NSCC Communication @ Work

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CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: Electronic Written Communication

1.1 Netiquette and Social Media 3

Chapter 2: Group Communication

2.1 Group Meetings and Web Conferencing 9

Chapter 3: Employment Skills

3.1 The Job Search Process 19
3.2 Resumes and Cover Letters 25
3.3 Letters 38
3.4 The Online Application Process 50
3.5 Key Takeaways – Employment Skills 56

Chapter 4: Interviews

4.1 Interview Skills 59

Chapter 5: Reports

5.1 Report Objective: Informational and Analytical 70

5.2 Report Organization 74
5.3 Report Type and Function: Informal Report 78
5.4 Report Type and Function: Formal Report 83
5.5 Report Parts – Informal and Formal 87
5.6 The Slide Deck Report 93
5.7 Key Takeaways 100

Chapter 6: Presentations

Version History 103

INTRODUCTION

NSCC Communication @ Work is an adapted version of *Seneca College Communication @ Work*, with additional content from *Communication @ Work: A College-to-Career Guide to Success*. Read the last chapter on version history for a complete mapping adaption history.

Welcome to your new English textbook! Now, you may be feeling like English classes should be behind you since you graduated from high school, but don't worry. This is different. When you take an English (or "Communications") course in college, it's all about preparing you for the real, everyday tasks of writing and speaking in your chosen profession rather than reading literature and writing essays. Ask any professional in your field, and they'll set you straight on the enormous importance of practical communication in the work they do. In fact, they'll assure you that you won't get far without workplace communication skills enabling you to apply the technical skills you're learning in your other courses. Trust those professionals—they know what they're talking about. You may not fully appreciate it yet, but you really need this guide to help develop those vital communication skills now and in the years ahead as you grow professionally.

A Note on Style

Whereas most commercial textbooks on communications maintain a high level of formality, this open textbook relaxes that a little to include contractions, colourful expressions, liberal use of "they" (rather than "he or she") as a singular pronoun, and other characteristics of semi-formal or casual business writing. The idea is to model the style of a common email between work colleagues, which imitates a conversational business style of writing while still being grammatically correct. Notice in the previous sentence and section, for instance, that "email" and "internet" appear instead of the more formal, old-fashioned "e-mail" and "Internet" often used in other textbooks. For this, we take our cue from style guides in leading tech publications and international news organizations that trend towards lowercasing and de-branding the term[1].

Notes

1. Martin, K. C. (2016, April 5). Should you capitalize the word Internet? Retrieved from https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2016/04/05/should-you-capitalize-internet/

CHAPTER 1: ELECTRONIC WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

We begin our applied-writing unit with electronic channels because they are by far the most popular both for personal and business use. Most students have grown up with these channels, which gives them the advantage of familiarity. With that comfort, however, may also come years of bad habits deeply rooted in the development of those skills for personal distraction and social ends. This chapter will attempt to provide those students a way to professionalize those communication skills. Email deserves a close look because it is the most widespread and established of the electronic forms. Since so much of our lives are wrapped up in electronic interaction, reviewing the netiquette principles established at the outset of the electronic communications revolution can actually help us move forward as we look at the newest and fastest communication channels, texting and instant messaging.

1.1 NETIQUETTE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to discuss emerging netiquette standards in social media used for professional purposes.

We create and curate personal profiles, post content and comments, and interact via social media as a normal part of both our personal and professional lives. How we conduct ourselves on the open internet can leave a lasting impression, one not so easily undone if it's regrettable. The hilarious but compromising selfie you posted on Instagram five years ago is still there for your potential employer to find, judge for what it says about your professionalism, and speculate about what customers might think if they saw it too. That sarcastic but not-so-PC reply to a public post on Facebook or Twitter in a heated moment a decade ago can come back to haunt you. We're all learning as we go in this new media environment, but any mistakes we make along the way, no matter how much we've matured since, are still there for all to see and can have lasting impacts on our careers. Many candidates for political office have been taken down by their past social-media posts and the agents tasked with digging them up[1], and you can be sure that untold numbers of job applicants have similarly scuppered their chances with similar cavalier shares. Some guidance about what can be done about those mistakes, as well as how to conduct ourselves properly moving forward, can help improve your employability.[2]

SHEA'S NETIQUETTE

Virginia Shea's Rules of Netiquette offer helpful guidelines for online behaviour:

- Remember the human on the other side of the electronic communication.
- Adhere to the same standards of behaviour online that you follow in real life.
- Know where you are in cyberspace.
- Respect other people's time and bandwidth.
- Make yourself look good online.
- Share expert knowledge.
- Keep flame wars under control.
- Respect other people's privacy.

- Don't abuse your power.
- Be forgiving of other people's mistakes (Shea, 1994).

Her rules speak for themselves and remind us that the golden rule (treat others as you would like to be treated) is relevant wherever there is human interaction[3]

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Your writing in a business context means that you represent yourself and your company. What you write and how you write it can be part of your company's success but can also expose it to unintended consequences and legal responsibility. When you write, keep in mind that your words will keep on existing long after you have moved on to other projects. They can become an issue if they exaggerate, state false claims, or defame a person or legal entity such as a competing company. Another issue is plagiarism, using someone else's writing without giving credit to the source. Whether the "cribbed" material is taken from a printed book, a website, or a blog the reproduction is plagiarism. Plagiarism can create both legal and professional difficulties for you. The owner of the content may initiate a copyright claim and the act of plagiarizing will be viewed as unprofessional and may violate formal company policies. In addition, industry standards often have legal aspects that must be respected and cannot be ignored. For the writer, this can be a challenge, but it can be a fun challenge with rewarding results.

The rapid pace of technology means that the law cannot always stay current with the realities of business communication. Computers had been in use for a couple of decades before the Copyright Act of 1985 was amended in 1997 to deal with internet-enabled copyright infringement. Technology advanced even further before the next major amendment came with the Copyright Modernization Act of 2012. Developments since then will continue to demand new laws to clarify what is fair and ethical, what should be prohibited, and who owns the rights to what.

For example, suppose your supervisor asks you to use your Facebook page or Twitter account to give an occasional "plug" to your company's products. Are you obligated to comply? If you later change jobs, who owns your posts or tweets—are they yours, or does your now-former employer have a right to them? And what about your network of "friends"? Can your employer use their contact information to send marketing messages? These and many other questions remain to be answered as technology, industry practices, and legislation evolve.[4]

Our product is better than X company's product. Their product is dangerous and you would be a wise customer to choose us for your product solutions.

What's wrong with the two sentences above? They may land you and your company in court. You made a generalized claim of one product being better than another, and you stated it as if it were a fact. The next sentence claims that your competitor's product is dangerous. Even if this is true, your ability to prove your claim beyond a reasonable doubt may be limited. Your claim is stated as fact again, and from the other company's perspective, your sentences may be considered libel or defamation.

Libel is the written form of defamation or a false statement that damages a reputation. If a false statement of fact that concerns and harms the person defamed is published—including publication in a digital or online environment—the author of that statement may be sued for libel. If the person defamed is a public figure, they must prove malice or the intention to do harm, but if the victim is a private person, libel applies even if the offense cannot be proven to be malicious. You have a Charter right to express your opinion (section 2[b]), but the words you use and how you use them, including the context, are relevant to their interpretation as opinion versus fact. Always be careful to qualify what you write and to do no harm.[5]

USING SOCIAL MEDIA PROFESSIONALLY

Review sites, blogs, tweets, and online community forums are some of the continually developing means of social media being harnessed by business and industry to reach customers and other stakeholders. People's comfort in the online environment forces businesses to market and interact there or risk a massive loss in sales and interest. Though most users learn how to use social media as an extension or facilitator of their social lives, using the same platforms for professional reasons requires some change in behaviour.

First, recognize that every modern business or organization should have a social media presence in the sites they expect their customer base to frequent, especially popular sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Messaging here must be consistent across the platforms when alerting the customer base of important information such as special events, deals, and other news.

Next, follow expert advice on how to properly take advantage of social media in detail to promote your operation and reach people. Large companies will dedicate personnel to run their social media presence, but small businesses can do much of it themselves if they follow some decent online advice such as the following:

- The Do's and Don'ts of How to Use Facebook for Business [Infographic] by Ginny Mineo on Hubspot.
- The Ultimate Guide to Twitter for Small Business in 2017 by Jenn Chen on Sprout Social
- How to Use Instagram for Business: A Complete Guide for Marketers by Christina Newberry & Katie Sehl on Hootsuite.

Know also that social media is a constantly evolving environment. Stay on trend by continually searching out and implementing the latest advice similar to the above.

Finally, always consider how the sites you access and what you post represent you and your employer, even if you think others don't know where you work or who you are. Internet service providers (ISPs) are required by law to archive information concerning the use and traffic of information that can become available under subpoena. Any move you make leaves digital footprints, so you will have to answer for any misstep that brings shame upon you or your company[6]

Key Takeaway

Whether in the public or private corners of the internet, conduct yourself online in a manner that is always conducive to your professional success, following established netiquette principles, as well as using social media effectively and responsibly.

Exercises

1. Recount how you have experienced a breach of netiquette such as online bullying. Were you a perpetrator, enabler, victim, or combination? What did you learn from it?

2. Identify and explain three ways that you can professionalize your online presence using social media.

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Source: Unit 19 [in Chapter 6] in Communication @ Work Seneca Edition.

Notes

1. (Harris, 2015)
2. (adapted from *Business Communication for Success*, 2015).

3. (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015).
4. (Tahmincioglu, 2009).
5. (Business Communication for Success, 2015)
6. (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015).

CHAPTER 2: GROUP COMMUNICATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define teamwork in professional settings.
2. Compare and contrast positive and negative team roles and behaviours in the workplace.
3. Discuss group strategies for solving problems.
4. Demonstrate best practices in delivering constructive criticism and bad news in person.

Almost every posting for a job opening in a workplace location lists teamwork among the required skills. Why? Is it because every employer writing a job posting copies other job postings? No, it's because every employer's business success absolutely depends on people working well in teams to get the job done. A high-functioning, cohesive, and efficient team is essential to workplace productivity anywhere you have three or more people working together. Effective teamwork means working together toward a common goal guided by a common vision, and it's a mighty force when firing on all cylinders. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has".[1]

Source: Chapter 11 Intro in Communication at Work Algonquin College Edition.

Notes

1. Frank G. Sommers & Tana Dineen. (1984). *Curing nuclear madness*: A new-age prescription for personal action (p. 158). Toronto: Methuen. Retrieved from https://books.google.ca/books/about/Curing_Nuclear_Madness.html?id=0d0OAAAAQAAJ&redir_esc=y

2.1 GROUP MEETINGS AND WEB CONFERENCING

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain the purpose and contents of the meeting agenda and minutes.

2. Demonstrate best practices in web conferencing for professional situations.

3. Plan and deliver short, organized spoken messages and oral reports tailored to specific audiences and purposes.

i. Use effective and engaging language and non-verbal behaviours
ii. Use verbal and nonverbal techniques to enhance spoken messages

Although they can be boring, pointless, and futile exercises if poorly organized, professional group meetings are opportunities to exchange information and produce results when used appropriately in any business or organization. A combination of thoughtful preparation and cooperative execution makes all the difference. Though they typically take place in boardrooms where participants meet in person, web conferencing enables face-to-face meetings anywhere in the world. In this section we examine what makes for effective in-person and virtual meetings before, during, and after.

MEETING PREPARATION: THE AGENDA

A meeting, like a problem-solving group, needs a clear purpose statement. The specific goal for the specific meeting will clearly relate to the overall goal of the group or committee. Determining your purpose is central to an effective meeting, whereas getting together just for the sake of it is a party, not a meeting. Standing meetings—i.e., meetings held regularly at a certain time by the same group—tend to become time-wasters because they require participation of personnel who may have no relevance to the topics proposed. Standing meetings are also money-wasters when you're paying employees an hourly rate to listen and not contribute to a discussion that has nothing to do with them and won't improve their work in any way—indeed, it just prevents them from accomplishing their own work for an hour or two. In their case, the benefits of information sharing can be better achieved by sending them the minutes (a written summary of the meeting's discussion).

Similarly, if the need for a meeting arises, do not rush into it without planning. A poorly planned meeting announced at the last minute is sure to waste time. People may be unable to change their schedules, may fail to attend, or may impede the progress and discussion of the group because of their absence. Those who attend may feel hindered because they needed more time to prepare and present comprehensive results to the group or committee.

If a meeting is necessary, and a clear purpose can be articulated, then you'll need to decide how and where to meet. With the option of web conferencing, distance is no longer an obstacle to participation, but meeting in person has many advantages over any technological mediation. People communicate both verbally and nonverbally—i.e., with facial expressions, eye contact, hand gestures, head nodding or head shaking, and posture. These subtleties of communication can be key to determining how group members really feel about an issue or question. Meeting in real time can be important, too, as all group members have the benefit of receiving and discussing new information at the same time. For purposes of our present discussion, we will focus on meetings taking place face to face in real time.

The blueprint for any meeting is the **agenda** document. It contains the following:

1. The **time, date, location**, list of **participants, purpose** statement, **call to order** identifying the person chairing or leading the meeting
2. **Introductions** if there is even one new participant in the group
3. **Roll call** listing the participants expected, which can be silently checked off by the participant in charge of recording minutes; a note is made beside the name of any absentees so that a list of actual participants is ready for the minutes
4. **Approval of the minutes**, where corrections to the previous meeting's minutes (sent out soon after the previous meeting) are suggested by participants who were there before the minutes are approved by the group for official archiving
5. **Old business** for discussing any issues left unresolved ("tabled") in the previous meeting
6. **New business** listing topics for discussion in order of priority so that the most important issues can be dealt with first so that items of lesser importance don't push the important ones off the agenda and into the next meeting if the lesser items end up taking longer than expected
    - The expected length of time is indicated for each item, with contentious items getting extra time to accommodate the depth of discussion expected.
    - Items may include proposals for new initiatives, brief presentations reporting on recent developments or existing initiatives, and discussions about recent or upcoming developments
    - Any preparatory work is indicated such as readings (e.g., reports that will be discussed) or reports that must be presented by individuals.
7. **Adjournment** for discussing when the next meeting shall take place

Writing the agenda requires soliciting information from the expected participants a couple of weeks in advance to work out scheduling and content details. Once the details are worked out, the agenda should be sent a week in advance to give participants time to do any preparatory reading (e.g., the previous meeting's minutes, which often accompany the agenda) or report writing.

Inviting participants via email has become increasingly common across business and industry. Software programs like Microsoft Outlook allow you to initiate a meeting request and receive an "accept" or "decline" response that integrates with your calendar to make the invitation process organized and straightforward. So that you don't get most participants declining an invitation because they are previously booked at the meeting time you've pitched, web apps like Doodle help determine the best time to meet by emailing the required participants a selection of times and determining what works best for all. Your Outlook calendar then allows you see what meetings and other commitments you have throughout your day to keep you on track.

If you are responsible for the room reservation, confirm it a week or two before the meeting and again the day before the meeting. Redundancy in the confirmation process can help eliminate a double-booking where two meetings are scheduled at the same time in the same place. If the meeting requires technology such as a projector for laptops to plug into or a web conferencing screen or telephone, confirm their reservation at the same time as you confirm the room reservation. Always personally inspect the room and test these systems prior to the meeting. There is nothing more embarrassing than introducing a high-profile speaker, such as the company president, and then finding that the PowerPoint projector is not working properly.[1]

CONDUCTING THE MEETING

If all the world's a stage, a meeting is a performance just like a job interview or speech presentation. Each member plays a role and should be aware of the responsibilities associated with it prior to the meeting. If the meeting's participants don't know each other, brief introductions at the outset serve to establish identity, credibility, and help the group get started on the business at hand. The purpose of the meeting should be clearly stated, and if there are rules or guidelines that require a specific protocol such as Robert's Rules of Order[2], they should be declared.

Mary Ellen Guffey[3]provides a useful checklist for participants as a guide for how to conduct oneself during a meeting, adapted below for our use:

- Be prepared and have everything you need on hand
- Arrive on time and stay until the meeting adjourns (unless there are prior arrangements)
- Turn off cell phones and personal digital assistants; don't just switch them to vibrate and put them on the tabletop
- Engage in polite small talk with participants before the meeting begins; don't cut yourself off from human interaction by looking at your phone
- Follow the established protocol for taking turns speaking
- Respect time limits
- Leave the meeting only for established breaks or emergencies
- Demonstrate professionalism in your verbal and nonverbal interactions
- Communicate interest and stay engaged in the discussion
- Avoid tangents and side discussions
- Respect space and don't place your notebook or papers all around you
- Clean up after yourself

- Engage in conversation with other participants after

If you are cast in the role of meeting leader, you may need to facilitate the discussion and address conflict. The agenda serves as your guide and you may need to redirect the discussion to the topic, but always demonstrate respect for all members. You may also need to intervene if a point has reached a stalemate due to conflict (see §10.4 above on conflict resolution) and you need to push the meeting along to not fall behind the agenda schedule.

Transitions are often the hardest part of any meeting. Facilitating the transition from one topic to the next may require you to create links between each point. You can specifically note the next point on the agenda and verbally introduce the next speaker or person responsible for the content area. Once the meeting has accomplished its goals in the established time frame, it is time to facilitate the transition to a conclusion. You may conclude by summarizing what has been discussed or decided, and what actions the group members are to take as a result of the meeting. If there is a clear purpose for holding a subsequent meeting, discuss the time and date, as well as assignments for next time based on action items this time.

MEETING FOLLOW-UP: THE MINUTES

A permanent record of the meeting's discussion, known as "**minutes**," summarizes major points raised, decisions taken, and actions assigned. A meeting participant who is especially fast a typing is usually assigned the role of recorder and adds bullet-point notes under each agenda item in the agenda soft copy to record the minutes. Action items should be highlighted since they are the main takeaways (e.g., "ACTION: Melinda to investigate new software for streamlining the job tendering process"). Emailed out to all participants afterwards, the minutes document serves not only as a reminder to those who attended, especially those tasked with action items, but can also be forwarded on to those who didn't so they too can get a sense of decisions made and action items that may affect them. This is especially efficient if those non-attendees' time is better used on other work rather than in a meeting. The document is usually considered tentative until officially approved at the next meeting, where it's usually the first point on the agenda. If anyone noticed any inaccuracies in the previous meeting's minutes, those are pointed out and corrected right away before the that previous meeting's minutes are approved and archived.

MEETING-ENHANCING TECHNOLOGY

Given the widespread availability and increasingly low cost of electronic communication, technologies that once served to bring people together across continents and time zones now also serve people in the same geographic area. Rather than traveling to a central point for a face-to-face interaction via plane, car, or even elevator within the same building, busy and cost-conscious professionals often choose to see and hear each other via web conferencing or telephone conference-calling. Though these channels sacrifice some nonverbal communication to the convenience of not having to leave your office, their advantages make them a necessary part of workplace communication. Knowing how to use them is a key skill for all job seekers, especially if they're used for a long-distance job interview. We will discuss the technologies by category, beginning with audio-only, then audio-visual, and finally social media.[4]

AUDIO-ONLY INTERACTIONS

When participating in a meeting via phone because you can't be present in person, most of the same rules of both in-person meetings (see above) and telephone calls (see §10.1.4 above) apply. When joining the meeting, however, it's much more important than an in-person meeting to announce yourself as being present by saying your name and your role ("Hi everyone, I'm Natalie Legere, HR Payroll Specialist. Thanks for having me here today.") so that the meeting includes you despite your being a disembodied voice.

If your role in the meeting is relatively minor, you may be silent for long stretches, which requires some responsibility both on your part and that of your fellow meeting participants. Your responsibility is to continue to be "present" in the sense of listening carefully for when you can and should contribute, as well as recording notes if necessary. If necessary, mute your microphone if background noise (e.g., a barking dog or crying baby) will come through to intrude on the meeting. The responsibility of the in-person participants, especially the meeting chair, is to not forget that you're there, to include you when addressing the group as a whole, and even ensure you're still there by asking occasionally for a response.

WEB CONFERENCING

If you've ever used Skype, Apple's Facetime, Google Hangouts, or the like socially, you're well familiar with online video (a.k.a. web) conferencing. Given the easy availability of these and a wide variety of other online applications, web conferencing is now standard for both one-on-one and group meetings with coworkers, managers, clients, and other stakeholders. It's so easy that some will use it for meetings with others on different floors of the same building let alone across the province, country, or the planet. Following some basic principles for how to prepare for and conduct such meetings can help make you a more effective communicator in this relatively new channel, or at least help you avoid embarrassment.

When **preparing for the meeting**, especially in your home, ensure that everything in the frame—yourself and the background—presents professionally. If you're doing a job video conferencing interview or the expectation of your audience is that you dress formally, dress as you would if you were meeting in person, including your bottom half. Just because the framing is such that they only see your top half doesn't guarantee that you won't have to get up at some point and be seen head to toe. You will be laughed out of a job if they see you in your shorts (or less) due to some unforeseen circumstance forcing you out of your seat.

The angle of your computer's camera is also important. Usually located right above your screen, the camera should be eye-level and 1-2 feet away to place you as the dominant figure in the frame. If it's about a foot (12 inches) away, your head and face will dominate, but the slight wide angle of the lens will distort you, making your nose more prominent relative to the rest of your face. At two feet away, your upper body and head will properly dominate and be in the correct proportion. Once your computer's camera is positioned three feet or more away and higher than eye-level, you minimize yourself too much and are swallowed up by your background. If the camera is too close and low because your laptop computer is literally on your lap or on a low desktop, on the other hand, the view up your nostrils will be unflattering.

Your background could include a general office scene or neighbouring cubicle if you're in the office, a bookcase if you're in the home, or a wall with tasteful art. If these are unavailable, a blank wall isn't a bad option compared with juvenile college dorm posters or domestic scenes such as a kitchen or living room—unless it's a very tasteful living room fireplace, for instance. If your background is a window, ensure that it isn't so bright that you're backlit to the point of being a dark shadowy figure. A light positioned near your camera and shining directly in your face will make you look like you're being interrogated, and a dim or unlit background will make you look like you're in a dungeon. A diffuse light from overhead lighting throughout the room or side lighting is best.

For the acoustics, choose an appropriately-sized room that doesn't echo strangely. A room with high ceilings and wood floors might echo too much. On the other hand, a room that's too small might make you sound like you're in a closet. A carpeted and furnished 16'x16' room will soak up the sound well enough to make your voice resonate normally.

Also, control your environment to ensure that no background interruptions will embarrass you. If you're interviewing from home, talk to your cohabitants about not entering the room or making loud noises until you give the all-clear signal that you're done. If children or pets are around, ensure that you can lock the door to dampen or silence noise and avoid intrusions like the one that embarrassed Prof. Robert Kelly during a live BBC News interview about South Korea.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=294#oembed-1

Kelly looked like he had properly prepared for the interview as he had several times before. You can see a world map on the wall behind him suggesting expertise on international relations, a floor-to-ceiling bookshelf, and presumably his own books on the table. With the camera properly framing him in his nice suit, everything was set up to make him look like the professional expert he is—except this time he forgot to lock the door. Suddenly, a toddler in a bright yellow jumper burst in and marched in with a swagger behind him, forcing him to pause, push her back, and apologize repeatedly to the interviewer on air. Matters got worse for him—but even more hilarious for viewers—when his infant son followed, rolling into the room in a walker, as well as his panicked wife chasing them down, dragging them back out of the room while knocking books off the table in the kerfuffle, and, from a crawl on the floor, slamming the door behind them. Though the video immediately went viral and amused the world in the days following the March 2017 incident, a less cute and slapstick intrusion may have ruined his career as a TV talking head in the way he thought it would just after it happened .[5]

Finally, test the connection with someone else to ensure that it works if you're not used to communicating in this way. Check that the framing, lighting, your appearance, and the background are all in order. Test the volume so that you can be properly heard and hear your audience in turn. Once you've web conferenced several times, you'll have the procedure for setting up and logging in so down pat that you won't need to test your connection futher.

During the interview or meeting, ensure your professionalism by doing the following:

- **Look directly into the camera** when speaking so that your audience sees you maintaining good eye contact with them. You may be tempted instead to look at your audience (only a few inches away from the camera) on the screen or, worse, at yourself in the bottom-corner inset view of what your audience sees, perhaps checking to make sure you look good. (You can see Prof. Kelly check this view and notice his children enter in the BBC interview mentioned above, though you can also see him try to maintain professionalism by looking back to the camera directly as much as possible.) It will be off-putting to your audience to see you looking away constantly and suspect that you're looking at yourself narcissistically rather than paying attention to them.
- **Pause** longer than you normally would after speaking to give your audience time to respond. If you pause after speaking and don't hear a reply during an in-person meeting, you may feel compelled to speak again, perhaps asking to confirm that they understood you. With web conferencing, however, anticipate a slight delay of about a second or more as the signal bounces around the communications network, which may include optical cables crossing the ocean floor depending on where you and your audience are located. Be patient so that you don't end up awkwardly speaking over each other.
- **Mute your microphone** if you're not talking to avoid background noise intruding, especially if it's beyond your control. When you're about to talk again, ensure that the microphone volume is back up so that you don't confuse everyone by speaking mutely.
- **Avoid doing other work**, emailing, or browsing the internet during the conference call. Your audience will be able to tell that you're engaged with something other than their conversation. They will probably feel the same way if you ignored them to look at your phone during an in-person meeting.[6]

Bearing these differences in mind, a web conference meeting should otherwise proceed much like an in-person meeting discussed throughout this section.

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Source: 11.3 in *Communication at Work Algonquin College* Edition.

Notes

1. (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015, 15.3, 19.4).
2. (Kennedy, 1997)
3. (Guffey, 2007)
4. (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015, 15.3, 19.4).
5. (Usborne, 2017).
6. (Lovgren, 2017).

CHAPTER 3: EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

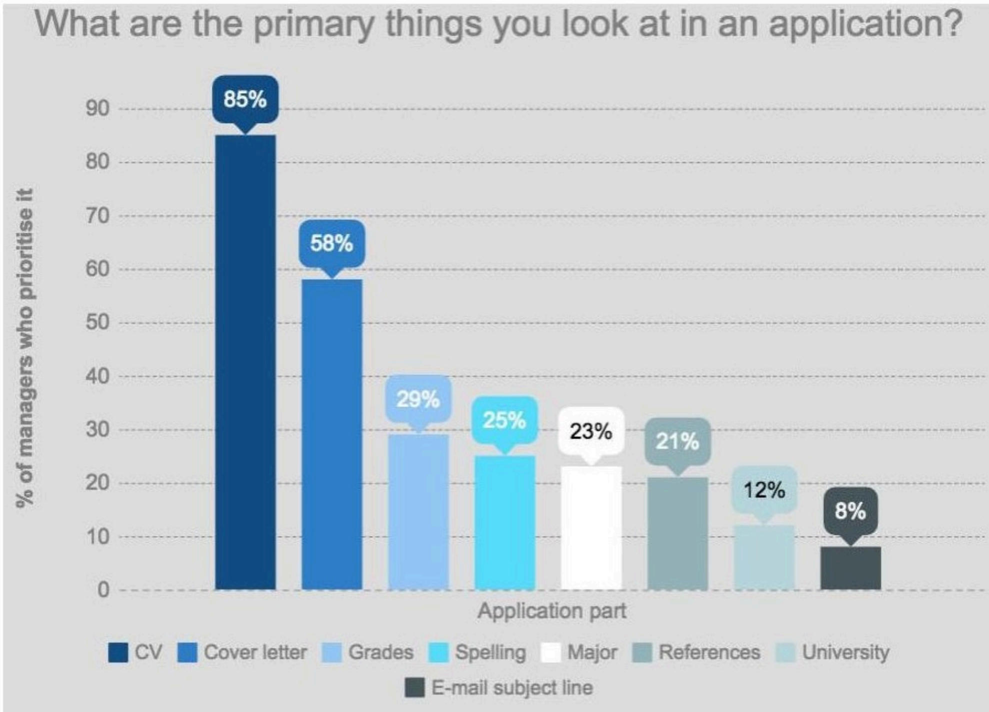
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Represent skills, knowledge, and experience realistically for employment purposes.
- Identify and assess individual skills, strengths, and experiences to identify career and professional development goals
- Research the job market to identify career opportunities and requirements
- Prepare a targeted and persuasive cover letter and resume

INTRODUCTION

A hiring competition involves a written and oral exam. You must pass the written component (the cover letter and résumé) before you move on to the oral (the interview), and you must out-perform the competition in the oral to get the job. The oral component proves that you can carry a conversation, represent the company in face-to-face interactions with customers, and see eye-to-eye with managers and co-workers while conducting day-to-day operations in a personable manner. Representing you in your physical absence, your cover letter and résumé mainly assure employers that you have the experience and skills required to be successful in the job. They also prove whether you are literate and conscientious enough to represent the company's respectability when writing on their behalf to customers and other stakeholders.

This chapter focuses on the written component of the hiring process, saving the oral for below. At this point, it's worth saying that the advice given here represents a fairly broad consensus of employer expectations, but it can't apply to all because each employer is unique in what they're seeking from applicants. It's like dating: everyone has a unique laundry list of preferences formed by genes and experience narrowing down who they're attracted to. If someone falls within the range of what you're looking for and you fall within their range, then it might work out. The only way to know for sure that you're both what the other is looking for is by flirting, which means, in the world of job hunting, networking. After examining strategies for job hunting, we'll cover the résumé and cover letter-writing process with the goal of producing job application materials that will considerably increase your chances of getting an interview and getting your dream job.



Note: Employers indicate the information they consider most important in a job application package.[1]

References

[1]Hadicke, G. (2016). What employers want in your application. *Graduateland*. Retrieved from https://graduateland.com/article/what-employers-want-application

Source: Chapter 13 Employment Skills Introduction in *Communication @ Work Seneca* Edition.

3.1 THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reviewing this information, you will be able to

- identify and assess individual skills, strengths, and experiences to identify career and professional development goals
- understand effective job search strategies for today's job market

INTRODUCTION

If you devote a portion of your life to training for a career, nothing is more important at the end of that program than getting a job where you can apply your training. The job application process poses a challenge that requires a skillset quite different from that which your core program courses teach you, yet you cannot get a job without this skill set. In most professions, the competition for jobs is so fierce that only your communication A-game can help you through the communication test that is the hiring process.

The following video provides an overview of what you will need to do to find your dream job.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=121#h5p-57

JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

Finding a job in this very competitive job market may require the use of traditional and non-traditional strategies. Some of these strategies are examined here.

NETWORKING

A recent study showed that approximately 61% of job seekers either used their personal network and/or online social network to land their dream job.[1] What exactly is a personal network and why is it so effective? A network is a group of people with whom you have a personal relationship based on similar interests. As you build this network and cultivate the relationships, you develop a connection and most importantly trust with your the people in your network. These relationships come in very handy because the majority of the job market is hidden, that is, jobs that are not advertised through conventional avenues. Most jobs are often found through referrals and word of mouth; thus, having a network of people that can give you inside information about available jobs in your field is invaluable. In addition to the inside information, people in your network also serve as personal references and a bridge between your potential employer and you. Some tips to help you develop a personal network include:

- Develop a list of people to speak with about your job search
- Contact the people on your list
- Call and possibly arrange a meeting with any referrals provided by your contact list
- Join an online networking group
- Conduct research on additional networking tips and trends

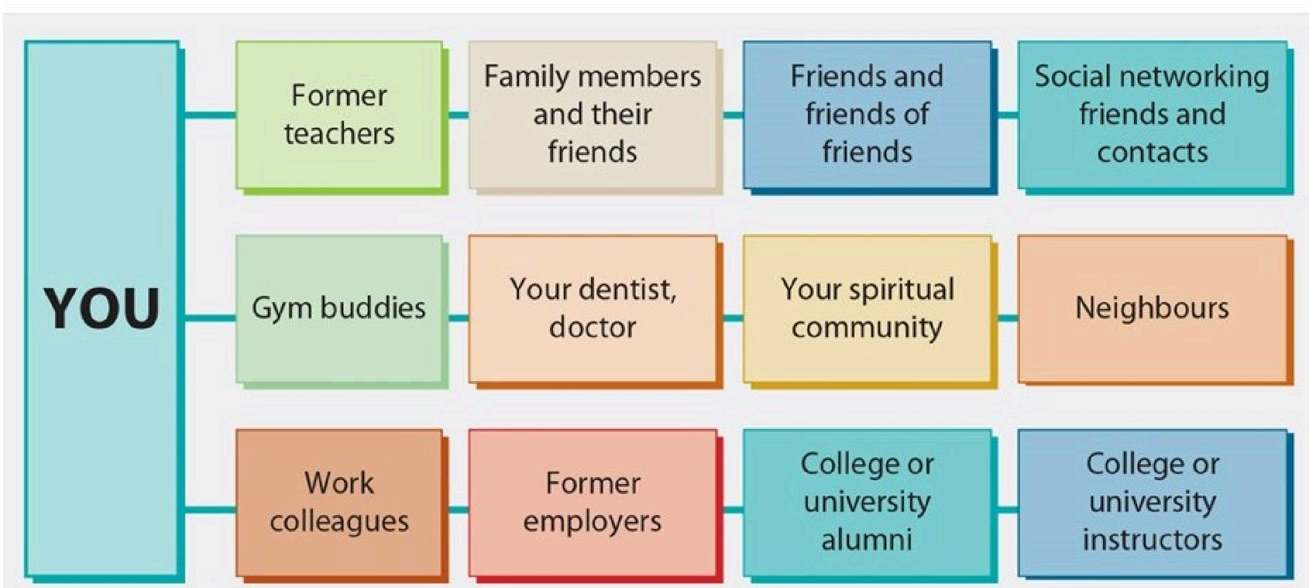


Figure 3.3.1: A matrix template to help develop a personal network.[footnote]([Business Communication](), 2019)[/footnote]

ONLINE JOB SITES

According to a recent Jobvite survey, job boards continue to be the number one medium to access job opportunities.[2] Major job search engines like [Monster]() and [Indeed]() are good places to start your job search process. However, both job seekers and employers have their objections to these sites. To job seekers, applying for a job through a job board can be frustrating for the following reasons:

- Some will strip out the formatting you've meticulously assembled for your résumé and cover letter
- Submitting confidential information about yourself to them feels risky
- They can feel like vast abysses into which you send dozens of applications you've laboured over for hours, but without ever receiving a response back

To employers and recruiters, the big job sites attract a flood of poor-quality applicants from around the world, leaving the hiring manager or committee with the time-intensive job of sorting out the applicants worth seriously considering from the droves of under-qualified applicants taking shots in the dark with what amounts to spam applications. With such a demanding selection process, employers simply don't have time to respond to every applicant.

Nonetheless, ignoring these sites altogether would be a mistake because too many employers use them to advertise positions. When your full-time job is just to find a full-time job, you can't leave any stone unturned. The following are sites worth searching for job postings and other information they offer on the job market: Figure 3.1.2[3]

Figure 3.1.2: A recent survey confirms that job boards continue to be the number one job search tool.

- Job Bank
- Monster
- Indeed
- Workopolis
- CareerBuilder
- Eluta
- Jobboom
- Glassdoor
- SimplyHired
- WOWjobs
- Charity Village

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=121#h5p-58

INDUSTRY CONFERENCES AND JOB FAIRS

Attend **industry conferences** and network with participants**.** Joining a professional association and attending its meetings and conferences will give you ample opportunities to network with employers and their recruiting agents. As in the previous scenarios, this only works if you are friendly and outgoing. Conference participants who merely soak in others' presentations and discussions without networking are effectively invisible to the recruiters. You should also attend **career fairs** and sign up for interviews with visiting recruiters. Because colleges are a greenhouse for the emerging labour pool, they have tight connections with industry partners . When company recruiters come to your college, be there to ask them about their employment opportunities. Recruiters aren't interested in students who aren't interested in them. Attending career fairs and talking to recruiters is a great way of showing interest.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=121#h5p-59

PERSONAL BRANDING

What is a personal brand and how do you develop one? The following TEDx talk provides an excellent explanation of the topic.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=121#h5p-60

Begin developing your personal brand by asking yourself the following questions:

- what about yourself do you want to emphasize in the job search process?
- What qualities distinguish you from everyone else?

- What unique skills can you offer your employer?
- What makes you a sought after employee?
- How will you make your future workplace better?

Use this information to promote yourself in online and offline forums. Online, create a Facebook page and a LinkedIn profile. Offline, create business cards and write a elevator pitch to introduce yourself at industry conferences and job fairs. No one will do better job at promoting you, than you will. Figure 3.1.2[4]

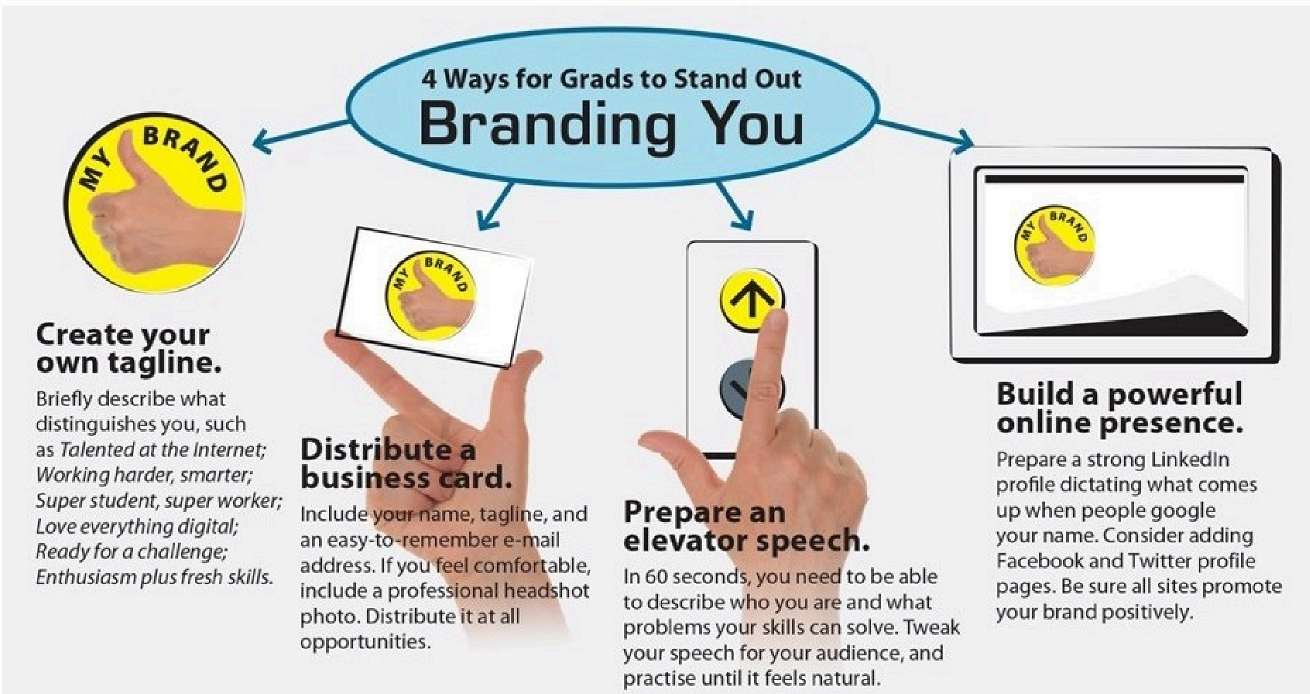


Figure 3.1.2: The four steps in the personal branding process explained.

Exercises

- Begin developing your network. Conduct at least one referral interview or join one online networking group. Record the results you experienced and the information you learned from the networking options you chose.
- Use several of the job search engines listed in above to collect about half a dozen job postings that you would be interested in applying to if they were available upon graduation. If you can't find any in your local region, look further afield in neighbouring cities or even other provinces or countries you'd be interested in moving to.
- Compare the various postings. Identify common terms used in the lists of required skills and job duties. What are the common work experience and educational qualifications identified as

required as assets?

References

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Source: Unit 47 in Communication @ Work Seneca Edition.

Notes

1. (*Business Communications*, 2019).
2. (Morgan, 2019).
3. (Morgan, 2019)
4. (Business Communication, 2019)

3.2 RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reviewing this information, you will be able to

- understand how to prepare a targeted and persuasive resume and cover letter
- understand the information required in each section of a resume and cover letter
- know how to apply the AIDA writing process to cover letters

INTRODUCTION

A **résumé** is the central document of your job application because it's what employers focus on most when judging an applicant's suitability for doing the job they're hiring for. Does the candidate have the right combination of core and soft skills to do that job? Did they acquire those skills with the right combination of education, employment, and other experience? Are they able to put a document together in a clear, concise, correct, organized, and reader-friendly way?

The **cover letter** literally covers the résumé and is thus the first thing the hiring manager sees of you. the cover letter plays a key role in convincing a hiring manager to consider your application. Besides introducing the résumé and requesting an interview, the cover letter is a sales pitch explaining how you will benefit the company you're applying to. In the communications test that is the hiring process, it also proves that you can put coherent, persuasive sentences and paragraphs together when writing formally on the employer's behalf. The cover letter must be flawless because, like the résumé that follows it, even one writing error could be read as a sign of the poor quality of work to come and prompt the hiring manager to save time by shredding it immediately.

The resume and cover letter work together to put your best your foot forward. These documents are the focus of the information below.

THE RESUME

Can you get to an interview without a resume? In most cases, the résumé is key to the hiring process. Sometimes one writing mistake—even just one little typo can fail you out of the running so you don't proceed to the oral component (the interview). Employers demand perfection in the résumé for the following reasons:

- When the hiring manager's task is to whittle down a pile of a hundred applications to about five for interviews, even one writing mistake in a résumé gives them the reason they're looking for to dump the résumé in the shredder, thinning out the pile a little further.
- A perfect résumé speaks volumes about how conscientious a job applicant can be about the quality of work the applicant will do. If a résumé is poorly written, the employer can safely expect a similarly poor quality of work if the applicant became an employee.

Employer expectations are high and rising. Gone are the days where a printed résumé was all you were responsible for. Today you must also project a professional image online in whatever employers find when they Google-search you—because they almost certainly will. Even your electronically submitted résumé must be written with a consideration of the electronic filters employers use to scan applications and pre-select only those that truly answer the job posting's call. This section will help you increase your chances of getting to interview for the job you've been training so hard for by writing a résumé that meets employer expectations.

Figure 3.2.1: Top reasons resumes are rejected by hiring managers. ([Liu,](#) n.d.)

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=126#h5p-61

ASSESS YOUR SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

The first step to putting together a winning résumé is to list your employable skills and qualifications. Which of your qualities make you hireable? If these don't come immediately to mind or the wording eludes you, a good place to start is the vocational learning outcomes of your current academic program. These describe the skills that industry employers have said graduates must have to be considered for hire. Many of these skills are noted in the learning outcomes of your college courses.

Of course, you can't possibly put all of these on a résumé because the full list would include too many, be too detailed, and would be worded in a manner unsuitable for a résumé. At this point, however, what's important is that you begin a master list of such skills that you can tailor for the résumé when you see what skills and duties employers list in their job postings. Matching the skills you have with those employers want is the key to a successful application.

In addition to program-specific skills, you can also add a range of other skills. Get started by asking yourself the following questions:

- What specific computer programs am I good at? Do I have examples of work I can show an employer of how I've used them at an intermediate or advanced level?
- Do I work well with others? Have I demonstrated this with my employment experience or with volunteer or extracurricular activities such as league sports or clubs?
- Am I better at following instructions or giving them? Am I destined for leadership roles? What proof can I offer up either way?
- Can I read, write, and converse in another language besides English? At what level of proficiency?
- Am I a quick learner? Am I a creative thinker? Can I think of specific instances as proof of my answers to these questions if asked in a job interview?
- Am I a good communicator in both written and spoken situations? What evidence can I offer employers of my proficiency in both?[1]

Not only will a few pages of notes in answer to these questions help you prepare résumés and cover letters, but they will also help you prepare for the job interview later.

DEVELOPING YOUR RESUME

To be competitive in any fierce job competition, a generic résumé—i.e., the kind that you made a hundred copies of to get your first job and handed out to every shop on the street that had a "Help Wanted" sign in the window—just isn't going to cut it. Your best chance of succeeding is to make your applications stand out with superior quality, knowing that your application will be just one of dozens, perhaps even hundreds, vying for interview spots. Along with those marred by glaring errors, generic résumés are the first to go into the shredder.

A targeted résumé, however, is tailored to present what the job posting asks for. An employer's job posting is a wish-list of all the skills and qualifications that would set up the applicant for success in the position advertised and reflects the selection criteria the employer applies to every job application. The employer expects that each section of the resume will prove the applicant is perfect for the job, as well as meet general expectations for quality of writing—clarity, conciseness, correctness, and accuracy—as well as document readability and organization.

You have three options for types of résumé based on your situation and what the employer wants, each defined by how they organize the content:

1. Reverse-chronological résumé: For each experience section (Education, Employment, and Related), this résumé lists your professional activities starting with the present or latest (most recent) at the top and your first (oldest) at the bottom. A key feature is a column with date ranges in months and years beside each educational program, job, and relevant activity you've done. This presents the hiring manager with a snapshot of where you're at right now in your professional development, how you got there, and where you came from.

Reverse-chronological résumés can be revealing in ways that might not cast you in an entirely positive light. Exclusively short-term employment and significant gaps in your work and educational history will raise red flags [2]. However, there are alternative ways of organizing a résumé.

2. Functional (a.k.a. competency- or skills-based) résumé: Rather than organize the résumé around experience sections measured out in months and years, the functional résumé makes important skills the subheadings. The bullet points that follow explain in more detail what each skill entails, how it was acquired through training or education, and how it was practiced and applied professionally. The functional résumé is ideal if you have questionable gaps or durations in your employment or educational history because it omits or de-emphasizes date ranges.

3. Combination functional and reverse-chronological résumé: This is the most popular form and the basis for the guide on targeted résumé parts given below. It uses the reverse-chronological format for the standard experience sections showcasing the applicant's educational and employment history but adds a Skills and Qualifications Summary at the beginning to highlight the applicant's abilities and credentials that match what the job posting asked for.

Some employers have strong preferences for one résumé type. Helpful employers will specify which they prefer in the job posting. If not, however, your only recourse is to contact the company and ask what their preferences are. Rather than cheating, this shows that you care enough about meeting employer expectations to be proactive on the communication front. Use a standard email address like yourfirstname.lastname@emailprovider.com

RESUME SECTIONS

Let's look in detail at how you can make your résumé meet common (but not necessarily all) employer expectations in all parts of a combination reverse-chronological/functional targeted résumé.

Personal Information. The personal information header appears at the top of the document. Use your full legal name. Below or beside your name, add your contact information, including your physical mailing address, phone number, and email address. Whatever phone number you give, ensure that the personalized message that a caller hears if they're sent to voicemail is a professional one. Also, don't use your work email address unless your current employer is okay with you using it to look for work elsewhere. Finally, space permitting, include a personal website such as a link to your LinkedIn profile and/or online portfolio

The **Objective** statement should mention the company and position in question. This type of statement confir,s to the employer that the résumé is targeted. Like someone on a date who makes the other feel special by saying that they're interested only in them, the Objective statement singles out the employer as the applicant's priority. A targeted résumé's Objective statement focuses on what exactly the applicant can do for the employer. See below for an example.

> **Example:** *To contribute to an increase in sales at Company XYZ as a top sales representative.*

Skills and Qualification Summary. This section follows the Objective because of its importance in declaring in one neat package the major skills and qualifications that match those in the job posting. If the job ad lists four main skills—let's call them skills "ABCD"—the candidates who list skills ABCD in this section will have the best chance of getting an interview because they frontload their résumé with all the top-priority items the employer seeks. Doing this shows you can follow instructions and says to the employer, "I read your job posting and am confident that I'm what you're looking for."

Your Skills and Qualifications Summary section helps you pass the filter that many employers use to scan electronically submitted applications to ensure they've used enough of the job posting's key words. If your application fails to mirror exactly the key terms listed throughout the job posting, the employer might not even see yours.

Dividing the Skills and Qualifications Summary into sub-lists related to categories of the job will increase your chances of meeting the employer's approval. To use this highly prized real estate on the page effectively, consider arranging the sub-lists in three columns; a couple could be for job-specific technical skill sets, another for transferrable soft skills. Only do this, however, if you're sure that your application formatting won't be electronically filtered out. Some of the online application services will convert résumés into scannable formats, often scrambling text into an unreadable mess.

Table 3.2.1 provides and example of how to organize a table with categories highlighting your job skills.

Table 3.2.1

Programming Language	Software	Interpersonal
3 years' advanced proficiency in C++2 years' intermediate use of C#	3 years' advanced proficiency with 3ds Max	Excellent leadership and teamwork skills
1 year of familiarity with OpenGL	5 years' functional proficiency with Photoshop2 years' familiarity with Java	Advanced writing and presentation skillsFully bilingual (reading, writing, speaking) in English and French

Employment Experience. The Employment Experience section follows the same format as the Education section. List your jobs in reverse-chronological order with your current (or most recent) job first and your earliest last. List the month/year date ranges in the same position as in the

Education section. The months are important because a date range such as "2015-2016" is misleading if you worked a few weeks before and after New Year's, whereas "Dec. 2015 – Jan. 2016" honestly indicates seasonal work. Figure 3.2.2 presents a sample employment experience section.

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Student Support Representative, Student Support Services — Apr. 2016 – Present
The AC Hub, Algonquin College, Ottawa ON

- Provide effective customer service in supporting student and faculty clientele

Sandwich Artist, Person in Charge, Subway — Jul. 2014 – Apr. 2016
Rideau Centre Food Court, Ottawa ON

- Managed staff and conducted quality-control inspections
- Ensured customer service satisfaction through direct interaction and team motivation
- Fostered effective teamwork among staff by role-modeling and conflict resolution

Figure 3.2.2: Sample employment experience section that list employment experience in reverse chronological order.

At the beginning of your working life, include whatever jobs you've done (except perhaps newspaper or flyer delivery) but make them relevant by adding transferrable skills as subpoints underneath. While you should omit task-specific skills, definitely list transferrable skills (e.g., teamwork) that match those listed in the job posting. As you can also see in the Figure each bullet-point skill begins with an action verb for consistent parallelism, the verb for the present job is in the present tense, and those for the past job are consistently past-tense verbs. Use clear, high-impact action verbs such as the following:

Achieved	Coordinated	Expanded	Innovated	Provided	Served
Analyzed	Corrected	Expedited	Introduced	Reduced	Spearheaded
Approved	Delegated	Facilitated	Investigated	Represented	Spurred
Averaged	Designed	Grew	Managed	Resolved	Streamlined
Collaborated	Directed	Implemented	Organized	Restructured	Strengthened
Constructed	Enabled	Improved	Overhauled	Reviewed	Supervised
Contributed	Engineered	Increased	Pioneered	Revitalized	Targeted
Converted	Established	Initiated	Prioritized	Screened	Transformed

Fleshed out into bullet-point descriptions of skills in a three-part ***verb*** + ***object*** + ***prepositional phrase*** structure, some of the above action verbs may look like the following:

- **Collaborated** with team members consistently in working groups improving departmental processes

- **Streamlined** collaborative report-writing processes by switching to Google Docs
- **Organized** annual awards dinner celebration for a department of 150 employees
- **Designed** 13 internal feedback forms in the company intranet for multiple departments
- **Secured** government program funding successfully for eight departmental initiatives

Focuses on quantifiable achievements with actual numerical figures and place adverbs after the verb rather than begin points with them (e.g., not *Consistently collaborated with team members*) so that you always lead with verbs.[3] To make your accomplishments more concrete, Google executive Laszlo Block advises you to structure them according to the following formula:

ACCOMPLISHED X AS MEASURED BY Y BY DOING Z

Even if your job is just a grocery store cashier, you can quantify your achievements and put them in perspective. Instead of "Processed customer purchases at the checkout," saying "Served 85 customers per day with 100% accuracy compared to my peers' average of 70 customers at 90% accuracy" demonstrates your focus on achieving outstanding excellence with regard to KPIs (key performance indicators), which hiring managers will love [4].

As you add more industry-specific work experience throughout your career, you can move those transferrable skills to go under only career-oriented entries in this section and delete non-industry-related work experience. A decade or two into your working life, you'll have a solid record of only career-oriented work experience in résumés targeted to career employers.

The gold standard of experience that employers want to see in a résumé is that you've previously done the job you're applying for—just for another employer[5]. This means that you can carry on in the new position with minimal training. If that's the case, you certainly want to place your Employment Experience section above your Education section. Otherwise, recent college graduates should lead with their more relevant Education section, appealing to employers hiring for potential rather than for experience, until they get that industry work experience.

References. In the context of the résumé, references are former employers who can vouch for you as a quality employee when asked by the employer you've applied to. You have two options for how to fill out your References section:

1. Simply say "**References available upon request**" under the heading "References" following the Related Experience section.
2. Include a References section with actual entries when applying to a smaller organization that will likely make quick decisions about hiring.

If you include actual references, put them all on one page at the end of your application document so they can be separated out and shredded at the end of the hiring process. Three or four references is best, and each must be someone who was in a position of authority over you, such as a manager or supervisor, for at least two years, ideally. The assumption is that less than two years is not enough time to fully assess the consistency of an employee's work ethic. List your references in order of what you expect to be the most enthusiastic endorsement down to the least. Do not include coworkers, friends, or family members among your references.

Each reference must contain the following pieces of information:

1. **Full name in bold,** followed by a comma and the reference's official job title capitalized (e.g., Manager, Supervisor, CEO, or Franchise Owner)
2. **Company** or organization they represent (or represented when you worked under them, though they've since moved on to another company) in plain style.
3. **Phone number** as employers checking references prefer to call, rather than email, so they can have a quick back-and-forth conversation about the candidate.
4. **Email address** to allow the for the potential employer to set up a time for a phone call with the reference or to ask for details in writing if a phone call is somehow difficult or impossible (e.g., time-zone differences or international calling charges).

It's very important that you confirm with your references that they will provide you with a *strong* endorsement (use those words when you ask) if called upon by a potential employer. Don't be afraid to ask. Providing references is part of a manager's or supervisor's job. They got to where they are on the strength of their former employers' references, and there's a "pay it forward" principle motivating them to do the same for the employees under them. If they don't believe in your potential, they'll likely be honest in advising you to ask someone else.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=126#h5p-62

THE COVER LETTER

An important distinction in the content between the résumé and cover letter is that the former is focused on your past, the cover letter on your future with the company. Many job applicants wastefully use the cover letter to express in sentences what they listed in point-form in their résumé. To be persuasive, however, the cover letter must convince the employer that you will apply the skills and qualifications developed through previous work, education, and other experience to your future job. They want to see how you think you'll help meet their business goals and fit the company culture. If you answer the "What's in it for us if we hire you?" question that hiring managers direct towards any cover letter, you increase your chances of getting an interview.

Is a cover letter even necessary? In cases where you know that the employer thinks they're just a waste of time, then you can obviously skip it. Sometimes job postings will helpfully clarify whether they want a cover letter or not. What if they don't say either way, though? The safe bet is to write a cover letter as part of your targeted approach to the job application. It'll show the hiring manager that you've made the extra effort to explain how well you suit the job and give them more information to make a well-informed decision about you. Adding a cover letter looks better than all the applicants who didn't bother

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=126#h5p-63

As a direct-approach message, the cover letter generally follows the AIDA pattern of persuasive message in its four paragraphs:

A for **Attention**	States emphatically what job you want and that you qualify
I for **Interest**	Summarizes how you will apply your skills and qualifications
D for **Desire**	Explains why you're interested in the company and job itself
A for **Action**	Requests that the reader consider you for an interview

COVER LETTER SECTIONS

Let's look in more detail at how to write each of these four cover letter paragraphs plus surrounding parts.

Opening Salutation. The most impressive cover letters address the hiring manager formally by name in the opening salutation[6]. "Dear Ms. Connie Jenkins:" tells the employer right away, "Take me seriously because I'm a targeted résumé" compared to the droves of applications introduced by generic cover letters beginning with "To whom it may concern:" or, worse, with no introductory cover letter at all. If the job posting said whom to address your application to, doing this gives you an early lead in the competition because it shows that you can follow orders, which not everyone does.

If the job posting made no mention of who the hiring manager is, finding their name also shows that you're resourceful and conscientious because you care about finding the right person to deal with—qualities employers love. You may have to dig for that information on the company website, by Google-searching for the company's HR or recruiting personnel, or calling the company to ask whom you can address your application.

Job Opening Identification. If your cover letter responds to a job posting, its first paragraph should be a brief couple of sentences that do no more or less than the following:

1. State the official **job title** of the position you're seeking, as well as the reference number if one was provided in the job posting. Get right to the point by saying emphatically, "I am applying with great enthusiasm for the position of . . ." or "Please accept this application submitted with keen interest for the position of . . . ." Don't waste the reader's time with redundant lead-ins such as "I'm Todd Harper and I'm applying for . . ."; they can see your name at the top and/or bottom of the page.

If the job posting included a reference number, include it in parentheses after the job title. Also include it in the bolded **subject line** above along with the job title. Employers use job reference numbers to direct applications to the correct competition, especially if the company is large enough to run several at once.

2. **Say where you found out about the job** in the first sentence after naming the job title. If you were recommended by someone in the company, name-dropping works well here. Even if you don't have an "in" from networking, say where you found the job posting or if a recruiter recommended it.

3. **State that you're qualified** for the position by asking the hiring manager to read onward. Be courteous in this request. A concluding sentence such as *Please consider the following application for details regarding how I meet the required qualifications for the position* nicely introduces the following paragraphs and résumé.

If your cover letter introduces an **unsolicited application**—i.e., it's a "cold call" prospecting for work rather than responding to a job posting—take a more indirect, persuasive approach than the direct one advised above. Start by asking if the employer is in need of someone who can do what you do, then detail the skills you have that will benefit the employer.

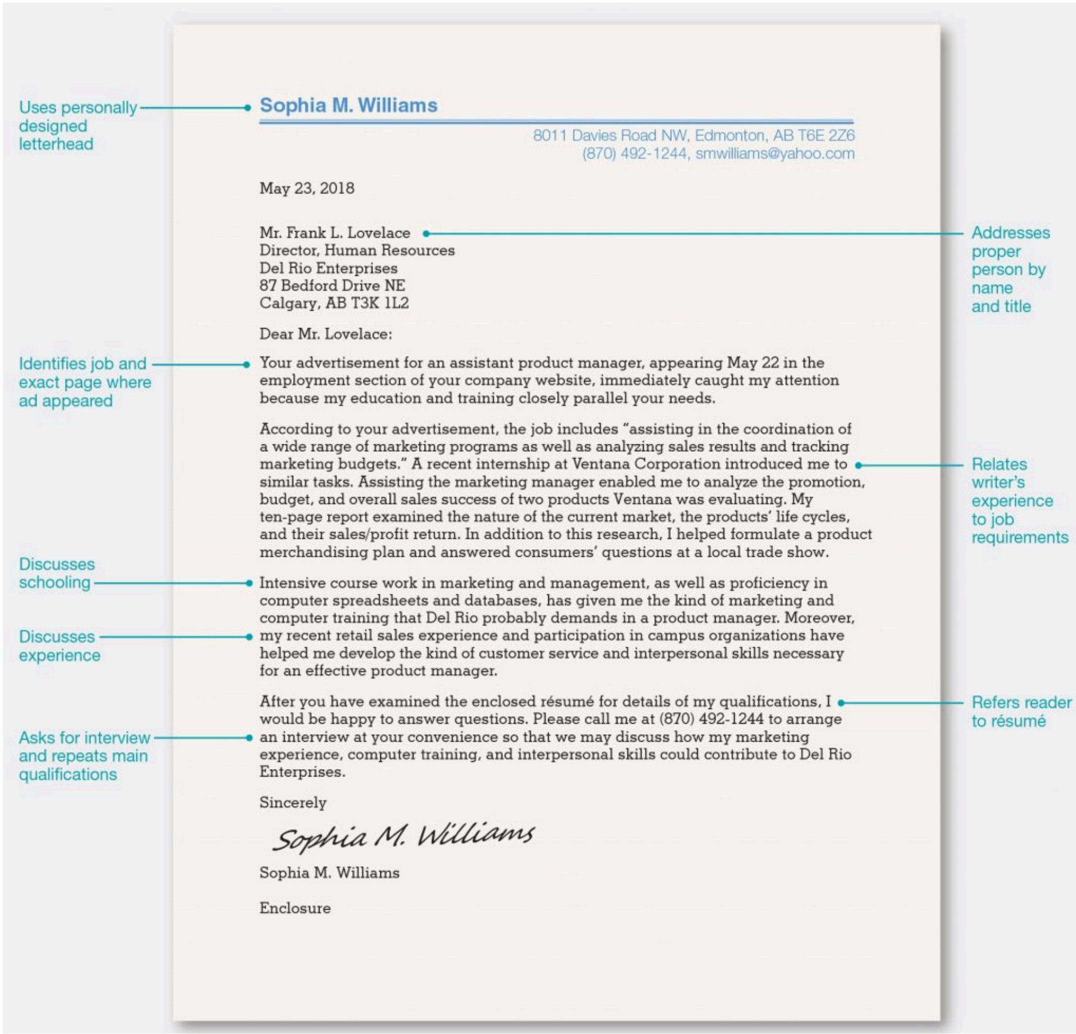
Skills and Qualification Summary. Use your second paragraph to explain how you'll apply the skills you've learned and practiced throughout your educational, work, and other experience to benefit the employer in the position you're applying for. Getting right to the point with this in a solicited application (responding to a job posting) is vital because anything you include that doesn't instantly convince the employer that you have what they're looking for is going to sink your application quickly. Avoid the trap of simply repeating and stretching out the Skills and Qualifications Summary section of your résumé into full sentences.

Make the paragraph instead about how you're going to benefit the employer, using those skills to help the company achieve its business goals, which requires knowing and saying what they are. This is why you were advised to research the company at the outset of the application process and note their products and/or services, clientele demographics, and mission/vision statement. Show that you know what they want and have the necessary skills to deliver exactly that. If you convince the employer that you bring a skill set to the table that will set you up for success in the position right away (with only minimal mandatory training), you're a step closer to the interview. If you list skills that only partially mirror what the posting asks for (or, worse, not at all), however, you've moved your application a step closer to the shredder.

Employer Preference. Though many applicants meet the required baseline qualifications for the job, only those who look like they will be a good "fit" in the company or organization culture will be invited for an interview. The paragraph that follows the qualifications paragraph is crucial to convincing the employer that you'll fit in nicely. To assure the employer you will be truly happy in that position, say what attracts you to it and to the company in general. Perhaps you have been a customer in the past and were really impressed by the product or service and the people you dealt with, and now you want to participate in the effort to make more satisfied customers like you've been. Saying that your priority is to make the company's customers and stakeholders happy, perhaps by paraphrasing the mission or vision statement available on their website and making it your own, goes a long way toward convincing the employer that you're their kind of people.

Closing Requests. End your letter's message concisely with two or three sentences that do the following:

1. **Thank the reader** for considering your application. Politely phrase this as a request to read on to the next page: *I very much appreciate your considering me for this position. Please review the attached résumé for a more detailed explanation of how I meet or exceed the required qualifications.*
2. **Request an interview.** Since winning an interview spot for a chance to get a job offer is the entire goal of the application, make your intentions clear by stating your desire to talk in person. You can say that you look forward to meeting and discussing further your "fit" in the organization, since that's exactly what they'll be doing with the interview. Though some cover letter writing guides advise ending with confidence, saying something like you'll be contacting them to arrange an interview or, worse, thanking them in advance for the job offer to come or asking when you can start the job will appear entitled in the worst way. Any statement that assumes certain victory looks like you're saying that this opportunity is owed to you rather than earned. An important part of being courteous here at the letter's closing is being humble. Figure 3.2.3[7]


Sophia M. Williams
8011 Davies Road NW, Edmonton, AB T6E 2Z6
(870) 492-1244, smwilliams@yahoo.com

May 23, 2018

Mr. Frank L. Lovelace
Director, Human Resources
Del Rio Enterprises
87 Bedford Drive NE
Calgary, AB T3K 1L2

Dear Mr. Lovelace:

Your advertisement for an assistant product manager, appearing May 22 in the employment section of your company website, immediately caught my attention because my education and training closely parallel your needs.

According to your advertisement, the job includes "assisting in the coordination of a wide range of marketing programs as well as analyzing sales results and tracking marketing budgets." A recent internship at Ventana Corporation introduced me to similar tasks. Assisting the marketing manager enabled me to analyze the promotion, budget, and overall sales success of two products Ventana was evaluating. My ten-page report examined the nature of the current market, the products' life cycles, and their sales/profit return. In addition to this research, I helped formulate a product merchandising plan and answered consumers' questions at a local trade show.

Intensive course work in marketing and management, as well as proficiency in computer spreadsheets and databases, has given me the kind of marketing and computer training that Del Rio probably demands in a product manager. Moreover, my recent retail sales experience and participation in campus organizations have helped me develop the kind of customer service and interpersonal skills necessary for an effective product manager.

After you have examined the enclosed résumé for details of my qualifications, I would be happy to answer questions. Please call me at (870) 492-1244 to arrange an interview at your convenience so that we may discuss how my marketing experience, computer training, and interpersonal skills could contribute to Del Rio Enterprises.

Sincerely

Sophia M. Williams

Sophia M. Williams

Enclosure

Figure 3.2.3: An image of a solicited cover letter that meets the criteria described above.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=126#h5p-64

Exercises

1. Write a targeted résumé for the job posting you chose. Moving forward, you can use this as a model for how to excerpt a targeted résumé from your generic CV.

2. Write an unsolicited cover letter for your dream job. Take the indirect approach and be convincing in how you present your pitch.

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Source: Unit 48 in Communication @ Work Seneca Edition.

Notes

1. (Guffey, Loewy, & Almonte, 2016, pp. 377-378)
2. (Vandegriend, 2017)
3. (Guffey, Loewy, & Almonte, 2016, p. 387).
4. (Block, 2014)
5. (Vandegriend, 2017)
6. (Guffey et al., 2016, p. 398)
7. (Business Communications, 2019)

3.3 LETTERS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to

- identify the parts of effective letters
- identify the different types of letter formats
- compose an effective letter

INTRODUCTION

As one of the most formal documents you can send, a letter conveys a high degree of respect to its recipient. Sending a letter is your way of saying that the recipient matters. Letters are usually one to two-page documents sent to people or organizations outside of the organization from which they're sent, whereas memos are equivalent documents for communications within an organization. Though we use email for many of the occasions that we used to send letters for before the twenty-first century, letters are still sent rather than emails for several purposes:

- Cover letters to employers in job applications
- Thank-you letters and other goodwill expressions
- Letters of recommendation (a.k.a. reference letters)
- Letters of transmittal to introduce reports or proposals
- Campaign initiatives, such as for fundraising or political advocacy
- Official announcements of products, services, and promotions to customers
- Claims and other complaints sent to companies to lay down a formal paper-trail record as evidence in case matters escalate into the court system
- Formal rejection notices to job or program applicants
- Collection notices to people with overdue payments

In these cases, letters offer the advantage of formality, confidentiality (it's illegal to open someone else's mail), and a record of evidence.

TYPES OF LETTER FORMATS

There are two main types of letters: **block-style** letters and **modified-block** style. The block style used by organizations has a company letterhead at the top, whereas modified-block letters are typically written independently by individuals. Though you may see minor format variations from company to company, letters have 10-12 major parts, each of which we'll examine for the conventions that, if followed, show that you are able to write to a high standard of formality should the occasion call for it.

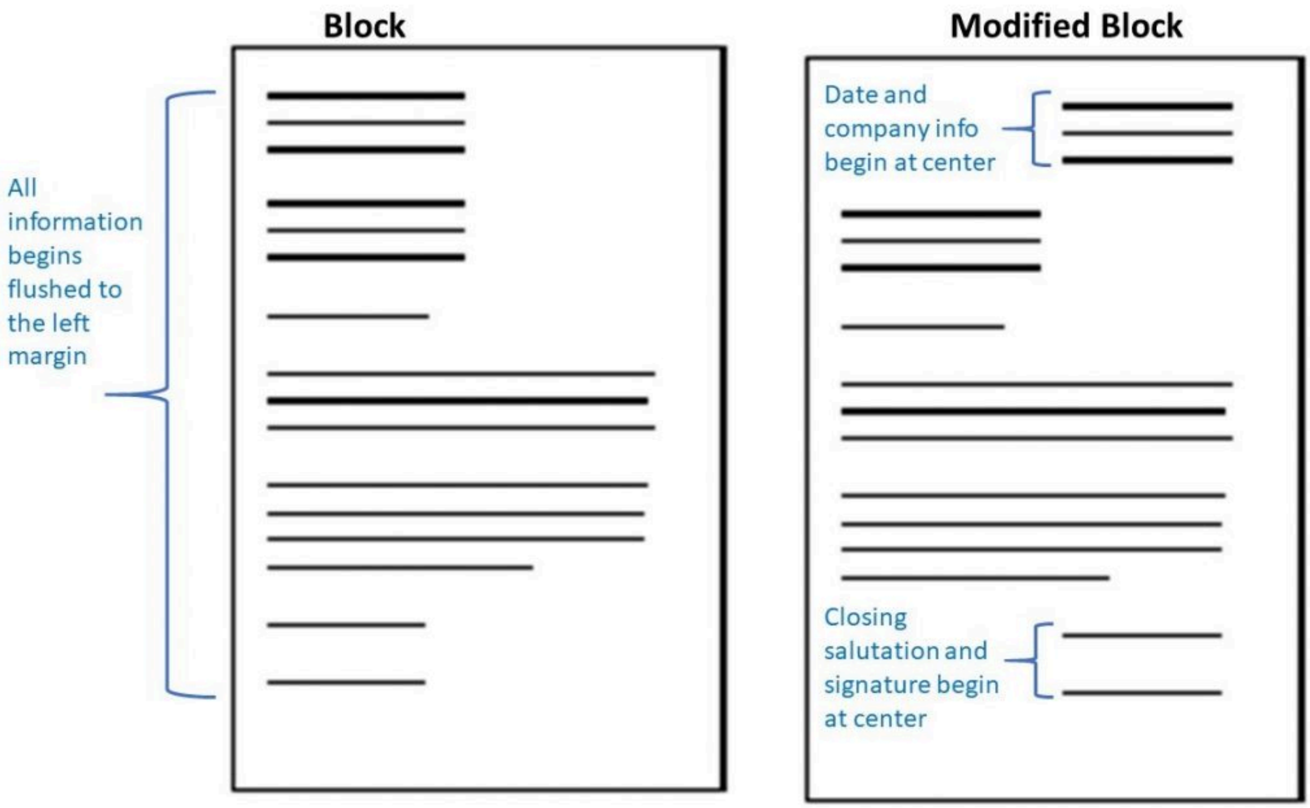

Figure 4.1.1: The two main letter formats used in business communications.

LETTER PARTS

Letters have 10 – 12 parts, including: Return Address or Company Letterhead, Date Line, Recipient Address, Subject Reference, Opening Salutation, Message Opening, Message Body, Message Closing, Closing Salutation, Signature, Signature Block, Enclosure Notice. The following video explains each part of a standard letter.

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https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=44#h5p-1

Before delving into the details of how to compose a letter, let's review the advantages, disadvantages, and occasions for using letters.

TABLE 4.1.1 EXCERPT: LETTER PROS, CONS, AND PROPER USE

Advantages	Disadvantages	Expectations	Appropriate Use
•Shows respect through formality and effort •Ensures confidentiality when sealed in an envelope and delivered to the recipient's physical address (it is illegal to open someone else's mail) •Can introduce other physical documents (enclosures)	•Slow to arrive at the recipient's address depending on how far away they are from the sender •Can be intercepted or tampered with in transit (albeit illegally) •Can be overlooked as junk mail •Time consuming to print, sign, seal, and send for delivery •Mail postage is costlier than email	•Follow conventions for different types of letters (e.g., block for company letters, modified block for personal letters) and provide the sender's and recipient's address, date, recipient salutation, closing salutation, and author's signature •Use company letterhead template when writing on behalf of your organization	•For providing a formal, permanent, confidential written message to a single important person or organization •Ideal for job applications persuasive messages bad-news messages, matters with possible legal implications, and responses to letters •For non-urgent matters

CONSTRUCTING A PROFESSIONAL LETTER

Now we will look at how to write the different parts of a letter.

RETURN ADDRESS OR COMPANY LETTERHEAD

The first piece of information in a letter is usually the sender's address. In block-style letters, the address appears as part of the company letterhead in the header under or beside the prominently displayed and brand-stylized company name and logo. Use a company letterhead template whenever writing on behalf of the company you work for; never use it for personal messages (e.g., reference letters for a relative) not authorized by the company. The company letterhead address usually appears in the one-line style following the format given below:

> [Street number] [Street name] [Street type], [City or town], [Provincial abbreviation] [two spaces] [Postal code with a single space in the middle]
>
> **Example:** 1385 Woodroffe Avenue, Ottawa, ON K2G 1V8

The letterhead also includes other contact information such as phone and fax numbers, as well as the company web address. Some company letterhead templates move some or all of these parts, besides the company name and logo, to the footer so that the whole page is framed with company branding. For dozens of letter template examples, go to open a blank new document in MS Word and type "letter" into the document type or go to [Letters](#) (Microsoft Office, 2014).

Figure 4.1.2: Selection of Microsoft Word business letter templates

Because **modified-block-style letters** are sent by individuals unaffiliated with a company, they typically include only the sender's two-line address at the top, which divides the above address style in half so that the street number, name, and type go on the first line (with no comma at the end), and the city/town, provincial abbreviation, and postal code go on the second, as shown below:

Example:

1385 Woodroffe Avenue
Ottawa, ON   K2G 1V8

In both styles of address, strike a formal tone by fully spelling out the street type rather than abbreviating it (e.g., *Street*, not *St.*; *Avenue*, not *Ave.*; *Road*, not *Rd.*; *Crescent*, not *Cres.*; *Boulevard*, not *Blvd.*; *Court*, not *Crt.*; etc.). Using abbreviations is fine in informal, personal letters, however.

A distinguishing feature of the modified-block style is that the sender address is justified (flush) to the vertical middle of the page (i.e., the left edge of its text lines up with it) rather than the left margin. Do this by highlighting the two address lines, then clicking and dragging the base of the left-margin tab in your word processor's ruler right to the vertical midpoint of the page. If your page has 2.5 cm margins, that would be at around the 8.25 cm mark. Note that modified-block-style letters place the sender's address on the first line below the header (i.e., about an inch or 2.5 cm from the top edge of the page) and don't include the sender's name at the top of this address block. The reader can find the sender's name by darting their eyes down to the signature block at the bottom.

In some circumstances, you may want to use block-style letters with a letterhead when writing on your own behalf rather than for a company. When writing a cover letter, for instance, you can stylize your name prominently as if it were the name of a company so that it stands out in a larger font in bold typeface, possibly in an eye-catching colour. Because this appears in the header margin, adopting the block style has the additional advantage of placing your name and contact information automatically on every page so that consistent personal branding extends to the one- to two-page résumé that follows, including the references page that would be separated out for confidentiality reasons.

DATE LINE

In a formal letter, the date must follow the unambiguous style that fully spells out the month, gives the calendar date, a comma, and the full year (e.g., April 25, 2020). In block-style letters, this appears left-justified (its left edge lines up with the left margin) often with 2-3 lines of space between it and the company letterhead above it and, for symmetry, as much between it and the recipient address below.

In modified-block-style letters, however, the date often appears as the third line of the sender address block. Its left edge, therefore, lines up with the vertical middle of the page. Only one line of space should separate the date line from the recipient address below. After this, block-style and modified-block letters are formatted in the same way until you get to the signature block at the bottom.

RECIPIENT ADDRESS (RECEIVER'S BLOCK)

No matter what style of letter you use, the recipient's address is left-justified, begins with the recipient's full name on the top line, and follows with their mailing address on the lines below in the format options given in Table 4.1.2 below.

Table 4.1.2: Standard Letter Address Format for Company and Personal Recipients

Address Format	Examples
Title Full Name, Professional Role Company Name # Street Type Town/City, PA A1B 2C3	Dr. Michelle Masterton, Geriatrician Tidal Healthcare Clinic 6519 Maynard Street Halifax, NS B4L 6C9
Title Full Name, Credentials Professional Role (if long) # Street Type Town/City, PA A1B 2C3	Mr. Jonathan Carruthers, MBA Freelance Marketing Consultant 3489 Cook Street Victoria, BC V9G 4B2

Notice that commas follow only (1) the recipient's name if followed by a professional role (capitalized) or credentials abbreviation and (2) the city or town. Two spaces separate the provincial abbreviation (PA) from the postal code, which has a single space in the middle dividing the six alpha-numeric characters into two groups of three for readability. Though you sometimes see addresses that fully spell out the province, rather than abbreviate it, and have only one space between the province and postal code, the style given above is dominant and has the advantage of being more concise and clearly distinguishing the province from the postal code without crowding the line with commas. Keep the end of each line free of any punctuation.

SUBJECT REFERENCE

Like a subject line in an email, letters can have subject lines that indicate the topic or purpose. The same titling principles as email apply, only the letter's subject reference begins with "**Re:**" or "RE:" or "Subject:" and is entirely in either bold typeface or all-caps, but not both. You might also see it positioned above or below the opening salutation, but usually above. Like all the text blocks beside the date line, a blank line of space separates this from the other parts above and below.

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here:
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OPENING SALUTATION

The most common opening salutation for a letter is given in Table 4.1.3 below:

Table 4.1.3: Opening Salutation

Opening Salutation Form	Examples
Dear [Title] [Full or Last Name]:	Dear Ms. Françoise Hardy: Dear Mr. Serge Gainsbourg: Dear Mrs. Pattie Boyd: Dear Dr. Landy: Dear Ms. Vartan: Dear Dana Dortmund:

The Dear, title, full name, and colon all signal formality. Variations in formal letters include omitting the title or the first name, but not both at once. Omit the title if you're at all concerned about its accuracy. For instance, if the recipient's first name is a unisex name and you're not sure if they're male or female, skip the gender title to avoid offending the recipient by mixing up their gender. Unless you're sure that the recipient prefers *Mrs.* (indicating that she's married) over *Ms.* because she's used it herself, *Ms.* might be the safer option. Avoid the title *Miss* because it's no longer commonly used and appears outdated. If you're addressing someone who identifies as non-binary, then *Mx.* might be best if you must use a title, or just no title at all. Other considerations in the opening salutation include the following:

- Using the recipient's first name only is appropriate only if you know them well on a friendly, first-name basis.
- Using a comma instead of a colon is appropriate only for very informal letters.
- *To whom it may concern:* is an appropriate opening salutation only if you really intend for the letter to be read by whomever it is given to, as in the case of a reference letter that an applicant gives copies of to potential employers. Otherwise, every effort should be made to direct the letter to a particular person, especially cover letters. If an employer has deliberately omitted any mention of who is responsible for hiring an applied-for position, addressing the person by professional role (e.g., *Dear Hiring Manager:*) is acceptable.

MESSAGE OPENING

Letters are ideal for both direct- and indirect-approach messages depending on the occasion for writing them. Direct-approach letters get right to the point by stating their main point or request in a paragraph of no more than a sentence or two. Letters organized with openings like this lend themselves to positive or neutral messages. Ideal for formally delivering bad-news or persuasive messages, indirect-approach letters begin with a buffer paragraph—again, this may only be a sentence or two—just to say some nice things before getting to the bad news or difficult request in the body of the message.

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MESSAGE BODY

Whether the opening takes the direct or indirect approach, the body supports this with explanatory detail. Ensure that your message body abides by the 6 Cs of , especially conciseness because a letter should only be a page or two. If appropriate for the content, use effective document design features such as numbered or bulleted lists to improve readability. For instance, if your letter contains a series of questions, use a numbered list so that the reader can respond to each with a corresponding numbered list of their own.

Message body paragraphs should be proper three-part paragraphs. Like all other text blocks throughout (except for the return address above and signature block below in a modified-block letter), every line in the message body must be flush to the left margin, including the first. In other words, rather than indent a paragraph's first line as novels do to mark where one paragraph ends and another begins, separate them with a blank line. Brevity in formal letters limits the number of paragraphs to what you can fit in a page or two.

MESSAGE CLOSING

The closing mirrors the opening with a sentence or two that wraps up the letter with something relevant to the topic at hand. Because of their formality, letters almost always end with a goodwill statement, such as an expression of gratitude thanking the reader for their attention or consideration. For instance, a cover letter thanks the reader for their consideration, invites them to read the enclosed résumé, and expresses interest in meeting to discuss the applicant's fit with the company in person since getting an interview is the entire point of an application. A thank-you letter will thank the recipient again, and a recommendation letter will emphatically endorse the applicant. Even letters delivering bad news or addressing contentious situations should end with pleasantries rather than hostile or passive-aggressive jabs. If an action is required, be sure to indicate when you would expect to follow through.

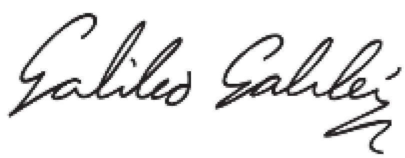
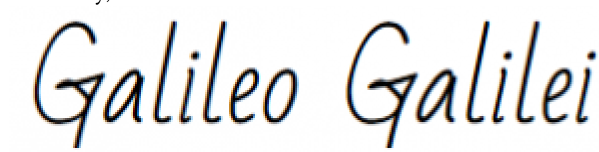
CLOSING SALUTATION

A simple *Sincerely* or *Cordially* are standard business letter closing salutations that signal the formal end of the message much like the opening salutation did before the beginning of the message proper. A more personal letter sent to someone you know well may end with *Yours truly* (with the second word all lowercase), but don't use this with someone you've never met or with anyone you want to maintain a strictly professional relationship with. Always place a "hanging comma" at the end of the line, as you can see in Table 4.1.4 below.

SIGNATURE

Your signature is a guarantee of authorship that carries legal weight. In a printed letter, leave enough space—usually about three single-spaced lines—to autograph your signature by hand. When sending a letter that you write and submit completely electronically, you have two options for an electronic signature, as explained in Table 20.4 below. Of the two, an image of your hand-written signature looks much more professional than a typed-out version using a simulated handwriting font. The hand-written image gives the impression that you are adept at technology.

Table 4.1.4: How to Make Signatures for Electronically Written and Sent Letters

Signature Image	**Simulated Signature**
Sincerely,  Galileo Galilei, Astronomer Image source: Connormah (2009)	Sincerely,  Galileo Galilei, Astronomer
1. Write your signature several times on a piece of blank, white paper. 2. Scan the document. 3. Crop the best image into a close-fitting jpeg image file. If the scanner makes a PDF file of the scanned image, make a jpeg file of the best signature by using the Snipping Tool (Microsoft Support, 2017) with the file type set to jpeg and saving the captured image. 4. Drag and drop the signature image from the folder where you saved it to the space between your closing salutation and your full printed name in the signature block. 5. Adjust the signature size so that it occupies the equivalent of about 2-3 single-spaced lines and delete any blanks lines of space above and below it so that it fits snugly between the closing salutation and your full printed name.	1. Your product warranty claim seems valid. Your product warranty claim seems valid. Your product warranty claim seems valid. Your product warranty claim seems valid. vType your name on the line between your closing salutation and full printed name in the signature block. 2. Highlight it. 3. Go to the font selection dropdown menu and select a simulated handwriting signature that is common to most computers such as Freestyle Script. 4. Adjust the font size so that your simulated signature occupies the equivalent of 2-3 single-spaced lines.

Don't cut corners when assembling an image of your handwritten signature. For instance, taking a smartphone photo of your signature rather than scanning it will look amateurish because the background will probably be greyish or another off-white shade that will clash with the pure white of your page background. Also, drawing your signature with your computer's mouse or touchpad will look shaky like it was signed by a seven-year-old. The inserted signature image must be seamlessly integrated and smoothly drawn for it to look professionally done.

Besides giving the impression that you're adept at technology, making an image file of your handwritten signature for electronic letters also sets you up for using it repeatedly to sign contracts and other documents electronically. If current labour trends take us to a predominant gig economy[1], having a shortcut for signing emailed contracts will save you time. Unless you're sent a contract via DocuSign or an equivalent technology solution to legally sign documents in a secure manner, a PDF contract sent to you would otherwise require printing it out, signing it, scanning it, and emailing it back. With a signature image, you can just drag and drop your signature into the document after downloading it, re-save it as a PDF, and email it back to the employer in a minute or two.

Though the simulated signature is certainly easier to put together, it carries with it several problems: it looks lazy and even tacky, carries no legal authority, and may not appear as a simulated signature font when it's opened by the recipient on another computer. If it's opened on, say, a Mac computer when you wrote it on a Windows-based PC, the signature might be converted into 25-pt. Arial font, making the recipient wonder why you chose a font that looks nothing like handwriting for your signature. The reason is that their computer didn't have the signature font you chose, or something was lost in translation, and their reader rendered the signature into a different font. For these reasons, using an image of your actual signature is better.

SIGNATURE BLOCK

The signature block clarifies the sender's name in full since handwritten signatures are rarely legible enough to do so themselves. The sender's professional role follows their name either on the same line (with a comma in between) if both the name and role are short enough, and on the second line if they are too long together. On the line below the sender's name and role can appear the name of the company they work for and their work email address on the third line; all three lines are single-spaced. If you are writing independently, putting your email address and phone number on the line(s) after your printed name depends on if you used a simple modified-block style address at the top, in which case you should add your contact info in the signature block. If you used a personal letterhead, perhaps for a job application cover letter, then you need not include anything more than your full printed name in your signature block.

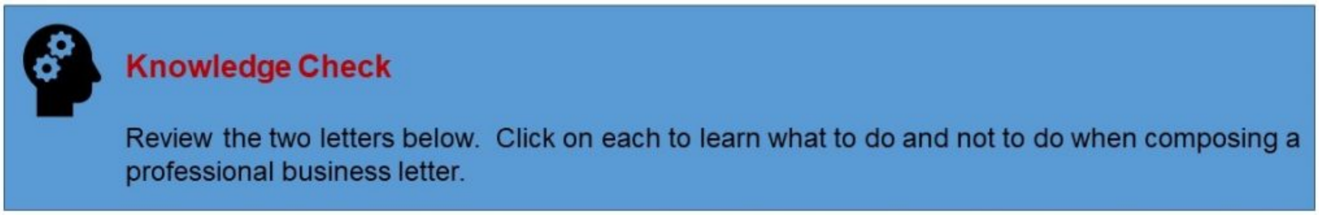
Sometimes letters are written on someone else's behalf, perhaps by an administrative assistant. In such cases, the signature and typed-out name of the person responsible for the letter is given at the bottom, then the initials of the person who typed it appear after a line of space below the last line of the signature block.

ENCLOSURE NOTICE

Just as emails can include attachments, letters are often sent along with other documents. Cover letters introduce résumés, for instance, and letters of transmittal introduce reports to their intended recipients. In such cases, an enclosure notice on the very last line of the page (above the footer margin) tells the reader that another document or other documents are included with the letter. This would look like the following:

ENCLOSURES (2): RÉSUMÉ, PORTFOLIO

For other documents included with the letter, simple, brief titles such as *Brochure* or *Thank-you Card* would suffice. Separate each with a comma if you have more than one.



SAMPLE 1 – INEFFECTIVE LETTER

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
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SAMPLE 2: REVISED LETTER

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=44#h5p-5

BEFORE SENDING YOUR LETTER

Given the importance of the letter you're writing, especially if it has to do with employment, editing is crucial to your career success. Even a single writing error in a cover letter, for instance, is enough to prompt the reader to dump it in the shredder without even glancing at the enclosed résumé, making the applicant's efforts useless. Apply all the revising and proofreading to ensure that the letter fulfills its purpose and represents you well with its flawless attention to detail.

For more perspectives on business letters, including slight format variations, see the following resources:

- How to Format a Business Letter (Doyle, 2018)
- Writing the Basic Business Letter (Purdue OWL, n.d.)
- How to Write a Business Letter (wikiHow, 2018)

Key Takeaway

If you need to send a highly formal message to show respect to your recipient and ensure confidentiality, follow standard business letter conventions.

Exercises

1. Put together a letterhead template for a fictional company that you might work for, or even start yourself, in the career you're training for. There's no need to go overboard with a fancy with a logo design; many companies' trademark is just their company name in an interesting font (e.g. Google or the fictional Dunder Mifflin in the TV show *The Office*). Include fictional contact information either at the top or bottom.

2. Using the company letterhead template you designed for Exercise #1, write a letter that you would send to everyone in your customer contact database advertising a new product or service that you would offer in the career you're training for.

3. If you did the email assignment at the end of unit 17, revise it in the form of a personal modified-block-style letter (invent details as necessary, including Dr. Emily Conway's company name and address for the recipient address block). Ensure that it is perfectly written in a formal style.

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Source: Unit 2: Letters in Chapter 7 Communication @ Work Seneca Edition.

Notes

1. (Nazareth, 2017)

3.4 THE ONLINE APPLICATION PROCESS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reviewing this information, you will be able to

- recognize a number of today's online digital tools and apps
- understand the differences of the online application process

INTRODUCTION

The first reader of a resume may no longer be a person but an **applicant tracking system (ATS)**. Online job boards, social networks, and mobile technology are becoming the engines and a permenant part of the modern day job search process. The number of Apps available to assist job applicants through the job search process are numerous. Thus, knowing how to take advantage of these Apps, how to build your online presence, and how to navigate through the online application process are skills the 21st century job seeker should know. The following video, *How to Apply for a Job Online*, will provide some basic knowledge on the online job application process.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=134#h5p-69

THE CHANGING APPLICATION PROCESS

Technology is changing the job application process. The way that organizations are looking for candidates, screening resumes, running interviews, and selecting the candidate to hire is changing due to the pervasive nature of technology. Technology, as the video above indicates, removes many obstacles in the hiring process; as a result organizations are utilizing technology to facilitate the seeking and hiring of new employees. In fact, a 2018 survey of trends in the hiring process reveals that 70% of companies have used social media to find and hire and employees and 89% plan to use social media as part of their future hiring process.[1] Figure 3.4.1[2] below provides additional results from this survey. Consequently, securing a job in the current and future job market will involve understanding the ins and outs of the online application process.

Figure 3.4.1: A 2018 survey revealing the role social media is playing in the online hiring process.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=134#h5p-70

CREATING YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

Clearly, having or creating an online presence is important in the new dynamic job search environment. Let's examine how to create an impactful online presence.

Social Network Sites

If you haven't done this yet, create a professionalize web presence by assembling a well-developed LinkedIn profile. This site and other social networking sites offer plenty of advice on how to make the most of social media platforms, so search a few out to get a picture of the consensus on what makes for a successful profile. A good, current place to start is The Most Effective Ways to Use LinkedIn (Doyle, 2018) because it links you to several in-depth guides for building each aspect of your profile.

If you've done this already, show potential employers that you're fully committed to your profession by continually updating your profile as the site adds and develops features. Keep building your network and adding content related to your field. Show that you engage in professional activities online because you're a motivated professional rather than toss a profile together as a one-time exercise because someone told you to.

As you gain more professional experience throughout your career, add it all to your online profile to make it a master CV ("curriculum vitae," meaning "course of life" in Latin) from which you can extract targeted résumés for particular job applications. It's okay if your targeted résumé and CV cover the exact same content in the beginning of your working life because you won't have much to put in either; employers will understand that when they see the year you graduated from college. As you gain more experience, be picky about what you include in a targeted résumé; however, your LinkedIn CV will provide employers with a fuller picture of what you've been doing with your life. They will be impressed that (1) you were able to present to them a slice of that history relevant to the job at hand, and that (2) you're so much more well-rounded than your targeted résumé lets on. They'll see that you have depth.

RESUME (ONLINE CONSIDERATIONS)

Yes, the resume is still very important for the online application process. The more closely your resume matches what an employer's applicant tracking system (ATS) is looking for, the better your chance of landing an interview and getting the job. Using key word from job postings is always a good strategy, but modern ATSs are also screening for additional qualities. Ensuring your online resume contains the following characteristics improves the probability that your resume will be selected by an ATS.

- Using keywords is good, but using key words in context is better. That is, use the keyword in a manner that ensure the ATS will recognize the skill noted as desirable.
- Focusing on nouns will attract the attention of hiring managers. The ATS looks for three types of nouns:
    - job titles, positions or roles
    - technical skills or specializations
    - certification, tools used, or specific experience
- Varying the job title to ensure ATS recognition
- Concentrating on skills section to ensure it responds to desired skills
- Keeping the resume format simple facilitates easy translation to an online format. Converting the basic resume to a plain-text is advisable
- Using conventional headings will increase ATS recognition[3]

E-PORTFOLIOS

An **e-portfolio** provides an opportunity for job seekers to present their skills and talents in a very tangible manner. An e-portfolio allows the job seeker to provide a basic resume containing links to projects, assignments, videos, social media sites (e.g. LinkedIn) to provide a comprehensive overview of their skills and personality for prospective employers.

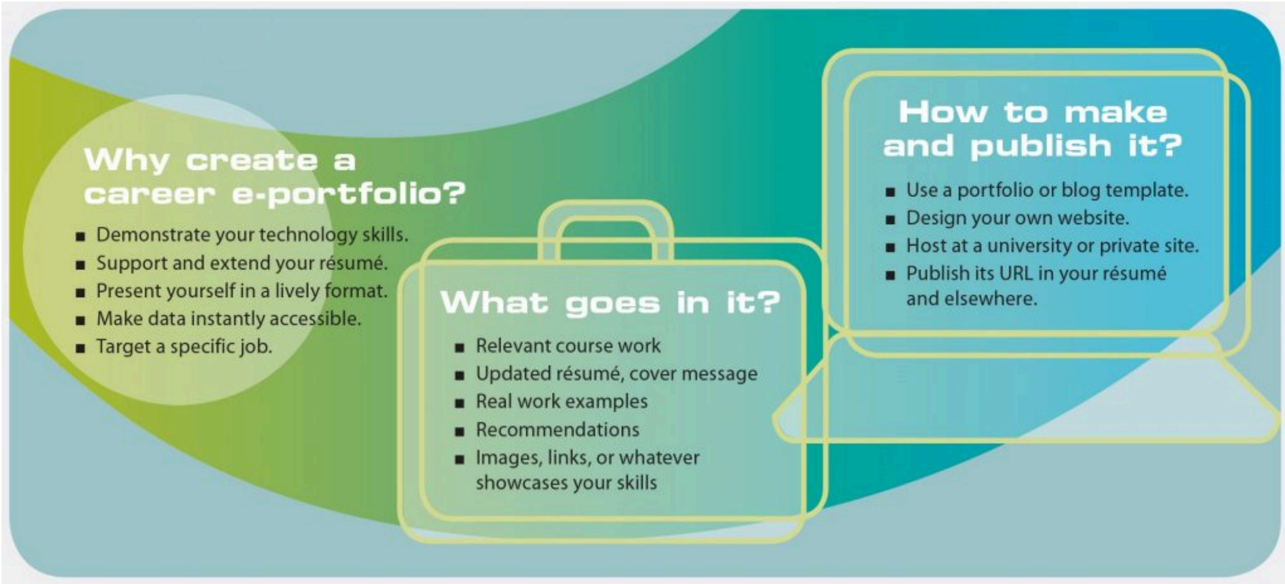

Figure 50.2: The why, what, and how of developing an e-portfolio. (Business Communications, 2019)

VIDEO RESUMES

Finally, another vehicle for an online job application is the video resume. A video resume allows job applicants to present their skills, qualification, and unique interests in a visual manner. With the availability of video and video editing apps, creating a video resume is well within the capabilities of most college students. Three skills in particular that highlighted through this medium: speaking, presentation, and technical skills. For a job requiring such skills, a well produced video resume provides an advantage over those applicants who apply in the more traditional manner. Here are some tips to create a video resume:

- Customize the video content to respond to or match the specific job opening applied for
- Keep the video resume to 1 – 3 minutes
- Dress professionally and appropriately
- Explain why you are the best candidate for the job

The following video provides a few more tips on creating a professional video resume.

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https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=134#h5p-71

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=134#h5p-72

CONCLUSION

The job application process is experiencing a dynamic evolution. In addition to the traditional job application process, a variety of online apps and other tools provide the motivated job seeker a huge selection of resources to stand out in a very crowded job market. These are really exciting times for job seekers willing to use these tools in the online application process.

Exercises

1. Become familiar with LinkedIn by setting up an account and completing a profile. Even if you are not in the job market yet, becoming familiar with LinkedIn can open your eyes to the kinds of information employers seek and also give you practice at filling in templates such as those in the ATS. The easiest way to begin is to view a LinkedIn video taking you through the steps in creating a profile.

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Source: Unit 50 in Communication @ Work Seneca Edition.

Notes

1. (TalentNow, 2019)
2. (TalentNow, 2019)
3. (Business Communications, 2019)

3.5 KEY TAKEAWAYS – EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

Key Takeaways

The following are a few of the most important elements to remember about the employment process in the digital age.

Key takeaways for today's job applicant include:

- Begin the job search process by exploring your interests, evaluating your qualifications, and investigating career opportunities.
- Develop a targeted résumé that is *perfect* in the quality of its content, organization, writing, and overall presentation to increase your chances of getting interviews and hence the jobs.
- Prepare a winning cover letter and résumé by assessing your skills and researching what employers are looking for, what jobs are available, and how to find and apply to them.
- Write a cover letter as part of your targeted approach to applying for job competitions; use it to identify the job by name, introduce your résumé, explain how you'll apply your skills in the job, and request an interview.
- Prepare for the pre-interview, interview, and post-interview process.
- Optimize the job search process and your chances of getting hired by taking advantage of today's digital tools and apps.

Source: Chapter 13 Key Takeaways in Communication @ Work Seneca Edition.

CHAPTER 4: INTERVIEWS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to

- understand the different types of interviews
- discuss the do and don't of employment interviewing.
- understand the three phases of the interview process
- understand how to succeed in each stage of the interview process

COMMON TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

There are many different types of interviews being used in today's job market. Understanding the most common interview formats will help you manage your expectations and prepare better.

- **Structured or formal:** This type of interview is very common and is used as a standardized method of comparing multiple candidates. The candidate is invited to attend a face-to-face meeting with the hiring personnel. In this format, an employer develops questions that will help assess the skills and experiences they are seeking to fulfill the requirements of the position. Many employers will have a rubric or scoring system for each question. A score is given based on the appropriateness of the candidates' answers and then these scores are compared as a method of determining the most suitable candidate.
- **Unstructured or informal:** This type of interview is more casual, and may have some prepared questions, but is typically less structured. The questions may be determined or changed depending on the candidate's responses or the direction of the conversation. In this method, the candidate has the opportunity to discuss their skills and qualifications more openly, emphasizing more of what they feel is important.
- **Prescreening, video, or telephone:** In an attempt to narrow the candidate pool, a telephone or video interview may be used for initial screening purposes. This interview format may also be used to interview candidates who don't reside in the same area. When taking part in a video or telephone interview, always remember to ensure your technologies are working and are charged in advance. Remove any distractions from the background. Dress and prepare as you would for an in-person interview.
- **Panel:** In a panel interview, a group of interviewers, typically two to five people from various positions and roles in the company, will take turns asking questions to one candidate. By

having multiple opinions involved in the hiring decision, the employer will have a broader, more objective viewpoint when making a decision on which candidate will be most suitable. During your interview, it is important to engage all of the panelists, therefore, as you answer each question, ensure that you are shifting your eye contact to address each one of them.

- **Group:** Often the group interview is used in order for an organization to save on time and resources by screening a larger number of candidates at the same time. The structure of a group interview may look different from employer to employer, but typically includes a series of questions to observe how candidates communicate, interact with people, and react under pressure.
- **Performance, testing, or presentation:** This type of interview can be arranged during a separate time or as part of a face-to-face interview. During this time, an interviewer asks the candidate to perform specified tasks related to the job within a limited timeframe. Employers cannot always make a hiring decision solely based on interview performance, therefore, depending on the job requirements, they may decide to test an individual's ability as part of the hiring process. For example, for an administrative assistant position, you may be tested on your ability to use Microsoft Excel, for a hairdressing position you may be asked to perform a haircut, or for a teacher you may be asked to give a presentation.

4.1 INTERVIEW SKILLS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reviewing this information, you will be able to

- discuss the do and don't of employment interviewing.
- understand the three phases of the interview process
- understand how to succeed in each stage of the interview process

INTRODUCTION

We all join communities, teams, and groups across our lifetimes. We go from an unknown outsider to a new member and eventually a full member. Businesses and organizations are communities consisting of teams and groups, and if we decide to switch teams or communities, or if that decision is made for us with a reduction in force layoff, for example, we'll be back on the job market. In order to make the transition from a outsider to an insider, you'll have to pass a series of tests, both informal and formal. One of the most common tests is otherwise known as an employment interview. An employment interview is an exchange between a candidate and a prospective employer (or their representative). It is a formal process with several consistent elements that you can use to guide your preparation.

Employment interviews come in all shapes and sizes, and may not be limited to only one exchange or one interaction. A potential employee may very well be screened by a computer (as the résumé is scanned) and interviewed online or via the telephone before the applicant ever meets a representative or panel of representatives. The screening process may include formal tests that include personality tests, background investigations, and consultations with previous employers. Depending on the type of job you are seeking, you can anticipate answering questions, often more than once, to a series of people as you progress through a formal interview process. Just as you have the advantage of preparing for a speech, you can apply the same research and public speaking skills to the employment interview.

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https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=130#h5p-65

Let's examine this process in more detail.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

The invitation to interview means you have been identified as a candidate who meets the minimum qualifications and demonstrate potential as a future employee. Your cover letter, résumé, or related application materials may demonstrate the connection between your preparation and the job duties, but now comes the moment where you will need to articulate those points out loud.

If we assume that you would like to be successful in your employment interviewing, then it makes sense to use the communication skills gained to date with the knowledge of interpersonal communication to maximize your performance. There is no one right or wrong way to prepare and present at your interview, just as each audience is unique, but prepare in anticipation of several common elements.

PREPARATION

The right frame of mind is an essential element for success in communication, oral or written. For many, if not most, the employment interview is surrounded with mystery and a degree of fear and trepidation. Just as giving a speech may produce a certain measure of anxiety, you can expect that a job interview will make you nervous. Anticipate this normal response, and use your nervous energy to your benefit. To place your energies where they will be put to best use, the first step is preparation.

Briefly, the employment interview is a conversational exchange (even if it is in writing at first) where the participants try to learn more about each other. Both conversational partners will have goals in terms of content, and explicitly or implicitly across the conversational exchange will be relational messages. Attending to both points will strengthen your performance.

Figure 49.1: There are a number of considerations before going into a job interview. ([Doyle](), 2020)

On the content side, if you have been invited for an interview, you can rest assured that you have met the basic qualifications the employer is looking for. Hopefully, this initiation signal means that the company or organization you have thoroughly researched is one you would consider as a potential employer. Perhaps you have involved colleagues and current employees of the organization in your research process and learned about several of the organization's attractive qualities as well as some of the challenges experienced by the people working there.

Businesses hire people to solve problems, so you will want to focus on how your talents, expertise, and experience can contribute to the organization's need to solve those problems. The more detailed your analysis of their current challenges, the better. You need to be prepared for standard questions about your education and background, but also see the opening in the conversation to discuss the job duties, the challenges inherent in the job, and the ways in which you believe you can meet these challenges. Take the opportunity to demonstrate the fact that you have "done your homework" in researching the company. Table 3.3.1 "Interview Preparation Checklist" presents a checklist of what you should try to know before you consider yourself prepared for an interview.

TABLE 3.3.1 INTERVIEW PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Table 3.3.1 Interview Preparation Checklist

What to Know	Examples
Type of Interview	Will it be a behavioral interview, where the employer watches what you do in a given situation? Will you be asked technical questions or given a work sample? Or will you be interviewed over lunch or coffee, where your table manners and social skills will be assessed?
Type of Dress	Office attire varies by industry, so stop by the workplace and observe what workers are wearing if you can. If this isn't possible, call and ask the human resources office what to wear—they will appreciate your wish to be prepared.
Company or Organization	Do a thorough exploration of the company's Web site. If it doesn't have one, look for business listings in the community online and in the phone directory. Contact the local chamber of commerce. At your library, you may have access to subscription sites such as Hoover's Online[1]
Job	Carefully read the ad you answered that got you the interview, and memorize what it says about the job and the qualifications the employer is seeking. Use the Internet to find sample job descriptions for your target job title. Make a written list of the job tasks and annotate the list with your skills, knowledge, and other attributes that will enable you to perform the job tasks with excellence.
Employer's Needs	Check for any items in the news in the past couple of years involving the company name. If it is a small company, the local town newspaper will be your best source. In addition, look for any advertisements the company has placed, as these can give a good indication of the company's goals.

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https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=130#h5p-66

PERFORMANCE

To prepare for an employment interview, research the company, market, and even individuals in your effort to learn more about the opportunity. From this solid base of preparation, you need to begin to prepare your responses. Would you like some of the test questions before the test? Luckily for you, employment interviews involve a degree of uniformity across their many representations. Here are eleven common questions you are likely to be asked in an employment interview

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Have you ever done this type of work before?
3. Why should we hire you?
4. What are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
5. Give me an example of a time when you worked under pressure.
6. Tell me about a time you encountered (X) type of problem at work. How did you solve the problem?
7. Why did you leave your last job?
8. How has your education and/or experience prepared you for this job?
9. Why do you want to work here?
10. What are your long-range goals? Where do you see yourself three years from now?
11. Do you have any questions?[2]

When you are asked a question in the interview, look for its purpose as well as its literal meaning. "Tell me about yourself" may sound like an invitation for you to share your text message win in last year's competition, but it is not. The employer is looking for someone who can address their needs. Telling the interviewer about yourself is an opportunity for you make a positive professional impression. Consider what experience you can highlight that aligns well with the job duties and match your response to their needs.

In the same way, responses about your strengths are not an opening to brag, and your weakness not an invitation to confess. If your weakness is a tendency towards perfectionism, and the job you are applying for involves a detail orientation, you can highlight how your weaknesses may serve you well in the position.

Consider using the "because" response whenever you can. A "because" response involves the restatement of the question followed by a statement of how and where you gained education or experience in that area. For example, if you are asked about handling difficult customers, you could answer that you have significant experience in that area because you've served as a customer service representative with X company for X years. You may be able to articulate how you were able to turn an encounter with a frustrated customer into a long-term relationship that benefited both the customer and the organization. Your specific example, and use of a "because" response, can increase the likelihood that the interviewer or audience will recall the specific information you provide.

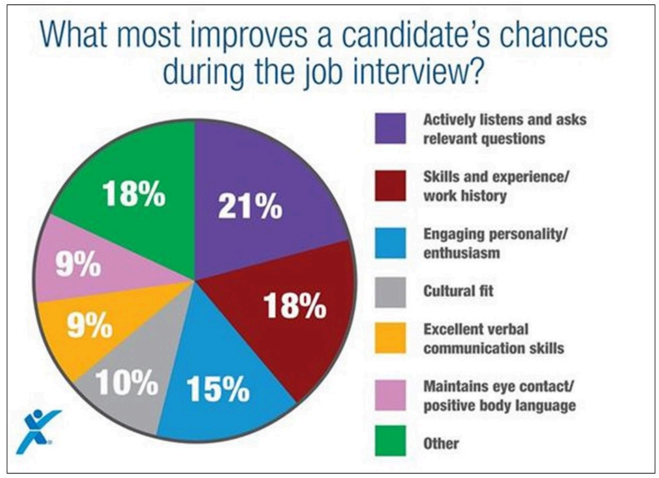

Figure 49.2: A survey of 2,169 business leaders reveals that using active listening skills and asking relevant questions improves the chances of securing employment. (GlobalNewswire, 2018).

You may be invited to participate in a conference call, and be told to expect the call will last around twenty minutes. The telephone carries your voice and your words, but doesn't carry any visual cues. If you remember to speak directly into the telephone, look up and smile, your voice will come through clearly, and you will sound competent and pleasant. Whatever you do, don't take the call on a cell phone with an iffy connection—your interviewers are guaranteed to be unfavorably impressed if you keep breaking up during the call. Use the phone to your advantage by preparing responses on note cards or on your computer screen before the call. When the interviewers ask you questions, keep track of the time, limiting each response to about a minute. If you know that a twenty-minute call is scheduled for a certain time, you can anticipate that your phone may ring may be a minute or two late, as interviews are often scheduled in a series while the committee is all together at one time. Even if you only have one interview, your interviewers will have a schedule, and your sensitivity to it can help improve your performance.

You can also anticipate that the last few minutes will be set aside for you to ask your questions. This is your opportunity to learn more about the problems or challenges that the position will be addressing, allowing you a final opportunity to reinforce a positive message with the audience. Keep your questions simple, your attitude positive, and communicate your interest.

At the same time as you are being interviewed, know that you too are interviewing the prospective employer. If you have done your homework you may already know what the organization is all about, but you may still be unsure whether it is the right fit for you. Listen and learn from what is said as well as what is not said, and you will add to your knowledge base for wise decision making in the future.

Above all, be honest, positive, and brief. You may have heard that the world is small and it is true. As you develop professionally, you will come to see how fields, organizations, and companies are interconnected in ways that you cannot anticipate. Your name and reputation are yours to protect and promote.

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https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=130#h5p-67

POST-PERFORMANCE

You completed your research of the organization, interviewed a couple of employees, learned more about the position, were on time for the interview (virtual or in person), wore neat and professional clothes, and demonstrated professionalism in your brief, informative responses. Congratulations are in order, but so is more work on your part.

Remember that feedback is part of the communication process: follow up promptly with a thank-you note or e-mail, expressing your appreciation for the interviewer's time and interest. You may also indicate that you will call or e-mail next week to see if they have any further questions for you. (Naturally, if you say you will do this, make sure you follow through!) In the event that you have decided the position is not right for you, the employer will appreciate your notifying them without delay. Do this tactfully, keeping in mind that communication occurs between individuals and organizations in ways you cannot predict.

After you have communicated with your interviewer or committee, move on. Candidates sometimes become quite fixated on one position or job and fail to keep their options open. The best person does not always get the job, and the prepared business communicator knows that networking and research is a never-ending, ongoing process. Look over the horizon at the next challenge and begin your research process again. It may be hard work, but getting a job is your job. Budget time and plan on the effort it will take to make the next contact, get the next interview, and continue to explore alternate paths to your goal.

You may receive a letter, note, or voice mail explaining that another candidate's combination of experience and education better matched the job description. If this happens, it is only natural for you to feel disappointed. It is also only natural to want to know why you were not chosen, but be aware that for legal reasons most rejection notifications do not go into detail about why one candidate was hired and another was not. Contacting the company with a request for an explanation can be counterproductive, as it may be interpreted as a "sore loser" response. If there is any possibility that they will keep your name on file for future opportunities, you want to preserve your positive relationship.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online

here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=130#h5p-68

CONCLUSION

Although you feel disappointed, don't focus on the loss or all the hard work you've produced. Instead, focus your energies where they will serve you best. Review the process and learn from the experience, knowing that each audience is unique and even the most prepared candidate may not have been the right "fit." Stay positive and connect with people who support you. Prepare, practice, and perform. Know that you as a person are far more than just a list of job duties. Focus on your skill sets: if they need improvement, consider additional education that will enhance you knowledge and skills. Seek out local resources and keep networking. Have your professional interview attire clean and ready, and focus on what you can control—your preparation and performance.

Exercises

1. Find a job announcement of a position that might interest you after you graduate or reach your professional goal. Write a brief statement of what experience and education you currently have that applies to the position and note what you currently lack
2. What are the common tasks and duties of a job you find interesting? Create a survey, identify people who hold a similar position, and interview them (via e-mail or in person).
3. What has been your employment interview experience to date? Write a brief statement and provide examples.

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Source: Unit 49 Interview Skills in Chapter 13 in *Communication @ Work Seneca* Edition.

Notes

1. (http://www.hoovers.com).
2. (McLean, 2005)

CHAPTER 5: REPORTS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to

- understand the purpose of reports
- understand report organization
- identify different types of reports
- identify the parts and contents of reports
- construct different types of reports

INTRODUCTION

A vital part of any business or organization, reports document specific information for specific audiences, goals, or functions. The type of report is often identified by its primary purpose or function, as in an accident report, a laboratory report, a sales report, or even a book report.

> Business reports help companies make decisions and solve business problems.

Reports are often analytical but sometimes just "report the facts" with no analysis at all. Other reports summarize past events, present current data, and forecast future trends. While a report may have conclusions, propositions, or even calls to action, presenting analysis is the primary function. A sales report, for example, is not designed to make an individual sale. It is, however, supposed to report sales to date and may forecast future sales based on previous trends [1].

Before delving into reports in detail, let's review the advantages, disadvantages, and occasions for writing them.

Table Excerpt: Report Pros, Cons, and Proper use

Channel	Advantages	Disadvantages	Expectations	Appropriate Use
Report	Allows presentation of a high volume of information presenting research and analysis	Time-consuming to write with proper research documentation and visual content	Follow conventions for organizing information according to the size of the report, audience, and purpose	For providing thorough business intelligence on topics important to an organization's operation
	Can take various forms such as a document booklet or proposal for reading alone	Time-consuming for the busy professional to read or an audience to take in	Visual aids should be covered in the text	For persuading audiences with well-developed arguments (e.g., recommendation reports)
				For persuading audiences with well-developed arguments (e.g., recommendation reports)

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https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=82#h5p-41

Exercises

1. Find an annual report for a business you would like to learn more about. Write a review for it and share it with classmates.

2. Write a report on a trend in business that you've observed. For example, write a report recommending open textbooks as a solution to the rising cost of traditional textbooks being a significant issue for students.

References

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University of South Australia. (2017). *Study Help: Report writing* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GV4yMF8vx6o

Chapter 11 Reports in *Communication @ Work Seneca* Edition.

Notes

1. (*Business Communication for Success,* 2015)

5.1 REPORT OBJECTIVE: INFORMATIONAL AND ANALYTICAL

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reviewing this information, you will be able to

- understand the purpose of analytical reports
- understand the purpose of informational reports

INTRODUCTION

Reports come in all shapes and sizes—from a couple of soft-copy pages shared electronically to a book-sized binder. The type of report depends on its function as expressed in the purpose statement. The function also influences the writing style and other elements such as visual content (figures) and presentation of numerical values. Reports also vary by style and tradition. Regardless of their specific function or type, however, there are two main categories of reports: informational and analytical.

Informational reports provide facts, data, feedback, and other types of information to assist management to make decisions. Informational reports do not provide an analysis or interpretation of information and do not provide recommendations. An example of this type of "just the facts" report is a police accident report. The report will note the time, date, place, contributing factors like weather, and identification information for the drivers involved in an automobile accident. It does not establish fault or include judgmental statements. You should not see "Driver was falling down drunk" in a police accident report. Instead, you would see "Driver failed sobriety tests and breathalyzer test and was transported to the station for a blood sample." The police officer is not a trained medical doctor licensed to make definitive diagnoses but can collect and present relevant information that may contribute to a diagnosis.

Analytical reports provide facts, data, feedback and other types of information, but they also provide analysis, interpretation, and recommendations. For instance, a field report by a Public Health Agency of Canada physician from the site of an outbreak of the H1N1 virus will note symptoms, disease progression, and steps taken to arrest the spread of the disease. It will ultimately make recommendations on the treatment and quarantine of subjects. Figure 22.1 below includes common reports that, depending on the audience's needs, maybe informational or analytical.([1]

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Informational	Analytical
Characteristics	Characteristics
Provides facts, data, feedback and other types of information	Provides facts, data, feedback and other types of information
Does not analyze or interpret information	Does analyze and interpret information
Does not provide recommendations	Does provide recommendations

Figure 5.1.1 notes important similarities and differences between informational and analytical reports.

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https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=86#h5p-43

ANALYTICAL AND INFORMATION REPORT PURPOSE

Each report purpose is best suited for specific types of reports. Figure 22.2 below provides an overview of the most appropriate business situations to use an informational or analytical report.

Figure 5.1.2 Informational and Analytical Reports

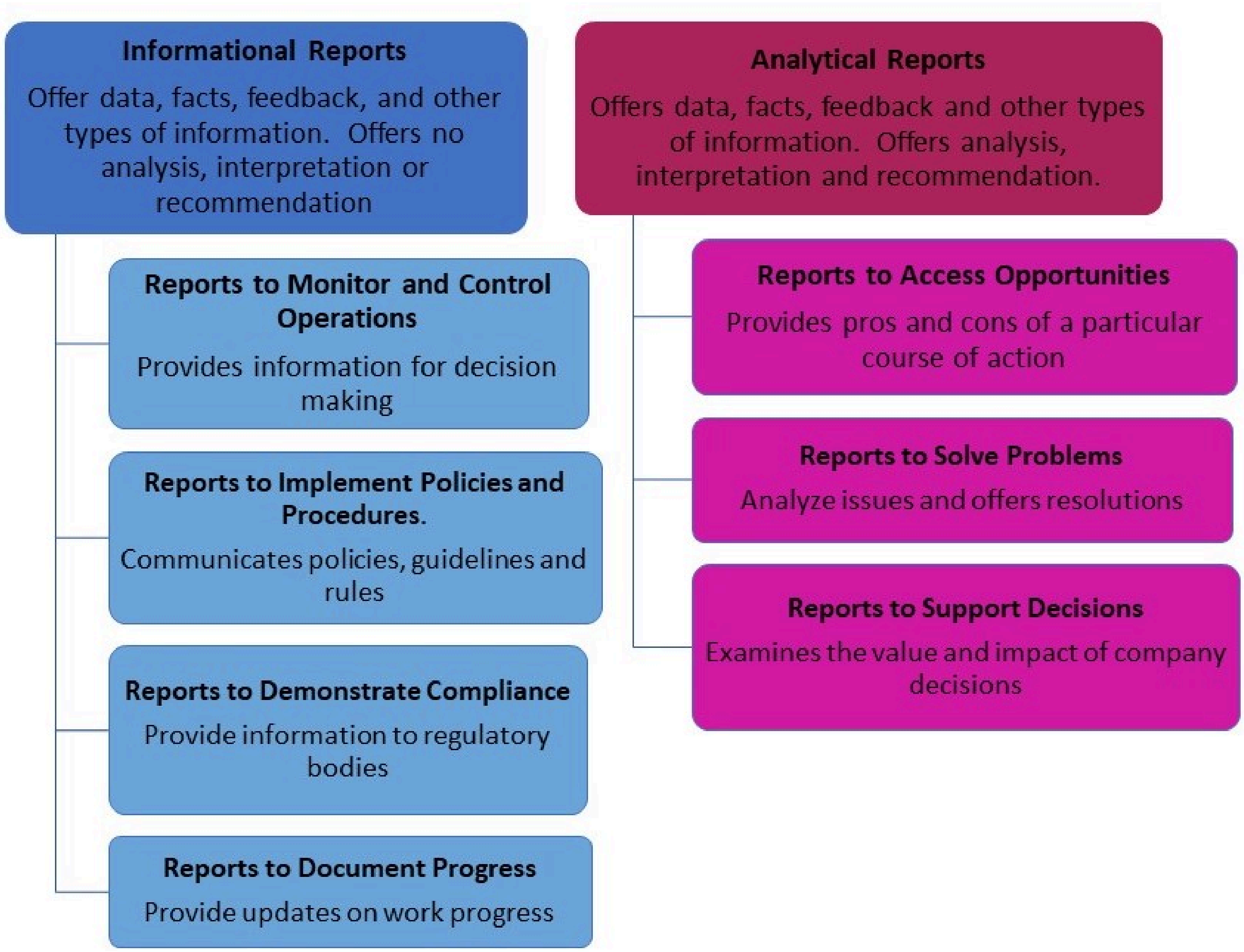

Figure 5.1.2 provides an overview of when to use informational and analytical reports to communicate your business messages.[2]

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https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=86#h5p-44

Exercise

Select a Fortune 500 company that appeals to you and search recent tweets and Facebook posts about it. Write either an informational or analytical report about the company you chose. In an informational report, summarize your findings in memo form or as an email. Alternatively, you could write an analytical report analyzing the strategies the company adopts in responding to tweets and Facebook posts.

References

Bovee, C., Thill, J., & Scribner, J. (2016). *Business communication essentials* (4th ed.). Toronto, ON: Pearson Canada Inc. Retrieved from http://www.pearsoncanada.ca/highered/product-showcase/new-solutions-for-core-foundations-from-pearson-canada/business-communication-essentials-fourth-canadian-edition-4e

Guffey, M., Loewry, D., Rhodes, K., Rogin, P. (2016). *Business communication: Process and product* (5th ed.). Toronto, ON: Nelson Education. Retrieved from http://www.cengage.com/cgi-wadsworth/course_products_wp.pl?fid=M20b&product_isbn_issn=9780176531393&template=NELSON

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Notes

1. *Business Communication for Success, 2015*; Business Communication Essentials, 2016)
2. (Business Communication Essentials , 2016)

5.2 REPORT ORGANIZATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to

- understand how reports are organized

INTRODUCTION

Because reports vary by size, format, and function, writing them involves adjusting to the needs of the audience while respecting conventions and guidelines. Reports are typically organized around six key elements, the 5Ws + H:

1. Whom 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, or those who have an interest in the report. That may include the person(s) the report is about, whom it is for, and the larger audience of the business, organization, or industry. Ask yourself who are the key decision-makers reading the report, who the experts or technicians will be, and how executives and workers may interpret your words and images.[1]

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ORGANIZATION PATTERN

Although reports have the same sections, the audience, purpose and content of a report will influence the report's organizing pattern: **direct or indirect.**

> A direct approach report presents the main idea followed by facts and findings

DIRECT PATTERN

Direct reports contain routine, nonsensitive information. Reports using this organizing pattern will present the most important findings first followed by facts, data and other explanatory details. Thus, the direct approach is most appropriate for **informational reports**. In addition, when the receiver is likely to be in agreement with and accepting of the report's information and recommendations, the direct approach can also be applied to **analytical reports.** This approach allows the receiver to access relevant information in a quick, efficient and easy to follow manner.

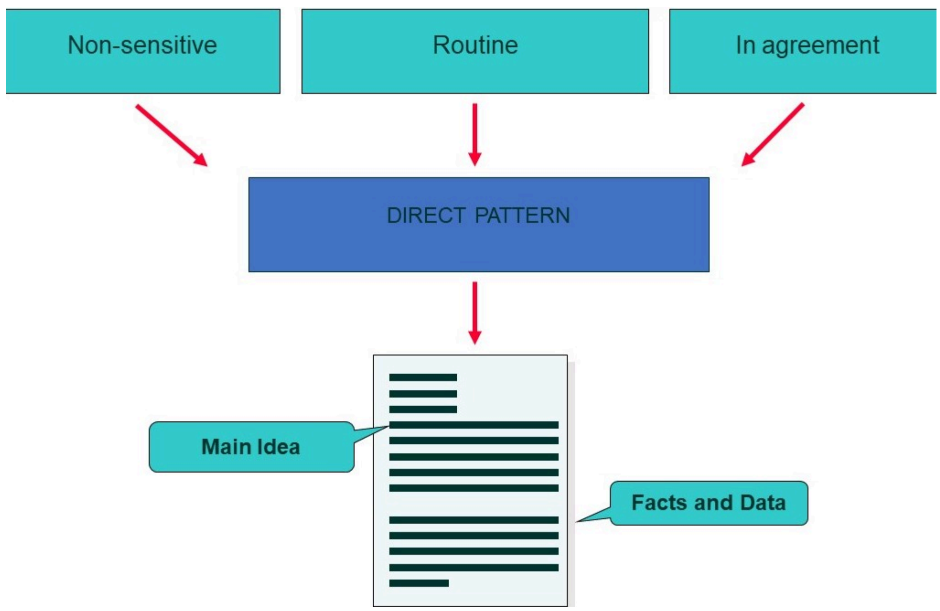

Figure 5.2..1 presents the organizing pattern of a direct report.

> An indirect approach report presents the facts and findings followed by the main idea.

INDIRECT PATTERN

An indirect approach may contain sensitive, controversial, debated or unpleasant information. As a consequence, not all readers will be knowledgeable of, in agreement with, or accepting of the information and/or recommendations made in the report. For this reason, the indirect approach is used when the audience must be educated about or persuaded of the credibility of the information presented and the merits of the recommendations made. An indirect report presents the facts, data and other explanatory details before presenting its conclusions and recommendations. Since only analytical reports present recommendations, the indirect approach is used exclusively with **analytical reports**.[2]

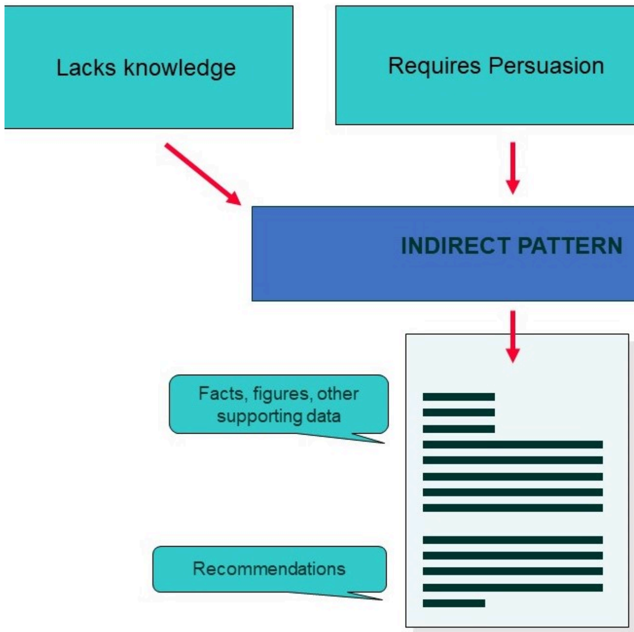

Figure 5.2.2 shows the organizing pattern of an indirect report.

ORDERING INFORMATION

In addition to determining if your report will use the direct or indirect approach, information must also be organized to help the reader understand the information. Five of the more useful ways to organize information are presented below.

INFORMATION ORGANIZATION METHODS

Time	Component	Importance	Criteria	Convention
Time organization is used to provide information in the order of events (e.g. what happened first, second, etc.). Using time to write trip reports and progress reports is particularly effective.	A component organizing system is used primarily for informational reports. Here elements such as location, geography, division, product or parts is used to present the data.	Reports organized according to importance my present the most important information first and then proceed to the least important information—or visa versa.	Reports organized via criteria establish standards or benchmarks to assess different options, plans, strategies, and products.	Reports created using a prescribed template are said to be organized using convention. Many short information reports use convention as their organizing principle.

Figure 5.2.2 presents five ways to organize information to assist reader comprehension.

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https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=93#h5p-46

Exercise

Think of a problem or challenge you have observed or experienced at your workplace. Do you have an idea or a solution that would help to reduce costs, improve customer service, improve quality, etc? Before beginning, consider the organizational principles presented in this section to determine how best to organize your information to receive the best possible response from your boss. Now write the report.

References

Bovee, C., Thill, J., & Scribner, J. (2016). *Business communication essentials* (4th ed.). Toronto, ON: Pearson Canada Inc. Retrieved from http://www.pearsoncanada.ca/highered/product-showcase/new-solutions-for-core-foundations-from-pearson-canada/business-communication-essentials-fourth-canadian-edition-4e

Meyer, C. (2017). Communicating for results (4th ed.). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from https://oup-arc.com/access/meyer-4e-student-resources#tag_case-studies.

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Notes

1. (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015)
2. (Business Communication Essentials, 2016; Communicating for Results, 2017)

5.3 REPORT TYPE AND FUNCTION: INFORMAL REPORT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to

- identify different types of reports
- Identify the different functions of reports

INTRODUCTION

Depending on the complexity and depth of content, reports are categorized as either informal or formal. Whatever the type, all reports provide the information that people in an organization need to solve problems and make decisions.

The **informal report** is 10 pages or under, and for this reason, informal reports are also referred to as the **short report**. Informal reports can have both an internal and external audience, but are mostly written for an internal audience. For internal audiences, the informal report is constructed as a memo or email report; for the external audience, the informal report is constructed as a letter or email report.

> The informal report is the most routine of all reports and the type you will have to write most often

In addition, the informal report can be informational or analytical in nature. The informational report contains non-sensitive, routine information, often presented in a prescribed format such as a fill-in-the-blank form. For this reason, the sections of an informational report include the introduction, findings, and conclusion. In contrast, the short analytical report seeks to answer questions about specific problems with the aim of solving those problems. How can we use social media more effectively? Should we close or open a new plant? How can customer service be improved? Therefore, the short analytical report not only includes an introduction, findings, and conclusion, but also recommendations.

Table 5.3.3 Informational and Analytical Short Report Sections

Short Informational Reports	Short Analytical Reports
• Introduction • Findings • Conclusion	• Introduction • Findings • Conclusion • Recommendation

The order of the sections in an analytical report will depend on if you are writing a **direct** or **indirect** report

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Informal Report Types and Functions

The video above provides a general overview of the short report. In your professional life, you will find that there are many different types of short reports to respond to the many different activities, duties, and responsibilities in business organizations. Table 22.2 below provides an overview of numerous types of short reports and their functions.

Table 5.3.4 Types and Function of Informal Reports

Informational Reports	Analytical Reports
Incident Report: Describes events in the workplace to officially document them for legal and insurance purposes	**Benchmark/Yardstick Report:** Evaluates two or more solutions to a single problem to determine the best solution.
Progress Report: Monitors and controls production, sales, shipping, service, or related business processes	**Feasibility Report:** Assesses the advisability of doing a project or proceeding with a specific course of action
Compliance Report: Documents and indicates the extent to which a product or service is within established compliance parameters or standards	**Recommendation Report:** Makes recommendations to management and serves as a tool to solve problems and make executive decisions
Financial Report: Analyzes status and trends from a finance perspective	
Investigative Report: Responds to a request for information about a specific problem or situation.	
Activity Report: Document the ongoing activities or projects of a division or department.	

Note: a review of the many different functions short informational and analytical reports serve in an organization.[1]

Labels and Section Headers

Although the informal report is short, any document that is two pages or longer should include a feature that helps to separate information into unique sections. Utilizing headers for any report in excess of 2-pages creates a better organized report and assists readers to understand, locate, and retain information.[2]

A QUICK COMPARISON: USING HEADINGS?

Take a look at these two dummy texts to compare the structure of an informal report without headings and an informal report that uses headings. (Note that these examples only show the formatting of a report, not the ideal way to write one.)

No Headings	Using Headings
General Store is opening a new location in Q4 of this upcoming year. There are three potential locations for this new store. In my research, I found that location one is in a poorly trafficked area, but is more affordable. Location two is in a highly trafficked area, but is out of the current budget. Location three is just right. After this research, I can conclude that General Store should open its new store at location three.	**Background** General Store is opening a new location in Q4 of this upcoming year. There are three potential locations for this new store. **Findings** Location one is in a poorly trafficked area, but is more affordable. Location two is in a highly trafficked area, but is out of the current budget. Location three is just right. **Recommendation** General Store should open its new store at location three.

Figure 5.3.4 illustrates the effectiveness of using headers to separate information. Notice how much easier it is to locate information via headers.[3]

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https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=99#h5p-48

Exercise

1. Select one of the following questions on which to base a report, and create an outline that contains functional and descriptive headings.

  - Should online retailers compile customer profiles to help market their products?
  - Do people over 40 suffer ageism in the IT industry?
  - Can contemporary pop-up stores play a role in the marketing of new products?

2. Review a long business article in a journal or newspaper. Highlight examples of how the article uses headings, transitions, previews, and reviews to help readers find their way.

References

#1 Bovee, C., Thill, J., & Scribner, J. (2016). *Business communication essentials* (4th ed.). Toronto, ON: Pearson Canada Inc. Retrieved from http://www.pearsoncanada.ca/highered/product-showcase/new-solutions-for-core-foundations-from-pearson-canada/business-communication-essentials-fourth-canadian-edition-4e

GreggLearning. (2019). *Guidelines to writing short business reports* [Video]. Youtube. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TW-1aan4nFs

#2 Guffey, M., Loewry, D., Rhodes, K., Rogin, P. (2016). *Business communication: Process and product* (5th ed.). Toronto, ON: Nelson Education. Retrieved from http://www.cengage.com/cgi-wadsworth/course_products_wp.pl?fid=M20b&product_isbn_issn=9780176531393&template=NELSON

#3 Lumen (n.d.). Informal reports. *Business communications skills for managers*. Retrieved January 12, 2020 from https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wmopen-businesscommunicationmgrs/chapter/informal-reports/

#2 Meyer, C. (2017). *Communicating for results* (4th ed.). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from https://oup-arc.com/access/meyer-4e-student-resources#tag_case-studies

5.4 REPORT TYPE AND FUNCTION: FORMAL REPORT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to

- understand the function of a formal report

INTRODUCTION

A formal report is a document that analyzes information, determines conclusions, and offers recommendations to solve problems. Formal reports are the result of the gathering and analysis of large amounts of data. This data is then presented to decision makers in business, industry, and government to aid in the process of making important decisions. Formal reports are longer (10+ pages) and are therefore also referred to as **long reports**. Long reports have a more formal tone, tackle complex and challenging topics, and are almost always analytical in nature. Similar to informal reports, formal reports are also organized into sections and utilize headings and subheadings to help readers access information. The following video provides and comprehensive overview of the long report.

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https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=103#h5p-49

CONDUCTING RESEARCH

An informal report may be written without including any research. However, the same cannot be said of the formal report. Because of the scope and complexity of formal reports, there is a need for in-depth and extensive data research and analysis. Collecting research is a critical part of writing the formal report. The conclusions made and the recommendations that follow should be based on facts, statistics, expert knowledge and other forms of information. Thus, collecting credible, up-to-date, and reliable information is a critical part of writing a formal report. Given the easy access to research databases, the internet, and other sources of digitized information, collecting information is nearly effortless today.

Table 5.4.5 Types of Report Data

Form of Data	Questions to Ask
Background or historical	How much does my reader know? Has this topic/issue been investigated before? Are the sources current, relevant, and/or credible?
Statistical	What/who is the source? How recent is data? What is source of information?
Expert opinion	Who is the expert? Is information bias? Is the information published?
Individual or group opinion	Whose opinion will the reader value? Have surveys/interviews been conducted on topic? Would conducting a survey or questionnaire be useful? Would focus groups provide useful information?
Organizational	Is in-house data available? How can I learn about public and private companies?

Note: The table presents various types of data and the questions to ask to ensure the credibility and reliability of collected information.[footnote](Business Communication: Process and Product , 2017).[/footnote]

DOCUMENTATION

Whenever research based on other people's work is included in a report, credit must be given to that work. This is called documentation. Proper documentation adds credibility to the information presented in a report and protects the writer against charges of plagiarism. Famous historians, high-level journalists, politicians, and educators have suffered grave consequences for not providing the required documentation.

To add clarity to writing and avoid charges of plagiarism, document the following:

- another person's ideas, opinions, examples, or theory
- Any facts, statistics, graphs, and drawings that are not common knowledge
- Quotations or another person's actual spoken or written words

- Paraphrases of another person's spoken or written words
- Visuals, images, and any kind of electronic media

Learn more by taking **NSCC's Academic Integrity Tutorial**.

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Additional Resources

- NSCC Academic Integrity Subject guide
- NSCC APA Citation Guide

Exercise

1. Select five business articles from a combination of print and online resources. Using APA, develop a Reference list of those resources.
2. Select a professional journal for your field of study. Select an article that is at least five pages long, of interest to you, and provides information on emerging trends in your field. Write an executive summary of the article for a busy executive who does not have time to read the entire article but who needs to stay current on what is happening in your field of expertise.

References

Acadia University. (2017). You quote it, you note it. *Vaughan Memorial Library*. Retrieved on January 14, 2020, from https://library.acadiau.ca/files/sites/library/tutorials/flash/you_quote_it_you_note_it/index.html

GreggLearning. (2019). *Writing long reports* [Video]. Youtube. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szFDwdS-D8k

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5.5 REPORT PARTS – INFORMAL AND FORMAL

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to

- understand the parts of an informal report
- understand the parts of a formal report

INTRODUCTION

Informal reports differ from formal reports in their length, purpose, and content. Nonetheless, the parts of an informal and formal report can be divided into three components: **front matter**, the parts of a report that precede the main body and contain introductory and background information that provides the context for the remainder of the report; **body**, the presentation of facts, statistics, expert opinion and other forms of research that provide the basis for any decisions made; and **back matter**, the parts of a report that follow the main body and provides the credentials for the data presented and other supplemental information. Figure 5.5.5 organizes the parts of an informal and formal report into the three components.

PARTS OF INFORMAL AND FORMAL REPORTS

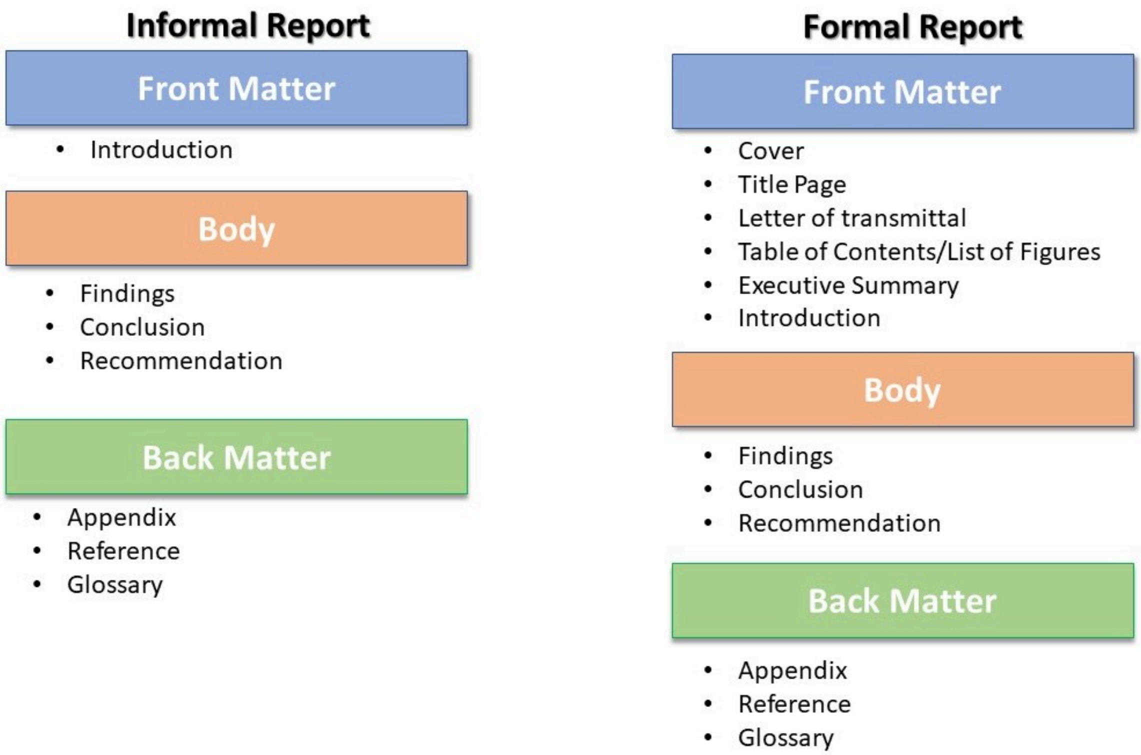

Figure 5.5.5 presents the parts of an informal and formal report.

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To understand the function of each part of an informal and formal report consult the Table below. Here the function of each part as well as information on how to compose each part of an informal or formal report is provided.

TABLE – COMMON FORMAL BUSINESS REPORT ELEMENTS

Table – Common Formal Business Report Elements

Part	Function	Example
Front Matter		
Letter of Transmittal	Optional cover letter that addresses the report's intended recipients and introduces it	See How to Write a Transmittal or Cover Letter (public.wsu.edu)
Cover	Title and image Gives the reader an immediate sense of what the report is all about	See Papers and Reports templates (Microsoft Office, 2014)
Title fly	Title only Optional	Feasibility Study of Oil Recovery from the X Tarpit Sands Location
Title page	Label, report, features title, author, affiliation, date, and sometimes for whom the report was prepared.	Feasibility Study of Oil Recovery from the X Tarpit Sands Location Peak Oilman, X Energy Corporation Prepared for X
Table of Contents	A list of the main parts of the report and their respective page numbers. Orients the reader around the scope of the report and helps them find specific information.	Abstract……………1 Introduction………..2 Background………..3
List of Illustrations	A list of figures and tables to help readers locate them. The list may be included as part of the TOC or as its own separate page.	Figure 1……………5 Figure 2……………7 Table 1………………3
Executive Summary	Presents an overview of the entire report for readers who may not have time to read the details of the full report.	Review the steps and an example of well and poorly developed executive summaries.
Abstract	Enables the reader to get a sense of the entire report at a glance to make quick decisions based on the findings	Learn the strategy for developing informative and descriptive abstracts.
Introduction	Introduces the topic of the report Establishes the context in which the report topic makes sense	Review these examples of how to write a Purpose Statement and an introduction.
Body		
Findings	Most extensive part of the report that presents the facts, statistics and expert opinion included in report.	Use the links to find keys to writing the findings section, including information on integrating graphics, integrating research, and using headers.
Conclusion	Summarizes the key finding presented in the report	Review information and complete exercises on writing a conclusion.
Recommendations	Outlines specific action to be taken to address issues and problems.	Review the recommendation writing process.
Back Matter		
References	List of sources referenced/cited throughout the report	This online module on references provides vital information.
Appendix	Related supporting materials. May include specialized supplemental materials.	Find an overview of creating appendices here.

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Exercises

1. You are writing an analytical report on the Canadian sales of your company's newest product (you can decide on the product). Of the following topics, identify what section of the report should include each topic. Briefly explain your decisions.

- Regional breakdown of sales across the country
- Date the product was released in the marketplace
- Sales figures from competitors selling the same products worldwide
- Prediction of how the Canadian economy will affect sales over the next six months
- Methods used to obtain those predictions
- Suggestions for how the company should proceed in the marketplace
- Actions that must be completed by year's end to ensure successful market presence

References

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5.6 THE SLIDE DECK REPORT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to

- understand the difference between a slide deck, presentation, and written report
- understand the importance of slide decks
- know the steps in the slide deck design process

INTRODUCTION

In the modern day business environment, reports are also delivered as digital documents called slide decks. **Slide decks** are digital reports that can be delivered via email or uploaded to an online site. Slide decks are a midway point between traditional presentations and written reports. Although a slide deck is a presentation, it is meant to be read by the receiver, not presented by the sender. A slide deck contains more text and fewer images than a typical presentation, but less text and more images than a written report. These characteristics make slide decks more inviting to read and easier to understand than written reports while providing more information than a typical presentation. For this reason, more and more professional fields are using slide decks to organize, summarize and present information on a wide range of business functions and trends.

Figure 5.6.1: Image of a slide deck report that combines reduced amounts of text and visuals to effectively communicate information (Business Communication, 2019).

DESIGNING A SLIDE DECK

In the video below, a pioneer in the field of slide deck presentations, Nancy Duarte, provides some tips on designing slide decks.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=111#h5p-53

WHY USE SLIDE DECKS

Slide decks have become popular in business for several good reasons.

Pre-meeting Document: Slide decks present information in a short, easy-to-read, accessible format. It's normal to provide information in advance to meeting attendees. The accessible characteristic of a slide deck allows everyone time to preview the issues and come to the meeting ready to share their views and make decisions. Therefore, a slide deck serves as a pre-meeting document that informs participants of the important point

Independent Reading: A presentation requires a speaker to explain the information presented. However, a slide deck provides just enough information to clearly communicate the main ideas presented. Thus, a slide deck allows for independent reading and study at the receiver's pace, consequently allowing a degree of convenience normal presentations do not.

Informative Handout: Providing a handout after a meeting or presentation serves to reinforce the main messages presented. A slide deck can contain the traditional main point highlights, but it can also contain interactive elements, video, and web links so the audience is able to explore all aspects of the information.

Visual Impact: Visuals help us communicate information quickly to different audiences. Visuals have the capacity to make complex information accessible. Thus, the visual aspect of a slide deck ensures that a larger segment of our audience is more likely to understand our message.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=111#h5p-54

STEPS IN THE DESIGN PROCESS

Choosing a Presentation Software Application

A slide deck is a presentation. Thus, different types of presentation software can be used to create your slide deck. Although the most popular presentation software maybe PowerPoint, other presentation software options such as Keynote, Google Slide, ClearSlide, and Prezi can also be used to create a slide deck presentation.

Choose a Slide Template

Your company may have preferred slide templates, but if not, choose a clean and simple slide template based on the colour palette and font of your brand. Visual consistency is the objective of the template. Each slide should feel connected by a singular feeling or theme. Keep things consistent by using a solid background colour or pattern and by using background images that have a similar colour palette. Templates can also reflect the type of organization and report. Figure 42.2 offers an example.

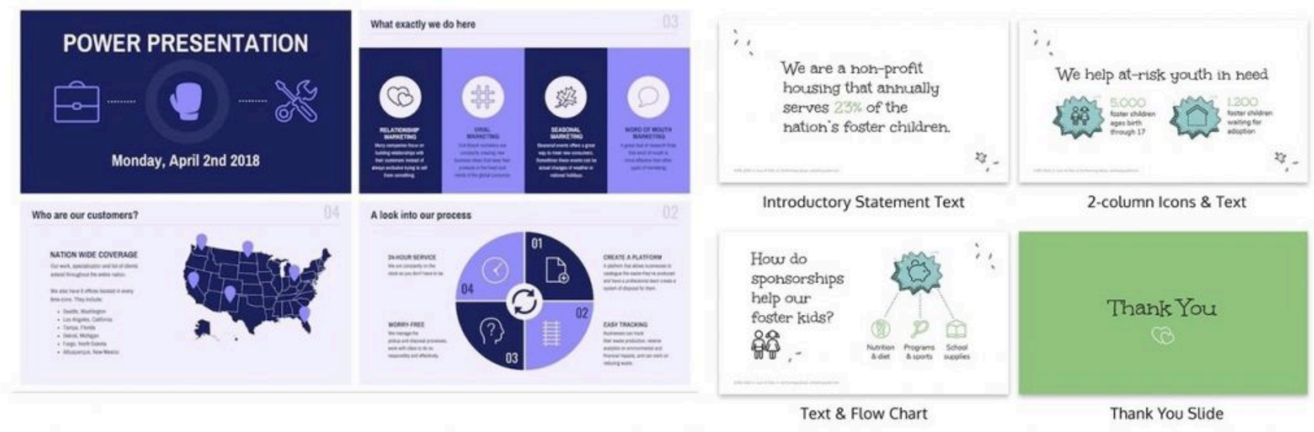

Figure 5.6.2: These two slide deck templates provide an example of consistency in colour, layout, and font, but the templates also reflect different types of reports and organizations.

MINIMIZE CONTENT

The business writing principles of short and concise writing apply to slide decks. When developing a slide deck, aim to present information in short, individual chunks of information. Avoid redundancy by only including points and visuals that are important for your audience to "see". Here are some other tips to ensure your content packs a punch.

- Sketch out your ideas on paper before using your presentation software to create your slide deck. Using a slide deck planning sheet can help you complete this step.
- Write the content and structure of the slide deck first then add supportive visuals
- Chunk your information by including only one main idea per slide
- Include one image per slide
- Use 18+ font size on each slide.
- Use only one-two different fonts
- For more complex information, use multiple slides
- Customize your slide deck to your specific audience

For additional information, view Cassie McDaniel's tutorial that features 22 tips for building great decks.

DESIGN WITH INTENTION

Colour is one of the key ways that you can communicate visually, so it's important to be purposeful. Remember, no two people interpret the same symbols in the same way. It's your job to ensure your audience does not make unconscious connections in a way that will interfere with clear communication. Use colour to help your audience highlight an important concept or to focus attention on important information. For example, think about how and when to use your company's brand colours or the colours of a competitor to help communicate your message.

Use **visuals** that add value to the conversation. Use only one visual per slide, so choose a chart, graph, infographic, etc. that will help you communicate your main point via that illustration. Simple and easy-to-understand graphics are preferable to complex and complicated ones. Using simple illustrations will help you communicate clearly to your audience.

Figure 5.6.3: Seven simple steps to develop a slide deck (Business Communication, 2019).

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=111#h5p-55

THE DUARTE SLIDE DECK MANUAL

The Duarte Slide Deck Manual is the industry standard for the development of slide decks. Review this manual for comprehensive and in-depth information on how to create well-planned and designed slide decks. The information contained in the manual serves as a guide but also as an example of what businesses today expect from employees in the 21st century. The manual can be resized for easier viewing by using the enlarge option.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nscccommunicationatwork/?p=111#h5p-56

Exercises 2.1

1. Review a report, proposal, or even an essay that you have previously written. Using the design principles covered in this section and presented in the Duarte Manual, convert that document into a slide deck report.

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5.7 KEY TAKEAWAYS

Key Takeaway

- Reports require a clear purpose, solid organization, and adherence to conventions.

The following is a 14-point checklist for helping to ensure that a report fulfills its goals:

REPORT CHECKLIST

☐ 1.Report considers the audience's needs

☐ 2. Format follows function of report

☐ 3. Format reflects institutional conventions and expectations

☐ 4. Information is accurate, complete, and documented

☐ 5. Information is easy to read

☐ 6. Terms are clearly defined

☐ 7. Figures, tables, and graphic elements support written content

☐ 8. Figures, tables, and graphic elements are clear and correctly labeled

☐ 9. Figures, tables, and graphic elements 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.[1]

Access the documents below for additional information on report writing

- Reports, Proposals, and Technical Papers. Once this page is accessed, use the side panel to open pages on various aspects of report writing.
- Handbook on Report Formats
- Writing Report Abstracts

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Notes

1. (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015)

CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATIONS

OVERVIEW

Many surveys have shown that public speaking is at the top of the list of fears for most people — sometimes, higher on the list than death. No one is afraid of writing their speech or conducting the research: people generally only fear the delivery aspect of the speech, which, compared to the amount of time you will put into writing the speech (days, hopefully), will be the shortest part of the speech giving process (5-8 minutes, generally, for classroom speeches). The irony, of course, is that delivery, being the thing people fear the most, is simultaneously the aspect of public speaking that will require the least amount of time.

Source: Chapter 10 Presentations in *Communication @ Work Seneca* Edition.

VERSION HISTORY

The open textbook *NSCC Communication @ Work* is a remixed adaptation of open textbooks:

- Seneca College Communication @ Work
- Communication @ Work: A College-to-Career Guide to Success
- Be the Boss of Your Career: A Complete Guide for Students & Grads

Version Mapping		
NSCC Version	Seneca Communication @ Work (an adapted version of Communication @ Work)	Communication @ Work: A College-to-Career Guide to Success
Chapter 1	Chapter 6: Electronic Written Communication – Intro and Unit 19 on Netiquette and Social Media	
Chapter 2		Chapter 11 Intro and Unit 11.3
Chapter 3	Chapter 13 [units 47,48, 50, key Take Aways] and Chapter 7 unit 21 on letters	
Chapter 4	Chapter 13: Unit 49 Interview Skills	
Chapter 5	Chapter 11: Reports [all units]	
Chapter 6	Chapter 10: Presentations [all units]	

Additional Changes

- Revised formatting to comply with accessibility standards.
- Removed references to outcomes and programs that do not apply to NSCC. [References and links to programs specific to the institution connected to the original open textbook.]
- 5.4 – Replaced link to library academic integrity module. Added a link to the NSCC Academic Integrity module.

SENECA Adaptation Notes

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