PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FOUNDATIONS

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Foundations

1.1: Overview and Intention

Contents

The chapters in this module include:

- Introduction to Communication
- Getting to Know Your Audience
- Choosing a Communications Channel
- Crafting Your Message with Plain Language
- A Picture Is Worth 1,000 Words: Using Visuals
- From Shotgun to Boomerang: Using Feedback

Module Summary

The focus of this module is on establishing important foundational skills to address the complexities of communicating in the modern-day professional environment. Although work contexts and technology are continually changing, the key principles of communication remain the same and as relevant as ever.

By completing this module, you should understand how audience characteristics and choice of words and | or images affect the crafting of meaningful messages. You should learn how to choose an appropriate delivery method for your message and how to use feedback to measure and improve its success. This module will stress key principles of professional communication.

You can apply the knowledge and skills developed in this module to a variety of communication contexts.

Relevance to Practice

Communication is key to your success—in relationships, at work, as a citizen of your country, and throughout your lifetime. Your ability to communicate comes from experience, and experience can be an effective teacher. This module, and the related communication course it is part of, will provide you with some experiences to help you communicate effectively in a professional context where change is rapid and you are expected to keep up. Whether you are (re-)entering the workforce or feel the need to brush up on your communication skills, this module should help you understand professional communication fundamentals that you can apply to your own context.

You did not learn to text in a day and did not learn all the shorthand—from LOL (laugh out loud) to BRB (be right back)—right away. In the same way, learning to communicate well requires you to observe and get to know how others have expressed themselves, then adapt what you have learned to your current task—whether it's texting a brief message to a friend, presenting your qualifications in a job interview, or writing a business report.

Effective communication takes preparation, practice, and persistence. There are many ways to learn communication skills. The school of "hard knocks" is one of them. But in the business environment, a "knock" (or lesson learned) may come at the expense of your credibility through a blown presentation to a client.

This module contains a compilation of information and resources, such as readings, articles, activities, videos, and infographics, offering you a trial run that allows you to try out new ideas and skills before you have to use them in "real life." Listening to yourself or perhaps the comments of others may help you reflect on new ways to present or perceive thoughts, ideas, and concepts. The net result is your growth; ultimately, your ability to communicate in business will improve, opening more doors than you might anticipate.

Learning Goals

Chapters within module centre on overarching learning goals. Goals are further described in terms of (a) specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to achieve the goals, and (b) specific learning outcomes that serve as evidence of achieving learning goals. The learning goals in this module are at an introductory level and are relevant to introductory communication tasks.

The learning goals for this module are that upon completing the readings and activities presented in this module, you should be able to do the following:

1. Analyze an audience for an intended message

2. Select an appropriate communication channel by analyzing the purpose of your message and the characteristics of your audience
3. Demonstrate the use of plain-language principles
4. Select and use/insert visuals to enhance communication
5. Use feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of a message

Developmental Attributes

Upon successfully completing this module, you should:

Understand the following:

- That good communicators choose a form and organizational pattern based on audience and purpose
- That the choice of words, images, and medium sets a tone and defines a message
- That feedback loops help communicators convey their message and clarify their thinking

Know the following:

- Key principles of plain language communication
- The characteristics that define an audience
- The similarities and differences between several communication channels
- Principles that influence visual style
- The forms and function of message feedback

Be able to do the following:

- Tailor messages to the level, experience, and expectation of an audience
- Express and organize ideas clearly, concisely, and logically
- Incorporate graphics to help convey the intended message
- Select the channel(s) that best suit(s) the message
- Elicit feedback to measure the success of the message

Learning Outcomes for this Module

Upon successfully completing this module, you should be able to:

1. apply principles of plain language to produce professional communication that is effective and concise;
2. select appropriate types of visual aids to enhance the purpose or function of messages;
3. describe conditions for appropriate use of different feedback types and related tools;
4. outline characteristics of an audience using an audience analysis tool;
5. select appropriate channel(s) for workplace communication based on the audience and intended message.

1.2: Introduction to Communication

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter | module, you should be able to:

- describe the communication process and the eight elements of communication listed.
- categorize given premises as one of the eight elements of communication.

What is Communication?

Think about communication in your daily life. When you make a phone call, send a text message, or like a post on Facebook, what is the purpose of that activity? Have you ever felt confused by what someone is telling you or argued over a misunderstood email? The underlying issue may very well be a communication deficiency.

There are many current models and theories that explain, plan, and predict communication processes and their successes or failures. In the workplace, we might be more concerned about practical knowledge and skills than theory. However, good practice is built on a solid foundation of understanding and skill. For this reason this module will help you develop foundational skills in key areas of communication, with a focus on applying theory and providing opportunities for practice.

Defining Communication

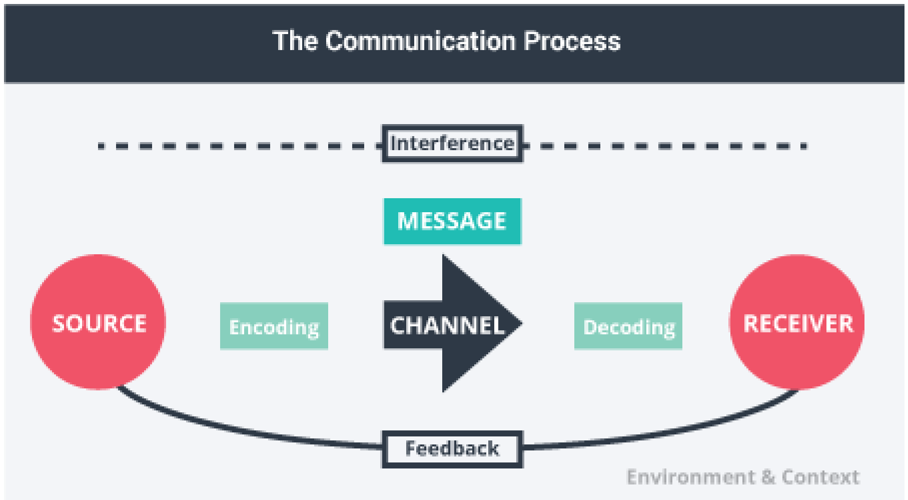
The word communication is derived from a Latin word meaning “to share.” Communication can be defined as “purposefully and actively exchanging information between two or more people to convey or receive the intended meanings through a shared system of signs and (symbols)” (“Communication,” 2015, para. 1).

Let us break this definition down by way of example. Imagine you are in a coffee shop with a friend, and they are telling you a story about the first goal they scored in hockey as a child. What images come to mind as you hear their story? Is your friend using words you understand to describe the situation? Are they speaking in long, complicated sentences or short, descriptive sentences? Are they leaning back in their chair and speaking calmly, or can you tell they are excited? Are they using words to describe the events leading up to their big goal, or did they draw a diagram of the rink and positions of the players on a napkin? Did your friend pause and wait for you to to comment throughout their story or just blast right through? Did you have trouble hearing your friend at any point in the story because other people were talking or because the milk steamer in the coffee shop was whistling?

All of these questions directly relate to the considerations for communication in this module:

1. Analyzing the Audience
2. Choosing a Communications Channel
3. Using Plain Language
4. Using Visual Aids
5. Evaluating Communication via Feedback

Before we examine each of these considerations in more detail, we should consider the elements of the communication process.



The Communication Process by L. Underwood

The communication process includes the steps we take in order to ensure we have succeeded in communicating. The communication process comprises essential and interconnected elements detailed in the figure above. We will continue to reflect on the story of your friend in the coffee shop to explore each element in detail.

Source: The source comes up with an idea and sends a message in order to share information with others. The source could be one other person or a group of people. In our example above, your friend is trying to share the events leading up to their first hockey goal and, likely, the feelings they had at the time as well.

Message: The message is the information or subject matter the source is intending to share. The information may be an opinion, feelings, instructions, requests, or suggestions. In our example above, your friend identified information worth sharing, maybe the size of one of the defence players on the other team, in order to help you visualize the situation.

Channels: The source may encode information in the form of words, images, sounds, body language, etc. There are many definitions and categories of communication channels to describe their role in the communication process. This module identifies the following channels: verbal, non-verbal, written, and digital. In our example above, your friends might make sounds or use body language in addition to their words to emphasize specific bits of information. For example, when describing a large defence player on the other team, they may extend their arms to explain the height or girth of the other team's defence player.

Receiver: The receiver is the person for whom the message is intended. This person is charged with decoding the message in an attempt to understand the intentions of the source. In our example above, you as the receiver may understand the overall concept of your friend scoring a goal in hockey and can envision the techniques your friend used. However, there may also be some information you do not understand—such as a certain term—or perhaps your friend describes some events in a confusing order. One thing the receiver might try is to provide some kind of feedback to communicate back to the source that the communication did not achieve full understanding and that the source should try again.

Environment: The environment is the physical and psychological space in which the communication is happening (Mclean, 2005). It might also describe if the space is formal or informal. In our example above, it is the coffee shop you and your friend are visiting in.

Context: The context is the setting, scene, and psychological and psychosocial expectations of the source and the receiver(s) (McLean, 2005). This is strongly linked to expectations of those who are sending the message and those who are receiving the message. In our example above, you might expect natural pauses in your friend's storytelling that will allow you to confirm your understanding or ask a question.

Interference: There are many kinds of interference (also called "noise") that inhibit effective communication. Interference may include poor audio quality or too much sound, poor image quality, too much or too little light, attention, etc. In our working example, the coffee shop might be quite busy and thus very loud. You would have trouble hearing your friend clearly, which in turn might cause you to miss a critical word or phrase important to the story.

Those involved in the communication process move fluidly between each of these eight elements until the process ends.

Key Takeaways and Check Ins

Now that we have defined communication and described a communication process, let's consider communication skills that are foundational to communicating effectively.

Learning highlights

- The goal of the communication process is to share meaning between a source and a receiver.
- There are eight essential elements in the communication process: source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, environment, context, and interference.

Check Your Understanding

References

McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

*Communicatio*n. (n.d.). In Wikipedia. Retrieved from https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication.

1.3: Audience

Getting to Know Your Audience

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- categorize specific elements of a given communication scenario to the stages of the acronym AUDIENCE;
- write a complete audience analysis detailing each part of AUDIENCE for a given communication scenario by briefly describing the purpose of a communication and the characteristics of an audience;
- write a complete audience analysis detailing each part of AUDIENCE for a specific communication task (e.g., letter writing, presentation, etc.).

Framing the Audience Analysis

The communications landscape changes rapidly over time, but one criterion for successful communication remains the same: the importance of knowing who your audience is and understanding their needs. Imagine you want to give a presentation to people in your department at work. You likely know your colleagues' personalities and what they expect of you. You might know their education levels and you are sure they understand all of your company-specific jargon. You think delivering your message should be easy, except many of them are so comfortable with you, they decide to skip your presentation because you took for granted that they would be interested. On the other hand, if you had to present to the board of directors, you might need to do more homework on who they are and what they expect from you. In other words, it is always important to get to know your audience as much as possible to give yourself the best chance at communicating successfully.

In this chapter you will begin to examine differences between primary, secondary, and hidden audiences. Then, using the AUDIENCE acronym as a tool, you will participate in activities that will help you flesh out information you need to know about your audience in order to persuade, inform, or entertain them. You will have at least three chances to practise your audience analysis skills and get peer feedback. Then, near the end of this chapter, you will craft a message that considers your audience's needs and expectations. This process will lay the foundation for you to become a communicator who is effective in persuading, informing, or entertaining an audience because you have done your best work in getting to know them, their needs, and expectations first.

Identifying Your Primary, Secondary, and Hidden Audiences

Your audience is the person or people you want to communicate with. By knowing more about them (their wants, needs, values, etc.), you are able to better craft your message so that they will receive it the way you intended.

Your success as a communicator partly depends on how well you can tailor your message to your audience.

Your primary audience is your intended audience; it is the person or people you have in mind when you decide to communicate something. However, when analyzing your audience you must also beware of your secondary audience. These are other people you could reasonably expect to come in contact with your message. For example, you might send an email to a customer, who, in this case, is your primary audience, and copy (cc:) your boss, who would be your secondary audience. Beyond these two audiences, you also have to consider your hidden audience, which are people who you may not have intended to come in contact with your audience (or message) at all, such as a colleague who gets a forwarded copy of your email.

Check Your Understanding

A Tool for Analyzing Your Audience

To help you get to know your audience even more, we will begin by working through a set of steps that, together, spell the acronym **AUDIENCE**. These steps will give you an idea of what questions to ask and what information can be useful in better connecting with your audience.

A	Analyze	Who is/are the recipients of your message?
U	Understand	What is their knowledge about your intended message?
D	Demographics	What is their age, gender, education level, position?
I	Interest	What is their level of interest/investment in your message (What's in it for them?)
E	Environment	What setting/reality is your audience immersed in, and what is your relationship to it? What is their likely attitude to your message? Have you taken cultural differences into consideration?
N	Need	What information does your audience need?
C	Customize	How do you adjust your message to your audience?
E	Expectations	What are your audience's expectations?

These categories of information have been assembled into a job aid to help you conduct your very own audience analyses. As you review the tool, list the traits that apply to you for each section. If you would like to expand this reflection, consider how you might fill this tool out with traits that apply to you in your personal life versus your worklife. What are some methods you might use to find out more about an audience?

For your audience analysis, choose one of the scenarios and fill out the following form. Submit it according to your instructor's directions.

Now let us take a look at putting this tool to use in a scenario. Read the following news story about an executive at a company [http://bit.ly/1Qyqdyy]. Reflect on these questions regarding his email:

1. Who was the primary audience for his original email?
2. Who was the secondary audience?
3. Who was the hidden audience?
4. Assuming he did an audience analysis, was it effective? Why or why not?
5. What elements of AUDIENCE might he have considered in advance to get a better outcome?

Category of Analysis	Description/Notes
Example:To further answer the questions above, we can use the AUDIENCE form to analyze the audience in this scenario and provide a revised message.	
AnalyzeWho will receive your message?	**Primary**: Yahoo employees working on the Daily Fantasy Football development team.**Secondary**: Other Yahoo employees. **Hidden**: Anyone the email could be forwarded to.
UnderstandWhat do they already know or understand about your intended message?	**Primary**: Understands the technical details of Fantasy football.**Secondary**: May have heard of the project. **Hidden**: Knows little of the technical details.
DemographicsWhat is their age, gender, education level, occupation, position?	**Primary**: 20s, 30s, 40s, White/Asian male, educated with bachelors' or technical degrees and above; mostly IT developers.**Secondary**: Various ages, gender, mostly educated, and in various positions. **Hidden**: Likely an American resident
InterestWhat is their level of interest/ investment in your message? (What's in it for them?)	**Primary**: Very invested (I'm their boss!).**Secondary**: Mild interest if they like Fantasy football or the technology behind it. **Hidden**: Not very invested.
EnvironmentWhat setting/reality is your audience immersed in, and what is your relationship to it? What is their likely attitude to your message? Have you taken cultural differences into consideration?	**Primary**: Developer setting. Can speak the same IT and corporate culture jargon. Likely to be open to my message because of my position.**Secondary**: Corporate setting; professionalism expected because of my position. Some may find it funny, others may find it offensive. There may be different corporate cultures in different departments. **Hidden**: Could be anyone in the world. Some Americans might find it offensive, others might find it funny. Could potentially include Ice Cube, or other Black people.
NeedWhat information does your audience need? How will they use the information?	**Primary**: Links to get others to participate in the contest staging.**Secondary**: Instructions on how to get to the staging area for the fantasy football preseason contest staging and explanation of deposit bonus. **Hidden**: Information consistent with what they already know about Yahoo's brand values.
CustomizeHow do you adjust your message to better suit your audience?	**Primary**: Revise to create a more professional tone by removing all references to Ice Cube, hip hop culture, and racially charged elements like Ebonics and the N-word.**Secondary**: Ensure the contest speaks to the widest variety of employees who can help test the system. **Hidden**: Ensure Yahoo's brand is not damaged, by being above reproach.
ExpectationsWhat does your audience expect from you or your message?	**Primary**: Expects me to be professional and my message to be relevant to their work.**Secondary**: Expects me to be professional, be competent, and embody company values. **Hidden**: Expects me to be professional.

Revised Message

Subject: Daily Fantasy Football goes live!

Greetings, folks.

Jerry here. I am proud to announce my team is now ready to bring you what you have all been waiting for: Daily Fantasy Football! Starting today, we are going to have NFL preseason contests on staging. Here is how to play:

1) On Desktop: link

2) On iOS: Download the latest dogfood app, which will point to the staging environment.

3) On Android: not yet available

4) Join the Daily Fantasy Football contest before 4 p.m. today: [link]

Please join contests, create contests, invite your friends, and make sure to alert the team at [link] if you find any technical problems.

One more thing: The team is also testing out deposit bonuses! For every dollar you put in, we give you another dollar. If you signed up for Fantasy Football, we give you two dollars. It's easy money! When you spend money on a contest that runs, your deposit bonus becomes real money at a rate of 4 percent. That means, if you enter a $1 contest, you get 4¢ from your bonus. So try that out and make sure your investment gets returns!

So let's go for the win-win. Play dogfood Daily Fantasy football so we can all have fun and make some money while we're at it.

Cheers,

Jerry

The Purpose of Your Message

When you communicate with an audience, you are normally trying to achieve one or more of the three following broad outcomes:

1. **Persuade** – convince your audience to do something or take some action
2. **Inform** – raise their awareness and/or understanding about a situation or issue
3. **Entertain –** capture their attention in order to distract and delight

Check Your Understanding

Here are two possible use cases where analyzing your audience will help you improve your communication:

1. You can complete an analysis to make sure you understand your audience comprehensively before you begin crafting your message. This ensures your message has the best chance at landing properly with your audience.
2. Take an existing message and use your analysis to better customize the message.

Can you think of others? In both of our suggested use cases, the AUDIENCE tool provides a framework to identify key factors you should consider when creating, revising, or reviewing communications.

Below you will find three scenarios that you can use to practise your ability to identify your audience. Using this Audience Analysis Form, complete an audience analysis for each of the three scenarios below.

Fill in the Audience Analysis template below and submit it according to your instructor's directions.

https://h5p.org/h5p/embed/265399

Conclusion

In this chapter you have learned what an audience is and why an awareness of your audience's needs and expectations is important to communicating your intended message.

You learned to define primary, secondary, and hidden audiences, and thought about ways to persuade, inform, and/or entertain them. You also used the AUDIENCE tool to examine an audience and begin to recognize when the audience and message are mismatched.

You should now be able to create messages that more effectively match your objective to successfully persuade, inform, or entertain. You are also well-positioned to get more practice and/or move on to the next module topic.

Key Takeaways and Check In

Learning highlights

- When you craft a message, it is important to (1) distinguish between your primary and secondary audiences and (2) identify a potentially hidden audience for your message.
- To better understand your audience and plan your communications, you can use the AUDIENCE job aid to reveal audience characteristics that either facilitate or impede the communication of a message.
- There are generally three purposes of a message:
  - to persuade
  - to inform
  - to entertain

Further Reading

- YouTube video about audience analysis to prepare for a speech or other verbal presentation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQ3wJ2A_4UI
- Audience Analysis web page by David McMurray with a focus on Technical Writing. Provides good guidance on how to effectively adapt (customize) your message to suit your audience. https://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/aud.html
- Article about getting to know less obvious elements of your audience, such as culture and thought patterns. The focus here is on presentation and provides good activities at the end to test your knowledge using individual and peer exercises. http://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/communication-for-business-success/s07-04-getting-to-know-your-audience.html
- Supplementary information for primary, secondary, and hidden audiences, along with more information about the AUDIENCE tool, can be found here: Audience Analysis: Primary, Secondary and Hidden Audiences

References and Attributions

Wollert Hickman, D. (2014). *Audience analysis: Primary, secondary, and hidden audiences.* Retrieved from http://writingcommons.org/index.php/2013-12-30-04-56-15/2014-02-04-20-46-53/audience-analysis-primary-secondary-and-hidden-audiences

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1.4: Communication Channel

Choosing a Communications Channel

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- categorize specific elements of a given communication scenario as verbal, non-verbal, written, and/or digital;
- determine, based on the richness of the communication, if the appropriate communication channel was implemented for a given communication scenario;
- recommend the most appropriate channel(s) for a given communication scenario.

Introduction

The channel or medium used to communicate a message affects how the audience will receive the message. Communication channels can refer to the methods we use to communicate as well as the specific tools we use in the communication process. In this chapter we will define communication channels as a medium for communication, or the passage of information. In this chapter we will discuss the principal channels of communication, as well as the tools commonly used in professional communication. We will discuss the pros, cons, and use cases for each tool and channel, because, in a professional context, the decision about which channel to use can be a critical one.

Communication Channels

Communication channels can be categorized into three principal channels: (1) verbal, (2) written, and (3) non-verbal. Each of these communications channels have different strengths and weaknesses, and oftentimes we can use more than one channel at the same time.

Verbal Communication

Most often when we think of communication, we might imagine two or more people speaking to each other. This is the largest aspect of verbal communication: speaking and listening. The source uses words to code the information and speaks to the receiver, who then decodes the words for understanding and meaning. One example of interference in this channel is choice of words. If the source uses words that are unfamiliar to the receiver, there is a chance they will miscommunicate the message or not communicate at all. The formality of vocabulary choice is another aspect of the verbal channel. In situations with friends or close co-workers, for example, you may choose more casual words, in contrast to words you would choose for a presentation you are making to your supervisors. In the workplace the primary channel of communication is verbal, much of this communication being used to coordinate with others, problem solve, and build collegiality.

Tone

One element of verbal communication is tone. A different tone can change the perceived meaning of a message. Table 1.3.1, "Don't Use That Tone with Me!" demonstrates just how true that is. If we simply read these words without the added emphasis, we would be left to wonder, but the emphasis shows us how the tone conveys a great deal of information. Now you can see how changing one's tone of voice can incite or defuse a misunderstanding.

Placement of Emphasis	Meaning
I did not tell John you were late.	Someone else told John you were late.
I ***did not*** tell John you were late.	This did not happen.
I did not ***tell*** John you were late.	I may have implied it.
I did not tell ***John*** you were late.	But maybe I told Sharon and Jose.
I did not tell John ***you*** were late.	I was talking about someone else.
I did not tell John you ***were*** late.	I told him you still are late.
I did not tell John you were ***late***.	I told him you were attending another meeting.

Don’t use that tone with me! Based on Kiely, M. (1993)

Non-Verbal Communication

What you say is a vital part of any communication, but what you don’t say can be even more important. Research also shows that 55 percent of in-person communication comes from non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, body stance, and smell. According to one study, only 7 percent of a receiver’s comprehension of a message is based on the sender’s actual words; 38 percent is based on paralanguage (the tone, pace, and volume of speech), and 55 percent is based on non-verbal cues such as body language (Mehrabian, 1981).

Research shows that non-verbal cues can also affect whether you get a job offer. Judges examining videotapes of actual applicants were able to assess the social skills of job candidates with the sound turned off. They watched the rate of gesturing, time spent talking, and formality of dress to determine which candidates would be the most successful socially on the job (Gifford, Ng, and Wilkinson, 1985). For this reason, it is important to consider how we appear in the professional environment as well as what we say. Our facial muscles convey our emotions. We can send a silent message without saying a word. A change in facial expression can change our emotional state. Before an interview, for example, if we focus on feeling confident, our face will convey that confidence to an interviewer. Adopting a smile (even if we are feeling stressed) can reduce the body’s stress levels.

Body Language

Generally speaking, simplicity, directness, and warmth convey sincerity, and sincerity is key to effective communication. A firm handshake given with a warm, dry hand is a great way to establish trust. A weak, clammy handshake conveys a lack of trustworthiness. Gnawing one’s lip conveys uncertainty. A direct smile conveys confidence. All of this is true across North America. However, in other cultures the same firm handshake may be considered aggressive and untrustworthy. It helps to be mindful of cultural context when interpreting or using body language.

Smell

Smell is an often overlooked but powerful non-verbal communication method. Take the real estate agent who sprinkles cinnamon in boiling water to mimic the smell of baked goods in her homes, for example. She aims to increase her sales by using a smell to create a positive emotional response that invokes a warm, homelike atmosphere for her clients. As easy as it is for a smell to make someone feel welcome, the same smell may be a complete turnoff to someone else. Some offices and workplaces in North America ban the use of colognes, perfumes, or other fragrances to aim for a scent-free work environment (some people are allergic to such fragrances). It is important to be mindful that using a strong smell of any kind may have an uncertain effect, depending on the people, culture, and other environmental norms.

Eye Contact

In business, the style and duration of eye contact people consider appropriate varies greatly across cultures. In the Canadian culture, looking someone in the eye (for about a second) is considered a sign of trustworthiness. However, in other countries, eye is perceived differently. For instance, in Asian culture, eye contact can be seen as insubordinate e.g., between student and teacher.

Facial Expressions

The human face can produce thousands of different expressions. Experts have decoded these expressions as corresponding to hundreds of different emotional states (Ekman, Friesen, and Hager, 2008). Our faces convey basic information to the outside world. Happiness is associated with an upturned mouth and slightly closed eyes; fear, with an open mouth and wide-eyed stare. Flitting ("shifty") eyes and pursed lips convey a lack of trustworthiness. The effect facial expressions have on conversation is instantaneous. Our brains may register them as "a feeling" about someone's character.

Posture

The position of our body relative to a chair or another person is another powerful silent messenger that conveys interest, aloofness, professionalism—or lack thereof. Head up, back straight (but not rigid) implies an upright character. In interview situations, experts advise mirroring an interviewer's tendency to lean in and settle back in her seat. The subtle repetition of the other person's posture conveys that we are listening and responding.

Written

In contrast to verbal communications, written professional communications are textual messages. Examples of written communications include memos, proposals, emails, letters, training manuals, and operating policies. They may be printed on paper, handwritten, or appear on the screen. Normally, a verbal communication takes place in real time. Written communication, by contrast, can be constructed over a longer period of time. Written communication is often asynchronous (occurring at different times). That is, the sender can write a message that the receiver can read at any time, unlike a conversation that transpires in real time. There are exceptions, however; for example, a voicemail is a verbal message that is asynchronous. Many jobs involve some degree of writing. Luckily, it is possible to learn to write clearly (more on this in the Plain Language chapter and the writing module).

Digital Communication Channels

The three principal communication channels can be used "in the flesh" and in digital formats. Digital channels extend from face-to-face to video conferencing, from written memos to emails, and from speaking in person to using telephones. The digital channels retain many of the characteristics of the principal channels but influence different aspects of each channel in new ways. The choice between analog and digital can affect the environment, context, and interference factors in the communication process.

Check Your Understanding

Information Richness

Information richness refers to the amount of sensory input available during a communication. For example, speaking to a colleague in a monotone voice with no change in pacing or gestures does not make for a very rich experience. On the other hand, if you use gestures, tone of voice, pace of speech, etc., to communicate meaning beyond the words themselves, you facilitate a richer communication. Channels vary in their information richness. Information-rich channels convey more non-verbal information. For example, a face-to-face conversation is richer than a phone call, but a phone call is richer than an email. Research shows that effective managers tend to use more information-rich communication channels than do less effective managers (Allen and Griffeth, 1997; Fulk and Body, 1991; Yates and Orlikowski, 1992). The figure below illustrates the information richness of different information channels.

Channel	Information Richness
Face-to-face conversation	High
Videoconferencing	High
Telephone	High
Email	Medium
Mobile devices	Medium
Blogs	Medium
Letter	Medium
Written documents	Low
Spreadsheets	Low

Adapted from Daft and Lenge, 1984; Lengel and Daft, 1988

Like face-to-face and telephone conversation, videoconferencing has high information richness because receivers and senders can see or hear beyond just the words—they can see the sender's body language or hear the tone of their voice. Mobile devices, blogs, letters, and memos offer medium-rich channels because they convey words and images. Formal written documents, such as legal documents and spreadsheets (e.g., the division's budget), convey the least richness, because the format is often rigid and standardized. As a result, nuance is lost.

When determining whether to communicate verbally or in writing, ask yourself, Do I want to convey facts or feelings? Verbal communications are a better way to convey feelings, while written communications do a better job of conveying facts.

Picture a manager delivering a speech to a team of 20 employees. The manager is speaking at a normal pace. The employees appear interested. But how much information is the manager transmitting? Not as much as the speaker believes! Humans listen much faster than they speak.

The average public speaker communicates at a speed of about 125 words per minute. That pace sounds fine to the audience, but faster speech would sound strange. To put that figure in perspective, someone having an excited conversation speaks at about 150 words per minute. Based on these numbers, we could assume that the employees have more than enough time to take in each word the manager delivers. But that is the problem. The average person in the audience can hear 400–500 words per minute (Leed and Hatesohl, 2008). The audience has more time than they need. As a result, they will each be processing many thoughts of their own, on totally different subjects, while the manager is speaking. As this example demonstrates, verbal communication is an inherently flawed medium for conveying specific facts. Listeners' minds wander. Once we understand this fact, we can make more intelligent communication choices based on the kind of information we want to convey.

The key to effective communication is to match the communication channel with the goal of the message (Barry and Fulmer, 2004). Written media is a better choice when the sender wants a record of the content, has less urgency for a response, is physically separated from the receiver, does not require much feedback from the receiver, or when the message is complicated and may take some time to understand.

Verbal communication makes more sense when the sender is conveying a sensitive or emotional message, needs feedback immediately, and does not need a permanent record of the conversation. Use the guide provided for deciding when to use written versus verbal communication.

Use Written	Use Verbal
to convey facts	to convey emotions
to provide a permanent record	when you do not need a permanent record
when you do not need a timely response	when the matter is urgent
when you do not need immediate feedback	when you need immediate feedback
to explain complicated ideas	for simple, easy-to-explain ideas

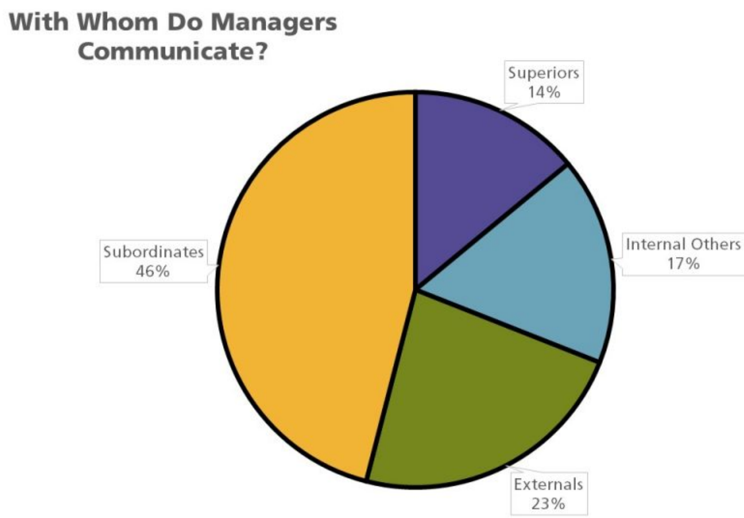
Written versus Verbal Communication

Direction of Communication Within Organizations

Information can move sideways, from a sender to a receiver—for example, from you to your colleague. It can also move upward, such as to a superior; or downward, such as from management to subordinates.

The status of the sender can affect the receiver's attentiveness to the message. For example, a senior manager sends a memo to a production supervisor. The supervisor, who has a lower status within the organization, will likely pay close attention to the message. But the same information conveyed in the opposite direction might not get the same attention. The message would be filtered by the senior manager's perception of priorities and urgencies.

Requests are just one kind of communication in a professional environment. Other communications, both verbal or written, may seek, give, or exchange information. Research shows that frequent communications with one's supervisor is related to better job performance ratings and overall organizational performance (Snyder and Morris, 1984; Kacmar, Witt, Zivnuska and Guly, 2003). Research also shows that lateral communication done between peers can influence important organizational outcomes such as turnover (Krackhardt and Porter, 1986).



With Whom Managers Spend Time Communicating At Work by L. Underwood. Adapted from Luthans and Larsen, 1986

External Communications

External communications deliver messages to individuals outside an organization. They may announce changes in staff, strategy, or earnings to shareholders; or they might be service announcements or ads for the general public, for example. The goal of an external communication is to create a specific message that the receiver will understand and/or share with others. Examples of external communications include the following:

Press Releases

Public relations professionals create external communications about a client's product, services, or practices for specific receivers. These receivers, it is hoped, will share the message with others. In time, as the message is passed along, it should appear to be independent of the sender, creating the illusion of an independently generated consumer trend or public opinion.

The message of a public relations effort may be B2B (business to business), B2C (business to consumer), or media related. The message can take different forms. Press releases try to convey a newsworthy message, real or manufactured. It may be constructed like a news item, inviting editors or reporters to reprint the message, in part or as a whole, and with or without acknowledgment of the sender's identity. Public relations campaigns create messages over time, through contests, special events, trade shows, and media interviews in addition to press releases.

Ads

Advertisements present external business messages to targeted receivers. Advertisers pay a fee to a television network, website, or magazine for an on-air, site, or publication ad. The fee is based on the perceived value of the audience who watches, reads, or frequents the space where the ad will appear.

In recent years, receivers (the audience) have begun to filter advertisers' messages through technology such as ad blockers, the ability to fast-forward live or recorded TV through PVRs, paid subscriptions to Internet media, and so on. This trend grew as a result of the large amount of ads the average person sees each day and a growing level of consumer weariness of paid messaging. Advertisers, in turn, are trying to create alternative forms of advertising that receivers will not filter. For example, The advertorial is one example of an external communication that combines the look of an article with the focused message of an ad. Product placements in videos, movies, and games are other ways that advertisers strive to reach receivers with commercial messages.

Websites

A website may combine elements of public relations, advertising, and editorial content, reaching receivers on multiple levels and in multiple ways. Banner ads and blogs are just a few of the elements that allow a business to deliver a message to a receiver online. Online messages are often less formal and more approachable, particularly if intended for the general public. A message relayed in a daily blog post will reach a receiver differently than if it is delivered in an annual report, for example.

The popularity and power of blogs is growing. In fact, blogs have become so important to some companies as Coca-Cola, Kodak, and Marriott that they have created official positions within their organizations titled Chief Blogging Officer (Workforce Management, 2008). The real-time quality of web communications may appeal to receivers who filter out a traditional ad and public relations message because of its prefabricated quality.

Customer Communications

Customer communications can include letters, catalogues, direct mail, emails, text messages, and telemarketing messages. Some receivers automatically filter bulk messages like these; others will be receptive. The key to a successful external communication to customers is to convey a business message in a personally compelling way—dramatic news, a money-saving coupon, and so on. Customers will think What's in it for me? when deciding how to respond to these messages, so clear benefits are essential.

Conclusion

Different communication channels are more or less effective at transmitting different kinds of information. Some types of communication range from high richness in information to medium and low richness. In addition, communications flow in different directions within organizations. A major internal communication channel is email, which is convenient but needs to be handled carefully. External communication channels include PR/press releases, ads, websites, and customer communications such as letters and catalogues.

Key Takeaways and Check In

Learning Highlights

- To communicate effectively, we need to align our body language, appearance, and tone with the words we are trying to convey.
- Different communication channels are more or less effective at transmitting different kinds of information. Some types of communication are information rich while others are medium rich.
- Communications flow in different directions within organizations.
- A major internal communication channel is email, which is convenient but needs to be handled carefully.
- External communication channels include PR/press releases, ads, websites, and customer communications such as letters and catalogues.

Check In

You should aim for 100% on these five questions to ensure you understand key concepts.

1.5: Plain Language

Crafting Your Message with Plain Language

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- identify active and passive voice, jargon, positive and negative tone, and unnecessary words in written and oral communications;
- rewrite a given message while adhering to five principles of plain language: active voice, common words, positive tone, reader focus, and short (concise) words and sentences;
- proofread another student's work, or your own, with a focus on the five principles of plain language: active voice, common words, positive tone, reader focus, and short (concise) words and sentences.

No matter who your audience is, they will appreciate your ability to write using plain language. This is a key skill in any professional setting. Plain language writing—and speaking—will help you to get your message across clearly and concisely. This chapter will introduce you to the principles of plain language and allow you to practise them.

Principle 1: Use Active Voice

To communicate professionally, you need to know when and how to use either active or passive voice. Although most contexts prefer the active voice, the passive voice may be the best choice in certain situations. Generally, though, passive voice tends to be awkward, vague, wordy, and a grammatical construct you should avoid in most cases.

Recognizing Active and Passive Voice

To use active voice, make the noun that performs the action the subject of the sentence and pair it directly with an action verb.

Read these two sentences:

> Matt Damon left Harvard in the late 1980s to start his acting career.
> Matt Damon's acting career was started in the late 1980s when he left Harvard.

In the first sentence, left is an action verb that is paired with the subject, Matt Damon. If you ask yourself, "Who or what left?" the answer is Matt Damon. Neither of the other two nouns in the sentence—Harvard and career—"left" anything.

Now look at the second sentence. The action verb is started. If you ask yourself, "Who or what started something?" the answer, again, is Matt Damon. But in this sentence, the writer placed career—not Matt Damon—in the subject position. When the doer of the action is not the subject, the sentence is in passive voice. In passive voice constructions, the doer of the action usually follows the word by as the indirect object of a prepositional phrase, and the action verb is typically partnered with a version of the verb to be.

The following sentences are in passive voice. For each sentence, identify

- the noun in the subject position,
- the form of the verb to be,
- the action verb, and
- the doer of the action.

Example 1: The original screenplay for *Good Will Hunting* was written by Matt Damon for an English calss when he was student at Harvard University.
Example 2: As an actor, Matt Damon is loved by millions of fans worldwide.

Check Your Understanding

Decide whether each of the following sentences is active or passive.

Using Action Verbs to Make Sentences More Interesting

Two sentences can say the same thing but leave a different impression based on the choice of verb. Which of the following sentences gives you the most vivid mental picture?

1. A bald eagle was overhead and now is low in the sky near me.
2. A bald eagle soared overhead and then dove low, seemingly coming right at me.

Most of us would agree that sentence B paints a better picture.

Try to express yourself with action verbs instead of forms of the verb *to be*. Sometimes it is fine to use forms of the verb *to be*, such as is or are, but it is easy to overuse them (as in this sentence—twice). Overuse of these verbs will make your writing dull.

Read each of the following sentences and note the use of the verb *to be*. Think of a way to reword the sentence to make it more interesting by using an action verb before you expand to view the suggested revision.

Note

A point of confusion that sometimes comes up when people discuss the passive voice is the use of expletive pronouns. A sentence with expletive pronouns often starts with "There is …" or "There are …." Many people mistakenly think that expletive pronoun sentences are a form of passive voice, but they are not.

To understand the difference, please read the "Avoid Expletive Pronouns" section under Principle 5.

Using Action Verbs Alone to Avoid Passive Voice

Even though the passive voice might include an action verb, the action verb is not as strong as it could be, because of the sentence structure. The passive voice also causes unnecessary wordiness. Read the following sentences and think of a way to reword each using an action verb in active voice. Then look at the suggested revision for each case.

Writing in the Active Voice

Writing in active voice is easy once you understand the difference between active and passive voice. Make sure you always define who or what did what. If you use forms of the verb to be with your action verb, consider the reason for your choice. If you are writing in progressive tense ("Carrie is walking to my house") or perfect progressive tense ("Melissa will have been married for four years by then"), you will need to use helping verbs, even in active voice.

Using Passive Voice

Sometimes passive voice is the best option. Consider the following acceptable uses of passive voice.

When you do not know who or what is responsible for the action:

> Example: Our front-door lock was picked.
>
> Rationale: If you do not know who picked the lock on your front door, you cannot say who did it. You could say a thief broke in, but that would be an assumption; you could, theoretically, find out that the lock was picked by a family member who had forgotten to take a key.

When you want to hide the person or thing responsible for the action, such as in a story:

> Example: The basement was filled with a mysterious scraping sound.
>
> Rationale: If you are writing a dramatic story, you might introduce a phenomenon without revealing the person or thing that caused it.

When the person or thing that performed the action is not important:

> Example: The park was flooded all week.
>
> Rationale: Although you would obviously know that the rainwater flooded the park, saying so would not be important.

When you do not want to place credit, responsibility, or blame:

> Example: A mistake was made in the investigation that resulted in the wrong person being on trial.

Rationale: Even if you think you know who is responsible for a problem, you might not want to expose the person.

When you want to maintain the impression of objectivity:

Example: It was noted that only first-graders chose to eat the fruit.

Rationale: Research reports in certain academic disciplines attempt to remove the researcher from the results, to avoid saying, for example, “I noted that only first graders….”

When you want to avoid using a gendered construction, and pluralizing is not an option:

Example: If the password is forgotten by the user, a security question will be asked.

Rationale: This construction avoids the need for the cumbersome “his or her” (as in “the user forgets his or her password”).

Principle 2: Use Common Words Instead of Complex Words

Inappropriate word choices will get in the way of your message. For this reason, use language that is accurate and appropriate for the writing situation. Omit jargon (technical words and phrases common to a specific profession or discipline) and slang (invented words and phrases specific to a certain group of people), unless your audience and purpose call for such language. Avoid using outdated words and phrases, such as “Dial the number.” Be straightforward in your writing rather than using euphemism (a gentler, but sometimes inaccurate, way of saying something). Be clear about the level of formality each piece of writing needs, and adhere to that level.

Writing without Jargon or Slang

Jargon and slang both have their places. Using jargon is fine as long as you can safely assume your readers also know the jargon. For example, if you are a lawyer writing to others in the legal profession, using legal jargon is perfectly fine. On the other hand, if you are writing for people outside the legal profession, using legal jargon would most likely be confusing, and you should avoid it. Of course, lawyers must use legal jargon in papers they prepare for customers. However, those papers are designed to navigate within the legal system and may not be clear to readers outside of this demographic.

Examples:

Jargon: I need to hammer out this report by tomorrow.
Alternative: I need to type up this report by tomorrow.

Euphemism: My uncle is vertically challenged.
Alternative: My uncle is only five feet tall.

Principle 3: Use a Positive Tone When Possible

Unless there is a specific reason not to, use positive language wherever you can. Positive language benefits your writing in two ways. First, it creates a positive tone, and your writing is more likely to be well-received. Second, it clarifies your meaning, as positive statements are more concise. Take a look at the following negatively worded sentences and then their positive counterparts, below.

Examples:

Negative: Your car will not be ready for collection until Friday.
Positive: Your car will be ready for collection on Friday.

Negative: You did not complete the exam.
Positive: You will need to complete the exam.

Negative: Your holiday time is not approved until your manager clears it.
Positive: Your holiday time will be approved when your manager clears it.

Avoid using multiple negatives in one sentence, as this will make your sentence difficult to understand. When readers encounter more than one negative construct in a sentence, their brains have to do more cognitive work to decipher the meaning; multiple negatives can create convoluted sentences that bog the reader down.

Examples:

Negative: A decision will not be made unless all board members agree.
Positive: A decision will be made when all board members agree.

Negative: The event cannot be scheduled without a venue.
Positive: The event can be scheduled when a venue has been booked.

Principle 4: Write for Your Reader

When you write for your readers and speak to an audience, you have to consider who they are and what they need to know. When readers know that you are concerned with their needs, they are more likely to be receptive to your message, and will be more likely to:

- take the action you are asking them to and
- focus on important details.

Your message will mean more to your reader if they get the impression that it was written directly to them. When you sit down to write, either for a paper or a presentation, consider the audience analysis tool presented earlier in this module.

Then try to answer these questions in your writing with user-friendly language. Speaking directly to the audience using you-oriented language helps to personalize the message and make it easier to understand. Using the second-person pronoun you tells your reader that the message is intended for them. You might be inclined to use he, she, or they instead, but those terms are not as direct or personal. Using the pronoun you makes the message feel relevant.

Consider the following sentences:

1. Employees arriving at the Sands Hotel for the team's day out should assemble in the lobby.
2. When you arrive at the Sands Hotel for the team's day out, please join us in the lobby.

Which one is more inviting? Most people will find the second sentence more friendly and inviting because it addresses the reader directly.

Organize Your Document to Meet Your Readers' Needs

When you write, ask yourself, "Why would someone read this message?" Often, it is because the reader needs a question answered. What do they need to know to prepare for the upcoming meeting, for example, or what new company policies do they need to abide by? Think about the questions your readers will ask and then organize your document to answer them.

Principle 5: Keep Words and Sentence Short (Conciseness)

It is easy to let your sentences become cluttered with words that do not add value to your message. Improve cluttered sentences by eliminating repetitive ideas, removing repeated words, and editing to eliminate unnecessary words.

Eliminating Repetitive Ideas

Unless you are providing definitions on purpose, stating one idea twice in a single sentence is redundant. Read each example below and think about how you could revise the sentence to remove repetitive phrasing. Then look at the suggested revision.

Examples:

Original: Use a very heavy skillet made of cast iron to bake an extra-juicy meatloaf.
Revision: Use a cast-iron skillet to bake a juicy meatloaf.

Original: Joe thought to himself, I think I'll make caramelized grilled salmon tonight.
Revision: Joe thought, I think I'll make caramelized grilled salmon tonight.

Removing Repeated Words

As a general rule, you should try not to repeat a word within a sentence. Sometimes you simply need to choose a different word. But often you can actually remove repeated words. Read this example and think about how you could revise the sentence to remove a repeated word that adds wordiness. Then check out the revision below the sentence.

Example:

Original: The student who won the cooking contest is a very talented and ambitious student.
Revision: The student who won the cooking contest is very talented and ambitious.

Rewording to Eliminate Unnecessary Words

If a sentence has words that are not necessary to carry the meaning, those words are unneeded and can be removed. Read each example and think about how you could revise the sentence; then check out the suggested revisions.

Examples:

Original: Andy has the ability to make the most fabulous twice-baked potatoes.
Revision: Andy makes the most fabulous twice-baked potatoes.

Original: For his part in the cooking class group project, Malik was responsible for making the mustard reduction sauce.
Revision: Malik made the mustard reduction sauce for his cooking class group project.

Avoid Expletive Pronouns (Most of the Time)

Many people create needlessly wordy sentences using expletive pronouns, which often take the form of "There is …" or "There are …."

Now, if you remember, pronouns (e.g., I, you, he, she, they, this, that, who, etc.) are words that we use to replace nouns (i.e., people, places, things), and there are many types of pronouns (e.g., personal, relative, demonstrative, etc.). However, expletive pronouns are different from other pronouns because unlike most pronouns, they do not stand for a person, thing, or place; they are called expletives because they have no "value." Sometimes you will see expletive pronouns at the beginning of a sentence, sometimes at the end. Look at the following expletive constructs:

Examples:

1. There are a lot of reading assignments in this class.
2. I can't believe how many reading assignments there are!
   Note: These two examples are not necessarily bad examples of using expletive pronouns. We included them to help you first understand what expletive pronouns are so you can recognize them.

The main reason we should generally avoid writing with expletive pronouns is that they often cause us to use more words in the rest of the sentence than we have to. Also, the empty words at the beginning tend to shift the more important subject matter toward the end of the sentence. The above sentences are not that bad, but at least they are simple enough to help you understand what expletive pronouns are. Here are some more examples of expletive pronouns, along with better alternatives.

Examples

Original: There are some people who love to cause trouble.
Revision: Some people love to cause trouble.

Original: There are some things that are just not worth waiting for.
Revision: Some things are just not worth waiting for.

Original: There is a person I know who can help you fix your computer.
Revision: I know a person who can help you fix your computer

While not all instances of expletive pronouns are bad, writing sentences with expletives seems to be habit forming. It can lead to trouble when you are explaining more complex ideas, because you end up having to use additional strings of phrases to explain what you want your reader to understand. Wordy sentences, such as those with expletive pronouns, can tax the reader's mind.

Example

Original: There is a button you need to press that is red and says STOP.
Revision: You need to press the red STOP button. Or: Press the red STOP button.

Of course, most rules and guideline have exceptions, and expletive pronouns are no different. In many cases common expressions, particularly if they are short, are not worth revising—especially in live communications such as presentations, lectures, and speeches.

Examples:

There is no place I'd rather be.
There are good days, and there are bad days.

There is no way around this.
How many ways are there to solve this puzzle?

The above sentences use expletive pronouns but are fine because they are short and easy on the reader's mind. In fact, revising them would make for longer, more convoluted sentences!

So when you find yourself using expletives, always ask yourself if omitting and rewriting would give your reader a clearer, more direct, less wordy sentence. Can I communicate the same message using fewer words without taking away from the meaning I want to convey or the tone I want to create? Practise evaluating your own writing and playing with alternative ways to say the same thing.

Note

Do not confuse expletive pronouns with passive voice (as also noted briefly in Principle 1: Use the Active Voice). Both expletive sentences and passive voice use forms of the verb to be, often result in wordiness, and sometimes obscure important information, but they are not the same thing grammatically. The following example should help to clear up any mix-up between the two.

Example:

The following sentence uses passive voice:

- A few people can be called upon to help you.

It is passive because the subject of the sentence (people) are not the doers of the verb called. The active agent who will be "calling" is missing. Are you to call upon these people, or will someone else call upon them?

But the following example uses an expletive pronoun and is not in passive voice, because it has an active agent (you) doing the "calling":

- There are a few people you can call upon to help you.

But even though passive voice and expletive constructs are not the same, it is possible—but rarely advisable—to write a sentence that uses both!

- There are a few people who can be called upon to help you.

The active agent doing the "calling" is, once again, missing; and the sentence starts with the expletive "There are." What a convoluted sentence!

A better sentence that uses neither passive voice nor expletive pronouns would be:

- You can call upon a few people to help you.

Ah! Much better!

Conclusion

In this chapter, you have recognized plain language as a way to get your message across clearly and concisely when writing and speaking. You have identified five principles of plain-language writing: use active voice, use common words instead of complex words, use a positive tone when possible, write for your reader, and keep words and sentences short. You should now be ready to get more practice using the questions in this chapter, or move on to the next topic.

Key Takeaways and Check In

Learning Highlights

- Write using the active voice to make sentences more interesting.
- Confine use of jargon to situations where your audience recognizes it. Remove slang and euphemisms from professional writing.
- Use positive instead of negative tone.
- Examine the subject matter, audience, and purpose to determine the level of formality for your writing or presentation.
- State ideas only once within a single sentence.

Check In

Aim to achieve 100% on these final, check in questions. Good luck!

Further Readings and Attribution

- Five-step checklist to write better. Center for Plain Language. http://centerforplainlanguage.org/5-steps-to-plain-language/

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1.6: Using Visuals

A Picture Is Worth 1000 Words

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- categorize given images as symbols, maps, graphs and tables, diagrams, illustrations, and/or photographs;
- describe the four purposes of using visuals to enhance communication;
- search the Internet for an appropriate visual based on the purpose and content of a message, and insert it into a document or presentation including proper attribution.

It may be a cliché to say, “A picture is worth a thousand words,” but visual images have power. Good communication is a multisensory experience. Children first learning how to read often gravitate toward books with engaging pictures. As adults we graduate to denser books without pictures, yet we still visualize ideas to help us understand the text. Advertisers favour visual media—television, magazines, and billboards—because they are the best way to hook an audience. Websites rely on colour, graphics, icons, and a clear system of visual organization to engage Internet surfers. Visuals bring ideas to life for many readers and audiences in multiple ways:

- As a link between raw data and usable knowledge
- To provide concrete, vivid, and quick representations
- To save space
- To speak in a universal language
- To be persuasive

Source: (Picardi, 2001)

This chapter discusses how to use different kinds of visual aids effectively.

Types of Visuals

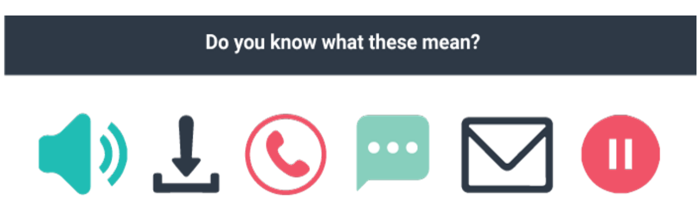
In this chapter we will be focusing on the following types of visuals:

- Symbols
- Maps
- Graphs and tables
- Diagrams
- Illustrations
- Photos

Source: (Saunders, 1994)

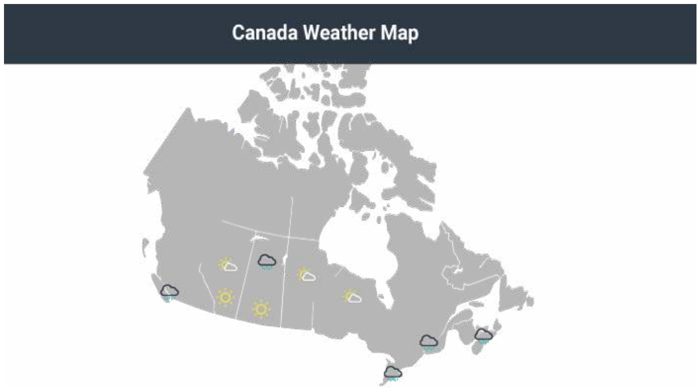
We will describe these in more detail below:

Symbols: Symbols include a range of items that can be either pictographic or abstract. We are surrounded by symbols, but how often do you think about the symbols that communicate with you everyday? What symbols can you see right now in your surroundings? Maybe the icons for the apps on your phone are familiar symbols to you. How about the TV remote control, which uses symbols to indicate the function of its buttons. Company logos lead you to identify the brand before you even read any words. Or look at the tags on your clothing; they use symbols to tell you how to wash and dry the garments as intended.



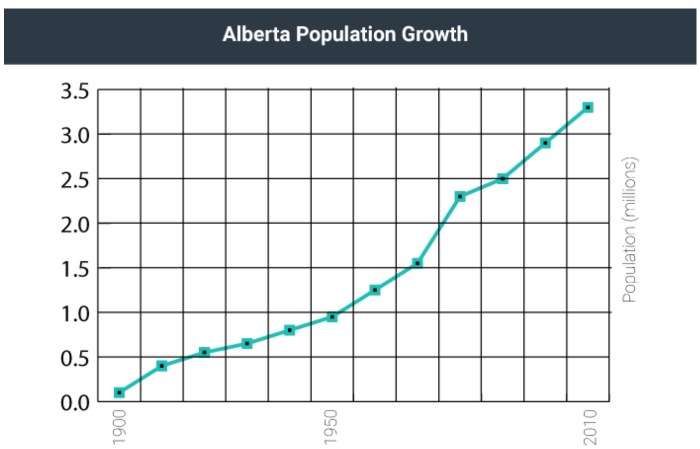
Icons in Everyday Life by L. Underwood

Maps: Maps sometimes include map charts, or statistical maps. Maps are often used to communicate geographical and other information in one visual (Picardi, 2001).

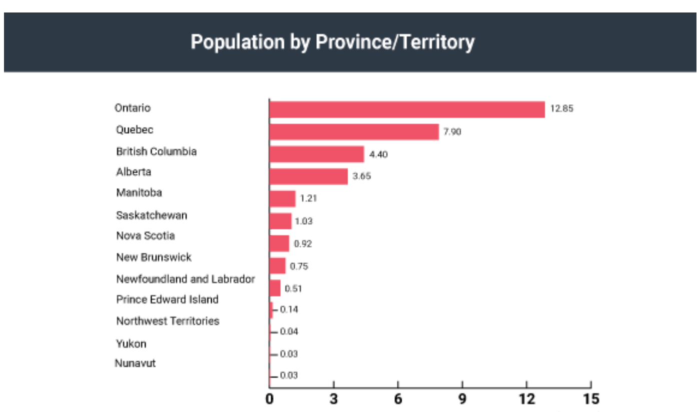


Canada Weather Map by L. Underwood

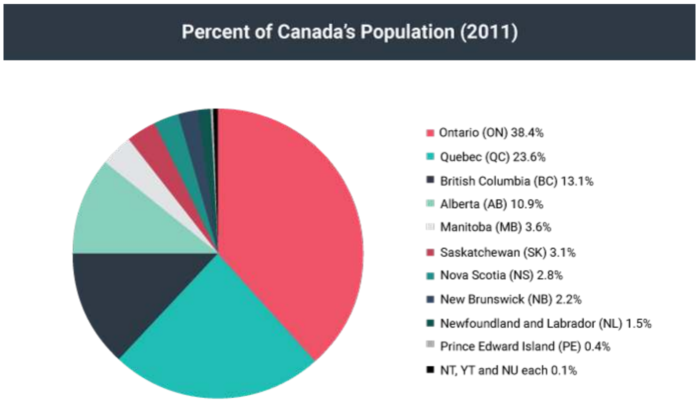
Graphs and Tables: Graphs can take a variety of forms, the most common being line graphs, bar graphs, and pie charts. Each type is better suited to different situations and purposes. For example, line graphs show change quickly, while bar charts are effective to compare data, and pie charts visualize the relation between parts and the whole (Picardi, 2001). Tables can be more effective for situations that call for qualitative data (not just numbers).



Population Growth Line Graph by L. Underwood



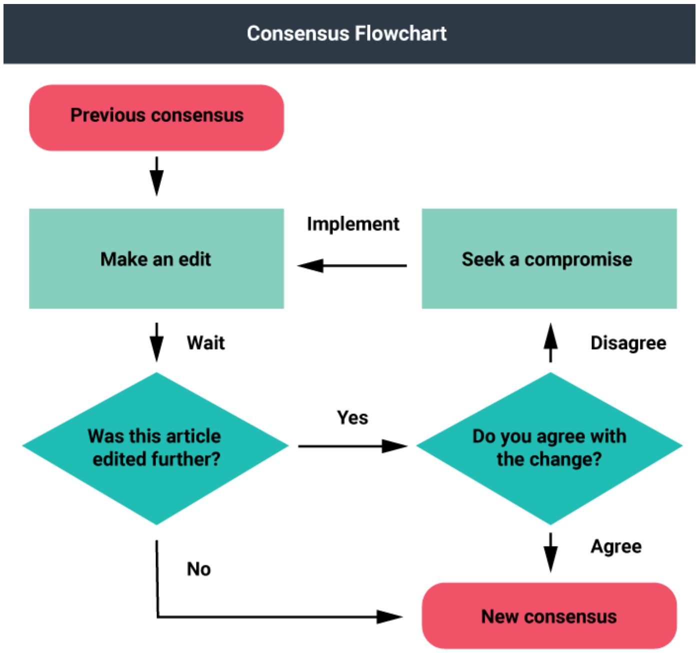
Canadian Population Bar Graph by L. Underwood



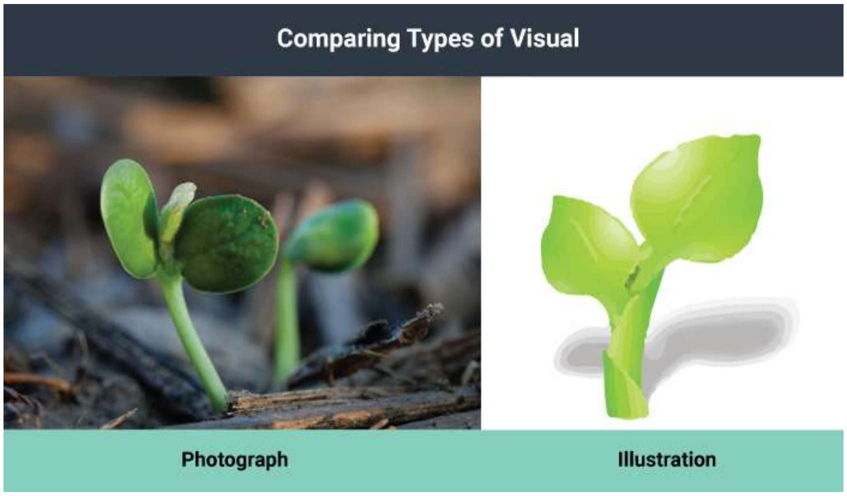
Percent of Canada's Population by L. Underwood

Tip: If you are working with numerical information, consider whether a pie chart, bar graph, or line graph might be an effective way to present the content. A table can help you organize numerical information, but it is not the most effective way to emphasize contrasting data or to show changes over time.

Diagrams: Saunders (1994) describes diagrams as "visuals drawn to represent and identify parts of a whole, a process, a general scheme, and/or the flow of results of an action or process." One example of a diagram would be a flow chart. Flow charts are often used to show physical processes, such as in a manufacturing facility, or in the decision making procedures of a larger corporation, for example. Flow charts combine the use of text, colour, and shapes to indicate various functions performed in a process.



Consensus Flowchart by L Underwood



Comparing Types of Visual by L, Underwood

Purpose of Visuals

There are a number of reasons you might consider including visuals in documents, presentations, and other communications. Four reasons are detailed below:

Decorative: Visuals that do not represent objects or actions within the text but are added, instead, for aesthetic effect are considered decorative. Decorative visuals are often added to gain attention or increase the audience's interest. Visuals can be used this way but can detract from the message you are trying to communicate and, thus, should be used with caution.

Representational: These visuals physically represent or physically resemble objects or actions in the text and are relevant to the content of the text. For example, rather than giving a detailed textual description of a new playground, you might include an image or render of the new playground and use the text to highlight specific features or information.

Analogical: Analogical visuals are used to compare and contrast two things, and explain their likeness or correspondence. For example, a marketing consultant might try to clarify the difference between targeted marketing and mass marketing by including images of a single fisherman with a single fishing rod and line next to an image of a bigger boat with a fishing net. By using the fishing analogy, the marketing consultant is attempting to connect possible prior understanding of the audience, a visual, and the concepts of targeted marketing versus mass marketing.

Organizational: The purpose of organizational images is to provide structure to information, visually define relationships, and illustrate connections. A chart of the hierarchical structure of a company is one example of an organizational image.

Communication professionals have offered their visual preferences for various communication needs. See if you match or agree with their recommendations.

https://quizlet.com/304328430/commun...s-flash-cards/

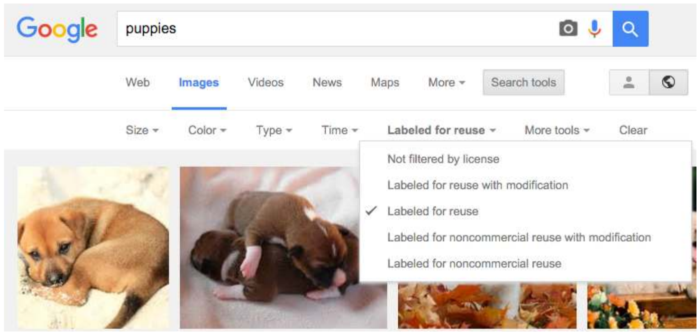
There are many considerations to keep in mind when choosing visuals. When possible, use a variety of types of visuals, but remember that any visuals you use should enhance the content of the text. For example, only add photos if viewing the photos will clarify the text. Near each visual, explain its purpose concisely. Do not expect your readers to figure out the values of the visuals on their own.

Finding and Crediting Visuals

You have three choices for finding visuals to use in your work. You can search the Internet, use photos you have taken, or create images yourself.

Finding Visuals Online

The Internet is a powerful tool you can use to find visuals to complement your work. If you simply click on "images" for your topic in a search engine, you will generate both royalty-free and copyright-protected images. However, if you include a term such as stock images, stock photos, or royalty-free images along with your topic, you will be able to narrow your search to royalty-free items. Some search engines can help you filter your search by license type as well. For example, Google images includes a search tool that allows you to filter the results by license type. We should mention, however, that this tool is not perfect, and you should check the source of the image directly for its licensing requirements. You should not take an image from a search engine unless you are sure that the creator has provided a license that allows you to do so.



Google Image Search Tools Screenshot from Google

When searching Google Images, you can search for images with specific permissions by clicking “Search Tools,” then “Usage Rights.”

You could also use a stock photo website that provides pay-per-use professional photos. Even on these sites you also need to be sure that the creator has provided a license for the image to be used freely in the way you intend to use it (for example, under a Creative Commons license).

About Copyright

Any time an individual or group creates something, such as a visual, they automatically have the rights to that visual and copies of it (i.e., copyright). They do not need to register with any organization in order to get the copyrights for their work; it is assumed as soon as they create it. This means that others are required to seek permission, and often pay a fee, n order to use the work. For example, a photographer might sell one of their photos to a magazine under the condition that they will be paid based on the number of copies printed or sold.

About Creative Commons

Creative Commons is a way for creators to share their work with fewer restrictions than copyright alone. There are four distinct conditions available in a Creative Commons license: attribution, share-alike, non-commercial, and no derivatives. Upon creating a work, an author may attach a Creative Commons license that offers a combination of these conditions. The table below outlines the conditions in more detail.

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	ShareAlike - SA Others may create and distribute derivatives based on (adapt, modify) your work, but they must use an identical license to the license that your work uses.
	No-Derivative Works - ND Others may distribute, display, and perform your copyrighted work; however, their material must be your work verbatim, not derivatives of your work.

Check Your Understanding

Match the images of Creative Commons licenses with what you would be allowed to do with a work bearing that license.

https://quizlet.com/215813185/match

https://quizlet.com/215813185/cc-lic...g-flash-cards/

When using Creative Commons works, ensure you follow the requirements that the work you are using is licensed under. This often includes identifying the original creator and a link to the Creative Commons license itself.

An image may also be in the Public Domain, meaning that the creator's intellectual property rights have expired, been forfeited, or are inapplicable. In this case, the image is free to use globally without restriction.

For guidance on how to find Creative Commons materials, using the creative common search portal, see How to Find Creative Commons Materials Using the Creative Commons Search Portal: A Guide for Instructors and Students

Using Your Own Photos

You could, of course, use any photographs you take yourself. To avoid rights issues, ask any human subjects included in your photos to sign a waiver giving you permission to use their likenesses. In the case of minors, you need to ask their guardians to sign the permission form.
Similarly, pictures taken by friends or relatives could be available as long as you get signed permission to use the photo as well as signed permission from any human subjects in the photo. Although it might seem silly to ask your sister, for example, to give you signed permission to use her photo or image, you never know what complications you could encounter later on. So, always protect yourself with permission.

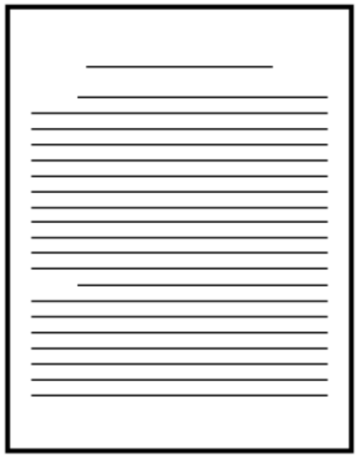
Making Your Own Visuals

A third option is to create your visuals. You do not have to be an artist to choose this option successfully. You can use computer programs to generate professional-looking charts, graphs, tables, flowcharts, and diagrams, or hire a graphic designer to do this for you.

Subject your visuals to the same level of scrutiny as your writing. Keep in mind that if you find one person has a problem with one of your visuals, there will be others who also take exception. On the other hand, remember that you can never please everyone, so you will have to use your judgement.

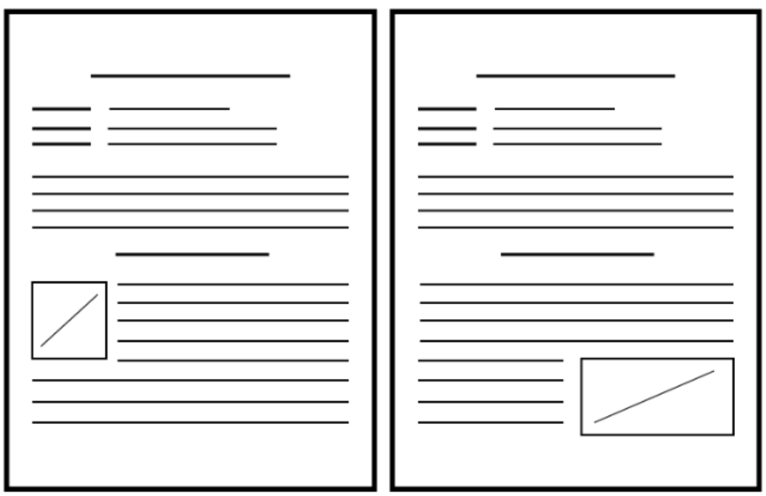
Positioning Images into Text (Layout)

When you insert an image into your text, you must make some physical decisions.



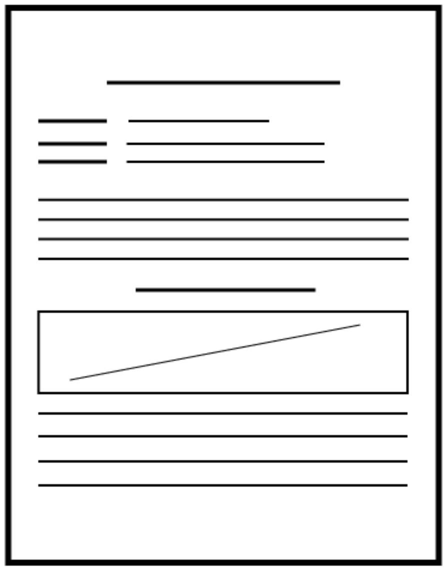
Text Only Document by JR Dingwall

When you insert an image into your text, you must make some physical decisions.



Left and Right Justified Images in a Document by JR Dingwall

Another choice is to move the text down to create page-wide space for the image. In such situations, the image is typically placed above the related text. This format is usually used at the beginning of a document where the image treatment does not break up the text.



Full Justified Image in a Document by JR DIngwall

Using White Space

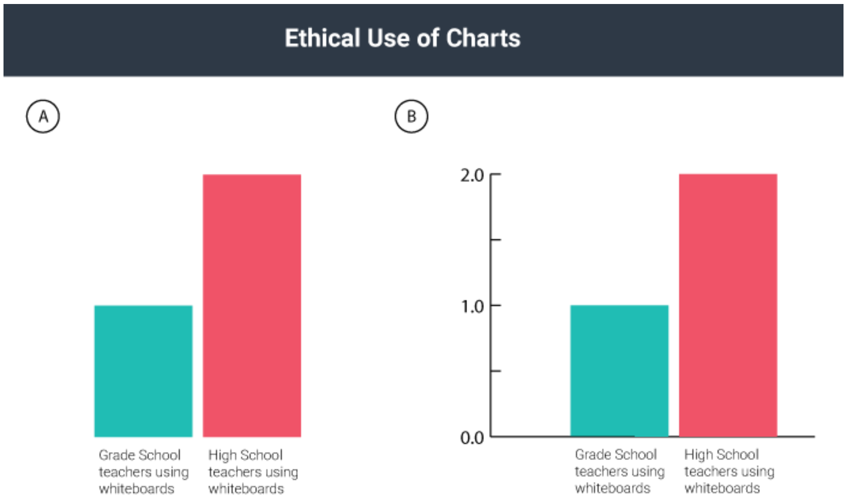
Incorporating charts, graphs, and other visuals is a way to break up blocks of text using visuals and white space. You can add white space by presenting lists vertically rather than running them horizontally across the page as part of a sentence. Also, leave enough white space around images to frame the images and separate them from the text.

Uses and Abuses of Visual Rhetoric

Choose visuals to advance your argument rather than just to decorate your pages. Just as you would not include words that are fluff, you should not include meaningless images. Also, just as you aim to avoid the use of fallacies in your text, you also need to be careful not to use fallacious visuals. For example, if you were arguing for the proposition that big dogs make good pets for families, you might show a picture of a friendly-looking Rottweiler puppy. But if you were against families having big dogs for pets, you might choose an image of a mean-looking adult Rottweiler baring its teeth. Watch out for the use of visuals that sway your opinion in the material you read, and use objective images in your own work.

Thanks to programs such as Adobe Photoshop, you can easily alter a photo, but make sure to do so ethically. For example, say that you are making an argument that a company unfairly hires only young people and disposes of employees as they age. You decide to show a photo of some of the employees to make your point. You take a photo of the company's employees (both old and young) and crop the original photo to show only the young employees. This cropping choice would be misleading and unethical.

You have probably seen tables or graphs that convey something that is not exactly accurate. For example, the two graphs in the image below could be used as proof that "twice as many" high school teachers as grade school teachers choose to use computer-driven whiteboards. Graph A seems to support this statement nicely. If you look at Graph B, however, you realize that the entire sample includes only two teachers, so "twice as many" means, literally, two rather than one—an inadequate sample that leads to neither impressive nor convincing data. Be very careful not to misrepresent data using tables and graphs, whether knowingly or accidentally.



Ethical Use of Charts by L. Underwood

Weighing Your Options for Visuals

Visuals, like verbal or written text, can make ethical, logical, and emotional appeals. Two examples of ethical appeals are a respected logo and a photo of the author in professional dress. Graphs, charts, and tables are examples of logical appeals. For the most part, nearly all visuals, because they quickly catch a reader's eye, operate on an emotional level—even those that are designed to make ethical and logical appeals.

Consider the following options when you choose visuals for your work:

- Choose visuals that your audience will understand and appreciate. Besides adding information, visuals can help to establish common ground with your audience.
- Think about the possible emotional reactions to your visuals and decide if you they are reactions you want to evoke.
- Make sure you choose ethically.
- Make sure you present the information accurately and in a balanced way when using images such as charts and tables.
- Look for visuals that are royalty free or create your own, unless you are prepared to pay for visuals.
- Make sure you choose visuals that align with the ethical standards of your work, because visuals can sway readers quickly. If your text is solidly ethical but your picture(s) are inflammatory, you might compromise the ethics of your work.
- Keep captions brief if you need to use them. Some images carry meaning without any explanation. If you cannot keep the caption brief, you probably need a different visual or better context for the visual in the text surrounding it.

Conclusion

In this chapter you have thought about the reasons to use a visual in your professional documents and have looked at different types of visuals, from diagrams and charts to illustrations and photographs. You have read about the purposes visuals serve and have learned that knowing whether your visual is intended to decorate, represent, analyze, or organize is key to choosing the right type of image.

You have also looked at ways to find and credit images, learning about Creative Commons licensing and exploring ways to fairly use others' images in your work. You have also learned a little bit about positioning images within your documents and the uses (and abuses) of visual rhetoric.

When you are confident in your ability to use images in your work, move on to the next chapter.

Key Takeaways and Check In

Learning Highlights

- You can satisfy your need for images in your work by reusing or remixing Creative Commons works, purchasing photos or images, taking your own photos, or creating your own visuals from scratch.
- You can freely use images you create or photos you capture with a camera. If you choose to use images created by others or photos taken by others, you must secure permission and/or attribute the work as specified by the creator/author.
- When inserting images, you can wrap text to provide rectangle white space, tightly fitting white space, or paper-width white space.
- Visual elements of communication are especially powerful rhetorical tools that can easily be abused but can also be used responsibly and effectively.

Check Your Understanding

Further Reading and Links

- *How to find Creative Commons–licensed materials (http://bit.ly/1Km9EqJ)*
- How to find Creative Commons materials using Google (http://bit.ly/1R1LPDq)
- How to find Creative Commons materials using YouTube (http://bit.ly/1W9AQsU)

References and Attribution

Picardi, R. P. (2001). *Skills of workplace communication: A handbook for T&D specialists and their organizations*. Westport, Conn.: Quorum Books, 2001.

Saunders, A.C. (1994). Graphics and how they communicate. In D.M. Moore and F.M. Dwyer, eds. *Visual literacy: A spectrum of visual learning.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

Attribution Statement (Visuals)

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- A derivative of an icon created by Алексей Миронов, originally published at https://www.iconfinder.com/icons/281830/call_circle_communication_mobile_phone_telephone_icon#size=128 in accordance with IconFinder's terms of service and the conditions specified by the creator
- A derivative of an icon created by Samat Odedara (https://www.iconfinder.com/samatodedara), originally published at www.iconfinder.com/icons/709539/bubble_chat_conversation_message_sms_talk_text_icon#size=128 in accordance with IconFinder's terms of service and the conditions specified by the creator

- A derivative of an icon created by the AIGA, originally published at https://www.iconfinder.com/icons/134146/email_mail_icon#size=128 under the public domain
- A derivative of an icon created by Google, published at https://www.iconfinder.com/icons/326567/circle_fill_pause_icon#size=128 in accordance with IconFinder's terms of service and the conditions specified by the creator
- A derivative of an icon created by Gregor Črešnar, originally published at www.iconfinder.com/icons/647888/arrow_direction_down_download_open_save_update_icon#size=128 in accordance with IconFinder's terms of service and the conditions specified by the creator
- A derivative of an icon created by Designmodo, published at https://www.iconfinder.com/icons/103167/audio_music_sound_speaker_volume_icon#size=128 under a CC BY 3.0 license
- A derivative of an icon created by Alessio Atzeni, originally published at https://www.iconfinder.com/icons/110801/sun_icon#size=128 in accordance with IconFinder's terms of service and the conditions specified by the creator
- A derivative of an icon created by Yannick Lung, originally published at https://www.iconfinder.com/icons/183558/cloud_rain_icon#size=128 in accordance with IconFinder's terms of service and the conditions specified by the creator
- A derivative of an image created by Casito, published at https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Alberta_population.svg under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license
- A derivative of an image created by Srm038, published at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2011_Canadian_Population_(bar_chart).png under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license
- A derivative of an image created by Hwy43, published at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2011_Canada_Pop_Pie.png under a CC BY 3.0 license
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- Content created by Anonymous for Creating and Finding Visuals, in Writers' Handbook, previously shared at http://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/writers-handbook/s13-02-creating-and-finding-visuals.html under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 license
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- A screenshot of a Google Images search, including

- *Puppy on Halong Bay created by Andrea Scaffer, published at https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Puppy#/media/File:Puppy_on_Halong_Bay.jpg under a CC BY 2.0 license*
  - Newborn Basenji puppies, published at https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Puppy#/media/File:Basenji_puppies.jpg by copperfeesh, CC BY SA 2.0 license
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Check Your Understandings

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1.7: Using Feedback

From Shotgun to Boomerang: Using Feedback

Learning Objectives

Upon complete this chapter, you should be able to:

- explain the ways in which communication effectiveness and feedback relate to each other,
- identify which type(s) of feedback may be available and how feedback may be gathered for a given communication scenario.

Religion and politics are two subjects that often provoke emotional responses, so, once you are aware of someone's viewpoint (based on feedback you have received in the past), you might choose to refrain from discussing these topics or change the way you address them. The awareness of bias and preference, combined with the sender's ability to adapt the message before sending it, increases the probability that a communication will be successfully received. To complete the communication process, you will need to gather and evaluate feedback.

You may receive feedback from peers, colleagues, editors, or supervisors, but feedback from the intended audience can be rare. Imagine that you work in the marketing department of an engineering company and have written an article describing a new kind of water pump that operates with little maintenance and less energy consumption than previous models. Your company has also developed an advertising campaign to introduce this new pump to the market and has added it to their online sales menu. Once your article has been reviewed and posted, it may be accessed online by a reader in another country who is currently researching water pumps that fall within your product range. That reader will see a banner ad displayed across the header of the website, with the name of your company prominently displayed in their native language, even if your article is in English. Ads like this are called contextual ads.

You might never receive direct feedback from that user after they read your article, but indirect feedback is fairly easy to collect. Google can report how many visits your website received as a result of the ad. For example, you can find out how many visits your website received from Germany, the city where the visits originated, and whether the visitor initiated a sales order for the pump. If the sale was left incomplete, you can find out at what stage of the purchase process the user abandoned the basket or order. If the sale was successful, your sales department can provide feedback in the form of overall sales as well as information on specific customers. This, in turn, allows you an opportunity for post-sales communication and additional feedback.

The communication process depends on a series of components that are always present. If you remove one or more, the process disintegrates. You need a source and a receiver, even if those roles alternate and blur. You need a message and a channel. You also need context and environment. Interference is also part of any communication process.

The final step in the communication process is feedback. It contributes to the transactional relationship in communication and serves as part of the information cycle.

Feedback is a receiver's response to a message and can come in many forms. Let us examine several diverse types of feedback.

Direct Feedback

You post an article about your company's new water pump, and when you come back to it an hour later there are 162 comments. As you scroll through the comments, you find that 10 potential customers are interested in learning more, while the rest debate the specifications and technical abilities of the pump. This direct response to your writing is another form of feedback.

Direct feedback is a response that comes from the receiver. Direct feedback can be both verbal and non-verbal, and it may involve signs, symbols, words, or sounds. You may send an email to a customer who inquired about your water pump, offering to send a printed brochure, and have a local sales representative call. In order to do so, you will need the customer's mailing address, physical location, and phone number. If the customer replies simply with "Thanks!"—no address, no phone number—how do you interpret this direct feedback? Communication is dynamic and complex, and it is not always easy to understand or predict it.

Just as non-verbal gestures do not appear independent of the context in which the communication interaction occurs, and often overlap, recycle, and repeat across the interaction, the ability to identify clear and direct feedback can be a significant challenge. In face-to-face communication, yawns and frequent glances at the clock may serve as a clear signal (direct feedback) for lack of interest, but direct feedback for the writer is less obvious. It is a rare moment when the article you wrote is read in your presence and direct feedback is immediately available. Often, feedback comes to the author long after the article is published.

Indirect Feedback

Indirect feedback is a response that does not come directly from the receiver or source. The receiver may receive the message and may become the source of the response, but they may not communicate the response directly to you, the author. Your ability to track who accesses your website, what they read, and how long their visit lasts can constitute feedback to guide your writing. You may also receive comments, emails, or information from individuals within your organization about what customers have told them. This is another source of indirect feedback. The fact that the information is not communicated directly may limit its reliability, but it does have value.

Check Your Understanding

Internal Feedback

We usually think of feedback as something that can only come from others, but in the case of internal feedback, we can get it from ourselves. Internal feedback may involve reviewing your document before you send it, but it also may involve evaluation from within your organization.

On the surface, it may appear that internal feedback cannot come from anyone other than the author, but that would be inaccurate. If we go back to the communication process and revisit the definitions of source and receiver, we can clearly see how each role is not defined by just one person or personality but instead within the transactional nature of communication by function. The source creates and the receiver receives. Once the communication interaction is initiated, the roles often alternate, as in the case of an email or text message “conversation” where two people take turns writing.

When you write a document for a target audience—for example, a group of farmers who will use the pumps your company produces to move water from source to crop—they will be the target receiver you have in mind as you write. Until they receive the message, the review process is internal to your organization, and feedback is from individuals and departments other than the intended receiver.

You may have your company’s engineering department confirm the technical specifications of the information you incorporated into the document or have the sales department confirm a previous customer’s address. In each case, you are receiving internal feedback about content you produced, and in some ways, each department is contributing to the message prior to delivery. Internal feedback starts with you. Your review of what you write is critical. You are the first and last line of responsibility for your writing. As the author, it is your responsibility to ensure your content is correct, clear, concise, and ethical.

When you, as an author, consider whether the writing in a document is correct, it is important that you interpret correctness broadly. The writing needs to fit the context and be appropriate for the audience’s expectations. A piece of writing may be technically correct, even polished, and still be incorrect for the audience. Keeping in mind what you know about your audience (e.g., their reading levels and educational background) will help you craft a fit-for-purpose message.

Correctness also involves accuracy. A skilled writer verifies all sources for accuracy. If you do not diligently verify everything, you are opening the door to accusations; for example, false information could be interpreted as a fraud and may have legal implications. Keep notes on where and when you accessed websites, where you found the information you cite or include, and be prepared to back up your statements with a review of your sources.

Writing correctly also includes providing current, up-to-date information. Most business documents emphasize the time-sensitive nature of the information. It does not make sense to rely on sales figures from two years ago when you can use sales figures from last year; neither does citing old articles, outdated materials, and sources that may not apply to the given discussion. That said, outdated information can serve useful purposes but often requires qualification on why it is relevant.

Business writing also needs to be clear; otherwise, it will fail in its purpose to inform or persuade readers. Unclear writing can lead to misunderstandings that consume time and effort to undo. An old saying in military communications is “Whatever can be misunderstood will be misunderstood." To give yourself valuable internal feedback about the clarity of your document, try to pretend you know nothing more about the subject than your least informed reader does. Can you follow the information provided? Are your points supported? This is why proofreading and testing is so key to the writing process.

Finally, a skilled business writer understands he or she does not stand alone. Ethical consideration of the words you write, what they represent, and their consequences are part of the responsibility of a business writer. The writer offers information to a reading audience, and if their credibility is lost, future interactions are far less likely to occur. Brand management reinforces the associations and a relationship with the product or services that would be negatively compromised should the article and, by association, author and company be found untrue. Advertising may promote features, but false advertising can lead to litigation.

Check Your Understanding

External Feedback

How do you know that your writing has been read and understood? Writing, reading, and action based on the exchange of symbolic information is a reflection of the communication process. Assessment of the feedback from the receiver is part of a writer's responsibility. Increasingly, web-based documents allow for interaction and enhancement of feedback, but you will still be producing documents that exist as hard copies. Your documents may travel to places you do not expect and cannot predict. Feedback comes in many forms, and in this part of our discussion we focus on assessing interaction and gathering information from it. External feedback involves a response from the receiver. Receivers, in turn, become a source of information themselves. Attention to the channel they use (how they communicate feedback), as well as non-verbal aspects like time (when they send it), can serve you well as feedback mechanisms.

Hard Copy Documents and External Feedback

Your business or organization may communicate in written forms across time zones and languages via digital communication, but some documents are still produced on paper. Offline technologies like a photocopier or printer are still tools you will use as a normal course of business.

Letters are a common way of introducing information to clients and customers, and you may be tasked to produce a document that is printed and distributed via "snail mail." Legal documents are still largely in hard copy print form. So, too, are documents that address the needs of customers and clients who do not, or prefer not to, access information digitally.

Age is one audience characteristic that you might focus on when considering who may need to receive a letter in hard copy form, but you may be surprised about this. In a 2010 study of Canadian Internet use, web research firm comScore found that "while every other age group's online engagement levelled off or even declined between the end of 2009 and the end of 2010, the number of older users jumped 12 percent. On the other hand, the number of web users aged 17 or under actually dropped 4 percent during the same period" (Globe and Mail, 2011).

Socioeconomic status is a better characteristic to focus on when sending hard copy documents. Lack of access to a computer and the Internet is a reality for much of the world's population. It is often stated that half of the world's population will never make a phone call in their lifetime, and even though the references for the claims are widespread and diverse, the idea that there are people without access to a phone is striking for many Westerners. While cell phones are increasingly allowing poor and rural populations to skip the investment in landline networks and wireless Internet is a leapfrog technology that changes everything, cell phones and computers are still prohibitively expensive and unavailable for many.

Suppose you work for a major bank on the West Coast of Canada. You have been assigned to write a letter offering a refinance option to a select, previously screened audience composed of individuals who share several common characteristics: high-wage earners with exceptional credit scores. How will you get the attention of this audience? If you sent an email, it might get marked as spam. The audience is small and you have a budget for hard copy production of documents that includes a line item for mailing costs. If the potential customer receives the letter from your department delivered by an overnight courier like FedEx, they may be more likely to receive your message.

In 2005, United States–based Wells Fargo Bank did exactly that. They mailed a letter of introduction outlining an opportunity to refinance at no cost to the consumer, targeting a group identified as high profit and low risk. The channels selected—print-based documents on letterhead with a mode of delivery sure to get attention—were designed to prompt a response. The letter introduced the program, highlighted the features, and discussed why the customers were among a group of individuals to whom this offer was being extended (Diaz de Leon, 2005). In the letter, the bank specifically solicited a customer response, a form of feedback, via email and/or phone to establish dialogue. One could collect feedback in terms of number of respondents and in terms of the channel customers used to respond.

Hard copy documents can be a challenge when it comes to feedback, but that does not mean it is impossible to involve them in the feedback process. It is important to remember that even up until the late 1990s, most business documents were print-based. From sales reports to product development reports, they were printed, copied, bound, and distributed, all at considerable cost.

If one purpose of your letter is to persuade the client or customer to reply by email or phone, one way to assess feedback is the response rate, or the number of replies in relation to the number of letters sent. If your report on a new product is prepared for internal use and is targeted to a specific division within your company, their questions in relation to the document may serve as feedback. If you send a memo that produces more questions than the one it was intended to address, the negative feedback may highlight the need for revision. In each case, hard copy documents are often assessed through verbal and written feedback.

External Feedback in a Virtual Environment

When the Internet first came into popular use, a challenge for companies was to accurately assess their audience. When you produce content for a specific audience with a specific purpose, the reception you get to your message determines its value. Imagine that you produced a pilot television program with all the best characters, excellent dialogue, and big-name stars, only to see the pilot flop. If you had all the right elements in a program, how could it fail? It may have failed to attract an audience. Television often uses ratings (measurements of the estimated number of viewers) to measure success. Programs that get past a pilot or past a first season do so because they have good ratings and are ranked above other competing programs. All programs compete with one another within a time slot or across a genre. Those that achieve high rankings—those that receive the largest number of viewers—can command higher budgets and receive more advertising dollars. Programs that reach few people are often cancelled and replaced.

Writers experience a process of competition, ratings, feedback, and renewal within the world of online publishing. Business writers want their content to be read. Just as companies developed ways to measure the number of viewers of a given television program, which led to rankings that influenced which programs survived and prospered and which were cancelled, the Internet has a system of keeping track of what gets read and by whom.

Page views are a count of how many times a website is viewed. Each time a user or reader views the page counts as one page view. Google and other companies commonly track the number of unique visits a reader makes to a website, using cookies, (small, time-encoded files) to identify specific users.

Rankings of website on search engines like Google are established through a number of metrics. One of the most important metrics is the number of other websites that link to yours. By linking to your page or article, another website is giving it a vote of confidence. This, in turn, results in higher rankings for your page. More people will see it and read it as a result. In time, your page may become an authority because many other pages link to it.

As a business writer you will naturally want to incorporate authoritative sources and relevant content, but you will also want to attract and engage your audience, positioning your document as an authority. Feedback in the form of links may be one way to assess your online document.

User-generated Feedback

Let's say you have reviewed the comments that users have left on your blog post. This, in some ways, serves the same purpose as letters to the editor in traditional media. In newspapers, magazines, and other offline forms of print media, an edition is produced with a collection of content and then delivered to an audience. The audience includes members of a subscriber-based group with common interests, as well as those who read a magazine casually while waiting in the doctor's office. If an article generated interest, enjoyment, or outrage (or demanded correction), people wrote letters in response. Selected responses would be published in the next edition. There is a time delay associated with this system that reflects the preparation, production, and distribution cycle of the medium.

With the introduction of online media, however, the speed of this feedback loop has greatly increased. Public relations announcements, product reviews, and performance data of your organization are often made available via social media. If you see a factual error in an internally released article, within minutes you may be able to respond in an email to correct the data. In the same way, if the document is released externally, feedback from outside your organization will be quick. Audience members may debate your description of the water pump or openly question its effectiveness in relation to its specifications; they may even post positive comments. Customer comments, such as letters to the editor, can be a valuable source of feedback.

Customer reviews and similar forms of user-generated content are increasingly common across the Internet. People often choose written communication as the preferred format; from tweets, blog posts, and commentary pages to threaded, theme-based forums, person-to-person exchange is increasingly common. Still, as a business writer, you will note that even with the explosion of opinion content, the tendency for online writers to cite a website promotes interaction.

Due to the speed at which we can communicate online, customers often expect that they can send a tweet, Facebook message, or email to your company and get a response right away. This has led to an entirely new set of communications roles in the workforce, as there is now a need for employees to monitor and post to company social streams in real time, reacting to external comments and complaints as they happen.

Your goal as a business writer is to meet the audience and employer's expectations in a clear and concise way. Trying to facilitate endless discussions may generate feedback but may not translate into success. Facebook serves as a reminder that you want to provide solid content and attend to the feedback. People who use Google already have something in mind when they perform a search, and if your content provides what readers are looking for, you may see your page views and effectiveness increase.

Interviews

Interviews provide an author with the opportunity to ask questions of, and receive responses from, audience members. Since interviews take considerable time and cannot easily be scaled up to address large numbers of readers, they are most often conducted with a small, limited audience. An interview involves an interviewer, an interviewee, and a series of questions. It can be an employment interview or an informational interview in preparation of document production, but in this case we are looking for feedback. As a business writer, you may choose to schedule time with a supervisor to ask a couple of questions about how you could improve the document you produced. You may also schedule time with the client or potential customer and try to learn more. You may interact across a wide range of channels, from face-to-face to an email exchange, and learn more about how your document was received.

Surveys

At some point, you may have answered your phone to find a stranger on the other end asking you to take part in a survey for a polling organization. You may have also received a consumer survey in the mail, with a paper form to fill out and return in a postage-paid envelope. Online surveys are also becoming popular. This type of reader feedback can be valuable, particularly if some of the questions are open ended. Closed questions require a simple yes or no to respond, making them easier to tabulate as "votes," but open-ended questions give respondents complete freedom to write their thoughts. As such, they promote the expression of new and creative ideas and can lead to valuable insights. Surveys can take place in person, for example, in an interview format, which is the format used when taking a census. For example, Statistics Canada employs people to go door to door and follow up with those households that do not return census questionnaires. Your organization may lack comparable resources and may choose to mail out surveys on paper with postage-paid response envelopes or may reduce the cost and increase speed by asking respondents to complete the survey online.

Focus Groups

Focus groups involve a representative sample of individuals, brought together to represent a larger group or audience. If you know the characteristics of your target audience, you would look for participants who can represent more than one of those characteristics. The interaction involves a question-and-answer format. If your company is looking to launch a new product, you may introduce that product to this select audience to see how they react. What they say and express may help you in writing your promotional materials. In terms of feedback, you may assemble a group of individuals who use your product or service, and then ask them a series of questions in a group setting. The responses may have bearing on the way you write about your product.

Normally, we think of focus groups in a physical setting, but, again, modern technology has allowed for innovative adaptations. Forums, webinars, and other virtual gatherings allow groups to come together across time and distance to discuss specific topics. A web camera, a microphone, and an Internet connection are all it takes. Focus groups will increasingly gather via computer-mediated technologies in the future as the costs of bringing people together for a traditional meeting increase.

Conclusion

To find out if your communication has been received and understood, you will need to collect feedback from your audience. This feedback will give you an opportunity to optimize your messages in the future, change your behaviour or methods, and clarify anything that your audience has misunderstood.

Feedback can come directly from your audience or indirectly via a third party. It may come from internal or external sources. Depending on the channel you are using, feedback might take the form of non-verbal cues, such as your receiver's expressions and body language; verbal cues, like word choice and tone; or written cues, like letters and memos. Digital channels have made it possible for audiences to rapidly respond via user-generated feedback on websites, blogs, and social media.

Companies can elicit feedback through a number of channels, including interviews, surveys, and focus groups.

No matter what channel you have chosen to communicate with, make sure to close the feedback loop with your audience to gain insight on how to become a better communicator.

Key Takeaways and Check In

Learning highlights

- Feedback may be indirect or direct, internal or external, and may be mediated digitally in many different ways.
- Feedback "closes the loop" on communication and provides a way to determine if you have achieved the goal of communicating, to establish shared meaning.

Check In

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Attribution

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1.8: Module Conclusion

Foundations

In this introductory module, you first learned that despite the proliferation of technology and change, some essentials of effective communication remain the same.

You learned the working definition of communication and the theory of the communication process. With this knowledge in hand, you went on to learn about getting to know your audience. You used the AUDIENCE tool to test your knowledge and practise your skills in tailoring your message to your audience's needs.

You then turned your attention to the best way to reach your audience by examining communication channels. You learned about the foundational channels, digital channels, the flow of information, and information richness. You developed the skills to determine the best channel for your audience and message.

You discovered that to tailor your messaging effectively, your choice of words and approach matters. You studied and applied the five principles of plain language to make your messages clear and concise.

You explored the ways that visuals make powerful communication tools, learning about different types of visuals and the best situations in which to use them. You also learned how to source and attribute images ethically with a better understanding of copyright, as well as licensing options, such as Creative Commons. You also gained valuable practice with layout and visual formatting to add impact and clarity.

Closing the communications loop, you took an in-depth look at the value and various forms of feedback. You learned that by incorporating feedback effectively, you create a loop that allows you to further fine-tune your message to your audience's needs and expectations.

Now that you have been well grounded in the foundations of communication, you are ready to put your skills to the test. Complete the end-of-module assessments to be sure you are ready to move on to the Writing module, or consult the Discovery Tool to find the next stop on your professional communication journey.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Writing

2.1: Overview and Intention

Contents

The chapters in this module include:

- Grammar and Punctuation
- Writing Workplace Documents
- Revising Workplace Documents
- Ethical Guidelines for Writing
- Information Literacy

Module Summary

This module builds on the knowledge of plain language, communication channels, and audience analysis that you may already have or have learned in the Foundations Module. Here you will learn about the importance of writing clearly and with purpose. The focus will be on doing so within workplace contexts where the main challenges are to keep communication concise and not merely succinct; understandable yet professional in tone and language; and in accordance with workplace-related standards and conventions.

You may use common elements of grammar, punctuation, and writing style casually in everyday writing; however, this approach is not necessarily directly transferable to the workplace. Simple mistakes in spelling, sentence structure, and verb tense can alter meaning in communication and can also have a negative outcome for the writer. A review of these common elements with a particular focus on workplace usage is included.

We will examine important steps in writing with purpose, such as formulating a plan, drafting a communication, and the process of reflection and revision. Unlike casual communication, workplace writing is more purposeful. The purpose may be to simply inform recipients, but oftentimes it is to intentionally cause them to take action. To do so, your writing needs to be clear and focused. It also needs to comply with structural norms and be formatted in a professional manner.

This module also examines characteristics that affect the quality of writing and the ability of a writer to communicate effectively, to communicate with authority, and to summarize ideas of others without plagiarizing. Some workplace settings today may favour dispensing with formality and instead shifting to a more relaxed writing style. However, such a shift may not be suitable in all cases, such as in legal, medical, and financial professions. Form, structure, and convention are important, but so too is writing in an ethical and informed way. Procedures and strategies on how to support your writings by integrating or referencing credible, evidence-based, and subject-related information is an important component of this module.

Relevance to Practice

One perception of workplace writing is that it is easy, given the types of tasks associated with it. The nature of workplace writing tasks seems to validate the notion of ease and lack of complexity. Things like memos, emails, letters, and even reports tend to be viewed as being simple and straightforward to create. The repetitive nature of workplace writing may also contribute to this perception.

In a broader context many occupations, other than perhaps in the field of journalism, place good writing skills below job-specific skills in order of importance. This, along with other factors, may contribute to the view by some that good writing is not a top priority when preparing for employment.

Writing in the workplace is more than just the techniques necessary to put together an email or an aesthetically pleasing report. The words, nuances in phrasing, structure, and other key writing characteristics together are the main ingredients of good workplace writing.

High expectations about communication skills in general are top of mind with today’s employers. One of the most important of these skills is the ability to convey meaning accurately and effectively in writing. Other expectations include being able to compose written workplace communication using language that is appropriate and that conforms to professional standards and conventions; and distinguishing the structural elements of workplace documents in order to use them appropriately.

The stakes in responding effectively in writing can also raise challenges in today's culturally diverse workplaces. Gender, ethnicity, and culture, for example, can be important considerations when writing with purpose or to influence behaviour.

Learning Goals

An overarching theme in this eText is on developing abilities for effective planning, construction, and distribution of common workplace-related documents and publications. Learning goals will guide this development while learning outcomes serve as evidence of achievement. Key developmental attributes related to these learning goals are also listed here.

The aim of this module is to help you develop the knowledge and skills necessary to:

1. express yourself clearly in written business communication and
2. prepare effective written communications that conform to professional workplace standards and expectations.

Developmental Attributes

Upon successfully completing this module, you should:

Understand the following:

- That poor grammar and writing habits can compromise the effectiveness of written communication
- That standards of writing for the workplace are different than in everyday life
- That differentiating between relevant and irrelevant information enables writers to develop a comprehensive and useful product
- That it is important to draw on several sources of information to add validity to writing products

Know the following:

- Proper punctuation, grammar, and vocabulary to make communication clear
- Key quality principles of effective workplace writing
- Layout and style techniques that maximize message impact
- Research techniques to source and evaluate information

Be able to do the following:

- Present information and ideas in a way that others can understand
- Prepare, review, and edit written communication while following rules of grammar and punctuation
- Write in context to express ideas clearly and concisely
- Format correspondence appropriately to conform to business standards
- Summarize information from sources of research

Learning Outcomes for this Module

Upon successfully completing this module, you should be able to:

1. apply principles of effective writing to produce professional workplace documents;
2. match the most appropriate styles of workplace correspondence to intended purpose or function, and;
3. apply rules of compliance and ethics in the development of written products.

2.2: Grammar and Punctuation

Grammar and Punctuation

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- rewrite grammatically incorrect sentences to clarify the meaning of messages,
- explain different ways that grammar might influence the meaning or reception of written workplace communications,
- demonstrate when to use different but appropriate punctuation marks in writing,
- explain the impact of using incorrect punctuation in workplace communication,
- rewrite sentences correcting punctuation errors, and
- apply proper punctuation to communicate the true meaning of messages.

Introduction

To ensure you are able to craft your messages clearly and correctly, you have the option of refreshing and practising your grammar and punctuation.

If you are already a grammar guru (or, if you have become one since using the optional grammar package), you can immediately dive into the next chapter to learn about five common workplace documents: standard business letters, fax cover sheets, memos, short reports, and emails.

Chances are, if you have ever read or commented about anything in an online comments section, you have probably encountered the “grammar police.” These are the folks who are quick to ignore the meaning of what you said and focus exclusively on whether or not you have done so in a grammatically correct way. For our purposes, the definition of grammar is “a set of actual or presumed prescriptive notions about correct use of a language.”

People whose native language is English may make grammatical errors all the time. Often, conventions of speech do not adhere to grammar rules. As long as everyone else around them makes the same mistake, it does not sound wrong, and there is no problem until they encounter people who have learned otherwise. From region to region, and even from workplace to workplace, there may be small but perceptible differences in how people use grammar, as the English language continues to evolve. Generally speaking, the rules of grammar serve to help us all understand how to use the English language correctly. As irritating or pedantic as learning and implementing grammar may seem, grammatical norms are important for effective and clear communication.

Similarly, **punctuation** is defined as “the marks, such as period, comma, and parentheses, used in writing to separate sentences and their elements and to clarify meaning.” Punctuation is sometimes taken for granted or used incorrectly, particularly in digital communication like text messaging and social media.

As a writer and communicator who intends to be clear and accurate, you may find a refresher on grammar and punctuation to be helpful, which is what this section will give you.

Grammar

Grammatical errors can disrupt an audience’s ability to understand your message clearly, or can simply distract from your message. Further, grammatical missteps can often weaken the writer’s credibility, potentially causing your audience to not take your message seriously.

In this section we will give an overview of the parts of speech, types of sentences, and modifier errors. As a refresher, here are some basics about grammar:

Parts of Speech

“Parts of speech” are the basic types of words in the English language. Most grammar books say that there are eight parts of speech: **nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions,** and **interjections.** We will add one more type: articles.

It is important to be able to recognize and identify the different types of words in English so that you can understand grammar explanations and use the right word form in the right place. Here is a brief explanation of the parts of speech:

If you would like to practise identifying the various parts of speech, you can try this interactive exercise:

Types of Sentences

When we refer to grammar, we are generally speaking about how language is formed at the sentence level. Words are the foundation of sentences, and in the previous section we learned about what types of words make up the main part of speech. Here we focus on how we put those words together to try to create meaning. In future chapters we will keep building on this to learn about paragraphs and how we then use those in various formats like letters, memos, and reports.

The first part of this review will focus on the three main types of sentences: simple, compound, and complex sentences.

Simple Sentences

Simple sentences contain one subject–verb pair and express a complete thought. They may contain more than one subject, as in the following example:

My wife and I got married in Japan.

Simple sentences may also contain more than one verb, as in the next example:

He cut the grass and put away the lawnmower.

Here are some other examples of simple sentences and their subject–verb patterns:

The movie wasn't very interesting. (subject, verb)

My friends and I disliked the movie. (subject, subject, verb)

My friends and I cooked and ate the meal together. (subject, subject, verb, verb)

I might watch TV or read a book after dinner. (subject, verb, verb)

Compound Sentences

The second type of sentence, the **compound sentence**, consists of two simple sentences joined by a **coordinating conjunction**.

There are seven coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. A comma precedes a coordinating conjunction, which joins two simple sentences.

Note

Do not be confused between a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence and a compound verb in a simple sentence. Study the following examples carefully.

My friend plays the guitar and writes music.

This is a simple sentence containing a subject (friend) and a compound verb (plays/ writes).

My friend plays the guitar, and he writes music.

This is a compound sentence—two simple sentences joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction. The subject of the first simple sentence is friend, and the verb is plays. The subject of the second simple sentence is he, and the verb is writes.

Complex Sentences

Clauses are groups of words that contain subjects and verbs. There are two types: **independent (main) clauses and dependent (subordinate) clauses.** An independent clause, in addition to containing a subject and verb, expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a simple sentence. A dependent clause on its own is just part of a sentence or fragment. It must be joined to an independent clause for it to make sense and present a complete thought to the reader.

There are three types of dependent clauses: adjective clauses, adverb clauses, and noun clauses. When you join dependent and independent clauses together, you create **complex sentences.** Study the examples below.

Complex sentence using a dependent adjective clause:

Example	Explanation
Vancouver has many interesting places to shop.	independent clause or simple sentence
which is the largest city in British Columbia	dependent adjective clause
Vancouver, which is the largest city in British Columbia, has many interesting places to shop.	complex sentence

Complex sentence using a dependent adverb clause of time:

Example	Explanation
I will tell her the news.	independent clause or simple sentence
as soon as I see her	dependent adverb clause of time
As soon as I see her, I will tell her the news.	complex sentence

Complex sentence using a dependent adverb clause of reason:

Example	Explanation
I went to bed early.	independent clause or simple sentence
because I was tired	dependent adverb clause of reason
I went to bed early because I was tired.	complex sentence

Complex sentence using a dependent noun clause:

Example	Explanation
I already know.	independent clause or simple sentence
what you said	dependent noun clause
I already know what you said.	complex sentence

Note

Comma with dependent adverb clause

If a dependent adverb clause is before an independent clause in a sentence, the two are separated by a comma. However, if the dependent adverb clause follows the independent (main) clause, no comma is used.

Use a comma when the dependent clause is first:

While we were eating dinner, someone rang the doorbell.

Do not use a comma when the main clause comes first:

Someone rang the doorbell while we were eating dinner.

When you are sure that you understand the lesson, you can continue with this exercise:

Agreement and Parallelism

You probably have a fairly well-developed sense of whether a sentence sounds right. In fact, that is one of the main reasons why you should get into the habit of reading your drafts aloud before you submit them for peer or instructor review. Or better yet, ask a friend to read your draft back to you. You will be surprised how many careless errors you catch just from hearing them.

One key aspect that can make a sentence sound incorrect is if the subject and verb do not agree. In properly written sentences, the subjects and verbs must agree in number and person. Agreeing in number means that a plural subject is matched up with the plural form of the verb. Although the plural of a noun often ends in -s, it is the singular of a verb that usually ends in -s.

Examples:

The *rabbit* hops all around the cage. (singular subject and verb)

The *rabbits* hop all around the cage. (plural subject and verb)

Agreement in person means, for example, a third-person noun must be matched with the proper third-person verb. This chart shows first, second, and third person for a few present-tense verbs. As you can see, most of the verbs are the same in all columns except for the third-person singular. The verb to be at the bottom also varies in the first-person singular column. So to match subjects and verbs by person, you could choose, for example, to say "I am," but not "I are."

Present-Tense Verbs

1st Person Singular: I	1st Person Plural: We	2nd Person Singular: You	2nd Person Plural: You	3rd Person Singular: He, She, It	3rd Person Plural: They
walk	walk	walk	walk	walks	walk
laugh	laugh	laugh	laugh	laughs	laugh
rattle	rattle	rattle	rattle	rattles	rattle
fall	fall	fall	fall	falls	fall
think	think	think	think	thinks	think
am	are	are	are	is	are

Examples:

It rattles when the wind blows. (third-person subject and verb)

I think I am a funny person. (first-person subject and verb)

Molly or Huck keep the books for the club, so one of them will know.

Explanation: The word "or" usually indicates a singular subject even though you see two nouns. An exception to this guideline is that if one of the subjects is plural, the verb should agree with the subject to which it is closest.

Correction: Molly or Huck keeps the books for the club, so one of them will know.

The wilderness scare me when I think of going out alone.

Explanation: When a singular noun ends with an -s, you might get confused and think it is a plural noun.

Correction: The wilderness scares me when I think of going out alone.

Each of the girls are happy to be here.

Explanation: Indefinite pronouns (anyone, each, either, everybody, and everyone) are always singular. So they have to always be used with singular verbs.

Correction: Each of the girls is happy to be here.

Pronoun agreement is another important aspect when composing sentences. Matching a pronoun with its **antecedent** in terms of number (singular or plural) can be tricky, as evidenced in sentences like this one:

- Each student should do their own work.* (please see explanation on pg 19.)

Since student is singular, a singular pronoun must match with it. A correct, but rather clunky, version of the sentence is the following:

- Each student should do his or her own work.

To avoid pronoun and antecedent problems, you should take three steps:

1. Identify the antecedent.
2. Determine if the antecedent is singular or plural.
3. Make sure the antecedent and pronoun match, preferably by making both plural if possible.

Note

The use of the singular they/their is widely contested, and many writing style guides now consider it acceptable. The English language is always evolving, and we think that it's worth pointing out that this construction, though not parallel or grammatically correct from a traditional perspective (pronoun agreement), is arguably more efficient than using traditional gendered constructions of he or she and his or her. Sometimes context will dictate what is more preferable to work with. In this particular module, we use singular they/their because the context causes us to refer to general designations of people, such as boss, employer, employee, student, teacher, writer, reader, etc.; using the traditional singular pronouns every time in sentences such as "Your boss may ask you to write a letter on his or her behalf" would have resulted in a tedious eText! So sometimes your writing context will affect the norms, conventions, and rules you adhere to—or bend!

Antecedent Identification

The antecedent is the noun that the pronoun represents in a sentence. When you see a pronoun, you should be able to understand its meaning by looking at the rest of the sentence. Look at the following sentence:

- The Smiths picked apples for hours, and they put them in large boxes.
- The antecedent for "they" is "the Smiths." The antecedent for "them" is "apples."

Read each of the following sentences and note the antecedent for each pronoun.

- Beth fell on the floor and found out it was harder than she thought.
- it—floor; she—Beth
- The women chatted as *they* jogged along with *their* pets.
- they—the women; their—the women's
- When Abe lost *his* gloves, he backtracked looking for *them.*
- his—Abe's; he—Abe; them—gloves

As sentences become more complicated or whole paragraphs are involved, identifying pronoun antecedents might also become more complicated. As long as pronouns and antecedents are used properly, however, you should be able to find the antecedent for each pronoun. Read the following sentences and note the antecedent for each pronoun.

Original: The ancient Mayans targeted December 12, 2012, as a momentous day that marks the end of a 5,126-year era. Today scholars speculate about what the Mayans expected to happen on that day and if they saw it as a time for celebration or fear. Some say that the end of an era would have been a cause for celebration. Others view it as an impending ominous situation because of its unknown nature. At any rate, you can rest assured that many scholars will be paying attention as the upcoming date draws near.

With explanation: The ancient Mayans targeted December 12, 2012, as a momentous day that marks the end of a 5,126-year era. Today scholars speculate about what the Mayans expected to happen on that day and if they (the Mayans) saw it (December 12, 2012) as a time for celebration or fear. Some say that the end of an era would have been a cause for celebration. Others view it (December 12, 2012) as an impending ominous situation because of its (December 12, 2012's) unknown nature. At any rate, you (the reader) can rest assured that many scholars will be paying attention as the upcoming date draws near.

Singular versus Plural Antecedents

When you are writing and using pronouns and antecedents, begin by identifying whether the antecedent is singular or plural. As you can see by looking at the following table, making this determination is sometimes not as easy as it might seem.

Antecedent	Singular or Plural?	Explanation
dog	Singular	Common singular nouns function as singular antecedents.
singers	Plural	Common plural nouns function as plural antecedents.
everybody	Singular	Indefinite pronouns sometimes function as antecedents. Since they refer to nonspecific things or people, their number can be ambiguous. To solve this problem, indefinite pronouns are treated as singular. Other indefinite pronouns include *anyone*, *each*, *everyone*, *someone*, *nobody*, *no one*, *something*, and *nothing*.
team	Singular	Words that stand for one group are singular even though the group includes plural members.
team members	Plural	By very definition, the members in a group number more than one, so the term is plural.
coat and hat	Plural	When two or more nouns are joined by “and,” they create a plural entity.
coat or hat	Singular	When two or more nouns are joined by “or,” the singular or plural determination of such an antecedent is based on the last-mentioned noun. In this case, “hat” is mentioned last and is singular. So the antecedent is singular.
coat or hats	Plural	Since the last-mentioned noun in this set is plural, as an antecedent this set would be plural.
coats or hat	Singular	Since the last-mentioned noun in this set is singular, as an antecedent this set would be singular, even though the set includes a plural noun. (Note: as a matter of style, try to avoid this arrangement by using the “[singular] or [plural]” sequence for your antecedents.)

Antecedent and Pronoun Matches

Antecedents and pronouns need to match in terms of number (singular or plural) and gender. For purposes of clarity, try to keep a pronoun relatively close to its antecedent. When the antecedent is not immediately clear, make a change such as rearranging the words, changing from singular to plural, or replacing the pronoun with a noun. Each of the following sentences has an antecedent–

pronoun matching problem. Read each sentence and think about the problem. Then check below each example for a correction and an explanation.

The singer kept a bottle of water under their stool.
Explanation: Since "singer" is singular, the pronoun must be singular. In this situation, to say "his or her" sounds odd, so the best choice would be to revise the sentence to clarify the gender of the singer.
Correction: Angela, the singer, kept a bottle of water under her stool.

Each student should complete their registration for next semester by October 5.* (please also see explanation on pg. 19)
Explanation: Often, as in this situation, the best solution is to switch the subject from singular to plural so you can avoid having to use "his or her."
Correction: Students should complete their registration for next semester by October 5.

Everyone should do what they think is best.
Explanation: Indefinite pronouns are treated as singular in the English language even when they have an intended plural meaning. You have to either use a singular pronoun or revise the sentence to eliminate the indefinite pronoun as the antecedent.
Correction: Everyone should do what he or she thinks is best.
OR All employees should do what they think is best.

To compete in the holiday tournament, the team took their first airline flight as a group.
Explanation: Collective nouns are singular since they represent, for example, one team, one crowd, or one family. Although the pronoun "it" is used for nonhuman reference, it can also be used to reference a singular collective noun that involves humans.
Correction: To compete in the holiday tournament, the team took its first airline flight as a group.

Neither Cathy nor the Petersons wanted to give up her place in line.
Explanation: In situations involving "or" or "nor," the antecedent must match the noun closest to the pronoun, which in this case is Petersons. Since Petersons is plural, the pronoun must be plural.
Correction: Neither Cathy nor the Petersons wanted to give up their place in line.

The dogs and the cat ate all its food immediately.
Explanation: When joined by "and," compound antecedents are plural and, therefore, take a plural pronoun.
Correction: The dogs and the cat ate all their food immediately.

Each member is responsible for his own dues and registration.
Explanation: Using "he," "his," or "him" as a universal singular pronoun is no longer acceptable. Either use both a masculine and a feminine pronoun as in the first revision or change the noun to plural and use a plural pronoun as in the second revision. Stylistically, pluralizing is preferable.
Correction: Each member is responsible for his or her own dues and registration. OR Members are responsible for their own dues and registration.

Parallelism

Parallelism is the presentation of ideas of equal weight in the same grammatical fashion. This writing principle falls under the umbrella of grammar, style, rhetoric, and content. Parallelism is important in various types of sentences.

You may not realize it, but when we write, we often include lists. Lists need to be parallel in order for the sentence to be grammatically correct and for the reader to enjoy reading it. All the items in a list should be grammatically parallel. For instance, if your sentence lists a series of activities, all the items need to begin with verbs of the same tense and case.

<u>Example:</u>

After work, Logan bought groceries, made dinner, and watched TV.

Bought, made, and watched are all perfect past-tense verbs, resulting in a parallel list.

Remember, too, that when you join even two items with a conjunction, those two items need to be parallel. Parallel lists are especially important in well-written résumes. When you list your work duties under an employment entry, make sure that each item in your list begins with words that are parallel in part of speech, tense, and, if applicable, case.

However, achieving parallelism goes beyond the technicalities of a simple list. That congruence is something to keep in mind when your writing deals with deeper subjects or is designed to persuade an audience. Used well, parallelism can enhance your readers' (and even your own) understanding and appreciation of a topic. The most famous line from John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address provides another example (a specific kind of reversal of phrasing known as **antimetabole**): "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." You'll encounter parallelism not only in politics but also in advertising, religion, and poetry as well:

- "Strong enough for a man, but made for a woman."
- "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."
- "Some say the world will end in fire, / Some say in ice."

Parallelism is essential to well thought-out, well constructed, and easy-to-read sentences and paragraphs.

Check your understanding

Indicate if the following sentences are parallel. In cases where they are not parallel, rewrite the sentence to make it parallel.

- You may respond to our survey on the phone, visit any one of our 10 locations, or write an email.
- This position is a fast-paced, challenge, dynamic, and customer-focused opportunity.
- The problem was in production, not in planning.
- Jeremy is receiving employee of the month because he is intelligent, cares, honest, and works hard.

Prepositions and Conjunctions

Prepositions

Prepositions are words that show the relationships between two or more other words. Choosing correct prepositions can be challenging, but the following examples will help clarify how to use some of the most common prepositions.

Types of Prepositions	Examples of Prepositions	How to Use	Prepositions Used in Sentences
Time	at	Use with hours of the day and these words that indicate time of day: *dawn*, *midnight*, *night*, and *noon.*	We will eat *at 11:30*. We will eat *at noon.*
	by	Use with time words to indicate a particular time.	I'll be there *by 5:00*. I'll be finished *by October*.
	in	Use with *the* and these time-of-day words:*afternoon*, *evening*, and *morning.* Use on its own with months, seasons, and years.	We'll start *in the morning*. The rainy season starts *in June*.
	on	Use with days of the week.	I'll see you *on Friday*.
Location	at	Use to indicate a particular place.	I'll stop *at the dry cleaners*.
	in	Use when indicating that an item or person is within given boundaries.	My ticket is *in my pocket*.
	by	Use to mean "near a particular place."	My desk is *by the back door*.
	on	Use when indicating a surface or site on which something rests or is located.	Place it *on the table*, please. My office is *on Lincoln Boulevard*.
Logical relationships	of	Use to indicate part of a whole. Use to indicate contents or makeup.	I ate half *of the sandwich*. I brought a bag *of chips*.
	for	Use to show purpose.	Jake uses his apron *for grilling*.
State of being	in	Use to indicate a state of being.	I am afraid that I'm *in trouble*.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are known as “joiner” words. They join two words, phrases, or sentences together. This classic video illustrates the function of conjunctions, which are either coordinating conjunctions (and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet) or correlative conjunctions (both…and, either…or, just as…so, neither…nor, not…but, not only…but also, whether…or).

Check Your Understanding

Modifier Errors and Split Infinitives

Consider this sentence: “For her birthday, Megan received an attractive woman’s briefcase.” The modifier “attractive” is in an awkward position. The person who wrote this sentence most likely intended to suggest that the briefcase was attractive. However, people reading it or listening to it might easily assume that the briefcase was intended for (or already belonged to) an attractive woman.

Three categories of modifier problems include **misplaced modifiers, dangling modifiers,** and **split infinitives.** These three categories, explained in the following subsections, are all similar because they all involve misplacing words or phrases. Understanding the differences between these categories should help you be on the lookout for such mistakes in your writing and that of your peers.

Misplaced Modifiers

The easiest way to clarify which word is being modified in a sentence is to place the modifier close to the word it modifies. Whenever possible, it is best to place a modifier immediately before or after the modified word.

Read the following example of a misplaced modifier, note the point of confusion, and review the correction.

<u>Example:</u>

The malfunctioning student’s phone beeped during class.

Misplaced modifier: “malfunctioning”

Modifying: “phone” (not “student”)

Point of confusion: The writer wants to say that the student had a malfunctioning phone that beeped during class, not that the student was malfunctioning.

Correction: The student’s malfunctioning phone beeped during class.

Dangling Modifiers

Often a dangling modifier modifies the subject of a sentence, but the placement of the modifier makes it seem as though it modifies another noun in the sentence. Other times, a dangling modifier actually modifies someone or something other than the subject of the sentence, but the wording makes it appear as though the dangling modifier modifies the subject. The resulting image conveyed can often be rather confusing, humorous, or just embarrassing.

Read the following examples of dangling modifiers, note the point of confusion in each case, and review the possible corrections. Note that there is often more than one correct way to rewrite each sentence.

<u>Example 1</u>

The child was climbing the fence that always seemed adventuresome.

Misplaced modifier: “that always seemed adventuresome”

Modifying: “child” (not “fence”)

Point of confusion: The wording makes it sound as if the fence is adventuresome, not the child.

Correction: The child, who always seemed adventuresome, was climbing the fence. OR The adventuresome child was climbing the fence.

Example 2

Reading in the porch swing, giant mosquitoes attacked me.

Misplaced modifier: "Reading in the porch swing"

Modifying: Implicit "I" (not "mosquitoes")

Point of confusion: The wording makes the sentence sound as if the mosquitoes are reading on the porch swing, not the speaker.

Correction: While I was reading on the porch swing, giant mosquitoes attacked me. OR Giant mosquitoes attacked me while I was reading on the porch swing.

Example 3

After being found in the washing machine, the dog eagerly played with his favourite chew toy.

Misplaced modifier: "After being found in the washing machine"

Modifying: "toy" (not "dog")

Point of confusion: This sentence is supposed to say that the toy, not the dog, was found in the washing machine.

Correction: After the dog's favourite chew toy was found in the washing machine, he eagerly played with it. OR The dog eagerly played with his favourite chew toy after it was found in the washing machine.

Split Infinitives

Splitting infinitives refers to placing a word between "to" and a verb, as in "Miss Clark set out to clearly define the problem." Technically, you should not place the word "clearly" between "to" and "define." This grammar rule came about in the eighteenth century when people held Latin up as the language standard. Since Latin did not have two-word infinitives, such as "to define," grammarians wanted to preserve the unity of the two-word infinitives in an effort to make English more Latin-like. The use of split infinitives, however, has become increasingly common over the decades (e.g., "to boldly go where no man has gone before"—Star Trek, 1966). In fact, split infinitives are gaining acceptance in professional and academic writing as well. For your purposes, knowing what split infinitives are will help you know your options as a writer.

Example 1

I'm going to quickly run to the store so I'll be back when you get home.

Infinitive link: "to run"

Splitter link: "quickly"

Correction: I'm going to run to the store quickly so I'll be back when you get home.

Example 2

Helen thought Mr. Beed said to loudly sing, but he actually said to proudly sing.

Infinitive link: "to sing" (twice)

Splitter link: "loudly"; "proudly"

Correction: Helen thought Mr. Beed said to sing loudly, but he actually said to sing proudly.

Check Your Understanding

Punctuation

Suppose you are presenting a speech. If you speak too quickly, your audience will not understand what you are saying. To avoid this, you stop and take a breath a few times as you read. But how do you know where to pause, where to change your voice, and where to stop? Punctuation, of course!

Punctuation marks provide visual clues to readers, telling them how they should read the sentence. Some punctuation marks tell you that you are reading a list of items, while other marks tell you that a sentence contains two independent ideas. Punctuation marks tell you not only when a sentence ends but also what kind of sentence you have read. This chapter covers different types of punctuation and their uses. Let's begin with three punctuation marks you are probably already comfortable with.

Periods

The **period (.)** is a very common punctuation mark that indicates the end of a declarative sentence. The period can also be used at the end of an imperative sentence.

Examples:

The concert begins in two hours.

Watch for oncoming traffic.

Question Marks

Example:
Is it snowing?

Exclamation Marks

The exclamation mark (!) is used at the end of an exclamatory sentence, indicating that the sentence is an exclamation. The mark could also be used at the end of an imperative sentence to indicate a command.

Example:

This is the best day of my life!

Stop what you're doing right now!

Commas

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the comma (,). The comma indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. There are many ways to use a comma. Here are a few:

- **Introductory word (such as a sentence adverb)**: Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- **Lists**: The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
- **Coordinating adjectives**: He was tired, hungry, and late.
- **Conjunctions in compound sentences**: The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- **Interrupting words**: I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters**: The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

Example:

Without spoiling the surprise, we need to tell her to save the date

In this sentence, "without spoiling the surprise" is an introductory phrase, while "we need to tell her to save the date" is the main sentence.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add and before the last item.

Example:

The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. Unlike with a list of nouns, the word and does not always need to be before the last adjective.

Example:

It was a bright, windy, clear day.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as for, and, or but.

Example:

He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought to give more details. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with **interrupting words**. These can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

Example:

If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential.

Example:

An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and emails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

Examples:

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should be getting our tickets soon.

Examples:

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 6H2.

After moving to Ottawa, Ontario, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Example:

Hello,

I would like more information about your job posting.

Thank you,

Anita Al-Sayf

Semicolons

Another punctuation mark that you will encounter is the **semicolon (;)**. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this indicates a place to pause and take a breath.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses when relying on a period to separate them into two shorter sentences would make your writing choppy, and using a comma would create a comma splice, or run-on sentence (joining two independent clauses with merely a comma is an error).

Example:

Incorrect: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important. (incorrect because of comma splice/run-on-sentence)

Choppy: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview. Appearances are important.

Correct: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.

Here, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already have their own commas (called "internal punctuation"—at least one of the items is itself its own list). Semicolons help the reader distinguish between the groupings of items.

Example:

Incorrect: The colour combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

Correct: The colour combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; or red, green, and brown.

> Tip
>
> Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions such as and, or, and but.

Colons

The **colon (:)** is used to introduce lists, quotations, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Examples:

Dear Hiring Manager:

To: Human Resources

From: Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

Example:

The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to Introduce a Quotation

You can use a colon to introduce a quotation.

Example:

Mark Twain said it best: "When in doubt, tell the truth."

If a quote is longer than 40 words, skip a line after the colon and indent the left margin of the quote by five spaces. Because quotations longer than 40 words use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary.

Example:

My father always loved Mark Twain's words:

There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and

people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

> Tip
>
> Long quotations, which are 40 words or more, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like such as or for example.

Example:

Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.

> Tip
>
> Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Examples:

Proper noun: We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from Hamlet: "To thine own self be true."

Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother's cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect: The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

Check Your Understanding

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks (" ") set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use them to indicate direct quotations or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A **direct quotation** is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An **indirect quotation** is a restatement of what someone said or wrote and does not use the person's exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Examples:

Direct quotation: Carly said, "I'm not ever going back there again."

Indirect quotation: Carly said that she would never go back there.

Writing in the Workplace

Most word processing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this tool can be useful, it has major limitations. Being well acquainted with the rules of punctuation is far better than leaving the thinking to the computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentences:

Examples:

The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.

The client said, "He thought our manuscript was garbage.

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote in which the client does not like the manuscript. But did he actually use the word "garbage," or has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client's words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client. But who is "he" in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch or flag this, because the sentences are not grammatically incorrect. However, the meanings of the sentences are not the same, but grammar-check software cannot discern whether the words on the screen convey intended meaning. When you understand punctuation, you can write what you mean, and, in this case, save a lot of confusion around the office.

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person's exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

Examples:

Beginning: Madison said, "Let's stop at the farmers' market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner."

Middle: "Let's stop at the farmers' market," Madison said, "to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner."

End: "Let's stop at the farmers' market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner," Madison said.

Speaker not identified: "Let's stop at the farmers' market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner."

Always capitalize the first letter of a quotation that is a complete sentence, even if that first word is not the first word of the original sentence. When using your own clarifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Examples:

"Regular exercise," he added, "boosts your energy levels and improves your overall mood." (Identifying words break up the quotation.)

"You should start reading simple books to your child as early on as possible—preferably during infancy," the psychologist instructed, adding, "long before your child comprehends or speaks the language!"

When the quotation plays a grammatical role within the sentence (i.e., it is part of the grammatical structure of the rest of the sentence), the quoted part should begin with a lowercase letter. In other words, when the quoted material completes the grammatical makeup of the entire statement, including your own identifying or reporting words, do not capitalize that first letter. In most cases, that kind of quoted material is a sentence fragment (not a complete sentence).

Examples:

My friend said, "Luigi's serves the best lasagna in the whole city." (Quoted material is a full sentence and does not play a grammatical role.)

My friend said that Luigi's "serves the best lasagna in the whole city." (Quoted material is not a complete sentence but is essential to completing the grammatical structure of the rest of the sentence.)

He told her, "Practise more, because practice makes perfect." (Quoted material does not contribute to the grammatical structure of the whole sentence.)

He told her to "practise more, because practice makes perfect." (Quoted material completes the grammatical structure of the rest of the sentence.)

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed after commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

Examples:

Question is part of quoted text: The new employee asked, "When is lunch?"

Question is not part of quoted text: Did you hear her say you were "the next Picasso"?

Exclamation is part of quoted text: My supervisor beamed, "Thanks for all of your hard work!"

Exclamation is not part of quoted text: He said I "single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars"!

Quotations within Quotations

Use **single quotation marks (' ')** to show a quotation within in a quotation.

Examples:

Theresa said, "I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, 'No dogs allowed.'"

"When you say, 'I can't help it,' what exactly does that mean?"

"The instructions say, 'Tighten the screws one at a time.'"

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, articles, individual blog post titles, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, as well as titles of websites, are italicized.

Examples:

"Annabelle Lee" is one of my favourite romantic poems.

The New York Times has been in publication since 1851.

Writing in the Workplace

In many businesses, the difference between exact wording and a paraphrase is extremely important. For legal purposes, or for the purposes of doing a job correctly, it is important to know exactly what the client, customer, or supervisor said. Sometimes, details can be lost when instructions are paraphrased. Use quotes to indicate exact words where needed, and let your coworkers know the source of the quotation (client, customer, peer, etc.).

Check Your Understanding

Apostrophes

An **apostrophe (')** is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter s indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add 's.

Examples:

Jen’s dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

The dog’s leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess’s sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in s still take the apostrophe s (’s) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in s, just add an apostrophe (’). If the plural noun does not end in s, add an apostrophe and an s (’s).

Examples:

Plural noun that ends in s: The drummers’ sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.

Plural noun that does not end in s: The people’s votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

Examples:

I do not like ice cream.

I don’t like ice cream.

Notice how the words do and not have been combined to form the contraction don’t. The apostrophe shows where the o in not has been left out.

Examples:

We will see you later.

We’ll see you later.

Look at the chart for some examples of commonly used contractions.

Contraction	Phrase
aren’t	are not
can’t	cannot
doesn’t	does not
don’t	do not
isn’t	is not
he’ll	he will
I’ll	I will
she’ll	she will
they’ll	they will
you’ll	you will
it’s	it is, it has
let’s	let us
she’s	she is, she has
there’s	there is, there has
who’s	who is, who has

Tip

Be careful not to confuse it’s with its. It’s is a contraction of the words it and is. Its is a possessive pronoun.

It’s cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)

The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words it is in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction it’s.

Check Your Understanding

Parentheses

Parentheses ( ) are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should still make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses.

Examples:

Attack of the Killer Potatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen (so far).

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious (and nutritious) foods I have ever tasted!

Dashes

An **em-dash (—)** is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together, and the program automatically converts them into a dash. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Examples:

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

An **en-dash (–)** is used to separate items in a range. These could be ranges of numbers, ranges of dates or ranges of school grades (e.g., Grades 4–7). You would also use an en-dash when displaying scores (e.g., a 5–0 win), comparisons or between two elements that have a relationship (U.S.–Canada relations).

Hyphens

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in a different way.

Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

Examples:

The 55-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.

My doctor recommended against taking any habit-forming medication.

My study group focused on preparing for the mid-year review.

*Note: Did you know that a noun+participle adjective before the noun it modifies should be hyphenated but should be left "open" if it comes after the noun? Examples: The medication is habit forming.

The habit-forming medication is too strong for over-the-counter use.

My doctor advised against taking taking medication that could be habit forming.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

Example:

My supervisor was concerned that the team meet-

ing would conflict with the client meeting.

Conclusion

In this section you went back to basics with grammar and punctuation.

In the grammar section you reviewed the types of sentences, such as simple and complex sentences. You went on to look at things like subject–verb agreement and parallelism. You then reviewed prepositions and conjunctions and finished off the section with modifier errors and split infinitives.

The punctuation section first reviewed some of the more common and correctly used punctuation marks like periods, question marks, exclamation marks, and commas. Then you delved a bit deeper into more challenging punctuation marks like semicolons, colons, quotation marks, apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens.

Strengthening any weak areas in grammar or punctuation will put you on the path to becoming a better writer and communicator.

Learning Highlights

- Match pronouns and antecedents by number (singular or plural) and gender.
- Collective nouns and indefinite pronouns are both considered singular even when they appear to refer to multiple members or components.
- Turning a singular subject into a plural subject is often the best way to handle a number problem between a subject and a pronoun.
- Misplaced modifiers can cloud the meaning of a sentence due to poor placement of key phrases within the sentence.

- Dangling modifiers attribute a description to the wrong noun because of being placed in the wrong place in a sentence.
- Split infinitives are acceptable in many writing situations, but you should understand them so you can avoid them when you need to.

Further Reading and Links

If you would like to read more about grammar and punctuation, see the following site:

- Study Zone, ELC University of Victoria

References

Grammar. (n.d.) In Oxford Dictionaries. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/grammar

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2.3: Writing Workplace Documents

Learning to Write Workplace Documents

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- describe the purposes of the workplace documents identified in the module;
- given a sample workplace document, identify if the formatting has been correctly applied, and if not, correct it;
- given a scenario, write a sample workplace document applying the correct formatting and following the FAST acronym for writing;

Introduction

Written business communication requires skill and expertise. From letters to reports, the way you use the written word counts. Written documents provide a record of a correspondence, which is key in situations where legal concerns may arise. In cases like this, it's important to be able to demonstrate that the message was sent and received and determine what dates this occurred.

The written communication you produce represents you and your company, so your goal is always to make it clear, concise, and professional, regardless of the type of message you are sending.

This chapter will introduce five key types of written business documents that you will encounter during your professional life. These are **email, memos, letters, fax cover sheets,** and **short reports**. You will also learn about the acronym **FAST**, which will help you stay mindful about the appropriate Format, Audience, Style, and Tone of your document.

Think back to what you learned in the Foundations module about the purpose of communication. You may recall that a message usually has one of three intentions: to inform, persuade, or entertain. When you are writing workplace documents, you'll usually be focusing on the first two intentions, inform and persuade, though you might choose to entertain when you have a lighthearted message, such as an email invitation to an office holiday party.

Most commonly, memos, fax cover sheets, and short reports are intended to inform. These deal with facts only, and their messages are usually neutral—they are not likely to create an emotional response, either positive or negative.

Emails and letters may be strictly informational, or they may be persuasive in some way. For example, you may write an email to ask a colleague to volunteer for an event the company is sponsoring. You'll need to persuade the receiver to give up a Saturday afternoon to help out the company, but perhaps you can persuade them by letting them know that the boss is taking everyone to dinner afterwards!

Whatever your message, remember that different types of workplace documents can align with different purposes. You'll use what you've learned about audience and communication channels to help you choose the right one; rely on your plain language writing, grammar, and punctuation skills to craft a clear message; then use the skills you develop in this chapter to format your document appropriately.

Writing Paragraphs

Before we dive into the types of documents and their uses, we'll need to consider an important part of writing that makes up your documents: the paragraph.

A strong paragraph contains three distinct components:

1. **Topic sentence.** The topic sentence is the main idea of the paragraph.
2. **Body**. The body is composed of the supporting sentences that develop the main point.
3. **Conclusion**. The conclusion is the final sentence that summarizes the main point.

The foundation of a good paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea of the paragraph. This guides the reader by signposting what the paragraph is about. All the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence.

Developing a Topic Sentence

Pick up any newspaper or magazine and read the first sentence of an article. Are you fairly confident that you know what the rest of the article is about? If so, you have likely read the topic sentence. An effective topic sentence combines a main idea with the writer's personal attitude or opinion; this is called the controlling idea. It orients the reader and provides an indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph. Read the following example.

Example:

Creating a national set of standards for math and English education will improve student learning in many provinces.

This topic sentence declares a favourable position for standardizing math and English education. After reading this sentence, a reader might reasonably expect the writer to provide supporting details and facts as to why standardizing math and English education might improve student learning in many provinces. If the purpose of the essay is actually to evaluate education in only one particular province, or to discuss math or English education specifically, then the topic sentence is misleading.

Five characteristics define a good topic sentence:

1. Provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.
2. Contains both a topic and the writer's position on it.
3. Is clear and easy to follow.
4. Does not include supporting details.
5. Engages the reader by using interesting vocabulary.

When creating a workplace document, use the "top-down" approach—keep the topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph so that readers immediately understand the gist of the message. This method saves busy colleagues precious time and effort trying to figure out the main points and relevant details.

Headings are another helpful tool. In a text-heavy document, break up each paragraph with individual headings. These serve as useful navigation aids, enabling colleagues to skim through the document and locate paragraphs that are relevant to them.

Identifying Parts of a Paragraph

An effective paragraph contains three main parts: a topic sentence, the body, and the concluding sentence. A topic sentence is often the first sentence of a paragraph. It expresses a main idea combined with the writer's attitude about the subject. The body of the paragraph usually follows, containing supporting details. **Supporting sentences** help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. The **concluding sentence** is the last sentence in the paragraph. It reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words.

Read the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

Example:

After reading the new TV guide this week, I had just one thought—why are we still being bombarded with reality shows? This season, the plague of reality television continues to darken our airwaves. Along with the return of viewer favourites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. Prisoner follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season, but if any of them are reading this blog—stop it! We've had enough reality television to last us a lifetime!

The first sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It tells the reader that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer's distaste for these shows through the use of the word bombarded.

Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It reiterates the main point that viewers are bored with reality television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

Paragraphs that begin with the topic sentence move from the general to the specific. They open with a general statement about a subject (reality shows) and then discuss specific examples (the reality show Prisoner).

Now take a look at the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

Example:

Last year, a cat travelled 130 miles to reach its family, who had moved to another state and had left their pet behind. Even though it had never been to their new home, the cat was able to track down its former owners. A dog in my neighbourhood can predict when its master is about to have a seizure. It makes sure that he does not hurt himself during an epileptic fit. Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.

The last sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It draws on specific examples (a cat that tracked down its owners and a dog that can predict seizures) and then makes a general statement that draws a conclusion from these examples (animals' senses are better than humans'). In this case, the supporting sentences are placed before the topic sentence, and the concluding sentence is the same as the topic sentence.

This technique is frequently used in persuasive writing. The writer produces detailed examples as evidence to back up his or her point, preparing the reader to accept the concluding topic sentence as the truth.

Sometimes the topic sentence appears in the middle of a paragraph. Read the following example. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

Example:

For many years I suffered from severe anxiety every time I took an exam. Hours before the exam, my heart would begin pounding, my legs would shake, and sometimes I would become physically unable to move. Last year I was referred to a specialist and finally found a way to control my anxiety—breathing exercises. It seems so simple, but by doing just a few breathing exercises a couple of hours before an exam, I gradually got my anxiety under control. The exercises help slow my heart rate and make me feel less anxious. Better yet, they require no pills, no equipment, and very little time. It's amazing how just breathing correctly has helped me learn to manage my anxiety symptoms.

In this paragraph the underlined sentence is the topic sentence. It expresses the main idea: that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to his main point (breathing exercises can help control anxiety) by using a personal anecdote (how he used to suffer from anxiety). The supporting sentences then expand on how breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The last sentence is the concluding sentence and restates how breathing can help manage anxiety.

Implied Topic Sentences

Some well-organized paragraphs do not contain a topic sentence at all. Instead of being directly stated, the main idea is implied in the content of the paragraph. Read the following example:

Example:

Heaving herself up the stairs, Luella had to pause for breath several times. She let out a wheeze as she sat down heavily in the wooden rocking chair. Tao approached her cautiously, as if she might crumble at the slightest touch. He studied her face, like parchment; stretched across the bones so finely he could almost see right through the skin to the decaying muscle underneath. Luella smiled a toothless grin.

Supporting Sentences

If you think of a paragraph as a hamburger, the supporting sentences are the meat inside the bun. They make up the body of the paragraph by explaining, proving, or enhancing the controlling idea in the topic sentence. Most paragraphs contain three to six supporting sentences depending on the audience and purpose. A supporting sentence usually offers one of the following:

Reason

Sentence: The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.

Fact

Sentence: Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.

Statistic

Sentence: Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.

Quotation

Sentence: "We will not allow this situation to continue," stated Senator Johns.

Example

Sentence: Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of 55.

The type of supporting sentence you choose will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you are attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position, you should rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. Read the following example:

Example:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. **(Topic sentence)**

First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. **(Supporting sentence 1: statistic)**

Second, they produce very few emissions during low-speed city driving. **(Supporting sentence 2: fact)**

Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. **(Supporting sentence 3: reason)**

Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. **(Supporting sentence 4: example)**

"It's the cheapest car I've ever had," she said. "The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I've owned." **(Supporting sentence 5: quotation)**

Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future. **(Concluding sentence)**

To find information for your supporting sentences, you might consider using one of the following sources:

- Reference book
- Encyclopedia
- Website
- Biography/autobiography
- Map
- Dictionary
- Newspaper/magazine
- Interview
- Previous experience
- Personal research

Concluding Sentences

An effective concluding sentence draws together all the ideas you have raised in your paragraph. It reminds readers of the main point—the topic sentence—without restating it in exactly the same words. Using the hamburger example, the top bun (the topic sentence) and the bottom bun (the concluding sentence) are very similar. They frame the "meat" or body of the paragraph. Compare the topic sentence and concluding sentence from the previous example:

Example:

Topic sentence: There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.

Concluding sentence: Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

Notice the use of the synonyms advantages and benefits. The concluding sentence reiterates the idea that owning a hybrid is advantageous without using exactly the same words. It also summarizes two examples of the advantages covered in the supporting sentences: low running costs and environmental benefits.

You should avoid introducing any new ideas into your concluding sentence. A conclusion is intended to provide the reader with a sense of completion. Introducing a subject that is not covered in the paragraph will confuse the reader and weaken your writing.

A concluding sentence may do any of the following:

Example:

Purpose: Restate the main idea.
Sample: Childhood obesity is a growing problem in the United States.

Purpose: Summarize the key points in the paragraph.

Sample: A lack of healthy choices, poor parenting, and an addiction to video games are among the many factors contributing to childhood obesity.

Purpose: Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.

Sample: These statistics indicate that unless we take action, childhood obesity rates will continue to rise.

Purpose: Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.

Sample: Based on this research, more than 60 percent of children in the United States will be morbidly obese by the year 2030, unless we take evasive action.

Purpose: Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.

Sample: Childhood obesity is an entirely preventable tragedy.

Transitions

A strong paragraph moves seamlessly from the topic sentence into the supporting sentences and on to the concluding sentence. To help organize a paragraph and ensure that ideas logically connect to one another, writers use transitional words and phrases. A transition is a connecting word that describes a relationship between ideas.

Example:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. Second, they produce very few emissions during low-speed city driving. Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. “It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I’ve owned.” Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

Each of the underlined words is a transition word. Words such as first and second are transition words that show sequence or clarify order. They help organize the writer’s ideas by showing that he or she has another point to make in support of the topic sentence. Other transition words that show order include third, also, furthermore, initially, and subsequently.

The transition word because is a transition word of consequence that continues a line of thought. It indicates that the writer will provide an explanation of a result. In this sentence the writer explains why hybrid cars will reduce dependency on fossil fuels (because they do not require gas). Other transition words of consequence include as a result, so that, since, thus, and for this reason.

To include a summarizing transition in her concluding sentence, the writer could rewrite the final sentence as follows:

Example:

In conclusion, given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

The following chart provides some useful transition words to connect supporting sentences and concluding sentences.

For Supporting Sentences					
above all	but	for instance	in particular	moreover	subsequently
also	conversely	furthermore	later on	nevertheless	therefore
aside from	correspondingly	however	likewise	on one hand	to begin with
at the same time	for example	in addition	meanwhile	on the contrary	
For Concluding Sentences					
after all	all things considered	in brief	in summary	on the whole	to sum up
all in all	finally	in conclusion	on balance	thus	ultimately

Transitional words and phrases are useful tools to incorporate into workplace documents. They are used within paragraphs to connect one sentence to the next, and are also found at the beginning and end of each paragraph, so that each is seamlessly connected to the next. They guide the reader through the document, clarifying relationships between sentences and paragraphs so that the reader understands why they have been written in that particular order.

For example, when you are writing an instructional memo, it may be helpful to consider the following transitional words and phrases: before you begin, first, next, then, finally, after you have completed. Using these transitions as a template to write your memo will provide readers with clear, logical instructions about a particular process and the order in which steps are supposed to be completed.

Preparing a Workplace Document

When you sit down to write a document at work, you'll need to consider who the audience is and what the purpose of your message is (to inform, persuade, or entertain). With that information you can decide which document type (channel) to use.

A good approach is to outline the document first, marking out where each element belongs. For example, if you have chosen to write a letter, you might first identify the location of each address, the date, the salutation, the signature, and so on. This will help you to create the structure of your document and make the writing process (and, further, the editing process) much easier.

When you are writing a workplace document, you will choose whether to approach your topic directly or indirectly. A direct message gets to the point immediately within the document, whereas an indirect message sandwiches the key point (often bad news) between other information (positive or neutral detail) so as to "soften the blow" of an undesirable communication.

Email

Electronic mail, usually called email, is probably familiar to you. It may be used similarly to text messaging or synchronous chat, or as a quicker way to receive and send information that would traditionally be written in a letter. It can be delivered to a mobile device. In business, it has largely replaced printed letters for external (outside the company) correspondence, as well as taking the place of memos for internal (within the company) communication (Guffey, 2008). Email is best for fairly brief messages.

Many businesses use automated emails to acknowledge communications from the public or to remind people that reports or payments are due. Your job might require you to populate a form email in which standard paragraphs are used, but you choose from a selection of sentences to make the wording suitable for a particular scenario, for example.

Emails are often informal when used for personal communication, but business communication requires attention to detail, awareness that your email reflects you and your company, and a professional tone so that it may be forwarded to any third-party if needed. Email often serves to exchange information within organizations. Although email may feel informal, remember that when used for business, it needs to convey professionalism and respect. Never write or send anything that you wouldn't want read in public or in front of your company president.

Tips for Effective Business Emails

- Proper salutations should demonstrate respect and avoid mix-ups in case a message is accidentally sent to the wrong recipient. For example, use a salutation like “Dear Ms. X” (external) or “Hi, Barry” (internal).
- Subject lines should be clear, brief, and specific. This helps the recipient understand the essence of the message. For example, “ABC Sales Proposal attached.”
- Close with a signature. Identify yourself by creating a signature block that automatically contains your name and business contact information.
- Avoid abbreviations. An email is not a text message, and the audience may not find your wit cause to ROTFL (rolling on the floor laughing).
- Be brief.
- Format cleanly. Include line breaks between paragraphs for ease of reading.
- Do a three-stage review (including structural edit, copy edit, and proofread) before you press send. It will take more time and effort to undo the problems caused by a hasty, poorly written email than to get it right the first time.
- Reply promptly. Watch out for an emotional response—never reply in anger—but make a habit of replying to emails within 24 hours, even if only to say that you will provide the requested information within 48 hours.
- Use “Reply All” sparingly. Do not send your reply to everyone who received the initial email unless your message absolutely needs to be read by the entire group.
- Avoid using all caps. Capital letters are used online to communicate yelling and are considered rude.
- Test links.
- Email ahead of time if you are going to attach large files (audio and visual files are often quite large) to prevent exceeding the recipient’s mailbox limit or triggering the spam filter.
- Give feedback or follow up. If you don’t get a response in 24 hours, email or call. Spam filters may have intercepted your message, so your recipient may never have received it.

Let’s look at two examples of business email. The first is an email form, and the second is a custom message written specifically for the situation and audience.

Example Email Form:

Subject: Welcome to the [our name] Store.

Dear [customer name],
Thank you for registering with the [our name] Store.
You can manage your personal information from the “My Account” section of the website when you sign in to the [our name] Store.
Here, you can change your contact details and password, track recent orders, add alternate shipping addresses, and manage your preferences and profile, all in this single convenient location.

Thank you for your interest in the [our name] Store!
We look forward to your next visit.

Example Custom Email:

To: Sean Carlson Physical Plant Manager, XYZ Corporation
From: Miles Nickel, Construction Site Manager, McCrady Construction
Sent: Monday, March 05, 2015, 2:47 p.m.
Subject: Construction Interruptions

Sean,

I know employees of XYZ Corporation are looking forward to moving into the new ABC Street building in June, but recently, groups of employees who do not have business here have been walking through the building. These visits create a safety hazard, interrupt the construction workers, and could put your occupancy date in jeopardy.

Please instruct your staff members who haven’t already been moved to ABC Street to stay out of the building. If they need to meet with someone who has already moved, they should conduct their business and leave promptly via the nearest staircase.

We need to avoid further interruptions so our construction workers can get the building ready for occupancy on schedule. If you have any questions, please call me.

Thanks,

Miles

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Check Your Understanding

Memos

A memo (or memorandum, meaning "reminder") is normally used for communicating policies, procedures, or related official business within an organization. It is often written from a one-to-all perspective, broadcasting a message to an audience, rather than a one-on-one, interpersonal communication. It may be used to update a team on activities for a given project or to inform a specific group within a company of an event, action, or observance.

Memo Purpose

A memo's purpose is often to inform, but it may occasionally include an element of persuasion or a call-to-action. All organizations have informal and formal communication networks. The unofficial, informal communication network within an organization is often referred to as the **grapevine**, and it is characterized by rumour, gossip, and innuendo. On the grapevine, one person may hear that someone else is going to be laid off and start passing the news around. Rumours change and transform as they are passed from person to person, and before you know it, the word is that they are shutting down your entire department!

One effective way to address unofficial speculation is to spell out clearly for all employees what is going on with a particular issue. If budget cuts are a concern, then you could send a memo explaining the changes that are imminent. If a company wants employees to take action, they may issue a memo. For example, on February 13, 2009, upper management at the Panasonic Corporation issued a declaration that all employees should buy at least $1,600 worth of Panasonic products. The company president noted that if everyone supported the company with purchases, it would benefit all (Lewis, 2009). While memos do not normally include a call-to-action that requires personal spending, they do usually represent the organization's interests. They may also include statements that align business and employee interest.

Memo Format

A memo has a header that indicates who sent it and who the intended recipients are. Pay particular attention to the title of the individual(s) in this section. Date and subject lines are also present, followed by a message that contains a declaration, a discussion, and a summary.

In a standard writing **format**, we might expect to see an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. All these are present in a memo, and each part has a purpose. The introduction in the opening uses a declarative sentence to announce the main topic. The body elaborates or lists major points associated with the topic, and the conclusion serves as a summary. Let's examine a sample memo.

Example Memo:

To: All Employees

From: Maya James, President, Provincial University

Date: September 21, 2015

Subject: Future Expenditure Guidelines

After careful deliberation, I have determined it is necessary to begin the initial steps of a financial stewardship program that carries Provincial University through what appears to be a two-year cycle of a severe provincial shortfall in revenue and subsequent necessary legislative budget reductions.

Beginning September 24, 2015, the following actions are being implemented for the General Fund, Auxiliary Fund, and Capital Fund in order to address the projected reductions in our provincial aid for the remainder of this year, 2015/2016, and for the next year, 2016/2017.

1. Only purchases needed to operate the university should be made so that we can begin saving to reduce the impact of the 2016/2017 budget reductions.
2. Requests for out-of-province travel will require approval from the Executive Committee to ensure that only necessary institutional travel occurs.
3. Purchase, including in-province travel and budget transfers, will require the appropriate vice president's approval.

Please understand that we are taking these prudent steps to create savings that will allow ProvU to reduce the impact of projected cuts in expected 2016/2017 legislative reductions. Thank you for your cooperation. Please direct any questions to my office.

<u>Five Tips for Effective Business Memos</u>

Audience Orientation

Always consider the audience and their needs when preparing a memo. An acronym or abbreviation that is known to management may not be known by all the employees of the organization, so, if the memo is to be posted and distributed within the organization, your goal should be clear and concise communication at all levels with no ambiguity.

Professional, Formal Tone

Memos are often announcements, and the person sending the memo speaks for a part or all of the organization. While it may contain a request for feedback, the announcement itself is linear, from the organization to the employees. The memo may have legal standing, as it often reflects policies or procedures.

Subject Emphasis

The subject is normally declared in the subject line and should be clear and concise. If the memo is announcing the observance of a holiday, for example, the specific holiday should be named in the subject line—for example, use "Thanksgiving weekend schedule" rather than "holiday observance."

Direct Format

Memos are always direct, meaning they get to the point quickly and the purpose is clearly announced.

Objectivity

Memos are a place for just the facts and should have an objective tone without personal bias, preference, or interest on display. Avoid subjectivity.

Check Your Understanding

A letter has five main areas:

1. The heading, which establishes the sender, including address and date
2. The introduction, which establishes the purpose
3. The body, which articulates the message
4. The conclusion, which restates the main point and may include a call-to-action
5. The signature line, which sometimes includes the contact information

Tip

When formatting a full-block business letter, keep in mind the following guidelines:

- Apply single spacing throughout
- Use 1" – 1 ½" margins
- Left-justify all contents

A sample letter is shown below with guiding notations in bold. Rather than placing the return address at the top of your page, you could instead use company letterhead showing the logo and company address.

Example Letter (Guide)

Return Address (if not in letterhead logo):

123 Cockburn Road

Anytown, MB A1M 2P3

Date: September 14, 2015

Recipient Note (optional): CONFIDENTIAL

Inside Address:

Ms. Zoe Maeve

123 Arbuthnot Drive

Anytown, AB T1A 2B3

Salutation: Dear Ms. Maeve:

Subject Line (optional): The myth of the paperless office

Introduction: This letter is to inform you that the myth of the paperless office, where you will not be required to produce hard copy letters on company letterhead, is just that: a myth.

Body: While email has largely replaced letter writing for many applications, several reasons for producing a hard copy letter remain. The first is that many employers still produce letters as a normal part of business communication. Next, we must consider that papers sales in business have increased across the last decade, showing no signs of the decrease we would associate with the transition to the paperless office. Finally, business letters may serve many functions, and your proficiency in their production will contribute to our personal and professional success.

Conclusion: Letter writing is a skill that will continue to be required in the business environment of today and tomorrow.

Close: Sincerely,

Murray Moman

Signature: Murray Moman

Reference Initials (optional): ARJ

Enclosure Notation (optional, if needed)

Copy Notation (optional): cc: Beth Lloyd

Mailing Notation (optional)

Remember that letters represent you and your company in your absence. In order to communicate effectively and project a positive image, you'll need to:

- be clear, concise, specific, and respectful
- ensure each word contributes to your purpose
- ensure each paragraph focuses on one idea only
- form a complete message
- keep your writing free of errors

Good News or Neutral Information in a Business Letter

Writing a letter that contains good or neutral news is fairly straightforward. Your intention is to get the news across quickly and clearly, while making sure the reader has a positive image of you and your company. You can do this by following these steps:

1. State the news simply and directly.

2. Give the reasons/details.
3. Close with a **goodwill statement.***

Bad News in a Business Letter

Saying no is more challenging than saying yes! This is true for all kinds of communication, but in a professional context, this can be challenging because you may not know the recipient of your message personally or be able to predict how they will react. When writing a letter that contains bad news, for example, when you need to tell a customer that they will not be receiving a refund, your challenge is to send a negative message while maintaining a positive relationship between your company and the receiver. Bad news can make the receiver feel a number of emotions, from disappointment to irritation, anger, and confusion. You can minimize these negative effects by structuring your letter in a specific way.

When you write a letter that contains bad news, your goals are to

- make the news easy to understand,
- let the receiver know that there will be no change in status (and avoid further communication),
- leave the receiver with a positive impression of your company.

Direct and Indirect Approaches to Writing Business Letters

There are two different ways to deliver bad news in a letter: the direct approach and the indirect approach. You'll decide which approach to use based on the type of news you are delivering.

When using the direct approach, you'll follow these steps:

1. State the bad news simply and directly.
2. Give the reasons.
3. Give an alternative, if possible.
4. Close with a goodwill statement.*

* What is a goodwill statement? It is an assertive but professional statement that demonstrates care about ongoing positive relationship.

The following letter uses the direct approach.

Example Letter (Direct Approach):

Dear Mr. Moore:

The reference you are looking for doesn't seem to have originated with our company. While looking through our record of corporate speeches on the effect of free trade on agriculture, we haven't come across anything similar to the remarks you mentioned. When I asked Mr. Lockhart, he had no recollection of anyone in the company having made that type of analogy.

We have conducted a quick Internet search and have found a number of sites that may well give you the information you are seeking. The Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada website at www.agr.gc.ca is probably a good starting point for your search.

We hope you find this information helpful.

When using the indirect approach, you'll follow these steps:

1. Begin with a buffer statement.*
2. Discuss the circumstances leading to the bad news.
3. State the bad news as positively as possible.
4. Give a helpful suggestion or alternative.
5. Close with a goodwill statement.

* What is a buffer statement? It is a gentle but professional statement that sets the tone of your letter.

Choosing an Approach

You would typically use the direct approach in all business letters, except when

- you are delivering bad news and it is unexpected;

- you don’t know the reader very well, and a negative emotional reaction is likely to occur.

In these situations, the indirect approach is a better choice.

In situations like these, the reasons you would give in the direct approach (in Step 2) could be viewed as excuses, so it is best not to present them. Instead, you should place the bad news in the middle portion of the letter, providing an explanation before it, and closing with positive or neutral language, as in the indirect approach. It is important to avoid a canned, insincere, inappropriate, or self-serving closing in any letter, but particularly so when you are using the indirect approach.

There are three key things to do in a letter that follows the indirect approach:

1. Provide proof that persuades the reader to accept the bad news.
2. Give the bad news.
3. Give options for future success.

The following letter uses the indirect approach.

Example Letter (Indirect Approach):

Dear James:

Clerks in our office must be ready to serve customers by 9:00 a.m. According to company policy, arriving at work on time is a mandatory element of your employment here.

This month you have been late to work four times. Only two late arrivals are permitted before management must intervene. Since you have exceeded those limits, it is necessary for me to give you a written warning and put you on probation.

If you are on time each day within the next 90 days, I will remove this from your employment record. You will then be able to work towards a promotion and salary increase. I would be pleased to discuss this with you at your convenience.

Tip

When using the indirect approach, you should follow these guidelines:

- **Don’t** mislead the reader with an opening that is too positive.
- **Do** keep reasons as short as possible.
- **Do** make sure the reader is clear about the bad news.
- **Do** avoid negative words and phrasing.
- **Don’t** end with a statement that is artificial.

When you are writing a letter that contains good news or neutral information, you should use the direct approach.

Check Your Understanding

Instructions: Please review the business letter below and then answer the multiple- choice questions that follow.

Aspen Country Lodge

November 14, 2015

Dorothy Allen
12345 Stream Ave.
St. Augustine, FL 34567

Dear ________(#1):

As the holiday season approaches, we are reminded of the blessings that are bestowed on us throughout the year. At Aspen Country Lodge, the pleasures we share year after year with our Legacy clients are among our most cherished blessings.

And so, as our staff looks forward to spending time with friends and family, we are also thinking of special friends like you and hoping you are enjoying good health and good cheer. We take pride in being your home away from home and reserve a special place in our hearts for the memories we’ve shared with you.

Thank you for making Aspen Country Lodge part of your annual traditions. Have a blessed Christmas and a peaceful, joyous, and prosperous New Year.

______________(#2),

Theodore P. Hyde, Owner/Manager

Aspen Country Lodge • 402 Aspen Way • Cold Bluff, CA 98765 • (303) 346-7889

Fax Cover Sheet

You might think that email has surely replaced fax by now, but that isn't the case in the business world, at least not yet! You'll notice that faxes are still commonplace when a signature is needed, or when a legally binding document (a contract, for example) is being transmitted. Some industries (such as medical and legal) still rely on faxes because their transmission cannot be intercepted. When confidentiality is important, a fax may be your go-to document format.

Your organization may have a fax cover sheet template that all employees use, so look for this before you send your first fax, as it will make the process much quicker. In general, fax cover sheets usually have some or all of the following contents:

- Company name or logo
- Date
- Name and fax number of receiver
- Name, fax, and phone number of sender
- Number of pages
- Subject*
- Message*
- Confidentiality Notice

*These are not always included. Use them if you have additional information not covered by the fax contents.

Example Fax Cover Sheet:

FAX *Smith & Sons. Ltd.*

To: James Milford **From**: Leonard Smith **Fax:** (555) 212-0988

Fax: (555) 313-0122 **Date:** 08/09/2015

Phone: (555) 401-9876

CONFIDENTIAL **Pages**: 5

Subject: Employment Contract

Message:

James,

Please sign and return the attached contract at your earliest convenience.
If you have any questions or concerns, please contact my office.

Best Regards,

Leonard.

Short Report

Reports are designed to record and convey information to the reader and can be used both internally and externally. Reports serve to document new information for specific audiences, goals, or functions. The type of report is often identified by its primary purpose, as in an accident report, a laboratory report, or a sales report. Reports are often analytical or involve the rational analysis of information. Sometimes they report the facts with no analysis at all. Other reports summarize past events, present current data, and forecast future trends. This section will introduce you to the basics of report writing.

Types of Reports

Reports come in all sizes but are typically longer than a page and somewhat shorter than a book. In this chapter we're focusing on short reports that would typically be up to four pages in length. The type of report depends on its function, and different industries have reports specific to them. For example, science researchers write lab reports, while incident reports are common in health-and-safety environments.

Reports vary by function, style, and tradition. Within your organization, you may need to address specific expectations. This section discusses reports in general terms, focusing on common elements and points of distinction. Reference to similar documents at your workplace may serve you well as you prepare your own report. There are many types of reports, but this section will focus on three types common to the workplace. At times, these may be combined into one longer report.

Type	Function
Progress Report	Monitor and control production, sales, shipping, service, or related business process.
Recommendation Report	Make recommendations to management and provide tools to solve problems or make decisions.
Summary Report	Present summaries of the information available on a given subject.

Progress Report

A progress report is used to give management an update on the status of a project. It is generated at timed intervals (for example, once a month) or on completion of key stages. It records accomplishments to date and identifies any challenges or concerns. It is usually written by the project lead and is one to two pages long.

When you write a progress report, begin by stating why you are writing the report:

- Identify what you've accomplished
- List any problems you have encountered
- Outline what work still remains

Conclude by providing an overview of the project's status and what should be done next.

Recommendation Report

A recommendation report is used to help management make decisions. The goal of this report is to identify a solution to a problem or suggest a course of action. In it, the writer might suggest that a procedure be adopted or rejected, assess an unsatisfactory situation, or persuade decision makers to make a change that will benefit the organization. For example, the report might suggest ways to enhance the quality of a product, increase profit, reduce cost, or improve workplace conditions. The intention of a recommendation report is not to assign blame or be overly critical, but to suggest improvements in a positive manner. If you're writing a recommendation report, it may be helpful to get input from your colleagues.

Summary Report

A summary report is used to give management information. For example, if you work in the marketing department, your boss might ask you to find out about your competitors' online activities so that your company can effectively compete with them. To do this, you would research your competitors' websites, social media profiles, digital advertising campaigns, and so on. You would then distill what you find down to the key points so that your boss can get the essential information in a short time, and then decide how to act on it. Unlike the recommendation report, the summary report focuses on the facts, leaving it to management to decide on a course of action.

How Are Reports Organized?

Reports vary by size, format, and function. You need to be flexible and adjust your report to the needs of the audience. Reports are typically organized around six key elements:

1. Who the report is about and/or prepared for

2. What was done, what problems were addressed, and the results, including conclusions and/or recommendations
3. Where the subject studied occurred
4. When the subject studied occurred
5. Why the report was written (function), including under what authority, for what reason, or by whose request
6. How the subject operated, functioned, or was used

Pay attention to these essential elements when you consider your stakeholders. That may include the person(s) the report is about, whom it is for, and the larger audience of the organization. Ask yourself who the key decision makers are, who the experts will be, and how your words and images may be interpreted. While there is no universal format for a report, there is a common order to the information. Each element supports the main purpose or function, playing an important role in the transmission of information.

Ten Common Elements of a Report

Page	Element	Function
1. Cover	Title and image	Like the cover of a book, sometimes a picture, image, or logo is featured to introduce the topic to the reader.
2. Title Fly	Title only	Optional
3. Title Page	Label, report, features title, author, affiliation, date, and sometimes for whom the report was prepared	
4. Table of Contents	A list of the main sections and their respective page numbers	
5. Abstract	• Informational abstract: highlight topic, methods, data, and results • Descriptive abstract: (All of the above without statements of conclusion or recommendations)	
6. Introduction	Introduces the topic of the report	
7. Body	Key elements of body include: • Background • Methodology • Results • Analysis and Recommendations	
8. Conclusion	Concise presentation of findings	Indicates the main results and their relation to recommended action or outcome
9. References	Bibliography or Works Cited	List of citations
10. Appendix	Related supporting materials	May include maps, analysis of soil samples, field reports, etc.

Here is a checklist for ensuring that a report fulfills its goals:

1. Report considers the audience’s needs
2. Form follows function of report
3. Format reflects institutional norms and expectations
4. Information is accurate, complete, and documented
5. Information is easy to read
6. Terms are clearly defined

7. Figures, tables, and art support written content
8. Figures, tables, and art are clear and correctly labelled
9. Figures, tables, and art are easily understood without text support
10. Words are easy to read (font, arrangement, organization)
11. Results are clear and concise
12. Recommendations are reasonable and well-supported
13. Report represents your best effort
14. Report speaks for itself without your clarification or explanation

Formatting a Report

Make it easier for your reader to comprehend the information in your report by formatting your document cleanly. Here are a few guidelines:

- Use 12pt type in a standard font
- Use 1 ½- to 2-inch margins
- Use headings and subheadings to divide the content into clear sections
- Separate paragraphs using white space
- Use visuals (charts, graphs, diagrams, etc.) where they will help in explaining numbers or other information that would be difficult to understand in text form

Check Your Understanding

FAST: Format, Audience, Style, Tone

Format

When composing your business documents, you will first have to decide which format best suits your purpose. In the foundations module we learned that the medium is the message. Similarly in this case, the format you choose for your business document should also align well with the purpose of your message. For example, an email might be considered semiformal depending on audience and purpose; a business letter is usually considered quite formal as are memos, faxes and short reports. Knowing what you've recently learned about the common types of business documents, you must remain mindful that the format you choose tells the audience something about the information they will receive and how important or serious it is for them to pay attention to it.

Once you have chosen the appropriate format for your message, it's also important to ensure that the formatting is correct. For example, if you intend to send a memo, it should not look like an informal email or a business letter; it should contain all the appropriate elements of a memo that you learned about in the previous section. It needs to be clear to the reader what format you are using and you can make that apparent by ensuring the appropriate formatting of your document.

Audience

In the Foundations module you learned the importance of knowing your audience in order to craft effective communications. That is as true as ever when writing business documents. Who you are writing to may be one person or many. The format you choose may make it easy for your document to be accessed by other people (such as email) and include secondary and hidden audiences. But in business writing, of course, your primary audience remains central to your messaging. A helpful approach some communicators use is to try to put themselves in the primary audience's shoes and ask, What's in it for me? or Why should I care? or So what? Identifying the audience and being aware of their needs will help you draft a document that is more likely to get their interest.

Style

Style and tone are often considered interchangeable and there are some blurry distinctions between the two. But for our purposes style refers to elements such as active versus passive writing, varied sentence lengths, flow, variety of word use, and punctuation choices. Style gives your writing a type of personality when coupled together with tone. As with the audience and format, it's important that the style you choose matches with the intended purpose of your message.

Tone

Similar in some ways to style, tone refers to the feeling your audience will get when they decode your document. Here you would ask yourself if your tone is formal, informal, positive, negative, polite, direct, or indirect. The purpose of asking yourself this question is to determine whether the tone suits or otherwise enhances the purpose of your intended message.

The acronym FAST not only helps as a guide to remembering the importance of selecting the right format, remembering your audience, and ensuring appropriate style and tone but also helps you remember that in business writing it's important to get to the point—fast!

Here is a handy tool you can use as you write to remember to use and incorporate the principles of FAST.

Conclusion

This chapter on writing workplace documents began with a review of writing solid paragraphs that include elements like a good topic sentence, body, and conclusion. You then learned about how to prepare a workplace document beginning with an outline and deciding which workplace document to use. You learned about and saw examples of emails, memos, business letters, fax cover sheets, and short reports. Finally, you were introduced to the acronym FAST as a tool to stay mindful of your document and content choices around format, audience, style, and tone.

With this new knowledge you should be well on your way to honing your workplace writing skills, which will be further enhanced in the next section on revising workplace documents.

Learning Highlights

Elements of paragraphs

- topic sentence
- body
- conclusions

Workplace Documents

- Emails are an electronic medium often used to send letters, memos, or less formal written communication.
- Letters are typically quite formal, brief printed messages often used to inform or persuade customers, vendors, or the public
- Memos are brief documents used internally to inform or persuade employees about business decisions on policy, procedures, or actions.
- Fax cover sheets must always contain complete information about the contents, sender, receiver, and number of pages. Faxing is relevant as a secure way to transmit sensitive documents.
- Short reports can report progress, summarize information, or recommend. They consist of 10 common elements and are no longer than four pages.

Check Your Understanding

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2.4: Revising Workplace Documents

Learning How to Revise Workplace Documents

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- describe the role of revision in the writing process;
- describe the three stages, and their elements, of the revision process;
- demonstrate the application of the revision process outlined in this module to a sample of your own writing;
- demonstrate constructive and respectful revision feedback when given a sample of writing.

Introduction

You may have heard the phrase "Writing is **rewriting**." This is just as true for technical and business documents such as the ones often found in organizations. Even the best, most accomplished writers in the world almost never lead with their first draft. Instead, there is a constant process of **revision,** namely, "(to) examine and improve or amend (written or printed matter)."

In this chapter you will first learn to distinguish revision from rewriting. Then you will learn the three stages of editing for business documents that you can perform once you've selected your format and completed a first draft. These include the **structural edit,** the **copy edit**, and **proofreading**. Finally, you will learn about the common tools editors and communicators use to make revising easier and more consistent.

Revision vs. Rewriting

The definition of rewriting is to "write (something) again so as to alter or improve it." In this module we focus on ways to alter and improve your writing, but we wish to make a distinction between revising and rewriting. For our purposes, rewriting would essentially mean throwing away your draft and starting again, whereas revising would mean making incremental improvements to your draft.

For example, you begin to draft a business letter to a supplier because you have a complaint about recent late deliveries. You address it to the client services department and include referencing numbers dates and times of the late deliveries. You use a formal tone, hoping it will be taken seriously by the client services department. Just then your boss gets back from a conference and she tells you that she wound up having lunch with the director of client services for that very supplier. She said the director was very interested in your experience and wanted something on paper sent directly to him. You now have to decide whether to simply revise the letter or start fresh with a rewrite.

You re-read your draft and realize (1) the audience has changed from a department to a specific person; (2) that specific person is already interested in building/maintaining a relationship; (3) the purpose is no longer to complain but to build a better future relationship by solving past problems, namely, late deliveries; and (4) the tone feels overly formal now, considering the new audience and new purpose. For these reasons you decide to start fresh with a re-write, give the draft to your boss for

review/comments, and then officially begin looking at your document through the lenses of the three stages of revision.

The Three Stages of Editing (Revision)

When you are editing, it can be tempting to try to do everything at once. This is usually a recipe for confusion, fatigue, and missed errors. Instead, go through your draft more strategically, moving from ensuring your big ideas make sense to ensuring you spelled your address correctly. These stages of editing do come in a sequence that can work well for most people, but if you're already a master editor with a revision style that works for you, that's fine too. You can still use the following stages in any sequence to ensure your finished document is as polished and professional as possible.

Substantive/Structural Edit

The structural edit aims to make sure that the ideas in the body of your document make sense. At this level you will ask yourself questions like does this paragraph make sense considering my audience and purpose? Is the information complete? This would be the stage that you might want to ensure you've covered the **Five W's and one H**, as applicable (who, what, when, where, why, and how). You might discover that you need to reorganize some paragraphs to make your ideas clearer or get to the point sooner. But the purpose of the structural edit is to make sure that the substance of your message will be clear and logical.

There are some things to consider regarding structure and purpose. The classic **structure for a story** includes a beginning, a middle, and an end. The structure for a news report, known as the **inverted pyramid**, puts all the important information (five W's and one H) within the first one or two paragraphs. Finally, the classic **essay structure** includes an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Most business documents use more of an essay style approach that facilitates a polite introduction, a body that includes the issue at hand, and a conclusion that sums up things in a courteous way. As your writing skills advance, you can use or incorporate other structures like story or news to make your writing more dynamic. The more practice you get, the better your writing should become over time.

Copy Edit

While structural editing looks at big ideas mostly at the paragraph level, copy editing usually aims to make corrections at the sentence level. Always keeping the audience in mind, a copy edit should also identify specific areas that may confuse or otherwise put off the audience. At this stage you will keep your eyes peeled for things like subject–verb agreement, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and other grammatical issues. You will also scan for appropriate tone (formal, informal, positive, negative, polite, etc.) as well as style (active, passive, varied sentence lengths, flow, variety of word, and punctuation choices, etc). Finally, you will correct any misspelled words as well as any punctuation errors.

It is important to note that many places list copy editing as a code for all editing or revision to documents. Sometimes it includes stylistic editing, which is its own editing category according to the Editors' Association of Canada. Sometimes people also include tasks that fall under proofreading as part of copy editing.

Proofreading

Proofreading assumes that the document is already as correct as can be. At this stage we look for errors within the body of the document, but we also look at the document as a whole for accuracy and correctness. For example, if we are mailing a letter using snail mail, we will want to ensure that the addresses are correct. The easiest way to do a proofread is from top to bottom of the document, ensuring that all the right formatting elements are in place as you go and that the information in the body is uninterrupted by errors or typos. Finally, if there are any enclosures or attachments, the proofreader should ensure that those things are actually enclosed or attached.

In some situations the proofreader may also double as a fact checker if the document happens to contain statistical information, charts, graphs, or other fact-rich information.

While editing or revising a document it is common to become really close to the document, especially if you are also the writer. At that point we tend to see what we think we wrote instead of what's actually on the page. Though it may not always be possible, it's very useful to have a fresh pair of eyes to help us revise our work. Peer review is one way to do this. Another useful technique is to put aside the document for a few hours or even a day if there's time, so that the writer will have a fresh(er) pair of eyes to hopefully catch any mistakes previously missed.

Revisor's Toolkit

Here is a list of some common and accessible tools that you might find useful as you revise your business documents.

Here is a list of some common and accessible tools that you might find useful as you revise your business documents.

Dictionary/Thesaurus

A dictionary will give you definitions and proper spelling of words. Today there are a number of reputable online dictionaries that complement or substitute their hardcopy counterparts, such as Oxford Online Dictionary and Merriam-Webster Dictionary. A thesaurus is great for expanding your vocabulary by supplying synonyms (similar words), related words, and antonyms (opposite words). For example, a search for "everyone" lists "all" as a synonym, "anybody/anyone, somebody/someone" as related words, and "nobody/none/no one" as antonyms (Merriam-Webster online thesaurus).

Style guide/Style sheet

There are some writing conventions that are not necessarily about right or wrong but more about remaining consistent within and across documents. For example, if you want to show that something happened in the morning, would you write 8AM, 8am, 8 a.m., 8 am, or 8 A.M.? In order to keep a consistent style to documents, several popular style guides are available such as the Chicago Manual of Style, The Canadian Press Styleguide, or even the old classic Strunk and White's Elements of Style. Some organizations make their own style guides, known as house style, to keep things consistent with their brand. (Imagine trying to start a sentence with a capital letter at Apple, home of the iPad, iPod, and iPhone!) Similarly, individual writers can also put together a stylesheet to keep track of style decisions in order to keep a document consistent. Some style areas to beware of in business documents include conventions regarding

- dates (year/month/day vs. day/month/year, etc.),
- times (24-hour clock vs AM/PM or a.m./p.m.),
- salutations ("Dear John," vs. "Dear John:" vs. "Dear John"), and
- British-based vs. US-based spelling conventions (e.g., colour/color, centre/center, programme/program).

Spell Check/Grammar Check

Most word processing software packages such as Microsoft Word and even newer online, cloud-based tools like Google Docs have spelling and grammar checking features. Normally these are found in the drop-down menu marked "Tools." This is especially useful for either the copy edit or proofing phase of revision.

On-screen edits (e.g. Track Changes, find/replace)

It is commonly suggested that looking for errors on the printed page is easier than finding them on-screen. However, there is also a push for environmental sensitivity and moving toward "paperless" offices. To help with this process, in addition to spellcheck, consider using tools such as Track Changes in Microsoft Word. This is particularly useful if you are revising written work for your boss or for a colleague who needs to know what changes you've made. Also found under the "Tools" drop-down menu, Track Changes allows you to remove/replace words; delete or add words, sentences, or paragraphs; and make other revisions while showing and keeping track of all changes made.

Another useful tool is the find/replace function. Let's say you want to be sure that you change all spellings of center to centre. You type "center" into the box that says "find," then type "centre" into the box that says "replace." You can then decide to "replace all" or replace them one by one as the system finds them throughout your document. This saves time and ensures more accuracy than trying to scan the document with your own eyes. The find/replace function is found under the "Edit" drop-down menu.

Off-screen/Hard-Copy Edits (e.g., Proofreader's marks)

If you must revise for someone else on actual paper, you may find a guide for proofreader's marks useful. These marks are fairly standard across all kinds of publishing and pretty easy to understand. They save space and time by using marked symbols to explain what changes need to be made and where. Here is a sample of proofreader's marks.

Conclusion

In this chapter you learned that the distinction between rewriting and revising was the equivalent of starting from scratch to making improvements to an already existing draft. You reviewed the three stages of editing that are useful during the revision process, including structural editing, copy editing, and proofreading. You then learned about some tools, such as dictionaries, style guides, and onscreen/offscreen editing tools, that help writers and editors to revise workplace documents.

Learning Highlights

- Rewriting is starting from scratch, whereas revising means making incremental changes.
- The revision process includes three stages of editing: the structural edit, the copy edit, and proofreading.
- Structural edit happens at the paragraph level and focuses on the flow of ideas and ensures logic.
- Copy edit happens at the sentence level and focuses on correcting grammar, punctuation, and style.
- Proofread assumes the document is done and ensures no further errors remain or were introduced in the editing process.
- There are several useful tools that help writers to revise effectively, including dictionaries/thesaurus, style guides, on-screen and off-screen editing tools.

Check Your Understanding

Further Reading and Links

If you would like to read more about revision, rewriting, and editing see the following sites: Editors' Association of Canada professional editorial standards.

References

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Attribution Statement (Revising Workplace Documents)

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2.5: Ethical Guidelines for Writing

Understanding Ethical Guidelines for Writing

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- describe plagiarism and ways to avoid it;
- describe copyright and how to use others' work ethically;
- describe the function of workplace codes of ethics and conduct, related to information access and record management;
- determine if a sample written summary of given source material would be considered plagiarism or not; and
- identify ethical violations in supplied scenarios related to written workplace documents.

Introduction

You love your new job working for a retailer of specialty athletic gear. As a member of the marketing team, you get the idea of writing some fake reviews on a popular online review portal to give your company and your team an edge. What's the harm? No one will know. It's not necessarily bad, because it's not against the law. But would most people consider it the right thing to do?

Ethics is defined as "moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity" (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). Ethical behaviour asks you to be concerned about what is inherently right or wrong in a given situation. The right thing to do may not always be obvious, and sometimes you have an ethical dilemma when there's no clear answer.

To help in situations when you are trying to behave and communicate ethically, most organizations have guidelines in place to help people act in a way that is considered more right than wrong.

Plagiarism, "the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own," (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.) is heavily frowned upon and typically carries big penalties. Effectively using sources and giving credit where credit is due is one way to avoid it.

Copyright, which you learned about briefly in the Foundations module chapter "A Picture Is Worth 1,000 Words: Using Visuals" is a law that helps to stamp out plagiarism and other unauthorized uses of intellectual or creative property. Creative Commons builds upon copyright, enabling flexibility and openness through attribution and sharing while maintaining conditions that seek to prevent unauthorized use.

Because organizations contain so much information, there are often protocols in place to govern who has access to information and under what circumstances—unauthorized access is usually considered unethical. Similarly, records management principles and guidelines are also in place in most organizations, because employees need to take great care to ensure records and other personal or private company information is kept safe.

Codes of conduct are found within many organizations that give guidelines for ethical or proper behaviour.

Being able to balance the need for speed and clarity while staying ethically sound means one must cultivate the skill of writing respectfully. Words are powerful, especially in written documents. Respectful writing aims to balance courtesy, professionalism, and and conciseness in a way that is considerate of intended, secondary, and hidden audiences.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism can occur on purpose or be accidental. It can also result from performance pressure, lapses in judgement, total ignorance, or a plethora of other reasons. This is why it is important to be vigilant and aim to be above reproach in your quest to write and communicate ethically. Examine the following high-profile examples of plagiarism about the University of Alberta's Dean of Medicine and the former head of the Toronto District School Board to get a feel for what it looks like and what the potential consequences can be.

There are some key ways to avoid passing off work that isn't your own: namely, give credit where credit is due. Always. If you did not come up with the idea, saying, phrase, or thought yourself, cite your source and make it clear where the words or ideas came from; this is a crucial first step. However, to stay on the right side of the law and be aligned with good ethical practice, you often need to do more than just cite the source to avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism can take many forms and be either intentional or unintentional. Follow this online tutorial where you will describe, identify the types of plagiarism, and demonstrate how to avoid it: http://www.ucd.ie/library/elearning/plagiarism/story.html

Check Your Understanding

Copyright and Creative Commons

Copyright and creative commons are among the most useful forms of **intellectual property** tools you will use as a writer of workplace documents. Other forms of intellectual property protection include things like patents, trademarks, and industrial designs (World Intellectual Property Organization, n.d.). In the Foundations module we learned that copyright is the exclusive and assignable legal right given to the originator for a fixed number of years to print, publish, perform, film, or record literary, artistic, or musical material. Once the number of years expires on copyright (in Canada, normally 50 years after the copyright holder's death), the work enters the public domain. A work enters the public domain when the creator's intellectual property rights have expired, been forfeited, or are inapplicable. We also learned that Creative Commons (CC) is a non-profit organization devoted to expanding the range of creative works available for others to build upon legally and to share; the organization has released several copyright-licenses known as Creative Commons licenses free of charge to the public.

Organizations have a special interest in protecting themselves from being sued and also from damaging their brand. If you are responsible for composing documents in your workplace, you might know that in most cases your organization will own the copyright. If you are confused at all regarding a document you create or anything related to ensuring proper protocol around intellectual property, your best bet is to contact the appropriate person in Human Resources and/or the person responsible for legal matters in your organization. The information we provide here is general and should not be taken as legal advice.

Creative Commons licensing is a bit of a new kid on the block. Where people have been grappling with interpreting copyright laws for some time now, the risk with Creative Commons licensing is that it's not as simple as it seems. People often think they are using the licenses correctly, but certain licenses are more compatible with some licences and less compatible with others. Here is a helpful chart that illustrates which licenses can and cannot be combined.

Figure 2.4.1 Creative Commons License Compatibility Chart by Laura Underwood
Adapted from Kennisland (2013)

Check Your Understanding

Access to Information and Records Management

Here we focus on ethical approaches to accessing information with respect to writing and working in organizations. With so much information around us, organizations often seek to effectively and efficiently manage access to information. Depending on your job or function, you may have access to several sensitive documents, databases, or repositories that can include things like trade secrets, employee information, patents, financial records, or customer/client information.On one hand you have the consumer perspective where people want to know what information organizations have collected about them. In Canada we have legislation such as the Privacy Act and PIPEDA (aka Digital Privacy act) to ensure certain standards in dealing with the government and other organizations and what information they have and can collect. However, on the other hand we have workers entrusted with the company's information who must manage it responsibly and ethically. Here are several short case studies to illustrate more common issues regarding access to information and records management (with instructive comments in the section to follow):

Situation 1

Shana's brother Dylan starts dating a girl named Zoe. Shana, a civilian clerical worker at the local police unit, thinks Zoe is pretty shady and doesn't trust her. She decides to use her position to get a background check on Zoe.

Situation 2

Felix works in customer service for one of the big phone companies. His mom wants to rent out a room to a mature college student, but he's wary about this person's ability to pay. He decides to go through company records to see if the student has a track record of paying his phone bills on time.

Situation 3

Alicia works in financial analysis and stumbles across an amazing investment opportunity as part of her work. She decides to quietly make an investment and also encourages her financially struggling sister to get in on the investment while it's hot.

Situation 4

Roger, a new dad and new homeowner, just began working as a senior administrator for his dream professional services company. Less than 90 days into the job, his boss comes to him in a panic and demands that he drop everything and start shredding boxes of documents. When Roger asks what the rush is, his boss tells him they are about to be raided and that heads will roll—including Roger's—if the cops get hold of what's in those documents.

Situation 5

Professor Smith has a thing for the handsome, intelligent student in her class. The student comes to her one day with flowers and a sad story about not being able to get a scholarship unless his A− becomes an A+. She accesses his paper record and simply draws a vertical stroke through the middle of the minus sign.

Situation 6

Billy Watson is writing a college exam. He is having trouble remembering his study notes, which he had compiled just the night before. He decides to take a peek at his cellphone while the proctor's back is turned so he can get the right answers. He thinks he's home free, until another exam proctor asks Billy to follow him after the exam.

Codes of Conduct in the Workplace

Codes of conduct come in various forms in organizations. Often during new hire orientation, workers will be exposed to the depth and range of company policies that they are expected to adhere to as a condition of employment. Depending on your role or position in the organization, some codes of conduct may be more applicable to certain people likely to find themselves in certain scenarios.

We cannot provide an exhaustive example of every possible code of conduct in every organization, but we can give brief examples of types of policies that would apply to the five scenarios you read above (in the Access to Information and Records Management section), as follows.

1. Situation 1 has to do with privacy and access to information. Whether Shana accessed records herself or convinced someone else with authorized access to do it, the two main issues here are breach of privacy and unauthorized access to information. Putting the force's reputation at risk with these actions can undermine trust in the organization.
2. Felix's situation is another case where access to information, privacy, and, in this case, financial records such as credit reports have been accessed in an unethical and possibly illegal way.
3. In Alicia's case, codes of conduct relating to insider information/trading and conflict of interest would likely apply here.
4. Roger's biggest issue here, should he follow his boss's instructions, would be less about following codes of conduct and more about the criminal matter of destroying evidence.
5. Professor Smith should be concerned about accepting a bribe and tampering with records.
6. Billy's cheating violated the student code of behaviour and resulted in academic probation.

Codes of conduct and other documents related to ethics, values, and rules that attempt to govern behaviour may not cover every possible situation or outcome. However, it is important to get to know the ones in your organization and also to get in touch with your own sense of values. Commonly known as the **“tummy test,”** whenever you find yourself in an ethical dilemma or other questionable moral workplace situation, using a combination of your workplace’s codes of conduct in conjunction with your own notion of what’s right and wrong is probably the best way to go.

Writing Respectfully

We learned in the Foundations module about the medium of writing. We learned that it’s not the most information rich method but that the written word, especially when it’s published on paper, is considered quite formal. We also learned about our audiences and how to meet their needs and expectations.

When we write respectfully, we aim to balance courtesy, professionalism, and conciseness.

<u>Courtesy</u>

You will notice that in most workplace documents, courtesy is embedded in the documents themselves. Take the business letter, for example, which begins with addressing the addressee as “Dear.” When you are courteous, it tells the audience that you are considering them and aiming to respect them. When the audience feels respected, they are usually more open to absorbing your message.

We learned about primary, secondary, and hidden audiences in the Foundations module. Being courteous means considering the needs and expectations of all potential audiences. Aiming for courtesy as a means of respect is a time-honoured tradition in human communication, and its expression can vary from one environment to the next. If you are writing for an audience or audiences outside your environment our culture, it makes sense to consult with someone more familiar with the target environment to ensure your courteous message can be received as intended.

<u>Professionalism</u>

Professionalism is described as “the competence or skill expected of a professional.” Included in this competence and skill are qualities normally found among ethical guidelines of various professional organizations, such as truthfulness, integrity, confidentiality, respect, and social responsibility. To be professional and write respectfully means being mindful of all of these elements and even having them supercede the desire for your own notions of personal expression. Workplace documents are not the place to insert your opinion or invoke your right to freedom of speech. Being a professional means understanding that there is a time and place for all kinds of expression, and your workplace is the time and place to put your organization front and centre of your communications.

<u>Conciseness</u>

Business people don’t like to read any more than they have to. This does not mean they don’t enjoy novels or articles; it just means that they are more likely to read workplace documents if they can identify that the information is useful, timely, and relevant to their needs. This comes back to the notion of keeping things short and to the point (as discussed in the section on plain language in the Foundations module) but in a way that balances conciseness with professionalism and courtesy.

Writing respectfully makes your message more palatable to your various audiences, professionalism ensures that ethics and competency are covered, and use of plain language principles keeps things concise in an era of information overload.

Writing respectfully may seem like a relatively basic aim, but is an important skill to master as we aim to communicate in a way that is ethical.

Conclusion

Now you have learned the definition of ethics and several scenarios showcasing ethical issues that can crop up when you write or work with documents in the workplace. You’ve learned about plagiarism and its pitfalls and how to guard against it with techniques like effective sourcing and using copyright laws and licenses like Creative Commons. You’ve seen pitfalls regarding access to information and information management and how codes of ethics along with your own “tummy test” can guard against landing your or your company in hot water. Finally, you learned about the virtues of writing respectfully, including the aim to always be courteous, professional, and concise in your business writing contexts.

Key Takeaways

- The definition of ethics is "moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity"
- Several common ethical issues exist in workplace writing, including plagiarism.
- Copyright and Creative Commons can be used as tools to guard against plagiarism while ensuring to give credit where credit is due
- You can use the "tummy test" or codes of conduct as methods to guard against ethical pitfalls around privacy or information management.
- Writing respectfully is considered an ethical way to communicate and includes balancing courtesy, professionalism, and conciseness in business writing.

Further Reading and Links

If you would like to read more about finding, using, and attributing Creative Commons–licensed materials, see the following sites:

- A New York Times article regarding deceptive Internet reviews
- A Guardian article regarding companies fined for fake internet reviews
- A CBC article regarding journal paywalls and copyright violation

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Attribution Statement (Ethical Guidelines for Writing)

2.6: Information Literacy

Importance of Information Literacy

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- apply information literacy skills to search for and gather information to complete a given research-based task;
- apply information literacy strategies to determine if a source is valid, reliable, and/or credible;
- write a short report adhering to the norms required for the document type, and the principles of effective workplace writing in response to a given research-based scenario.

Introduction

In this chapter you will learn how to conduct research for use in your professional life. When you are writing more complex pieces of communication, such as the reports you learned about in a previous chapter, you'll need to draw upon research to make your points clear and persuasive. Here you'll find out how to identify what information you need, where to find it, how to cite it, and how to pull together your research into a finished piece of professional work.

Identifying Your Information Needs

Not every piece of business writing requires research or investigation. When you are undertaking more formal documents, particularly reports, you'll need to do your research, but this does not necessarily mean long hours at a library. Start by consulting with colleagues who have written similar documents and ask what worked, what didn't work, and what was well received by management and the target audience. Your efforts will need to meet similar needs.

Before you go to the library, look over the information sources you already have in hand. Do you regularly read a magazine that relates to the topic? Was there an article in the newspaper you read that might work? Is there a book, website, or podcast that has information you can use? You might even know someone who has experience in the area you want to research, someone who has been involved with the topic for his or her whole life. We do a lot of our reading and research online today, so getting information firsthand is probably not the first method that comes to mind—but talking to an expert directly will give you insight into a topic that no website can compete with.

When you sit down to write a message that incorporates research, you'll need to consider the purpose and audience just as you would with any other professional communication. Your **general purpose** will, most often, be to inform, but it may also be to persuade. For example, if you are writing a recommendation report, you'll draw upon your research to persuade the reader to take the action you suggest. You will also have a **specific purpose** in mind, in terms of the results you want to achieve. For example, if you work for a magazine and are researching content for a marketing campaign, your specific purpose might be to increase subscriber numbers by 20 percent in the next quarter.

You'll also consider what your audience's needs and expectations are. For example, if your boss has asked you to draft a report on social media marketing so that he can present an action plan to the management team, your approach will be more formal than if you are simply surfing the web to find and price out a location for the next team-building day. Once you know your audience and purpose, it's time to start gathering information.

Narrowing Your Topic

You'll start with developing ideas around your topic, but even with a purpose in mind, you may still have too broad of a subject to cover within the time frame you have. You might want to revisit your purpose and ask yourself, how specific is my topic?

Imagine that you work for a local skydiving training facility. Your boss has assembled a list of people who might be candidates for skydiving and asks you to write a letter to them. Your general purpose is to persuade, and your specific purpose is to increase the number of students enrolled in classes. Your approach might be to tell your audience how exhilarating the experience of skydiving is, discuss the history and basic equipment, cover the basic requirements necessary to go on a first jump, and provide reference information on where your audience could go to learn more (videos and websites, for example).

But, at this point you'll probably realize that a one-page letter simply is not enough space for the content you are planning to share. Rather than expand the letter to two pages and risk losing the reader, consider your audience and what they might want to learn. How can you narrow your topic to better consider their needs? As you edit your topic, considering what the essential information is and what can be cut, you'll come to focus on the key points naturally and reduce the pressure on yourself to cover too much information in a limited space.

Perhaps starting with a testimony about a client's first jump, followed by basic equipment and training needed, and finally a reference to your organization, may help you to more clearly define your document. Skydiving history may be fascinating, but including it in the letter would result in too much information. Your specific purpose may be to increase enrolment, but, in order to persuade your audience to consider skydiving for themselves, your general goal will need to be to communicate goodwill and establish communication with this target audience.

Focus on Key Points

Let's imagine that you are the office manager for a pet boarding facility that cares for dogs and cats while their owners are away. The general manager has asked you to draft a memo to remind employees about safety practices. Your general purpose is twofold: to inform employees about safety concerns and to motivate them to engage in safe work practices. Your specific purpose is also twofold: to prevent employees from being injured or infected with diseases on the job, and to reduce the risk of the animal patients being injured or becoming sick while in your care.

You are an office manager, not a veterinary or medical professional, and there are volumes written about animal injuries and illnesses, along with entire schools devoted to teaching medicine to doctors who care for human patients. In a short memo, you cannot cover all possible examples of injury or illness. Instead, focus on the behaviours and situations you observe around the office. For example:

- Do employees wash their hands thoroughly before and after contact with each animal?
- Are hand-washing facilities kept clean and supplied with soap and paper towels?
- When cleaning the animals' cages, do employees wear appropriate protection such as gloves?
- What is the procedure for disposing of animal waste, and do all employees know and follow the procedure?
- When an animal is being transferred from one cage to another, are there enough staff members present to assist when needed?
- What should an employee do if he or she is bitten or scratched?
- What if an animal exhibits signs of being ill?
- Have there been any recent incidents that raised concerns about safety?

Once you have posed and answered questions like these, it should be easier to narrow down the information so that the result is a reasonably brief, easy-to-read memo that will get employees' attention and persuade them to adopt safe work practices.

Check Your Understanding

Complete the module below on developing a research topic:

Planning Your Investigation

Now let's imagine that you work for a small accounting firm whose president would like to start sending a monthly newsletter to clients and prospective clients. He is aware of newsletter production service vendors that provide newsletters to represent a particular accounting firm. He has asked you to compile a list of such services, their prices and practices, so that the firm can choose one to employ.

You will begin your planning immediately while your conversation with the president is still going on, as you will need more information before you can gauge the scope of the assignment. Approximately how many newsletter vendors does your president want to know about—are three or four enough? Would 20 be too many? Is there a set budget figure that the newsletter cost must not exceed? How soon does your report need to be done?

Once you have these details, you will be able to plan when and where to gather the needed information. If the president has any examples of newsletters he has seen from other businesses, you can examine them and note the contact information of the companies that produced them.

Assuming that your president wants to consider more than just a couple of vendors, you will need to expand your search. The next logical place to look is the Internet. As anyone who has spent an entire evening aimlessly web surfing can attest, the Internet is a great place to find loads and loads of interesting but irrelevant information. Knowing what questions you are seeking to answer will help you stay focused on your report's topic, and knowing the scope of the report will help you to decide how much research time to plan in your schedule.

Staying Organized

Once you open up a web browser such as Google and type in a search parameter like "newsletter production," you will have a wealth of information to look at. Much of it may be irrelevant, but even the information that fits with your project will be so much that you will be challenged to keep track of it.

Perhaps the most vital strategy for staying organized while doing online research is to open a blank page in your word processor and title it "Sources." Each time you find a webpage that contains useful and relevant information, copy the URL and paste it on this Sources page. Under the URL, you might also make a few notes about what you found there. If in doubt about a source, list it for the time being—you can always discard it later. Having these source URLs and snippets of information all in one place will save you a great deal of time later on.

As you explore various websites of companies that provide newsletter production services, you will, no doubt, encounter new questions that your president did not answer in the original conversation:

- Does the newsletter need to be printed on paper and mailed? Or would an email newsletter be acceptable, or even preferable?
- Does your firm want the newsletter vendor to write all of the content customized to your firm, provide a menu of pre-existing articles for your firm to choose from, or let your firm provide some—or even all—of the content?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of these various options?

You also realize that in order to get any cost estimates, even when the above questions are settled, you will need to know the desired length of the newsletter (in pages or in word count), and how many recipients are on your firm's mailing list. At this point in your investigation, it may make sense to give your president an informal interim report summarizing what you have found out and what additional questions need to be answered.

Having a well-organized list of the information you have assembled, the new questions that have arisen, and the sources where you found your information will allow you to continue researching effectively as soon as you have the answers you need.

Internet Search Strategies

Whether you are searching research **databases** or conducting general **online searches**, the search terms and phrases you use will determine what information you find. Following some basic **search term** guidelines can make the process go smoothly.

Start by using keywords that relate to your topic.

Example: alternative energy

To expand your search, use synonyms or components of the initial search terms.

Synonym Example: renewable energy

Components Example: algae energy, wind energy, biofuel

Another technique you can use is to refine the presentation of your search terms using **boolean operators**. These are words like AND, NOT, and OR. The asterisk and parentheses can also be used. These can be used to filter your search in the following ways.

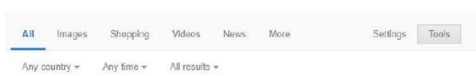
Tip	Description	Keywords
Use multiple words.	Use multiple words to more narrowly define your search.	renewable energy instead of energy
Use quotation marks.	Place quotation marks around two or more words that you want to search for only in combination, never individually.	“renewable energy”
Use “AND” to connect words.	Use “AND” between words when you want to retrieve only articles that include both words	algae AND energy
Use “OR” to choose one or the other.	Use “OR” to find information relating to one of two options but not both. This option works well when you have two terms that mean the same thing and you want to find articles regardless of which term has been chosen for use.	ethanol OR ethyl alcohol
Use “NOT” to eliminate likely options	Use “NOT” to eliminate one category of ideas you know a search term will likely generate.	algae NOT food
Use “*” to include alternate word endings.	Use “*” to include a variety of word endings. This process is often called using a “wildcard.”	alternate* energy
Use parentheses to combine multiple searches.	Use parentheses to combine multiple related terms into one single search using the different options presented in this table.	(renewable OR algae OR biofuel OR solar) AND energy

When you find a helpful article or website, look for additional search terms and sources that you can follow up on.

Filtering Your Results

When using a search engine like Google, you will get a millions of search results on just about any topic you are looking for. Given the volume of possibilities, it is helpful if you can filter these results in some way.

You may be looking for a specific type of search result, for example, an image, map location, news article, or video. For this, a bar across the top of Google’s search results allows you to filter results to these specific types.



This bar also has a “Search Tools” button that can help you further. When you click on this button, you’ll get a second search bar containing options specific to your search type. For example, if you use it in the basic “Web” search, you’ll be able to filter your results by country, language, location, and time. If you use it in “Image” search, you can filter your image results by size, colour, kind, date, and usage rights. These search tools can help you drill down to the information you need more quickly.

Google Scholar

If your research is more academic in nature, you may need to find scholarly articles and journals to support your assertions. Academic journal search engines like Google Scholar search these specifically.

You can filter your search by recency (since 2015, for example); set up alerts for specific keywords; and view the author(s), year of publication, number of citations, source, and other details before you click on the article link.

Most scholarly journals require payment for viewing and downloading articles, but in many cases you can read the article’s abstract before you decide to buy. Alternatively, your school library may have purchased access to various scholarly journals for student use, so it is worth inquiring if you can access these using your college or university login. Some workplaces (particularly those in the fields of education and research) will have similar access agreements.

The Filter Bubble

Search engines like Google, and websites that use complex programming to decide what to show you, like Facebook, have a habit of delivering what they think you want to see. To do this, these websites use information they know about you in order to feed you results that will likely appeal to you. This is done by aggregating data on your previous searches, gender, location, language, other websites you visit, products you've looked at in online shops, activity of your friends, political leanings, and many other details. This effect, coined "the Filter Bubble" by Eli Pariser (2011), causes you to receive search results that are not as objective as you think. In other words, It is difficult to get information about viewpoints that oppose your own, for instance.

So when you are using the Internet for research, make a point to seek out viewpoints that oppose your own. Sign out of your online accounts or turn on incognito browsing to see if your results are different. Instead of your own laptop, use computers at school that do not have the same online "picture" of you. Use scholarly search engines to read expert opinions, but, most of all, be aware of the filter bubble, and seek out ways to get around it. It takes a little bit of effort, but by circumventing it, you may find that your research is more well-rounded and objective as a result.

Check Your Understanding

Complete the module below on internet searching tips:

Evaluating Sources of Information for Validity, Reliability, and Credibility

One aspect of Internet research that cannot be emphasized enough is the abundance of online information that is incomplete, outdated, misleading, or downright false. Anyone can put up a website; once it is up, the owner may or may not enter updates or corrections on a regular basis. Anyone can write a blog on any subject, whether or not that person actually has any expertise in the area. Therefore, it is always important to look beyond the surface of a site to assess who sponsors it, where the information came from, and whether the site owner has a certain agenda. When you write for business and industry you will want to draw on reputable, reliable sources—printed as well as electronic ones—because they reflect on the credibility of the message and the messenger.

Analyzing and assessing information is an important skill in the preparation of writing. Here are six main points to consider when evaluating a document, presentation, or similar source of information.

In general, documents that represent quality reasoning have the following six traits:

- A clearly articulated purpose and goal
- A question, problem, or issue to address
- Information, data, and evidence that is clearly relevant to the stated purpose and goals
- Inferences or interpretations that lead to conclusions based on the presented information, data, and evidence
- A frame of reference or point of view that is clearly articulated
- Assumptions, concepts, and ideas that are clearly articulated

An additional question that is central to your assessment of your sources is how credible the source is. This question is difficult to address even with years of training and expertise. Academics have long cultivated an understood acceptance of the role of objective, impartial use of the scientific method to determine validity and reliability. But as research is increasingly dependent on funding, and funding often brings specific points of view and agendas with it, pure research can be—and has been—compromised. You can no longer simply assume that "studies show" something without awareness of who conducted the study, how it was conducted, and who funded the effort.

It may seem like hard work to assess your sources, to make sure your information is accurate and truthful, but the effort is worth it. Business and industry rely on reputation and trust in order to maintain healthy relationships. Your document, regardless of how small it may appear in the larger picture, is an important part of that reputation and interaction.

Credibility Checklist

When you are looking at a web source, here are some things you should keep in mind when trying to identify the source's credibility:

- - Who wrote the material? Look for an author's name or company logo. Look up the person/company elsewhere to see what you can find out about them. Also look for any contact information on the website, such as an address or phone number. If the organization is of suspect origins, they are less likely to provide direct contact details.
  - Who owns the website? You can use web domain lookup tools (like Who.is, for example) to find out who the owner of the web domain is and how long they have owned the domain for. This may help you to decipher who is behind the message.
  - Is the material recent? You might notice a "last updated" date across the bottom of the website or a date attached to the article. If the information is timely or focuses on a highly changeable topic (technology or medical research, for example), you'll want the most recent information you can find.
  - How is the material laid out? While not a definitive clue to authenticity, a poorly designed website full of flashing banners and clip art might quickly tell you that you're not looking at the most reputable source!
  - What is the website doing with your information? Any websites that process payments or collect any user data are required to tell you what they collect and what they are doing with this information, though a cookie alert and perhaps also through a Terms and Conditions page or Privacy Policy. Look for these on any website before you give out personal details of any kind.
  - How is the website viewed by the wider community on the web? Search for the website's name and any company names or author names you find on the site, using search engines and social media. Can you find any reviews? Has the website been pointed to as a credible resource via social media sharing?

The above list isn't exhaustive, of course, but it will help you in your search. Sometimes your first reaction is the best one: What is your tummy test telling you?

Check Your Understanding

Complete the module below on evaluating internet sources:

Citing Your Sources

In your academic and professional career, you'll hear about a few different ways to cite your sources—for example, Harvard Style, MLA, and APA. In this course, we'll focus on APA formatting, developed by the American Psychological Association.

Citing your sources will be easier if you plan for this at the start of the process. You should

- begin noting down your sources at the beginning of your research,
- apply APA guidelines as you write so that you have less cleanup to do later, and
- use online tools like CiteThisForMe to get correct formatting.

APA Formatting

These are the major components of an APA-style report or paper:

1. Title page
2. Abstract
3. Body, which includes the following:
   - Headings and, if necessary, subheadings to organize the content
   - In-text citations of research sources
4. References page

All these components must be saved in one document, not as separate documents.

Title Page

The title page of your paper includes the following information:

- Title of the paper
- Author's name
- Name of the institution with which the author is affiliated

- Header at the top of the page with the paper title (in capital letters) and the page number (If the title is lengthy, you may use a shortened form of it in the header.)

List the first three elements in the order given in the previous list, centred about one-third of the way down from the top of the page. Use the headers and footers tool of your word-processing program to add the header, with the title text at the left and the page number in the upper-right corner.

Abstract

The next page of your paper provides an abstract, or brief summary of your findings. You may not need to be provide an abstract in every paper, but you should use one in papers that include a hypothesis. A good abstract is concise—about one hundred to one hundred fifty words—and is written in an objective, impersonal style. Your writing voice will not be as apparent here as in the body of your paper. When writing the abstract, take a just-the-facts approach and summarize your research question and your findings in a few sentences.

Margins, Pagination, and Headings

APA style requirements also address specific formatting concerns, such as margins, pagination, and heading styles within the body of the paper. Review the following APA guidelines:

1. Set the top, bottom, and side margins of your paper at 1 inch.
2. Use double-spaced text throughout your paper.
3. Use a standard font, such as Times New Roman or Arial, in a legible size (10- to 12-point).
4. Use continuous pagination throughout the paper, including the title page and the references section. Page numbers appear flush right within your header.
5. Section headings and subsection headings within the body of your paper use different types of formatting depending on the level of information you are presenting.

Headings

APA style uses section headings to organize information, making it easy for the reader to follow the writer's train of thought and to know immediately what major topics are covered. Depending on the length and complexity of the paper, its major sections may also be divided into subsections, sub-subsections, and so on. These smaller sections, in turn, use different heading styles to indicate different levels of information. In essence, you are using headings to create a hierarchy of information.

The following heading styles used in APA formatting are listed in order of most important to least important:

1. Section headings use centred, boldface type. Headings use title case, with important words in the heading capitalized.
2. Subsection headings use left-aligned, boldface type. Headings use title case.
3. The third level uses left-aligned, indented, boldface type. Headings use a capital letter only for the first word, and they end in a period.
4. The fourth level follows the same style used for the previous level, but the headings are boldfaced and italicized.
5. The fifth level follows the same style used for the previous level, but the headings are italicized and not boldfaced.

In-Text Citations

Throughout the body of your paper, include a citation whenever you quote or paraphrase material from your research sources. The purpose of citations is twofold: to give credit to others for their ideas and to allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic, if desired. Your in-text citations provide basic information about your source; each source you cite will have a longer entry in the references section that provides more detailed information.

In-text citations must provide the name of the author or authors and the year the source was published. (When a given source does not list an individual author, you may provide the source title or the name of the organization that published the material instead.) When directly quoting a source, you are also required to include the page number where the quote appears in your citation.

This information may be included within the sentence or in a parenthetical reference at the end of the sentence, as in these examples.

Example:

Epstein (2010) points out that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (p. 137).

Here, the writer names the source author when introducing the quote and provides the publication date in parentheses after the author’s name. The page number appears in parentheses after the closing quotation marks and before the period that ends the sentence.

Example:

Addiction researchers caution that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (Epstein, 2010, p. 137).

Here, the writer provides a parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence that includes the author’s name, the year of publication, and the page number separated by commas. Again, the parenthetical citation is placed after the closing quotation marks and before the period at the end of the sentence.

Example:

As noted in the book Junk Food, Junk Science (Epstein, 2010, p. 137), “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive.”

Here, the writer chose to mention the source title in the sentence (an optional piece of information to include) and followed the title with a parenthetical citation. Note that the parenthetical citation is placed before the comma that signals the end of the introductory phrase.

Example:

David Epstein’s book Junk Food, Junk Science (2010) pointed out that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (p. 137).

Another variation is to introduce the author and the source title in your sentence and include the publication date and page number in parentheses within the sentence or at the end of the sentence. As long as you have included the essential information, you can choose the option that works best for that particular sentence and source.

Citing a book with a single author is usually a straightforward task. Of course, your research may require that you cite many other types of sources, such as books or articles with more than one author or sources with no individual author listed. You may also need to cite sources available in both print and online and nonprint sources, such as websites and personal interviews.

References List

The brief citations included in the body of your paper correspond to the more detailed citations provided at the end of the paper in the references section. In-text citations provide basic information (the author’s name, the publication date, and the page number if necessary), while the references section provides more extensive bibliographical information. Again, this information allows your reader to follow up on the sources you cited and do additional reading about the topic if they so desire.

The specific format of entries in the list of references varies slightly for different source types, but the entries generally include the following information:

- The name(s) of the author(s) or institution that wrote the source
- The year of publication and, where applicable, the exact date of publication
- The full title of the source
- For books, the city of publication
- For articles or essays, the name of the periodical or book in which the article or essay appears
- For magazine and journal articles, the volume number, issue number, and pages where the article appears
- For sources on the web, the URL where the source is located

The references page is double spaced and lists entries in alphabetical order by the author’s last name. If an entry continues for more than one line, the second line and each subsequent line are indented five spaces.

APA Reference Element Worksheet

APA has put together a worksheet to help you create your Reference entry. Once your reference entry is done, creating the matching in-text citation is much easier.

https://apastyle.apa.org/instructional-aids/scaffolded-reference-elements-worksheet.pdf

Check Your Understanding

Complete the module below on APA citation style:

Presenting Your Findings

Organizing your Document

The purpose of business writing is to communicate facts and ideas. In order to accomplish that purpose, each document has key components that need to be present in order for your reading audience to understand the message. These elements may seem simple to the point that you may question how any writer could neglect them. But if you take note of how often miscommunication and misunderstanding happen, particularly in written communications, you will realize that it happens all the time. Omission or neglect may be intentional, but it is often unintentional; the writer assumes (wrongly) that the reader will easily understand a concept, idea, or the meaning of the message. From background to language, from culture to education, many variables can come into play and hinder effective communication. The degree to which you address these basic elements will increase the effectiveness of your documents. Each document must address the following:

- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- How
- (and sometimes) Why

If you have these elements in mind as you prepare your document, it will be easier to decide what to write and in what order. They will also be useful when you are reviewing your document before delivering it. If your draft omits any one of these elements or addresses it in an unclear fashion, you will know what you need to do to fix it.

Outlines

Chances are you have learned the basic principles of outlining in English writing courses: an outline is a framework that organizes main ideas and subordinate ideas in a hierarchical series of Roman numerals and alphabetical letters. The right column of the following table presents a generic outline in a classical style. In the left column, the three main structural elements of an informative document are tied to the outline. You will need to fill in an outline using the structure on the right with the actual ideas and points you are making in your writing project. Feel free to adapt and tailor it to your needs, depending on the specifics of your report, letter, or other document.

Element	Contents
Introduction	Main Idea
Body	I. Main idea: Point 1 Subpoint 1 A.1 Specific information 1 A.2 Specific information 2
	II. Main idea: Point 2 Subpoint 1 B.1 Specific information 1 B.2 Specific information 2
	III. Main idea: Point 3 Subpoint 1 C.1 Specific information 1 C.2 Specific information 2
Conclusion	Summary: Main points 1–3

The following table presents an alternate outline form that may be more suitable for brief documents like letters and emails. You can use this format as a model or modify it as needed.

Element	Contents
Introduction	General purpose, statement, or thesis statement
Body	Point 1:
	Point 2:
	Point 3:
Conclusion	Summarize main points

Using Rhetorical Proofs

Another way to approach organizing your document is with the classical proofs known as ethos, logos, and pathos. **Ethos**, or your credibility, will come through with your choice of sources and authority on the subject(s). Your **logos**, or the logic of your thoughts represented across the document, will allow the reader to come to understand the relationships among who, what, where, when, and so forth. If your readers cannot follow your logic, they will lose interest, fail to understand your message, and possibly not even read it at all. Finally, your **pathos**, or passion and enthusiasm, will be reflected in your design and word choices. If your document fails to convey enthusiasm for the subject, how can you expect the reader to be interested? Every document, indeed every communication, represents aspects of these classical elements.

General Purpose and Thesis Statements

No matter what your business writing project involves, it needs to convey some central idea. To clarify the idea in your mind and make sure it comes through to your audience, write a thesis statement. A thesis statement, or central idea, should be short, specific, and to the point.

This statement is key to the success of your document. If your audience has to work to find out what exactly you are talking about, or what your stated purpose or goal is, they will be less likely to read, be influenced, or recall what you have written. By stating your point clearly in your introduction, and then referring back to it in the body of the document and at the end, you will help your readers to understand and remember your message.

Organizing Principles

Once you know the basic elements of your message, you need to decide in what order to present them to your audience. A central organizing principle will help you determine a logical order for your information. One common organizing principle is chronology, or time: The writer tells what happened first, then what happened next, then what is happening now, and, finally, what is expected to happen in the future. Another common organizing principle is comparison: The writer describes one product, an argument on one side of an issue, or one possible course of action; and then compares it with another product, argument, or course of action.

As an example, let's imagine that you are a business writer within the transportation industry and you have been assigned to write a series of informative pieces about an international initiative called the "TransAmerican Transportation System Study." Just as the Canadian Pacific Railway once unified Canada from east to west, which was further reinforced by the TransCanada Highway System, the proposed TransAmerican Transportation System will facilitate integrating the markets of Mexico, the United States, and Canada from north to south. Rail transportation has long been an integral part of the transportation and distribution system for goods across the Americas, and its role will be important in this new system.

In deciding how to organize your report, you have several challenges and many possibilities of different organizing principles to use. Part of your introduction will involve an historical perspective, and a discussion of the events that led from the Canadian Pacific Railway to the TransAmerican Transportation System proposal. Other aspects will include comparing the old railroad and highway systems to the new ones, and the transformative effect this will have on business and industry. You will need to acknowledge the complex relationships and challenges that collaboration has overcome, and highlight the common benefits. You will be called on to write informative documents as part of a public relations initiative, persuasive essays to underscore the benefits for those who prefer the status quo, and even write speeches for celebrations and awards.

The following table lists 17 different organizing principles and how they might be applied to various pieces you would write about the TransAmerican Transportation System. The left column provides the name of the organizing principle. The centre column explains the process of organizing a document according to each principle, and the third column provides an example.

Conclusion

In this chapter, you read about doing research to support your workplace documents. You learned some new ways to find information that supports your assertions, from speaking to experts, to collaborating with colleagues, reading books, and, of course, searching on the Internet. You considered that not all of the information on the Internet is credible, learned some ways to distinguish between true and false on the Internet, and found ways to target and filter your online research. Then you found out about APA formatting and how to use it to cite your sources. You went on to find out about how to structure your information in a document, such as outlining your work, using rhetorical proofs, and choosing among organizing principles. From here you should be able to successfully develop more complex workplace documents, such as reports. Good luck!

Key Takeaways

- Clarify your general and specific purpose before you begin your research.
- Identify the resources that you have available, narrow your topic, focus on key points, and plan your investigation.
- Use boolean operators to narrow your search.
- Use search engine filters to find information quickly.
- Source academic journal articles using Google Scholar.
- "The filter bubble" can have a significant impact on the types of search results you receive online.
- Evaluate your sources for credibility. Consider the creator, language, recency, activity, and reputation of the website sources you use.
- Use APA style to place inline (in-text) citations and to create your reference list.
- Outline your work first to make the writing process easier.
- Use rhetorical proofs and/or organizational principles to order your document.

Further Reading and Links

If you would like to read more about finding, using, and attributing Creative Commons–licensed materials, see the following sites:

- Formal Reports and Proposals http://www.pearsoned.ca/highered/divisions/virtual_tours/northey/sample_chapter_9.pdf

- “SEEK! The search skills game” available from the OER Commons https://www.oercommons.org/courses/seek-the-search-skills-game under a CC BY-NC 3.0 Unported license.
- A Guide to Crap Detection Resources
- Written Document Examples from the Ontario College Writing Exemplars

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Johannesen, R. (1996). Ethics in human communication (4th ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

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Attribution Statement (Information Literacy)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Presentation

3.1: Overview and Intention

Contents

The chapters in this module include:

- Your Presentation Style
- Developing a Presentation Strategy
- Presentation Aids
- Communicating with a Live Audience

Module Summary

You may have already had exposure to public speaking and giving presentations, or perhaps you shudder at the thought. This module introduces you to the art and science of putting together an impressive presentation. You will develop key strategies needed to prepare and deliver professional presentations. Doing so so requires a range of skills. Foremost is the ability to communicate well. Whether for business, school, or in everyday life, the ability to communicate effectively and with confidence is a core skill. But not everyone is a gifted communicator.

The art of communication involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and values. Speech is a key skill in communicating. Conversational speech may come easy to some, but communicating verbally in a professional context may not. Professional speaking can be thought of as a rhetorical skill. To be effective, you need to understand not only what to say but also how to say it. You will learn about key elements of rhetoric as a function of communication and how it can be applied to professional presentations.

Casual conversation is usually spontaneous and informal. What is communicated may be unplanned and without consequence. Professional presentations, on the other hand, need to be planned and well-structured. They often occur in formal and sometimes stressful environments. Unlike in casual conversation, personal traits used in formal presentations may not come to you naturally. As a presenter, you need to know how to use elements of verbal and non-verbal communication effectively. For example, eye contact, body language, speaking style, active listening, and being concise are all important elements of a quality presentation. You will learn ways to hone these traits in order to effectively apply them as you develop your personal communication style.

In this module you will learn about proven techniques for planning a presentation for different purposes such as informing, persuading, or entertaining your audience. Each of these requires attention to detail and a clear strategy. Delivery includes what you say in words and what you say using props or presentation aids. You need to ensure these work in harmony to convey your message clearly. You will also learn about design considerations for creating visual aids to enhance your presentation.

Anxiety is a common barrier many presenters experience and can result from being nervous or uncomfortable facing groups of people. It can also be caused by things like the presentation venue, familiarity with equipment that will be used, or other environmental factors. We will examine techniques to cope with and offset the impact of presentation anxiety.

As you work through the eText module chapters, you will learn that giving good presentations does not just happen; rather, it is the result of a deliberate and well-planned process that combines both art and science. This process begins with you learning some things about yourself, specifically identifying key skills that you can adapt to improve on your delivery style and the authenticity of your message. We will determine the extent to which your own beliefs and attitudes may play a positive or negative role in delivering a successful presentation. You will discover how building self-confidence and using self-reflection can help you to develop your ideas more thoroughly and communicate them effectively to others.

Interpersonal skills are perhaps the most important for a successful presentation. They are key to getting your message across and to the way your audience reacts to you and interacts with you during your presentation. You will discover how verbal and non-verbal skills can be harmonized to deliver a presentation that an audience will not soon forget, both in its content and in presentation.

The next phase of the process is about planning. Here you will learn about factors to consider when preparing for an effective presentation and how to develop an execution strategy based on these factors. We will cover planning activities such as knowing your audience, researching supporting evidence for your topic, and organizing the flow of your presentation.

The final phase focuses on delivering a presentation. This is the culmination of your hard work in preparation and planning. It is where you showcase your communication skills and planning strategy. This is also the time when your audience is eager to get what they came for. In other words, this is the time when you sell yourself based on the quality of information you will convey and on how well it resonates with the audience.

Regardless of its substance or how well planned it may be, a poorly delivered presentation can be a significant disappointment to you and the audience. Not every presentation can be done well by winging it. You will learn several delivery techniques that improve the likelihood of a successful presentation including how to skillfully use body movements without causing distraction, how and when to vary voice characteristics to add emphasis, and the subtleties of eye contact to draw your audience into the presentation. You will also discover the pros and cons of using props and how to integrate them effectively to support your presentation.

Since your presentation is as much about you as is the topic, you will learn tips and techniques for rehearsing, interacting with your audience, conducting effective Q&A's, and improving your persona.

Relevance to Practice

long with good writing skills, the ability to communicate verbally is vital to many employers today. It is an integral part of the modern business world. People in the workplace spend the majority of their time communicating. Verbal communication in the workplace takes many forms such as staff meetings, discussions, speeches, presentations, informal conversations, and telephone and video conferences.

Communicating verbally is more personal and flexible than writing. It allows workers to exchange ideas, information, and feedback more quickly. Verbal communication tends to occur in person, making it easier to negotiate, express emotions, outline expectations, and build trust, all of which are important in today's workplace. Communication can also occur between people who are not together in person. In these situations, unique skills are necessary to achieve success.

Simple conversation skills are also valued in the workplace, but this does not mean using casual or informal language. Rather, what is prized by many employers is the ability to communicate important information professionally but in a meaningful and understandable way. This can be important when making spontaneous presentations as well as more elaborate formal group presentations, which are a part of many work roles today

Learning Goals

An overarching theme in this eText is on recognizing how personal traits and attitudes build confidence and that successful delivery of a presentation is the result of clear and deliberate planning. Learning goals based on this theme will guide the development of a planning strategy while learning outcomes serve as evidence of achievement. Key developmental attributes related to the learning goals are also listed here.

The learning goals for this module are that upon completing the readings and activities presented in this module, you should be able to do the following:

1. build a persona that exudes confidence as a presenter and;
2. understand the dynamics at play in developing an effective presentation delivery strategy and executing it successfully.

Developmental Attributes

Upon successfully completing this module, you should:

Understand the following:

- That communication is not only about the words we say but also about how they are conveyed
- That communicating well involves knowing about yourself and is vital to building acceptance and trust in others
- That good communication is not an inherent skill but a process that is learned and practised
- That listening is a focused mental process, while hearing is a physical process with no particular intent
- That effective verbal communication can be key to a person's success

Know the following:

- Rules and procedures for organizing information
- Characteristics of different purposes for verbal presentations
- Strategies to manage performance anxiety
- Quality standards for the development of presentation visual aids
- Techniques to minimize performance barriers

Be able to do the following:

- Effectively communicate in verbal and non-verbal ways
- Adapt language and communication style to ensure understanding by a diverse range of individuals
- Speak in a clear manner so as to be easily understood
- Apply active listening strategies to give full attention to what others are saying, reflecting on what is said and offering constructive responses
- Create effective visual aids to support presentation topics
- Demonstrate management of audience interaction techniques

Learning Outcomes for this Module

Upon successfully completing this module, you should be able to:

1. demonstrate the effective use of key interpersonal communication skills in professional presentations,
2. execute a communication strategy to deliver an effective presentation following accepted standards of public speaking, and
3. demonstrate the effective integration of communication and presentation techniques in the delivery of professional presentations.

3.2: Your Presentation Style

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- recognize the value of self-awareness in the delivery of effective presentations,
- describe the function of active listening and feedback in verbal communication,
- describe verbal techniques used to support professional presentations, and
- describe non-verbal techniques used to support professional presentations.

Your non-verbal cues like gestures, facial expressions, and posture can punctuate and strengthen your message or do the opposite. You will learn about these non-verbal elements and have a chance to see how you use them in conjunction with your verbal cues by recording and examining a pre-selected speech or presentation.

After combining all of these elements, you will have a better understanding of who you are as a presenter and what you can bring to the table to develop your presentation strategy in the next chapter.

What Makes a Successful Speech or Presentation?

Figure 1: What Makes a Successful Presentation by Laura Underwood

A successful speech occurs when the speaker and the audience connect in a benign environment. In order to facilitate this, it helps to look at some things that typically make a successful speaker as well as the role of the audience in making a speech or presentation great.

What Makes a Successful Speaker?

According to longtime Toastmasters member Bob Kienzle, there are a few key elements that tend to make a successful speaker:

- Voice—Can the person be easily understood?
- Body Language—Does their body support what they're saying? Are they confident?
- Coherent Structure—Does what they're presenting make sense? Is it logical?
- Enthusiasm—Do they care about what they're presenting?
- Expertise—Do they know what they're talking about? Are they credible?
- Practice—If they haven't practiced or sufficiently prepared, it will likely show up in one or more of the above.

A successful speaker can be inspired by other speeches or speakers but may fall flat if they try to copy someone else. Authenticity and passion can resonate so much with an audience that it can outweigh elements otherwise considered pitfalls. The techniques, tools, and best practices are a guideline, and it's important to note there is no such thing as "perfection" in public speaking. "Failure" can happen in myriad ways, but it's more helpful to see them as learning opportunities, or opportunities to make a stronger connection to your audience.

The biggest failure, according to Kienzle, is to pass up opportunities to practise your skills in presenting or public speaking.

Audience Role

One of the most anxiety-inducing areas of presenting or speech-making is being in front of the audience. Some people may feel more at ease with relatively small audiences of up to about 10 people. Others feel like 10 people is too "intimate" and actually feel more comfortable with the "impersonal" numbers in the hundreds or thousands.

People often think of hostile audiences throwing tomatoes and yelling boos if the presenter makes the slightest mistake or slip of the tongue. But the truth is most audiences desperately want you to succeed. They are overwhelmingly on your side. This means in most situations they are very forgiving; they know being up there can be tough. If you make a mistake, you can apologize or laugh it off and keep going.

The audience is at least as involved in your presentation as you are. Awareness of yourself and awareness of them is key. If you are so preoccupied with your fear of the audience that you bury your head in the podium while reading a boring list of facts your audience could read themselves, you will lose them. If you're not interested, they're not interested. If you are so frightened of your audience that you never look at them, you will not be able to get cues about their involvement in your presentation.

What you bring to the audience affects what they get from your presentation or speech. For that reason, it is tremendously important to develop enough self awareness so that you can be present for your audience and have the confidence to make adjustments to keep them on your side and involved in your presentation.

Self-Awareness

The connection between self-awareness and being a good presenter may not be immediately obvious. But a good presenter usually has a very good idea not just of the audience and the environment but also about themselves, their motivation, values, perception, and other elements. Without delving into a full-on psychological profile, taking some time getting to know more about you and what makes you tick is still extremely useful in the pre-strategizing stage of planning for your presentation. Oftentimes these things lie below the surface of our awareness. Imagine, for example, seeing only the tip of the iceberg, not knowing the even greater mass of ice that lies beneath the water's surface.

We already know that your success as a presenter depends on the three factors of the presenter, the audience, and the environment. Doing a bit of self-analysis as a presenter, then, is just as important as doing an audience analysis or examining the environment. In order to become more self-aware, it's important to first ponder a few concepts that may or may not be new to you. These include self concept, self-reflection, internal monologue, and dimensions of self. Later we'll examine importance of knowing about your values and perceptions, active listening, as well as strengths and weaknesses.

Your self-concept is "what we perceive ourselves to be" (McLean, 2005) and involves aspects of image and esteem. How you feel about yourself influences how you communicate with others. What you are thinking now and the way you communicate influences how others treat you. For example, if you perceive yourself to be a horrible presenter, your behaviour will likely follow your thoughts. Your audience then encounters several cringeworthy moments mirroring your feelings of discomfort, and they wish you'd get off the stage as quickly as possible too! On the flipside, if you feel nervous about presenting but confident that you know your topic so well, you let your passion and expertise shine through, and your audience focuses on that and isn't fazed by your sweaty palms or your occasional mispronunciations.

Self-reflection can be a useful tool in helping to improve or support your self-concept. Self-reflection is a trait that allows you to adapt and change to the context or environment, to accept or reject messages, to examine your concept of yourself, and to improve.

Your internal monologue is your mental self-talk. It can be a running monologue in your mind that is rational and reasonable, or disorganized and illogical. It can interfere with listening to others, impede your ability to focus, and become a barrier to effective communication. Self-reflection can be a useful tool here as well, allowing you to distinguish whether what you're saying to yourself is constructive and honest or destructive and false.

Who are you? What are your dimensions of self? You are more than your actions and more than your communication, and the result may be greater than the sum of the parts, but how do you know yourself?

For many, answering these questions can prove challenging while trying to reconcile the self-concept you perceive with what you want others to perceive about you. Is it even possible to see yourself through interactions with others, and can you come to terms with the idea that we may not know everything there is to know about ourselves?

Joseph Luft and Harry Ingram gave considerable thought and attention to these dimensions of self, which are represented in the figure below known as the Johari Window (Luft & Ingram, 1955).

In the first quadrant of the figure, information is known to you and others, such as your height and colour. The second quadrant represents things others observe about us that we are unaware of, such as how many times we say "umm" in the space of five minutes. The third quadrant involves information that you know but do not reveal to others. It may involve actively hiding or withholding information, or may involve social tact, such as thanking your Aunt Martha for the large purple hat she's given you that you know you will never wear. Finally, the fourth quadrant involves information that is unknown to you and to others, such as, for example, a childhood experience that has been long forgotten or repressed may still motivate you.

What you bring to the audience affects what they get from your presentation or speech. For that reason, it is tremendously important to develop enough self awareness so that you can be present for your audience and have the confidence to make adjustments to keep them on your side and involved in your presentation.

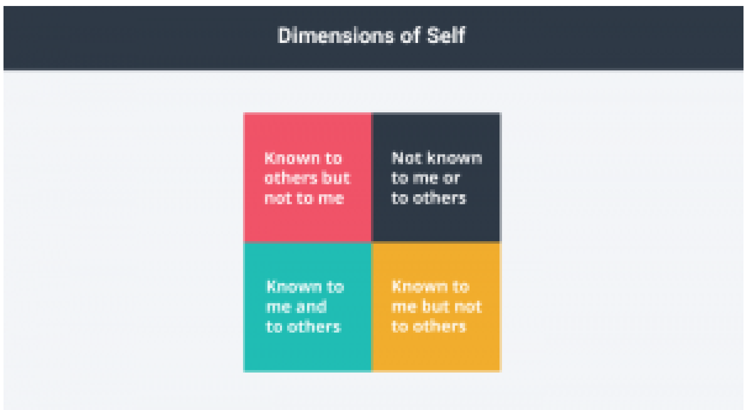

Figure 2: JOHARI Window by Laura Underwood Adapted from Luft & Ingram (1955)

These dimensions of self remind us that we are not fixed—that freedom to change combined with the ability to reflect, anticipate, plan, and predict allows us to improve, learn, and adapt to our surroundings.

In the context of business communication, the self plays a central role. How do you describe yourself? Do your career path, job responsibilities, goals, and aspirations align with your talents? How you represent "self" through your résumé, in your writing, in your articulation and presentation—these all play an important role as you negotiate the relationships and climate present in any organization.

Your Values and Perceptions

Another key element in becoming more self-aware involves understanding your values and perceptions. Your values are defined as "the principles or standards of behaviour; one's judgement of what is important in life" (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015). Your values are often so embedded in who you are that you probably don't think twice about them. You could also be totally unaware of what they are if you take for granted that everyone shares your values. As a speaker it's important for you to uncover what your values are to avoid glaring blind spots (visible to others but not to you) and know more about who you are.

Our values and life experience can also lead to our perception about ourselves and others. Perception is defined as "the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted." The problem is that our perception or interpretation of events can go unchallenged, and we can cling to perceptions whether they are accurate or inaccurate.

If you've never considered your values or perceptions before, it can be helpful to monitor what issues or concerns cause you to take the following behaviours:

Judging

Judging is defined as forming an opinion or conclusion about something (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015). If you find yourself jumping to conclusions or nitpicking minor details to condemn someone or something, it may be because the issue or person has challenged your values. Judgement in the best sense of the term leads to useful and ethical decision making; in its negative sense it can lead to bias. Bias is the "inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair" (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015).

Anticipating

When you anticipate, you "regard [something] as probable" or "expect or predict [something]" (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015). Anticipating can be a by-product of judging, when you have already decided what the other person is going to say. You might even start filling in their words for them. The point is, you have stopped listening to the other person. You may be polite in letting them finish, but your mind is already formulating witty comebacks to something they said that challenged your values or perceptions. At its best, anticipating can solidify that people are on the same wavelength, like an old married couple who know each other so well they really can fill in their words meaningfully. On the other end of the spectrum, anticipating leads to shutting down true communication, often followed by a fruitless power struggle over winning an argument that neither party is listening to or learning from.

Emotional Reaction or Response

To have an emotional reaction or response means "Arousing or (being) characterized by intense feeling." These intense feelings can be a strong indicator that your values or perceptions are being challenged. Emotional reactions can be physiological; your heartbeat quickens, palms get sweaty, you feel your face heating from the neck up. In more severe reactions it can trigger mild or violent responses, anything from walking away to arguing to physical violence. You can also have an emotional reaction that no one else notices; you may even be vocal about how much you don't care about a particular thing or person. But if you feel emotional discomfort, follow those feelings to examine what values or perceptions may lie below the surface; in this way, you will know yourself better and understand what triggers you.

To sum up, if you find yourself judging, jumping the gun by anticipating, or having a strong emotional response, some element of your deeply held values are likely at play or have been betrayed in some way. This is very important information that can help you understand yourself in terms of what you bring to the stage or podium as a presenter. This knowledge can be used to examine whether or not your perceptions are accurate or false, and lead to approaches to help you improve in areas such as (a) active listening and (b) knowing your strengths and weaknesses—both of which are examined next.

Active Listening

Listening vs. Hearing

Hearing is an accidental and automatic brain response to sound and requires no effort. We are surrounded by sounds most of the time. For example, we are accustomed to the sounds of airplanes, lawn mowers, furnace blowers, the rattling of pots and pans, and so on. We hear those incidental sounds and, unless we have a reason to do otherwise, we train ourselves to ignore them. We learn to filter out sounds that mean little to us, just as we choose to hear our ringing cell phones and other sounds that are more important to us.

Table 1: Active Listening

Hearing	Listening
Accidental	Focused
Involuntary	Voluntary
Effortless	Intentional

Listening, on the other hand, is purposeful and focused rather than accidental. As a result, it requires motivation and effort. Listening, at its best, is active, focused, concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a speaker. We do not always listen at our best, however.

Effective listening is about self-awareness. You must pay attention to whether or not you are only hearing, passively listening, or actively engaging. Effective listening requires concentration and a focused effort that is known as active listening. Active listening can be broken down into three main elements: attention, attitude, and adjustment.

Attention

Hoppe (2006) advises that active listening is really a state of mind requiring us to choose to focus on the moment, being present and attentive while disregarding any of our anxieties of the day.

He suggests listeners prepare themselves for active attention by creating a listening reminder. This might be to write "Listen" at the top of a page in front of you in a meeting.

We know now that attention is the fundamental difference between hearing and listening. Paying attention to what a speaker is saying requires intentional effort on your part.

Nichols (1957), credited with first researching the field of listening, observed, "Listening is hard work. It is characterized by faster heart action, quicker circulation of the blood, a small rise in bodily temperature."

Consider that we can process information four times faster than a person speaks. Yet, tests of listening comprehension show the average person listening at only 25 percent efficiency. A typical person can speak 125 words-per-minute, yet we can process up to three times faster, reaching as much as 500 words-per-minute. The poor listener grows impatient, while the effective listener uses the extra processing time to process the speaker's words, distinguish key points, and mentally summarize them (Nichols, 1957).

While reading a book or having a discussion with an individual, you can go back and reread or ask a question to clarify a point. This is not always true when listening. Listening is of the moment, and we often only get to hear the speaker's words once.

The key, then, is for the listener to quickly ascertain the speaker's central premise or controlling idea. Once this is done, it becomes easier for the listener to discern what is most important. Of course, distinguishing the speaker's primary goal, his main points, and the structure of the speech are all easier when the listener is able to listen with an open mind.

Attitude

Even if you are paying attention, you could be doing so with the wrong attitude. Telling yourself this is all a waste of time is not going to help you to listen effectively. You'll be better off determining an internal motivation to be attentive to the person speaking.

Approaching the task of listening with a positive attitude and an open mind will make the act of listening much easier. As mentioned earlier, bad listeners make snap judgments that justify their decision to be inattentive. Yet, since you're already there, why not listen to see what you can learn?

Kaponya (1991) warns against such psychological deaf spots, which impair our ability to perceive and understand things counter to our convictions. It can be as little as a word or phrase that might elicit "an emotional eruption," causing communication efficiency to drop rapidly.

For instance, someone who resolutely supports military action as the best response to a terrorist action may be unable to listen objectively to a speaker endorsing negotiation as a better tool. Even if the speaker is effectively employing logic, drawing on credible sources, and appealing to emotion with a heartrending tale of the civilian casualties caused by bombings, this listener would be unable to keep an open mind. Failing to acknowledge your deaf spots will leave you at a deficit when listening.

You will always need to make up your own mind about where you stand—whether you agree or disagree with the speaker—but it is critical to do so after listening. Adler proposes having four questions in mind while listening: "What is the whole speech about?" "What are the main or pivotal ideas, conclusions, and arguments?" "Are the speaker's conclusions sound or mistaken?" and "What of it?"

Once you have an overall idea of the speech, determine the key points, and gauge your agreement, you can decide why it matters, how it affects you, or what you might do as a result of what you have heard. Yet, he notes it is "impossible" to answer all these questions at the same time as you are listening. Instead, you have to be ready and willing to pay attention to the speaker's point of view and changes in direction, patiently waiting to see where she is leading you.

Adjustment

The final element to consider is adjustment. Often when we hear someone speak, we don't know in advance what the speaker will say. So, we need to be flexible, willing to follow a speaker along what seems like a verbal detour down a rabbit hole, until we are rewarded by the speaker reaching his final destination while his audience marvels at the creative means by which he reached his important point.

If the audience members are more intent on reacting to or anticipating what is said, they will be poor listeners indeed. Having an open attitude, paying attention, and being in the moment of the speech leads to the flexibility required to adjust to the situation.

Your Strengths and Weaknesses

Are you aware of what your strengths and weaknesses are as a presenter? You may have some ideas already. For example, if you are very soft spoken, you may consider that to be a weakness if you're on stage, especially without a microphone. Soft-spoken people also sometimes keep low-key in other ways; maybe they're more plain in the way they dress or have less expressive mannerisms. Many people think that to be effective on stage you must be a rip-roaring extrovert. This is not true. No matter who you are, if you are aware of the qualities that make you a unique individual and you spend time getting to know your audience, you can convert any perceived weaknesses into a potential strength. Conversely, if you are so overconfident about your abilities that it shows itself in poor preparation and lack of concern for your audience or environment, your strengths can quite quickly become weaknesses.

Your first step in helping define what makes you you is to look at what you're good at and what you enjoy doing. At the same time, this helps you distinguish what you're not so good at and what you don't enjoy. Make a list as you go through the next sections on your verbal and non-verbal communication techniques to get a reasonable prediction about how to focus your strategy as a presenter.

What Are My Verbal Communication Techniques?

Pitch

Do you have a deep, low voice, or a high-pitched one? We all have a normal speaking pitch where we are most comfortable, but we can move our pitch up or down. Use pitch inflections to make your delivery more interesting and emphatic. If you don't change pitch at all, your delivery will be monotone, which gets boring for the audience very quickly. Some people pitch their voices up at the end of sentences, making every statement sound like a question—avoid this common but distracting habit.

Volume

Do you speak softly or loudly? Adjust the volume of your voice to your environment and audience. If you're in a large auditorium, speak up so that people in the back row can hear you. But if you're in a small room with only a few people, you don't want to alarm them by shouting! You may need to use volume to compensate for ambient noise like traffic or an air conditioner. You can use volume strategically to emphasize the most important points in your speech.

Emphasis

Stress certain words in your speech to add emphasis to them, that is, to indicate that they are particularly important. You may also use a visual aid to emphasize key points by using photographs or charts.

Pronunciation

Make sure that you know the appropriate pronunciation of the words you choose. If you mispronounce a word, it could hurt your credibility or confuse your audience. Websites such as Wiktionary contain audio files that you can play to hear standard pronunciation of many words. Your pronunciation is also influenced by your accent. If your accent is quite different from the accent you expect most members of your audience to have, practise your speech in front of someone with the same accent that your audience members will have, to ensure you are pronouncing words in a clear, understandable way.

Fillers

Avoid the use of "fillers" as placeholders for actual words (like, er, um, uh, etc.). You might get away with saying "um" two or three times in your speech before it becomes distracting, but the same cannot be said of "like"—a particularly troubling filler for many North American speakers. If you have a habit of using fillers, practise your speech thoroughly so that you remember what you want to say. This way, you are less likely to lose your place and let a filler word slip out.

Rate

Are you a fast or slow speaker? The pace that you speak at will influence how well the audience can understand you. Many people speak quickly when they are nervous. If this is a habit of yours, practice will help you here, too. Pause for breath naturally during your speech. Your speaking rate should be appropriate for your topic. A rapid, lively rate communicates enthusiasm, urgency, or humour. A slower, moderated rate conveys respect and seriousness. By varying your rate within a speech, you can emphasize your main points and keep your audience engaged.

What Non-Verbal Cues Do I Use?

Gestures

A gesture is "a movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning" (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015). You can use these to channel nervous energy into an enhancement of your speech, reinforcing important points, but they can be distracting if overused. If the audience is busy watching your hands fly around, they will not be able to concentrate on your words.

Take a look at this article, titled "What to Do with Your Hands When Speaking in Public" (The Washington Post, 2015) for do's and don'ts of gesturing when you are speaking.

Facial Expression

You might be unaware of how much your facial expressions say when you are speaking. Facial expression comes so naturally that we are not always in control of the story our face is telling. Rehearse your speech in front of a mirror to see what facial expressions come across. You might find that your face is saying something entirely different about your topic than your words are! Practise using facial expressions consciously. If you are speaking about an upbeat topic, smile! Conversely, if your topic is serious or solemn, avoid facial expressions that are overtly cheerful, because the audience will be confused by the mixed message.

In North American culture, the most important facial expression you can use is eye contact. Briefly catch the eye of audience members as you move through your speech. If you can't look your audience members in the eye, they may view you as untrustworthy. Remember, though, that eye contact is a culturally sensitive gesture. In some cultures, there are certain accepted behaviours for males looking females in the eye, and vice-versa. You'll want to avoid holding eye contact for too long with any one person, as too much can be unnerving.

Posture

It's easy to let your posture slip when you've been talking for a while, but try to stay conscious of this and stand up straight. This gives the audience the perception that you are authoritative and take your position seriously. If you are slouching, hunched over, or leaning on something, this gives the impression that you are anxious, lacking in credibility, or not serious about your message. Speakers often assume more casual posture as a presentation continues, but you only get one shot at making a first impression, so make sure you begin with a strong stance.

Silence

Silence is a powerful technique if used well, but it is often overlooked. Perhaps you had a teacher in high school who would stand sternly and silently at the front of the room, expectantly waiting for the chatter to die down. His silence and stance were unnerving, so students soon became quiet, didn't they? And some of the best comedians use the well-timed pause for a powerful and hilarious —rather than serious—effect. Either way, pauses are useful for emphasis and dramatic effect when you are speaking.

Some speakers are reluctant to pause or use silence because they become uncomfortable with the dead air, but sometimes your audience needs a moment to process information and respond to you.

Movement

You can use your body movements to communicate positively with the audience. Leaning in or moving closer to the audience helps to bridge the space of separation. Moving from one side of the room to the other in a purposeful way that supports your content is a useful way to keep your audience engaged; their eyes will track your movements. Pacing rapidly with no purpose and no support to your message may quickly distract from your message, however. Standing still without movement when you are listening or responding to a question can show interest. However, standing still without any movement for the duration of your presentation could leave the audience bored. Balance is key, as is using your body as an extension of your content that suits the context of the environment and the audience.

Conclusion

This chapter helped you focus on getting to know your presentation style by understanding yourself better. You learned that elements of the environment, the audience, and the presenter had an impact on what makes for a good speech. You examined several issues related to self-awareness, including uncovering your values, understanding your perceptions, and dealing with strengths and weaknesses. Finally, you learned about verbal and non-verbal elements of your own presentation style, including how to work with your body as an extension of your presentation content. You should now be able to take what you have learned from this chapter into the next chapter as a foundation to build your presentation strategy.

Further Reading and Links

- Excerpts about the 10 greatest speeches of all time by women from Marie Claire magazine, UK.
- Talks on Technology, Education and Design from TED.
- Listening Effectively: Barriers to Effective Listening courses.candelalearning.com/publicspeaking1xmaster/chapter/chapter-4-barriers-to-effective-listening/

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3.3: Developing a Presentation Strategy

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- describe key communication format factors to consider when developing a presentation,
- describe the main functional elements of an effective introduction,
- match the main elements of the rhetorical model to where they are best applied in the development of a presentation,
- describe the functional organization in the body of an effective presentation,
- describe the main functional elements of an effective conclusion, and
- develop a presentation outline using the concepts discussed in the chapter.

Introduction

In beginning to think about a strategy for your presentation, you must move from thinking only about your "self" to how you will engage with the world outside of you, which, of course, includes your audience and environment.

This chapter focuses on helping you prepare a presentation strategy by first revisiting the acronym FAST, which will help you select an appropriate Format, prepare an Audience analysis, ensure your Style reflects your authentic personality and strengths, and that the Tone is appropriate for the occasion.

Then, after you've selected the appropriate channel, you will begin drafting your presentation first by considering the general and specific purposes of your presentation and using an outline to map your ideas and strategy.

You'll also learn to consider whether to incorporate backchannels or other technology into your presentation, and, finally, you will begin to think about how to develop presentation aids that will support your topic and approach.

At the end of this chapter you should be armed with a solid strategy for approaching your presentation in a way that is authentically you, balanced with knowing what's in it for your audience while making the most of the environment.

Preparing a Presentation Strategy

Incorporating FAST

In the Writing module, you learned the acronym FAST, which you can use to develop your message according to the elements of Format, Audience, Style, and Tone. When you are working on a presentation, much like in your writing, you will rely on FAST to help you make choices.

First, you'll need to think about the Format of your presentation. This is a choice between presentation types. In your professional life you'll encounter the verbal communication channels in the following table. The purpose column labels each channel with a purpose (I=Inform, P=Persuade, or E=Entertain) depending on that channel's most likely purpose.

Table 1: Presentation Communication Channels

Channel	Direction	Level of Formality	Interaction	Purpose
Speech	One to many	Formal	Low. One-sided	I,P,E
Presentation	One/Few-to-many	Formal	Variable. Often includes Q&A	I,P,E
Panel	Few-to-,many	Formal	High. Q&A based	I,P
Meeting	Group	Informal	High.	I,P
Teleconference	Group	Informal	High	I,P
Workshop	One-to-many	Informal	High. Collaborative	I (Educate)
Webinar	One-to-many	Formal	Low.	I
Podcast	One-to-many	Formal	Low. Recorded	I,P,E

There are some other considerations to make when you are selecting a format. For example, the number of speakers may influence the format you choose. Panels and Presentations may have more than one speaker. In meetings and teleconferences, multiple people will converse. In a Workshop setting, one person will usually lead the event, but there is often a high-level of collaboration between participants.

The location of participants will also influence your decision. For example, if participants cannot all be in the same room, you might choose a teleconference or webinar. If asynchronous delivery is important, you might record a podcast. When choosing a technology-reliant channel, such as a teleconference or webinar, be sure to test your equipment and make sure each participant has access to any materials they need before you begin.

Once you have chosen a Format, make sure your message is right for your Audience, just as you did in the Foundations module, when you conducted your Audience Analysis. You'll need to think about issues such as the following:

- What expectations will the audience have?
- What is the context of your communication?
- What does the audience already know about the topic?
- How is the audience likely to react to you and your message?

The AUDIENCE tool you used in the Foundations module will be helpful tool here.

Next, you'll consider the style of your presentation. Some of the things you discovered about yourself as a speaker in the self-awareness exercises earlier will influence your presentation style. Perhaps you prefer to present formally, limiting your interaction with the audience, or perhaps you prefer a more conversational, informal style, where discussion is a key element. You may prefer to cover serious subjects, or perhaps you enjoy delivering humorous speeches. Style is all about your personality!

Finally, you'll select a tone for your presentation. Your voice, body language, level of self-confidence, dress, and use of space all contribute to the mood that your message takes on. Consider how you want your audience to feel when they leave your presentation, and approach it with that mood in mind.

Presentation Purpose

Your specific purpose addresses what you are going to inform, persuade, or entertain your audience with—the main topic of your speech. Each example below includes two pieces of information: first, the general purpose; second, the specific purpose.

Your specific purpose addresses what you are going to inform, persuade, or entertain your audience with—the main topic of your speech. Each example below includes two pieces of information: first, the general purpose; second, the specific purpose.

Examples

To inform the audience about my favourite car, the Ford Mustang

To persuade the audience that global warming is a threat to the environment

Timing

Aim to speak for 90 percent of your allotted time so that you have time to answer audience questions at the end (assuming you have allowed for this). If audience questions are not expected, aim for 95 percent. Do not go overtime—audience members may need to be somewhere else immediately following your presentation, and you will feel uncomfortable if they begin to pack up and leave while you are still speaking. Conversely, you don't want to finish too early, as they may feel as if they didn't get their "money's worth."

To assess the timing of your speech as you prepare, you can

- set a timer while you do a few practice runs, and take an average
- run your speech text through an online speech timer
- estimate based on the number of words (the average person speaks at about 120 words per minute)

You can improve your chances of hitting your time target when you deliver your speech, by marking your notes with an estimated time at certain points. For example, if your speech starts at 2 p.m., you might mark 2:05 at the start of your notes for the body section, so that you can quickly glance at the clock and make sure you are on target. If you get there more quickly, consciously try to pause more often or speak more slowly, or speed up a little if you are pressed for time. If you have to adjust your timing as you are delivering the speech, do so gradually. It will be jarring to the audience if you start out speaking at a moderate pace, then suddenly realize you are going to run out of time and switch to rapid-fire delivery!

Incorporating Backchannels

Have you ever been to a conference where speakers asked for audience questions via social media? Perhaps one of your teachers at school has used Twitter for student comments and questions, or has asked you to vote on an issue through an online poll. Technology has given speakers new ways to engage with an audience in real time, and these can be particularly useful when it isn't practical for the audience to share their thoughts verbally—for example, when the audience is very large, or when they are not all in the same location.

These secondary or additional means of interacting with your audience are called backchannels, and you might decide to incorporate one into your presentation, depending on your aims. They can be helpful for engaging more introverted members of the audience who may not be comfortable speaking out verbally in a large group. Using publicly accessible social networks, such as a Facebook Page or Twitter feed, can also help to spread your message to a wider audience, as audience members share posts related to your speech with their networks. Because of this, backchannels are often incorporated into conferences; they are helpful in marketing the conference and its speakers both during and after the event.

There are some caveats involved in using these backchannels, though. If, for example, you ask your audience to submit their questions via Twitter, you'll need to choose a hashtag for them to append to the messages so that you can easily find them. You'll also need to have an assistant who will sort and choose the audience questions for you to answer. It is much too distracting for the speaker to do this on their own during the presentation. You could, however, respond to audience questions and comments after the presentation via social media, gaining the benefits of both written and verbal channels to spread your message.

Developing the Content

Creating an Outline

As with any type of messaging, it helps if you create an outline of your speech or presentation before you create it fully. This ensures that each element is in the right place and gives you a place to start to avoid the dreaded blank page. Here is an outline template that you can adapt for your purpose. Replace the placeholders in the Content column with your ideas or points, then make some notes in the Verbal and Visual Delivery column about how you will support or emphasize these points using the techniques we've discussed.

Table 2: Presentation Outline

Section	Content	Verbal and Visual Delivery
Introduction	• Attention-grabber • Main idea • Common ground	
Body	• I. Main idea: Point 1 • Subpoint 1 • A.1 specific information 1 • A.2 specific information 2 • II. Main idea: Point 2 • Subpoint 1 • B.1 specific information 1 • B.2 specific information 2 • III. Main idea: Point 3 • Subpoint 1 • C.1 specific information 1 • C.2 specific information 2	
Conclusion	• Summary of main points 1-3 • Residual message/call-to-action	

Introduction

The beginning of your speech needs an attention-grabber to get your audience interested right away. Choose your attention-grabbing device based on what works best for you topic. Your entire introduction should only be around 10 to 15 percent of your total speech, so be sure to keep this section short. Here are some devices that you could try:

Subject Statement – to the point, but not the most interesting choice.

Example

We are surrounded by statistical information in today's world, so understanding statistics is becoming paramount to citizenship in the twenty-first century.

Audience Reference – highlights something common to the audience that will make them interested in the topic.

Example

As human resource professionals, you and I know the importance of talent management. In today's competitive world, we need to invest in getting and keeping the best talent for our organizations to succeed.

Quotation – wise words of another person. You can find quotations online that cover just about any topic.

Example

Oliver Goldsmith, a sixteenth-century writer, poet, and physician, once noted that "the true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them."

Current Event – refer to a current event in the news that demonstrates the relevance of your topic to the audience.

Example

On January 10, 2007, Scott Anthony Gomez Jr. and a fellow inmate escaped from a Pueblo, Colorado, jail. During their escape the duo attempted to rappel from the roof of the jail using a makeshift ladder of bed sheets. During Gomez's attempt to scale the building, he slipped, fell 40 feet, and injured his back. After being quickly apprehended, Gomez filed a lawsuit against the jail for making it too easy for him to escape.

Historical Event – Compare or contrast your topic with an occasion in history.

Example

During the 1960s and ’70s, the United States intervened in the civil strife between North and South Vietnam. The result was a long-running war of attrition in which many American lives were lost and the country of Vietnam suffered tremendous damage and destruction. We saw a similar war waged in Iraq. American lives were lost, and stability has not yet returned to the region.

Anecdote, Parable, or Fable – An anecdote is a brief account or story of an interesting or humorous event, while a parable or fable is a symbolic tale designed to teach a life lesson.

Examples

In July 2009, a high school girl named Alexa Longueira was walking along a main boulevard near her home on Staten Island, New York, typing in a message on her cell phone. Not paying attention to the world around her, she took a step and fell right into an open manhole (Witney, 2009).

The ancient Greek writer Aesop told a fable about a boy who put his hand into a pitcher of filberts. The boy grabbed as many of the delicious nuts as he possibly could. But when he tried to pull them out, his hand wouldn’t fit through the neck of the pitcher because he was grasping so many filberts. Instead of dropping some of them so that his hand would fit, he burst into tears and cried about his predicament. The moral of the story? “Don’t try to do too much at once” (Aesop, 1881).

Surprising Statement – A strange fact or statistic related to your topic that startles your audience.

Examples

- A Boeing 747 airliner holds 57,285 gallons of fuel.
- The average person has over 1,460 dreams a year.
- There are no clocks in any casinos in Las Vegas.
- In 2000, Pope John Paul II became the most famous honorary member of the Harlem Globetrotters.

Question – You could ask either a question that asks for a response from your audience, or a rhetorical question, which does not need a response but is designed to get them thinking about the topic.

Examples

- Raise your hand if you have ever thought about backpacking in Europe.
- If you prick us, do we not bleed? (Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice)

Humour – A joke or humorous quotation can work well, but to use humour you need to be sure that your audience will find the comment funny. You run the risk of insulting members of the audience, or leaving them puzzled if they don’t get the joke, so test it out on someone else first!

Examples

“The only thing that stops God from sending another flood is that the first one was useless.”—Nicolas Chamfort, sixteenth-century French author

Personal Reference – Refer to a story about yourself that is relevant to the topic.

Example

In the fall of 2008, I decided that it was time that I took my life into my own hands. After suffering for years with the disease of obesity, I decided to take a leap of faith and get a gastric bypass in an attempt to finally beat the disease.

Occasion Reference – This device is only relevant if your speech is occasion-specific, for example, a toast at a wedding, a ceremonial speech, or a graduation commencement.

Example

Today we are here to celebrate the wedding of two wonderful people.

After the attention-getter comes the rest of your introduction. It needs to do the following:

- Capture the audience’s interest
- State the purpose of your speech
- Establish credibility

- Give the audience a reason to listen
- Signpost the main ideas

Body

Rhetoric and Argument

Your audience will think to themselves, Why should I listen to this speech? What's in it for me? One of the best things you can do as a speaker is to answer these questions early in your body, if you haven't already done so in your introduction. This will serve to gain their support early and will fill in the blanks of who, what, when, where, why, and how in their minds.

You may remember the three rhetorical proofs, namely, ethos, pathos, and logos, from the Writing Module. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C) considered these the three most important elements in a speaker's arsenal.

Ethos

Ethos refers to the speaker's character and expertise. When you use ethos correctly, you are showing the audience that you are credible and that they can believe what you say. To cover this element in your speech, tell the audience why they should listen to you. You can do this by demonstrating your authority on your topic. For example, you could begin a persuasive speech on the dangers of drinking and driving with a short story about how you helped implement a "designated driver" program. This way the audience will understand your relationship to the message and form a positive perception of you. If you are trying to persuade the audience to donate blood, your credibility on the subject may come from your studies in the medical field or from having volunteered at a blood drive.

Pathos

The term pathos refers to the use of emotion as a persuasive element. You have probably seen commercials on television for charities trying to raise funds for sick children or mistreated animals, complete with sad images and music; this is pathos at work. We don't always make decisions based on clear thinking. We are easily moved by words, by a video clip, or by a piece of music, so this can be an effective way of convincing the audience to take a particular action. But it can be overdone, and the audience will tire of it if you push too hard. If pathos is central to your strategy, be subtle about it so that you don't turn off your audience.

Logos

The term logos refers to logic. Aristotle believed that any argument should be based on logic, not pathos (emotion), but you might not agree! To win your audience over using logic, your speech must be carefully organized and present facts and evidence. Depending on the general purpose of your speech, particularly if its goal is to persuade, you may need to present an argument. To do this, logos is key. Think about what prosecutors do during a trial—particularly during closing arguments. This is the place for facts and reason. Prosecutors will argue that the scenario they have presented is the only logical interpretation of the evidence. To use logos effectively, incorporate expert testimony, statistics, and other reliable data.

Organization

An organized body helps your audience to follow your speech and recall your points later. When developing the body of your speech, recall the specific purpose you decided on, then choose main points to support it. Just two or three main points are usually sufficient, depending on the length of your speech. Anticipate one main point per two to three minutes of speaking.

To narrow down your main points, start by brainstorming. Don't worry about judging the value or importance of the points at this stage; just write down as many possible points as you can that support your topic. What information does your audience need to know to understand your topic? What information does your speech need to convey to accomplish its specific purpose? Here is an example of a list that you might begin with.

Table 3: Organizing the Points in a Presentation

Item	Notes
Specific Purpose	To inform a group of school administrators about the various open-source software packages that could be utilized in their school districts
Brainstorming List of Points	Define open-source software.
	Define educational software.
	List and describe the software commonly used by school districts.
	Explain the advantages of using open-source software.
	Explain the disadvantages of using open-source software.
	Review the history of open-source software.
	Describe the value of open-source software.
	Describe some educational open-source software packages.
	Review the software needs of my specific audience.
	Describe some problems that have occurred with open-source software.

Once you have a list of points, you'll need to narrow them down. Begin by looking for closely related minor points that can be grouped into one. This process is called chunking. Before reading our chunking of the preceding list, can you determine three large chunks out of the list above?

Table 4: Organizing the Main Points in a Presentation

Item	Notes
Specific Purpose	To inform a group of school administrators about the various open-source software packages that could be utilized in their school districts
Main Point 1	**School districts use software in their operations.**
	Define educational software.
	List and describe the software commonly used by school districts.
Main Point 2	**What is open-source software?**
	Define open-source software.
	Review the history of open-source software.
	Explain the advantages of using open-source software.
	Explain the disadvantages of using open-source software.
	Describe some problems that have occurred with open-source software.
Main Point 3	**Name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for the audience's use.**
	Review the software needs of my specific audience.
	Describe some educational open-source software packages.

The preceding list is a little disjointed, and not all of the topics work together clearly. These are just general ideas at this point. There is often more than one way to organize a speech. Some of these points could be left out, and others developed more fully, depending on the purpose and audience. You will refine this information until you have the number of main points you need. Ensure that they are distinct, and balance the content of your speech so that you spend roughly the same amount of time addressing each. You'll also need to remember what you learned about parallel structure in the Writing Module, to make sure each of your main points is phrased in the same way. The last thing to do when working on your body is to make sure your points are in a logical order, so that your ideas flow naturally from one to the next.

Concluding on a High Note

You'll need to keep your energy up until the very end of your speech. In your conclusion, your job is to let the audience know you are finished, help them remember what you've told them, and leave them with a final thought or call-to-action, depending on the general purpose of your message.

Conclusion

In this chapter you revisited the importance of FAST and AUDIENCE tools in helping to lay out a strategy that incorporates your own understanding with the needs of the audience. You learned about how to use an outline to stay organized and keep track of your ideas, as well as general and specific purposes. You learned the importance of sustaining your audience's attention throughout the presentation with key approaches you can take as you write your introduction, body, and conclusion. You should now be prepared to take your strategy to the next level by ensuring you next consider whether and how to incorporate high-quality presentation aids.

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3.4: Presentation Aids

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- explain how visual aids can improve the quality and impact of a presentation,
- distinguish unique benefits of different types of visual aids, and
- develop visual aids that are consistent with standard presentation quality criteria

Introduction

Presentations can be enhanced by the effective use of visual aids. These include handouts, overhead transparencies, drawings on the whiteboard, PowerPoint slides, and many other types of props. Once you have chosen a topic, consider how you are going to show your audience what you are talking about. Visuals can provide a reference, illustration, or image to help the audience to understand and remember your point.

Visual aids accomplish several goals:

- Make your speech more interesting
- Enhance your credibility as a speaker
- Guide transitions, helping the audience stay on track
- Communicate complex information in a short time
- Reinforce your message
- Encourage retention

Emphasis, Support, and Clarity

The purpose for each visual aid should be clear and speak for itself. If you can't quickly link the purpose of a visual aid to the verbal message, consider whether it should be used. Visual aids can be distracting or confusing if they are not clearly connected to what you are saying.

Perhaps you want to highlight a trend between two related issues, such as socioeconomic status and educational attainment. You might show a line graph that compares the two, showing that as socioeconomic status rises, educational attainment also rises. People learn in different ways. Some of us learn best using visual stimuli; others learn by taking notes or by using tactile objects. So, by using visuals to support your presentation and, if possible, tactile aids or demos, you can help a significant proportion of the audience learn about your topic.

Clarity is key in the use of visual aids. Limit the number of words on your slides. No more than 10 words per slide, with a font large enough to be read at the back of the room or auditorium, is a good rule of thumb.

Methods and Materials

Slide Decks

The most common visual aid used in presentations, slide decks may be developed using software such as PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, or Google Slides. These tools allow you to show text, images, and charts and even to play audio or video files. They are an excellent enhancement to your presentation, but they do require a contingency plan. Computers sometimes fail to work as planned, so make sure you have a whiteboard or handout as a backup in case of any technical issues. You can minimize the risk by testing out equipment ahead of time.

Also, remember that these are an aid to your central, verbal message. Resist the urge to read directly from them with your back to the audience, or to pack slides full of text in lieu of speaking all of the information you want to get across.

Flip Charts, Whiteboards, and Large Prints

Flip charts and whiteboards are a good choice when you don't have access to a computer and projector. Alternatively, you can print some visual aids like charts and graphs in large sizes and show them during your presentation. If you plan to get a lot of audience input and want to write or draw things out, then a whiteboard is an ideal choice. But make sure your writing is large enough to be seen at the back of the room and that it is easy to read.

Handouts

If it will be helpful for your audience to refer to the information you're sharing at a later date, they'll appreciate it if you leave them with a handout. But never give handouts to the audience at the beginning of your speech. They will be distracted by reading and tune you out. If you decide to use one, let the audience know at the beginning of the speech that you'll provide it at the end. This will relieve them from having to capture all your content by taking notes, and keep their attention focused on you while you speak.

Demonstrations and Tactile Aids

If your presentation is about how to do something, for example, how to cook a particular dish or how to use a tool, you will want to show the audience a demonstration. Sometimes it is helpful to pass around a tactile aid, for example, a model. These can be very helpful if you want your audience to learn by doing. Make sure to pass items around during pauses in your presentation so that you don't lose the audience's attention. If audience members need to move around to use a tactile aid, make sure the location has enough space to make this possible.

Using Visual Aids

Designing Slide Decks

Using PowerPoint or a similar program, You'll be able to import, or cut and paste, words from text files, images, or video clips to represent your ideas. You can even incorporate web links.

At first, you might be overwhelmed by the possibilities, and you might be tempted to use all the bells, whistles, and sounds, not to mention the flying, and animated graphics. If used wisely, a simple transition can be effective, But if used indiscriminately, it can annoy the audience to the point where they cringe in anticipation of the sound effect at the start of each slide.

Stick to one main idea per slide. The presentation is for the audience's benefit, not yours. Pictures and images can be understood more quickly and easily than text, so you can use this to your advantage as you present.

If you develop a slide deck for your presentation, test these out in the location beforehand, not just on your own computer screen, as different computers and software versions can make your slides look different than you expected. Allow time for revision based on what you learn.

Your visual aids should meet the following criteria:

- Big – legible for everyone, even the back row
- Clear – the audience should "get it" the first time they see it
- Simple – simplify concepts rather than complicating them
- Consistent – use the same visual style throughout

Font

Another consideration that you'll need to make when designing your slide decks is font. As previously mentioned, think about the people at the back of the room when choosing the size of your text, to make sure it can be read by everyone.

A common mistake that presenters make is to use decorative fonts, or to incorporate many different fonts in their slides. This not only creates a mixed message for the audience but also makes your message difficult to read. Choose legible, common fonts that do not have thin elements that may be difficult to see.

Colour

When considering your choice of colours to use, legibility must be your priority. Contrast can help the audience read your key terms more easily. Make sure the background colour and the images you plan to use complement each other. Repeat colours, from your graphics to your text, to help unify each slide. To reduce visual noise, try not to use more than two or three colours.

According to the standard colour wheel, colours are grouped into primary, secondary, and tertiary categories. Primary colours are the colours from which other colours are made through various combinations: blue, red, and yellow. Secondary colours—green, orange, and purple—combine two primary colours, while tertiary colours are made from combinations of primary and secondary colours.

Figure 1: The Colour Wheel by Laura Underwood

Colours have relationships depending on their location on the wheel. Colours that are opposite each other are called complementary, and they contrast, creating a dynamic effect. Analogous colours are located next to each other and promote continuity and sense of unity.

Blue-green colour blindness, and red-green colour blindness are fairly common, so avoid using these colour combinations if it is important for the audience to differentiate between them. If you are using a pie chart, for example, avoid putting a blue segment next to a green one. Use labelling so that even if someone is colour blind, they will be able to tell the relative sizes of the pie segments and what they signify.

Colour is also a matter of culture. Some colours may be perceived as formal or informal, or masculine or feminine. Certain colours have understood meanings; for example, red is usually associated with danger, while green signals "go." Make sure the colours you use align with your message. If you are discussing climate change or the natural world, for example, you'd be more likely to use blues and greens rather than metallic colours to avoid confusing the audience.

Helpful Hints

Visual aids can be a powerful tool when used effectively but can run the risk of dominating your presentation. Consider your audience and how the portrayal of images, text, graphic, animated sequences, or sound files will contribute or detract from your presentation. Here are some hints to keep in mind as you prepare yours.

- Keep it simple
- One idea per slide

- Avoid clutter
- Use large, bold fonts that can be read from at least 20 feet away
- Use contrasting colours for a dynamic effect
- Use analogous colours to unify ideas
- Do not use clip art
- Proofread each slide with care
- Test in the presentation room beforehand
- If you are using a computer for your visual aids, have a backup plan

Conclusion

Using visual aids takes time and practice. The more you practise before your speech, the more comfortable you will be with your visual aids and the role they serve. Know your material well enough that you refer to your visual aids, not rely on them.

Check Your Understanding

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3.5: Communicating with a Live Audience

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- explain the preparation process used to deliver a presentation,
- describe ways to cope with mistakes and surprises during a live presentation,
- describe important audience factors to consider in delivering an effective presentation, and
- critique and provide constructive feedback on a professional presentation.

Introduction

This chapter focuses on what to do when presentation day finally arrives. You have had the opportunity to learn about your presentation style, mapping out an effective strategy, and making the most of presentation aids, so you should be well poised to communicate interpersonally with a live audience.

You will first learn about how to prepare to present by taking a deeper look at what you should be doing during rehearsals, considering how you'll dress comfortably and professionally and how your setup will include contingency plans.

You will learn effective approaches to managing anxiety, such as how to cope with your body's reaction as well as how to cope with mistakes or surprises that may pop up in the speech, with the technology or through some other external distraction.

Having an understanding of how to read your audience for positive or negative cues is important during and post presentation, and you will learn about interpreting them in scanning their body language and during Q&A.

Finally, you will have a chance to critically reflect on the delivery of a presentation by learning about how to do a self-analysis, as well as give and receive constructive verbal and non-verbal feedback.

Preparing to Present

Rehearsing

To deliver your presentation to the best of your ability, and to reduce your nerves once you take the stage, you need to practise by rehearsing. As you do, try to identify the weaknesses in your delivery to improve on them. For example, do you often mis-speak the same words (e.g., pacific for specific; ax for ask) or do your hands or feet fidget? Use your practice time to focus on correcting these issues. These sessions should help you get comfortable and help you remember what you want to say without having to constantly refer to notes.

Try practising in front of a mirror, or even recording yourself speaking to a camera and playing it back. It's also helpful to get feedback from a supportive audience at this stage. Perhaps a few family members or friends could watch you give your presentation and provide some feedback.

If at all possible, access the room where you will be presenting. This way you can get a feel for its setup and decide how you will stand or move during your presentation.

Most other problems can be prevented with practice. Rehearse so that you are not reliant on your notes. This way, if a note card goes missing, it's no big deal. During your rehearsals you'll get used to pacing yourself, pausing for breath, and the timing of your speech so that this comes more naturally once you get onstage.

Dress for Success

While there are no definitive guidelines for how you should dress for your presentation, your appearance is an important part of your audience's first impression. If you want them to take you seriously, you'll need to look the part. While you don't have to wear a suit each time you present, there are some scenarios where this would be expected; for example, if you are presenting to a corporate audience who wear suits to work, you should do the same. You should dress one step above your audience. If your audience is going to be dressed casually in shorts and jeans, then wear nice casual clothing such as a pair of pressed slacks and a collared shirt or blouse. If your audience is going to be wearing business casual attire, then you should wear a dress or a suit.

Another general rule is avoid distractions in your appearance. Overly tight or revealing garments, over-the-top hairstyles or makeup or jangling jewelry can distract your audience's attention from your message.

Setting Up Your Environment

Depending on the circumstances of your speech or presentation, you may have some choices to make about the environment. Perhaps you have a choice of meeting rooms that you can use, or, perhaps you have only one option.

If you have some flexibility, it is helpful to think about what sort of environment would best help you get across your message across. For example, if you are running a workshop, you might want to assemble participants in a circle to encourage collaboration and discussion. If you are holding a webinar, you'll need a quiet location with a strong Internet connection and a computer system. It is imperative that you think about what facilities you need well before the day of your presentation arrives. Arriving to find that the equipment you expected isn't available is not a nice surprise for even the most experienced speaker!

If you have access to the location beforehand, you may need to move tables or chairs around to get things just the way you want them. You might choose to have a podium brought in, if you are aiming for a formal feel, for example, or you may need to position your flip chart. Double check that you have all the equipment you need, from whiteboard markers to speakers. It is far better if you can get comfortable with the room before your audience arrives, as this will make you feel more prepared and less nervous.

If you are using technology to support your presentation (i.e., PowerPoint slides or a projector), test everything before you begin. Do a microphone check and test its volume, view your slides on the computer you will be using, check any weblinks, play videos to test their sound, or make a call to test the phone connection prior to your teleconference. Your audience will get restless quickly if they arrive and are expected to wait while you fix a technical problem. This will also make you seem disorganized and hurt your credibility as an authoritative speaker.

Contingency Planning

Well before the day of your presentation, ask yourself, What could go wrong? This might sound like a way for a novice presenter to stress oneself out, but it can actually be very helpful. If you anticipate the worst-case scenario and are prepared for it, problems on the day of your presentation are less likely to bother you.

Many of the possible problems can be avoided with preparation. Make sure you have notes with you in case you need them. Dress professionally so that you feel good about how you are presenting yourself. Getting there early to set up and test the equipment will prevent many technical issues, but having a handout with you will make you feel even more comfortable in case you have problems with your slides. Bring a bottle of water in case your throat becomes dry or you need a moment to pause.

Most other problems can be prevented with practice. Rehearse so that you are not reliant on your notes. This way, if a note card goes missing, it's no big deal. During your rehearsals you'll get used to pacing yourself, pausing for breath, and the timing of your speech so that this comes more naturally once you get onstage.

During the Presentation

Managing Anxiety

Studies have been done to assess how nervous or stressful people typically get during presentations, by examining people's physiological responses at three intervals: one minute before the presentation, the first minute of the speech, and the last minute of the speech. They discovered that nervousness usually peaked at the anticipation stage that occurs one minute before the presentation. They further found that as the speech progresses, nervousness tends to go down. Here are some things you can do to help you manage your anxiety before the presentation:

- Practice/rehearse in similar conditions/setting as your speech
- Be organized
- Think positively
- Analyze your audience
- Adapt your language to speaking style

During the presentation itself, there are four main areas where you can focus attention in order to manage your anxiety:

1. Your body's reaction

2. Attention to the audience
3. Keeping a sense of humour
4. Common stress management techniques

Your Body's Reaction

Physical movement helps to channel some of the excess energy that your body produces in response to anxiety. If at all possible, move around the front of the room rather than remaining imprisoned behind the lectern or gripping it for dear life (avoid pacing nervously from side to side, however). Move closer to the audience and then stop for a moment. If you are afraid that moving away from the lectern will reveal your shaking hands, use note cards rather than a sheet of paper for your outline. Note cards do not quiver like paper, and they provide you with something to do with your hands. Other options include vocal warm-ups right before your speech, having water (preferably in a non-spillable bottle with a spout) nearby for dry mouth, and doing a few stretches before going on stage.

Deep breathing will help to counteract the effects of excess adrenaline. You can place cues or symbols in your notes, such as "slow down" or ☺, that remind you to pause and breathe during points in your speech. It is also a good idea to pause a moment before you get started to set an appropriate pace from the onset. Look at your audience and smile. It is a reflex for some of your audience members to smile back. Those smiles will reassure you that your audience members are friendly.

Attention to the Audience

During your speech, make a point of establishing direct eye contact with your audience members. By looking at individuals, you establish a series of one-to-one contacts similar to interpersonal communication. An audience becomes much less threatening when you think of them not as an anonymous mass but as a collection of individuals.

A gentleman once shared his worst speaking experience: Right before the start of his speech, he reached the front of the room and forgot everything he was supposed to say. When asked what he saw when he was in the front of the room, he gave a quizzical look and responded, "I didn't see anything. All I remember is a mental image of me up there in the front of the room blowing it." Speaking anxiety becomes more intense if you focus on yourself rather than concentrate on your audience and your material.

Keeping a Sense of Humour

No matter how well we plan, unexpected things happen. That fact is what makes the public speaking situation so interesting. When the unexpected happens to you, do not let it rattle you. At the end of a class period late in the afternoon of a long day, a student raised her hand and asked the professor if he knew that he was wearing two different coloured shoes, one black and one blue. He looked down and saw that she was right; his shoes did not match. He laughed at himself, complimented the student on her observational abilities, and moved on with the important thing, the material he had to deliver.

Stress Management Techniques

Even when we use positive thinking and are well prepared, some of us still feel a great deal of anxiety about public speaking. When that is the case, it can be more helpful to use stress management than to try to make the anxiety go away.

Here are two main tools that can help:

- Visualization: imagining the details of what a successful speech would look and sound like from beginning to end; a way of hypnotizing yourself into positive thinking by using your mind's eye to make success real.
- Systematic desensitization: Gradual exposure to the thing that causes fear—in this case, giving a speech—can ultimately lead to decreased anxiety. Basically, the more practice you get speaking in front of people, the less fear and anxiety you'll have about public speaking. Organizations like Toastmasters that help people confront their fears by providing a supportive environment to learn and practise is a good option if you have a true phobia around presenting or public speaking.

Using a Microphone

If you are using a microphone during your speech, there are a few cautions to be aware of. First, make sure you do a sound check and that you know how the microphone works—how to turn it on and off, how to mute it, and how to raise or lower it. If possible, have it positioned to the height you need before you go onstage. Make sure the microphone does not block your face.

If you will be using a clip-on microphone (called a lavaliere mic), you'll need to wear something with a lapel or collar that it can be clipped to. Make sure your hair and jewelery are out of the way to avoid rustling noises, and place the microphone 8 to 10 inches below your chin.

Finally, do not get too close to the microphone. Many people stand too close to the mic and end up hunched over it, creating bad posture and an uncomfortable position. If you get too close, the mic will pick up your breathing as well as your words and can also create that screeching feedback that will make your audience jump in their seats. Doing a sound check and getting comfortable with the equipment before you go onstage will prevent the majority of errors when using a microphone.

Coping with Mistakes and Surprises

Even the most prepared speaker will encounter unexpected challenges from time to time. Here are a few strategies for combating the unexpected in your own presentations.

Speech Content Issues

What if a note card goes missing or you skip important information from the beginning of your speech? While situations like these might seem like the worst nightmare of a novice public speaker, they can be easily overcome. Pause for a moment to think about what to do. Is it important to include the missing information, or can it be omitted without hindering the audience's ability to understand your speech? If it needs to be included, does the information fit better now or in a later segment? If you can move on without the missing element, that is often the best choice, but pausing for a few seconds to decide will be less distracting to the audience than sputtering through a few "ums" and "uhs." Situations like these demonstrate why it's a good idea to have a glass of water with you when you speak. Pausing for a moment to take a sip of water is a perfectly natural movement, so the audience may not even notice that anything is amiss.

Technical Difficulties

Technology has become a very useful aid in public speaking, allowing us to use audio or video clips, presentation software, or direct links to websites. But it does break down occasionally! Web servers go offline, files will not download, or media contents are incompatible with the computer in the presentation room. Always have a backup plan in case of technical difficulties. As you develop your speech and visual aids, think through what you will do if you cannot show a particular graph or if your presentation slides are garbled. Your beautifully prepared chart may be superior to the verbal description you can provide. Your ability to provide a succinct verbal description when technology fails will give your audience the information they need and keep your speech moving forward.

External Distractions

Unfortunately, one thing that you can't control during your speech is audience etiquette, but you can decide how to react to it. Inevitably, an audience member will walk in late, a cell phone will ring, or a car alarm will go off outside. If you are interrupted by external events like these, it is often useful and sometimes necessary to pause and wait so that you can regain the audience's attention.

Whatever the event, maintain your composure. Do not get upset or angry about these glitches. If you keep your cool and quickly implement a "plan B" for moving forward, your audience will be impressed.

Reading Your Audience

Recognizing your audience's mood by observing their body language can help you adjust your message and see who agrees with you, who doesn't, and who is still deciding. With this information, you can direct your attention—including eye contact and questions—to the areas of the room where they can have the most impact.

As the speaker, you are conscious that you are being observed. But your audience members probably don't think of themselves as being observed, so their body language will be easy to read.

Handling Q&A

Question-and-answer sessions can be trickier to manage than the presentation itself. You can prepare for and rehearse the presentation, but audience members could ask a question you hadn't considered or don't know how to answer. There are three important elements to think about when incorporating Q&A's as part of your presentation:

Audience Expectations

At the beginning of your speech, give the audience a little bit of information about who you are and what your expertise on the subject is. Once they know what you do (and what you know), it will be easier for the audience to align their questions with your area of expertise—and for you to bow out of answering questions that are outside of your area.

Timing of Q&A's

Questions are easier to manage when you are expecting them. Unless you are part of a panel, meeting, or teleconference, it is probably easier to let the audience know that you will take questions at the end of your presentation. This way you can avoid interruptions to your speech that can distract you and cause you to lose time. If audience members interrupt during your talk, you can then ask them politely to hold on to their question until the Q&A session at the end.

Knowing How to Respond

Never pretend that you know the answer to a question if you don't. The audience will pick up on it! Instead, calmly apologize and say that the question is outside of the scope of your knowledge but that you'd be happy to find out after the presentation (or, suggest some resources where the person could find out for themselves).

If you are uncertain about how to answer a question, say something like "That's really interesting. Could you elaborate on that?" This will make the audience member feel good because they have asked an interesting question, and it will give you a moment to comprehend what they are asking.

Sometimes presenters rush to answer a question because they are nervous or want to impress. Pause for a moment, before you begin your answer, to think about what you want to say. This will help you to avoid misinterpreting the question, or taking offense to a question that is not intended that way.

A final tip is to be cautious about how you answer, so that you don't offend your audience. You are presenting on a topic because you are knowledgeable about it, but your audience is not. It is important not to make the audience feel inferior because there are things that they don't know. Avoid comments such as "Oh, yes, it's really easy to do that…" Instead, say something like "Yes, that can be tricky. I would recommend…" Also, avoid a bossy tone. For example, phrase your response with "What I find helpful is…" rather than "What you should do is…"

Critiquing a Presentation

Self-Analysis

It is often said that we are our own worst critic. Many people are hard on themselves and may exaggerate how poorly a speech or presentation went. Other times, there's not much exaggeration. In both cases it helps to do a post examination of your performance as presenter.

To provide a slightly more objective approach to analyzing the delivery of your speech or presentation, it may be useful to refer back to what we saw in chapter 1 related to what makes a good speech or presenter. Namely, did you

- make the most of your unique voice? Did the audience seem to understand you?
- make the most of using body language? Did your body confidently support what you were saying?
- use a coherent structure? Did the audience seem to make sense of your presentation? Was it logical?
- show enthusiasm? Did you show the audience you cared about your presentation?
- demonstrate expertise? Did you show your credibility by citing reliable sources and making a distinction between facts and your opinion?
- show you practised and prepared? Did your confidence show because you implemented a plan that included sufficient rehearsal, contingency plans, and other success strategies?

Honestly asking yourself these questions with the intention of uncovering your strengths and weaknesses should help you to become a better presenter. While it is important to review other kinds of feedback, whether from the audience, your peers, or an instructor, it is also useful to have a realistic understanding of your own performance. This understanding is part of gaining experience and improving as a presenter.

Giving Feedback

In chapter 1 we reviewed the idea that speakers and audiences can't exist without one another. From the perspective of a speaker, the audience members are vital in helping him or her to understand how they are doing both during and after the presentation. Knowing what it feels like to be on stage is often motivation enough for many people to give non-verbal feedback or verbal feedback.

Non-Verbal Feedback

Let us now shift our focus from effective public speaking skills to effective listening. Boothman (2008) recommends listening with your whole body, not just your ears. Consider how confident you would feel speaking to a room full of people with their eyes closed, arms and legs crossed, and bodies bent in slouches. These listeners are presenting non-verbal cues communicating that they are uninterested and unimpressed. Meanwhile, a listener sitting up straight, facing you with an intent look on his face, is more likely to offer reassurance that the speaker's words are being understood.

Eye contact is another non-verbal cue to the speaker that you are paying attention. You don't want to be bug-eyed and unblinking; the speaker might assume there is a tiger behind her and begin to panic as you seem to be doing. However, attentive eye contact can indicate you are listening and help you to stay focused too. There are some cultures where maintaining eye contact would cause discomfort, so keep that in mind. Also, you may be someone who listens better with eyes closed to visualize what is being said. This can be difficult for a speaker to recognize, so if this is you, consider incorporating one of the following non-verbals while you listen with eyes closed.

Nodding your head affirmatively, making backchannel responses such as "Yes," "Umhum," or "OK" can help the speaker gauge your interest. Even the speed of your head nod can signal your level of patience or understanding (Pease & Pease, 2006). Leaning in as a listener is far more encouraging than slumping in your seat. Miller (1994) suggests the "listener's lean" demonstrates "ultimate interest. This joyous feedback is reflexive. It physically endorses our communiqué." Nevertheless, sending too many non-verbal responses to the speaker can go wrong, too. After all, a conference room full of people shifting in their seats and nodding their heads may translate as a restless audience that the speaker needs to recapture.

Verbal Feedback

While speakers sometimes want all questions held until the end of a presentation, asking questions when the opportunity presents itself can help you as a listener. For one, you have to listen in order to be able to ask a question. Your goal should be to ask open-ended questions ("What do you think about….?" rather than "We should do …, right?"). You can use questions to confirm your understanding of the speaker's message. If you're not entirely sure of a significant point, you might ask a clarifying question. These are questions such as "What did you mean?" "Can you be more specific?" or "What is a concrete example of your point?" These can help your comprehension while also offer the speaker feedback. When asking questions, approach the speaker in a positive, non-threatening way. A good listener doesn't seek to put the speaker on the defensive. You want to demonstrate your objectivity and willingness to listen to the speaker's response.

Finally, paraphrasing what has been said in your interactions with the speaker can be another useful tool for a good listener. Imagine the difference if, before you respond to an upset colleague, you take a moment to say, "I understand you are disappointed we didn't consult you before moving forward with the product release…" before you say, "we didn't have time to get everyone's input." Reflecting back the speaker's point of view before responding allows the speaker to know you were listening and helps foster trust that everyone's voice is being heard.

Table 1: Constructive vs Not Constructive Verbal and Non-Verbal Feedback

Non-Verbal Feedback (constructive)	Verbal Feedback (constructive)
Listen with whole body	Ask open-ended questions
Use appropriate eye contact	Questions confirm understanding of message
Nod affirmatively (mmm hmm, yes, OK)	Ask clarifying questions (can you give an example of/did you mean…)
Use **listener's lean**	Use paraphrasing to demonstrate accurate understanding
Non-Verbal Feedback (not constructive)	Verbal Feedback (not constructive)
Closed body position	Asking closed questions
No eye contact	Asking questions that don't relate to speaker's message
Inattentive, distracted (playing with phones, engaging in side conversations etc.)	Asking rhetorical questions
Slumping, yawning	Making your own speech instead of asking a question

Receiving Feedback

Being open to receiving feedback is the only way to have a better picture of your performance as a presenter or speaker. Combining self-analysis with the feedback of your audience or peers is your opportunity to better understand your strengths as a presenter and what resonated well with your audience.

It may be a bit more uncomfortable to look at things that did not go well or receive feedback that's judgemental, biased, or otherwise laden with emotion. In the first chapter of this module, you learned about self-awareness. When receiving and making sense of feedback, it is very important to be self-aware and honest with yourself. This honesty will help you distinguish between an environmental situation, a situation that lies with the audience member, or a situation with the presenter.

Conclusion

In this chapter you learned about useful tools such as rehearsing, dressing appropriately, and having a contingency plan that help you prepare to present to a live audience. You examined approaches that would be useful during the presentation itself, such as keeping a good sense of humour and attention on your audience to manage anxiety, and what steps to take for a critical review afterwards to close the feedback loop.

Further Reading and Links

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- Presentation Skills http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/DeafStudiesTeaching/dissert/Presentation%20Skills.htm

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Attribution Statement (Communicating with a Live Audience)

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3.6: Module Conclusion

Presentation Module Conclusion

This module on how to present in a professional context examined three key themes over four chapters: knowledge of self, looking outside yourself, and performing interpersonally.

The first chapter focused on Your Presentation Style with the key theme of getting to know more about yourself. Here you examined your ideas about successful speakers, began to delve into areas of self-awareness and your values, and learned the nature of your own verbal and non-verbal presentation behaviours.

This knowledge allowed you to move on to Developing a Presentation Strategy, which focused on looking outside of yourself to develop a presentation strategy. You did this by revisiting some tools you first learned about in both the Writing and Foundations modules with FAST and AUDIENCE, respectively. With these frameworks in place, you began to brainstorm and keep track of your ideas using an outline to write your presentation. This included writing an attention-grabbing intro, a body using classical rhetorical proofs, and a conclusion that ended on a high note.

Presentation Aids continued the theme of looking outside yourself by focusing on visuals or other tools that can aid your presentation by lending emphasis, clarity, and support. You learned about several tools and techniques, such as how to to use slide decks (e.g., PowerPoint) and use colours effectively to support your presentation.

Communicating with a Live Audience featured the final theme about working together with others (interpersonally). Here you should have learned how to prepare to present, how to manage anxiety, and how to cope with mistakes. You should have gained insight into how to read an audience's positive and negative cues as well as the elements involved in constructively critiquing a presentation.

These three themes of looking within, looking without, and coming together interpersonally have aimed to give you useful and insightful foundation and practice for how to present effectively in a professional context in the twenty-first century. What you've learned in this module will serve as good preparation for your presentations and give you a solid foundation for topics you'll discover in the module on Interpersonal Communication Skills.

Attribution Statement (Conclusion)

3.7: Glossary

Your Presentation Style

Adjustment

The willingness to be flexible and adapt to the speaker's points and verbal detours without judgement or jumping to conclusions

Anticipate

Regarding something as probable; to expect or predict something. Anticipating what a speaker will say before saying it can get in the way of active listening.

Attitude

A settled way of thinking or feeling about something. Keeping an open or positive attitude is more beneficial to active listening.

Authenticity

The quality of being genuine; of undisputed origin and not a copy.

Bias

The inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair.

Body Movements

The way a speaker moves his/her body as a way to communicate with the audience and/or release nervous energy.

Deaf Spots (Psychological)

Impaired ability to perceive and understand things counter to our convictions.

Dimensions of Self

The four dimensions that make up the Johari Window by Luft and Ingram.

Emotional Reaction

Arousing or being characterized by intense feeling.

Emphasis

Putting stress on certain words in your speech to make them stand out as important.

Facial Expression

When the look on a person's face communicates their mood, feeling, or state of being, sometimes unconsciously.

Fillers

Placeholders for actual words (e.g, uh, uhm, erm, ah) that people typically use to fill space while speaking; they can become distracting to the listener.

Gesture

A movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning.

Hearing

An accidental and automatic brain response to sound that requires no effort.

Internal Monologue

Self-talk that can be rational and reasonable or illogical and disorganized.

Johari Window

Ingram and Luft’s four-quadrant box of dimension of self: (1) what’s known to me and known to others, (2) what’s known to others but unknown to me, (3) what’s known to me but unknown to others, and (4) what’s unknown to me and to others.

Judging

Forming an opinion or conclusion about something.

Listening

To give one’s attention to sound.

Listening Reminder

Giving oneself a cue to remember to pay attention to the speaker, such as a note or an image.

Pitch

The quality of a sound governed by the rate of vibrations producing it; the degree of highness or lowness of a tone.

Posture

A particular position of the body.

Pronunciation

The way that you say your words, often informed by other elements such as accent (e.g., to-may-toe vs. to-mah-toe)

Rate

The vocal speed of the speaker.

Self-concept

What we perceive ourselves to be; involves aspects of image and esteem.

Self-reflection

A trait that allows you to adapt and change to the context or environment, to accept or reject messages, to examine your concept of yourself, and to improve.

Silence

The fact or state of abstaining from speech.

Values

Principles or standards of behaviour; one's judgement of what is important in life.

Volume

Quantity or power of sound; degree of loudness.

Developing a Presentation Strategy

Asynchronous Delivery

A presentation delivery not existing or occurring at the same time; previously recorded.

Attention-Grabber

A device, such as a story or anecdote, designed to get the audience's attention in the introduction.

AUDIENCE (tool)

A tool and acronym used to help analyze the audience as part of a pre-presentation strategy. Stands for Analysis, Understand, Demographics, Interest, Environment, Need, Context, Expectation.

Backchannels

A secondary or covert route for the passage of information, oftentimes social media tools like Twitter, for certain kinds of presentations or speeches.

Chunking

Grouping together connected items or words so that they can be stored or processed as single concepts.

FAST

An acronym and tool to assist in developing your presentation strategy. Stands for Format, Audience, Style, and Tone.

Format

Choice between presentation styles such as speech, presentation, panel, or podcast.

Podcast

A digital audio file made available on the Internet for downloading to a computer or portable media player, typically available as a series, new instalments of which can be received by subscribers automatically.

Rhetorical Proofs

Classical way to make a solid argument using the three proofs of ethos, pathos, and logos (credibility, passion, logic).

Style

The personality you bring to your presentation through elements such as manner of dress, level of formality, use of humour, etc.

Teleconference

A conference with participants in different locations linked by telecommunication devices.

Timing

The amount of time allotted for a speech or presentation, usually including time for questions.

Tone

The overall mood of the presentation using tools like voice, body language, and self-confidence.

Webinar

A seminar conducted over the Internet.

Presentation Aids

Colour Blindness

The inability to distinguish certain colours.

Colour Wheel

A circle with different coloured sectors used to show the relationship between colours.

Decorative Font

A font that is highly stylized, usually a serif, and sometimes difficult to read.

Demonstration

A practical exhibition and explanation of how something works or is performed.

Flip Charts

A large pad of paper bound so that each page can be turned over at the top to reveal the next, used on a stand at presentations.

Handouts

A piece of printed information provided free of charge, especially to accompany a lecture or advertise something.

Legibility

The quality of being clear enough to read.

Slide Deck

A presentation supplemented by or based on a display of projected images or photographic slides (e.g., PowerPoint).

Sound Effect

A sound other than speech or music made artificially for use in a play, film, or other broadcast production or presentation.

Tactile Aid

An aid that is of or connected with the sense of touch.

Transition (slide)

The process of changing from one slide to another (e.g., using swipe, fade, or other visual or audio effects to indicate a slide change).

Whiteboards

A wipeable board with a white surface used for teaching or presentations.

Communicating with a Live Audience

Audience Etiquette

The customary code of polite behaviour in society or among members of a particular profession or group, in this case between the audience and the speaker.

Backup Plan

A plan made incase a file or other presentation item is lost or damaged.

Composure

The state or feeling of being calm and in control of oneself.

Deep Breathing

The action of breathing deeply, especially as a method of relaxation.

Eye Contact

The state in which two people are aware of looking directly into each other’s eyes.

Glitch

A sudden, usually temporary malfunction or fault of equipment.

Lectern

A tall stand with a sloping top to hold a book or notes, from which someone, typically a preacher or lecturer, can read while standing up.

Listener’s Lean

Leaning toward the speaker as a sign of interest and attentiveness.

Microphone check

The act of testing the microphone for volume, function, position, etc.

Misinterpreting

To interpret something or someone wrongly.

Nervousness

The state of being anxious or apprehensive.

Offense

Causing someone to feel resentful, upset, or annoyed.

Paraphrasing

Express the meaning of (something written or spoken) using different words, especially to achieve greater clarity.

Podium

A small platform on which a person may stand to be seen by an audience.

Preparation

Something done to get ready for an event or undertaking.

Rehearsing

Mentally prepare, practise, or recite (words one intends to say) for later public performance.

Systematic Desensitization

To make less sensitive systematically by gradually increasing exposure to the thing one is afraid of, in this case public speaking.

Technical Difficulties

A difficulty arising from a method of procedure; (now also) a technological problem.

Visualization

Forming a mental image or imagining a presentation going well as a way to cope with public speaking stress.

Vocal Warm-Ups

Prepare for speaking or a performance by exercising or practising using one’s voice gently beforehand.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Interpersonal

4.1: Overview and Intention

Contents

The chapters in this module include:

- Communication and Diversity in Canadian Workplaces
- Your Interpersonal Communication Preferences
- Cross-Cultural Communication
- Conflict Resolution

Module Summary

In general, interpersonal communication is about how we respond to others in our environment. It is a core element of how we function in the workplace and in life. It is also about what others rightly or wrongly conclude about us or about what we say and do. The ability to communicate well in the workplace with people who are different is a core competency.

Interpersonal communication is a process that people use collectively to regulate and control social interactions. In these interactions, people with different communication experiences may see things in different ways. Our ability to consider these differences is vital to establishing a meaningful and productive communication exchange. This exchange requires having good interpersonal communication skills.

According to some experts and theorists, interpersonal communication can differ by its approach. A situational approach, for example, is one where communication focuses on, and is defined by, external quantitative factors such as the number of people involved in the process and their physical proximity. Another approach is developmental, which is based on qualitative factors. This approach views interpersonal communication affected by participant traits such as culture, sociological factors, and one's own psychological attributes.This developmental approach is the main focus of this module.

Interpersonal communication happens continually throughout life and takes on many forms. Each of these forms affect our personal communication style. The following are some examples:

- What we say with words and how we say them: the words we use to convey thoughts and meaning to others, along with utterances that impart this meaning.
- What we say without words: physical behaviours, expressions, body language, and movements that take the place of words.
- Where we communicate: the physical location—such as at home, on the street, at work, in social gatherings, and online.
- Context: the condition or situation that influences our communication, such as meetings, work groups, classrooms, parties, sad or traumatic events, happy and disappointing events.
- With whom we communicate: friends, family, authority figures, people who may be different in ethnicity, culture, race, nationality, or ability.

This module addresses several of these key forms of interpersonal communication to help prepare you for the working conditions of a modern, multicultural, and diverse workplace.

Diversity in the workplace in many ways mirrors Canada's diversity. The demographic of today's workforce in both the public and private sector is diverse in culture, religion, gender, ability, and generation.

The key to working in such diverse settings is to understand the idea of inclusion and how to adapt your communication style to it. In the chapter "Communication and Diversity in Canadian Workplaces," you will learn about some of the most important concepts related to diversity and inclusion, such as discrimination, stereotyping, and bias. You will discover how these concepts affect your perception and the way you choose to view others. Understanding the import of these concepts will help you recognize how they affect interpersonal communication and how you can avoid the pitfalls associated with them.

In the chapter "Your Interpersonal Communication Preferences" you will learn how self-perception and interpersonal awareness influence the behaviours you exhibit in communicating with others. This includes the ability to notice, interpret, and anticipate the concerns and feelings of others and to communicate this awareness empathetically.

Identifying your personal communication preferences is about understanding what comes naturally to you, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of different communication styles. Communication styles may also be affected by cultural attributes. For example, some cultures rely more on non-verbal than on verbal cues when communicating. Facial expressions, body language, and gestures also play an important part in interpersonal communication.

In today's workplace you will almost certainly work as a member of a team. So, you will learn about teamwork and collaboration and, in particular, how personal communication style affects group dynamics, roles, and decision making within a diverse and multicultural working group.

In the chapter "Cross-Cultural Communication" you will learn about the iceberg model of culture, which shows that what is easily visible of culture is usually just the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface are many unseen but important elements, such as thought patterns, values, and assumptions. The chapter focuses on uncovering these hidden elements by examining theories that focus on cultural dimensions, explaining what happens during culture shock, and how to move from a monocultural to an intercultural mindset.

Because how we communicate is inherently influenced by our culture, the material in this chapter provides a foundation for a sought-after and somewhat rare communication skill set. The multicultural workplace can often become the lens through which we view culture and our situations within it. Appreciating multiculturalism and its imprint on the modern workplace is critical to creating positive and successful professional experiences.

Intercultural communication in or out of the workplace requires more than language skills. Adapting to intercultural working environments requires the development of attitudes appropriate to working with new cultures and expanding one's knowledge of the cultural profiles of people from specific countries and backgrounds.

In the chapters "Conflict Resolution" and "Interpersonal Communication Strategies" the focus is on addressing interpersonal conflicts occurring between two or more individuals. This is a common reality in today's diverse workplace. You will learn about conflict management styles such as the competing style, which emphasizes personal goals at the expense of relational goals with others; avoiding style, which avoids conflict as much as possible; accommodating style, which attempts to smooth over disagreements; compromising style, which tries to moderate concern for both personal and relational goals; and collaborating style, which finds ways to resolve conflict so that all sides feel they have achieved something positive.

Coping with conflicts in the workplace requires applying a variety of strategies, including informal conflict styles, as well as more formal negotiation techniques. Learning how to negotiate with superiors, colleagues, and subordinates to better cope with conflict situations is challenging and requires knowledge of your own response to conflict.

Relevance to Practice

Many businesses today have become global in an effort to reach new markets and remain competitive. In this process the human dimension of the modern workplace has changed both domestically and internationally. Where once a workplace consisted of people with similar backgrounds and characteristics, today workers in a company represent many different geographic regions and cultures. Your ability to adapt to this ever-changing environment is of paramount importance to employers.

Effective interpersonal communication within the context of human diversity and multiculturalism is a key skill for workers. More often than not, companies look for this skill when hiring and want to see it exhibited on the job.

Communicating is not just about language. Getting along well in the workplace is not only about having things in common. To succeed in the modern workplace, you will need to understand and accept the notion of inclusion. Doing so means putting the concept and practice of diversity into action where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed to create business value. Workers' interpersonal communication skills need to align well with this transition from diversity to inclusion.

Modern technologies allow workers to reach out and connect with colleagues in different regions of the world. These colleagues can be from varying backgrounds and cultures. In both local and global working environments, cross-cultural communication is quickly becoming the new working norm and brings new communication challenges to the workplace.

Learning Goals

An overarching theme in this eText is on recognizing how personal traits and attitudes build confidence and that successful delivery of a presentation is the result of clear and deliberate planning. Learning goals based on this theme will guide the development of a planning strategy while learning outcomes serve as evidence of achievement. Key developmental attributes related to the learning goals are also listed here.

The learning goals for this module are that upon completing the readings and activities presented in this module, you should be able to do the following:

- competently communicate in both a personally effective and socially appropriate manner within culturally diverse workplace settings, and
- value interpersonal communication as integral to creating and fostering relationships.

Developmental Attributes

Upon successfully completing this module, you should:

- Understand the following:That building effective communication skills is an ongoing process
- That people with different communication practices express themselves in different ways
- That we are often controlled by what we create through communication
- That cultural values, beliefs, and customs affect the communication process
- That communication can become complex as individuals from diverse cultures are added to the process

Know the following:

- How to translate knowledge of the communication process to actual interpersonal communication behaviours
- How to apply characteristics of cross-cultural relations such as acceptance, openness, and sensitivity
- Conflict resolution techniques that are particular to interpersonal communication in a culturally diverse workplace

Be able to do the following:

- Interpret conditions surrounding a cross-cultural communication interaction
- Present a desired self-image to influence reactions and impressions of others
- Recognize and decipher verbal and non-verbal coding in intercultural message exchanges
- Mediate conflict situations using empathy, appreciating disparate views, and forming rational arguments

Learning Outcomes for this Module

Upon successfully completing this module, you should be able to:

- explain the benefits and challenges of diversity in Canadian workplaces;
- apply cross-cultural communication best practices for a given context, and;
- describe how characteristics of your conflict resolution style impact interpersonal communication within a diverse workplace.

4.2: Introduction to Diversity

Communication and Diversity in Canadian Workplaces

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter | module, you should be able to

- describe diversity within the context of a modern workplace
- explain how language use influences communication in a diverse workplace
- explain characteristics related to manifestations of diversity
- describe how diversity in the workplace can create challenges for effective interpersonal communication.

Are you familiar with the term diversity? Perhaps you have encountered it at your school or heard about it in the media. A diverse group is one that consists of people with different backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and traits. Canadian workplaces are becoming more diverse as organizations realize what a diverse workforce can bring, from innovation and creativity to employee happiness and retention.

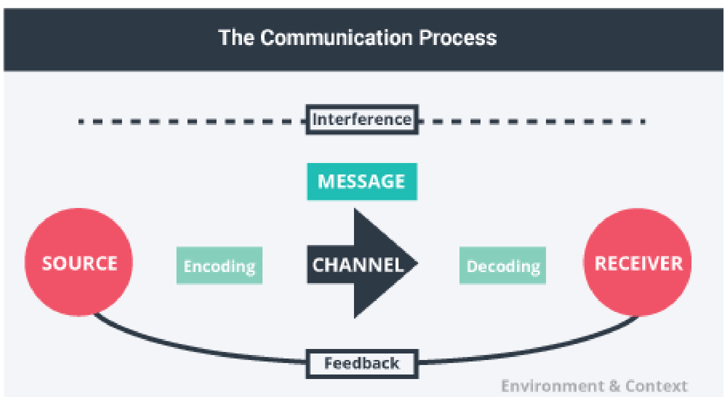
In this chapter we will explore some of the key types of diversity that you will likely encounter in your professional life. We begin with diversity essentials, reviewing the communications process with emphasis on encoding and decoding as the spots where communication problems can occur among people with different reference points. You'll then learn about why diversity matters in Canada and get a glimpse into our changing demographics along with concepts and definitions useful to demystifying diversity as well as inclusion.

There are more types of human diversity than we can possibly list, but we shine a spotlight on religion and culture, linguistic diversity, gender, sexual orientation, generation and age, socioeconomic, and ability in this chapter.

With the benefits that a diverse workforce brings come communication challenges like similarity-attraction phenomenon and fault lines, which we examine near the end of the chapter.

Working with people who are different from you can be complex. When you navigate this environment, you will learn new terminology. You will also experience behaviours, approaches, misunderstandings, and sources conflict that you may not have encountered before. By learning about the intricacies of interpersonal communication in a diverse workforce now, you will be prepared to develop mutually beneficial relationships in your future that can include anybody.

Diversity Communication Essentials



The Communication Process by L. Underwood

When we communicate interpersonally with someone who is similar to us in terms of thought patterns, language, gender, or peer group, for example, we encode a message using a given channel, and the receiver decodes the message in the way that we expect that they would. For example, you're on the soccer field with possession of the ball, and you hear your teammate who is behind you clap three times. You know this means your teammate is open. You turn and give a quick pass, and your teammate makes a goal. This is an example of good, effective communication. But what if you interpreted your teammate's clapping to mean that you should not pass the ball? You would have decoded this message in a way the sender had not intended, and you would have taken a different action. Your teammate might later question why you didn't pass the ball. You might react negatively to your teammate's accusations and demand to know why they didn't yell "ball!" to indicate being ready to receive the ball. You can see by this example that when good communication happens, the possibilities for high performance are endless. But when communication is poor, the likelihood for shared understanding and high performance decreases significantly.

When we examine communication and diversity in the Canadian workplace, we have to understand that miscommunication will usually reveal itself in the way the message is encoded or decoded. In order to understand how to communicate more effectively interpersonally, we need to develop our abilities in better understanding ourselves, the situation at hand, and others.

Interpersonal Miscommunications

While on a UK-based diverse team made up of people from Asia, Africa, Southern Europe, and India, a Canadian team member experienced a miscommunication with her teammates. The team felt she had taken over a project presentation without including their input, even though she had asked each team member if they were OK with the presentation before delivering it. The Canadian felt justified in her approach, since she had asked each person for their feedback and their OK. In other words, she encoded a message and assumed it would be decoded the way she expected, especially since she "checked." One of her teammates from Asia approached her to have a conversation. "I don't understand. I asked you if you were OK with everything before giving the presentation, and you said yes," said the Canadian.

"Yes, but you didn't ask again!" said the South Korean. The Canadian thought the South Korean was ridiculous. Exactly how many times did the South Korean expect her to ask?

The Canadian later discovered that the South Korean was expecting her to ask again a few more times to be sure that yes really meant yes. When the Canadian didn't do that, the South Korean decoded this as rude or insensitive. Years later, when the Canadian lived and worked in South Korea, she remembered this lesson and tried to be less judgemental in order to understand the norms of people who live and work in a South Korean context. She reflected and later understood that as a Canadian in the workplace, she was primarily focused on the task, or getting the work done. Her teammates were primarily focused on building good relationships. She learned that in some situations, no good work will get done unless a good relationship is present first.

Why Diversity Matters

Diversity is defined as "the variety of characteristics that all persons possess, that distinguish them as individuals, and that identify them as belonging to a group or groups. It is a term used to encompass all the various differences among people commonly used in Canada and in the United States. Diversity programs and policies are aimed at reducing discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and outcome for all groups. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, type of area (urban/rural), age, faith and/or beliefs" (mygsa.ca, 2015).

This means that diversity is not about those other folks over there; it's about you as well as them. It's about all of us.

When done right and applied to people in a work or professional context, having diversity provides a competitive advantage for businesses and increased satisfaction for employees who can put their full potential to work. According to Ryerson University's Diversity Institute (Ryerson University, 2015), the business case for diversity in Canada has several strong points.

First, diversity from more immigrants from non-traditional countries can stem the skills, talent, and population shortage.

Second, diverse people can have better understanding and connections to a bigger variety of domestic and global markets.

Third, studies have shown that diverse teams are more creative and innovative and thus deliver higher value.

Fourth, diversity can increase both employee and customer satisfaction while reducing lawsuits and increasing overall public reputation.

Finally, diversity has been shown to improve company performance and result in increased shareholder value.

Diversity matters because when we communicate with people who are different from us in a fundamental way, it can be difficult to go from miscommunication and misunderstanding to synergy and high performance in a business context. In an interpersonal context it is also difficult to make the leap from thinking the other person is “ridiculous” to challenging ourselves to develop our skills in listening and empathy before leaping to dismissive judgement. In order to get there, we must understand a bit more about our context in Canada.

Diversity in Canada

This land mass, North America, is called Turtle Island by many Aboriginal people. As the indigenous people of what is now called Canada, Aboriginal peoples—including Inuit, First Nations, and Métis—argue that they have collective entitlements that were never extinguished. This is to say that in some circles the very notion of “Canada” is a contentious issue.

When trading relationships between Aboriginals and Europeans led to mass immigration through imperial colonialism, the landscape was changed, and we became a treaty nation.

Settlers primarily from France and Britain, and former Loyalists—including some black people—from what is now the United States, have been in Canada for generations as have others (in comparatively smaller numbers) like the Japanese and Chinese people. France was the first dominant colonial group, and they were ultimately displaced by the British.

Canada is a constitutional monarchy that retains the Queen of Britain as the head of state; before confederation, Canada was a British colony. Overseas immigration to Canada used to exclude any non-Europeans as a matter of policy with institutional and societal support, with some exceptions. Over time, it can be argued that Canada is getting better at becoming a place where all residents and citizens can feel at home.

Since the 1970s, Canada has had an official policy of multiculturalism. This policy says people do not have to give up parts of their identity or their culture such as their religion, language, or customs, provided that they don’t interfere with others’ rights and freedoms as defined in Canada’s Constitution or Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In 2017, *The Globe and Mail* took to the streets to poll Canadians on multiculturism. Click through to watch the 6 minute video:

Multiculturism explored by The Globe and Mail

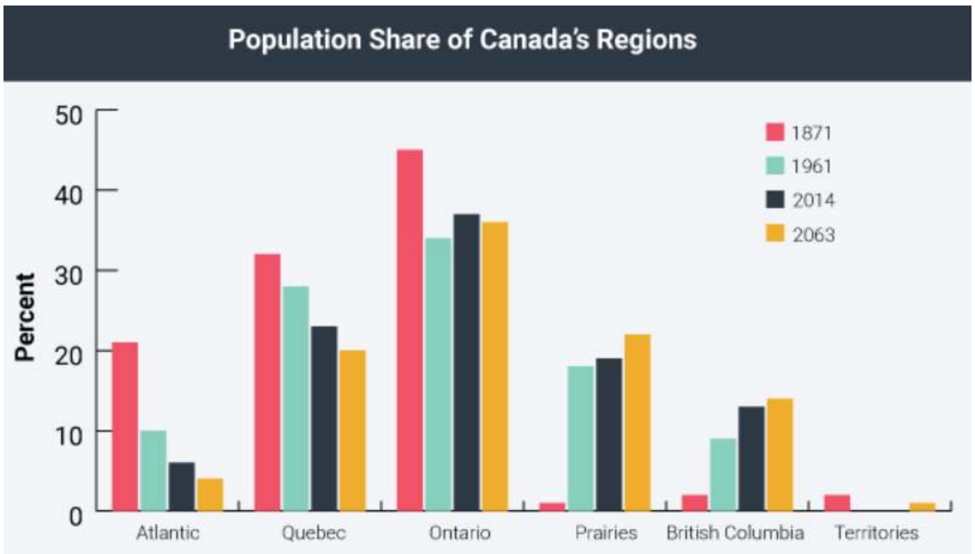
Canada’s official multicultural policy lends itself nicely to the notion of diversity. Canada is often described as a mosaic, in contrast to the melting pot philosophy of the United States to the south. Where the melting pot expects people to blend in, assimilate, and become “American,” the Canadian mosaic identity is arguably more fluid, enabling people to retain their cultures, customs, traditions, or other elements of their heritage. Not everyone is thrilled with this policy. Some people feel that too much difference creates too many divisions and too much confusion resulting in a national identity crisis. But in the famous words of Marshall McLuhan, “Canada is the only country in the world that knows how to live without an identity.”

Demographics

Editor’s note: All statistical information and graphs in the following sections have been reproduced from Statistics Canada (statcan.gc.ca).

Throughout Canada’s history, changes in population growth and age structure have had many repercussions for Canadian society, for example on infrastructure needs, social programs, and the political influence of the various regions of the country.

As demographic trends—some recent, such as negative natural increases or the significant contribution of international immigration to population growth of some regions—will continue to shape Canada in the coming years, it is important to shed light on how these changes will affect the various regions of the country if current trends continue. Certain recent trends will probably affect many other aspects of Canadian society, such as ethnocultural and linguistic diversity.

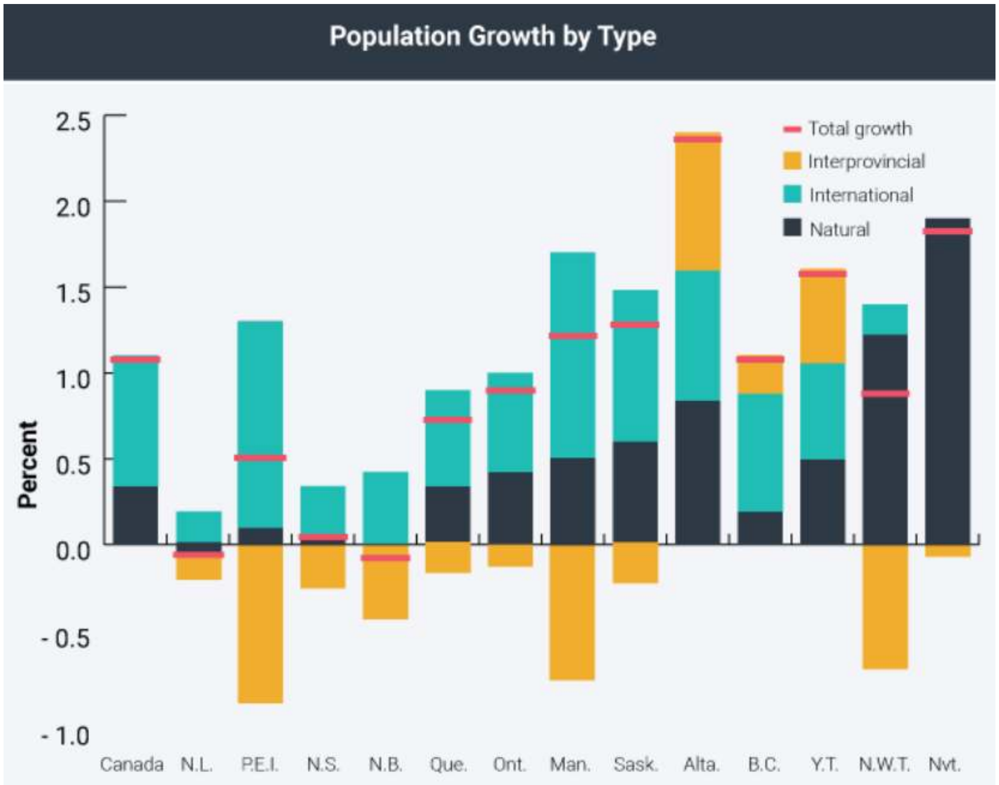


Population Share of Canada’s Regions by L. Underwood Adapted from Statistics Canada (2015)

In 1961, the population share of the Atlantic provinces was higher than that of British Columbia (10 percent versus 9 percent), and only 5 percentage points separated the population shares of Quebec (29 percent) and Ontario (34 percent).

In 2014, the Atlantic provinces made up 7 percent of Canada’s entire population. Nearly two in five Canadians lived in Ontario (39 percent), and the difference between this province and Quebec (23 percent) had increased to 16 percentage points. Lastly, in 2008, the population share of the provinces west of Ontario became higher (31 percent) than the share of the provinces east of Ontario (30 percent) for the first time in the history of the country.

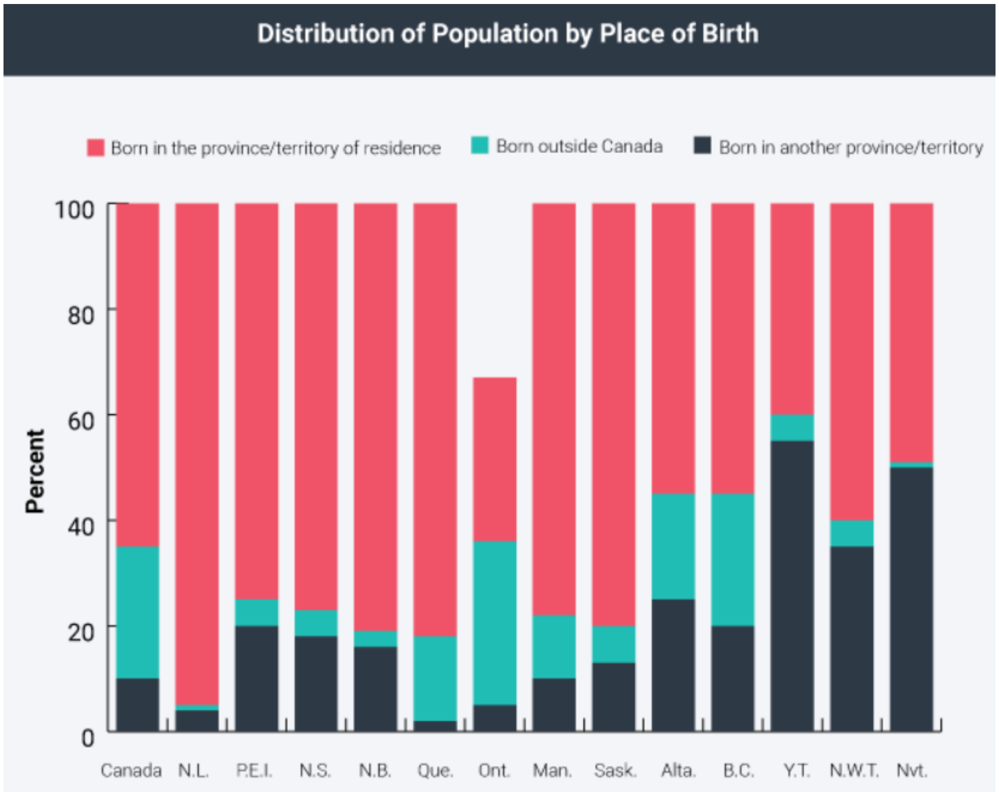
If the recent demographic trends remain steady until 2063, or nearly 200 years after Confederation, the population share of the Prairie provinces (24 percent) could exceed that of Quebec (21 percent). The Atlantic provinces’ weight could represent less than 5 percent of Canada’s population, while the population share of Ontario could decrease slightly.



Canada’s Population Growth by Province by L. Underwood Adapted from Statistics Canada (2015)

Population growth in the provinces and territories can be broken down into three factors: natural increase, international migratory increase, and interprovincial migratory increase.

At the national level, approximately two-thirds of population growth is currently the result of international migratory increase, while the other third is a result of natural increase—notably because of a low fertility rate fluctuating around an annual average of approximately 1.6 children per woman.



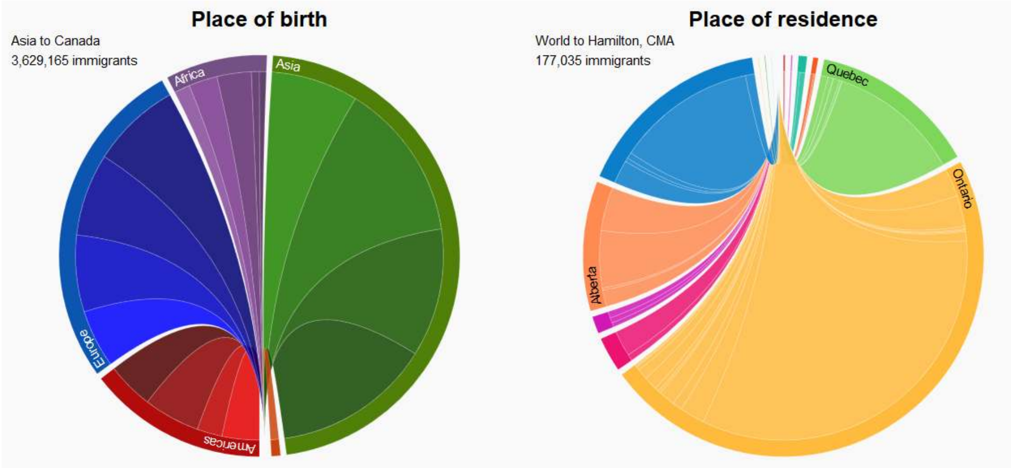
Canada’s Distribution of Population by Place of Birth by L. Underwood Adapted from Statistics Canada (2011)

The disparity in the sources of population growth from one province or territory led to differences in the population profile of provinces and territories.

Population composition by birthplace, which depends on the magnitude of international and interprovincial migratory increases, is a case in point. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, approximately one in two individuals living in British Columbia (51 percent) and Alberta (46 percent) were born outside these provinces (i.e., abroad or in another Canadian province or territory).

While natural increase trends are mostly predictable (because they are partially linked to changes in the age structure of the population), the trends associated with international and interprovincial migratory increases are more difficult to predict because they are more likely to be associated with changes in the economy. Many studies have shown the links between migration and the labour market.

Stats Can offers an interesting, interactive chart of immigrant population. With a hover or a click, you can see from where new Canadians are arriving and to where they are settling.



Admission Category and Applicant Type (7), Period of Immigration (7), Place of Birth (272), Age (12) and Sex (3) for the Immigrant Population Who Landed Between 1980 and 2016, in Private Households of Canada, Provinces and Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2016 Census.

If the various components of population growth (fertility, mortality, immigration, emigration, and interprovincial migration) remained steady in the coming years, however, the age structure and ethnocultural diversity of the various provinces and territories could become increasingly different. In addition, the population share of the provinces and territories could change considerably in the next 50 years, making for a very different Canada than today's or at the time of Confederation.

This demographic and diversity information helps to underscore the amount of change that has happened and the amount of change that is likely to continue. Understanding the environment and context behind the increasing likelihood of having to work with diverse people from other provinces/territories, countries, as well as people with different languages, ages, or ethnicities is important for interpersonal communication skills development.

Key Diversity-Related Concepts and Definitions

When trying to understand how to more effectively encode and decode messages, it's important to understand that people's identities are diverse and complex, often shaped by their environment, history, and experience. We sometimes generalize in order to make sense of or evaluate a situation, but being mindful and listening carefully will help us do a better job of responding to a situation case-by-case instead of falling back on discriminatory or racist attitudes, bias, or stereotyping. We'll look at each one of these in turn, but the first step is to understand what culture is.

Culture has more than one definition, but for our purposes it means the attitudes and behaviour characteristic of a particular social group (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015). We are usually unaware of our patterns of behaviour and simply consider the way we approach things to be "normal" or common sense. When we encounter something or someone that/who does not fit with our notion of normal or correct, communicating interpersonally in that situation or with that person can become more difficult or complex. Some people belong to a dominant cultural group, defined as "a group that is considered the most powerful and privileged of all groups in a particular society or context and that exercises that power through a variety of means (economic, social, political etc)" (mygsa.ca, 2015). Other people may belong to a non-dominant cultural or minority group. "The concept 'minority group' does not refer to demographic numbers, but is used for any group [that] is disadvantaged, underprivileged, excluded, discriminated against, or exploited. As a collective group, a minority occupies a subordinate status in society" (mygsa.ca, 2015). These concepts about culture, particularly dominant versus non-dominant cultures, are important to our understanding that in the workplace, interpersonal communication takes place against a backdrop of these influences and affects the way people perceive, give, and receive messages.

Discrimination in the workplace can take many forms. Discrimination is defined as "the unequal treatment of groups or individuals with a history of marginalization either by a person or a group or an institution which, through the denial of certain rights, results in inequality, subordination and/or deprivation of political, education, social, economic, and cultural rights" (mygsa.ca, 2015). For example, a female board member once told the author that after board meetings in previous decades, all the other board members—

all men—would go socialize afterwards, typically to play golf. When she tried to join them, they said, “These excursions are just ‘for the boys’ …. You understand, right?”

When you have a mix of prejudice and power leading one group (the dominant or majority group) to dominate over and exploit another (the non-dominant, minority or racialized group), you have racism, which asserts that the one group is supreme and superior while the other is inferior. Racism is any individual action, or institutional practice backed by institutional power that subordinates people because of their colour or ethnicity. Race is defined as a socially created category to classify humankind according to common ancestry or descent, and relies on differentiation by general physical or cultural characteristics such as colour of skin and eyes, hair type, historical experience, and facial features. Race is often confused with ethnicity (a group of people who share a particular cultural heritage or background); there may be several ethnic groups within a racial group (mygsa.ca, 2015). Racism in the modern Canadian workplace can show up in many ways and be either intentional or unintentional, from screening out or prioritizing certain names on résumes to assuming the racialized person in the room is the server or assistant. For many people in Canada’s dominant group, being called a racist is a tremendous insult that can immediately shut down communication. Ironically, the power to shut down or ignore communication related to racial discrimination is a racist act. People with good interpersonal communication skills can navigate their discomfort long enough to focus on listening, reflecting, and collaborating to find solutions.

Bias is subjective opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination, either for or against an individual or group, formed without reasonable justification that influences an individual’s or group’s ability to evaluate a particular situation objectively or accurately (mygsa.ca, 2015). Many people in the workplace are unaware of the biases they may have, which is why self-reflection is such an important part of how to improve interpersonal communication through self-awareness.

Similarly, a stereotype is a false or generalized, and usually negative, conception of a group of people that results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences (mygsa.ca, 2015). When we learn about other groups of people, it’s easy to forget that individuals make up groups. For good interpersonal communication to occur, it is important to be open, to listen, and to recognize that person as a unique individual.

Understanding how culture, discrimination, stereotypes, and bias affect the workplace and how people communicate are essential to understanding the move toward inclusive practices. These days when you hear about diversity, you also hear about inclusion. Inclusion means acknowledging and respecting diversity. It is an approach based on the principles of accepting and including all people, honouring diversity, and respecting all individuals (mygsa.ca, 2015).

Types of Diversity

Below, we highlight the following types of diversity:

- Religion and Culture
- Linguistic
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Generation and Age
- Socioeconomic

Religion and Culture

Scenario

Culture may well be the first type of diversity that comes to mind, and with good reason! As a resident of Canada, you live in one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, and you are probably already encountering people from different cultural and religious backgrounds every day. If you consider Canada’s history, you’ll recognize that, with the exception of the First Nations and Inuit populations, most modern-day Canadians come from families that came to the country from elsewhere. As mentioned earlier, historically, most Canadian settlers came from Europe, although the Middle East and Asia are now our largest source of newcomers (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Language

The English language has unfortunately developed many pejorative terms for people of various religions and ethnicities. When choosing a word to refer to a religious or ethnic group, your best choice is usually to use the term that the community uses to refer to itself. The table below will help you find the preferred word for some of the more commonly confused cultural and religious labels, but please keep in mind that this is only a small sampling of possible terms and ethnicities.

Benefits

Religious and cultural diversity can benefit an organization in a number of ways, including the following:

- Happier employees (when the organization shows respect for differences)
- Increased productivity, innovation, and profit (employees are able to bring what they have learned about other ways of doing things to their roles)
- A wider talent pool (if the organization hires internationally, they have more access to highly experienced people)
- The ability to represent and speak for the company's target audience(s) (and, therefore, develop products and services that will fit their needs)

Challenges

One of the main challenges you might experience in a diverse workplace, whether differences are cultural or otherwise, is resistance to change. There will always be a few people who are not as open minded or flexible. For these people, it may be difficult, at first, to take advantage of all the benefits that diversity can bring. For example, consider the following scenario.

The Intercultural Workplace

Claire, from Canada, decides to take a year off between high school and university. She visits England for a year, to work and travel. During her time in England, Claire takes a temporary job at a large corporation in Manchester. As Administrative Assistant to the Vice-President, Claire spends a lot of time managing communication between her office and the offices of the other executives who are stationed around the country. She finds herself juggling hundreds of emails and phone calls per week, most of which are from colleagues with a question or two.

After experiencing this "communication overload" for a few months, Claire attends a meeting. One of the managers asks if anyone has anything to discuss. Claire mentions that there seem to be some communication problems, with a significant volume of email and phone calls leaving little time for productive work. She explains that at her previous workplace, staff used an online collaboration tool to exchange quick messages with one another. She says that once everyone got used to using the tool and keeping it open throughout their work day, the volume of emails and phone calls were significantly reduced, and workers were able to get more done in their day. Claire suggests that they try out this new tool for a one-month trial period to see if it can help with the problems they are experiencing.

Claire looks around as she is explaining this, and most of her colleagues are nodding and taking notes. However, when she finishes her explanation, one of the senior managers quickly jumps in to say, "No, I don't think that's for us. We've always done things by email, so I can't see us changing things now."

Claire is discouraged. Being the "new girl" and from a different country, she was nervous about speaking up, but, in her previous experience in Canada, employees have been encouraged to make suggestions when processes are not working, so she felt that she could help out by doing so here. But even though she doesn't feel different from her British colleagues, Claire has some unfamiliar interpersonal challenges to navigate.

When discussing the incident with a co-worker later on, Claire realizes that in the UK employees are, generally, a little more reserved and not likely to suggest that managers are doing anything "wrong"—at least not directly. Politeness and subtlety is key in this culture, so Claire's direct communication style is something that British workers are not as accustomed to. Her co-worker also mentions that the manager who dismissed Claire's idea has been with the company for over 30 years and is probably "set in her ways." Here Claire's challenges are twofold: she is experiencing a combination of intercultural and intergenerational differences.

In this case, even though many members of staff were in favour of Claire's idea, it was not approved, as the manager in question did not support it.

Strategies

To communicate effectively in a culturally diverse workplace, adopt the following tips and techniques:

- Avoid jargon and slang in verbal and written communication, as these are often specific to a cultural group or location. Using these can alienate people and cause misunderstandings.
- Assign or become a mentor to new employees. This will help with integration and communication of the company's processes, vision, and values.
- Facilitate (and take part in) professional development opportunities. When people work together to solve a problem or learn something new, this creates bonds and allows sharing of ideas.
- Practise active listening.
- Be aware of your own biases and privileges, and be open to new points of view.
- Know your audience! As in all other communication practices, this key piece of advice is important here, too. Ask yourself, What does my audience know or perceive about my topic? By thinking about your audience ahead of time, you may be able to foresee and prevent misunderstandings or objections.

Linguistic

Scenario

English may be the most widely spoken language around the world, but there are more native speakers of Mandarin Chinese and Spanish than there are native English speakers. In the West, we take for granted the bias towards English-speaking people. English is commonly used as the default language in business sectors from science to the maritime industries and aeronautics. It is estimated that 53.8 percent of the Internet's top websites are written in English (W3 Techs, 2016).

But we cannot assume that everyone we work with will be a native English-speaker or will be able to speak English at all. In Canada, linguistic barriers can be particularly challenging because we have two official languages: English (56.9 percent of the population are native-speakers) and French (21.3 percent) (Statistics Canada, 2011). Our territories use various languages belonging to Aboriginal groups. Add to that the multitude of languages used by people from the many ethnicities that make up our cultural mosaic, and the likelihood of common interactions with non-native English speakers increases further.

In Quebec, 78.9 percent of the population have French as a mother tongue, while only 8.3 percent are native English speakers; however, 42.6 percent of the province's population have a knowledge of both official languages (Statistics Canada, 2011). French is legally the official language and must be used in the public sector and public relations. Nationally, signage and packaging display both English and French messaging. In New Brunswick, our only officially bilingual province, 65.5 percent of the population are native English speakers, while 31.9 percent are French speakers (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Language

Have you ever casually mentioned, "He doesn't speak English," "She isn't from here," or "He won't understand," when referring to an English-language learner or speaker of a language other than English? Phrases like this are often said without malice, but they can come across as dismissive of the person's efforts to communicate. Be sensitive about the way that you refer to people who speak a language other than your own. Chances are they'd love to be able to speak English as well as you do and are making efforts to learn, but this doesn't happen overnight!

Benefits

Linguistic diversity and multilingualism is a major benefit to the Canadian workplace, because our country has two official languages. Knowing a second-language improves your ability to communicate with a wider range of people, enriching communication and collaboration in your workplace. Knowing a second language can also improve your career prospects. You'll have more opportunities to work internationally, and, if you want to work in the public sector in Canada, bilingualism is often a requirement.

Challenges

The key challenge in this situation is avoiding misunderstandings. These can occur in a few different ways. First, the non-native speaker may lack the vocabulary to explain to you what they need or want. But second, you might find yourself tempted to make assumptions or even to fill in words or finish their sentences for them, which, in most contexts, will demonstrate your impatience and come across as rude in most contexts.

Another challenge in the linguistically diverse workplace is that while those who share a language will enjoy speaking to one another in their native tongue, this can make other workers and customers feel excluded. If people are conversing in front of you in a language that you don't understand, you might worry that something negative is being said.

Strategies

Before you find yourself thinking, This person's English isn't very good, consider, how well can you speak their native language, be it Japanese, Hungarian, or Bengali? In most cases, you will find that non-native English speakers around the world work hard to learn even a little bit of English—it is those of us in the West who are generally less competent with other languages, mostly because we don't have the same need to use them in our daily interactions. Because of the English language bias we mentioned earlier, speakers of other languages may perceive that opportunities will be greater if they can speak some English. So, show some appreciation that the person is making an effort to communicate with you! This goes a long way.

If you are struggling to communicate with someone who does not speak English, try having them write down what they need to say, as this may make it easier. If you are trying to explain a set of instructions, for example, you could try using gestures or even drawing a diagram or picture. It's amazing what you can communicate with a few stick people, if you need to! In this context, body language and tone are very important. The other person may not understand everything you are saying, but they can tell from your body language, expressions, and vocal tone what the mood of your message is. For this reason, do a quick self-check on your own frustration level, as you will want to keep any annoyance or frustration hidden. If you have access to a computer or mobile device, these can come in very handy, as you can type in what you need to say in a translation application (e.g., Google Translate). Though the translation may not be grammatically correct, you can usually get the essential meaning across.

Communicating Through Language Barriers

In many ways the world has become a lot smaller over the last few years. As technology increases our capacity to communicate with anyone at any time, our workplaces are becoming increasingly globalized. One of our authors works in digital technology and spends a lot of time working with computer programmers who are working from all over the world. She often has to instruct a non-native English speakers on highly technical details via text-based communication. When she does this, she is typically on the opposite side of the world and has never met the programmer face-to-face.

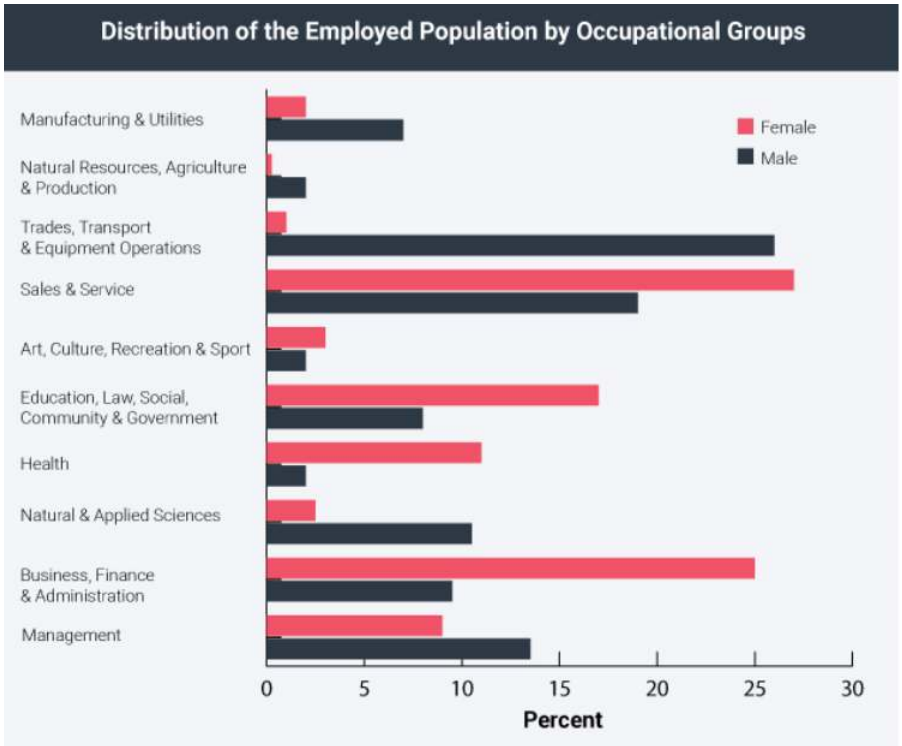
The following are some of the tips she has learned over time to help with this:

- Write down the steps to take, in order
- Give instructions in writing instead of (or in addition to) verbal instructions. It is easier for ESL speakers to follow written text as they can look up (or use a translation app) on any words they don't understand. They can also refer to the document later and are less likely to miss steps.
- Use plain language
- Ask the recipient to respond with a list of tasks they will undertake, and their expected completion
- If you are working on something visual, use a screen-sharing application or take screenshots—it's very difficult to collaborate on things like this unless you are both looking at the same thing, at the same time
- Take advantage of video chat tools like Skype and Google Hangouts. These provide more information richness so that misunderstandings are less likely
- Look for some common ground. For example, she says, "I worked with a programmer whose favourite television show was also one of mine. We shared quips and references that made us laugh, so our communication became friendlier and more relaxed."

Gender

Scenario

Men and women make up nearly equal proportions of working Canadians. In 2011, women comprised 48 percent of the labour force. When occupations were considered, men and women were noticeably involved in different types of roles, as you can see from the graph below (Statistics Canada, 2013). This split contributes to the challenges that both genders face when they choose to enter fields traditionally thought of as male- or female-dominated professions.



Distribution of Canadian Employees by Occupation by L. Underwood Adapted from Statistics Canada (2013)

Language

One key to avoiding gendered bias in language is to avoid the generic use of he when referring to something relevant to both males and females. Instead, you can informally use a gender-neutral pronoun like they or their, or you can use his or her (American Psychological Association, 2010). When giving a series of examples, you can alternate usage of masculine and feminine pronouns, switching with each example.

We have gendered associations with certain occupations or activities that tend to be male- or female-dominated. The following word pairs show the gender-biased term followed by an unbiased term:

- waitress → server
- chairman → chair or chairperson
- mankind → humankind or people
- cameraman →camera operator
- mailman → postal worker
- sportsmanship → fair play

Common language practices also tend to infantilize women but not men, when, for example, women are referred to as chicks, girls, or babes. In addition, titles of address that precede names are used to indicate women's marital status, whereas no such distinction exists for men (i.e., Miss/Mrs. versus only Mr.). Since there is no linguistic equivalent to indicate the marital status of men, using Ms.—which does not denote marital status—instead of Miss or Mrs. helps to reduce bias.

Benefits

A gender-diverse workforce has a number of benefits that not only improve working conditions for employees but also improve the bottom-line for the organization. Men and women have different views, strengths, and insights. By making the best use of these differences, companies can do a better job of problem solving and innovating. Equal representation of males and females inside the company also benefits those outside it—particularly the customers and clients, as the company can more accurately understand what the market wants and needs. Having a reputation for gender diversity also has positive benefits when it comes to public relations and recruitment. Increasingly, people want to work for companies that are making positive moves in this regard. It is not in an organization's best interest to ignore nearly half of its prospective talent pool when competition for the best and brightest employees is only increasing.

Challenges

Two issues that can cause conflict between men and women in the workplace are the earnings gap and the glass ceiling. According to the Pay Equity Commission, Ontario statistics show that men in full-time employment earn an average of 26 percent more than women do (Pay Equity Commission, 2011). The following are some potential explanations:

- Women are more likely to have gaps in their résumes as a result of taking time off to have children.
- Women are underrepresented in high-earning occupations like business and engineering.
- Traits more often associated with men, such as assertiveness and negotiating skills, are valued in higher-ranking roles, so women are less likely to be hired for these or promoted into them.

These explanations do not account for gender differences in pay when the roles and responsibilities are the same, however. Gender discrimination lawsuits are an unfortunate reality and, in these cases, discrimination against women does appear to be the primary factor.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. have had several incidences of alleged gender discrimination. One of the people who initiated a lawsuit against them in the early 2000s was a female assistant manager who found out that a male assistant manager with similar qualifications was making $10,000 more per year. When she approached the store manager, she was told that the male manager had a "wife and kids to support." She was then asked to submit a household budget to justify a raise (Daniels, 2003). Such discrimination contributes to an unfair work environment and results in conflict between men and women in the workplace.

The glass ceiling is another term that you may be familiar with. It refers to the idea that women are less likely to get promoted to higher management roles. Though women represent close to one-half of the workforce, men are four times more likely to reach the highest levels of organizations (Umphress et. al, 2008).

Traditionally, men have been viewed as more assertive and confident than women, while women have been viewed as more passive and submissive, making them less likely to be considered a fit for a management role. Stereotypes also influence how employees' accomplishments are viewed. For example, when men and women work together in a team on a "masculine" task such as working on an investment portfolio and it is not clear which member has contributed what, managers are more likely to attribute successes to the male employees (Heilman et. al, 2005). In addition to contributing to the team, female employees must also work harder to communicate their contributions to superiors.

Strategies

The more that employees know about gender inequalities, the more likely they are to effect change. So, to create a more inclusive workplace, individuals would do well to set up, contribute to or attend opportunities for professional development (e.g., workshops and panel discussions) that focus on this area. Workplaces that establish and promote gender equality goals, such as an aim to have women in a certain percentage of management roles, will create interest and conversation between employees. As part of this, you can champion female leadership by holding talks and sharing success stories of female-led working groups within and external to the company. If your workplace doesn't already offer these, look for opportunities to run and attend social events that give male and female employees an opportunity to mix, such as book clubs, fitness groups, or fundraising events.

Sexual Orientation

Scenario

A forum research poll released in 2012 found that 5% of the Canadian population identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. The 2016 census recorded 72, 880 same-sex couples, representing 0.9% of all couples. From 2006 to 2016, the number of same-sex couples increased much more rapidly (+60.7%) than the number of opposite-sex couples (+9.6%). In 1999, Canada recognized same-sex couples as common-law partners, providing a legal status similar to that of heterosexual common-law couples. In 2005, Canada legalized same-sex marriage; and by 2016 one in eight same-sex couples (12.0%) had children living with them compared with about half of opposite-sex couples.

Language

Sexual orientation refers to a person's preference for sexual relationships with individuals of the other sex (heterosexuality), one's own sex (homosexuality), or both sexes (bisexuality). The term also refers to transgender individuals, those whose behaviour, appearance, and/or gender identity departs from conventional norms. Transgendered individuals include transvestites (those who dress in the clothing of the opposite sex) and transsexuals (those whose gender identity differs from their physiological sex and who sometimes undergo a sex change). A transgender woman is a person who was born biologically as a male and becomes a woman, while a transgender man is a person who was born biologically as a woman and becomes a man. Gay is the common term now used for any homosexual individual; gay men or gays is the common term used for homosexual men, while lesbian is the common term used for homosexual women. All the types of social orientation just outlined are often collectively referred to by the shorthand LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) or LGBTQ (includes the term queer/questioning, and the T can also refer to twin-spirited as well as transgender). The term straight is used today as a synonym for heterosexual.

LGBTQ people are often the recipients of insensitive language. Much of this is the result of misunderstanding on the part of straight people, who may use the incorrect terminology simply because they are not familiar with the community's preferred definitions. However, there are occasions where language misuse can be hurtful or offensive. For example, the use of the word gay as a casual insult when speaking about someone or something bad or undesirable is offensive and should be avoided.

Another challenge here is to avoid heterosexual bias. For example, do not make assumptions about sexual orientation when addressing a colleague. Rather than saying, "Is your wife coming to the staff Christmas party?" you might ask, "Are you bringing a date to the staff Christmas party?" In communication about activities attributed more commonly to straight people, such as parenting, you should also avoid heterosexual bias. For example, rather than branding your event "The Annual Father–Daughter Picnic," you might instead create a more open and inclusive event by terming it "The Annual Parent–Child Picnic." This way, you can avoid unintentionally excluding LGBTQ people who may feel unwelcome if other terms were used.

Benefits

A diverse group of staff that includes LGBTQ people creates, within an organization, a more accurate representation of the public. In order to develop products and services for an increasingly diverse market, organizations can benefit from the insights that exist here. Inclusion of LGBTQ people also comes with an economic benefit. LGBTQ people make up a potentially high-value demographic. Cohabiting same-sex couples are statistically more likely to have a two-income household with no children than heterosexual couples are, so their purchasing power is increasingly one that companies selling consumer products and services want to target.

Challenges

In many parts of Canada, society has become increasingly liberal in recent years. Tolerance and acceptance of LGBTQ people has generally increased, as the stigma associated with non-heterosexual orientations gradually fades. But people in this demographic still face a whole host of challenges. For example, it was not until 1992 that a law was changed to allow LGBTQ people to serve in the Canadian military without harassment or discrimination. In some professions, for example those that are traditionally male-dominated, LGBTQ people may still not feel comfortable sharing their sexual orientation with work colleagues, a fact that implements an immediate communication barrier.

Much of the challenge of integration that LGBTQ people experience stems from the prejudice, misunderstanding, and discomfort on the part of heterosexual people. When you don't know someone well, you may not know how they will react to a great many things, from your value system and opinions, to something far more personal like your sexual orientation. For this reason, many LGBTQ people may choose to keep their orientation private at work, regardless of the industry they work in. Some religions have strong anti-LGBTQ biases, which may put LGBTQ people who work in religiously oriented organizations such as schools and charities backed by religious groups, in a difficult position. LGBTQ people remain vulnerable to bullying, depression, and other issues because of the outside pressures and stigmas that remain present in some segments of society.

Strategies

How can organizations show their respect for diversity in sexual orientation? It all starts with communication! Some companies start by creating a written statement that the organization will not tolerate discrimination based on sexual orientation. They may have workshops addressing issues relating to sexual orientation and facilitate and create networking opportunities for LGBTQ employees. Perhaps the most powerful way in which companies show respect for sexual orientation diversity is by extending benefits to the partners of same-sex couples. Research shows that in companies that have these types of programs, discrimination based on sexual orientation is less frequent, and the job satisfaction and commitment levels are higher (Button, 2001)

Generation and Age

Scenario

Until recently, workplaces had been managed and staffed mostly by Baby Boomers and those from Generation X. People from these generations tend to view diversity as an issue of fairness and equality. For them, a diverse workplace is important because it is legally required and the right thing to do but is not always truly supported or encouraged by management and staff. Millennials—loosely defined as the generation born between the late 1970s and the early 2000s—will make up the largest proportion of the worldwide workforce by 2025. Their views on what makes a happy and productive workplace are vastly different than the views of the generations that came before them, as are their preferred working styles.

Language

Language that includes age bias can be directed toward older or younger people. Descriptions of younger people often presume recklessness or inexperience, while those of older people presume frailty or disconnection. The term elderly generally refers to people over 65, but it has connotations of weakness, which isn't accurate, because there are plenty of people over 65 who are stronger and more athletic than people in their 20s and 30s. Though it's generic, the term older people doesn't have the same negative implications. Additionally, referring to people over the age of 18 as boys or girls isn't typically viewed as appropriate.

Benefits

Research shows that age is correlated with a number of positive workplace behaviours, including higher levels of citizenship behaviours such as volunteering, higher compliance with safety rules, lower work injuries, lower counterproductive behaviours, and lower rates of tardiness or absenteeism (Ng and Feldman, 2008). Having representation from multiple generations on your team will also help you to avoid the dreaded groupthink, a term with which you may be familiar; it essentially means that in an attempt to avoid conflict, groups can agree on flawed decisions because they are trying so hard not to offend, criticize, or discredit members' ideas, or because they share biases, values, and ideas that do not leave room for alternative points of view.

Have you noticed that Western culture tends to value youth? This is to our detriment, particularly in the workplace, as the older people in our society can be great sources of information. When you have longer-serving employees on your team, you have the benefit of their experience—you can avoid repeating mistakes that the organization has made in the past. Generation X'ers can help to bridge the gap between baby boomers and millennials, facilitating better communication on teams.

Challenges

Different generations have different preferences with respect to communication processes. For example, baby boomers prefer face-to-face communication, while millennials prefer short text-based communications (instant messaging, for example). Millennials tend to be more team-oriented and prefer a collaborative environment, whereas baby boomers prefer to work in a more solitary manner.

Strategies

The pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk Inc. noticed that baby boomers were competitive and preferred individual feedback on performance, while Generation Y workers were more team oriented. This difference led one regional manager to start each performance feedback e-mail with recognition of team performance, which was later followed by feedback on individual performance. Similarly, Lockheed Martin Corporation noticed that employees from different generations had different learning styles, with older employees preferring PowerPoint presentations and younger employees preferring more interactive learning (White, 2008). Paying attention to such differences and tailoring various aspects of communication to the particular employees in question may lead to more effective communication in an age-diverse workforce.

Socioeconomic

Scenario

In Canada, 8.8 percent of the population are considered to be in low-income, after tax (Statistics Canada, 2013). The low-income cut-off for a four-person family in Canada is relative and based on the percentage of income a family would need to spend on basic needs. As an example, in 2011, the after-tax cut-off for a family of four living in a community with a population between 30,000 and 99,999 people is $30,487 per annum (Statistics Canada, 2015). People on low incomes also tend to be more likely to suffer from other demographic disadvantages, such as low levels of education and poor health.

But even if you are not part of the low-income demographic, economic status differences are still likely to play a role in your professional life. Around the world, the gap between the wealthy and poor is widening, and the middle class is shrinking. The global markets have still not entirely recovered from the recession of the 2000s, and a steady drop in oil prices have made their mark, particularly in Canada. It does not take long to go from affluent to economically disadvantaged when global forces are in play. There are increasing tensions between the rich and the poor around the world, with social movements like Occupy gaining traction. Even within your own social group or workplace, this divide may be obvious—for example, between high-earning upper management and the relatively low-earning working classes.

Language

Derogatory terms are an unfortunate reality for low-income demographics. Use of terms like ghetto and trailer trash are offensive and should be avoided. As in all communication, consider your audience! Before you use words that have the potential to offend, recognize that a simple slip of the tongue, even if it is not meant with malice, can cause hurt feelings, discomfort, and embarrassment.

Benefits

As with most of the diversity types we have discussed, the more an organization resembles the makeup of the market it targets, the more likely it is to be able to respond to demands from this demographic. Mixing people with different worldviews provides an opportunity to learn from their experiences. It is tempting to think that solutions to big problems will come from the highly educated few at the top and trickle down, but this is often not the case. People who experience challenges in life often develop resourcefulness in order to overcome them—a desirable trait in any worker.

You may have heard stories of people who came from a disadvantaged background only to credit their later success to the life skills they learned in more trying times. Famous names, such as Oprah Winfrey, Leonardo DiCaprio, J. K. Rowling, and many others, experienced economic disadvantages that paved the way for the success they now have.

Challenges

People who struggle to meet their own basic needs, for example, food, clothing, and shelter, often miss out on the opportunities given to people in better economic situations. For example, a middle- or upper-class young person typically has an easier time getting into post-secondary education than their low-income counterparts because their primary and secondary education has been of a better quality. They have been able to access after-school programs and tutors, if ever they needed to. They most likely had access to books, the Internet, and educational experiences growing up, many of which may be out of reach for young people from low-income families. These advantages carry over into their working lives. While higher-income individuals have opportunities to go to university, network with people who can help them in their careers, and take on jobs and internships to build a high-quality résume, the same cannot necessarily be said for those on a lower income.

Many people do not realize the prejudice they hold, when it comes to poverty. There is a widespread belief that poverty is equated with laziness, or that people of a lower socioeconomic status are entirely responsible for their circumstances. When considering another person's economic situation, remember that many people who are of lower incomes have experienced considerable challenges in life. For example, many people struggle financially because of relationship and family breakdowns, illness, lack of educational opportunities, or other misfortunes that you may not be able to see or understand.

Just because someone works in a similar role to you does not mean that their earnings or disposable income is the same as yours. In the workplace there can be a lot of pressure on people of lower economic status to spend money in order to be included in the social aspects of the workplace. For example, do your colleagues go out for drinks when it is someone's birthday? Does your office hold a holiday party where the staff go out for a meal? While those staff members who are financially successful may not give these events a second thought, those who have socioeconomic challenges may not be able to attend, or may stretch themselves in order to be there and be included, even though they cannot afford to.

Strategies

Your organization can begin to address these challenges by paying a living wage to all employees. Doing so has positive benefits for the organization; for example, the organization will have access to a wider talent pool, as prospective employees are attracted to organizations that have policies such as this. It is also a way to gain positive media attention. Even if you are not a member of management who has the necessary power required to make such a significant change to the organization, you can champion the concept collectively with colleagues who support the move. Employer-subsidized programs such as meals and childcare at the office can also make an impact on the standard of living of employees.

Ability

Scenario

According to Statistics Canada (2015), over 11 percent of Canadians experience pain, mobility, or flexibility challenges. These can be severe enough to require a wheelchair or other mobility aid, or they can be less severe but still make it difficult for people to do jobs that require some type of movement or labour.

The next most common disability among Canadians was mental or psychological disabilities (3.9 percent). These commonly include depression and anxiety; however, a great many others exist that are less familiar to the general public.

Dexterity problems is the next most common category, affecting 3.5 percent of Canadians. Dexterity limits can affect a person's motor function and can make moving around the worksite a challenge. It can also make it difficult for people to use computers and other digital devices.

About 5.9 percent of Canadians have some type of vision or hearing problem, be it total blindness or deafness, or partial use of these senses.

While other areas like memory, learning, and developmental disabilities can also pose barriers, specific tools and aids can be useful for employees with disabilities. For example, wheelchairs and arm supports can make movement possible, while hearing aids and magnifiers can make hearing or vision clearer. For people who are blind, interaction with computers is possible with the aid of screen readers and text-to-speech technology.

Language

People with disabilities are sometimes viewed as a cultural/social identity group. Those without disabilities are often referred to as able-bodied. As with sexual orientation, comparing people with disabilities to "normal" people implies that there is an agreed-upon definition of what "normal" is and, thus, that people with disabilities are "abnormal." Disability is preferred to the word handicap. By ignoring the environment as the source of a handicap and placing it on the person, we reduce people with disabilities to their disability—for example, calling someone "a paraplegic" instead of "a person with paraplegia." In many cases, verbally marking a person as disabled is unnecessary and potentially damaging. Language used in conjunction with disabilities also tends to portray people as victims of their disability and paint pictures of their lives as gloomy, unpleasant, or painful. Such descriptors are often generalizations or completely inaccurate.

Another set of troubling terms include the casual use of words and phrases like "crazy," "He's off his meds," or "She's a little OCD." By using these terms, we are making light of serious mental health concerns. The casual way in which we use these for humorous effect is offensive to people who live with serious conditions, and can result in situations where you unknowingly "stick your foot in your mouth." Mental health issues are often invisible, so you have no way of knowing that the people around you aren't actually sufferers of these conditions. Perhaps they have a family member or friend who struggles with a mental illness and would be upset or offended by your comment.

Solidify your understanding of People First Language:

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/foundationsprofcomms/?p=1305

Benefits

People with ability challenges can be a significant boost to the ability of an organization to reach its market. Those who experience these things on a daily basis have an insight that able-bodied people cannot have.

For example, one of our authors taught a blind student who used a screen reader and text-to-speech technology to interact with computers in a course about digital technology. The speed at which the student could operate these devices often exceeded the speed of able-bodied students and even the teacher herself. The student was eager to share her perception of the world with her fellow students and, therefore, invited a guest to demonstrate a variety of tools used to make the Internet more accessible. As a result, the class was able to gain insight into this demographic and adjust their practices accordingly. The blind student's goal was to become an accessibility consultant so that she could improve Internet access for people with challenges similar to hers. By undertaking this career path, the student will be able to develop user-friendly and inclusive designs to help organizations develop more inclusive business practices—a level of insight missing from the organizations that she works for.

Challenges

Environmental factors can play a part in making the work day of a disabled person more of a challenge than it should be. For example, you have probably been in older buildings that do not have elevators installed either because of the age of the building or space constraints. To an able-bodied employee, working in a office building like this may not be a problem. But for someone who uses a wheelchair, lack of an elevator can make even the seemingly simple task of sitting at a desk on the second floor, impossible. The costs of refitting a building or purchasing equipment to accommodate people with disabilities can be prohibitive for organizations. In addition, the ability to accommodate in a way that does not demean or hide people with disabilities is a challenge for organizations. For example, buildings that do not have ramps at the front entrance may instead fit an accessible entrance at the rear of the building. While this may not seem like a problem for the able-bodied person, a wheelchair user will need to access the building differently than others, which may bring up feelings of exclusion.

A main communication challenge that arises here is misunderstanding on the part of able-bodied people. Individuals without impairments cannot know what everyday life is like for a disabled person. Sometimes able-bodied people go out of their way to be accommodating out of awkwardness or because they don't want to come across as prejudicial, but while most people will appreciate these efforts, most disabled persons have become accustomed to (and some have always lived with) their challenges and are capable of managing themselves as well as able-bodied people are. As such, a level of discomfort can arise because we are singling them out, even if our intentions are good. This is not to say that you should not be accommodating to a disabled person but simply that you should ask if there is anything you can do to help rather than taking over or micromanaging them.

Another factor to consider is that some disabilities are invisible. For example, perhaps you sit next to a person who suffers from a mental health issue or a learning disability or who experiences persistent pain, and you don't know it. This can make pulling their own weight on a team challenging. Perhaps the disability leads them to miss work or struggle to complete tasks. Therefore, it is far better to ask what you can do to help than to react with frustration or conflict. Let the person take their time and show or tell you what they need.

Strategies

Supportive communication with others seems to be the key for making employees feel at home. Because the visible differences between individuals may act as an initial barrier against developing rapport, employees with disabilities and their co-workers may benefit from being proactive in relationship development (Colella & Varma, 2001).

Another key way to make a people with different abilities feel confident in the workplace is to consider accessibility. As a communications professional, this may come to your attention particularly when you are communicating via digital channels. For example, let's assume that your workplace uses an intranet to deliver news, policy changes, employee education content, and other announcements. You'll need to consider employees with disabilities, here, particularly those who have visual, hearing, or motor impairments. The following are some things you can do to accommodate this demographic:

- Make sure the intranet is fully accessible to screen readers and avoid using images in place of text, as screen readers cannot "read" images.
- Test your web pages with a colour-blindness simulator to ensure that colour-blind users will have a good experience.
- Provide text transcripts for all audio content and alongside videos.
- Make it easy to navigate pages by avoiding the need for a lot of clicking or precise mouse movements.

These are just a few suggestions, of course. Depending on the demographics of your staff, there will be many more accommodations you can make. But this should get you started on thinking about accessibility. Most of all, remember that not everyone has the luxury of being able-bodied and that not all illnesses and challenges are visible.

Communication Challenges

If managing diversity effectively has the potential to increase company performance, increase creativity, and create a more satisfied workforce, why aren't all companies doing a better job of encouraging diversity? Despite all the potential advantages, there are also a number of challenges associated with increased levels of diversity in the workforce. Conflict can arise if staff members do not use some caution when working in this way. Here we will highlight two issues to watch out for.

Similarity-Attraction Phenomenon

Have you noticed that we tend to stick within groups of people who are similar to us? Naturally, we want to be around people who share our interests and values; we perceive safety and comfort in belonging. But this automatic, natural habit can mean that we miss out on many of the benefits that diversity can create. This pattern, the similarity-attraction phenomenon, begins at the door of organizations that hire individuals who are "similar" to the existing workforce.

For example, the technology sector is under increasing pressure to diversify its predominantly white-male workforce. This homogenous hiring habit not only results in fewer opportunities for women and minority groups but also means that the organization hires people with similar backgrounds, interests, and ideas. The workforce is less able to come up with new solutions to the problems they are trying to solve because their thought processes and points of reference are similar. This also limits their ability to authentically represent their audience. Consider a social networking technology startup, for example. How can a workforce consisting of highly educated white males accurately speak and develop services for growing audiences in South Asia or East Asia, where the education levels, economic status, race, religion, language, and cultural practices are far removed from what the employees experience themselves? These issues demonstrate why having a diverse workforce is so important.

Research shows that individuals communicate less frequently with those they perceive as being different from themselves (Chatman et. al, 1998). They are also more likely to experience emotional conflict with people who differ with respect to race, age, and gender (Jehn et. al, 1999; Pelled et. al, 1999). Individuals who are different from their team members are more likely to report perceptions of unfairness and feel that their contributions are ignored (Price et. al, 2006).

There are some simple things you can do to prevent this from becoming a source of conflict in your workplace. First, be a friendly and welcoming face for newcomers! If a new starter joins your team, invite them for coffee or offer to show them around. Something as simple as this can help to break down the divide between new and long-serving staff members and can create groups of colleagues with different experiences and backgrounds. Mentorship programs are also helpful here. If you have an opportunity to become a mentor or to be mentored, seek out someone with a different background or set of experiences than your own. This will create an equally beneficial relationship that leads both of you to learn something new.

Fault Lines

Another challenge that is particularly common in team-working scenarios is that groups often split into subgroups based on some common trait. For example, in a group composed of three females and three males, gender may act as a fault line, dividing the team in two. Further, imagine that the female members of the group are all over 50 years old and the male members are all younger than 25. In this case, age and gender combine to further divide the group.

Teams that are divided by fault lines experience a number of difficulties. For example, members of the different subgroups may avoid communicating with each other, reducing the overall cohesiveness of the team. These types of teams make less effective decisions and are less creative (Pearsall et. al, 2008; Sawyer et. al, 2006).

To prevent fault lines from becoming an issue in your workplace, look for ways to mix demographics within a team so that splitting into these obvious sub-groupings is not easy. Going back to our example of a team composed of three male and three female members, let's consider an alternate age scenario: If two of the female members are older and one of the male members is also older, age could be a bridging characteristic that brings together people who might otherwise be divided across gender.

Conclusion

You will likely encounter many types of diversity in your professional life. You have learned that different people from different groups may encode and decode things in unexpected ways and that Canada's history, geography, and demographic trends show that we are becoming increasingly diverse.

Differences between people can include religion and culture, generation, linguistic, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. While a diverse workforce can offer significant benefits to an organization, some communication challenges may arise, including the similarity-attraction phenomenon and the development of fault lines in teams.

Workplaces in Canada and around the world are making an effort to be more inclusive—that is, to create an open, supportive environment where staff are free to express themselves and work in a collaborative way. The flow of ideas from different cultures, generations, genders, and religious backgrounds is actively encouraged because of the resulting positive effects on business goals. These positive effects often take the form of desired attributes like increased innovation, productivity, employee happiness and retention, and other such metrics. This shift toward diversity and inclusivity is sometimes credited to the increase of millennials in the workplace and the qualities that this growing demographic look for in a professional environment.

Understanding how to communicate in a diverse environment is a key skill for a twenty-first-century employee.

Key Takeaways and Check In

Learning highlights

- In a social context, diversity is about embracing things that make us different and focusing on how these differences enrich our lives. Workplace diversity is not so different. It is about recognizing key factors of what makes us different. It is about making the most of the talents of people from diverse backgrounds to provide a more adaptable, effective, and productive workplace.
- Perceptual, cultural, and linguistic barriers can give rise to ineffective communication in the workplace and need to be overcome.
- Resistance to change (in practices), which includes intolerance to cultural diversity, can be a significant barrier to successful practices of diversity in the workplace.
- Recognition of the complexities as well as the benefits of diversity is a good first step to creating an inclusive workplace.

Check Your Understandings

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Further Reading, Links, and Attribution

- Check out this MTV video on understanding more about the debate between free speech and diversity-related political correctness.
- See this article on how to explain white privilege to a broke white person.
- This Atlantic article, "A person can't be diverse," discusses misuses of and problems with the term diversity from the perspective of filmmaker Ava DuVernay.
- View this article on five ways to foster a discrimination-free workplace.

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4.3: Your Interpersonal Communication Preferences

Discover Your Preferences

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- describe each of the three domains of identity as they relate to communication practice,
- explain the relationship between identity and perception, and their influence on achieving shared understanding through communication,
- describe your own communication and work habit preferences, and
- explain how key factors of diversity influence your workplace behaviours.

This chapter is all about helping you to uncover your interpersonal communication preferences. When we study interpersonal communication, we often focus on external things like the audience or environment. Those things are important here as well, but they are important in the context of their impact on you.

The chapter begins with an overview of the three core elements that make up your identity. Personal identity elements are examined using the five-factor personality trait model, on which many personality tests are built. The second element is your social identity, which would include things like identifying socially as an animal rescue volunteer, an entrepreneur, or a marathon runner. The third is your cultural identity, which can include elements such as your race, ethnicity or gender.

The next section of the chapter takes a deeper look at other elements of your identity. Some elements of your identity are things you choose, known as avowed identity, and some are elements that are put upon you, known as ascribed identity.

The focus is then turned to perception, including how selective perception can often negatively affect interpersonal communication.

The chapter wraps up with information to help you determine your preferences and work habits, a review of communication channels, and a peek at Belbin's nine team roles that may help you understand and excel at communicating interpersonally while doing team work.

Having a better knowledge of your own interpersonal communication preferences will allow you to better understand yourself, your identity, and motivations. This awareness is a useful first step in developing your abilities to relate with and understand other people too.

Personal, Social, and Cultural Identity

We develop a sense of who we are based on what is reflected back on us from other people. Our parents, friends, teachers, and the media contribute to shaping our identities. This process begins right after we are born, but most people in Western societies reach a stage in adolescence in which maturing cognitive abilities and increased social awareness lead them to begin to reflect on who they are. This begins a lifelong process of thinking about who we are now, who we were before, and who we will become (Tatum, 2009). Our identities make up an important part of our self-concept and can be broken down into three main categories: personal, social, and cultural identity.

Did you know?

IDENTITY was Dictionary.com's word of the year for 2015!

Our identities are formed through processes that started before we were born and will continue after we are gone; therefore, our identities aren't something we achieve or complete. Two related but distinct components of our identities are our personal and social identities (Spreckels and Kotthoff, 2009). Personal identities include the components of self that are primarily intrapersonal and connected to our life experiences. For example, I may consider myself a puzzle lover, and you may identify as a fan of hip-hop music. Our social identities are the components of self that are derived from involvement in social groups.

Example identity characteristics

Personal	Social	Cultural
Antique Collector	Member of Historical Society	Irish Canadian
Dog Lover	Member of Humane Society	Male/Female
Cyclist	Fraternity/Sorority Member	Greek Canadian
Singer	High School Music Teacher	Multiracial
Shy	Book Club Member	Heterosexual
Athletic	Entrepreneurial Co-Working Member	Gay | Lesbian | Two Spirited

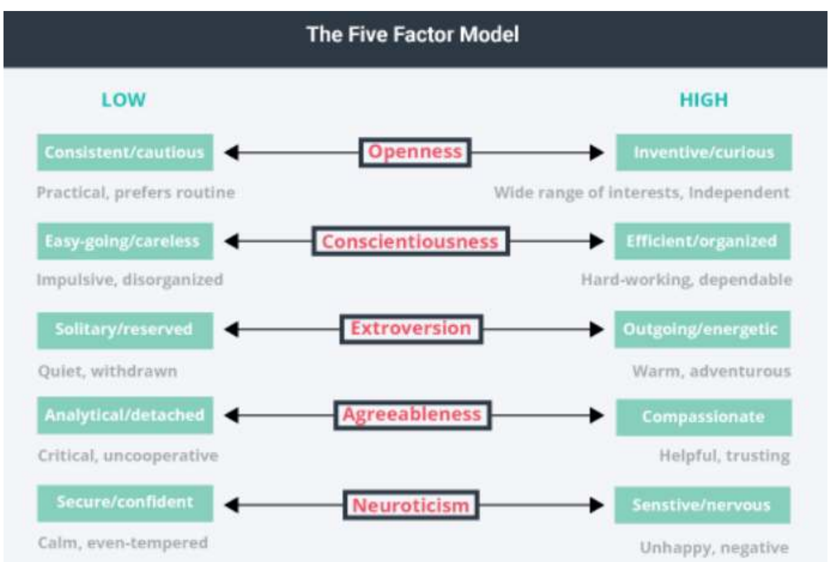
Personal identities may change often as people have new experiences and develop new interests and hobbies. A current interest in online video games may later give way to an interest in graphic design. Social identities do not change as often, because they depend on our becoming interpersonally invested and, as such, take more time to develop. For example, if an interest in online video games leads someone to become a member of an online gaming community, that personal identity has led to a social identity that is now interpersonal and more entrenched.

Cultural identities are based on socially constructed categories that teach us a way of being and include expectations for social behaviour or ways of acting (Yep, 2002). Since we are often a part of them from birth, cultural identities are the least changeable of the three. The social expectations for behaviour within cultural identities do change over time, but what separates them from most social identities is their historical roots (CollIer, 1996). For example, think of how ways of being and acting have changed in America since the civil rights movement.

Common ways of being and acting within a cultural identity group are expressed through communication. In order to be accepted as a member of a cultural group, members must be acculturated, essentially learning and using a code that other group members will be able to recognize (Collier, 1996). We are acculturated into our various cultural identities in obvious and less obvious ways. We may literally have a parent or friend tell us what it means to be a man or a woman. We may also unconsciously consume messages from popular culture that offer representations of gender.

Personal Identity

We will use the Five-Factor Model to examine your personal identity. You can use the acronym OCEAN to remember the five traits, which are **Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness**, and **Neuroticism**. Take a look at the following scale. Where would you position yourself on the continuum for each of the traits?



Five-Factor Personality Model by L. Underwood Adapted from OpenStax CNX

These traits have a high degree of influence over your working life. They will help you to decide which career path is right for you; for example, if you identify as highly extroverted and conscientious with low neuroticism, you would do well in a sales-oriented position, but someone who identifies on the opposite ends of these scales is unlikely to enjoy or excel at this type of work.

Explore the Five Factors

Psychologist World provides quizzes to discover where you sit on each factor's continuum.

These traits will dictate the people you collaborate with successfully, your team-working ability, and the type of environment you prefer to work in. Your position on the conscientiousness scale can help to predict your job performance (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). For example, people who are highly conscientious are more able to work within teams and are less likely to be absent from work. These traits are also connected to leadership ability (Neubert, 2004). Although it may seem counterintuitive at first, if you score low on the agreeableness scale, you are more likely to be a good leader. If you consider the division between leaders and followers on a team, those who make decisions and voice their opinions when they do not agree are promoted to higher ranks, while those who are happy to go along with the consensus remain followers.

These traits will also influence your overall enjoyment of the workplace experience. For example, agreeableness and extroversion are indicators that you will enjoy a social workplace where the environment is set up to foster collaboration through an open office concept and lots of team-working. Conversely, if you score low on these two traits, that doesn't mean that you will not be a good worker, just that you might not suit this type of environment. If you score low on these two traits but high on openness and conscientiousness, you might instead be an excellent entrepreneur or skilled in creative pursuits such as design or storytelling.

Social Identity

Your social identity gives a sense of who you are, based on your membership in social groups. Your social identity can also be connected to your cultural identity and ethnicity. For example, if you are nationalistic or have pride in belonging to a particular country or race, this is part of your social identity, as is your membership in religious groups. But your social identity can also result in discrimination or prejudice toward others if you perceive the other group as somehow inferior to your own. This can occur innocently enough, at first, for example, through your allegiance to a particular sports team. As part of your identity as a fan of this team, you might jokingly give fans of a rival team a hard time, but be cautious of instances where this could become derogatory or even dangerous. For example, if your fellow fans use an insensitive term for members of the rival group, this can cause insult and anger.

Cultural Identity

The identifiers that shape your cultural identity are conditions like location, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, language, history, and religion. Your understanding of the normal behaviour for each of these cultures is shaped by your family and upbringing, your social environment, and the media. Perhaps unconsciously, you mirror these norms, or rebel against them, depending on your environment and the personal traits outlined above.

Your perception of the world, and the way you communicate this, is shaped by your cultural identity. For example, one of our authors had a white South African colleague who, in casual conversation, used a racial term to refer to black South Africans. While the author was affronted by the colleague's use of the term, the author came to realize that this word choice had been a result of the colleague's upbringing. The colleague's parents, friends, and community had been using that term casually; as such, using that racial term in everyday speech was an ingrained behaviour that did not hold the level of offense for him that it did for the community that he was referring to. While the term has always been considered an ethnic slur, white Afrikaans-speaking people used it as a casual term to reinforce their perceived superiority during the country's history, particularly during apartheid. While offensive to those outside of his cultural and social group, the term was used within it habitually.

Depending on your environment, you may feel societal pressure to conform to certain cultural norms. For example, historically, immigrants to English-speaking countries adopted anglicized names so that their names would be easier to pronounce and so that they could more easily fit into the new culture. For example, Giovanni may have been renamed John (as was the case with Giovanni Caboto, the Italian explorer, more widely known as John Cabot). However, consider how important your own name is to your identity. For many of us, our names are a central piece of who we are. Thus, in changing their names, these people ended up changing an integral element of their self-perception.

The cultural constructs of gender and power often play a part in workplace communication, as certain behaviours become ingrained. For example, in Canada and the United States, male leaders are typically applauded and thought of as forward-thinking when they adopt typically “feminine” traits like collaboration and caring. Those same traits in female leaders are often considered weak or wishy-washy. Similarly, women who are competitive or assertive are “female dogs” to be put down, whereas men exhibiting these traits are seen as self-starters or go-getters. It is difficult to be a female leader and be socially beyond reproach in the West.

Most of us are often totally unaware of how we enforce or reinforce these norms that prevent women from reaching their full potential in the workplace. Not to mention the implications on how a female leader might communicate effectively interpersonally. In some authoritarian cultures, it is considered inappropriate for subordinates to make eye contact with their superiors, as this would be disrespectful and impolite. In some other cultures, women are discouraged from making too much eye contact with men, as this could be misconstrued as romantic interest. These behaviours and interpretations may be involuntary for people who grew up as part of these cultures.

Ascribed and Avowed Identity

Any of these identity types can be ascribed or avowed. Ascribed identities are personal, social, or cultural identities that others place on us, while avowed identities are those that we claim for ourselves (Martin and Nakayama, 2010). Sometimes people ascribe an identity to someone else based on stereotypes. If you encounter a person who likes to read science-fiction books, watches documentaries, wears glasses, and collects Star Trek memorabilia, you may label him or her a nerd. But if the person doesn’t avow that identity, using that label can create friction and may even hurt the other person’s feelings. However, ascribed and avowed identities can match up. To extend the previous example, there has been a movement in recent years to reclaim the label nerd and turn it into something positive, and hence, a nerd subculture has been growing in popularity. For example, MC Frontalot, a leader in the nerdcore hip-hop movement, says that being branded a nerd in school was terrible, but now he raps about “nerdy” things like blogs to sold-out crowds (Shipman, 2007). We can see from this example that our ascribed and avowed identities change over the course of our lives. Sometimes they match up, and sometimes they do not, but our personal, social, and cultural identities are key influencers on our perceptions of the world.

Perception

Perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information to represent and understand the environment. The selection, organization, and interpretation of perceptions can differ among people. When people react differently to the same situation, part of their behavior can be explained by examining how their perceptions are leading to their responses.

For example, how do you perceive the images below? What do you see? Ask a friend what they see in the images. Are your perceptions different?

Naturally, our perception is about much more than simply how we see images. We perceive actions, behaviours, symbols, words, and ideas differently, too!

Selective Perception

Selective perception is driven by internal and external factors.

The following are some internal factors:

- Personality: Personality traits influence how a person selects perceptions. For instance, conscientious people tend to select details and external stimuli to a greater degree.
- Motivation: People will select perceptions according to what they need in the moment. They will favour selections they think will help them with their current needs and be more likely to ignore what is irrelevant to their needs. For example, a manager may perceive staying under budget as the top factor when ordering safety gear but miss or ignore the need for high quality.
- Experience: The patterns of occurrences or associations one has learned in the past affect current perceptions. For example, if you previously learned to associate men in business suits with clean-shaven faces or no discernable facial hair as ideal and

trustworthy, you may dismiss the same man who shows up with a beard or moustache, perceiving he may have something to hide. Such a person will select perceptions in a way that fits with what they found in the past.

When you recognize the internal factors that affect perception selection, you also realize that all of these are subject to change. You can change or modify your personality, motivation, or experience. Being aware of this is helpful in interpersonal communication because we can use our perceptions as a catalyst for changing what we pay attention to (personality) in order to communicate better (motivation). Once we modify those, we can open ourselves to new patterns (experiences) and ways of understanding.

The following are some external factors of selective perception:

- Size: A larger size makes selection of an object more likely.
- Intensity: Greater intensity, in brightness, for example, also increases perceptual selection.
- Contrast: When a perception stands out clearly against a background, the likelihood of selection is greater.
- Motion: A moving perception is more likely to be selected.
- Repetition: Repetition increases perceptual selection.
- Novelty and familiarity: Both of these increase selection. When a perception is new, it stands out in a person's experience. When it is familiar, it is likely to be selected because of this familiarity.

External factors can be designed in such a way as to affect your perception. Marketers, advertisers, and politicians are extremely well-versed in using external factors to influence perceptual selection. Let's say you have a long cylinder of ice water in a beautiful glass container next to a short bowl of water in a plain, white ceramic container. Most people would choose the glass container because it looks bigger and the clarity may make it seem brighter, despite the fact that it contains less water than the bowl. Similarly, you may perceive that brand A is better than brand B because you've seen brand A in high-fashion magazines, while brand B is mostly available at discount stores in your local mall. You may pay more for brand A because you perceive you're getting quality when in actuality brands A and B are made from the same material at the same low-cost overseas factory.

Perception can influence how a person views any given situation or occurrence, so by taking other people's perceptions into account, we can develop insight into how to communicate more effectively with them. Similarly, by understanding more about our own perceptions, we begin to realize that there is more than one way to see something and that it is possible to have have an incorrect or inaccurate perception about a person or group, which would hinder our ability to communicate effectively with them.

Examine the vignette below and determine which of the three types of internal selective perception most closely matches this situation:

Culture and Perception

The author has taken two trips to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), landing at Dubai Airport. At the time of her visit, a visa was required for Canadians, and, as part of the visa requirements, travellers needed to be digitally fingerprinted and have an eye scan.

During her first trip there was no lineup. She went and was scanned and printed with no issues. On her second trip, she went to the familiar area, but there were two long lines nearly equal in length. There were no signs to indicate which line was designated for what, so she didn't know which line to stand in or what the respective lines were for.

She looked around and saw some official-looking gentlemen at a nearby booth. She went and said, "Excuse me, sorry to bother you, but I need to have my visa sorted out and I don't know which line I'm supposed to stand in."

The men looked at her, staring daggers at her. She was perplexed, as they looked somehow angry or ticked off. After a long, uncomfortable silence, one of the men piped up and said, "You can stand in any line you want, ma'am."

She felt frustrated that they seemed to be so unhelpful. She was mindful of her anger rising, tried to soften her tone, and said, "I'm not being funny here, but the last time I was here, there was no line. Now there are two, and I don't know what they're for because there are no signs, and so I don't know which line I'm supposed to be in. This is why I came here to ask for your help, so I can know which line to stand in."

Finally, the other man said, "Ma'am you can stand in that line there," pointing to the line that happened to be closest to her.

“Thank you,” she said, walking away shaking her head. She was in line and still trying to figure out why those men at the booth had been so cross at her for asking a simple question. It made no sense.

She started looking at the people in her line. They seemed to come from a range of countries, and all looked travel worn. She looked at the other line. Same thing. She wondered, still, why there were two lines.

After doing some shuffling with her bags and passport, about 10 minutes after first standing in line, she had a huge realization. All the people in her line were women or children. All the people in the other line were men.

It took her over 10 minutes and an uncomfortable conversation to realize that in many Islamic countries, men and women mostly go about their day-to-day lives in separate ways. Her co-ed upbringing had completely blinded her to this reality in this context.

If it were a queue for a washroom, she would have noticed right away, but as a queue for a travel visa, it had genuinely not occurred to her—even after looking at these lines pretty intensely for several minutes—that the reason behind having two lines was that one was for men and the other for women and children.

Suddenly, she also understood that the two gentlemen at the booth had looked at her angrily because they might have thought she either was trying to make a point as a smug westerner or was totally dense. She laughed and laughed…

Perceiving Emotion

Part of perception in a communication context is about how we perceive another person’s mood, needs, and emotional state. We don’t always say what we really mean; therefore, some reading between the lines occurs when we are communicating with someone, particularly if their reaction is not what we expect.

For example, when a baby is crying, we, as adults, wonder, Has the baby eaten? Could the baby be tired? Is she uncomfortable or unwell? Has he been startled? Our first thoughts go to meeting the baby’s basic needs. Conversely, when we have an encounter with an adult who reacts to us with a negative emotion, we often think, This person is mad at me, He doesn’t like me, She’s not a nice person, or She’s in a bad mood for no reason. We take the adult’s response personally, but yet we know instinctively that the baby’s reaction is not about us. Why is it that we react so differently to the baby’s behaviour in contrast to the adult’s, even though the trigger may be very similar? We make assumptions based on our own perception, but we are not always right. If we, instead, considered whether or not the adult’s basic needs had been met, relationships and emotions in the workplace could be managed more easily. The next time you have a disagreement with someone, consider whether or not their essential needs are currently being met, and you may find that the lack of fulfillment of these needs—not something you have said or done—is playing a part in the person’s emotional response.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs from Simply Psychology

Psychologist Abraham Maslow (Maslow, 1943) described a series of need levels that humans experience. As Figure 4.2.3 shows, the more basic needs are at the bottom of the pyramid. The most basic needs must be met before humans will desire and focus their attention on the next level of the hierarchy. This plays a big part in communication—and miscommunication—with other people.

Let's take a look at each of these needs, beginning with the most basic:

- Physiological: These are the physical needs required for survival, including air, water, food, clothing, and shelter. Without these, the body cannot function.
- Safety: These needs are required for humans to feel secure, and include physical safety, health, and financial security.
- Love and belonging: These are our social needs and include family, friendship, love, and intimacy.
- Esteem: These are our needs to feel respected by others and to have self-respect. This level of needs explains why we study, take up occupations, volunteer, or strive to increase our social status.
- Self-actualization: This refers to our desire to fulfill our potential. Each person will approach this need in their own way. For example, you might aim to become achieve athletic goals, while your friend may work at developing her artistic skill.

Think about how your basic needs are met in your workplace environment. Do you respond to others differently, or have trouble regulating emotion and mood when your basic needs are not met? This can, unknowingly for some, be the source of conflict, frustration, and misunderstanding between colleagues.

In a professional context, Maslow's hierarchy is key to employee motivation, happiness, and productivity. We work to earn money so that our basic needs will be met. But some organizations extend their reach to further meet employee needs, for example, by providing food, social gatherings, professional development opportunities, career progression, and so on. These provisions make the organization more appealing to new applicants and encourages existing staff to stay with the company.

Preferences and Work Habits

The personality indicators described above have a significant impact on your working style and preferences. Your previous work experience, demographics, and strengths will also play a part. You may not have spent much time considering your own preferences and habits, or the impact of these on the people you work with. So, let's take a few moments to look at this.

Ask yourself:

- Do you enjoy working in a sociable environment, or do you prefer to work in a more solitary environment?
- Do you feel more energized through meeting people and building relationships or from coming up with great ideas?
- Are you a big-picture person, or do you focus on the fine details?
- Is your decision-making process based more on logic or on feelings?
- At what time of day do you feel most productive?
- What practices help you stay organized?
- Do you prefer to take a planned, orderly approach to your work, or a more flexible and spontaneous approach?
- Which of your previous working environments did you find most enjoyable? Why?
- Which communication channels do you use, most commonly?
- What have previous colleagues and managers said about your skills and working process? Which elements have come up in performance reviews as things you excel at? What have you struggled with in the past?
- What are the demographics and traits of people you have worked best with in the past? With whom have you had conflicts and misunderstandings, and what do you think were the causes of these?

Channels of Communication

Do you recall the communication channels we discussed in the Foundations module? These have an impact on the way your message is received in any type of communication but are particularly important when you are communicating interpersonally. Your communication preferences are part of your interpersonal style, but when deciding which channel to use to communicate information to others, you will need to consider which channel is best for the situation.

For example, perhaps you are a millennial who prefers to communicate on-the-go using mobile devices and quick-response channels like text, social media, or instant message. But you might struggle to use these channels efficiently if your colleagues are primarily from the baby boomer generation, because your preferences might not align.

You may recall the term communication richness, first discussed in the Foundations module. The channels considered to be the most rich are those that transmit the most non-verbal information, such as, for example, face-to-face conversations or video conferencing. Channels that communicate verbal information, such as phone calls, for example, are less rich. The least rich channels use written communication, such as email or postal mail. Depending on the details of your message, you will identify the most effective channel to use. For example, if you need a response right away, if you anticipate an emotional response, or if your message needs to remain in strict confidence, you will need to use a highly information-rich channel. If your message is not urgent, intended for information only, and directed to a large group of people, you might choose a less rich channel. For a refresher on this concept, review the Choosing a Communications Channel Chapter of the Foundations module.

Team Roles

Belbin’s (1981) team inventory is a model that helps people to identify what strengths and weaknesses they can bring to a group or team. Normally, people fill out a questionnaire that helps determine what their top three team strengths are out of nine possible categories. According to Belbin’s research, these categories are stable across cultures. The nine categories are listed in the chart below:

Action-Oriented Roles	Shaper	Implementer	Completer | Finisher
People-Oriented Roles	Coordinator	Team Worker	Resource Investigator
Thinking-Oriented Roles	Plant	Monitor-Evaluator	Specialist

Research Break

1. Find definitions or profiles for each for the nine team roles.
2. Add the definitions or profiles to the Padlet below.
3. Reflect on the following questions and add to Padlet as appropriate:
    - Which top three roles do you think you align most with?
    - Do you have a mix of action, people, and thinking-oriented roles, or do your team strengths fall in one or two of those categories?
    - Have you worked with others who seem to clearly match one or more of the definitions you’ve uncovered?

How you behave on a team and what strengths come to the surface usually depends on who else is on the team at least as much as your own personality traits and strengths. But because Belbin’s team roles look at your top three strengths, you can usually find a role on a team that plays to your strengths and have others take the lead in areas where you either are weaker or have little interest.

These team roles are another aspect of a diversity that allows and encourages people to bring their strengths and experiences to the table to solve problems or innovate. Having this framework helps increase the likelihood of interpersonal communication and team synergy because team members understand one another’s strengths and weaknesses and can determine their preferred team role(s).

Key Takeaways

In this chapter you learned about your own preferences and tendencies for communicating interpersonally as a foundation for understanding yourself and others better.

You examined several elements that make up your identity: these are the personal, social, and cultural aspects as well as ascribed and avowed identity.

Learning about perception and selective perception helped you to understand that there is more than one way to see something and that we sometimes choose to see only what we want to see. You learned that incorrect or inaccurate perception can get in the way of effective interpersonal communication.

Finally, you examined your work preferences and habits, reviewed your preferred communication channels, and researched where you might best lend your talent and experience to a team using Belbin’s Team Role framework.

This better understanding of your interpersonal communication preferences is the grounding you should find useful in the next chapter on cross-cultural communication.

Learning highlights

- Your identity consists of three main elements: personal, social, and cultural.
- An easy way to remember the five-factor personality model is by using the acronym OCEAN (openness, conscientiousness, extroversion | introversion, agreeableness, neuroticism).
- Ascribed identity is given to you, while avowed identity is what you choose for yourself.
- Perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information to represent and understand the environment.
- Belbin's team inventory is a nine-category model that helps people to identify the top three categoric strengths they can bring to a group or team.

Further Reading, Links, and Attribution

Further Reading and Links

- BBC Future article on optical illusions – How your Eyes Trick Your Mind

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4.4: Cross-Cultural Communication

What is Culture?

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to:

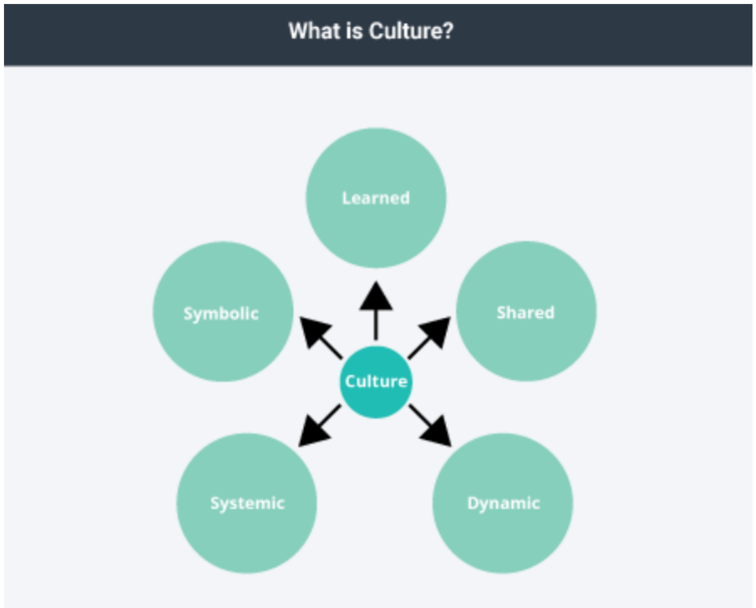
- distinguish between surface and deep culture in the context of the iceberg model,
- describe how cross-cultural communication is shaped by cultural diversity,
- explain how the encoding and decoding process takes shape in cross-cultural communication,
- describe circumstances that require effective cross-cultural communication, and
- describe approaches to enhance interpersonal communication in cross-cultural contexts.

We may be tempted to think of intercultural communication as interaction between two people from different countries. While two distinct national passports communicate a key part of our identity non-verbally, what happens when two people from two different parts of the same country communicate? Indeed, intercultural communication happens between subgroups of the same country. Whether it be the distinctions between high and low Germanic dialects, the differences in perspective between an Eastern Canadian and a Western Canadian, or the rural-versus-urban dynamic, our geographic, linguistic, educational, sociological, and psychological traits influence our communication.

Culture is part of the very fabric of our thought, and we cannot separate ourselves from it, even as we leave home and begin to define ourselves in new ways through work and achievements. Every business or organization has a culture, and within what may be considered a global culture, there are many subcultures or co-cultures. For example, consider the difference between the sales and accounting departments in a corporation. We can quickly see two distinct groups with their own symbols, vocabulary, and values. Within each group there may also be smaller groups, and each member of each department comes from a distinct background that in itself influences behaviour and interaction.

Suppose we have a group of students who are all similar in age and educational level. Do gender and the societal expectations of roles influence interaction? Of course! There will be differences on multiple levels. Among these students not only do the boys and girls communicate in distinct ways, but there will also be differences among the boys as well as differences among the girls. Even within a group of sisters, common characteristics exist, but they will still have differences, and all these differences contribute to intercultural communication. Our upbringing shapes us. It influences our worldview, what we value, and how we interact with each other. We create culture, and it defines us.

Culture involves beliefs, attitudes, values, and traditions that are shared by a group of people. More than just the clothes we wear, the movies we watch, or the video games we play, all representations of our environment are part of our culture. Culture also involves the psychological aspects and behaviours that are expected of members of our group. For example, if we are raised in a culture where males speak while females are expected to remain silent, the context of the communication interaction governs behaviour. From the choice of words (message), to how we communicate (in person, or by e-mail), to how we acknowledge understanding with a nod or a glance (non-verbal feedback), to the internal and external interference, all aspects of communication are influenced by culture.

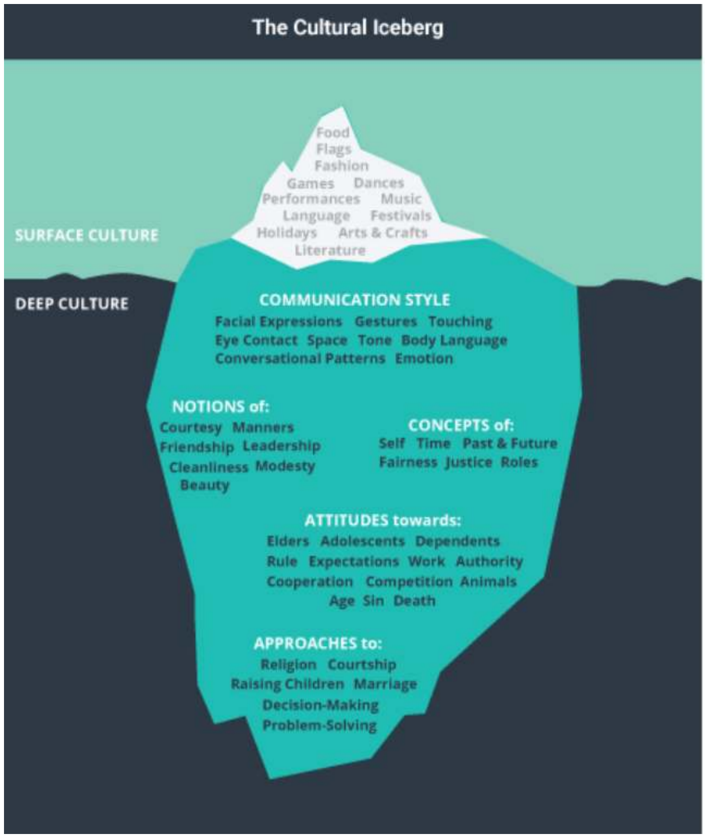


What Is Culture? by L. Underwood Adapted from Understanding Culture; in Cultural Intelligence for Leaders (n.d.)

Culture consists of the shared beliefs, values, and assumptions of a group of people who learn from one another and teach to others that their behaviours, attitudes, and perspectives are the correct ways to think, act, and feel.

It is helpful to think about culture in the following five ways:

- Culture is learned.
- Culture is shared.
- Culture is dynamic.
- Culture is systemic.
- Culture is symbolic.



The Cultural Iceberg by L. Underwood Adapted from Lindner (2013)

The iceberg, a commonly used metaphor to describe culture, is great for illustrating the tangible and the intangible. When talking about culture, most people focus on the “tip of the iceberg,” which is visible but makes up just 10 percent of the object. The rest of the iceberg, 90 percent of it, is below the waterline. Many business leaders, when addressing intercultural situations, pick up on the things they can see—things on the “tip of the iceberg.” Things like food, clothing, and language difference are easily and immediately obvious, but focusing only on these can mean missing or overlooking deeper cultural aspects such as thought patterns, values, and beliefs that are under the surface. Solutions to any interpersonal miscommunication that results become temporary bandages covering deeply rooted conflicts.

Cultural Membership

How do you become a member of a culture, and how do you know when you are full member? So much of communication relies on shared understanding, that is, shared meanings of words, symbols, gestures, and other communication elements. When we have a shared understanding, communication comes easily, but when we assign different meanings to these elements, we experience communication challenges.

What shared understandings do people from the same culture have? Researchers who study cultures around the world have identified certain characteristics that define a culture. These characteristics are expressed in different ways, but they tend to be present in nearly all cultures:

- rites of initiation
- common history and traditions
- values and principles
- purpose and mission
- symbols, boundaries, and status indicators
- rituals
- language

Terms to Know

Although they are often used interchangeably, it is important to note the distinctions among multicultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural communication.

Multiculturalism is a rather surface approach to the coexistence and tolerance of different cultures. It takes the perspective of "us and the others" and typically focuses on those tip-of-the-iceberg features of culture, thus highlighting and accepting some differences but maintaining a "safe" distance. If you have a multicultural day at work, for example, it usually will feature some food, dance, dress, or maybe learning about how to say a few words or greetings in a sampling of cultures.

Cross-cultural approaches typically go a bit deeper, the goal being to be more diplomatic or sensitive. They account for some interaction and recognition of difference through trade and cooperation, which builds some limited understanding—such as, for instance, bowing instead of shaking hands, or giving small but meaningful gifts. Even using tools like Hofstede, as you'll learn about in this chapter, gives us some overarching ideas about helpful things we can learn when we compare those deeper cultural elements across cultures. Sadly, they are not always nuanced comparisons; a common drawback of cross-cultural comparisons is that we can wade into stereotyping and ethnocentric attitudes—judging other cultures by our own cultural standards—if we aren't mindful.

Lastly, when we look at intercultural approaches, we are well beneath the surface of the iceberg, intentionally making efforts to better understand other cultures as well as ourselves. An intercultural approach is not easy, often messy, but when you get it right, it is usually far more rewarding than the other two approaches. The intercultural approach is difficult and effective for the same reasons; it acknowledges complexity and aims to work through it to a positive, inclusive, and equitable outcome.

Whenever we encounter someone, we notice similarities and differences. While both are important, it is often the differences that contribute to communication troubles. We don't see similarities and differences only on an individual level. In fact, we also place people into in-groups and out-groups based on the similarities and differences we perceive. Recall what you read about social identity and discrimination in the last chapter—the division of people into in-groups and out-groups is where your social identity can result in prejudice or discrimination if you are not cautious about how you frame this.

We tend to react to someone we perceive as a member of an out-group based on the characteristics we attach to the group rather than the individual (Allen, 2010). In these situations, it is more likely that stereotypes and prejudice will influence our communication. This division of people into opposing groups has been the source of great conflict around the world, as with, for example, the division between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; between Croats, Serbs, and Bosnian Muslims in the former Yugoslavia; and between males and females during women's suffrage. Divisions like these can still cause conflict on an individual level. Learning about difference and why it matters will help us be more competent communicators and help to prevent conflict.

Theories of Cross-Cultural Communication

Hofstede

Social psychologist Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, 1982, 2001, 2005) is one of the most well known researchers in cross-cultural communication and management. His website offers useful tools and explanations about a range of cultural dimensions that can be used to compare various dominant national cultures. Hofstede's theory places cultural dimensions on a continuum that range from high to low and really only make sense when the elements are compared to another culture. Hofstede's dimensions include the following:

- Power Distance: High-power distance means a culture accepts and expects a great deal of hierarchy; low-power distance means the president and janitor could be on the same level.
- Individualism: High individualism means that a culture tends to put individual needs ahead of group or collective needs.
- Uncertainty Avoidance: High uncertainty avoidance means a culture tends to go to some lengths to be able to predict and control the future. Low uncertainty avoidance means the culture is more relaxed about the future, which sometimes shows in being willing to take risks.
- Masculinity: High masculinity relates to a society valuing traits that were traditionally considered masculine, such as competition, aggressiveness, and achievement. A low masculinity score demonstrates traits that were traditionally considered feminine, such as cooperation, caring, and quality of life.

- Long-term orientation: High long-term orientation means a culture tends to take a long-term, sometimes multigenerational view when making decisions about the present and the future. Low long-term orientation is often demonstrated in cultures that want quick results and that tend to spend instead of save.
- Indulgence: High indulgence means cultures that are OK with people indulging their desires and impulses. Low indulgence or restraint-based cultures value people who control or suppress desires and impulses.

As mentioned previously, these tools can provide wonderful general insight into making sense of understanding differences and similarities across key below-the-surface cross-cultural elements. However, when you are working with people, they may or may not conform to what's listed in the tools. For example, if you are Canadian but grew up in a tight-knit Amish community, your value system may be far more collective than individualist. Or if you are Aboriginal, your long-term orientation may be far higher than that of mainstream Canada. It's also important to be mindful that in a Canadian workplace, someone who is non-white or wears clothes or religious symbols based on their ethnicity may be far more "mainstream" under the surface. The only way you know for sure is to communicate interpersonally by using active listening, keeping an open mind, and avoiding jumping to conclusions.

Trompenaars

Fons Trompenaars is another researcher who came up with a different set of cross-cultural measures. A more detailed explanation of his seven dimensions of culture can be found at this website (The Seven Dimensions of Culture, n.d.), but we provide a brief overview below:

- Universalism vs. Particularism: the extent that a culture is more prone to apply rules and laws as a way of ensuring fairness, in contrast to a culture that looks at the specifics of context and looks at who is involved, to ensure fairness. The former puts the task first; the latter puts the relationship first.
- Individualism vs. Communitarianism: the extent that people prioritize individual interests versus the community's interest.
- Specific vs. Diffuse: the extent that a culture prioritizes a head-down, task-focused approach to doing work, versus an inclusive, overlapping relationship between life and work.
- Neutral vs. Emotional: the extent that a culture works to avoid showing emotion versus a culture that values a display or expression of emotions.
- Achievement vs. Ascription: the degree to which a culture values earned achievement in what you do versus ascribed qualities related to who you are based on elements like title, lineage, or position.
- Sequential Time vs. Synchronous Time: the degree to which a culture prefers doing things one at time in an orderly fashion versus preferring a more flexible approach to time with the ability to do many things at once.
- Internal Direction vs. Outer Direction: the degree to which members of a culture believe they have control over themselves and their environment versus being more conscious of how they need to conform to the external environment.

Like Hofstede's work, Trompenaars's dimensions help us understand some of those beneath-the-surface-of-the-iceberg elements of culture. It's equally important to understand our own cultures as it is to look at others, always being mindful that our cultures, as well as others, are made up of individuals.

Ting-Toomey

Stella Ting-Toomey's face negotiation theory builds on some of the cross-cultural concepts you've already learned, such as, for example, individual versus collective cultures. When discussing face negotiation theory, face means your identity, your image, how you look or come off to yourself and others (communicationtheory.org, n.d.). The theory says that this concern for "face" is something that is common across every culture, but various cultures—especially Eastern versus Western cultures—approach this concern in different ways. Individualist cultures, for example tend to be more concerned with preserving their own face, while collective cultures tend to focus more on preserving others' faces. Loss of face leads to feelings of embarrassment or identity erosion, whereas gaining or maintaining face can mean improved status, relations, and general positivity. Actions to preserve or reduce face is called facework. Power distance is another concept you've already learned that is important to this this theory. Most collective cultures tend to have more hierarchy or a higher power distance when compared to individualist cultures. This means that maintaining the face of others at a higher level than yours is an important part of life. This is contrasted with individualist cultures, where society expects you to express yourself, make your opinion known, and look out for number one. This distinction becomes really important in interpersonal communication between people whose cultural backgrounds have different approaches to facework; it usually leads to conflict. Based on this dynamic, the following conflict styles typically occur:

- Domination: dominating or controlling the conflict (individualist approach)
- Avoiding: dodging the conflict altogether (collectivist approach)
- Obliging: yielding to the other person (collectivist approach)
- Compromising: a give-and-take negotiated approach to solving the conflict (individualist approach)
- Integrating: a collaborative negotiated approach to solving the conflict (individualist approach)

Another important facet of this theory involves high-context versus low-context cultures. High-context cultures are replete with implied meanings beyond the words on the surface and even body language that may not be obvious to people unfamiliar with the context. Low-context cultures are typically more direct and tend to use words to attempt to convey precise meaning. For example, an agreement in a high-context culture might be verbal because the parties know each other's families, histories, and social position. This knowledge is sufficient for the agreement to be enforced. No one actually has to say, "I know where you live. If you don't hold up your end of the bargain, …" because the shared understanding is implied and highly contextual. A low-context culture usually requires highly detailed, written agreements that are signed by both parties, sometimes mediated through specialists like lawyers, as a way to enforce the agreement. This is low context because the written agreement spells out all the details so that not much is left to the imagination or "context."

Verbal and Non-Verbal Differences

Cultures have different ways of verbally expressing themselves. For example, consider the people of the United Kingdom. Though English is spoken throughout the UK, the accents can be vastly different from one city or county to the next. If you were in conversation with people from each of the four countries that make up the UK—England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, you would find that each person pronounces words differently. Even though they all speak English, each has their own accent, slang terms, speaking volume, metaphors, and other differences. You would even find this within the countries themselves. A person who grew up in the south of England has a different accent than someone from the north, for example. This can mean that it is challenging for people to understand one another clearly, even when they are from the same country!

While we may not have such distinctive differences in verbal delivery within Canada, we do have two official languages, as well as many other languages in use within our borders. This inevitably means that you'll communicate with people who have different accents than you do, or those who use words and phrases that you don't recognize. For example, if you're Canadian, you're probably familiar with slang terms like toque (a knitted hat), double-double (as in, a coffee with two creams and two sugars—preferably from Tim Hortons), parkade (parking garage), and toonie (a two-dollar coin), but your friends from other countries might respond with quizzical looks when you use these words in conversation!

When communicating with someone who has a different native language or accent than you do, avoid using slang terms and be conscious about speaking clearly. Slow down, and choose your words carefully. Ask questions to clarify anything that you don't understand, and close the conversation by checking that everything is clear to the other person.

Cultures also have different non-verbal ways of delivering and interpreting information. For example, some cultures may treat personal space differently than do people in North America, where we generally tend to stay as far away from one another as possible. For example, if you get on an empty bus or subway car and the next person who comes on sits in the seat right next to you, you might feel discomfort, suspicion, or even fear. In a different part of the world this behaviour might be considered perfectly normal. Consequently, when people from cultures with different approaches to space spend time in North America, they can feel puzzled at why people aim for so much distance. They may tend to stand closer to other people or feel perfectly comfortable in crowds, for example.

This tendency can also come across in the level of acceptable physical contact. For example, kissing someone on the cheek as a greeting is typical in France and Spain—and could even be a method of greeting in a job interview. In North America, however, we typically use a handshake during a formal occasion and apologize if we accidentally touch a stranger's shoulder as we brush past. In contrast, Japanese culture uses a non-contact form of greeting—the bow—to demonstrate respect and honour.

Meaning and Mistranslation

Culturally influenced differences in language and meaning can lead to some interesting encounters, ranging from awkward to informative to disastrous. In terms of awkwardness, you have likely heard stories of companies that failed to exhibit communication competence in their naming and/or advertising of products in another language. For example, in Taiwan, Pepsi used the slogan “Come Alive With Pepsi,” only to find out later that, when translated, it meant, “Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead” (Kwintessential, 2012). Similarly, American Motors introduced a new car called the Matador to the Puerto Rican market, only to learn that Matador means “killer,” which wasn’t very comforting to potential buyers.

At a more informative level, the words we use to give positive reinforcement are culturally relative. In Canada and the United Kingdom, for example, parents commonly reinforce their child’s behaviour by saying, “Good girl” or “Good boy.” There isn’t an equivalent for such a phrase in other European languages, so the usage in only these two countries has been traced back to the puritan influence on beliefs about good and bad behaviour (Wierzbicka, 2004).

One of the most publicized and deadliest cross-cultural business mistakes occurred in India in 1984. Union Carbide, an American company, controlled a plant used to make pesticides. The company underestimated the amount of cross-cultural training that would be needed to allow the local workers, many of whom were not familiar with the technology or language/jargon used in the instructions for plant operations, to do their jobs. This lack of competent communication led to a gas leak that killed more than 2,000 people and, over time, led to more than 500,000 injuries (Varma, 2012).

Language and Culture

Through living and working in five different countries, one of the authors notes that when you learn a language, you learn a culture. In fact, a language can tell you a lot about a culture if you look closely. Here’s one example:

A native English speaker landed in South Korea and tried to learn the basics of saying hello in the Korean language. Well, it turned out that it wasn’t as simple as saying hello! It depended on whom you are saying hello to. The Korean language has many levels and honorifics that dictate not only what you say but also how you say it and to whom. So, even a mere hello is not straightforward; the words change. For example, if you are saying hello to someone younger or in a lower position, you will use (anyeong); but for a peer at the same level, you will use a different term (anyeoung ha seyo); and a different one still for an elder, superior, or dignitary (anyeong ha shim nikka). As a result, the English speaker learned that in Korea people often ask personal questions upon meeting—questions such as, How old are you? Are you married? What do you do for a living? At first, she thought people were very nosy. Then she realized that it was not so much curiosity driving the questions but, rather, the need to understand how to speak to you in the appropriate way.

In Hofstede’s terms, this adherence to hierarchy or accepted “levels” in society speak to the notion of moving from her home country (Canada) with a comparatively low power distance to a country with a higher power distance. These contrasting norms show that what’s considered normal in a culture is also typically reflected to some degree in the language.

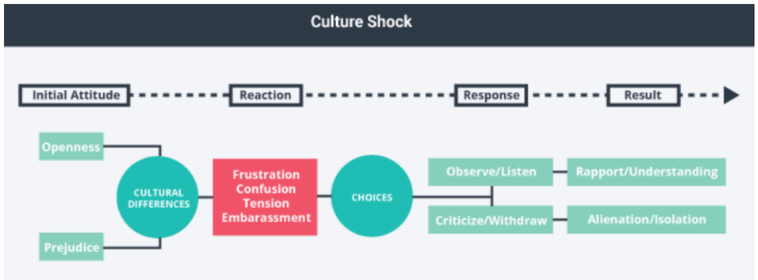
What are the implications of this for interpersonal communication? What are the implications of this for body language (bowing) in the South Korean context? What are the ways to be respectful or formal in your verbal and non-verbal language?

Comparing and Contrasting

How can you prepare to work with people from cultures different than your own? Start by doing your homework. Let’s assume that you have a group of Japanese colleagues visiting your office next week. How could you prepare for their visit? If you’re not already familiar with the history and culture of Japan, this is a good time to do some reading or a little bit of research online. If you can find a few English-language publications from Japan (such as newspapers and magazines), you may wish to read through them to become familiar with current events and gain some insight into the written communication style used.

Preparing this way will help you to avoid mentioning sensitive topics and to show correct etiquette to your guests. For example, Japanese culture values modesty, politeness, and punctuality, so with this information, you can make sure you are early for appointments and do not monopolize conversations by talking about yourself and your achievements. You should also find out what faux pas to avoid. For example, in company of Japanese people, it is customary to pour others’ drinks (another person at the table will pour yours). Also, make sure you do not put your chopsticks vertically in a bowl of rice, as this is considered rude. If you have not used chopsticks before and you expect to eat Japanese food with your colleagues, it would be a nice gesture to make an effort to learn. Similarly, learning a few words of the language (e.g., hello, nice to meet you, thank you, and goodbye) will show your guests that you are interested in their culture and are willing to make the effort to communicate.

If you have a colleague who has travelled to Japan or has spent time in the company of Japanese colleagues before, ask them about their experience so that you can prepare. What mistakes should you avoid? How should you address and greet your colleagues? Knowing the answers to these questions will make you feel more confident when the time comes. But most of all, remember that a little goes a long way. Your guests will appreciate your efforts to make them feel welcome and comfortable. People are, for the most part, kind and understanding, so if you make some mistakes along the way, don't worry too much. Most people are keen to share their culture with others, so your guests will be happy to explain various practices to you.



Culture Shock by L. Underwood

You might find that, in your line of work, you are expected to travel internationally. When you visit a country that is different from your own, you might experience culture shock. Defined as "the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone when they are suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes" (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015), it can disorient us and make us feel uncertain when we are in an unfamiliar cultural climate. Have you ever visited a new country and felt overwhelmed by the volume of sensory information coming at you? From new sights and smells to a new language and unfamiliarity with the location, the onset of culture shock is not entirely surprising. To mitigate this, it helps to read as much as you can about the new culture before your visit. Learn some of the language and customs, watch media programs from that culture to familiarize yourself, and do what you can to prepare. But remember not to hold the information you gather too closely. In doing so, you risk going in with stereotypes. As shown in the figure above, going in with an open attitude and choosing to respond to difficulties with active listening and non-judgmental observation typically leads to building rapport, understanding, and positive outcomes over time.

Culture Shock

Experiencing culture shock does not require you to leave Canada. Moving from a rural to an urban centre (or vice versa), from an English-speaking to a French-speaking area, or moving to or from an ethnic enclave can challenge your notion of what it is to be a Canadian.

In one example, one of the authors participated in a language-based homestay in rural Quebec the summer before her first year of university. Prior to this, she had attended an urban high school in Toronto where the majority of her classmates were non-white and into urban music. When she went to take the train and saw that all the other kids were white, listening to alternative music, and playing hackey sack, she began to worry.

When she met her house mother upon arrival, the house mom looked displeased. Out of four students to stay in her home, two were non-white. The students discovered quickly that the house dad was a hunter, evident by the glass cabinet full of shotguns and the mounted moose heads on the wall. To add to all these changes, the students were forbidden to speak English as a way to help make the most of the French language immersion program. About two weeks into the program, the student from Toronto, a black girl, overheard the house mom talking with her roommate, a white girl from London, Ontario. She said, "You know, I was really concerned when I saw that we had a black and an Asian student, because we never had any people like that in our house before, so I didn't know what to expect. But now, you know especially with your roommate from Toronto, I can see that they're just like normal people!"

The urban to rural transition was stark, the language immersion was a challenge, and the culture of the other students as well as that of the host family was also a big change. With so many changes happening, one outcome that is consistent with what we

> know about one aspect of culture shock, is that most of the students on this immersion program reported sleeping way longer hours than usual. It's but one way for your mind and body to cope with the rigours of culture shock!
>
> Despite all the challenges, however, the benefit for the author was a 30 percent improvement in French language skills—skills that later came in handy during bilingual jobs, trips to France, and the ability to communicate with the global French-speaking community.

A Changing Worldview

One helpful way to develop your intercultural communication competence is to develop sensitivity to intercultural communication issues and best practices. From everything we have learned so far, it may feel complex and overwhelming. The Intercultural Development Continuum is a theory created by Mitchell Hammer (2012) that helps demystify the process of moving from monocultural approaches to intercultural approaches. There are five steps in this transition, and we will give a brief overview of each one below.

See if you can deduce the main points of the overview before expanding the selection.

The first two steps out of five reflect monocultural mindsets, which are ethnocentric. As you recall, ethnocentrism means evaluating other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015).

People who belong to dominant cultural groups in a given society or people who have had very little exposure to other cultures may be more likely to have a worldview that's more monocultural according to Hammer (2009). But how does this cause problems in interpersonal communication? For one, being blind to the cultural differences of the person you want to communicate with (denial) increases the likelihood that you will encode a message that they won't decode the way you anticipate, or vice versa.

For example, let's say culture A considers the head a special and sacred part of the body that others should never touch, certainly not strangers or mere acquaintances. But let's say in your culture people sometimes pat each other on the head as a sign of respect and caring. So you pat your culture A colleague on the head, and this act sets off a huge conflict.

It would take a great deal of careful communication to sort out such a misunderstanding, but if each party keeps judging the other by their own cultural standards, it's likely that additional misunderstanding, conflict, and poor communication will transpire.

Using this example, polarization can come into play because now there's a basis of experience for selective perception of the other culture. Culture A might say that your culture is disrespectful, lacks proper morals, and values, and it might support these claims with anecdotal evidence of people from your culture patting one another on the sacred head!

Meanwhile, your culture will say that culture A is bad-tempered, unintelligent, and angry by nature and that there would be no point in even trying to respect or explain things them.

It's a simple example, but over time and history, situations like this have mounted and thus led to violence, even war and genocide.

According to Hammer (2009) the majority of people who have taken the IDI inventory, a 50-question questionnaire to determine where they are on the monocultural–intercultural continuum, fall in the category of minimization, which is neither monocultural nor intercultural. It's the middle-of-the-road category that on one hand recognizes cultural difference but on the other hand simultaneously downplays it. While not as extreme as the first two situations, interpersonal communication with someone of a different culture can also be difficult here because of the same encoding/decoding issues that can lead to inaccurate perceptions. On the positive side, the recognition of cultural differences provides a foundation on which to build and a point from which to move toward acceptance, which is an intercultural mindset.

There are fewer people in the acceptance category than there are in the minimization category, and only a small percentage of people fall into the adaptation category. This means most of us have our work cut out for us if we recognize the value—considering our increasingly global societies and economies—of developing an intercultural mindset as a way to improve our interpersonal communication skill.

Conclusion

In this chapter on cross-cultural communication you learned about culture and how it can complicate interpersonal communication. Culture is learned, shared, dynamic, systemic, and symbolic. You uncovered the distinction between multicultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural approaches and discovered several new terms such as diplomatic, ethnocentric, and in-/out-groups.

From there you went on to examine the work three different cross-cultural theorists including Hofstede, Trompenaars, and Ting-Toomey. After reviewing verbal and non-verbal differences, you went on to compare and contrast by doing your homework on what it might be like to communicate interpersonally with members of another culture and taking a deeper look into culture shock.

Finally, you learned about the stages on the intercultural development continuum that move from an ethnocentric, monocultural worldview to a more intercultural worldview.

The ability to communicate well between cultures is an increasingly sought-after skill that takes time, practice, reflection, and a great deal of work and patience. This chapter has introduced you to several concepts and tools that can put you on the path to further developing your interpersonal skills to give you an edge and better insight in cross-cultural situations.

Key Takeaways and Check In

Learning highlights

- The iceberg model helps to show us that a few easily visible elements of culture are above the surface but that below the surface lie the invisible and numerous elements that make up culture.
- Ethnocentrism is an important word to know; it indicates a mindset that your own culture is superior while others are inferior.
- Whether a culture values individualism or the collective community is a recurring dimension in many cross-cultural communication theories, including those developed by Hofstede, Trompenaars, and Ting-Toomey.
- Language can tell you a great deal about a culture.
- The intercultural development model helps demystify the change from monocultural mindsets to intercultural mindsets.

Further Reading, Links, and Attribution

Further Reading and Links

- A student's reflection on experiencing culture shock.
- Stella Ting-Toomey discusses face negotiation theory in this YouTube video.

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4.5: Conflict Resolution

What is Conflict?

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- describe a number of general types of conflict;
- identify sources of misunderstanding, differences, and conflict in the workplace;
- explain how communication in different cases escalates misunderstanding, differences, and conflict in the workplace;
- describe your conflict resolution style; and
- describe ground rules for communication and strategies to resolve conflict.

This chapter begins with an overview of what conflict is, in this case, the struggle that happens when people feel they have incompatible goals, wants, demands, or needs. The focus then moves to types of conflict you are likely to experience—such as structural, relationship, or interactional—as you try to communicate interpersonally in modern work settings.

You will learn about the five phases of conflict, including prelude, triggering event, initiation differentiation, and resolution. This knowledge allows you to take a step back from a conflict situation to understand where you are so you can make better choices that enhance interpersonal communication instead of further fuel conflict.

Similarly, you will learn about common reactions to conflict. Some of these reactions help to diffuse the situation, for example, postponing, fogging, or coalition formation. You'll also gain knowledge about approaches like gunnysacking, backstabbing, or threats that can escalate or worsen the conflict.

Competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating are the categories of styles or approaches people typically use to manage conflict.

Finally, the chapter winds down with a review of group conflict resolution strategies, with a detailed section on the usefulness of active listening.

For the interpersonal communicator, this chapter provides an opportunity to develop knowledge and skill in how to use conflict to clarify and improve communication, instead of having conflict lead to stalemates and further communication breakdown.

The word "conflict" produces a sense of anxiety for many people, but it is part of the human experience. Conflict is inevitable, but we can improve our handling of disagreements, misunderstandings, and struggles in the workplace to make it easier to manage when it does occur. Hocker and Wilmot (1991) offer us several principles on conflict that have been adapted here for our discussion:

- Conflict is universal.
- Conflict is associated with incompatible goals.
- Conflict is associated with scarce resources.
- Conflict is associated with interference.
- Conflict is not a sign of a poor relationship.
- Conflict cannot be avoided.
- Conflict cannot always be resolved.
- Conflict is not always bad.

McLean (2005) defines conflict as the physical or psychological struggle associated with the perception of opposing or incompatible goals, desires, demands, wants, or needs. When incompatible goals, scarce resources, or interference are present, conflict often results, but it doesn't mean the relationship is poor or failing. All relationships progress through times of conflict and collaboration. The way we navigate and negotiate these challenges influences, reinforces, or destroys the relationship. Rather than viewing conflict negatively, view it as an opportunity for clarification and growth.

Types of Conflict

Conflict can arise for a variety of reasons. Usually, the conflicts you encounter in the workplace are one of these seven types:

Structural

- Problems with the way a situation is set up (i.e., who is involved, geographical and physical relationships, unequal power and authority, impact of underlying processes, impact of external events).

For example, structural reasons for conflict could be things such as difficulty setting times to meet with colleagues who are in different time zones, one person thinks they are "in charge" but other members of the group don't agree, the business processes take a lot of time to implement so it is is hard to get things done on time, etc.

Relationship

- Often a cause of conflict, relationship conflict may arise from poor communication, stereotyping, misconceptions, and time constraints.

For example, relationship triggers for a conflict could resemble the following scenarios: a couple of group members do not answer emails in a timely way, holding up progress for others; someone assumes that a certain person's disability will prevent them from participating in a project, without asking the person what they feel confident in doing; a supervisor moves up a deadline so that the group is under increasing time pressure, etc.

Interaction

- Some people have not developed their skills in interacting with others.This can be a source of conflict, particularly when one's needs are not met by others. Interaction challenges can lead to negative responses such as avoidance and attack.

For example, interaction triggers can occur when a solitary worker is required to work in a team-oriented culture or when a worker doesn't realize that their poor time-management skills are affecting the team's ability to complete a project on time.

Values and Identity

- We all have different values and perceptions. When these do not align within a working group, or when they are challenged, they can cause conflict.

For example, values-and-identity triggers can occur when a colleague tells another that their method is "wrong" or when a worker refuses to work on a project because it doesn't align with their personal beliefs (i.e., there is misalignment with the person's political or religious views).

Data

- Lack of information, or conflicting information, causes considerable conflict in the workplace.

For example, data triggers can occur in an instance where a manager has told a subordinate what the deliverables of a project are, but another team member has been instructed by a different manager with a different set of goals.

Cultural

- Cultural conflict arises when there is misunderstanding of group norms, confusion over language and communication styles, or underlying trust is missing.

For example, cultural triggers can occur when a new employee joins a workplace where the business culture is different from the one she left, or when people from different cultural backgrounds work on the same team but misunderstand meanings because of language barrier.

The Five Phases of Conflict

When you experience conflict at work, you may notice that there are five distinct stages, as follows:

1. Prelude
2. Triggering Event
3. Initiation
4. Differentiation
5. Resolution

To give you some context, we'll examine a workplace conflict scenario.

Conflict at Work

Adam and Connor work for a large financial firm, advising clients on the financial services the company sells. Their job titles are the same, and their desks are opposite from each other within an open office environment. Adam has been with the firm for 15 years but likes to keep to himself, as he is quite introverted. Still a relatively new employee, Connor puts in many hours trying to build up his client base. He has done the training that Human Resources asked him to do, and he tries to follow the company rules and procedures. He is quite extroverted and social and seems to be getting along well with his colleagues. Their line manager, Eva, is pleased with Connor's work, so far.

The line manager has assigned Adam to be Connor's "buddy" and to assist in helping Connor settle in. Much of their day is spent working on the computer, meeting with clients, and communicating with stakeholders at various levels.

Connor has noticed that Adam is not as time-sensitive as he is; Adam arrives late on most days, but Connor doesn't know that Adam works late most nights because he prefers to work after others have gone home for the day. Connor has tried to schedule a check-in meeting with Adam a few times, but each time he does, Adam says, "Don't worry. We'll catch up when I get in tomorrow." By the time Adam arrives late for work, Connor has clients coming in to meet with him.

This morning the men had a meeting scheduled for 9 a.m. It is now 9:30, and Adam has just arrived and is taking off his coat. "Morning, Adam," Connor says, "I was hoping we could catch up at 9 this morning, and we keep missing each other. I have a few questions. Are you still able to fit me in?"

Adam rolls his eyes. "Honestly, the gig's not that complicated," he replies. "I really don't have time to babysit you!" Then he storms off to get a coffee.

First, we need to identify the prelude to the conflict. What is the scene, and who is involved? Here we know that we have two male colleagues working at the same level within the organization. We have no third parties involved, but the setting is relatively public. The two men sit at desks in an open office, so it is likely that others in the environment overheard the exchange.

Second, we need to identify the triggering event. The following variables are some examples of triggering events:

- a rebuff—asking for an action that is not met
- an illegitimate demand—imposing wants and needs on another person
- criticism—finding fault with others' action
- non-cumulative annoyance—realizing differences in attitude and opinions
- cumulative annoyance—realizing recurring differences
- mutual cumulative annoyance—mutually involved in creating recurring annoyances

On this occasion the main triggering event is a rebuff. Connor tried to line up a meeting with Adam several times, but Adam did not follow through. However, some of these other triggers are also playing a part here. Management has imposed needs on Adam, an an introverted person who prefers to work in a solitary way and, thus, doesn't really want to comply with being Connor's "buddy." There are also recurring differences between the two men's working styles. But these are secondary to the primary event.

Third, we need to consider the initiation phase. Now that Connor has perceived the triggering event, he has three options. He can either

1. confront Adam,
2. avoid the issue, or
3. take another action.

Conflict is needed to clarify the issue, but, naturally, Connor feels a bit angry and anxious about the situation. He is unaware of the anxiety and frustration that Adam is also feeling. His perception is that Adam doesn't like him or doesn't want to be helpful, but the reality is that Adam is not comfortable being a work buddy, because of his solitary nature—and he is struggling to express this in a productive way. Connor's anxiety about the situation could lead him to avoid the issue altogether, depending on his personality.

Fourth, we need to consider the differentiation phase. This is the phase where the conflict is contained, agreed, or escalated. The conflict could be

- **passed**—in the sense that the issue is ignored or dropped (for example, Connor could decide not to say anything and forget about the problem);
- **refocused**—whereby a complaint is made but the responsibility for it is put onto an external party (for example, Connor could ask his line manager, Eve, to sort out the problem); or
- **mitigated**—in the sense that a complaint is made but worked out (for example, Connor and Adam could discuss the issues, perhaps with a third-party such as Eve, to come to an agreement). If this is to work, both parties need to be responsive during the conversation, using active listening techniques and validating each other's points of view during interactions.

Lastly, we need to look at the resolution phase. In this step the conflict is resolved. There are two possible outcomes:

- Resolution: This is the best-case scenario, a win–win. In this outcome, both parties are satisfied and will not need to deal with the situation again. For example, in this situation, a resolution might be found by matching up Connor with a "buddy" whose working style is more closely aligned with his own.
- Management: This is a less preferred scenario, in that a solution has been found but one party is unsatisfied with it. It is likely that, with this outcome, the issue will arise again. For example, in Adam and Connor's conflict, their line manager might tell Adam that mentoring Connor is part of his job and that he will be disciplined if he does not comply. Perhaps she will sit in on their first meeting to make sure this happens. In this case, Adam will be unsatisfied and is likely to cause some discomfort between the two men.

Stages of Conflict by L. Underwood

Reactions to Conflict

We all react to conflict in our own way, depending on aspects of our personality, our culture, and our previous experiences. Some reactions to conflict can make the issues worse. It is important to check your own behaviour as well as the behaviour of others when you are experiencing conflict. Here are some ways that people react to conflict:

Conflict Management Style

Conflict Management Styles by L. Underwood adapted from Thomas, K., & Kilmann, R. (1974)

In order to better understand the elements of the five styles of conflict management, we will apply each to the following scenario:

Conflict Management Styles

Rachel and Simon have been running a restaurant business together for 15 years. Rachel manages front-of-house operations and staffing, while Simon is a trained chef who looks after the kitchen. Rachel is growing frustrated because Simon has decided to spend a large portion of the profits on redecorating the restaurant, while Rachel wants to save most of the profits but spend a little on advertising. Conflicts regarding money are very common. Let's see the numerous ways that Rachel and Simon could address this problem.

Competing
The competing style indicates a high concern for self and a low concern for other. When we compete, we are striving to "win" the conflict, potentially at the expense or "loss" of the other person. One way we may gauge our win is by being granted or taking concessions from the other person. For example, if Simon pays the decorators to get started right away, he is taking an indirect competitive route resulting in a "win" for him by simply getting his way.

The competing style also involves the use of power, which can be non-coercive or coercive (Sillars, 1980). Non-coercive strategies include requesting and persuading. When we request, we suggest that our conflict partner change a behaviour. Requesting doesn't require a high level of information exchange. When we persuade, however, we give our conflict partner reasons to support our request or suggestion, meaning there is more information exchange, which may make persuading more effective than requesting.

Rachel could try to persuade Simon to spend on advertising by showing him the positive return on investment (ROI) that the restaurant received on their last advertising campaign, or by showing him that customer numbers are steadily falling, and arguing that they need to advertise for continued viability of the business.

Coercive strategies violate standard guidelines for ethical communication and may include aggressive communication directed at rousing your partner's emotions through insults, profanity, and yelling, or through threats of punishment if you do not get your way. If Rachel works more hours than Simon, she could use that power to threaten to not come in for her shifts if Simon doesn't do what she wants. In these scenarios, the "win" that could result is only short term and can lead to conflict escalation.

Interpersonal conflict is rarely isolated, meaning there can be ripple effects that connect the current conflict to previous and future conflicts. Simon's behind-the-scenes spending or Rachel's missed shifts could lead to built-up negative emotions that could further test their partnership.

Competing has been linked to aggression, although the two are not always paired. If assertiveness does not work, there is a chance it could escalate to hostility. There is a pattern of verbal escalation: requests, demands, complaints, angry statements, threats, harassment, and verbal abuse (Johnson and Roloff, 2000).

The competing style of conflict management is not the same thing as having a competitive personality. Competition in relationships isn't always negative, and people who enjoy engaging in competition may not always do so at the expense of another person's goals. But in the workplace, competition can be a challenge. For example, if an opportunity for a promotion presents itself, you may find that you and your colleagues are all competing for the position. This may result in improved efficiency for the department, but it could also result in negative feelings towards one another, if only one person is selected for the promotion.

Avoiding
The avoiding style of conflict management often indicates a low concern for self and a low concern for others. In some cultures that emphasize group harmony over individual interests, avoiding a conflict can indicate a high level of concern for others. In general, avoiding doesn't mean that there is no communication about the conflict. Remember, it is impossible not to communicate. Even if you don't verbalize your point of view, your actions will show others something about how you are feeling. Even when we try to avoid conflict, we may be giving our feelings away through our verbal and non-verbal communication. Rachel's sarcastic tone as she tells Simon that he's "Soooo good with money!" and his subsequent eye roll both bring the conflict to the surface without specifically addressing it. The avoiding style is either passive or indirect, meaning there is a higher chance of the listener inaccurately decoding the speaker's intended message, which may make this strategy less effective than others. You may decide to avoid conflict for many different reasons, some of which are better than others. If you view the conflict as having little importance to you, it may be better to ignore it. If the person you're having conflict with will only be

working in your office for a week, you may perceive a conflict to be temporary and choose to avoid it and hope that it will solve itself. If you are not emotionally invested in the topic, you may be able to reframe your perspective and see the situation in a different way, thus resolving the issue. In all these cases, avoiding doesn't really require an investment of time, emotion, or communication skill, so there is not much at stake.

Avoidance is not always an easy conflict management choice, because sometimes the person we have conflict with isn't a temp in our office or a weekend houseguest. While it may be easy to tolerate a problem when you're not personally invested in it, when faced with a situation like Rachel and Simon's, avoidance would just make the problem worse. For example, avoidance could first manifest as changing the subject, then progress from avoiding the issue to avoiding the person altogether, to even ending the partnership.

Indirect strategies of hinting and joking also fall under the avoiding style. While these indirect avoidance strategies may lead to a buildup of frustration or even anger, they allow us to vent a little of our built-up steam and may make a conflict situation more bearable. When we hint, we drop clues for our partner will identify, hoping that they will change their behaviour, thereby solving the problem without any direct communication. But in doing this, make sure you don't overestimate your partner's detective abilities. For example, when Rachel leaves the account statement on the desk in hopes that Simon will realize the impact he would make on the restaurant's finances if he spent a lot of money on redecoration, Simon may simply ignore it or even get irritated with Rachel for not putting the statement with all the other mail. We also overestimate our partner's ability to decode the jokes we make about a conflict situation. It is more likely that the receiver of the jokes will feel provoked or insulted than find humour in your joke, if tension between you two already exists. So more frustration may develop when the hints and jokes are not decoded, which often leads to passive-aggressive behaviour.

Passive-aggressive behaviour is a way of dealing with conflict in which one person indirectly communicates their negative thoughts or feelings through non-verbal behaviours, such as not completing a task. For example, Rachel may wait a few days to deposit money into the bank so Simon can't withdraw it to purchase decorating supplies, or Simon may cancel plans for a staff party because he feels that Rachel is questioning his responsibility with money. Although passive-aggressive behaviour can feel rewarding in the moment, it is one of the most unproductive ways to deal with conflict. These behaviours may create additional conflicts and may lead to a cycle of passive-aggressiveness in which the other partner begins to exhibit these behaviours as well, while never actually addressing the conflict that started it all. In most avoidance situations, both parties lose. However, avoidance can be the most appropriate strategy in some situations—for example, when the conflict is temporary, when the stakes are low, when there is little personal investment, or when there is the potential for violence or retaliation.

Accommodating
The accommodating conflict management style indicates a low concern for self and a high concern for others and is often viewed as passive or submissive, in that one person obliges another without providing personal input. The motivation behind accommodating plays an important role in whether or not it is an appropriate strategy. Generally, we accommodate because we are being generous, we are obeying, or we are yielding (Bobot, 2010). If we are being generous, we accommodate because we genuinely want to; if we are obeying, we don't have a choice but to accommodate (perhaps because of the potential for negative consequences or punishment); and if we yield, we may have our own views or goals but give up on them because of fatigue, time constraints, or because a better solution has been offered. Accommodating can be appropriate when there is little chance that our own goals can be achieved, when we don't have much to lose by accommodating, when we feel we are wrong, or when advocating for our own needs could negatively affect the relationship (Isenhart & Spangle, 2000).

The occasional accommodation can be useful in maintaining a relationship. For example, Rachel may say, "It's OK that you want to spend the money on redecorating this time." However, being a team player can slip into being a pushover, which will not work in your favour in the long term. If Rachel keeps telling Simon, "It's OK this time," their business may be short on profit at the end of the year. At that point, Rachel and Simon's conflict may escalate as they question each other's motives, or the conflict may spread if they direct their frustration at other staff members.

Research has shown that the accommodating style is more likely to occur when there are time restraints and less likely to occur when someone does not want to appear weak (Cai & Fink, 2002). If you're standing outside the movie theatre and two movies are starting, you may say, "Let's see the movie you wanted to see," so you don't miss the beginning. But if you're a new manager at an electronics store and an employee wants to take Sunday off to watch a football game, you may say no to set an example for the other employees. As with avoiding, there are certain cultural influences we will discuss later that make accommodating a more effective strategy.

Compromising
The compromising style shows a moderate concern for self and others and may indicate low investment in the conflict and/or the relationship. Even though we often hear that the best way to handle a conflict is to compromise, the compromising style isn't a win–win solution; it is a partial win–lose. In essence, when we compromise, we give up some or most of what we want. It's true that the conflict gets resolved temporarily, but lingering thoughts of what you gave up could lead to a future conflict. Compromising may be a good strategy when there are time limitations or when prolonging a conflict may lead to relationship deterioration. Compromise may also be good when both parties have equal power or when other resolution strategies have not worked (Macintosh and Stevens, 2008).

Compromising is that it may be used as an easy way out of a conflict. The compromising style is most effective when both parties find the solution agreeable. Rachel and Simon could decide to paint the restaurant but work with the furnishings they have, take out an advertisement in the local newspaper and keep the remainder of the funds in the bank. They are both giving up something, but getting part of what they each wanted. If the pair agrees that the advertising funds should come out of Simon's food budget, however, the compromise isn't as equitable, and Simon, although he agreed to the compromise, may end up with feelings of resentment.

Collaborating
The collaborating style involves a high degree of concern for self and others, and usually indicates investment in the conflict situation and the relationship. Although the collaborating style takes the most work in terms of communication competence, it ultimately leads to a win–win situation in which neither party has to make concessions because a mutually beneficial solution is discovered or created. The obvious advantage is that both parties are satisfied, which could lead to positive problem solving in the future and strengthen the overall relationship. For example, Rachel and Simon may agree to do the redecorating themselves rather than paying a decorator, and to advertise using social media because they can manage this themselves for minimal cost. This way, they can

> bank the profits minus the small expenditures incurred. In this case, they didn't make the conflict personal but focused on the situation and came up with a solution that may end up saving them money. The disadvantage is that this style is often time consuming, and potentially only one person may be willing to use this approach while the other person is eager to compete to meet their goals or willing to accommodate.

Here are some tips for collaborating and achieving a win–win outcome (Hargie, 2011):

- Do not view the conflict as a contest you are trying to win.
- Remain flexible and realize there are solutions yet to be discovered.
- Distinguish the people from the problem (don't make it personal).
- Determine what the underlying needs are that are driving the other person's demands (needs can still be met through different demands).
- Identify areas of common ground or shared interests that you can work from to develop solutions.
- Ask questions to allow them to clarify and to help you understand their perspective.
- Listen carefully and provide verbal and non-verbal feedback.

Strategies for Resolving Conflict In Groups

Since we know that conflict will happen and that it can strengthen relationships when handled correctly, we would do well to set up ground rules for handling it when it does, inevitably, arise. When people believe strongly about the outcomes they are trying to reach, conflict is more likely to arise, so, conflict can sometimes be an indicator of an engaged and passionate group that will ultimately be successful.

- Outline conflict management strategies when the group first comes together.
- Establish good communication from the start.
- Take notes and/or have someone create meeting minutes for the record.
- Focus on timely issues rather than bringing problems from the past or worries for the future into the conversation.
- On topics of conflict, clarify each member's position.
- Acknowledge emotional topics and establish the root of a person's emotional response.
- Have each member outline the facts and assumptions on which their position is based.
- At the end of conversations and meetings, establish next actions and responsibilities.
- Organize smaller discussions among subsets of members and then bring suggestions to the larger group.
- To reach consensus in the large group, take a vote.

With Challenging People

We all have to work with challenging people from time to time. Someone's negative attitude or unwillingness to co-operate can cause stress and friction for colleagues and teams. Though it's much easier said than done, try not to let these people get to you. Sometimes the adage that your parents might have told you, "Kill them with kindness," really is the best way to handle this! However you choose to handle this, it is imperative that you remain professional at all times. If you don't, you'll be risking your reputation, too. Here are some tips for dealing with difficult people at work:

Consider why the person is behaving this way.

Think back to what you learned about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Often, when a person directs anger towards you, it is not about you at all, but about some other problem in their day or an unmet need. When people lash out, they do so, frequently, because they feel threatened or perceive that they are not being heard. Can you change your approach to remove these barriers? You may be able to improve communication by doing so.

Check your own behaviour.

Did you wake up "on the wrong side of the bed" this morning? Sometimes we give off negative feelings without really meaning to. Think about how your tone and language might have provoked a response. If you do realize that you were responsible for a negative interaction, apologize and ask if you can start over. This can reduce bad feelings and get communication back on track.

Speak in private

It will be uncomfortable for you and the person you are struggling to communicate with to have a difficult conversation when the whole office can hear you. Ask the person politely if you can have a chat in private to see if you can resolve the issue. Importantly, when you sit down together, be cautious about the language you use. Use "I" rather than "you"-focused wording. For example, "I feel like there might be some tension between us…" rather than "You were so rude to me this morning!"

Focus on the actionable items.

Also, when you speak, make sure not to blame, accuse, or dredge up past experiences. Attend to the current issue only.

Find common ground.

One of the best ways to build rapport with someone is to find out what you have in common. Sharing a laugh over a favourite movie that you share or a tip for a hobby that you have in common can break the ice and get the conversation flowing more naturally.

Get reinforcements or support.

If you don't feel able to resolve the negativity on your own, get some help. You can either speak to a colleague that you trust, or to a superior. Do make sure you approach this in a way that does not look like gossiping or complaining, though. The goal here is to find a resolution to a problem, not to badmouth another person. Ask for advice from someone you trust, privately, about how they would handle the situation. Or if things have become so uncomfortable that you need someone else to speak to the person who you are in conflict with, you may need to ask a superior to intervene.

Minimize encounters.

If you are unable to resolve the matter with the person privately and you're not sure how else to handle the problem, sometimes the simplest way to handle this is to minimize the amount of time that you need to spend together. Be cordial and do not make a point to avoid the person, but try to work on different projects to minimize opportunities for conflict. This isn't the ideal solution, though!

Active Listening

Active listening starts before you receive a message. Active listeners make strategic choices to set up ideal listening conditions. You can manage physical and environmental noises by moving locations or by manipulating the lighting, temperature, or furniture, for example. Avoid scheduling important listening activities during times (or in conditions/environments) when you anticipate psychological or physiological noise that would pose a distraction. For example, we often know when we're going to be hungry, full, more awake, less awake, more anxious, or less anxious; planning in advance can prevent the presence of these barriers.

In terms of cognitive barriers to effective listening, we can prime ourselves to listen by analyzing a listening situation before it begins. For example, you could ask yourself the following questions:

- What are my goals for listening to this message?
- How does this message relate to me?
- What listening type and style are most appropriate for this message?

Effective listeners must work to maintain focus as much as possible and refocus when attention shifts or fades (Wolvin and Coakley, 1993). One way to do this is to find the motivation to listen. If you can identify intrinsic and or extrinsic motivations for listening to a particular message, then you will be more likely to remember the information presented. Ask yourself how a message could leave an impression on your life, your career, your intellect, or your relationships. As we ponder such implications, we can overcome our tendency toward selective attention.

Listening techniques can help with concentration and memory. **Mental bracketing** refers to the process of intentionally separating out intrusive or irrelevant thoughts that may distract you from listening (McCornack, 2007). This requires that we monitor our concentration and attention and be prepared to let thoughts that aren't related to a speaker's message pass through our minds without our giving them much attention. **Mnemonic devices** are techniques that can aid in information recall (Hargie, 2011). Starting in ancient Greece and Rome, educators used these devices to help people remember information. They work by imposing order and organization on information. Three main mnemonic devices are acronyms, rhymes, and visualization.

Tips to Improve Active Listening

Julian Treasure's short TED Talk, *5 Ways to Listen Better*, provides helpful tips and guidelines to improve your own active listening skills. Watch it below or at https://tinyurl.com/yd3afhop

Active Listening Behaviours

We can prepare for active listening in advance and engage in certain cognitive strategies to help us listen better. We also engage in active listening behaviours as we receive and process messages.

Eye contact is a key sign of active listening. Speakers usually interpret a listener's eye contact as a signal of attentiveness. While a lack of eye contact may indicate inattentiveness, it can also signal cognitive processing. When we look away to process new information, we usually do it unconsciously. Be aware, however, that your conversational partner may interpret this as not listening. If you really do need to take a moment to think about something, you could indicate that to the other person by saying, "That's new information to me. Give me just a second to think through it." An occasional head nod and "uh-huh" signal that you are paying attention. However, when we give these cues as a form of "autopilot" listening, others can usually tell that we are pseudo-listening, and whether they call us on it or not, that impression could lead to negative judgments.

A more direct way to indicate active listening is to reference previous statements made by the speaker. Norms of politeness usually call on us to reference a past statement or connect to the speaker's current thought before starting a conversational turn. Being able to summarize what someone said to ensure that the topic has been satisfactorily covered and understood or being able to segue in such a way that validates what the previous speaker said helps regulate conversational flow. Asking probing questions is another way to directly indicate listening and to keep a conversation going, since they encourage and invite a person to speak more. You can also ask questions that seek clarification and not just elaboration. Speakers should present complex information at a slower speaking rate than familiar information, but many will not. Remember that your non-verbal feedback can be useful for a speaker, as it signals that you are listening but also whether or not you understand. If a speaker fails to read your nonverbal feedback, you may need to follow up with verbal communication in the form of paraphrased messages and clarifying questions.

As active listeners, we want to be excited and engaged, but don't let excitement manifest itself in interruptions. Being an active listener means knowing when to maintain our role as listener and resist the urge to take a conversational turn.

Note-taking can also indicate active listening. Translating information through writing into our own cognitive structures and schemata allows us to better interpret and assimilate information. Of course, note-taking isn't always a viable option. It would be fairly awkward to take notes during a first date or a casual exchange between new coworkers. But in some situations where we wouldn't normally consider taking notes, a little awkwardness might be worth it for the sake of understanding and recalling the information. For example, many people don't think about taking notes when getting information from their doctor or banker. To help facilitate your note-taking, you might say something like "Do you mind if I jot down some notes? This seems important."

Active listening is exhibited through verbal and non-verbal cues, including steady eye contact with the speaker; smiling; slightly raised eyebrows; upright posture; body position that is leaned in toward the speaker; non-verbal cues such as head nods; verbal cues such as "OK," "mmhmm," or "oh"; and a lack of distracting mannerisms like doodling or fidgeting (Hargie, 2011).

Preventing Conflict with Good Business Etiquette

There are certain expectations and unwritten rules for presenting yourself in a business context, known as **business etiquette**. These vary depending on the culture and the level of formality of the environment, but overlooking them can cause conflict and misunderstanding. For example, in some cultures the handshake is seen as overly formal, but in North America it is the standard professional greeting. Keeping the following tips in mind when navigating the professional environment in North America will help you to maintain positive, conflict-free relationships.

- **Be on time.** Tardiness is frowned-upon in our time-conscious culture.
- **Don't interrupt.** When people are speaking, make eye contact and show that you are listening. If you have something to add, don't interject. Rather, wait until the person has finished speaking to add your comments.
- **Dress professionally.** Make sure your clothes are clean and pressed, and dress at or slightly above the level of formality that your colleagues do.
- **Unplug during meetings.** There are few faux pas worse than being that person in a meeting who is so busy texting or reading emails that he doesn't look up when someone speaks to him. This is not only impolite but will also cause you to miss key information because your focus is elsewhere.
- **Watch your language.** Never raise your voice in the workplace, and make sure not to use foul language in a professional environment.
- Show gratitude. It is surprising how often people neglect to say please and thank you, or to send a thank-you note or email when someone does something to help you. This will make them feel appreciated and more inclined to help you out in future.
- **Remember names.** A trick to help you remember the name of a person you just met is to use their name three times in the first conversation you have. Make a note of someone's name or get their business card.
- **Leave your habits at home.** Nail biting or trimming, smoking, chewing tobacco, chewing gum loudly, talking with your mouth full, spitting, wiping your hands on your clothes, blowing your nose loudly in an open office—these are all unpleasant habits that your colleagues don't want to witness. Please keep your professional hat on at all times in a workplace and avoid these!

Key Takeaways and Check Ins

This chapter introduced you to the definition, types, and five phases of conflict. You learned that some reactions to conflict can diffuse conflict, while others can escalate it.

You learned about the various conflict management styles and had an opportunity to uncover which style most closely matches your conflict management preference. You also learned about group conflict resolution strategies as well as how active listening and etiquette can be an effective conflict management and interpersonal communication tool.

Learning highlights

- The nature of conflict indicates a perception of incompatible goals, needs, wants, etc., between individuals or groups.
- Several types and sources of conflict exist.
- The five phases of conflict are prelude, triggering event, initiation, differentiation, and resolution.
- Conflict management styles include competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodation.
- Active listing is a powerful tool in conflict resolution.

Check In

Read the scenario and answer the questions based on the scenario.

Scenario

Jane is the new power tools department manager for a large national home improvement store. She came into the position from another company directly into this managerial role and has been working at this home improvement store for about six months. At one of the weekly team meetings, after Jane announces a major decision about the strategic direction for the department, Dennis—who has worked at this store for 10 years—exclaims that he thinks this decision was the wrong one. Jane is flustered but decides, rather than risking the potential for an argument in front of the whole department, to acknowledge Dennis's comment but move on with the meeting. After the meeting Jane asks Dennis to meet her in her office the next day.

Dennis believes he is going to be reprimanded for speaking his mind. He wonders why he is being singled out. After all, he is committed to the department but feels his experience has been completely overlooked in Jane's planning. He is skeptical that someone who has not been with the company for very long could possibly know how to improve things.

During the private meeting Dennis asks Jane why she wanted to meet. Jane expresses her disappointment in his response to the announcement the day before. Dennis crosses his arms and says, "I'm sorry you feel that way, but if you knew what you were doing, we wouldn't be having this conversation."

Jane's voice increases in volume, and she tells Dennis that his behaviour and disrespect will not be tolerated. She tells him that he can either shape up and work with the team, or find another job. When faced with the possibility that it could mean losing his job, Dennis replies, "Fine. We will go with your plan."

Further Reading, Links, and Attribution

- The Boston Globe's [Boston.com] site offers tips on handling conflict in the workplace from management consultant Sue Lankton-Rivas

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