Professional Writing

BBI 3415 (Unit 1 – 10/10)

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MODUL PEMBELAJARAN : BBI 3415 PROFESSIONAL WRITING disediakan dalam bentuk bahan pengajaran dan pembelajaran kendirri di bawah program Pendidikan Jurak Jauh, Universiti Putra Malaysia. Sebarang pertanyaan dan cadangan untuk memperbaiki gaya penyampaian dan isi kandungan modul ini bolehlah dikemukakan kepada penulis dengan menggunakan alamat Pusat Pendidikan Luar.

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B.A. (Eng.) Hons., Dip. Ed. (TESL), M.Ed. (TESL)

In UPM, I have taught general English proficiency courses to students from the various faculties and a written business communication course to the economics undergraduates. Formerly when I was in the Faculty of Educational Studies, I taught courses on language learning and teaching, and literature. The courses I teach now in the present faculty are Professional Writing I and II, and Textual Criticism.

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Chan Swee Heng


I have been with UPM for more than twenty years, attached formerly to the Faculty of Educational Studies. Grammar for Communication is one of the courses I teach on campus. Other courses that I teach are Research Project (undergraduate), and Composition: Theory and Practice (postgraduate).

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B.Edu. (TESL), M.A (TESL)

I am currently a coordinator for two courses: Tertiary Intensive English and Report Writing. At present, I am also teaching Report Writing and Interactive Speaking. Other general English proficiency courses that I have taught are English for Academic Purposes, Oral Interactions, Academic Writing Skills, Writing for Academic Purposes and English for Occupational Purposes.

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CONTENTS OF THE MODULE

1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

General Description

This is a four hour credit course.

Professional Writing I (BBI3407) focuses on the language of professional writing. It highlights diction related to professional, technical, and business fields as well as mechanical conventions. It covers principles of professional communication, strategies for professional writing, and the place of the audience. Also covered in the course is the writing of memoranda, different kinds of letters, and short reports using appropriate style, format, and graphics.

Below are the course synopsis and objectives.

Synopsis: Correspondence most commonly used in the world of work; various types and formats of informal (brief) reports; adapting the expository strategies in writing to the demands of different audiences and purposes in the professional setting.

Objectives: At the end of the course, students should be able to produce representative examples of the kinds of correspondence and basic types of documents used by business, agencies, and technical professions in the English-speaking environment.
2.0 TEXT FOR THE COURSE

Arrangements are made at the beginning of the semester for the text book (Huckin, 1991) and the reference book (King, 1999) to be made available. Please contact IDEAL for the details.

The following books should be purchased:


Other References:


3.0 Assessment

There are three forms of assessment:

1. Portfolio 20%
2. Mid-semester examination 40%
3. Final Examination 40%
TOTAL 100%

3.1 Portfolio

This is a compilation of your writing assignments based on the topics set for the ‘Tutorial Work’ in units 4 to 8 only. Write your first draft at home and then discuss it with your tutor during your tutorial. Submit your final draft which must be typed using an appropriate format.

3.2 Topics Covered for the Examinations

For the mid-semester examination, the first six topics will be covered according to the learning schedule given. The examination involves the writing of a memo and a letter. It is a two hour paper.

The final examination consists of multiple choice questions covering all the topics. It is a one and a half hour paper.

4.0 Examination Dates

Examination dates are fixed by IDEAL which will inform you about the dates.
4.1 Date for Submission of the Portfolio

During the second face to face, you submit the completed assignments ‘Tutorial Work’ in units 4 to 6 of the module.

By the 13th week of the semester, you submit the completed assignments ‘Tutorial Work’ in units 7 and 8 of the module by mailing them to me at the following address:

Ms. Sharon Goh Seng Pang  
Jabatan Bahasa Inggeris  
Fakulti Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
43400 UPM Serdang

5.0 FACE-TOFACE/TUTORIAL SESSIONS

You will meet me twice during the semester and you will also meet your tutor for five sessions at your centre. The schedule for these meetings will be given to you by IDEAL.

5.1 WORK WITH YOUR TUTOR

Assignments are given in the section ‘Tutorial Work’ found in the units to cover the relevant topics. Please complete your assignments at home and bring them to the tutorial sessions where your tutor will help you with any problem you may have with the topics covered.

Schedule for Tutorial Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutorial Session</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unit 4 &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unit 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unit 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Unit 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Unit 9 &amp; 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.0 ORGANIZATION OF THE MODULE

Read the module and also refer to the textbook (known as ‘the Text’ in the module). For the section ‘Practice’ in the module, you are given exercises to practise the topics covered. These exercises are meant to reinforce your learning. For the section ‘Tutorial Work’, you are to do the assignments and bring them to the tutorial sessions. Assignments for the first four tutorial sessions must be submitted as your portfolio for evaluation (20%).

7.0 LEARNING SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Writing for Professional Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Developing Strategies for the Writing Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Identifying the Audience and Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Writing Effective Business Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Writing Effective Memos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 &amp; 7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Writing Requests and Replies to Requests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MID-SEMESTER EXAMINATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 &amp; 9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Writing Complaints and Replies to Complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 &amp; 11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Writing Application Letters and Resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Forwarding An Argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 &amp; 14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fundamentals in Report Writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION A

PREPARATION FOR PROFESSIONAL WRITING

UNIT 1: WRITING FOR PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

UNIT 2: DEVELOPING STRATEGIES FOR THE WRITING PROCESS

UNIT 3: IDENTIFYING THE AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE
Writing for Professional Communication

1.0 Introduction

One of the most useful subjects you study in your academic pursuit of this degree programme is writing. In view of your future professional career especially if you are in the commercial sector, professional writing becomes very important. Professional writing will be crucial to your success at work.

Just imagine your one day in the workplace as a business executive. You are asked to reply to a letter received by the company asking for some specific information on your company’s products. You need to search and gather the necessary information. Write your reply to the request letter. To get part of the information, you have to send a memo to a colleague asking for the details. Just before leaving for home, you get a call from your manager asking you to write a report on the feasibility of launching a new product at a higher price than that offered by the competitors.

Even in your personal life, there are times you have to resort to professional writing. You may need to write to the bank notifying them of the change in your mailing address. You may write to a company complaining of the poor service received. You also may have to prepare a report for your residents’ association outlining the solutions to the problems faced by the residents.

1.1 The Importance of Professional Communication

Whatever your profession, a lot of your time will be spent on communication. Studies have shown that professional and technical communication skills are important in the workplace. A poorly written document reflects not only the image of the writer but that of the company or organization. The ability to write in a professional manner can even affect your career prospects!

Selected Foreign Studies

A review of the research studies cited in the Text (p.4 – 8) show data that points to the importance of professional communication. For the purpose of this course, most of the writing skills are highlighted here. In the survey of around 4,000 American engineering technical writing ranked second among the subjects most needed for engineering careers in the industry. In a survey of 345 distinguished engineers and 837 experienced business persons, around half of them felt that writing in their present position was very important while slightly less than half of them thought writing was critically important to them.
UNIT 1: WRITING FOR PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives of this unit are:

- To review the importance of professional communication
- To identify the components in professional communication
- To identify the contexts in professional writing
- To collaborate in professional writing

CONTENT OF THE UNIT

1.1 The importance of professional communication
1.2 The components in professional communication
1.3 The contexts in professional writing
1.4 Collaboration in professional writing
In another survey involving 595 engineering alumni of the University of California, Berkeley (p. 4), almost three-quarters of the respondents felt that writing skills had helped their career advancement. In a further indication of the high value they placed on writing, almost all of them regarded the ability to write to be a consideration in hiring and promotion.

Selected Local Studies

The local situation is similar. In the nationwide surveys on the use of English in the commercial sector conducted by two of the writers of this module, the importance of English proficiency in writing was revealed. The first survey involved 137 Malaysian companies and 158 economics undergraduates from this university who underwent practical training in these companies. Responses from the companies indicated that business executives were required to have an advanced level of English proficiency in their writing ability especially for writing business reports, translations and writing about technical or specialized topics related to the job. For writing routine business letters and memos, intermediate proficiency was required. Overall, writing was ranked second in the order of importance of English skills needed.

For the undergraduates who were the prospective employees, they ranked writing as the second most important language need. During their practical training, half of them needed to write routine business letters, memos, and reports. Slightly less than half of them had to translate other languages into English, and write about job-related technical or specialized topics (Goh and Chan, 1993).

In the second survey which is part of the earlier mentioned survey, the use of English among the actual business executives in these companies was investigated. Writing routine business letters and memos was found to be a regular task for the business executives. Writing business reports was the second most frequently used performed task. Then followed by translation and writing about technical or specialized topics. In the overall order of importance of English skills, writing was again ranked as the second most needed skill (Goh and Chan, 1996).

These surveys revealed the role of professional writing in the workplace. Writing well in English is critical for both local and international arenas in commerce, science, and technology. In your work, you need to write clearly and effectively to communicate your message to the reader. Since effective communication is crucial for success and promotion in your career, your ability to write well can make a difference to your life!
Practice 1

Interview a business executive to find out the writing tasks needed in his workplace. List down the tasks mentioned and discuss them with your friends or course mates.

1.2 The Components of Professional Communication

A way to prepare yourself for successful communication is to understand the components of professional communication. Communication is a process of sending and receiving messages. When the receiver is able to access the message correctly, communication is said to be effective. This two-way process in the exchange of information is increasingly needed in today’s fast paced and borderless world.

The diagram below shows the six components of professional communication:

- Context
- Writer/ Sender
- Message
- Medium
- Reader/ Receiver
- Feedback

![Diagram of the Components of Professional Communication]
Context

Before writing the message, you have to consider the context which is the broad background information that you need to know in order to write the document. Context includes the information about your local situation, culture, and company or organization and other business or organizational conventions. Your knowledge about your own situation will shape the way you present your data.

Context also includes the type of stimulus you receive like a letter, a memo, or a report. This stimulus causes you to respond to it, for example, in the form of a letter or a memo. You may also respond orally.

Bearing in mind the context, you begin to find a suitable way to present your ideas reflecting your attitude, opinions, previous experience, and other aspects of your world view. You must carefully select the appropriate words to express clearly your ideas. With the purpose of writing now firmly in mind, you can begin to write. The concept of contexts will be further elaborated in 1.3.

Writer/ Sender

The writer or the sender is the one who writes the message. As the writer, your main role is to decide on the appropriate way to express your ideas to the reader so that the desired action can be achieved. You are bound to consider word choice, tone, graphics, and other aspects of language usage and use. For example, a survey cited in the Text (p. 13) shows that the use of graphics and other illustrative aids was ranked as the second most important type of communication for engineering practice.

You must recognize your own attitudes and you have to realize that they can colour your perception of a situation. Your choice of words can reveal your inner self. You need to be careful when composing your message to send out the right signals.

Message

The message is the contents of your professional communication. Before writing, you have to consider the main points of the message. Other details must also be considered beforehand. You must convey clearly the purpose of the message. In the Davis and Storms surveys cited in the Text (p. 11), the need to write clearly one’s purpose was highly valued by experienced engineers and business people.

In the units on letter writing, the message can be written following the recommended steps outlined for each kind of letter.
Medium

For the purpose of this course, the medium here refers to the written medium of communication. The written mode is used over the oral medium when there is less of an urgency to reply to the message immediately. Thus, you may not pick up the phone but instead you choose to write a letter.

Your need to write a letter can be prompted by a letter sent to you requiring a written answer. Often the need to have the information on record can be a consideration on your choice of the written medium. The written medium allows the possibility for review and it reflects a more formal way of communication as compared to the oral medium.

Reader/ Receiver

The action of the reader or the receiver can be affected by the way the message is composed. Therefore, as a writer, you must be aware of the implications of the words in your message. You have to write bearing in mind the reactions of the reader. You need to constantly remember to write with the reader in mind so as not to antagonize him or her.

Once the reader is offended by your remarks, you may lose his or her goodwill. This in turn may mean a loss of business or other opportunity. Thus, you need to edit and proofread your message before sending it out to minimize any miscommunication.

Feedback

Writers appreciate feedback to know the results of the communication. You must try to allow feedback in message. For example, your client requests for a 50% discount on your product; but you cannot grant his request. Nevertheless, you can still invite him to let you know of his reaction to your offer of an alternative discount of 20% which you give as a gesture of goodwill. By inviting his feedback, you gain another chance to build goodwill.

Understanding the six components of professional communication helps to facilitate your writing. However, there can be problems at any point of the communication process. There can be a mismatch between your expectation and the real situation. Communication problems can be avoided or minimized if you always have adequate preparation before the written task. The first three units here aimed to prepare you for your professional writing task.
1.3 The Contexts in Professional Writing

The concept of contexts is essential to an understanding of the whole process of professional communication. The term ‘contexts’ or background refers to a wider perspective which includes not just the perspective of the individual, but also the local and national perspectives. It also includes the global or cross-cultural, legal, and ethical variables.

Individual Context

As an individual, you have your own world view which may or may not be shared by others. However, in order to communicate professionally and effectively like in your workplace, you must follow the shared conventions of the discourse community. If you were an architect writing a report for a specialist reader, you are expected to use technical terminology to express your ideas in a specific manner so that the technical problem can be investigated thoroughly. On the other hand, if you were to write for a non-specialist reader like the financial controller, then you explain in non-technical terms and use business conventions to get the message across.

Local Context

The local context can be the shared values of your community or the shared conventions of your company or organization. When you write to another member of the discourse community, you must adhere to the conventions of that community in order to be clearly understood. For example, when writing a business letter, you normally include the various parts of the letter. It would seem illogical to the reader if you omit the dateline. Such a convention as the dateline serves a useful purpose in providing a piece of concrete information for reference.

National Context

At the national level, there can be certain conventions common to the culture of a particular country. In western countries, when writing a business, it is the practice to use the courtesy title followed by the last name or surname of the reader in the salutation like ‘Dear Mr. Currier’ for the reader named Timothy Currier. In Malaysia, however, we do not follow this western convention of writing the last name in the salutation if we write a Malay name. If the name is Rosnah binti Kamal (Rosnah, daughter of Kamal), then the salutation becomes ‘Miss Rosnah’ or ‘Ms Rosnah’ as the last name is not the surname but the name of her father.
Global or Cross-Cultural Context

With globalization, there is the need to communicate with a foreign audience. Cross-cultural considerations are increasingly necessary for effective professional communication. It is to our advantage to be concerned with the cultural context of a foreign reader to ensure successful communication. For example, generally, you will need to be very polite and adopt a formal tone when dealing with a Japanese client whereas you can normally use a less formal tone with an American client especially if you have been dealing with him for some time.

Legal Context

The legal aspect is another context to consider when writing for professional communication. To avoid lawsuits, documents like letters must be written clearly. There is no ambiguity which can mislead the reader. Instructions that are not clear which results in a serious technical problem may lead to a lawsuit. Similarly, pre-description that is vague which results in a wrong order may also become a case for litigation. You also need to pay attention to the law, for example, when promoting your store’s annual sales in order not to break the law.

Ethical Context

Connecting to the legal context is the ethical context. When you write a business document as part of your job, you represent the company. It is your ethical responsibilities to protect the image of your company. If you write in an irresponsible manner, your action may lead to legal problems for your company, not just ethical ones. Thus, you have to adhere to work ethics when writing to clients.

The awareness of the dominant characteristics of communication for different nationalities cannot be taken lightly. The various contexts can affect both writers and readers. Consideration for these contexts in communication can avoid unintended misunderstanding and unnecessary complexity in your written communication.

Practice 2

Interview a foreigner working as a business executive or manager in Malaysia or her about the cross-cultural problems faced at work to gain a further understanding of this context in professional communication. List down the problems and discuss with your friends or course mates.
1.4 Collaboration in Professional Writing

Research studies have shown the value of collaboration in professional writing. The survey mentioned on page 8 of the Text shows the extent of collaboration in proposal writing among 125 authors from various disciplines. The collaborative activity was relatively high in the planning, reviewing, and writing stages.

In a series of case studies mentioned on page 9 of the Text, the collaborative nature of professional writing was evident in five of the seven writing projects. The successful projects involved interaction with the targeted reader before writing began. Writing with the readers in mind and with the feedback from the readers, the eventual written documents were accepted by them. In contrast, the other two projects which did not involve the readers failed to win their approval.

Collaboration is a common and useful way to improve your professional writing skills. Professionals frequently work in groups at work. A common example is when people work in projects which require them to write reports. Writing proposals is also a common collaborative activity. Even when writing a business letter, there can be collaboration when the letter written by one person is checked by another person like the boss. The initials line can indicate the collaboration. For example, the initials in ‘KL: tc: rb’ means that Kimberly Lee signed the letter, Tiffany Chase actually wrote it while Rae Brown typed it.

Advantages

The advantages of collaborative writing are as follows:

- The specialized knowledge of different people can be pooled together for a more concerted effort.
- The combined talents of the people can allow for a more productive effort.
- The time reduction in the shared work load enables the work to be completed more quickly.

These days, the software tools make the writing process seamless. Collaborative writing can be done quickly and easily with the help of the computer software tools. Computer technology is available to facilitate the work.
Steps

You can follow the following steps to practise collaboration in professional writing:

1. Organize yourselves into groups of five or six members
2. Appoint or elect a group leader
3. Assign clear roles for the members
4. Remind members to co-operate and be courteous to each other
5. Hold weekly meetings or when necessary
6. Discuss pre-writing work and delegate duties
7. Assign each person a part of the writing tasks
8. Write parts assigned
9. Revise collaboratively determined by the majority’s views
10. Edit the final draft by the whole team or by the most competent writer

Reference


Developing Strategies for the Writing Process

1.0 Introduction

In the writing process, after you have thought of a topic, the next writing stage is to generate ideas about the topic. You may need to go through this stage first to discuss and explore ideas on paper before you decide to write about them. Once you have sufficient ideas for your topic, the subsequent stages in the writing process involve grouping ideas, identifying the point of view, and developing an outline. There are stages explained in this unit. First, we shall take a look at the prewriting strategies can be used to generate ideas.

1.1 Prewriting Strategies

Prewriting strategies, which are sometimes called invention techniques, can help you generate ideas on how much you know about a topic and what you want to say. Prewriting strategies can also lead to a change in your topic if you might discover you have nothing to say about the original topic. As you use the prewriting strategies, gathering ideas, you need to find out which strategy works best for you. No one strategy for generating ideas always works for all topics. Experiment all the following strategies on your own at this stage of prewriting:

- Keeping an idea book
- Writing in a journal
- Freewriting
- Using “Wh” questions
- Brainstorming:
  - Listing
  - Clustering

Keeping an Idea Book

Keeping an idea book like a pocket-sized notepad helps you to jot down ideas to mind. Sometimes, you can also be on the lookout for ideas to write about to listen and talk to people. So, always have an idea book close to you.
UNIT 2: DEVELOPING STRATEGIES FOR THE WRITING PROCESS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives of this unit are:

- To be able to use prewriting strategies
- To group ideas
- To write a thesis statement
- To develop an outline
- To source materials from libraries or data bases

CONTENT OF THE UNIT

1.1 Prewriting Strategies
1.2 Grouping Ideas
1.3 Forming a Thesis Statement
1.4 Developing an Outline
1.5 Sourcing Materials
Writing in a Journal

Keeping a journal allows you to have a conversation on paper with yourself. It helps you to record and reflect your daily thoughts or ideas. Besides, you can even write your responses about your reading, observations, experiences, feelings, or even your dreams. The subject matter and tone can be as personal and informal as you wish, as the audience is yourself only. You may allocate fifteen to twenty minutes a day to write your journal.

Freewriting

Freewriting is a generating-idea activity in which you write freely about a topic without worrying about your organization, logic, sentence structures, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and mechanics. Your main concern is to look for a specific focus. While you are writing, one idea may spark another. The more you freewrite, the more ideas you will have.

Using “Wh” Questions

You may use “Wh” questions such as Who? What? When? Why? Where? and How?. Asking questions forces you to approach a topic from varied perspectives. Besides, the questions can also help you to decide whether you have enough points and details to write about a topic. For example, if you are to write on a topic “An Accident in UPM”, you might ask yourself these questions to draw ideas about the topic:

Where was the accident?
Who were involved?
How many people were hurt?
Why did the accident happen?
What actions were taken to help the injured victims?

Brainstorming

Brainstorming means listing all the ideas that come to mind associated with a topic. The ideas can be listed as words, phrases or even random sentences. This technique allows your mind to run freely, generating as many ideas as possible that can be eliminated if they are not related to your topic or be grouped and expanded on if you are interested in a particular idea. You can brainstorm alone in one session or over several sessions, depending on how much time you have before the assignment. Alternatively, you can also brainstorm in groups, whereby one person’s ideas may bounce off the next person’s, and collectively more ideas get listed.
Brainstorming can be carried out in two ways. The ideas generated during brainstorming can be jotted in the form of a list or it can be visually represented as a kind of mind mapping, as shown below:

a) Listing

Listing is a useful and common brainstorming technique in which you make a list of whatever words or phrases that come into your mind. The main purpose of listing is to help you to produce as many ideas as possible and then look for a specific focus for your topic. Do not worry about your spelling and grammar. You may follow this procedure:

- Write down the topic at the top of your paper.
- Make a list of every idea that comes into your mind about your topic.
- Stay focus on your topic; however, if you write down any irrelevant information, don’t worry about it as you can always eliminate it out.

Example of Listing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Problems in UPM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use slang and idioms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk too fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use incomplete sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Pronunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor verbal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students are difficult to understand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Mapping

Mapping is another brainstorming activity that you can use to generate ideas more visual, so it can help you associate ideas more easily. You can follow procedure:

- Write your topic in capital letters in the center of an unlined paper.
- Draw a line radiating out from the center, and label it with the name of subdivision of your topic. Circle the label, and you can associate it with:
specific subdivisions. Once you run out of ideas, you can think of another major subdivision and repeat the same process.

- Add anything that comes into your mind for any section of your map.

Example of a Mapping Exercise

Practice 1

Refer to exercise 2.1 in the Text (p.28). In groups of 3 – 4, work on question C using either listing or mapping technique. Discuss your answers with your friends.
1.2 Grouping Ideas

After using any one of the generating strategies, you may have all the ideas laid out in front of you. What do you do next? You have to group the ideas. When you group the ideas, you divide them into groups by making connections and finding patterns. Try looking for a focus, that is group your ideas into subtopics.

Example of Two Groups of Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Problems in UPM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use slang and idioms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Verbal Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use incomplete sentences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The example above shows the ideas listed under “Communication Problems in UPM” further be divided into two subtopics – “poor verbal skills” and “International students are difficult to understand”. The ideas “no motivation” and “lack of confidence” can be eliminated as they do not fit into either of the subtopics.

Practice 2

Refer to exercise 2.1 in the Text (p.28). Group your ideas based on your brainstorming technique in Practice 1. Discuss your answers with your friends.

1.3 Forming a Thesis Statement

As mentioned in the Text (p. 41), once you have explored your topic, generate grouped your ideas, you need to form a possible thesis statement. A thesis statement is the most important sentence in your introductory paragraph of any assignment. It indicates the central message or the main point. An effective thesis statement is important for two reasons: prepares you as the writer to better organize and develop the main point as well as provides the reader with a guide to understand your main point.
Several basic requirements for a thesis statement:

- It states the subject — the topic that you are discussing.
- It reflects the purpose — either to give your readers information or to persuade them to agree with you.
- It includes a focus: controlling ideas or subtopics — your assertion that conveys your point of view that will describe the paper or assignment.
- It uses specific language — vague words are avoided.
- It is a complete statement — include verbs or helping verbs.

Examples of Clear Thesis Statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living in a modern city</th>
<th>is</th>
<th>difficult because of the rising crime rate and overcrowded condition.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Topic)</td>
<td>(Verb)</td>
<td>(Subtopics)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>is caused</th>
<th>by work problems and a hectic lifestyle.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Topic)</td>
<td>(Helping verb + Verb)</td>
<td>(Subtopics)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Practice 3

Identify the thesis statements. For the incorrect phrases, rewrite them into clear thesis statements.

1. Employees need both motivation and discipline.
2. Ingredients of a proper handshake.
3. What are the characteristics of a competent manager?
4. The factories are closing down due to two reasons: a shortage of staff and the inefficiency of the system.
5. Advantages of using computers.
Answers

2. A proper handshake has three ingredients: pressure, pumps, and eye contact.
3. A competent manager must be patient, understanding, and hardworking.
5. Computers can provide you information, entertainment, and education.

1.4 Developing an Outline

Outlining is a very useful planning strategy which helps to pull together the results of gathering and grouping ideas, and preparing a thesis statement. It also provides a visual guide and checklist on the flow of ideas and completeness of a piece of writing. In addition, as the Text explains in pp. 42 – 44, you can also organize your ideas from the most important to the least important. Outlining depends on what you would like to emphasize on.

You can do an outline at various stages in the writing process: before drafting – arrange materials; during drafting – to keep track of evolving materials, miss information, undesirable repetitions or digressions from the thesis; or while revising check the logic of an early draft’s organization.

In general, there are two types of outline: simple and detailed outline.

Simple Outline

A simple outline begins with a thesis statement, which indicates the central message, the main point of a piece of writing. Then, you must write the main lines of argument represented by Roman numerals I, II, and III. They can be as many as you like to support your thesis statement. An example is as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I first main line of argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II second main line of argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III third main line of argument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another Example of a Simple Outline

Thesis Statement:
You need to consider three most important factors when investing in real estate: the location, the type of bank loan and the housing developers.

I  You need to look for a suitable location.
II You need to select the right type of bank loan.
III You need to look for established housing developers.

Detailed Outline

A detailed outline begins with a thesis statement with main lines of argument as support. Each main line of argument may be further supported by sub-arguments as presented by capital letters A, B. Then, each sub-argument may be supported by proof as presented by numbers 1, 2. In addition, details (the use of examples, statistics, etc.) for each proof can be presented by small letters a, b. In short, the detailed outlined presents the arguments according to their various levels of generalities.
Example of a Detailed Outline

Thesis Statement

I  first main line argument
   A  first sub-argument for I
       1  first proof for IA
       2  second proof for IA
   B  second sub-argument for I
       1  first proof for IB
       2  second proof for IB

II second main line of argument
   A  first sub-argument for II
       1  first proof for IIA
           a.  
b.  
       2  second proof for IIA
   B  second sub-argument for II
       1  first proof for IIB
       2  second proof for IIB

Another Example of a Detailed Outline

Thesis Statement:
You need to consider two most important factors when investing in real estate: location and the type of bank loan.

I  You need to look for a suitable location.

   A.  Available amenities

       1.  Clinic
       2.  Market
• Numbers, letters and indentations

Numbers, letters and indentations are used to signal groupings and levels of importance. Capital roman numerals (I, II) are used to number the main lines of argument of the thesis statement. Indented capital letters (A, B) are used to number the sub-arguments of each main line of argument. Further indented numbers (1, 2) are used to number the proof for each sub-argument. Indented lowercase letters (a, b) are used to show the additional details.

• More than one entry at each level

When you number the levels of generality, you must make sure that there are at least two parts. For example, when there is a number 1, there must be a number 2. Whenever there is A, there is also B (Refer to diagram 1 and 2). If there is only one subdivision, you need to eliminate that subdivision as in Diagram 3 or expand the material to at least two subdivisions.

For Example:

Diagram 1

A.
B.

Diagram 2

A.
1.
2.
B.

Diagram 3

A.
1.
B.
B. Proper infrastructure
   1. Easy access to main roads
      2. Ample public transportation

II You need to select the right type of bank loan.

A. Interest rate
   1. The need to shop around for a suitable loan.
      a. Low interest rate
      b. Competitive loan package
   2. The need to consider the repayment period
      a. Pay less interests for a longer period
      b. Pay more interests for a shorter period

B. Constraints
   1. Income
   2. Personal budget

Guidelines for an Outline

Below are several guidelines for you to follow when you prepare an outline for professional writing:

- Thesis statement

The thesis statement comes before the roman numeral I entry. The content of the introductory and concluding paragraphs is not included in an outline.
• Parallelism

Parallelism means each item in an outline follows the same grammatical pattern. For example, all might start with the “ing” forms of verbs like:

A. Using pocket dictionaries
B. Using unabridged dictionaries

• Capitalization and punctuation

Use capital letters for the first word of each entry except for proper nouns. In a sentence outline, end each sentence with a period; otherwise, you do not need to end with any punctuation.

Examples of a Sentence Outline

A. Noise pollution occurs in the workplace.
B. Noise pollution occurs during leisure-time activities.

Practice 4

Write an outline for question C in the Text (exercise 2.1 p. 28). Discuss the outline with your friends.

1.5 Sourcing Materials

As explained in the Text (p. 41), sourcing materials means that you look for materials, for example, books, journals, proceedings from the library to get more information about your topic or any issue that you are interested in. If you are not sure of how to source for your information, you may ask the librarians for help. The librarians may even explain to you about available searches of national and international databases. In addition, if you have access to the computers, you may even surf the internet on your topic or any area of your interest. All you need to do is to get into a search engine, for example, “yahoo” or “hobot” and type the key words of your topic. All the information found may help you to generate more ideas for your topic or find areas of your interest.
1.6 Conclusion

This unit shows how you can generate ideas for your topic, that is through prewriting strategies. By doing so, you will discover for yourself that ideas may flow smoothly and you won’t have any blank paper anymore. Grouping ideas and preparing an outline can also help you to organize and present your ideas better to the reader. Subsequently, you will produce a clear piece of professional writing.
Identifying the Audience and Purpose

1.0 Introduction

When we have to complete a writing assignment, we need to apply many aspects of effective writing to help get our message across. Some of the principles we need to follow are general, such as using good grammar, efficient sentence structure skills and correct mechanics. Others may be more specific like the use of prescribed conventions relating to format and the necessary attention to purpose and audience.

Some primary questions that confront us as we write are: “Why am I writing this document?” and “What response do I want from readers?” The answers to these questions underlie your understanding of the audience and the purpose of your writing. First, we shall take a look at the type of audiences that we may encounter.

1.1 Types of Audiences

In the real world, the audience comes in different shapes and sizes. Your audience may be an individual or more often, a group of people who may differ in background experience, reading strategies and needs. According to the Text (p. 60 – 66), you are likely to encounter five large groups of audiences:

➤ The managerial audience
➤ The nonspecialist audience
➤ The peer audience
➤ The international audience
➤ The mixed audience

Each type of audience comes with different characteristics.

The Managerial Audience

The busy manager has little time for careful reading. Foreground recommended for maximum reading for this group of readers. An abstract or an executive summary would be useful. The manager tends
UNIT 3: IDENTIFYING THE AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives of this unit are:

- To identify the type of target audience for a report
- To be able to analyse audience needs
- To identify the purpose in report writing
- To use language in terms of accuracy, comprehensibility and tone

CONTENT OF THE UNIT

1.1 Types of audience
1.2 Audience analysis
1.3 Identifying your purpose
1.4 Building up your readability
the introduction, background and conclusion while ignoring the details in the body.

The Nonspecialist Audience

Writing for the nonspecialist audience, as the name suggests, would demand conscious attention to the avoidance of technical jargon. Make use of shared knowledge of established conventions and provide a simple-to-follow overview to your report or memo. Other recommendations include:

- Provide background information where necessary
- Define or explain difficult concepts
- Use examples and illustrations for clarifications
- Use analogies if appropriate to bring home the point

If operators are your target audience, they would look for statements of how the document would relate to their jobs.

The Peer Audience

In contrast to the non-specialist audience, the peer audience is considered a luxury. Writing to them is a rather straightforward process as they are assumed to share your background experience. As recommended, you should follow the steps outlined on p. 63 in the Text.

The International Audience

An interesting fact noted is that there are more nonnative speakers of English in the world than native speakers. Given the value attached to English as an international language, we need to be, however, very aware that the use of the language is often culture specific. While we may be using English, we differ in the way we construct our sentences, the choice of diction and idiom. We may even differ in interpretations of certain expressions. Thus, in dealing with an international audience, some background research in their home and corporate culture is important for successful communication.
The Mixed Audience

More often than not, the audience that reads our writing is mixed. Preparing your writing for such a group is probably the most difficult task. It is recommended that you tailor your writing such that you meet the various needs of the different audiences. A “layered” technique enables you to cater to the needs by making sure that certain sections are written with certain people in mind. For example, the executive summary is meant for the manager, while the other details are for the specialist. At the same time, details and explanations are included to cater to the non-technical audience.

Whatever is the type of audience you need to address, they share some common characteristics:
- They face constant interruptions even when reading.
- They are impatient in wanting to locate the information they need.
- (Therefore, do not waste our reader’s time telling them what they already know.)
- They often do not share a similar technical background as the writer.
- They collectively share decision-making authority.

These characteristics may be obstacles in getting your message across. To minimise problems that may arise, an audience analysis could be done.

1.2 Audience Analysis

To help you understand your audience, five steps are outlined in the Text (pp. 66-69). In addition, you could incorporate the following:

1. Make notes of what you know about your reader. Answer these questions yourself to make a sound evaluation.
   a. What kind of technical background does the reader have?
   b. What main question does the reader want answered?
   c. What kind of action do you want the reader to take?
   d. What kind of a personality does the reader have that may affect his reading style?
   e. Is there a specific preference on the part of the reader for a particular writing style?
2. It is good advise to ask for information from colleagues about the intended reader. There may be previous records of documents written for the same reader which have been well-received. You could refer to them to provide you with an useful orientation or approach to your task.

3. The most important reader is the one who will make decisions based on documents sent to him. You need to identify who he is to tailor your writing accordingly.

4. All readers appreciate simple and to the point writing.

1.3 Identifying Your Purpose

The purpose of your communication should not left to guesswork. As stated in the Text, the *ostensible purpose* should be clear. Generally, documents written for professional purposes are to inform or persuade. Often the dual purposes merge in a single document. You may wish to inform and persuade at the same time.

Practice 1

Go through Exercise 3-4 (p.70).

Answer

The situation explores a writing assignment which you, as an analyst at an investment company, is asked to carry out.

Some ostensible purposes of your writing are:

- To explain and update readers/investors on the performance of Arrow Fund
- To convince readers/investors that they need not worry about temporary setbacks

The audience is very varied. They include:
• Your immediate superior
• The manager of the Fund
• The Board of Directors
• The investors
• The potential investors
• The Federal Securities and Exchange Commission
• The general interested public

This would be a very difficult report to write. As an analyst, you are supposed to be a specialist and be objective in the report. At the same time, you are an employee of the company and is under some obligations to the company. On the other hand, the investors are an innocent party who should be told the truth. You as the writer faces a dilemma which you need to resolve before you can even begin to write. It can develop into a moral question on how I have to compromise. Of course you can choose to leave the job and the decision not to write at all! In real life, tough decisions need to be made. Decisions can ultimately determine what you want to write and who your prioritised audience is.

1.4 Building up Your Readability

In this section, we shall focus on choosing appropriate words to help you to convey your purpose and reach the audience. The discussion focuses on Chapter 27 (pp. 486-495) in the Text. The three elements that impact your writing are accuracy, comprehensibility and tone.

Accuracy

To be accurate, you have to practice being precise, though bearing in mind the type of audience you are interacting with. Where abstract nouns are used, you may want to replace them with verbs.

e.g. Replacement of the old computers could be expected by 12 January 2001.

The old computers could be replaced by 12 January 2001. (revised)

When a technical word has a precise meaning, we should not attempt to substitute it with another word or phrase. If the word is considered very
unfamiliar then we could explain the term used but not substitute it. Refer to the example given with the use of the word “download”. The word is specific to the use of the computer. If you are afraid that the lay person does not understand the meaning, then you could include an explanation in parenthesis after “download”.

Practice 2

Rewrite the following sentences to make them more concise. Where necessary, make two sentences from the given sentence.

1. The disbursement of the funds can only take place when the proceedings in the court are finalised which is expected by the month of May.

2. The new management at this point of time has yet to make a decision on the issue of compensation for staff who are considered temporary.

3. The department must justify its aims and goals so that they can be included in the plan for the year 2000 and that plan is strategic and important for the company owned by Syed Ali.

4. During the course of the field work, the performance workers will undergo the process of reviewing to fulfill the establishment of how productive they are.

5. In the preparation of the statement for the month, the department in charge of bills must, first of all, check all the invoices for the project.

6. By June, we plan to begin the process of prioritising the objectives to enable the chairman to proceed with the negotiation with the workers from the union.

Answers

1. The funds can only be disbursed when the court proceedings are finalised. This is expected to be completed by May.
2. The new management at present has yet to decide on the issue of compensation for temporary staff.

3. The department must justify its goals so that they can be included in the strategic plan for 2000. The strategic plan is important for Syed Ali’s company.

4. During the field work, worker performance will be reviewed to establish their productivity.

5. In preparing the monthly statement, the billing departments must, first of all, check all the project invoices.

6. By June, we plan to prioritise the objectives to enable the chairman to begin negotiations with the union workers.

Sexist Language

Sexist language is avoided today. This trend reflects the changing society in which more and more women are entering professions previously dominated by males. Men are also seen entering into professions that are female dominated. Language reflects changing concerns. As such, the use of language has to be sensitive to the new changes.

Practice 3

Following the recommendations given on p. 488 in the Text, revise the following sentences:

1. The new office is looking for a department chairman to head the team.
2. Every manager is responsible for the staff under him.
3. If an employee is sick, he has to turn in a medical certificate as proof.
4. An engineer is in demand these days for his service especially in the building industry.
5. To be elected as a committee member, he needs to be a confirmed staff.
Answers

1. ... a chairperson ...
2. All managers are ... under them.
3. If employees are sick, they ... medical certificates...
4. Engineers are in demand ... for their services ...
5. ... that person needs to be ...

Practice 4

Go through the exercises found on p. 488 – 489 in the Text and then check your answers against the key provided.

Correctness

The concept of “correctness” is not a constant. One needs to be sensitive to the environment of language use to judge the appropriateness of words or expressions used. These days, there is a preference for simple words which tend to be shorter as well. For example, instead of saying, “The project will commence on 1 July 2001” we prefer to say “The project will begin on 1 July 2001". “Commence” appears to be suitable only in a more formal environment. Making a wrong choice could lead to us being labelled as pretentious and insincere.

Practice 5

Assuming that you are writing for an informal audience, what words could you use to substitute those that are underlined?

e.g. That recommendation would be advantageous to our future planning.

That recommendation would be helpful for our future planning.

(revised)

1. The reduction of production output would alleviate the consumption of electricity.
2. The sales department must **endeavour** to increase sales for the next quarter.

3. The new general manager would **undertake** a revised schedule to meet production deadline.

4. The factory has to **procure** new machines if efficiency is to be improved.

5. If you continue to **demonstrate** such an attitude, you will be **terminated**.

6. Please **transport** the files from the old office to the new.

7. Be **cognizant** of the fact that only authorised personnel can enter the factory.

8. It took **approximately** five hours for a complete shutdown of the machinery.

**Answers**

1. lessen
2. try
3. carry out
4. buy
5. show, fired
6. move
7. aware
8. about

**Comprehensibility**

This touches on the use of technical terms, idioms and uncommon words. A word of caution is given again regarding the use of technical terms. Sometimes they cannot be avoided as they have very precise meanings. Where it is considered helpful, give explanations or non-technical definitions to aid understanding.

Another way to increase comprehensibility is to avoid idiomatic expressions and uncommon words, bearing in mind that no one likes to look up a dictionary all the time while reading especially if the reader is a busy technocrat.
Computers are left running and fans are left on full blast in store areas. That is totally unacceptable. Such action must come to a complete stop. Employees are responsible for the profitability of the company. Do your part immediately to amend the situation.

Answer

You will notice that in certain parts the choice of words is too formal. The overall tone shows anger and the employees seem to be scolded and ordered about. This kind of tone is not going to be well-received as the intention of the memo is to seek cooperation to cut down cost. The memo should sound more friendly and it should appeal to the good will of the employees. Scolding adults normally invite adverse reactions. It would be more helpful if they are encouraged or invited to cooperate. Some solid facts could also be included to make your argument more logical and convincing.

Revised version:

MEMO

To: All Employees
From: Janet Loo, Personnel Manager
Date: June 30, 2001
Re: Energy-saving

Recently our monthly electricity bill has gone up by RM2000. This has caused us to be very concerned as the expenditure eats into our profits. As you know when this happens, benefits to employees are affected. Our year-end bonus depends very much on our profit margin. As such, the company appeals to all employees to play their part in cutting down our electricity bill. We could all help by doing small things such as:

- Switching off lights in the wash rooms after use
- Minimising the use of the kettle at half-fill capacity during tea break
- Switching off computers after work
- Switching off fans and air-conditioners in rooms when they are not used
Practice 6

Go through Exercise 27-2 in the Text ((p.493) and check your answers against the key provided.

Tone

In connecting to your reader, you would want to use a suitable tone. You may assume a tone that is authoritative, cooperative or objective depending on the writing situation. A wrong tone damages communication. Remember that tone is conveyed through how you write and not what you write. Depending on who is the intended audience and your ostensible purpose, you would exercise your discretion in word choice and sentence construction.

Practice 7

Go through Exercise 27-3 (p. 493) and check your answers against the key provided.

Practice 8

The following memo is too aggressive. Rewrite it so that it appeals to the target audience.

MEMO

To: All Employees
From: Janet Loo, Personnel Manager
Date: June 30, 2001
Re: Energy-saving

It has been brought to my attention that our electricity bill has been escalating without due cause. Upon investigation it was found that employees have been very negligent in the use of electrical power. Employees leave lights on in the wash rooms after use. The kettle is constantly used to boil water during tea break only at half-fill capacity.
Other than the above mentioned, all of you are welcome to suggest more ways to help us to cut down the electricity bill. I will personally discuss with you any plans that are proposed.

We look forward to receiving a very much reduced bill next month. With your cooperation, we can make that a reality.

1.5 Conclusion

In communication, it works well for the writer to be very clear about the purpose of your writing and who you are trying to reach with your message. The use of language towards this end entails attention to the characteristics of the audience and adopting a style which helps to connect to the reader. Finally, the overall tone must be suitable in the context and environment of the message. Exercising the recommended good practice will help achieve the goals of effective writing.
SECTION B

MEMOS AND LETTERS

UNIT 4: WRITING EFFECTIVE BUSINESS LETTERS

UNIT 5: WRITING EFFECTIVE MEMOS

UNIT 6: WRITING REQUESTS AND REPLIES TO REQUESTS
UNIT 4: WRITING EFFECTIVE BUSINESS LETTERS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives of this unit are:

- To understand the purpose of writing a business letter
- To identify the principles of an effective business letter
- To identify the various parts of a business letter
- To use the basic formats of a business letter

CONTENT OF THE UNIT

1.1 Purpose of Writing a Business Letter
1.2 Principles of an Effective Business Letter
1.3 Parts of a Business Letter
1.4 Basic Formats of a Business Letter
Writing Effective Business Letters

1.0 Introduction

This unit prepares you to write effective business letters which are very important in our working lives. Writing effective business letters serve to communicate information with the reader better as well as serve as a record. So, in order to write effective business letters, you need to understand several concepts which will be explained in this unit.

1.1 Purpose of Writing a Business Letter

When you write business letters, you need to identify the following information:

- WHAT you are writing about - SUBJECT
- WHO you are writing for - AUDIENCE OR READER
- WHY you are writing - PURPOSE

Subject

Subject refers to content or message of the letter. The more specific the subject, the easier it is for the reader to understand the information that you want to convey. Therefore, you need to be clear about what you want to say first and include sufficient and relevant details of the message in the letter.

Audience or Reader

You need to identify who your audience is as you can plan your message from the reader's point of view. You also have to know your audience as the style of writing letters differs if you have an international audience. For example, if you are writing a letter to an American audience, you may want to go straight to the point. On the other hand, if you are writing to a Japanese audience, you may want to establish some small talk at the beginning of the letter. In other words, we have to adapt to the cross-cultural differences if we want to write effective business letters. For further information on cross-cultural differences, you can refer to the Text (p. 230). In addition, if you know your audience, you would be able to address your audience appropriately using appropriate expressions like "Ms", "Mrs.", "Madam" or "Mr.". Other explanations on the forms of address can be found in the Text (p. 218).
Purpose

Knowing why you are sending the letter is also very important. You must be sure of your purpose of writing a letter. Is the letter to inform? Is it to request for information? Is it to supply information? Is it to make a complaint? Once you are very sure of your purpose, you will be able to convey your intended purpose with relevant details to your audience clearly.

1.2 Principles of an Effective Business Letter

If you want to communicate easily and effectively, you need to follow the seven “Cs” principles. The Seven “Cs” are:

1. Courteous

You should write your letter in a friendly, natural and conversational style. You should also be as helpful, pleasant, and courteous as possible to your audience. Show your audience your sincerity and desire in communicating with them. So, choose appropriate words and tone to be used in the letter.

For example:

Please send the SBB check no: 88750 for RM500 by Friday, 3 May.

Many thanks for your note and the information.

If you require further information about the society, I will be happy to furnish it on request.

2. Clear

A clear letter means that the audience is able to understand the writer’s message. Try to avoid vague words and jargons but use simple and familiar words that the audience would be able to understand. You may also consider using the active voice rather than the passive voice in your letter as the former creates illusion of movement and force. Besides the choice of words and voice, a clear letter refers to the way you organize your ideas in a logical order.
### Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vague Words or Phrases</th>
<th>Recommended Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>at an early date</td>
<td>→ by Thursday, 6 March 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in due course</td>
<td>→ in a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acknowledge receipt for/</td>
<td>→ thank you for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this is to acknowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive Voice</th>
<th>Active Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your proposal has been approved by our manager.</td>
<td>The manager has approved your proposal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Concise**

Being concise means saying all that you have to say in the fewest possible words. Eliminate unnecessary words. For example, there is no need to use repetition of words the same meaning such as “We are ever ready, willing and able to be of assistance.” Another example is the use of wordy language such as “due to the fact” which can be replaced by the word “because.”

4. **Complete**

Completeness is related to how much of the content of the letter is included for audience to understand the message clearly. Writing a complete message will show your sincere interest to communicate with the reader, besides saving you the expense and any possible need of a follow-up message. To make sure your letter is complete, you have to include all important and relevant information in your letter. If you do not, your audience will be left with an incomplete message, not knowing your intended message and necessary actions that should take place.

*For example:*

Please see me tomorrow.

The above message is not complete. The time and place to meet are not included. A proper guide for the completeness of the message is to ask yourself the journalistic questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
5. **Concrete**

The principle of being concrete refers to the use of specific names, numbers or even actions. You may include what people can see, touch, smell, taste or hear. The use of concrete descriptions can clarify your message.

*For example:*

Vague: The printers that we ordered earlier have not arrived.
Concrete: The 40 Canon BJC-210 SP printers that we ordered on 8 February 2001 have not arrived by 20 February 2001 as promised.

6. **Constructive**

Being constructive means that you should carefully identify words and phrases that set a positive tone in the letter to the reader who would have a favourable impression of you as the writer. Use words such as “agree”, “proud”, “success”, “appreciate” and “thank” to help create a positive tone.

7. **Correct**

You must proofread your letter after writing or typing it to make sure that all information is correctly documented with no spelling, grammatical or typographical errors. The letter sent to the reader will portray an image of you. In addition, errors made may result in a loss of time, money or goodwill. For example, an error made in a date or time or even an amount of money can cause the damages just mentioned.

**Practice 1**

Each of the following sentences lacks one of the “C” principles. Rewrite the phrases to improve the sentences.

1. Thank you for your BBMB check no: 88728 in the amount of RM75.
2. Please send me some papers for printing.
3. We demand payment now.
4. We are in receipt of your check for RM68.
5. Please confirm your accommodation with Penny by 9.00 a.m. tomorrow.
Answers

1. Thank you for your BBMB cheque no: 88728 for RM75.
2. Please send me two rows of white A4 papers for printing.
3. Please mail me your payment latest by 20 February 2001.
4. Thank you for your cheque of RM68.
5. Please confirm your accommodation with Penny by 9.00 a.m. on 3 March.

1.3 Parts of a Business Letter

When you write a business letter, you should be aware of the various parts of a business letter. In general, there are four parts of a business letter: They are the heading, opening, body and closing. You can refer to these parts in the Text (p. 212). Additional explanation on each part of the business letter is further described as below:

Part I: Heading

The heading contains the writer’s address and the date line.

Writer’s Address

For our local context, the writer’s address includes the street address on the first line followed by the postal code and town on the second line. You can start about two inches from the top of a plain paper. If you put your name in the heading, then there is no need to repeat your name below your signature. Punctuation marks are also not required. Do not abbreviate words on your own such as west, east, street, avenue; names of the town, state and city.

For example:

50, Jalan Ara Kiri
Lucky Garden
59100 Kuala Lumpur

For the writer’s address in a foreign country, you need to follow the country’s practice. The American example is provided in the Text (p. 212 – 213)

If there is a letterhead which contains the company’s name, street address, and/or a post office box number, postal code, town and/or state/city, and phone number, you start you letter with a date line. The date line should be at least two lines below the letterhead.
Date Line

The date line is an essential part of any business letter. It refers to the date when the letter is written and in any case it is the only way to establish the timing of a letter of order, complaint, or any transaction made. The date line should be written immediately a line below the writer’s postal code, town and/or state/city.

The date line should contain:

- The name of the month, spelled in full
- The day of the month, in digits
- The year, written as four digits

The date line can also be written in two different ways:

- Month Day, Year (requires a comma in between the day and the year)
  
  For example: January 13, 2001

- Day Month Year (no comma)
  
  For example: 13 January 2001

Part II: Opening

The purpose of the opening is to direct the letter to greet the audience. It includes the inside address and a salutation. The attention line and the subject line are optional.

Inside Address

The inside address includes the following: the reader’s name; reader’s job title; reader’s organization or company; organization’s street address; and postal code, town and/or state/city.
1. Reader’s Name

When writing the reader’s name, you can follow these rules:

- Write the reader’s name exactly as he or she writes it, and spell it correctly.
- Use the correct courtesy title (Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms., Madam, or Dr.) with the name. If you are unsure, omit the courtesy title and use the name as given. See the Text (p. 219) for an example.
- If you do not know the name of the person, you may use a job title (Sales Executive) or department name (Finance Department) as the addressee.

2. Reader’s Job Title

When writing the reader’s job title, you can follow these rules:

- Use the reader’s job title when you know it (Sales Executive, Personnel Manager, Personnel Administrator).
- Reader’s job title is written below the reader’s name.

Example:
Mr. Albert Ng
Personnel Manager

3. Readers’ Organization/Company

Company names should be spelled out correctly unless the company itself uses abbreviations in its official name. Nevertheless, if you are not sure of the abbreviation it is safer to spell out the company’s name.

4. Organization’s Street Names and Address

House numbers and building numbers are expressed in figures, except for “one”. If the street name is a number, spell out numbers up to and including ten; use figures for numbers over ten. Omit the ordinal endings “st”, “nd”, and “th” when a word like East West separates the two numbers. Avoid your own abbreviations.
For example:

One Jalan Kasturi
2 Jalan Selasih
520 Jalan Lirau Nipis

7430 Seventh Street
606 14th Avenue
528 East 68 Street

5. Postal Code, Town and/or State/City

In the Malaysian context, postal code precedes the town/state/city while in the American Postal Service (USPS), the ZIP Code is placed after the town or state and city. Do not use abbreviations for the names of town/state/city unless it is customarily abbreviated. You may also check with the letterhead of the reader's organization to confirm the inside address.

For example:

59100 Kuala Lumpur (No comma)
Cleveland, OH 55100-1619
Cleveland, Ohio 55100-1619

Attention Line

The attention line is an optional part of a business letter's opening. An attention line is appropriate when you do not know the name of the person to write to. In this case, you write the attention line addressing the reader's job title or the name of the department of an organization. When using an attention line, follow these rules:

- Type the attention line on the second line after the inside address or one double space before the salutation.
- Type the attention line in all capital letters or small letters.
- Use a colon after the word Attention:
- Use a salutation of Ladies and Gentlemen or Dear Organization Name:

Nevertheless, use the salutation “Ladies”, if the group consists of only women and likewise.
For example:

Syarikat Farook
81 Jalan Lakeview
Off Jalan Puchong
58200 Kuala Lumpur

Attention: Sales Department

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Subject Line

A subject line, which can be optional, informs the reader about the subject matter of the entire letter before the message begins. The subject line always follows the salutation and precedes the body of the letter. Nevertheless, another alternative is that the subject line can precede the salutation as found in the Text (p. 212).

When writing the subject line, you can follow these rules:

- Type the subject line (leave one blank line) above the salutation.
- Type in either all capital letters or capitalize the content words and underlined.
- Type with or without the word "Subject".
- Start the subject line at the left margin.

Salutation

The salutation greets the reader and helps set the tone of the letter. The choice of salutation indicates how the writer sees his or her relationship with the reader. If you fail to address the reader with the appropriate salutations or to the degree of politeness, you then set a poor impression of yourself to the reader (Text p. 218 - 220). The Text also provides further explanations on the appropriate ways to address the reader. In addition to the Text, you can follow these rules when writing a salutation:

- Leave a double space above and below the salutation.
- Abbreviate the titles Mr., Mrs., Ms, and Dr. but spell out titles such as Major, Professor and Reverend.
- Start the salutation at the left margin.
- Capitalize the first word and any noun or title in a salutation: Dear Mr. Rayappan.
- Use a colon after the salutation: Dear Mr. Ahmad:
Practice 2

Arrange the jumbled parts into its correct order.

1. Ames, Iowa 50010
   August 28, 2000
   25 Woodland Drive

2. January 10, 2001
   328 Jalan Hulu
   58100 Kuala Lumpur

3. Sales Manager
   Aik Keong Sdn. Bhd.
   Mr. Tan
   422 Jalan Pokok Asam
   Sales Department
   58200 Penang
   Dear Mr. Tan:

Answer

1. 25 Woodland Drive
   Ames, Iowa 50010
   August 28, 2000

2. 328 Jalan Hulu
   58100 Kuala Lumpur
   January 10, 2001

3. Mr. Tan
   Sales Manager
   Sales Department
   Aik Keong Sdn. Bhd.
   422 Jalan Pokok Asam
   58200 Penang
   Dear Mr. Tan:
Part III: Body

The body of the letter mainly refers to the content or the message of the letter. When typing the message, you can follow these rules:

- You should use single spacing for each paragraph.
- You can use single or double spacing between paragraphs.
- You must maintain at least two paragraphs for the body of the letter.

The recommended spacing for the whole letter can be seen from p. 214 - 219 in the Text.

Part IV: Closing

The closing in a business letter typically includes a complimentary closing phrase, the writer’s typed name and title. It may also include an initial line, an enclosure line, a line and a postscript.

Complimentary Closing

The complimentary closing indicates that the message has ended. When writing complimentary closing phrase, you can follow these rules:

- Leave one blank line below the last line of the message.
- Make sure the first word is capitalized.
- A comma follows the complimentary closing. Sometimes, it is optional.
- Match your complimentary closing with the salutation.

The following examples of the complimentary closing can be used when you write your letter. The formal list shows complimentary closings that should be used for letters with salutations such as Ladies and Gentlemen, or Dear Sir/Madam. The semiformal list shows complimentary closings for letters that use a courtesy title and a surname in the salutation such as Dear Ms. Radha, Dear Mr. Ang). The informal list should be used when the reader’s first name is used in the salutation such as Dear Alyson, Dear Halim.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Semiformal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yours very truly</td>
<td>Sincerely yours</td>
<td>Sincerely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very sincerely yours</td>
<td>Yours sincerely</td>
<td>Cordially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very truly yours</td>
<td>Cordially yours</td>
<td>Yours truly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writer's Typed Name and Job Title

Writer's typed name and job title are included in a business letter as a form of identification. Leave three blank lines for the handwritten signature, and type the writer's name. The writer's job title or department can be either on the same line with the writer's name or a separate line.

*For example:*

Sincerely yours,

Ho Kim Fook
Sales Executive

Initials line

As explained in the Text (p.217), the initials line indicates that someone other than the writer typed the letter. If you are the writer and the typist yourself, you can omit this line. As shown in the Text (p.216), the initials line “AJ:vg” indicates that the capital letters are the initials of the writer or the person who signs the letter and the small letters are the initials of the typist. The two initials are separated by a colon or a slash (/). Normally, the initials line is typed one blank line below the last line of the writer's job title.

Enclosure Line

Enclosure line indicates to the reader that something has been enclosed together with the letter so that the reader is reminded to look for the enclosed item. The enclosure line is typed one blank line below the initials line. The enclosure can be in a form of whole document, a single page, a picture, a drawing, a reply card, a catalog, a brochure and any other document. If there is no document to be attached, you can omit this line. If there is more than one item to be enclosed, the number of items may be indicated.

*For example:*

(1) Enclosures: (2) Enclosures 2 (3) 2 Enc.
   1. Brochure
   2. Reply card
Copy Line

Copy Line indicates to the reader that carbon copy or photocopy of the letter has been sent to the person (or persons) whose name appears after the "cc:" as shown in the Text (p.216). Sometimes "xc:" is used to indicate that a photocopy has been sent. You can type a copy line one line below the enclosure line (if not below the initials line).

Postscript

A postscript is used by the writer as an attention seeking method to emphasize a special point to the reader. A postscript is typed on the second line below whatever was typed last. You may type "PS." or "PS:" and leave two spaces before the first word of the postscript.

Practice 3

Use the information below and prepare the closing of each business letter.

1. The letter is signed by Mrs. Suresh Lull and typed by you. There are two enclosures: a sales brochure and a reply card. A carbon copy of the letter must be sent to Mr. Francis Boyd.

2. The letter is written and typed by you. There are two enclosures: a schedule of events and a pamphlet.

3. The letter is dictated and signed by you and typed by James Pereira. Carbon copies must be sent to Mrs. Raymond Chua and Mr. Ali Hussein. Include a postscript to remind the reader that you hope to see him at the sales seminar on February 22, 2001.
Answers

1. Yours sincerely,

   Suresh Lull
   Sales Executive
   SL:ml
   Enclosures:
   1. A sales brochure
   2. A reply Card
   cc: Mr. Francis Boyd

3. Sincerely yours,

   Lim May Leng
   Sales Manager
   ML:jp
   cc: Mrs. Raymond Chua
   Mr. Ali Hussein
   PS: See you at the sales seminar on February 12, 2001

2. Yours sincerely,

   Lim May Leng
   Sales Manager
   Enclosures:
   1. A schedule of events
   2. A pamphlet

1.4 Basic Formats of a Business Letter

When you write a business letter, you have to consider the format that you would like to adopt to portray a positive image to your reader. The Text (p.208) explains three common formats for business letters. They are the unblocked, semi-blocked and blocked.
Unblocked

Several features of the unblocked format are explained in the Text (p. 208). All the items start at the left margin except for the following: writer’s address, complimentary closing writer’s signature, writer’s typed name, and job title. The first line of a paragraph indented a few spaces. You may refer to the outline in the Text (p. 212 – 214; Figure 11.3, 11.4 and 11.5) or as outlined below:

1. Subject Line
2. Salutation
3. Body of the Letter
4. Body of the Letter
5. Complimentary Closing
6. Writer’s Signature
7. Writer’s Typed Name
8. Writer’s Job Title
9. Initials Line
10. Enclosure Line

* The column on your left indicates the number of blank lines between sections.
Semiblocked

The Text (p. 208) explains the features of the semiblocked format. All items start at the left margin of a plain paper except for the following: writer’s address, complimentary closing, writer’s signature, writer’s typed name, and job title. You may refer to the outline of this format in the Text (p.215) or as outlined below:

| 3 | Writer’s Address  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2 | Reader’s Name  
|   | Reader’s Job Title  
|   | Reader’s Organization  
|   | Reader’s Organization Address |
| 1 | Subject Line |
| 1 | Salutation |
| 1 | Body of the Letter |
| 1 | Body of the Letter |
| 1 | Complimentary Closing |
| 3 | Writer’s Signature |
|   | Writer’s Typed Name  
|   | Writer’s Job Title |
| 1 | Initials Line |
| 1 | Enclosure Line |

* The column on your left indicates the number of blank lines between sections.
**Blocked**

As explained in the Text (p. 208), all items are typed at the left margin of a plain paper. You can refer to the format in the Text (p. 216; Figure 11.7).

1. **Subject Line**
2. **Salutation**
3. **Body of the Letter**
4. **Complimentary Closing**
5. **Enclosure Line**

* The column on your left indicates the number of blank lines between sections.
1.5 Conclusion

Though there are three basic formats of a business letter, you need to practise only one letter format as outlined in this unit and in the Text based on your own preference for this course.

In conclusion, writing a business letter is not as difficult as long as you remember that you are communicating with another business person like yourself. If you can apply the purpose and principles of a business letter using the appropriate format, you will be on the journey to writing an effective business letter.

Tutorial Work

Write a letter replying to the letter on p. 213 of the Text using one of the letter formats mentioned. The focus of this exercise is on the practice of using a suitable letter format. The content of the letter is of less importance at this stage of your tutorial work. Discuss your answer with your tutor.
UNIT 5: WRITING EFFECTIVE MEMOS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives of this unit are:

- To identify the purposes of writing a memo
- To identify the parts of a memo
- To use the basic formats of a memo

CONTENT OF THE UNIT

1.1 Purposes of Writing a Memo
1.2 Parts of a Memo
1.3 Basic Formats of a Memo
Writing Effective Memos

1.0 Introduction

In this unit, you will be introduced to another method to write business correspondence besides using business letters, that is, memo writing. In order to write effective memorandums or memos (in short), you can adopt the rules of writing business letters except for the format and the approach. Memos are not typed on letterhead stationery, nor do they require the formality of an inside address, salutation, or complimentary closing. The format and parts of memos will further be explained in this unit.

1.1 Purposes of Writing a Memo

Before looking into the purposes of writing a memo, you should understand the definition of a memo and its many advantages. A memo is a document used for communication within an organization. It is a quick, effective system of communication for persons working within the same organization. It can be sometimes called “in-house” communication, inter-company correspondence or internal correspondence. A memo is frequently used as an inter-office correspondence in many large and small organizations because it has many advantages. The advantages of using a memo are:

- It can save time because a memo uses a very simple format.
- It can be delivered instantly by electronic mail to many readers simultaneously.
- It carries a unique informality and gets a friendly reception.
- It provides a written record.
- It is extremely brief, straight to the point and can use in-house vocabulary and abbreviations.

Besides all the advantages, memos are used within an organization to serve several purposes. Among them are:

- requesting for information
- requesting for attendance at a meeting
- giving information
- reminding or confirming information
- sending an enclosure
- informing new assignments or procedures
1.2 Parts of a Memo

Since a memo is used for fast and efficient inter-office communication, its format should allow readers to meet the objectives. All memos have two main parts: the heading and the message.

Heading

Several examples of the heading are shown in memos in the Text (pp. 250, 256 and 258). In addition, as explained in the Text (pp. 269 – 270), a memo’s heading provides the following information:

- **TO**: Who will receive the memo?
- **FROM**: Who is sending the memo?
- **SUBJECT**: What is the title of the message?
- **DATE**: When is the memo written?
- **DISTRIBUTION**: Who else will receive the memo?
- **ENCLOSURE**: What other documents to be included?

1. **TO (The Reader)**

In this heading, you need to include the following information: the name of the reader; reader’s job title; reader’s department (optional); reader’s organization (optional) and address of reader’s organization (optional). A courtesy title is normally not required forATHE name of the reader. However, in-house etiquettes may require the use of a courtesy title especially when addressing someone of a higher rank.

2. **FROM (The Writer)**

In this heading, you need to include the following information for identification purposes and to facilitate a response: the name of the writer; writer’s job title; writer’s department (optional); writer’s organization (optional); and address of writer’s organization (optional). A courtesy title is not required for the name of the writer.

If you are writing a memo to your colleague in the same department on an organizational letterhead, which includes name of organization, name of department, address and phone number of department or organization, then you can leave out the information on reader’s or writer’s department, organization and address of the organization as shown in the Text.
(p.272, Figure 13-8). In contrast, if you are writing a memo to the reader from another department, then you may state both departments as shown in the Text (p. 272, Figure 13-9).

3. SUBJECT

The subject line or reference line (written as “Re”) serves as the title of the message and acts as an aid in filing the memo for future reference. When you write the subject line, you need to follow the rules:

- Make it a concise phrase and not a complete sentence or a question.
- Be specific.
- Capitalize the first and all important words in the title except for prepositions and articles. Prepositions of more than five letters, however, may be capitalized. Articles that begin the title are capitalized.
- Omit a period (full stop) at the end of the subject line.

4. DATE

The date indicates when the memo is written. Just as in letters, the date should be written in full and not abbreviated or wholly expressed in figures. A suitable way to write “March 15, 2001”.

5. DISTRIBUTION

Distribution, an optional heading, is listed if you have to send the memo to another person. If the memo is to be sent to several people, the heading may look better if list their names at the end of the memo. The list of names can be arranged first by and then in alphabetical order.

6. ENCLOSURE

Enclosure, an optional heading, is listed if you have anything to enclose to your memo. The enclosures can be brochures, reports, schedules of events of documents.
MESSAGE

The most important rule for writing the message is to write from your reader's point of view. First, the writer needs to analyze the reader's needs in terms of his knowledge and familiarity. For example, if the reader is new in his or her job and the writer is to give instructions to the reader to conduct a research project which started a few months ago, the writer then should give some background information and details about the project to the reader. Secondly, the writer of the memo can use the word “you” to orient the reader.

The message of a memo provides the reader with a specific purpose. The basic structure of the message is as below:

- State the statement of purpose, which should be concise and direct.
- Give the supporting details and facts accurately.
- End with conclusions, suggestions or future actions to remind the reader on the next course of action; or a goodwill thought.

Statements of Purpose

The first paragraph of the message should begin with a clear statement of purpose in order to provide the reader with a context besides attracting the reader’s attention to the details. The information that follows later will then only be valid if you identify the reason for writing first.

For example:

As you requested, the committee members of the registration of BIZCON 2001 have updated the list of presenters and participants who will attend the business conference. A copy of the list is attached.

Supporting Details

The second paragraph of the message should provide the following points such as:

- Provide the causes if you bring up a problem and the reasons for your proposed solutions.
- Give realistic and logical explanations if you want to carry out new procedures and instructions.
- Give sufficient details if you want to inform about a change in schedule.
• Inform readers the benefits if you need to persuade them.

For example:

The list of presenters and participants have been updated as on March 1, 2001 based on their verbal and written feedback. Nevertheless, more presenters and participants are expected to indicate their interest.

If the memo is too long, you may want to consider headings (such as “Goals”, “General Rating”) to describe the information as in the Text (p. 260) so that the reader will be able to identify the information related to your subject. In addition, you can also use the listing technique instead of presenting your information in one paragraph after another.

Ending

The ending should be written as a separate paragraph expressing conclusions, suggestions, future actions or a goodwill thought. It should be tied neatly together with the statement of purpose and the message.

For example:

Please let me know if you need any further information about the list of presenter and participants.

After the ending, memos, like letters, should be signed before they are sent. There are two ways of signing a memo. First, the writer can write his or her initials after the type name in the FROM : line as shown in the Text (pp. 686, 691 and 698). Second, the writer can sign his or her full name above the typed signature, which is in the middle of the page on the fourth line after the last line of the ending.

Sample memos can be seen in the Text (pp. 254 – 268).
1.3 Basic Formats of a Memo

Generally, memos are short, concise documents with the use of an informal tone. However, you may have to write longer memos, depending on your topic. So, whether it is a short or long memo, below are some basic guidelines on formatting a memo:

1. Overall Format

The memo should have:

- one-inch margins around the page.
- all the lines of the memo beginning at the left margin.
- the following information in the continuing page of the memo such as the reader’s name, the page number and the date. You should continue typing the message on the third line below the heading. The message should have at least one paragraph with a minimum of two lines.

2. Heading

For the heading:

- Type a colon after each information in the heading, for example, “TO:”.
- Set a tab stop space after the colon.
- Use capital letters or small letters (except for the first letter) for all the information in the heading, for example, “TO:” or “To:”.
- Leave one blank line in between the information in the heading.

3. Message

For the message:

- Leave 3 blank lines after the last information in the heading.
- Use single space for the paragraph.
- Leave a blank line between each paragraph
4. Sample Format of a Memo

Below is a sample format of a memo:

| 3* | To : Name of reader  
|    | Reader’s job title  
|    | Reader’s department (optional)  
|    | Reader’s organization (optional)  
|    | Address of reader’s organization (optional) |

| 1 | From : Name of writer  
|   | Writer’s Initial  
|   | Writer’s job title  
|   | Writer’s department (optional)  
|   | Writer’s organization (optional)  
|   | Address of writer’s organization (optional) |

| 1 | Subject or Re : Title of the message |

| 1 | Date : Date of the memo |

| 1 | Encl : Enclosure : other documents which are included with the memo (optional) |

| 3 | Statement of Purpose |

| 1 | Supporting details |

| 1 | Ending |

* Number of blank lines between sections
Practice

You are the marketing executive at the sales department. Write a memo to the assistant manager of the Management department, Abdullah Ghani on 8 March 2001 and ask for the names of his employees who would like to attend the in-house seminar, “Tips for Better Sales”. The seminar will be on Wednesday, 9 April 2001 from 9.00 a.m. to 12 noon in the Training Center.

Answer

MEMO

To: Abdullah Ghani  
Assistant Manager  
Management Department

From: Lim Kai Seng  
Marketing Executive  
Sales Department

Subject: Sales Seminar

Date: March 8, 2001

Please send me the name of any employee in your department who would like to attend an in-house seminar, “Tips for Better Sales”.

The seminar will be held in our Training Center on Wednesday, 9 April 2001 from 9.00 a.m. to 12 noon. We have invited a guest speaker, Dr. Chris Campbell to give us some ideas on how to improve our sales.

Please let me know the number of interested participants from your department by 20 March 2001.

Lim Kai Seng  
Marketing Executive
1.4 Conclusion

Using memos as a type of business correspondence helps to convey the message quickly within an organization. The simple format also encourages the writer to use memos more often. Nevertheless, the writer has to carefully identify the most suitable method to convey the message, for example, if a phone call can send the message and receive the response at the same time, then it would be better to choose the phone call. In the workplace, you need to consider saving time and effort besides carrying out your professional tasks effectively.

Tutorial Work

You have to complete the memo below based on the given situation.

Situation:

The staff at the sales department performed very well last year. You, as the senior officer in the Public Relations Office at Harris Corporation, are to arrange a holiday reward for the staff. Write a memo dated February 28, 2001, to the manager of the sales department, Mr. David Wong, to recommend a week’s vacation at Jaya Resort in Redang Island from March 20 to 27, 2001.

You can discuss your answer with your tutor. This completed memo has to be included in your portfolio for assessment.
MEMO

To :
From :
Subject :
Date :
Encl. :

Statement of Purpose: commend a holiday reward.

Supporting Details: give details on the type of facilities available in the resort and any free benefits for the staff.

Ending: remind the reader to read the enclosed brochure and give feedback.
UNIT 6: WRITING REQUESTS AND REPLIES TO REQUESTS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives of this unit are:

- To understand the purpose of writing a request letter
- To use the appropriate steps to organize a request letter
- To understand the purpose of writing a reply to a request letter
- To use the appropriate steps to organize a reply to a request letter

CONTENT OF THE UNIT

1.1 Purposes of Writing a Request Letter
1.2 Steps to Organize a Request Letter
1.3 Purposes of Writing a Reply to a Request Letter
1.4 Steps to Organize a Reply to a Request Letter
Writing Requests and Replies to Requests

1.0 Introduction

In the business context, one of the types of letters that you will most frequently write is letters requesting for information and other matters. At times, if other organizations or departments request information from you, then you will need to write letters of replies to their requests. This unit emphasizes on the basic steps on the organization of both letters of requests and replies to requests.

1.1 Purposes of Writing a Request Letter

Request letters can serve two purposes: request for information or an action. Several specific purposes of request letters can be listed as below:

- Request for price-lists, catalogues, prospectuses, brochures, pamphlets
- Request for discounts
- Request for methods of payments
- Request for appointments
- Request for reservations
- Request for suggestions or recommendations

To ensure that your requests are responded to, you need to make sure that your request is reasonable, which means that your request can be more easily fulfilled. Reasonable requests refer to all the requests that are mentioned above. Unreasonable requests which would most likely be a waste of your time and effort are request for competitive information about an organization's profits, new products or future plans. You also need to consider the principles of writing business letters as in Unit 4 of this module.

1.2 Steps to Organize a Request Letter

As mentioned in the Text (p. 225), you can write a clear and effective request letter if you follow the basic steps:
STEP 1. State the Purpose or Background Information

To orient the reader, you need to state your specific request or give some background information. You may provide the statements of purpose or indicate your problems as some background information to attract your reader’s attention to your request. In addition, you can also give reasons for making your requests.

STEP 2. Indicate the Details of the Request

You need to give specific details of your request so that your reader understands your request, and in return give the necessary information or take appropriate actions to meet your request. For example, if you request for information on hotel room rates, you may need to inform your reader:

- the type of room, for example, single or double rooms or suites
- the number of persons staying
- the dates as the rates of the rooms vary according to the season

STEP 3. Signal the Closing

It is polite to close the letter with a goodwill statement or any request for the reader’s action.

You can refer to the Text (p. 228) for the sample letter of request using the basic steps as mentioned earlier.

Practice 1

You plan to enrol in a university for an advanced diploma programme after your graduation. Write a letter to the university requesting information about admission procedures and other matters.

Answer

Please refer to the sample letter.
**Sample Letter of Request**

18 Lorong Satu  
Taman Cahaya  
Kuantan  
25050 Kuantan  
11 June 2001

The Registrar  
Admission Office  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
43400 UPM Serdang  

Subject: Advanced Diploma in Business and Computer Science

Dear Sir:

I am writing in response to your advertisement dated 1 June which appeared in *The Star*. As I shall be completing my diploma in Business Studies in Kuala Lumpur College in two months’ time, I am interested in enrolling in your university for the advanced diploma programme in business and computer science next semester. Therefore, I would like to know more about this programme offered by your university.

Please provide me with information of the following:  
1) Admission procedures  
2) Minimum entry qualifications  
3) Fee structure of the programme  
4) Duration of the programme  
5) Scholarships and study loans available

I would appreciate it if you could reply by the end of this month.

Yours sincerely,

Raj Balan
1.3 Purposes of Writing a Reply to a Request

Writing a reply to a request can serve two main purposes: provide information as requested and improve the chances of having a potential customer for your organization. Thus, when you receive a request letter, you should remember to reply to the request promptly so as to maintain the writer’s interest in your company and to indicate your willingness to cooperate and share information.

1.4 Steps to Organize a Reply to a Request

When you reply to a request, you can either provide a positive or negative response. You provide a positive response if you can agree to the writer’s terms and conditions or you are able to provide all the information as requested. Sometimes, if you are unable to do so, then you have to give a negative response.

In this unit, you will be introduced to two types of reply letters to a request. They are called “YES” letters if you can provide a positive response and “NO” letters if you provide a negative response.

“YES” Letters

When you say “yes” to the request, you should be direct and well-organized. In addition, as mentioned in the Text (p. 227), you should include all the information as requested. You must also make sure that all the information given should be relevant and correct. There are several basic steps that you can follow to organize your information:

STEP 1. State the Purpose

You can orient the reader by restating the reader of his or her request. Then, you state the purpose of the letter – say “YES” to the request. You may also start by thanking the enquirer first before restating his or her request.

STEP 2. Provide Details

It is important to provide all the details requested. You may also include any other relevant details that may benefit the reader. A useful technique to adopt when you have too many details to convey to the reader is to use listing or numbering.
**STEP 3. Signal the Closing**

It is best to conclude the letter by offering any further assistance, and end with a goodwill closing.

You can refer to the Text (p. 229) for the sample letter of reply to a request using the basic steps as mentioned earlier.

**Practice 2**

Write a reply to the letter of request in the Text (p. 228) by providing the necessary information.

**Answer**

| Computer Connection  
| 384 Grand Drive  
| Harrington, GA 30018  
| June 1, 1989  

Ms. C. Beth: Norther  
Instructor, Data Processing  
Anderson College  
400 Haggerty Road  
San Francisco, CA 94105  

Subject: Apple II Plus Systems  

Dear Ms. Norther,

Thank you for your letter dated May 28 in which you have expressed a keen interest in purchasing ten of our Apple II Plus Systems for your Computing Science Club’s new Pascal course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose or background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

33
We are glad to provide the following information in detail as you have requested:

1) The cost of one system and its peripheral equipment is $4,000. The cost covers the monitor, central processing unit, keyboard, a pair of stereo speakers, and printer.

2) The software available with the system is Pascal II.

3) The specifications for the computer system and its microprocessor are Pentium III 800 MHz, 64 MB SDRAM Memory, 30 GB Hard Drive, and 12X speed CD-ROM.

We hope that we have given you sufficient details for your reference. Please do write in for more information if necessary. Enclosed is a catalog of our company’s full range of computer systems with the price list. We look forward to the pleasure of your order.

Sincerely yours,

R.B. Sparks
Sales Representative

RBS/sg
Enclosure
"NO" Letters

When you write "NO" letters or refusal letters, you must remember to deliver the negative message gently and tactfully. Why? The answer is because you need to maintain goodwill of the reader for future business opportunities. To accomplish this purpose, you may consider the following steps to organize an effective "NO" letter:

STEP 1.  Start with a Positive and Friendly Buffer

Successful "NO" letters always begin with a positive and friendly buffer. The positive buffer will help the reader to further read the message of the letter with an open mind. Do not disappoint your reader at the beginning of the letter with the answer "NO".

STEP 2.  State the Reasons or Explanation

The reasons for this "NO" letter should be developed logically so that the reader will understand and accept your reasons and decisions. In your explanation, you can imply that you would rather say "yes" than "no".

STEP 3.  Make a Statement of Refusal

If you are able to provide concrete reasons and develop your reasons logically for your refusal, your reader should be prepared to receive the statement of refusal more readily, without being so upset. You must remember to state the statement of refusal in a positive manner or it can be implied.

STEP 4.  Provide Suggestions

This step is optional. If applicable for certain situations, you may offer suggestions as an alternative. For example, you may want to suggest another supplier or your regular customer since you do not have the stock as requested.

STEP 5.  End with a Goodwill Statement

End your letter with a positive note such as an expression to cooperate in future or for the reader's success.
You can refer to a sample of refusal or “NO” letter as below. In this letter, the writer has to decline an invitation to speak at a conference.

**Example of a “NO” Letter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buffer</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Implied Refusal</th>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Goodwill statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Malaysian Business Congress has a lot to offer to the business community, and I attended your annual conference last year and found it to be a most rewarding experience. I appreciate very much your invitation to be the keynote speaker for this year’s conference in Penang on August 8. The date of the conference is during the period when I will be in Sydney for meetings with my business associates. I tried to reschedule these meetings, but I was unable to do so. May I suggest that you contact Ms. Faridah Alias, our marketing manager in charge of brand-name marketing for Europe? She is eager to become more involved in your congress and has relevant experience related to this year’s conference theme, “Achieving the Best Sales”. I am enclosing her address and phone number with her permission in case you would like to contact her. All the best for getting the right speaker. Your conference plans look promising and I am sure the conference will be a success!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Practice 3**

You have been invited to serve as a committee member of a student body in your university. Write a letter to decline the invitation and give reasons for your refusal. Offer a suggestion.

**Answer**

Please refer to the sample letter.
Sample of a “NO” Letter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buffer</th>
<th>Appreciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason(s)</td>
<td>Refusal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 SS20/9  
Taman Megah  
47301 Petaling Jaya  
26 May 2001

Mr. Zulkifli Ahmad  
President  
Arts Club  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
43400 UPM Serdang

Dear Mr. Zulkifli:

Your Arts Club is a well established club on campus meeting the needs of the students for arts and cultural activities. I hear that last year’s art competition attracted over a hundred participants! I feel honoured to be invited to be a committee member in your popular club.

I am now holding the post of Secretary for the annual Open Day event for my hostel. This post requires me to attend weekly meetings and prepare reports. As I am a resident of this hostel, I have to give priority to my responsibility here. Moreover, I am a final year student doing my research project which involves travelling to various places to collect data. These activities leave me with little time for another engagement. Therefore, I am sorry I am unable to accept your invitation.

May I suggest that you contact Miss Linda Lee, a second year student in accountancy, who may be interested in the post. Miss Lee will be an asset to your club as she is active in recreational activities and is familiar with fundraising projects. Last year, she successfully collected RM10,000 for the Save Our Environment campaign. With her permission, I enclose her postal address, e-mail address and telephone number in case you would like to contact her.
1.5 Conclusion

Writing and responding to business letters may take up a lot of your valuable working time. Therefore, if you are able to understand and apply all the basic steps as explained in this unit for both letters of requests and replies to requests, you would not only write them effectively but significantly decrease your time and effort.
Tutorial Work 1

Based on the situation below, write a request letter as part of your portfolio. You can discuss your answer with your tutor.

Situation:

You are working as an assistant manager of Silver Stone Corporation, 85 Jalan Masjid India, 38100 Kuala Lumpur. You are given the responsibility to arrange for an upcoming annual dinner for your company on 15 August. Write a letter to Mrs. Vivian Chan, the banquet coordinator of Millennium Hotel, 20 Jalan Shamsuddin, 45000 Kuala Lumpur, asking her to quote the rates for:

- a banquet room to accommodate 200 people
- A decorated stage for presentation
- A fully equipped sound system
- Western and local cuisine
- Table decorations
- Other relevant information

You request the hotel to confirm all details so that you can finalize the plan.

Answer

You may check your answer here on how to organize your request letter.

Step 1
Identify your organization and state the purpose of your letter.

Step 2
Give the details to support your purpose:
1. State the date and time of the dinner.
2. Request for a banquet room for the number of people to be served.
3. Request for the desired dinner menu and ask for price, including tax and tips.
4. Request for the quotation for a sound system and a stage.
5. Request for any other information.

Step 3
Ask for a reply by a certain date.

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Tutorial Work 2

Write a reply to the request letter in the earlier Tutorial Work of this unit (p. 39) giving her all the information requested. You may also add other relevant information.

Answer

You may check your answer on how to organize a reply to the request letter.

Step 1
Restate the request and state the purpose of your letter – say “YES” to the request.

Step 2
Give all the details correctly to support your purpose.

1. Confirm the date, time and place of the dinner.
2. Reserve a banquet room for the number of people to be served.
3. Able to serve the desired dinner menu and provide the price, including tax and tips. Give other suggestions on the choice of menu.
4. Able to provide facilities for a fully equipped sound system at no charge. Give a quotation.
5. Provide table and stage decorations at no charge.
6. Provide any other information.
7. Mention enclosure, if any.

Step 3
End with a goodwill closing, for example, “… looking forward to…”
**Tutorial Work 3**

Write a reply to the request letter in the earlier Tutorial Work of this unit (p. 39) informing her that all the banquet rooms have been fully booked on 15 August. Offer to put her on the waiting list and suggest another alternative date.

**Answer**

You can check your steps with the following answer:

**Step 1**
Begin with a positive buffer such as “Thank you for sending us your reservation request. We appreciate …”

**Step 2**
State the reason(s) for your refusal. Mention that all the banquet rooms were fully booked when the request was received.

**Step 3**
Provide a statement of refusal, direct or implied.

**Step 4**
Offer to put her name on the waiting list and suggest another alternative date.

**Step 5**
End with a goodwill statement such as “If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to call me. Enclosed are documents for your reference if you decide to agree to the alternative date”.
SECTION B

MEMOS AND LETTERS

UNIT 7: WRITING COMPLAINTS AND REPLIES TO COMPLAINTS

UNIT 8: WRITING APPLICATION LETTERS AND RESUMES
UNIT 7: WRITING COMPLAINTS AND REPLIES TO COMPLAINTS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives of this unit are:

- To understand the purpose of writing a complaint letter
- To use the appropriate steps to organize a complaint letter
- To understand the purpose of writing a reply to a complaint
- To use the appropriate steps to organize a reply to a complaint letter

CONTENT OF THE UNIT

1.1 Purposes of writing a complaint letter
1.2 Steps to organize a complaint letter
1.3 Purposes of writing a reply to a complaint letter
1.4 Steps to organize a reply to a complaint letter
Writing Complaints and Replies to Complaints

1.0 Introduction

When you deal with the many daily tasks whether for professional or personal reasons, you sometimes find it necessary to complain about the unsatisfactory service or defective products that you get. Business companies and other organizations do make mistakes despite their efforts to be efficient. Thus, you receive slow or unpleasant service, wrong order or bills, to name just a few. You then feel compelled to write complaint letters to the companies or organizations involved to seek answers and solutions.

It is not uncommon for you in turn to receive complaints about your company service or products from dissatisfied customers. As a representative of your company, you will find that you have to reply to the complaints. These complaint letters are also called claim letters. This unit outlines the basic steps on the organization of both the complaint letters and the replies to complaints.

1.1 Purposes of Writing a Complaint Letter

Generally complaint letters are intended to find answers and solutions to the problems faced or to obtain satisfaction from being heard. A few specific examples of complaint letters are shown below:

- Complain about misleading claims in advertisements
- Complain about unhygienic conditions in a restaurant
- Complain about mistakes in the statement of account
- Complain about the unfriendly service in a retail outlet
- Complain about late delivery of the merchandise ordered
- Complain about faulty wiring in the new electrical appliance

To elicit the action that you desire, you need to be restrained and specific in your complaint letter. Your letter must not sound angry or sarcastic. If you feel that the tone is not right in your first draft of the letter, discard the draft and write again. You can try writing the letter when you are calm to avoid using an angry tone. When you come across as a reasonable person with a valid complaint in your letter, the chance of a favorable response is higher.
1.2 Steps to Organize a Complaint Letter

You can refer to the Text (p.223) about the steps to organize a complaint letter. The steps are given as below:

**STEP 1. State the Purpose or Problem**

To present yourself as a reasonable person, it is important to state the problem in a straightforward and tactful manner. The problem has to be clearly stated to avoid misunderstanding. Leave out the unnecessary details at this stage so as not to distract the reader.

**STEP 2. Provide the Details**

You have to give specific details of the nature of the problem clearly and directly. The important details are to be included to give a comprehensive picture of the problem. For example, in the case of a dispute between you and an employee of the company, you need to explain accurately, but not exaggerating, the situation to identify the problem. You also need to give details about the incident like the date and name to substantiate your claim.

**STEP 3. Suggest a Solution**

To help the reader know how best to acknowledge your grievance or to compensate you if he is prepared to do so, you can suggest the kind of solution you are seeking. For example, you may be interested in an apology or an assurance that the reader will be more careful in the future. You may ask for certain actions to be taken like a refund for a wrongly issued ticket, a replacement of the faulty product, or free repair for the damaged product.

You can refer to the sample letter of a complaint in the Text (p.224) using the basic steps outlined earlier.
**Practice 1**

Write a letter of complaint to a restaurant about your unpleasant dining experience there. Include a solution to the problem and ask for an assurance that the problem can be solved in the future.

**Answer**

Please refer to the sample letter.

**Sample Letter of Complaint**

| 123 Jalan Satu  | 123 Jalan Satu  |
| Taman Cempaka   | Taman Cempaka   |
| 75250 Melaka    | 75250 Melaka    |
| January 8, 2002 | January 8, 2002 |

Manager
Happy restaurant
116 Jalan Mahkota
75000 melaka

Dear Sir or Madam:

I have been dining regularly in your restaurant with my family during the weekends. However, I have to stop going to your restaurant after my recent unpleasant dining experience last Sunday, January 1.

During dinner, I was shocked to find a fly in the fried noodle. When I asked for the dish to be replaced, the waiter brought back another plate of fried noodle with stale prawns in it. My family and I did not finish the meal as by that time, we had lost our appetite.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Purpose or problem</th>
<th>Purpose or problem</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I hope that your kitchen staff will be careful in preparing the food before it is served to the customers. Please take immediate actions to ensure the hygienic standard of your restaurant and the quality of the food served. I am prepared to return to dine at your place if you can give an assurance that efforts are going to be made to improve the image of your restaurant.

Sincerely yours,

Ng Chong Jin

1.3 Purposes of Writing a Reply to a Complaint Letter

The reply to a complaint is also known as an adjustment letter. When you receive a complaint letter from a customer, you will have to reply promptly to the complaint. You should be willing to entertain such a letter because it gives you the chance to realize a problem you may not be aware of and to find a way to solve it.

Another reason why you need to reply to a complaint letter is to be fair to your customer who deserves at least a courteous reply. When you are seen to be fair to the customer, you give him a sense of satisfaction even if you cannot grant him his claim. Since you are dealing with an unhappy customer, you must use polite and pleasant words to create a positive tone. A calm customer is more receptive to your explanation.
1.4 Steps to Organize a Reply to a Complaint

The steps to organize a reply to a complaint are found in the Text (p.224). For unit, the steps are presented below:

**STEP 1. State the Purpose or Background Information**

At the beginning of your reply, you can state your purpose. If an apology is warranted, then you have to apologize politely. You also can retell the complaint to reflect your understanding of the problem as well as describe the solution suggested to express your empathy. The reader then can be satisfied with your seriousness in solving his problem.

**STEP 2. State the Action Taken**

If you have good news for the customer, tell him quickly. You need to tell the reader exactly the kind of action that you have taken to help him. If you are not able to grant him his claim, you have to explain clearly and tactfully the reason. You need to maintain a positive tone by avoiding the use of negative words like 'As you did not inform me of the damage before the warranty expires, I shall not repair your microwave for free'. Instead you can say 'We can only provide free repair for a damaged product before the expiry of the warranty'.

**STEP 3. End with a Goodwill Statement**

You can end the letter with a goodwill statement which is necessary to maintain a cordial relationship with your customer. Statements expressing a willingness on your part to be given another chance to serve him or pleasant wishes go a long way in ensuring a continued business or professional relationship.

Please refer to the Text (p.226) for a sample response to a letter of complaint using the basic steps outlined earlier.
Practice 2

Write a reply to the letter of complaint in Practice 1 of this unit.

Answer

HAPPY RESTAURANT
116 Jalan Mahkota
75000 Melaka
Tel: 06-367823  Fax: 06-362951

18 January, 2002

Mr. Ng Chong Jin
123 Jalan Satu
Taman Cempaka
75250 Melaka

Dear Mr. Ng:

Thank you for your letter dated 8 January. We are sorry to learn that you are dissatisfied when dining in our restaurant recently. You are right about the need to serve hygienic and fresh food which is our usual standard.

We have ordered the kitchen staff to be hygienic in preparing the food. We also have appointed a supervisor who is responsible for checking the food before it is served to the customers. In addition, our assistant manager will conduct spot check on the food.
1.5 Conclusion

It is to your advantage to communicate in writing about your complaint. Oral complaints often are less effective. When your complaint letter is written persuasively, it may just result in the desired correction. For the reply to a complaint, the ultimate success depends not only on what you write but also on how you convey your message.
Tutorial Work 1

Write a complaint letter as part of your portfolio based on the situation given. You can discuss your answer with your tutor.

Situation:

During your recent holiday in Langkawi, you are disappointed with the service in the hotel in which you stayed. Write a letter of complaint to the management of the hotel describing the problems you faced and offer solutions to solve the problems.

Answer

You can check the suggested answer below on how to organize your letter.

Step 1
Point out that during your stay in the hotel, you were disappointed with the slow service provided by the telephone operator and the limited facilities in the gymnasium.

Step 2
Give the details to support your complaint:
1. State the days you stayed in the hotel and room number.
2. State the time taken by the operator to connect an important call for you.
3. State your frustration with only a treadmill in the gymnasium for your workout.
4. Mention the lack of a changing room in the gymnasium.
5. Mention the inconvenience of having to return to your room to shower after your workout.

Step 3
Give the following suggestions:
1. Suggest that training be provided to the telephone operators to become more efficient.
2. Provide more exercise equipment in the gymnasium.
3. Build a changing room in the gymnasium for the convenience of hotel guests.
Tutorial Work 2

Assume that you are the general manager of the hotel. Write a reply to the letter of complaint stated in Tutorial Work 1(p.9).

Answer

You can write your reply using the following suggested answer.

Step 1
Thank the customer for his constructive feedback about the slow service provided by the telephone operator and the limited facilities in the gymnasium.

Step 2
State the actions taken by the management to solve the problems mentioned like:
1. Conduct a refresher training course for the telephone operators to improve their efficiency.
2. Provide a budget for the purchase of more exercise equipment for the gymnasium.
3. Build a changing room next to the gymnasium.

Step 3
End your letter with a goodwill statement such as an invitation to the customer to return or warm wishes.
UNIT 8: WRITING APPLICATION LETTERS AND RESUMES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives of this unit are:

- To understand the types of application letters and resumes
- To understand the purposes of writing application letters and resumes
- To identify the appropriate steps to write application letters and resumes
- To use the guidelines for writing application letters and resumes

CONTENT OF THE UNIT

1.1 Types and Purposes of Application Letters and Resumes
1.2 Basic Steps of Writing Application Letters and Resumes
1.3 Guidelines for Writing Application Letters and Resumes
Writing Application Letters and Resumes

1.0 Introduction

In many job applications, you need to prepare two important documents: application letter and a resume. An application letter is usually enclosed together with a resume. Therefore, this unit provides you with guidelines on how to write effective resumes and application letters, which are sometimes called "cover letters". It is worth bearing in mind that you should understand the basic steps to writing effective application letters and resumes in order to secure an interview for the intended job.

1.1 Types and Purposes of Application Letters and Resumes

A. Application Letters

Types of Application Letters

There are two types of application letters: objective and highlight letters. An objective letter identifies the position being sought, indicates an interest in having an interview, and calls attention to the fact that the resume is attached. It also mentions any other special matters that are not included in the resume, such as dates and times when you are available to come in for an interview. This letter does not salesmanship and is very brief.

On the other hand, a highlight letter summarizes the key information that will emphasize that you are a suitable candidate for the job. In other words, it selects the best information from the resume and summarizes it in the letter. This type of letter, which is more popular than the former, is especially designed to make the connection with the specific job.

Purposes of Writing Application Letters

An application letter, which is your personal sales letter, is written for two purposes. The first purpose of the application letter is to draw a clear connection between the job you are seeking and your qualifications listed in the resume. In other words, the letter should be written to match the requirements of the job with
your qualifications, emphasizing how you are right for the job. Secondly, the
purpose of an application letter is to ask the potential employer for an interview.

B. Resumes

Types of Resumes

There are two main types of resumes: the chronological and the functional.
Chronological resumes list and describe your experiences in reverse chronological
order, that is, starting with the most recent. When and where you acquired the
experiences is clearly demonstrated. This type of resume is the easiest to write
and prepare and works best for people with a steady employment background.

On the other hand, functional resumes stress the applicant’s skills, abilities and
qualifications without excessive regard for date of service, length of involvement
and specific employers. This type of resume works well for people who are
shifting career focus and who want to emphasize skills rather than job titles. Both
types are acceptable. Sometimes, both types are combined to write a resume. In
short, it is up to you to adopt the type of resume that you think would draw the
attention of the reader.

Purposes of Writing Resumes

A resume, which is a selective record of your background, serves two purposes.
The main purpose is to give the potential employer a summary of your ability,
skills and experience. Another purpose is to get you an interview if the employer
finds that your qualifications meet the job requirements. A well-written resume
will make you a stronger job candidate in the competitive market.
1.2 Basic Steps of Writing Application Letters and Resumes

A. Application Letters

As mentioned in the Text (p. 190), you can write an effective application letter if you follow the basic steps:

STEP 1 State the Purpose

At the beginning of the letter, you need to state the purpose of the letter which is to apply for a post as advertised or from a personal contact.

STEP 2 Provide Details of Your Background

Next, you present your qualifications, working experience and accomplishments. You also need to provide the proof of these achievements by including the relevant documents.

STEP 3 Signal the Closing

At the end of the letter, you can request for action from the reader, for example, an interview or a reply. You can also indicate your willingness to provide further information and contact number, if necessary.

B. Resumes

Before preparing your resume, you can brainstorm for ideas that highlight your strengths, skills and abilities. For example:

- Education
- Relevant university courses
- Research Papers
- Working Experience
- Co-curricular activities
- Volunteer work
- Interests
- Sports
After listing down your ideas in your draft, you can use the following steps to write your resume:

**STEP 1: Provide Personal Bio-data**

You can begin your resume by presenting your personal data such as your full name, address, telephone number, date of birth, nationality, identity card number and marital status. The address and telephone number given should be reachable in case the potential employer would like to call you for an interview.

**STEP 2: Use Relevant Headings**

You can use different headings to categorize your achievements and other relevant data to meet the requirements of the job. The types of headings are qualifications, working experience (part-time and full-time jobs), accomplishments (for example, publications, certifications), co-curricular activities, volunteer work, interests, and sports. You may arrange the data using either the functional or chronological format.

**STEP 3: State the References**

To end your resume, you can list your references in an easy-to-read arrangement. References are only necessary upon request. You can name at least two referees who know you well enough to report on your personality and capability. Each reference should include the referee’s full name with his job title, position, address and contact number. If references are required, you may put a statement at the bottom of your resume indicating that references are available upon request.

Once you have finalized all the details in your draft, you can refine your resume. You can refer to the given guidelines. You may also refer to the sample letters and resumes in your text (pp. 192 – 195, 198 – 203)
1.3 Guidelines for Writing Application Letters and Resumes

A. Application Letters

When writing application letters, you may need to consider the following guidelines:

1. *Proper use of the business letter format*
   Have you set up the letter using an acceptable business letter format?

2. *Appropriate connection between your background and the requirements of the job*
   Do you emphasize this connection?

3. *Adequate balance between brevity and details*
   Does your letter have substantial information?

4. *Relevant introduction*
   Does your introduction establish the purpose of the letter?

5. *Sufficient specifics (dates, numbers, names, etc.)*
   Does your letter give enough specific details but at the same time not too densely detailed?

6. *Upbeat, positive tone (should not sound overly aggressive and over-confident)*
   Is the tone of your letter positive?

7. *Correct grammar and mechanics*
   Does your letter use correct grammar and mechanics?

8. *Overall neatness, professional-looking quality*
   Is the letter on high quality paper? Is the copy clean and free of smudges?

9. *Adequate spacing*
   Is there adequate spacing between paragraphs and between the components of the letter?
B. Resumes

When writing your resume, you may need to consider the following guidelines:

1. **Appropriate type of resume and sufficient content**
   Have you chosen the type of resume that will best convey your qualifications and background? Have you provided the necessary, relevant details for your job? Does your resume have enough information to sell your skills?

2. **Consistency of phrasing**
   Do you use the same style of phrasing for similar information in a resume? For example, you have to use past tense verbs for all work descriptions.

3. **Appropriate use of action verbs for descriptive phrases (Refer to List A)**
   Do you use action verbs to describe your achievements, skills, and qualifications?

4. **Consistency of punctuation style**
   Do you use the same kind of punctuation for similar sections of information? For example, you use a series of commas to separate items in a sentence.

5. **Correct grammar and mechanics**
   Have you used correct grammar and mechanics?

6. **Appropriate headings**
   Do you use appropriate headings to categorize your data?

7. **Consistency of typography (font size, types of font)**
   Does your resume reflect the consistency of typography?

8. **Adequate spacing**
   Is it consistent throughout your resume?

9. **Readability**
   Are the paragraphs in your resume short, that is, below 6 lines for each paragraph? Is your resume easy to read and pleasing to the eye?

10. **Overall neatness, professional-looking quality**
    Is the resume on high quality paper? Is the copy clean and free of smudges?
# List A: Action Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accelerated</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
<th>Acquired</th>
<th>Adjusted</th>
<th>Administered</th>
<th>Advised</th>
<th>Analyzed</th>
<th>Applied</th>
<th>Appointed</th>
<th>Arranged</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
<th>Assisted</th>
<th>Assured</th>
<th>Attended</th>
<th>Authoried</th>
<th>Awarded</th>
<th>Began</th>
<th>Built</th>
<th>Calculated</th>
<th>Chaired</th>
<th>Checked</th>
<th>Communicated</th>
<th>Controlled</th>
<th>Coordinated</th>
<th>Counseled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Created</td>
<td>Decided</td>
<td>Delegated</td>
<td>Demonstrated</td>
<td>Designed</td>
<td>Determined</td>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>Devised</td>
<td>Directed</td>
<td>Discovered</td>
<td>Drafted</td>
<td>Edited</td>
<td>Elect</td>
<td>Entered</td>
<td>Established</td>
<td>Evaluated</td>
<td>Excell</td>
<td>Found</td>
<td>Fostered</td>
<td>Gave</td>
<td>Gained</td>
<td>Graded</td>
<td>Guided</td>
<td>Handled</td>
<td>Helped</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Improved</td>
<td>Incorporated</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>Indicated</td>
<td>Initiated</td>
<td>Innovated</td>
<td>Inspected</td>
<td>Interpreted</td>
<td>Interviewed</td>
<td>Introduced</td>
<td>Investigated</td>
<td>Joined</td>
<td>Kept</td>
<td>Launched</td>
<td>Lectured</td>
<td>Looked</td>
<td>Made</td>
<td>Maintained</td>
<td>Managed</td>
<td>Maximizada</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Opened</td>
<td>Operated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordered</td>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Participated</td>
<td>Performed</td>
<td>Persuaded</td>
<td>Pioneered</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>Prepared</td>
<td>Presented</td>
<td>Processed</td>
<td>Projected</td>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>Proved</td>
<td>Produced</td>
<td>Profit</td>
<td>Programmed</td>
<td>Purchased</td>
<td>Rated</td>
<td>Received</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>Renovated</td>
<td>Reported</td>
<td>Researched</td>
<td>Revealed</td>
<td>Reviewed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Sent       | Served      | Set      | Showed   | Simplified | Solved  | Specified | Started | Strengthened | Studied | Submitted | Summarized | Supervised | Supported | Targeted | Taught  | Tested  | Tracked | Trained | Transferred | Translated | Traveled | Treated | Tutored | Typed | Updated |

### 1.4 Conclusion

In the application for a job, you have to face competition from other candidates. Therefore, if you want to secure a job successfully, the first step you have to do is to sell your strengths, skills, and abilities through your application letter and resume. Your professional writing skills may very well be a crucial part in helping you to secure the job you desire.
Practice

Write a letter of application and a resume based on the advertisement below for recruitment.

---

The STAR Thursday January 6 2002

RECRUITMENT

We are looking for dynamic individuals to promote our corporate motto ‘Vacation for a Living’ as:

MARKETING EXECUTIVE

Requirements

You need to:
• Be 21 - 35 years old
• Obtain a degree
• Possess good communication skills in spoken and written English

Remuneration

We will provide you with:
• A basic salary and an excellent commission
• Exciting incentive trips

Experience is not necessary as training will be provided. Interested candidates please write to:

Personnel Manager
Vacation Marketing Company
9 Jalan USJ 8
46100 Petaling Jaya

58
Answer: Sample of an Application Letter

21 Lorong Jaycee  
Canning Garden  
31400 Ipoh  
10 January 2002

Personnel Manager  
Vacation Marketing Company  
9 Jalan USJ 8  
46100 Petaling Jaya

Subject: Marketing Executive

Dear Sir/Madam:

In response to your advertisement in *The Star* dated 6 January 2002 for marketing executives, I would like to apply for the post which is to be based in Petaling Jaya.

I am 25 years old and I am currently employed as a temporary clerk in a travel agency in Ipoh. My present temporary job is to reserve seats on the airlines for the customers and to book accommodation for them in hotels. As I enjoy traveling and meeting people, I would like to join your action-filled company to promote your motto 'Vacation for a Living' as a marketing executive.

As you can see from my enclosed resume, I am a graduate from Universiti Putra Malaysia majoring in English studies. I have effective communication skills in both spoken and written English, as reflected in my active participation in the campus English language debate team and the English Literary Club. I have a distinction for English in my SPM examination and good grades for my English courses in the university.

My present employer, Mr. Alex Chase, and my former lecturer in charge of the debate team, Dr. V. Gopal, are willing to be my references. Their particulars can be found in my resume.
I shall be pleased to provide any further information and am willing to attend an interview. I can be reached at 05-521320 in the afternoons.

Yours sincerely,

Azlan Osman

Enc.

Closure
Answer: Sample of a Resume

Azlan Osman
21 Lorong Jaycee
Canning Garden
31400 Ipoh
Tel : 03-91318208
E-mail : azlan@yahoo.com

Position Applying for
Marketing Executive

Personal Biodata
Date of Birth : May 10, 1970
Place of Birth : Ipoh
Age : 25 years
Nationality : Malaysian
I.C. Number : 700510-04-5618
Marital Status : Single

Qualification
B.A (English Studies), Universiti Putra Malaysia, 2001

Co-Curricular Activities
Vice president of English Literary Club
Member of the English debate team
Member of Badminton Club
Employment

Administration Clerk
Reserve airflight seats for customers
Made bookings for accommodation in hotels

45, Jalan Sultan Ismail
50900 Kuala Lumpur

Languages Spoken

Bahasa Malaysia and English

Interests

Travelling, reading and playing badminton

References

(1) Mr. Alex Chase
   Managing Director

   45, Jalan Sultan Ismail
   30900 Ipoh
   Tel: 05-5673048

(2) Dr. V. Gopal
   Senior Lecturer

   Department of English
   Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
   Universiti Putra Malaysia
   43400 UPM Serdang
   Tel: 03-89468718
Tutorial Work

Write a letter of application and a resume based on the given advertisement for appointment.

Saturday, January 19, 2002

NEW STRAITS TIMES

APPOINTMENT

We are an established corporate company based in Kuala Lumpur. In line with our expansion program, applicants are invited from suitably qualified candidates for the following position:

ADMINISTRATION EXECUTIVE

The candidate should have the following requirements:

1. Obtain a Diploma or Degree
2. Preferably has a minimum of one year's working experience
3. Be able to work independently
4. Possess good spoken and written skills in English
5. Be computer literate

Fresh graduates are also encouraged to apply. Interested candidates please send a detailed resume and a recent passport-sized photo to the address below:

The Advertiser
P/O. Box 236
50200 Kuala Lumpur
Answer: Sample of an Application Letter

For the letter format, you may refer to Unit 4. You can check the steps of writing an application letter with the following answer:

Step 1
State the purpose of the letter such as “I would like to apply for the post of administration executive as advertised on Thursday, 10 January in the New Straits Times”.

Step 2
Mention all the relevant details of your background such as personal biodata, qualifications, working experience and other accomplishments.

Step 3
End by requesting for an interview or a reply. You can indicate how the prospective employer can get in touch with you.

Answer: Sample of a Resume

You can use the following steps for your answer.

Step 1
Present your personal data such as your full name, address, telephone number, date of birth, place of birth, nationality, identity card number and marital status.

Step 2
Use headings such as qualifications, working experience (part-time and full-time jobs), accomplishments, co-curricular activities, volunteer work, interests, and sports. Under each heading, you need to give detailed information such as dates, place, address, and job description. You can select the type of resume which you think will attract your reader’s attention, that is, chronological or functional resume.

Step 3
State the references if they are requested in the advertisement. Otherwise, this step is optional.
SECTION C

REPORT WRITING

UNIT 9 : FORWARDING AN ARGUMENT

UNIT 10 : FUNDAMENTALS IN REPORT WRITING
UNIT 9: FUNDAMENTALS IN REPORT WRITING

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives in this unit are:

- To identify the parts of a report
- To identify the functions of reports
- To identify the format of a report
- To use the noun phrase in given and new information

CONTENT OF THE UNIT

1.1 Parts of a report
1.2 Functions of reports
1.3 Format of a report
1.4 Building up your readability
Fundamentals in Report Writing

1.0 Introduction

In this unit, we will cover the basic features that are found in short reports. A useful aid is to follow Pfeiffer’s ABC format for organisation (Technical Writing: A Practical Approach, Ohio:Prentice-Hall, 1997). The ABC refers to Abstract, Body and Conclusion. Each of the sections is discussed and examples worked out to illustrate the approach used to present the relevant information.

1.1 Parts of a Report

Abstract

The abstract refers to that portion of information that gives an immediate overview of the report. Other terms are used, such as Introduction and Summary, Executive Summary, Executive Overview etc. In a report, this section may be preceded by a foreword, as explained in the Text, (pp. 235 – 236); the foreword serves to catch the audience attention, to orient the audience to the subject of the report and to define the purpose of the report. If we choose not to have a separate section entitled foreword, it may be subsumed under the abstract.

Very quickly, we can analyse the one of the given forewords on page 236 to see how it fulfills the conditions spelt out in the Text. The sentences are numbered for ease of discussion.
### Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Provides the context.</td>
<td>(1) During my visit to your nursery on September 15, 1989, you and I observed the high mortality of the 2-year-old red pine seedlings in bed 19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) States the problem.</td>
<td>(2) As you stated this would lead to a production shortage in 1990.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) States the required task.</td>
<td>(3) You requested my help in finding the cause of this problem so that it could be corrected in the near future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) States the purpose of the report.</td>
<td>(4) The purposes of this report are (1) to explain that parasite nematodes are the probable cause for the high seedling mortality and (2) to recommend a solution to the problem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This pattern is a conventional style used to introduce most reports.

The summary that follows presents the main results of the study. The conclusion is highlighted and if applicable, it also mentions briefly the recommendations and implications arising from the study. The information presented should be directed at the needs of the audience. A series of pertinent questions are listed on p. 237 of the Text to show what a manager would look for when he reads a report. As such, the writer should provide the answers as clearly as possible to satisfy the task requirements.

### The Body

The body contains the essential details. They must be presented logically and organised well for efficient reading.
Some useful tips to deal with this section are:

- Where appropriate, use headings to provide the lead-in to the discussion. Headings are also useful when there is a change in direction in the points presented.

- Sub-headings should be preceded by a short lead-in paragraph. It acts as a sign to the reader, especially if he wishes to skim and scan the materials before deciding on which section he would like to focus on.

- In presenting information, a time-tested method used is to move from the general to the specific. Again, this helps to present important information clearly before going into the details. The reader is aided in selective reading.

The Conclusion

This section emphasizes the major findings. If the findings are already well discussed in the previous section, the conclusion merely restates the important findings. If the discussion in the body has pointed to a conclusion, then it is the function of the conclusion to provide more information about the conclusions that are made.

Implications are included to indicate the projection or awareness of possible reactions and further developments that may arise from the findings. In a way, it serves to troubleshoot the situation.

If asked for, recommendations are included as well. Whatever the recommendations and implications, they must be logically connected to the findings. They are a natural extension from the discussion of the findings. If the recommendations and implications cannot be related to the findings, then the report is seriously flawed.
Other considerations

Other than attending to the ABC format, you could ask yourself the following questions to help you to write the report.

- Are you using a letter or memo format for your report?
- What kind of visuals can I include to make my presentation more interesting and more easily understood?
- Have I separated fact from opinion clearly?
- What materials would I attach as appendices?
- Have I edited my work carefully?

Practice 1

Read Chapter 5 (pp. 96-109) and go through the following exercises:

A. Exercise 5-1, A and B (99-100) to help you recognise a strong statement of the problem.
B. Exercise 5-5 (pp. 106-107) to help you to frame the forewords and introductions.
Check your answers against the key provided.

Practice 2

Attempt Exercise 12-3 ((p.248).

Answer

An outline is presented to show how the details can be incorporated. Brief comments are given in parenthesis.
Procedures (This main heading would direct the reader's attention to the organisation of the information.)
The final analysis is based...
Although the sample preparation is ... the process of irradiation is different. The process...

Sample preparation (this is a sub-heading which relates to the main heading)
Sample preparation ... irradiation

Irradiation Process (Another sub-heading)
One sample .... The other sample...

Analysis (the second main heading)
Sample analysis was performed by ... (These information are more general and therefore should be moved to an earlier section.)

Sample composition ... each sediment sample.

Activation of short –Lived Isotopes (sub-heading)

Activation of Long-Lived Isotopes (a parallel sub-heading)

Results (another main heading)
The final results... per million.

Table: Constituent Elements of Sediment Samples – TG-1 and TG-2
(A table heading would help the reader to read the results better. Column headings would also be helpful.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Sediment Samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(The invite to attend to questions “If any questions arise ...” should be moved to the conclusion as an end remark.)
(You will notice that font size and spacing are varied to indicate main sections and sub-sections.)

5
1.2 Functions of Reports

The five common types of informal reports written in an organization either in as a memo report or letter report are

- Problem Analyses
- Recommendation Reports
- Progress Reports
- Evaluation Reports
- Laboratory Reports

All of them will follow the fundamentals of writing a report. Specific to each type is the special function that is being focused on. The contents of each type are briefly outlined to give you a quick reference.

Outline 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary highlighting the problems covered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Body

| Background information relating to the problems |
| Detailed Observations of the problems |
| Data to support the description of the observations |
| Consequences of the problems |

Conclusion

| Restatement of the problems |
| Emphasis on the need for immediate action |
| Suggestions to solve the problem (if required) |
Outline 2

Recommendation Report

Abstract
Purpose
Context of the situation/problem giving rise to the recommendation
Executive summary of recommendations forwarded

Body
Details of the situation or problem
Systematic presentation of the recommendations
Data to support your arguments
Benefits/advantages arising from the implementation
Caution on possible drawbacks

Conclusion
Restatement of the main recommendations
Highlight on main benefit
Outline 3

Progress Report

Abstract
Purpose
Executive summary of the project being reported on
Reference to the last progress report made if applicable

Body
Description of work completed within a time frame
Problems encountered clearly stated
Explanations for unachieved targets
Description of what remains to be done within expected timeframe

Conclusion
Restatement of work completed
Expression of satisfaction or concern on progress made so far

Outline 4

Evaluation Report

Abstract
Purpose
Executive summary on the main points of the evaluation

Body
Detailed description of the item/situation under evaluation
Systematic presentation of information according to criteria used for the evaluation
Critical analyses of the strengths and weaknesses detected
Supporting data for the critique

Conclusion
Restatement of the major findings and conclusions
Recommendations if applicable
Outline 5

Lab Reports

Abstract
Purpose
Executive summary of results

Body
Statement of the hypothesis
Equipment used
Procedures followed
Problems encountered if any
Results of the experiment or test

Conclusion
Restatement of main results
Implications arising
Recommendations if applicable

Examples of Reports

To get into the feel of how reports are actually written, you are to read various reports given on pp. 254-268 in the Text. Each report by nature of function will differ in terms of emphasis and approach while maintaining somewhat similar format.

Practice 1

Go through Exercise 13-1 (pp.253-257) to work on some similarities and differences found in different reports.
Answer

Similarities
Both are problem-solving reports. They identify the problems and suggest solutions to the problems. The solutions are clearly put forward.

Differences
The reports differ in the manner the problem is stated. The amount of space given to the description of the problem in the executive summary differs significantly. In Report 13-2, the report is written upon request. The problem has been already identified and thus is shared knowledge between reader and writer.
In Report 13-3, the report is self-initiated. The problems identified must be given in greater details to provide substance for the argument of the case.

The emphasis on the solutions differs. In Report 13-2, the proposals are forwarded with caution to potential problems. In Report 13-3, the argument for implementation is stronger. Details and data to support the argument are listed. Report 13-3 is more personal with personal involvement more strongly stated. This is to be expected in self-initiated reports. Details in Report 13-2 are found mostly in attachments rather than the body of the report. This helps in cutting down reading time for materials, which may be known, to the readers.

1.3 Format of the Report

Reports follow a format. If it is a memo report, then the memo format will be used. It will have more details than the usual informal short inter-office memo. Details are found on p. p. 269 of the Text with accompanying examples. Where letterheads are used, the information need not be repeated in writing.

If a letter format is used for the report, the format would follow the conventions of letter writing with the usual name of the receiver, inside address, dateline subject heading and complimentary close followed by the signature and name of sender together with his/her designation.
Practice 2

Your company received an assignment to look into the adequacy of emergency exits in CY Company. Write a letter report to report on problems and offer solutions to solve the problems. Make use of the notes given.

Findings
Emergency stairs - east wing - blocked by old furniture – west wing – old photocopiers – stairs dimly light – poor signage

Recommendations
Clear off old furniture – fire hazard
Move photocopiers to open space next to storeroom
Improve signage – light up exit signs – increase size – more directions - disperse floor plan information at every department

Practice 3

Write a memo report to Syarikat KYS, which asked for a study on the traffic flow for a new kindergarten they have set up in Taman Maju. They have received complaints about traffic congestion in the area when parents drop off and pick up their children from school.

Include the information below and give section headings to enable easy reading.
You may include more data to make your report more convincing.

Information
Road plan
Encourage parents to use school bus
Provide incentives
Relocate main gate to side road that has less traffic
Have two sessions instead of one
Tutorial Work

Practice 4

Present one of your reports in class and compare your answers with your course mates. Obtain comments and feedback from each other and your tutor to improve on your work.

1.4 Building Up Your Readability

In Chapter 24, you are given details about the use of the noun phrase in sentence construction. The noun phrase is important because of its information load. It directs the reader to the core meaning. How easy the reader is able to follow your argument rests strongly on how you are able to convey the core meaning clearly and this means you must be able to string your ideas together effectively. The ideas need to follow each other logically meeting the reader's expectations about the order of information. Before going into the techniques with regard to the use of the noun phrase, you should be aware of the concept of new and given information.

In English, we are able to analyse information as given and new. If we are able to understand meaning of concepts or objects from the context discussed earlier, then the information is given information. In reading we always refer to what has been previously read to help us to understand what needs to be read after. This 'referring-back' principle forms part and parcel of our reading strategies. If this principle is violated, then the text is difficult to read. Information could thus be ordered whereby new information would become given information.

For example:

The manager appeals to the customers to be patient.

The underline part contains the noun phrases, which convey the main information. Either part in the initial sentence could be the new information. If
we see the manager as a point of reference for development in the next sentence, then the given information could continue as: He told them that the problem is being attended to immediately. If we see the customers as a point of reference to be continued as given information for the next sentence then we could begin: The customers or they have been waiting all morning to see him.

Thus to connect to the next sentence, it is expected that you continue with given information, otherwise the ideas would become disjointed.

Given information refers very clearly to the new information. Normally, they are not placed too far apart as distance could create a problem in understanding reference.

With this understanding, you are able to improve your flow of ideas through practice in the use of the noun phrase in the context of given and new information.

The different techniques involve using:

1. Exact repetition
2. Short form repetition
3. Pronouns and other substitutes
4. Synonyms
5. Associated noun phrases

Go through the examples provided in the Text (pp. 443 –452)

Practice 5

1. Analyse the first paragraph of passage C in Exercise 24.2 (pp.452--) by underlining the noun phrases and drawing lines to connect to given information. The passage is reproduced below. The sentences arranged vertically and numbered for ease of analysis. The reference is done for you.
2. What are the techniques that are used to connect the information?

(1) Now even some of the sickest heart patients with clogged coronary arteries can be considered for hear-saving balloon therapy, researchers say.
(2) That’s important news for up to 60,000 older “high-risk” patients with multiple coronary plugs, blocked grafts from previous bypass surgery, or massive congestive heart failure.
(3) Many have such weak hearts that they were considered too weak for balloon angioplasty.
(4) In that procedure, a tiny balloon is snaked through an artery and inflated to break up a clot.
(5) This works best for patients under 65 who have only a single blockage, according to just-issued guidelines to doctors.

Answer

(1) Now even some of the sickest heart patients with clogged coronary arteries can be considered for hear-saving balloon therapy, researchers say.
(2) That’s important news for up to 60,000 older “high-risk” patients with multiple coronary plugs, blocked grafts from previous bypass surgery, or massive congestive heart failure.
(3) Many have such weak hearts that they were considered too weak for balloon angioplasty.
(4) In that procedure, a tiny balloon is snaked through an artery and inflated to break up a clot.
(5) This works best for patients under 65, who have only a single blockage, according to just-issued guidelines to doctors.

From the analysis, it is clear that Sentence (1) provides the new information. In sentence (2) the new information now becomes given information. In sentence (3) many refers to the given information again. In sentence (4) the given information refers to the new information given in Sentence (1).
Sentence (5) begins with fronted given information again. It can be observed that fronting the given information helps to convey the information clearly.

Techniques Use

Sentence (2) – exact repetition and synonyms
Sentence (3) – short form repetition, pronoun and synonyms
Sentence (4) – substitute
Sentence (5) – substitute

Tutorial Work

Work on second paragraph of passage C and discuss your answer with the tutor.

1.6 Conclusion

There are certain features of a report that are common to all types of reports. Knowing these fundamentals provides the foundation for the writer to customise the report for specific purposes and audiences. Reports may be presented in different formats and style depending on the communication intent. The writer needs also to be aware of in-house preference as work culture does dictate acceptability standards and criteria.
UNIT 10: FORWARDING AN ARGUMENT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives of this unit are:

• To identify the guidelines for constructing an argument
• To identify the types of argument
• To use visuals effectively

CONTENT OF THE UNIT

1.1 Guidelines for constructing arguments
1.2 Types of arguments
1.3 Using visuals effectively
Forwarding An Argument

1.0  Introduction

All technical reports are argumentative in nature. Here an argument means make a claim that something should be believed or done, plus proof or good reason believing or doing it" (p.72 in the Text). This skill is considered to be of importance in successful report writing. As such, an effective writer should learn how an argument is structured.

1  Guidelines for constructing arguments

This section discusses some of the expectations and criteria for writing arguments.

1.  Use evidence to support claims

To be convinced, a discerning reader will look for data or evidence that would support the claims. The reader expects you to give proof, especially if recommendations are to be translated into action. Other than just providing the proof, the writer is also responsible for wording them such that they are easily understood. The cited should be accurate and representative. Otherwise, the danger of 'false' arises and this would lead to serious repercussions.

2.  Sequence your points for maximum impact

We could appeal to the general psychological makeup of readers who normally remember things said at the beginning or the ending better than other communication. Thus, evaluate your points and sequence them effectively.

3.  Be logical

Most technical writing is objective. We argue based on logic rather than emotion of the time. Readers are more convinced when the writing appeals to their logic.

4.  Cite established authorities as a cross reference

Credentials are important if decisions are to be made based on your report. A reputable source goes a long way in lending credibility to what you write. However, use them only where appropriate. Over-reliance on them shows the lack of independent thinking.
1.2 Types of Arguments

The text identifies and explains two types of arguments that could be effectively used (pp. 76 – 83). In presenting an argument of fact, you will need to pay attention to the various subparts (existence, definition and quality) to arrive at an effective whole. Go through the outline of the argument of fact (p. 80) carefully to realise the expectations involved. Similarly, go through the details provided in the outline for the argument of policy (p. 81).

The argument used will help you to build a case. The final presentation calls for the exercise of many aspects of your skills as a writer. You will follow a format that is suitable and are expected to apply the fundamentals of report writing. As you work on the report, you tailor your argument to suit your audience needs, organise the arguments for maximum impact and follow the guidelines in the construction of arguments. A writer faces a myriad of tasks in the process of completing a written assignment. It is certainly not an easy feat.

Practice 1

Go through Exercise 4-1 (pp. 74-76) to improve your skills at making claims. Check your answers against the key provided.

Practice 2

Read the section on the basic strategies of argument (pp. 76-77) and go through Exercise 4-2 (pp. 77-78). Check your answers against the key provided.

1.3 Using Visuals effectively

Introduction

Often, arguments are backed up by evidence in the form of visuals. The computer age today makes it possible for writers to explore graphics from many dimensions. If we are computer literate, the opportunities available are astounding. Numerous soft wares produce illustrations, which used to take hours to construct. There are fonts sizes to suit every purpose and colour graphics now appear to be the norm.

The advantages in using graphics are obvious. They help simplify and reinforce ideas. They attract attention and may communicate even better than words.
Guidelines for using graphics

While graphics are touted as almost indispensable in modern communication, they must be used with care. Some guidelines that can be followed are:

1. Use them for a clear purpose. If you cannot identify a purpose for their use, perhaps the communication is better without them. They may just be excess baggage.
2. The information contained in the graphics must be accurate and do not contradict the written text. Inaccurate information is extremely damaging to the reputation of the writer.
3. When graphics are used, make sure they are referred to in your writing. There must be a connection and the graphics should not be made to "stand alone." Common phrases such as "as shown in Table 1..., Table 1 shows..." would help to make the connection.
4. Number the graphics accordingly. They are grouped into common categories for easy reference. For example, you may have Table 1, 2, 3... and Figures 1, 2, 3...
5. All graphics should have titles and there must be consistency in the positioning of the titles.
6. Position the graphics such that they are close to the text. We do not begin a section with a graphic. Some text would normally precede it.
7. Provide a key or legend to explain the symbols used. Otherwise, even the more well-designed graphic is a total waste of effort.

Types of visual aids

There are many types of graphics available to present your information. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, the type that is used depends on the nature of the data as well as the degree of clarity and relevance it offers to convey the intended message. Some common types are discussed below.

The Bar Graph

They are used frequently to provide comparisons. However, the number of bars should not be too many. Otherwise, the information would be too cluttered. Uniformity in bar width and space between bars is important. These days, the bars may not be presented in the traditional form as illustrated in the Text. The bar information may illustrate an issue discussed by incorporating a more appealing image. Instead of the traditional straight bar, a more fanciful symbol could be used.
The Line Chart
They are useful to indicate trends. There is emphasis on direction and rate of change. The Text (pp.163-166) provides a comparison in the use of the line chart with the bar graph to convey the same information. Go through each of the illustrations and the comments given in the Text to appreciate the differences.

The Table
A table is used to present raw data, usually in the form of numbers. Notes may accompany a table and they are usually placed at the bottom of the table. If a source needs to be acknowledged, it is placed after the notes.

The Pie Chart
This is another familiar graphic, which can be used to show the relationship between the parts in relation to the whole. For clarity, a pie chart normally does not go beyond 6 – 7 divisions. These days, there are many variations in its presentation. We may shade just only one portion for emphasis, construct an exploded pie chart or draw a pie within a pie other than presenting information using the simple traditional circle with its segments.

The Flow Chart
A flow chart is useful in explaining a process. Arrows normally accompany the drawing to indicate the connection in the process. Extra care must be taken to ensure that the flow is logically connected. The direction of arrows must be accurate. Do not overload the flow chart with too much information. Different shapes may be used to show different activities though we do not use too many different shapes, as it would be confusing.

Examples of selected graphics
Given here are some examples of graphics made available through the Microsoft Excel programme. Making them is a breeze. All you need to do is to click the right buttons.
Bar Graph 3
Practice 1

Go through Exercise 9-1 (pp. 173-174) and compare your answer against the key provided.

Tutorial Work

Go through Exercise 9-3 (pp. 174-176) and compare your visuals with those of your friends. Are there similarities or differences? Which of the visuals is considered most suitable? Why?

1.4 Conclusion

This unit shows the structure of an argument. It is emphasised that an argument is an essential approach used in reports. To add strength to the argument, visuals are often used. The choices available stretch your imagination. You can be very creative with the visuals bearing in mind that the visuals must be linked to the argument effectively for them to be fully exploited. A report that looks good imparts a favorable impression, though physical appearance is of course not the end all.