

# Business communication essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Business professionals undertake a wide variety of communication tasks everyday, many in the form of written messages. To compete for an audience's attention, the writer must produce messages that are purposeful, audience-centered, and concise. An effective method for producing written messages is to view writing as a three-step process: planning, writing, and completing. Planning, the first step, entails first analyzing the situation by defining your purpose and developing a profile of your audience. The second step is to compose your message, keeping foremost in mind the need to adapt to your audience. After producing a first draft, the writer completes the message by revising after reviewing the content, editing clarity and style, producing the document by considering format and design decisions, proofreading, then distributing the message.

### I. Optimizing Your Writing Time

Generally, the writer should dedicate half the allotted time to planning, about a quarter to writing, and about a quarter to completing the message.

### II. Planning Effectively

Don't rush the planning step, as it will save you time later. Planning reduces indecision as you write

#### ANALYZING YOUR SITUATION

The first consideration in planning a business message is the purpose.

### I. Defining Your Purpose

#### Defining Your Purpose

The general purpose of any business correspondence is to inform, to persuade, or to collaborate with your audience. Informing an audience requires little direct interaction: the writer has maximum control of what is being imparted. Persuading an audience requires some active participation from the audience: the writer must adjust his message according to the feedback from the audience. Collaborating with an audience requires

maximum participation from the audience: thus the writer's control is minimized. The specific purpose of a business message identifies what you hope to accomplish and what your audience should think or do. There are four important questions the writer should consider to test the purpose of a business message:

1. Will anything change as a result of your message?
2. Is your purpose realistic?
3. Is the time right?
4. Is your purpose acceptable to your organization?

## II. Developing an Audience Profile

The next step in analyzing your situation is to develop an audience profile.

There are six important considerations in developing an audience profile:

1. Identify your primary audience. Make sure you address the needs of key decision makers.
2. Determine audience size and geographic distribution.
3. Determine audience composition. Look for similarities and differences in culture, language, age, education, organizational rank and status, attitudes, experience, motivations, and any other factors that might affect the success of your message.
4. Gauge audience members level of understanding.

Include enough information to accomplish your purpose.

5. Understand audience expectations and preferences. What medium will be most appealing? How much detail is necessary?
6. Forecast probable audience reaction. Anticipating the audience's response enables the writer to deal with resistance effectively

**GATHERING INFORMATION**

With a clear picture of your audience and their needs, your next step is to gather information. Sometimes this takes the form of formal research, but

sometimes, depending on the subject, informal information gathering is sufficient. Among the effective ways to gather information informally are the following: Considering other viewpoints

Reading reports and other company documents

Talking with supervisors, colleagues, or customers

Asking your audience for input.

#### I. Uncovering Audience Needs

One of the most important maxims in professional communication is to anticipate the audience's questions and to have the answers ready at hand. Often those questions are readily apparent: the audience will have asked them directly by contacting the company or organization. Sometimes, however, the request is vague; the consumer may not be able to explain what he or she wants or may not even know what it is. In these instances, the writer should attempt to clarify the audience's need by asking questions to narrow the focus. Sometimes it is necessary to anticipate questions the audience might not even have thought of yet. Providing the answer to a question before it has been asked is frequently an excellent means of establishing goodwill with a business customer or client.

#### II. Providing Required Information

After the audience's needs have been defined, they must be satisfied. A familiar means of making sure all the necessary information is included in a business message is to use the journalistic approach - to ask the questions who? what? when? where? why? and how? about the text of the message in order to insure that no important information has been left out. Anytime one

of these questions has not been answered, the writer should consider providing more detail. A. Be Sure the Information Is Accurate

It is essential not only to anticipate and answer all the audience's questions but also to answer them correctly. Providing incorrect or misleading information can result in the company's being held culpable and possibly being sued. The writer should always confirm information that is being supplied to make sure that it is correct and that he or she has the authority to release it. Outside sources, especially on the Internet, should be checked for accuracy and currency. Any numerical information, especially dates and financial calculations, should be checked and double-checked. B. Be Sure the Information Is Ethical

Ethics is a paramount issue in the professional world, thus any information provided in a business message must conform to high standards of honesty and sincerity. An example of an unethical message is one in which pertinent information has been omitted. Of course, organizations often have sound reasons, legal and otherwise, for not including every detail about a business matter. In these instances, the best course is for the writer to provide as much information as he or she believes to be complete and then offer to provide more if required. Honest mistakes are made in the business world, and the ethical course of action is to correct them as soon as possible. C. Be Sure the Information Is Pertinent

Just as the writer must be sure to include as much information as can be provided, he or she must be careful not to overwhelm the audience with irrelevant information or too much detail. SELECTING THE RIGHT MEDIUM

After collecting the necessary information, the writer should ascertain the best way to adapt the message to the purpose and audience. This step entails choosing an appropriate communication medium, the form through which you will communicate your message: oral, written, visual, and electronic (which often combines several media types). I. Oral Media

Primary oral media are face-to-face conversation, interviews, speeches, and in-person presentations. Their advantage is the opportunity to interact with your audience. II. Written Media

Written media take many forms. Memos are used for routine exchanges of information within an organization. Letters are used to correspond with recipients outside an organization. Reports and proposals come in a variety of lengths and are usually longer than memos and letters. III. Visual Media

Traditional business messages rely primarily on text, but more and more people are discovering the power of messages where visual elements dominate. Visual media include any formats in which one or more visual elements play a central role in conveying the message content. IV. Electronic Media

Electronic media include electronic versions of both oral (e. g., telephone calls, teleconferencing, podcasts), written media (e. g., e-mail, IM, blogs, websites, and wikis), and visual media (electronic presentations, computer animation, and video. Multimedia refers to the use of two or more media to craft a single message. V. Factors to Consider When Choosing Media

The first consideration in choosing the appropriate medium is media richness - the medium's effectiveness in (1) conveying the message in more than one informational cue (visual, verbal, vocal), (2) facilitating feedback, and (3) establishing a personal focus. The richest communication medium is face-to-face conversation, which provides the opportunity for immediate feedback and enables both speaker and audience to convey emotional responses. Multimedia presentations are also rich, with the ability to present images, animation, text, music, sound effects, and other elements. The leanest media are those that communicate in the simplest ways, provide no opportunity for audience feedback, and aren't personalized. A second factor to consider when choosing media is message formality because your media choice will affect your style and tone. A third factor is media limitations. Every medium has limitations; for example, while face-to-face communication is one of the richest media, it is also the most restrictive because both you and your audience have to be in the same place at the same time. A fourth factor is the intentions of the sender. Your choice of medium influences your audience's perception of your intentions. A fifth factor is the urgency and cost of the message.

The last factor to consider is the preferences of the audience, which is sometimes affected by the culture. For example, the U. S., Canada, and Germany emphasize written messages, but Japan emphasizes oral messages

## ORGANIZING YOUR INFORMATION

Organization can make the difference between the success or failure of a message. Poorly organized messages are often characterized by the

following: taking too long to get to the point, including irrelevant material, getting ideas mixed up, and leaving out necessary information. I.

### Recognizing the Importance of Good Organization

Good organization is essential in a business letter in three key ways: it helps your readers understand your message, it helps your readers accept your message, it avoids wasting the reader's time. Even more important, a well-organized message is easier for the reader to understand and thus respond to positively. Organization, combined with diplomacy, will enhance the writer's and the organization's credibility. Saving the reader's time is another important consideration, for, as noted above, time is money. A well-organized message is concise and relevant, providing only what the reader wants or needs to know. II. Defining Your Main Idea

The subject of a business message is sometimes called the topic, and the statement or assertion the writer makes about the topic is called the main idea. Often the main idea is easy to impart, but in messages in which the writer is trying to persuade an audience or in which there is bad news to convey, the writer needs to develop a main idea that will establish a good relationship with the audience by focusing on common interests and advantages. III. Limiting Your Scope

Once the writer has determined the main idea, he or she should limit the scope of the message. Scope means the range of information, general length, and the amount of detail. Two considerations in determining and limiting the scope are time available and audience's expectation. No matter what the scope is, the message should consist of only a few main points –



#### maybe a half dozen or fewer. IV. Choosing Between Direct and Indirect Approaches

After you've defined your ideas, you're ready to decide the sequence you will use to present your points. You have two basic options: Direct approach (deductive) – When you have a receptive audience, start with the main idea supported by the evidence. Indirect approach (inductive) – When you have a resistant or skeptical audience, start with the evidence, building your case before presenting the main idea. If the audience is likely to be receptive, the direct approach works better. On the other hand, if the audience is resistant to the message, the indirect approach – saving the main idea until last – is advised. A. Routine and Positive Messages

The most common types of business correspondence are routine and positive messages. These messages are direct and easy to understand. The main idea should be stated immediately and then developed by evidence in the body of the message. B. Negative Messages

Negative messages, on the other hand, require the indirect approach. The opening of a negative message should be a bit indirect, with the bad news stated in the body and justified by the reasons for it. This approach is not considered unethical or manipulative; it is simply a matter of considering the feelings of a reader who is about to be let down and trying to make the situation a little easier. C. Persuasive Messages

Persuasive messages are perhaps the most challenging of business correspondence. An audience that has to be persuaded is not naturally

receptive, and thus the writer must get the reader to consider something contrary to his or her inclination. Persuasive messages begin by capturing the reader's attention and then stimulating interest in it. The main idea then offers a solution to the problem or gratification of the need. The message ends with a call to action and a cordial closing.

### V. Outlining Your Content

The writer must provide the appropriate structure in which to present ideas and supporting evidence. An outline is an excellent and sometimes indispensable tool for structuring a business message. Using outlining software provided by your word processor, follow a consistent scheme of headings and subheadings to identify major points. Another way of structuring a message is to create an "organization chart" with main ideas and subordinate ideas arranged visually by divisions according to priority.

#### A. Start with the Main Idea

The main idea helps you establish the goals and general strategy of the message, and it summarizes two vital things: (1) what you want your audience members to do or think, and (2) why they should do so.

#### B. State the Major Points

Support your main idea with the major points that clarify and explain your ideas in concrete terms.

#### C. Illustrate with Evidence

Each of these key points must in turn be supported with evidence; the more evidence provided, the more likely will the audience be persuaded. And it is a good idea to vary the types of details, using statistical data, examples, description, narration, authoritative references, and visual aids.

### Chapter 5 Writing Business Messages

## ADAPTING TO YOUR AUDIENCE

Good communication involves not only effective channels and media but also a good relationship with the audience. Honesty and sincerity are important considerations for the writer. In addition, using the “ you” attitude, being polite, using bias-free language, and projecting a positive company image can go a long way to establishing a good relationship with the audience. I. Being Sensitive to Your Audience’s Needs

### A. Using the “ You” Attitude

Adopting the “ you” attitude means trying to see a situation through the audience’s eyes and expressing information in terms of the audience’s needs and interests. Of course, using the “ you” attitude does require some finesse: overusing it runs the risk of sounding artificial. B. Maintaining Standards of Etiquette

Maintaining standards of etiquette is another way to respond to your audience. Courtesy, kindness, and tact are obvious means of communicating effectively. Of course, the writer should never vent frustration or express anger, no matter how exasperated he or she gets. Written communication usually requires more tact than oral; when one is speaking, the tone of voice and body language can indicate the attitude behind the words. Another important courtesy to observe is promptness. And if a response to a message is going to be delayed, let the sender know when a response can be expected. C. Emphasizing the Positive

Emphasizing the positive is another way of establishing a good relationship with an audience. Sometimes a business message contains bad news, but in

most instances something positive can be said. Also, even though it is sometimes necessary to point out other people's mistakes, it is better to focus on what can be done to rectify the error rather than the fact that it was made in the first place. The language used in a business message is important, and the writer should avoid wording that might seem hurtful or insensitive, even though he or she must be honest. One way to do this is by using euphemisms. On the other hand, it is important not to use euphemism in a way that they hide or distort the facts. For example, "relocating refuse" does not mean the same thing as "burying toxic waste."

#### D. Using Bias-Free Language

Most people naturally want to be unbiased, ethical and fair. But being so is not always enough. In the multicultural modern world, it is just as important to be perceived as unbiased. Bias-free language avoids words and phrases that unfairly categorize or stigmatize people in ways related to gender, age, race, or disability.

#### II. Building Strong Relationships with Your Audience

##### A. Establishing Your Credibility

An important consideration in establishing a relationship with an audience is building credibility, a measure of your believability based on how reliable you are and how much trust you evoke in others. To build and maintain credibility, emphasize the following characteristics: honesty

objectivity

awareness of audience's needs

credentials, knowledge and expertise

endorsements

performance

sincerity

### B. Projecting Your Company's Image

A final consideration in developing a good audience relationship is to project one's company image positively. One's own views and personality must sometimes be subordinated in order to effect the best interest of the organization. III. Controlling Your Style and Tone

#### A. Using a Conversational Tone

Your communication style involves the choices you make: the words you select, the manner in which you use them in sentences, and the way you build paragraphs. Your style creates a certain tone, or overall impression. Your style can range from forceful to objective, colorful or dry, personal to formal; most business messages effect a conversational tone. Writers of business messages should be careful to follow these guidelines: Avoid obsolete and pompous language

Avoid preaching and bragging

Be careful with intimacy

Be careful with humor

#### B. Using Plain English

A writer often has to adapt his or her tone to the situation, changing from conversational to formal, or the other way around, depending on the circumstances. In most business situations, though, the preferred idiom is known as plain English, which is the way people normally speak; thus, it can be understood by just about anyone with an eighth- or ninth-grade

education. Plain English does have some limitations - it does not entail the vocabulary necessary for scientific research, and it falls a bit short in expressing strong feelings or personal insights. Moreover, it does not incorporate the variety of cultures and dialects that make up the English language. But in general it is an effective way of avoiding some of the misunderstanding that can result from nuances of usage and meaning.

### Selecting Active or Passive Voice

As a rule, the active voice is more direct and precise than the passive voice. The active voice emphasizes the doer of an action (John rented the office.), whereas the passive voice emphasizes whom or what the action was done by (The office was rented by John.) Both have their uses, but the active voice is generally preferred in vigorous, concise, and easily understood communication. COMPOSING YOUR MESSAGE

After considering how to adapt to the audience, a writer is ready to compose the message he or she has planned (see chapter 4 on planning messages). I.

### Choosing Strong Words

#### A. Using Functional and Content Words Correctly

Effective messages depend on using correct grammar and usage and on carefully chosen words. Functional words are those whose meanings do not change - prepositions, conjunctions, articles, and pronouns - but even so the writer needs to be sure to use them correctly. Content words - such as nouns, verbs, adjective, and adverbs - are often subject to interpretation, and so the writer needs to be sure to choose words carefully to impart the intended meaning. Content words often have both a denotative meaning

and a connotative meaning. The denotative meaning is the one given by the dictionary; the connotative meaning includes all the associations and feelings evoked by the word. Another consideration in choosing the right word is its abstractness or concreteness.

Abstract words express concepts, qualities, or characteristics; examples are progress and accountability. Concrete words refer to the physical world; examples are chair and , green. Concrete words are more specific and less likely to be misconstrued, but business messages often employ abstract terms as well - for example, morale, productivity, quality, motivation, and promise. When discussing abstract ideas in the business world, the writer should use specific, concrete words whenever possible to reduce misinterpretation. B. Finding Words That Communicate

Some more suggestions about choosing words are as follows:

Choose powerful words - nouns and verbs rather than modifiers Choose familiar words - familiar to the reader, that is.

Avoid clichés - phrases that are so commonly used, they lose effectiveness.

Use jargon carefully - technical terms and professional jargon have their place in business messages, but awareness of the audience's level of understanding is essential here. II. Creating Effective Sentences

A. Choosing from the Four Types of Sentences

Just as important as diction in business messages is sentence structure.

There are four types of sentences, discussed in detail with examples in the text: A simple sentence has one main clause. A compound sentence has two main clauses joined by a conjunction or separated by a semicolon. A

complex sentence has one main clause and at least one subordinate clause. And a compound-complex sentence has two main clauses and at least one subordinate clause. B. Using Sentence Style to Emphasize Key Thoughts

One technique for emphasizing a key idea is to give it more space by using extra words. Another is to place the important point in a separate short sentence. You can also call attention to something by making it the subject of the sentence. In complex sentences the relative position of the main clause and the subordinate clause determines the relative importance of the ideas being expressed. If the subordinate clause is put at the end of the sentence, the main idea of the sentence is emphasized. If the subordinate clause is put at the beginning, the main idea is de-emphasized. Good writing is characterized by a variety of sentence types and emphasis of ideas. III.

### Crafting Coherent Paragraphs

#### A. Elements of the Paragraph

Paragraphs vary in length and form depending on their purpose and audience. A typical paragraph contains a topic sentence, support sentences that develop that topic, and transitional words and phrases. Paragraphs should be unified (achieved by a topic sentence and closely related support sentences), well-developed, and coherent (achieved by transitional elements and reasonably ordered support sentences). The topic sentence explicitly states the point of the paragraph and in business messages usually starts the paragraph. Support sentences explain the topic sentence, usually by one or more of these five basic ways: illustration, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, classification, and problem and solution. A paragraph is well-



developed when it contains enough information to make the topic sentence convincing, without including irrelevant sentences. Transitional elements provide coherence among the sentences within the paragraph and show connections to adjacent paragraphs. Transitions are words and phrases that tie ideas together to show relationships; for example, moreover to indicate additional detail, and however to show contrast.

### B. Five Ways to Develop a Paragraph

Five ways to develop a paragraph are

illustration

comparison or contrast

cause and effect

classification

problem and solution

### USING TECHNOLOGY TO COMPOSE AND SHAPE YOUR MESSAGES

A variety of electronic tools can help you to compose messages efficiently. Style sheets are master lists of predefined styles (typeface, type size, etc.) for headlines, paragraph text, and so on. Templates go beyond style sheets by defining such matters as page design, available fonts, and other features. Autocompletion is a software feature that inserts a ready-made block of text when you type the first few characters. Autocorrection is a similar automatic feature that instantly corrects spelling and typing errors. File merge makes it easy to combine files; mail merge lets you personalize form letters. Word processors now automate endnotes, footnotes, indexes, and tables of contents. Wizards guide you through the process of creating letters, memos,

résumés, and other common documents. Chapter 6 Completing Business Messages

## REVISING YOUR MESSAGE

The third step in the writing process – completing the message – entails four steps within itself: revising, producing, proofreading, and distributing the message. I. Evaluating Your Content, Organization, Style, and Tone

The best approach to revision is to set the draft aside for a day or so and then go back and read it with a fresh eye. Start by reviewing the “big picture”: content and organization. When evaluating the content, consider the following questions: Is the information accurate

Is the information relevant to your audience?

Is there enough information to satisfy your audience’s needs? Is there a good balance between the general and the specific? The next step is to evaluate for organization. The questions to consider are Are all your points covered in the most logical order?

Do the most important ideas receive the most space, and are they prominently placed? Would the message be more convincing if arranged in a different sequence? Are any points repeated unnecessarily?

Are details grouped logically?

Finally, evaluate whether you have the most effective style, and tone for the intended audience. Consider the appropriate degree of formality or informality. The beginning and ending of a message have the greatest effect on the audience; so they should receive special careful attention.

The beginning must engage the audience's interest and be geared to the audience's probable reaction. And the ending should briefly summarize the main idea and leave the audience in a positive frame of mind. II. Reviewing for Readability

The second step in revising is to focus on readability. Readability formulas such as the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score can determine the reading level necessary to understand the message. General business messages typically are geared to readers on the 8th to 11th grade levels. Most technical documents are geared at an audience reading on the 12th-14th-grade level. As interesting and useful as readability formulas can be, they do have some shortcomings: they don't account much for the effects of audience analysis, writing clarity, and document design. A. Varying Your Sentence Length

Because most audiences skim a business message rather than read it thoroughly, make the message easy to skim by using short paragraphs, varied sentence lengths, bullets and lists, and headings and subheadings. An experienced writer learns to develop sentence rhythms to emphasize important ideas and help the reader move along through the text. While business writing is typically characterized by short sentences, too many short sentences make the message choppy. On the other hand, too many long, convoluted sentences cause the reader to lose focus and, ultimately, lose interest. Variation in sentence lengths is the key. Short sentences emphasize key points, medium-length sentences help show relationships between ideas, and long sentences serve to group ideas, enumerate key

points, and preview or summarize information. B. Keeping Your Paragraphs Short

As a rule, paragraphs should be short (about 100 words). Large blocks of text are intimidating and off-putting. One-sentence paragraphs can be used for emphasis or transition, but used sparingly and only for effect. C. Using Lists and Bullets to Clarify and Emphasize

Another way to provide readability is to use lists within the paragraph. The items on the list can be separated from one another by numbers, letters, or bullets in order to highlight them and make them easy for the reader to identify. Vertical lists are especially helpful the making the page easy to skim. It is especially important that the items in the list be written in parallel structure. D. Adding Headings and Subheadings

Another way to highlight the components of a message is to use headings, which are similar to subject lines in memos and e-mails. Headings provide organization, focus the reader's attention, and make connections between main and subordinate ideas. Descriptive headings simply identify the topic, while informative headings give the reader more understanding of the context of the message. III. Editing for Clarity and Conciseness

Once the message has been made readable, the next step is to revise individual sentences for clarity. Some tips for achieving clear sentences are Break up overly long sentences. Rewrite hedging sentences.- Using the qualifiers may or seems too often can make a piece of writing evasive or uncertain. Impose parallelism - Similar ideas should be expressed in similar

grammatical constructions. Correct dangling modifiers – In sentences which begin with modifying phrases, the next word – or close to it – should be the word the phrase refers to. Reword long noun sequences – Using a series of three or more nouns can be confusing or, at least, distracting. Replace camouflaged verbs – Watch for words that end in -ion, -tion, -ing, -ment, -ant, -ence, and -ency. These endings change verbs into nouns and adjectives (for example, justify becomes justification) and require additional words in the sentence.

Clarify sentence structure – In general, keep the subject and predicate as close together as possible. Clarify awkward references – To save words, writers sometimes use the aforementioned, as mentioned above, the former, the latter, respectively. These phrases can cause readers to lose track of the main idea; thus they should be used sparingly. Curb your enthusiasm – Adjectives and adverbs have their place in business writing, but the emphasis should always be on the nouns and verbs. Conciseness is a virtue. Most drafts can be cut by 50%. You can cut excess by reorganizing content, improving readability, and making sentences clear. Tips for achieving conciseness include Delete unnecessary words and phrases – Very and rather usually are not needed. Shorten long words and phrases – Reduce in the even that to if. Eliminate redundancies – visible to the eye can be reduced to visible. Recast “ It is/There are starters – These words tend to result in longer sentences. IV. Using Technology to Revise Your Message

Technology can be helpful in revising a business message. Just being able to revise and save text, not to mention the cut-and-paste and search-and-

replace functions, makes writing easier and more effective. Most word processing programs includes automatic grammar and spelling checkers, and some provide revision and editing trackers, which are especially useful when documents are being produced by a group of writers. However, these technological advantages have to be used with caution. Spell checkers can point out typos, but they won't correct the wrong word if it is spelled correctly. A thesaurus can be useful in suggesting alternative words when the one you have thought of just isn't right. A grammar checker will point out passive constructions, long sentences, and words that tend to be misused. You, the writer, must make the choice from among the suggestions the computer provides. PRODUCING YOUR MESSAGE

Producing the message entails designing an attractive, contemporary page layout and often incorporating graphics or hypertext. I. Adding Graphics, Sound, Video and Hypertext

Business messages are often embellished by full-color pictures, sound, video, and hypertext links. Visuals can be produced by presentation software (for overhead transparencies and computer slide shows) and graphics software (for diagrams and flow charts as well as more complex artistic designs such as clip art and scanned material). Sound bites and video clips can be recorded and attached to documents. And hypertext links can enable readers to move easily from one document to another. II. Designing for Readability

The layout of a printed document and website homepage is an important consideration. Used well, the elements of visual design can improve the

effectiveness of your message and influence the audience's perceptions. The essential factors in document design are Consistency – in margins, typeface, type size, spacing, paragraph indentations, between columns, and around photographs Balance – of text, visuals, and white space

Restraint – in use of design elements, highlighting, decorative touches Detail – in placement and appearance

#### A. White Space

Several design elements will make a message look professional, interesting, and up-to-date. White space (any space free of text or artwork) provides visual contrast with the text, allowing the reader to stop from time to time to rest. B. Margins and Justification

Margins have a notable effect on business messages. Fully justified (left and right) margins give the appearance of form letters; in addition, they are difficult to read because of inconsistent gaps between words. Margins flush on the left but ragged on the right give the message an informal, contemporary appearance. C. Typefaces

Typeface refers to the physical appearance of the text characters, making the message look formal or casual, authoritative or friendly, classic or modern. Serif typefaces have small crosslines (called serifs) at the ends of each letter. Serif typefaces, such as Times New Roman are most often used for text, but they can look cluttered when used in larger font sizes for headings. Sans serif typefaces such as Arial look best when surrounded by white space; they are effective for headings and other displays but are difficult to read in long passages. Type style refers to modifications made by

the writer for contrast or emphasis – such as italics, underlining, and highlighting. Boldface headings are especially helpful in breaking up long passages of text.

But too much boldface will result in a “ checkerboard” appearance. Italics are also used for emphasis, but there are specific rules governing their use in some instances – indicating titles of books, for example. Of course, any type style that impedes the reader’s progress does more harm than good. Type size is a consideration as well; the most common for business messages is 10 or 12 point. III. Using Technology to Produce Your Message

Most word processing programs provide enough elements to produce an appealing, professional-looking document, but the next step up is desktop publishing software such as Quark Xpress, Adobe InDesign, and Microsoft Publisher, which include advanced layout capabilities. Moreover, they employ style sheets to insure that the formatting commands are applied consistently throughout a particular document or indeed any document produced by a department or entire organization. IV. Formatting Formal Letters and Memos

Formal business letters usually follow certain design conventions and are on company letterhead stationery. The first item is the date, followed by the inside address (which identifies the person receiving the letter. Your company is likely to have a standard format to follow. **PROOFREADING YOUR MESSAGE**



Even though typos, misspelled words, and incorrect punctuation might seem insignificant compared to the larger issues of content and organization, these details make a difference in one's credentials as a professional. When proofreading, you should look for two types of errors: (1) undetected mistakes from the writing and design stages and (2) mistakes that crept in during production. It is important to proofread not just for grammatical, mechanical, and spelling errors but also for the following: Omissions in text or documentation

Inconsistent design and formatting elements; for example, typeface and type styles, special characters, page headers and footers, page numbers

Misalignment of text or columns

Misadherence to company publishing standards

As with every other skill, practice produces proficiency. The more experience you have as a proofreader of your writing, the more you will know what kind of errors to anticipate. **DISTRIBUTING YOUR MESSAGE**

The final step in completing a business message is to distribute it. Advances in technology increase your options. When planning the distribution of your message, consider the following: Cost – Weigh the cost versus the benefits.

Convenience – Consider whether the audience has the access to all the technology needed to read the message easily. Time – Don't waste money on rapid delivery if the recipient doesn't need it that soon. Security and privacy – Weigh convenience against security concerns.