

Dear Reader:

Thank you for your interest in *The Essential Handbook For Business Writing*.

This sample PDF offers a random collection of pages from each section of the handbook. Page numbers normally found in the text have been removed.

To get an understanding of the scope of the handbook, please read the introductory pages and the Table Of Contents.

The actual book is 194 pages in length. It is comprised of the following five stand-alone sections:

- 1) Composition Basics
- 2) Business Writing
- 3) Proposals and Reports
- 4) Usage
- 5) Visual Design

The lesson-on-every-page format is intended to make learning instant. For clarity and simplicity, each topic has a brief explanation followed by numerous examples—there are, for example, over 30 writing samples included that can serve as templates.

I am happy to announce that *The Essential Handbook For Business Writing* is, for the second consecutive year, on the reading list at Queen's University School of Business.

Sincerely,

Desmond Gilling



THE ESSENTIAL HANDBOOK  
For  
BUSINESS WRITING

REVISED EDITION

*communication excellence in English,  
the language of business worldwide*



Desmond A. Gilling

# Good writing is good business.

*write clearly*.....be understood

*write concisely*.....be direct

*write confidently* .....know your purpose

*write creatively* .....express your ideas

*write convincingly* .....be persuasive

*write strategically* .....generate business

*write professionally* .....make an impact

grammar basics ♦ principles of composition ♦ writing samples  
usage ♦ proposals & reports ♦ résumé & cover letter ♦ design basics

“This writing handbook includes everything a person in business needs to produce excellent writing. I particularly like its simple, concise presentation and the numerous writing examples included. I will be introducing this handbook to our Hong Kong office.”

B. Soong, Vice President, McGraw-Hill Financial

“From now on, before we put together a document, we will refer to this comprehensive handbook exclusively.”

M. Heydon, Manager & Sr. Account Executive, Manion Wilkins

“I intend to use this handbook often, particularly when putting together a sales letter or proposal. I don’t think there is a better writing handbook on the market anywhere. I will be recommending the training sessions they offer.”

C. Pollock, Financial Advisor, Sun Life.

“I certainly could have used this in business school. Great writing handbook. Everything you need to know is at your fingertips.”

J. Earle, C.A., Scotiabank

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THE ESSENTIAL HANDBOOK  
For  
BUSINESS WRITING

Revised Edition

Desmond A. Gilling

The Essential Handbook For Business Writing, Revised Edition.

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# INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of English as the official language of business worldwide, it is critical that business writers produce clear, concise communication. In business, writing tasks may range from a simple memorandum to detailed proposals and reports. However, regardless of the simplicity or the complexity of a piece of written communication, the principles of excellent writing must be observed. Written communication is like a corporate ambassador: companies will be judged by the professionalism evident in their business writing.

Because the five sections that comprise this handbook stand alone, it is not necessary to approach the text sequentially. However, I recommend an initial complete reading of the handbook to become familiar with the range of topics. Before beginning a writing assignment, it is beneficial to review the sections that deal with punctuation, sentence variety, phrases and clauses, and subordination. These sections are specifically designed to help the writer be creative, strategic, and effective. For documents that require visual enhancement, the Visual Design section offers basic elements of design, font selection, and page layout.

This handbook is intended for business writers worldwide who have at least a basic level of English language proficiency. For business writers with English as their secondary language, this handbook will immediately raise their writing skill level. Native English-speaking users will also benefit from the use of this handbook with its simple, straightforward presentation of business writing basics and with the numerous writing samples. *The Essential Handbook For Business Writing* is designed to be an easy-to-use, comprehensive reference book for business writers of all levels.

With the frequent use of this handbook, business writers will be able to write with confidence knowing that they are producing professionally written communication that will serve them well in the business world.

Desmond A. Gilling

## PART 1: Composition Basics

“Language is the dress of thought.”

*Samuel Johnson*

### COMPOSITION BASICS

In business, when you submit a piece of writing you hold yourself up to scrutiny. If your message is unclear, if your grammar is weak, if your vocabulary is imprecise, you could be judged harshly. However, if you write concisely, clearly, and with sufficient creativity to make an impact, you will be considered a highly valued asset to your company.

To write successfully you must have command of the following:

- basic grammar
- precise vocabulary
- syntax (the arrangement of words to form a sentence)
- sentence structure (the arrangement of sentence elements)
- paragraph construction

Once you’ve mastered the above areas, you can concentrate on creating compelling sentences and unified, coherent paragraphs.

Follow these basic rules in all correspondence:

- Use plain English and avoid jargon.
- Vary the length of your sentences.
- Divide your written message into unified paragraphs.
- Keep each paragraph to a single topic.
- Introduce each paragraph with a strong topic sentence.
- Use transitional words and phrases to unify sentences and paragraphs.
- Select the communication format that best suits your message.
- Use a professional tone.

The general objective of all business writing is to produce clear, concise, coherent communication.

## Usage

### TEN COMMON USAGE ERRORS

#### it's/its

*It's* is a contraction of *it is*; *its* is a possessive pronoun.

- a) *It's* necessary to keep strict accounts of expenditures. (*it is*)
- b) The corporation took care of *its* employees. (possessive)

#### less/fewer

Use *less* for quantity measurement that cannot be counted; use *fewer* for things that can be counted (units).

- a) She had *less* work to do after the holidays. (quantity)
- b) There were *fewer* jobs because of the recession. (units)
- c) There is *less* time to complete tasks. (quantity)
- d) There are *fewer* hours to complete tasks. (units)

#### their/there/they're

*Their* is a possessive pronoun showing ownership; *there* is an adverb stating a location; *they're* is the contraction of *they are*.

- a) The managers submitted their reports. (possessive)
- b) She placed her desk over *there* by the window. (location)
- c) *They're* interested in the attending the sales conference. (*they are*)

#### shall/will

Use *shall* with first person and *will* with second and third persons to indicate the future tense; reverse this to indicate determination or need. (This distinction is being ignored with growing frequency.)

- a) I *shall* attend the meeting. (future)
- b) They *will* attend the meeting. (future)
- c) They *shall* never agree with administration. (determination)
- d) We *will* overcome all obstacles and succeed. (determination)

#### Note: **irregardless / regardless**

*Irregardless* is the nonstandard of *regardless*. Avoid. Use *regardless* or *irrespective*.

# PART 111: Business Writing

## THE PRINCIPLES OF BUSINESS WRITING

Business writing takes many forms each suited to a specific purpose. All business writing must be clear and concise with simple, straightforward language.

In the business world, poorly written communication is unacceptable. Every letter, memorandum, report, or announcement must be composed for maximum effect and to suit both the purpose and the intended audience.

## STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS WRITING



**prepare**

define purpose, audience, scope, medium



**arrange**

create order, structure, layout, design



**draft**

write first copy from outline



**revise**

add or delete information



**proofread**

polish final copy

Prepare a document by addressing the following questions:

What is the purpose of the communication?

How much detail is needed?

For whom is the communication written?

What is the best format to clearly convey the message?

What action or outcome is expected?

## Structure

### STRUCTURE

To write effectively, it is critical to adhere to a structure. Structure will control the flow of ideas and ensure that what you write is logically presented and readily understood.

#### Structure = Logical Presentation of Ideas

##### The Paragraph

contains sentences dealing with one main idea

##### Topic Sentence

introduces the main idea of a paragraph

##### Development Sentences

support and develop the main idea of the paragraph

### THE PARAGRAPH

A paragraph is made up of closely related sentences that deal with a common topic or idea sometimes referred to as the **controlling idea**.

### THE TOPIC SENTENCE

The purpose of a topic sentence is to introduce the main idea of a paragraph. A topic sentence usually appears at the beginning of a paragraph, but it may appear near the middle or at the end. For example, if in the beginning of a paragraph a question is raised or a notable fact given, the topic sentence may be most effective in the second or third position in the paragraph.

### THE DEVELOPMENT SENTENCES

Development sentences elaborate on the controlling idea introduced in the topic sentence by including facts, examples, references, or any information that enhances the reader's understanding of the main idea. It is important that the development sentences stay on topic.

**NOTE:** Not all business communication requires paragraph format; however, formal structure to suit the message is always important to ensure that information is presented clearly and logically.

## THE OUTLINE PROCESS

Once a writer determines the purpose and the audience for a piece of written communication, it is essential to develop an outline. An outline helps a writer arrange ideas and structure the communication logically. All business documents should evolve from an outline that defines the scope of the topic.

**An outline is the end product of formulating ideas.**

### Notes

Create notes as you write and refer to these frequently to add or delete information. Create a hierarchy of topics and sub-topics ranging from important to less important.

### Research

List the supplementary information that matches the related topics or sections. Include quotations, statistics, illustrations, graphs, and other supportive material.

### Order

Use headings and subheadings to establish order and to provide a guide for the reader.

### Revise

Review the outline and, if necessary, rearrange the order of topics, sub-topics, and sections to allow for a logical flow. Delete redundant headings, subheadings, or sections.

**Begin the first draft when the outline is complete.**

## COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

This section deals with commonly confused terms including homonyms (word pairs that sound the same but have different meanings). Ten frequent usage errors are listed below. Additional frequently confused terms are listed on pages 63–77.

### TEN COMMON USAGE ERRORS

#### accept/except

*Accept* is a verb meaning to agree to receive something; *except* is either a preposition or a conjunction.

- a) He will gladly *accept* his annual bonus pay. (verb)
- b) All staff *except* management will be under review. (conjunction)

#### and/& (ampersand)

Avoid using the ampersand (&) in place of the word *and*. Reserve the ampersand for titles and corporate names: AT&T, Smith & Wesson, Standard & Poor's.

#### bad/badly

*Bad* is an adjective; *badly* is an adverb. *Bad* will often be used to describe a feeling; *badly* describes an action.

- a) He felt *bad* about missing the sales quotas. (feeling)
- b) She performed *badly* in the debate. (adverb)
- c) The stock market reacted to the *bad* news of inflation. (adjective)

#### can/may

*Can* refers to ability; *may* refers to permission.

- a) If I have the correct information, I *can* write a report.
- b) His manager told him that he *may* take extended vacation time.

#### good/well

*Good* is an adjective; *well* is an adverb that can also be used to mean health.

- a) He gave a *good* presentation. (adjective)
- b) Because she was now feeling *well*, she returned to work. (adverb)
- c) Sales were going *well* throughout the second quarter. (adverb)

#### I/me

*I* is subjective; *me* is objective.

- a) The assignment was given to my manager and *me*. (objective)
- b) My manager and *I* accepted the assignment. (subjective)

## THE TOPIC SENTENCE

A topic sentence introduces the **controlling idea** of a paragraph and may comment briefly on that idea. A paragraph should focus on one topic only, and should develop that topic through additional sentences within the paragraph. A topic sentence does two things:

- 1) **introduces** the main (controlling) idea of a paragraph
- 2) **restricts** the paragraph to a single topic

A topic sentence usually appears at the **beginning** of a paragraph, but it can also be found in the **middle** or the **end**. A topic sentence at the **beginning** of a paragraph would be supported by sentences that follow. If a quotation from an authority or an important fact introduces the main idea, the topic sentence may appear in the **middle** of the paragraph and act as a transition between sentences in the beginning and those at the end. When the topic sentence appears at the **end** of a paragraph, it acts as a conclusion or as support for ideas already presented.

A topic sentence may take the form of a question: a method that immediately engages the reader. The subsequent sentences would respond to the topic sentence with explanations, details, facts, and evidence. In business writing, this method should be used sparingly and only when it is the most advantageous way to introduce a topic.

### **The Topic Sentence = main idea + elaboration**

(See topic sentences, pages 90–92.)

- 1) Our company's increased production this year is due to the efforts of employees working the weekend shift.

**topic sentence = increased production + weekend shift**

- 2) To facilitate our global initiatives, three new locations—Singapore, Hong Kong, and Seoul—have been identified for business expansion.

**topic sentence = three locations + global initiatives**

**NOTE:** Introduce only the main idea in the topic sentence; do not include details that will be part of the body of the paragraph.



## Presentation

### ORGANIZING IDEAS

A paragraph or a section of a document is **coherent** when its elements blend making it easy for the reader to follow the main idea. Coherency also means consistency in tone and subject.

**NOTE:** Unify a paragraph by making sure each sentence in the paragraph relates to the main idea. A rephrased (not a repeated) topic sentence may be included at the end of a paragraph for emphasis or to reinforce the main idea.

### METHODS OF PRESENTING IDEAS

**Chronological Order:** In a chronological presentation information is presented in sequence. Though a technique typically used in narrative writing, chronological order is used in business writing to clarify a specific order of events or to explain a process: for instance, the sequence of events leading up to a business deal.

**Logical Order:** This technique is particularly suited to business communication as it arranges information to suit logical associations. It also allows the freedom to present illustrations, explanations, cause-and-effect relationships, and problem-solving action. Two arrangements of presenting ideas lie within this category: *general to specific* and *specific to general*.

**General to Specific:** With this method, a general idea is presented first followed by specific details and supportive information.

#### **Example**

**To date, expansion into Southeast Asia has been ignored.**

(This topic sentence is **general** and would be followed by specific details.)

**Specific to General:** With this method, a specific idea is presented first followed by more general information about the idea.

**A consulting firm will be hired to assess the viability of business expansion into the Southeast Asian market with particular emphasis on the ratio of cost to profit.**

(This topic sentence is **specific** and would be followed by general details.)

## SAMPLE PARAGRAPHS

The paragraphs below illustrate examples of **logical** and **chronological** formats. Each begins with a clear topic sentence (controlling idea). The body of each paragraph contains sentences that give important details elaborating on the main idea. (Topic sentences are in bold.)

### Logical Order

<p><b>Three new locations for business expansion have been identified that will facilitate our global initiatives.</b> These locations—Singapore, Hong Kong, and Seoul—have a collective population of over 22 million and represent a significant opportunity for inroads to business in Southeast Asia. The plan is to set up operations and distribution outlets in each of these cities. These three new locations are ideal starting points for business expansion as each has a large population and a strategic geographic proximity to other Southeast Asian countries.</p>	topic sentence
	ideas arranged in logical order
	topic sentence restated

### Chronological Order

<p><b>The company's increased production this year is due to the efforts of employees working the weekend shift.</b> At the beginning of the year the company was seeking ways to increase productivity without incurring unmanageable expense. At a general meeting for all employees, the addition of a weekend shift was discussed and later voted on. After an overwhelming vote of acceptance, it was decided that a weekend shift would be made available to anyone wishing to earn overtime pay. This shift was then assigned, on a rotating basis, to those employees who applied. By year's end, we found that productivity had increased substantially as a direct result of the work of the employees on the weekend shift.</p>	topic sentence
	ideas arranged in chronological order
	topic sentence restated

## Persuasive Writing

“To be persuasive we must be believable;  
to be believable we must be creditable;  
to be creditable we must be truthful.”

*Edward R. Murrow*

### THE ART OF PERSUASIVE WRITING

In business, persuasive writing is integral to sales letters and proposals, as well as any other correspondence that attempts to convince a reader. Persuasive writing is a specific skill distinguished by a writer's ability to establish a clear premise and to present a series of proofs to support that premise.

A topic sentence containing the main premise usually appears at the beginning of a persuasive paragraph. The writer will then, in logical order, follow with sentences that both prove and support this main premise.

#### **Examples:**

##### **Topic Sentence: general premise**

*Lack of proficiency in producing written communication in English for business is a widespread problem in today's corporate world.*

##### **Topic Sentence: specific premise**

*Many corporations understand the need for excellence in business writing and have taken action to increase the proficiency of their staff in this area.*

##### **Topic Sentence: general premise**

*Today, English is the language of business worldwide.*

##### **Topic Sentence: specific premise**

*With English as the language of business worldwide, it is critical that companies ensure that their employees are proficient in business writing in English.*

Although the above topic sentences are related in premise, they differ in content. Each **general** premise would be followed by sentences that, through specific references, support the topic. Each **specific** premise, more confined to a narrowed idea, would follow with sentences broadening the scope of the topic.

## Persuasive Writing

### SAMPLE PERSUASIVE LETTER (with components of a persuasive message)

subject line introduces the topic	Dear Mr. Singh: Subject: English, The Global Language of Business
quotation, statistics, facts set up premise	Levitt and Dubner, co-authors of <i>Freakanomics</i> , stated: “There are now more nonnative English speakers than native English speakers.” In China, for example, there are currently over 400 million people learning English. The top-ten English-speaking countries in the world have a total of 742 million people who have English as their secondary language. Of the seven billion people in the world, over half will soon have the need to become proficient in English. To address this growing trend and stay competitive, foreign companies and multinational corporations must make training in English business writing a priority.
topic sentence and premise	
points of argument	Every piece of written communication that leaves a company acts as a corporate ambassador. Improper communication can cause confusion and may result in misleading information or subsequent legal consequences. Excellent communication, however, can result in increased business, improved client relations, and a highly respected corporate image. It is imperative for corporate employees to write accurately and professionally. It is just good business.
personal touch: writer as authoritative voice	Recently I toured Southeast Asia with stops in Bangkok, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City, and Hanoi. A significant educational movement was occurring in these cities with the learning of English at the core. Businesses were encouraging their employees take English proficiency tests and partake in English writing classes.
evidence to support premise	The need for training in English business writing is not restricted to foreign countries. Corporations in English-speaking countries are discovering a surprisingly low level of writing proficiency among employees, including university graduates. This may be because of an educational shift in the 1970s where the basics of grammar and composition were, in many cases, removed from school curricula.
reinforces premise	Regardless of language orientation, culture, or geography, English is now firmly established as the language of global business. Progressively minded corporations are initiating strategies to increase the English business writing skills of their employees. Good writing is good business.
	Regards, Karen Carothers

“Sales letters are the life blood of most companies.”  
*J. Venolia*

## THE SALES LETTER

Professional sales letters are so important that many companies hire writers or agencies to compose them. However, it is useful for staff members to have the skills and confidence to write their own persuasive sales letters.

- ◆ Know the needs and motivation of the potential client.
- ◆ Know your product and its key selling features.
- ◆ Anticipate objections and focus on value and benefits.
- ◆ Know the competition.

### THE SALES FORMULA

#### Attention

Open with a statement of fact, a statistic, or a newsworthy announcement about your product or service. Indicate your in-depth knowledge of the client's business and ask questions to indicate that you have the client's interest in mind.

#### Interest

Deliver a strong sales message: outline the benefits of the product or service; offer testimonials from satisfied clients; offer sales samples or free products; suggest use of the product or service for a trial period.

#### Desire

Motivate the client by showing that the product or service you are offering creates profit, efficiency, and savings: benefits with strong appeal.

#### Action

Encourage the client to take the next step: order the product, accept a sample, agree to a meeting, partake in a demonstration. Be proactive. If price is a selling point, include it; if price is a deterrent, accentuate value and benefit.

**SAMPLE SALES LETTER A (BUSINESS TO BUSINESS)**

<b>Company Letterhead</b>
<b>Date</b>
<b>Inside Address</b>
Dear Ms. Cordoba:
<b>Business Writing Professional Development</b>
With English as the de facto language of business worldwide, proficiency in business writing in English has become essential for conducting global business. For this reason, EBE (Essential Business English) has developed a comprehensive writing workshop designed to meet the communication needs of corporations such as yours.
The EBE writing workshop may be of particular interest to you as the Professional Development Coordinator. We offer an affordable, effective, and stimulating professional development business writing in-service. Our mandate is to provide thorough, well-structured instruction for managers and general staff that will immediately improve writing skills.
Our highly qualified instructors have exemplary academic and professional qualifications and extensive experience in delivering our proven training method. Our workshops are designed to make participants confident, skilled writers of business correspondence enabling them to communicate professionally in a global environment.
Please consider participating in our program and giving your staff the highest level of training in business writing. Each of your staff members attending our workshop will receive a copy of <i>The Essential Handbook For Business Writing</i> —an invaluable business writing reference book. I have enclosed a complimentary copy for your perusal. Further details can be found at <a href="http://www.EBEglobal.com">www.EBEglobal.com</a> .
Please contact me at your convenience to discuss how we can be part of your professional development initiatives.
Sincerely, Mark O'Keefe Director of Marketing, EBE Global

subject line states service offered

global business is connected to business writing

sales pitch: benefits of the service offered

highlights the qualifications of instructors

call to action; value-added offer

request for future contact

**SAMPLE SALES LETTER C: (BUSINESS TO BUSINESS)**

Company Letterhead

Date: January 7, 2014

To: Raymond Liu, Assets Manager

From: Brent Adams, Account Manager

Subject: Greenlink Information Systems (GIS)

Dear Mr. Liu:

As an Assets Manager you understand the need for timely and accurate financial information. Our company is in the business of providing up-to-the-minute financial data to support the research and analysis required for sound investing.

At GIS we have sophisticated software tools that instantly connect our clients to our information base. Our unequaled resources come from the 5,000 employees in 15 countries who work round the clock daily to update critical financial data. With our user-friendly software platform, streaming pertinent information is a point-click away. In addition, our information technologists are always available to ensure that the informational needs of our clients are met immediately.

Our existing clients are from a variety of financial sectors: banks, investment houses, pension fund management companies, private equity firms, and others. These clients will attest to the sophistication and reliability of our information technology and to the extensive support we provide.

If you would like to talk about how GIS would enhance your research and data procurement capabilities, I would be happy to meet with you at your convenience. In the meantime, please visit our website ([www.gis.rtl](http://www.gis.rtl)) to view our client list and testimonials.

Regards,  
Brent Adams  
Account Manager, GIS

memo format

states purpose of the letter

states precise description of service being offered

persuasive tone; details of GIS Systems

refers to existing client base as a testimony

call to action; website given for further details

## Complaint Response

### RESPONSE TO A COMPLAINT

Respond swiftly to a letter of complaint. In the interest of retaining the customer or client, it is imperative to handle the complaint efficiently and professionally. Think of the response to a complaint as a public relations opportunity.

#### HINTS:

- ◆ Respond promptly and offer an apology.
- ◆ Thank the client upfront for his or her patience; reassert that the problem is rare and that it will be addressed immediately.
- ◆ Reinforce that your company values the client and will do whatever is necessary to resolve the complaint.
- ◆ Refer to the complaint including specifics such as time, date, reference numbers, and other important details.
- ◆ If the client is correct in the complaint, acknowledge this; if you believe the client to be in error, do not state this directly.
- ◆ If the client is incorrect in the claim, offer clarification; reassure the client that issuing a complaint was the right thing to do.
- ◆ Refer to company policy to set up guidelines.
- ◆ Outline the options for rectifying the problem.
- ◆ If possible, give a date by which the issue may be resolved.

#### BUT:

- ◆ Avoid reviewing all the details of the complaint and focus on the solution.
- ◆ Don't appear reluctant to solve the issue: be an enthusiastic problem solver.
- ◆ Don't make any references to legal liability in the initial response.

Note: the letter of refusal on page 110 provides an additional example of a response to a complaint (or request).



## Text Messaging

### TEXT MESSAGING FOR BUSINESS

Although text messaging has become the preferred format for short, direct communication in the wider business community, it is not a replacement for e-mail messaging; instead, it acts as an instant messaging convenience or as a complement to a more detailed e-mail message.

However, no formal rules for business text messaging exist. Therefore, the distinction between personal text messaging and business text messaging is unclear. Below are guidelines to follow to ensure that business text messages adhere to the commonly accepted rules of business communication.

- Avoid the use of emoticons and abbreviations.
- Compose business text messages with formal grammar and sentence structure.
- Keep the text message clear and concise.
- Address the text message recipient by his or her last name. If there is a close, less-formal relationship with the business associate, addressing by first name is acceptable.
- Use text messaging for specific short communication only.
- Choose the appropriate time to send a text message. Text messages should not be interruptive or be sent during nonbusiness hours. (Excessive, persistent text messaging is annoying and intrusive.)
- Do not use text messages for complex communications. In these cases, text messages may be used to alert the recipient that a detailed message will follow by e-mail.

Note: In sensitive situations, text messaging is a poor substitute for a phone conversation where the speaker's tone may be important to the spirit of the message.

#### Appropriate uses of a business text message:

- ◆ a request for a meeting
- ◆ a confirmation of a meeting time or of the receipt of a message
- ◆ a request for information needed immediately
- ◆ an alert to a detailed message or important document being forwarded
- ◆ a request for a convenient time for a phone conversation
- ◆ an alert to a sudden situation requiring immediate attention
- ◆ a request for a brief business conversation

## The Memorandum

“Talk of nothing but business and dispatch that business quickly.”

*A. Manutius*

### THE MEMORANDUM

The **memo** was originally conceived to provide short, precise, direct communication to employees within a company without using the conventional formality common to a standard business letter. A memorandum will state the writer, the person or group being addressed, and the date and subject of the message.

The term “memo” is short for memorandum. The plurals are memoranda and memos, and the now popular memorandums.

#### HINTS:

- ◆ State the purpose of your memo in the subject line.
- ◆ Make the subject line clear and precise.
- ◆ A formal salutation and complimentary close are not required.
- ◆ Be concise and use short, direct sentences.
- ◆ Avoid jargon unless needed for an industry-specific message.
- ◆ Try to keep the length to one page, two if necessary.
- ◆ Include lists, graphs, and charts as supportive material.
- ◆ Address any anticipated objections at the close of a memo.
- ◆ If required, end the memo with a call to action.

#### NOTE:

- 1) In some cases, an initial beside the name of the person who wrote the memo is expected as verification of its author. Do not use signature-style font for initials. Add the actual initials, photocopy or scan the memo, and then distribute it.
- 2) List recipients of a memo according to a hierarchy of rank if this is expected. Otherwise, list recipients alphabetically.
- 3) Send a letter instead of a memo for formal external correspondence.

# The Memorandum

## SAMPLE INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

### — INTERNAL MEMORANDUM —

**Date:** January 15, 2014

**To:** All Staff

**From:** Paula Richards, Office Manager

**Subject:** Office Renovation and Relocation

#### **Renovations**

Because our existing workspace is restricted, we have decided to make extensive office renovations. Presently, we have cramped work stations, unsuitable meeting space, and inconveniently located equipment. These inadequate working conditions will be further exacerbated by the increase in staff expected over the next three years.

#### **Relocation**

Our office renovations are set to begin February 23, 2014. Before that date, all staff members will be relocated to an alternate facility. We are currently negotiating temporary space on other floors in this building and we are also attempting to secure space in the adjacent building.

On February 20, please take care of the following:

1. Remove all personal belongings.
2. Store all files in file boxes available from the mailroom.
3. Save all documents on the company server.
4. Empty desks and store computers, printers, and software.

We are aware that this move will be inconvenient and time consuming, but the benefits are substantial. Once the renovations are complete, each of you will have an efficient, comfortable work station with easy access to all equipment and services.

The relocation will take place on February 21, 2014. Staff will not be expected to report to work on moving day.

Thank you for your cooperation.

memo  
format

explains  
reasons for  
renovations

gives  
specifics

list states  
staff duties

offsets  
objections

specific  
date with  
incentive  
for staff

## The Press Release

### THE PRESS RELEASE

Most companies may, on occasion, have to produce a press release to inform the public or the business community of a special announcement or important corporate event. A company may have their own press release template and assign someone in-house to write the release or they may use the services of an outside agency.

A press release has to be newsworthy to spark the interest of the media. To accomplish this, the writer must think like a journalist because writing a press release is essentially a journalistic enterprise. Journalists are often assigned to special departments (travel, technology, etc.) and welcome press releases. However, if a press release is poorly written or uninspiring, the media may not be interested.

Unlike most written business communication that is often solely informational, a press release requires an element of creativity to peak the interest of a broad audience. If a press release is not intended for general release to all media, the appropriate media group should be chosen to suit the nature of the announcement.

Some press releases cultivate widespread interest because of their subject matter. For example, a breakthrough cancer-fighting drug, the merger of major corporations, or an innovative advancement in technology may be of great interest to both the business community and the general public. Some announcements are of interest only to a specific industry or sector; however, with a little creativity, these too can be made informative and interesting to a broader audience.

It is critical that the facts in the press release be accurate and that a “release of information” be obtained. Submitting inaccurate or false information could seriously undermine the credibility of the company.

**Note:** A press release may not always be of interest to a journalist or a media outlet. Journalists like press releases that offer a compelling story that sparks the interest of the business community or the general public. If the announcement is only of medium interest, then it is the writer’s job to compose a well-written, properly formatted press release with an angle that creates excitement.

## PART 1V: Proposal & Report

### PROPOSAL & REPORT WRITING

This Proposal & Report Writing section includes:

- 1) steps for writing a proposal and a report
- 2) types of proposals and reports
- 3) a comparison of a proposal to a report
- 4) an outline of the components of a proposal and a report
- 5) a sample of a proposal and two samples of short reports

**NOTE:** Due to space restrictions, full-length proposals and reports are not offered; however, the basic structure of a proposal and a report is illustrated. Certain parts of a proposal and a report are common to both; for convenience, these have been repeated in the two respective sections.

A formal proposal may be **external** or **internal**. An internal proposal is often less formal and, in some cases, written as a memorandum. The basic purpose of a proposal is to persuade. The amount of detail in the proposal will vary according to its scope.

The length of a formal report depends on the scope of the subject. A corporate annual report, for example, may be over 100 pages in length and may be professionally designed and bound. On the other hand, an internal report may be simply a one-page memo written by an employee and distributed throughout a company by e-mail.

If you intend to compose a detailed external formal proposal or report, it is advisable that you refer to a resource that deals specifically with formal proposals and reports.

**This section includes examples (in brief) of the following:**

- 1) a formal proposal
- 2) a progress report (internal)
- 3) a recommendation report (internal)

**SAMPLE PROPOSAL: Letter of Transmittal**

<b>Company Letterhead</b>
<b>Date</b>
<b>Inside Address</b>
Dear Ms. Patek: Please accept this business proposal in response to the RFP submitted by you on behalf of Greenlink Publishing for the marketing expansion of <i>The Essential Handbook For Business Writing</i> . This proposal addresses key issues regarding business expansion to potentially lucrative markets throughout Southeast Asia. This proposal addresses three issues: 1) expansion into Southeast Asian markets 2) marketing strategies to suit expansion 3) development of ancillary products and services To date, we have been pleased with the marketing and distribution of <i>The Essential Handbook For Business Writing</i> . The conventional methods used so far have been successful in bringing the book to the North American market. This proposal has been drafted to meet the potentially lucrative opportunities for market expansion into Southeast Asia and for the development of ancillary products and services. On behalf of EBE, we appreciate your request for a proposal and look forward to meeting with you to discuss the potential of these initiatives. Sincerely, <i>Yolanda Schultz</i> Yolanda Schultz Director of Marketing Essential Business English

introduces proposal

a list of specific issues in the proposal

specifics of the proposal

a thank-you and suggestion of a future meeting

## SAMPLE PROPOSAL: Executive Summary

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This proposal examines the feasibility of expanding the distribution of *The Essential Handbook For Business Writing* to markets in Southeast Asia and of developing complementary products for this expansion. It also outlines various target markets, marketing strategies, and the financial benefits of such expansion.

states  
purpose

### RESEARCH TO DATE

In December 2013, an initial study of the Southeast Asian region was conducted to ascertain the following:

subheading

- 1) Countries and cities as initial target markets
- 2) The nonnative English-speaking population of Southeast Asian countries
- 3) The English-language proficiency in these regions
- 4) The need for training in English business writing in multinational corporations in major cities of this region
- 5) The number of colleges and universities in Southeast Asia
- 6) The cost of expansion throughout Southeast Asia

key points  
from body  
section

### POPULATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

In this region, seven countries including nine major cities are target markets with a total population of 512 million. The population of the major cities in this area is approximately 54 million. Hundreds of multinational corporations are active in this region representing a direct market for EBE products and services. In addition, there are more than 1,000 post-secondary educational institutions where *The Essential Handbook For Business Writing* would be marketed as a textbook.

### BUSINESS REVENUE POTENTIAL

Considering the size of the market and the need for EBE products and services in both the corporate and education sectors, it is estimated that revenues from this region could reach up to five million dollars (US) within a three-year period.

persuasive  
message

To achieve these revenues, it is necessary to obtain investment capital and to establish a sufficiently staffed base of operations in Southeast Asia. The timing for such expansion is in keeping with the growing worldwide demand for English writing instruction.

creates  
urgency

## BUSINESS REPORTS

### STEPS

**Examine previous reports.** If asked to write a formal report, the first step is to examine the content and format of your company's previously written reports. Since these reports have been accepted by management, they will provide a proper blueprint or template.

**Be aware that reports range in style.** Reports may be in memo format or produced in hard copy bound with a formal cover. Annual reports, for example, are often professionally designed, bound, and printed. Besides giving important information, formal reports present a corporate image and should be attractive and professional looking.

**Understand that reports will vary.** A report may be as short as a single page or as long as 100 or more pages. The length is determined by the scope of the subject and the detail of the information included.

**NOTE:** Writing a formal report can be a daunting task. However, as with all written communication, the formal report can be an opportunity for writers to display their excellent writing skills.

Reports are written for a variety of reasons:

- ◆ to indicate areas of concern within a company
- ◆ to prove compliance with government regulations
- ◆ to document progress on projects or initiatives
- ◆ to gain acceptance for proposals, plans, or new projects
- ◆ to outline the implementation of policy or procedure
- ◆ to monitor and manage company activity
- ◆ to guide a decision-making process
- ◆ to explain the details of an accident or an incident

The motivation for writing a report may be as follows:  
to research, to give information, to evaluate, to solve a problem.

Regardless of the type or the purpose of the report, these three basic steps of writing should be followed:

**Prewriting    Writing    Revising**



# PART V: Visual Design

## VISUAL DESIGN BASICS

All documents require an element of design, which can be as simple as selecting an appealing and functional font or as detailed as creating balance and distribution on a page. Elements of design may also include creating sections with titles and subtitles and inserting graphic elements (graphs, charts, illustrations, etc.).

### CREATING A DOCUMENT



write copy

**composition**

create headings  
and subheadings



create text  
layout (grids)

**arrangement**

use justified or  
left-alignment for  
body text



enhance document  
with images

**images and graphics**

integrate text  
and art in harmony



select serif and  
sans serif fonts

**design**

create contrasts:  
art, space, text



proofread copy

**revision**

check appearance:  
balance of graphics  
and text

## DOCUMENT DESIGN

The first step in document design is to match the size of a page with the amount of text to be included. Once this match is made, space for images, charts, text boxes, and headings can be allotted as needed.

When it is known how much of each element (text, graphics, etc.) is to be included on a page, the actual layout process can begin.

## WORKING WITH FONTS

There are two main font categories: **serif** and **sans serif**. Serif fonts have short extensions on the ends of letters; sans serif fonts have straight endings. Serif fonts are preferred for reading long passages as the serifs create a pleasant flow from letter to letter. Sans serif fonts are ideal for short passages, titles, headings, captions, and callouts. Besides these basic fonts, there are two font categories used less frequently: **script** and **novelty**.

If a document is laden with inappropriate or inconsistent fonts, it will be difficult to read and will annoy the reader. The fonts you choose for your document should adhere to the following rules:

- 1) Fonts should not be distracting.
- 2) Fonts should be simple and easy to read.
- 3) Fonts should be consistent throughout the document.
- 4) Fonts should suit the message.

serif	sans serif	<i>script</i>	<i>novelty</i>
font	font	<i>font</i>	<i>font</i>

## SIMPLE FONT USAGE RULES

- ◆ Use **serif** font for main body text.
- ◆ Use **sans serif** font for headings or special messages.
- ◆ Use **script** font for personal messages: invitations, etc.
- ◆ Use **novelty** font for short, casual messages and advertising copy.

### TEXT ALIGNMENT

Below are four text alignments to consider when presenting written material. (See additional sample on next page.)

#### Middle-aligned Text

Text must  
be strategically placed to avoid  
dangling a  
word on a separate  
line.  
(as in this case)

This alignment often appears in invitations, notices, and title pages. It should be balanced with a mix of short and long lines to accent key terms such as titles, names, dates, or instructions.

#### Justified Text

Justified text creates a clean, orderly look. It is an efficient way to present information and is often used in newspapers, reports, and books.

Justified text is sometimes unbalanced because of uneven gaps. To avoid gaps, match up the line length with the type size. Look out for lines that are too short and words that are too long.

#### Left-aligned Text

Flush-left text (as shown here) adheres to the natural flow of reading; left to right on a page. The left edge is straight; the right edge is uneven.

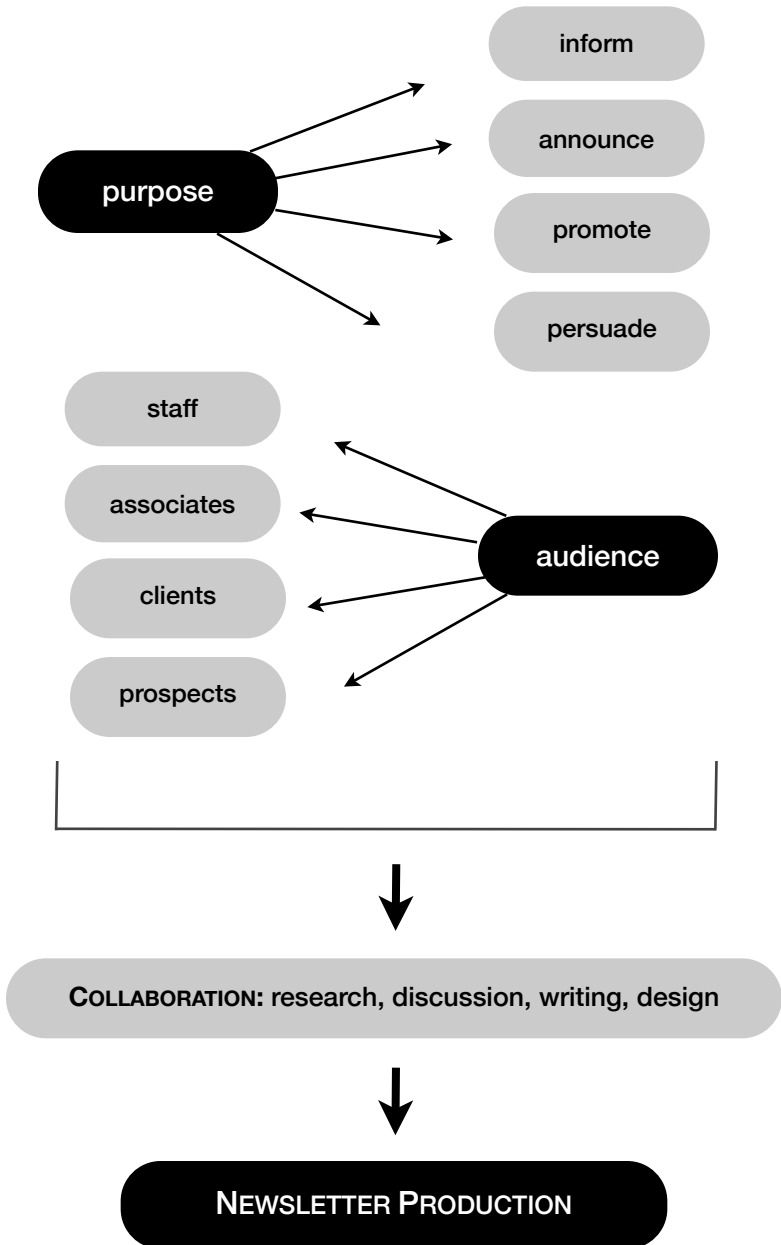
Unlike justified text, left-aligned text does not suffer from erratic spacing. The right edge should look natural and pleasantly uneven without excessive hyphenation.

#### Right-aligned Text

Flush-right text as shown here is rarely used and may seem awkward to readers. Finding the beginning of a ragged line can be annoying. It is best used with short bursts of text.

Often used in advertising, right-aligned text works well with callouts and captions placed on the left edge. Because right-aligned text is unusual, it can be a pleasant relief from ordinary layouts.

## NEWSLETTERS



### NEWSLETTERS

A newsletter is an important communication tool for making an announcement, featuring a new product or service, updating staff and clients on new developments, or simply keeping in touch with associates within an industry. Newsletters are often composed in-house by staff and may consist of more than one page. PDF format is standard for newsletters sent by e-mail.

Deciding on the best design depends on your message and your audience. Consider the following:

- Is a photo or image useful to explain the main idea?
- Which layout best conveys the message?
- How many text columns make for easy reading?
- Which text alignment presents best in the layout?
- Which fonts best suit the message?
- Are charts and graphs useful to support a main idea?
- What should be the balance between text and graphics?

Newsletters generally fall into two categories:

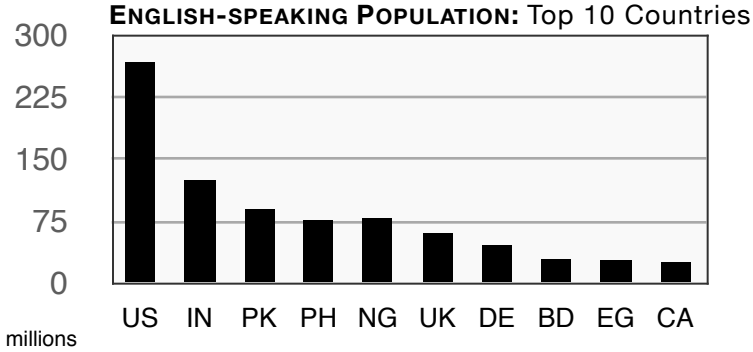
- 1) **Corporate Newsletters:** These are sent to employees, clients, or members of a common group.
- 2) **Promotional Newsletters:** These are intended to promote or solicit business by targeting a database of potential clients, subscribers, or purchasers.

The design and content of a newsletter depends on the nature of the information and the intended audience. If a special newsletter is created to announce a new product or service, a single photo or a collection of photos may be included. Financial newsletters are often heavy on text with the addition of charts or graphs to illustrate specific data. To be consistent with regularly sent newsletters, many companies create a template with logo and defined text boxes, columns, and layouts.

**NOTE:** Newsletters are seldom the work of one person. Collaboration on research, writing, and design is standard, and sometimes includes outside consultants.

## Charts & Graphs

Using charts and graphs is a clear and simple way to illustrate relationships. The bar graph and the table chart illustrate two ways of visually conveying statistical information.



Country	% English Speaking	Eligible Pop. (millions)	Total English Speaking (millions)	English First Language (millions)	English Other Language (millions)
US	95%	281 M	267 M	226 M	42 M
IN	12%	1.2 B	125 M	0.25 M	350 M
PK	49%	181 M	89 M	N/A	89 M
NG	53%	148 M	79 M	4 M	75 M
PH	79%	97 M	76 M	3 M	73 M
UK	98%	61 M	60 M	58 M	2 M
DE	56%	82 M	46 M	0.25 M	46 M
BD	18%	163 M	29 M	N/A	29 M
EG	35%	83 M	28 M	N/A	28 M
CA	85%	33 M	25 M	18 M	8 M

BD...Bangladesh  
 CA.....Canada  
 DE.....Germany  
 EG.....Egypt  
 IN.....India

NG.....Nigeria  
 PH.....Philippines  
 PK.....Pakistan  
 UK...United Kingdom  
 US.....United States