to know all that. He or she simply needed an accurate and factual summary. After all, the complete file will still be there if anything needs double-checking.

Richard decided to include the following information so that the Disputed Claims Manager could make a decision on what to do next.

Remember to KISS:
Keep It Short and
Simple!

- The claimant's full name and address.
- The policy number and date.
- The date of the claim.
- The nature and value of the claim.
- Who processed it, and when.
- Why it aroused suspicion.
- What action was then taken, and when.
- How it was investigated, and by whom.
- Dates of any interviews or correspondence with the claimant that formed part of the investigation.
- The investigator's conclusions.
- Richard's recommendations for further action.

Activity 16



I think it would make sense for Richard Longman's organization to use a standard form of report for short reports of this kind. What advantages do you think that would bring?

Three possible advantages of using a standard form of report occurred to me.

- The structure and layout of the reports would soon become familiar, so both filling them in and reading them would be easier.
- It would save the sender having to decide what information to include.
- It would ensure that the sender didn't forget to cover all the important points.

The sender could still write a covering note to explain any additional issues, to make reservations or to stress particular points.

We shall come back to the use of standard conventions when writing letters, memos, reports and e-mails in Session C.

How you say it

After Activity 13 we said that one of three things that would make the recipient's task easier is setting out the 'key messages'. These might also be included in a slot on the standard form, but if Richard wished to include them in a written document, he would probably have headed them clearly, as follows.

Conclusions

Mrs Pallavicini is a comparatively new customer, and there were reasonable grounds for being suspicious about her claim.

However, no firm evidence of fraud could be found, and the Investigation Department believes that the police would not consider that the case justifies a criminal investigation.

Recommendations

- 1 To pay the claim in full.
- 2 To decline to insure this claimant in future.

Short and to the point: indeed, there is a strong case for starting the document with these conclusions.

Depending on the time available, the Disputed Claims Manager can now:

- act immediately on this information;
- or review the accompanying forms or 'narrative' before doing so;
- or go back to the original file to check details and clarify any queries.

To return to our starting point, keeping it short and simple in what you say and how you say it:

- saves the reader time and mental effort;
- simplifies decision making;
- minimizes the need to spend time on clarification and queries (each of which can result in another tedious and unnecessary round of paperwork).

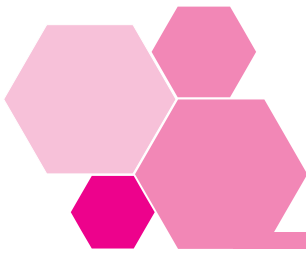
It's good to send communications of this quality: it is efficient from the organization's point of view, and it gets the sender a good reputation for competence and clear thinking. To send good written communications such as this requires planning, which we shall come back to in Session C. For now, let's think more about 'how you say it'.

3.2 The ABC of effective written communication

Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity are the ABC of effective written communication.

- **Accuracy:**
 - get the information right;
 - use correct grammar and spelling.
- **Brevity:**
 - stick to the point;
 - don't use more words than you need to.
- **Clarity:**
 - express yourself simply and clearly;
 - use a logical structure.

I am not going to say anything now about getting the information right, except to say that it is up to you to plan, prepare and check it before you commit yourself to writing. Remember that writing can go on the record for a very long time: if you have made a silly factual mistake it will not be easy to get rid of it. We will come back to grammar and spelling shortly.



4 Plain words

In written communication it is almost always better to use simple and straightforward language, especially if you are dealing with practical and straightforward people.

Here is an example of written communication from someone who seems incapable of being straightforward.

MEMORANDUM

To: Belinda Wasserman, Production

From: Tom Robinson, Customer Services

Subject: Recent developments

You asked me to comment on the problems we have been experiencing recently with regard to maintaining adequate inventory for meeting agreed performance criteria for meeting customer orders for made-up fabrics for the mail-order market.

Our position is already well known. There have been extreme difficulties in the recent period and this has had negative effects, particularly in terms of customer complaints. These are up by a considerable margin of late.

Regarding quality, we have not become aware of any substantial variation from the normal picture.

Finally, packaging standards appear to be experiencing some degree of deterioration as more has come back as damaged in the post.

Fabric-based motor accessories do not appear to present a problem as at this moment in time.

Remember your ABC:
Accuracy, Brevity and
Clarity.

4.1 Short words or long?

There are all sorts of things wrong with the way this memo is written. For example, the first paragraph wouldn't have been necessary at all if he had used an informative title for the memo. What does 'Recent developments' mean?

I want to concentrate on the words and phrases Tom uses, however.

In the English language there are many different ways of saying things, and there are long and short alternatives for a lot of ideas. In the passage above, we could replace his long words with short ones as follows.

Long	Short
developments	events
experiencing	having, seeing
maintaining	keeping
negative	bad
considerable	large, big
regarding	as for
substantial	large, big
variation	change

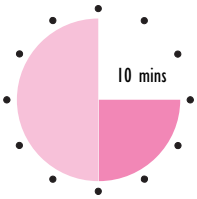
Some of the long words in this passage are not so easily shortened, because they are in effect 'technical terms', and have a specific meaning that is not easy to reproduce in ordinary language.

performance criteria
deterioration
accessories

'Inventory' is a borderline case; it means 'stocks', but in many organizations people are used to the longer word.

If you can use shorter words, which have the same meaning, you are likely to make your writing easier to understand.

Activity 17



Write down **one** or **two** short words that could replace the long ones in the list below. I have done the first two for you.

Long	Short
advantageous	useful
application	use
ascertain	_____
commencement	_____
comprehension	_____
consequently	_____
deficiency	_____
disadvantage	_____
elucidate	_____
emphasize	_____
excessive	_____
expedite	_____
expenditure	_____
fundamental	_____
furthermore	_____
illustrate	_____
inventory	_____
relationship	_____
subsequently	_____
terminate	_____
unprecedented	_____
utilize	_____

Answers can be found on page 107.

'He's a man of few words', said the Research Director's secretary. 'It just so happens that they're all incredibly long'.

Thus instead of saying something like:

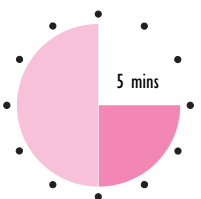
'Subsequently we comprehended the fundamental disadvantages of excessive expenditure on inventory.'

we can say:

'Then we understood the basic drawbacks of spending too much on stocks.'

The problem is not just with individual words, but with whole groups of words or phrases.

Activity 18



Suppose you received the following letter:

Dear Sir

With reference to your recent letter, we are now in a position to advise you that your order has been expedited and you should obtain receipt of the outstanding goods, namely 24 HP 168-pin ECC DIMMs, by 31 January latest.

Assuring you of our best attention at all times,

Yours faithfully

Jot down what you think about the way the letter is written.

What impression do you form of the writer from reading the letter?

(Don't bother about the possible inefficiency that led to the letter being necessary in the first place.)

The way letters and memos are written may be a 'cultural' thing. If your organization's culture is to be rather formal in its written communications, don't offend people by 'loosening up' too much. Formality in writing may be as important as the dress code or the 'clear desk' policy.

I think the first thing to strike you would be the unnatural language used. 'We are now in a position to advise you' and 'you should obtain receipt' are just two examples.

We understand what the writer is saying, but he or she could have said it far more simply. For example 'you should receive', or 'the order should arrive' would be better than 'you should obtain receipt'. And 'we are now in a position to advise you', could probably have been left out altogether if the sentence had been changed a little.

But worse than this, the writer uses one word, 'expedited', which quite possibly the reader wouldn't understand. In fact, it means 'hurried up', nothing more, but you suspect that the writer is using it to sound important and official.

Trying to make ourselves sound important is an understandable human weakness but it doesn't usually cut much ice. A letter like this is more likely to annoy or amuse its readers than impress them.

Finally, the writer uses some flowery phrases, which used to be very common in commercial writing, but have now largely been abandoned. Beginning a letter 'with reference to' tends to involve you in writing a very awkward sentence. It's simpler and sounds better to deal with what you are referring to in a separate sentence like this: 'Thank you for your recent letter. I have followed up your order'. And 'Assuring you of our best attention at all times', although it sounds friendly enough, could well be replaced by something simpler like: 'We apologize for the delay'.

I have two other complaints about this letter.

- It fails to identify the particular order or its date, both of which are important when talking about matters of this kind.
- It is horribly impersonal.

4.2 Long-winded phrases

Simple phrases, as well as simple words, are often better, but long-winded ways of saying things are all too common. 'Clichés' are a special problem: because we hear and read them so often, they are frequently the first expressions that come to mind.

Here are a few examples of what I mean, with a simpler alternative shown alongside them.

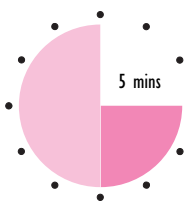
with regard to	<i>regarding/about</i>
a large proportion of	<i>many</i>
at an early date	<i>soon</i>
at the present moment in time	<i>now</i>
in consequence of	<i>because/owing to</i>
due to the fact that	<i>because/owing to</i>

If we try putting these expressions in sentences we can see that the simpler alternative puts the idea across more effectively and saves time and energy for the writer and the reader.

Look at the two letters below, and see what a difference just using the simpler alternatives makes.

Dear Mr Nicholls With regard to your order 265 dated 11 November, I am sorry to inform you that a large proportion of the parts are not in stock at the present moment in time, in consequence of strike action in our Spanish factory. However, we should be able to let you have them at an early date, due to the fact that the dispute has now been resolved. Yours sincerely Sales Manager	Dear Mr Nicholls Regarding your order 265 dated 11 November, I am sorry to inform you that many of the parts are not in stock now, owing to strike action in our Spanish factory. However, we should be able to let you have them soon, because the dispute has now been resolved. Yours sincerely Sales Manager
---	--

Activity 19



Here are some more examples of sentences containing long-winded, overworked expressions which can be replaced by simpler, clearer ones. Jot down what you think would be a better word to use in each of these sentences instead of the group of words highlighted.

Despite the fact that deliveries of raw materials were late, the order was met on time.

This **in many cases** proved to be so.

I should like to **draw your attention to the fact** that I haven't been paid.

We must **give due consideration to** the staff development programme.

In view of the fact that I am retiring this year, I **am of the opinion that** somebody else should undertake the long-term project.

All departments, **with the exception of** Data Processing, were represented.

Here are my suggestions, though other words would do as well in some cases. I've written the whole sentence out each time so that you can see that using a simpler expression improves the sentence and doesn't affect the meaning in any way.

- **Although** deliveries of raw materials were late, the order was met on time.
- This **often** proved to be so (or: This was often so.)
- I should like to **point out** that I haven't been paid.
- We must **consider** the staff development programme.

- **Since** I am retiring this year, **I think that** somebody else should undertake the long-term project.
- All departments **except** Data Processing were represented.

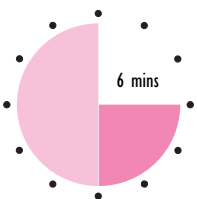
When you write simply, your ideas and decisions come across simply and honestly. Be on your guard for people who try to disguise the truth of what they are saying by wrapping things up in a blanket of words to confuse the reader.

4.3 Watch out for ‘jargon’

It’s very easy to slip into using jargon, which means special words and phrases that some people are familiar with, but many others aren’t. Training specialists, for example, talk about competences, performance criteria, self-assessment, learning objectives and so on. Other specialists know exactly what they mean, but ‘outsiders’ usually don’t.

Technical aspects of the job also produce a lot of jargon, like the reference to ‘HP 168-pin ECC DIMMs’ in the letter we looked at on page 34. In this case both writer and reader knew what was meant (these are Dual In-line Memory Modules (DIMMs) with error checking and correcting (ECC) for Hewlett-Packard desk-top computer systems), but you can’t always rely on this.

Activity 20



Another kind of jargon is ‘management-speak’, a special kind of language that is intended to put a pseudo-scientific ‘spin’ on unpleasant realities. Here is an example.

Downsizing typically generates negative trends in employee motivation, focused on perceptions of disempowerment and fuelled by inadequately managed ‘information-creep’.

Try rewriting this short passage in simple language – if you can work out what it means.

I would write the passage something like this.

Job cuts usually cause lower morale, especially when they leave staff feeling helpless and there are lots of rumours flying around.

That puts a rather different complexion on it, doesn't it?

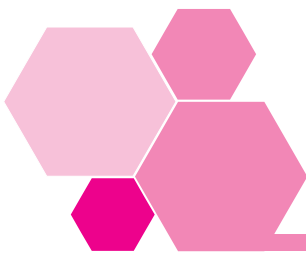
There's another point to watch with this kind of thing: if you try to use a lot of long, impressive-sounding words you may end up using one you don't understand, and get it wrong. That could be embarrassing.

4.4 An issue of quality

Most organizations have a strong focus on quality, and written communications have an important role to play in encouraging this.

Quality of writing may be judged in a number of ways, depending for instance on whether:

- you provide information that is accurate, complete, and timely;
- your written communications to customers (both internal and external) are polite, pleasant and 'human';
- you classify and store your written records correctly;
- your communications, whatever their purpose, are designed to be understandable as well as technically accurate.



5 Making the right impression

Accuracy, brevity, simplicity, clarity and humanity in your writing will help you get better results. You will find it easier to reach your target, and the receiver will be more likely to notice your message and understand and act upon your words.

It will also boost your own reputation, because although your written communications are intended to achieve some purpose, they are also about human relationships. When you send someone a written communication, you are also sending lasting images and impressions about yourself, whether you intend to or not, and whether the receiver is conscious of them or not.

5.1 Writing styles

Here is an example, addressed to you. Read it carefully, and then think about what impression you get of the sender.

P.F. Wapentake
Head of Resourcing Policy Research
Resourcing Policy Unit
Business Development Services
Cramley Research Institute
Cramley University

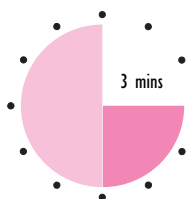
Dear Sir or Madam

As Head of Resourcing Policy Research, I have pleasure in sending you a copy of the Resource Policy Unit's report on trends and developments in controlled and limited-list tendering procedures, as defined in the European Union Procurement Directives (cumulative annualizing provisions).

Regrettably the Unit is not in a position to answer any enquiries relating to the research. However, if your organization wishes to submit any evidence for consideration under the ongoing review process you should write to G.O. Scorse, Deputy Head of Resourcing Policy Research, at the above address. Such contributions will not be acknowledged.

Yours faithfully

Activity 21

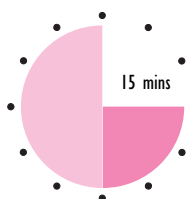


Write down briefly what impression you get about the person who wrote this letter, and what kind of relationship is likely to be created between sender and receiver.

This communication is as dull as ditchwater, and although Wapentake invites you to respond, the letter seems designed to make sure that you do not and certainly not to him or her. Your most likely response would be to 'bin' the whole thing.

The writer comes across as a colourless but self-important person who is going through the motions of communicating without having any genuine interest in the outcome.

Activity 22



Look through some of the written communications you have sent out recently. Think about how you 'come over' to your readers.

Below is a series of scales on which you can rate the impression you give.

For example, if you think you come across as fairly up-to-date, put a tick under the +1 column on the up-to-date—old-fashioned scale. If you think you are extremely old-fashioned, put your tick under the -3 column. If you feel that you are neither specially up-to-date nor specially old-fashioned, put the tick under 0 in the middle column.

	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	
Polite								Rude
Friendly								Unfriendly
Organized								Disorganized
Warm								Cold
Relaxed								Uptight
Open								Devious
Up-to-date								Old-fashioned
Efficient								Inefficient
Experienced								Inexperienced
Totals								Totals

When you've finished, add up your total score in each column, and then add these together to get a 'total total'. If it comes to a **plus** figure, then you've rated the overall impression you give quite positively. If it comes to a **minus** figure, you need to think hard about what you are writing.

Few of us could claim that the way we **want** to be perceived, and the way we **actually** present ourselves, match up exactly. Why not ask some of the people to whom you send written communications to score you on the 'impressions' scale? It might point to how you could improve your writing.

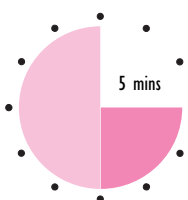
We will deal with some of these issues later, but if you want to ensure that your written material portrays you as businesslike, competent and efficient, you should consider whether:

- the documents are clearly identifiable for what they are;
- they are neatly presented and clearly laid out;
- the key messages are clearly set out;
- the statements are accurate;
- the language is clear and straightforward;
- the grammar and spelling are free from silly errors.

Let's look at spelling and grammar now.

5.2 Spelling and grammar

Activity 23



This notice contains various errors of spelling and grammar.

The heating controls in this area must not be altared, they are pre-set by the engineers and this can damage them. The settings are done to acheive a proper heating at all times even if cold first thing.

The meaning of this notice is fairly clear, but what effect would the errors have?

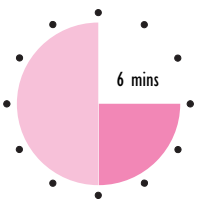
A lot of people who read the notice may not realize there are errors, but you can be sure that someone will. And that person is going to think less of the writer as a result. In other words, the writer's credibility will suffer.

I am not going to explain everything that is wrong with the notice in our example, but here is an improved version of it:

The heating controls in this area are pre-set by the engineers to provide the correct level of heating throughout the day. Even if it seems cold early in the day, please do not alter the settings, as this can cause damage.

Correct spelling means learning words as you go along. No-one can claim to spell everything perfectly, because there are so many long and complicated words in the language. But it is very embarrassing to have your spelling corrected, and it is well worth trying to improve your spelling skills.

Activity 24



You will need a dictionary for this Activity, which is about checking your spelling. Tick the words that are correct, and write down the correct spelling of those that are wrong.

Tabulation	☐	_____
Committee	☐	_____
Fulfill	☐	_____
Necessary	☐	_____
Preparation	☐	_____
Perceive	☐	_____
Bussiness	☐	_____
Arguement	☐	_____
Queue	☐	_____
Solusion	☐	_____
Corparation	☐	_____
Defendant	☐	_____
Coranory	☐	_____
Instalment	☐	_____
Segment	☐	_____
Independent	☐	_____
Discipline	☐	_____
Greavance	☐	_____
Promise	☐	_____
Equipped	☐	_____

EXTENSION 2

Several straightforward but comprehensive guides to grammar are available. They are non-academic, and give you plenty of examples and opportunities to practise. My choice is *Rediscover Grammar*, but in a large bookshop you may find other titles that you prefer. In the meantime, when you are sending out important letters on which a lot depends, get someone more experienced to check your final draft.

I hope you found that dictionary Activity useful – obviously I don't need to give you the correct answers.

It's a good idea to keep a dictionary handy whenever you have to write something. It only takes a few moments to check how to spell a word you are unsure about, and guessing wrongly can cause a lot of embarrassment. There are a number of good-sized pocket dictionaries on the market. Why not invest in one? And while it is no substitute for improving your spelling, if you use a computer word-processing program, its spell-checker function can help you avoid silly errors. (But remember it can't correct certain common mistakes, such as 'there' for 'their'.)

Grammar is a less clear-cut issue than spelling: it means the rules on how we should put our words together. This is an example of bad grammar.

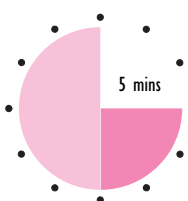
'Where's them memos what I wrote this morning?'

Although many people would say something like that, most listeners would agree that it was incorrect grammar, which always seems worse when it is written down. The correct way to put it would be as follows.

'Where are the memos that I wrote this morning?'

Correct grammar is just as important as correct spelling. It is much too big a subject for us to deal with fully here, but think about this issue seriously: bad grammar and bad spelling always give a poor impression, no matter how efficient you are in your job.

Activity 25



S/NVQ DI.2

This Activity may provide the basis of appropriate evidence for your S/NVQ portfolio. If you are intending to take this course of action, it might be better to write your answers on separate sheets of paper.

The meaning of words, correct spelling, correct grammar and useful phrases are things that we pick up as we go along – often because we've made a mistake and someone has corrected us. This is a lot easier if you keep a notebook to jog your memory, so for this Activity I suggest you try compiling a 'Writer's Handbook' of your own.

EXTENSION 3

If you are not confident about avoiding common errors in writing, you may find it helpful to look at Extension 3. This is a brief guide to two of the trickier areas: plurals and using apostrophes. If you're never quite sure when to write **its** and when to write **it's**, this extension will help you get it clear.

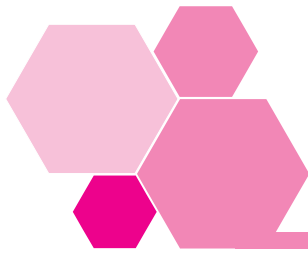
There are three ways to do this.

- Buy a pocket notebook and divide it into sections.
- Use pages from your personal organizer, if you have one.
- Set up a database on your PC, if you use one.

The headings I suggest are:

- new words and their meanings;
- short alternatives for longer words;
- simple alternatives for longer phrases;
- words you find difficult to spell;
- useful turns of phrase.

Your Writer's Handbook can become a valuable tool that will be useful for years to come. Be sure to keep it handy whenever you write.



6 The human touch

Writing simple, clear communications which read well will do a lot to improve our reputation for communicating well but, as I mentioned at the beginning of this part of the workbook, we may still feel that what we write has a rather cold and impersonal tone and is excessively formal. So how can we get round that problem?

Let's look at a few simple techniques we could use to lighten the tone.

6.1 People matter more than things

Look at this pair of sentences.

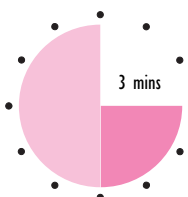
'Every effort will be made.'

'We shall make every effort.'

In the first sentence the emphasis is on the effort – it is impersonal. In the second sentence the emphasis is spread between 'we' and 'effort' so we learn from that sentence what is being made ('every effort') and who is making it ('we'). It is more personal.

Sometimes, of course, we want to emphasize a thing rather than a person but, as a general rule, if you write in the impersonal way for any length of time, you create a rather cold, remote effect, which doesn't give a very favourable impression.

Activity 26



Here are **two** more sentences written in a similar way to the one we've just looked at. Rewrite each sentence so that the emphasis is on the person as much as on the thing.

Enquiries will be dealt with by Marilyn Smith.

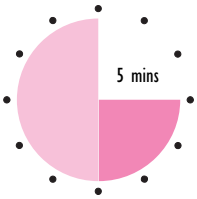
Your application has been received by the Personnel Officer.

I would have completed the sentences as follows.

- Marilyn Smith will deal with enquiries.
- The Personnel Officer has received your application.

Your wording may not be quite the same as mine but I hope it is on the same lines.

Activity 27



Here are some more examples of a cold, impersonal tone.

Improve them by using 'I' and 'we', for example, and by changing the wording where you think it is appropriate.

Applications will be dealt with in order of receipt.

The decision will be conveyed to you by my secretary.

All arrangements will be confirmed by this office.

It is regretfully felt that the company is unable to provide further assistance.

Here is how I would rewrite each of these sentences. Of course, your version may differ slightly from mine.

- We shall deal with applications in the order we receive them.
- My secretary will let you know the decision.
- We shall confirm all arrangements.
- I'm sorry that we're no longer able to help. (Or: I'm sorry that we can't help any further.)

In some situations, it may be reasonable to have the cold and impersonal tone – for example when replying to a solicitor's letter or a formal complaint of some kind. It has also been traditional to write technical and other reports in a very impersonal tone, but even this is changing. Where people used to write things like:

'Clocking-on procedure was observed 14 times.'

we might now write:

'I observed clocking-on procedure 14 times.'

I also think that writing:

'I discussed the proposals fully with the entire workteam and we reached the following conclusions ...'

is just as clear and efficient, but more human than:

'The proposals were fully discussed with the workteam and the following conclusions were reached ...'

6.2 The personal touch

Finally, we can often make what we write sound more human if we spend a few moments adding a personal touch – even to an everyday memo or business letter.

I don't mean by this that we should write in a gossipy style like this:

'I observed clocking-on on the nightshift 14 times. Jolly cold it was too! Still, here are the results anyway.'

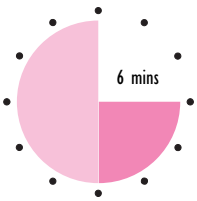
Organizations don't communicate – people do. Yet in the letter we looked at in Activity 18 on page 34, the writer is pretending to be an organization. This is why the letter comes across as so formal, cold and impersonal. It is achieved partly by using bureaucratic language, but the writer uses three other tricks:

- beginning the letter 'Dear Sir' instead of using the person's actual name;
- writing 'we' instead of 'I';
- using 'passive' forms ('your order has been expedited') instead of active ones ('we have expedited ...'). We'll say a bit more about this later.

The personal touch in business correspondence was once completely forbidden, but times have changed. Most people now feel that writing 'I', addressing people by name, and even using abbreviations (such as 'don't' and 'couldn't') helps get better results because it establishes a more human relationship between sender and receiver. However this does still depend on the context; for example, a hospital administrator replying to a complaint about treatment would be wise to retain a more formal tone.

Use the right 'sign-off' for your letters. 'Yours faithfully' is on the impersonal side (it's normal to use it in letters that begin 'Dear Sir/Dear Madam'); 'Yours sincerely' is more personal, and should be used when you address someone by name. 'Yours truly' is very personal – keep it for people you're personally friendly with.

Activity 28



Rewrite the letter on page 34, making it simpler, plainer and more human. The customer's name is Nazreem Khan, and the order number was NK 0556/03 (dated 10 January 2003).

There are several better ways of putting the letter, but I think this would work quite well.

Dear Mr Khan

Your order no. NK 0556/03 dated 10 January 2003

I apologise for the late delivery of your order for 24 HP 168-pin ECC DIMMs.

We have now despatched the DIMMs, and they should reach you by 31 January. Please give me a call if there is any further problem.

Yours sincerely

It's always worth asking yourself if your memos and e-mails (and all the copies that sometimes get sent) are really necessary.

Incidentally, I think I would almost certainly send this letter by fax, with a copy in the post, to make sure the information reached the customer as early as possible.

Sometimes the addition of a single sentence is enough to achieve the desired effect.

- 'Thank you for your letter of ...'
- 'Thank you for your support.'
- 'I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting on ...'
- 'Please let me know if I can ...'
- 'If you need any further help please ...'.

Any of these may be suitable to assure whoever you are writing to that you are human and that you realize they are too.

And, once you get into the habit of including a comment like one of these, it becomes an almost automatic response and not something over which you have to chew your pen for hours.

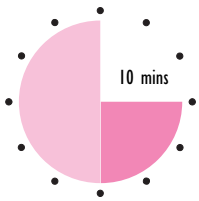
6.3 Formality

So far I have tended to emphasize the **benefits** of adopting a slightly informal tone and language so that you have the human touch. In many contexts, this is the right approach to take in order to make a favourable impression and have your message attended to. However there are times – I alluded to one above, where the hospital administrator is responding to a complaint – when you need a higher level of formality.

We will look in Session C at the formats and writing process for letters, memos, reports and e-mails in particular. Each of these forms can be more or less formal, depending on your language and tone. Letters and reports tend to be more formal than e-mails and memos, though much depends on:

- the preferred style of your organisation (a record company aimed at the youth market, for instance, would have a noticeably less formal approach to written communications than a government department);
- the subject matter of the writing.

Activity 29

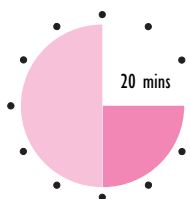


Here are a number of written documents and their subject matter. Grade each of them on a 'desired formality' scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being extremely formal and 1 being totally informal.

Subject matter	Format	Desired level of formality (please circle)	
		Informal	Formal
An invitation from the Chief Executive to a banquet at Head Office.	Memo	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Response to a request for a donation to charity.	Letter	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Notice of a staff member being selected for an Olympic team.	E-mail	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
A record of an accident at work.	Report	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Confirmation of a job offer and terms of employment.	Letter	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Details of entertainment to be available at the staff summer party.	Memo	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Your responses to this may differ quite a lot from mine, and this will mostly be because of the different organizations we work for or have worked for. I would say that the invitation memo will be very formal, as will the accident report and the employee letter containing contract details. The letter to the charity will be on a formality scale of about 5, while both the e-mail and the memo about the summer party will be quite informal.

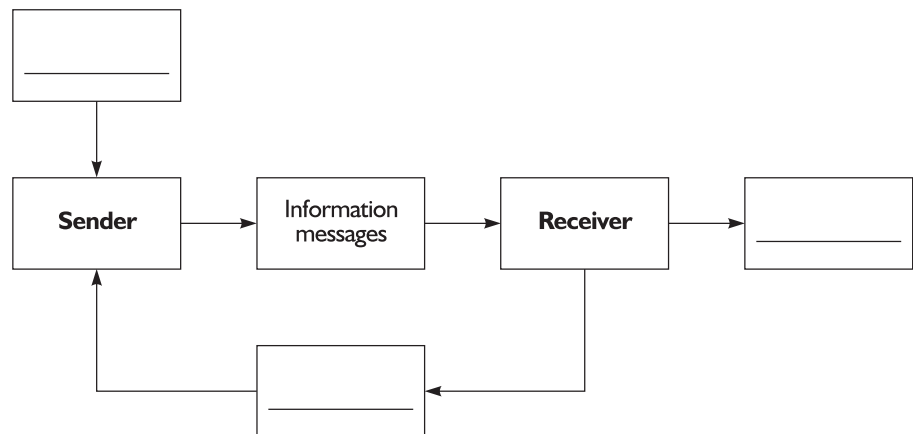
Self-assessment 2



- I Here is string of long-winded expressions. Try to come up with **one**, or perhaps **two**, words which could replace them.

- a Establish a connection between _____
- b Pay due attention to _____
- c In the vicinity of _____
- d Reach a consensus _____
- e Under no circumstances whatsoever _____
- f At every available opportunity _____
- g Without the slightest reservation _____
- h Arrive at the conclusion _____
- i Reach the decision _____
- j It may well be that _____
- k With a fair degree of probability _____
- l Unable to proceed further _____
- m In addition _____
- n Poorly illuminated _____
- o Socially withdrawn and inhibited _____
- p At the present moment in time _____
- q Render assistance to _____
- r Provide the necessary resources _____
- s On a subsequent occasion _____
- t Ascertain the location of _____

- 2 Fill in the missing elements from this diagram of the communication process.



- 3 Rewrite the following paragraph so that the writer is not 'hiding behind' the company:

'The company does not normally deal directly with the public, and it is usually recommended that you contact the retailer first. However, since the problem is urgent, a replacement unit will be sent to you direct from this office.'

- 4 Highlight the correct words to use in this sentence, from the choice offered (use a dictionary to check the meanings if in doubt).

'You have my (assurance/insurance/ensurance) that I will do everything necessary to (assure/insure/ensure) that the life (assured/insured/ensured) on your policy is that of your husband.'

- 5 Here's an anagram. Can you re-arrange the letters to make a useful four-word slogan for writers?

DOE KITTEN LEAPS SHRIMP

6 Here are **four** sentences containing grammatical errors. Rewrite them correctly.

a Lettuce's 80p each.

b The government has made a serious mistake in their calculations.

c The team won't have nothing to do with a suggestion of that sort.

d Where's the memos that I wrote?

7 Rewrite these **five** sentences to make them more direct and 'human'.

a The Mayor will be greeted by the Managing Director.

b Improvements will have been made by that time.

c Responsibility may have to be taken by myself.

d It was overlooked.

e Normal practice is to reply in writing.

8 How many words did we save by rewriting the sentences in question 7 in a more direct form?

Answers to these questions can be found on pages 104–105.

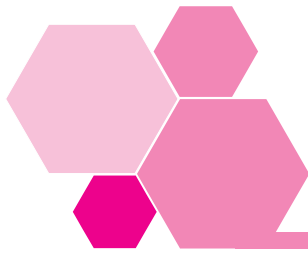
7 Summary

- The first priority in written communication is to ensure that the messages actually reach their destination. Check fax numbers and addresses, check that the document has arrived and pop a hard copy in the post just to be on the safe side.
- For any written communication, it pays to make the reader's task as simple as possible.
 - Identify the writer, target, purpose and content clearly.
 - Make it easy to read by:
 - keeping it short and simple (KISS);
 - using plain and simple language;
 - making the key messages clearly visible;
 - laying the document out so that it's easy to read.
- Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity (ABC) are a must for all written communications.
- Use plain words because:
 - it makes your material easier to understand;
 - it gives a good impression of you as a person;
 - both you and the reader understand what you are saying.
- In the English language there are many different ways of saying practically everything. On the whole the shorter ways are better: they will help your messages get through more easily.
- The flowery old-fashioned language that used to be normal in 'business correspondence' has little place today, though some organizations prefer more formality than others.
- On the whole, you communicate better when you use direct forms of writing and show the reader that you are a human being, and do not pretend to be a machine or an organization.
- Its written communications may be one of the factors by which quality is judged in an organization.
- Your writing style, spelling and grammar will, whether you like it or not, give your readers a particular impression of you. Make sure you are giving the impression you want to give.
- To make your writing sound human you should:
 - emphasize the people in your sentences rather than the things (i.e. write in the active voice rather than the passive voice);
 - use 'I' and 'we' rather than writing impersonally (with the possible exception of technical reports);
 - try to include a personal touch – a recognition of the reader's involvement – when writing memos, letters and e-mails.



Session C

Planning and laying out your writing

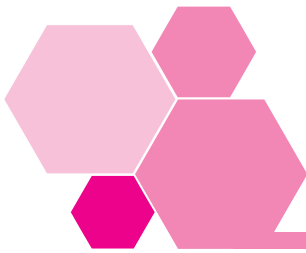


I Introduction

Millions of words are written every day, and your messages are going to have to compete with them. You therefore need to make the reader's task as easy as possible. We have considered some ways of making your words and phrases clearer and simpler. Now we need to think about structure and the visual appearance of the document.

In Session B we talked a little bit about standard forms for documents, such as letters, memos, faxes, reports and e-mails. I explained that one reason for using them was so that the receiver could instantly see what and who were involved. In other words, a clear structure made reading and understanding easier.

When we're talking about slightly longer letters, memos, short reports, factsheets etc., there are a lot more words to read, and the benefits of a clear and logical structure are even greater. The workbook on *Project and Report Writing* goes into this in more detail, but the same ideas can be used, even in quite short bits of writing.



2 Planning your writing

Remember the Five Ps:
Prior Planning Prevents
Poor Performance.

The best way to make sure that you do anything properly is to PLAN it. This applies to everything a first line manager does – you have to look ahead.

Here is a list of the things that you need to think about when you are planning to write a document.

- Make appropriate use of information.
- Consider the needs of the recipient.
- Use the appropriate tone and level of language.
- Select the appropriate format for your communication – this may be a letter, a memo, a report, an e-mail, a note or some other format.
- Give your writing a clear and coherent structure.
- Lay out the written document carefully, using your organization's 'house styles' where appropriate.
- Include visual materials as much as possible.

We have already looked at using information, the needs of the recipient, and the use of language.

2.1 Written formats

The most common forms of written document are produced using standard conventions of structure, style and layout, which make your task of writing considerably easier. Let's look at some examples of these. I've made a few notes next to each one as to how it should be planned out.

Therese Webster is a section team leader in a credit control department. Customers who pay late come up with all sorts of excuses and they are usually sent a standard letter to 'chase' payment. Occasionally, however, a more personal letter is required.

Owen's Supplies Ltd 18–22 Bath Street, Abingdon, OX14 3JW Tel: 01235 544221 Fax: 01235 566991 Mr R Kane Finance Director Abingdon Audio Visual Ltd 29 Spring Street Abingdon OX14 7SM 30 September 2003 Our reference: TW/300903/AVD Dear Mr Kane Thank you for your letter of 29 September. We are all very sorry to hear about the fire that you have suffered at your premises, and we hope that you will be able to restore your systems and get back to normal as soon as possible. In the circumstances we are happy to allow you an extra ten days to pay the outstanding invoices, as you have requested. I look forward to receiving your payment by the revised due date of 10 October. Please let me know in good time if you foresee any further problems. Yours sincerely <i>Therese Webster</i> Mrs Therese Webster Team Leader, Credit Control	Notes 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
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- 1 This is the standard letterhead used by everyone in the company when writing letters to outsiders.
- 2 You must include the fullest details that you have for the person receiving the letter, their organization and address.
- 3 Letters must be dated; this helps when the recipient replies to you.
- 4 References are optional but again can make it easier to locate a letter, both for sender and recipient.
- 5 If you know quite well the person to whom you are writing you could say 'Dear Robert', but this is quite informal. If you have no name for anyone specifically in an organization, use 'Dear Sir/Madam'.

- 6 If you are replying to a letter or other communication received, you need to make some reference to it at the outset.
- 7 This is the real 'point' of the letter, as it gives an answer to the request that was made. It is given a separate paragraph so that it can be seen quickly.
- 8 This 'sign-off' is used with 'Dear Mr' and 'Dear Robert' letters. Use 'Yours faithfully' for 'Dear Sir/Madam'.
- 9 You must either sign your letters, or authorize someone else to 'PP' them – that is, to put their signature for you ('per pro').
- 10 Your name should be included in type, just in case your signature is not legible – it is important for your recipient to know which person in your organization has sent the letter.
- 11 Including your position tells your recipient that you have the authority to send the letter.

Therese's section is under a lot of pressure because two of the five staff are off sick. She wants to take on a temporary credit control clerk, and sends the following memo to her line manager:

Owen's Supplies Ltd		Notes
MEMO		1
To:	Lorna Duggan, Credit Control Manager	2
CC:		3
From:	Therese Webster, Credit Control Section Team Leader	
Date:	30 September 2003	
Subject:	Request for temporary staff	4
As you know, Cherie and Hanif are both off sick. I have called them and I am afraid that they will both be away sick next week as well.		5
The amount of the work that my section has to do remains at the usual level but there are only three staff, so we are incurring considerable overtime costs. In addition, I am concerned that the stress on the remaining staff is causing a higher than usual number of mistakes to be made.		
Please may I call the staffing bureau and ask for Yolande Szalaw, our usual temp, to come in until either Hanif or Cherie, or both, are back? A signed copy of this memo would give me the authority I need to do this.		
<i>Therese Webster</i>		6

- 1 This is the standard memo form or 'house style' used in Therese's organization. Using it allows the recipient to see immediately that it is an internal document.
- 2 Memo forms are usually pre-printed with these details. 'CC' means 'copy to', that a copy of the memo has gone to a third party.
- 3 Put as much detail in as you can. Note that the memo doesn't have to be copied to anyone at all, and Therese hasn't bothered with this here.
- 4 Highlighting the subject matter in some way – by putting it in bold type for instance – makes it easy for the recipient to see at a glance what the issue is.
- 5 Therese states the problem, its causes and consequences, as clearly as possible, and then asks for action. Note that she would have to be able to back up her claims about the level of work, the costs, the stress and the mistakes.
- 6 It is not strictly necessary to sign a memo, but doing so shows clearly that the memo is at an end.

There was a minor accident in Therese's section and she had to complete a report for the health and safety officer.

Owen's Supplies Ltd	Notes 1
ACCIDENT REPORT	2
To: Stuart Brooks, Health and Safety Officer	3
From: Therese Webster, Credit Control Section Team Leader	
Date: 30 September 2003	
Subject: Accident in Credit Control Office 30 September 2003	4
Introduction An accident occurred in the credit control office this afternoon. Nobody was hurt. This report describes the incident, the factors that caused it, and the lessons that can be learned from it.	5
The incident A motorcycle courier driver with a package to deliver was directed by Reception, on the ground floor, to our office on the first floor. As he came into our office he shoved the double doors (that open inwards) rather hard and knocked into Dawn Clifford, who happened to be walking past. Dawn fell to the ground but was unhurt, though shaken.	6
Factors underlying the incident I believe that the incident occurred primarily because the courier was unfamiliar with our offices, and barged through the doors thinking they led into a corridor rather than an office. Also, he could not see clearly as he had kept his helmet on. The double doors have no movement limiter so they can crash open suddenly like this. Finally, our new desks are larger than our old ones so they take up more room. This means that Dawn was walking past the doors rather closer to them than she would have done previously, and so was sent flying.	7
Recommendations ■ People who are unfamiliar with our offices should not be sent in unaccompanied. ■ Packages should be taken from couriers at Reception and sent up to offices via internal mail. ■ If couriers are allowed in they should be required to take off their helmets. ■ The doors to our offices should have movement limiters put on them. ■ The office should be re-arranged so that gangways are clear of doors.	8

- 1–4 The same points apply as for the memo above.
- 5 Because reports are a relatively formal record, they should follow a standard format even if they are in fact very short. This introduction sets out the key facts – that there was an accident, non-one was hurt but lessons can be learned.
- 6 This is the main body of the report and is a factual description of events.
- 7 This analyses the events and forms some conclusions.
- 8 This section sets out the recommendations of the writer – in many reports, this is the key section.

Because new furniture was being delivered, Therese's section had a big tidy up and got rid of quite a lot of old trade magazines etc. She has now found that she also sent her copies of *Credit Control Monthly* to the dump. She needs the latest edition as it had an article on a new piece of software in it. She knows that her friend William Hobhouse, who works for the Edinburgh office, will be happy to send her a copy.

E-MAIL	Notes
From: Therese Webster	1
Date: 30 September 2003	
To: williamhobhouse@owens.co.uk	
Subject: Lost magazine!	2
Hi Will	3
During our office clearout the other day I threw out all my copies of <i>Credit Control Monthly</i> by mistake. I really wanted to keep the article in this month's edition on CreditSoft 3000. Could you possibly fax me a copy of it? I'm on 01235 566991.	4
Many thanks	5
Therese Credit Control Team Leader Owen's Supplies Ltd 18-22 Bath Street, Abingdon OX14 3JW Tel: 01235 544221	6
***** This e-mail and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. The views expressed in this communication may not necessarily be the views held by Owen's Supplies Ltd. If you have received this e-mail in error please notify the sender. This footnote also confirms that this e-mail message has been swept by VIRUScleaner for the presence of computer viruses. *****	7

- 1 This is the standard e-mail form used in Therese's organization. In most e-mail systems, the sender and the date appear automatically, so you only have to put in the recipient. The e-mail cannot be sent without one.
- 2 It is possible to send an e-mail without the subject box filled in, but since so many people get so many e-mails, it is best to give the person an idea of what your message is about at the outset.
- 3 As e-mail is generally such an informal means of communication many people do not bother with a greeting but it is still good manners to include one.
- 4 The message is informally but clearly phrased. Many people dispense with grammar, punctuation and spelling with e-mails, but remember that how the message is written says a great deal about the sender. Do you want to be thought of as careless, casual and offhand?
- 5 How to end an e-mail is very much a matter of taste. It is probably best to use some sort of sign-off, but these can vary tremendously in tone. Here it is easy, since Therese is asking William for something and therefore thanks him.
- 6 You can't physically sign an e-mail but you should end with your name and who you are, including a phone number so that the person can easily call you with an immediate response if necessary
- 7 This sort of message comes up automatically on the e-mail systems of many organizations. It is not usually the responsibility of the sender to include it specifically.

One thing you have probably spotted about the main content of this e-mail is that it is very much what you would expect to find in a well-written note. We saw this earlier, when we were thinking about a colleague writing out a proper note of a phone message. The conventions of note-writing for someone else are much the same as for e-mails.

We have now covered the most common forms of writing that you see in organizations. There may well be others, depending on the nature of your organization, but the same principles should apply to them too.

2.2 Selecting your format

While house styles and standard conventions will help you a great deal in writing a clear and useful document, don't forget that first of all you need to decide which is the appropriate format to use for the message you want to send.

Now we have looked in detail at the four main formats you are likely to encounter, you will have a good idea of when each should be used. One way of making the decision is to think about what we said in Session A about what writing is for.

- Memory – letters provide a good record outside the organization, and reports do the same internally. Memos and e-mails are less durable, generally speaking.
- Crossing space and time – e-mail is an excellent way to get written messages across space and time, though the fax does the same for notes, letters, memos and short reports.
- Copies – all the formats can easily be copied, though this is probably most true of e-mails with attachments.
- Back up – the memo and e-mail are probably most often used to back up what was said. I often pop a letter in the post to back up both speech and e-mails, particularly with the latter because I know it is so easy for them to be overlooked.
- Passing on a message – we mostly use notes for this, though increasingly e-mails are used to pass on notes that were previously just scribbled on a piece of paper.
- Legal requirement – the legal status of e-mails is still a rather grey area, so letters, memos and reports are probably the most important written media for meeting legal requirements for written evidence.

Remember that you also have a choice of **how to send** your chosen format. Just because you have written a letter does not mean that you are restricted to sending it by 'snail mail' post. You can fax it, or send it via e-mail as an attachment.

The only thing to watch out for here is the legal aspect. If you really want to be sure that your document is legal evidence then it is best to send a hard copy by post, preferably registered post so you have evidence of its arrival.

Activity 30



You have some pieces of information to convey to the following recipients. Which format would you use in each case – letter, memo, report, or e-mail/note?

Information	Intended recipients	Format to be used
1 Notice of redundancy.	Three members of your team.	
2 Directions to your office (not a map).	Client visiting in three hours time.	
3 Confirmation of the date, time and venue of a meeting.	Four colleagues in your department.	
4 Directions to your office (including a map).	Client visiting in three hours time.	
5 Results of your investigation into a new warehouse racking system.	Your immediate line manager, plus her boss.	
6 Message received by phone.	Your colleague at the next workstation.	
7 Cancellation of an order.	Supplier.	
8 Complaint received in person from several customers.	Customer Services Manager.	

You may well have different ideas on this from me, especially if you work in a more 'paperless' environment, where the e-mail has replaced other forms of written communication. Anyway, I would have chosen:

- a letter for 1 and 7 (possibly faxed as well as posted in the latter case);
- an e-mail for 2;
- a memo for 3;
- notes for 4 and 6 (faxed with the map, in the case of 4);
- reports for 5 and 8 (though 8 would be very short, or could even just be a memo).

2.3 Using structure

I said at the beginning of this section that you should plan to give your writing a clear and coherent structure. What does this mean exactly?

If you look at Therese's accident report you will see that she has included certain 'building blocks' in her writing to clarify her structure: an introduction, a description, an analysis and recommendations. The reader is taken through the report step-by-step.

How would you have reacted if instead she had started with the analysis, then had her introduction, followed this with her recommendations and finished with a description of the incident? It would have made no sense at all, as it would be incoherent and illogical.

Structure is largely a question of common sense about what to put in and in what order. You need to think about the following.

- What the reader already knows (Therese didn't need to describe what the Credit Control Section does – she knows that the Health and Safety Officer will know this).
- What the reader needs to know (the health and safety aspects of an incident).
- What the reader doesn't need to know (that Dawn is the accountant, for instance, or that she likes windsurfing).

Standard conventions for documents, and house style, can help with structure, as can the following golden rule:

Each piece of writing should have a beginning, a middle and an end.



3 Laying out written documents

Once you have selected the most appropriate format for your writing you need to settle down and just do it. Many people 'freeze' at this point, worrying about the writing process. The best way to overcome fears like these is to remember that your objective is to send a clear message, not to write *War and Peace*. There is no point spending lots of time writing the perfect document if it is only going to be seen by one person who will promptly 'bin' it.

- Organize the information that you have to hand, including notes, and work out where in your writing you are going to use each bit of information.
- Use plain and simple language.
- Keep your document as brief as possible while making sure that everything is included.
- Allow yourself enough time to draft and check the document, and to get it checked by a colleague if it is particularly important.
- Think about how the document should be laid out so that it is easy both to read and to write.

Layout is obviously closely linked to structure and to your chosen format. If your organization has 'house styles' then you don't actually need to think too much about layout – just follow the style. And if the house style is set up as a document 'template' in the word processing system you use, then you have even less to worry about.

There are some basics of layout that you should bear in mind:

- use headings;
- use numbering;
- use indents;
- put figures in columns.

3.1 Use headings

Skim through any part of this workbook, and you will see that it is organized under headings. These come in several levels, for example:

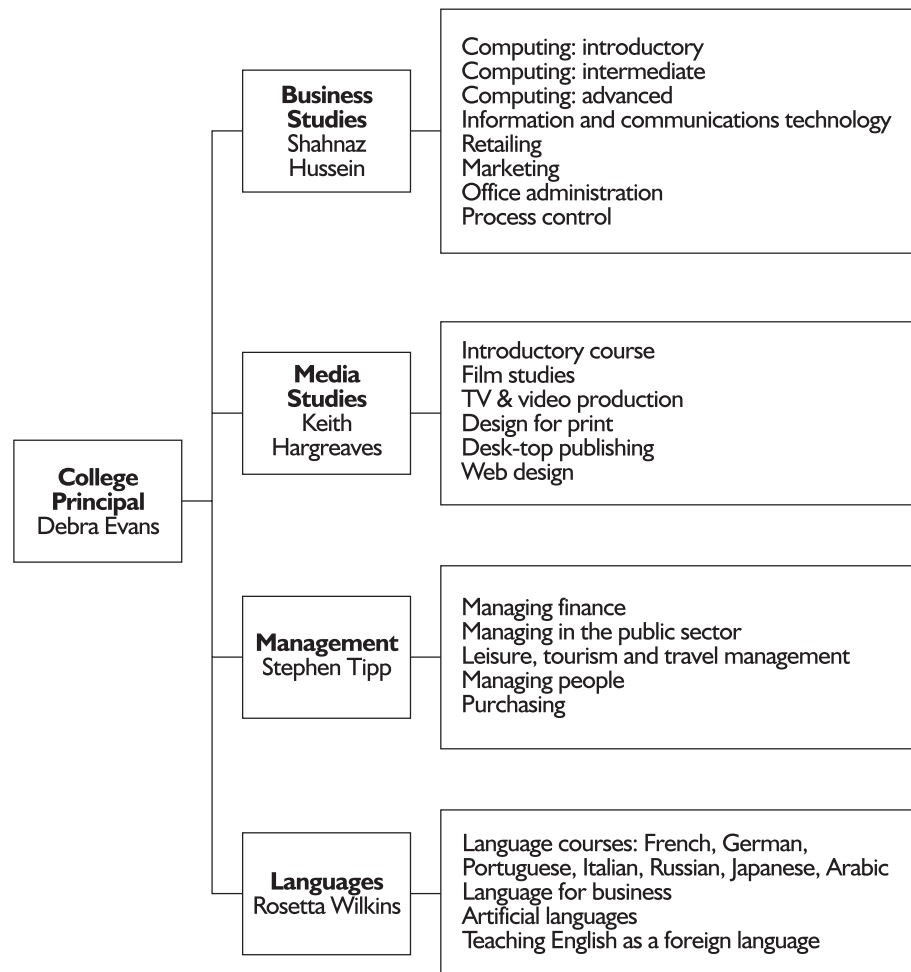
Session B Writing for results

3 Getting the reader's attention

3.1 Keeping it short and simple

Headings are a way of grouping ideas. We could also show similar structures as diagrams, as the case study below shows.

Danuta was responsible for preparing the college's information booklet for new students. This involved trying to explain what courses were on offer, and which departments delivered them. She also wanted to name the key individuals heading up the departments. It was perfectly possible to do this in text form, as a series of lists, but the result was very dull and didn't really show how the departments related to one another. She opted for a diagram.



3.2 Use numbering

Headings show which points logically go together. Numbering makes this even clearer. It also helps when you're going to discuss the document with someone, especially over the phone. It's quicker and easier to say 'In section 3.5 you mention that ...' rather than 'When you discuss mechanization you mention that ...'. 'Mechanization' could appear anywhere in the document and time is lost while everybody leafs through it to find the right item.

Readers will find that numbered headings and sub-headings help when making notes, for the same reason, and when making a written response to the document, for example:

'I shall respond to the relevant sections in order:

3.5 Mechanization'

You notice that I've used a decimal numbering system. This is simpler and more consistent than something like 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, etc., since it is possible, in

a fairly lengthy document, to become confused about which letter belongs with which number. With a decimal system, each number (1.3, 23.4 or whatever) will appear only once, and will relate to only one sub-section.

One point to remember with a decimal system is that it's only the figures after the decimal point that change in any one section. So after 1.9, you continue 1.10, 1.11, 1.12 – not 1.9, 2.0, 2.1.

3.3 Use indents

You should usually indent your text so that it matches the level of importance of the sub-headings, like this.

Claiming travel expenses

The arrangements for claiming travel expenses as laid down in the Company Staff Manual are as follows.

- I All staff members are entitled to claim expenses for activities where travel is involved, provided that:
 - I.1 the duties are duly authorized;
 - I.2 they take place:
 - during work hours
 - or outside work hours for the purpose of carrying out authorized duties at some other location;
 - I.3 they do not include the cost of normal travel from home to work;
 - I.4 the claim is properly submitted on the standard form.
- 2 The method of travel should be the cheapest that is reasonably practical. In particular:
 - 2.1 staff members may use their own cars where this is likely to save a significant amount of time compared with using public transport;
 - 2.2 for the sake of economy, staff members should travel together where possible.
- 3 The rates per mile for staff members using own cars are, at present, as follows.

Engine size

up to 1500cc	35 pence per mile
up to 2000cc	40 pence per mile
over 2001cc	45 pence per mile

3.4 Put figures in columns

Because of the way we have been taught to handle figures, we find it easier to compare two or more figures or to relate them to each other if they are shown to us vertically rather than presented in the middle of a line of words.

So, if you are writing something which involves several figures, try to arrange them in a simple vertical table. So this:

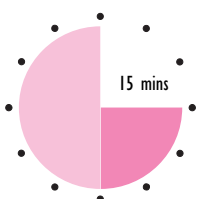
Last year we sold a total of £1 500 000 from the 'Brigadier' range, of which £328 000 was sold to North America, and £229 000 was sold to Europe. Most of the rest was accounted for by UK sales, but £51 500 went to the Far East.

can become this.

My advice is to use tables in very small doses. I once helped to produce a book that was 500 pages long – and 350 pages were nothing but tables. That really was a challenge to the reader's attention span.

Sales totals	'Brigadier' range sales last year
Export sales:	
North America	£328 000
Europe	£229 000
Far East	£51 500
UK sales	£891 500
Total	£1 500 000

Activity 31



Read the memo below. Then rewrite it on the blank memo form provided, improving the structure and layout, and making the document shorter and clearer so that the reader can take in the information more easily.

Here are some hints.

- Make notes first.
- Think about headings and numbering of sections.
- Think about indents.
- Think about the way you present figures.

MEMORANDUM

From: R. Singh, Site General Manager
Subject: Telephone Costs
To: All Section Leaders
Date: 3 November

I am very concerned about our rapidly increasing telephone costs. For whatever reason, the bill for the last quarter (July–Sept) is over £1800, compared with £1200 this time last year – an increase of over 50%.

Bills for the first two quarters this year were approximately £1400 and £1500 respectively, compared with £1120 and £1090, confirming the upward trend. At this rate, we'll have doubled costs in a very short period. We know that fax traffic is increasing (but fax machines can be programmed to transmit overnight when rates are cheaper).

We expected that our telephone sales drive would increase costs by 10% in this last quarter, but against this, charges overall have fallen by 3%. That means the true excess increase is a massive 43% this quarter. We must do something to get this under control.

The higher morning rate no longer applies, but could you please ask all staff in your section to reduce costs wherever possible. You might stress the benefits of preparing for a call before making it so that time spent actually on the telephone is kept to a minimum. It would also help if staff got into the habit of ringing back or leaving a message rather than holding the line if the person they are calling is not immediately available.

Mobiles can be a problem too. Staff are phoning in from mobiles when they could be using ordinary phones or call boxes. Also, it's very expensive to call someone else's mobile, such as contractors or sales people in the field.

Some of these may even be personal calls, and this is possibly a difficult topic. We have never previously attempted to prevent staff making or receiving personal calls – in a small firm like ours there has to be some give and take. I would welcome any suggestions as to what could be done about this side of things. In the meantime, please ask staff to keep personal calls to a minimum and to use the pay phone in the snack bar as far as possible.

R.S.

MEMORANDUM

From: R. Singh, Site General Manager
Subject: Telephone Costs
To: All Section Leaders
Date: 3 November

A more effective way of laying out this memo can be found on page 108.

The aim with a written communication like this is to make it as easy as possible for readers to understand what the issues are, where the problems lie, and what action is required.

Laying out the document clearly, by grouping the key ideas under numbered headings, with text indents and mini-tables where appropriate, helps achieve this.



4 Including visual materials

'Our reporter gave a graphic account of the sights which greeted her when she entered the village. It was, she said, a vision from Hell.'

We use the words 'graphic' and 'graphically' when we mean 'colourful', 'striking', 'dramatic', and 'attention-catching', and that is precisely what graphics in your written materials are supposed to achieve. We think of something that is 'graphic' as a particularly vivid and easily understood way of depicting something. 'Graphic speech' conjures up pictures in our minds, and pictures (visual communication) are a stronger means of communication than spoken or written words or numbers.

In text, 'graphics' can include all kinds of visual material, such as:

- photographs;
- diagrams (look back at page 70 for an example);
- charts and graphs;
- maps;
- 'screens' from computer programs;
- cartoons;
- technical illustrations.

Visual materials like these help you communicate more effectively, so it makes sense to use them. This is quite easy, especially if you are working with PCs. These allow us to incorporate all kinds of visual material – including pictures from digital cameras – into text documents, to change their size and shape, and to introduce patterns, shading and so on. This can make a big difference to how documents look and how well they communicate.

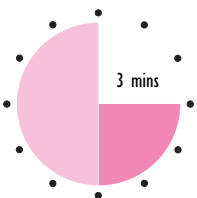
4.1 Including information

Much of your day-to-day writing will be quite straightforward, but sometimes you will need to include information in the form of numbers – or numerical data, as we usually call them. You may need to use them when you want:

- to prove a point;
- to communicate the numbers themselves;
- to explain something better than words alone can do.

Data can be confusing or boring, and difficult to present. Just think how many times you skip looking at statistics in newspaper reports or other forms of communication. Nevertheless, statistics and numerical data are vital to the running of a business. They often form the key part of the information that is available for you when you are writing a message. They are vital to understanding what is happening around us.

Activity 32



Note down **three** examples of numerical data or figures you might find at your workplace.

Obviously the numerical data you have included will depend on the type of work you do. Here are just a few examples:

- overtime hours;
- sales figures;
- sickness rates;
- product prices;
- wastage rates;
- bonus payments;
- profit and loss accounts;
- number of accidents.

As we have to deal with so many figures in our working lives it is easy to miss some, or not take in all the information. Therefore, we need to be good at presenting figures so that people can take in and understand information quickly.

For some organizations – like retailers, manufacturers and businesses in the financial sector – numbers are their lifeblood. But all kinds of organization use numbers for measuring how well they are doing: costs, sales, overheads, activity levels, individual performance, progress of training, wastage and the overall financial picture.

In fact, if you try to make a serious point about any such issue without using numbers as information to back up your case, you will look rather silly.

Here's an example.

Robyn wrote a short note to the General Manager:

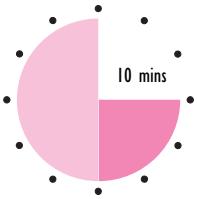
'All my staff have worked very hard over the last year, and output is greatly increased. The team is successful all round, and everyone has contributed to this. I realize that this year things are tight, but I would like to recommend that my team should receive a performance bonus of 1% of annual salary, on top of any additional increases.'

The General Manager called her in and gave her a 'roasting'. Apart from not considering the firm's general policy on pay, he said, she had given him nothing but personal opinions.

- Where was the evidence that the team had worked harder than last year?
- What were the actual increases in output?
- Where was the evidence that everyone in the team had contributed equally?
- What did 'successful' mean, and where was the evidence for it?

He also pointed out that Robyn had made no attempt to evaluate the cost of her proposal, or its impact on budgets for the current year and subsequently. He told her to forget the whole thing unless she was able to present a reasoned case, supported by accurate information.

Activity 33



How could Robyn get the information to support her case?

- 1 Evidence that the team had worked harder.

- 2 Evidence of increased output.

- 3 Evidence that everyone had contributed equally.

- 4 Evidence of 'success'.

- 5 Cost predictions and forecast of effect on budgets.

Organizations have a strong preference for hard facts. They're considered more meaningful, more reliable and more credible – and they have a businesslike 'feel'.

A well-managed organization should be able to make this sort of information available for use by its managers and team leaders. Some of it might have been quite difficult to get, though.

- 1 Evidence of working harder could easily come from:

- total hours worked;
- amount of overtime worked;
- productivity (output per head);
- numerical data about average speed of completing tasks.

- 2 Evidence of increased output should be obvious in any production or activity-based organization. Here are some examples from the work of a housing charity.
 - Total number of enquiries handled.
 - Number of enquiries handled per staff member.
 - Number of 'clients' found accommodation.
 - Number of information packs distributed.
 - Number of presentations given to outside bodies.
 - Amount of time that helplines and advice desks are open for business.
- 3 Evidence of individual performance may not always be so easy to find. Obvious sources are:
 - appraisal records;
 - individual output and productivity (where this can easily be measured, e.g. in assembly work, keyboarding, sales, call handling).
- 4 'Success' may simply mean meeting or exceeding output targets, but it might also be measured by:
 - surveys of customer satisfaction;
 - reduced error/wastage rates;
 - fall in the number of complaints.
- 5 Cost and budget information should be easiest of all to come by, though it may mean consulting Personnel and financial specialists. Many first line managers are involved in creating budgets, and have specific responsibilities for controlling costs and ensuring output targets are met.

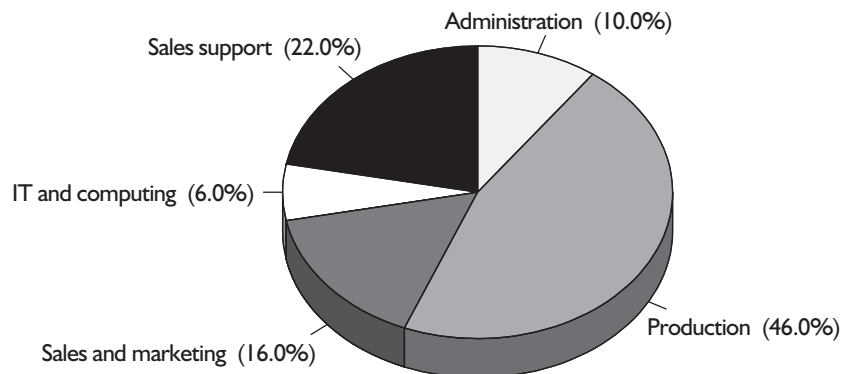
4.2 Including numerical information visually

Numbers – numerical data – are of vital importance in every organization. 'Raw' data (the basic figures before they are processed and analysed) are the most reliable evidence of performance. However, the numerical data usually need analysing before they give us clear answers, and that is what statistics is about. Statistics is a series of techniques for telling us what our numerical data really mean, in particular, how things are changing, and when differences are important. Statistical analysis can be extremely complicated – but for most management purposes, it is very simple.

Wherever you need to include numerical data and tables, it's worth considering whether visual materials would get the message across better.

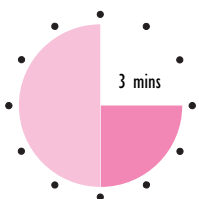
Try out some rough visual representations of numerical data. Squared paper can be handy for this. It provides a basic scale without the need for rulers and a lot of calculation. You can draw up a more accurate version later, if necessary.

The simplest kind of chart is perhaps the **pie-chart**, which is a straightforward way of showing how the total breaks down into its main components, as in this example.

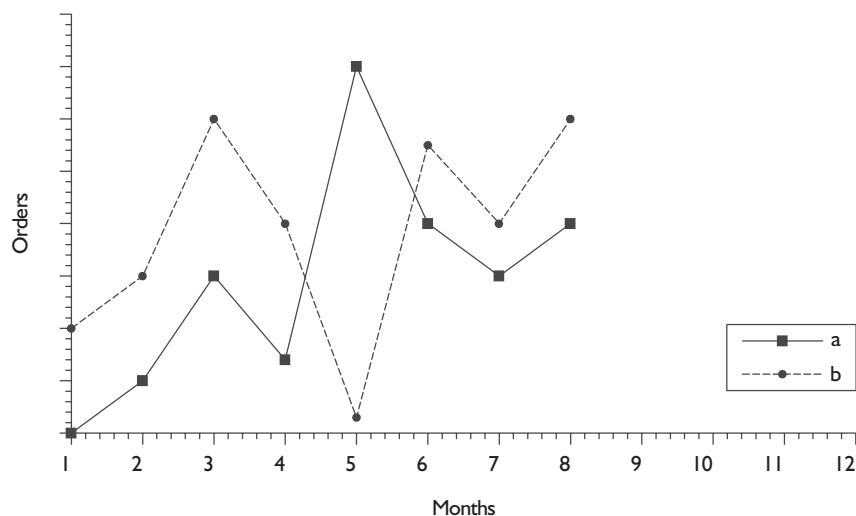


Graphs and bar charts are useful aids to seeing what lies behind the numbers in your tables.

Activity 34



Look at this graph, which plots orders for product **a** and product **b** over a period of months.



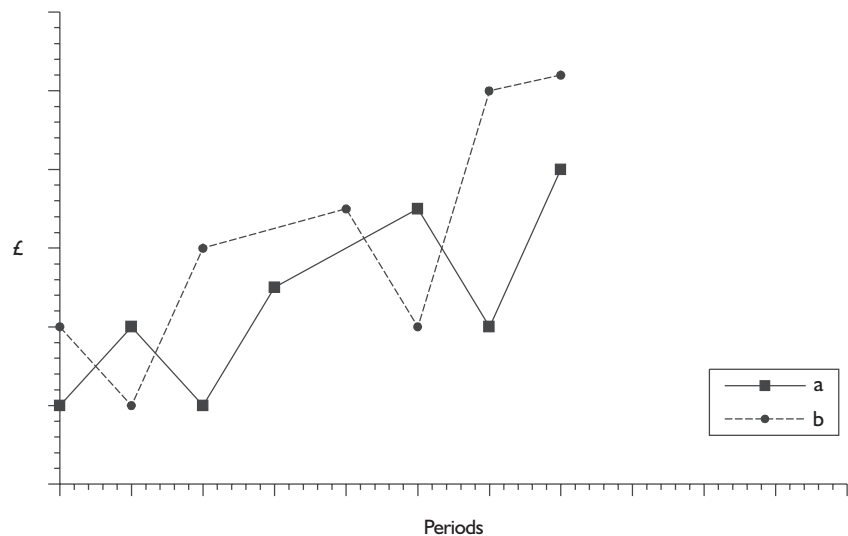
What does it show you?

The graph shows **at a glance** that:

- orders are on an upward trend overall;
- there was a huge fall in orders for product **b** in month 5, and a large rise in orders for product **a**.

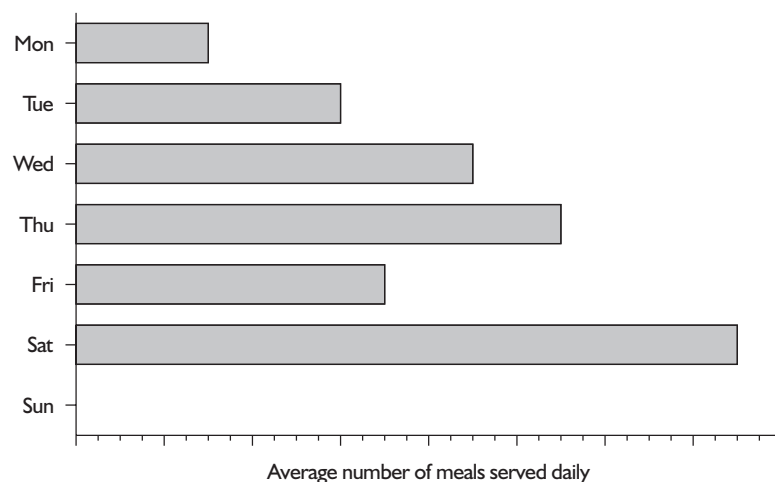
The latter cries out for an explanation.

The graph clearly and instantly reveals things that you can only get from tables of figures after a good deal of head-scratching. These are often patterns, as in this example.

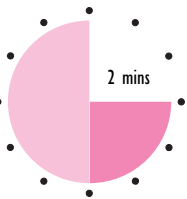


Here the two lines follow the same pattern, but one is a full period later than the other. Again, this cries out for explanation (perhaps one line represents orders received and the other shows goods despatched), but the pattern wouldn't have been visible at all in a table.

Patterns, as on this bar chart showing numbers of meals served in a large restaurant, can be very useful for planning.



Activity 35



What use would this information be for management and planning purposes?

It tells you clearly when the restaurant is busiest, and therefore:

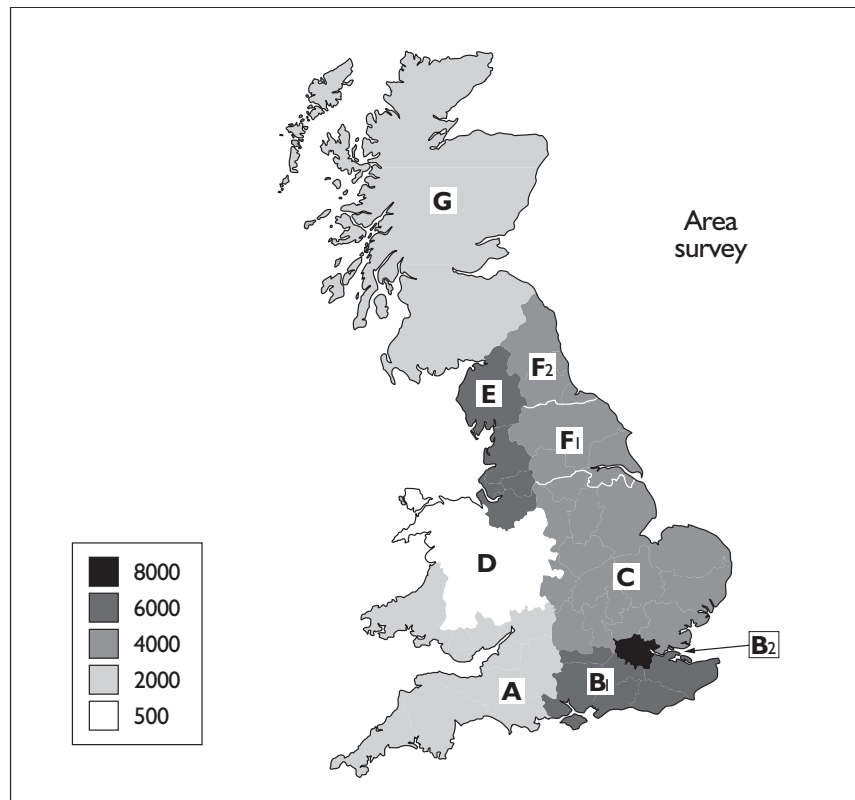
- when the largest deliveries of supplies need to be made;
- how the staffing levels should vary during the week.

4.3 Including other kinds of visual material

Newspapers and magazines, whose business is communication, use graphics in all sorts of imaginative ways. For example, magazines like *Which?* use ‘**matrix**’ **diagrams** to present the results of their tests on consumer products in an easily digestible way.

Make		Features ratings				
		a	b	c	d	e
Features	A	● ● ●	● ●	●	● ● ● ●	● ● ●
	B	●	● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ●	● ●
	C	● ●	●	● ● ●	● ● ●	● ● ●
	D	● ● ● ● ●	● ●	●	● ●	● ●
	E	● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ●	●	● ● ● ●
Features	a					
	b					
	c					
	d					
	e					

Where information has a geographical aspect, you can show it on a map, like this.



This kind of map can be used to show all sorts of interesting things.

- How spending power varies regionally.
- Rates of incidence of various diseases.
- Numbers of youngsters in further and higher education.
- Pollution rates, car usage, proportion of land in urban use, and so on.

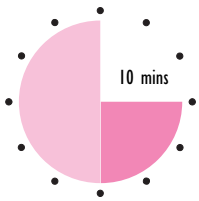
The smallest kind of map is the **floor or site layout plan**. You may also find yourself using these, for example when you are:

- discussing security issues;
- describing an accident;
- explaining some problem of storage, movement or work space.

Unlike graphs and charts, which are easy to create using a computer, and maps, which can be copied from a template of some kind, you may have to draw up layout plans by hand. The key issue is to make them reasonably accurate (this means measuring distances) and to show the scale.

This has been a very brief introduction to an important subject. For more about the use of visual materials and graphics, see the workbook on *Project and Report Writing*.

Self-assessment 3



1 What are the five Ps?

P_____ P_____ P_____ P_____ p_____ .

2 How should you end a letter which has started with 'Dear Mr Farrar?'

3 Number these formats in order of their level of formality.

Format	Level of formality
Letter	
E-mail	
Memo	
Note	
Report	

4 What SIX things should you think about when deciding what format to use for your written communication?

5 Complete the following.

Each piece of writing should have a _____, a _____
and an _____.

6 Fill in the blanks to give **three** simple techniques for laying out your written material better.

Use _____

Use _____

Use _____

- 7 What techniques can you use to draw attention to a particular word, heading or section of your text (hint: look carefully at this workbook and you should be able to identify at least **four**).

- 8 Rewrite the following information in the form of a table, to make it more intelligible.

'From 9.00 to 12.00, Alan and Beni will be on duty. Carol will be on from 9.00 to 14.00. Debra will work from 12.00 to 17.00. Alan and Beni come back on at 14.00 after their lunch break and work through till 17.00.'

Answers to these questions can be found on pages 105–106.

5 Summary

- Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.
 - Use information.
 - Think about your recipient.
 - Use the right tone and level of language.
 - Use the right format – letter, memo, e-mail, note or report.
 - Use structure to give logic and coherence.
 - Lay out your writing well.
 - Include visual materials.
- When you select which format to use, remember what written communication does.
 - It serves as a record.
 - It crosses space and time.
 - It can be copied.
 - It backs up speech and other forms of writing.
 - It passes on messages.
 - It can be a legal requirement.
- A piece of writing needs a beginning, a middle and an end. Use the standard conventions of the different formats to give structure, and think about what the reader:
 - already knows;
 - needs to know;
 - doesn't need to know.
- To organize your written material better:
 - use headings;
 - use numbering;
 - use indents;
 - put figures in columns to make tables.
- Back up your written documents with data and graphics when you need:
 - to prove your point;
 - to communicate the numbers themselves;
 - to explain something better than words alone can do.
- Use visual means to communicate numbers and other complex material more effectively.
 - Pie charts to show breakdown (or share of various elements within a total).
 - Bar-charts to compare quantities and totals.
 - Graphs to show how up to four quantities have changed over several periods of time.
 - Maps, plans and diagrams to show more complicated relationships.

Performance checks



I Quick quiz

Write down the answers to the following questions on *Writing Effectively*.

Question 1 In general, speech has **three** advantages over writing. What are they?

Question 2 A written statement creates a permanent record and it is more likely to be accurate than anyone's memory. What is its other big advantage?

Question 3 Even if a meeting is minuted, it pays to make your own notes. Why?

Question 4 Fill in the blanks so that this passage makes sense.

Speech is fine for getting immediate action and communicating _____ amounts of _____, but it is very ineffective when:

- the speaker tries to _____ too much _____;
- the _____ have to _____ it for too long.

Question 5 Sometimes we put things in writing because the law requires it. There is another good reason for putting things in writing in situations where the law may in due course be involved. What is it?

Question 6 You have an important document that needs to reach a bank in Frankfurt, Germany, within 48 hours. The document is not particularly confidential. You have all normal business communication facilities at your disposal. Describe how you would send the document and ensure its safe arrival.

Question 7 When busy people receive a written document, what are the first **two** things they need to be able to do?

Question 8 What is the ABC of effective written communication?

Question 9 Translate the following phrases into plain and simple language.

a Enhanced strategies for revenue generation may exist.

b Significantly advantageous consequences may be anticipated.

c The product has encountered negative consumer reactions.

Question 10 This sentence contains minor errors. Highlight them and write the correct version below.

‘The principle objection to seperating mens and women’s events is that its likely to mean having less paying visitors.’

Question 11 Rewrite the following in a more human and direct way.

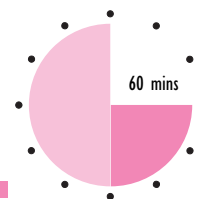
‘Colleagues’ opinions and those of the workteam were sought.’

Question 12 One main advantage of numbering headings in written documents is that it helps the writer organize the material. What is the other?

Answers to these questions can be found on pages 109–110.



2 Workbook assessment



Read the following two letters and then deal with the task which follows, writing your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

The first letter is to A Savage & Son, specialist rose growers, from a prospective customer, S Hamlin, who is the owner of a hotel in Yorkshire. He wants to plant the grounds of the hotel with roses and is asking for details of what rose trees are available.

The reply is from the Customer Service supervisor of A Savage & Son. As you see, the letter contains some useful information but it isn't very well expressed, logically structured, or well presented, so that you, the customer, can quickly grasp what you are being told.

Rewrite the letters from A Savage & Son to S Hamlin, using the same information to answer the customer's enquiry but expressing it more simply, logically and helpfully.

You will need to think about:

- the words and phrases used;
- the style;
- the grouping of the main points included;
- the overall structure.

HAWKGARTH HOTEL

Exelby, North Yorkshire BR8 9QL

A. Savage & Son
Reading Road
Binchester
Berkshire
BC2 6QX

4 August 2003

Dear Sir

I read with interest the article 'Roses for all reasons' in the *Sunday Echo* yesterday in which you were mentioned as providing a free advisory service on planting and cultivating roses.

This hotel stands in two acres of grounds and used to be well known in the area for its splendid display of roses. We have several interesting photographs taken before the Second World War which bear this out. However, its requisition during the war as a military establishment, subsequent years of neglect followed by twenty years use as a boarding school means that the former rose gardens have virtually disappeared.

I anticipate that re-stocking the grounds will take about five years. I am thinking of starting this year with hedges, roses amongst the trees in the woodland and climbers in difficult positions, which will all take some years to achieve maturity.

I should be interested to know what you would suggest for the following.

1. Climbing roses for a north facing, random stone wall of the main wing of the hotel, approximately 30 metres long.
2. A vigorous tall rose hedge to screen adjoining farm buildings and to deter animals from the farm from coming through the fence onto our property.
3. Rambling roses to grow amongst trees on the edge of an existing copse of trees (rather neglected at the moment) in a shaded corner of the grounds. I hoped that planting some roses there would give colour and interest to an otherwise dull area.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

S. Hamlin

A. Savage & Son
 Rose Specialist
 Reading Road
 BINCHESTER
 Berkshire BC2 6QX

Mr S. Hamlin
 Hawkgarth Hotel
 EXELBY
 North Yorkshire BR8 9QL

7 August 2003

Dear Sir

With reference to your letter of 4 August, we shall be delighted to help you re-stock your rose garden and offer the following suggestions. A copy of our catalogue is enclosed so that you can consider the entire stock list for yourself. The ideal planting time for roses is November/December, though any time until March is possible, provided there is no danger of severe frost. However, I do advise you to place your order as soon as possible so that the roses are dispatched in time for autumn planting provided, of course, that you are ready to plant them then. Our roses are packed in peat and polythene and will tolerate being kept in dark, frost-free conditions for up to three weeks prior to planting.

As I said, you may like to choose alternatives from the complete stock list but I suggest the following. Alberic Barbier would do well climbing against a north wall and will also grow into trees satisfactorily, though you would have to be careful that roses were not planted too close to the roots of trees and, of course, no roses will do well in totally shaded conditions. However, I think you would find that the following would achieve the effect you want in adding interest and colour to the copse:

Alberic Barbier;
 Dr van Fleet;
 Bobbie James;
 Pauls Himalayan Musk;
 Wedding Day.

This would give you a variety of colour and flowering periods and the additional interest of coloured hips in the autumn.

In addition to Alberic Barbier as a climber for a north wall, you might like to try Gloire de Dijon, Golden Showers, May Queen and New Dawn. This will also give you a variety of colour. You are fortunate in having random stone walls against which almost every colour is seen to advantage as opposed to brick, for instance, which never does justice to reds and crimsons. However, against a north facing wall, with limited direct sunlight, I think you will find that lighter yellows, pinks and whites create a more pleasing effect. Incidentally, May Queen also makes a splendid tree. As for the hedge, I suggest Nevada, Constance Spry and Frühlings Gold to give you a variety of colour, though, of course, if you feel that one colour would create a more dramatic effect then you could create a hedge of any one of these. Certainly any of them will give you a tall, impenetrable hedge within a few years.

Judging by the indication of size you have given, I estimate that you would need twelve climbers and fifteen to twenty roses to grow into the copse. You don't give an indication of the length of hedge you require but, to provide a dense hedge of this type you could estimate planting one bush every four feet.

Climbers and the roses for the copse are £5.00 each, hedging plants are £4.00 and we give a discount of 10 per cent on orders over £300. There is a standard charge of £10 per order for packaging and carriage but this is waived on orders over £75.

We can offer a more detailed advisory service than I have given if you provide more detailed information of dimensions, aspect, soil type etc and, if required, we will also come and visit a customer's premises to discuss special requirements, though we have to charge for this service. I enclose a questionnaire which you might like to complete and return if you would like more detailed advice on planting your grounds. This service is free.

I wish you every success with your roses and we look forward to receiving your order.

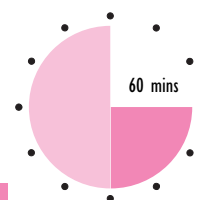
Yours faithfully

R. Harris
 Customer Service Supervisor

Enc



3 Work-based assignment



S/NVQ DI.2

The time guide for this assignment gives you an approximate idea of how long it is likely to take you to write up your findings. You will need to spend some additional time gathering information, perhaps talking to colleagues and thinking about the assignment and planning.

Your work on this assignment may provide the basis of appropriate evidence for your S/NVQ portfolio. If you are intending to take this course of action, it might be better to write your answers on separate sheets of paper.

Choose what seems to you a fairly limited problem at work to which you can think of a solution. This might be:

- a minor change in a clerical system;
- a slightly different way of working;
- a change of material or materials handling;
- a change of storage arrangements;
- something to do with the health, safety or welfare of your workteam.

But those are only suggestions. You may well think of something which doesn't come into any of these categories, and exactly what you choose will depend on the nature of your job.

Perhaps you will think of a problem which you have solved fairly recently. In that case, use it for this project, but assume that your solution hasn't yet been put into operation.

Don't choose anything too ambitious because, as you know, it's rarely simple to bring about a major change in one work area without affecting the work of a lot of other people.

Having chosen your problem and its solutions, write a memo to your immediate boss describing precisely what the problem is and what you suggest to improve the situation. Remember to provide enough evidence to support your case and write it in a way which is likely to get a favourable response.

Next, assume that what you propose has been agreed to and you can make the change.

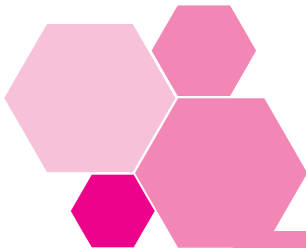
How would you inform your workteam?

Would you need to back up anything you say in writing? In one or two sentences write down what you would do to make sure that your workteam took notice of the change you were making and remembered it whenever necessary.

Finally, write out **one** of the pieces of written information that you might use to get your workteam to make the change you suggest effectively and efficiently. This might be a memo, but could be in another form.

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Reflect and review



I Reflect and review

Now that you have completed your work on *Writing Effectively*, let us review our workbook objectives.

- When you have completed this workbook you will be better able to decide when it is more useful to write than to speak, and when a combination of the two is even more useful.

In Session A, we had a lot to say about the advantages of speech versus the advantages of writing, and pointed out various situations in which writing would be preferable. Emergencies, informal situations and meetings obviously call for speech. But when people are distant, facts need to go on the record, and when more complex ideas are being communicated, writing clearly has the edge.

Now you have completed your reading and responded to the Activities, you should have a clearer idea of when to write rather than speak. The best way to test this is to think about situations where you might use both.

- In what situations would you opt for writing first, **but back up your messages with speech**, and why?

- In what situations would you opt for speech first, **but back up your messages in writing**, and why?

The second objective is as follows.

- When you have completed this workbook you will be able to give your written communications a better chance of:
 - reaching their destination;
 - being noticed;
 - being read;
 - being understood.

Many factors are involved in this, but the key is to think about how you can make the reader's job easier. Achieving this involves:

- 1 administrative matters like choosing the right format, and clearly addressing and identifying your documents;
- 2 language skills (mainly the ability to write in a simple and straightforward way);
- 3 physical issues, especially choosing a clear and attractive layout;
- 4 the ability to structure your ideas and material logically;
- 5 good judgement as to when to insert tables and graphics.

Now's the time to review how much you've achieved in these five key areas. Rate yourself out of ten on each of them, and make a brief note of where you feel your weaknesses and strengths presently lie.

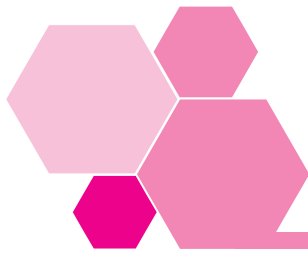
1 Administrative matters Rating ☐

2 Language skills Rating ☐

3 Use of layout Rating ☐

4 Logical structure Rating ☐

5 Use of tables and graphics Rating ☐



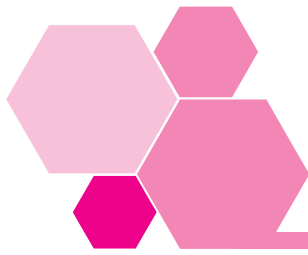
2 Action plan

Use this plan to develop further for yourself a course of action you want to take. Make a note in the left-hand column of the issues or problems you want to tackle, and then decide what you intend to do, and make a note in column 2.

The resources you need might include time, materials, information or money. You may need to negotiate for some of them, but they could be something easily acquired, like half an hour of somebody's time, or a chapter of a book. Put whatever you need in column 3. No plan means anything without a timescale, so put a realistic target completion date in column 4.

Finally, describe the outcome you want to achieve as a result of this plan, whether it is for your own benefit or advancement, or a more efficient way of doing things.

Desired outcomes			
1 Issues	2 Action	3 Resources	4 Target completion
Actual outcomes			



3 Extensions

Extension 1

Communication by fax has both advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages

- It is much quicker than the post (thus allowing at least a day more for preparation).
- Handwritten notes can be included.
- An accurate copy of the document is delivered.
- When a fax arrives, it is physically visible, unlike an e-mail message.
- Even if the intended person doesn't notice it, someone else may (though this can be a disadvantage too).

Disadvantages

- Faxes aren't useful at all if the intended recipient does not have a fax machine.
- Transmission can fail.
- Faxes can go astray.
- The potential for 'last minute' transmission encourages us to delay preparing and sending our material until the last minute.
- The 'last minute' sometimes turns out to be too late.
- The print quality of faxed documents is often rather poor.
- Long paper documents can take a long time to send.
- Faxed documents cannot always be substituted for the 'originals' that are often required by the law (in contracts and as legal evidence, for example).
- There is a lack of privacy and confidentiality as faxes are often received in a general, open office.

Many people find e-mail, which is the fastest-growing channel for written communications, useful for short or urgent messages that might otherwise be delivered via a phone call. Often the style is informal and more like spoken conversation.

Longer documents can also be sent by e-mail, often as 'attachments' to be printed out at the other end.

The advantages and disadvantages of e-mail are these.

Advantages

- It can be the quickest communication channel (and thus, like faxes, e-mail messages can be left until the last moment).
- It is handier than paper faxes for sending longer documents, that were generated or stored on a computer, and attachments.
- The sender can see whether the mail has reached its destination (many organizations have e-mail systems that can also tell the sender whether the receiver has 'read', i.e. opened, the e-mail).
- Internal e-mail systems provide a confidential and private way to send messages for the eyes of the recipient only (when using external links such as the Internet, senders can protect their messages by using passwords or encryption).

Disadvantages

- E-mail isn't useful at all if the other party doesn't have an e-mail 'address'.
- The potential for last-minute transmission can cause the same problems as outlined above for faxes.
- Like faxes, e-mails will not always be accepted as 'original documents' for legal purposes.
- The priority given to e-mails may vary with different people. There is no physical piece of paper to land on someone's desk, and the receiver may ignore the 'electronic mailbox' for days on end. This problem is encouraged by the large amount of e-mail traffic which is of a trivial and low-priority nature.
- Many people feel deluged by e-mails, either because the senders do not really think about whether all the intended recipients need to receive the message, or because the e-mails contain unnecessary attachments. This means that e-mails become a burden and almost a torture, provoking irritation and over-hasty responses.
- The medium is almost too immediate and informal. Most people would think twice before expressing irritation in a phone call or face-to-face, but have no such hang-ups about 'firing off' a grumpy e-mail. Sometimes well-considered letters or memos that take some time to write, or a planned meeting, are better methods of communication.
- Unlike speech, e-mail is a permanent form of communication – you can keep e-mails on your computer for years. When senders use it as a replacement for speech, but still express themselves in informal ways, then there is a permanent record of that sender's irritation or other negative emotion that the recipient can brood on at leisure.
- The accepted informality of e-mail writing can make writers careless, so that their intended message becomes very garbled, or they can express themselves in a way that causes offence.
- The ease of e-mail tempts many busy people into using it instead of meetings or phone calls, when really the nature of the message would make these forms of verbal communication more appropriate.

Extension 2

Book *Rediscover Grammar*
 Author D Crystal
 Edition 1988
 Publisher Longman

The book goes into great depth in explaining the rules of English grammar and its complexities in a clear and concise format that makes it easy to understand. Ideal for anybody who is having difficulties with English grammar or anybody who simply wants to correct the grammar that they use in day-to-day life.

Extension 3

Many people have difficulty with plurals, and end up getting them wrong. A common mistake is to use an apostrophe-S, as in these examples.

'Lettuce's only 80p.'

'Girl's and boy's wanted for delivering newspaper's.'

Never use apostrophe-S to make a plural. For most words, the correct way to form a plural is simply to add S:

Singular	Plural
ratchet	ratchets
programme	programmes
warehouse	warehouses
inspector	inspectors
kitten	kittens
colleague	colleagues
tree	trees
breakfast	breakfasts
album	albums
limb	limbs
pudding	puddings
expedition	expeditions

With some words, you make the plural by adding ES.

Singular	Plural
watch	watches
carcass	carcasses
tomato	tomatoes

Words which end in Y, change to IES.

Singular	Plural
city activity	cities activities

And there are some very common words which change in different ways.

Singular	Plural
woman mouse leaf child	women mice leaves children

So when do we use the apostrophe-S?

It **never** indicates a plural. **Either** it is a shortened version of 'is' or 'has', **or** it indicates belonging.

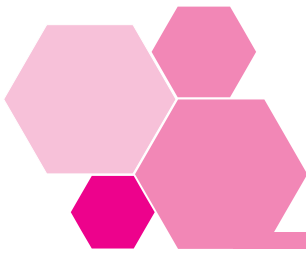
Short for 'is' or 'has'	Belonging
The ratchet's broken.	The ratchet's teeth are broken.
The summons's on the table.	The summons's wording is wrong.
The city's a mess.	So are the city's inhabitants.

The word that writers most often get wrong is **its/it's**.

Its without an apostrophe indicates 'belonging to'; **it's** with an apostrophe is short for **it is** or **it has**. For example:

'Look at that mouse – it's lost its tail!'

Extensions involving further reading can be taken up via your ILM Centre. They will either have them or will arrange that you have access to them. However, it may be more convenient to check out the materials with your personnel or training people at work – they may well give you access. There are other good reasons for approaching your own people; for example, they will become aware of your interest and you can involve them in your development.



4 Answers to self-assessment questions

Self-assessment 1 on page 18

- 1 My choice of speech or writing in these seven situations is as follows.
 - a When a member of your team wants advice about a work problem – speech.
 - b When a legal issue is involved – writing, though there may occasionally be situations where you choose **not** to put something in writing because for legal reasons you would prefer it not to be available.
 - c It is an emergency and you need action to be taken immediately – speech.
 - d You need to communicate the same message to large numbers of people – writing (unless all the people are gathered in one place and you can speak to them simultaneously – even so, a written record makes things clearer and more memorable).
 - e You need to send your message across time and space – writing.
 - f You need to communicate with people at a different location – either.
 - g You want to put forward some proposals for discussion at a committee – both.

- 2 The statements should read as follows.
 - a Writing is the best choice if you need to put your words on **RECORD**.
 - b Communicating in **SPEECH** can be very ineffective when too much **INFORMATION** is involved and the listeners have to **REMEMBER** it for too long.
 - c An important advantage of communicating in **WRITING** is that you can get exactly the **SAME** message to a large number of people.

- 3 Here are four situations where it would be useful to note in writing the time, date and other details.
 - You receive an important message.
 - A particular problem arises.
 - You have a bright idea.
 - You witness an incident of some kind.

You may have thought of others as well.

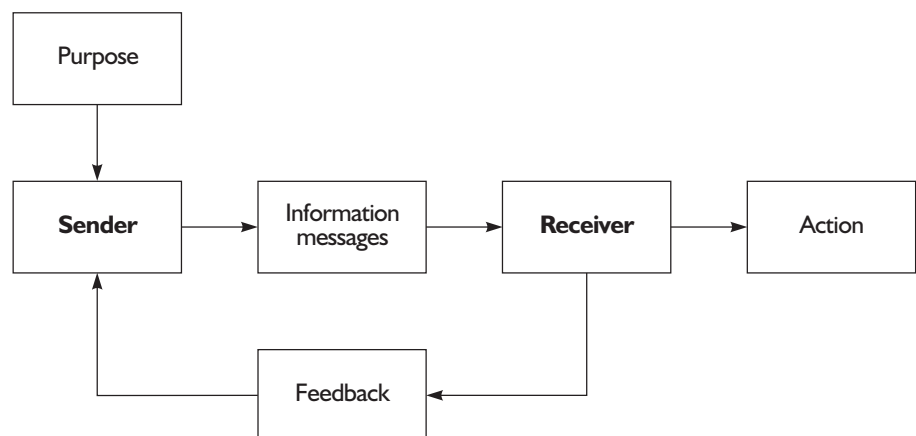
- 4
 - Staff can refer to them at any time, even when the manager is not there.
 - The manager does not have to repeat instructions constantly.
 - New staff can be trained more easily.
 - Staff can multi-task more effectively.
 - All staff should do things consistently as a result.

- 5 It pays to think before you speak at meetings that are being minuted, because something you say that is foolish or unfortunate may go on permanent record.
- 6 For a full list of advantages and disadvantages of fax and e-mail communication, see Extension 1.

Self-assessment 2 on page 53

- 1 The expressions could be written more simply like this.
 - a Link
 - b Note
 - c Near
 - d Agree
 - e Never
 - f Whenever
 - g Definitely
 - h Conclude
 - i Decide
 - j Probably
 - k Likely
 - l Stuck
 - m Also
 - n Dim
 - o Shy
 - p Now
 - q Help
 - r Equip
 - s Later
 - t Find

- 2 The diagram should read like this.



- 3 Your wording may differ slightly from mine.

'We do not normally deal directly with the public so I would usually suggest that you contact the retailer first. However, since the problem is urgent, we will send you (or 'I have arranged to send you') a replacement unit direct from this office.'

- 4 This statement should read:

'You have my ASSURANCE that I will do everything necessary to ENSURE that the life INSURED on your policy is that of your husband.'

- 5 The anagram, when deciphered, reads: **'Keep it short and simple'**.

- 6 Here are the four sentences with the grammatical errors corrected. Make sure you can see what I have done.

- a Lettuces 80p each.
- b The government has made a serious mistake in its calculations.
- c The team won't have anything to do with a suggestion of that sort.
- d Where are the memos that I wrote?

- 7 You can improve the five sentences like this.

- a The Managing Director will greet the Mayor.
- b We will have made improvements by that time.
- c I may have to take responsibility.
- d We (or I) overlooked it.
- e We usually reply in writing.

- 8 There were 35 words in the original sentences, and 29 in the rewritten version, a saving of 6 words, or 17.14%.

Self-assessment 3
on page 84

- 1 Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance

- 2 Yours sincerely

- 3

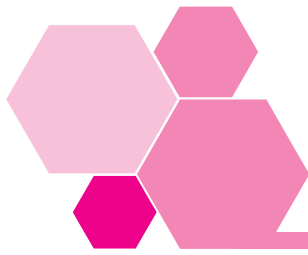
Format	Level of formality
Letter	4
E-mail	2
Memo	3
Note	1
Report	5

- 4 Memory; crossing time and space; copies; back-up; passing on a message; legal requirement.
- 5 Each piece of writing should have a beginning, a middle and an end.
- 6 The three techniques are USE HEADINGS, USE NUMBERING, and USE INDENTS.
- 7 Techniques you can use to draw attention to a particular word, heading or section of your text include:
 - using bold lettering;
 - using italic lettering;
 - using underlining;
 - using larger lettering sizes;
 - using 'icons' (small symbols to indicate particular kinds of material);
 - using a different colour.

The first four will be available on any word-processing system; the last two require slightly more in the way of skills and equipment.

- 8 This information can be written down as a simple table like this.

Hours	9.00–12.00	12.00–14.00	14.00–17.00
Alan	✓	–	✓
Beni	✓	–	✓
Carol	✓	✓	–
Debra	–	✓	✓



5 Answers to activities

Activity 17 on page 33

The words you would use to replace these long ones depends to some extent on the context, but the ones which occurred to me are:

Long	Short
advantageous	useful
application	use
ascertain	find out
commencement	start
comprehension	understanding
consequently	so
deficiency	lack
disadvantage	drawback
elucidate	explain
emphasize	stress
excessive	too much
expedite	speed up
expenditure	spending
facilitate	allow
fundamental	basic
furthermore	also
illustrate	show
inventory	stock
relationship	link
subsequently	later, then
terminate	end
unprecedented	new
utilize	use

Activity 31
on page 72

I would lay the memo out like this. You may have decided to do it slightly differently.

Memorandum		
From:	R. Singh, Site General Manager	
Subject:	Telephone Costs	
To:	All Section Leaders	
Date:	3 November	
1 The problem		
Our telephone costs are rapidly increasing – they are 50% above last year's costs in the last quarter.		
	last year	this year
Jan–Mar	£1,120	£1,400
Apr–June	£1,090	£1,500
Jul–Sept	£1,200	£1,800
We cannot explain this increase solely in terms of the telephone sales drive we have had. We expected this to increase costs by only 10%. As we also knew that unit charges would decline by 3%, the budgeted increase was only 7% – and we have exceeded this by 43%.		
2 Ways of reducing costs		
In order to help bring telephone costs back under control, please encourage all staff in your section to:		
2.1 avoid making calls to the office from mobiles;		
2.2 avoid making calls to mobiles;		
2.3 prepare for calls before making them to keep time actually spent on the telephone to a minimum;		
2.4 ring back or leave a message rather than holding on;		
2.5 keep personal calls to a minimum (there is a pay phone in the snack bar).		
3 Personal calls		
This may be a difficult issue, as we have never imposed any restrictions in the past. I would be grateful for any suggestions for dealing with it.		
R.S.		



6 Answers to the quick quiz

Answer 1 Speech has three advantages over writing.

- It is more immediate.
- It can have more impact.
- It is a lot quicker than writing.

Answer 2 A written statement creates a permanent record and is more likely to be accurate than anyone's memory. Its other big advantage is that it can CROSS BOTH TIME AND SPACE to be used again.

Answer 3 Even if a meeting is minuted, it pays to make your own notes in case later there are disagreements about what was actually said.

Answer 4 This passage should read as follows.

Speech is fine for getting immediate action and communicating SMALL amounts of INFORMATION, but it is very ineffective when:

- the speaker tries to COMMUNICATE too much INFORMATION;
- the LISTENERS have to REMEMBER it for too long.

Answer 5 The other good reason for putting things in writing when the law may in due course be involved is to protect ourselves (it's wise to put down the facts before our memory of them starts to diminish.)

Answer 6 There are several possible ways of sending (and confirming the arrival of) a document like this within the required timescale.

- The post will not do.
- You could use a courier, but it would be expensive.
- Fax or e-mail would both be feasible (and inexpensive) but you would need to make a follow-up telephone call to ensure safe arrival.

Answer 7 When busy people receive a written document, the first two things they need to be able to do are:

- to identify who sent it and what it is about
- to decide whether it is important or not.

Answer 8 The ABC of effective written communication is ACCURACY, BREVITY and CLARITY.

Answer 9 I would translate the following phrases into plain and simple language as follows.

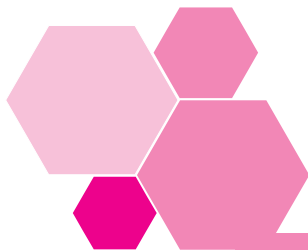
- a There may be better ways of earning money.
- b We can expect a much better result (or outcome).
- c Customers don't like the product.

Answer 10 This sentence, when corrected, should read as follows.

'The principal objection to separating men's and women's events is that it's likely to mean having fewer paying visitors.'

Answer 11 'We (or I) asked our (or my) colleagues and members of the workteam what they thought.'

Answer 12 The other main advantage to numbering headings is that it helps the reader to understand the material more easily (it's also easier to discuss the document when you can refer to sections by number).



7 Certificate

Completion of this certificate by an authorized person shows that you have worked through all the parts of this workbook and satisfactorily completed the assessments. The certificate provides a record of what you have done that may be used for exemptions or as evidence of prior learning against other nationally certificated qualifications.

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Writing Effectively

.....
has satisfactorily completed this workbook

Name of signatory

Position

Signature

Date

Official stamp

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