



International Business Communications

An ICM Study Aid

Contents



Section	Page
Learning Log	3
Introduction	5
Section 1: The Process of Communication	6
Section 2: Speaking Effectively	14
Section 3: Listening	20
Section 4: Human Interaction and Non-Verbal Communication	26
Section 5: Talking on the Telephone	35
Section 6: Interviewing	46
Section 7: Being Interviewed for a Job	56
Section 8: Communicating in Groups	62
Section 9: Running and Taking Part in Meetings	69
Section 10: Giving a Talk	79
Section 11: Using Visual Aids	89
Section 12: Faster Reading	99
Section 13: Better Reading	105
Section 14: Writing Business Letters	111
Section 15: Applying for a Job	122
Section 16: Writing Reports	129
Section 17: Memos' Messages, Forms and Questionnaires	144
Section 18: Visual Communication	150
Section 19: Getting to Grips With Grammar	162
Section 20: Appendices	169

Learning Log



Study Aid Page	Key learning Point

Study Aid Page	Key learning Point

Introduction



The International Business Communications Unit covers a range of topics to help you improve your communication skills within a business setting. It will look at how you can increase your knowledge and also examine the way in which communication can be used in business.

The unit covers the main communication tasks with which you are likely to be confronted – telephoning, interviewing, meetings, giving talks and oral presentations, writing letters, reports, questionnaires, emails and so on. In addition it covers non-verbal communication listening and reading, the use of visual aids – boards, projectors, DVD's, plus visual communication such as graphs and charts.

This self study aid acts as an introduction to the subject and will also help with your revision. However, we recommend that you also use the ICM study book Mastering Communication by Nicky Stanton – 5th edition (ISBN: 978-0230216921) as this covers the subject in much more detail.

On pages 3 and 4 of this study aid you will find a learning log. You can use this to note key learning points or points you would like to study further. This will help you when you revise the subject for your examination.

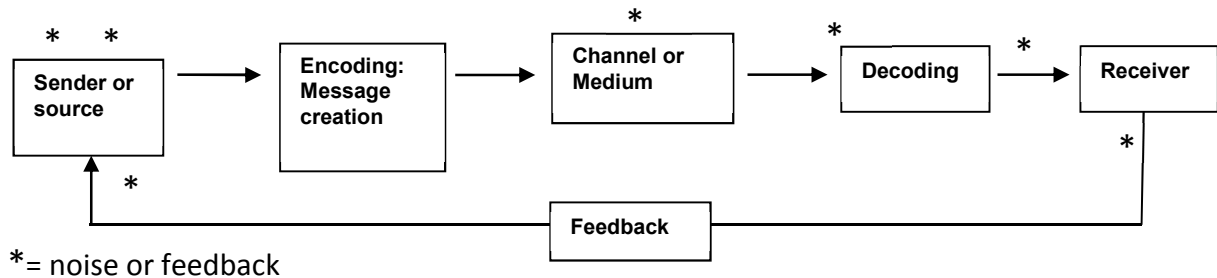


The Process of Communication

The Objectives of Communication



Our starting point needs to be to understand the process of communication



Whatever form of communication we are engaged in, whether writing or speaking; imparting information; offering an explanation; trying to educate, convince or amuse, there are four main objectives that we must be aware of, they are:

1. To be received (heard or read)
2. To be understood
3. To be accepted
4. To get action

Failing at any one of these objectives will lead to fail to communicate properly and effectively.

The Meaning of Words

The meaning we each individually attach to words will alter our perception of them. Our individuality can be a major barrier to effective communication. It helps to recognise that the only connection between a word, and the object it represents, is whatever association we have chosen to make. We need to also be aware of regional variations in dialect.

With words which describe things we can touch, feel, hear, see or smell – we may have less trouble getting our meaning across as we have usually all had the same experience. More difficult are words that describe sensations, feelings and emotions, as these can all be interpreted differently.

Non-verbal communication



Words are not the only way we can communicate. Every time we communicate we are sending out messages by a number of other means

Facial expression	Using a smile says something is positive, a frown negative.
Body movements	Movement of hands and body can help to explain our verbal message more clearly.
Posture	How we stand or sit.
Placement	Whether we face the other person or turn away.
Eye contact	Whether we look at the other person or not, and the length of time we are looking at them.
Physical contact	A pat on the back or an arm round the shoulder is seen as positive affirmation.
Closeness	The distance we are from the person or audience.
Head movements	To indicate agreement or disagreement.
Appearance	Your choice of clothes and how smart you are.
Non-verbal features of speech	Variations of pitch, emphasis and timing: the tone and quality of your voice (also called 'para-language').
Non-verbal features of writing	Handwriting, lay-out, organisation, neatness and visual appearance.

Non-verbal features of communication are sometimes called 'metacommunication', from the Greek word meta, for beyond. We need to always be aware of these additional messages that we may be giving.

Metacommunications can be very powerful, the receiver will use these clues to help interpret what you mean, sometimes taking the meaning from the meta-communication instead of the actual words.

Every communication that we take part in will have its own context or situation, and this will impact on how our message is perceived. An individual's past experiences will give differences in perception and understanding. This means that having total clarity in your wording is all the more important.

Barriers to Communication



Being aware of factors that can cause problems when we are communicating can help us overcome them or minimise their effect:

Perception

Everyone's past experiences influence their view of the world. These differences in perception can be affected by age, nationality, sex, education, job, status and personality. Differences in perception can trigger other barriers to communication.

Assumptions

If we only hear what we expect to hear, or see what we expect to see, then we can distort the reality of the situation. We need to be careful not to assume something just based on past experience. Don't always assume that your receiver has the same level of knowledge as you.

Stereotypes

Because past experiences influence us, we must be aware of not treating different people as if they are all the same.

No interest

You should always be aware that the receiver's lack of interest in your topic could be the biggest barrier to your effective communication. If this occurs angle your delivery to fit the receiver's interests or needs.

Expression

Self-expression can be a barrier when hindered by not finding the right words or lack of self-confidence. These problems can be overcome by increasing your vocabulary or by preparation and planning.

Emotion

The emotions of either receiver or communicator can also prove to be a barrier; any strongly felt emotion is liable to prevent almost anything except the emotion being communicated.

Personality problems

A clash of personalities is one of the most common causes of communication failure. We may not be able to change the personality of others, but at least we should be prepared to consider our own personality, to see if a change in our behavior may result in a more satisfactory relationship.

Why? Who? Where? When? What? How?



Whatever communication task you are undertaking, asking these six questions *before* you start will give your communication a better chance of success, and make the task easier.

Why am I doing it?

- Why do I need to communicate?
- What is reason for me writing or speaking?

Who is it for?

- Who is going to be the audience?
- What do I know about them?
- How much do they currently know about the subject?
- Do I know how they will react?

Where and when?

- Will my receiver have relevant material to hand?
- Is the message part of an ongoing issue or will this be a new subject?
- Do I have a good relationship with the receiver, will there be any problems?

What is the content?

- What do I want, and need, to say?
- What are the key points to pass on?
- What information is irrelevant?
- What information will ensure the message is:
 - Clear?
 - Constructive?
 - Concise?
 - Correct?
 - Courteous?
 - Complete? (the six C's of communication)

How will I deliver the message?

- How will I communicate the message? Words? Pictures?
- How will I organise the sections? Deductive (main points then examples/illustrations) or inductive (start with examples/illustrations then main point at the end)
- How am I going to achieve the right effect? What tone? Which words to use?

Planning the message



Once you have considered all the previous six points you can move forward to constructing your message.

Stage One What is the purpose of the message?	Writing down, quite briefly, what the purpose of the message is will help you focus. With the details in front of you are more likely to stay on track.
Stage Two Gather the information	Make notes however you prefer (PC, sticky notes, lists) to cover all your main points. Then work through and see if there is anything that is not really relevant.
Stage Three Put information in sections	Look through your list for links between pieces of information. Rewrite your notes in groups, with headings. These will become your sections in the finished message.
Stage Four Find a logical sequence	You can now put the groups of information into a sensible order that your reader can follow: Chronological: order in which events happened in time Complexity: simpler ideas first, then increasingly complex ones Place: presenting facts geographically, north to south, top to bottom Cause and Effect: e.g. because this happened, because that happened Importance: descending or ascending order of importance Familiarity: moving from the known to the unknown Topical: just deal with items on a topic-by-topic basis.
Stage Five Write an outline	By working through the first four stages you will have a skeleton outline. This can now be refined by cutting it down or re-writing more clearly.
Stage Six Write a first draft	At this stage don't worry about style or exact wording. Your skeleton outline will give you the basis for your draft that then just needs to be put into sentences and paragraphs.
Stage Seven Write the final draft	Now consider your message from the point of view of the receiver. Adapt the final draft to match their specific needs. Make sure there is a clear argument to follow, from the receivers' point of view. Use words and terms you know your receiver will understand.

Summary – How to communicate



The basics of communication cover the differences our past experiences play in how we communicate and receive information; barriers to communication and different forms of communication.

Non-verbal communication:

- Facial expression
- Body movements
- Posture
- Placement
- Eye-contact
- Physical contact
- Closeness
- Head-movements
- Appearance

Barriers:

- Perception
- Assumptions
- Stereotypes
- Being uninformed
- No interest
- Trouble with expression
- Emotion
- Personality problems

Once you have an understanding of these factors you can look at the why?, who?, where and when?, what? and how? of constructing a communication. This will then culminate in you having the skills to formulate a concise and effective message, from start to finish.

Section One – Test Questions



1. a) State and explain the **FOUR** main objectives of communication.

- b) Outline the stages you would go through in planning a message.

2. Describe and discuss the major barriers to effective business communication. Use examples to illustrate your answer.

3. State the main types of non-verbal communication and discuss with examples why such non-verbal communication is important in business.



Speaking Effectively

Basic Speaking Skills



When placed in a situation that requires us to speak in-front of others there are a number of skills that we can use. Forward planning and knowing your subject are important. Speaking skills are needed for a number of areas, such as giving others information, making a presentation, teaching someone a new procedure, interviewing or acting as chair in a meeting.

There are two key skill areas which will help when you are speaking:

Personal qualities	• Accuracy: A wide vocabulary will help you to ensure you are using the right words to get your meaning across. Prior research will help you get your facts right and stop any confusion. • Eye contact: It is important to make eye contact with your audience to help keep them engaged. • Clarity: You need to speak your words in a clear way, use simple language and organised material to help your audience understand. • Relaxation: Staying relaxed and taking a deep breath before you start will help the message come across more naturally. If you are flustered you may talk too fast and mix your message up. • Empathy: If a situation is difficult try and put yourself in the others persons position. You don't have to agree with them, just have empathy for their situation. This will help you stay calm and focused. • Appearance: Your self-image, how you see yourself, will affect your confidence and how much confidence your audience has in you. It is also important to make sure you are dressed appropriately for the situation. • Sincerity: Believe in what you are saying and stay as natural as possible. You are more likely to come across as sincere. • Posture: Slouching or bending when talking will affect your breathing, and therefore, the quality and clarity of your speech. Bad posture can also give your audience the impression that you are bored or uninterested in your subject.
Vocal qualities	• Volume: The volume of your speech should be moderated to the situation. A small room requires you to speak more quietly than a large meeting room full of people. Learn to project your voice, so that you can increase the volume without straining.

Vocal qualities cont.

- **Pitch:** If you are tense your voice can sound higher, this is an increase in pitch. Keeping yourself relaxed will moderate your speaking and the flow of your language.
- **Tone:** This can be described as the 'up-and-down' changes to your voice, or inflection. You need to make sure that your tone stays positive and enthusiastic to help keep your audience engaged.
- **Speed:** Speaking too quickly can confuse your audience and your message to them. Occasional increases in speed can portray a sense of urgency when needed. Speaking too slowly can lead to your audience getting bored and switching off.
- **Diction:** Diction describes the way you pronounce words. Clear diction can show people that you know your subject and are well informed. Whatever your accent you need to pronounce your words clearly.
- **Pace:** using carefully considered pauses in your speech will help to ensure that your audience has time to take things in and is aware of a change of subject whilst you are talking.

Qualities to Aim for



Alert

Being alert will show your listener that you are interested in the subject. An engaged speaker is more likely to get their audience on board, the audience won't feel like they are wasting their time on an uninteresting subject.

Expressive

Your voice needs to show your listeners that you are interested. By having a voice full of feeling you can portray positive feelings.

Distinct

Being distinct means speaking as clearly as possible, so that you can be heard and understood. You need to talk directly to your audience and pronounce your words clearly.

Pleasant

Using a friendly tone of voice, smiling and being polite will help your audience to warm to you, and therefore, your subject.

Summary – Good Speaking



Becoming an effective speaker requires you to use a number of skills. Whether speaking to one other individual, a small group, or a room full of people, most of these skills overlap. Remember:

Personal qualities:

- Accuracy
- Eye contact
- Clarity
- Relaxation
- Empathy
- Appearance
- Sincerity
- Posture

Vocal qualities:

- Volume
- Pitch
- Tone
- Speed
- Diction
- Pace

An effective speaker needs to be alert, expressive, distinct and pleasant. Practicing speaking using these qualities will help them come naturally to you. Utilising these new skills will help you get your audience on board and involved.

Section Two – Test Questions



1. Effective speakers possess both personal qualities and vocal qualities. Discuss both personal and vocal qualities, giving examples of EACH.

2. There are four main qualities for a good speaker to aim for, list them with the reasons why they are important



Listening

Listening-the Neglected Skill



Many organisations use written forms of communication as their main source for passing on information. This can sometimes mean that, when faced with a situation where verbal communication is needed, people don't listen as well as they should.

Research has shown that the average person will only remember about 50% of what they have heard when questioned immediately afterwards. Another study found that others will only remember a tiny 10% of the message after only three days.

Unlike with written communication skills, we are rarely taught specifically how to listen. Therefore the skill of a good communicator is also to help and encourage the receiver to listen, so that they can take in the key points.

Reasons for Improving Listening

Using effective listening skills can produce a number of positive results:

Encourage others	If you set an example of listening well to others you encourage them to pay you the same respect.
Resolve problems	Although you may not always agree with someone it is true that the best way to resolve a problem is to listen to each other. Showing that you understand the other person's point of view can help you both feel happier with the final outcome.
Improve interactions	Listening while a colleague passes on information or gets an issue off their chest will mean that they appreciate your interest; it will also help you understand them better.
gather all the information	Holding all the relevant information is the key to making decisions and to the resolution of problems. The speaker is more likely to cover all the facts if their listener is being attentive.
Understand people	Paying attention and listening to another person will help you learn what they are really like. You can then make sure that future interactions suit their personality, providing more positive results.

Listening effectively will give you:

- All the information
- Better understanding
- More chance of being listened to yourself
- Cooperation from others.

Are you a Good Listener?



It is important for us all to consider the way we listen, and to ask ourselves if we are as good at it as we think we are?

The following questions, if answered honestly, will give you an idea of what sort of listener you are:

- 1 •Do you sit in a position in a room where you know you will be able to hear?
- 2 •Do you listen out for the feel of the information as well as the facts?
- 3 •Do you look at the speaker as well as listening, are you really paying attention?
- 4 •Is the speakers message all you pay attention to, or are you looking at their appearance too?
- 5 •Do you make sure that your own feelings don't cloud what is being said?
- 6 •Do you take care to follow the main topic and train of thought throughout?
- 7 •Do you interrupt when you hear something you don't agree with, or let the speaker continue?
- 8 •Do you let others have the last word or does it always have to be you?
- 9 •Do you make sure to consider the other person's point of view before you come to a conclusion?

You can use these questions, and your answers to them, to monitor your progress when trying to improve your listening skills.

Ten Aids to Good Listening



Improving concentration is the key to becoming a good listener. The points below can be used to help you achieve this.

Are you ready to listen?	• You need to be prepared to actively listen, not just to be there. • Focus on what the speaker is saying, not your own concerns. • Have some background knowledge of the subject so that you are already aware of the content.
Are you being open minded?	• Don't let the speakers appearance or style of presentation affect how you view what they are saying. • Don't let your own pre-conceptions influence what you are taking in. • Don't jump to conclusions before you have heard the full message.
Are you interested?	• Making an effort to be interested is as important as the speaker making their presentation content interesting. • Look for relevant points that will catch your attention and which you can use. • Looking interested will help keep the speaker involved as well.
Are you avoiding assumptions?	• Be aware of listening out for assumptions the speaker is making. • Be critical in a constructive way so that you can view their arguments in an unbiased way.
Are you listening for the main points?	• Trying to take in all the information at once may stop you seeing the main points of the message. • Be alert to what is being said so you can extract the key issues.
Are you getting distracted?	• Make a real effort to stay focused on the speaker and subject. • Don't allow the behavior of others to distract you. • Be aware that most people lose attention during the middle of the message, concentrate most then.
Are you helping the speaker?	• Responses from the listener, such as nodding the head; eye-contact and using small words of agreement, will help the speaker know you are paying attention. • Reflect back to them, 'so you feel that...', 'you said that...'. ' • Keep your responses quiet and brief though, don't let them be a distraction.
Are you taking notes?	• Notes can help you remember the key points. • Don't try and write everything down, this will become a distraction in itself.

Summary – Good Listening



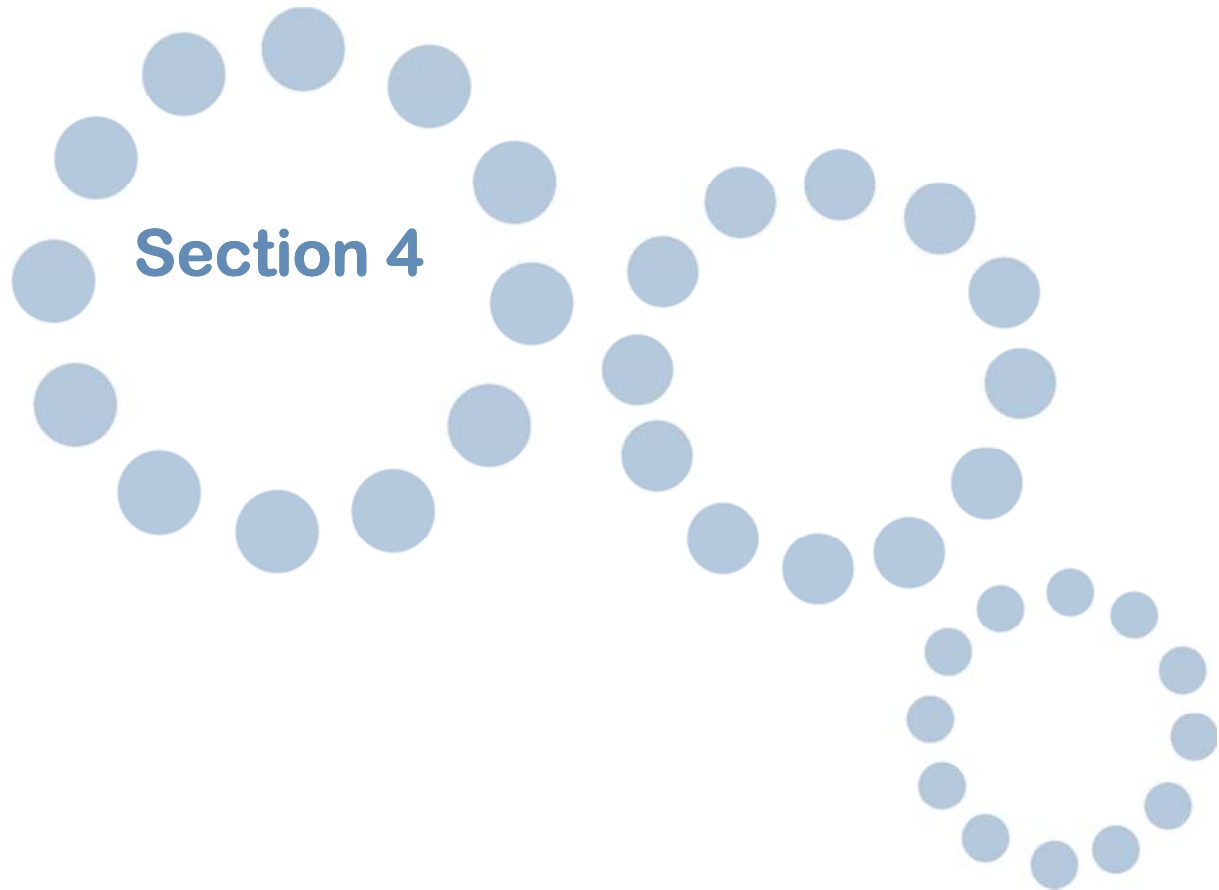
Results of good listening

- Others are encouraged
- Problems are resolved more easily
- You improve interactions
- You gather all the information
- You understand people better

Points for good listening

- Be ready to listen
- Be open minded
- Stay interested
- Avoid assumptions
- Listen for main points
- Don't get distracted
- help the speaker
- Take notes

- 25



Human Interaction and Non-verbal Communication

Metacommunication and Paralanguage



Part of every communication is an element of non-verbal communication. Whilst we may not be talking we will still always be communicating.

All the actions we take will communicate something to other people, and our own feeling about others and situations will, in-turn, influence how we communicate.

Non-verbal communication is anything, an action, expression or possession, which is not spoken. Other people will constantly be taking a view of you based on the clothes you wear; your car; the way you walk; gestures you make and your facial expression.

During all interactions, both you and the others involved, will be adding information to the spoken message by taking in these non-verbal communications.

Two important elements of non-verbal communication are paralanguage and metacommunication.

Paralanguage: is the additional information that we pick-up from the other persons tone of voice. A message may be spoken in positive wording but if the person sounds down-beat the listener will notice.

Metacommunication: taken for the Greek word meta, meaning 'in addition to' or 'beyond'. These are the elements of communication that are in addition to the spoken word, for example, the facial expression or stance of the speaker.

We need to be aware of these non-verbal cues, both in ourselves and others, to fully understand the sub-conscious effect they may have on our understanding of a communication.

The Language of Silence



Silence, sometimes, is a welcome thing, but in the wrong circumstances can have a big impact. If you are asked a question during a conversation and you don't answer you may make the speaker think that you are uninterested or have not been paying attention. In the same way, if a speaker asks a group if they have any questions, and gets no response, they may be left feeling that their message has not come across in the right way.

A reaction from your audience is a way of getting feedback, allowing the speaker to assess the success of their communication.

There are times and places where silence is important, when someone else is talking or when we are waiting for a response to a question, but you need to consider when to use it best.

The Language of Time

Different groups of people will have different perceptions of time, based on their culture, job and past experiences. Some people are fast moving and make quick decisions; others may take their time and be more cautious. It is easy to assume that everyone you interact with will have the same time-scale as you, but this is often not the case.

The way we manage our own time is in fact another form of communication, turning up half an hour late for a pre-arranged meeting is a definite way of telling the other party that you are uninterested, or can't be bothered.

There are also cultural differences in how time in meetings is managed. Some cultures get straight down to business, others insist on taking more time at the start to get a drink and greet each other. If you do have to travel, or move, abroad it is important to find out how communications and time schedules are affected by local customs.

Body Language or Kinesics



Most people have a natural instinct to observe others, we 'people watch'. These observations lead us to try and work out more about others, from their appearance, speech and body language. You may not be aware of it, but we are also sub-consciously decoding this body language, this is called kinesics.

Body language can influence both giver and receiver during a communication and it is important to know something about it. The speaker will pass on messages about their conviction, sincerity and attitude in this non-verbal way. Likewise the body language of the receiver will offer details of their understanding and agreement.

Becoming effective at reading body language will help you to communicate better. By becoming more observant, of both your own and the other parties' body language, you will be able to fully understand how you are being received, and the extent to which your message is being understood.

There are various areas of body language that can be broken down so they can more easily be understood:

Space

Space and status	In an office setting, space is often related to status. The way we react to another person's space, such as their office, tells them how we view them.
Territory	It seems to be instinctual to us to want to protect an area of space as our own, and define it as our territory. People in a public setting will automatically sit at a distance from people they do not know.
Personal space	Your personal space can be described as the amount of space you are happy to have around you when interacting with others. This can vary a huge amount from person to person and we need to be conscious of not making people feel uncomfortable. Personal space can be broken down further: Intimate distance: Roughly between actual contact and ½ metre, used to describe actual contact or being very close, usually in a family or very close friendship Personal distance: Roughly between ½-1 ¼ metres, contact is kept possible but with more effort. Used for people you have met before who are not just a casual acquaintance. Social distance: Roughly between 1 ¼- 4 metres, usually used in a business setting, anything from casual conversation to the more formal setting of a meeting with the Chief Executive. Public Distance: Roughly between 4-8+ metres, varies from situations such as a college lecture to an address by a politician.

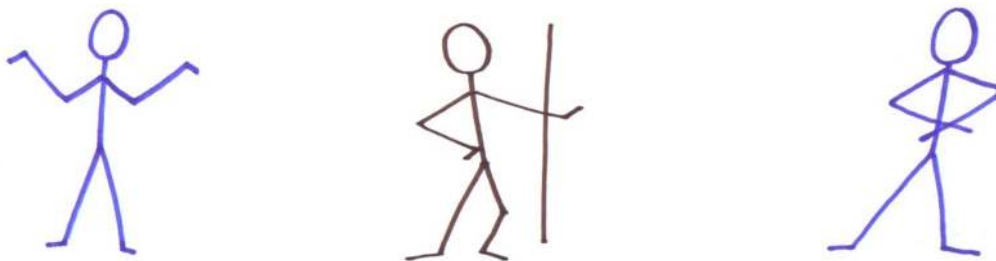
Touch

The use of touch as part of communication is limited to certain settings and groups. We often see it as related to our personal space and it is usually confined to the setting of the family or very close friendships. Some people are a lot more tactile than others and we need to be aware of others boundaries as well as our own.

Orientation and posture

How we position our body, and the stance we take, can tell others a lot about our attitude. Research points to the fact that those who want to cooperate will sit next to those they are working with. It has also been shown that if someone is feeling un-cooperative they will tend to sit facing the other person. The posture of our body will also give big signals to those we are communicating with. Someone standing in front of you with head held high and hands on hips will indicate that they feel superior to you.

Look at the images below and see what you can tell from the posture



Each stance may show a different attitude to different people. For example, image one could be perceived as uninterested, doubtful or questioning; image two as impatient, angry or casual; image three as dominating, aloof or angry.

Head movements and facial expression

Nodding or shaking the head is used generally to express agreement or disagreement. The listener can change the vigor of these movements to indicate how strongly they feel.

We can also use facial expression, such as a smile or a frown, to show what we are feeling. This can be more subtle than we might think; a slight raise of an eyebrow can be enough for the other person to get an indication of what we think.

Showing interest	Two people having a conversation will intermittently look each other in the eye; more eye contact shows more interest than looking away often.
Synchronisation of speech	When engaged in communication the speaker will tend to make more eye contact if they are confident in what they are saying, and less when they are feeling unsure. When they have finished they will often take a longer look at the listener to gage their reaction, this will also indicate that they have finished talking.
Gaining feedback	When listening to someone else we will look at them to pick up information from their face to support what we are hearing. The speaker will also look at the listener to understand how they are reacting to the message.

The movement of the eyes can also help us understand others

Gestures

The movements, or gestures, we make with other parts of our body are what most people recognise as body language, or non-verbal communication. How we move and use our hands, arms, feet and body are quite easily read by most people. There are different ways we can use these gestures:

Giving information	Waving, clenching your fists or pointing a finger are simple ways of using your hands to quickly support your verbal communication. Hand signals can also be used when we are unable to communicate verbally, such as sign language or when in an especially noisy place.
Showing emotion	The hands can be used to communicate how we are feeling on an emotional level; shaking a fist to show anger; a hand to the mouth to show shock; clapping the hands to show praise.
Expression	An extrovert may show the world how confident they are with large, exaggerated movements to draw attention to themselves; whereas someone with less confidence will keep any gestures close to their body and will use them less often.
Supporting speech	The movements of the body and head when talking will support what the speaker is saying, and can be used to offer greater impact to important points. We can also indicate, by raising a hand, that we wish to talk ourselves.

The Underlying Psychology



Various psychologists have looked into the reasons behind the way we communicate with each other. We will briefly look at Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), Transactional Analysis (TA) and Emotional Intelligence (EI) to give us further understanding of the basis of communication.

The method of using **NLP** was first initiated 1970's by Richard Bandler and John Grinder. They worked with techniques from psychology, psychotherapy and linguistics to create a method of consciously changing and improving the way a person communicates. They looked at the way good communicators worked so they could help others use these techniques. The basis of this method is to use face-to-face contact in your communications and to always stay positive so as engage with your listener. It is said that by making a conscious effort to keep your voice, body-language and speech similar to your listener you will build a stronger affinity with them.

Eric Berne developed the technique of Transactional Analysis, or **TA**, in the 1950's. It is based on the idea that we can all learn to understand interactions with others better. By examining the way others are behaving we can moderate our own behavior to be sympathetic and to smooth over conflict.

Berne said that we all act in one of three states, as parent, adult or child. The parent will be telling others what to do, the adult will stay logical and the child will be emotional. It is important to maintain the role of the rational and logical adult as much as possible to communicate well. By recognising when your parent and child behaviors come into play you will have a better chance of staying in the adult role.

Emotional Intelligence, or **EI**, is a rapidly growing and expanding field which looks at the identification of emotions in yourself and others. A set of four main competencies has been coined by Daniel Goleman as Self-Awareness; Self-Management; Social Awareness and Relationship Management.

1. **Self-awareness** – the skill of reading your own emotions and recognising their impact but also using gut feelings to guide decisions.
2. **Self-management** – being able to control emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances.
3. **Social awareness** – Sensing, understanding, and reacting to others' emotions while understanding the social structures in play.
4. **Relationship management** – learning to inspire, influence, and develop others whilst also managing any conflict that may arise.

In order to communicate well you need to assess the situation, listen well and put aside any pre-conceptions, either factual or emotional.

Conflict Between Verbal and Non-verbal Communication



Recognising the elements of both forms of communication is the key to improving your skills as a communicator. We need to be able to see the hidden messages as well as understanding what we are hearing. When you are delivering a message your listener may be reacting in positive way, in-terms of their speech, but you need to ask yourself if their non-verbal communication is backing this up; crossed arms or looking away may tell you otherwise. If someone tells you they understand what you are saying but is looking confused you may have to question them further.

Summary- the Importance of Paralanguage

Learning about paralanguage and human interaction is a vast area of study, of which we have looked a small section.

To increase your communication skills in this area you simply need to practice observing better; ensure you know as much about yourself and those you are communicating with as possible; work on your powers of perception and consider how others will perceive you. By practicing these skills you will increase your ability to translate the paralanguage of those around you and understand situations better.

- 34



Talking on the Phone

Telephone Problems



Most people working in a Business environment will use the telephone on a regular basis. While it is an important tool it can also create problems if we don't know how to have a productive and efficient conversation.

There are a number of problems that can arise due to a badly managed telephone call:

Financial Cost

- Financial cost due to wasted time, listening to menu's; calls being transferred; being on hold; inefficient contacts.

Misunderstandings

- Cost of misunderstandings: people being rude to potential customers; staff not having relevant information and giving a bad first impression.

Missing information

- Cost of not dealing face to face: being unable to pick-up non-verbal cues; the message being misheard and thus misunderstood; people being unconfident and missing out important facts.

It is also important to ensure that, as you cannot pick-up non-verbal cues, you do learn to understand verbal clues. By learning to listen more closely you can start to pick up hidden information:

- Trust your intuition, you should find you get a feeling about the other person and their personality which will help you make a judgement.
- You can check if your instinct is right by asking 'reflective questions' (see section three), 'You seem to be saying that.....'
- Before you ask a question or make a statement try and imagine how the other person might respond. You can then try and tailor your question to the specific conversation.

Basic Telephone Rules



Consider all these points before you make a call, to ensure you make the most of your time:



Stay brief: don't rush your call or be rude but try to stick to the point.



Speak clearly: make sure you enunciate your words carefully as the quality of the phone line and not being face-to-face can affect the way you are understood. Use phonetic code for letters, e.g A for Alpha, B for Bravo.



Use your resources: use prior knowledge and good questioning to ensure an efficient call and end result.



Be polite: It might seem like a basic thing but first impressions really do count. Use your tone of voice to let the other person know that you are happy to help.



Speak more slowly: Remember that slowing your speech down will help the other person to pick-up all that you are saying. It is crucial not to rush anything, such as giving a phone number, that will need to be written down.



Make a good impression: Think about how you might come across to others, concentrate on what you are saying; smiling will come across in your voice; don't use jargon; use the other person's name.



Remember you aren't face-to-face: Use words to replace what you might have used body language for, 'yes' to replace a nod, 'of course' to replace a smile.

Switchboard Operators



Most medium and large Businesses will employ either a switchboard operator, or receptionist, to ensure that calls coming in are directed to the right person.

A good receptionist needs to have the qualities that will ensure they make a good first impression for the company and also get their job done efficiently; they need to be: intelligible to callers; be quick; be courteous; be accurate in their work; be resourceful when under pressure and use discretion at all times.

Remember, to most callers the switchboard operator or receptionist is their first contact with the company, and first impressions last.

A good switchboard operator becomes the face of the company. They have to explain absences and delays, have initial dealings with complaints and take important messages.

If you can help the person in this role it will help you too:

- Find out how the phone system works.
- If you ask the switchboard operator to connect a call make sure you are there to take it.
- If you are going to be away from your phone, let them know.
- If you arrange for someone to call you give them your direct line.
- When you are given a message act on it promptly, then the receptionist won't have to deal with an angry caller who thinks their message hasn't been delivered.

Making a Call

It is important to plan ahead when making a call, and to learn certain points for during and after the call:

Before you call

- Remember your why?, who?, where?, when?, what? And How? (see p.11).
- Write down the purpose of the call, what you want to achieve, and any key dates or names.
- Have any relevant files to hand.
- If possible, know exactly who it is you need to talk to before you call.
- Have paper to hand for making notes.
- Dial the number carefully to avoid a wrong number.
- Call out of peak payment times if you can.

During the call

- Make sure you are polite to the person and say good morning/afternoon. State your name and that of your organisation before other information.
- Be aware that you may get put on hold and have to go through more than one department.
- Mirror the other person's style to build rapport.
- Control the flow of the conversation by asking questions and sticking to the point.
- Be brief and to the point, keep to your subject.
- Be clear about what your call is concerning.
- Refer to your notes as you have need.
- Spell names and addresses clearly and give numbers slowly.
- Take notes of important facts.
- Check the other person's understanding.
- After a long call summarise the main points for you and the recipient.
- If you leave a message make sure it is short and to the point.

After the call

- Write down any relevant notes straight away.
- Make sure the notes are dated and filed.
- Diarise any follow-up actions or calls.
- Pass the details on to anyone else who needs to become involved.

Gathering Information by Phone



The phone is often the first option used in business for gathering primary or secondary information. You may have been asked to find a particular piece of information for a meeting, gather facts for a report or it may be part of your everyday job. Again, it helps to prepare beforehand:

Before the call

- Decide what information you actually need.
- Consider where to go for that information, which business, individual, government department.
- Write out a series of specific questions which will get you the right information.

During the Call

- When your call is answered be polite, and to the point. Don't forget exactly what you are calling for.
- If you can't get help from the person who answers, ask them if they know who can help.
- Even if your first port of call can't help don't give up, try another department or organisation until you find your information.
- Make sure you ask for the right person, even if you don't have a name, make it clear which department you need.
- Write down any information or further contacts straight away, it's easy to forget.
- Make sure you are polite at all times and say thank-you.

Answering the Phone



If your organisation does not have a receptionist or switchboard operator then any employee may need to answer the phone. It is unwise for this job to fall to an inexperienced and unconfident junior. However it is important for everyone to have some guidelines for answering a call:

Before taking a call	• Get to know how the phone system works, and in particular how to transfer a call. Getting this wrong can lead to the caller being cut-off and this leaves a bad impression. • Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand before you pick-up the phone. • Make sure you have an internal phone directory to hand and access to a diary (if needed).
During a call	• Answer with your name, company (unless the call has gone via an operator) and department so the caller knows who has answered. • Make sure you answer in a polite and cheerful way, remember that first impression. • Don't rush your greeting, let the caller hear you properly or you will only have to repeat yourself. • If you cannot answer the query be prepared to transfer the call or take a clear message. • If you are in the role of secretary know your managers movements, and have to hand the names of any important callers they may be waiting for. • Take notes and double check points in a long message, especially at the end of the call. • Get the caller to repeat any points you are unclear on or any names or addresses that may have been rushed. • Use words to make-up for the lack of body language. • Don't agree to anything for someone else. • Don't be distracted by the rest of the room or talk to anyone else when on the phone. • Don't put callers on hold unless you really have to. • Stick to the point and be efficient and helpful. • Agree with the caller what happens next, are you going to take action, or will you pass on a message for them to be called back?
After a call	• Review your notes and fill in any missing details before you forget. • If you are passing on a message make sure your notes are clear. • Take actions needed immediately, such as passing on the message or sending an email, while everything is still clear in your mind.

Dealing with customers or other business people over the phone can result in having to negotiate a difficult situation, here are some points to bear in mind:

Do

1. Make sure you give the caller your name and ask for theirs.
2. Volunteer your help before you need to be asked.
3. Let the caller tell you their complaint without interrupting.
4. Let them know you are taking them seriously by summarising their points.
5. Be sympathetic to them without agreeing too much.
6. Make sure you go over any actions you are going to take at the end of the call.
7. Call the person back if there are going to be any delays with a resolution.

Don't

1. Try and reason with the caller before they have let off steam.
2. Make excuses or blame a third party, that's not the customers problem.
3. Offer a solution until you have all the facts.
4. Tell the customer that you have had no other similar complaints, it will only make them angry.
5. Take it personally, be objective and try and see things from the customers point of view.
6. Offer a solution that you cannot deliver or have the authority to give. You can always call them back after speaking to a manager.

Voicemail and Mobile Manners



Many larger organisations will have a voice messaging or voicemail system. Staff on the system can leave voicemail messages for colleagues and have a personal mailbox for messages to be left for them. This prevents the need for receptionists and secretaries to spend so much time taking messages; it also gives you the option of recording a personal message so callers know they have reached the right person.

These systems also have other advantages such as the option of leaving a group message, avoiding the use of email and not having numerous missed calls.

To make the system work the majority of staff must be part of it and people must check their messages on a regular basis. It is also important not to only have your phone answered by your voicemail.

Mobile phones are now also playing an increasing part in the business world. We need to make sure we think about how they are being used:

- Mobiles should not be used when driving, even if you are expecting an important work call.
- Mobile phones should be turned off at times when they will disturb others, especially if you are outside work.
- Don't try to have an important business call out in the street or in a crowded public space, it won't give a good impression.
- If you are using a mobile for work remember the cost and to check your voicemail on a regular basis.

Summary- Talking on the phone



Remembering a few key points can help make the use of the phone much more productive, whether making or taking a call:

- Prepare before the call, have relevant papers to hand, plain paper for notes and messages, know how your phone system works.
- Be polite and helpful, you are representing your company.
- Make sure the other person knows who they are talking to.
- Always stick to the point and keep calls brief and efficient.
- If dealing with a complaint make sure you follow it through from start to finish.
- Take notes to help you clarify points.
- Summarise long calls to check understanding.
- Take clear and concise messages.
- Write up your notes and take action as soon as you end the call.

- 45



Interviewing

Interviewing Weaknesses



The word interview can cover a number of situations; it isn't just limited to looking for a new job. You could have an informal interview with your manager to check progress on a project; an interview with a senior manager about a possible promotion or even an interview with a customer who you are looking to sell a product to.

It is easy to become complacent in such situations, we are usually engaged in them on a regular basis, but it is important to remember that all these sort of interactions are significant and opportunities not to be wasted.

Interviews can leave you feeling that they were a bit pointless if not planned properly. Maybe the interview took ages but didn't get to the point; if one party was constantly talking over the other or the outcome wasn't what you hoped.

It is worth considering whether the outcome could have been better with a simple check list:

- Why are you having the interview?
- Is the purpose clear to both parties?
- Are the right people involved?
- What are the expected outcomes?
- Are both parties going to be open to the other's point of view?
- How much time will be taken up?

The crucial point to bear in mind is that a successful interview needs to involve people who are willing to listen to each other and work together.

What is an Interview?

An interview differs from other sorts of interaction because it is planned, has a purpose and usually involves two people. For an interview to be successful it needs to:

- Be planned
- Have a set purpose
- Be controlled

The skills of being a good interviewer go hand-in-hand with those of being a good interviewee. Learning how to interview will give you greater insight in to how to perform when you are being interviewed.

The Purpose of the Interview



The purpose of all interviews is to exchange information, to pass on, obtain or clarify. There may be a specific purpose, such as appointing someone to a job; disciplining an employee or dealing with a complaint. Some interviews will be concerned with a series of topics, sometimes with points raised by both parties.

The key to the purpose of the interview is to look at the reason behind it. In research this is generally viewed as being one of four possible purposes:

One

- **Dissemination of information:** Journalism interviews, teacher to student, interviews at work.

Two

- **Looking to change behaviour:** Selling, appraisal, discipline, counselling.

Three

- **Researching new information:** Academic research, market research, police interrogation, opinion surveys.

Four

- **Problem solving or decision-making:** Job interviews, appraisals, complaints, parent and teacher meetings.

Types of Interview Information



There are six basic types of information involved in interviews:

Description

- The interviewee is the one required to provide the information, based on experience or involvement, such as a lawyer questioning a witness.

Factual knowledge

- The interviewee is passing on factual knowledge that they already have, such as an expert witness or specialist.

Attitude and belief

- The information being provided by the interviewee is based on feelings and opinions, rather than fact.

Feelings

- The interviewee is passing on details of how they feel about a situation or event.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of the interviewee is appraised in the past, present and future.

Value

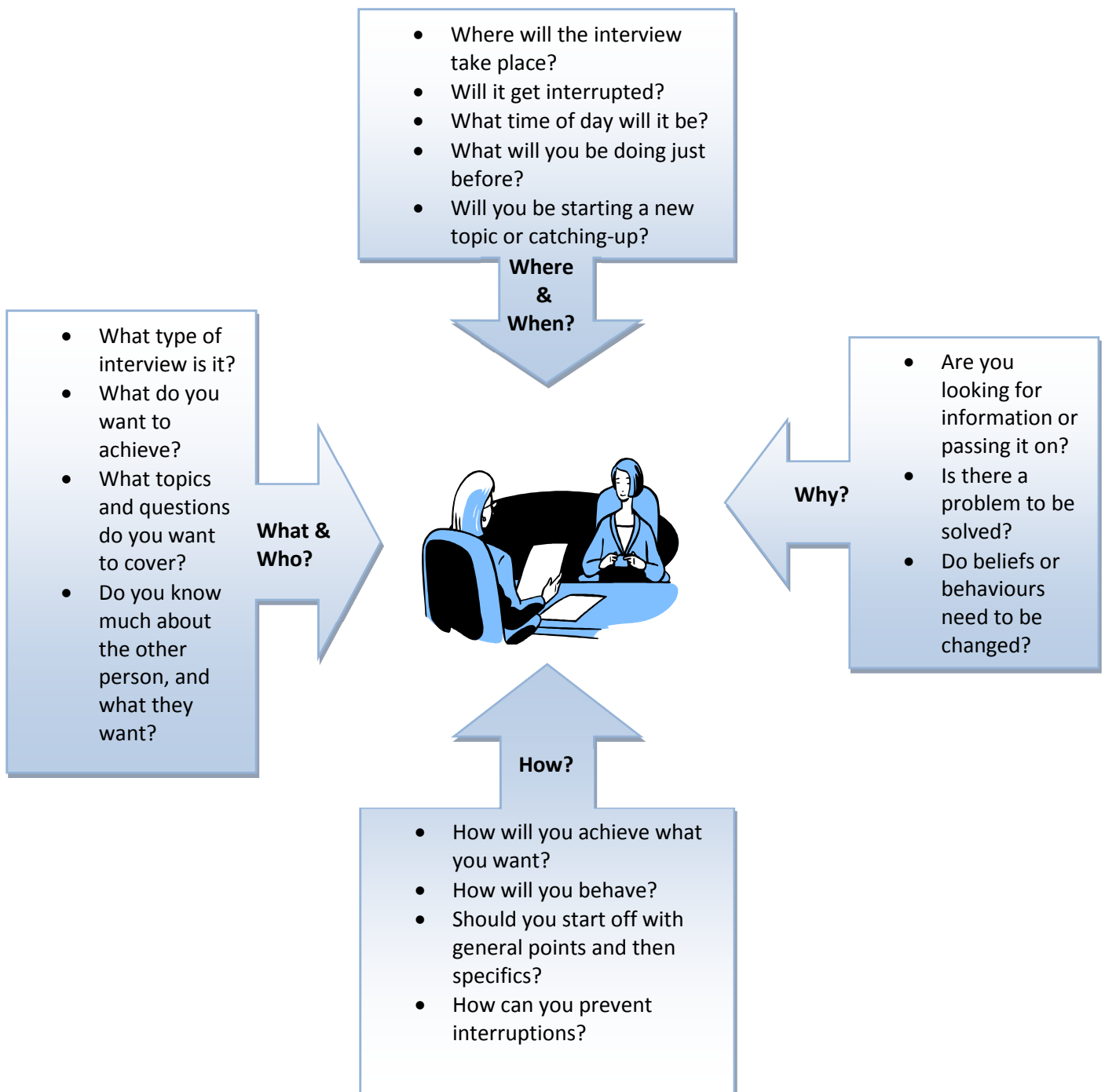
- The information concerns long-standing beliefs held by either party, what they value as qualities needed for a certain situation.

Face-to-face interviews are still viewed as the best way to gain information that is subjective, such as feelings, beliefs and values. Factual information can be gathered in other ways, such as by email and questionnaires, but these methods are not as successful for subjective information.

How to Plan an Interview



A successful interview needs to be carefully planned, ahead of time. Learning to be a good interviewer or interviewee takes time and effort; you will need to practice your skills so that they become second nature. Some interviews may end up being more spontaneous, but having learnt and practiced skills will help you deal with these situations better. One way to help yourself is to always break-down the full set of reasons behind the interview before you start:



Structuring the interview



The interview can simply be split into two sections, the opening, when you establish rapport, and the main body.

The opening - Possible starting points

- Summarise the problem being faced, give the interviewee the details.
- Offer your explanation of how the problem arose but encourage discussion around this.
- Start with a striking or bold fact, gets the interviewee engaged.
- Start by asking for help or advice.
- Ask for the other person's opinion on an issue.
- Let the other person know why you are both there, on who's request.
- Ask for a certain amount of the other person's time, give them a timescale.
- Ask an initial question, whether leading, searching for agreement or direct.

The main body - what to cover

- Make sure your opening doesn't take up too much time.
- Seek solutions to problems.
- Ask and answer questions.
- Use time to convince the other party if you are selling.
- Decide how much structure you need:
- **Non-structured**- just keep in mind your main purpose, works best for counselling based interviews.
- **Moderately structured**- Have some main questions prepared and maybe some follow-up ones.
- **Highly structured**- Pre-prepare all the questions and have a schedule, if there are multiple interviewees they are all asked the same questions in the same order. The questions are mainly close-ended but some may be open-ended.
- **Standardised**- Further structure is added by only giving the interviewee a certain number of answers by keeping all questions close-ended.

How to question and probe



Most successful interviewers will try to conduct their interview like a conversation, to keep things relaxed and responses natural. The way questions are used will affect the feel and outcome of the interview:

Direct or closed questions

- Limits the possible response from the interviewee, such as 'how long have you worked here?'
- Used best when specific answers are wanted.
- Good for gathering factual information.
- Can discourage the interviewee to talk and can create an interrogation like feeling.

Yes or no questions

- Questions are formulated which only allow for a yes or no answer.
- Have the same uses as direct questions.
- Good for getting information quickly.
- Does not allow the interviewee an opinion and can lead to mis-leading answers if the true response is neither yes or no.

Leading questions

- the interviewer uses specific questions to get the answer that they want, 'don't you think it would be a good idea if...'
- Very useful for sales based interviews.
- If used too aggressively or without proper planning it can be off-putting.

Loaded questions

- Best used by an interviewer wanting to find out if an interviewee is easily lead or will stick to their own opinions.
- May not be the true opinion of the interviewer but will directly ask how the interviewee feels about a certain situation.
- Has little use for gathering information containing thoughts or feelings.

Open ended questions

- Gives the interviewee maximum freedom to respond honestly, 'How do you feel about....'
- Can tell the interviewer a lot about the other persons feelings and beliefs.
- without proper planning time can be wasted getting the right pieces of information.

Prompting questions

- Helps when an interviewee is not fully understanding what the interviewer is asking.
- Can be used if the interviewee has gone blank.
- The interviewer needs to take care not to use this type of questions too quickly.

Mirror questions

- Can be used to summarise and get clarification, 'so you think that...'
- One of the best ways to get proper communication between parties.
- Offers immediate feedback to the interviewee.
- Should not be used to lead or prompt, questions should not be too direct.

Probing questions

- If the first answer given does not contain enough detail a further probing question can be used, 'can you give me an example?'
- Can encourage the interviewee to keep talking.
- Can make the interviewee feel uncomfortable if used too often.

Hypothetical questions

- Used most effectively when the interviewer wants to see how the interviewee would handle a specific situation, 'what would you do if...?'
- If the situation described in the question is too far from reality it will not give a useful answer.

Once the questions have been decided on it is then important to plan a sequence for them. One method of doing this is to use **funnel sequencing**, starting with open-ended questions and following up with more specific ones. An alternative is **inverted funnel** sequencing, starting with specific questions. A third method is **tunnel sequencing**, which uses a number of similar, simple questions to get an initial series of answers or opinions.

When you have reached a conclusion at the end of the interview you need to close effectively:

- Do a brief summary of achievements and views
- Thank the interviewee
- Agree any actions to be taken or a further meeting.

Summary - Interviewing



The key to being a good interviewee, or interviewer, is planning:

- Recognise the different sorts of interview you might encounter.
- Know your what & who?, where & when?, why? And how?
- Know your subject and what you want to achieve.
- Learn the different sorts of questions, and their uses.
- Understanding the way an interviewer works will help you be a better interviewee.
- Always aim to establish good rapport.
- Know how to close.
- Follow-up any actions you have agreed.

- 55



Being Interviewed for a Job

Preparing for the Interview



There are three main areas you can concentrate on before going for an interview:

1. Making sure you have a positive attitude to the interview.
2. Ensuring that you have a clear idea of your strengths and weaknesses.
3. Planning to make sure you make the most of yourself during the interview.

Dealing with nerves

- Remember that everyone gets nervous.
- Some nervous tension will ensure you are focused on the job in hand.
- Interviewers expect candidates to be a little nervous and take this into account.
- Planning ahead will calm your nerves, to a certain extent, as you will knowledge behind you.

Practice

- Always go to an interview you have been invited to, even if you aren't sure you want the job, it's great practice.
- If you can, visit someone who works in the organisation so you can get a proper feel for the place.
- You can practice interview questions at home, or at work with colleagues, it all helps you to feel more comfortable with the process.

Background

- Get to know as much about the company as you can
 - How big is it?
 - Public or private sector?
 - What is its reputation like?
 - What are the names of top staff and chief executive?
- Research their products and their field: internet, libraries, and colleagues as sources.
- Find out what the department you are applying to actually does.

Prepare questions

- Gathering background information will give you possible questions you can ask the interviewer.
- Consider salary scale, working conditions and training opportunities.
- Preparing beforehand will stop your mind going blank if you are asked if you have any questions.

Preparing – Know Yourself



We need to consider how we would answer a question directed at our personality, 'what are your strengths and weaknesses?'

Preparing before the interview will allow you to answer without making yourself sound arrogant, or having your weaknesses sound too bad. Acknowledging a weakness lets you analyse it and make the best of it:

Question yourself

- What do people like, and not like, about you?
- What are you good and bad at?
- How would people, in and out of work, describe you?
- If you asked a friend or colleague these questions, about you, would they answer the same?

Awkward questions

You could try answering the following and then look at how they could relate to an interview situation:

- Can you detail your most valuable experience?
- What do you feel is most important, money or status?
- Do you get angry or aggressive, why?
- What is your best achievement in the last year?
- Do you have the right experience for the job you want?
- What have you found the hardest thing to do in the last year?
- Where would you like to be in five years' time?
- What is your worst fault?
- Describe yourself in three words.

At the Interview



Be yourself and stay calm

- Allow plenty of time to get to the interview.
- Know where it is.
- If you aren't flustered from rushing you will be more natural.
- Revise what you wrote on the application so you can relate to it.

Project a good image

- Demonstrate how you have moved on in previous jobs.
- Show that you are confident in your beliefs.
- Make it clear you want to learn and progress.
- Prepare by thinking of examples that demonstrate the qualities listed on the application.

Have a realistic approach

- Don't be over-confident or arrogant.
- Show that you are ambitious but don't over do it.
- Make it clear that you know both your strengths and weaknesses and how they relate to your progression.
- Admit your weaknesses but demonstrate when you have had success overcoming them.

Know what to avoid

- Don't deliver your words in a monotonous way, try to sound enthusiastic and engaged without being too loud.
- Don't be unresponsive, avoid simple yes or no answers without extra detail.
- If a question seems inappropriate answer as best you can rather than refusing to answer.
- Avoid the use of slang.
- Don't slump or sit too stiffly, try to stay looking as relaxed as you can.
- Avoid making negative comments about how suited you are to the job.

Tips to Remember



- Give yourself plenty of time for your journey, arriving late not only gives a bad impression but you will be left feeling flustered and not at your best.
- Keep your appearance neat and business like.
- Let the interviewer guide the degree of formality, avoid jokes and sarcastic comments.
- Take notes if you want to record certain information, but ask the interviewer if it's ok to first.
- Be polite and friendly; don't forget to smile when appropriate.
- Don't hover around once the interview has ended.
- Smile, thank the interviewer for their time and shake hands.

Summary – Being Interviewed



- Research the business.
- Know yourself so you can be yourself.
- Practice.
- Pre-prepare questions you might be asked.
- Know how to present yourself and behave during the interview.
- Know what to avoid.

- 61



Communicating in Groups

Advantages of Groups



Meetings, and working in teams, are methods often used within business settings. It is sometimes the case that many of these meetings are not as efficient as they could be. The first clear advantage to having more than one person looking at a problem is that it will give you more brains to focus on it; there are other advantages as well:

Commitment

To ensure people take full ownership of a decision it is best to have them fully involved in the making of that decision. Those involved from the beginning have full understanding of any new process from end to end. Being part of the team who made the decision also leads to people being more motivated and committed. It is also the case that personal involvement creates a more positive feeling towards the decision.

Better decisions

There are four main reasons why a decision made by a group should be better than that of an individual

1. **More information:** more people will give you more view points and sources of information. Using techniques, such as brainstorming, helps to gather all this information together and gets everyone involved. Starting with a warm-up or ice-breaker will also help the atmosphere.
2. **More suggestions:** a group environment is generally more creative. More participants gives you a division of labour so people have a better focus to generate ideas. Having a larger number of viewpoints stops individual bias taking over.
3. **Higher productivity:** being part of a group often encourages individuals to work harder to fit in with the group. The team atmosphere builds to create a final outcome that all the team are proud of.
4. **Bolder decisions:** having a team to share responsibility with encourages more adventurous decisions, ones that we might not make on our own. People want to be part of that final decision and so everyone can be brave together.

Disadvantages of Groups



The advantages we have looked at only work in a good group working set-up. Most of the advantages will have a flip-side if the group is not managed well.

Time

An individual working alone will take up less 'man hours' than a group. There are also issues with co-ordination which a group will have more problems with. When working in a group time will be taken up with ensuring that everyone has the relevant information and possibly product knowledge. It is also the case that, with a group, time will have to be given to each person to allow their interaction; prompt actions may be better taken by an individual. A badly chaired meeting will waste time on irrelevant points and agenda issues that not all are concerned with.

Too much talk

If the group loses focus too much time can be taken up with talk, rather than action. It is important to have someone to encourage decisions to be made and actions taken, as it is easy for the group to avoid making a final choice.

Group pressure

The advantage of a team taking more risky decisions can be counter balanced by an overriding group mentality, which can lead to less effective outcomes. The pressure to agree with the rest of the group can lead individuals not to speak out, even if they feel a decision is not the best one. Too much compromise can give a watered-down final outcome.

The key to good group working is to recognise when the format will work best, and accept when it will not.

Factors Affecting Group Effectiveness



The factors that can affect the outcomes of group working all tend to be connected. Each factor has an effect on its own, but will also be linked in with other factors. They can be broken down into separate points but it must be remembered that they all work together to create the final result.

Cohesion	How the group holds together, and works together, influences how committed individuals are the success of the meeting. Cohesion often works in a circular way as once created it leads to better outcomes, which then also leads to stronger cohesion. A cohesive team will encourage loyalty and commitment from its members.
Uncontrollable areas- the group	There are always factors placed on a group at the start that the members will not have any control over: • Size – Bigger groups bring more knowledge but, if too big, not everyone can get fully involved. Groups of less than five will often be less cohesive and split into smaller sub-groups. Groups of over ten make things less personal and over fifteen often means that quieter participants stop getting involved. • Characters and objectives – Everyone is likely to come to a group meeting with their own agenda and opinions. How these all fit together affects the route and outcome of the discussions. If all the members of the group think in the same way things will be calmer, but not necessarily more productive. In an effective team these personal agendas will take second place to the common goal, but there will always need to be compromise to achieve this. • Status and position – Any group that has been put together will have its own perceptions of hierarchy between members, whether based on job role or not. The members will also have their own perception of the role they are to play. Already formed friendships or working relationships will also play a part.
Uncontrollable areas- the environment	• Physical location – the setting for the meeting affects cohesion and commitment. If the room is too large people can feel isolated. The group may split into smaller sub-groups. Meetings held in a neutral setting give a more equal footing for all. • How the group is viewed – The way the rest of the organisation sees the working group will affect its moral. If the team is viewed as ineffective then its members will not want to be involved. If the group has a wider influence members will feel they are more worthwhile. • Expectations – How important the outcome is to the business will influence how the participants feel about the group.

Uncontrollable areas – the task	The attitude of the members of a group will be influenced by the task they have been set. The nature of the task, its degree of difficulty and whether factors like time are fixed, will affect how the members view it. The four main types of task are: information sharing; problem solving; persuading and decision making. The type of task will influence how the group will need to work. Meetings focused on one main task are easier to manage and less confusing.
Controllable areas	Areas that are controllable can be changed and adapted to best suit the group and the task, this will then influence the productivity and outcome: • Leadership – there are three main types of leadership style Democratic: The leader provides guidance when needed but lets the group mainly work together. Autocratic: The leader constantly guides and directs. Laissez-faire: the group is left to its own devices with no direction given. The style chosen by the group leader will directly affect how the group operates. • Interaction – The way the group interacts will influence its final outcome. Everyone needs to interact with each other, not just the leader, to have a full exchange of ideas. Larger meetings may need more control from the chair to stay focused, smaller meetings can be freer. • Roles and behaviour – Most of the time when in a group we focus on the process of reaching our goal, and ignore the behaviours going on around us. These behaviours can, in fact, be central to the effectiveness of the group. The dynamics of the group can influence moral, atmosphere, participation, levels of conflict and cooperation. The behaviours can be split into a number of types: 1. Task roles: initiating activity, seeking information, getting opinions, offering information or opinion, clarifying, coordinating, summarising. 2. Group building: encouraging, getting contributions, setting standards, summarising feelings, following and accepting. 3. Task and building: evaluation of task, analysing problems, checking for consensus, mediation, calming tensions. • Negative behaviours – some members will not be involved in a way that is positive to the group, or the outcome. These behaviours need to be challenged for the group to be effective: Being aggressive; blocking ideas; expressing personal agendas; competing; pleading for personal gain; mucking around; attention seeking; being withdrawn.

Summary – Making Groups Work



Being aware of all the factors that affect team working helps us to all be more successful when we are part of a group. It is also important to understand how all these factors interrelate to influence outcomes. When working as part of a group, remember these points:

- Be aware of how your behavior, and the role you choose for yourself, can help the group move forward.
- Be conscious of what roles others are taking, and how this will influence outcomes.
- Encourage others to work together, and take part, so that the group you are part of is successful and effective.
- Ask yourself these questions before the meeting:
 1. **Where do I sit in the group?:** What will others expect of me, am I only representing myself, am I in a lead role, will I get judged on my role?
 2. **Where is the influence?** Who will have the influence, what kind of influence is it, do I want to alter this, and if so, how?
 3. **What are my own objectives?** Do they fit with the main task; are they the same as the groups, if not can I make them compatible, am I prepared to compromise?

When managed well, with enthusiastic and committed members, group meetings can be a very useful way of working. It is important to learn how to work to enable effective group working.

- 68



Running and Taking Part in Meetings

Chairing Meetings



An effective chair has a number of tasks to perform to ensure an efficient and effective meeting takes place. They need to keep in mind the task set for the meeting and the group dynamics that they need to manage:

Objectives	Setting the objectives of the meeting, and the desired outcome, helps the chair and the participants. Everyone will be clear what the aim is and how it could possibly be achieved. A clear and concise agenda will often be the best way to share the objectives, let people know what the task is and whether the function is advisory or action based.
Control	The chair needs to choose a method of control based on the type of meeting, democratic, autocratic or laissez-faire. The chair has ultimate responsibility for the outcome of the meeting and they need to: decide items to be discussed; define limits of discussion; manage flow of talk; keep to the point; stay impartial; ensure understanding; summarise.
Guidance	The chair must ensure that all members of the group follow the agenda in order and don't stray from the point. The flow of discussion can be guided by a pre-defined order 1. Identify the problem or subject 2. Share and develop ideas 3. Look at alternatives 4. Summarise a course of action
Encouraging discussion	The chairperson can use appropriate questions to stimulate further input from members, and to keep people on the right course. Questions can be phrased to avoid yes or no answers, but kept brief and simple. Keep questions directly related to the topic and which only cover a single point.
Hidden agendas	Another vital role for the chair is to prevent personal issues being raised. The chair needs to step in to challenge any statements of a personal nature or which do not stay on topic.
Achieving an outcome	The final decision of the group may be a little unclear and the chair will need to clarify and summarise it for the group. The final outcome needs to cover as wide a consensus as possible and be composed of ideas from the group as a whole.

Decision-making Methods



Authority

- Chairperson decides.
- Members may not all agree.
- Fast and efficient.

Consensus

- Based on general feelings of the group.
- Slow, everyone needs to have a say.
- Members tend to be committed.

Unanimous

- Everyone agrees in full.
- Difficult to achieve.

Majority

- Voting can also be used.
- Seen as fair by most as majority rules.
- Can cause divisions.
- Minority voters may not be committed.

Responsibilities of Participants



Attitude

- Have an open-minded positive attitude.
- Avoid negative feelings.
- What are the benefits? gaining knowledge and information, helping shape policy, better team work, expressing your opinions.

Preparation

- Know the topic.
- Know the desired outcome.
- Know who else is taking part.

Group Process

- Understand the roles others may take.
- Understand the role of the leader or chair.
- Recognise hidden agendas.

Participation

- Talk only when you have something relevant to say.
- Pay attention so you can contribute at short notice.
- Don't talk over others but don't leave your ideas unsaid.
- Stay on subject.
- Listen as well as talk.

Duties of Officers and Members



Each participant of a meeting has a series of jobs to carry out, whether the meeting is formal or informal:

Before	During	After
Chair • Detail items to be discussed • Agree agenda • Send details of agenda, location and time to participants • Arrange room appropriately	• Start promptly • Inform of topics clearly • Encourage effective contributions • Summarise when needed • Get an effective final decision	• Review draft minutes before distribution • Keep check on progress of actions and agreements
Minute taker • Gather appropriate information from previous minutes or new sources • Draft agenda with chair • Put agenda items in a logical priority • Circulate appropriate papers to all, with as much notice as possible	• Arrive before the start • Help get the room set-up • Have all papers available • Question unclear points • Assist chair	• Draft minutes promptly • Agree draft with chair and distribute • Monitor any action points if needed
Participants • Let chair or secretary know points for agenda • Read all papers • Prepare any papers individually needed	• Arrive on time • Contribute appropriately and constructively • Take notes of any actions and final decision	• Read minutes once received • Clarify any unclear points • Take actions as detailed and report back if needed

The Agenda



Most formal meetings will follow a set order; the list below covers most, although not all, of the items that may be used:

- Appointment of chair and officers (if required).
- Notice of Meeting- giving details of time place and purpose. Only read-out at very formal meetings.
- Minutes of previous meeting.
- Matters arising from previous minutes.
- Correspondence received.
- Chairs opening statement (formal meetings).
- Matters carried over from previous meeting.
- Financial points (accounts, treasurer's report).
- Reports from working parties.
- Motions proposed.
- Other items listed on the agenda.
- Any other business, or AOB, should be kept short.
- Agree date of next meeting.
- Vote of thanks and reply by chair (if appropriate, usually formal meetings).
- Chairperson closes meeting.

Agenda items are usually numbered and any change to this order should be explained by the chair at the start of the meeting. If items from a previous meeting are to be raised a summary of details should be given so that everyone understands the context. Supporting paper work should be given to everyone and used as reference. Above all, keep the agenda items clear and separate to avoid confusion.

When planning an agenda:

1. Check for any items left to carry over from the last meeting.
2. Establish new agenda items by contacting participants and considering relevant developments.
3. Prioritise items and try not to agenda too many separate points.
4. Regular items should be dealt with early.
5. Number all items.
6. Ensure you have identified relevant papers.
7. Agree draft agenda with chair, if needed.
8. Distribute with a copy of the last minutes and relevant papers.

The Minutes



Once the meeting has taken place it is up to an appointed person to produce the minutes, a summary of what was said, any actions needed who will carry them out and how the action was agreed upon.

There are basic guidelines which will help if you are asked to produce any minutes

During the meeting

- Record date, time and venue, as well as attendees and absentees.
- Write notes following the topics, use agenda as a guide.
- Try to keep notes as brief as you can whilst ensuring you get all relevant details down.
- Number notes in line with the agenda.
- Clearly mark any actions so they stand out, highlighter or asterisk.
- If you are unclear on a point, clarify it at the time.
- Keep notes as clear and concise as you can.

Writing up

- Check if there is a certain style used to record minutes for this meeting.
- Draft as soon after the meeting ends as possible.
- Type short and clear notes.
- Make sure actions are clearly labeled with who is responsible and when by.
- Proof-read minutes carefully before checking them with the chairperson.
- Distribute to relevant people, attendees, those who couldn't attend and anyone else involved.
- File minutes.
- Follow progress of actions if you have been asked to.

Don't

- Lose track of the pace so your notes get muddled.
- Put personal views into your notes or minutes.
- Use too much jargon.
- Leave it too long before preparing the minutes.
- leave out details of the time, date and venue of the next meeting.

Videoconferencing and Audio-conferencing



When it is possible, video or audio-conferencing can sometimes be used to avoid gathering people from long distances for meetings.

Videoconferencing uses a video link, either on screens or a laptop, to link people in two or more locations. It will generally cost a lot less than the travel costs of bringing people to the same location and the meeting can be set-up quickly. It is the next best thing to a face-to-face meeting as you still get to see body language and expressions. There are some disadvantages though, it won't allow for informal chatting or networking and because everyone has the take it in turns to speak the natural flow may get disrupted.

Audio-conferencing is more widely used, because of its lower costs and ease of use. People are connected via a conferencing set-up on the telephone. Many people can take part and it can be used for overseas contacts too. It can be set-up using an in-house system or by contacting your landline provider.

Both methods still require a chairperson, who will need to distribute an agenda and paperwork, either by fax or email. The chair will also need to let all participants know who is taking part and if anyone joins or leaves the conference part-way through. Participants will need to be careful about not talking over each other and when on audio-conference, letting others know who is talking.

Formal Procedure

Large meetings, around twenty people plus, will usually follow more formal lines with regards to procedure. This method, also referred to as Parliamentary procedure, helps keep larger groups better controlled and managed. A balance needs to be struck between the management of a larger group and the formality preventing proper interaction.

Some organisations and bodies are required to follow a formal procedure by Law; these will be detailed in their 'rules of association'. Doing some research into formal procedure for meetings will give you an idea of how to conduct yourself in such a meeting.

Summary - Meetings

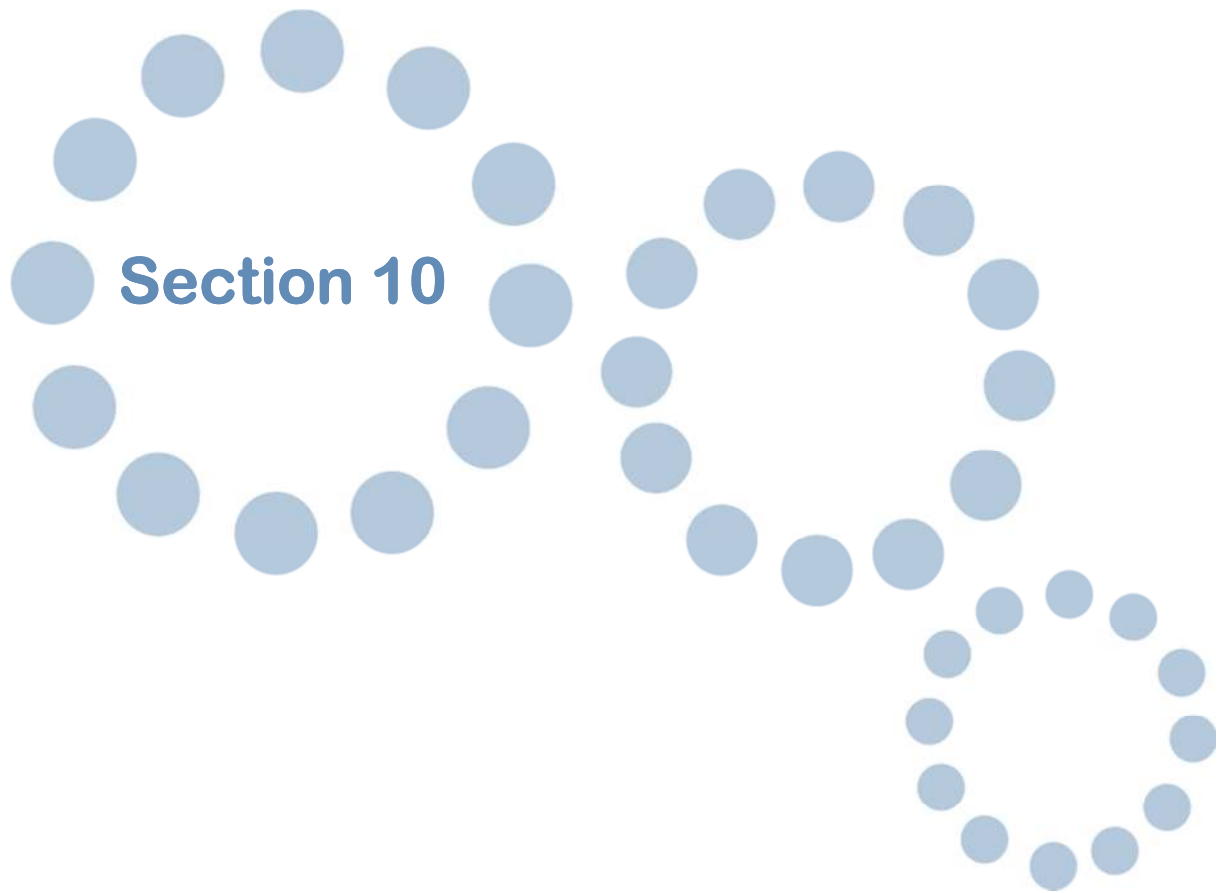


- Whatever your role during a meeting it is important to prepare beforehand
- Participate during and carry out any actions requested of you afterwards.
- It is important for all participants to have respect for others, to allow them to speak and not to dominate the situation.
- If chairing a meeting you need to stay focused and in control, without leaving others too afraid to talk.
- The minute taker also has to stay focused and has a responsibility to ensure notes are clear, concise and distributed promptly.
- Whenever you are taking part in a meeting, take it seriously, get involved and pay attention.

Section Nine – Test Questions



1. Discuss the roles and duties of the following key meeting participants:
 - a) chair
 - b) secretary
2. Chairing a formal meeting is a difficult job. Discuss the responsibilities of the person whose role it is to chair a meeting.
3.
 - a) Why is it essential to take minutes at a formal meeting?
 - b) Compile a set of minutes for a business meeting of your choice



Giving a Talk

Techniques of Public Speaking

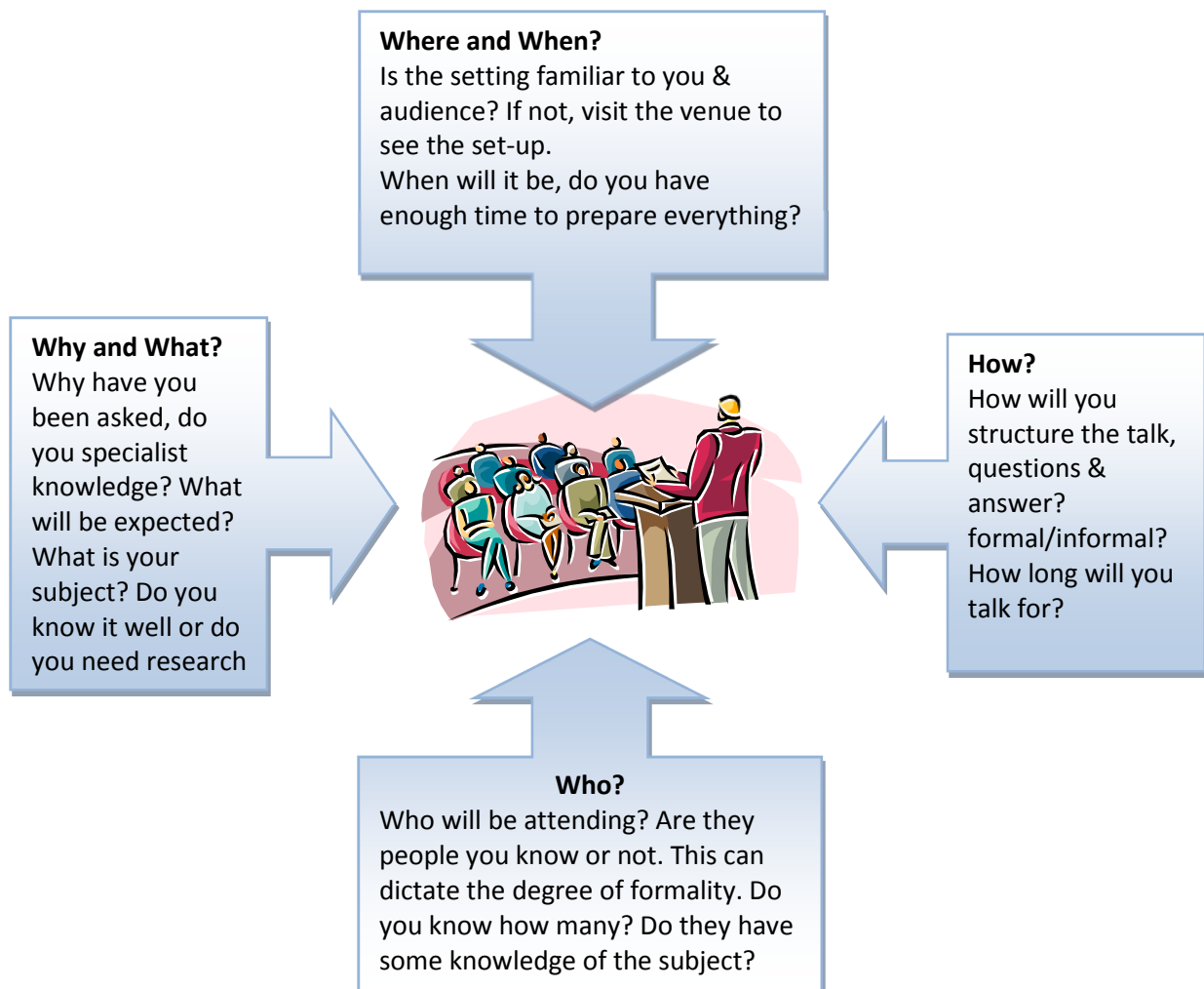


Although we may not often be required to speak in public, having the knowledge of how to do so will give you confidence should the situation arise.

Whilst you can learn techniques the best way to increase your skills is to practice. This doesn't have to be in a formal setting, just take any opportunity offered to you. If you are asked to chair a meeting; give a small presentation to a few colleagues or even just say a few words at the start of a meeting, seize the opportunity. The more you can practice the more your confidence will increase and when a more formal public speaking situation comes up you will be prepared.

Preparation

As with other forms of communication you can start with your Why? Who? What? Where? When? and How?



Answering these points will help you to then adjust to the particular circumstances presented to you. It is likely that someone else will have dictated the subject, venue, length and audience but having prior knowledge of these will help you prepare.

You need to have a clear idea of exactly what you need to achieve:

Reason	Method
Describing or informing: Giving facts and details, observations or background information.	You need to know the level of knowledge of your audience. Use language appropriate to them, avoiding jargon or explaining it. Think carefully about how you order points; refer back to table on page 10. The use of illustrations and examples will keep your audience engaged.
Explanation or instruction: Explaining how things work or operate, possibly offering the why? as well. Giving directions or instructions.	Best dealt with using diagrams, demonstrations and pictures. A practical demonstrations will give your audience practical hands-on knowledge of what you are telling them. Language should be kept clear and descriptive. The order you present points in is also important.
Convincing or inspiring: To try and change opinions or attitudes. Maybe presenting an argument for or against an action.	Use sound knowledge and reasoned argument to get your point across. Facts and evidence will work better than generalised, non-specific wording. Don't ignore the other side of the argument but work to make it clear that your way is sounder.

Developing the Material



Careful planning is the key to developing a talk that covers everything that you want, and need, to say. Breaking your main subject down into smaller sub-sections will help ensure that you don't miss anything out. Use as much time as you have at your disposal to forward plan and write a draft.

Planning

- Take time over considering what you need to include.
- Note down ideas when they occur.
- Discuss possible ideas with colleagues.

Reading

- Make sure you have read around your subject so you know it very well.
- Use the internet to look up visual examples and quotes you could use.

Writing

- Start with a rough draft, include an introduction and conclusion.
- Keep your draft clear and concise.
- Read through a couple of times to check the length and content.

Opening the Talk



How you open a talk can often play a large part in how the rest of the delivery goes. You need to be able to introduce yourself, and your subject, in a way that quickly gets the audience on board and engaged. Most people are more nervous at the start of the talk, so planning your introduction carefully will help settle you down.

- Make sure you are comfortable with the set-up of your visual aids and notes.
- Try not to hesitate too long before you start, but do wait for your audience to settle.
- Make your opening original, try to avoid clichés.
- Sound as confident as you can, even if you feel a bit unsure.
- Don't give away all the exciting parts of your talk at the start.
- Avoid making the introduction too long; your audience will get bored.

There are lots of different ways you can start your talk, carefully consider which might work best for your subject and audience:

Subject or title	A simple start which is very easy to use.
Objective	Telling your audience what they can expect and what you hope to achieve. Don't tell them too much though.
Anecdote	Keep it short and relevant.
Question	Put a question to your audience that covers the reason you are there, 'Are these new systems going to work for us all?' You can then use you talk to answer this.
Informal start	Not suitable for all occasions but should be fine for smaller settings and close colleagues.
Joke	Be careful of the setting in which this might work. Used appropriately it can help break the ice.
Personal statement	Refer to a local setting or particular of the work place that fits in with your subject. Only use this if you know the area or setting well.
Facts	Use a clear fact or statistic that informs about your subject; keep it simple to avoid bombarding your audience with information.
Topical	Refer to a story in the news or local paper that links in with your subject.
Quotation	Works well if the person quoted is known to the audience and the quote is relevant to your subject.
Shock	Making a statement about your subject that the audience might not be expecting will get their attention. You can then argue against your own statement to continue the subject.

Closing the Talk



Finishing your talk in a memorable way can be as important as starting it well. You need to ensure that your audience leaves happy and still thinking about your subject:

- Don't let things just tail off, finish with a solid point.
- Keep to the structure you drafted, adding in points you've just remembered makes things confusing.
- When summing up main points don't go into too much detail.
- Be clear about the point at which you are closing, don't keep adding bits on.
- Learn your closing rather than having to read it from your notes.

As with the opening, there are a number of ways to close:

Summary	Simple and effective, re-iterates the important points to the audience.
Story	A closing story or anecdote should be short and relevant, demonstrating your main point.
Question	Ask your audience how they think you could move forward with the subject, based on what you have said.
Quote	Use a relevant quote to back-up your concluding point.
Options	Give the audience a series of alternative options to the problem. Your talk should have given them a clear idea as to which one you believe works.
Action	Ask your audience for immediate action, if your talk has gone well and been persuasive they will be on board.
Fear	It is a bit of a difficult close to get right, but letting your audience know the consequences of not taking action can get them behind you.
Reward	Let the audience know the positive outcomes of taking part in an action you have requested.
Appeal	Letting the audience know what they need to do to help others out.

Make careful consideration of which way might work best. Keep your conclusion short and to the point, it's too late to cover any new points.

Visual Aids



Later sections will look more closely at the use of visual aids but they need to be noted here too. Use visual aids to make sure points that are important hit home. You could use:

- Handouts that the audience can refer to throughout.
- Visuals that can help clarify complex points.
- Graphics, such as boxes or bullets, to simplify and highlight points.
- Computer packages, such as PowerPoint, to bring your words clarity and interest.
- Transparent slides for OHPs can be used to trace pictures or graphics if you don't have use of a computer.
- Use bold images and colours to get the audience's attention.

Be careful to avoid:

- Anything too complex, don't confuse your audience.
- Irrelevant visual aids.
- Over-use of visual aids.
- Packing too much information into too small a space.
- Badly prepared aids, with spelling and grammar mistakes.

Make sure you detail in your notes where a visual aid will be used, and which one you need

Use of Notes

Notes are important in a number of ways, they jog our memory, help prevent things being left out, stop the logical sequence being lost and enable complex points to be made.

Although you may have written out your speech in full just reading it like a script will mean a dull, monotone delivery. Very technical points may need to be written down word-for-word to ensure you get all details across, but mostly this should be avoided.

Although you may want to memorise your speech it will always help to have notes to hand. They will prevent you missing sections, or important points, out and having to come back to them.

Practise with your notes to sort out how detailed you need them, will main headings do or do you need to add more detail?

Having notes with you will give you further confidence and this will come across in the presentation of your talk.

Practising the Talk



Preparation, followed by practice, is the best way to ensure you are as confident as possible before starting your talk.

Practising the talk in full will help you learn it, listen to how it comes across and ensure it fits into any time scale.

If you can record yourself practising the talk you will get an even better idea of how it comes across. You could also consider practising in front of a few people to increase your confidence and get feed-back.

Room and Platform Layout

Room	• Visit the room beforehand. • Consider the seating plan, keep the audience close together and don't position yourself too far away.
Platform	• Make sure you have everything to hand that you will need; notes, a drink, a microphone if needed, visual aids. • Give yourself room to move or have a chair set-up if appropriate. • Ensure you don't stand in front of the white board or screen if you are using them.
Equipment	Make sure you have already set-up equipment for your visual aids: • Whiteboard - clean and with pens and eraser to hand. • Projector - check you know how to work it, that it's on and that your slide presentation works. • OHP – Check it's plugged in and the focus and set-up work on the screen. Have pens to hand.

Delivery of the Talk



If you have prepared well it will come across in your talk. Try your best to stay calm and relaxed, be yourself and make eye-contact with the audience. Remember the points for speaking effectively, in section two, and that if you sound interested and engaged your audience is more likely to be too.

Summary – Being a Good Speaker

- Prepare well
- Know your subject
- Write a draft and then notes
- Check your room and set-up beforehand
- Practise

When giving a talk it is vital that your audience believes your conviction and enthusiasm for the subject. Make sure you speak in a positive way and keep things as simple as possible to avoid confusing your audience. Preparation and practice are key.

- 88



Using Visual Aids

General Principles



With so many visual aids available to us now, it can be a little overwhelming. Getting the balance between making use of them and over doing things can be tricky too. Learning what is available, when to use which type of equipment, and when not too will help you feel prepared for a situation when visual aids are needed.

The following is a list of the main visual aids that you might encounter:

- Flip charts
- Overhead projectors (OHP)
- Whiteboards
- Interactive boards
- Magnetic boards (build-up)
- Physical objects
- Models or demonstrations
- Media or data projectors
- Slide projectors
- DVDs

Your visual aids need to be kept simple and clear. They need to follow their name, use a visual element to aid your point, not make it for you.

If your slide or flip chart is full of words, you are missing the point. An audience trying to listen and read at the same time is only going to get confused. You need to get a careful balance between words and pictures that will help both you and the audience.

Knowing how to use the equipment, and the benefits of it, will help you make the most of the resources available to you.

Whiteboards and Interactive Boards



Whiteboards are, generally, wall-mounted, plastic covered boards that can be written on with non-permanent markers, cleaned and used again. Newer interactive boards can be linked to a computer and written on with pens or using fingers.

What for?	How?	Advantages	Disadvantages
• Build up a simple visual message • Can be used for a spontaneous presentation • Main points can be left on permanent display.	• Use bright pens that show up • Drywipe markers can be cleaned off afterwards • Make sure audience can see clearly • Write and draw clearly • Don't add too much information • Use a pointer to refer to the board for clarity.	• Often available • Interactive boards can let you save a copy of the talk • Easy to use.	• Writing too much can confuse the audience • Audience may have to wait for presenter to write things down • Adding content to the board can spoil the flow of the talk.

Flip Charts



Flip charts are large pads of paper that can be mounted on a stand and drawn on with marker pens. They can be pre-prepared or used at the time.

What for?	How?	Advantages	Disadvantages
• Giving audience background information • Building up information when used in sequence • Writing down discussion points • Show a starting question to kick things off.	• Keep points and images simple • Mask sections off if you want to reveal one point at a time • Prepare some points in advance • Learn your presentation page by page.	• Widely available • Cheap to use • Easy to use • Flip chart can be kept as a record.	• The pad can become difficult to manage if a lot of sheets are used • If images and words are too small they won't be useful • Can be difficult to move • Mistakes cannot be wiped out.

Build-up Visuals

Magnetic boards and pin boards can be used to add and remove pieces of information throughout the presentation, building-up the exact story the speaker wants to present.

What for?	How?	Advantages	Disadvantages
• Building-up a presentation • Items can be moved, added or removed.	• Don't try to have too many images or words • Make images bold and eye-catching.	• Items can be easily moved • Items can be reused • Images can be dramatic to grab attention.	• Can be confusing if too many images used • Takes time to prepare • Not so widely available.

Physical Objects



An actual example of your subject can really get the audience engaged. This won't work for every situation but can be very effective and easy to understand

What for?	How?	Advantages	Disadvantages
• To give the audience a real example of a product or item • To add clarity to a presentation.	• You need to consider when to show the item for best context • Only use if it is appropriate • Let the audience examine the item by passing round or allowing them to get up.	• Has great impact • Gives real clarity to your presentation • Helps understanding better than words alone can.	• People may all want to look at once, not wait their turn • Using an item that doesn't best demonstrate a point is a waste of time • Picking the wrong time to show people will spoil the effect.

Models and Demonstrations

Using a model or demonstration can be a great way to add excitement and interest to a presentation.

What for?	How?	Advantages	Disadvantages
• Adding interest to an otherwise formal subject • Explains a subject very clearly • Essential for explaining abstract concepts or scientific theories.	• Know exactly how to do the demonstration and practice • Check the room is appropriate • Prepare carefully so your model or demonstration works well.	• Will clearly make your point • Gets the audience interested and engaged • Can by-pass a lot of potentially dull talking.	• Can take a lot of preparation • If the demonstrator doesn't know what they are doing it can back-fire and cause confusion.

Overhead Projectors



Less widely used now, the overhead projector (OHP) uses a light to project images from prepared acetates onto a screen.

What for?	How?	Advantages	Disadvantages
• Images can be photo-copied or drawn onto clear film or acetate • Sheets can be overlaid to build up detail • Items can be masked and then revealed.	• Keep things simple • Photocopy complex images • Check position and focus of the image • A pencil can be used as a pointer • You can write or draw further details as you go along.	• Cheaper than a data projector • Many companies still have them • Relatively easy to use with practice • Flexible to use • Can be used in a variety of ways: images, words, overlays, masking.	• Needs practice to use well • Permanent screens cannot be moved • Heavy to move • Takes time to prepare good acetates • There are more modern tools available.

Data Projectors



A projector that can be linked to a computer, DVD player or digital camera, to project a pre-prepared slide show or set of images.

What for?	How?	Advantages	Disadvantages
• Link to any electronic source • Use with PowerPoint or similar slide template • Use to show video as well as still images.	• learn how to use the projector well in advance • Check you have all the cables you need • Check the set-up of the projected image before you start • Learn which keys will let you toggle (switch) between images • Practice all the methods you will need.	• Don't have to use slides or acetates that can only be used for one subject • Can use both still and moving images • Can use all the techniques in PowerPoint to create interest • Can store your whole presentation on a CD or memory stick • Can be used with a remote control.	• Expensive to buy or hire • Can have technical problems • Can be difficult to learn how to use • Heavy to move if changing sites.

Slide Projectors



A more old-fashioned projector that uses small pre-prepared slides to project an image

What for?	How?	Advantages	Disadvantages
• Use to show photographic images • Can be used to show diagrams.	• Only pay for slides to be made if you can use them more than once • Try and use a projector that uses a magazine to load slides.	• Gives the audience a real image • Cheaper to produce than video • You can take the photos yourself.	• Room has to be darkened to show • Not often used • Expensive to make up slides • Limited uses.

DVDs

DVDs or videos can be hired and played as part of a presentation. Look online to find suppliers.

What for?	How?	Advantages	Disadvantages
• Uses real life images • Use to demonstrate processes.	• Check set-up before you start • Dim lights or lower blinds • Ensure DVD is relevant • Watch the DVD before so you know it.	• Adds entertainment • Breaks-up the speaking sections • Helps understanding.	• Can have technical problems • Takes forward planning • Limited use.

Summary – Using Visual Aids



There are various points to bear in mind when using visual aids:

- Prepare well:
 1. Know your equipment
 2. Prepare your presentation
 3. Practice
 4. Check the set-up.
- Don't make things too complicated, too much content is confusing.
- Make sure you aren't talking and expecting your audience to read at the same time.
- Your images or words should be an aid to the main talk, they don't need to cover everything you are going to say in detail.
- Use images big enough for all the audience to see.
- Always have a back-up in place in case of technical problems.

- 98



Faster Reading

How Do You Read?



It is true that everyone reads at different speeds, and that some people find reading at a faster pace easier than others. Having said that, there are ways to increase the speed at which you read and methods to help you retain more of the information.

Look through the following questions and answer them honestly, this will give you an idea of what your reading style is like:

1. Do you skim over what you need to read before taking in the detail?
2. If you get to a section you don't understand do you re-read it before going on?
3. Do you find it hard to pick out the main points of a chapter?
4. Are you quicker at reading certain sorts of material?
5. If you have a lot to read do you try and read as much as possible without a break?
6. Do you pronounce difficult words to yourself as you read?
7. Does your mind wander when you have a large, complicated item to read?
8. Do you take your time reading, or rush through so you can read it again?
9. Do you find it easy to understand and then remember what you have read?
10. Do you feel like you are a slow reader?

Questions 1, 4, and 9 are about good reading techniques. If you found that some of your answers seemed negative then learning some new reading methods can help you to improve, and will therefore give you more confidence when reading.

Why do we read?

There are three main reasons why we might need to read something:

- **Enjoyment:** Many people simply enjoy the process of reading for pleasure.
- **Learning:** This is the most likely reason for reading other than for pleasure. Whether at work, home or as a student, reading to gather information will happen regularly. It might be the case that you are reading instructions, recipes, manuals, text books or information on a new product.
- **Conclusions:** Reading about other people's opinions and ideas can help you to evaluate a subject more thoroughly so as to form your own judgement.

Do we understand?

Although increasing the speed at which you read is important it is wasted if you don't then understand what you have read. Learning methods to improve one area must go hand-in-hand with the other.

The Physical Process of Reading



Eye movements

Faulty eye movements, which you may not even be aware of, can be a cause of inefficient reading technique. When you are reading your eyes will constantly make stops when moving along the words. These tiny stops are called **fixations**. The efficiency of your reading is based on how much you take in with each fixations, this is called your **recognition span**. Efficient readers tend to be able to take in a lot more per fixation, up to a line at a time, as they have a large recognition span.

Repetition

Those who read in an inefficient way tend to take in each word individually and also backtrack over what they have just read. This repetition is because the individual words have not linked up to form a cohesive meaning. The slowness of pace, and the backtracking over words, can also lead the brain to lose focus as it struggles to take in what is actually on the page.

Try reading a passage word-by-word, covering the next word as you go. Think about how this makes your brain struggle to understand what has actually been written.

Visualisation

When first learning to read, most people will mouth words or visualise the sounds of each word in their head. Slower readers have often carried this technique on and the time taken to acknowledge each word causes the slowness. Concentrating on each word in this way prevents your brain from understanding the whole passage.

Try reading a passage with your finger placed vertically on your lips, this is the easiest way to check if you are mouthing the words. Trying this will also help you overcome it as you will be conscious of when your lips are moving

Making a conscious effort to increase your reading speed will give your brain less chance to linger over separate words.

Comfort

Being uncomfortable or too comfortable can affect your concentration:

- Your chair needs to be comfortable, but not too much. It is best to sit at a table.
- It is important for what you are reading to be well lit, preferably from behind to reduce glare.
- Giving yourself short, regular breaks will help you keep your concentration levels high.
- Make sure you go for regular eye-tests, your sight may have worsened without you realising and this can have a big impact on how easily you can read.

Increasing Your Vocabulary



If your vocabulary is not as good as it could be you will get further pauses while reading as your brain tries to work out the meaning of a word. These pauses will have an obvious impact on the speed of your reading. Have a quick search online for vocabulary games or tests, these are a good way to improve your standard and help your reading speed.

There are other things that can help you increase your vocabulary too:

- **Read a wide range of material**, covering a wide range of subjects. This way you are developing your vocabulary from as many sources as possible. Quality newspapers and magazines will help too.
- **New words**: Try picking a new word each week that you have read but not understood. Practice using it in the right context as much as you can that week.
- **Use the Dictionary**, make sure you look up any words that you come across that you don't understand, don't just guess their meaning. Use an up-to-date dictionary or look the word up online.
- **Root meanings**: A lot of English words have their roots in Greek or Latin. While you don't need to try and learn these languages have a rough idea of some of the more widely used will help your understanding. The word antibiotic comes from the Greek word anti, meaning against. The word aquarium has its roots from the Latin word aqua, meaning water.

Practice Techniques

Using a rhythm

Tapping a steady rhythm on the page as you read will encourage your brain to read in a more rhythmic way. Try a few different rhythms until you find one that feels right for you. By gradually increasing the rhythm that you are tapping you will help to gradually increase the speed that you read at.

Using a pointer

Use your finger or a pen to follow the words across the page as you read. Keep the pace smooth and start slowly. You may find this a little distracting at first but with a little practice it will become less noticeable. Once you are comfortable with using the pointer you can increase the speed to encourage your brain to read faster.

Summary – Faster Reading



Learning to read more rapidly is based on the skill of having your eyes move smoothly and with speed along the words. Increasing the speed at which you read takes practice but will also stop your brain focusing on just one word at a time. Although it will feel difficult at first, the more you practice the easier it will get.

- Recognise bad reading habits you may have
- Make sure you are set up right before you start
- Increase your vocabulary
- Practice techniques to increase your speed
- Try just reading faster to become better at it.

- 104



Better Reading

Determining Priorities



When faced with a mountain of emails, a full in-tray or a large course text we need to be able to prioritise. It is more than likely that you won't have time to fully read everything so you need to be able to work out what is the most important. The starting point is to break things down into what is essential, useful or irrelevant. Giving yourself a rough idea of what each item is about will help you work this out; there are two skills that can help, scanning and skim-reading

Scanning

Scanning is a method of taking a brief overview of a text to recognise relevant points, without having to read the whole item. By letting your eyes run quickly over a text your brain will start to pick out certain words.

As an example, say you had an assignment due about a new computer. By scanning the text knowing this your brain is likely to pick out the word computer. This would also work for picking out names of relevant colleagues or companies in emails.

Scanning through the text in this way will help you find relevant points but also to get an idea of the structure and how long it will take to process.

Is the material **useful**? Then make sure you keep hold of it to read later, when you have time.

Is the material **essential**? Then read it straight away.



Is the material **irrelevant**? Then it can be discarded, but don't do this unless you are sure.

Skim-Reading



Having formed an overview of the content it is worth taking some time to skim-read before you read in-depth. Skim-reading is about reading as fast as you can to take in as much information as you can, without reading every detail.

Most pieces of written English are structured in similar ways:

Paragraphs and sentences

As a general rule, in well written factual or explanatory texts, a paragraph will cover one main topic. Generally one sentence within the paragraph will contain the main point and is called the **topic sentence**. The first sentence can be used to state the main idea; the following sentences should give evidence to support this. Alternatively the whole paragraph will build-up to the last sentence which contains the main idea.

Visual and verbal signals

Textbooks and business texts will tend to use headings and sub-headings to help the reader find their way around. Other signposts are typing in **bold**, using *italics*, or underlining important words or phrases. Lists may be put clearly using bullet points or numbering.

Certain words can also be used as a signal to the reader. By using the phrase 'for example' the reader knows that they are getting supporting evidence, not important for skim reading. If the author has written 'firstly' the reader knows there will be a 'secondly'. If the text includes words such as 'consequently' or 'therefore' the reader knows there is a point of conclusion coming.

Points for skim-reading

1. Read as fast as you can, you only want an overview.
2. Don't get distracted by points you find interesting.
3. Read the title, contents and summary if available.
4. Read the first paragraph more slowly as it will tell you, briefly, what is to come.
5. Concentrate of the first sentence of other paragraphs for an overview.
6. If the first sentence doesn't tell you what's next try reading the last sentence.
7. Reading the last two or three paragraphs more slowly should give you a summary of the whole document.

SQ3R Method of Reading



There are various methods that can be utilised for good reading practice. One of those is the SQ3R. The method has five stages and will help you increase your good reading habits.

Stage One: Survey	By skim-reading the document you can give yourself an initial idea of its contents. If you are looking for a particular subject you can just try skim-reading the table of contents to find it.
Stage Two: Question	To read effectively you need to be constantly focused. Concentrating carefully will ensure you are taking in all the detail that you need to. By questioning what you have just read you are analysing the content and so taking in more detail.
Stage Three: Read	Having gained an idea of the main content and areas of interest you can now start to read in a more in-depth way. Further reading will confirm the main ideas and theories of the piece of writing. This will be the first time you read through so you don't need to take notes. A complex piece of written material is better read through quickly, twice, than once slowly.
Stage Four: Recall	This is the stage to start making notes but try and do it by recalling what you have just read rather than by copying sections down. If you can't recall what you need then re-read the section.
Stage Five: Review	The final stage is about making sure you have really got everything out of the material. The best way is to take a quick review of the first four stages again • Survey: Review the relevant sections; have you got the main ideas? How is the piece structured? • Question: Has the piece answered all the questions that came up whilst you were reading? • Read: Another rapid skim through may highlight points you have missed • Recall: Check through your notes and fill in gaps where needed. Make sure that your notes fit with the main ideas of the material.

Summary – Better Reading



Learning skills for better reading may take time, but it will be worth it. Improving the efficiency with which you read will, overall, save you time and get you better results.

Ways that can help include:

- **Scanning:** learning to get a very quick over-view to check for relevance.
- **Skim-reading:** taking a quick skim over the whole document to look for main ideas and theories.
- **SQ3R:** Using proven methods to help you learn to be the most efficient, and proficient, reader that you can be.

- 110



Writing Business Letters

Why Good Letter Writing Matters



Deciding when to use written communication over other forms needs to be considered carefully. Business letters can cost more than communications such as email or a phone call, but sometimes are the best form of communication for the job.

Written communication - Advantages	Oral communication - Advantages
• Best for facts. • Complicated or difficult points can be reviewed. • Leaves a written record. • Both writer and reader can deal with the item when they want to. • Writer can pre-view and plan before sending. • Can be checked for errors prior to sending.	• Best for feelings or emotions. • Can be tailored to be personal. • Involves more interaction and feedback. • Cheaper option generally. • Can have greater impact. • Speaker can adapt their speech to fit the listener.
Written communication – Dis-advantages	Oral communication – Dis-advantages
• Takes time. • Less options for feedback. • Don't have the help of non-verbal cues. • Receiver may not like reading communications. • Cannot guarantee the letter will be delivered or read. • Less individual.	• Added pressure of thinking as you speak. • Mistakes cannot be removed. • Cannot always tell how much of the message is being taken in. • Information can be forgotten without a written record.

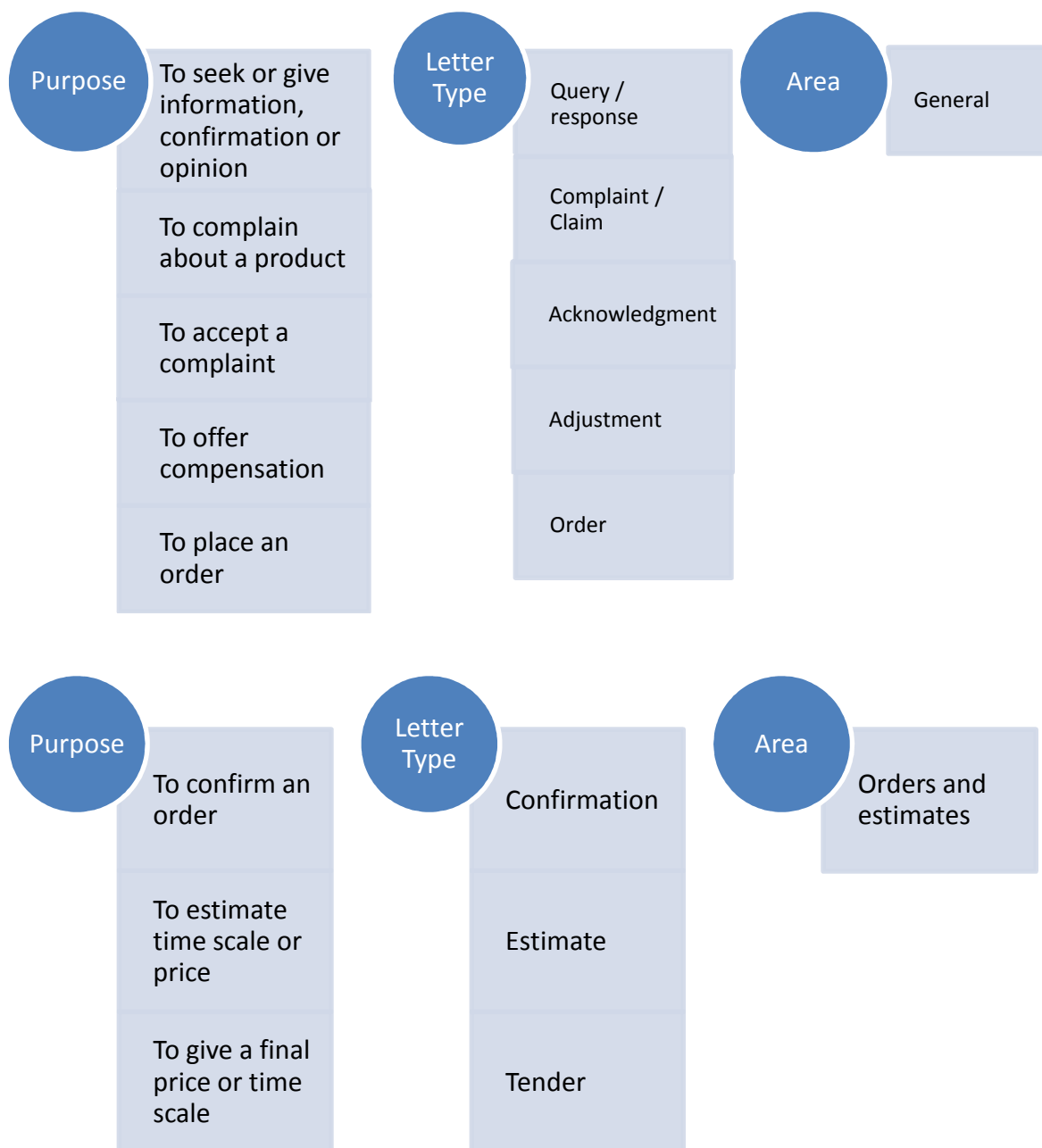
A piece of written communication can also be used to send information to back-up or prepare for a phone call or meeting. Sending through diagrams, maps, figures or specifications can re-enforce what you want to say. It is important to remember the six C's of communication: Clear, Constructive, Concise, Correct, Courteous, and Complete.

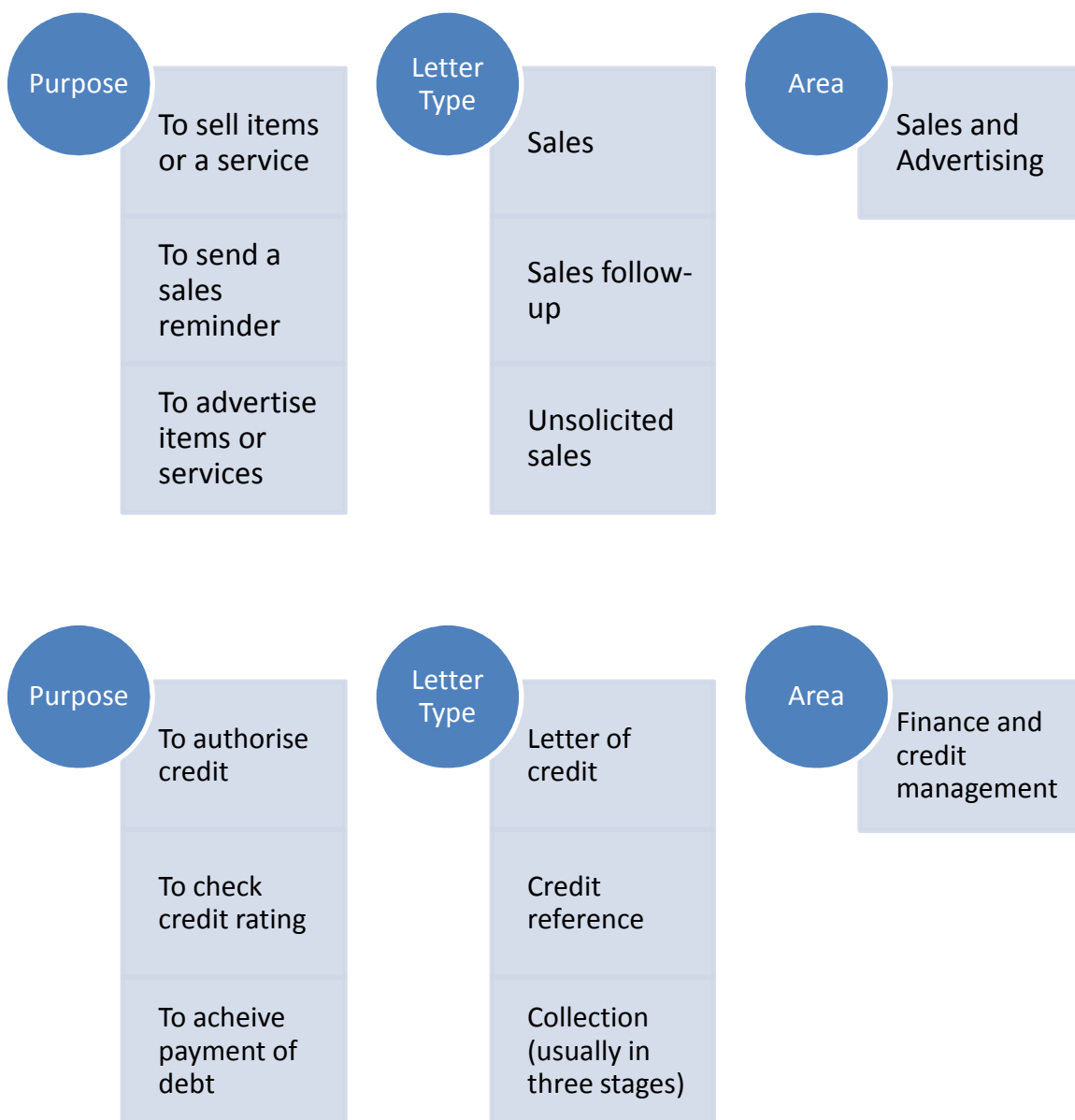
Planning a Letter



Effective letters take careful planning, as with all forms of communication. Reviewing previous correspondence is a good place to start. It is also important to consider the reader and your main reason for writing in the first place. Specific situations, such as a complaint, will require a specific type of response. You need to think about how your reader will respond and what sort of structure you need to follow.

Most letters will fall into one of the following categories:





Different letters will inspire different reader responses:

- **Favorable:** agreeing a request, sending purchased items or refunds.
- **Neutral:** for subjects such as a reference or credit reference, presenting facts.
- **Unfavourable:** When you are refusing something, such as a request for compensation. Care must be taken not to offend.
- **Persuasive:** selling an idea or a product.

Planning and analysing how your reader might respond will help you choose the best structure and content for your letter:

Broad area	Specific type of letter	Suggested style	Structure
Favourable	• Order • Confirmation • Acknowledgement • Information • Claim • Adjustment	Deductive (main points then examples/illustrations)	1. Positive main point 2. Explanations and details 3. Closing points
Neutral	• Credit reference • Personal reference • Letter of credit • Estimate • Tender	Deductive	1. Neutral main point 2. Explanations 3. Closing points
Unfavourable	• Refusal of compensation • Refusal of credit • Rejection of order • Solicitors letters	Inductive (start with examples/illustrations then main point at the end)	1. Neutral statement leading to facts 2. Explanation of facts 3. Undesirable main point 4. Related more positive alternative
Persuasive	• Sales letters • Job applications • Loan applications • Estimates • Tenders	Inductive	1. Neutral introduction 2. Main facts and analysis 3. Summary of main positive points

Most word processing packages, and the internet, can be used to look up specific letter templates which can help you find a starting point for your letter, but be aware, always read through and check the template actually fits what you need to say.



The appearance of your letter is the first thing your reader will notice, and this will have an immediate impact on how they feel about your organisation. Most organisations will have their own set of letter templates so that all letters sent out have the same style and image.

There are many different layouts that can be used for letters but some of the most common are:

Fully Blocked, everything starts from the left-hand margin:

- Efficient and modern looking.
- Can look unbalanced, even more so if the addresses start from the left.

Semi-blocked, date and signature are on the right, heading centred and the rest from the left:

- Fairly efficient.
- More even to look at.

Semi-indented, similar to semi-blocked but start of each paragraph is indented:

- Can look less cluttered.
- Clear where each paragraph starts.

Most letters should be written on A4 sized plain paper for clarity and ease of printing. If using a window envelope you need to ensure that your typed letter will fold to fit the window so the address is visible.

The Structure of a Letter



Heading or letterhead

- Usual on business letters to have a letterhead, in bold, across the top with full contact details of sender.
- Statutory requirements for letterhead are: trading name, if Limited company, Registered address, registration number, location of registration, list of Directors if founded after 1916 (some details may be on the footer of the page).
- Logo if the company has one.

Date

- Usually placed two or three lines under the address, finishing at the right-hand margin.
- In Europe date is written as day, month, year.

References

- Business letters often get filed so adding a reference will help.
- Composed of 1: initials of signatory, in capitals, 2: initials of secretary, 3: specific point, e.g. meeting file 3
- Should be quoted when sending and replying to letters.

Recipient details

- Most often from the left margin, under the reference.
- Should contain name and full address with title.

Salutations and closes

- Formal opening and closes.
- Certain rules apply.

Subject Heading

- Best kept to one subject and one line.
- Placed after the salutation but before the main letter body.

Signature

- A gap is usually left after the complimentary closing for the signature to be hand written. The senders name should be typed below.

Main Body

- Use clear, concise language and check spelling and punctuation.
- Templates should set margins and spacing.
- Double line spacing can be used for short letters.
- Follow on sheets should detail the recipient, date and reference at the top.
- If more than one copy is being sent detail c.c at the end of the letter.
- Note in bold at the top, and the envelope, if the letter is private or confidential.

Forms of address

'Mr' or 'Esq'

- 'Esquire' can be used for higher ranking professions such as Doctors or Solicitors
- 'Mr' can be used for any man. Do not use together

Addressing Women

- Most often used are Miss, Mrs or Ms
- Ms is often used in business as neutral
- Use Lady or Dame if appropriate
- Can be omitted

Titles

- Use a person's forename if they are a Sir or Lady but not Lord or Lady
- Dr is used for Medical Doctors or those with a PhD
- Consultants are called 'Mr'

Letters and Qualifications

- Use details of academic qualifications, military decorations and professional memberships after the person's name
- Decorations first, then degrees and diplomas, then professional memberships

Salutations and Complimentary Closes

Yours
Faithfully

- Dear Sir/ Sirs
- Gentlemen / ladies
- Dear Madam

Yours Sincerely

- Dear Mr ...
- Dear Ms ...
- Dear Reverend ...
- Dear Lady / Lord ... (first name or surname)
- Dear Dr ...

Sincerely, Best
Wishes,
Regards or
Love

- Dear Bob
- Dear Janet

Dictating



Although dictating to a Dictaphone or secretary is not a widely used option, it can help you build other skills. Practicing speaking what you would normally write will help you focus your speech and can improve your skills for leaving recorded messages and using voice-input packages on the computer.

Prepare

- Yourself: concentrate on your subject, focus on that alone.
- The material: have a short outline in note form.
- Your priorities: know exactly what your key points are and what order you want them in.
- The secretary: if you are dictating to another person they need to know the subject, who the letter is too, if they need more than one copy, any reference numbers.

Practice

- Be clear and to the point.
- Use vocal punctuation, e.g. 'new paragraph', 'full-stop', 'comma' etc.
- Speak at a slower pace than normal, check with your typist if relevant.
- Spell out names of people or places or any technical terms.
- If you lose focus, take a minute, play back the last sentence and start again.
- Always read through the material once complete to check accuracy.

Summary – Writing Business Letters



Business letters can play a crucial part in the image of a company. Badly thought out or put together letters will give a really bad impression.

Preparation is again the key, it is vital to fully know your subject and what needs to be said before you start writing.

You need to know:

- Who the letter is to, how should they be addressed?
- What sort of letter is it, complaint, compensation, order?
- What outcome do you want?
- What template to use? If relevant.
- How to structure the letter?
- Who the addressee needs to respond to?
- Where the letter will be filed and any reference numbers?

- 121



Applying for a Job

What Sort of Job do you want?



The process of applying for a job needs to be given a proper amount of time. Rushing will only lead to you not giving the best of yourself, or applying for a post that isn't right for you.

Choosing the right job will, partly, depend on how desperate you are. If you are settled in a job that is ok you can afford to be choosier than if you are out of work or about to finish a college course. Applying for a job to which you are totally unsuited will often just lead to a rejection of your application.

A good starting point is to consider points about you and your personality and how they will influence your job choices. Take time to answer these simple questions:

1. Do you want to work on your own or as part of a team?
2. Would you prefer to work with people, things or animals?
3. Do you enjoy problem solving?
4. Would you like to have a job with responsibility?
5. Do you want to work indoors or outdoors?
6. Are you more creative, or practical?
7. Do you prefer to work under pressure or at your own pace?
8. Do you want to be office based or out-and-about?
9. Are you better suited to being closely supervised or left to work on your own?
10. Do you want to be dealing with people or facts, figures and written work?
11. Are you prepared to move location for the right job?
12. What are your priorities: pay, colleagues, opportunities, benefits and conditions?
13. Are you happy to train-up to fulfill a role?

Careers advisers can offer further help in this area, as can online personality or vocational guidance tests.

Once you have your answers you can prioritise them into sections. Look at the things you feel you must have, things you want and things that would just be a bonus to the job. You now have a more solid base to start looking for jobs that you are not only suited for, but that you actually want.

What is Available to You?



Once you know what sort of job you want to need to start actively looking. Use as many different sources as you can to find vacancies. You need to be willing to look on a regular basis.

Internet

Probably the most widely used resource now but can be a little overwhelming. It may be worth doing a little research into which sites might offer vacancies specific to your area.

Newspapers

Again find out if specific papers advertise for your area on specific days. Local papers are best used for local jobs.

Job Centres and Agencies

Visiting a job Centre can help you see what is available in your locality but there is likely to be a lot of competition. Signing on with a private agency means that you will have someone helping to find you possible roles but you will then be tied into an agency contract. Make sure you sign on with an agency that operates in your chosen field.

Careers Office

Your local careers office should be listed in the phone book. A professional careers counselor is trained to help you focus on exactly how you can progress your career and where to start. If you are at college or University you should have access to careers counselors on-site.

Once you have identified a job that looks promising you need to pay careful attention to the person specification and the job description to make sure you are going to fit the companies criteria, otherwise your application is a waste of time.

The Application Itself



The starting point is simple, does the advert ask for applications in writing, a Curriculum Vitae (C.V), applications online or for you to fill in a set application form? Whichever is asked for you will need to tailor it to the specific job. You may need to apply for the application form itself, either in writing or over the phone. Either way be clear, concise and to the point and make sure you quote any relevant reference numbers.

Application Forms

- Presentation needs to be as near perfect as you can get it. Check spelling and punctuation and read-through to check for accuracy. Check for instructions such as BLOCK CAPITALS.
- Dates listed on the form need to be accurate. Keeping a list of dates of relevant qualifications, job changes or promotions written down will help.
- List details such as qualifications and past experience as they are asked for, e.g. earliest to present day.
- Keep details as clear as possible.
- If you have just left college or school then use the space for experience to list holiday jobs or other positions of responsibility you have held.
- Think carefully about who to put down as your references. They need to be able to give a clear and positive insight into both your personality and your work standards.
- Pay close attention to the 'other relevant information' or 'supporting statement' section. This is where you can write exactly why you are suitable for the specific position. Consider carefully which past experiences will show you have the right transferable skills. Refer to the job description and person specification and try to cover all the essential skills asked for in the same order as the application.
- Write clearly in full sentences, not note form.
- Don't make your personal statement longer than the space provided as if the employer has lots of applications to review it may not get their full attention.
- Making a photocopy or copy on the computer will ensure you know exactly what you wrote if you get called for interview. It will also be a useful reference for future applications.

Application Letters

- A letter of application, or covering letter with C.V, needs to be linked to the job specifics in the same way as a 'supporting statement' section would be.
- Keep your letter clear, relevant and as concise as possible.
- Don't add information unless it links specifically with the job details or person specification.
- Try to list information in the same order as it is listed in the job description. This will help the employer link the two together.

- Keep your points positive, show your transferable skills even if you don't have the exact experience.
- Read through your letter at least once before you send it. Try and look at it from the point of the employer, which points are relevant and which can be removed.
- Make sure you include details of relevant education and qualifications if you have not been asked to include a C.V.
- Include the full job title, all your contact details and any reference numbers.
- These points apply for either a long application letter or for a short covering letter to go with a C.V.

If you have been asked for a C.V and don't have one then have a look online. There are plenty of templates available, have a look for one that you think reads well and clearly. Don't go for anything over-fussy or over-long.

Job-hunting on the Internet

Career Websites

You should be able to find some websites with careers advice through a simple online search. These sites offer information such as careers guidance, templates for C.V's and letters, industry news and jobs vacancies. Some also allow you to upload a C.V so that you can be sent details of relevant jobs.

C.V Online

There are a couple of advantages to uploading your C.V to an online careers site. Not only will you be sent relevant vacancies but, employers can also search through C.V's for those they feel would fit their position or organisation. You need to be aware though that you may get sent a lot of emails for unsuitable jobs and that, potentially, your current employer could see your C.V online.

Agencies

Recruitment Agencies often operate online and it may be quicker than going into a branch. Check that the one you are looking for actually lists positions that you feel would be relevant before you sign-up. You may be required to conduct a telephone interview before they accept you to their books. As with posting your C.V online you may find that you get sent positions that are not suitable to you.

Summary – Applying for a Job



- Be willing to put in the time to look for new vacancies on a regular basis.
- Know yourself and your C.V, get careers advice if needed.
- Take your time with applications, the more you do the easier it will get.
- Ensure that you only apply for jobs that you are qualified for and want to do.
- Only include information that is strictly relevant.
- Refer to the Job Description and Person Specification throughout.
- If you don't have the exact experience then clearly list your transferable skills.
- Keep application forms or letters clear and to the point and neatly presented.

- 128



Writing Reports

What is a Report?



A report can be defined as an account, presented usually in detail. Researched and accurate facts are presented for the information of others. Many people don't have to write reports on a regular basis and so, when asked to complete one, can find the task daunting.

By thinking through your everyday actions you may find that you are offering short reports more often than you realised:

- You may have given a written report to a colleague who missed a meeting.
- Have you given a verbal report on a book or film to a friend?
- A manager may have asked for further facts or opinions on a work related problem to help them make a decision.
- You may have to make a regular written report of facts or figures for another department.

So the term itself covers a wider area than we may have considered.

Types of Report

There are a number of ways to give a report:

- Verbally
- Using demonstrations or presentations
- By letter, memo or email
- Using pre-set forms
- In the form of long or short documents

There are also various ways to classify reports:

- Length
- Tone (formal/ informal)
- Repetition (daily/ weekly/ one-off)
- Priority
- Subject
- Style (descriptive/ narrative/ statistical/ pictorial)
- Distribution (internal/ team/ external).

These two basics need to be established before a report can be given its correct focus, so as to fit the circumstances as well as possible.

Essentials of a Good Report



1. **Cohesive** – The report should centre on a single subject and not lose focus. All details should be relevant.
2. **Accurate** – Facts should be researched and verified. Arguments must be backed by fact and well-reasoned.
3. **Logical** – the facts and details should be presented in a logical order so as to be clear. There should be no repetition.
4. **Concise** – The language and content should be kept clear and concise to avoid confusion.
5. **Intelligible** – The style and wording should be kept simple enough that someone from outside the area can still understand the report.

What is the Purpose of the Report?

The purpose of any report is sometimes called the 'terms of reference' and you need to know these before you can start. Whoever asks you to write the report needs to give you details of the subject and how much you need to cover and why you are writing it, this will give you your objective so that you have a starting point. More formal reports are often presented with the 'terms of reference' at the start, so those reading the report know the objective too. Another option is to start your report with the written instructions you were given, if they are concise and well written.

The key points to know before you start are:

- Why is the report needed?
- Who is it for?
- What is the required outcome?

If you don't feel you have been given these in enough detail then go back and ask again.

Fundamental Structure



All reports should follow the structure of three main parts, the introduction, body and conclusion.

The introduction

- Using a standard plan helps to keep this section clear and to the point.
- State, in order, the subject; purpose; methods of research; short summary of findings, conclusions & recommendations; the plan of the main body of the report.
- Be as brief as possible without losing clarity.
- Only cover what you will expand on later in the report.

The main body of the report

- Use this section to set out all the relevant facts you have gathered.
- Explain your methods, procedure and the results gained from them.
- Lead your reader towards the conclusions you will make in the final section.

The conclusion

- The final section should clearly lay out your conclusions and any recommendations.
- No new points should be added.
- It should fit with the points you have made in the previous sections.
- It should ensure that the reader reaches the conclusion that was desired from the report.

Format, Layout, Headings and Numbering



Unless you are required to write your report using a house style or within a form there are a number of layouts that can be used:

Letter/ Memo

Best used for short reports. The three sections are there but maybe not so clearly defined as in a longer report.

Schematic

The details of a short report are broken down into clearly defined sections and headings. Bullets and numbering keep the text clear.

Mixed

Using a combination of letter format and schematic. This will contain some sections with clear headings but not as many break-downs using bullets or numbering.

Section Headings

Labeling different sections will help the reader know where they are. Don't add too many or you will only confuse. Keep headings in the same font and style as the rest of the report and make sure they are relevant to the section.

Functional Paragraphs

When writing longer reports you can use 'functional paragraphs' as an introduction and conclusion to a long section.

Numbering

You can use numbers or letter to split sections into levels of importance. Alternating between numbers and letters will highlight priority to the reader, e.g 1,2,3; a), b), c); i), ii) etc.

The decimal system can also be used in this way: 1. Followed by subsection 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 etc.

Long Formal Reports



Longer, more formal reports will have further additions of the preliminaries, at the start, and supplements, at the end:

Preliminaries

- **Title page:** This should include the subject, author, organisation name and address and the date it was completed. The title itself should be kept as short as possible whilst making it clear what the report is about.
- **Authorisation:** This details for whom, and why, the report was commissioned. As mentioned this can be labeled as the Terms of Reference.
- **Table of Contents:** Listing all the headings and sub-headings will enable the reader to reference the report fully. It will also give the reader an idea of what will be covered in the report.
- **List of figures:** Again for reference, all tables, diagrams and figures within the report should be listed.
- **Foreword:** More often used in large scale reports available to the public or with a whole section of industry in-mind. Gives a short explanation of why the report was carried out.
- **Acknowledgments:** This is used to list others who have been instrumental in bringing the report together, including those who provided funding, and support staff.
- **Summary:** This can also be called the 'Executive Summary' and it provides a much shortened outline of the contents and conclusions so that the reader can tell at a glance if the report is going to cover what they are looking for.

Supplements

- **References:** Reference should be made to any other written sources of information you have used to inform your report. The reference should be detailed in the text and in a list at the end. Make sure you: clearly highlight information that is not your own; put quotation marks around quotes made by others; list all references in the supplemental list; link all items in the supplemental list to its position in the text; figures and images must also be referenced. References are normally listed in the same order they appear in the text and as: Surname of author, first name, title of work, publisher, and date of publication.
- **Bibliography:** This is optional but can provide the reader with sources of further reading with could be useful to them.
- **Appendices:** Used to cover in further detail longer pieces of information that could confuse the main body of the text.
- **Index:** Used in very long reports to list full contents in alphabetical order at the end.

How to get Started



Section one looked at the preparation needed when starting any piece of written work, the same applies here. You need to look at these in order:

1. Set your objectives.
2. Research and gather your information.
3. Organise the material and write a basic plan.
4. Prepare a first draft.
5. Edit the report, reviewing your first draft.
6. Create the final report.

Making a start will tell you if you know enough about what you have been asked to do, and if your objectives are clear enough. Writing a timetable, based on estimates for each task, will also help you plan.

Setting your Objective

Setting your objective, knowing your 'terms of reference', is vital to the success of the finished report. Make sure you write this out clearly at the start, and, if you need to, agree it with the report commissioner. You should refer back to your objective throughout the writing process and this will ensure that you don't lose touch with your subject.

If you are asked to take over the writing of a regular reports (e.g. weekly or monthly) then you still need to prepare. You will probably have a set template and past reports to refer to. Once you have these it is important to find out why the report is prepared, if it is still valid and if it could be improved.

One-off reports won't have the same framework to start from but you should be able to access other reports written within the organisation, as a reference on tone and style. Only use others' reports as a guide, and decide for yourself if you think their methods worked and are worth following.

A good starting point is to write down a couple of short sentences on what you see as the aims and objectives of your report. By clearly detailing your main arguments and aims you give yourself a jumping off point. It is worth considering some of the points on the next page.

Each different report will have a varying range of aims. You need to consider these as, by questioning further, you can use them to set your framework:

Aim of report	What you need to consider
For information	• How much detail do you need? • Who will the recipients be? • Have you got clearance to give all the information? • Will the report be kept for reference? • What level should you pitch the report at?
For a future record	• Who will reference the report? • Is the report to be used externally, e.g. for legal matters • What are the keys points that may be used in the future?
To recommend or influence	• Who are you making your recommendation to? • Are you offering a single recommendation or various options? • What are the strongest arguments? • What evidence do you need? • Who do you want to influence? • Why do you want to change opinion?
To answer a question	• Is the question being asked clear from the terms of reference? • How does the commissioner want to use the report? • Do the recipients know anything about the subject?
As a statutory obligation	• What is the full obligation? • Can you include further information so the appeal is wider? • Is there a template that has been previously used? • How can you highlight the crucial, statutory information?
For publicity	• Why is the report being used for publicity? • How is the publicity going to help the business? • Who will publicise the report? • Who will have access to the report? • How can you give the report public appeal?

Researching and Assembling the Material



Once you know what you need to be finding out, to support your main argument, you can start researching. You need to be looking for material that will back up what you want to say and support a strong argument. Don't be tempted to rush your research; you will later be left with insufficient information.

Keep detailed notes of all your research, using techniques such as mind-mapping can help with this process.

Sources of information

- Primary: interviews, questionnaires, telephone calls. Networking with colleagues, other companies and possibly friends.
- Secondary: Databases, libraries, online sources, customers or suppliers, professional or trade associations, conferences.

Techniques

- For facts: online databases, magazines and books, journals. Check books and journals for recommend further reading or sources. Skim-read and scan to get an overview and speed the process up.
- For attitudes and feelings: face-to-face or phone interviews; paper or phone surveys or questionnaires.
- For support data: carrying out experiments, observing actual events. Gives clear results but only if carried out expertly. Can you find the information recorded elsewhere?

Organising and Planning the Report



Keeping clear notes will help you start to plan the structure of the report. There are various options for doing this:

- Put each topic or piece of material on a separate note card.
- Set-up a spreadsheet with clear topic headings.
- Use a mind-map, look online for examples.
- Keep reviewing your information to look for items that can be grouped together.
- Once you start grouping you can label with headings and sub-headings.
- Try to think about a logical order for your sections, remember the techniques used for sequencing in Section One.
- Also keep a record of any visual sources that you come across, check that you have permission to use them.
- It may help to review your material at regular intervals so you keep a clear idea of how you are progressing.
- Your note taking will help you progress towards being able to write a first draft.

Writing the First Draft

Start by knowing the sections you need to tackle, introduction, body, conclusion, summary, supplements. Punctuation, spellings and style don't matter at this stage.

Introduction

- Start with your subject, make it sound catchy.
- State the purpose and a brief background.
- If not doing a separate summary, include a brief summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- Give a brief overview of your methods and sources.
- Cover the plan of the report.

Main Body

- Cover more detail of your methods and procedures.
- Detail all your findings and analyse them to make it clear how they support your arguments.
- Try to keep a logical order and avoid repetition of points.

Conclusion

- This should summarise all your findings and make clear links to what you have concluded.
- Don't make points that have not been proven by your research.
- Include recommendations based on your findings.
- Avoid introducing points that you have not already covered in the main body of the report.
- Make sure your final sentence or paragraph details the most important point you are trying to make.

Summary

- Write a summary that clearly links with your subject; introduction and conclusion.
- Be brief and to the point, don't try to cover too much.
- Ensure that this also links to the original plan for the report, check that you have kept focus.

Supplements

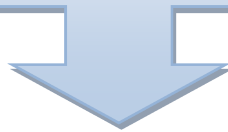
- Use your notes and recorded information to write the table of contents, appendices, references and bibliography, if needed.

Remember, this is just the first draft; it doesn't have to be perfect.

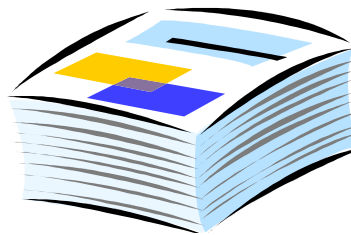
Editing the Report



Overall: Are your headings consistent?
Are the subject and conclusion clear?
Does anything look confusing?



Sections: Do your, title, introduction, and conclusion fit together?
Are your main points emphasised?
Can you pick out the subject, purpose and plan?



Text: Is it clear where new sections start?
Does the wording link sections?
Are any paragraphs or sentences too long, or short?
Have you used any over long phrases or fussy wording?



Visual aids: Is it clear what they are about?
Do they link clearly with the text?
Has each one got a title?
Have you referenced them?



Reading through the text out loud can give you a clearer overview of how the piece flows. Note any points of repetition or anything that may sound confusing to the listener. Does anything jump out that you have missed?

At this stage it may also be beneficial to ask an experienced colleague to read through and give you their opinions.

Producing the Report



Make sure you have left yourself enough time from the first draft stage to actually producing a hard copy of your report. Go through the report and make changes from your first draft. Once you have made changes you need to do a final read-through to check accuracy again. Once you are happy with the content you can concentrate on the finer details.

Appearance

- Don't cram too much onto a page, leave clear space between paragraphs and around diagrams.
- Make sure your headings and sub-headings are clear and of consistent style throughout.
- As a general rule, use single line-spacing for text and double between paragraphs.
- You may decide to use a desktop publishing package if available. These do take practice though so you'll need extra time if you haven't used one before.
- If you have a member of word processing staff to help you, liaise with them fully and clearly, don't expect them to guess.

Checking a draft

- There are set ways to note corrections to word processing staff.
- Do an online search for 'word processing correction signs'.
- You should also be able to find a reference version in libraries.
- Check with your word processing staff that they understand the method you have used.

Making copies

- Initially just print two hard copies, one for yourself and one for the commissioner of the report.
- If further copies are required then you should use a high quality photocopier or check for printing services that are available.
- The report may need binding or presenting in a folder and you should take time to consider the physical appearance of the hard copies.

Summary – Report Writing



Make the task of writing a report less daunting by breaking it down:

- Know your objective and purpose.
- Be clear about what is being asked of you.
- Know your audience.
- Research carefully and use as many sources as you can.
- Remember the sections you need to cover, at least an introduction, main body and conclusion.
- Make clear and easy to use notes.
- Write a first draft, review it yourself and get outside input if you can.
- Make sure all the sections link and flow, avoid repetition and adding new points to the conclusion.
- If you have someone to type the report for you liaise with them fully.
- Ensure you have left time to review style, clarity and how to produce hard copies.

- 143



Memos, Messages, Forms and Questionnaires

Memos



Memos, short for memorandum, are a regular source of internal communication in most organisations. Traditionally sent in paper form, they are now more often sent as emails. Memos can range from a short, bite-sized communication to a much longer document, the word coming from the Latin *memorare*, to remember.

Although used as a sort of internal letter there are points to remember:

- An official greeting or formal close is not required.
- The memo should be as short as possible.
- They usually only deal with one subject.
- Often sent via in-house templates.
- Usually, in paper form, headed with a recipient's name, senders name, date and subject.
- Email versions often have details of department, name, address etc. at the end.

The language of the memo will depend on the subject, recipient, position of the sender and whether it is asking, answering or informing. Be aware of who you are sending your memo to and ensure that the language you use is appropriate.

Emails

Emails, so widely used now by the business community, have a number of advantages:

- Low cost to send.
- Very quick, and easy to send to multiple recipients.
- Usually sent as plain text so no time is wasted on layout.
- Not affected by international time-zone restrictions.
- Quick and easy for all levels of staff to communicate with each other.
- Can be used with attachments if more complex documents need to be sent.

As with most forms of communication, there are also disadvantages:

- You can end up being sent a lot of unwanted emails.
- When rushed and not checked for spelling and grammar they can give a bad impression.
- The tone of an email can be misinterpreted as its not face-to-face communication.
- Its speed and ease can lead to people sending messages they haven't thought through properly.
- Can lead to a lack of personal communication within a business.

You need to remember that, although you may be sending a personal email, anyone can look over the receivers shoulder. Emails forwarded to the wrong people can have serious ramifications.

There are always considerations that need to be made when using emails:

- Personal statements or insults can be considered as liable, remember it's in writing.
- Take care over your recipients list; don't send your message to people who don't really need it.
- If emailing a number of people make sure you use the facility to hide everyone's email addresses from others.
- If sending a regular email to a lot of people then set up a mailing list so you don't have to re-type the addresses every time.
- Avoid using abbreviations or symbols in work emails.
- Auto-signatures can be set-up to end an email, but keep them short.
- Don't send really large attachments, the recipients email may not cope with it, anything over 10kb is probably too big.
- Check your message and recipients before pressing send; once it's gone, it's gone.

Fax

The fax is not so widely used as it once was but still has its advantages. Sending diagrams, maps or images can be quicker via a fax than having to scan documents so they can be emailed. It also has an advantage over using the post as it is much quicker.

When sending a fax you need to remember that the machine is usually used by a number of people, a header page will link your document together to avoid pages getting lost. You need to include your name and telephone number; your organisation name; the recipient's name and organisation; the date; a subject heading and the number of pages in your fax.

It is also important to bear in mind that this isn't a private form of communication; anyone at the other end could remove your fax and look through it before giving it to the right recipient.

Postcards and Reply Cards

Postcards and reply cards can be pre-printed and are cheap to post, making them an efficient way to contact large numbers of customers at once. As there are no envelopes or folding involved they are quicker than a letter. They can be used to send an advert, acknowledge an order or to offer a simple way for a customer to reply to an offer. You should bear in mind that many of those you contact in this way will consider the contact junk mail and it will go straight in the rubbish bin.

Text Messaging



Text messages are becoming more widely used as a business tool, to confirm appointments, update customers about orders and send details of new products or opportunities to mailing list clients. It is also possible for companies to set up multi text systems to contact all employees at once, or integrate with their email set-up to contact people out of the office. Text messages are short, to the point and non-intrusive if the recipient has their phone on silent.

If text messaging is to be used for customer contact it should be used with care. Only contact people who have signed up to your mailing list; don't send endless messages, people will get bored; and avoid text speak or jargon.

Forms and Questionnaires

Although many people may think that forms are over used they can have many benefits:

- You can get the same information from a large number of people.
- You only have to send out one document to get that information.
- If well designed they are simple to use.
- They make it easier to compare the information received.
- It is easier to locate specific pieces of information.

There are also some disadvantages:

- If the form is too long or complicated people will get frustrated.
- If badly designed it won't give you the information you need.
- If the language used is too complex it won't be understood.

Points to remember when you are designing a form are:

- Make the form look attractive.
- Keep it as short as you can and check that it is easy to understand and fill in.
- Leave enough space for full answers.
- Use simple language and direct questions.
- Make sure you have covered all the information you need.
- Test the form out on a sample group before a full mailing.

Questionnaires are most widely used for research. They can be complex and take time to fill-in, so are best not used in unsolicited first contact. If you do want to use a questionnaire it is best to get someone experienced to design one that is user friendly and will give you the required information as easily as possible. As with forms, it is best to test the results on a sample group first.

Summary – Report Writing



Again, it all comes down to preparation:

- Consider the best way to communicate for your subject.
- Know your audience, use appropriate language and format.
- Take your time with all forms of communication, however quick, to avoid mistakes.
- Consider carefully what form to use if your message or answer is confidential.
- Keep your message clear, concise and easy to understand.
- Make sure you are using the best tools for the job.

- 149



Visual Communication

When to use Charts and Graphs



Knowing when a visual aid will help is an important skill. If used too often, or in the wrong context, visual aids stop being an aid.

Statistics

Presenting facts, using statistics, can be a crucial way of enabling business decisions to be made. It is important to be able to present these statistics in a way that helps, not hinders, the decision making process. Statistics can be used in three main ways:

- **Historical:** showing evidence of past facts.
- **Comparative:** allowing different pieces of information to be compared.
- **Predictive:** using statistics to try and predict a future happening or trend.

If the statistical information being given out is too complicated, or not focused in the right direction, there is a real danger that it will cause confusion or even give the wrong information. When using statistics it is important to keep facts to a minimum and for the presenter to have pulled out the relevant pieces of information, rather than just showing all the statistics available.

Graphics

Graphic aids are the umbrella term used for all charts and other illustrations which we can use to help us present data. Graphics can help clarify and focus information in a more efficient way than words alone.

There are many different forms including charts, graphs, tables and diagrams. Knowing all about the different types can help you choose the best one for your needs. As with statistics, the key is to keep it simple; don't use a graphic aid when it's not needed, as it will interrupt the flow of your written or spoken work.

Visual presentation

The use of any visuals should be carefully considered. It is easy to overuse visual aids so bear in mind that your aid should:

- Grab attention and look attractive.
- Give as much information as possible, as quickly as possible.
- Help comprehension, not hinder.
- Clearly give the exact information you need it to.
- Strengthen your verbal information.
- Clarify comparisons.

You will always need to offer some verbal or written explanation of the visual aid, but it should be mainly able to be understood on its own.

Presentation of Statistical Data



Long sections of unbroken text, concerning statistical data, will confuse most people and stop them picking out the key facts. Textual presentation of statistics can work on some levels but must be done carefully. If writing a piece of text to include statistics you need to pick out the key points you want to present and write them in a clear, concise way. Ensure that you are not adding irrelevant facts or figures.

There are various types of visual aid that will work for statistics:

Tables

Tables cover the boundary between textual and visual presentation. By adding the numbers of a set of statistics to a table you break the information down into an accessible form, without actually using images

ITEM	NEEDED
Books	1
Magazines	3
Notebooks	1
Paper pads	1
Pens	3
Pencils	2
Highlighter	2 colors
Scissors	1 pair

Data presented in a simple table

Tables should be:

- Able to display a large amount of information clearly.
- Allow easy reference and comparison of figures.
- Have clearly labelled headings.
- Be carefully laid out and not cram the figures in too closely.

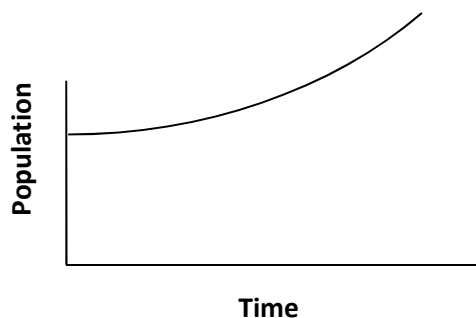
Graphs and charts can also be used but you first need to know the difference between continuous and discrete information.

Presenting Continuous Information



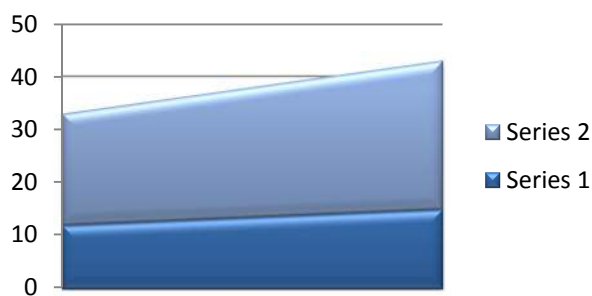
Continuous information covers facts and figures that will give a continuous line on a graph, for example; acceleration, speed, population growth, sales. These are plotted against a continuous point, such as time or money.

Graphs are a simple way to show continuous information and should be relatively easy to plot.

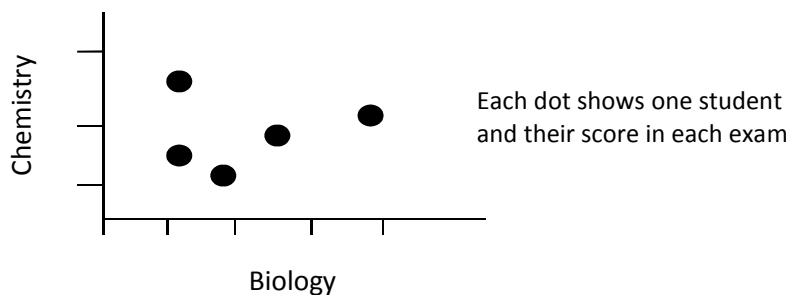


A **simple graph** shows points of data connected by a line to show an increase or decrease. The line can be plotted against time for a comparison. A steep curve will show more intense activity than a shallow line.

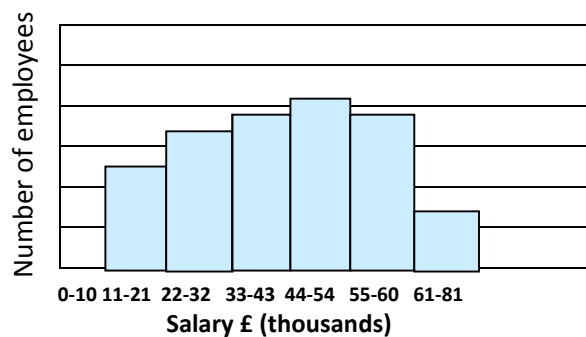
A **multiple graph** will use more than one line to show multiple data sources, for comparison. Dotted or broken lines can be used to clarify if the lines cross.



A **divided**, or compound, graph also shows multiple data but uses shaded areas to show comparison.



A **scatter graph**, or scattergram, uses single dots plotted against the points on the two axes. The dots are not joined but can be used to show trends. Closely spaced dots represent a high incidence.



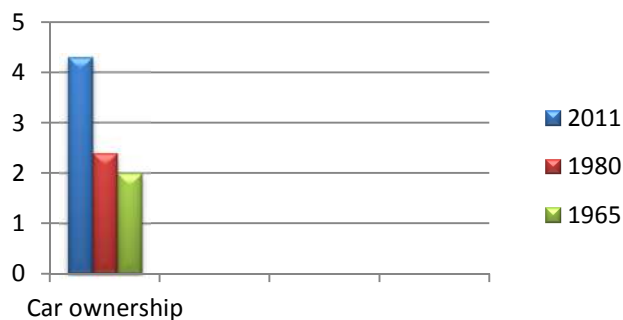
A **histogram** can be used to show comparisons between large numbers of items or people. The graph uses bars (labelled as intervals) as a measurement but these will vary in width as well as height depending on the numbers. The bars will be plotted against two different axes.

Presenting Discrete Information

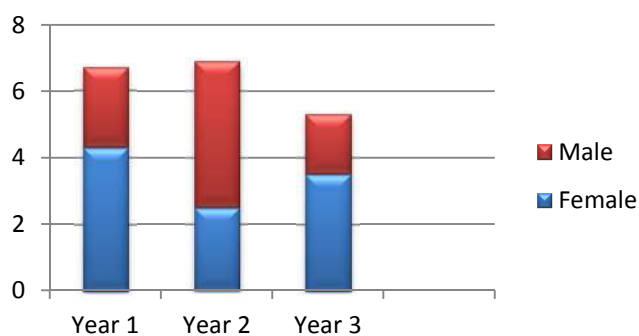


Discrete, or non-continuous, information describes facts that are not directly linked to a continuous item, such as time. Statistics such as numbers of children per family, or population in different countries in the same year, fall under the heading of discrete information.

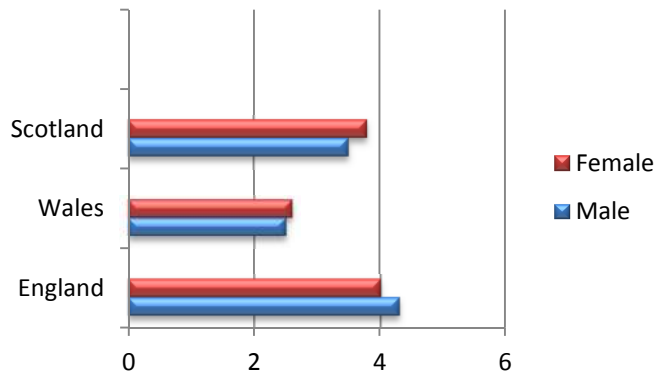
Discrete information is better presented in different forms than continuous information.



A **bar chart** can show information about any number of things and can compare them to time or place. They can quickly show a comparison of amount without the exact figures being needed. The figures plotted are shown as horizontal or vertical bars rather than lines. Vertical lines are usually used to show chronological or other quantitative data, horizontal lines for comparing qualitative or geographical data.



A **divided** or component bar chart divides the bars to show comparisons within sections. The separate parts are coloured or shaded and a key shows what they mean.

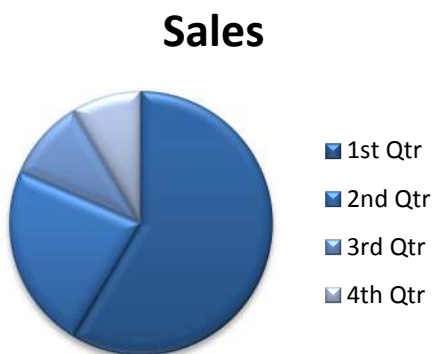


A **Multiple** bar chart will use many more bar sections to compare more data, for example to compare male/female split in population but also separating this up into countries.

Other forms are a **floating** bar chart and a **population pyramid**. They are much more complex to plot and less widely used, examples of these can be found online.

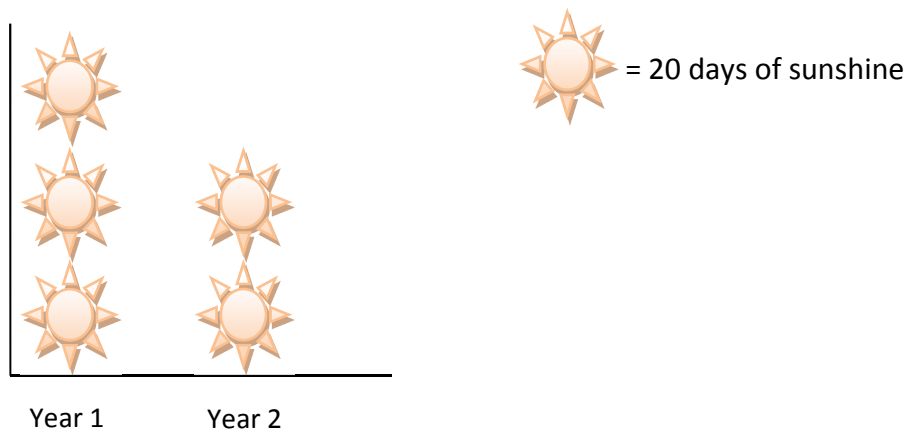
All bar charts need to:

- Include a zero line as a starting point.
- Have bars of uniform width.
- Not have gaps between bars that are wider than the bars themselves.
- Use different colours or shading to differentiate between bars.



A **pie chart** or circle chart is easy to interpret and to use. Each segment represents a percentage, always adding up to 100 per cent. Larger segments mean larger numbers.

Most simple graphs and charts can be created using your computers word processing package or art package. So long as you know the figures you want to show you can pick a chart style and the computer will do the rest for you.



A **pictorial chart** is more complex as you won't be able to use the p.c. to do the plotting. It uses the form of a bar chart, but with an image to represent the figures. The image used must be uniform and always represent the same amount.

It is also possible to create **statistical maps** where information is shown on a map template, with shaded areas to represent information. This can be used to show facts such as numbers in work, or students achieving higher exam grades. Again, this is more complex to produce and would probably require specialist help.

All charts and graphs are open to interpretation. The creator of the chart may leave out information so that what they want to say is represented and the reader must be aware of this. Leaving out information to save time or space is counterproductive, as the person viewing the chart will be mis-lead. Take care with your charts and graphs to make sure you are giving an honest and clear representation of the facts.

Presenting Non-statistical Information



There are areas other than statistics which can benefit from the use of visual aids; a picture can sometimes convey a message in a way that avoids problems with language or ability.

Public information

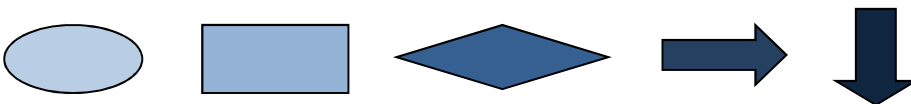


Signs and symbols are useful to us to represent public safety points or information. These sorts of symbols can be used in presentations and to represent ideas. Care must be taken not to use symbols that may be unclear to some, or to use them in conjunction with words as well.

Instructional information



Flow charts are an easy way to show the steps needed to complete a process or learn a piece of information. They take the reader through a process step-by-step, so that each section is learnt on its own in a manageable way. If well written they leave less room for mis-interpretation than a confusing list of instructions.

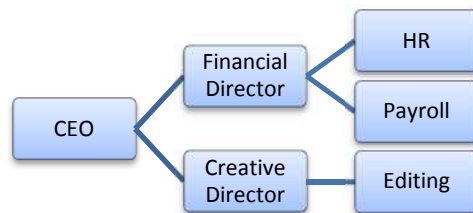


Algorithms use a series of pre-defined symbols to guide a person through a set of instructions. An oval represents the start or finish; a rectangle means process (take action); a diamond means decision and arrows show the flow through the process map.

Relationships

Technical drawings can be used to show the relationships between parts in machinery or geographical sites. Simple line drawings work but an exploded drawing, breaking down all the parts, is often clearer.

Family tree charts



Shown as horizontal or vertical charts, an **organisation chart** can show clearly the employment structure in an organisation. It is also possible to show similar information in the form of a **family tree**, with names or items linked but simple straight lines. Complex processes or information structures can be shown in an **information map**, again using simple lines and boxes but with additional lines to show links to other sections, allowing you to see connections that may have been missed previously.

Overlays

The final thing to consider is how to use your visual aid. One way to present with clarity is to use an overlay, if doing an oral presentation. Packages such as power point allow you to start your chart with a basic grid, showing axes and key. You can then overlay further detail, one section at a time, as you reach that point in your talk.

Summary – Visual Communication



With so much choice available it is important to make the right decisions about what form your visual aid should take:

- Know your subject.
- Know your audience.
- How are you presenting? Written, oral or both.
- Know what visual aids there are.
- Are you presenting figures or facts?
- What do you have time to prepare?
- What do you have the skill to prepare?
- Are there templates available?
- Will you need outside help?
- Is the final visual clear and easy to understand?
- Does it get your point across?

Section 18 - Test Questions



With appropriate examples (at least two for each element) indicate and explain by what visual communication means you would present the following:

- a) Continuous information over a period of time
- b) Discrete or non-continuous information

Discuss, with appropriate business examples, the uses of the following forms of visual information:

- a) Pie charts
- b) Pictorial charts
- d) Line graphs

Often organisations need to present non-statistical information effectively. Describe and discuss the following types of non-statistical visuals:

- a) Flow charts
- b) Organisation charts.



Getting to Grips with Grammar

What is Grammar?



Grammar is concerned with the generally accepted rules of how words fit together; how sentences are formed; covering both written language and spoken language.

Knowing these grammatical rules means that others understand us better and there is less room for misunderstandings. The rules of grammar will vary from place to place, called dialect, and over time, called correct usage.

Using correct grammar is also important to how others may view you, making mistakes can give the impression of lack of education or laziness. The subject of grammar is a large one, it may be the case that you will need to do further reading, beyond this book, if you are still unclear.

The Parts of Speech in Brief

There are eight separate words that are used to describe the function of words within the English language

Nouns

A noun is a naming word, used for people, places or things.

- **People:** Jane, Robert
- **Places:** London, Cardiff
- **Things:** Telephone, car, fridge
- **Abstract things:** Sad, happy, teamwork; things that are not covered by the senses.

Pronouns

A pronoun can be used to replace a noun if an item has already been mentioned; it stops the need of mentioning the noun repeatedly in a sentence:

'Carol gave the hat to Richard' can be replaced with 'she gave it to him', if Carol, Richard and the hat have already been mentioned.

Adjectives

Adjectives are used to qualify a noun or pronoun, to give us more information:

'This *gorgeous* car is the *fastest* one I have driven'.

Verbs

A verb is a *doing* word, describing what *happened*, what is *done* or what *is*, as part of a sentence:

- 'He *passed* her the basket' (what happened)
- 'The school *closed* for six weeks' (what is done)
- 'She *is* my friends sister' (what is)

Verbs can also be described as **transitive**, where there is a subject and an object:

'He ate the apple' (apple is the object of ate)

There are then **intransitive** verbs, where there is no object:

'Jane was cuddled'

Adverbs

Adverbs qualify, or modify, verbs, as adjectives do for nouns and pronouns. An adverb will offer description of how a verb is carried out:

'She ran away *quickly*'

'The children were playing *upstairs*'

Adverbs can also modify verbs, adjectives, clauses, sentences and other adverbs:

'He talked *quite* loudly' (the adverb *quite* modifies another adverb, *loudly*)

Prepositions

Prepositions are words that be combined with verbs to make a phrase, showing a connection between things:

'The cat jumped *onto* the table'

The most commonly used in English are 'of', 'in', 'to', 'with', 'for' and 'on'

Prepositions can be placed before a noun to offer explanation:

'She was hiding *underneath* the covers'

Interjections

Interjections, or exclamations, are used mostly in descriptive writing. Often used at the beginning of a sentence, as a stand-alone word:

'Hi', 'hooray!', 'indeed'.

Conjunction

A conjunction describes a word that is used to connect words, sentences or phrases together:

'I like to sing *and* dance'

'I like to sing *but* not dance'

'I like to sing, *yet* I don't dance'

You can check your understanding of these eight parts by reading an article or book chapter and seeing what you can identify. Dictionaries always list the type of word, in abbreviated form, if you need to check. There will be abbreviations which you may not understand, but the dictionary should have a full list of explanations at the front.

The Framework of English

The eight parts of speech, that we have just looked at, are then formed into sentences, clauses, phrases and paragraphs:

Sentences

A sentence is a group of words that are complete together, whether representing a statement, request, command, question or exclamation. At a more basic level, it will start with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

Clauses

A clause is a small grammatical grouping, either expressing a complete statement (independent) or as part of a longer sentence (dependant).

Independent clauses can stand-alone as a sentence: 'I am angry'.

Dependant clauses will be linked to the rest of the sentence, they offer further explanation: 'I located the article **that he suggested to me**'

Phrases

A phrase describes a short collection of words, without a verb, which can act like a noun, verb or adjective. The phrase can stand alone, but will form part of a sentence.

Paragraph

A paragraph will be made up of a number of sentences but will, overall, deal with one subject or idea. An idea may be discussed and developed over the sentences but a new idea should not then be started. A topic sentence, usually at the beginning, will give a clear indication of what the paragraph will cover.

The Architecture of the Sentence



The basic structure of a sentence needs to include a subject and a predicate. The **subject** will be the thing, or person, under discussion; the *predicate* is what is said about the subject

'The Doctor has examined all the patients'

'The dog has chewed the shoes'

The subject will, usually, be a noun or pronoun; the predicate has to be a verb as it is describing what has happen or will be. If a person or thing is affected by the verb it is called the object, so in the above sentence the 'shoes' are the object.

Complex Sentences

More complex sentences can then be formed by adding additional words or groups of words.

- A.** By adding a **conjunction** we can join several shorter sentences together, the short sections are then called main clauses:

*'The Doctor has examined all the patients **but** he hasn't found the cause'*

By adding the conjunction 'but' we have joined the two main clauses together to form a sentence. Where more than two clauses are joined the sentence will be called a compound sentence.

- B.** Some sentences will contain a primary clause and one or more '**dependant**' or '**subordinate**' clauses:

*'The doctor has examined all the patients **who have come into his surgery**'*

The second part of this sentence is the subordinate, as it would not stand alone.

- C.** We can also add in **phrases**, to offer further explanation or detail:

*'The Doctor has examined all the patients who have come into his surgery, **with great care**'*

Because 'with great care' does not have its own subject, or predicate, it is described as a phrase.

By understanding the way sentences and paragraphs are formed we can not only avoid making mistake, but can also use this skill to write in a more imaginative and creative way.

Summary - Grammar



Learning how grammar operates within language will improve your comprehension and your skill as both a written and verbal communicator:

- Take time to understand the eight parts of speech.
- Any time you don't understand, check.
- Learn about phrases, clauses, paragraphs and sentences.

Section 19 - Test Questions



Name the eight main parts of speech, with examples of each type of word.

State the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs.

Explain the component parts of a sentence, and how they can be joined together to form a complete sentence?



Appendices

A - Punctuation



Full Stop .

- At the end of a sentence.
- Don't use after a question or exclamation mark.
- At the end of a sentence that offers instruction, command, advice or request (an imperative sentence).
- After initials and sometimes after abbreviations.
- Between pounds and pence, when expressed as figures.

Comma ,

- Separate words, or groups of words longer than three.
- Separate a subordinate clause that follows a main clause.
- Separate a relative clause.
- Separate a phrase within the main sentence.
- Separate coordinate clauses that have been joined by the conjunctions but, and, for, neither or nor.
- Separate an introductory clause from the main sentence.
- Highlight a dependant word or phrase that breaks the flow of the sentence.
- Before a short quote.

Semi-colon ;

- Shows a longer pause than a comma.
- Use between two parts of a compound sentence which are not joined with a conjunction.
- Between clauses in a compound sentence if they are joined with conjunctive adverbs: also, for, hence, consequently, on the other hand, nevertheless, otherwise etc.
- Before the following: i.e, as, viz, e.g.
- To separate sections of a compound sentence which contain a comma.
- To highlight parts of a series.
- Separate phrases or clauses which have a common dependence.

Colon :

- To connect two groups of words, without a conjunction, where the second links to the first.
- Introduce a long quotation.
- At the start of a list of items.
- Separate independent clauses which contrast each other.

Question mark ?

- Should be followed by a capital letter, the same as a full stop.
- Use after a question.
- Not to be used after an indirect question, one that doesn't need an answer.
- After the separate parts of a speech containing multiple questions.

Exclamation mark !

- Use after a word, phrase or sentence where strong emotion is expressed.
- At the end of a sentence to show strong emphasis.

Quotation marks “

- Use at the start and finish of a direct quote.
- To enclose sections of an interrupted quote.
- Enclose the name or sections of quoted published works, books, magazines, reports etc.
- Around unusual words or to give emphasis to a particular word.

Apostrophe ‘

- To show possession by a noun: Lady's bag; Jim's coat.
- At the end of the noun if plural.
- To point to a left out letter: Can't, isn't.
- To show plurals in letters and numbers.
- Where part of a date is removed: '50s.

Dash -

- Not to be confused with a hyphen.
- Use to separate a break in a sentence, or change or direction.
- To show emphasis.
- To mark a statement of summary.

Round Brackets ()

- Also called parentheses.
- To show an explanation or supplementary material.
- To contain letters or numbers in a list.
- Enclose a figure in numbers, or an abbreviation, after the full word.

Square brackets []

- Use to enclose additional explanation or comment, by a different author to an original quote.

Hyphen -

- Use if a word is divided onto the next line.
- To join some compound words: Ex-Wife, pro-choice.
- To link two words which will act as an adjective before a noun: Long-term, cash-flow.
- To link numbers, fractions or quantities.
- Joining a single letter to another word: x-ray.

If in any doubt you can easily check these punctuation marks online, and most word processing packages will auto-check for you.

B – Capital Letters



Capital letters should be used:

1. For proper names of people, companies, products and places.
2. At the start of a sentence or quote.
3. For the days of the week and names of months, not for seasons.
4. For titles of films, books and magazines.
5. When writing the points of the compass, but not if giving directions.
6. When listing the full title of a course of study.
7. Full job titles or sections of government.

C - Numbers

As a general rule, numbers up to ten should be written as words and higher numbers as figures. This is not a hard and fast rule and is up to the individual.

Points to consider:

- At the start of a sentence.
- Round numbers: Ten, Sixty, Eighty.
- If one number follows another, spell the first and number the second.
- Sums of money should always be written as numbers.
- Ordinal numbers, in lists as 1st, 2nd. In text as First, Second.
- Quantities and measurements are, most often, written as numbers.

D – Business Clichés



Cliché	Better alternative
In the event	If/ when
Due to the fact	Because
Consequently	So
In connection with	About
In conclusion would state	Finally / to conclude
Communication	Letter, fax, email
Commence	Start
Beg	Avoid using this word
At your earliest convenience	As soon as possible
Attached hereto	Attached
In answer to same	In reply to your query
Are in agreement	Agree
Kindly advise us to your wishes	Please let us know what you require
Acknowledge receipt of	Have received
In accordance with	Under
Above-mentioned	This / these
I would advise	Avoid using this phrase
In excess of	More than
Furthermore	Also
Forward	Send on to
Going forward	In future
Herewith	Avoid
Please do not hesitate	Please
In the near future	Soon – an actual date is better
Only too pleased	Happy to
Peruse	Read
On receipt	When we / you get
With reference to	Concerning / about
In respect of	About
State	Say / mention
Terminate	Finish / complete
Utilise	Use
Viz	Namely
We note your comments regarding	You mention that
Regret	Sorry

E – Misused and Confused Words



Here is a list of words that, whilst similar in spelling or pronunciation, mean different things

• Accept • Except	To give an affirmative answer, to receive To exclude or leave out
• Advise • Advice	To recommend or suggest (verb) To offer recommendation or counsel (noun)
• Affect • Effect • Effect	To alter or influence (verb) The result or consequence (Noun) To bring about (verb)
• Irritate • Aggravate	Annoy Make worse (verb)
• Already • All ready	Previous Prepared
• Altogether • All together	All or complete As a group
• Between • Among	In the middle of two Where there are three or more
• Number • Amount	Units that can be counted Quantity of material
• Further • Farther	More, additional Geographical distance
• Eminent • Imminent	Prominent Near, impending
• Uninterested • Disinterested	Lacking interest Neutral
• Discreet • Discrete	Prudent Individual
• Depreciate • Deprecate	Loss of value Expressing disapproval
• Current • Currant	Present time Dried fruit
• Council • Counsel	An assembly Advice, legal or physiological
• Continual • Continuous	Constant, frequent repetition Without stopping
• Confident • Confidant	Positive Someone to confide in
• Complement • Compliment	To complete or make whole To offer praise or flattery

• Anyone • Any one	Any person A specific person or item
• Comprise • Consist	Make up a whole Made up of (verb)
• Forgo • Forego	Go without To go before
• Formerly • Formally	Previous Following convention
• Imply • Infer	To allude to, written or spoken To reach a conclusion from speech or writing
• Impractical • Impracticable	Not possible, for a practical reason Not worth trying to do
• Its • It's	Pronoun for possession Contracted version of it is
• Less • Fewer	Smaller amount of uncountable material Smaller total of countable items
• Licence • License	Permission or authorisation To authorise
• Maybe • May be	Perhaps What might happen
• Moral • Morale	To have principle State of mind
• Proceed • Precede	To go ahead To go before
• Practice • Practise	Action, sometimes repeated To perform
• Oral • Verbal	Word of mouth Words, written or oral
• Personal • Personnel	Private, for yourself Staff
• Your • You're	Possessive pronoun Contracted version of you are
• Whose • Who's	Possessive Contracted version of who is
• Weather • Whether	Climate or atmosphere To introduce alternatives
• There • Their • They're	A place Belonging to Contracted version of they are
• Stationary • Stationery	Not moving Items for writing or craft
• Principal • Principle	Head of a college or school, primary importance (adjective) A basic truth or law

F – Ten Basic Rules for Spelling



One	Words ending with a silent e, drop the e before a vowel, in a compound word: Drive – driving, ride – riding Don't drop the e if before a consonant: gentle – gently The e can be left in to distinguish different words: Dying- dyeing The e is also left following g or c: Manageable, Noticeable
Two	If a word ends in l, make it ll before adding a y: Final - finally, total - totally
Three	i goes before e, except after c: Achieve, piece but ceiling, receipt. This is a general rule, there are exceptions: Ancient, science, species (these are not all)
Four	If a word ends in a single consonant this needs to be doubled before ing, ed, or er are added: Swim – swimming, begin – beginning, plan – planned If the stress of the word is not on the final syllable then don't double: Alter – altering Exceptions are : worship – worshipping, Travel - travelling
Five	The c should be change to s where a noun is used as a verb: Practice – practise, advice – advise, Licence – license
Six	If adding <i>mis</i> or <i>dis</i>, to a word starting with s, the word retains the s: Satisfy – dissatisfy, spell – misspell. Exceptions: Disappear, mislead, Disappoint
Seven	If a word ends in y, preceded by a consonant, the y should be changed to an i if syllable is added: Happy – happily, funny - funnily
Eight	When forming a compound word using all, till, full or well, the second l is usually dropped: Well – welfare, full – fulfil
Nine	Words ending in <i>-our</i> usually lose the u if followed by <i>-ation, -rous</i> or <i>-ate</i>: Vigour – vigorous, humour – humorous, colour – coloration (humor and color are American spellings)
Ten	With words ending in <i>-cede, -ceed, -sede</i>: cede is the most often used except for: supersede Proceed, exceed and succeed.

G –Commonly Misspelled Words



Advertisement Agreeable Among Appearance Arrangement Absence Accessible Accommodate Acquainted	Believed Benefited Business Beautiful Beginning Behaviour	Conceal Conscientious Concise Correspondence Criticism Certain Choice Circumstance Colleagues Coming Competent	Disappear Disappointed Decision Definite Dependent (adj) Dependant (noun)
Eighth Embarrassed Emergency Environment Extremely Expenses Exercise Excitement Essential Especially	Faithfully Familiar February Friend Forty Fourth Forth Forgo Forego	Guard Guarantee Gauge Government Grateful Gracious	Height Honour Honest
Instalment Independent Immediate	Knowledge	Losing Lying Library	Miniature Maintenance Management Minute Miscellaneous
Noticeable Nuclear	Occasionally Omitted Opinion Occurrence	Parallel Parliament Personal Personnel Professional Pronunciation Psychological Proceed Privilege preceding	Quantitative Qualitative Quite Quiet
Really Receipt Received Recommend Restaurant Responsibility	Surprising Safety Secretary Sincerely Successfully Supersede	Tendency Transferred Twelfth	Unconscious Undoubtedly Usually Until Unnecessary

H – Tips on Modern Business Style



Always remember the six C's:

Clear, Concise, Courteous, Constructive, Correct, Complete.

Use active verbs, make things personal:

We feel that, not it is felt

We acknowledge the problem, not it is acknowledged.

Don't use more words that you need, you risk confusing:

We agree, not we are currently in agreement.

Finally, not we would like to add in conclusion.

Use shorter words where you can:

Start not commence

Transport not transportation.

Avoid Jargon

You can alienate and exclude others from your message.

Avoid Latin words and clichés

You can confuse, and even bore, your reader.

Try to use common place words over complex ones

You might think it makes you look smarter but you might find that others are just confused or put off.

Check that what you want to communicate makes sense

Always read through and ask for a second opinion.