

Effective Business Writing *for Success*

Jane Smith

**Booklet and resources to
accompany the audio tracks**

Effective Business Writing for Success

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About the author

Jane Smith is a founder partner of the training company Word Smiths. She is passionate about helping people to improve their confidence and learn new skills. As a trainer, her particular expertise is in helping people to learn read faster, use Mind Maps for memory and develop a more professional and consistent communication style. She is a talented and creative instructional designer with long experience of writing e-learning and classroom training materials for diverse audiences. In less busy moments she writes business books, articles and book reviews. Jane lives in South Wales with two fat cats and a great view of the Black Mountains. You can find out more about Word Smiths at www.word-smiths.co.uk.



Details of Jane's other audio books are on the back page of this booklet.

Foreword

Welcome to this learning resource on effective business writing. By listening to this audio book and practising the skills I describe, your expertise and confidence will rapidly improve.

Keep this booklet by you as you listen, as it contains a summary of the key points and a few exercises for you to carry out. And if you enjoy Effective Business Writing for Success, or have any comments or questions, please email me at jane@word-smiths.co.uk.

A word of caution: it's OK to listen to this audio book while you are in the car. But don't practise the exercises while you are driving – or in any other situation that requires your full concentration.

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The additional resources

The resources provided at the end of this pdf link to the content of the audio book. At various points in the audio book, you may hear them referred to as 'online resources'. This is because, in the CD edition of this publication, they are provided as separate downloadable files. In this download edition, though, all the resources are packaged in this single pdf. You can use the resources at any time and in any way that suits your requirements as a learner. They are:

- Resource A: notes and exercises (*resource B is these exercises in Word format - not provided here*)
- Resource C: feedback to exercises
- Resource D: model documents.

Additional audio track

In the audio book, you will also hear references to an additional bonus track - *Writing the minutes of meetings*. In this download edition, this is Track 8.

Track 1: Your starting point

It's essential for business people to be able to write clearly and succinctly – and to know that they are making the right impact on their readers.

The aim of this package is to help you to improve your business writing skills and to get your message across to your readers.

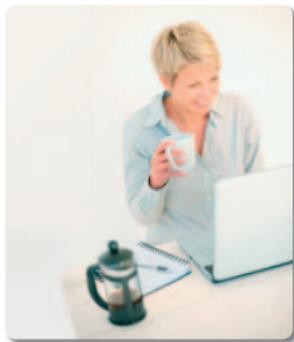
Writing skills self assessment

Knowing exactly where you need to improve your skills is a vital first step towards becoming an effective business writer.

How confident a writer are you?

So start by rating your writing skills on the following scale, where:

- 4 means excellent / no problems
- 3 means not too bad / OK most of the time
- 2 means room for improvement / sometimes OK
- 1 means lots of problems / poor most of the time.



Writing skill	1	2	3	4
1. How confident do you feel about planning what you write?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. How confident are you about editing/revising what you or others write?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. To what extent are you able to write clearly and positively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. How confident do you feel about using grammar and punctuation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. How good are your emails?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. How clear and persuasive are your reports?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. What are your business letters like?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Are you confident about being able to write good meeting minutes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

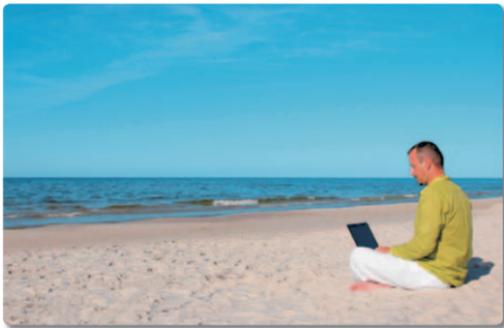
Your answers will indicate which tracks will be of particular value to you.

- If you gave yourself a 1 or a 2 in Questions 1 and 2,
Track 2 will help you to improve your planning and editing skills.
- If you gave yourself a 1 or a 2 in Question 3,
Track 3 will help you write clearly and concisely in plain English.
- If you gave yourself a 1 or a 2 in Question 4,
Track 4 will help you to avoid the main pitfalls of English grammar and punctuation.
- If you gave yourself a 1 or a 2 in Question 5,
Track 5 will help you to improve your emails.
- If you gave yourself a 1 or a 2 in Question 6,
Track 6 will help you to write better reports.
- If you gave yourself a 1 or a 2 in Question 7,
Track 7 will help you to write a more effective letter.

If you gave yourself a 1 or a 2 in Question 8, the bonus track, ***Writing the minutes of meetings***, will help you to improve your meeting minutes. To download this extra audio track, go to the online resources web page ([see page 1 for details of how to access the online resources](#)).

But if you scored lots of threes or fours, ***Effective Business Writing for Success***

will still help you improve your business communications. It doesn't matter how experienced you are as a writer; this audio book will help you build on what you already know and will boost your confidence and ability.



Track 2: A process for writing

Adopting a systematic process will avoid many pitfalls and ensure that your finished document is as good as it can be.

1. Create your message.
2. Organise and structure your information.
3. Write the first draft.
4. Edit and revise your material.

Step 1 – Creating your message

You need to clarify who is going to read the document and your purpose for writing.

Who is going to read the document?



Purposes for writing

It's helpful to start your document with a clear purpose so the reader knows why you are writing. You might say:

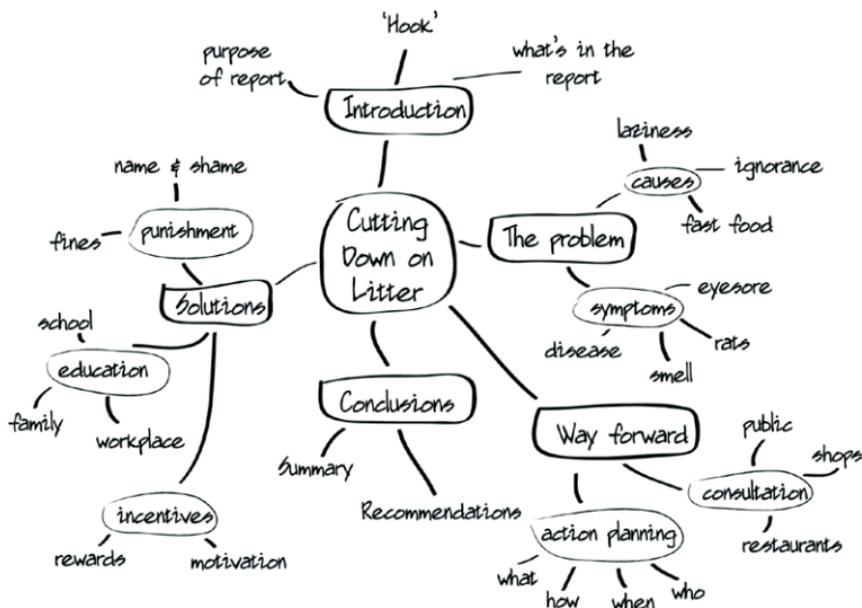
- *The purpose of this report is to . . .*
- *The aim of this paper is to . . .*
- *This document sets out to . . .*
- *I'm writing to . . .*
- *My purpose in writing is to . . .*

It's also useful to start and/or finish with a statement of what you are expecting the reader to do.

Step 2 – Organising and structuring information

Proper planning will produce a better structured document. You may, for example:

- Make a list of all the topics or headings that you want to include
- Draw a spider diagram
- Draw a Mind Map.



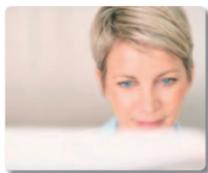
Spider diagram for planning a report on cutting down on litter

Step 3 – Writing the first draft

Imagine speaking to your reader and answer their questions as you think they might arise. In longer documents, make good use of sub-headings to guide the reader through the text.



Step 4 – Editing and revising your material



Be aware that this step is potentially endless because you can always make improvements. Remember that the aim is to convey your message effectively, not to achieve perfection!

Track 3: Using plain English

Plain English is any message, written with the reader in mind, that gets its meaning across clearly and concisely so the reader can take the appropriate action. There are a few simple techniques for writing clearly. Here are three of the main ones:

- Always use short sentences
- Avoid the passive
- Choose familiar words.

Using short sentences

Research into reading tells us that sentences should be between 15 and 20 words long. This is because longer sentences can confuse readers – and they may need to read your sentence more than once to understand it.

Avoiding the passive

The rule is to try to make your writing as active as possible. For example:

- *The riot was stopped by the police* (passive)
- *The police stopped the riot* (active).

The passive voice tends to sound formal, old fashioned and bureaucratic, whereas the active sounds crisper and more dynamic.

Choosing familiar words

Words which are unnecessarily complex and unfamiliar do not make your text seem more important or impressive – they merely form a barrier between you and your readers. Try to avoid using words and phrases that:

- Have disappeared from the written or the spoken language (*promulgate, deem, peruse*) – use instead words that your readers can easily recognise (*publicise, believe, read*)
- Are overused (*we live in turbulent times, singing from the same hymn sheet*) – try to write something less clichéd (*the environment is constantly changing, we need to project a consistent message*)
- Contain unnecessary words (*in order to, at a later date, in view of the fact*) – use short forms instead (*to, later, because*).

Track 4: Grammar and punctuation

Rules about words and punctuation have evolved for one reason: to aid communication.

The following unpunctuated sentences don't make much sense:

- *Mother to be attacked on waste ground.*
- *Once she had the dress off she would go searching for matching shoes.*

The meaning emerges when the same sentences are punctuated:

- *Mother-to-be attacked on waste ground.*
- *Once she had the dress, off she would go, searching for matching shoes.*

Apostrophe

The apostrophe is mainly used to express possessives:

- *The boy's book* (placed before the *s* in the singular)
- *The boys' books* (placed after the *s* in the regular plural)
- *The men's room* (placed before the *s* in the irregular plural)
- *James' letter* (placed after the *s* when the singular noun already ends in an *s*).

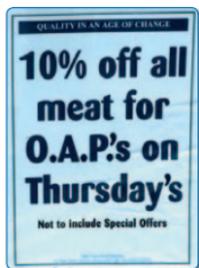
Note that the possessive form of *it* (*its*) does not take an apostrophe:

- *The dog was chasing its tail.*

The apostrophe is also used to indicate that letters are missing: *I've*, *didn't*, *can't*, *doesn't* and *it's* (this where *it's* with an apostrophe is correct).

Although it often seen, you should never use an apostrophe to make a plural:

- Not *three book's* but *three books*.
- Not *six MP's* but *six MPs*.
- Not *the 1990's* but *the 1990s*.



Classic example of two 'grocer's plurals'

Comma

You can use a **separating comma** to mark off an introductory phrase:

- *Hearing that her son had broken his leg, Mary immediately left for the hospital.*

The **listing comma** is used to make lists:

- *The Three Musketeers were Athos, Porthos and Aramis.*

The **joining comma** is used to join two complete sentences into a single sentence after the connecting words *and, or, but, while* or *yet*.

- *I have already paid back half of what I owe, and will pay the rest next week.*
- *Fred promised to get in touch last week, but he has not contacted me yet.*

Remember: you cannot join two sentences with a comma unless you use a connecting word – *and, or, but, while* or *yet*.

Bracketing commas are the most frequently used type of comma.

- *These findings, we would suggest, cast doubt upon his hypothesis.*
- *Rupert Brooke, who was killed in the war at the age of 28, was one of our finest poets.*

The phrase bracketed by the two commas could be removed and you would still have a complete sentence that makes sense.

Semi-colon

The semi-colon presents two closely related main clauses in one sentence. Using a full stop would separate the ideas too much.

- *It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.* (Charles Dickens)

In this function, the semi-colon is equivalent to a full stop. It cannot be replaced with a comma.

Collective nouns

Collective nouns like *government, management, committee, team* and *family* are used to refer both to a whole group as a singular entity, and to the members of the group as a number of individuals. In other words, you can treat collective nouns as singular or plural.

You may, therefore, correctly write:

- *The committee has made a decision,* or
- *The committee have now taken their seats.*

Capitalisation

Only use capital letters at the beginning of a sentence, for the first letters of document or publication titles, where they are part of a proper name (*The Daily Mirror, Women's Institute*) or a proper noun (*Monday, Christmas*), and headings.

In line with the modern preference for a more streamlined appearance, many people now prefer to write main headings in sentence case – with only the initial letter in capitals (*Help and advice for tenants* rather than *Help and Advice for Tenants*). However, your own house style or preference may be to write main headings in title case (all main words capitalised). Subheadings should be in sentence case.

One of the most common confusions concerns job names. Specific job titles are capitalised (*National Marketing Manager, Regional Advisor, Managing Director*), but use lower case letters if you are talking about a type of job (*manager, advisor, director*).

Track 5: Writing persuasive emails

emails have completely changed the way that people work. Many of us spend a lot of our time dealing with emails – writing them, responding to them, forwarding them to others and carrying out actions that arise from them. But what does an effective email look like?

- Make sure the purpose is clear.
- Talk to the reader in an appropriate voice, using words that will be familiar to them.
- Keep it short and to the point.
- Check that it cannot cause offence or be misinterpreted.

email structure

emails have four distinct components:

- Subject header (should be short, precise and motivating)
- Salutation (use name(s) if possible)
- Body text (main point at the beginning, then add appropriate detail)
- Signoff (should be businesslike and sincere).



Style and tone

As with any business communication, always state your objective for your email as clearly as possible from the beginning. Remember that it is possible to use a tone that is both businesslike and polite or friendly. Your reader may be offended or upset if your message is unclear or abrupt.

Always think about the requirements of the person (or people) on the receiving end. Talk to them in an appropriate voice, using words that will be familiar to them.

Track 6: Writing clear and concise reports

Succinct and compelling reports are essential for effective business communication. The problem is that few people learned the essentials of this kind of writing. They are not the same as school essays or academic writing.

Recognising quality in business reports

A key step in developing your own abilities as a report writer is to train yourself to evaluate the business reports that you have to read.

You need to be able to recognise the bad features (which you will try to avoid) and the good features (which you will try to emulate).

The good features could include:

- Purpose and action required clearly defined
- Page not overloaded with words
- Clear, logical structure
- Graphics (pictures, diagrams and tables) help get the message across and break up the text
- Effective sub-headings guide the reader through the content.

There can be several reasons why you may struggle to read and engage with a particular report:

- The purpose may not be clear
- Poor structure
- Contains too much or too little information
- Tone and language unfriendly or pompous
- Confusing or boring lay-out and graphics.

A report consists of several important ingredients, including: appearance, structure, content, language and tone. The more of these you get right, the better your report will be.



Presenting a report

Reports can be set out in several parts, but you won't always need them all. These are the usual ones.

• Title / contents

Think carefully about this as a good title or title page will encourage a reader to read on. A contents list is essential for long reports.

• Introduction

This should be brief – bear in mind that your task in writing it is to grab the attention of your readers, to tell them why you've written the report, to make them want to read on and prepare them for what is to come. It should contain a tantalising taster of the content of the report – but don't include any of the key messages here.

• Executive summary

The summary, conclusions and recommendations are often placed before the main body in an executive summary. Doing this enables busy readers to quickly scan through the main points of the report without having to plough through all the supporting information.



• Main body

This is likely to be the longest section, containing all the relevant details organised under headings and sub-headings. Few readers will read every word, so start with the most important topic, follow it with the next most important, and so on.

• Summary and conclusions

Keep this brief and avoid saying anything new in this section – one technique is to simply copy and paste the key points from the main body of the report.

• Recommendations

The main threads set out in the summary and conclusion should lead logically to your recommendations.

• Appendices

These contain material which readers only really need to know if they are studying the report in depth.

Track 7: Writing good letters

The format, style and tone of a business letter is important because it dictates the nature of the relationship between the writer/organisation and the person on the receiving end.

As with any other business communication, to write an effective letter it's essential to understand your reader's needs, to know why you are writing, to identify appropriate content and finally to write clearly and briefly.

Checklist for business letter writing

When you write a business letter, use this checklist to remind you of the key principles of effective letter writing.

• Keep it strong

- Get straight to the point in the first paragraph.
- Provide any extra information to support that point.
- Use concrete words and examples.
- Keep to the subject.

• Keep it short

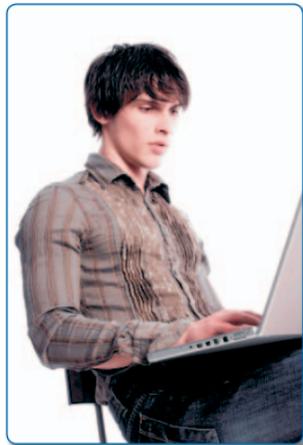
- Cut needless words and needless information.
- Cut stale phrases and redundant statements.

• Keep it simple

- Use familiar words, short sentences and short paragraphs.
- Keep your subject matter as simple as possible.
- Keep related information together.

• Keep it sincere

- Answer promptly.
- Be as human and as friendly as possible.



Track 8: Writing the minutes of meetings

Accurate and concise minutes are vital for the success of any meeting. And the role of the minute taker carries a lot of responsibility – but usually very little support or credit. There seems to be a general assumption that anyone can take minutes. But in reality minute takers are often unsure what to write and meetings are often badly chaired and chaotic. There is much more involved in minute taking than simply writing quickly – including active listening, assertiveness and the ability to summarise accurately.

Don't see writing minutes as a terrible chore – instead, this is really an opportunity to develop your skills, increase your confidence and enhance your visibility in the organisation.

Minute writing checklist

- Prepare by familiarising yourself with the agenda, scanning through any attached papers and talking to the chair about what outcomes are expected and what style of minutes are required
- In most situations, minutes are not required to record everything that happened during a meeting– they should be a brief summary of what was said and what was decided.
- Shorthand is not necessary for the type of minutes we're discussing here. But if a complete record is required, shorthand, speed writing skills or some form of audio recording may be necessary.
- You can often get ahead of the game by filling in a lot of information before the meeting on pre-prepared forms.
- When you are writing the minutes up, concentrate on decisions made and the main points of the discussion leading to those decisions.
- The style you use will depend on the nature of the meeting and the requirements of the participants and chair. The three main styles are: formal 'verbatim' minutes; 'action' minutes; 'summary' minutes.
- Your readers will thank you if your minutes are short and simple and written in familiar language.

Track 9: Finally ...

Here are five secrets of good writing that will help to communicate your message and create a favourable image for your organisation.

1. Create a strong beginning

The reader's attention is at its highest at the beginning, so this is the place to hammer your message home.

2. Use clear, crisp, lively verbs

Verbs are doing words so they give your writing life and dynamism.

Adjust, agree, carry out, convert, discuss, explain, extract, find, follow, identify, obtain, perform, prepare, prove, recognise, remove, select, specify, take, test.

3. Use paragraphs and headings

Paragraphs are an important part of structure. They break text down and make it more readable, they give the reader a rest and they make the page less cluttered.

4. Make your writing flow

You can link your text together in a number of ways. You can repeat words from the end of the prior sentence, or point back to the prior thought by restating (*this, that, these, those*), or starting the sentence with a signal word or phrase.

First, for example, in addition, by contrast, nevertheless, given that, similarly, on the other hand, likewise, furthermore, in the first place, secondly, as a result, by comparison, alternatively, therefore, moreover.

5. Talk to your reader

Readers will be more interested in what you have to say if you talk directly to them.

- Don't say *Once this decision is made*; try instead *Once you have made this decision*.
- Similarly, *The point that must be borne in mind is this...* is better expressed as *You must remember that...*

Saying *you* makes readers feel that you are thinking of them as human beings. At the same time, it is a good idea to show that both you and your organisation are human too. You can do this by using the personal pronouns *I, me, we* and *us* where they are appropriate.



Additional Resources

The resources provided in the following pages link to the content of the audio book. At various points in the audio book, you may hear them referred to as 'online resources'. This is because, in the CD edition of this publication, they are provided as separate downloadable files.

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The resources in the following pages include:

- Resource A: notes and exercises (pages 16 – 41)
(Resource B is these exercises in Word format - not provided here)
- Resource C: feedback to exercises (pages 42 – 57)
- Resource D: model documents (pages 58 – 73)

Use them at any time and in any way that suits your requirements as a learner.

The page size of these resources is, like the rest of the booklet, 18cm x 12cm - so if you want to print any of them out on A4 paper, simply resize the page(s) in your computer's print dialog box.

To print at A4, set the print size to either 'Fit to printable area' or enlarge to 160%. If your print dialog box offers this, you can also centre the image on the page.

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Track 1: Your starting point

Writing effectively is one of the most demanding tasks that we undertake at work. It is both a complicated technical skill and a subtle creative activity. The problem is that few of us have learned the essentials of this kind of effective writing. The techniques that we were taught at school and university are not always appropriate at work. Letters to clients, advertising copy, feature articles, press releases or project reports are not the same as essays or dissertations; they are different kinds of documents and must be written differently.

You are a reader too

A key step in developing your own abilities as a writer is to train yourself to identify the good features (which you will try to emulate) and the bad features (which you will try to avoid) of any written material.

The points that you identify may be concerned with structure, style, tone, content, user-friendliness, language and layout. By changing all the negatives to positives, you can come up with a list of quality criteria which you will hope to meet. For example, if 'too many words on the page' is a negative, then 'page not overloaded with words' is the standard at which you will aim.

A group who took part in this activity came up with the following list:

Appearance

- Page not overloaded with words
- Use of appropriate pictures and colour
- Plenty of white space
- Consistent use of font styles
- Good use of subheadings to break the text up.

Language

- Jargon avoided
- User friendly language
- Verbs active rather than passive
- Short sentences
- Short paragraphs.

Structure

- Logical structure – beginning, middle and end
- Contents listed at the start of longer documents
- Appendices at the end if necessary.

Style/tone

- Personal style
- Tone business-like and friendly
- Writer appears to talk to/engage the reader.

You can use your own list in a number of ways:

- Refer to it while you are writing to make sure that you are continuing to meet the standards
- Use it to review your first draft and to decide what changes you need to make
- Refer to those points which help you to provide feedback to colleagues
- Use it when evaluating materials that you are editing or rewriting.

Track 2: A process for writing

A systematic process will stop you from writing anything until you know exactly what you are going to write, and in what order.

The process I recommend involves four clear steps:

1. Create your message.
2. Organise your information.
3. Write the first draft.
4. Edit and revise your material.

Creating your message: who is your reader?

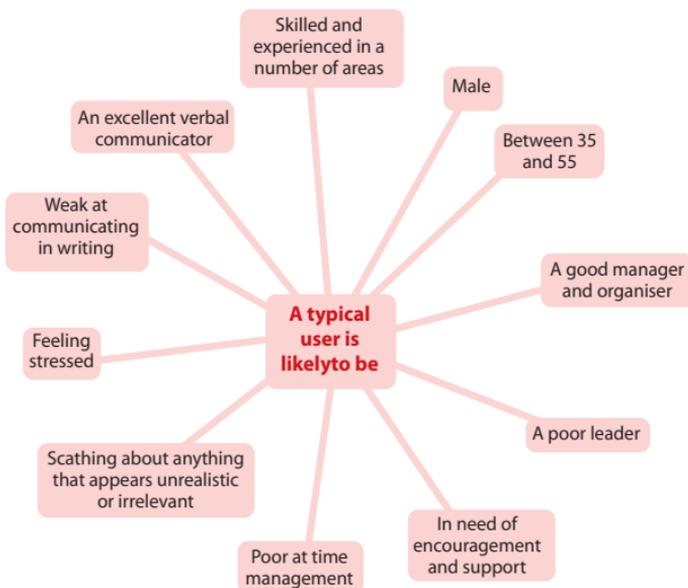
If you are really going to engage readers and encourage them to respond to your communications, you have to talk to them as people. The approach you take and the words you use must be determined by the characteristics and needs of the person or people to whom, or for whom, you are writing.

It's useful to start by asking – and answering – a number of questions, for example:

- Who is going to read your document? Is it one person or a number of people?
- What do they already know about the subject? What do they need to know?
- Does your reader understand technical terms? Do you need to avoid or explain specialised terms or jargon?
- What motivates them? How can you get them interested?
- What objections might they raise to the information you are putting forward? How can you anticipate and deal with any such problems.
- What do you want your reader to do? If you want them to take action, you need to spell it out.

For complex documents or marketing material, it is valuable to build up a reader profile: a pen picture of the person or people with whom you are trying to communicate.

Here is an example of a reader profile I created when I worked on a report for managers in a large public sector organisation.



Creating your message: your purpose for writing

Being clear about your document's purpose is important because it keeps you on track. As you build your message you can check that everything that you write, and the way you write it, relates to this central purpose.

It's usually a good idea to explicitly spell out your purpose at the start of the message – and you can do this in a number of ways. For example, you might say:

- *The purpose of this email is to **confirm** (arrangements for ...)*
- *The aim of this report is to **record** (the outcomes of ...)*
- *This paper aims to **demonstrate** (that ...)*
- *My intention in **writing** this memo is to ask (members of the team ...)*
- *I'm **replying** to (thank you for) your recent email in which you ask ...*

The purpose is always written as a verb – a doing word. Here are some more examples:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| • <i>Persuade</i> | • <i>Summarise</i> | • <i>Explain</i> |
| • <i>Sell</i> | • <i>State</i> | • <i>Outline</i> |
| • <i>Ask</i> | • <i>List</i> | • <i>Confirm</i> |
| • <i>Complain</i> | • <i>Reply</i> | • <i>Argue</i> |
| • <i>Highlight</i> | • <i>Inform</i> | • <i>Respond</i> |
| • <i>Recommend</i> | • <i>Propose</i> | • <i>Specify</i> |
| • <i>Identify action needed</i> | • <i>Invite</i> | • <i>Review</i> |

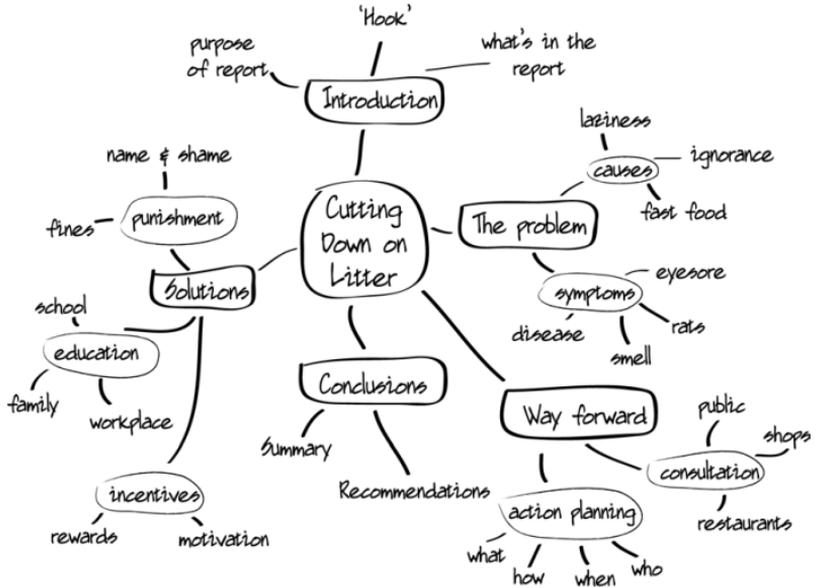
You will also use verbs when you are specifying the action that you want your recipient(s) to take in a letter or email. You could say, for example:

- *Please **reply** by 4 December.*
- *Please **contact** me again if you need more information.*
- *Please **note** the following points:*
- *Please **select** one of the following options:*
- *Please **read** the enclosed contract.*
- *Please **complete** the form and **return** it in the envelope provided.*
- *Please **attend** a meeting at 24 Maxwell Street on ...*
- *Please **send** your feedback by...*
- *Please **let me know**...*
- *Please **arrive** by 10.30.*
- *Please **give** me a call.*

Organising information

A spider diagram is a brainstorm or ideas dump – a very effective way to plan and structure longer texts. Start by putting the topic in a box in the centre of the page, then draw lines to branch out from it to your main ideas. Each idea is expressed in terms of a single word or short phrase – no actual writing of sentences is allowed at this stage. Leave space to add new information and make links between the main ideas.

Here is an example of a spider diagram created to plan a 40-page report.



It is important to keep working on your spider diagram until you are happy that you have captured all the points you want to make and that all your points are noted under the correct headings.

Once you have created your spider diagram, you can transform that information into a linear outline.

On the next page, you'll see the same information expressed as a linear outline. Note that in some places I have started to develop the linear notes into full sentences.

Cutting down on litter (H1)

- Introduction (H2)
- The purpose of this report is to ...
- Hook - the UK is one of the most heavily littered countries in Europe.
- What the report covers

The problem (H2)

Litter is anything that is thrown, dropped or deposited in a public place creating an eyesore and/or environmental damage. This includes

Why is litter a problem? (H3)

The impact of litter has a much greater effect than just making places look a complete mess:

- Health hazard
- Danger
- Smell
- Rats
- Eyesore

Causes (H3)

- Laziness
- Ignorance
- Fast food
- Culture

Solutions (H2)

Some solutions are aimed at trying to clear up the mess, while others try to persuade people not to drop litter in the first place.

Practical solutions (H3)

- Street sweeping
- Litter bins

Education (H3)

- School/college
- Workplace
- Community projects

Punishment (H3)

People who carelessly discard litter in a public open place are committing a criminal offence.

- Fines
- Publish names of offenders

Way forward (H2)

Consultation (H3)

- Public
- Shops
- Fast food restaurants

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Action planning (H3)

- What
- When
- Who

Implementation (H3)

- Targets
- How
- By when

Conclusion (H2)

Summary (H3)

Recommendations (H3)

It is important to keep working on your linear outline until you are happy that all the points you want to make are in the right order and nested under the correct headings. Then you can start to build up your document sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph and section by section.

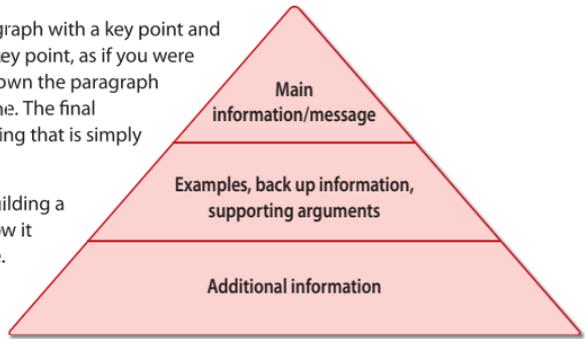
Although you have created a linear outline, you don't have to write in a linear manner. When creating reports, for example, it is a good idea to write the main body first, then the conclusion and recommendations. You will then write the introduction and the executive summary last of all. This ensures that the first items the reader sees accurately reflect what is in the report, and that they are as brief and strong as possible.

Writing the first draft

When writing the first draft, start each paragraph with a key point and write further supporting points under that key point, as if you were answering readers' questions. The further down the paragraph you go, the less important the points become. The final sentence in the paragraph could be something that is simply nice to know but not vitally important.

Structuring a document in this way is like building a pyramid. At the top is the message and below it are the key points that support the message.

The diagram shows the ideal pyramid structure for paragraphs.



And here is an example of a paragraph from the litter report which illustrates how the pyramid structure works in practice.

TOPIC SENTENCE (S)



Why is litter a problem?

The impact of litter is much greater than just making places look a complete mess. Every piece of litter harms the environment and is potentially dangerous.

EXAMPLES AND BACK-UP INFORMATION



- Litter encourages the spread of germs and disease by pests such as rats, pigeons and seagulls.
- Discarded syringes, condoms and broken glass are dangerous and can cause injuries.
- Litter may travel through drains into waterways, where it pollutes rivers, seas and beaches. This pollution can harm swimmers and wildlife through poisoning, choking or strangling.
- Accumulated litter and carelessly discarded cigarette ends are potential fire hazards.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



In addition, a littered environment looks unsightly and attracts further litter. This lowers property values and discourages tourists.

Exercise – writing headings and sub-headings

All business documents should make good use of effective headings and sub-headings to guide the reader through your message as it unfolds and to emphasise your key points.

This article about environmental issues in business is quite well organised, but it is difficult to read because the main heading is poor and the body contains no sub-headings. Try making the document more reader friendly by improving the main heading and adding appropriate sub headings. You can make any other changes that you think would make the document more readable.

Things to do

Greener homes are in the spotlight these days, but what about the other places where many of us spend huge chunks of our time – our offices? Some simple changes of habit can save energy and resources at work, and these small steps can be multiplied by persuading the powers-that-be at your workplace to adopt environmentally friendly (and often cost-effective) policies.

Artificial lighting accounts for 44 percent of the electricity use in office buildings.

Make it a habit to turn off the lights when you're leaving any room for 15 minutes or more and utilize natural light when you can.

Make it a policy to use low energy light bulbs and fixtures, which use at least two-thirds less energy than regular lighting, and install timers or motion sensors that automatically shut off lights when they're not needed.

Computers in the business sector unnecessarily waste millions of pounds worth of electricity a year.

Make it a habit to turn off your computer—and the power strip it's plugged into—when you leave for the day. Otherwise, you're still burning energy even if you're not burning the midnight oil. (Check with your IT department to make sure the computer doesn't need to be on to run backups or other maintenance.) During the day, setting your computer to go to sleep automatically during short breaks can cut energy use by 70 percent. Remember, screen savers don't save energy.

Make it a policy to invest in energy-saving computers, monitors, and printers and make sure that old equipment is properly recycled. Look for a recycler that has pledged not to export hazardous e-waste and to follow other safety guidelines. Old computers that still work, and are less than five years old, can be donated to organisations that will refurbish them and find them new homes.

The average office worker goes through 10,000 sheets of copy paper a year.

Make it a habit to print on both sides or use the back side of old documents for faxes, scrap paper, or drafts. Avoid colour printing and print in draft mode whenever feasible.

Make it a policy to buy chlorine-free paper with a higher percentage of post-consumer recycled content. Also consider switching to a lighter stock of paper or alternatives made from bamboo, hemp or organic cotton. Recycle toner and ink cartridges and buy remanufactured ones. Research shows that each remanufactured toner cartridge keeps approximately 2.5 pounds of metal and plastic out of landfill and conserves about 2.5 litres of oil.

Make it a habit to think before you print: could this be read or stored online instead? When you receive unwanted catalogues, newsletters, magazines, or junk mail, request to be removed from the mailing list before you recycle the item. Make it a policy to post employee manuals and similar materials online, rather than distribute print copies. They're easier to update that way too.

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Make it a habit to recycle everything your company collects. Just about any kind of paper you would encounter in an office, including fax paper, envelopes, and junk mail, can be recycled. So can your old cell phone, PDA, or pager.

Make it a policy to place recycling bins in accessible, high-traffic areas and provide clear information about what can and cannot be recycled.

Make it a policy to purchase office supplies and furniture made from recycled materials.

Make it a habit to bring your own mug and dishware for those meals you eat at the office.

Make it a policy to provide reusable dishes, silverware, and glasses. Switch to Fair Trade and organic coffee and tea, and buy as much organic and local food as possible for parties and other events. Provide filtered drinking water to reduce bottled-water waste.

Whenever possible, try to use public transport instead of a car when travelling on business. If you have to rent a car, some rental agencies now offer hybrids and other fuel-efficient vehicles.

Make it a policy to invest in videoconferencing and other technological solutions that can reduce the amount of employee travel.

Make it a habit to carpool, bike, or take public transport to work, and/or telecommute when possible. If you need to drive occasionally, consider joining a car-sharing service instead of owning your own wheels. Make it a policy to encourage telecommuting (a nice perk that's also good for the planet!) and make it easy for employees to take alternative modes of transport by offering bike parking, or organising a carpool.

When you have finished, check your version against our model answers in

Resource C: exercise feedback.

Track 3: Using plain English

Here are three of the main techniques for writing clearly and briefly:

- First – always use short sentences
- Second – avoid the passive
- And third – use familiar words.

Exercise – applying the plain English rules

These exercises will help you to understand and apply the plain English rules. When you have finished, compare what you have written with the suggestions in **online resource C: exercise feedback**.

- a) Cut the following down to make them more reader friendly
- Taken as a whole, the much reduced programme of participatory experiential art workshops have continued to run extremely successfully over the past year despite the loss of dedicated studio facilities which have continued to generate extra work for the team.
 - The Head of Communication was invited to be Works of Art Officer on the Investments committee – a job which involves responsibility for the company art collection including purchasing new pieces and organising exhibitions.
 - At Barnbrook College we endeavour to ensure that every learner receives individual care and support required to succeed on their programme; individual needs are assessed and each student's progress is monitored by the programme team and supported by specialist qualified professionals. To maximise opportunities and minimise risk we work closely with other partners within the Local Authority and beyond.
- b) Make the following sentences active
- I was sent several stationery items by your company last week.
 - We were ignored by your waiter for at least half an hour before our order was taken.
 - The bathroom was not cleaned by the maid until after we had arrived.
 - I am complaining because a mistake was made by your accounts department.

c) Translate the following words and phrases into more familiar language

- A high proportion of
- Accordingly
- Advise
- Alleviate
- Ascertain
- At this point in time
- Commence
- Concurrence
- Discontinue
- Due to the fact that
- Endeavour
- Forward
- In a position to
- In excess of
- In respect of
- In the event of
- Initiate
- Prior to
- Remittance
- Should you wish
- Sufficient
- Supplementary
- Whilst

Track 4: Grammar and punctuation

Exercise – identify the errors

Which of the following sentences contain errors of grammar, punctuation or capitalisation? Tick to say whether you think each one is correct or incorrect. If you think it's incorrect, suggest your own error-free version. Then check your answers against the ones provided in [online resource C: exercise feedback](#).

1. The horse has broken it's leg. Correct Incorrect
2. We will need two taxi's for six people. Correct Incorrect
3. They are going to sit they're exams next week. Correct Incorrect
4. There are always less cars on the road during the school holidays. Correct Incorrect
5. This is the most expensive of the two policies. Correct Incorrect
8. This product will appeal to Marketing Managers across the UK. Correct Incorrect
9. The team need more training. Correct Incorrect
10. The shop sell's mens' shoe's, childrens' books, lady's clothes and electrician's tools. Correct Incorrect
11. Mr Smith owes the housing department three months rent. Correct Incorrect
12. The first volume of the biography, covering the writer's life from his birth in 1904 to 1939 was published in 1989. Correct Incorrect
13. Three years are a long time. Correct Incorrect
14. A list of Mr Brown's properties are attached. Correct Incorrect
15. I'm going to lose ten kilos by christmas. Correct Incorrect
16. The council is providing a new childrens' playground. Correct Incorrect

Exercise – correct the errors

The passage below badly needs a good edit. Identify and correct as many errors as possible, including mistakes in grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalisation and poor structure or style.

Bear-faced chic

In the late 1990's, a magnificent polar bear was found by artists Bryn Snowborn and Mark Wilson in a pub in Wensleydale. It'd been their for some time and was completely legless. "This one was supposed to be half a bear," the artists noted in there journal, with barely concealed dismay, "but on arrival it turned out to be a head and shoulders only, in a transparent glass case behind the bar in amongst the bottles". This may sound like a somewhat slightly niggling way to react to an encounter with an arctic mammal in a Yorkshire pub however its perhaps because when it comes to stuffed polar bears Snowborn and Wilson have seen far more in the past few years than most people see in a lifetime.

Inspired by their discovery of 3 bear's in a crowded Glasgow basement in 2001 the pair embarked on an odyssey to photograph every taxidermic polar bear in the UK. 5 years later, with no less than 34 bears caught on camera, that mission reached an end. To mark the occasion, an exhibition at the Horniman Museum in south London brought together the complete set of portraits for the first time.

As the artists discovered, the UKs stuffed polar bear population tend not to reveal themselves easily. One was found in the storeroom of a Liverpool museum, it was sandwiched between a tiger and a llama. Another, once the face of Fox's Glacier Mints spends his days in a somerset hallway, wearing a fez and holding a basket of plastic tulips.

Although the vast majority of the bears in this country was brought here by 19th-century explorers, one gentle specimen who resides in the hallway of Lord Thomases London home is proof that the desire to have a bear of ones own is not yet dead.

Wilson even suggests we may be in the grip of a resurgence. Lord Thomass' bear was bought from the famous Deyrolle Natural History Shop in Paris. They still have another in stock, if your interested – and have £9,000 to spare.

When you have finished, check your version against our model answers in

Resource C: exercise feedback.

Track 5: Writing persuasive emails

Exercise – what is wrong with these emails?

It is always useful to study examples of poor emails. You can always learn from reading what other people have written – even if it's how not to write! Look at the three emails below and think how you would feel if you were the recipient. List the errors in style, grammar, structure etc in each one, and then check your response against our ideas in **online resource C: exercise feedback**.

Subject: Problems

Yo Bob

Jo foned this morning too say she will be late for the meeting. Sarah sez she doesn't mind holding it later in the day, or even Wednesday, but not be4 midday. I just foned Mike's secretary and she sez that he won't be back from Milan unit! Tuesday night anyway. (OK for some BTW!!) So it looks like IT WILL HAVE TO BE ON WEDNESDAY. I've checked wth Sarah and Mike's secretary and they kan make this. Meeting room 4 is free at that time. Is thsi OK with you?

Keep smiling – Hil

Subject: Evaluations

Dear Mrs Smith

With reference to the conference, which was held last month. Please find attached a summary of the comments of delegates, who attended the conference. It is confirmed that since the conference feedback was 90% favourable therefore there is a plan to held it again next year.

Please be assured that your fee will be sent under separate cover, by post. Assuring you of our best intentions at all times.

Yours sincerely

James R Jones (Mr)

Subject: EMAIL Sent in error

Dear Mary

You will have received an email this afternoon confirming booking details for your forthcoming holiday.

As you can see you are registered on our system but you should disregard the content of my previous email which was sent to you in error as the email was inadvertently sent to our entire mailing list whereas it should actually have been sent only to those going on the September cruise to Italy. There are several major problems with the new software which seems unfortunately to contain quite a lot of teething troubles.

Apologies for any confusion this may have caused you. If you are require clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Peter Bishop

Bookings Assistant

We have included some 'model' emails in **Resource D: model documents**.

Track 6: Writing clear and concise reports

Exercise – what is wrong with this report?

Here is an example of a report which fails because it does not take the reader's perspective. What exactly is wrong with it? List its failings, and then check our ideas in [online resource C: exercise feedback](#).

Artist-led Master classes

Taken as a whole, the much reduced programme of participatory experiential art workshops have continued to run extremely successfully over the past year despite the loss of dedicated studio facilities which have continued to generate extra work for the team.

Student Photography Exhibition Woburn Arts Arena (9-16 April)

This lively exhibition which was well attended by both students and members of the public showcased selected works from this year's Student Photography Competition, included landscape, documentary, still life, abstract and portraiture. There were 346 photographs entered in the competition which was judged by Giulia Martello, Frank Plumstock and George Blair.

Work by graduates of BA Fine Art Drawing School of Art and Design (4-14 May) Studio gallery

This is our second exhibition featuring work by a selection of talented new graduates from the BA in Fine Art Drawing, a highly respected course bringing together students keen to develop an artistic practice through investigating drawing and its role in contemporary art. On the course a diverse range of student work explores the place of drawing in activities like site-specific art, installation, TBA's, new digital technologies, through to painting, sculpture and printmaking. The pieces selected for this show include video, mixed media, photography and sound. The preview was very well attended and the exhibition attracted a number of favourable.

NEW WOBERN ARTS ARENA

Over the Christmas vacation, the Facilities Department completed the conversion of the new foyer into the WOBERN ARTS ARENA and work of final year visual art students is installed in the space at the time of writing.

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENTS

The Head of Visual arts continued to work on academic developments, collaborating in particular with the Department of Social and Policy Sciences.

SCR Committee

The Head of Visual Arts was invited to be Fine Arts Officer on the SCR committee. This involves responsibility for the SCR art collection including purchasing new pieces and organising exhibitions.

The parts of a report

Reports can be set out in eight parts, but you won't always need them all.

- Title or title page
- Contents list
- Introduction
- Discussion
- Summary and conclusions
- Recommendations
- Appendix

A short report won't need a title page, but should have a title.

The contents list is only needed in long reports.

The introduction should be brief and answer any of the following questions that seem relevant.

- What is the topic?
- Who asked for the report and why?
- What is the background?

The discussion is the main body of the report. It is likely to be the longest section, containing all the details of the work organised under headings and sub-headings. Few readers will read every word of this section. So start with the most important, follow it with the next most important, and so on. You should follow the same rule with each paragraph. Begin with the main points of the paragraph, then write further details or an explanation.

The summary and conclusions section is sometimes placed before the discussion section. It describes the purpose of the report, your conclusions and how you reached them.

The conclusions are your main findings. Keep them brief. They should say what options or actions you consider to be best and what can be learned from what has happened before. So they may include or may lead to your recommendations: what should be done in the future to improve the situation?

Often, writers will put the summary and conclusions and the recommendations together and circulate them as a separate document. This is often called an executive summary because people can get the information they need without having to read the whole report.

It may be better (and cheaper) to send everyone an executive summary, and only provide a copy of the full report if someone asks for it.

The appendix is for material which readers only need to know if they are studying the report in depth. Relevant charts and tables should go in the discussion where readers can use them. Only put them in an appendix if they would disrupt the flow of the report.

We have included some 'model' reports in **Resource D: model documents**.

Numbering systems

Numbering systems can be a useful device to help readers keep track of where they are within the report, especially if you help them by showing the basic structure in your contents list. However, numbering systems are not compulsory or even necessary, and can become unwieldy.

In a more narrative kind of report, any numbering may be intrusive. As in other aspects of report writing, you need to ask yourself, 'what system (if any) is going to be most useful to my readers'?

Decimal system

- 1 MAIN HEADING
 - 1.1 Secondary heading
 - 1.1.1 Sub-heading
 - 1.1.2 Sub-heading
 - 1.2 Secondary heading
 - 1.2.1 Sub-heading
 - 1.2.2 Sub-heading
 - 1.2.2.1 Sub-sub-heading

Alphanumeric system

- A MAIN HEADING
 - 1 Secondary heading
 - a) Sub-heading
 - i) Sub-sub heading
 - ii) Sub-sub heading
 - b) Sub-heading
 - i) Sub-sub heading
 - ii) Sub-sub heading
 - 2 Secondary heading
 - a) Sub-heading
 - i) Sub-sub heading
 - ii) Sub-sub heading

References

It is important to list all references in a bibliography at the end of the report. There are various systems in use, but here is a suggested format for the most common types of publication:

- Website
Author(s). title of website or web page. site url, copyright year listed.
- Book
Author(s). title of book. edition. location of publisher: name of publisher, year of publication.
- Magazine or journal:
Author(s). "title of article." name of magazine, volume issue (date): pages where the article is located.

Track 7: Writing good letters

Writing a business letter is not simply a matter of expressing your ideas plainly. The way you write a letter may have a significant impact on your success in achieving business goals or targets. Observing some simple guidelines can result in a more appropriate tone, improved clarity of purpose and a better relationship with the recipient.

To write an effective letter, it is essential to know why you are writing, to understand your reader's needs and finally to write clearly and briefly. Every letter should be as unambiguous, helpful and friendly as the topic allows. The best letters have a conversational tone and read as if you were talking to your reader.

Keeping your reader in mind

If you keep your readers in mind when you write, it will help you use the right tone, appropriate language and include the right amount of detail.

What do readers want from writing? They want relevant information, presented in a clear, easy-to-understand style. They don't want muddled thinking, background information they already know, business-speak and jargon or waffle. Above all, they want to get the gist of your message in one reading—they don't want to dig for the meaning through long sentences and a boring style. So if you always keep your readers in mind, you will have to adapt your style and content to meet their needs.

Getting a clear picture of your readers before you start to write helps to focus your writing to get your message across. The better picture you have of your readers, the better you can direct your writing.

Ask yourself:

- Who are my readers?
- What do I want them to do?
- What do they already know about the subject?
- What do they need to know?
- What information do they want?
- What interests or motivates them?
- What prejudices do they have?
- What worries or reassures them?
- What will persuade them to my view?
- What other arguments do I need to present?
- How are they likely to react to what I say?
- Will they understand technical terms?

Try to write a sincere and helpful letter which shows you are interested in the reader's circumstances. If he or she has mentioned something personal in the letter, refer to it in your reply. This builds a bridge between you and the reader.

Using the correct salutation

When addressing a good friend or colleague:

- *Dear Jack ... Best wishes*
- *Dear Mary ... Best regards*

When you know the recipient's name:

- *Dear Mr Hanson ... Yours sincerely*
- *Dear Mrs Hanson ... Yours sincerely*
- *Dear Miss Hanson ... Yours sincerely*
- *Dear Ms Hanson ... Yours sincerely*

When the recipient's name is unknown to you:

- *Dear Sir ... Yours faithfully*
- *Dear Madam ... Yours faithfully*
- *Dear Sir or Madam ... Yours faithfully*

Addressing whole departments:

- *Dear Sirs ... Yours faithfully*

Sign with your first name if you have saluted the reader with his or her first name. Otherwise use your first and last names rather than your initial and last name. Type your full name and job title below the signature.

We have included some 'model' letters in **Resource D: model documents**.

Exercise – update these expressions

How could you update the following rather old-fashioned business expressions?

1. Further to your recent complaint about our products...
2. I write in response to your letter dated 4 April.
3. Further to our recent meeting at a conference in July...
4. Please don't hesitate to contact me again if you have any further questions.
5. I write in reference to recent correspondence regarding the...
6. Trusting this answers your questions.
7. Thanking you for an early response to this letter.
8. Thank you in advance for your assistance.
9. Please find attached a report on our recent meeting.

Track 8: Writing the minutes of meetings

Exercise – how can these minutes be improved?

Study the following minutes and try to decide what is wrong with them. How can they be improved?

British Canoeing Society – Northern Section

Quarterly Meeting

Present: Paul Bold (PB), Karen Good (KG), Vi Moody (VM), Caroline Moreton Morris (CMM), Donald Paul (DP), Arnold Rawnsfield (AR), Fabriella Panmeer (FP), Ruth Peabody (RP).

Apologies received from: Dilys Saviour (DS), Phil Lovely (PL).

1. Minutes of the last meeting

These were agreed.

2. Matters arising.

None reported.

3. Chairman's business

KG raised the question of the Section constitution. She noted that any suggestions for constitutional changes should be sent to her. However she asserted that it is possible that there will be wider consultation as the research board are currently considering whether to standardise the constitutions of all BCS subsections.

KG enquired about the status of the British Journal of Canoeing as the research board had discussed whether this should at some time in the next year become a journal of water sports, possibly under the aegis of the section – there has been no action on this as yet but DP agreed to raise this at the next meeting of the research board.

Action: DP.

KG thanked Francis Ball and Susan Shoreham-Lee for organising the Lancaster conference.

KG announced that she is intending to stand down as chair next year and suggested the committee should start to consider possible replacements.

Action: All members.

4. Treasurer's report

VM presented the Treasurer's Report. She noted difficulty in obtaining figures for membership of the Section from the BCS. AR kindly offered to send her his mailing list.

VM stated that the 'Morton Slalom' event at the 2009 regional competition had cost the Section more than £3000. She suggested that the Section should consider carefully whether it would be worth investing in this type of event in the future.

VM pointed out that calligrapher's bill for the Prize Certificates is £484.80. RP pointed out that it is possible to replicate this type of calligraphy on the computer. AR mentioned that he can source calligraphy at a much cheaper price than the cost noted in the accounts. FP countered that it is totally immoral to undercut professional calligraphy artists.

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There was general agreement that we should look at cheaper ways of producing the certificates.

Action VM.

VM suggested that 'Viewing Lancaster' in preparation for the 2010 conference is likely to be expensive, but DP was extremely keen that the November 2009 meeting should take place in the venue for the 2010 conference as is usual practice. He suggested that individual members look into their respective likely costs. PB expressed his anger at the idea that the group might cancel this part of the annual programme

Action: all members.

VM has put a provisional figure of £160 on costs for web pages in the current financial year but this has to be finalised.

VM suggested that more clarity is needed in the guidelines we provide for applicants for training bursaries. DS suggested that they get together to discuss the content of the relevant web pages.

Action VM & DS.

5. Future conferences

DP stated that the dates for the 2010 conference in Lancaster had been fixed for 20-22 August. The earlier-than-usual timing is due to clashes with other Canoeing events including NCC and EWSWE10, as well as other major competitions taking place in September. It was suggested we should contemplate advertising this altered timing well in advance, and we agreed it could be made clear at the present conference and on the website.

Action DS.

CMM suggested we email this year's delegates after the conference.

Action CMM.

At this moment in time identified individuals are being approached by DP as keynote speakers. DP stated that it was unlikely that keynotes will be funded by the BCS Board in the future as their funds are likely to be committed elsewhere.

DP said that various symposia have been mooted by the committee for the 2010 but anyone wanting to make further contributions are welcome to get in touch.

DP went on to state that our keynotes are unlikely to be funded by the BCS Research Board in the future as their money is likely to be committed elsewhere.

AR queried whether we could advertise our conference more widely. We can really do with a higher attendance as this would reduce costs considerably. RP interjected that is ridiculous in this day and age not to be advertising all our events online. PB stated that there are flyers for section members in The Paddler, but that the BCS mailing list is probably the best means by which we advertise. CMM suggested we boost our mailing list by building up a list of email addresses when delegates register and if we include questions regarding contact preferences we can add to the database people who are interested in receiving future information about Section activities.

6. Date, time and place of next meeting

DP will email a list of possible dates and times. The venue will be Manchester.

Action DP

The meeting concluded at 1.35p.m.

Exercise – improve these minutes

Rewrite these minutes in summary format. Then have a look at our summary minutes in [online resource C: exercise feedback](#).

Trip to art exhibition

The chair reminded the committee that they had agreed to discuss the trip to an art exhibition at the last meeting. The item had been brought up under Any Other Business but there was not enough time to discuss it.

Mr Titcombe proposed that the group goes on a trip to see the Ursula Billing exhibition which is on at the Albany Gallery. He was of the opinion that this is the best exhibition showing at the moment.

Mr Raneesh interjected that this was a preposterously high expense for the small art group. The coach itself would be extremely expensive.

The Chair asked if anyone wanted to second the proposal to go on a trip to an exhibition.

Miss Senan pointed out that the group had been saving for this day out for a whole year. She wondered what on earth they had been saving for, if not to go on a trip to an exhibition. How could they profess to be interested in the arts and not go and see what other artists are producing? She seconded the proposal.

The Chair confirmed that they now had a motion to go on a trip – proposed by Mr Titcombe and seconded by Miss Senan. He asked for members' views.

Mr Raneesh was of the opinion that the money in the account was to cover the hire of the hall and to pay for new equipment, not for gadding about.

Mr Raneesh pointed out that things had changed – he thought their main priority at the moment was to prepare for their own exhibition of landscape paintings. He was not that impressed with the work of Ursula Billing.

Mr Newsom objected that Mr Raneesh remarks were not in the least bit relevant.

The treasurer, Mrs Drake, pointed out that the bank balance was currently very healthy. They could easily afford the cost of the bus, as long as it is no more than £500. She asked if members wanted her to find how much it would cost to hire a coach for the day to go to the Albany Gallery.

Miss Senan proposed an amendment to the motion – that they find out the cost of a bus before deciding about going to the gallery.

Dr Wheatley seconded the amendment.

The Chair asked for a vote, which showed that members agreed to the amendment.

Resolution

The treasurer will find out how much it would cost to hire a coach to go to the Albany Gallery and report to the next meeting. Members will then vote on the proposal to visit the Ursula Billing exhibition at the Albany Gallery.

Finally: A note on appearance

The appearance of your document is just as important for its clarity as the text itself. A well laid out document enhances the impression that you are trying to create and helps the reader to understand your message. A poor layout, on the other hand, may actually form a barrier to communication. There are many factors to consider here, but the main ones are explained below.

White space

Most people feel daunted when they are confronted with pages of densely written typescript. The amount of white space surrounding the words or graphics is almost as important as everything else. Ask yourself the following questions.

- Do the pages look clear and uncluttered?
- Is there enough space between the paragraphs?
- Are the margins wide enough?
- Is there enough space for headings?

Headings

Every document needs a heading or headings to help readers to find their way through the text. Headings are the signposts that guide your readers through the text. They help to ensure that they do not lose track of the message you are trying to communicate.

It is important that your headings are consistent, so that:

- Main headings always look the same
- Subheadings are less prominent than main headings
- Subheadings follow a clear pattern.

If you write on a computer, you can select the heading styles for your document before you start. This ensures that they will always be consistent.

Highlighting

It is best to use **bold** if you want to emphasise particular words or groups of words. Other ways of making things stand out, such as:

- CAPITALS
- *italics*
- underlining

can be difficult to read because they alter the shape of words.

Graphics

Pictures, graphs, charts and diagrams serve a number of different purposes:

- They break up the text and hold the reader's interest
- They look attractive on the page
- They can often communicate an idea more effectively than words alone.

Fonts & typefaces

To be precise, a typeface refers to the primary design of the set of characters (for example, Courier, Geneva, Arial), while a font is set of type characters of a particular typeface design and size (for example, 10 point Georgia Bold, 18 point Helvetica Italic). However, in practice, the terms font and typeface are often used interchangeably.

There are many fonts available on word processors, but the two main categories are serif and sans-serif typefaces. A serif is a small stroke added to the ends of letters. A typeface without serifs is called sans-serif.

- This is a serif typeface (Times)
- This is a sans-serif typeface (Arial).

Traditionally, serif fonts are used for the main or body text, as they are easier to read when printed on the page. But if your document is mainly going to be read on screen, many people find that a sans-serif font is more legible.

As a general rule, avoid using more than two or three different fonts in a single document, because too many fonts make the layout look busy and cluttered. The power of word-processing and layout programs, and the ease with which anyone can now attempt complex layouts, make it more important than ever to remember the golden rules of good page design:

- Simplicity
- Clarity
- Consistency.

Resource C: feedback to exercises

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Track 2: A process for writing

Feedback to exercise: writing headings and sub-headings

The original article was quite well organised, but difficult to read because the main heading was poor and the body contained no sub-headings.

We have made the article more reader-friendly by introducing a more interesting main heading (H1) and plenty of sub-headings (H2). We have also re-ordered and edited some of the content to make it flow better. We have added bullet points where appropriate to highlight the different key points.

Now the article is much more reader-friendly.

Going green at work (H1)

Greener homes are in the spotlight these days, but what about the other places where many of us spend huge chunks of our time – our offices? Some simple changes of habit can save energy and resources at work. These small steps can be multiplied by persuading the powers-that-be at your workplace to adopt environmentally friendly (and often cost-effective) policies.

Turn out the lights and change the bulbs (H2)

Artificial lighting accounts for 44 percent of the electricity use in office buildings.

- Make it a habit to turn off the lights when you're leaving any room for 15 minutes or more and utilise natural light when you can.
- Make it a policy to use low energy light bulbs and fixtures, which use at least two-thirds less energy than regular lighting
- Install timers or motion sensors that automatically shut off lights when they're not needed.

Cut down on computer energy waste (H2)

Computers in the business sector unnecessarily waste millions of pounds worth of electricity a year.

- Make it a habit to turn off your computer—and the power strip it's plugged into—when you leave for the day. Otherwise, you're still burning energy even if you're not burning the midnight oil.
- During the day, set your computer to go to sleep automatically during short breaks can cut energy use by 70 percent. Remember, screen savers don't save energy.
- Make it a policy to invest in energy-saving computers, monitors, and printers and make sure that old equipment is properly recycled.
- Look for a recycler that has pledged not to export hazardous e-waste and to follow other safety guidelines.
- Donate old computers that still work, and are less than five years old, to organisations that will refurbish them and find them new homes.

Think before you print (H2)

The average office worker goes through 10,000 sheets of copy paper a year.

- Always buy chlorine-free paper with a higher percentage of post-consumer recycled content.
- Also consider switching to a lighter stock of paper or alternatives made from bamboo, hemp or organic cotton.

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- Recycle toner and ink cartridges and buy remanufactured ones. Research shows that each remanufactured toner cartridge keeps approximately 2.5 pounds of metal and plastic out of landfill and conserves about 2.5 litres of oil.
- Print on both sides or use the back side of old documents for faxes, scrap paper, or drafts.
- Avoid colour printing and print in draft mode whenever feasible.
- Think before you print: could this be read or stored online instead?
- When you receive unwanted catalogues, newsletters, magazines, or junk mail, ask to be removed from the mailing list before you recycle the item.
- Post employee manuals and similar materials online, rather than distribute print copies. They're easier to update that way too.

Recycle and reuse whenever possible (H2)

Just about any kind of paper you would encounter in an office, including fax paper, envelopes, and junk mail, can be recycled. So can your old cell phone, PDA, or pager.

- Place recycling bins in accessible, high-traffic areas and provide clear information about what can and can not be recycled.
- Purchase office supplies and furniture made from recycled materials.
- Bring your own mug and dishware for those meals you eat at the office.
- Provide reusable dishes, silverware, and glasses.
- Switch to Fair Trade and organic coffee and tea, and buy as much organic and local food as possible for parties and other events.
- Provide filtered drinking water to reduce bottled-water waste.

Rethink your business travel (H2)

Whenever possible, try to use public transport instead of a car when travelling on business. If you have to rent a car, some rental agencies now offer hybrids and other fuel-efficient vehicles.

- Invest in videoconferencing and other technological solutions that can reduce the amount of employee travel.
- Use a carpool, ride a bike, or take public transport to work.
- If you need to drive occasionally, consider joining a car-sharing service instead of owning your own wheels.
- Encourage telecommuting (a nice perk that's also good for the planet).

Track 3: Using plain English

Feedback to exercise: applying the plain English rules

- a) This is how you might cut the passages down to make them more reader friendly
- i) Taken as a whole, the much reduced programme of participatory experiential art workshops have continued to run extremely successfully over the past year despite the loss of dedicated studio facilities which have continued to generate extra work for the team.
The reduced programme of experiential art workshops has run successfully over the past year despite the loss of dedicated studio facilities. This has continued to generate extra work for the team.
 - ii) The Head of Communication was invited to be Works of Art Officer on the Investments committee – a job which involves responsibility for the company art collection including purchasing new pieces and organising exhibitions.
The Investments committee invited the Head of Communication to be its Works of Art Officer. This job involves taking responsibility for the company art collection, and responsibilities include purchasing new pieces and organising exhibitions.
 - iii) At Barnbrook College we endeavour to ensure that every learner receives individual care and support required to succeed on their programme; individual needs are assessed and each student's progress is monitored by the programme team and supported by specialist qualified professionals. To maximise opportunities and minimise risk we work closely with other partners within the Local Authority and beyond.
At Barnbrook College we aim to ensure that all learners receive the individual care and support they require to succeed on their programmes. The programme team, supported by specialist qualified professionals, assesses individual needs and monitors each student's progress. We maximise opportunities and minimise risk by working closely with other partners within the local authority.
- b) This is how you might make the sentences active.
- i) I was sent several stationery items by your company last week.
Your company sent me several stationery items last week.
 - ii) We were ignored by your waiter for at least half an hour before our order was taken.
Your waiter ignored us for at least half an hour before taking our order.
 - iii) The bathroom was not cleaned by the maid until after we had arrived.
The maid did not clean the bathroom until after we had arrived.
 - iv) I am complaining because a mistake was made by your accounts department.
I am complaining because your accounts department has made a mistake.

c) Here is how you might translate the words and phrases into more familiar language

A high proportion of.....Most of
Accordingly.....therefore
Advise.....tell/inform
Alleviate.....improve/make better
Ascertain.....find out
At this point in time.....now
Commence.....start/begin
Concurrence.....agreement
Discontinue.....stop
Due to the fact that.....because
Endeavour.....try
Forward.....send on
In a position to.....able to/can
In excess of.....more than
In respect of.....about
In the event of.....if
Initiate.....start
Prior to.....before
Remittance.....payment
Should you wish.....if you want
Sufficient.....enough
Supplementary.....extra
Whilst.....while

d) Here is how you might rewrite the passages using the plain English rules.

i) There are a growing number of local authorities that are prepared to support cycling with hard cash. There are more tangible incentives on offer, if you only know where to look. There are a number of employers which offer mileage remittances to cyclists.

A growing number of local authorities are prepared to support cycling with hard cash. Many employers offer cyclists more tangible incentives like mileage payments.

ii) With reference to the conference, which was held last month, please find attached a summary of the comments of delegates who attended the conference. It is confirmed that since the conference feedback was 90% propitious therefore there is a plan to hold the event again next year.

I attach a summary of the comments of the delegates who attended last month's conference. Since the feedback was extremely positive, we plan to hold the event again next year.

iii) We are writing to advise you about the strict latecomer policy put in place for this performance. There will be no latecomers admitted and no re-admittance after the commencement time of 7.30pm. All customers are therefore advised to arrive at the theatre, situated on level 1, in good time. Ticket collection will be from the theatre ticket desk, also located on level 1.

Please note that this performance carries a strict latecomer policy. We will not admit latecomers or re-admit anyone after the start time, which is 7.30 pm. We therefore advise you to arrive at the theatre (situated on Level 1) in good time. Please collect your tickets from the theatre ticket desk, which is also on Level 1.

Track 4: Grammar and punctuation

Feedback to exercise: are these correct?

All the sentences except no. 9 are incorrect.

1. The horse has broken it's leg.

The horse has broken **its** leg.

2. We will need two taxi's for six people.

We will need two **taxis** for six people.

3. They are going to sit they're exams next week.

They are going to sit **their** exams next week.

4. There are always less cars on the road during the school holidays.

There are always **fewer** cars on the road during the school holidays.

5. This is the most expensive of the two policies.

This is the **more** expensive of the two policies.

8. This product will appeal to Marketing Managers across the UK.

This product will appeal to **marketing managers** across the UK.

9. The team need more training.

(Correct – team can be singular or plural)

10. The shop sell's mens shoe's, children's books, lady's clothes and electrician's tools.

The shop sells **men's shoes**, children's books, **ladies'** clothes and **electricians'** tools.

11. Mr Smith owes the housing department three months rent.

Mr Smith owes the housing department three **months'** rent.

12. The first volume of the biography, covering the writer's life from his birth in 1904 to 1939 was published in 1989.

The first volume of the biography, **covering the writer's life from his birth in 1904 to 1939**, was published in 1989.

13. Three years are a long time.

Three years **is** a long time.

14. A list of Mr Brown's properties are attached.

A list of Mr Brown's properties **is** attached.

15. I'm going to lose ten kilos by christmas.

I'm going to lose ten kilos by **Christmas**.

16. The council is providing a new childrens' playground.

The council is providing a new **children's** playground.

Feedback to exercise: correct the errors

Here is the passage with errors corrected.

Bear-faced chic

In the late **1990s**, artists Bryn Snowborn and Mark Wilson found **a magnificent polar bear** in a pub in Wensleydale. **It had been there** for some time and was completely legless. "This one was **supposed** to be half a bear," the artists noted in **their** journal, with barely concealed dismay, "but **(on arrival)** it turned out to be a head and shoulders only, in a **(transparent)** glass case behind the bar **(in) among** the bottles". This may sound like a **(somewhat)** slightly niggling way to react to an encounter with an arctic mammal in a Yorkshire pub. **However, it's** perhaps because, **when it comes to stuffed polar bears**, Snowborn and Wilson have seen far more in the past few years than most people see in a lifetime.

Inspired by their discovery of **three bears** in a crowded Glasgow basement in **2001**, the pair embarked on an odyssey to photograph every taxidermic polar bear in the UK. **Five** years later, with no less than 34 bears caught on camera, that mission reached an end. To mark the occasion, an exhibition at the Horniman Museum in south London brought together the complete set of portraits for the first time.

As the artists discovered, the **UK's** stuffed polar bear population **tends** not to reveal **itself** easily. **They found one** in the storeroom of a Liverpool museum, **(it was)** sandwiched between a tiger and a llama. Another, **once the face of Fox's Glacier Mints**, spends his days in a Somerset hallway, wearing a fez and holding a basket of plastic tulips.

Although the vast majority of the bears in this country **were** brought here by 19th-century explorers, one gentle specimen, **who resides in the hallway of Lord Thomas' London home**, is proof that the desire to have a bear of **one's** own is not yet dead.

Wilson even suggests we may be in the grip of a resurgence. Lord **Thomas** bought his bear from the famous Deyrolle Natural History Shop in Paris. They still have another in stock, if **you're** interested – and have £9,000 to spare.

Track 5: Writing persuasive emails

Feedback to exercise: what is wrong with these emails?

Subject: Problems

Yo Bob

Jo foned this morning too say she will be late for the meeting. Sarah sez she doesn't mind holding it later in the day, or even Wednesday, but not be4 midday. I just foned Mike's secretary and she sez that he won't be back from Milan untl Tuesday night anyway. (OK for some BTW!!) So it looks like IT WILL HAVE TO BE ON WEDNESDAY. I've checked wth Sarah and Mike's secretary and they can make this. Meeting room 4 is free at that time. Is thsi OK with you?

Keep smiling – Hil

Here are some of the errors in style, grammar and structure:

- 'Text speak' is not appropriate in a business document (too informal)
- Capital letters are not appropriate (a reader will interpret these as shouting)
- The writer does not get to the point straight away (blurs the message)
- The writer includes too much irrelevant detail (wastes the reader's time).

How might the reader feel?

- Frustrated by the length of the message
- Confused about the content of the message
- Annoyed by the over-familiar style of writing.

The email might be better written like this:

Subject: Need to reschedule finance meeting

Bob

Can we reschedule Tuesday's finance meeting for Wednesday at 11am in Meeting Room 4? This will allow Jo, Sarah and Mike to attend.

Please let me know as soon as possible whether or not this new arrangement suits you.

Thanks

Hilary

Subject: Evaluations

Dear Mrs Smith

With reference to the conference, which was held last month. Please find attached a summary of the comments of delegates, who attended the conference. It is confirmed that since the conference feedback was 90% favourable therefore there is a plan to held it again next year.

Please be assured that your fee will be sent under separate cover, by post. Assuring you of our best intentions at all times.

Yours sincerely

James R Jones (Mr)

Here are some of the errors in style, grammar and structure:

- The email is far too formal in tone – it read like a business letter from a bygone era.
- The writer over-uses the passive voice: 'it is confirmed', 'Please be assured'
- Phrases like 'With reference to', 'Please find attached' and 'Assuring you' sound stiff and old-fashioned.

How might the reader feel?

- Irritated (the message is far too long)
- Confused (it contains too much detail)
- Amused (some of the old-fashioned expressions are laughable)

The email might be better written like this:

Subject: APM Conference: follow-up

Dear Jane Smith

I attach a summary of delegates' comments about the APM conference. As you will see, the feedback is very favourable and we are already planning a similar event for next year.

We will send your expenses by post at the end of the month.

With kind regards

James Jones

Events Manager

Subject: EMAIL Sent in error

Dear Mary

You will have received an email this afternoon confirming booking details for your forthcoming holiday.

As you can see you are registered on our system but you should disregard the content of my previous email which was sent to you in error as the email was inadvertently sent to our entire mailing list whereas it should actually have been sent only to those going on the September cruise to Italy. There are several major problems with the new software which seems unfortunately to contain quite a lot of teething troubles.

Apologies for any confusion this may have caused you. If you are require clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Peter Bishop

Bookings Assistant

Here are some of the errors in style, grammar and structure:

- It contains passives ('you will have received' and 'it should have been sent') and meaningless business clichés ('please do not hesitate'). It reads more like a very old fashioned letter than an email.
- It gives far too much information in long meandering sentences that fail to get the point across clearly.

How might the reader feel?

- Irritated and frustrated (it's too long and involved)
- Confused about the nature of the message (it contains too much detail)

The email might be better written like this:

Subject: email sent in error

Dear Mrs Jones

Please disregard the email which I sent earlier confirming your holiday booking as it was sent to you in error. I'm afraid we are having teething problems with our new bulk email system.

I'm sorry for any confusion.

With best wishes

Peter Bishop

Bookings Assistant

Track 6: Writing clear and concise reports

Feedback to exercise: What is wrong with this report?

Artist-led Master classes

Taken as a whole, the much reduced programme of participatory experiential art workshops have continued to run extremely successfully over the past year despite the loss of dedicated studio facilities which have continued to generate extra work for the team.

Student Photography Exhibition

Woburn Arts Arena (9-16 April)

This lively exhibition which was well attended by both students and members of the public showcased selected works from this year's Student Photography Competition, included landscape, documentary, still life, abstract and portraiture. There were 346 photographs entered in the competition which was judged by Giulia Martello, Frank Plumstock and George Blair.

Work by graduates of BA Fine Art Drawing

School of Art and Design

(4-14 May)

Studio gallery

This is our second exhibition featuring work by a selection of talented new graduates from the BA in Fine Art Drawing, a highly respected course bringing together students keen to develop an artistic practice through investigating drawing and its role in contemporary art. On the course a diverse range of student work explores the place of drawing in activities like site-specific art, installation, TBA's, new digital technologies, through to painting, sculpture and printmaking. The pieces selected for this show include video, mixed media, photography and sound. The preview was very well attended and the exhibition attracted a number of favourable.

NEW WOBURN ARTS ARENA

Over the Christmas vacation, the Facilities Department completed the conversion of the new foyer into the WOBURN ARTS ARENA and work of final year visual art students is installed in the space at the time of writing.

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENTS

The Head of Visual arts continued to work on academic developments, collaborating in particular with the Department of Social and Policy Sciences.

SCR Committee

The Head of Visual Arts was invited to be Fine Arts Officer on the SCR committee. This involves responsibility for the SCR art collection including purchasing new pieces and organising exhibitions.

These are some of the main problems.

Structure

- The report does not include an introduction with purpose, context or background.
- There is no summary or conclusion.

Appearance

- The lay-out is a mess (headings not consistent, spacing is poor etc).
- Not enough white space.
- Headings are poor.
- Capital letters used for highlighting names.

Grammar, punctuation and writing style

- There are many mistakes in grammar and punctuation.
- The report contains a number of lengthy sentences and passives.
- At least one sentence is incomplete.

Language

- There are a number of unexplained abbreviations.

Track 7: Writing good letters

Feedback to exercise: update these expressions

How could you update the following rather old-fashioned business expressions?

1. Further to your recent complaint about our products.
I have been investigating your complain about our products.
2. I write in response to your letter dated 4 April.
I have received the letter you wrote on 4 April.
3. Further to our recent meeting at a conference in July...
We met at a conference in July...
4. Please don't hesitate to contact me again if you have any further questions.
Please contact me again if you have any more questions.
5. I write in reference to recent correspondence regarding the...
Thank you for writing to me about...
6. Trusting this answers your questions.
I hope this answers your questions.
7. Thanking you for an early response to this letter.
Please reply as soon as possible.
8. Thank you in advance for your assistance.
Thank you for your help.
9. Please find attached a report on our recent meeting.
I attach a report about our recent meeting.

Track 8: Writing the minutes of meetings

Feedback to exercise: how can these minutes be improved?

Study the following minutes and try to decide what is wrong with them. How can they be improved?

British Canoeing Society – Northern Section

Quarterly Meeting

Present: Paul Bold (PB), Karen Good (KG), Vi Moody (VM), Caroline Moreton Morris (CMM), Donald Paul (DP), Arnold Rawnsfield (AR), Fabriella Panmeer (FP), Ruth Peabody (RP).

Apologies received from: Dilys Saviour (DS), Phil Lovely (PL).

1. Minutes of the last meeting

These were agreed.

2. Matters arising.

None reported.

3. Chairman's business

KG raised the question of the Section constitution. She noted that any suggestions for constitutional changes should be sent to her. However she asserted that it is possible that there will be wider consultation as the research board are currently considering whether to standardise the constitutions of all BCS subsections.

KG enquired about the status of the British Journal of Canoeing as the research board had discussed whether this should at some time in the next year become a journal of water sports, possibly under the aegis of the section – there has been no action on this as yet but DP agreed to raise this at the next meeting of the research board.

Action: DP.

KG thanked Francis Ball and Susan Shoreham-Lee for organising the Lancaster conference.

KG announced that she is intending to stand down as chair next year and suggested the committee should start to consider possible replacements.

Action: All members.

4. Treasurer's report

VM presented the Treasurer's Report. She noted difficulty in obtaining figures for membership of the Section from the BCS. AR kindly offered to send her his mailing list.

VM stated that the 'Morton Slalom' event at the 2009 regional competition had cost the Section more than £3000. She suggested that the Section should consider carefully whether it would be worth investing in this type of event in the future.

VM pointed out that calligrapher's bill for the Prize Certificates is £484.80. RP pointed out that it is possible to replicate this type of calligraphy on the computer. AR mentioned that he can source calligraphy at a much cheaper price than the cost noted in the accounts. FP countered that it is totally immoral to undercut professional calligraphy artists.

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There was general agreement that we should look at cheaper ways of producing the certificates.

Action VM.

VM suggested that 'Viewing Lancaster' in preparation for the 2010 conference is likely to be expensive, but DP was extremely keen that the November 2009 meeting should take place in the venue for the 2010 conference as is usual practice. He suggested that individual members look into their respective likely costs. PB expressed his anger at the idea that the group might cancel this part of the annual programme

Action: all members.

VM has put a provisional figure of £160 on costs for web pages in the current financial year but this has to be finalised.

VM suggested that more clarity is needed in the guidelines we provide for applicants for training bursaries. DS suggested that they get together to discuss the content of the relevant web pages.

Action VM & DS.

5. Future conferences

DP stated that the dates for the 2010 conference in Lancaster had been fixed for 20-22 August. The earlier-than-usual timing is due to clashes with other Canoeing events including NCC and EWSWE10, as well as other major competitions taking place in September. It was suggested we should contemplate advertising this altered timing well in advance, and we agreed it could be made clear at the present conference and on the website.

Action DS.

CMM suggested we email this year's delegates after the conference.

Action CMM.

At this moment in time identified individuals are being approached by DP as keynote speakers. DP stated that it was unlikely that keynotes will be funded by the BCS Board in the future as their funds are likely to be committed elsewhere.

DP said that various symposia have been mooted by the committee for the 2010 but anyone wanting to make further contributions are welcome to get in touch.

DP went on to state that our keynotes are unlikely to be funded by the BCS Research Board in the future as their money is likely to be committed elsewhere.

AR queried whether we could advertise our conference more widely. We can really do with a higher attendance as this would reduce costs considerably. RP interjected that is ridiculous in this day and age not to be advertising all our events online. PB stated that there are flyers for section members in The Paddler, but that the BCS mailing list is probably the best means by which we advertise. CMM suggested we boost our mailing list by building up a list of email addresses when delegates register and if we include questions regarding contact preferences we can add to the database people who are interested in receiving future information about Section activities.

6. Date, time and place of next meeting

DP will email a list of possible dates and times. The venue will be Manchester.

Action DP

The meeting concluded at 1.35p.m.

You may have noted the following ways in which the minutes could be improved:

- Make them briefer – these minutes contain a lot of unnecessary detail. A lot of the detail could be summarised, making them easier to read and understand.
- Cut out any record of emotional or judgemental outbursts (eg 'FP countered that it is totally immoral to undercut professional calligraphy artists', 'that is ridiculous in this day and age not to be advertising all our events online').
- Reduce adjectives and adverbs. 'DP was extremely keen ...' would be better written as 'DP favoured ...'.
- Make the minutes less chatty in tone. 'We can really do with a higher attendance ..' might be better written as 'we need to find ways of attracting more attendees ...'.
- Cut out clichéd phrases – eg 'At this moment in time'.
- Turn passives into actives eg 'various symposia have been mooted by the committee'.
- Include a deadline for completion of the specified actions.

Feedback to exercise: improve these minutes

This is how the minutes might appear in summary format.

Trip to art exhibition

- Mr Titcombe proposed that the group goes on a trip to see the Ursula Billing exhibition at the Albany Gallery.
- Miss Senan seconded the proposal.

There followed a discussion in which:

- Mr Raneesh stated that the money in the account was to cover the hire of the hall and to pay for new equipment. He thought their main priority was to prepare for their own exhibition of landscape paintings.
- The Treasurer pointed out that the bank balance was currently very healthy. They could afford to pay up to £500 towards the cost of a bus.

Miss Senan proposed an amendment that they find out the cost of a bus before deciding about going to the gallery.

Dr Wheatley seconded the amendment.

Members voted in favour of the amendment.

Resolution

The committee resolved that the treasurer will find out how much it would cost to hire a coach to go to the Albany Gallery and report to the next meeting.

Members will then vote on the proposal to visit the Ursula Billing exhibition at the Albany Gallery.

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Job offer

Dear (first name)

As discussed on the phone, I enclose your formal offer of employment. We are all really pleased that you are joining the team and are looking forward to working with you.

(Please let me know your earliest start date.)

(As agreed, your start date will be XX. Please come along to meet me at XXXX at 9.30 on your first morning.)

We have an exciting induction programme lined up for you, which will be an opportunity for you to gain an insight into different areas of our business. You will also be learning about our history and our unique company philosophy.

Looking forward to seeing you again on XX, but in the meantime please contact me if you have any questions.

Best wishes

(Sign first name)

(Print full name)

(Job role)

Covering letter for job application

Dear (full name or first name as appropriate)

I am responding to your advertisement for a XXX which appeared in (publication) on (date).

As you can see from my CV, my main skills are.. I can (also) offer.. experience in ... My main interests are I am keen to secure a position with XXX because ...

I have developed most of the skills that you are looking for during my career (experience) as For example, while during my time at XXXX, I (worked closely with) (spent part of my time) (gained a lot of experience in). This valuable experience makes me an ideal candidate for the current vacancy.

I can offer considerable creativity and enthusiasm to this post. You will also find that I am reliable, responsible and able to work on my own initiative.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

(Sign first name)

(Print full name)

Letter of resignation 1

Dear (name of manager)

I have decided to resign my position with XXXX to take up another job offer. Since the required period of notice is a week (a month), my last day of work will be (day) (date).

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you for all the help and support you have given me while I have been part of the XXX team. I appreciate everything that (company name) has done for me during my time here and I wish you and the rest of the team every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

(Sign first name)

(Print full name)

Letter of resignation 2

Dear XXX

As per section ... of my contract of employment, I hereby give x weeks notice of my intention to leave (company name).

You may be surprised to hear of my intention to leave so soon. However, I now realise that my role in this company does not fulfil my career aims and I feel it is best for me to move on to another job.

This decision was not an easy one and took a lot of consideration. However, I am confident that my new role represents a positive move towards achieving my ambitions and goals.

Thank you for all that you have done for me in my employment here and I wish the company continued success.

Yours sincerely

(Sign first name)

(Print full name)

Replies to an invitation

Accepting (informal)

Dear Robert

Thank you for your kind invitation to the party which you are holding on 31 October at Arden House. I'd love to come – looking forward to it.

Kind regards

Janet

Declining (informal)

Dear Robert

Thank you for your kind invitation to the party which you are holding on 31 October at Arden House. I'd have loved to come but unfortunately I'm doing something else on that day. I hope it goes well and look forward to seeing you again soon.

Kind regards

Janet

Formal replies

Dear Ms Buck

Your invitation to a reception

Thank you very much for your kind invitation to attend the reception at Arden House Conference Centre on 31 October. I am delighted to accept this invitation and look forward very much to meeting you again on that day.

(Unfortunately I won't be able to attend, but do look forward to meeting you again on some other occasion.)

Yours sincerely

Your signature

Your name

Your job role

Date: 24 November 2010

To: Maintenance team

From: John Jones

Purpose: To remind you to complete job forms at the agreed time

Action required: Complete forms immediately after carrying out maintenance

Deadline: Immediate

In the past couple of months some team members have failed to complete form J4216X on the day on which a job is finished. In some cases I have had to chase up forms two weeks after they should have been sent in.

Completing job forms (J4216X) as soon as you finish a job is vital part of your responsibility as a team engineer. Without them we have no formal record of what work you carried out, when, where and for which client. This could put us in a difficult and embarrassing position if a client queries an invoice.

One of our Key Performance Indicators is 'Documentation completed accurately and on the day on which the work is carried out'. You agreed to meet this target when you signed your contract for work.

Please make sure that all forms are completed and sent to us at the correct time in future.

Many thanks

John Jones

Maintenance Manager

Example of an effective report

Postcode change for 1-5 The Bungalows, Foxton Road, Waterley Cross

Report to: Executive

Date: 15 September 2009

Report author: Councillor G. Marshall, Marshfield Ward

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to summarise the reasons why the postcode of The Bungalows, Foxton Road, Waterley Cross needs to be changed. The report recommends that the Council gives its approval to change the post code.

2. Executive Summary

Residents of Foxton Road and The Bungalows, Foxton Road have been experiencing problems relating to their similar address details and identical postcodes. Following consultation, the Council decided at the July meeting to change the address and postcode of The Bungalows. However, when the renaming notice was served, Bungalows residents filed objections to the court saying they would prefer to keep their original street name. Marshfield Ward Members now propose that we keep the address of 1-5 The Bungalows, Foxton Road the same but change its post code.

3. Background

For several years, residents of Foxton Road and The Bungalows, Foxton Road have complained to the council about problems relating to their postcodes and other address details. For example:

- Mail and other deliveries wrongly delivered
- Mail and other deliveries lost
- Taxis calling at the wrong address
- Emergency Services unable to locate a property
- Utility bills sent to the wrong address
- Services cut off when bills are not paid.

These problems all stem from the fact that The Bungalows, Foxton Road and Foxton Road itself are both numbered 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. In addition, all these properties use the same post code, PR8 2AF.

These problems are likely to increase in the future as more and more companies use the postcode and house number to store and locate addresses.

3.1 Consultation

In May and June 2009, the Planning Committee carried out a written consultation with the residents of 1-5 The Bungalows. At the same time, a West Burrington Homes and a District of Waterley Officer carried out door-to-door visits. The three Marshfield Ward Members held a meeting with the residents at 1-5 The Bungalows and at 5 Foxton Road. During this consultation exercise, the majority of residents agreed that the only way to solve the problem was to change the address and postcode of either Foxton Road or The Bungalows, Foxton Road. >>

4. Current position

At the July meeting, members decided to change the address and postcode of 1-5 The Bungalows, Foxton Road. Accordingly, this Executive agreed to make an order to alter the Street Name of 'The Bungalows, Foxton Road, Waterley Cross' to 'East Park Bungalows, Waterley Cross'. The Bungalows' post code would also be changed. This order would fall under Section 18 of the Public Health Act 1925.

When the renaming notice was served, residents of 1-5 The Bungalows decided that they would prefer to keep their original street name. They filed their objections with the magistrates court. The three Marshfield Ward Members arranged a meeting with the residents to discuss their views and to find out what they wanted to do. A compromise option was agreed: only the post code of 1-5 The Bungalows would be changed and the rest of the address would remain unchanged.

5. Implications

The planning team has identified no cost, legal or strategy implications of the proposed post code change. They have carried out a risk assessment and have or will implement all the necessary action required to manage the identified risks.

6. Recommendations

That the Council:

- Withdraw the order under Section 18 of the Public Health Act 1925 changing the name of the Street currently known as 'The Bungalows, Foxton Road, Waterley Cross' to 'East Park Bungalows, Waterley Cross'.
- Apply to Royal Mail for a new post code for 1-5 The Bungalows, Foxton Road, Waterley Cross.

To a colleague (informal)

Subject: Need to reschedule finance meeting

Bob

Can we reschedule Tuesday's finance meeting for Wednesday at 11am in Meeting Room 4? This will allow Jo, Sarah and Mike to attend.

Please let me as soon as possible whether or not this new arrangement suits you.

Thanks

Hilary

To a client/supplier

Subject: APM Conference: follow-up

Dear Jane Smith

I attach a summary of delegates' comments about the APM conference. As you will see, the feedback is very favourable and we are already planning a similar event for next year.

We will be sending your expenses by post at the end of the month.

With kind regards

James Jones

Events Manager

More formal email

Subject: email sent in error

Dear Mrs Jones

Please disregard the email which I sent earlier this afternoon confirming your holiday booking as it was sent to you in error. I'm afraid we are experiencing a few teething problems with our new bulk email system.

I'm sorry for any confusion this may have caused you. Please contact me if you require clarification.

With best wishes

Peter Bishop

Bookings Assistant

email confirming an interview

Subject: Interview on Wednesday October 10

Dear Mrs Jones

Thank you for your email inviting me for an interview for the position of operations manager at your Reading depot. I am pleased to confirm that I can attend the interview at 28-30 Marshall St, Reading at 10am on Wednesday October 10.

Looking forward to seeing you then

Best wishes

Your name

email dealing with a complaint

Subject: Your complaint about poor service

Dear Mr Smith

We are sorry that you and your family were not happy with the service that we provided when you came to our restaurant for lunch on 31 September. I assure you that we take this matter very seriously and are investigating it carefully. We will contact you again as soon as we find out what went wrong.

In the meantime, please accept my sincere apologies for the upset that you and your family experienced when you visited our restaurant. We very much hope to be able to explain what happened and persuade you to give us another try!

With best wishes

Paul Edwards

Restaurant Manager

Wimpoles Hotel, Bath

Example agenda

Meeting of the Facilities and Administration Committee

Meeting Room 3

29 March 2010, 14:00

Apologies for absence

1. Committee (Chair's) business
2. Minutes of the previous meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Reports
 - 4.1 Finance report
 - 4.2 Health and safety report
 - 4.3 Report from staff forum
5. Visit of David Smith MP
 - 5.1 Timetable for visit
 - 5.2 Security for visit
6. Restaurant
 - 6.1 Redecoration
 - 6.2 New chairs
 - 6.3 Provision of shelter for smoking area
7. Any other business
8. Date of next meeting

Minute-taking forms

Many minute-takers write their notes on forms which they partially fill in before the meeting and complete as the meeting progresses. If you want to use this approach, you'll need two types of form:

- The first is a facing sheet which records the title, date and place of the meeting, those present, apologies, minutes of last meeting, matters arising and date of next meeting. You can complete many of these details before the start of the meeting.
- The second form records discussions, decisions and actions in respect of each agenda item. You will complete this form during the meeting.

There are two examples of note-taking forms on the following pages.

The big advantages of using forms are that:

- You are less likely to miss points and your note-taking will be more organised
- You can structure discussion points under the appropriate agenda item, and you don't have to note points as they come up in a chaotic discussion
- It is relatively quick and easy to write up your minutes from these notes.

Minute-taking: cover sheet

Meeting title	
Date	
Venue	
Present, apologies and other <i>List full names and use a code for the minutes</i>	
In attendance <i>List anyone who is not part of the committee and note their role in the meeting (observer, speaker, contributor etc)</i>	
Date of next meeting	
Time and venue	
Minutes of the last meeting held on <i>(date)</i>	
Accepted as a true record? <i>(yes or no)</i>	
Any amendments? <i>Note the details, using the same numbering system as the previous minutes.</i>	
Matters arising <i>Use the same numbering system as the previous minutes.</i> <i>Confirm that actions agreed have been 'completed' or are 'in hand'.</i> <i>Don't include matters that are on this meeting's agenda.</i>	

Minute-taking form (one sheet per agenda item)

Agenda Item (number)		
Title (As it appears in the agenda)		
Introduced by (name the person who led the discussion)		
Main discussion points <ul style="list-style-type: none">• List each discussion point under a separate bullet• Only note the main points• Write points vertically down the page• If necessary, note the name (in code) of the person making the point		
Decisions		
Actions to be taken	By whom	By when

Examples of different types of minutes

Action minutes

Meeting: Governing Body Of Bond Street School Resources Committee			
Date: 10/10/2010		Time: 2pm	
Participants Governors Ms A Able (Chair) AA Mr B Baker BB Mr C Chapman CC Mr F Flint. FF In attendance Mr G Gordon (Clerk to the Meeting). GG Mrs H Heath (School Finance Officer). HH		Apologies Mrs D Davies DD In attendance Mrs Julia Jones (Head Teacher) JJ	
Agenda item	Action	Actioner	Deadline
1. Minutes of the previous meeting	Approved		
2. Matters arising	No matters arising		
3. Budget monitoring statement	Propose that up to £2,000 be made available for additional CPD in line with the school's development plan.	HH	Immediately
4. Projected pupil numbers	1. Prepare a brief paper on ways of improving the marketing of the school.	AA and CC	By next meeting
	2. Prepare a brief paper on staffing options in the light of the projected falling rolls	BB and CC	By next meeting
5. Any other business	New staff room chairs required	GG	Defer to next meeting
6. Next meeting	Will be 12/02/11 at 2pm Minutes circulated by 27/10/10	GG	

Summary minutes

Governing Body Of Bond Street School Resources Committee

Wednesday 10 October, 2010

Present

Ms A Able (Chair) AA

Mr B Baker BB

Mr C Chapman CC

Mr F Flint FF

In attendance

Mr G Gordon (Clerk to the Meeting) GG

Mrs H Heath (School Finance Officer) HH

In attendance

Mrs Julia Jones (Head Teacher) JJ

Apologies

Mrs D Davies DD

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved and signed as an accurate record of 11 July 2007.

2. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Budget monitoring statement

The Committee considered the budget monitoring statement for the current financial year. The head teacher explained the statement in some detail and answered questions.

Particular issues in their discussions were:

- The head teacher explained that the projected underspend on teachers' salaries was due to new staff being appointed on salaries below those budgeted for.
- It was agreed that the projected overspend on staff cover costs should be met from the projected underspend on teachers' salaries.

The Committee noted that all other aspects of the budget seemed to be proceeding as planned.

Action: That up to £2,000 be made available for additional CPD in line with the school's development plan

By: HH and JJ

When: immediately

Action: Explore ways of avoiding this problem in future and report on this matter to the next meeting

By: BB and CC

By when: next meeting

4. Projected pupil numbers

The Committee discussed the implications of the latest projected pupil numbers for the school.

The discussion covered the following points:

- Impact of the opening of a new academy in the town
- Falling rolls in the country and in the region as a whole
- How to improve the image of the school in the area
- How to market the school more widely and more positively.

Action: prepare a brief paper on ways of improving the marketing of the school.

By: AA and CC

By when: next meeting

>>

<<

Action: prepare a brief paper on staffing options in the light of the projected falling rolls.

By: JJ

By when: next meeting

5. **Any other business**

There were no other items of business.

6. **Next meeting**

To be held on 12 February 2011 at 2pm

Chair's signature

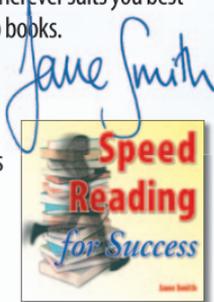
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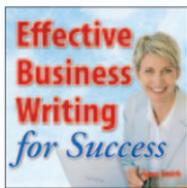
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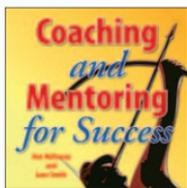
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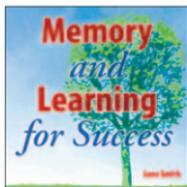
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