CHAPTER 5

Planning, Composing, and Revising

Chapter Outline

Writing Practice for John Grisham

Best-selling author John Grisham knows the secret to writing success. His legal thrillers have sold more than 250 million copies worldwide, and nine of his novels have been adapted into successful films. But before his first book was published in 1988, Grisham was a working lawyer in Southaven, Mississippi. Like fellow lawyers-turned-writers Scott Turow and Erle Stanley Gardner (who created the character Perry Mason), Grisham honed his writing skills drafting and redrafting legal briefs.

Lawyers learn early to take special care in writing their briefs, which are the written arguments submitted to judges and opposing lawyers, two intimidating audiences. Judges study the materials' fairness, and opposing lawyers naturally search for flaws. Each brief must present the lawyer's arguments clearly, concisely, and persuasively.

"What lawyers understand better than most writers is that the really hard work takes place before setting pen to paper."

How do lawyers do it? Freedman writes, "What lawyers understand better than most writers is that the really hard work takes place before setting pen to paper." In other words, to *write* effectively, lawyers must first *plan* effectively. Using the main facts and evidence in the case, lawyers create strategies, plan organizations, and focus arguments all before they start to write. And once they do begin writing, they draft, revise, rework, edit, and redraft, each step taking them closer to a strong, well-written legal brief.

According to Freedman, a good brief needs a strong central theme, plain language, focused arguments, and relentless revision and editing. The same tips hold true for any business document. While most memos, letters, and reports will not receive the same level of antagonistic scrutiny as legal briefs, using careful planning, drafting, and revision techniques will focus and improve any document.

Sources: Adam Freedman, "Why Trial Lawyers Say It Better," *Wall Street Journal*, January 29, 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703555804576102384190154812.html; and "John Grisham Bio," JohnGrisham.com, accessed May 24, 2011, http://www.jgrisham.com/bio/.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know

LO 5-1 New information about the activities involved in the composing process, and how to use these activities to your advantage.

LO 5-2 New guidelines for effective word choice, sentence construction, and paragraph organization.

LO 5-3 New techniques to revise, edit, and proofread your communications.

Ethics and the Writing Process

As you plan a message,

- Be sure you have identified the real audiences and purposes of the message.
- In difficult situations, seek allies in your organization and discuss your options with them.

As you compose,

- Provide accurate and complete information.
- Use reliable sources of material. Document when necessary.
- Warn your readers of limits or dangers in your information.
- Promise only what you can deliver.

As you revise,

- Check to see that your language does not use words that show bias.
- Use feedback to revise text and visuals that your audience may misunderstand.
- Check your sources.
- Assume that no document is confidential. E-mail documents and IMs (instant messages) can be forwarded and printed without your knowledge; both electronic and paper documents, including drafts, can be subpoenaed for court cases.

Skilled performances look easy and effortless. In reality, as every dancer, musician, and athlete knows, they're the products of hard work, hours of practice, attention to detail, and intense concentration. Like skilled performances in other arts, writing rests on a base of work.

THE WAYS GOOD WRITERS WRITE

No single writing process works for all writers all of the time. However, good writers and poor writers seem to use different processes.[1] Good writers are more likely to

- Realize that the first draft can be revised.
- Write regularly.
- Break big jobs into small chunks.
- Have clear goals focusing on purpose and audience.
- Have several different strategies to choose from.
- Use rules flexibly.
- Wait to edit until after the draft is complete.

The research also shows that good writers differ from poor writers in identifying and analyzing the initial problem more effectively, understanding the task more broadly and deeply, drawing from a wider repertoire of strategies, and seeing patterns more clearly. Good writers also are better at evaluating their own work.

Thinking about the writing process and consciously adopting the processes of good writers will help you become a better writer.

ACTIVITIES IN THE COMPOSING PROCESS LO 5-1

Composing can include many activities: planning, brainstorming, gathering, organizing, writing, evaluating, getting feedback, revising, editing, and proofreading. The activities do not have to come in this order. Not every task demands all activities.

Planning

- Analyzing the problem, defining your purposes, and analyzing the audience.

- Brainstorming information to include in the document.
- Gathering the information you need—from the message you're answering, a person, printed sources, or the web.
- Selecting the points you want to make, and the examples, data, and arguments to support them.
- Choosing a pattern of organization, making an outline, creating a list.

Writing

- Putting words on paper or a screen. Writing can be lists, possible headings, fragmentary notes, stream-of-consciousness writing, incomplete drafts, and ultimately a formal draft.

Revising

- Evaluating your work and measuring it against your goals and the requirements of the situation and audience. The best evaluation results from *re-seeing* your draft as if someone else had written it. Will your audience understand it? Is it complete? Convincing? Friendly?
- Getting feedback from someone else. Is all the necessary information there? Is there too much information? Is your pattern of organization appropriate? Does a revision solve an earlier problem? Are there obvious mistakes?
- Adding, deleting, substituting, or rearranging. Revision can be changes in single words or in large sections of a document.

Editing

- Checking the draft to see that it satisfies the requirements of standard English. Here you'd correct spelling and mechanical errors and check word choice and format. Unlike revision, which can produce major changes in meaning, editing focuses on the surface of writing.
- Proofreading the final copy to see that it's free from typographical errors.

Note the following points about these activities:

- **The activities do not have to come in this order.** Some people may gather data *after* writing a draft when they see that they need more specifics to achieve their purposes.
- **You do not have to finish one activity to start another.** Some writers plan a short section and write it, plan the next short section and write it, and so on through the document. Evaluating what is already written may cause a writer to do more planning or to change the original plan.
- **Most writers do not use all activities for all the documents they write.** You'll use more activities when you write more complex or difficult documents about new subjects or to audiences that are new to you.

For many workplace writers, pre-writing is not a warm-up activity to get ready to write the "real" document. It's really a series of activities designed to gather and organize information, take notes, brainstorm with colleagues, and plan a document before writing a complete draft. And for many people, these activities do not include outlining. Traditional outlining may lull writers into a false sense of confidence about their material and organization, making it difficult for them to revise their content and structure if they deviate from the outline developed early in the process.

MBAs Can't Write

The writing and presentation skills of MBAs have long been a complaint of employers. Too many words, employers say, and too many big words. Graduates are particularly inept at preparing short persuasive communications or writing for multiple audiences.

Now MBA programs are acting on the complaints. The Wharton School of Business now requires 12 communication classes, twice what it required before. Other business schools are adding writing coaches, and having the writing coaches assign writing grades to papers for other courses.

Adapted from Diana Middleton, "Students Struggle for Words," *Wall Street Journal*, March 3, 2011, B8.

Overcoming Writer's Block

According to psychologist Robert Boice, who has made a career study of writer's block, these actions help overcome writer's block:

1. **Prepare for writing.** Collect and arrange material. Talk to people; interact with some of your audiences. The more you learn about the company, its culture, and its context, the easier it will be to write—and the better your writing will be.
2. **Practice writing regularly and in moderation.** Try to write almost daily. Keep sessions to a moderate length; Boice suggests an hour to an hour and a half.
3. **Talk positively to yourself:** "I can do this." "If I keep working, ideas will come." "It doesn't have to be perfect; I can make it better later."
4. **Talk to other people about writing.** Value the feedback you get from them. Talking to other people expands your repertoire of strategies and helps you understand your writing community.

Adapted from Robert Boice, *Advice for New Faculty Members: Nihil Nimus* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000), 111—12.

Not all writing has to be completed in office settings. Some people work better outside, in coffee shops, or from home.

USING YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY

To get the best results from the time you have, spend only one-third of your time actually "writing." Spend at least another one-third of your time analyzing the situation and your audience, gathering information, and organizing what you have to say. Spend the final third evaluating what you've said, revising the draft(s) to meet your purposes and the needs of the audience and the organization, editing a late draft to remove any errors in grammar and mechanics, and proofreading the final copy.

Do realize, however, that different writers, documents, and situations may need different time divisions to produce quality communications, especially if documents are produced by teams. Geographic distance will add even more time to the process.

BRAINSTORMING, PLANNING, AND ORGANIZING BUSINESS DOCUMENTS

Spend significant time planning and organizing before you begin to write. The better your ideas are when you start, the fewer drafts you'll need to produce a good document. Start by using the analysis questions from Chapter 1 to identify purpose and audience. Use the strategies described in Chapter 2 to analyze audience and identify benefits. Gather information you can use for your document. Select the points you want to make—and the examples and data to support them.

Sometimes your content will be determined by the situation. Sometimes, even when it's up to you to think of information to include in a report, you'll find it easy to think of ideas. If ideas won't come, try the following techniques:

- **Brainstorming.** Think of all the ideas you can, without judging them. Consciously try to get at least a dozen different ideas before you stop. Good brainstorming depends on generating many ideas.
- **Freewriting.**[2] Make yourself write, without stopping, for 10 minutes or so, even if you must write "I will think of something soon." At the end of 10 minutes, read what you've written, identify the best point in the draft, then set it aside, and write for another 10 uninterrupted minutes. Read this draft, marking anything that's good and should be kept, and

then write again for another 10 minutes. By the third session, you will probably produce several sections that are worth keeping—maybe even a complete draft that's ready to be revised.

- **Clustering.**[3] Write your topic in the middle of the page and circle it. Write down the ideas the topic suggests, circling them, too. (The circles are designed to tap into the nonlinear half of your brain.) When you've filled the page, look for patterns or repeated ideas. Use different colored pens to group related ideas. Then use these ideas to develop your content.
- **Talk to your audiences.** As research shows, talking to internal and external audiences helps writers to involve readers in the planning process and to understand the social and political relationships among readers. This preliminary work helps reduce the number of revisions needed before documents are approved.[4]

Thinking about the content, layout, or structure of your document can also give you ideas. For long documents, write out the headings you'll use. For short documents, jot down key points—information to include, objections to answer, benefits to develop. For an oral presentation, a meeting, or a document with lots of visuals, try creating a **storyboard,** with a rectangle representing each page or unit. Draw a box with a visual for each main point. Below the box, write a short caption or label.

WRITING GOOD BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS

Good business and administrative writing is closer to conversation and less formal than the style of writing that has traditionally earned high marks in college essays and term papers. (See Figure 5.1.)

Most people have several styles of talking, which they vary instinctively depending on the audience. Good writers have several styles, too. An e-mail to

Figure 5.1 Different Levels of Style

Feature	Conversational style	Good business style	Traditional term paper style
Formality	Highly informal	Conversational; sounds like a real person talking	More formal than conversation would be, but retains a human voice
Use of contractions	Many contractions	OK to use occasional contractions	Few contractions, if any
Pronouns	Uses first- and second-person pronouns	Uses first- and second-person pronouns	First- and second-person pronouns kept to a minimum
Level of friendliness	Friendly	Friendly	No effort to make style friendly
How personal	Personal; refers to specific circumstances of conversation	Personal; may refer to reader by name; refers to specific circumstances of audiences	Impersonal; may generally refer to readers but does not name them or refer to their circumstances
Word choice	Short, simple words; slang	Short, simple words but avoids slang	Many abstract words; scholarly, technical terms
Sentence and paragraph length	Incomplete sentences; no paragraphs	Short sentences and paragraphs	Longer sentences and paragraphs
Grammar	Can be ungrammatical	Uses standard English	Uses more formal standard English
Visual impact	Not applicable	Attention to visual impact of document	No particular attention to visual impact

To Clarify or Not to Clarify

Former Federal Board Chair Alan Greenspan was known for his lack of clarity. After one speech, a headline in the *Washington Post* read "Greenspan Hints Fed May Cut Interest Rates," while the corresponding headline in the *New York Times* read "Doubt Voiced by Greenspan on a Rate Cut." Even his wife joked that he had to propose twice before she understood what he was saying.

His replacement, Ben Bernanke, has a different style. As he aims for more transparent communications, he is trying to make the Fed clearer about goals for economic growth.

Adapted from Greg Ip, "'Transparent' Vision: New Fed Chairman Hopes to Downplay Impact of His Words," *Wall Street Journal*, September 6, 2006, A1; and Daniel Kadlec, "5 Ways the New Fed Chairman Will Be Different," *Time*, November 7, 2005, 49–50.

your boss about the delays from a supplier will be informal, perhaps even chatty; a letter to the supplier demanding better service will be more formal.

Reports tend to be more formal than letters and memos, since they may be read many years in the future by audiences the writer can barely imagine. Reports tend to avoid contractions, personal pronouns, and second person (since so many people read reports, *you* doesn't have much meaning). See Chapter 18 for more about report style.

Keep the following points in mind as you choose a level of formality for a specific document:

- Use a friendly, informal style to someone you've talked with.
- Avoid contractions, slang, and even minor grammatical lapses in paper documents to people you don't know. Abbreviations are OK in e-mail messages if they're part of the group's culture.
- Pay particular attention to your style when you write to people you fear or when you must give bad news. Research shows our style changes in stressful contexts. We tend to rely on nouns rather than on verbs and deaden our style when we are under stress or feel insecure.[5] Confident people are more direct. Edit your writing so that you sound confident, whether you feel that way or not.

More and more organizations are trying to simplify their communications. Alan Greenspan, former chair of the Federal Reserve, was infamously known for his lack of clarity in communications, but his successor is striving to bring about new clarity in the board's communications (see sidebar on this page).

In the financial world, the US Securities and Exchange Commission's *A Plain English Handbook: How to Create Clear SEC Disclosure Documents* asks for short sentences, everyday words, active voice, bullet lists, and descriptive headings. It cautions against legal and highly technical terms. Warren Buffett wrote the preface, saying that the handbook was good news for him, because too often he had been unable to decipher the documents filed by public companies. He offers his own writing tip: write to a specific person. He says he pretends he is writing to his sisters when he writes his Berkshire Hathaway annual reports. The SEC has more recently applied the handbook standards to the brochures investment advisers give to clients and has urged them on hedge funds.[6]

In 2010, the Plain Writing Act became law. It requires all federal agencies to use clear prose that the public can readily understand. PlainLanguage.gov explains the law, provides a 112-page manual to help agencies use plain language, and offers examples of good federal communication.

Of course, the news is full of examples where these efforts have failed. The same negative examples, however, also show the great need for clear, simple style. A major factor in the subprime mortgage disaster was documents written in prose so complex that even experts couldn't understand it. Many homeowners who signed adjustable rate mortgages and subsequently lost their homes claim they did not understand all the consequences of what they were signing. Experts outside the mortgage business agree with the homeowners that the language was too complex for most people to understand.[7]

Communication consultants like Gerard Braud urge clients to simplify their prose. He warns, "All communication affects [the] bottom line. . . . When a reader, listener, viewer or member of a live audience has to take even a nanosecond to decipher what you are saying because you are making it more complicated than it needs to be, you may lose that person."[8]

Good business style allows for individual variation. Figure 5.2 shows the opening paragraphs from Warren Buffett's letter to shareholders in Berkshire Hathaway's 2010 annual report. Buffett's direct style suggests integrity and

Figure 5.2 Opening Paragraphs of Warren Buffett's 2010 Letter to Shareholders

BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY INC.

To the Shareholders of Berkshire Hathaway Inc.:

Buffett's letter start with a short financial summary of the past year.

The per-share book value of both our Class A and Class B stock increased by 13% in 2010. Over the last 46 years (that is, since present management took over), book value has grown from $19 to $95,453, a rate of 20.2% compounded annually.*

The highlight of 2010 was our acquisition of Burlington Northern Santa Fe, a purchase that's working out even better than I expected. It now appears that owning this railroad will increase Berkshire's "normal" earning power by nearly 40% pre-tax and by well over 30% after-tax. Making this purchase increased our share count by 6% and used $22 billion of cash. Since we've quickly replenished the cash, the economics of this transaction have turned out very well.

He explains his assumptions.

A "normal year," of course, is not something that either Charlie Munger, Vice Chairman of Berkshire and my partner, or I can define with anything like precision. But for the purpose of estimating our current earning power, we are envisioning a year free of a mega-catastrophe in insurance and possessing a general business climate somewhat better than that of 2010 but weaker than that of 2005 or 2006. Using these assumptions, and several others that I will explain in the "Investment" section, I can estimate that the normal earning power of the assets we currently own is about $17 billion pre-tax and $12 billion after-tax, excluding any capital gains or losses. Every day Charlie and I think about how we can build on this base.

Social benefits

Both of us are enthusiastic about BNSF's future because railroads have major cost and environmental advantages over trucking, their main competitor. Last year BNSF moved each ton of freight it carried a record 500 miles on a single gallon of diesel fuel. That's *three* times more fuel-efficient than trucking is, which means our railroad owns an important advantage in operating costs. Concurrently, our country gains because of reduced greenhouse emissions and a much smaller need for imported oil. When traffic travels by rail, society benefits.

. . .

Historic examples

Money will always flow toward opportunity, and there is an abundance of that in America. Commentators today often talk of "great uncertainty." But think back, for example, to December 6, 1941, October 18, 1987, and September 10, 2001. No matter how serene today may be, tomorrow is *always* uncertain.

Don't let that reality spook you. Throughout my lifetime, politicians and pundits have constantly moaned about terrifying problems facing America. Yet our citizens now live an astonishing six times better than when I was born. The prophets of doom have overlooked the all-important factor that *is* certain: Human potential is far from exhausted, and the American system for unleashing that potential—a system that has worked wonders for over two centuries despite frequent interruptions for recessions and even a Civil War—remains alive and effective.

Why do you think he used these dates?

We are not natively smarter than we were when our country was founded nor do we work harder. But look around you and see a world beyond the dreams of any colonial citizen. Now, as in 1776, 1861, 1932 and 1941, America's best days lie ahead.

Performance

Colorful metaphor

Charlie and I believe that those entrusted with handling the funds of others should establish performance goals at the onset of their stewardship. Lacking such standards, managements are tempted to shoot the arrow of performance and then paint the bull's-eye around wherever it lands.

* All per-share figures used in this report apply to Berkshire's A shares. Figures for the B shares are 1/1500th of those shown for A.

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clarity. Later in the letter, Buffett adds some of the colorful prose for which he is famous:

- We're prepared. Our elephant gun has been reloaded, and my trigger finger is itchy.
- [Deriding those who dismiss important facts as anomalies] I always love explanations of that kind: The Flat Earth Society probably views a ship's circling of the globe as an annoying, but inconsequential, anomaly.
- The fundamental principle of auto racing is that to finish first, you must first finish.
- Credit is like oxygen. When either is abundant, its presence goes unnoticed. When either is missing, that's *all* that is noticed.[9]

HALF-TRUTHS ABOUT BUSINESS WRITING

Many generalizations about business writing are half-truths and must be applied selectively, if at all.

Half-Truth 1: "Write as You Talk."

Most of us use a colloquial, conversational style in speech that is too informal for writing. We use slang, incomplete sentences, and even grammatical errors.

Unless our speech is exceptionally fluent, "writing as we talk" can create awkward, repetitive, and badly organized prose. It's OK to write as you talk to produce your first draft, but edit to create a good written style.

Half-Truth 2: "Never Use *I*."

Using *I* too often can make your writing sound self-centered; using it unnecessarily will make your ideas seem tentative. However, when you write about things you've done or said or seen, using *I* is both appropriate and smoother than resorting to awkward passives or phrases like *this writer.*

Half-Truth 3: "Never Use *You*."

Certainly writers should not use *you* in formal reports, as well as other situations where the audience is not known or *you* may sound too informal. But *you* is widely used in situations such as writing to familiar audiences like our office mates, describing audience benefits, and writing sales text.

Half-Truth 4: "Never Begin a Sentence with *And* or *But*."

Beginning a sentence with *and* or *also* makes the idea that follows seem like an afterthought. That's OK when you want the effect of spontaneous speech in a written document, as you may in a sales letter. If you want to sound as though you have thought about what you are saying, put the *also* in the middle of the sentence or use another transition: *moreover, furthermore.*

But tells the reader that you are shifting gears and that the point which follows not only contrasts with but also is more important than the preceding ideas. Presenting such verbal signposts to your reader is important. Beginning a sentence with *but* is fine if doing so makes your paragraph read smoothly.

Half-Truth 5: "Never End a Sentence with a Preposition."

Prepositions are those useful little words that indicate relationships: *with, in, under, to, at.* In job application letters, reports, and important presentations,

Evaluating "Rules" about Writing

Some "rules" are grammatical conventions. For example, standard edited English requires that each sentence have a subject and verb, and that the subject and verb agree. Business writing normally demands standard grammar, but exceptions exist. Promotional materials such as brochures, advertisements, and sales letters may use sentence fragments to mimic the effect of speech.

Other "rules" may be conventions adopted by an organization so that its documents will be consistent. For example, a company might decide to capitalize job titles (e.g., *Production Manager*) even though grammar doesn't require the capitals.

Still other "rules" are attempts to codify "what sounds good." "Never use *I*" and "use big words" are examples of this kind of "rule." To evaluate these "rules," you must consider your audience, purposes, and situation. If you want the effect produced by an impersonal style and polysyllabic words, use them. But use them only when you want the distancing they produce.

avoid ending sentences with prepositions. Most other messages are less formal; it's OK to end an occasional sentence with a preposition. Noting exceptions to the rule, Sir Winston Churchill famously scolded an editor who had presumptuously corrected a sentence ending with a preposition, "This is the kind of impertinence up with which I will not put."[10] Analyze your audience and the situation, and use the language that you think will get the best results.

Half-Truth 6: "Big Words Impress People."

Learning an academic discipline requires that you master its vocabulary. After you get out of school, however, no one will ask you to write just to prove that you understand something. Instead, you'll be asked to write or speak to people who need the information you have.

Sometimes you may want the sense of formality or technical expertise that big words create. But much of the time, big words just distance you from your audience and increase the risk of miscommunication. If you feel you need to use big words, make sure you use them correctly. When people misuse big words, they look foolish.

Half-Truth 7: "Never Have a Sentence with More than 20 Words, or a Paragraph with More than 8 Lines."

While it is true that long sentences and paragraphs may sometimes be hard to read, such is not always the case. Long sentences with parallel clauses (see pages 134–135) may be quite clear, and a longer paragraph with a bulleted list may be quite readable. Your audience, purpose, and context should guide length decisions. Instructions for complicated new software may need shorter sentences and paragraphs, but an instruction paragraph on the six criteria for legitimate travel expenses may be longer than eight lines and still quite clear.

If your audience, however, believes in rigid guidelines, then you should follow them also.

TEN WAYS TO MAKE YOUR WRITING EASIER TO READ LO 5-2

Direct, simple writing is easier to read. One study tested two versions of a memo report. The "high-impact" version had the "bottom line" (the purpose of the report) in the first paragraph, simple sentences in normal word order, active verbs, concrete language, short paragraphs, headings and lists, and first- and second-person pronouns. The high-impact version took 22% less time to read. Readers said they understood the report better, and tests showed that they really did understand it better.[11] Another study showed that high-impact instructions were more likely to be followed.[12]

As You Choose Words

The best word depends on context: the situation, your purposes, your audience, the words you have already used.

1. Use words that are accurate, appropriate, and familiar. Accurate words mean what you want to say. Appropriate words convey the attitudes you want and fit well with the other words in your document. Familiar words are easy to read and understand.

Building a Better Style

To improve your style,

- Try telling someone what you really mean. Then write the words.
- Try reading your draft out loud to someone sitting about three feet away—about as far away as you'd sit in casual conversation. If the words sound awkward, they'll seem awkward to a reader, too.
- Ask someone else to read your draft out loud. Readers stumble because the words on the page aren't what they expect to see. The places where that person stumbles are places where your writing can be better.
- Read widely and write a *lot.*
- Use the 10 techniques starting on this page to polish your style.

What's in a Name (1): Quirky Job Titles

Have you noticed the fun job titles at some companies lately? A mortgage company with a Wealth Creation Specialist, a chamber of commerce with a Director of First Impressions (receptionist)?

McLellan Marketing Group—headed by Top Dog, of course—has a Duchess of Details (project manager) and a Warden (accountant). The Top Dog says the titles give customers an immediate impression of the company so they can judge compatibility.

Even national companies have joined in the retitling craze. Best Buy's computer-help Geek Squad employs Special Agents, Field Marshals, and Mission Controllers. Build-a-Bear (stores where you choose, stuff, and dress your own teddy bear) has its Chief Executive Bear and Database Adminbearstrator.

Experts say the new titles work when they fit the corporate culture and company clients.

Adapted from Patt Johnson, "Quirky Names Try to Better Match What People Do," *Des Moines Register*, March 10, 2008, 1D.

Sometimes choosing the accurate word is hard. Most of us have word pairs that confuse us. Grammarian Richard Lederer tells Toastmasters that these 10 pairs are the ones you are most likely to see or hear confused.[13]

Affect/Effect	Disinterested/Uninterested
Among/Between	Farther/Further
Amount/Number	Fewer/Less
Compose/Comprise	Imply/Infer
Different from/Different than	Lay/Lie

For help using the pairs correctly, see Appendix B.

Some meanings are negotiated as we interact one-on-one with another person, attempting to communicate. Individuals are likely to have different ideas about value-laden words like *fair* or *empowerment*. The *Wall Street Journal* notes that the Securities and Exchange Commission has upped the ante on the definition of *rich* as it regulates the net worth requirement for those eligible to invest in hedge funds. That definition is important because it often becomes the government's definition of *rich*:

> The SEC. . . . says investors need to have investible assets of at least $2.5 million, excluding equity in any homes or businesses, to be eligible to sign on a hedge fund's dotted line. That's a huge jump from the current requirement, which says individuals have to have a net worth of at least $1 million, including the value of primary residences, or an annual income of $200,000 for the previous two years for individuals or $300,000 for couples."[14]

Some word choices have legal implications.

- Confusion about the definition of *wetlands* has reduced these natural resources by more than half.[15]
- Some employees, such as assistant managers in small franchises, are working to be reclassified as nonprofessionals. The word choice affects the workers' paychecks, because under labor laws employers are exempt from paying extra when professionals and administrators work overtime.[16]
- Medicare dropped its opposition to defining obesity as an illness, thus allowing Medicare to cover the payment for some treatments.[17]

As the last example indicates, some word choices have major health repercussions. Smokers have sued tobacco companies for duping them into believing that "light" cigarettes were less harmful. *Recall,* when used in warnings about defective pacemakers and defibrillators, causes patients to ask for replacements, even though the replacement surgery is riskier than the defective device. For this reason, some physician groups prefer *safety advisory* or *safety alert*.[18]

Accurate denotations To be accurate, a word's denotation must match the meaning the writer wishes to convey. Denotation is a word's literal or dictionary meaning. Most common words in English have more than one denotation. The word *pound,* for example, means, or denotes, a unit of weight, a place where stray animals are kept, a unit of money in the old British system, and the verb *to hit.* Coca-Cola spends millions each year to protect its brand names so that *Coke* will denote only that brand and not just any cola drink.

When two people use the same word or phrase to mean, or denote, different things, **bypassing** occurs. For example, a large mail-order drug company notifies clients by e-mail when their prescription renewals get stopped because the doctor has not verified the prescription. Patients are advised to call their doctors and remind them to verify. However, the company's website posts a sentence telling clients that the prescription is *being processed.* The drug company means the renewal is in the system, waiting for the doctor's verification. The patients believe the doctor has checked in and the renewal is moving forward. The confusion results in extra phone calls to the company's customer service number, delayed prescriptions, and general customer dissatisfaction.

Problems also arise when writers misuse words.

> The western part of Pennsylvania was transferred from Columbus to Philadelphia.

(Pennsylvania did not move. Instead, a company moved responsibility for sales in western Pennsylvania.)

> Three major divisions of Stiners Corporation are poised to strike out in opposite directions.

(Three different directions can't be opposite each other.)

> Stiners has grown dramatically over the past five years, largely by purchasing many smaller, desperate companies.

This latter statement probably did not intend to be so frank. More likely, the writer relied on a computer's spell checker, which accepted *desperate* for *disparate,* meaning "fundamentally different from one another."

Appropriate connotations Words are appropriate when their **connotations,** that is, their emotional associations or colorings, convey the attitude you want. A great many words carry connotations of approval or disapproval, disgust or delight. Words in the first column below suggest approval; words in the second column suggest criticism.

Positive word	**Negative word**
assume	guess
curious	nosy
cautious	fearful
firm	obstinate
flexible	wishy-washy

A supervisor can "tell the truth" about a subordinate's performance and yet write either a positive or a negative performance appraisal, based on the connotations of the words in the appraisal. Consider an employee who pays close attention to details. A positive appraisal might read, "Terry is a meticulous team member who takes care of details that others sometimes ignore." But the same behavior might be described negatively: "Terry is hung up on trivial details."

Advertisers carefully choose words with positive connotations.

- In this youth-conscious society, hearing aids become personal communication assistants.[19]
- Expensive cars are never *used;* instead, they're *pre-owned, experienced,* or even *previously adored.*[20]
- Insurers emphasize what you want to *protect* (your home, your car, your life), rather than the losses you are insuring against (fire damage, auto accident, death).
- Credit card companies tell about what you can do with the card (charge a vacation), not the debt, payments, and fees involved.

What's in a Name (2): How Local Is "Local"?

Some consumers prefer to purchase food produced locally on the assumption that the food will be fresher and contain fewer chemicals. But what does *local* mean? One woman in Washington, D.C., found "local" strawberries whose packaging indicated they were actually grown in California.

Some states and retailers have established definitions for what qualifies as locally grown: Vermont says within state or 30 miles of sales place; Walmart says *local* means produce came from the state where it is being sold. However, definitions vary widely, and, given the diversity of crops and their growing regions, a nationwide standard is unlikely.

So, despite the economic boon to retailers of labeling a product as locally produced, the advantage to consumers is not always clear.

Adapted from "Locally Grown Produce? It All Depends on How You Define It," *Des Moines Register*, April 2, 2011, 8A.

Words may also connote categories. Some show status. Both *salesperson* and *sales representative* are nonsexist job titles. But the first sounds like a clerk in a store; the second suggests someone selling important items to corporate customers. Some words connote age: *adorable* generally connotes young children, not adults. Other words, such as *handsome* or *pretty*, connote gender.

Connotations change over time. The word *charity* had acquired such negative connotations by the 19th century that people began to use the term *welfare* instead. Now, *welfare* has acquired negative associations. Most states have *public assistance programs* instead.

Ethical implications of word choice How positively can we present something and still be ethical? *Pressure-treated lumber* sounds acceptable. But naming the material injected under pressure—*arsenic-treated lumber*—may lead the customer to make a different decision. We have the right to package our ideas attractively, but we have the responsibility to give the public or our superiors all the information they need to make decisions.

Word choices have ethical implications in other contexts as well. When scientists refer to 100-year floods, they mean a flood so big that it has a 1% chance of happening in any given year. However, a "1% annual chance flood" is awkward and has not become standard usage. On the other hand, many nonscientists believe a 100-year flood will happen only once every hundred years. After a 100-year flood swamped the Midwest in 1993, many people moved back into flood-prone homes; some even dropped their flood insurance. Unfortunately, both actions left them devastated by a second 100-year flood in 2008.[21]

Perhaps one of the best-known examples of ethical implications deals with the interrogation technique of waterboarding. President Bush's attorney general said waterboarding was not torture; President Obama's attorney general said it was.[22]

Familiar words Use familiar words, words that are in almost everyone's vocabulary. Use the word that most exactly conveys your meaning, but whenever you can choose between two words that mean the same thing, use the shorter, more common one. Try to use specific, concrete words. They're easier to understand and remember.[23]

A series of long, learned, abstract terms makes writing less interesting, less forceful, and less memorable. When you have something simple to say, use simple words.

The following list gives a few examples of short, simple alternatives:

Formal and stuffy	Short and simple
ameliorate	improve
commence	begin
enumerate	list
finalize	finish, complete
prioritize	rank
utilize	use
viable option	choice

There are some exceptions to the general rule that "shorter is better":

- Use a long word if it is the only word that expresses your meaning exactly.
- Use a long word—or phrase—if it is more familiar than a short word: *a word in another language for a geographic place or area* is better than *exonym.*

- Use a long word if its connotations are more appropriate. *Exfoliate* is better than *scrape off dead skin cells.*
- Use a long word if your audience prefers it.

2. Use technical jargon sparingly; eliminate business jargon. There are two kinds of **jargon.** The first is the specialized terminology of a technical field. Many public figures enjoy mocking jargon. Even the *Wall Street Journal* does its share, mocking quotes like this one from a computer industry press release announcing a new "market offering":

> [The] offerings are leading-edge service configuration assurance capabilities that will help us to rapidly deploy high-demand IP services, such as level 3 virtual private networks, multi-cast and quality of service over our IP/MPLS network.[24]

A job application letter is one of the few occasions when it's desirable to use technical jargon: using the technical terminology of the reader's field helps suggest that you're a peer who also is competent in that field. In other kinds of messages, use technical jargon only when the term is essential and known to the reader. If a technical term has a "plain English" equivalent, use the simpler term.

The second kind of jargon is the **businessese** that some writers still use: *as per your request, enclosed please find, please do not hesitate.* None of the words in this second category of jargon are necessary. Indeed, some writers call these terms *deadwood,* since they are no longer living words. If any of the terms in the first column of Figure 5.3 show up in your writing, replace them with more modern language.

As You Write and Revise Sentences

At the sentence level, you can do many things to make your writing easy to read.

3. Use active voice most of the time. "Who does what" sentences with active voice make your writing more forceful.

A verb is in **active voice** if the grammatical subject of the sentence does the action the verb describes. A verb is in **passive voice** if the subject is acted upon. Passive voice is usually made up of a form of the verb *to be* plus a past participle. *Passive* has nothing to do with *past.* Passive voice can be past, present, or future:

were received	(in the past)
is recommended	(in the present)
will be implemented	(in the future)

To spot a passive voice, find the verb. If the verb describes something that the grammatical subject is doing, the verb is in active voice. If the verb describes something that is being done to the grammatical subject, the verb is in passive voice.

Active Voice	Passive Voice
The customer received 500 widgets.	Five hundred widgets were received by the customer.
I recommend this method.	This method is recommended by me.
The state agencies will implement the program.	The program will be implemented by the state agencies.

DUTA [Don't Use That Acronym]

Used properly, acronyms can be both convenient and powerful. Marketers in Washington, D.C., for example, use mostly unknown acronyms in their subway and billboard advertising to target government employees at specific agencies. It doesn't matter that most people have no idea what the ads are about; the signs are targeted for government procurement agents and program managers.

But acronyms can fail when the intended audience doesn't understand what an acronym stands for or when a single acronym has multiple meanings, sometimes even within the same organization. In Washington D.C., even some of the bureaucrats in the intended audience don't understand the ads.

To look up the definition of an acronym, try using www.AcronymFinder.com, an acronym dictionary used by businesses, lawyers, students, and savvy writers seeking acronym definitions. The site has over 1 million visitors and 4 million page views a month. In May 2011, the site listed more than 750,000 acronyms, including 90 SAFEs, 147 FASTs, and 202 CATs. No wonder acronyms can be confusing.

Adapted from Thomas Catan, "To Understand Washington Ads, You've Got to Be a Code Breaker," *Wall Street Journal,* March 7, 2011, A1.

Figure 5.3 Getting Rid of Business Jargon

Instead of	Use	Because
At your earliest convenience	The date you need a response	If you need it by a deadline, say so. It may never be convenient to respond.
As per your request; 65 miles per hour	As you requested; 65 miles an hour	*Per* is a Latin word for *by* or *for* each. Use *per* only when the meaning is correct; avoid mixing English and Latin.
Enclosed please find	Enclosed is; Here is	An enclosure isn't a treasure hunt. If you put something in the envelope, the reader will find it.
Hereto, herewith	Omit	Omit legal jargon.
Please be advised; Please be informed	Omit—simply start your response	You don't need a preface. Go ahead and start.
Please do not hesitate	Omit	Omit negative words.
Pursuant to	According to; or omit	*Pursuant* does not mean *after.* Omit legal jargon in any case.
This will acknowledge receipt of your letter.	Omit—start your response	If you answer a letter, the reader knows you got it.
Trusting this is satisfactory, we remain	Omit	Eliminate-*ing* endings. When you are through, stop.

Menu Word Choice

Some restaurants use humorous names for their dishes so patrons will talk about them to their friends.

- Sticky Fingers RibHouses, a South Carolina–based chain, calls its onion appetizer Git-R-D'onions.
- David Burke at Bloomingdales, New York, offers Angry Roasted Hen-in-Law: a roasted chicken which comes with a knife in its back.
- Spy City Café, next to Washington's Spy Museum, serves Disguise Dogs, hotdogs which come with a selection of 15 toppings ("disguises").

Adapted from Judy Mandell, "Name That Dish: Menu Writing Gets Creative," *USA Weekend,* March 18, 2007, 19.

To change from passive voice to active voice, you must make the agent the new subject. If no agent is specified in the sentence, you must supply one to make the sentence active.

Passive Voice	Active Voice
The request was approved by the plant manager.	The plant manager approved the request.
A decision will be made next month. No agent in sentence.	The committee will decide next month..
A letter will be sent informing the customer of the change. No agent in sentence.	[You] Send the customer a letter informing her about the change.

Passive voice has at least three disadvantages:

- If all the information in the original sentence is retained, passive voice makes the sentence longer. Passive voice takes more time to understand.[25]
- If the agent is omitted, it's not clear who is responsible for doing the action.
- Using much passive voice, especially in material that has a lot of big words, can make the writing boring and pompous.

Passive voice is desirable in these situations:

a. Use passive voice to emphasize the object receiving the action, not the agent.

Your order was shipped November 15.

The customer's order, not the shipping clerk, is important.

b. Use passive voice to provide coherence within a paragraph. A sentence is easier to read if "old" information comes at the beginning of a sentence. When you have been discussing a topic, use the word again as your subject even if that requires passive voice.

> The bank made several risky loans in the late 1990s. These loans were written off as "uncollectible" in 2001.

Using *loans* as the subject of the second sentence provides a link between the two sentences, making the paragraph as a whole easier to read.

c. Use passive voice to avoid assigning blame.

> The order was damaged during shipment.

Active voice would require the writer to specify *who* damaged the order. The passive voice is more tactful here.

According to PlainLanguage.gov, changing writing to active voice is the most powerful change that can be made to government documents.[26] But even the self-proclaimed prescriptivist style editor Bill Walsh, a copy chief at the *Washington Post*, admits that sometimes passive voice is necessary—although not as often as many writers think.[27]

4. Use verbs—not nouns—to carry the weight of your sentence. Put the weight of your sentence in the verb to make your sentences more forceful and up to 25% easier to read.[28] When the verb is a form of the verb *to be*, revise the sentence to use a more forceful verb.

Weak: The financial advantage of owning this equipment instead of leasing it is 10% after taxes.

Better: Owning this equipment rather than leasing it will save us 10% after taxes.

Nouns ending in *-ment*, *-ion*, and *-al* often hide verbs.

Weak	**Better**
make an adjustment	adjust
make a payment	pay
make a decision	decide
reach a conclusion	conclude
take into consideration	consider
make a referral	refer
provide assistance	assist

Use verbs to present the information more forcefully.

Weak: We will perform an investigation of the problem.

Better: We will investigate the problem.

Weak: Selection of a program should be based on the client's needs.

Better: Select the program that best fits the client's needs.

5. Eliminate wordiness. Writing is **wordy** if the same idea can be expressed in fewer words. Unnecessary words increase writing time, bore your reader, and make your meaning more difficult to follow, since the reader must hold all the extra words in mind while trying to understand your meaning. Don Bush, the "friendly editor" columnist for *intercom*, calls wordiness the most obvious fault of technical writing.[29]

Good writing is concise, but it may still be lengthy. Concise writing may be long because it is packed with ideas. In Chapter 3, we saw that revisions to create you-attitude and positive emphasis and to develop benefits were frequently *longer* than the originals because the revision added information not given in the original.

What's in a Name (3): Medicine Names

"Prozac. Viagra. Lipitor.

"The names of these incredibly popular medicines don't have defined meanings. But millions of dollars are spent creating just the right sound and image.

"Research shows letters with a hard edge like P, T or K convey effectiveness. X seems scientific. L, R or S provides a calming or relaxing feel. Z means speed. . . .

"Most companies prefer a name that says something about the drug, like Allegra, which alludes to the allergy relief it provides. . . .

"The name cannot make a claim about a drug. The hair-loss treatment Rogaine, for instance, was originally called Regain until the FDA rejected it. . . .

"The FDA rejects 35 percent to 40 percent of the brands it reviews. In Europe, the rejection rate approaches 50 percent."

Quoted from Tom Murphy, "Starts with P, T, K? Payoff Big for Right Drug Name: Companies Spend Millions of Dollars on Processing a Winning Medicine Brand," *Des Moines Register*, January 18, 2008, 6D.

Meaningless Sentences

[Editor Bill Walsh of the *Washington Post* gives these examples of meaningless sentences]

- *A donation of your car, truck or boat is tax-deductible to the maximum extent of the law.*

In other words, you're allowed to deduct it as much as you're allowed to deduct it. Good news: Your toenail clippings are also deductible to the maximum extent of the law.

- *You can use this scholarship at any participating school in the world.*

I have no doubt that this is true. But it raises one major question. . . .

- *Area schools will be back in session Monday, disappointing thousands of children who would rather stay home and watch John Wayne movies.*

No, they wouldn't. (How old are you, anyway?)

Quoted from Bill Walsh, *The Elephants of Style: A Trunkload of Tips on the Big Issues and Gray Areas of Contemporary American English* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 140, 149.

Sometimes you may be able to look at a draft and see immediately how to condense it. When the solution isn't obvious, try the following strategies to condense your writing:

a. Eliminate words that add nothing.
b. Combine sentences to eliminate unnecessary words.
c. Put the meaning of your sentence into the subject and verb to cut the number of words.

You eliminate unnecessary words to save the reader's time, not simply to see how few words you can use. You aren't writing a telegram, so keep the little words that make sentences complete. (Incomplete sentences are fine in lists where all the items are incomplete.)

The following examples show how to use these methods.

a. Eliminate words that add nothing. Cut words if the idea is already clear from other words in the sentence. Substitute single words for wordy phrases.

Wordy: Keep this information on file for future reference.

Better: Keep this information for reference.

or: File this information.

Wordy: Ideally, it would be best to put the billing ticket just below the monitor and above the keyboard.

Better: If possible, put the billing ticket between the monitor and the keyboard.

Phrases beginning with *of*, *which*, and *that* can often be shortened.

Wordy: the question of most importance

Better: the most important question

Wordy: the estimate which is enclosed

Better: the enclosed estimate

Wordy: We need to act on the suggestions that our customers offer us.

Better: We need to act on customer suggestions.

Sentences beginning with *There are* or *It is* can often be tighter.

Wordy: There are three reasons for the success of the project.

Tighter: Three reasons explain the project's success.

Wordy: It is the case that college graduates advance more quickly in the company.

Tighter: College graduates advance more quickly in the company.

Check your draft. If you find these phrases, or any of the unnecessary words shown in Figure 5.4, eliminate them.

b. Combine sentences to eliminate unnecessary words. In addition to saving words, combining sentences focuses the reader's attention on key points, makes your writing sound more sophisticated, and sharpens the relationship between ideas, thus making your writing more coherent.

Wordy: I conducted this survey by telephone on Sunday, April 21. I questioned two groups of upperclass students—male and female—who, according to the Student Directory, were still living in the dorms. The purpose of this survey was to find out why some upperclassstudents continue to live in the dorms even though they are no longer required by the University to do so. I also wanted to find out if there were any differences between male and female upperclass students in their reasons for choosing to remain in the dorms.

Figure 5.4 Words to Cut

Cut the following words	Cut redundant words	Substitute a single word for a wordy phrase	
quite	~~a period of~~ three months	~~at the present time~~	now
really	during ~~the course of~~ the negotiations	~~due to the fact that~~	because
very	during ~~the year of~~ 2004	~~in order to~~	to
	maximum ~~possible~~	~~in the event that~~	if
	~~past~~ experience	~~in the near future~~	soon (or give the date)
	plan ~~in advance~~	~~on a regular basis~~	regularly
	refer ~~back~~	~~prior to the start of~~	before
	~~the color~~ blue	~~until such time as~~	until
	~~the state of~~ Texas		
	~~true~~ facts		

Tighter: On Sunday, April 21, I phoned upperclass men and women living in the dorms to find out (1) why they continue to live in the dorms even though they are no longer required to do so, and (2) whether men and women gave the same reasons.

c. Put the meaning of your sentence into the subject and verb to cut the number of words. Put the core of your meaning into the subject and verb of your main clause.

Wordy: The reason we are recommending the computerization of this process is because it will reduce the time required to obtain data and will give us more accurate data.

Better: Computerizing the process will give us more accurate data more quickly.

Wordy: The purpose of this letter is to indicate that if we are unable to mutually benefit from our seller/buyer relationship, with satisfactory material and satisfactory payment, then we have no alternative other than to sever the relationship. In other words, unless the account is handled in 45 days, we will have to change our terms to a permanent COD basis.

Better: A good buyer/seller relationship depends upon satisfactory material and payment. You can continue to charge your purchases from us only if you clear your present balance in 45 days.

6. Vary sentence length and sentence structure. Readable prose mixes sentence lengths and varies sentence structure. A really short sentence (under 10 words) can add punch to your prose. Really long sentences (over 30 or 40 words) are danger signs. The first-place Golden Gobbledygook Award, in the Legalese Hall of Shame, goes to a four-page, 1,000-word sentence in an indictment filed in Oklahoma.[30]

You can vary sentence patterns in several ways. First, you can mix simple, compound, and complex sentences. (See Appendix B for more information on sentence structure.) **Simple sentences** have one main clause:

We will open a new store this month.

Compound sentences have two main clauses joined with *and, but, or,* or another conjunction. Compound sentences work best when the ideas in the two clauses are closely related.

What's in a Name (4): Names Influence Eating Behaviors

Can renaming a food make it more appealing? Can the name make you eat more? Well, yes, especially if you're dieting.

Researchers called Jelly Belly candies "fruit chews" or "candy chews." Dieters rated "candy chews" as being less tasty than "fruit chews." In addition, dieters consumed 70% more jelly beans when the candies were called "fruit chews" than they did when the candies were called "candy chews."

Adapted from Christopher Shea, "Salad Is a Magic Word," *Wall Street Journal,* April 23–24, 2011, C4.

We have hired staff, and they will complete their training next week.

We wanted to have a local radio station broadcast from the store during its grand opening, but the DJs were already booked.

Complex sentences have one main and one subordinate clause; they are good for showing logical relationships.

When the stores open, we will have specials in every department.

Because we already have a strong customer base in the northwest, we expect the new store to be just as successful as the store in the City Center Mall.

You can also vary sentences by changing the order of elements. Normally the subject comes first.

We will survey customers later in the year to see whether demand warrants a third store on campus.

To create variety, occasionally begin the sentence with some other part of the sentence.

Later in the year, we will survey customers to see whether demand warrants a third store on campus.

Use these guidelines for sentence length and structure:

- Always edit sentences for conciseness. Even a short sentence can be wordy.
- When your subject matter is complicated or full of numbers, make a special effort to keep sentences short.
- Use longer sentences to show how ideas are linked to each other, to avoid a series of short, choppy sentences, and to reduce repetition.
- Group the words in long and medium-length sentences into chunks that the reader can process quickly.
- When you use a long sentence, keep the subject and verb close together.

Let's see how to apply the last three principles.

Use long sentences to show how ideas are linked to each other, to avoid a series of short, choppy sentences, and to reduce repetition. The following sentence is hard to read not simply because it is long but because it is shapeless. Just cutting it into a series of short, choppy sentences doesn't help. The best revision uses medium-length sentences to show the relationship between ideas.

Too long: It should also be noted in the historical patterns presented in the summary, that though there were delays in January and February which we realized were occurring, we are now back where we were about a year ago, and that we are not off line in our collect receivables as compared to last year at this time, but we do show a considerable over-budget figure because of an ultraconservative goal on the receivable investment.

Choppy: There were delays in January and February. We knew about them at the time. We are now back where we were about a year ago. The summary shows this. Our present collect receivables are in line with last year's. However, they exceed the budget. The reason they exceed the budget is that our goal for receivable investment was very conservative.

Better: As the summary shows, although there were delays in January and February (of which we were aware), we have now regained our position of a year ago. Our present collect receivables are in line with last year's, but they exceed the budget because our goal for receivable investment was very conservative.

Group the words in long and medium-length sentences into chunks. The "better" revision above has seven chunks. At 27 and 24 words, respectively, these sentences aren't short, but they're readable because no chunk is longer than 10 words. Any sentence pattern will get boring if it is repeated sentence after sentence. Use different sentence patterns—different kinds and lengths of chunks—to keep your prose interesting.

Keep the subject and verb close together. Often you can move the subject and verb closer together if you put the modifying material in a list at the end of the sentence. For maximum readability, present the list vertically.

Hard to read: Movements resulting from termination, layoffs and leaves, recalls and reinstates, transfers in, transfers out, promotions in, promotions out, and promotions within are presently documented through the Payroll Authorization Form.

Better: The Payroll Authorization Form documents the following movements:

- Termination
- Layoffs and leaves
- Recalls and reinstates
- Transfers in and out
- Promotions in, out, and within

7. Use parallel structure.

Parallel structure puts words, phrases, or clauses in the same grammatical and logical form. In the following faulty example, *by reviewing* is a gerund, while *note* is an imperative verb. Make the sentence parallel by using both gerunds or both imperatives.

Faulty: Errors can be checked by reviewing the daily exception report or note the number of errors you uncover when you match the lading copy with the file copy of the invoice.

Parallel: Errors can be checked by reviewing the daily exception report or by noting the number of errors you uncover when you match the lading copy with the file copy of the invoice.

Also parallel: To check errors, note

1. The number of items on the daily exception report.
2. The number of errors discovered when the lading copy and the file copy are matched.

Note that a list in parallel structure must fit grammatically into the umbrella sentence that introduces the list.

Faulty: The following suggestions can help employers avoid bias in job interviews:

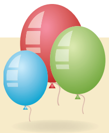
1. Base questions on the job description.
2. Questioning techniques.
3. Selection and training of interviewers.

Parallel: The following suggestions can help employers avoid bias in job interviews:

1. Base questions on the job description.
2. Ask the same questions of all applicants.
3. Select and train interviewers carefully.

Also parallel: Employers can avoid bias in job interviews by

1. Basing questions on the job description.
2. Asking the same questions of all applicants.
3. Selecting and training interviewers carefully.



Limerick Law

Federal Judge Ronald Leighton thought a 465-page lawsuit (the title alone was eight pages) was too long. In a limerick, he demanded a "short and plain" statement of allegations:

Plaintiff has a great deal to say,
But it seems he skipped
Rule 8(a).
His Complaint is too long,
Which renders it wrong,
Please rewrite and refile today.

Adapted from "Nobles & Knaves," *Washington Times,* July 13, 2008, B02.

Words must also be logically parallel. In the following faulty example, *juniors, seniors,* and *athletes* are not three separate groups. The revision groups words into nonoverlapping categories.

Faulty: I interviewed juniors and seniors and athletes.

Parallel: I interviewed juniors and seniors. In each rank, I interviewed athletes and nonathletes.

Parallel structure is a powerful device for making your writing tighter, smoother, and more forceful. As Figure 5.5 shows, parallelism often enables you to tighten your writing. To make your writing as tight as possible, eliminate repetition in parallel lists; see Figure 5.6.

8. Put your readers in your sentences. Use second-person pronouns *(you)* rather than third-person *(he, she, one)* to give your writing more impact. *You* is both singular and plural; it can refer to a single person or to every member of your organization.

Third-person: Funds in a participating employee's account at the end of each six months will automatically be used to buy more stock unless a "Notice of Election Not to Exercise Purchase Rights" form is received from the employee.

Second-person: Once you begin to participate, funds in your account at the end of each six months will automatically be used to buy more stock unless you turn in a "Notice of Election Not to Exercise Purchase Rights" form.

Be careful to use *you* only when it refers to your reader.

Incorrect: My visit with the outside sales rep showed me that your schedule can change quickly.

Correct: My visit with the outside sales rep showed me that schedules can change quickly.

Figure 5.5 Use Parallelism to Tighten Your Writing.

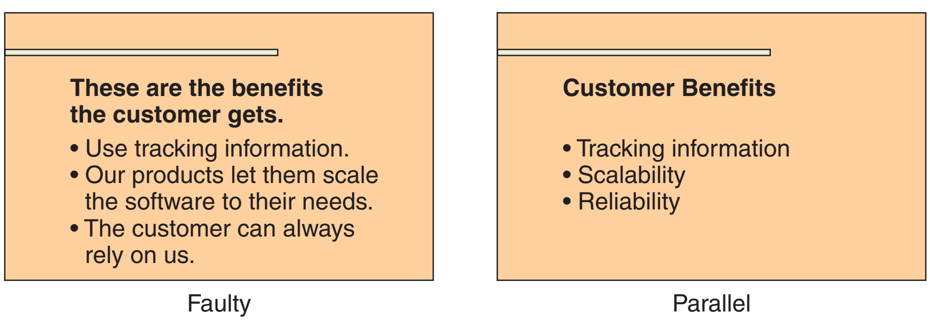
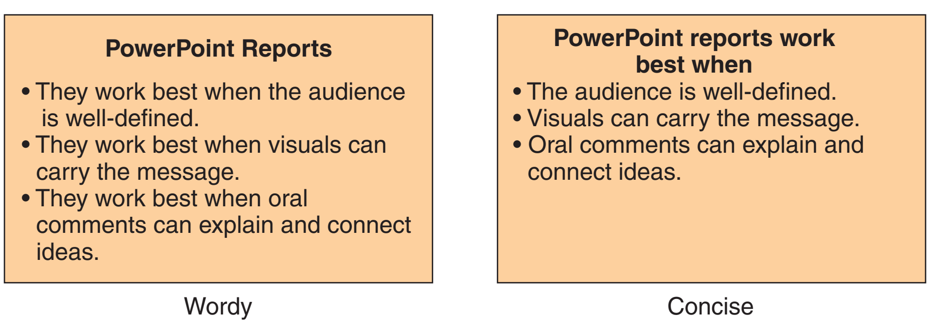


Figure 5.6 Eliminate Repeated Words in Parallel Lists.



As You Write and Revise Paragraphs

Paragraphs are visual and logical units. Use them to chunk your sentences.

9. Begin most paragraphs with topic sentences. A good paragraph has **unity;** that is, it discusses only one idea, or topic. The **topic sentence** states the main idea and provides a scaffold to structure your document. Your writing will be easier to read if you make the topic sentence explicit and put it at the beginning of the paragraph.[31]

Hard to read (no topic sentence):	In fiscal 2012, the company filed claims for refund of federal income taxes of $3,199,000 and interest of $969,000 paid as a result of an examination of the company's federal income tax returns by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for the years 2008 through 2010. It is uncertain what amount, if any, may ultimately be recovered.
Better (paragraph starts with topic sentence):	The company and the IRS disagree about whether the company is responsible for back taxes. In fiscal 2012, the company filed claims for a refund of federal income taxes of $3,199,000 and interest of $969,000 paid as a result of an examination of the company's federal income tax returns by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for the years 2008 through 2010. It is uncertain what amount, if any, may ultimately be recovered.

A good topic sentence forecasts the structure and content of the paragraph.

Plan B also has economic advantages.

(Prepares the reader for a discussion of B's economic advantages.)

We had several personnel changes in June.

(Prepares the reader for a list of the month's terminations and hires.)

Employees have complained about one part of our new policy on parental leaves.

(Prepares the reader for a discussion of the problem.)

When the first sentence of a paragraph is not the topic sentence, readers who skim may miss the main point. If the paragraph does not have a topic sentence, you will need to write one. If you can't think of a single sentence that serves as an "umbrella" to cover every sentence, the paragraph probably lacks unity. To solve the problem, either split the paragraph into two or eliminate the sentence that digresses from the main point.

10. Use transitions to link ideas. Transition words and sentences signal the connections between ideas to the reader. Transitions tell whether the next sentence continues the previous thought or starts a new idea; they can tell whether the idea that comes next is more or less important than the previous thought. Figure 5.7 lists some of the most common transition words and phrases.

These sentences use transition words and phrases:

Kelly wants us to switch the contract to Ames Cleaning, and I agree with her. (continuing the same idea)

Kelly wants us to switch the contract to Ames Cleaning, but I prefer Ross Commercial. (contrasting opinions)

As a result of our differing views, we will be visiting both firms. (showing cause and effect)

Figure 5.7 Transition Words and Phrases

To show addition or continuation of the same idea

and
also
first, second, third
in addition
likewise
similarly

To introduce another important item

furthermore
moreover

To introduce an example

for example (e.g.)
for instance
indeed
to illustrate
namely
specifically

To contrast

in contrast
on the other hand
or

To show that the contrast is more important than the previous idea

but
however
nevertheless
on the contrary

To show cause and effect

as a result
because
consequently
for this reason
therefore

To show time

after
as
before
in the future
next
then
until
when
while

To summarize or end

finally
in conclusion

These are transitional sentences:

Now that we have examined the advantages of using Ames Cleaning, let's look at potential disadvantages. (shows movement between two sections of evaluation)

These pros and cons show us three reasons we should switch to Ross Commercial. (shows movement away from evaluation sections; forecasts the three reasons)

ORGANIZATIONAL PREFERENCES FOR STYLE

Different organizations and bosses may legitimately have different ideas about what constitutes good writing. If the style doesn't seem reasonable, ask. Often the documents that end up in files aren't especially good; later, other workers may find these and copy them, thinking they represent a corporate standard. Bosses may in fact prefer better writing.

Recognize that a style may serve other purposes than communication. An abstract, hard-to-read style may help a group forge its own identity. Researchers James Suchan and Ronald Dulek have shown that Navy officers preferred a passive, impersonal style because they saw themselves as followers. An aircraft company's engineers saw wordiness as the verbal equivalent of backup systems. A backup is redundant but essential to safety, because parts and systems do fail.[32]

Building a good style takes energy and effort, but it's well worth the work. Good style can make every document more effective; good style can help make you the good writer so valuable to every organization.

REVISING, EDITING, AND PROOFREADING LO 5-3

Once you have your document written, you need to polish it.

A popular myth is that Abraham Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg address, perhaps the most famous American presidential speech, on the back of an envelope on the train as he traveled to the battlefield's dedication. The reality is that Lincoln wrote at least a partial draft of the speech before leaving for the trip and continued to revise it up to the morning of its delivery. Furthermore, the speech was on a topic he passionately believed in, one he had been pondering for years.[33]

Writing for International Audiences

When you're writing for readers in another country, be careful to adjust your writing style to the new culture. Even the English language changes when you leave the United States. American spelling in documents for audiences who have learned British English can be annoying to readers. Remember that spelling is cultural, so adjust your writing to suit your readers, even if that means writing *grey, analyse, colour, centre,* and *familiarise.* Adjusting your style and your spelling for international audiences demonstrates respect for their cultures.

If you're adapting your text for an international audience, go beyond a dictionary. Localize your document by asking a native speaker from your target country (or countries) to read the document and note any problematic words, phrases, images, or examples.

Adapted from James Calvert Scott, "American and British Business-Related Spelling Differences," *Business Communication Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2004): 153–67.

Like Lincoln, good writers work on their drafts; they make their documents better by judicious revising, editing, and proofreading.

- **Revising** means making changes in content, organization, and tone that will better satisfy your purposes and your audience.
- **Editing** means making surface-level changes that make the document grammatically correct.
- **Proofreading** means checking to be sure the document is free from typographical errors.

What to Look for When You Revise

When you're writing to a new audience or have to solve a particularly difficult problem, plan to revise the draft at least three times. The first time, look for content and clarity: Have I said enough and have I said it clearly? The second time, check the organization and layout: Have I presented my content so it can be easily absorbed? Finally, check style and tone: Have I used you-attitude? The Thorough Revision Checklist summarizes the questions you should ask.

Often you'll get the best revision by setting aside your draft, getting a blank page or screen, and redrafting. This strategy takes advantage of the thinking you did on your first draft without locking you into the sentences in it.

As you revise, be sure to read the document through from start to finish. This is particularly important if you've composed in several sittings or if you've used text from other documents. Such documents tend to be choppy, repetitious, or inconsistent. You may need to add transitions, cut repetitive parts, or change words to create a uniform level of formality throughout the document.

If you're really in a time bind, do a light revision, as outlined in the Light Revision Checklist. The quality of the final document may not be as high as with a thorough revision, but even a light revision is better than skipping revision altogether.

When Words Hurt

In the summer of 2006, a large, midwestern state university was gearing up to host the first national Special Olympics, a competition featuring people with intellectual disabilities. Visitors would be arriving from all over the country, and the small university town wanted to put on its best face for the crowds. The student newspaper created a 14-page, full-color visitors' guide to the town and inserted it into the campus paper. Unfortunately, they named it "[Name of Town] for Dummies" after the popular book series.

The editor-in-chief quickly apologized for the insensitive word choice, while the newspaper removed the inserts and replaced them with reprinted publications featuring a new headline.

Adapted from Lisa Rossi, "Olympics Section Goof Sends Paper Running," *Des Moines Register*, July 1, 2006, 1A, 4A.

Sometimes revising and proofreading is more pleasant if done in an informal setting.

Revisioning a Novel

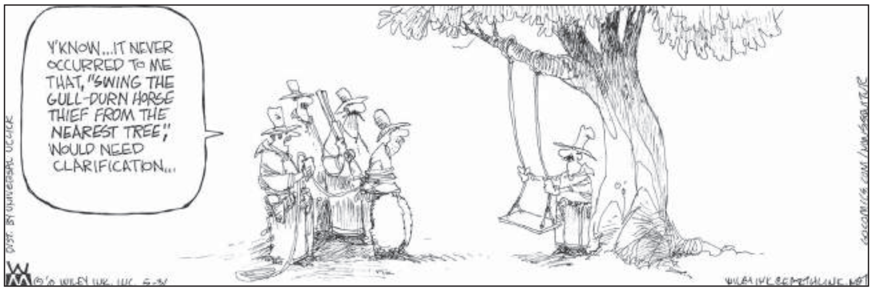
Michael Chabon is a Pulitzer Prize author. And his novel, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, had a blurb in his publisher's sales catalog plus an on-sale date when his editor made him revise it.

He spent eight months reworking the entire book, adding a flashback structure and paring down the language.

Altogether, he spent five years and four drafts working on the novel. In the process, he moved to a different plot and changed from a first-person to a third-person narrator. His editor sent him detailed notes in the margins of the drafts. On the final draft, she went over the manuscript page by page with him.

The novel won both Hugo and Nebula awards, science fiction's highest awards.

Adapted from Sam Schechner, "Chabon's Amazing Rewrite Adventures," *Wall Street Journal,* April 27, 2007, W3.



Checklist Thorough Revision Checklist

Content and clarity

- ☐ Does your document meet the needs of the organization and of the reader—and make you look good?
- ☐ Have you given readers all the information they need to understand and act on your message?
- ☐ Is all the information accurate and clear?
- ☐ Is the message easy to read?
- ☐ Is each sentence clear? Is the message free from apparently contradictory statements?
- ☐ Is the logic clear and convincing? Are generalizations and benefits backed up with adequate supporting detail?

Organization and layout

- ☐ Is the pattern of organization clear? Is it appropriate for your purposes, audience, and context?
- ☐ Are transitions between ideas smooth? Do ideas within paragraphs flow smoothly?
- ☐ Does the design of the document make it easy for readers to find the information they need? Is the document visually inviting?
- ☐ Are the points emphasized by layout ones that deserve emphasis?
- ☐ Are the first and last paragraphs effective?

Style and tone

- ☐ Does the message use you-attitude and positive emphasis?
- ☐ Is the message friendly and free from sexist language?
- ☐ Does the message build goodwill?

Checklist Light Revision Checklist

- ☐ Have you given readers all the information they need to understand and act on your message?
- ☐ Is the pattern of organization clear and helpful?
- ☐ Is the logic clear and convincing? Are generalizations and benefits backed up with adequate supporting detail?
- ☐ Does the design of the document make it easy for readers to find the information they need?
- ☐ Are the first and last paragraphs effective?

What to Look for When You Edit

Even good writers need to edit, since no one can pay attention to surface correctness while thinking of ideas. Editing should always *follow* revision. There's no point in taking time to fix a grammatical error in a sentence that may be cut when you clarify your meaning or tighten your style. Some writers edit more accurately when they print out a copy of a document and edit the hard copy.

Check your material to make sure you have acknowledged all information and opinions you have borrowed from outside the organization (see Chapter 18 for help on documentation). Using material from outside the organization without acknowledging the source is plagiarism. Even when you use company information, you may need to acknowledge the source if your audience is skeptical or generally not aware of the existence of the information.

Check your communication to make sure your sentences say what you intend.

Not: Take a moment not to sign your policy.

But: Take a moment now to sign your policy.

Not: I wish to apply for the job as assistant manger.

But: I wish to apply for the job as assistant manager.

An extra "not" caused Arkansas to accidentally pass a law allowing its citizens of any age, even children, to marry if their parents agreed. The unintended law said this:

> In order for a person who is younger than eighteen (18) years of age and who is not pregnant to obtain a marriage license, the person must provide the county clerk with evidence of parental consent to the marriage.[34]

Walden O'Dell, former CEO of Diebold, an Ohio manufacturer of ATMs and other machines, wrote in a fund-raising letter for President Bush that he was "committed to helping Ohio deliver its electoral votes to the president." That wording raised ethics questions because Diebold makes voting machines.[35]

When you edit, you also need to check that the following are accurate:

- Sentence structure.
- Subject–verb and noun–pronoun agreement.
- Punctuation.
- Word usage.
- Spelling—including spelling of names.
- Numbers.

You also need to know the rules of grammar and punctuation to edit. Errors such as sentence fragments and run-on sentences disturb most educated readers and make them wonder what other mistakes you might be making. Errors in punctuation can change the meaning of a sentence. Lynne Truss, author of the *New York Times* bestseller on punctuation *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, offers "a popular 'Dear Jack' letter" to show the need for care:[36]

> Dear Jack,
> I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy—will you let me be yours?
>
> Jill

Résumé Proofreading Errors

- "Position Desired: Profreader." It doesn't look good. . .
- "Skills: Familiar with all faucets of accounting." Accountant by day, plumber by night.
- "Resume Section Title: Educatio" You're "n" trouble.
- "Experience: Detailed-oriented saleman." We have our doubts.
- "Experience: Demonstrated ability in multi-tasting." You'll love our vending machine.
- "Carrier Objective: To become a manager." A man on the move.
- "Languages: Speak English and Spinach." Must be what they teach at the culinary academy.
- "Awards/Accomplishments: Dum major with my high school band." Don't be so hard on yourself.
- "Experience: Child care provider: Organized activities; prepared lunches and snakes." Probably best to stick with graham crackers and milk.

Quoted from "Cover Letter Statements," Robert Half International, accessed March 20, 2011, http://www.resumania.com/ResumaniaArchive.

The Cost of a Typo

Most small proofreading errors are embarrassing to a company. Some errors, though still small, can be very costly and even dangerous. In February 2011, Johnson & Johnson recalled more than 667,000 packages of Sudafed because of an error on the directions. Instead of the standard warning, each of the packages instructed users "do not *not* divide, crush, chew, or dissolve the tablet."

Although no accidents or problems were reported from the incorrect instructions, the one repeated word cost the company time, money, and some of its reputation for quality. Not every typo requires a recall, but any one can be costly.

Adapted from Melly Alazraki, "Johnson & Johnson Recalls Sudafed Because of a Typo," February 25, 2011, http://www.dailyfinance.com/2011/02/25/johnson-and-johnson-recalls-sudafed-because-of-a-typo/.

Dear Jack,
I want a man who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people, who are not like you. Admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me. For other men I yearn! For you I have no feelings whatsoever. When we're apart I can be forever happy. Will you let me be? Yours,

Jill

Writers with a good command of grammar and mechanics can do a better job than the computer grammar checkers currently available. But even good writers sometimes use a good grammar handbook for reference. On the other hand, even good editors—such as Bill Walsh, Copy Desk Chief for the Business Desk of the *Washington Post*—warn writers that handbooks should be used with a clear goal of clarifying text, not blindly following rules.[37]

Appendix B reviews grammar and punctuation, numbers, and words that are often confused.

Most writers make a small number of errors over and over. If you know that you have trouble with dangling modifiers or subject–verb agreement, for example, specifically look for them in your draft. Also look for any errors that especially bother your boss and correct them.

How to Catch Typos

To catch typos use a spell-checker. But you still need to proofread by eye. Spell checkers work by matching words; they will signal any group of letters not listed in their dictionaries. However, they cannot tell you when you've used the wrong word but spelled it correctly.

Don't underestimate the harm that spelling errors can create. A large, midwestern university lost its yearbook after an uncaught typo referred to the Greek community as the "geeks on campus." Greeks boycotted the yearbook, which went deeply into debt and out of business. The impact of typos on job documents is well-known (see sidebar on this page for example). Proofread every document both with a spell checker and by eye, to catch the errors a spell checker can't find.

Proofreading is hard because writers tend to see what they know should be there rather than what really is there. Since it's always easier to proof something you haven't written, you may want to swap papers with a proofing buddy. (Be sure the person looks for typos, not content.)

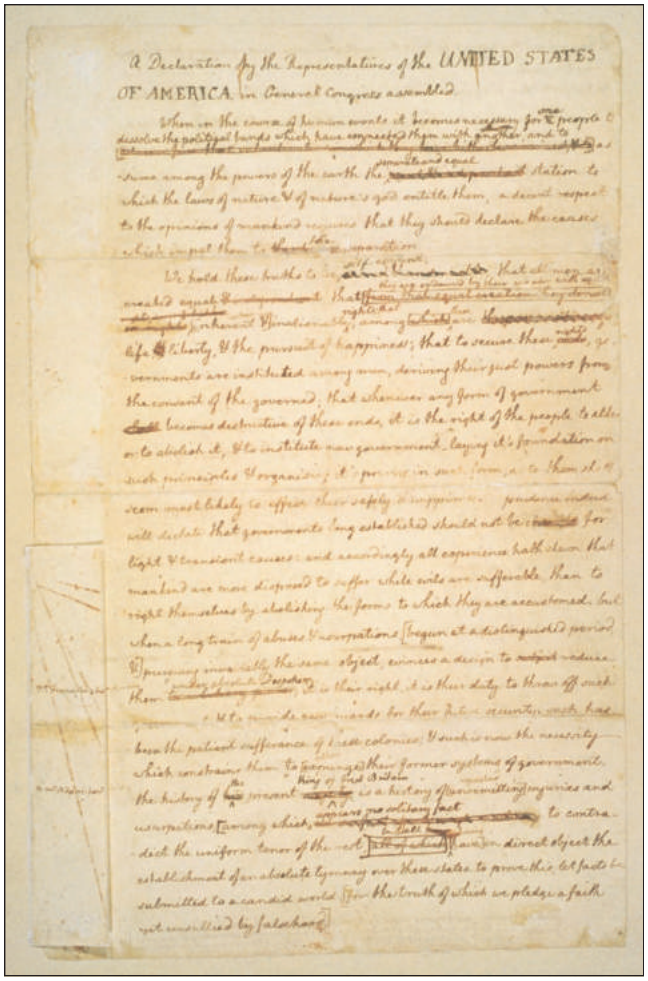
To proofread,

- Read once quickly for meaning, to see that nothing has been left out.
- Read a second time, slowly. When you find an error, correct it and then *re-read that line.* Readers tend to become less attentive after they find one error and may miss other errors close to the one they've spotted.
- To proofread a document you know well, read the lines backward or the pages out of order.

Always triple-check numbers, headings, the first and last paragraphs, and the reader's name.

GETTING AND USING FEEDBACK

Getting feedback almost always improves a document. In many organizations, it's required. All external documents must be read and approved before they go out. The process of drafting, getting feedback, revising, and getting



Even history-shaping documents, like the Declaration of Independence, become better with editing.

more feedback is called **cycling.** One researcher reported that documents in her clients' firms cycled an average of 4.2 times before reaching the intended audience.[38] Another researcher studied a major 10-page document whose 20 drafts made a total of 31 stops on the desks of nine reviewers on four different levels.[39] Being asked to revise a document is a fact of life in business.

You can improve the quality of the feedback you get by telling people which aspects you'd especially like comments about. For example, when you give a reader the outline or planning draft, you probably want to know whether the general approach and content are appropriate, and if you have included all major points. After your second draft, you might want to know whether the reasoning is convincing. When you reach the polishing draft, you'll be ready for feedback on style and grammar. The Checklist on the next page lists questions to ask.

It's easy to feel defensive when someone criticizes your work. If the feedback stings, put it aside until you can read it without feeling defensive. Even if you think that the reader hasn't understood what you were trying to say, the fact that the reader complained usually means the section could be improved. If the reader says "This isn't true" and you know the statement is true, several kinds of revision might make the truth clear to the reader: rephrasing the statement, giving more information or examples, or documenting the source.

Too Much Feeback?

When college admissions officers review applications, part of the information they consider is the personal essay. Now students are getting help on those essays.

A thriving industry has grown up around the college essay. Numerous books, websites, and training seminars have been developed to help students write college essays that will win them admission into their college of choice. None of the sources actually write the essay, but all offer advice, suggestions, and examples to help students craft their own papers.

People in the new industry claim they are doing nothing wrong. After all, parents have always been able to help their children write and revise their applications. The new industry also blames the universities for creating the demand for writing assistance. Yet admissions officers worry that the college essay industry is doing more harm than good. They note that the prep services lead to formulaic essays that look prepped and may not match the information on the application form. Outstanding essays may not be matched by writing and verbal skills scores. Plagiarism site Turnitin.com says 11% of the admissions essays it checked contained at least one-quarter unoriginal material. Other critics claim that the costly services put students who cannot afford the extra help at a disadvantage.

What do you think? Are the essay prep services ethical?

Adapted from June Kronholz, "Perfect College Essay Takes Lots of Practice—and Extra Help," *Wall Street Journal,* July 11, 2005, A1, A8; and "The Admissions Police," *Wall Street Journal,* April 6, 2007, W1, W10.

Your Edits May Be Showing

"When SCO Group, a litigious Lindon (Utah) software company, filed a breach of contract suit in Michigan against Daimler Chrysler[, . . . a] CNET News reporter, poking through the Microsoft Word filing, discovered that the case had originally been drawn up as a suit against Bank of America in a California court. . . .

"[H]idden in a Word, Excel, or PowerPoint file may [be] the names of the author and anyone who edited the document, reviewers' comments, . . . and deleted text. . . .

"A *Wired News* analysis of a Word document circulated by California Attorney General Bill Lockyer urging other attorneys to crack down on file-sharing showed that the text had been edited or reviewed by an official of the Motion Picture Association of America. . . .

"Nearly every business exchanges electronic documents with partners, competitors, and customers. . . . [To remove sensitive information,] select "Track Changes" from the tools menu and view the document as "Final Showing Markup." Make sure that all your changes have been either accepted or rejected by the program—a step that removes the tracking information. And make sure all versions but the last have been deleted."

Quoted from Stephen H. Wildstrom, "Don't Let Word Give Away Your Secrets," *BusinessWeek*, April 19, 2004, 26.

Reading feedback carefully is a good way to understand the culture of your organization. Are you told to give more details or to shorten messages? Does your boss add headings and bullet points? Look for patterns in the comments, and apply what you learn in your next document.

USING BOILERPLATE

Boilerplate is language—sentences, paragraphs, even pages—from a previous document that a writer legitimately includes in a new document. In academic papers, material written by others must be quoted and documented—to neglect to do so would be plagiarism. However, because businesses own the documents their employees write, old text may be included without attribution.

Many legal documents, including apartment leases and sales contracts, are almost completely boilerplated. Writers may also use boilerplate they wrote for earlier documents. For example, a section from a proposal describing the background of the problem could also be used in the final report. A section from a progress report describing what the writer had done could be used with only a few changes in the methods section of the final report.

Writers use boilerplate both to save time and energy and to use language that has already been approved by the organization's legal staff. However, research has shown that using boilerplate creates two problems.[40] First, using unrevised boilerplate can create a document with incompatible styles and tones. Second, boilerplate can allow writers to ignore subtle differences in situations and audiences.

READABILITY FORMULAS

Readability formulas attempt to measure objectively how easy something is to read. However, since they don't take many factors into account, the formulas are at best a very limited guide to good style.

Computer packages that analyze style may give you a readability score. Some states' "plain English" laws require consumer contracts to meet a certain readability score. Some companies require that warranties and other consumer documents meet certain scores.

Readability formulas depend heavily on word length and sentence length. See the BAC website to calculate readability using the two best-known readability formulas: the Gunning Fog Index and the Flesch Reading Ease Scale. Research has shown,[41] however, that using shorter words and sentences will not necessarily make a passage easy to read. Short words are not always easy to understand, especially if they have technical meanings (e.g., *waive, bear market, liquid*). Short, choppy sentences and sentence fragments are actually harder to understand than well-written medium-length sentences.

No reading formula yet devised takes into account three factors that influence how easy a text is to read: the complexity of the ideas, the organization of the ideas, and the layout and design of the document.

Instead of using readability formulas, test your draft with the people for whom it is designed. How long does it take them to find the information they need? Do they make mistakes when they try to use the document? Do they think the writing is easy to understand? Answers to these questions can give much more accurate information than any readability score.

Checklist Questions to Ask Readers

Outline or planning draft

- ☐ Does the plan seem on the right track?
- ☐ What topics should be added? Should any be cut?
- ☐ Do you have any other general suggestions?

Revising draft

- ☐ Does the message satisfy all its purposes?
- ☐ Is the message adapted to the audience(s)?
- ☐ Is the organization effective?
- ☐ What parts aren't clear?
- ☐ What ideas need further development and support?
- ☐ Do you have any other suggestions?

Polishing draft

- ☐ Are there any problems with word choice or sentence structure?
- ☐ Did you find any inconsistencies?
- ☐ Did you find any typos?
- ☐ Is the document's design effective?

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Processes that help writers write well include not expecting the first draft to be perfect, writing regularly, modifying the initial task if it's too hard or too easy, having clear goals, knowing many different strategies, using rules as guidelines rather than as absolutes, and waiting to edit until after the draft is complete.
- Writing processes can include many activities: planning, gathering, brainstorming, organizing, writing, evaluating, getting feedback, revising, editing, and proofreading. **Revising** means changing the document to make it better satisfy the writer's purposes and the audience. **Editing** means making surface-level changes that make the document grammatically correct. **Proofreading** means checking to be sure the document is free from typographical errors. The activities do not have to come in any set order. It is not necessary to finish one activity to start another. Most writers use all activities only when they write a document whose genre, subject matter, or audience is new to them.
- To think of ideas, try **brainstorming, freewriting** (writing without stopping for 10 minutes or so), and **clustering** (brainstorming with circled words on a page).
- Good style in business and administrative writing is less formal, more friendly, and more personal than the style usually used for term papers.
- Use the following techniques to make your writing easier to read.

  As you choose words,

  1. Use words that are accurate, appropriate, and familiar. Denotation is a word's literal meaning; connotation is the emotional coloring that a word conveys.
  2. Use technical jargon sparingly; eliminate business jargon.

As you write and revise sentences,

3. Use active voice most of the time. Active voice is better because it is shorter, clearer, and more interesting.
4. Use verbs—not nouns—to carry the weight of your sentence.
5. Eliminate wordiness. Writing is wordy if the same idea can be expressed in fewer words.
   a. Eliminate words that add nothing.
   b. Combine sentences to eliminate unnecessary words.
   c. Put the meaning of your sentence into the subject and verb to cut the number of words.
6. Vary sentence length and sentence structure.
7. Use parallel structure. Use the same grammatical form for ideas that have the same logical function.
8. Put your readers in your sentences.

As you write and revise paragraphs,

9. Begin most paragraphs with topic sentences so that readers know what to expect in the paragraph.
10. Use transitions to link ideas.

- If the writing situation is new or difficult, plan to revise the draft at least three times. The first time, look for content and completeness. The second time, check the organization, layout, and reasoning. Finally, check style and tone.

CHAPTER 5 Exercises and Problems

Go to www.mhhe.com/locker10e for additional Exercises and Problems.

5.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. What are some techniques of good writers? Which ones do you use regularly? (LO 5-1–3)
2. What are ways to get ideas for a specific communication? (LO 5-1)
3. What activities are part of the composing process? Which one should you be doing more often or more carefully in your writing? (LO 5-1)
4. What are some half-truths about style? (LO 5-2)
5. What are some ways you can make your sentences more effective? (LO 5-2)
6. What are some ways you can make your paragraphs more effective? (LO 5-2)
7. How can you adapt good style to organization preferences? (LO 5-2)
8. How do revising, editing, and proofreading differ? Which one do you personally need to do more carefully? (LO 5-3)
9. How can you get better feedback on your writing? (LO 5-3)

5.2 Interviewing Writers about Their Composing Processes

Interview someone about the composing process(es) he or she uses for on-the-job writing. Questions you could ask include the following:

- What kind of planning do you do before you write? Do you make lists? formal or informal outlines?
- When you need more information, where do you get it?
- How do you compose your drafts? Do you dictate? Draft with pen and paper? Compose on screen? How do you find uninterrupted time to compose?
- When you want advice about style, grammar, and spelling, what source(s) do you consult?
- Does your superior ever read your drafts and make suggestions?
- Do you ever work with other writers to produce a single document? Describe the process you use.
- Describe the process of creating a document where you felt the final document reflected your best work. Describe the process of creating a document you found difficult or frustrating. What sorts of things make writing easier or harder for you?

As your instructor directs,

a. Share your results orally with a small group of students.
b. Present your results in an oral presentation to the class.
c. Present your results in a memo to your instructor.
d. Share your results with a small group of students and write a joint memo reporting the similarities and differences you found.

5.3 Analyzing Your Own Writing Processes

Save your notes and drafts from several assignments so that you can answer the following questions:

- Which practices of good writers do you follow?
- Which of the activities discussed in Chapter 5 do you use?
- How much time do you spend on each of the activities?
- What kinds of revisions do you make most often?
- Do you use different processes for different documents, or do you have one process that you use most of the time?
- What parts of your process seem most successful? Are there any places in the process that could be improved? How?
- What relation do you see between the process(es) you use and the quality of the final document?

As your instructor directs,

a. Discuss your process with a small group of other students.
b. Write a memo to your instructor analyzing in detail your process for composing one of the papers for this class.
c. Write a memo to your instructor analyzing your process during the term. What parts of your process(es) have stayed the same throughout the term? What parts have changed?

5.4 Identifying Words with Multiple Denotations

a. Each of the following words has several denotations. How many can you list without going to a dictionary? How many additional meanings does a good dictionary list?

browser	log	see
court	table	check

b. List five other words that have multiple denotations.

5.5 Evaluating the Ethical Implication of Connotations

In each of the following pairs, identify the more favorable term. When is its use justifiable?

1. wasted/sacrificed
2. illegal alien/immigrant
3. friendly fire/enemy attack
4. terminate/fire
5. inaccuracy/lying
6. budget/spending plan
7. feedback/criticism

5.6 Correcting Errors in Denotation and Connotation

Identify and correct the errors in denotation or connotation in the following sentences:

1. In our group, we weeded out the best idea each person had thought of.
2. She is a prudent speculator.
3. The three proposals are diametrically opposed to each other.
4. While he researched companies, he was literally glued to the web.
5. Our backpacks are hand sewn by one of roughly 16 individuals.
6. Raj flaunted the law against insider trading.

5.7 Using Connotations to Shape Response

Write two sentences to describe each of the following situations. In one sentence, use words with positive connotations; in the other, use negative words.

1. Chris doesn't spend time on small talk.
2. Chris often starts work on a new project without being told to do so.
3. As a supervisor, Chris gives very specific instructions to subordinates.

5.8 Choosing Levels of Formality

Identify the more formal word in each pair. Which term is better for most business documents? Why?

1. adapted to	geared to
2. befuddled	confused
3. assistant	helper
4. pilot project	testing the waters
5. cogitate	think

5.9 Eliminating Jargon and Simplifying Language

Revise these sentences to eliminate jargon and to use short, familiar words.

1. When the automobile company announced its strategic downsizing initiative, it offered employees a career alternative enhancement program.
2. Any alterations must be approved during the 30-day period commencing 60 days prior to the expiration date of the agreement.
3. As per your request, the undersigned has obtained estimates of upgrading our computer system. A copy of the estimated cost is attached hereto.
4. Please be advised that this writer is in considerable need of a new computer.
5. Enclosed please find the proposed draft for the employee negative retention plan. In the event that you have alterations which you would like to suggest, forward same to my office at your earliest convenience.

5.10 Changing Verbs from Passive to Active Voice

Identify passive voice in the following sentences and convert it to active voice. In some cases, you may need to add information to do so. You may use different words as long as you retain the basic meaning of the sentence. Remember that imperative verbs are active voice, too.

1. For a customer to apply for benefits, an application must be completed.
2. The cost of delivering financial services is being slashed by computers, the Internet, and toll-free phone lines.
3. When the vacation schedule is finalized it is recommended that it be routed to all supervisors for final approval.
4. As stated in my résumé, I have designed web pages for three student organizations.
5. Material must not be left on trucks outside the warehouse. Either the trucks must be parked inside the warehouse or the material must be unloaded at the time of receiving the truck.

5.11 Using Strong Verbs

Revise each of the following sentences to replace hidden verbs with action verbs.

1. An understanding of stocks and bonds is important if one wants to invest wisely.
2. We must undertake a calculation of expected revenues and expenses for the next two years.
3. The production of clear and concise documents is the mark of a successful communicator.
4. We hope to make use of the company's website to promote the new product line.
5. If you wish to be eligible for the Miller scholarship, you must complete an application by January 31.
6. When you make an evaluation of media buys, take into consideration the demographics of the group seeing the ad.
7. We provide assistance to clients in the process of reaching a decision about the purchase of hardware and software.

5.12 Reducing Wordiness

1. Eliminate words that say nothing. You may use different words.
   a. There are many businesses that are active in community and service work.
   b. The purchase of a new computer will allow us to produce form letters quickly. In addition, return on investment could be calculated for proposed repairs. Another use is that the computer could check databases to make sure that claims are paid only once.
   c. Our decision to enter the South American market has precedence in the past activities of the company.
2. Combine sentences to show how ideas are related and to eliminate unnecessary words.
   a. Some customers are profitable for companies. Other customers actually cost the company money.
   b. If you are unable to come to the session on HMOs, please call the human resources office. You will be able to schedule another time to ask questions you may have about the various options.
   c. Major Japanese firms often have employees who know English well. U.S. companies negotiating with Japanese companies should bring their own interpreters.

5.13 Improving Parallel Structure

Revise each of the following sentences to create parallelism.

1. The orientation session will cover the following information:
   - Company culture will be discussed.
   - How to use the equipment.
   - You will get an overview of key customers' needs.
2. Five criteria for a good web page are content that serves the various audiences, attention to details, and originality. It is also important to have effective organization and navigation devices. Finally, provide attention to details such as revision date and the webmaster's address.
3. When you leave a voicemail message,
   - Summarize your main point in a sentence or two.
   - The name and phone number should be given slowly and distinctly.
   - The speaker should give enough information so that the recipient can act on the message.
   - Tell when you'll be available to receive the recipient's return call.

5.14 Putting Readers in Your Sentences

Revise each of the following sentences to put readers in them. As you revise, use active voice and simple words.

1. Mutual funds can be purchased from banks, brokers, financial planners, or from the fund itself.
2. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you back to Global Wireless. As a previous customer we have outstanding new rate plans to offer you and your family. We invite you to review the rate plans on the attached page and choose the one that best fits your needs. All our customers are important to us.
3. Another aspect of the university is campus life, with an assortment of activities and student groups to participate in and lectures and sports events to attend.

5.15 Editing Sentences to Improve Style

Revise these sentences to make them smoother, less wordy, and easier to read. Eliminate jargon and repetition. Keep the information; you may reword or reorganize it. If the original is not clear, you may need to add information to write a clear revision.

1. There are many different topics that you will read about on a monthly basis once you subscribe to *Inc.*
2. With the new organic fertilizer, you'll see an increase in the quality of your tomatoes and the number grown.
3. New procedure for customer service employees: Please be aware effective immediately, if a customer is requesting a refund of funds applied to their account a front and back copy of the check must be submitted if the transaction is over $500.00. For example, if the customer is requesting $250.00 back, and the total amount of the transaction is $750.00, a front and back copy of the check will be needed to obtain the refund.

4. The county will benefit from implementing flextime.
   - Offices will stay open longer for more business.
   - Staff turnover will be lower.
   - Easier business communication with states in other time zones.
   - Increased employee productivity.
5. There is a seasonality factor in the workload, with the heaviest being immediately prior to quarterly due dates for estimated tax payments.

5.16 Practicing Plain Language

Working with a partner, create three sentences that feature problematic elements that mask meaning.

- Sentence 1: wordiness and/or euphemisms
- Sentence 2: jargon from your field of study
- Sentence 3: words with multiple denotations or connotations

Then exchange your sentences with another team and rewrite their sentences into plain language.

5.17 Using Topic Sentences

Make each of the following paragraphs more readable by opening each paragraph with a topic sentence. You may be able to find a topic sentence in the paragraph and move it to the beginning. In other cases, you'll need to write a new sentence.

1. At Disney World, a lunch put on an expense account is "on the mouse." McDonald's employees "have ketchup in their veins." Business slang flourishes at companies with rich corporate cultures. Memos at Procter & Gamble are called "reco's" because the model P&G memo begins with a recommendation.
2. The first item on the agenda is the hiring for the coming year. George has also asked that we review the agency goals for the next fiscal year. We should cover this early in the meeting since it may affect our hiring preferences. Finally, we need to announce the deadlines for grant proposals, decide which grants to apply for, and set up a committee to draft each proposal.
3. Separate materials that can be recycled from your regular trash. Pass along old clothing, toys, or appliances to someone else who can use them. When you purchase products, choose those with minimal packaging. If you have a yard, put your yard waste and kitchen scraps (excluding meat and fat) in a compost pile. You can reduce the amount of solid waste your household produces in four ways.

5.18 Revising Paragraphs

Revise each paragraph to make it easier to read. Change, rearrange, or delete words and sentences; add any material necessary.

a. Once a new employee is hired, each one has to be trained for a week by one of our supervisors at a cost of $1,000 each which includes the supervisor's time. This amount also includes half of the new employee's salary, since new hires produce only half the normal production per worker for the week. This summer $24,000 was spent in training 24 new employees. Absenteeism increased in the department on the hottest summer days. For every day each worker is absent we lose $200 in lost production. This past summer there was a total of 56 absentee days taken for a total loss of $11,200 in lost production. Turnover and absenteeism were the causes of an unnecessary expenditure of over $35,000 this summer.

b. One service is investments. General financial news and alerts about companies in the customer's portfolio are available. Quicken also provides assistance in finding the best mortgage rate and in providing assistance in making the decision whether to refinance a mortgage. Another service from Quicken is advice for the start and management of a small business. Banking services, such as paying bills and applying for loans, have long been available to Quicken subscribers. The taxpayer can be walked through the tax preparation process by Quicken. Someone considering retirement can use Quicken to ascertain whether the amount being set aside for this purpose is sufficient. Quicken's website provides seven services.

5.19 Revising, Editing, and Proofreading a Letter

Dana Shomacher, an enthusiastic new hire of six months at Bear Foods, wants Stan Smith, regional head of HR at the grocery chain, to allow her to organize and publicize a food drive for Coastal Food Pantry. Revise, edit, and proof her memo.

> Hey Stan,
>
> I have this great idea for great publicity for Bear Foods that won't cost anything and will get us some really great publicity. Its something great we can do for our community. I wont Bear to conduct a food drive for Coastal Food Pantry. Their was an article in the Tribune about how they were having trouble keeping up with food requests and I thought what a great fit it would be for Bear.
>
> All our employees should donate food and we should also get our customer to donate also. We could set out some shopping carts for the donations. I could write an announcement for the Tribune and get some postures made for our front windows.
>
> I am willing to take care of all details so you won't have to do anything except say yes to this memo.
>
> Dana

After you have fixed Dana's memo, answer these questions in a memo to your instructor.

- What revisions did you make? Why?
- Many grocery stores already contribute to local food pantries. In addition to some staples, they provide items such as bakery goods that are past their sale date but still quite tasty, sacks for bagging groceries at the pantry, and even shopping carts to transport groceries to the cars of pantry clients. If Bear already contributes to Coastal, how should that fact change the content of Dana's memo?
- What edits did you make? Why?
- What impression do you think this letter made on the head of human resources? Explain. Do you think he granted Dana's request? Why or why not?

Submit both your version of Dana's memo and your analysis memo.

5.20 Writing Paragraphs

As your instructor directs, write a paragraph on one or more of the following topics.

a. Discuss your ideal job.
b. Summarize a recent article from a business magazine or newspaper.
c. Explain how technology is affecting the field you plan to enter.
d. Explain why you have or have not decided to work while you attend college.
e. Write a profile of someone who is successful in the field you hope to enter.

As your instructor directs,

a. Label topic sentences, active voice, and parallel structure.
b. Edit a classmate's paragraphs to make the writing even tighter and smoother.

5.21 Identifying Buzzwords and Jargon

This is an actual press release published in the *Des Moines Register* with an article on buzzwords.

> Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., the largest private employer with more than 1.8 million employees and the largest corporate mover of people, selected Capital Relocation Services as the sole source provider for the implementation of its Tier III and Tier IV relocation programs. These two programs account for the vast majority of the company's

relocations. Capital was awarded the business following an intensive RFP and due diligence process.

"We're very excited about the synergy that Wal-Mart's selection of Capital brings to both companies," commented Mickey Williams, Capital's CEO. "We are also pleased to welcome to Capital the existing Wal-Mart PMP Relocation team that has been on-site at Wal-Mart's Bentonville headquarters for 14 years. They will continue to serve Wal-Mart and Sam's Club's Associates and will have an active role in the implementation of the new policy."

"What really enabled us to stand out was our focus on the strategic results Wal-Mart was looking for, and connecting that to their relocation program," added Williams. "Additionally, we demonstrated what would need to be done to achieve those results."

Mr. Williams continued, "Several years ago, we realized that traditional relocation solutions weren't enough. The challenge was that relocation management had become a logistics focused straightjacket. The emphasis was on efficiency and not on effectiveness. In a time of unprecedented change, relocation management programs were becoming increasingly inflexible."

"We realized that our continued success required us to stop thinking of ourselves solely as a relocation management company—we had to start thinking and acting as a talent management support company; after all that is the underlying purpose of relocation management in the first place. Wal-Mart's selection of Capital is a big confirmation that our approach is the right one."

Now answer these questions:

1. What is this press release about? What is it saying?
2. Why did Capital Relocation Services get the new contract?
3. Underline the buzzwords and jargon in the press release. What do these words do in the press release?
4. What is the purpose of this press release? Does it meet its purpose? Why or why not?

Write a memo to your instructor evaluating the press release as an effective document.

Source: Larry Ballard, "Decipher a Honcho's Buzzwords, Such as 'Unsiloing,'" *Des Moines Register,* January 21, 2008, 1D

5.22 Checking Spelling and Grammar Checkers

Each of the following paragraphs contains errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Which errors does your spelling or grammar checker catch? Which errors does it miss? Does it flag as errors any words that are correct?

a. Answer to an Inquiry

   Enclosed are the tow copies you requested of our pamphlet, "Using the Internet to market Your products. The pamphelt walks you through the steps of planning the Home Page (The first page of the web cite, shows examples of other web pages we have designed, and provide a questionaire that you can use to analyze audience the audience and purposes."

b. Performance Appraisal

   Most staff accountants complete three audits a month. Ellen has completed 21 audits in this past six months she is our most productive staff accountant. Her technical skills our very good however some clients feel that she could be more tactful in suggesting ways that the clients accounting practices courld be improved.

c. Brochure

   Are you finding that being your own boss crates it's own problems? Take the hassle out of working at home with a VoiceMail Answering System. Its almost as good as having your own secratery.

d. Presentation Slide

How to Create a Web Résumé

- Omit home adress and phone number
- Use other links only if they help an employer evaluate you.
  - Be Professional.
  - Carefully craft and proof read the phrase on the index apage.

5.23 Revising Documents using "Track Changes"

"Track Changes" is a feature in some word processors that records alterations made to a document. It is particularly useful when you are collaborating with a colleague to create, edit, or revise documents. Track Changes will highlight any text that has been added or deleted to your document but it also allows you to decide, for each change, whether to accept the suggestion or reject it and return to your original text. In addition to Track Changes, many word processors include a comment feature that allows you to ask questions or make suggestions without altering the text itself.

For this exercise, you will electronically exchange a document with one of your classmates. With the Track Changes feature turned on, you will review each other's documents, make comments or ask questions, insert additions, and make deletions to improve the writing, and then revise your work based upon the changes and comments.

As your instructor directs, select the electronic file of the document you created for exercise 5.20 "Writing Paragraphs" or another document that you have created for this class. Exchange this file with your peer review partner. Open your partner's file and select Track Changes. Review the document and make suggestions that will help your peer improve the writing. For instance, you can

- Look for accurate, appropriate, and ethical wording as well as instances of unnecessary jargon.
- Look for active voice and concise prose.
- Look for structural issues like topic sentences, tightly written paragraphs, varied sentence structure and length, and focus upon the thesis statement. Suggest where sentences can be combined or where sentences need parallel structure.
- Look for you-attitude.
- Ask questions (using comments) when the text isn't clear or make suggestions to tighten the writing or improve word choices.

Return the document to its author and open yours to review the changes and comments your partner added to your document. For each change, decide whether to Accept or Reject the suggestion.

Continue to revise the document. Then submit a copy of your original version and the revised version to your instructor.

5.24 Using the SEC's *A Plain English Handbook*

Go the Securities and Exchange Commission's *A Plain English Handbook,* at http://www.sec.gov/pdf/handbook.pdf. Scroll down to Appendix B and look at the four before and after examples. What kinds of changes have been made? What are examples of each kind? Can you understand the revised version? Did you understand the original version?

5.25 Investigating the Plain Language Act in Federal Agencies

Look at some of the plain language guidelines for some of the agencies listed on the PlainLanguage.gov site, at http://www.plainlanguage.gov/plLaw/fedGovt/index.cfm.

- Work in small groups, with each group checking the adaptations of a different agency. Report back to the class. As a class, discuss how different agencies adapt the act to their focus.
- In your groups, also look at some of the before and after examples. Share a particularly good one with the class, explaining the changes in the improved message.
- You might want to look at the humorous but true nine easy steps to making a sentence unreadable, found at http://www.plainlanguage.gov/testExamples/indexExample.cfm?record=6&search=humor.

5.26 Valuing drafts

Suppose your state has an open records law, a law that gives citizens broad access to records of communications made by public officials, including records reflecting the development of various decisions and laws. Now suppose your state legislature is considering legislation that would enable government officials to keep drafts secret. Are you for or against the new legislation?

Hints:

1. Why do you think the new legislation is being proposed?
2. What is a draft? Do you want to see brainstorming notes of Senator Doe? Suppose in your state a law is a draft until it has been signed by the governor. Would that fact modify your opinion?

3. Can you think of criteria that would exclude some but not all drafts?
4. Where in the process do you think most of the significant changes are made in policy? Early? Late? Somewhere in-between?
5. When does it become hard to change a policy?
6. Suppose the policy could also be applied to drafts of corporate officials who set company policies with public impact. Now are you for or against the new legislation?

As your instructor directs,

a. Discuss your opinions in small groups.
b. As a group present your opinions to the class.
c. Post your opinions online for your classmates to read.

CHAPTER 6

Designing Documents

Chapter Outline

A Sign of the System

Designing directional signs for streets and subway systems should be easy, right? According to *Helvetica and the New York City Subway System*, by Paul Shaw, creating a unified, effective sign system takes extensive planning and careful design.

When the three independent subway systems in New York City merged in 1940, the signs were a confusing hodge-podge of detailed antique mosaics and hand-painted placards. By the 1960s, the subway systems were a mess, what one task force called "the most squalid public environment of the United States," and the signs were one symptom of the problem.

In 1966, New York's Transit Authority contracted with design firm Unimark International to redesign the signs and coordinate their placement in the subway system. The designers carefully analyzed the needs of the people who used the subway to find the best places to put each sign. They also proposed a standard look for each sign, using the newly designed typeface Helvetica.

The Transit Authority accepted Unimark's proposal, but did not allow the designers to implement the plan. Rather, the Transit Authority relied on their own plans: they used a different typeface and ignored the recommendations on sign placement. Additionally, the Transit Authority did not remove the old signs when the new signs were placed.

The result was chaos. Soon, New York contacted Unimark again. This time, the designers carried their vision throughout the subway system, using Helvetica and color-coded disks that still help commuters navigate the subways today. Now the Transit Authority's distinctive signs are a recognized symbol of New York City.

"Now the Transit Authority's distinctive signs are a recognized symbol of New York City."

Although most designers rarely get to work on something as large as redesigning a city's transit system, the process of designing for the audience that Unimark used in New York should apply to any document.

Source: Michael Bierut, "When in Helvetica," *Wall Street Journal*, March 26, 2011, C8.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know

LO 6-1 Why document design is important in business communication.

LO 6-2 The four levels of document design, and how they can help you critique documents.

LO 6-3 Guidelines for document design.

LO 6-4 How to design brochures.

LO 6-5 How to design web pages.

LO 6-6 How to do basic usability testing on your documents.

Good Document Design Saves Money

Document design changes are not just cosmetic. Infomap, a communications consulting company, reports these savings among its customers:

- A major brokerage firm found 5,000 document inconsistencies by using Information Mapping services. After creating a new document system, the firm experienced a 30% reduction in costly errors.
- A leading credit card company reduced the average length of phone calls to its customer service center by 60 seconds each after improving the design of its reference materials. This time reduction reduced costs by 20%.
- A leading health care provider redesigned its customer claims manual and saw the number of calls to the help desk decrease by 50%.
- A major government agency struggling with information overload used Information Mapping to create "uniform information architecture" agency wide. Newly trained "mappers" changed over 60,000 pages, and the agency reported over $17 million dollars of cost savings.

Adapted from "Expertise—Success Stories," Information Mapping, accessed May 23, 2011, http://infomap.com/index.cfm/expertise/success_stories.

Good document design saves time and money, reduces legal problems, and builds goodwill. Effective design groups ideas visually, making the structure of the document more inviting and obvious so the document is easier to read. Easy-to-read documents enhance your credibility and build an image of you as a professional, competent person. Many workplaces expect you to be able to create designs that go beyond the basic templates you'll find in common business software programs. Good design is important not only for reports, web pages, brochures, and newsletters but also for announcements and one-page letters and memos.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE DESIGN LO 6-1

When document design is poor, both organizations and society suffer. The *Challenger* space shuttle blew up because its O-rings failed in the excessive cold. Poor communication—including charts that hid, rather than emphasized, the data about O-ring performance—contributed to the decision to launch. More recently, after the *Columbia* space shuttle disintegrated during reentry, poor communication was again implicated in NASA's failure to ensure the spacecraft was safe. Mission leaders insisted that engineers had not briefed them on the seriousness of the damage to the shuttle when a piece of foam struck it on takeoff. But after studying transcripts of meetings, Edward R. Tufte, who specializes in visual presentations of evidence, concluded that engineers did offer their concerns and supporting statistics. However, they did so using visuals that obscured the seriousness.[1] In 2000, the badly designed Florida ballot confused enough voters to cloud the outcome of the U.S. presidential election.

DESIGN AS PART OF YOUR WRITING PROCESS(ES)

Design isn't something to "tack on" when you've finished writing. Indeed, the best documents, slides, and screens are created when you think about design at each stage of your writing process(es).

- As you plan, think about your audience. Are they skilled readers? Are they busy? Will they read the document straight through or skip around?
- As you write, incorporate lists and headings. Use visuals to convey numerical data clearly and forcefully.

- Get feedback from people who will be using your document. Do they find the document hard to understand? Do they need additional visuals?
- As you revise, check your draft against the guidelines in this chapter.

DESIGN AND CONVENTIONS

Like all aspects of communication, effective design relies heavily on conventions. These conventions provide a design language. For instance, most graphical interfaces are organized around the desktop metaphor, where we use files, folders, tabs, and trashcans. Commercial websites use the metaphor of the shopping cart. We have a mental image of the way brochures, business letters, or business cards are supposed to look.

Conventions may vary by audience, geographic area, industry, company, or even department, but they do exist. Some conventions work well with some audiences but not with others, so careful audience analysis is necessary. The British and Americans prefer serif typefaces; the French and Dutch prefer sans serif. Instruction pictures for office equipment generally show feminine hands using the equipment. Some female readers will relate more readily to the instructions; others will be offended at the implied assumption that only women perform such low-level office jobs.[2]

Conventions also change over time. Résumés used to be typed documents; now most companies ask for electronic ones. Today we rarely use Courier font; we italicize titles rather than underlining them, and we space once rather than twice after periods at ends of sentences.

Conventions also change with new software. When Microsoft Word 2007 and Word 2008 were launched, they broke long-standing Word conventions. They used the font Cambria for headings and Calibri for body text, instead of the traditional Times New Roman. The default spacing changed from single to 1.5. Time will tell if these settings become new conventions.

Many Word users were also frustrated at first with the overall interface of the program, because it broke too many conventions at once. Instead of the classic drop-down menus that have been present since early versions of Word, the menus now use a more visual interface, with a small icon representing each task a user wants to perform. For example, if you want to insert a picture, a little picture icon indicates that option. Similarly if you want to do a word count, a little icon with "ABC 123" indicates this option.

Violating conventions is risky: violations may not be interpreted correctly, or they may signal that the author or designer is unreliable or unknowledgeable. Brochures with text that does not fit properly into the folded panels, freehand drawings in a set of installation instructions, or bar charts with garish color designs can destroy the reader's trust.[3]

Redesigning the Newspaper

The publishers of the *Wall Street Journal* spent two years researching, creating, and testing designs for the *Journal*'s new look before they unveiled it. After getting advice from their customers in the form of surveys, focus groups, and test marketing, the *Journal*'s publishers chose to redesign their newspaper in specific ways:

- They expanded their use of headings and white space to make it easier to read and follow articles from page to page.
- They created a hierarchy, through headline size and story placement, to indicate relative importance of news.
- They changed to a narrower paper size that would make the *Journal* more convenient to hold.
- They added more color to help highlight important topics and help readers find information more easily.
- They created a new font, called Exchange, which is easy to read even when printed in a small size in tight columns.

Adapted from L. Gordon Crovitz, "What Is Changing—What Isn't—in the *Wall Street Journal*," *Wall Street Journal*, December 4, 2006, A17; L. Gordon Crovitz, "What to Expect in Your *Journal*, Starting Jan. 2," *Wall Street Journal*, December 30–31, 2006, A11; and Mario R. Garcia, "The Relevance of Good Design," *Wall Street Journal*, January 2, 2007, G8.

LEVELS OF DESIGN LO 6-2

Visual communications expert Charles Kostelnick distinguishes four levels of design (see Figure 6.1). These levels provide an organized way to think about the design choices you can make in your own documents, presentations, and visuals. They're also useful when you analyze the documents you encounter in a professional setting: one of the best ways to get ideas for your own document designs is to analyze the design elements in successful documents.

When you look at communication design, look for Kostelnick's four levels:[4]

- Intra—Design choices for individual letters and words. Intra-level design choices include the font and its size you choose; whether you use bold, italics, or color changes to emphasize key words; and the way you use capital letters. The serif font used for body text on this page is an intra-level choice, as is the sans serif font used for headings.

Designing for Baby Boomers

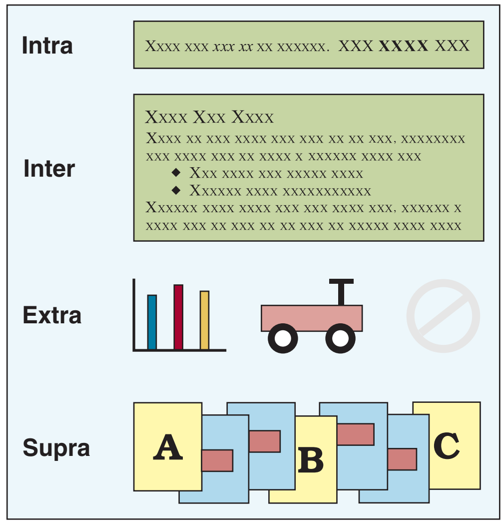
As baby boomers turn 60, many start to lose the ability to see as clearly as they once did. Tiny buttons on cellphones, small typeface on bottles of pills, and even the low lighting in some restaurants all make reading a difficult task. But this baby boomer generation is not bashful when it comes to denouncing issues with poor document design.

As a result, some corporations are trying to help this large population see and function better in our society. For example, Romano's Macaroni Grill supplies reading glasses and large-print menus on request. Target is modifying its labeling on prescription bottles by putting the most important information—patient name, medication, dosage—in large boldface capital letters. Some remote controls and cellphones now have large text and buttons specifically designed for this older audience. Some laundry labels on garments use larger print. Even Microsoft has given users the option to enlarge the size of text on computer screens.

Overall, those companies that are willing to adapt their products to the unique needs of the 77 million baby boomers are more likely to be successful in the future.

Adapted from Katie Hafner, "Their Parents' Eyes," *New York Times*, August 4, 2007, B1.

Figure 6.1 Four Levels for Examining Visual Language



Source: Kostelnick, Charles; Roberts, David D.; Dragga, Sam, *Designing Visual Language*: Strategies for Professional Communicators 1st Edition, © 1998. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

- Inter—Design choices for blocks of text. Inter-level design choices include the ways you use headings, white space, indents, lists, and even text boxes. The headings and bulleted lists that organize information on this page are inter-level choices.
- Extra—Design choices for graphics that go with the text. Extra-level design choices include the way you use pictures, photographs, data displays, charts, and graphs, and the ways in which you emphasize information on those graphics. The figures in this chapter are extra-level design choices.
- Supra—Design choices for entire documents. Supra-level design choices include paper size, headers and footers, and the index and table of contents, as well as color schemes and layout grids that define the look of all sections of a document. The placement of the page numbers in this book, the two-column layout grid on all of the pages in this chapter, and the navigation text in the header on this page are supra-level choices.

The U.S. Census 2010 poster in Figure 6.2 illustrates all levels of design. At the intra-level, this poster uses a sans serif font throughout the whole document. Other intra-level elements include words in all capital letters and the boldface sentence. Inter-level elements involve the centered text throughout the notice and chunking text above and below the image. The main text below the image uses a pyramid shape, while the text above the image uses a reverse pyramid. This choice helps the viewer focus attention on the image. The main image containing faces that form the shape of the United States is part of the extra-level. This image is used to highlight the textual element that encourages viewers to help paint the newest portrait of America. The supra-level includes the size of the poster, which measures 16″ × 20″ so that all the information can be clearly seen when posted. Another unifying piece of information on a supra-level that can be found in all census promotional material is the "United States Census 2010: It's in our hands" tag and slogan in the bottom right corner. Visually, this information is treated like a page footer and can be found somewhere on every promotional census material.

Figure 6.2 This United States 2010 Census poster uses all four levels of design.

Source: "Posters," U.S. Census Bureau: United States Census 2010, http://2010.census.gov/partners/pdf/ActionPoster.pdf

GUIDELINES FOR DOCUMENT DESIGN LO 6-3

Use the guidelines in Figure 6.3 to create visually attractive documents.

1. Use White Space.

White space—the empty space on the page—makes material easier to read by emphasizing the material that it separates from the rest of the text. To create white space,

Figure 6.3 Guidelines for Page Design

1. Use white space to separate and emphasize points.
2. Use headings to group points and lead the reader through the document.
3. Limit the use of words set in all capital letters.
4. Use no more than two fonts in a single document.
5. Decide whether to justify margins based on the situation and the audience.
6. Put important elements in the top left and lower right quadrants of the page.
7. Use a grid of imaginary columns to unify graphic elements.
8. Use highlighting, decorative devices, and color in moderation.

- Use headings.
- Use a mix of paragraph lengths (most no longer than seven typed lines). It's OK for a paragraph or two to be just one sentence. First and last paragraphs, in particular, should be short.
- Use lists.
  - Use tabs or indents—not spacing—to align items vertically.
  - Use numbered lists when the number or sequence of items is exact.
  - Use **bullets** (large dots or squares like those in this list) when the number and sequence don't matter.

When you use a list, make sure that all of the items in it are parallel (see "Parallel Structure" in Chapter 5, p. 135) and fit into the structure of the sentence that introduces the list.

Increasing white space can easily improve the look of your message. Figure 6.4 shows an original typed document. Notice how this document is visually uninviting. In Figure 6.5, the same document has improved white space by using lists, headings, and shorter paragraphs. Audiences scan documents for information, so anything you can do visually to help ease their reading will reflect positively on you as the communicator. Keep in mind that

Figure 6.4 A Document with Poor Visual Impact

Full capital letters make title hard to read

MONEY DEDUCTED FROM YOUR WAGES TO PAY CREDITORS

Long paragraph is visually uninviting

When you buy goods on credit, the store will sometimes ask you to sign a Wage Assignment form allowing it to deduct money from your wages if you do not pay your bill. When you buy on credit, you sign a contract agreeing to pay a certain amount each week or month until you have paid all you owe. The Wage Assignment Form is separate. It must contain the name of your present employer, your social security number, the amount of money loaned, the rate of interest, the date when payments are due, and your signature. The words "Wage Assignment" must be printed at the top of the form and also near the line for your signature. Even if you have signed a Wage Assignment agreement, Roysner will not withhold part of your wages unless all of the following conditions are met: 1. You have to be more than forty days late in payment of what you owe; 2. Roysner has to receive a correct statement of the amount you are in default and a copy of the Wage Assignment form; and 3. You and Roysner must receive a notice from the creditor at least twenty days in advance stating that the creditor plans to make a demand on your wages. This twenty-day notice gives you a chance to correct the problems yourself. If these conditions are all met, Roysner must withhold 15% of each paycheck until your bill is paid and give this money to your creditor.

If you think you are not late or that you do not owe the amount stated, you can argue against it by filing a legal document called a "defense." Once you file a defense, Roysner will not withhold any money from you. However, be sure you are right before you file a defense. If you are wrong, you have to pay not only what you owe but also all legal costs for both yourself and the creditor. If you are right, the creditor has to pay all these costs.

Important information is hard to find

Figure 6.5 A Document Revised to Improve Visual Impact

**Money Deducted from Your Wages
to Pay Creditors**

First letter of each main word capitalized— Title split onto two lines

When you buy goods on credit, the store will sometimes ask you to sign a Wage Assignment form allowing it to deduct money from your wages if you do not pay your bill.

Have You Signed a Wage Assignment Form?

Headings divide document into chunks

When you buy on credit, you sign a contract agreeing to pay a certain amount each week or month until you have paid all you owe. The Wage Assignment Form is separate. It must contain

- The name of your present employer,
- Your social security number,
- The amount of money loaned,
- The rate of interest,
- The date when payments are due, and
- Your signature.

List with bullets where order of items doesn't matter

Single-space list when items are short.

The words "Wage Assignment" must be printed at the top of the form and also near the line for your signature.

Headings must be parallel. Here all are questions

When Would Money Be Deducted from Your Wages to Pay a Creditor?

Even if you have signed a Wage Assignment agreement, Roysner will not withhold part of your wages unless all of the following conditions are met:

White space between items emphasizes them

1. You have to be more than 40 days late in payment of what you owe;

2. Roysner has to receive a correct statement of the amount you are in default and a copy of the Wage Assignment form; and

Double-space between items in list when most items are two lines or longer.

3. You and Roysner must receive a notice from the creditor at least 20 days in advance stating that the creditor plans to make a demand on your wage. This 20-day notice gives you a chance to correct the problem yourself.

Numbered list where number or order of items matter

If these conditions are all met, Roysner must withhold fifteen percent (15%) of each pay-check until your bill is paid and give this money to your creditor.

What Should You Do If You Think the Wage Assignment Is Incorrect?

If you think you are not late or that you do not owe the amount stated, you can argue against it by filing a legal document called a "defense." Once you file a defense, Roysner will not withhold any money from you. However, be sure you are right before you file a defense. If you are wrong, you have to pay not only what you owe but also all legal costs for both yourself and the creditor. If you are right, the creditor has to pay all these costs.

these devices take space. When saving space is essential, it's better to cut the text and incorporate white space and headings.

Design and Driver Safety

The New York City Department of Transportation decided to revise 250,000 street signs throughout the city. Current signs use all capital letters. The new signs will use a font called Clearview and feature both capital and lowercase letters.

The newly designed street signs are expected to improve safety, according to the Federal Highway Administration. Drivers will be able to decipher words more easily because of their shapes and, in turn, pay more attention to the road.

The price to replace all of the signs is anticipated to be $27.5 million. The project will be completed by 2018.

Adapted from "New York to Replace 250,000 Street Signs," United Press International, article published October 1, 2010, http://www.upi.com/Odd_News/2010/10/01/New-York-to-replace-250000-street-signs/UPI-10711285863676/.

2. Use Headings.

Psychological research has shown that our short-term memories can hold only seven plus or minus two bits of information.[5] Only after those bits are processed and put into long-term memory can we assimilate new information. Large amounts of information will be easier to process if they are grouped into three to seven chunks rather than presented as individual items.

Headings are words, short phrases, or short sentences that group points and divide your document into sections. Headings enable your reader to see at a glance how the document is organized, to turn quickly to sections of special interest, and to compare and contrast points more easily. Headings also break up the page, making it look less formidable and more interesting. To use headings effectively,

- Make headings specific.
- Make each heading cover all the material until the next heading.
- Keep headings at any one level parallel.

In a letter or memo, type main headings even with the left margin in bold or in a larger or different font. Capitalize the first letters of the first word and of other major words; use lowercase for all other letters. (See Figure 6.5 for an example.) In single-spaced text, triple-space between the previous text and the heading; double-space between the heading and the text that follows.

If you need subdivisions under a main heading, again type the heading even with the left margin, but this time make the subheading visually distinct from the major heading by varying font size or using italics. Use subheadings only when you have at least two subdivisions under a given main heading.

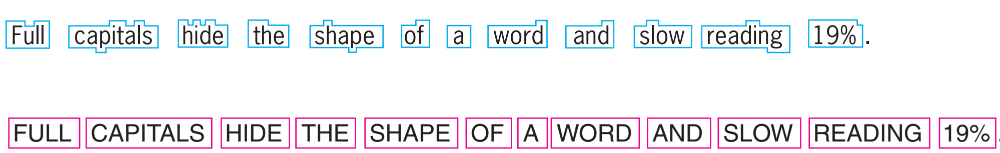
In a report, you may need more than two levels of headings. Figure 18.3 in Chapter 18 shows levels of headings for reports.

Research continues to show that headings help readers. In a study that examined forensic child abuse reports from Canadian children's hospitals, researchers discovered that headings play an important role. Headings and subheadings helped improve the accessibility of information about the severity of the child's injuries between the physicians who authored the reports and the social workers, lawyers, and police officers who later used them.[6]

3. Limit the Use of Words Set in All Capital Letters.

We recognize words by their shapes.[7] (See Figure 6.6.) In capitals, all words are rectangular; letters lose the descenders and ascenders that make reading faster and more accurate.[8] In addition, many people interpret text in full capitals as "shouting," especially when that text appears in online documents. In those cases, full capitals might elicit a negative response from your audience. Use full capitals sparingly, if at all.

Figure 6.6 Full Capitals Hide the Shape of a Word



4. Use No More than Two Fonts in a Single Document.

Fonts are unified styles of type. Popular fonts are Times Roman, Calibri, Palatino, Helvetica, or Arial, and each comes in various sizes and usually in bold and italic. In **fixed** fonts every letter takes the same space; an *i* takes the same space as a *w*. Courier and Prestige Elite are fixed fonts. Most fonts are **proportional** and allow wider letters to take more space than narrower letters. Times Roman, Palatino, Helvetica, and Arial are proportional fonts. Most business documents use no more than two fonts.

Serif fonts have little extensions, called serifs, from the main strokes. (In Figure 6.7, look at the feet on the *r*'s in New Courier and the flick on the top of the *d* in Lucinda.) New Courier, Elite, Times Roman, Palatino, and Lucinda Calligraphy are serif fonts. Helvetica, Arial, Geneva, and Technical are **sans serif** fonts since they lack serifs (*sans* is French for *without*). Sans serif fonts are good for titles and tables.

You should choose the fonts you use carefully, because they shape reader response just as font size does. Research suggests that people respond positively to fonts that fit the genre and purpose of the document.[9] For example, a font like Broadway (see Figure 6.7) is appropriate for a headline in a newsletter, but not for the body text of a memo.

Twelve-point type is ideal for letters, memos, and reports. Smaller type is harder to read, especially for older readers. You can create emphasis and levels of headings by using bold, italics, and different sizes. Bold is easier to read than italics, so use bolding if you need only one method to emphasize text. In a complex document, use bigger type for main headings and slightly smaller type for subheadings and text.

If your material will not fit in the available pages, cut it. Putting some sections in tiny type saves space but creates a negative response—a negative response that may extend to the organization that produced the document.

5. Decide Whether to Justify Margins.

Word-processing programs allow you to use **full justification** so that type lines up evenly on both the right and left margins. This paragraph you are reading justifies both margins. Margins justified only on the left, sometimes called **ragged right margins,** have lines ending in different places. In this chapter, sidebar columns with bullets use ragged right margins.

Figure 6.7 Examples of Different Fonts

This sentence is set in 12-point Times Roman.

This sentence is set in 12-point Arial.

This sentence is set in 12-point New Courier.

This sentence is set in 12-point Lucinda Calligraphy.

This sentence is set in 12-point Broadway.

This sentence is set in 12-point Technical.

Cultural Differences in Document Design

Cultural differences in document design are based on reading practices and experiences with other documents. Language is one source of these differences. For example, English and other European languages are written in horizontal lines moving from left to right down the page. Hebrew and Arabic languages are read from right to left. This affects where readers of these languages look first when they see a page of text.

People in the United States focus first on the left side of a website. Middle Eastern people focus first on the right side, so websites in Arabic and Hebrew orient text, links, and graphics from right to left.

Translations also affect the layout of a document. To convey the same message, Spanish and French take up more room than English does. Writing concise text for brochures, packages, and web pages is more challenging in the wordier languages. The problem is even more complex in designing bilingual or multilingual documents. For example, a company selling in Canada must use both English and French on its packages, and the French type must be printed at least as large as the English. On some products, such as a bottle of medicine or perfume, this requirement leaves little room for fancy graphics.

Adapted from "The Effects of Cross Cultural Interface Design Orientation on World Wide Web User Performance," by Albert N. Badre, accessed May 23, 2011, ftp://ftp.cc.gatech.edu/pub/gvu/tr/2001/01-03.html; and "Multilingual Labeling Broadens Product Appeal," by Pan Demetrakakes, BNet, accessed May 23, 2011, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0UQX/is_7_67/ai_106423172/.

http://infomap.com/index.cfm/themethod/demos

Information Mapping uses grids and tables to present complex information in an easy-to-find format. Review some of the online demos on the Information Mapping website, and notice how the 'after' documents make strong use of tables, lists, and white space to draw your attention to important points.

Try the fun interactive demo at http://infomap.com/movies/demo.htm to see how they convert time savings to money savings.

http://www.degraeve.com/color-palette and http://www.colorhunter.com/

Do you have a hard time generating aesthetically pleasing color schemes? Have you ever wanted to create a color scheme that matches a prominent photo in your document?

Color Hunter and Color Palette Generator websites allow you to upload a photo from any URL address. After you complete this step, the websites create a color palette that matches the primary colors found within the image.

Use full justification when you

- Can use proportional fonts.
- Want a more formal look.
- Want to use as few pages as possible.

Use ragged right margins when you

- Cannot use a proportional font.
- Want an informal look.
- Want to be able to revise an individual page without reprinting the whole document.
- Use very short line lengths.

6. Put Important Elements in the Top Left and Lower Right Quadrants.

Readers of English are accustomed to reading pages of text from left to right, developing this habit over a lifetime. Effective document designers tap into our habit. They know that we start in the upper left-hand corner of the page, read to the right, move down, and then to the right again. Actually, the eye moves in a Z pattern.[10] (See Figure 6.8.) Therefore, the four quadrants of the page carry different visual weights. The top left quadrant, where the eye starts, is the most important; the bottom right quadrant, where the eye ends, is next most important.

7. Use a Grid to Unify Graphic Elements.

Many document designers use a **grid system** to design pages. In its simplest form, a grid imposes two or three imaginary columns on the page. In more complex grids, these columns can be further subdivided. Then all the graphic elements—text indentations, headings, visuals, and so on—are lined up within the columns. The resulting symmetry creates a more pleasing page and unifies long documents.

Figure 6.9 uses grids to organize a page with visuals and a newsletter page.

Figure 6.8 Put Important Elements in the Top Left and Bottom Right Quadrants

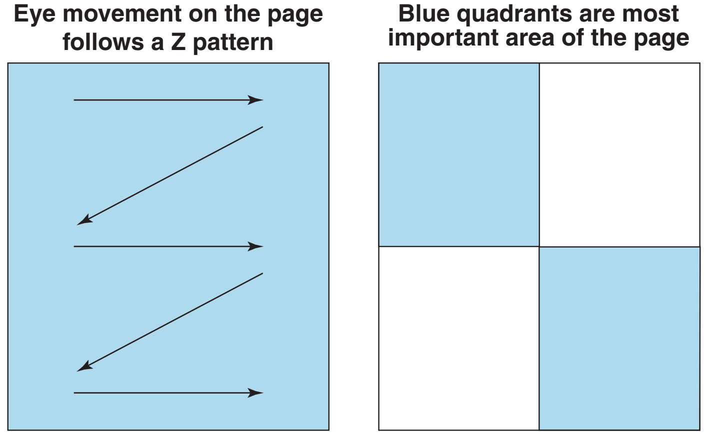
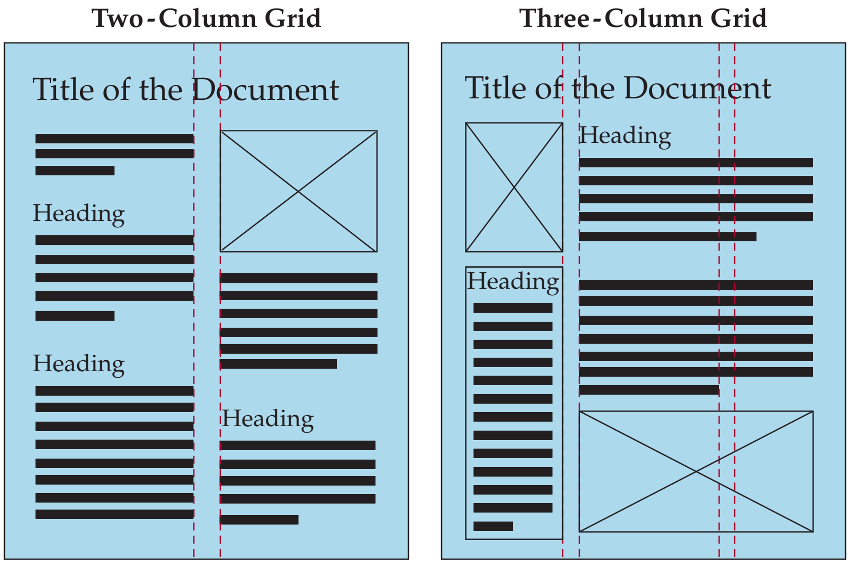


Figure 6.9 Examples of Grids to Design Pages



8. Use Highlighting, Decorative Devices, and Color in Moderation.

Many word-processing programs have arrows, pointing fingers, and a host of other **dingbats** that you can insert. Clip art packages and presentation software allow you to insert more and larger images into your text. Used in moderation, highlighting and decorative devices make pages more interesting. However, don't overdo them. A page or screen that uses every possible highlighting device just looks busy and hard to read.

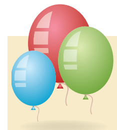
Color works well to highlight points. Use color for overviews and main headings, not for small points. Red is appropriate for warnings in North America. Since the connotations of colors vary among cultures, check with experts before you use color with international or multicultural audiences. (For more information on color, see the discussion in Chapter 16.)

DESIGNING BROCHURES LO 6-4

Designing a good brochure incorporates all elements of document design. To create an effective brochure, you must analyze your rhetorical situation, draft the text, select appropriate visuals, create the design, and print.

Analyzing Your Rhetorical Situation

In all forms of business communication, you should begin by considering your audience and purpose. A brochure designed to promote awareness of your company will have a different look than a brochure telling people how to do something and persuading them to do it. Try to identify a **central selling point,** an overarching benefit the audience will get. Identify any objections the audience may have and brainstorm ways to deal with these in your brochure. Finally, consider how the audience will get the brochure and where they will use it.



Forecasting Color

The Pantone Color Institute is one of the premier organizations for deciding what colors are trendy. There are over 1,900 Pantone hues and picking the up-and-coming colors is a full-time job.

The Color Institute has an entire team who jets around the globe, attends trade shows, and studies psychological research to determine upcoming trends. The team compiles its findings into a report that sells to businesses for $750. Each issue gives advice on how businesses can market their products using the latest color trends.

Consumer psychology plays a big part in forecasting. At one time, the color brown was associated with mud or wood, but it has undergone a transformation to being associated with quality food or good taste. A once unpopular color—orange—has become trendy in recent years; you can see the color on video cameras, blenders, and cars.

The economy can also have a big impact on color trends. In leaner times, people tend to favor neutrals.

Adapted from Alyssa Abkowitz, "The Color Committee Gets to Work," *Fortune,* October 26, 2009, 34–37.

http://colorschemedesigner.com

Have you ever wondered how color documents might look to a person with color deficiencies? Well, now you can see! This website provides the ability to create a color scheme you might incorporate into your professional documents. It also has a drop-down menu that allows you to see how your color creations will be perceived by people with color deficiencies. Since nearly 14.5% of the population has some sort of color deficiency, you should consider how the colors you choose in your designs may affect your audience.

Drafting the Text

Once you have developed a clear understanding of your rhetorical situation, draft the text to see how much room you need. If you have a lot of text, you'll need to use a bigger brochure layout or a series of brochures. However, make sure to tighten your writing by following the guidelines in Chapter 5. Use you-attitude and positive emphasis throughout.

People are more likely to read brochures if the text engages their attention. So be sure to use interesting headlines and selling points by making them informative as well as attention-grabbing, funny, or out of the ordinary. Or you might use sidebars with testimonial quotes, examples, or vignettes. You could add elements to get your readers involved with your brochure, such as a coupon for a free or discount offer, a quiz, or a puzzle. Interesting stories can also hold your readers' attention.

Selecting Appropriate Visuals

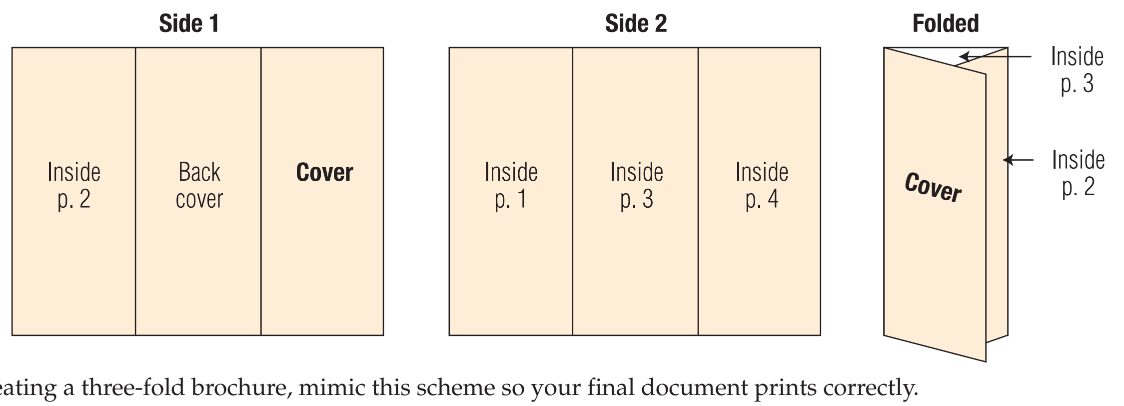
After the text is drafted, choose appropriate visuals to accompany it. Use a visual that tells a story. Remember that the visual has to work for the audience. A photo of a campus landmark may not mean much to an audience thinking about attending a summer program on campus. For additional information about incorporating visuals, including ethics, see Chapter 16.

Creating the Design

Before inserting textual and visual elements into your brochure, you might use thumbnail sketches to test layouts. You will need to choose the image you want to project for yourself or your organization. (Clean and clear? Postmodern and hip?) Make every choice—color, font, layout, paper—a conscious one. The three-fold brochure shown in Figure 6.10 is the most common layout, but many other arrangements are possible.

Put your central selling point on the cover. Then, use a grid to align the elements within the panels. Make sure that the Z pattern emphasizes important points for each spread the reader encounters. In a three-fold brochure, the Z pattern needs to work for the cover alone, for inside pages 1 and 2 (as the reader begins to unfold the brochure),and for inside pages 1, 3, and 4 (when the brochure is fully opened).

Figure 6.10 Three-Fold Brochure on 8.5″ × 11″ Paper



When creating a three-fold brochure, mimic this scheme so your final document prints correctly.

Follow these additional design principles when creating your brochure:

- Use proportional fonts.
- Use two fonts—one for headings and one for body text—to create visual variety.
- Avoid italic type and underlining, which can make text hard to read.
- Use color effectively (by using the color scheme designer mentioned in the sidebar on page 168).
- Repeat design elements (headings, small photos) across panels to create a unified look.
- Create contrast (between text and visuals, between a larger font for headings and a smaller one for text).
- Include enough white space—use lists and headings or short paragraphs with extra space between them. Ragged right margins generally work better with short line lengths.

Printing the Brochure

Printing can be accomplished on your personal inkjet printer. For better laser-quality results, however, you might go to Kinkos or Copyworks. If your organization demands an even higher professional look or you have thousands of copies to print, take your brochure to a commercial printer.

If you opt for four-color printing, use glossy paper to add a professional tone to your design. Four-color printing will look best; however, it will also cost you or your organization the most money. To get the effect of color with the least expense, use black print on colored paper.

DESIGNING WEB PAGES LO 6-5

Like effective brochures, web pages also incorporate principles of rhetorical analysis and document design. To create effective web pages, you must attract and maintain the audience's attention, create a usable home page, provide easy navigation, follow conventions, and increase accessibility.

Attracting and Maintaining Attention

The amount of time you have to attract and keep an audience's attention on your website is minimal. Researchers tracked how long users took to read or scan web pages; 52% of the visits were shorter than 10 seconds. In fact, 25% were less than four seconds. Only 10% were longer than two minutes. Therefore, any mishaps in design could cause audiences to completely skip your website.[11]

Jakob Nielsen, a web guru and usability consultant, provides research showing that web audiences use an F-shaped pattern when viewing web pages. First, they quickly read across the top of the page. Then they move down the page some and read across again, but for a shorter distance. Finally, they scan down the left side. All this happens quickly. The F-shaped pattern means that your most important information must be at the top of the page. In addition, make sure that headings, paragraphs, and items in lists start with words important to your reader.[12]

Make Sure Your Website Makes the Grade

"Ninety-seven percent of the 1,000-plus corporate Web sites that Forrester Research Inc. has evaluated received failing grades. Companies with bad Web sites are turning off customers and leaving money on the table. And usually it's due to common mistakes that can be broken down into four categories:

1. Value. The first mistake that companies make is copying features from competitors.
2. Navigation. Companies often opt for cute menus instead of clear menus.
3. Presentation. Web sites need to be easy to read and understand.
4. Trust. People are concerned about online privacy and security. Calling attention to privacy policy can actually help sales."

Quoted from Ben Worthen, "Why Most Web Sites Receive Failing Grades," *Wall Street Journal*, August 21, 2007. Copyright © 2007 by Dow Jones & Company, Inc. Reproduced with permission of Dow Jones & Company, Inc. via Copyright Clearance Center.

http://www.oswd.org

Open Source Web Design has thousands of clean, professional design templates for web pages available for download. Most of these templates are free to use: the authors ask only that you keep their contact information on the pages you create using the template.

http://www.usableweb.com/

Usable Web offers a collection of links about information architecture, human factors, user interface issues, and usable design specific to the World Wide Web. Log on to find tips on how to improve the overall design and look of your website and its features.

Creating a Usable Home Page

Your home page is crucial. Not only must it open quickly, but visitors must be able to find what they want quickly. Studies show that users grow impatient after waiting 10 seconds for a page to load, and most will leave the site immediately.[13] In addition, first-time visitors tend not to scroll down beyond the first screen of text.

To keep visitors around long enough to find (or buy) what they want, make using the first screen extremely easy.

- Provide an introductory statement or graphic orienting the surfing reader to the organization sponsoring the page.
- Make completing a task as easy as possible.
- Offer an overview of the content of your page, with links to take readers to the parts that interest them.
- Provide navigation bars vertically on the left of the screen or horizontally on the top and bottom. A site index and an internal search engine are valuable tools.
- Make it clear what readers will get if they click on a link.

Ineffective phrasing:	Employment. Openings and skill levels are determined by each office.
Better phrasing:	Employment. Openings listed by skill level and by location.

Providing Easy Navigation

While websites have increased the value they have to offer, the biggest problem now is navigation, especially as sites grow and become more complex. A web page's navigation should be intuitive to the audience and make accessing information easy. If the audience has to work too hard to figure out how to use your web page, chances are they will leave the site. After eBay fell behind Amazon for site visitors, they launched an overhaul of the website before the holiday shopping season in 2010 to organize thousands of listings and upgrade their outdated technology. Some of the new elements on the home page include recommendations to users based on previous searches, mentions of the hottest items, and consolidated lists with the best deals.[14]

Following Conventions

Jakob Nielsen urges his readers to follow conventions of web pages and get back to design basics. He reminds designers that users want quality basics. Here are some of the top web design mistakes he lists:

- Bad search engines
- Links that don't change color when visited
- Large text blocks
- Fixed font size
- Content that doesn't answer users' questions

He also cautions against violating design conventions. Users will expect your website to act like the other sites they visit. If it doesn't, the site will be harder to use and visitors will leave. Nielsen warns that some conventions, such as banner ads, have outlived their usefulness. Banner blindness is so prevalent that anything that looks like a banner will be ignored, as one nonprofit health site discovered. The site had a box at the top of their home page telling users what to do if they thought they were having a heart attack, but research showed that users were ignoring the box because they thought it was an ad.[15]

As you design web pages, use the following guidelines:

- Use a white or light background for easy scanning.
- Keep graphics small. Specify the width and height so that the text can load while the graphics are still coming in.
- Provide visual variety in your text. Use indentations, bulleted or numbered lists, and headings. Start lists with impact words—remember the F pattern.
- Unify multiple pages with a small banner, graphic, or label so surfers know who sponsors each page.
- Use alternative text ("ALT tag") for visually impaired viewers.
- On each page, provide a link to the home page.
- Keep animation to a minimum, and allow viewers to control its use. If you have an animated site introduction page, include an easy-to-spot Skip Intro button.
- If your web pages include music or sound effects, put an Off button where the user can see it immediately. Computer users may be at work, in a library or at another location where your brand's theme song would be disruptive—or embarrassing.

Appropriately enough, the web has many additional resources on web page design, as well as technical pages on HTML, XML, and Java.

Increasing Accessibility

As you design a website, you also should try to make it accessible to people with disabilities. The law is beginning to consider a website a public space and therefore subject to the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. Target settled a class action suit with the National Federation of the Blind by agreeing to pay $6 million in damages and to make their site more accessible. More legal proceedings got Apple to agree to make iTunes more accessible. One of the most sought features in these legal actions is text attached to links and graphics that can be accessed by screen-reading software.[16] For more ways to make your web page accessible, see the sidebar on this page.

One additional concern in terms of accessibility is the location where people view your web pages. With the proliferation of smartphones and other tablet computers, you need to optimize your website for these alternative viewing platforms. The retail world is trying to catch up, but has been slow. Halfway through 2010, only 12% of the top 500 U.S. online retailers had compatible sites for smartphones. Yet, 85% of customers surveyed expect the ability to shop easily on their phones, according to research by Tealeaf, a software company that monitors online consumer patterns. Some of the survey participants suggested that mobile shopping was sometimes more frustrating that sitting in traffic.[17]

Making Your Web Page Accessible

Users with hearing impairments need captions for audio material on the web.

Blind users need words, not images. Words can be voiced by a screen reader or translated into Braille text. To make your web page accessible for people with vision impairments,

- Put a link to a text-only version of the site in the upper-left-hand corner.
- Put navigation links, a site map, and search box at the top of the screen, preferably in the upper left-hand corner.
- Arrange navigation links alphabetically so that blind users can use a screen reader to jump to the links they want.
- Provide alternative text (an "Alt tag") for all images, applets, and submit buttons.
- Provide a static alternative to flash or animation.
- In hypertext links, use text that makes sense when read alone. A person listening to the audio will not understand "Click here." "Click to order a copy" or "Click for details" offers a better clue.

The Web Accessibility Initiative (www.w3.org) points out that accessible websites are easier for a variety of people to use—not just those with obvious impairments.

TESTING THE DESIGN FOR USABILITY LO 6-6

Usability testing is an important step in document design. A document that looks pretty may or may not work for the audience. To know whether your design is functional, test it with your audience.

According to Jakob Nielsen, testing a draft with five users will reveal 85% of the problems with the document.[18] If time and money permit additional testing, revise the document and test the new version with another five users. Test the document with the people who are most likely to have trouble with it: very old or young readers, people with little education, people who read English as a second language.

Three kinds of tests yield particularly useful information:

- Watch someone as he or she uses the document to do a task. Where does the user pause, re-read, or seem confused? How long does it take? Does the document enable the user to complete the task accurately?
- Ask the user to "think aloud" while completing the task, interrupt the user at key points to ask what he or she is thinking, or ask the user to describe the thought process after completing the document and the task. Learning the user's thought processes is important, since a user may get the right answer for the wrong reasons. In such a case, the design still needs work.
- Ask users to put a plus sign (+) in the margins by any part of the document they like or agree with, and a minus sign (−) by any part of the document that seems confusing or wrong. Then use interviews or focus groups to find out the reasons for the plus and minus judgments.

Jakob Nielsen also urges usability testing for web design. In fact, he recommends testing at various stages of the design process—good advice for complex paper documents as well. He also warns that the best usability testing involves *watching* people use the communication. Listening to what they think they do can be misleading.[19] (Would you have told a researcher that you look at a web page using an F pattern?)

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Good document design can save time and money, and can prevent legal problems.
- Effective design groups ideas visually, making the structure of the document more inviting and obvious so the document is easier to read.
- The best documents are created when you think about design at each stage of the writing process.
  - As you plan, think about the needs of your audience.
  - As you write, incorporate lists, headings, and visuals.

- Get feedback from people who will be using your document.
- As you revise, check your draft against the guidelines in this chapter.

- Effective design relies heavily on conventions, which vary by audience.
- The four levels of design—intra, inter, extra, and supra—help you organize and analyze design choices.
- These guidelines help writers create visually attractive documents:
  1. Use white space.
  2. Use headings.
  3. Limit the use of words set in all capital letters.
  4. Use no more than two fonts in a single document.
  5. Decide whether to justify margins.
  6. Put important elements in the top left and lower right quadrants.
  7. Use a grid to unify visuals and other graphic elements.
  8. Use highlighting, decorative devices, and color in moderation.
- To create an effective brochure, you must analyze your rhetorical situation, draft the text, select appropriate visuals, create the design, and print.
- To create effective web pages, you must attract and maintain the audience's attention, create a usable home page, provide easy navigation, follow conventions, and increase accessibility.
- To conduct a usability test, observe people reading the document or using it to complete a task.

CHAPTER 6 Exercises and Problems

**Go to www.mhhe.com/locker10e for additional Exercises and Problems.*

6.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. Why is document design important in business communication? (LO 6-1)
2. What are the four levels of document design? (LO 6-2)
3. What are some guidelines for document design? (LO 6-3)
4. What are some basic guidelines for designing brochures? Web pages? (LO 6-4)
5. What are some basic guidelines for designing web pages? (LO 6-5)
6. How can you perform basic usability testing on your documents? (LO 6-5)

6.2 Evaluating Page Designs

Use the guidelines in Chapter 6 to evaluate each of the following page designs. What are their strong points? What could be improved?

As your instructor directs,

a. Discuss the design elements you see on these sample pages with a small group of classmates.

b. Write a memo to your instructor evaluating the design elements on each of the sample pages. Be sure to address the four levels of design, as well as the guidelines for page and visual design discussed in this chapter.

c. In an oral presentation to the class, explain the process you'd use to redesign one of the sample pages. What design elements would make the page stronger or weaker? What design elements would you change, and how? Given the title of the document, what audience characteristics might your design take into account?

6.3 Recognizing Typefaces

Some companies commission a unique typeface, or wordmark, for their logos. Other companies use a standard font. When a logo is used consistently and frequently, it becomes associated with the organization. Can you name the brands that go with each letter of the alphabet below?

As your instructor directs,

a. Discuss the visual design of these brand visuals with a small group of classmates. What features distinguish them from other, similar brands? What makes them so recognizable?

b. Select one of the brand visuals represented and research it to determine its history. How has the visual changed over time? Write a memo to your instructor evaluating those changes, and identifying some of the design strategies (and business strategies) involved in each change.

Source: "Alphabet Soup," © *Issue: The Journal of Business and Design*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 1997, pp. 24–25.

Alphabet Soup You don't always need to see the whole word to recognize the name of the brand. One letter will do. Used effectively, a distinctive logotype becomes the corporate signature. That is why many companies commission the design of a unique typeface, or wordmark, that incorporates clues to their line of business or operating philosophy. Other companies have adopted an off-the-shelf typeface that they have made their own through the use of designated corporate colors, upper or lower case styling, condensed or expanded leading and other techniques. As with any branding tool, a logotype must be used consistently and frequently to work. Test your familiarity with some of the best-known logotypes by naming the brand that goes with each letter in this alphabet.

Source: "Alphabet Soup." Reprinted with permission from © *Issue: The Journal of Business and Design*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 1997, pp. 24–25. Published by Corporate Design Foundation and sponsored by Potlatch Corporation.

6.4 Evaluating the Ethics of Design Choices

Indicate whether you consider each of the following actions ethical, unethical, or a gray area. Which of the actions would you do? Which would you feel uncomfortable doing? Which would you refuse to do?

1. Putting the advantages of a proposal in a bulleted list, while discussing the disadvantages in a paragraph.
2. Using a bigger type size so that a résumé visually fills a whole page.
3. Using tiny print and very little white space on a credit card contract to make it less likely that people will read it.
4. Putting important information on the back of what looks like a one-page document.
5. Putting the services that are not covered by your health plan in full caps to make it less likely that people will read the page.

6.5 Using Headings

Reorganize the items in each of the following lists, using appropriate headings. Use bulleted or numbered lists as appropriate.

a. Rules and Procedures for a Tuition Reimbursement Plan
   1. You are eligible to be reimbursed if you have been a full-time employee for at least three months.
   2. You must apply before the first class meeting.
   3. You must earn a "C" or better in the course.
   4. You must submit a copy of the approved application, an official grade report, and a receipt for tuition paid to be reimbursed.
   5. You can be reimbursed for courses related to your current position or another position in the company, or for courses which are part of a degree related to a current or possible job.
   6. Your supervisor must sign the application form.
   7. Courses may be at any appropriate level (high school, college, or graduate school).

b. Activities in Starting a New Business
   - Getting a loan or venture capital.
   - Getting any necessary city or state licenses.
   - Determining what you will make, do, or sell.
   - Identifying the market for your products or services.
   - Pricing your products or services.
   - Choosing a location.
   - Checking zoning laws that may affect the location.
   - Identifying government and university programs for small business development.
   - Figuring cash flow.
   - Ordering equipment and supplies.
   - Selling.
   - Advertising and marketing.

6.6 Evaluating Page Designs

1. Collect several documents that you receive as a consumer, a student, or an employee: forms, letters, memos, newsletters, e-mail, announcements, ads, flyers, and reports. Use the guidelines in this chapter to evaluate each of them.
2. Compare these documents in a specific category to the documents produced by competing organizations. Which documents are more effective? Why?

As your instructor directs,

a. Discuss the documents with a small group of classmates.
b. Write a memo to your instructor evaluating three or more of the documents, and comparing them to similar documents produced by competitors. Include originals or photocopies of the documents you discuss in an appendix to your memo.
c. Write a letter to one of the originating organizations, recommending ways it can improve the design of the documents.
d. In an oral presentation to the class, explain what makes one document strong and another one weak.

6.7 Evaluating Websites

Compare three web pages in the same category (for example, shelters for the homeless, organizations, car companies, university departments, food banks). Which page(s) are most effective? Why? What weaknesses do the pages have?

As your instructor directs,

a. Discuss the pages with a small group of classmates.
b. Write a memo to your instructor evaluating the pages. Include URLs of the pages in your memo.
c. In an oral presentation to the class, explain what makes one page good and another one weak.
d. Post your evaluation in an e-mail message to the class. Include the URLs so classmates can click to the pages you discuss.

6.8 Comparing Websites

Alexa.com is a website that tracks the performance and popularity of other websites. In addition to ranking websites, the site allows users to input several websites and compare their rank and number of page views on a colored graph. The comparisons can range between seven days and a year. Visit the site to see which websites currently have the honor of being the top-rated. Where does your organization's or school's website rank? How can a tool like this be useful for businesses? What limitations does this tool have?

As your instructor directs,

a. Share your findings with a small group of classmates.
b. Put your findings in a memo to your instructor.

6.9 Creating a Brochure

Create a brochure for a campus, nonprofit, government or business organization. As you work,

- Analyze your intended audience. What are their needs? What factors are most likely to persuade them to read your brochure?
- Choose a story: What's the important information? What idea do you want your audience to take away?
- Make page design choices that create a usable document and generate a positive response from your audience.
- Make visual design choices that enhance and expand on your text without being simply decorative.

As your instructor directs,

a. Write a memo to your instructor explaining your choices for content and design.
b. In an oral presentation to the class, display your brochure and explain your content and design choices.

6.10 Creating a Web Page

Create a web page for a campus, nonprofit, government or business organization that does not yet have one. As you work,

- Analyze your intended audience. What are their needs? What factors are most likely to persuade them to use this site?
- Choose a story: What's the important information? What action do you want them to take while they're browsing this site?
- Make page design choices that create a usable site and generate a positive response from your audience.
- Make visual design choices that enhance and expand on your text without being distracting.

As your instructor directs,

a. Write a memo to your instructor explaining your choices for content and design.
b. In an oral presentation to the class, display your site and explain your page and visual design choices. Provide the URL, or display images of the site as presentation visuals, so that classmates can evaluate your design as you present it.

6.11 Testing a Document

Ask someone to follow a set of instructions or to fill out a form. (Consider consumer instructions, forms for financial aid, and so forth.)

- Time the person. How long does it take? Is the person able to complete the task?
- Observe the person. Where does he or she pause, reread, seem confused?
- Interview the person. What parts of the document were confusing?

As your instructor directs,

a. Discuss the changes needed with a small group of classmates.
b. Write a memo to your instructor evaluating the document and explaining the changes that are needed. Include the document as an appendix to your memo.
c. Write to the organization that produced the document recommending necessary improvements.
d. In an oral presentation to the class, evaluate the document and explain what changes are needed.

6.12 Improving a Financial Aid Form

You've just joined the financial aid office at your school. The director gives you the following form and asks you to redesign it. The director says:

> We need this form to see whether parents have other students in college besides the one requesting aid. Parents are supposed to list all family members that the parents support—themselves, the person here, any other kids in college, and any younger dependent kids.
>
> Half of these forms are filled out incorrectly. Most people just list the student going here; they leave out everyone else.

If something is missing, the computer sends out a letter and a second copy of this form. The whole process starts over. Sometimes we send this form back two or three times before it's right. In the meantime, students' financial aid is delayed—maybe for months. Sometimes things are so late that they can't register for classes, or they have to pay tuition themselves and get reimbursed later.

If so many people are filling out the form wrong, the form itself must be the problem. See what you can do with it. But keep it to a page.

As your instructor directs,

a. Analyze the current form and identify its problems.

b. Revise the form. Add necessary information; reorder information; change the chart to make it easier to fill out.

c. Write a memo to the director of financial aid pointing out the changes you made and why you made them.

Hints:

- Where are people supposed to send the form? What is the phone number of the financial aid office? Should they need to call the office if the form is clear?
- Does the definition of *half-time* apply to all students or just those taking courses beyond high school?
- Should capital or lowercase letters be used?
- Are the lines big enough to write in?
- What headings or subdivisions within the form would remind people to list all family members whom they support?
- How can you encourage people to return the form promptly?

Please complete the chart below by listing all family members for whom you (the parents) will provide more than half support during the academic year (July 1 through June 30). Include yourselves (the parents), the student, and your dependent children, even if they are not attending college.

EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION, 201_ – 201_						
FULL NAME OF FAMILY MEMBER	AGE	RELATIONSHIP OF FAMILY MEMBER TO STUDENT	NAME OF SCHOOL OR COLLEGE THIS SCHOOL YEAR	FULL-TIME	HALF-TIME* OR MORE	LESS THAN HALF-TIME
STUDENT APPLICANT						

*Half-time is defined as 6 credit hours or 12 clock hours a term.

When the information requested is received by our office, processing of your financial aid application will resume.

Please sign and mail this form to the above address as soon as possible. Your signature certifies that this information, and the information on the FAF, is true and complete to the best of your knowledge. If you have any questions, please contact a member of the need analysis staff.

__________________________ _______________

Signature of Parent(s) Date

CHAPTER 7

Communicating across Cultures

Chapter Outline

Communicating Compassion

When disaster strikes, like the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, a company's ability to communicate well and efficiently becomes doubly important. This is especially true for international corporations, which need to navigate not only the natural disasters, but also the complications of cross-cultural communication.

Apple, Inc., relies on suppliers in Japan for many components of its computers and other consumer products. When the earthquake struck, Apple was preparing to release its latest version of the popular iPad in Japan. It was a critical time for the company's continued success. Hours after the earthquake, however, Apple suspended the iPad's launch, and all its employees in Japan received the following message from CEO Steve Jobs:

"To Our Team in Japan,

"We have all been following the unfolding disaster in Japan. Our hearts go out to you and your families, as well as all of your countrymen who have been touched by this tragedy.

"If you need time or resources to visit or care for your families, please see HR and we will help you. If you are aware of any supplies that are needed, please also tell HR and we will do what we can to arrange delivery.

"Again, our hearts go out to you during this unimaginable crisis.

"Please stay safe."

The message itself was important—a statement of encouragement and support from the head of the company. But the way Apple continued to respond made the difference for thousands of employees and even more nonemployees. In cities with no power or Internet, Apple's self-contained stores stayed open, providing free wireless access, free use of computers and phones, charging stations, food, and places to sleep for stranded employees. Hundreds crowded into the stores to contact family and friends.

"The actions of the local employees and the executive teams that helped thousands of people were admirable and appropriate gestures from a truly international company."

Apple's International HR chief was in Japan at the time and he, with other executives, went to the retail store to spend the night with the employees. The executive team authorized thousands of dollars in taxi charges and hotel rooms to help their employees get to their families.

In high-context cultures like Japan, which place great importance on personal relationships, oral agreements, and nonverbal actions, Apple's response to the disaster was perfectly suited. The written message from Steve Jobs was good; the actions of the local employees and the executive teams that helped thousands of people were admirable and appropriate gestures from a truly international company.

Sources: Ricardo Bilton, "Steve Jobs Responds to Japan Quake," *International Business Times*, March 17, 2011, http://www.ibtimes.com/art/services/print.php?articleid5123928; and Kevin Rose, "Apple's Role in Japan during the Tohoku Earthquake," *Kevinrose.com* (blog), March 16, 2011, http://kevinrose.com/blogg/2011/3/14/apples-role-in-japan-during-the-tohoku-earthquake.html.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know

LO7-1 Why global business is important.

LO7-2 Why diversity is becoming more important.

LO7-3 How our values and beliefs affect our responses to other people.

LO7-4 How nonverbal communication impacts cross-cultural communications.

LO7-5 How to adapt oral communication for cross-cultural communications.

LO7-6 How to adapt written communications for international audiences.

LO7-7 Why it is important to check cultural generalizations.

Our values, priorities, and practices are shaped by the culture in which we grow up. Understanding other cultures is crucial if you want to work in an organization with a diverse group of employees, benefit from a global supply chain, sell your products to other cultures in our country, sell to other countries, manage an international plant or office, or work in this country for a multinational company headquartered in another country.

The successful intercultural communicator is

- Aware of the values, beliefs, and practices in other cultures.
- Sensitive to differences among individuals within a culture.
- Aware that his or her preferred values and behaviors are influenced by culture and are not necessarily "right."
- Sensitive to verbal and nonverbal behavior.
- Willing to ask questions about preferences and behaviors.
- Flexible and open to change.

The first step in understanding another culture is to realize that it may do things very differently, and that the difference is not bad or inferior. The second step is understanding that people within a single culture differ.

When pushed too far, the kinds of differences summarized in this chapter can turn into stereotypes, which can be just as damaging as ignorance. Psychologists have shown that stereotypes have serious consequences and that they come into play even when we don't want them to. Asking African American students to identify their race before answering questions taken from the Graduate Record Examination, the standardized test used for admission to graduate schools, cut in half the number of items they got right. Similarly, asking students to identify their sex at the beginning of Advanced Placement (AP) calculus tests, used to give high school students college credits, lowered the scores of women. If the sex question were moved to the end of the test, about 5% more women would receive AP credit.[1]

HBR on Chinese versus Russian Entrepreneurs

As business opportunities continue to expand in China and Russia, the *Harvard Business Review* offers this summary of the differences between entrepreneurs in the two countries:

- Chinese tend to think concretely and appreciate harmonious and balanced ideas. Russians tend to think abstractly and tolerate contradictory positions.
- Chinese networks tend to be small and close knit: family, friends, and colleagues. Russia's institutional chaos has hastened the formation of new, loosely knit networks.
- Members of Chinese networks exhibit higher levels of trust, Russians lower levels.

Because of these characteristics, Chinese networks are harder to enter than the more fluid Russian networks. However, once you are in, you will be more trusted in a Chinese network than in a Russian one.

However, HBR notes that Americans will always be expected to be different and that trying too hard to fit in will undermine trust.

Don't try to memorize the material in this chapter as a rigid set of rules. Instead, use the examples to get a sense for the kinds of things that differ from one culture to another. Test these generalizations against your experience. When in doubt, ask.

GLOBAL BUSINESS LO 7-1

As we saw in Chapter 4, exports are essential both to the success of individual businesses and to a country's economy as a whole. Even many small businesses have global supply chains. Most major businesses operate globally, and an increasing share of profits comes from outside the headquarters country:

- McDonald's has restaurants in over 115 countries and has 66% of its income internationally.
- 3M operates in over 65 countries and has 65% of its sales internationally.
- Procter & Gamble brands are sold in 180 countries.
- Unilever sells products in over 180 countries; more than 50% of its business is in emerging markets.
- Walmart's international sales earn "only" 29% of the company's sales, but that percentage is a huge $109 billion.[2]

Other businesses are following suit. Movie studios, for instance, are turning down scripts that would play well in the United States because they would not play well abroad. Such decisions are seen as sound, since foreign ticket sales are now two-thirds of the global film market. Studios are hiring more foreign actors for blockbusters, rewriting scripts for international audiences, and cutting back on comedies (American humor is frequently not funny abroad).[3] Other companies depend on international vendors or operations for services such as call centers, data centers, and accounting centers.

Local Culture Adaptations

As they expand globally, U.S. retailers are catering to local tastes and customs. When expanding to China, Walmart enraged consumers when they sold dead fish and meat packaged in Styrofoam, which shoppers saw as old merchandise. Walmart quickly learned to compensate by leaving meat uncovered and installing fish tanks to sell live fish. They also sell live tortoises and snakes; Johnson's Baby Oil is stocked next to moisturizers containing sheep placenta, a native wrinkle "cure." Walmart lures customers on foot or bikes with free shuttle buses and home deliveries for large items. Perhaps the biggest change is Walmart's acceptance of organized labor in China; in July 2006 it accepted its first union ever into its stores.

The costs for failing to adapt to local cultures can be high. AlertDriving, a Toronto company that provides training for companies' drivers, opened its services in more than 20 countries before it became aware of problems. The driving lessons had been poorly translated, and the instructions did not fit with local laws and customs. To make matters worse, the company did not learn about some of the problems for years because some clients considered criticism disrespectful. Eventually AlertDriving had to spend a million dollars to retranslate and rework all of its materials for local cultures, a costly lesson in cultural awareness.[4]

Beyond Stereotypes

Learning about different cultures is important for understanding the different kinds of people we work with. However, leadership coaches Keith Caver and Ancella Livers caution that people are individuals, not just representatives of a cultural group. Based on their work with African American executives and middle managers, Caver and Livers have found that coworkers sometimes treat these individuals first as representatives of black culture, and only second as talented and experienced managers.

As an example, Caver and Livers cite the all-too-common situation of a newly hired black manager who participates in a management development activity. The new manager is prepared to answer questions about her area of business expertise, but the only questions directed toward her are about "diversity." African American clients of Caver and Livers have complained that they are often called upon to interpret the behavior of famous black Americans such as Clarence Thomas or Jesse Jackson, and they wonder whether their white colleagues would feel their race qualifies them to interpret the deeds of famous white Americans.

In this example, stereotypes make well-intentioned efforts at communication offensive. To avoid such offense, consider not only culture, but also people's individual qualities and their roles and experiences. A person who communicates one way in the role of son or daughter may communicate very differently as engineer or client.

Adapted from Keith A. Caver and Ancella B. Livers, "Dear White Boss," *Harvard Business Review* 80, no. 11 (November 2002), 76–81.

What cultural barriers did Disney need to overcome to help Hong Kong Disneyland succeed? See sidebar on this page.

International Career Experience

When plants, stores, and offices move overseas, people follow—from top executives to migrant workers. In fact, managers often find they need international experience if they want top-level jobs. Expatriate experience has also been shown to make them more creative and better problem solvers.[5] This effect, combined with booming overseas growth, means that executive head hunters are looking for people with deep bicultural fluency or experience in several countries, with China, India, and Brazil at the top of the list.[6] Responding to the need for global experience, business schools are stepping up their international offerings with classes, international case studies, overseas campuses, and student/faculty exchanges. For both young and experienced hires, second-language proficiency and multicultural awareness are sought.[7]

U.S. workers join a host of migrant workers already abroad. Nepalis work in Korean factories; Mongolians perform menial labor in Prague. Close to half of all migrants are women, many of whom leave children behind. They stay in touch with cellphones and the Internet.[8]

Migrant workers benefit the economies of both host and home countries. The money sent home by migrants, over $317 billion a year, is three times the world's total foreign aid. For seven countries, that income is over a quarter of their gross domestic product.[9] Thus, the money sent home is one of the major drivers of international development.

Thomas Friedman, Pulitzer Prize author and *New York Times* columnist, uses the metaphor of a flat world to describe the increasing globalization. In *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century,* he says,

> What the flattening of the world means is that we are now connecting all the knowledge centers on the planet together into a single global network, which—if politics and terrorism do not get in the way—could usher in an amazing era of prosperity, innovation, and collaboration, by companies, communities, and individuals.[10]

DIVERSITY IN NORTH AMERICA LO 7-2

Even if you stay in the United States and Canada, you'll work with people whose backgrounds differ from yours. Residents of small towns and rural areas may have different notions of friendliness than do people from big cities. Californians may talk and dress differently than people in the

Marketing Disney to China

Only six months after Hong Kong Disneyland opened, Disney officials were scrambling to understand why attendance was so low at the new park. They turned for answers to Chinese travel agents who book tours. Some of these agents believed Disney officials had not tried to understand the local market and Chinese culture.

After the disappointing start at the Hong Kong park, Disney officials were anxious to learn and ready to make changes. Using the travel industry feedback and other market research, Disney developed a new advertising campaign. Original ads had featured an aerial view of the park; new TV spots focused on people and showed guests riding attractions. A new print ad featuring a grandmother, mother, and daughter showed that Disneyland is a place where families can have fun together.

Disney also worked to make visitors more comfortable inside the park. At an attraction offered in three different languages, guests gravitated toward the shortest line—usually the line for English-speaking guests. Now, three separate signs clearly mark which language will be used to communicate with guests in that line. Greater use of Mandarin-speaking guides and materials helps guests better enjoy shows and attractions. Also, additional seating was added in dining areas because Chinese diners take longer to eat than do Americans. Disney is hoping such changes will attract more guests to the Hong Kong park.

Source: Merissa Marr and Geoffrey A. Fowler, "Chinese Lessons for Disney," *Wall Street Journal,* June 12, 2006, B1, B5.

Midwest. The cultural icons that resonate for baby boomers may mean little to Millennials. For many workers, local diversity has become as important as international diversity.

The last two decades have seen a growing emphasis on diversity. This diversity comes from many sources:

- Gender
- Race and ethnicity
- Regional and national origin
- Social class
- Religion
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Physical ability

Many young Americans are already multicultural. According to 2009 U.S. census figures, 37% of Americans aged 15 to 24 are African American, Latino, Asian, or Native American.[11] Some of them are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. In 2009, the largest numbers of immigrants to the United States have come from Mexico, India, China, the Philippines, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Vietnam, and Korea.[12] In 2002 Latinos became the largest minority group in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2042, the non-Hispanic white population will be less than 50% of the country's total population.[13] Already California, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Texas have a population that is more than 50% minorities; the Census Bureau labels these states as having a "majority–minority" population.[14]

Bilingual Canada has long compared the diversity of its people to a mosaic. But now immigrants from Italy, China, and the Middle East add their voices to the medley of French, English, and Inuit. Radio station CHIN in Toronto offers information in 30 languages.[15]

According to 2010 U.S. census figures, about 9 million people identified themselves as belonging to two or more races.[16] U.S. census figures also show that 19.7% of the population nationally and 42.3% in California speak a language other than English at home.[17] In cities such as Los Angeles and San Jose, over half the population speaks a language other than English at home (60.3% and 53.7%, respectively).[18]

Faced with these figures, organizations are making special efforts to diversify their workforces. Microsoft, for instance, has 40 different Employee Networks; in addition to various ethnic groups (Chinese Employees is the largest), they cover various family roles (Working Parents), disabilities (Visually Impaired Persons), age groups (Boomers), and backgrounds (U.S. Military Veterans). Various groups focus on a variety of functions, including member support, diversity advocacy, cultural awareness, and educational outreach. They also provide resources for recruiting and training.[19]

These companies are smart; new evidence shows that diversity can improve business. Research analyzing the relationship between diversity levels and business performance of 250 U.S. businesses found a correlation between diversity and business success; companies with high levels of racial and ethic minorities have the highest profits, the highest market shares, and highest number of customers. On the other hand, organizations with low levels of diversity have the lowest profits, the lowest market shares, and the lowest number of customers.[20]

WAYS TO LOOK AT CULTURE

Each of us grows up in a culture that provides patterns of acceptable behavior and belief. We may not be aware of the most basic features of our own culture until we come into contact with people who do things differently. In India,

Adapting Costco to Taiwan

By offering an American experience with a local twist, Costco has found success in Asian markets. In Costco's Taiwan location, such twists include selling its store-brand steak thinly sliced to accommodate local preferences, offering local favorites such as sea cucumbers and mahjong sets, and including local variations on traditional American favorites in its frozen foods section, like Peking duck pizza alongside pepperoni pizza.

Besides product management, Costco Taiwan has had to find ways to convince customers that an annual membership, a relatively new idea in Taiwan, is worth their investment. One way Costco Taiwan has done this is by following the chain's U.S. policy of trying to guarantee the lowest market prices for products.

Another, more surprising tactic, is a return policy. Costco's Taiwan chief Richard Chang explains that returning merchandise is an unfamiliar practice in Asian markets, but Costco Taiwan is trying to change that by making returns, even of half a watermelon, "so pleasurable that you are going to tell your family and friends. That's something money can't buy. We consider that part of our advertising."

These practices have made the store the second most profitable in the 567-store chain.

Adapted from Andria Cheng, "Costco Cracks Taiwan Market," *Wall Street Journal*, April 2, 2010, B5.

children might be expected to touch the bare feet of elders to show respect, but in the United States such touching would be inappropriate.[21]

Anthropologist Edward Hall first categorized cultures as high-context or low-context, categories which are popular in the business milieu, although no longer in vogue in anthropology. In **high-context cultures,** most of the information is inferred from the social relationships of the people and the context of a message; little is explicitly conveyed. Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and Latin American cultures are high-context. In **low-context cultures,** context is less important; most information is explicitly spelled out. German, Scandinavian, and North American cultures are low-context.

High- and low-context cultures value different kinds of communication and have different attitudes toward oral and written communication. As Figure 7.1 shows, low-context cultures like those of the United States favor direct approaches and may see indirectness as dishonest or manipulative. The written word is seen as more important than oral statements, so contracts are binding but promises may be broken. Details matter. Business communication practices in the United States reflect these low-context preferences.

Another way of looking at cultures is by using Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Based on data collected by IBM, Hofstede's five dimensions are power/inequality, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term/short-term orientation. They are now applied to 74 countries and regions. To illustrate, Hofstede analyzes the United States as extremely high in individualism, but also high in masculinity, with men dominating a significant portion of the power structure. It has a lower power-distance index, indicating more equality at all social levels. It also has a lower uncertainty avoidance index, meaning that it has fewer rules and greater tolerance for a variety of ideas and beliefs than do many countries.[22]

The discussion that follows focuses on national and regional cultures. But business communication is also influenced by the organizational culture and by personal culture, such as gender, race and ethnicity, social class, and so forth. As Figure 7.2 suggests, all of these intersect to determine what kind of

Figure 7.1 Views of Communication in High- and Low-Context Cultures

	High-context (Examples: Japan, Saudi Arabia)	**Low-context (Examples: Germany, North America)**
Preferred communication strategy	Indirectness, politeness, ambiguity	Directness, confrontation, clarity
Reliance on words to communicate	Low	High
Reliance on nonverbal signs to communicate	High	Low
Importance of relationships	High	Low
Importance of written word	Low	High
Agreements made in writing	Not binding	Binding
Agreements made orally	Binding	Not binding
Attention to detail	Low	High

Source: Robert T. Moran, Philip R. Harris, and Sarah V. Moran, *Managing Cultural Differences: Global Leadership Strategies for the 21st Century,* 7th ed. (Boston: Elsevier, 2007), 49–52.

Figure 7.2 National Culture, Organizational Culture, and Personal Culture Overlap

communication is needed in a given situation. Sometimes one kind of culture may be more important than another. For example, in a study of aerospace engineers in Europe, Asia, and the United States, researchers found that the similarities of the professional discourse community outweighed differences in national cultures.[23]

VALUES, BELIEFS, AND PRACTICES LO 7-3

Values and beliefs, often unconscious, affect our response to people and situations. Most North Americans, for example, value "fairness." "You're not playing fair" is a sharp criticism calling for changed behavior. In some countries, however, people expect certain groups to receive preferential treatment. Many people in the United States value individualism. Other countries may value the group. Japan's traditional culture emphasized the group, but there is evidence that this cultural value is changing.

Religion also affects business communication and business life. Practicing Muslims, Jews, and Christians observe days of rest and prayer on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, respectively. During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunup to sundown; scheduling a business luncheon with a Muslim colleague during Ramadan would be inappropriate. A sampling of international holidays, including Ramadan, appears in Figure 7.3.

Even everyday practices differ from culture to culture. North Americans and Europeans put the family name last; Asians put it first. North American and European printing moves from left to right; Arabic reads from right to left. In the United States, a meeting on the fourth floor is actually on the fourth floor; in England, it is actually on the fifth floor of the building, because the British distinguish between ground and first floors. In Korea, the building may not have a fourth floor, or it may just be "F" floor, because the word for *four* sounds like the word for *death*.[24]

Common business practices also differ among cultures. In Middle Eastern—or predominantly Muslim—countries, business cards are exchanged only with the right hand, never with the "unclean" left hand. In China, business cards are exchanged with both hands; they are commented upon and put in a card case. In Russia, where hierarchy is important, cards should show your status with items like your title and the founding date of your company. In India, where education is specially valued, your card might show your graduate degrees.[25]

Women in the Workplace

In 2011 the White House released a comprehensive report on the status of U.S. women; it was the first update in nearly 50 years. Drawn from federal statistics, the report highlights women's changing roles, showing a shift toward education and employment. Women caught up with men in college attendance; in fact, younger women are more likely than younger men to obtain a college degree. And more women go on to graduate school than do men. Women are also flocking to the workplace; the number of women age 20 or older working outside the home doubled over the period covered by the report.

These gains, however, have not carried over into wage equity: in 2009 women still earned only about 75 percent of what their male counterparts earned. Women also continue to fill a major share of administrative jobs, but lag behind men in pursuing higher-paying science- and math-oriented careers. The report also points out that U.S. single-parent families are still headed predominantly by women, resulting in more women than men living below the poverty line.

Adapted from "White House Releases First Comprehensive Federal Report on the Status of American Women in Almost 50 Years," press release, White House, March 01, 2011, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/01/white-house-releases-first-comprehensive-federal-report-status-american-.

Figure 7.3 A Sampling of International Holidays

Holiday	Date	Celebrated in	Commemorates
Chinese New Year (Spring Festival)	January or February (date varies)	Countries with Chinese residents	Beginning of lunar new year
Independence Day	March 6	Ghana	1957 independence from Great Britain
St. Patrick's Day	March 17	Ireland	Ireland's patron saint
Mardi Gras	Day before Lent	Countries with Christian residents, most famously Brazil	Day of feasting before Lent
Cinco de Mayo	May 5	Mexico	1867 victory over the French
St. Jean-Baptiste Day	June 24	Québec province of Canada	Québec's national holiday
Canada Day	July 1	Canada	1867 proclamation of Canada's status as dominion
Bastille Day	July 14	France	1789 fall of the Bastille prison during the French Revolution
Ramadan	Ninth month of lunar year	Countries with Muslim residents	Atonement; fasting from sunup to sundown
Respect for the Aged Day	September 15	Japan	Respect for elderly relatives and friends
Chun Ben	Last week of September	Cambodia, other Buddhist countries	The dead and actions for one's salvation
Yom Kippur	September or October (dates vary)	Countries with Jewish residents	Day of atonement
Diwali	October or November	Countries with Hindu residents	Festival of lights celebrating renewal of life
Christmas	December 25	Countries with Christian residents	Birth of Jesus
Boxing Day	December 26	British Commonwealth	Tradition of presenting small boxed gifts to service workers

In today's electronically connected world, cultural practices can change swiftly. For instance, in China, where age has traditionally been revered, few political or business leaders now turn gray, even those who are in their fifties or sixties. Workers are also becoming less group oriented and more individualistic.[26] In such fluid contexts, communication becomes even more important. If you don't know, ask.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION LO 7-4

Chapter 4 discussed the significance of nonverbal communication in interpersonal communication. **Nonverbal communication** is also important in intercultural settings. Be aware of usage differences in such areas as body language, touch, space, and time.

Living and working in another country require being sensitive to cultural beliefs and practices. The Japanese holiday Shichi-go-san (seven-five-three) is celebrated on November 15th when boys (ages 3 and 5) and girls (ages 3 and 7) are taken by their parents to a Shinto shrine to give thanks for their health and growth, and to pray for their future. Shichi-go-san dates back to ancient times when the families of samurai and noblemen would mark milestones in their children's growth.

Body Language

Just as verbal languages differ, so body languages differ from culture to culture. The Japanese value the ability to sit quietly. They may see the U.S. tendency to fidget and shift as an indication of lack of mental or spiritual balance. Even in North America, interviewers and audiences usually respond negatively to nervous gestures such as fidgeting with a tie or hair or jewelry, tapping a pencil, or swinging a foot.

People use body language to signal such traits as interest, respect, emotional involvement, confidence, and agreement. For example, Americans working in the Middle East are cautioned to avoid pointing their finger at people or showing the soles of their feet when seated. They also need to avoid misreading handholding among Arab men, for whom it is an expression of affection and solidarity.[27]

Eye contact North American whites see eye contact as a sign of attention; in fact, lack of eye contact is slightly suspect. But in many cultures, dropped eyes are a sign of appropriate deference to a superior. Japanese show respect by lowering their eyes when speaking to superiors. In some Latin American and African cultures, such as Nigeria, it is disrespectful for lower-status people to prolong eye contact with their superiors. Similarly, in the United States, staring is considered rude. For the English, however, polite people pay strict attention to speakers and blink their eyes to show understanding. In China, a widening of the eyes shows anger, in the United States—surprise. Among Arab men, eye contact is important; it is considered impolite not to face someone directly.[28] In Muslim countries, women and men are not supposed to have eye contact.

These differences can lead to miscommunication in the multicultural workplace. Superiors may feel that subordinates are being disrespectful when the subordinates are being fully respectful—according to the norms of their culture.

Facial Expression The frequency of smiling and the way people interpret smiles may depend on the purpose smiles serve in a particular culture. In the United States, smiling varies from region to region. In Germany, Sweden, and the "less-smiley" U.S. cultures, smiling is more likely to be reserved for close relationships and genuine joy. Frequent smiles in other situations would

Cross-Cultural Collaboration Gone Wrong

When Daimler-Benz and Chrysler proposed a $36 billion merger in 1998, both parties thought it was a good plan.

The merger was supposed to strengthen each other's place in the automotive market. But in 2007, a third party Cerberus Capital Management bought DaimlerChrysler for just $7.4 billion. What went wrong?

The cultural differences reflected in the practices of the two companies were a significant factor. For example, the German workers of Daimler-Benz were used to daily, company-sanctioned beer breaks while the American workers worried that alcohol consumption during work would lead to accidents and legal suits.

In addition, the German professionals were used to a formal, hierarchical structure in the organization and formal business attire.

Differences in the corporate lifestyle later led to questions as to who got the better end of the deal. U.S. assembly line workers earned more wages per hour than their German counterparts. However, the German workers, who received a six-week annual vacation, fully paid health care and education, and a triennial soul-soothing spa break, undoubtedly had a better benefits package. In addition, while the Daimler plant produced 850,000 vehicles a year with 120,000 employees, Chrysler manufactured 3 million with approximately the same number of employees. These cultural differences eventually overshadowed the positives of this merger.

Adapted from Associated Press, "A Chronology in the Takeover Saga of Global Automaker DaimlerChrysler AG," *Associated Press Archive*, May 14, 2007; Roberto A. Weber and Colin F. Camerer, "Cultural Conflict and Merger Failure: An Experimental Approach," *Management Science* 49, no. 4 (2003); and Carol Williams, "Steering around Culture Clashes," *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1999, C1.

Communicating with Subsistence Consumers

Subsistence consumers may earn little money, but they still need to buy necessities. Corporations are learning how best to communicate with them.

Many of them lack basic reading skills, so visual cues are important. Cues such as store layout, package design, and brand logos need to remain consistent for them. Many buy products that look attractive because of packaging colors or pictures. They also tend to buy only brands they recognize by appearance, so changes in colors or visual design have negative impacts.

To better serve these customers, stores need to

- Price products in whole or half numbers, and display these prices graphically—such as a picture of the money needed to buy the product.
- Display pictures of product categories, so shoppers can find the goods they need.
- Train store personnel to form relationships with consumers and offer friendly, individualized assistance.

Adapted from Jose Antonio Rosa, Madhubalan Viswanathan, and Julie A. Ruth, "Emerging Lessons: For Multinational Companies, Understanding the Needs of Poorer Consumers Can Be Profitable and Socially Responsible," *Wall Street Journal,* October 20, 2008, R12.

Fast food chains are adapting to international cultures.

therefore seem insincere. For other people, including those in Thailand, smiling can be a way to create harmony and make situations pleasant.

Research has shown that when they are interpreting emotions, Americans focus on the mouth, so smiles are important. Japanese often focus on the eyes. This distinction is apparent even in their emoticons. American use :) for a happy face and :(for a sad one; Japanese use ^-^for a happy face and ;_; for a sad one.[29]

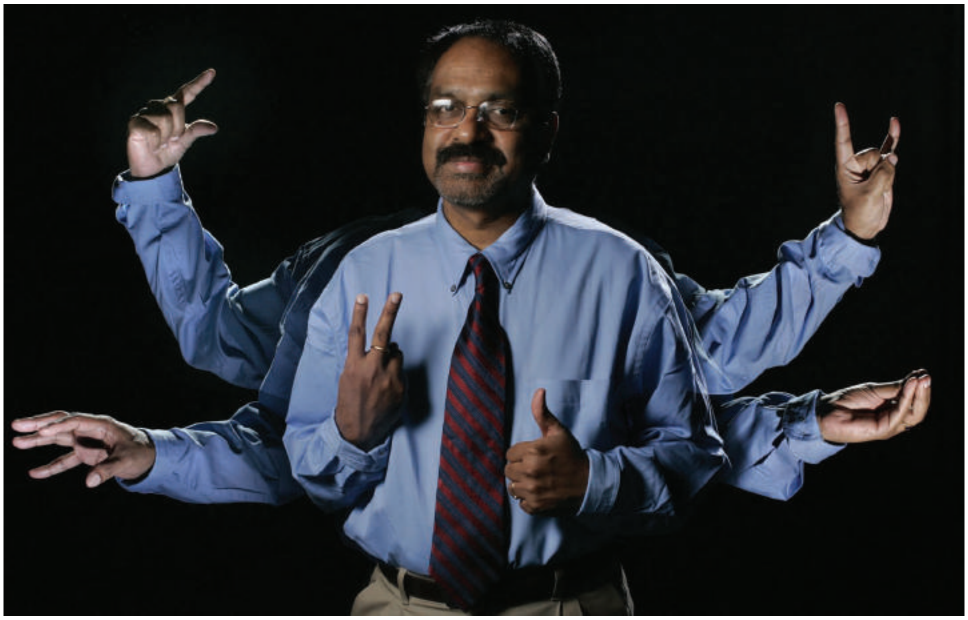
Gestures U.S. citizens sometimes assume that they can depend on gestures to communicate if language fails. But the meanings of gestures vary widely in different cultures. Kissing is usually an affection gesture in the United States but is a greeting gesture in other countries. In Greece, people may nod their heads to signify *no* and shake their heads to signify *yes*.[30]

Gestures that mean approval in the United States may have very different meanings in other countries. The "thumbs up" sign, which means "good work" or "go ahead" in the United States and most of western Europe, is a vulgar insult in Iraq, Iran, and Bangladesh. The circle formed with the thumb and first finger that means *OK* in the United States is obscene in Brazil and Germany. In India, the raised middle finger means you need to urinate.[31]

The V-sign is another gesture with multiple meanings. Made with the palm facing out, it was famously used by Churchill during WWII and by the hippies in the 60s and 70s. Made with the palm facing in, it is the equivalent of giving someone the finger in countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Australia. An American president made interesting headlines when he inadvertently used the V-sign on a visit to Australia.

Touch

Repeated studies have shown that babies need to be touched to grow and thrive and that older people are healthier both mentally and physically if they are touched. But some people are more comfortable with touch than others.



HARRY BAUMERT/THE REGISTER
A MULTIPLE-EXPOSURE PHOTOGRAPH IN ONE FRAME

What in the United States could mean "wait" or "hold on" in Nigeria indicates putting on a curse. In India it means "stop" or "enough."

What in the United States illustrates "a small amount," in Japan illustrates the degree of something, as in, "I know little English."

This means "peace" in the United States; it is the same as showing the middle finger in Australia and New Zealand. It can mean the number 2 in many places.

In the United States, this gesture means "well done" or "thumps up," but in Iraq, Iran and Bangladesh it means "up yours."

This refers to the Texas longhorns, but in Norway it salutes the devil; in Argentina it means your wife is cheating on you.

In the United States, this could mean small or contained. In Lebanon it means "wait"; and in Italy, "what the #$%! do you want?"

In India, an open hand wave could be interpreted as a "no."

In some cultures, hands folded as if in prayer means "I'm in deep thought; don't bother me."

An "O" with the thumb and index means "OK" in the U.S., but is an obscenity in Brazil and Germany.

The meanings of gestures vary with cultures.

Source: Mike Kilen, "Watch Your Language: Rude or Polite? Gestures Vary with Cultures," *Des Moines Register,* May 30, 2006, E1–2.

Each kind of person may misinterpret the other. A person who dislikes touch may seem unfriendly to someone who's used to touching. A toucher may seem overly familiar to someone who dislikes touch.

Most parts of North America allow opposite-sex couples to hold hands or walk arm-in-arm in public but frown on the same behavior in same-sex couples. People in some other countries have the opposite expectation: male friends or female friends can hold hands or walk arm-in-arm, but an opposite-sex couple should not touch in public.

In U.S. business settings, people generally shake hands when they meet, but little other touching is considered appropriate. In Mexico, greetings may involve greater physical contact. Men may embrace one another, and women may kiss one another. In many European settings, business colleagues may shake hands when they encounter one another throughout the day. In countries along the Mediterranean, hugs and shoulder pats are common as well. In some European countries, greetings include light kisses. The typical pattern is to kiss the person's right cheek and then the left (or to kiss the air near the cheek). In Italy this pattern stops with two kisses; Belgians continue for three, and the French for four.[32]

Mac and PC's Overseas Adventures

"When Apple Inc. wanted to bring its series of 'Mac vs. PC' ads to international markets, it faced a difficult issue: What's funny in one culture can seem ill-mannered in another.

"In the American ads . . . a nerdy PC guy keeps getting trumped by his hip Mac counterpart, who uses pointed banter that demonstrates how Macs are better. In one . . . spot, PC is proudly having a camera taped to his head so he can do video chatting—only to discover that Mac already has a built-in camera. . . .

"But in Japanese culture, where direct-comparison ads have long been frowned upon, it's rude to brag about one's strengths. So for Japanese versions of the ads, two local comedians from a troupe called the Rahmens made subtle changes to emphasize that Macs and PCs are not that different. Instead of clothes that cast PC clearly as a nerd and Mac as a hipster, PC wears plain office attire and Mac weekend fashion, highlighting the work/home divide between the devices more than personality differences. . . .

"PC's body language is a big source of the humor in Japan: Mac looks embarrassed when the PC touches his shoulder, or hides behind Mac's legs to avoid viruses. . . .

"The international campaigns reflect a growing move by U.S. companies to refine their ad campaigns for overseas markets."

Quoted from Geoffrey A. Fowler, Brian Steinberg, and Aaron O. Patrick, "Mac and PC's Overseas Adventures: Globalizing Apple's Ads Meant Tweaking Characters, Clothing, Body Language," *Wall Street Journal,* March 1, 2007, B1. Copyright © 2007 by Dow Jones & Company, Inc. Reproduced with permission of Dow Jones & Company, Inc. via Copyright Clearance Center.

That's Not What We Meant!

Translating a product's advertising slogan is especially tricky, because the product's benefits have to be packed into just a few words. A poor translation can be embarrassing, as in the following examples:

Kentucky Fried Chicken's slogan in English: *Finger lickin' good.*

Meaning in Chinese translation: *Eat your fingers off.*

Otis Engineering Corporation's slogan: *Completion equipment.*

Meaning in Russian translation: *Equipment for orgasms.*

Parker Pen Company's slogan: *Avoid embarrassment.*

Meaning in Spanish translation: *Avoid pregnancy.*

Perdue Farms' slogan: *It takes a tough man to make a tender chicken.*

Meaning in Spanish translation: *It takes a sexually excited man to make a chicken affectionate.*

Examples quoted from Anton Piëch, "Speaking in Tongues," *Inc.*, June 2003, 50.

https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.

World Factbook published by the Central Intelligence Agency is a good starting point for learning about the people of another country. Extensive country-by-country information includes history, government, and economics.

Space

Personal space is the distance people want between themselves and other people in ordinary, nonintimate interchanges. Some research shows that many North Americans, North Europeans, and Asians want a bigger personal space than do many Latin Americans, French, Italians, and Arabs. Even people who prefer lots of personal space are often forced to accept close contact on a crowded elevator or subway, or in a small conference room.

Even within a culture, some people like more personal space than do others. In many cultures, people who are of the same age and sex take less personal space than do mixed-age or mixed-sex groups.

Time

Differences in time zones complicate international phone calls and video conferences. But even more important are different views of time and attitudes toward time. Offices in the United States keep time by the calendar and the clock. Being "on time" is seen as a sign of dependability. Other cultures may keep time by the seasons, the moon, the sun, internal "body clocks," or a personal feeling that "the time is right."

North Americans who believe that "time is money" are often frustrated in negotiations with people who take a much more leisurely approach. Part of the problem is that people in many other cultures want to establish a personal relationship before they decide whether to do business with each other.

The problem is made worse because various cultures mentally measure time differently. Many North Americans measure time in five-minute blocks. Someone who's five minutes late to an appointment or a job interview feels compelled to apologize. If the executive or interviewer is running half an hour late, the caller expects to be told about the likely delay upon arriving. Some people won't be able to wait that long and will need to reschedule their appointments. But in other cultures, half an hour may be the smallest block of time. To someone who mentally measures time in 30-minute blocks, being 45 minutes late is no worse than being 10 minutes late is to someone who is conscious of smaller units.

Different cultures have different lead times for scheduling events. In some countries, you need to schedule important meetings at least two weeks in advance. In other countries, not only are people not booked up so far in advance, but a date two weeks into the future may be forgotten.

Anthropologist Edward Hall distinguishes between **monochronic cultures,** which focus on clock time, and **polychronic cultures,** which focus on relationships. People in monochronic cultures tend to schedule their time and do one task at a time; people in polychronic cultures tend to want their time unstructured and do multiple tasks at the same time. When U.S. managers feel offended because a Latin American manager also sees other people during "their" appointments, the two kinds of time are in conflict.[33]

Other Nonverbal Symbols

Many other symbols can carry nonverbal meanings: clothing, colors, age, and height, to name a few.

Clothing In North America, certain styles and colors of clothing are considered more "professional" and more "credible." Some clothing denotes not only status but also occupational group. Cowboy boots, firefighter hats, and judicial robes all may, or may not, signal specific occupations. Tool belts, coveralls, hard hats, and stethoscopes may signal broader occupational groupings.

Eating pizza with chopsticks illustrates how new cultural values interact with native culture to constantly create hybrid cultures.

Colors Colors can also carry meanings in a culture. Chinese tradition associates red with good fortune. Korean Buddhists use red to announce death. Black is the color of joy in Japan, the color of death in the United States.[34] White is the color of funerals in eastern countries; in the United States it is the color of brides. UPS found its company color working against it when it entered the Spanish market. The brown trucks that distinguish the delivery company's brand in the United States are not a good image in Spain, where hearses are traditionally brown. When UPS realized its mistake, it altered its uniforms and truck colors in Spain, emphasizing the company logo rather than the color brown.[35]

Age In the United States, youth is valued. People color their hair and even have face-lifts to look as youthful as possible. In Japan, younger people generally defer to older people. Americans attempting to negotiate in Japan are usually taken more seriously if at least one member of the team is noticeably gray-haired.

Height Height connotes status in many parts of the world. Executive offices are usually on the top floors; the underlings work below. Even being tall can help a person succeed. A recent study found that white, non-Hispanic males of below-average height earned 10% less than males of above-average height. Each additional inch of height was linked to 2.5% greater income. Perhaps surprisingly, the measurement that produced this effect was the man's height when he was a teenager. Those who grew later in life did not enjoy the income benefits of greater height. For white women in the study, actual adult height was associated with greater income. The researchers lacked sufficient data on other ethnic groups except to say that there seems to be a height–income effect for black males that resembles the effect for white males.[36]

Walmart is one of many companies that have expanded internationally.

ORAL COMMUNICATION LO 7-5

Effective oral communication requires cultural understanding. As Figure 7.4 suggests, even an act as specific as a business introduction may differ across cultures. These are general patterns, not absolutes, but they help communicators stay alert for audience preferences.

During business meetings, even words as distinct as *yes* and *no* may cause confusion. In some cultures where saying *no* is considered rude, a *yes* may mean merely "I heard you."

Learning at least a little of the language of the country where you hope to do business will help you in several ways. First, learning the language will give you at least a glimpse into the culture. In English, for example, we say that a clock "runs." The French say "*Il marche*"—literally, "It is walking." Second, learning some of the language will help you manage the daily necessities of finding food and getting where you need to go while you're there. Finally, in business negotiations, knowing a little of the language gives you more time to think. You'll catch part of the meaning when you hear your counterpart speak; you can begin thinking even before the translation begins.

Frequently you will need good translators when you travel abroad on business. Brief them with the technical terms you'll be using; explain as much of the context of your negotiations as possible. A good translator can also help you interpret nonverbal behavior and negotiating strategies. Some translators can help their clients establish trust and credibility with international businesses.

Understatement and Exaggeration

To understand someone from another culture, you must understand the speaker's conversational style. The British have a reputation for understatement. Someone good enough to play at Wimbledon may say he or she "plays a little tennis." In many contexts, Americans accept exaggeration as a way to express positive thinking. Particularly in advertising, Americans expect some hype. Germans, in contrast, generally see exaggeration as a barrier to clear

More Than Words

Does the language you speak affect the way you perceive the world? Linguistic research suggests that the answer is yes—language not only reflects our thoughts, but, in many ways, shapes our thoughts. Here are just a few examples:

- Russian speakers, who have a larger vocabulary for blues, are better able to distinguish among shades of blue.
- Some indigenous tribes use combinations of *north*, *south*, *east*, and *west* instead of *left* and *right* for direction ("you have a bug on your northeast foot"); they have superior spatial orientation, even in unfamiliar landscapes.
- The Piraha, an Amazonian tribe, uses words like *few* and *many* instead of number words; its people are unable to keep track of exact quantities.
- Studies conducted at Stanford found that Spanish and Japanese speakers could not remember who caused accidental events as well as English speakers could. The reason? Spanish and Japanese do not normally mention the agents of accidents: "The glass broke itself," rather than "Dana broke the glass."

Adapted from Lera Boroditsky, "Lost in Translation," *Wall Street Journal*, July 24, 2010, W3.

http://www.cyborlink.com/
http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/

Cyborlink.com and Kwintessential.co.uk provide information on business communication in various countries. On both sites, choose a country to explore and you will get general information on topics such as negotiations, gift giving, personal space, and much more.

Figure 7.4 Cultural Contrasts in Business Introductions

	United States	Japan	Arab countries
Purpose of introduction	Establish status and job identity; network	Establish position in group, build harmony	Establish personal rapport
Image of individual	Independent	Member of group	Part of rich culture
Information	Related to business	Related to company	Personal
Use of language	Informal, friendly; use first name	Little talking	Formal; expression of admiration
Values	Openness, directness, action	Harmony, respect, listening	Religious harmony, hospitality, emotional support

Source: Adapted from Farid Elashmawi and Philip R. Harris, *Multicultural Management 2000: Essential Cultural Insights for Global Business Success* (Houston: Gulf, 1998), 113.

communication. German customers are likely to be intolerant of claims that seem logically unsupportable. An American writing for a German audience should ensure that any claims are literally true.[37]

Compliments

The kinds of statements that people interpret as compliments and the socially correct ways to respond to compliments also vary among cultures. Statements that seem complimentary in one context may be inappropriate in another. For example, women in business may be uncomfortable if male colleagues or superiors compliment them on their appearance: the comments may suggest that the women are being treated as visual decoration rather than as contributing workers.

WRITING TO INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES LO 7-6

Most cultures are more formal than that of the United States. When you write to international audiences, you may need to use titles, not first names. Avoid contractions, slang, and sports metaphors.

Not: Let's knock these sales figures out of the ballpark.

But: Our goal is to increase sales 7%.

Do write in English unless you're extremely fluent in your reader's language. Be clear, but be adult. Don't write in second-grade English.

Not: We will meet Tuesday. Our meeting room will be Hanscher North. We will start at 9:30 AM.

But: We will meet Tuesday at 9:30 AM in Hanscher North.

The patterns of organization that work for United States audiences may need to be modified in international correspondence. For instance, most North Americans develop an argument linearly; points in a contract such as price, quantity, and delivery date are presented in order, one at a time. However, business people from other cultures may think holistically rather than sequentially, and the business relationship may be far more important than the actual contract, which may not even be considered binding.

In other documents, negative messages may need more buffering and requests may need to be indirect. A U.S. manager asking a direct question in an e-mail ("Were the contract numbers checked against Accounting's figures?") could cause hurt feelings among some international recipients, who might take the question as an accusation.

Safety Problem: Multiple Languages

All mining is dangerous, but platinum mining is particular so. The mineral is frequently a mile below the surface and in very hard rock. Safety at Anglo's platinum mines was further complicated by a lack of a common language. Workers, who come from various countries and tribes, speak a dozen languages, and are frequently not able to warn each other of dangers.

For over a hundred years, Anglo has taught its miners Fanagolo, a 200-word pidgin language created for mining tasks. But today's workers find the language racially offensive.

Now Anglo is offering English and Afrikaans classes, and encouraging all its miners to learn one of the two languages.

Adapted from Robert Guy Matthews, "A Mile Down, Saving Miners' Lives," *Wall Street Journal,* July 19, 2010, B1.

Figure 7.5 Cultural Contrasts in Oral Communication

	United States	Europe	Asia
Opening a conversation	Take the initiative	England: take the initiative	Japan: wait for an invitation to speak
Interrupting	Wait until speaker finishes	Italy: interruptions common; more than one person may speak at once	Japan: do not interrupt; silence periods common
Vocal characteristics	Modulated pace and volume	Spaniards may speak louder than the French	Indians speak English much faster than Americans
Disagreements	Stated calmly and directly	Spain: often accompanied by emotional outbursts	Japan: often communicated by silence
Praise	Key motivational factor	Russia: saved for extraordinary behavior, otherwise seen as false	Indonesia: may be offensive (suggests supervisor surprised by good job)

Source: Adapted from Richard M. Steers, Carlos J. Sanchez-Runde, and Luciara Nardon, *Management across Cultures: Challenges and Strategies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 222–23.

As Figures 7.5 and 7.6 suggest, the style, structure, and strategies that would motivate a U.S. audience may need to be changed for international readers. Relationships become more important, as do politeness strategies. The information in the figures suggests general patterns, not definitive delineations, but such suggestions help communicators look for ways to be more effective. Most writers will benefit from researching a culture before composing messages for people in it.

Response time expectations may also need to be modified. U.S. employees tend to expect fast answers to e-mails. However, other cultures with hierarchical organization structures may need extra response time to allow for approval by superiors. Pressing for a quick response may alienate the people whose help is needed and may result in false promises.[38]

In international business correspondence, list the day before the month:

Not: April 8, 2008

But: 8 April 2008

Spell out the month to avoid confusion.

Figure 7.6 Cultural Contrasts in Written Persuasive Documents

	United States	Japan	Arab countries
Opening	Request action or get reader's attention	Offer thanks; apologize	Offer personal greetings
Way to persuade	Immediate gain or loss of opportunity	Waiting	Personal connections; future opportunity
Style	Short sentences	Modesty; minimize own standing	Elaborate expressions; many signatures
Closing	Specific request	Desire to maintain harmony	Future relationship, personal greeting
Values	Efficiency; directness; action	Politeness; indirectness; relationship	Status; continuation

Source: Adapted from Farid Elashmawi and Philip R. Harris, *Multicultural Management 2000: Essential Cultural Insights for Global Business Success* (Houston: Gulf, 1998), 139.

Business people from Europe and Japan who correspond frequently with North America are beginning to adopt U.S. directness and patterns of organization. Still, it may be safer to modify your message somewhat; it certainly is more courteous.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION LO 7-7

Learning to communicate with people from different backgrounds shouldn't be a matter of learning rules. Instead, use the examples in this chapter to get a sense for the kinds of factors that differ from one culture to another. Test these generalizations against your experience. Remember that people everywhere have their own personal characteristics. And when in doubt, ask.

You can also learn by seeking out people from other backgrounds and talking with them. Many campuses have centers for international students. Some communities have groups of international business people who meet regularly to discuss their countries. By asking all these people what aspects of the dominant U.S. culture seem strange to them, you'll learn much about what is "right" in their cultures.

Multicultural Diabetes Education

New York City's 11 public hospitals are tailoring diabetes education for different cultures.

The programs start with communications in the patients' native tongues. Handouts come in 11 languages, from Albanian to Urdu. Phone-based translation services allow medical staff to communicate in still more languages. If patients miss their appointments, phone calls and letters in their native language remind them.

Correct portion sizes are illustrated with photos of plates of lamb *korma*, fried plantains, and General Tso's chicken. Cooking classes for Caribbean emigrants demonstrate flavoring rice with fresh herbs and spices rather than tripe or pig snouts. An online guide for Indian foods lists nutritional information for classic dishes such as *roti* (flat bread) and *dal* (bean or pea dishes).

The goal of the program is to make good health care more accessible.

Adapted from Theo Francis, "Treating Diabetes and Understanding Cultures: With Minorities at Risk, Doctors Work to Make Diet Advice Hit Home," *Wall Street Journal*, October 23, 2007, D2.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Culture provides patterns of acceptable behavior and beliefs.
- The successful intercultural communicator is
  - Aware of the values, beliefs, and practices in other cultures.
  - Sensitive to differences among individuals within a culture.
  - Aware that his or her preferred values and behaviors are influenced by culture and are not necessarily "right."
  - Sensitive to verbal and nonverbal behavior.
  - Willing to ask about preferences and behaviors.
  - Flexible and open to change.
- In high-context cultures, most of the information is inferred from the context of a message; little is explicitly conveyed. In low-context cultures, context is less important; most information is explicitly spelled out.
- Nonverbal communication is communication that doesn't use words. Nonverbal communication can include body language, space, time, and other miscellaneous matters such as clothing, colors, age, and height.
- Nonverbal signals can be misinterpreted just as easily as can verbal symbols (words).
- No gesture has a universal meaning across all cultures. Gestures that signify approval in North America may be insults in other countries, and vice versa.
- Personal space is the distance someone wants between him- or herself and other people in ordinary, nonintimate interchanges.
- North Americans who believe that "time is money" are often frustrated in negotiations with people who want to establish a personal relationship before they decide whether to do business with each other.
- The patterns of organization that work for North American audiences may need to be modified in international correspondence.

CHAPTER 7 Exercises and Problems

*Go to www.mhhe.com/locker10e for additional Exercises and Problems.

7.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. Why is global business important? (LO 7-1)
2. What are the advantages of receiving an overseas assignment? (LO 7-1)
3. Why is diversity becoming more important than ever before? (LO 7-2)
4. What are low-context and high-context cultures? (LO 7-3)
5. How do our values and beliefs affect our responses to other people? (LO 7-3)
6. What are some forms of nonverbal communication? What variations would you expect to see in them among people of different cultures? (LO 7-4)
7. Why do people from monochronic cultures sometimes have trouble with people from polychronic cultures? (LO 7-4)
8. What are some characteristics of oral communications you should consider when communicating cross-culturally? (LO 7-5)
9. What are some cautions to consider when writing for international audiences? (LO 7-6)
10. Why is it important to check cultural generalizations? (LO 7-7)

7.2 Identifying Sources of Miscommunication

In each of the following situations, identify one or more ways that cultural differences may be leading to miscommunication.

1. Alan is a U.S. sales representative in South America. He makes appointments and is careful to be on time. But the person he's calling on is frequently late. To save time, Alan tries to get right to business. But his hosts want to talk about sightseeing and his family. Even worse, his appointments are interrupted constantly, not only by business phone calls but also by long conversations with other people and even the customers' children who come into the office. Alan's first progress report is very negative. He hasn't yet made a sale. Perhaps South America just isn't the right place to sell his company's products.
2. To help her company establish a presence in Asia, Susan wants to hire a local interpreter who can advise her on business customs. Kana Tomari has superb qualifications on paper. But when Susan tries to probe about her experience, Kana just says, "I will do my best. I will try very hard." She never gives details about any of the previous positions she's held. Susan begins to wonder if the résumé is inflated.
3. Stan wants to negotiate a joint venture with an Asian company. He asks Tung-Sen Lee if the people have enough discretionary income to afford his product. Mr. Lee is silent for a time, and then says, "Your product is good. People in the West must like it." Stan smiles, pleased that Mr. Lee recognizes the quality of his product, and he gives Mr. Lee a contract to sign. Weeks later, Stan still hasn't heard anything. If Asians are going to be so nonresponsive, he wonders if he really should try to do business with them.
4. Elspeth is very proud of her participatory management style. On assignment in India, she is careful not to give orders but to ask for suggestions. But people rarely suggest anything. Even a formal suggestion system doesn't work. And to make matters worse, she doesn't sense the respect and camaraderie of the plant she managed in the United States. Perhaps, she decides gloomily, people in India just aren't ready for a woman boss.

7.3 Interviewing for Cultural Information

Interview a person from an international community about cross-cultural communication. You might want to discuss issues such as these:

- Verbal and nonverbal communication, including body language.
- Tone and organization of professional communications.
- Attitude toward materialism.
- Time awareness differences.
- Concepts of personal space.

Compare the person's responses with your own values and write a memo to your instructor reflecting on the similarities and differences.

7.4 Analyzing Ads

Search for international ads on YouTube using keywords such as "Cell phone ads China" "Domino pizza in India." Compare them to a similar ad created in the Unites States.

- What are some differences you see in the advertisement?
- How do they inform about the cultural values of the commodities shown in the advertisement?

Discuss your findings in small groups. As a group, prepare a short presentation for your classmates.

7.5 Comparing Company Web Pages for Various Countries

Many multinationals have separate web pages for their operations in various countries. For example, Coca-Cola's pages include pages for Belgium, France, and Japan. Analyze three of the country pages of a company of your choice.

- Is a single template used for pages in different countries, or do the basic designs differ?
- Are different images used in different countries? What do the images suggest?
- If you can read the language, analyze the links. What information is emphasized?
- To what extent are the pages similar? To what extent do they reveal national and cultural differences?

As your instructor directs,

a. Write a memo analyzing the similarities and differences you find. Attach printouts of the pages to your memo.
b. Make an oral presentation to the class. Paste the web pages into PowerPoint slides.
c. Join with a small group of students to create a group report comparing several companies' web pages in three specific countries. Attach printouts of the pages.
d. Make a group oral presentation to the class.

7.6 Researching Other Countries

Choose two countries in two different continents other than North America. Look them up in both cyborlink .com and kwintessential.co.uk. Note information a new manager in those countries would need to know. Working in small groups (make sure your group covers multiple continents and does not duplicate countries), share your information.

a. Which country would be the easiest one for a young U.S. manager to gain international experience? Why?
b. Which country would be the hardest? Why?
c. Which country would you like to be sent to by a company? Why?

7.7 Creating a Web Page

Create a web page of international information for managers who are planning assignments in another country or who work in this country for a multinational company headquartered in another country.

Assume that this page can be accessed from another of the organization's pages. Offer at least seven links. (More is better.) You may offer information as well as links to other pages with information. At the top of the page, offer an overview of what the page covers. At the bottom of the page, put the creation/update date and your name and e-mail address.

As your instructor directs,

a. Turn in a copy of your page(s). On another page, give the URLs for each link.
b. Write a memo to your instructor (1) identifying the audience for which the page is designed and explaining (2) the search strategies you used to find material on this topic, (3) why you chose the pages and information you've included, and (4) why you chose the layout and graphics you've used.
c. Present your page orally to the class.

Hints:

- Limit your page to just one country or one part of the world.
- You can include some general information about working abroad and culture, but most of your links should be specific to the country or part of the world you focus on.

- Consider some of these topics: history, politics, geography, culture, money, living accommodations, transportation, weather, business practices, and so forth.
- Chunk your links into small groups under headings.

7.8 Comparing International Information

In small groups, find at least four websites providing information about a specific international community. Also, if possible, meet with a member of that community and discuss your findings. Do you find any clashing sources of evidence? What do the contradictions tell you about your sources? What do they tell you about that international community in general?

Discuss your findings in small groups. As a group, prepare a short presentation for your classmates.

7.9 Planning an International Trip

Assume that you're going to the capital city of another country on business two months from now. (You pick the country.) Use a search engine to find out

- What holidays will be celebrated in that month.
- What the climate will be.
- What current events are in the news there.
- What key features of business etiquette you might consider.
- What kinds of gifts you should bring to your hosts.
- What sight-seeing you might include.

As your instructor directs,

a. Write a memo to your instructor reporting the information you found.
b. Post a message to the class analyzing the pages. Include the URLs as hotlinks.
c. Make an oral presentation to the class.
d. Join with a small group of students to create a group report on several countries in a region.
e. Make a group oral presentation to the class.

7.10 Recommending a Candidate for an Overseas Position

Your company sells customized computer systems to businesses large and small around the world. The Executive Committee needs to recommend someone to begin a three-year term as Manager of Eastern European Marketing.

As your instructor directs,

a. Write a memo to each of the candidates, specifying the questions you would like each to answer in a final interview.
b. Assume that it is not possible to interview the candidates. Use the information here to write a memo to the CEO recommending a candidate.
c. Write a memo to the CEO recommending the best way to prepare the person chosen for his or her assignment.
d. Write a memo to the CEO recommending a better way to choose candidates for international assignments.
e. Write a memo to your instructor explaining the assumptions you made about the company and the candidates that influenced your recommendation(s).

Information about the candidates:

All the candidates have applied for the position and say they are highly interested in it.

1. **Deborah Gere,** 39, white, single. Employed by the company for eight years in the Indianapolis and New York offices. Currently in the New York office as Assistant Marketing Manager, Eastern United States; successful. University of Indiana MBA. Speaks Russian fluently; has translated for business negotiations that led to the setting up of the Moscow office. Good technical knowledge, acceptable managerial skills, excellent communication skills, good interpersonal skills. Excellent health; excellent emotional stability. Swims. One child, age 12. Lived in the then–Soviet Union for one year as an exchange student in college; business and personal travel in Europe.
2. **Claude Chabot,** 36, French, single. Employed by the company for 11 years in the Paris and London offices. Currently in the Paris office as Assistant Sales Manager for the European Economic Community; successful. No MBA, but degrees from MIT in the

United States and l'Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris. Speaks native French; speaks English and Italian fluently; speaks some German. Good technical knowledge, excellent managerial skills, acceptable communication skills, excellent interpersonal skills. Excellent health, good emotional stability. Plays tennis. No children. French citizen; lived in the United States for two years, in London for five years (one year in college, four years in the London office). Extensive business and personal travel in Europe.

3. **Linda Moss,** 35, African American, married. Employed by the company for 10 years in the Atlanta and Toronto offices. Currently Assistant Manager of Canadian Marketing; very successful. Howard University MBA. Speaks some French. Good technical knowledge, excellent managerial skills, excellent communication skills, excellent interpersonal skills. Excellent health; excellent emotional stability. Does Jazzercize classes. Husband is an executive at a U.S. company in Detroit; he plans to stay in the States with their children, ages 11 and 9. The couple plans to commute every two to six weeks. Has lived in Toronto for five years; business travel in North America; personal travel in Europe and Latin America.
4. **Steven Hsu,** 42, of Asian American descent, married. Employed by the company for 18 years in the Los Angeles office. Currently Marketing Manager, Western United States; very successful. UCLA MBA. Speaks some Korean. Excellent technical knowledge, excellent managerial skills, good communication skills, excellent interpersonal skills. Good health, excellent emotional stability. Plays golf. Wife is an engineer who plans to do consulting work in eastern Europe. Children ages 8, 5, and 2. Has not lived outside the United States; personal travel in Europe and Asia.

Your committee has received this memo from the CEO.

To: Executive Committee

From: Ed Conzachi *EC*

Subject: Choosing a Manager for the New Eastern European Office

Please write me a memo recommending the best candidate for Manager of East European Marketing. In your memo, tell me whom you're choosing and why; also explain why you have rejected the unsuccessful candidates.

This person will be assuming a three-year appointment, with the possibility of reappointment. The company will pay moving and relocation expenses for the manager and his or her family.

The Eastern European division currently is the smallest of the company's international divisions. However, this area is poised for growth. The new manager will supervise the Moscow office and establish branch offices as needed.

The committee has invited comments from everyone in the company. You've received these memos.

To: Executive Committee

From: Robert Osborne, U.S. Marketing Manager *RO*

Subject: Recommendation for Steve Hsu

Steve Hsu would be a great choice to head up the new Moscow office. In the past seven years, Steve has increased sales in the Western Region by 15%—in spite of recessions, earthquakes, and fires. He has a low-key, participative style that brings out the best in subordinates. Moreover, Steve is a brilliant computer programmer. He probably understands our products better than any other marketing or salesperson in the company.

Steve is clearly destined for success in headquarters. This assignment will give him the international experience he needs to move up to the next level of executive success.

To: Executive Committee

From: Becky Exter, Affirmative Action Officer *BE*

Subject: Hiring the New Manager for East European Marketing

Please be sensitive to affirmative action concerns. The company has a very good record of appointing women and minorities to key positions in the United States and Canada; so far our record in our overseas divisions has been less effective.

In part, perhaps, that may stem from a perception that women and minorities will not be accepted in countries less open than our own. But the experience of several multinational firms has been that even exclusionary countries will accept people who have the full backing of their companies. Another concern may be that it will be harder for women to establish a social support system abroad. However, different individuals have different ways of establishing support. To assume that the best candidate for an international assignment is a male with a stay-at-home wife is discriminatory and may deprive our company of the skills of some of its best people.

We have several qualified women and minority candidates. I urge you to consider their credentials carefully.

To: Executive Committee

From: William E. Dortch, Marketing Manager, European Economic Community *WED*

Subject: Recommendation for Debbie Gere

Debbie Gere would be my choice to head the new Moscow office. As you know, I recommended that Europe be divided and that we establish an Eastern European division. Of all the people from the States who have worked on the creation of the new division, Debbie is the best. The negotiations were often complex. Debbie's knowledge of the language and culture was invaluable. She's done a good job in the New York office and is ready for wider responsibilities. Eastern Europe is a challenging place, but Debbie can handle the pressure and help us gain the foothold we need.

To: Ed Conzachi, President

From: Pierre Garamond, Sales Representative, European Economic Community *PG*

Subject: Recommendation for Claude Chabot

Claude Chabot would be the best choice for Manager of Eastern European Marketing. He is a superb supervisor, motivating us to the highest level of achievement. He understands the complex legal and cultural nuances of selling our products in Europe as only a native can. He also has the budgeting and managerial skills to oversee the entire marketing effort.

You are aware that the company's record of sending U.S. citizens to head international divisions is not particularly good. European Marketing is an exception, but our records in the Middle East and Japan have been poor. The company would gain stability by appointing Europeans to head European offices, Asians to head Asian offices, and so forth. Such people would do a better job of managing and motivating staffs which will be comprised primarily of nationals in the country where the office is located. Ending the practice of reserving the top jobs for U.S. citizens would also send a message to international employees that we are valued and that we have a future with this company.

To: Executive Committee

From: Elaine Crispell, Manager, Canadian Marketing *EC*

Subject: Recommendation for Linda Moss

Linda Moss has done well as Assistant Manager for the last two and a half years. She is a creative, flexible problem solver. Her productivity is the highest in the office. Though she could be called a "workaholic," she is a warm, caring human being.

As you know, the Canadian division includes French-Speaking Montreal and a large Native Canadian population; furthermore, Toronto is an international and intercultural city. Linda has gained intercultural competence both on a personal and professional level.

Linda has the potential to be our first woman CEO 15 years down the road. She needs more international experience to be competitive at that level. This would be a good opportunity for her, and she would do well for the company.

7.11 Researching Diversity at Your School

Research your university's policies and practices regarding diversity. Conduct the following research:

- Locate your university's position statement on diversity for both employment and educational opportunities.
- Find diversity data for your university's student body.
- Gather pictures of the student body you can find from the Internet, brochures, and posters throughout your university.
- Analyze your findings. Do the pictures you find resemble the statistics you find?

As your instructor directs,

a. Write an e-mail to your instructor explaining your findings, opinions, and conclusions.
b. Share your results with a small group of students.
c. Write an e-mail message to the president of the university outlining your opinion on how your university is achieving diversity and what, if anything, needs to be done to improve its efforts.
d. Make a short oral presentation to the class discussing your findings and conclusions.

7.12 Researching Diversity Programs of Companies

Find three businesses that are successfully globalizing or outsourcing.

- Specify their successes. What actions, behaviors, and policies do they follow to be successful at globalizing and/or outsourcing their organization?
- Note what other organizations can learn from these examples.

Find three businesses that are having problems globalizing or outsourcing.

- Specify their problems. What actions, behaviors, and policies do they follow that are causing the problems?
- Note what other organizations can learn from these examples.

As your instructor directs,

a. Write an e-mail to your instructor explaining your findings, opinions, and conclusions.
b. Share your results with a small group of students.
c. Make a short oral presentation to the class discussing your findings and conclusions.

CHAPTER 8

Working and Writing in Teams

Chapter Outline

Newsworthy Communication

A Team Disaster

Complex operations like deepwater oil drilling involve hundreds of people and, sometimes, multiple corporations working in close cooperation. The Deepwater Horizon disaster in April 2010 exposed the failures of the corporate and individual teams who were involved with the operation.

In a report released in early 2011, the presidential commission on the Deepwater Horizon disaster placed responsibility for the massive oil spill on well owner BP and two of its contractors, Transocean and Halliburton. But the problems that led to the disaster are not confined to the companies involved in the Gulf spill. Commission cochairman William K. Reilly stated that what the commission observed was "a system-wide problem" exemplified by communication failures at every level.

"Successful teams, whether composed of individuals or corporations, must be built on excellent cooperation and communication."

At the most basic level, the workers on the rig did not understand who had authority during an emergency. Written safety guidelines on the rig required multiple people to make decisions about responding to emergencies, but crew members wasted critical minutes when the rig caught fire attempting to decide whether they could shut off the well. As the captain of the rig and 10 other managers and crew members discussed the situation, Andrea Fleytas, a 23-year-old rig worker, took charge and radioed a distress signal to the Coast Guard. She was promptly reprimanded for doing so without the captain's permission.

As the disaster unfolded, larger issues emerged surrounding the cooperation of the companies that should have been working together on the Horizon. The commission report found that all three companies had failed to communicate with each other or with their employees about dangers, procedures, and similar situations.

Successful teams, whether composed of individuals or corporations, must be built on excellent cooperation and communication. People on the teams must be aware of correct procedures and their own roles and responsibilities. In the case of the Deepwater Horizon disaster, failures in teamwork at all levels ended up in a human and environmental tragedy.

Sources: Stephen Power and Ben Casselman, "White House Probe Blames BP, Industry in Gulf Blast," *Wall Street Journal,* January 6, 2011, A2; and Douglas A. Blackmon, Vanessa O'Connell, Alexandra Berzon, and Ana Campoy, "There Was 'Nobody in Charge,'" *Wall Street Journal,* May 28, 2010, A6–A7.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know

LO 8-1 Different kinds of productive and nonproductive roles in teams.

LO 8-2 Group decision-making strategies.

LO 8-3 Characteristics of successful teams.

LO 8-4 Techniques for resolving conflict.

LO 8-5 Techniques for making meetings effective.

LO 8-6 Techniques for collaborative writing.

http://www.teamtechnology.co.uk/

Log on to this website to find a wide range of articles and resources about interacting effectively in team settings. More specifically, click on "Team Roles" to find some interactive links to aid in assessing yourself as a team member as well as determining roles of your fellow group members.

Teamwork is crucial to success in an organization. Some teams produce products, provide services, or recommend solutions to problems. Other teams—perhaps in addition to providing a service or recommending a solution—also produce documents. Today teamwork is facilitated by technology tools such as wikis, Google Docs, chats, Skype, and teleconferencing.

Teamwork comes into play when a job is too big or the time is too short for one person to do the work, and again when no one person has the needed knowledge and skills. High stakes also call for teamwork, both because the efforts of multiple talented people are needed and because no one person wants the sole responsibility for a possible failure.

Interpersonal communication, communication between people, is crucial for good teamwork. It relies heavily on interpersonal skills such as listening and networking. Chapter 4 discusses interpersonal skills vital for good teamwork. Skills in conflict resolution, meeting organization, and collaborative writing also help teamwork. These skills will make you more successful in your job, social groups, community service, and volunteer work. On writing teams, giving careful attention to both teamwork and writing process (see Chapter 5) improves both the final product and members' satisfaction with the team.

TEAM INTERACTIONS LO 8-1

http://www.effectivemeetings.com/

Log onto EffectiveMeetings.com for articles offering advice about making meetings effective. What advice offered in these articles do you think would be helpful for conducting meetings with your fellow group members?

Teams can focus on different dimensions. **Informational dimensions** focus on content: the problem, data, and possible solutions. **Procedural dimensions** focus on method and process. How will the team make decisions? Who will do what? When will assignments be due? **Interpersonal dimensions** focus on people, promoting friendliness, cooperation, and team loyalty.

Different kinds of communication dominate during these stages of the life of a task team: formation, coordination, and formalization.

During **formation,** when members meet and begin to define their task, teams need to develop some sort of social cohesiveness and to develop procedures for meeting and acting. Interpersonal and procedural comments reduce the tension that always exists in a new team. Insistence on information in this first stage can hurt the team's long-term productivity.

Teams are often most effective when they explicitly adopt ground rules. Figure 8.1 lists some of the most common ground rules used by workplace teams.

During formation, conflicts frequently arise when the team defines tasks and procedures. Successful teams clarify what each member is supposed to do. They also set procedures: When and how often will they meet? Will decisions

Figure 8.1 Possible Team Ground Rules

- Start team meetings on time; end on time.
- Attend regularly.
- Come to the meeting prepared.
- Leave the meeting with a clear understanding of what each member is to do next.
- Focus comments on the issues.
- Avoid personal attacks.
- Listen to and respect members' opinions.
- Everyone speaks on key issues and procedures.
- Address problems as you become aware of them. If you have a problem with another person, tell that person, not everyone else.
- Do your share of the work.
- Communicate immediately if you think you may not be able to fulfill an agreement.
- Produce your work by the agreed-upon time.

be made by a leader, as is the case with many advisory groups? By consensus or vote? Will the team evaluate individual performances? Will someone keep minutes? Interpersonal communication is needed to resolve the conflict that surfaces during this phase. Successful teams analyze their tasks thoroughly before they begin to search for solutions.

Coordination is the longest phase and the phase during which most of the team's work is done. While procedural and interpersonal comments help maintain direction and friendliness, most of the comments need to deal with information. Good information is essential to good decisions. Successful teams deliberately seek numerous possible solutions. Conflict may occur as the team debates these solutions. Successful teams carefully consider as many solutions as possible before choosing one. They particularly avoid the temptation of going with the first solution that arises.

In **formalization,** the group finalizes its work. The success of this phase determines how well the group's decision will be implemented. In this stage, the group seeks to forget earlier conflicts.

Roles in Teams

Individual members can play multiple roles within teams, and these roles can change during the team's work. Roles can be positive or negative.

Positive roles and actions that help the team achieve its task goals include the following.

- **Seeking information and opinions**—asking questions, identifying gaps in the team's knowledge.
- **Giving information and opinions**—answering questions, providing relevant information.
- **Summarizing**—restating major points, summarizing decisions.
- **Synthesizing**—pulling ideas together, connecting different elements of the team's efforts.
- **Evaluating**—comparing team processes and products to standards and goals.
- **Coordinating**—planning work, giving directions, and fitting together contributions of team members.

Developing Team Cohesiveness

In *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni suggests a simple method for helping to establish social cohesiveness in a new team. His low-risk exercise involves having everyone on the team answer a short list of questions about themselves.

The questions, while personal, are not particularly probing, and the group could create the list of questions together. He suggests questions about hometown, number of siblings, a few facts about one's childhood, hobbies, first job, and worst job.

Simply by answering even innocuous questions about themselves, team members begin to relate to each other and see each other as interesting people. This in turn encourages greater empathy and understanding.

Have you tried Lencioni's technique in a team you belonged to? Did it help in team formation? What questions do you think would work best?

Adapted from Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 198.

Teamwork Myths

Myth: Harmony is good.

Reality: Well-managed conflict can generate more creative solutions and help a group's performance.

Myth: Add new members for fresh ideas and energy.

Reality: The longer group membership stays stable, the better groups perform.

Myth: With today's technology, in-the-room team meetings are no longer necessary.

Reality: Long-distance teams have a considerable disadvantage. So much so that many businesses pay the money to bring them together at key times.

Myth: Larger teams are better, particularly when they include representatives of all constituencies.

Reality: Large size is one of the worst impediments to team effectiveness. It allows individuals to shirk their share of the workload and requires more effort poured into coordinating activities.

Adapted from J. Richard Hackman, "Six Common Misperceptions about Teamwork," *Harvard Business Review* (blog), June 7, 2011, http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2011/06/six_common_misperceptions_abou.html.

Positive roles and actions that help the team build loyalty, resolve conflicts, and function smoothly include the following behaviors (also see the list in Figure 8.2):

- **Encouraging participation**—demonstrating openness and acceptance, recognizing the contributions of members, calling on quieter team members.
- **Relieving tensions**—joking and suggesting breaks and fun activities.
- **Checking feelings**—asking members how they feel about team activities and sharing one's own feelings with others.
- **Solving interpersonal problems**—opening discussion of interpersonal problems in the team and suggesting ways to solve them.
- **Listening actively**—showing team members that they have been heard and that their ideas are being taken seriously.

Negative roles and actions that hurt the team's product and process include the following:

- **Blocking**—disagreeing with everything that is proposed.
- **Dominating**—trying to run the team by ordering, shutting out others, and insisting on one's own way.
- **Clowning**—making unproductive jokes and diverting the team from the task.
- **Overspeaking**—taking every opportunity to be the first to speak; insisting on personally responding to everyone else's comments.
- **Withdrawing**—being silent in meetings, not contributing, not helping with the work, not attending meetings.

Some actions can be positive or negative depending on how they are used. Active participation by members helps teams move forward, but too much talking from one member blocks contributions from others. Criticizing ideas is necessary if the team is to produce the best solution, but criticizing every idea raised without ever suggesting possible solutions blocks a team. Jokes in moderation can defuse tension and make the team work more fun. Too many jokes or inappropriate jokes can make the team's work more difficult.

Leadership in Teams

You may have noted that "leader" was not one of the roles listed above. Being a leader does *not* mean doing all the work yourself. Indeed, someone who

Figure 8.2 The Five Characteristics of an Effective Team

1. They trust one another.
2. They engage in unfiltered conflict around ideas.
3. They commit to decisions and plans of action.
4. They hold one another accountable for delivering against those plans.
5. They focus on the achievement of collective results.

Quoted from Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 189–90.

implies that he or she has the best ideas and can do the best work is likely playing the negative roles of blocking and dominating.

Effective teams balance three kinds of leadership, which parallel the three team dimensions:

- Informational leaders generate and evaluate ideas and text.
- Interpersonal leaders monitor the team's process, check people's feelings, and resolve conflicts.
- Procedural leaders set the agenda, make sure that everyone knows what's due for the next meeting, communicate with absent team members, and check to be sure that assignments are carried out.

While it's possible for one person to assume all these responsibilities, in many teams, the three kinds of leadership are taken on by three (or more) different people. Some teams formally or informally rotate or share these responsibilities, so that everyone—and no one—is a leader.

Studies have shown that people who talk a lot, listen effectively, and respond nonverbally to other members of the team are considered to be leaders.[1]

Decision-Making Strategies LO 8-2

Probably the least effective decision-making strategy is to let the person who talks first, last, loudest, or most determine the decision. Most teams instead aim to air different points of view with the objective of identifying the best choice, or at least a choice that seems good enough for the team's purposes. The team discussion considers the pros and cons of each idea. In many teams, someone willingly plays **devil's advocate** to look for possible flaws in an idea. To give ideas a fair hearing, someone should also develop an idea's positive aspects.

After the team has considered alternatives, it needs a method for picking one to implement. Typical selection methods include voting and consensus. **Voting** is quick but may leave people in the minority unhappy with and uncommitted to the majority's plan. Coming to **consensus** takes time but usually results in speedier implementation of ideas. Airing preferences early in the process, through polls before meetings and straw votes during meetings, can sometimes help teams establish consensus more quickly. Even in situations where consensus is not possible, good teams ensure everyone's ideas are considered. Most people will agree to support the team's decision, even if it was not their choice, as long as they feel they have been heard.

Business people in different nations have varying preferences about these two methods. An international survey of 15,000 managers and employees found that four-fifths of the Japanese respondents preferred consensus, but a little more than one-third of the Americans did. Other nations in which consensus was preferred included Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France.[2]

Two strategies that are often useful in organizational teams are the standard problem-solving process and dot planning.

The standard problem-solving process has multiple steps:

1. Identify the task or problem. What is the team trying to do?
2. Understand what the team has to deliver, in what form, by what due date. Identify available resources.
3. Gather information, share it with all team members, and examine it critically.

Make the Most of Your Brainstorming

Matt Bowen, president of the Aloft Group Inc. marketing and PR agency, has advice on running successful brainstorming meetings:

- Identify a clear, concrete goal before you start. That allows you to establish some boundaries for ideas—about practicality or cost, for example—and helps you keep your brainstorming session focused.
- Let everyone involved in the meeting know what the goal is ahead of time. That gives everyone a chance to have ideas ready when they come to the meeting: if people "prebrainstorm," you can focus your meeting on refining ideas.
- Set limits on meeting size and duration. Bowen recommends limiting a brainstorming meeting to one hour, with no more than five to seven participants. An hour is enough time for a focused discussion, and it's easier for everyone to participate and be heard in a small team.
- Let the ideas flow freely. Bowen recommends practicing active listening skills that encourage people both to share their ideas and to build on each other's ideas.
- Remember that there are no bad ideas: any idea, however impractical, might inspire the best solution, and spending time weeding out weak ideas can stifle creativity.
- Brainstorm with a diverse team. The best ideas come out of teams made up of people with very different perspectives.

Adapted from Kelly K. Spors, "Productive Brainstorms Take the Right Mix of Elements," *Wall Street Journal*, July 24, 2008, B5.

4. Establish criteria. What would the ideal solution include? Which elements of that solution would be part of a less-than-ideal but still acceptable solution? What legal, financial, moral, or other limitations might keep a solution from being implemented?
5. Generate alternate solutions. Brainstorm and record ideas for the next step.
6. Measure the alternatives against the criteria.
7. Choose the best solution.

Dot planning offers a way for large teams to choose priorities quickly. First, the team brainstorms ideas, recording each on pages that are put on the wall. Then each individual gets two strips of three to five adhesive dots in different colors. One color represents high priority, the other lower priority. People then walk up to the pages and stick dots by the points they care most about. Some teams allow only one dot from one person on any one item; others allow someone who is really passionate about an idea to put all of his or her dots on it. The dots make it easy to see which items the team believes are most and least important.

What happens if your team can't agree, or can't reach consensus? Team-building expert Bob Frisch suggests some strategies for working through a team-decision deadlock. In addition to using standard group techniques (setting clear goals, brainstorming solutions, and weighing the pros and cons of each solution), you should

- Use the current sticking point as the start for a new round of brainstorming. If there are two solutions that your team can't choose between, break the deadlock by brainstorming new solutions that combine the old ones. That will get the team making progress again and get new ideas on the table.
- Instead of rushing to a decision, allow time for team members to consider the options. Sometimes people refuse to compromise in order to avoid making a bad snap decision. Giving your team time to consider the options will take the pressure off. For especially complex decisions, schedule multiple meetings with time in between to do some research and to digest the pros and cons of each solution.
- Allow team members to make their decisions confidentially. People might refuse to state an opinion—or change an opinion—if they feel their opinions and reasoning will be judged negatively by the group. A secret ballot or other confidential form of "discussion" can help break a deadlock by giving team members an opportunity to voice their opinions without being judged or embarrassed.[3]

Feedback Strategies

As soon as the team begins to put its decisions into play, it needs to begin generating and heeding feedback. Sometimes this feedback will be external; it will come from supervisors, suppliers, clients, and customers. It should also, however, come from within the team. Teams frequently evaluate individual team members' performances, team performance, task progress, and team procedures.

Feedback should be frequent and regular. Many teams have weekly feedback as well as feedback connected to specific stages of their task. Regular feedback is a good way to keep team members contributing their share of the work in a timely fashion. While feedback needs to be honest and incorporate criticism, such critiques can be phrased as positively as possible ("please get your figures in for the Wednesday update" rather than "do you think you can make the Wednesday deadline this time?"). And don't forget to praise.

Research shows that teams with a higher ratio of positive-to-negative interactions do better work.[4]

One form of feedback that has been gaining popularity with organizations is **360-degree feedback.** This is a form of employee-development assessment in which a team member receives feedback from peers, managers, subordinates, customers, suppliers—from anyone touched by that person's work. Organizations or teams that use this model successfully typically apply it to everyone on the team, including team leaders. Research has shown this method is particularly effective when workers believe they can improve from the feedback. The method is also more effective when the feedback is positive and constructive.[5]

Characteristics of Successful Student Teams LO 8-3

Studies of student teams completing class projects have found that students in successful teams were not necessarily more skilled or more experienced than students in less successful teams. Instead, successful and less successful teams communicated differently.

- Successful teams assign specific tasks, set clear deadlines, and schedule frequent meetings. They also regularly communicate as a team about each member's progress. In less successful teams, members are not sure what they are supposed to be doing or when it is needed. Less successful teams meet less often.
- Successful teams recognize that they have to build trust with each other through goodwill, active listening, and consistent participation. Teams who trust each other tend to work together to solve problems that impact the whole team. Less successful teams expect members to complete their own parts, and fail to bring those parts together into a coherent whole, behaviors which also appear in unsuccessful workplace teams.[6]
- Successful teams recognize the contribution of every team member to the team's success, and take time to acknowledge each member during team meetings. When team members know that their efforts are noticed and appreciated by their peers, they're much more willing to contribute to the team. Less successful teams take individual contributions for granted.
- Successful teams listen carefully to each other and respond to emotions as well as words. Less successful teams pay less attention to what is said and how it is said.
- In successful teams members work more evenly and actively on the project.[7] Successful teams even find ways to use members who don't like working in teams. For example, a student who doesn't want to be a "team player" can be a freelancer for her team, completing assignments by herself and e-mailing them to the team. Less successful teams have a smaller percentage of active members and frequently have some members who do very little on the final project.
- Successful teams make important decisions together. In less successful teams, a subgroup or an individual makes decisions.
- Successful teams listen to criticism and try to improve their performance on the basis of it. In less successful teams, criticism is rationalized.
- Successful teams deal directly with conflicts that emerge; unsuccessful teams try to ignore conflicts.

Research has shown that student teams produce better documents when they disagree over substantive issues of content and document design. The

Who Does What

Working successfully on a team depends on being open about preferences, constraints, and skills and then using creative problem-solving techniques.

A person who prefers to outline the whole project in advance may be on a team with someone who expects to do the project at the last minute. Someone who likes to talk out ideas before writing may be on a team with someone who wants to work on a draft in silence and revise it before showing it to anyone. By being honest about your preferences, you make it possible for the team to find a creative solution that builds on what each person can offer.

In one team, Rob wanted to wait to start the project because he was busy with other class work. David and Susan, however, wanted to go ahead now because their schedules would get busier later in the term. A creative solution would be for David and Susan to do most of the work on parts of the project that had to be completed first (such as collecting data and writing the proposal) and for Rob to do work that had to be done later (such as creating tables, revising, editing, proofreading, and making bound copies).

What are your work preferences? What are the preferences of other people on your team? How can you work together to accommodate everyone's schedules and preferences?

Checklists for Teams

As knowledge continues to grow, more and more tasks have to be accomplished by teams. One person no longer has the knowledge or skills to do them. Indeed, one person may not know enough to even supervise them. Teams perform organ transplants, run marketing campaigns, and create proposals for billion dollar projects.

Construction is a good example. In the past, construction on grand edifices, such as palaces and cathedrals, was overseen by a master builder. Now skyscrapers are constructed by 16 different trades. To coordinate their work, the structural engineering firm in charge uses enormous checklists for work to be done and dates. The checklists are created by a team, with at least one person from each of the 16 trades. As work is completed, or problems arise, new checklists are created.

McNamara/Salvia, a large construction firm in Boston, also uses a communication checklist. After each major step in construction, for instance elevator installation, all trades involved meet to discuss progress. When questions or problems arise, more items are added to the checklist. Problems are discussed and resolved by representatives of the relevant trades, who then sign off on proposed solutions.

Adapted from Atul Gawande, *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right* (New York: Henry Holt, 2009), chap. 3.

disagreement does not need to be angry: someone can simply say, "Yes, and here's another way we could do it." Deciding among two (or more) alternatives forces the proposer to explain the rationale for an idea. Even when the team adopts the original idea, considering alternatives rather than quickly accepting the first idea produces better writing.[8]

As you no doubt realize, these characteristics of good teams actually apply to most teams, not just student teams. A survey of engineering project teams found that 95% of the team members thought that good communication was the reason for team success, and poor communication the reason for team failures.[9]

Peer Pressure and Groupthink

Teams that never express conflict may be experiencing groupthink. Groupthink is the tendency for teams to put such a high premium on agreement that they directly or indirectly punish dissent.

Many people feel so much reluctance to express open disagreement that they will say they agree even when objective circumstances would suggest the first speaker cannot be right. In a series of classic experiments in the 1950s, Solomon Asch showed the influence of peer pressure. People sitting around a table were shown a large card with a line and asked to match it to the line of the same length on another card. It's a simple test: people normally match the lines correctly almost 100% of the time. However, in the experiment, all but one of the people in the group had been instructed to give false answers for several of the trials. When the group gave an incorrect answer, the focal person accepted the group's judgment 36.8% of the time. When someone else also gave a different answer—even if it was another wrong answer—the focal person accepted the group's judgment only 9% of the time.[10]

The experimenters varied the differences in line lengths, hoping to create a situation in which even the most conforming subjects would trust their own senses. But some people continued to accept the group's judgment, even when one line was seven inches longer than the other.

A classic example of groupthink, and one illustrating the sometimes constraining influence of a powerful team leader, occurred during President Kennedy's administration. The deliberations of Kennedy and his advisers illustrated classic characteristics of groupthink such as premature agreement and suppression of doubts. Kennedy guided the discussions in a way that minimized disagreements. The result was the disastrous decision to launch the Bay of Pigs invasion, whose failure led to the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, Kennedy subsequently analyzed what had gone wrong with the decision process, and he had his advisers do likewise. He used these analyses to change the process for the Cuban Missile Crisis. Although the team again included Kennedy and many of the same advisers, it avoided groupthink. Kennedy ordered the team to question, allowed free-ranging discussions, used separate subteam meetings, and sometimes left the room himself to avoid undue influence of the discussions.[11]

Teams that "go along with the crowd" and suppress conflict ignore the full range of alternatives, seek only information that supports the positions they already favor, and fail to prepare contingency plans to cope with foreseeable setbacks. A business suffering from groupthink may launch a new product that senior executives support but for which there is no demand. Student teams suffering from groupthink turn in inferior documents.

The best correctives to groupthink are to consciously search for additional alternatives, to test one's assumptions against those of a range of other people, and to protect the right of people on a team to disagree. When power roles are a factor, input may need to be anonymous.

WORKING ON DIVERSE TEAMS

In any organization, you will work with people whose backgrounds and working styles differ from yours. Residents of small towns and rural areas have different notions of friendliness than do people from big cities. Marketing people tend to have different values and attitudes than researchers or engineers. In addition, differences arise from gender, class, race and ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and physical ability. Even people who share some of these characteristics are likely to differ in personality type.

These differences affect how people behave on teams and what they expect from teams. For example, in a business negotiation, people from Asia are more likely to see the goal of negotiation as development of a relationship between the parties. In contrast, American negotiators (especially the lawyers on the team) are more likely to see the purpose of a negotiation as producing a signed contract.[12] Such differences are likely to affect what people talk about and how they talk. Some western cultures use direct approaches; other cultures, especially eastern cultures, consider such approaches rude and respond by withholding information.

Other pitfalls of team differences exist. Sometimes people who sense a difference may attribute problems in the team to prejudice, when other factors may be responsible. Also, a significant body of research shows that accurate interpretation of emotions in diverse teams is influenced by factors such as gender, nationality, race, and status.[13] On the other hand, another body of

Diverse teams can extend the range of group efforts and ideas.

Here a Team, There a Team

At ICU Medical, any worker can form a team to tackle any problem he or she wishes. What's more, the CEO has never vetoed a team decision.

Teams elect their own leaders, assign tasks, set meetings and deadlines. Most teams have 5 to 7 people, and 12 to 15 teams generally finish a project each quarter. Teams have changed the company's production process and set up a 401(k) plan.

Serving on a team is voluntary, although some employees with special expertise get invited to join teams frequently. But team participation does not give employees a break from their regular job duties, which still must be performed satisfactorily.

To help teams function smoothly, ICU has a team handbook, created—you guessed it—by yet another team. The 25-page handbook addresses issues like what to do at the first meeting and other frequently asked questions. Teams also must post notes about their meetings on the company intranet, where all employees can offer feedback.

As a final team incentive, ICU rewards successful teams, with the size of the reward reflecting the importance of the project.

Would you like to work at ICU?

Adapted from Erin White, "How a Company Made Everyone a Team Player," *Wall Street Journal,* August 13, 2007, B1.

Team Stats

Most white-collar workers have to collaborate, but they are not always happy about doing so. Here are some team statistics.

- The majority of workers (54%) prefer working in groups of three.
- 10% of workers prefer to work alone.
- 82% of workers collaborate, and 42% do so constantly.
- Women (51%) like working collaboratively to learn more than men (40%) do.
- Men (36%) like working collaboratively to perform a task more than women (25%) do, but obviously neither group is close to a majority.
- Younger workers (18–24) like working collaboratively to learn (60%).

Do you see any of these statistics reflected in your teams?

Adapted from Matt Vella, "Indata: White-Collar Workers Shoulder Together—Like It or Not," *BusinessWeek*, April 28, 2008, 58.

research shows that ethnically diverse teams produce more and higher-quality ideas.[14] Research has also found that over time, as team members focus on their task, mission, or profession, cultural differences become less significant than the role of being a team member.[15]

Sometimes the culture to which the team belongs is a distinct asset, uniting strangers in positive ways and giving them strengths to use in high-stakes situations. With their team skills enhanced by the organizational culture, airline crews and emergency teams may perform heroically in a crisis.

Savvy team members play to each other's strengths and devise strategies for dealing with differences. These efforts can benefit the whole team. A study of multicultural teams published in the *Harvard Business Review* found acknowledging cultural gaps openly and cooperatively working through them an ideal strategy for surmounting cultural differences. For example, a U.S. and U.K. team used their differing approaches to decision making to create a higher-quality decision. The U.K. members used their slower approach to analyze possible pitfalls, and the U.S. members used their "forge ahead" approach to move the project along. Both sides appreciated the contributions of the other members.[16]

CONFLICT RESOLUTION LO 8-4

Conflicts are going to arise in any group of intelligent people who care about their task. Yet many of us feel so uncomfortable with conflict that we pretend it doesn't exist. However, unacknowledged conflicts rarely go away: they fester, making the next interchange more difficult.

To reduce the number of conflicts in a team,

- Make responsibilities and ground rules clear at the beginning.
- Discuss problems as they arise, rather than letting them fester till people explode.
- Realize that team members are not responsible for each others' happiness.

In spite of these efforts, some conflict is a part of any team's life and that conflict needs to be resolved. When a conflict is emotionally charged, people will need a chance to calm themselves before they can arrive at a well-reasoned solution. Meeting expert John Tropman recommends the "two-meeting rule" for emotional matters: Controversial items should be handled at two different meetings. The first meeting is a chance for everyone to air a point of view about the issue. The second meeting is the one at which the team reaches a decision. The time between the two meetings becomes a cooling-off period.[17]

Figure 8.3 suggests several possible solutions to conflicts that student teams experience. Often the symptom arises from a feeling of not being respected or appreciated by the team. Therefore, many problems can be averted if people advocate for their ideas in a positive way. One way to do this is to devote as much effort to positive observations as possible. Another technique is to state analysis rather than mere opinions. Instead of "I wouldn't read an eight-page brochure," the member of a team could say, "Tests we did a couple of years ago found a better response for two-page brochures. Could we move some of that information to our website?" As in this example, an opinion can vary from person to person; stating an opinion does not provide a basis for the team to make a decision. In contrast, analysis provides objective information for the team to consider.

Figure 8.3 Troubleshooting Team Problems

Symptom	Possible solutions
We can't find a time to meet that works for all of us.	*a.* Find out why people can't meet at certain times. Some reasons suggest their own solutions. For example, if someone has to stay home with small children, perhaps the team could meet at that person's home. *b.* Assign out-of-class work to "committees" to work on parts of the project. *c.* Use technology (e.g., Skype, wikis, e-mail) to share, discuss, and revise drafts.
One person isn't doing his or her fair share.	*a.* Find out what is going on. Is the person overcommitted? Does he or she feel unappreciated? Is he or she unprepared? Those are different problems you'd solve in different ways. *b.* Early on, do things to build team loyalty. Get to know each other as writers and as people. Sometimes do something fun together. *c.* Encourage the person to contribute. "Mary, what do you think?" "Jim, which part of this would you like to draft?" Then find something to praise in the work. "Thanks for getting us started." *d.* If someone misses a meeting, assign someone else to bring the person up to speed. People who miss meetings for legitimate reasons (job interviews, illness) but don't find out what happened may become less committed to the team. *e.* Consider whether strict equality is the most important criterion. On a given project, some people may have more knowledge or time than others. Sometimes the best team product results from letting people do different amounts of work. *f.* Even if you divide up the work, make all decisions as a team: what to write about, which evidence to include, what graphs to use, what revisions to make. People excluded from decisions become less committed to the team.
I seem to be the only one on the team who cares about quality.	*a.* Find out why other members "don't care." If they received low grades on early assignments, stress that good ideas and attention to detail can raise grades. Perhaps the team should meet with the instructor to discuss what kinds of work will pay the highest dividends. *b.* Volunteer to do extra work. Sometimes people settle for something that's just OK because they don't have the time or resources to do excellent work. They might be happy for the work to be done—if they don't have to do it. *c.* Be sure that you're respecting what each person can contribute. Team members sometimes withdraw when one person dominates and suggests that he or she is "better" than other members. *d.* Fit specific tasks to individual abilities. People generally do better work in areas they see as their strengths. A visual learner who doesn't care about the written report may do an excellent job on the accompanying visuals.
People in the team don't seem willing to disagree. We end up going with the first idea suggested.	*a.* Brainstorm so you have multiple possibilities to consider. *b.* After an idea is suggested, have each person on the team suggest a way it could be improved. *c.* Appoint someone to be a devil's advocate. *d.* Have each person on the team write a draft. It's likely the drafts will be different, and you'll have several options to mix and match. *e.* Talk about good ways to offer criticism. Sometimes people don't disagree because they're afraid that other team members won't tolerate disagreement.
One person just criticizes everything.	*a.* Ask the person to follow up the criticism with a suggestion for improvement. *b.* Talk about ways to express criticism tactfully. "I think we need to think about *x*" is more tactful than "You're wrong." *c.* If the criticism is about ideas and writing (not about people), value it. Ideas and documents need criticism if we are to improve them.

Steps in Conflict Resolution

Dealing successfully with conflict requires attention both to the issues and to people's feelings. The following techniques will help you resolve conflicts constructively.

1. Make sure the people involved really disagree. Sometimes different conversational styles, differing interpretations of data, or faulty inferences create apparent conflicts when no real disagreement exists.

Someone who asks "Are those data accurate?" may just be asking for source information, not questioning the conclusions the team drew from the data.

Sometimes someone who's under a lot of pressure may explode. But the speaker may just be venting anger and frustration; he or she may not in fact be angry at the person who receives the explosion. One way to find out if a person is just venting is to ask, "Is there something you'd like me to do?"

2. Check to see that everyone's information is correct. Sometimes people are operating on outdated or incomplete information. People may also act on personal biases or opinions rather than data.

3. Discover the needs each person is trying to meet. Sometimes determining the real needs makes it possible to see a new solution. The **presenting problem** that surfaces as the subject of dissension may or may not be the real problem. For example, a worker who complains about the hours he's putting in may in fact be complaining not about the hours themselves but about not feeling appreciated. A supervisor who complains that the other supervisors don't invite her to meetings may really feel that the other managers don't accept her as a peer. Sometimes people have trouble seeing beyond the presenting problem because they've been taught to suppress their anger, especially toward powerful people. One way to tell whether the presenting problem is the real problem is to ask, "If this were solved, would I be satisfied?" If the answer is *no,* then the problem that presents itself is not the real problem. Solving the presenting problem won't solve the conflict. Keep probing until you get to the real conflict.

4. Search for alternatives. Sometimes people are locked into conflict because they see too few alternatives. People tend to handle complexity by looking for ways to simplify. In a team, someone makes a suggestion, so the team members discuss it as if it is the only alternative. The team generates more alternatives only if the first one is unacceptable. As a result, the team's choice depends on the order in which team members think of ideas. When a decision is significant, the team needs a formal process to identify alternatives before moving on to a decision. Many teams use brainstorming when they search for alternatives.

5. Repair negative feelings. Conflict can emerge without anger and without escalating the disagreement, as the next section shows. But if people's feelings have been hurt, the team needs to deal with those feelings to resolve the conflict constructively. Only when people feel respected and taken seriously can they take the next step of trusting others on the team.

A Team of Rivals

A major focus of Doris Kearns Goodwin's book *Team of Rivals* is Abraham Lincoln's leadership style, particularly the way he built his leadership team. President Obama said if he could take only one book, apart from the Bible, with him to the White House it would be this book. The following are some of Goodwin's key points:

- Lincoln chose his cabinet from his most able rivals, men who were guaranteed to hold different views. His ability to weave these men into an effective team showed great emotional intelligence.
- These men were confident enough that they were not afraid to question Lincoln or argue with him. The resulting exchange of ideas strengthened Lincoln's decision making.
- These men also had temperaments different from Lincoln's, helping Lincoln find a balanced approach to leading the war.
- Lincoln shared both credit for successes and responsibility for failures, including failures of others. Goodwin calls this tactic creating "a reservoir of good feeling." Through this approach Lincoln earned the intense loyalty of his team.

Adapted from Doris Kearns Goodwin, "Leadership Lessons from Abraham Lincoln," *Harvard Business Review* 87, no.4 (2009): 43–47.

Criticism Responses

Conflict is particularly difficult to resolve when someone else criticizes or attacks us directly. When we are criticized, our natural reaction is to defend ourselves—perhaps by counterattacking. The counterattack prompts the critic to defend him- or herself. The conflict escalates; feelings are hurt; issues become muddied and more difficult to resolve.

Just as resolving conflict depends on identifying the needs each person is trying to meet, so dealing with criticism depends on understanding the real concern of the critic. Constructive ways to respond to criticism and get closer to the real concern include paraphrasing, checking for feelings, checking inferences, and buying time with limited agreement.

Paraphrasing To **paraphrase,** repeat in your own words the verbal content of the critic's message. The purposes of paraphrasing are (1) to be sure that you have heard the critic accurately, (2) to let the critic know what his or her statement means to you, and (3) to communicate that you are taking the critic and his or her feelings seriously.

Criticism:	You guys are stonewalling my requests for information.
Paraphrase:	You think that we don't give you the information you need.

Checking for feelings When you check the critic's feelings, you identify the emotions that the critic seems to be expressing verbally or nonverbally. The purposes of checking feelings are to try to understand (1) the critic's emotions, (2) the importance of the criticism for the critic, and (3) the unspoken ideas and feelings that may actually be more important than the voiced criticism.

Criticism:	You guys are stonewalling my requests for information.
Feelings check:	You sound pretty angry, yes?

Always *ask* the other person if you are right in your perception. Even the best reader of nonverbal cues is sometimes wrong.

Checking for inferences When you check the inferences you draw from criticism, you identify the implied meaning of the verbal and nonverbal content of the criticism, taking the statement a step further than the words of the critic to try to understand *why* the critic is bothered by the action or attitude under discussion. The purposes of checking inferences are (1) to identify the real (as opposed to the presenting) problem and (2) to communicate the feeling that you care about resolving the conflict.

Criticism:	You guys are stonewalling my requests for information.
Inference:	Are you saying that you need more information from our team?

Inferences can be faulty. In the above interchange, the critic might respond, "I don't need more information. I just think you should give it to me without my having to file three forms in triplicate every time I want some data."

Buying time with limited agreement Buying time is a useful strategy for dealing with criticisms that really sting. When you buy time with limited agreement, you avoid escalating the conflict (as an angry statement might do) but also avoid yielding to the critic's point of view. To buy time, restate the part of the criticism you agree to be true. (This is often a fact, rather than the interpretation or evaluation the critic has made of that fact.) *Then let the critic respond, before you say anything else.* The purposes of buying time are (1) to allow you time to think when a criticism really hits home and threatens you, so that you can respond to the criticism rather than simply reacting defensively, and (2) to suggest to the critic that you are trying to hear what he or she is saying.

Criticism:	You guys are stonewalling my requests for information.
Limited agreement:	It's true that the cost projections you asked for last week still aren't ready.

Scientific Teams

For centuries Western innovation has been led by individuals, like Da Vinci, Darwin, and Einstein. But in recent years, teamwork has become the model that drives innovation, especially in the sciences.

Benjamin Jones, a professor at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, analyzed 19.9 million papers and 2.1 million patents, and found that 99% of scientific subfields have seen not only increased levels of teamwork but also increases in the sizes of teams.

According to Jones, the best research now comes from teams. Among the most cited studies, papers authored by teams are cited more than twice as often as papers by individual authors. Papers cited more than one thousand times—"home run papers"—are more than six times as likely to be the result of team research.

What is behind this shift toward teamwork? In part, Jones claims, researchers develop narrow expertise during years of graduate study, requiring them to rely on colleagues in other fields to provide connections between areas of study. Additionally, the complex nature of twenty first-century problems demands collaborative efforts in order to truly transform our understanding of those problems.

Adapted from Jonah Lehrer, "Sunset of the Solo Scientist," *Wall Street Journal,* February 5, 2011, C12.

DO NOT go on to justify or explain. A "Yes, but . . ." statement is not a time-buyer.

You-Attitude in Conflict Resolution

You-attitude means looking at things from the audience's point of view, respecting the audience, and protecting the audience's ego. The *you* statements that many people use when they're angry attack the audience; they do not illustrate you-attitude. Instead, substitute statements about your own feelings. In conflict, *I* statements show good you-attitude!

Lacks you-attitude:	You never do your share of the work.
You-attitude:	I feel that I'm doing more than my share of the work on this project.
Lacks you-attitude:	Even you should be able to run the report through a spelling checker.
You-attitude:	I'm not willing to have my name on a report with so many spelling errors. I did lots of the writing, and I don't think I should have to do the proofreading and spell checking, too.

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS LO 8-5

Meetings have always taken a large part of the average manager's week. Although technology has eliminated some meetings, the increased number of teams means that meetings are even more frequent. In spite of their advantages for communication, meetings are not always good. Many productive workers see them as all too often a waste of time, interrupting valuable work, while less productive workers see them as a pleasant break. However, meetings can easily be made more effective.

Meetings can have multiple purposes:

- To share information.
- To brainstorm ideas.
- To evaluate ideas.
- To develop plans.
- To make decisions.
- To create a document.
- To motivate members.

When meetings combine two or more purposes, it's useful to make the purposes explicit. For example, in the meeting of a company's board of directors, some items are presented for information. Discussion is possible, but the group will not be asked to make a decision. Other items are presented for action; the group will be asked to vote. A business meeting might specify that the first half hour will be time for brainstorming, with the second half hour devoted to evaluation.

Formal meetings are run under strict rules, like the rules of parliamentary procedure summarized in *Robert's Rules of Order.* Motions must be made formally before a topic can be debated. Each point is settled by a vote. **Minutes** record each motion and the vote on it. Formal rules help the meeting run smoothly if the group is very large or if the agenda is very long. **Informal meetings,** which are much more common in the workplace, are run more

International Teams

IBM programmer Rob Nicholson has 50 colleagues from three countries—England, India, and Canada—on his software team.

Global teams such as his have to work to overcome language and cultural barriers. Workers worried about having their jobs outsourced have to learn to share information. Workers from more polite or reserved cultures have to conquer their reluctance to interrupt people and instead contact colleagues immediately with questions.

The team collaborates through sophisticated electronic communications. Team wikis allow members to post reports on their own progress and comment on the work of other team members. Team members get automatic alerts when major components of their project change. Completed program segments are put into a shared database. Phones display photos and personal details of team members so new programmers can learn about their teammates and where to go for help. Instant messaging keeps team members in touch.

A vital task for this team is dividing the work into small pieces. Most projects are divided into two-week chunks; those chunks are further divided into pieces that one programmer can complete in one or two days. The task list is kept on the team wiki. As programmers complete their tasks, they take the top task from the wiki list.

When the software fails a test, the entire team stops programming and focuses on finding the problem. In fact, the British office has rigged a red emergency light on its testing machine.

Clear and frequent communications among team members are a vital key for the success of the project.

Adapted from Phred Dvorak, "How Teams Can Work Well Together from Far Apart," *Wall Street Journal,* September 17, 2007, B4.

loosely. Votes may not be taken if most people seem to agree. Minutes may not be kept. Informal meetings are better for team-building and problem solving.

Planning the **agenda** is the foundation of a good meeting. A good agenda indicates

- A list of items for consideration.
- Whether each item is presented for information, for discussion, or for a decision.
- Who is sponsoring or introducing each item.
- How much time is allotted for each item.

Although a time schedule on an agenda is frequently not followed exactly, it does inform participants about the relative importance of the agenda items. In general, the information on an agenda should be specific enough that participants can come to the meeting prepared with ideas, background information, and any other resources they need for completing each agenda item.

Many groups start their agendas with routine items on which agreement will be easy. Doing so gets the meeting off to a positive start. However, it may also waste the time when people are most attentive. Another approach is to put routine items at the end. If there's a long list of routine items, sometimes you can dispense with them in an omnibus motion. An **omnibus motion** allows a group to approve many items together rather than voting on each separately. A single omnibus motion might cover multiple changes to operational guidelines, or a whole slate of candidates for various offices, or various budget recommendations. It's important to schedule controversial items early in the meeting, when energy levels are high, and to allow enough time for full discussion. Giving a controversial item only half an hour at the end of the day or evening makes people suspect that the leaders are trying to manipulate them.

Pay attention to people and process as well as to the task at hand. At informal meetings, a good leader observes nonverbal feedback and invites everyone to participate. If conflict seems to be getting out of hand, a leader may want to focus attention on the group process and ways that it could deal with conflict, before getting back to the substantive issues. Highly sensitive topics may require two or more meetings, the first to air the subject and people's feelings and the second to vote. The time between the two gives participants time to cool off and informally discuss the issues involved.

If the group doesn't formally vote, the leader should summarize the group's consensus after each point. At the end of the meeting, the leader should summarize all decisions and remind the group who is responsible for implementing or following up on each item. If no other notes are taken, someone should record the decisions and assignments. Long minutes will be most helpful if assignments are set off visually from the narrative.

If you're planning a long meeting, for example, a training session or a conference, recognize that networking is part of the value of the meeting. Allow short breaks at least every two hours and generous breaks twice a day so participants can talk informally to each other. If participants will be strangers, include some social functions so they can get to know each other. If they will have different interests or different levels of knowledge, plan concurrent sessions on different topics or for people with different levels of expertise.

Fun at Berkshire Hathaway's Annual Meeting

[In his 2011 letter to the shareholders of Berkshire Hathaway, Warren Buffett gives a three-page preview of what to anticipate at the annual meeting. Here are some colorful excerpts.]

- If you decide to leave during the day's question periods, please do so while *Charlie* is talking. (Act fast; he can be terse.)
- On Sunday, around 1 p.m., I will be at Borsheims with a smile and a shoeshine, selling jewelry. . . . I've told Susan Jacques, Borsheims' CEO, that I'm still a hot shot salesman. But I see doubt in her eyes. So cut loose and buy something from me for your wife or sweetheart (presumably the same person). Make me look good.
- Gorat's and Piccolo's will again be open exclusively for Berkshire shareholders on Sunday. . . . These restaurants are my favorites and—still being a growing boy—I will eat at both of them on Sunday evening.

Quoted from Warren Buffett, "Letters 2010," Berkshire Hathaway Inc., accessed May 24, 2011, http://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/2010ltr.pdf.

Write Meeting Minutes Minutes Later (not Months)

During congressional hearings on the cholesterol drug Vytorin, representatives from Merck and Schering-Plough (the drug's manufacturers) were grilled by lawmakers over a set of meeting minutes.

The minutes were from a meeting held between the drug manufacturers and the outside contractors who had researched the drug's effectiveness. According to the minutes, those consultants had recommended changing the way they evaluated the results of their research to "fudge" the data and make it seem that Vytorin was more effective than it really is. But when they testified before Congress, the researchers claimed that Vytorin's manufacturers had suggested that change in their research process—and that those minutes had been written by Merck employees almost a year after the meeting. In fact, those minutes hadn't been written until after the congressional investigation began—a delay which made it look like Vytorin's manufacturers were "fudging" more than test data.

Meeting minutes serve two main purposes: they preserve a record of what happened and what was decided, and they capture the facts so that if there's a dispute later, it's easier to untangle the truth. In either case, the best practice is to write the minutes right after the meeting, so that everything is still remembered correctly.

Adapted from Alica Mundy and Ron Winslow, "Accuracy of Vytorin Minutes Raises Doubt," *Wall Street Journal,* April 12, 2008, A3.

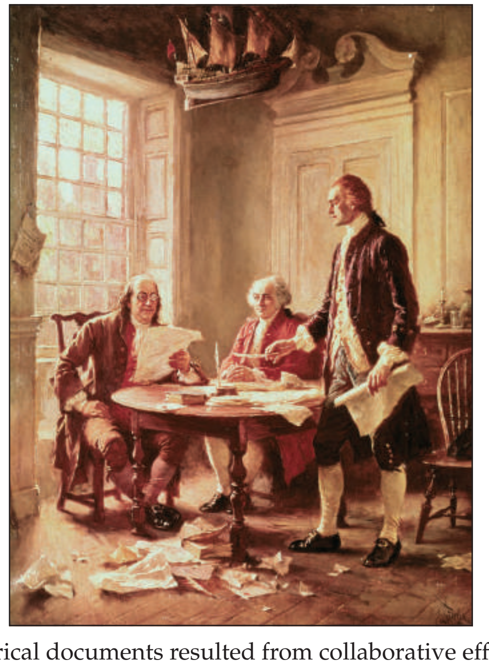
COLLABORATIVE WRITING LO 8-6

Whatever your career, it is likely that some of the documents you produce will be written with a team. Collaborative writing is often prompted by one of the following situations:

- The task is too big or the time is too short for one person to do all the writing.
- No one person has all the knowledge required to do the writing.
- The stakes for the task are so high that the organization wants the best efforts of as many people as possible; no one person wants the sole responsibility for the success or failure of the document.

Collaborative writing can be done by two people or by a much larger group. The team can be democratic or run by a leader who makes decisions alone. The team may share or divide responsibility for each stage in the writing process. There are several ways teams commonly divide the work. One person might do the main writing, with others providing feedback. Another approach is to divide the whole project into smaller tasks and to assign each task to a different team member. This approach shares the workload more evenly but is harder to coordinate, although technology, such as wikis or Google docs, helps. Sometimes team members write together simultaneously, discussing and responding to each other's ideas. This approach helps consensus but is time-consuming.

Research in collaborative writing suggests strategies that produce the best writing. As noted earlier, research has found that student teams that voiced disagreements as they analyzed, planned, and wrote a document produced significantly better documents than those that suppressed disagreement, going



Many important historical documents resulted from collaborative efforts. Thomas Jefferson may have written the foundation for the Declaration of Independence, but he received many suggestions and changes from other key players, including John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. The document underwent 47 alterations before it was finalized and presented to Congress.

along with whatever was first proposed.[18] A case study of two collaborative writing teams in a state agency found that the successful team distributed power in an egalitarian way, worked to soothe hurt feelings, and was careful to involve all team members. In terms of writing process, the successful team understood the task as a response to a rhetorical situation (with a specific audience, purpose, and situation), planned revisions as a team, saw supervisors' comments as legitimate, and had a positive attitude toward revision.[19] Ede and Lunsford's detailed case studies of collaborative teams in business, government, and science create a description of effective collaborative writers: "They are flexible; respectful of others; attentive and analytical listeners; able to speak and write clearly and articulately; dependable and able to meet deadlines; able to designate and share responsibility, to lead and to follow; open to criticism but confident in their own abilities; ready to engage in creative conflict."[20]

Planning the Work and the Document

Collaborative writing is most successful when the team articulates its understanding of the document's purposes, audiences, and contexts, and explicitly discusses the best way to achieve rhetorical goals. Businesses schedule formal planning sessions for large projects to set up a time line specifying intermediate and final due dates, meeting dates, who will attend each meeting, and who will do what. Putting the plan in writing reduces misunderstandings during the project.

When you plan a collaborative writing project,

- Make your analysis of the problem, audience, context, and purposes explicit so you know where you agree and where you disagree. It usually helps to put these in writing.
- Plan the organization, format, and style of the document before anyone begins to write to make it easier to blend sections written by different authors. Decide who is going to do what and when each piece of the project will be due.
- Consider your work styles and other commitments when making a timeline. A writer working alone can stay up all night to finish a single-authored document. But members of a team need to work together to accommodate each other's styles and to enable members to meet other commitments.
- Decide how you will give constructive feedback on each person's work.
- Build some leeway into your deadlines. It's harder for a team to finish a document when one person's part is missing than it is for a single writer to finish the last section of a document on which he or she has done all the work.

All team members need to give input on important planning issues, especially to analysis and organization.

Composing the Drafts

When you draft a collaborative writing project,

- Decide who will write what. Will one person write an entire draft? Will each team member be assigned a portion of the draft? Will the whole team write the draft together? Most writers find that composing alone is faster than composing in a group. However, composing together may

Being Taken Seriously

It's frustrating to speak in a meeting and have people ignore what you say. Here are some tips for being taken seriously:

- Link your comment to the comment of a powerful person, even if logic suffers a bit. For example, say, "John is saying that we should focus on excellence, AND I think we can become stronger by encouraging diversity."
- Show that you've done your homework. Laura Sloate, who is blind, establishes authority by making sure her first question is highly technical: "In footnote three of the 10K, you indicate. . . ."
- Find an ally in the organization and agree ahead of time to acknowledge each other's contributions to the meeting, whether you agree or disagree with the point being made. Explicit disagreement signals that the comment is worth taking seriously: "Duane has pointed out. . . , but I think that. . . ."
- Use the style of language that powerful people in your organization use.
- Repeat your ideas. Put important ideas in a memo before the meeting.

Adapted from Joan E. Rigdon, "Managing Your Career," *Wall Street Journal,* December 1. 1993, B1; Cynthia Crossen, "Spotting Value Takes Smarts, Not Sight, Laura Sloate Shows," *Wall Street Journal,* December 10, 1987. A1, A14; and Anne Fisher, "Ask Annie: Putting Your Money Where Your Mouth Is," *Fortune,* September 3, 2001, 238.

reduce revision time later, since the group examines every choice as it is made. Even so, it is still generally faster to have individuals compose drafts.

- Decide how you will share drafts. Will you use wikis or Google docs so everyone can work on a draft? International teams particularly need to use electronic media to compose drafts.
- Carefully label and date drafts so everyone is working on the most current version. Make sure everyone knows the date of the latest draft.
- If the quality of writing is crucial, have the best writer(s) draft the document after everyone has gathered the necessary information.

Revising the Document

Revising a collaborative document requires attention to content, organization, and style. The following guidelines can make the revision process more effective:

- Evaluate the content and discuss possible revisions as a team. Brainstorm ways to improve each section so the person doing the revisions has some guidance.
- Evaluate the organization and discuss possible revisions as a team. Would a different organization make the message clearer?
- Recognize that different people favor different writing styles. If the style satisfies the demands of standard English and the conventions of business writing, accept it even if you wouldn't say it that way.
- When the team is satisfied with the content of the document, one person—probably the best writer—should make any changes necessary to make the writing style consistent throughout.

Editing and Proofreading the Document

Since writers' mastery of standard English varies, a team report needs careful editing and proofreading.

- Have at least one person check the whole document for correctness in grammar, mechanics, and spelling and for consistency in the way that format elements (particularly headings), names, and numbers are handled.
- Run the document through a spell checker.
- Even if you use a computerized spell checker, at least one human being should proofread the document too.

Like any member of the writing team, those handling the editing tasks need to consider how they express their ideas. In many situations, the editor plays the role of diplomat, careful to suggest changes in ways that do not seem to call the writer's abilities into question. Describing the reason for a change is typically more helpful than stating an opinion. Writers are more likely to allow editing of their prose if they know a sentence has a dangling modifier, or a paragraph needs work on parallel structure. Using words like *could* and *should* to modify a direction can add a tone of politeness.

Corporate Annual Meetings

Corporate annual meetings have become more interesting as activists become more vocal. PETA representatives press restaurant operators on the ethical treatment of the animals slaughtered for them. Environmentalists pressure manufacturers about their water treatments. Shareholders confront executive compensation plans they believe to be out of line.

All the action is moving corporate officials to stage-manage their annual meetings. Companies have been assigning "escorts" to activists, requiring questions to be submitted ahead of time in writing, setting speaker time limits of one to three minutes, and using stationary microphones, rather than roving ones, to ensure orderly proceedings. Many companies are googling the sponsors of shareholder resolutions. Some firms are moving meeting locations to out-of-the-way locations: U-Haul's parent company held one annual meeting in a tiny Nevada town. Home Depot hired several dozen beefy "greeters" to enforce speaker time limits. Some activists find they are greeted by an official who sits by them at the meeting and escorts them to the door afterward.

Some companies are going too far. Walmart had to apologize after a report that they had investigated some resolution sponsors. And some companies still believe in showing courtesy to shareholders as a way to generate goodwill.

Adapted from Erin White, "Stage-Managing the Annual Meeting: Companies Keep Tight Rein on Activists, Limit Speeches; Beefy 'Greeters' at the Depot," *Wall Street Journal,* April 16, 2007, B1, B3.

The Blue Man Group uses consensus to create their shows and run their business.

Making the Team Process Work

The information in this chapter can help your team interact effectively, run meetings efficiently, and deal with conflict constructively. The following suggestions apply specifically to writing teams:

- Give yourselves plenty of time to discuss problems and find solutions. Writing a team report may require hours of discussion time in addition to the time individuals spend doing research and writing drafts.
- Take the time to get to know team members and to build team loyalty. Team members will work harder and the final document will be better if the team is important to members.
- Be a responsible team member. Produce your drafts on time.
- Be aware that people have different ways of expressing themselves in writing.
- Because talking is "looser" than writing, people on a team can think they agree when they don't. Don't assume that because the discussion went smoothly, a draft written by one person will necessarily be acceptable.
- Allow more time at all stages of the writing process than you would if you were writing the document by yourself.

Blue Man Group Work

The Blue Man Group started in 1988 as a trio of performance artists doing street theater in New York City. Today, Blue Man Group is an entertainment franchise with about 70 Blue Men employed in nine theater shows plus touring concerts. They fill stadiums, they've founded their own creativity-based early childhood program, and they've been nominated for a Grammy. How did they do it? Teamwork.

As Matt Goldman, one of the founding Blue Men, notes, "Three is the smallest unit where you can have an outsider." The Blue Man Group uses consensus to create their music, original instruments, and shows—and to run their business. They discuss decisions until they reach a point where all three members can agree. That lets each member bring his/her own unique contributions to the process, while ensuring that the whole team is satisfied with the result. "It takes longer, but we find if you keep talking things through, you reach a better choice."

Working as part of a team is one of the most challenging communication tasks you can face in a professional setting. As a team member, you'll use your audience analysis skills to build goodwill with people inside *and* outside of your team, and your organizational skills to keep both your communication and your work moving smoothly.

Sources: Liz Welch, "How We Did It: The Blue Man Group, from Downtown Performance Art to Global Entertainment Empire," *Inc.*, August 2008, 110–12; and "What Is Blue Man Group?" Blue Man Productions, Inc., accessed May 31, 2011, http://www.blueman.com/about/whatis.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Effective teams balance information leadership, interpersonal leadership, and procedural team management.
- Successful teams set clear deadlines, schedule frequent meetings, deal directly with conflict, have an inclusive decision-making style, and have a higher proportion of members who worked actively on the project.
- Groupthink is the tendency for groups to put such a high premium on agreement that they directly or indirectly punish dissent. The best correctives to groupthink are to consciously search for additional alternatives, to test one's assumptions against those of a range of other people, and to protect the right of each person in the group to disagree.
- To resolve conflicts, first make sure that the people involved really disagree. Next, check to see that everyone's information is correct. Discover the needs each person is trying to meet. The presenting problem that surfaces as the subject of dissension may or may not be the real problem. Search for alternatives. Repair negative feelings.
- Constructive ways to respond to criticism include paraphrasing, checking for feelings, checking inferences, and buying time with limited agreement.
- Use statements about your own feelings to own the problem and avoid attacking the audience. In conflict, *I* statements are good you-attitude!
- To make meetings more effective,
  - State the purpose of the meeting at the beginning.
  - Distribute an agenda that indicates whether each item is for information, discussion, or action, and how long each is expected to take.
  - Allow enough time to discuss controversial issues.
  - Pay attention to people and process as well as to the task at hand.
  - If you don't take formal votes, summarize the group's consensus after each point. At the end of the meeting, summarize all decisions and remind the group who is responsible for implementing or following up on each item.
- Collaborative writing means working with other writers to produce a single document. Writers producing a joint document need to pay attention not only to the basic steps in the writing process but also to the processes of team formation and conflict resolution. They also need to allow more time than they would for single-authored documents.

CHAPTER 8 Exercises and Problems

**Go to www.mhhe.com/locker10e for additional Exercises and Problems.*

8.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. What are 10 kinds of productive roles in teams? Which roles do you prefer to play? (LO 8-1)
2. What are five kinds of nonproductive roles in teams? (LO 8-1)
3. What are some team decision-making strategies? (LO 8-2)
4. Name five characteristics of successful teams. (LO 8-3)
5. What is groupthink? Have you ever experienced it? (LO 8-2)
6. What are some techniques for resolving conflict? (LO 8-4)
7. What are some techniques for responding to criticism? (LO 8-4)
8. What are some techniques for making meetings effective? (LO 8-5)

9. What are some techniques for collaborative writing? (LO 8-6)
10. Have you ever been part of a team that wrote a document as a whole group rather than assigning out pieces? If so, how did the process work for your team? (LO 8-6)

8.2 Brainstorming Ways to Resolve Conflicts

Suggest one or more ways that each of the following teams could deal with the conflict(s) it faces.

1. Mike and Takashi both find writing hard. Elise has been getting better grades than either of them, so they offer to do all the research if she'll organize the document and write, revise, edit, and proofread it. Elise thinks that this method would leave her doing a disproportionate share of the work. Moreover, scheduling the work would be difficult, since she wouldn't know how good their research was until the last minute.
2. Because of their class and work schedules, Lars and Andrea want to hold team meetings from 8 to 10 pm, working later if need be. But Juan's wife works the evening shift, and he needs to be home with his children, two of whom have to be in bed before 8. He wants to meet from 8 to 10 am, but the others don't want to meet that early.
3. Lynn wants to divide up the work exactly equally, with firm due dates. Marcia is trying to get into medical school. She says she'd rather do the lion's share of the work so that she knows it's good.
4. Jessie's father is terminally ill. This team isn't very important in terms of what's going on in her life, and she knows she may have to miss some team meetings.
5. Sherry is aware that she is the person on her team who always points out the logical flaws in arguments: she's the one who reminds the team that they haven't done all the parts of the assignment. She doesn't want her team to turn in a flawed product, but she wonders whether the other team members see her as too critical.
6. Jim's team missed several questions on their team quiz. Talking to Tae-Suk after class, Jim learns that Tae-Suk knew all the answers. "Why didn't you say anything?" Jim asks angrily. Tae-Suk responds quietly, "Todd said that he knew the answers. I did not want to argue with him. We have to work together, and I do not want anyone to lose face."

8.3 Comparing Meeting Minutes

Have two or more people take minutes of each class or team meeting for a week. Compare the accounts of the same meeting.

- To what extent do they agree on what happened?
- Does one contain information missing in other accounts?
- Do any accounts disagree on a specific fact?
- How do you account for the differences you find?

As your instructor directs,

a. Discuss your findings with your team.
b. Share your team findings orally with the class.
c. Describe and analyze your findings in a memo to your instructor.

8.4 Learning about Annual Meetings

The sidebar on page 219 previewed the annual meeting of Berkshire Hathaway. Read Buffett's complete three-page preview at http://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/2010ltr.pdf. Prepare to discuss the preview in small groups by answering these questions:

- What is the tone of the preview?
- What useful hints does Buffett give to his shareholders?
- What activities will occur at the meeting?

Now look up the announcement for the annual conference of a professional society to which you belong.

- What is the tone of the conference preview?
- Does it give useful hints?
- What activities will occur at the meeting?

Which meeting would you rather attend, Buffett's or that of your professional society? Why? Discuss the answers to these questions in small groups.

8.5 Recommending a Policy on Student Entrepreneurs

Assume that your small team comprises the officers in student government on your campus. You receive this e-mail from the Dean of Students:

> As you know, campus policy says that no student may use campus resources to conduct business-related activities. Students can't conduct business out of dorm rooms or use university e-mail addresses for business. They can't post business web pages on the university server.
>
> On the other hand, a survey conducted by the Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership showed that 7 out of 10 teens want to become entrepreneurs.
>
> Should campus policy be changed to allow students to use dorm rooms and university e-mail addresses for business? (And then what happens when roommates complain and our network can't carry the increased e-mail traffic?) Please recommend what support (if any) should be given to student entrepreneurs.

Your team will be writing a report recommending what (if anything) your campus should do for student entrepreneurs and supporting your recommendation.

Hints:

- Does your campus offer other support for entrepreneurs (courses, a business plan competition, a start-up incubator)? What should be added or expanded?
- Is it realistic to ask alumni for money to fund student start-ups?
- Are campus dorms, e-mail, phone, and delivery services funded by tax dollars? If your school is a public institution, do state or local laws limit business use?

You need to

- Send e-mail messages to team members describing your initial point of view on the issue and discussing the various options.
- Help your team write the report.
- Write a memo to your instructor telling how satisfied you are with
  - The decision your team reached.
  - The process you used to reach it.
  - The document your team produced.

8.6 Recommending a Fair Way to Assign Work around the Holidays

Assume that your team comprises a hospital's Labor-Management Committee. This e-mail arrives from the hospital administrator:

> Subject: Allocating Holiday Hours
>
> It's that time of year again, and we're starting to get requests for time off from every department. We have shifts where every physician and half the nurses want time off. Don't these people realize that we can't close down over a holiday? And what's worse is that some of the shift leads are giving preferential treatment to their friends. The head of the nurses' union has already started complaining to me.
>
> We need a comprehensive, hospital-wide procedure for assigning holiday vacation time that doesn't make us shut down wards. It needs to be flexible, because people like to take a week off around Christmas. But we have to set limits: no more than one-quarter of the staff can take time off at any one time. And those nurses like to swap shifts with each other to arrange their days off into larger blocks, so we need to cover that too.

> Write up a policy to keep these people in line. Be sure to throw in the safety concerns and regulatory stuff.

Your team will be performing these tasks:

a. Write a team response recommending a new policy and supporting your recommendations. Include two transmittal e-mails: one to the hospital administrator, and one to the hospital's medical and nursing staff. Take care to address the two audiences' different needs and expectations with good you-attitude and positive emphasis.

b. Create a one-page notice describing your new policy. This notice should be suitable for posting at the duty desk for each ward: that is, in full view of both your employees and your customers (the patients). Create an effective visual design that emphasizes and organizes the text.

You personally need to

- Send e-mail messages to team members describing your initial point of view on the issue and discussing the various options.
- Help your team write the documents.
- Write a memo to your instructor telling how satisfied you are with
  - The decisions your team reached.
  - The process you used to reach them.
  - The documents your team produced.

8.7 Recommending a Dress Policy

Assume that your small team comprises your organization's Labor-Management Committee

This e-mail arrives from the CEO:

> In the last 10 years, we became increasingly casual. But changed circumstances seem to call for more formality. Is it time to reinstate a dress policy? If so, what should it be?

Your team will be writing a response recommending the appropriate dress for employees and supporting your recommendation.

Hint:

Agree on an office, factory, store, or other workplace to use for this problem.

You need to

- Send e-mail messages to team members describing your initial point of view on the issue and discussing the various options.
- Help your team write the response.
- Write a memo to your instructor telling how satisfied you are with
  - The decision your team reached.
  - The process you used to reach it.
  - The document your team produced.

8.8 Responding to an Employee Grievance

Assume that your small team comprises the Labor-Management committee at the headquarters of a chain of grocery stores. This e-mail arrives from the vice president for human resources:

> As you know, company policy requires that employees smile at customers and make eye contact with them. In the past 9 months, 12 employees have filed grievances over this rule. They say they are being harassed by customers who think they are flirting with them. A produce clerk claims customers have propositioned her and followed her to her car. Another says "Let *me* decide who I am going to say hello to

> with a big smile." The union wants us to change the policy to let workers *not* make eye contact with customers, and to allow workers to refuse to carry groceries to a customer's car at night. My own feeling is that we want to maintain our image as a friendly store that cares about customers, but that we also don't want to require behavior that leads to harassment. Let's find a creative solution.

Your team will be writing a group response recommending whether to change the policy and supporting your recommendation.

You need to

- Send e-mail messages to team members describing your initial point of view on the issue and discussing the various options.
- Help your team write the response.
- Write a memo to your instructor telling how satisfied you are with
  - The decision your team reached.
  - The process you used to reach it.
  - The document your team produced.

8.9 Answering an Ethics Question

Assume that your team comprises your organization's Ethics Committee. You receive the following anonymous note:

> People are routinely using the company letterhead to write letters to members of Congress, senators, and even the president stating their positions on various issues. Making their opinions known is of course their right, but doing so on letterhead stationery implies that they are speaking for the company, which they are not.
>
> I think that the use of letterhead for anything other than official company business should be prohibited.

Your team will be determining the best solution to the problem and then communicating it in a message to all employees.

You need to

- Send e-mail messages to team members describing your initial point of view on the issue and discussing the various options.
- Help your team write the message.
- Write a memo to your instructor telling how satisfied you are with
  - The decision your team reached.
  - The process you used to reach it.
  - The document your team produced.

8.10 Interviewing Workers about Collaborating

Interview someone who works in an organization about his or her on-the-job collaboration activities. Possible questions to ask include the following:

- How often do you work on collaborative projects?
- Do your collaborative projects always include people who are in your immediate office? How often do you collaborate with people via technology?
- How do you begin collaborative projects? What are the first steps you take when working with others?
- How do you handle disagreements?
- What do you do when someone isn't doing his/her share of the work on a collaborative project?
- What do you do to see every person meets team deadlines?
- How do you handle unexpected problems? Illness? Injury? Broken equipment?
- What advice can you give about effectively collaborating on projects?

As your instructor directs,

a. Share your information with a small team of students in your class.
b. Present your findings orally to the class.
c. Present your findings in a memo to your instructor.
d. Join with other students to present your findings in a team report.

8.11 Networking for Team Formation

In this exercise, you are going to participate in a networking event, an abbreviated "talk and walk."

To prepare for the event,

- Prepare business cards for yourself, using a computer application of your choice.
- Prepare a list of people in your class whom you would like to meet (give visual descriptions if you do not know their names).
- Prepare a list of questions you would like to have answered.
- Collect materials to use for taking notes during the event.

During the event, you will have six three-minute sessions to talk with a fellow student. Your instructor will time the sessions and tell you when to change people.

After the event, analyze what you have learned. Here are some questions to get you started:

- Who was the most interesting? Why?
- Who did you like the most? Why?
- Who would you most like to have on a team in this class? Why?
- Did you meet anyone you didn't want to work with? Explain.
- What lessons did you learn about networking?

Write up your analysis in a memo to your teacher.

8.12 Writing a Team Action Plan

Before you begin working on a team project, develop a team action plan to establish a framework that will hold your team members accountable for their work.

After reading the project assignment sheet and meeting your team, decide upon answers for the following questions:

- Will you have a team leader? If so, who? Why is that person qualified to be the team leader? What are that person's responsibilities? How will you proceed if the team leader is unable to meet those responsibilities?
- What will be each team member's role? What is each team member's qualification for that role?
- How are you dividing your work? Why did you choose to divide the work the way you did?
- What are the tasks your team needs to accomplish? For each task in the assignment, identify a concrete deliverable (What do you need to hand in?), a concrete measure for success (How will your team decide if you completed that task well?), and a work schedule (When does each task need to be done?)
- How will you resolve disagreements that may arise while working on the project? How will your team make decisions: By majority? By consensus?
- When and where will you hold meetings? Decide whether you can hold meetings if all team members are not present. How will you inform team members of what occurred at meetings if they were not present?
- Define what "absence" means for your team. Are all absences equal? How should a team member who's going to be absent let the team know? How far in advance does your team need to know about an absence? How many absences from one team member will be too many? What are the consequences of too many absences?
- Create a policy dealing with people who don't attend class during your preparation days or during your presentation; people who don't attend meetings outside class; people who miss deadlines, don't do their work at all or in a timely manner, or who consistently turn in incomplete or poor-quality work. What penalties will you apply? (Some ideas: you might consider loss of points, grade reductions, failure, a team firing, or a team intervention.)
- Will you report problem members to your instructor? If so, at what point? What role do you want your instructor to have in dealing with problem members?

After your team determines and agrees on an action plan, the team's secretary should send your answers in a memo to your instructor, who will keep the document on file in case a problem arises.

8.13 Writing Team Meeting Minutes

As you work in a collaborative team setting, designate a different member to take minutes for each meeting.

As your instructor directs, your minutes should include:

- Name of the team holding the meeting.
- Members who were present.
- Members who were absent.
- Place, time, and date of meeting.
- Work accomplished, and who did it, during the meeting.

- Actions that need to be completed, the person responsible, and the due date.
- Decisions made during the meeting.
- New issues raised at the meeting but not resolved should be recorded for future meetings.
- Signature of acting secretary.

Remember to keep your minutes brief and to the point. When the minutes are complete, e-mail them to your fellow team members and cc: them to your instructor.

8.14 Keeping a Journal about a Team

As you work on a team, keep a journal after each team meeting.

- Who did what?
- What roles did you play in the meeting?
- What decisions were made? How were they made?
- What conflicts arose? How were they handled?
- What strategies could you use to make the next meeting go smoothly?
- Record one observation about each team member.

At the end of the project, analyze your journals. In a memo to your instructor, discuss

- Patterns you see.
- Roles of each team member, including yourself.
- Decision making in your team.
- Conflict resolution in your team.
- Strengths of your team.
- Areas where your team could improve.
- Strengths of the deliverables.
- Areas where the deliverables could be improved.
- Changes you would make in the team and deliverables if you had the project to do over.

8.15 Analyzing the Dynamics of a Team

Analyze the dynamics of a task team of which you were a member. Answer the following questions:

1. Who was the team's leader? How did the leader emerge? Were there any changes in or challenges to the original leader?
2. Describe the contribution each member made to the team and the roles each person played.
3. Did any members of the team officially or unofficially drop out? Did anyone join after the team had begun working? How did you deal with the loss or addition of a team member, both in terms of getting the work done and in terms of helping people work together?
4. What planning did your team do at the start of the project? Did you stick to the plan or revise it? How did the team decide that revision was necessary?
5. How did your team make decisions? Did you vote? reach decisions by consensus?
6. What problems or conflicts arose? Did the team deal with them openly? To what extent did they interfere with the team's task?
7. Evaluate your team both in terms of its task and in terms of the satisfaction members felt. How did this team compare with other task teams you've been part of? What made it better or worse?
8. What were the strengths of the team? Weaknesses?
9. How did the team's strengths and weaknesses impact the quality of the work produced?
10. If you had the project to do over again, what would you do differently?

As you answer the questions,

- Be honest. You won't lose points for reporting that your team had problems or did something "wrong."
- Show your knowledge of good team dynamics. That is, if your team did something wrong, show that you know what *should* have been done. Similarly, if your team worked well, show that you know *why* it worked well.
- Be specific. Give examples or anecdotes to support your claims.

As your instructor directs,

a. Discuss your answers with the other team members.
b. Present your findings in an individual memo to your instructor.
c. Join with the other team members to write a collaborative memo to your instructor.

8.16 Dealing with a "Saboteur"

It's often said that "there's no *I* in *team*" because on the best teams, everyone works together for the good of the group. What happens when you encounter a team member who believes that "there's a *me* in *team*" and ignores or undermines the team's success in order to achieve personal goals?

Consider this scenario. You're on a team of four students, and you've all been working for the past month to complete a major class project. When you were planning out your project, one team member—let's say Lee—argued with your team's decisions, but agreed to go along with the majority. Lee contributed the bare minimum to your team's work, sat silently during meetings, and when you asked for help overcoming a problem with the project, Lee responded with a shrug, "I told you at the start that I thought this was a bad idea. I guess we're all going to get a failing grade."

Now you're at your last team meeting before the assignment is due. Lee reveals a decision to quit the team and turn in a separate project. Lee doesn't want a grade that "will suffer from all your 'second-rate' efforts," and tells you that s/he already complained to your instructor about the rest of you.

As your instructor directs,

a. Write a memo to your instructor in which you explain your individual response to this scenario. What would you do? How should your team proceed?

b. Work as a group to establish a working policy that might address this scenario before it happens.

- What policies would you need to protect the group from individual members who are out for themselves?
- What policies would you need to protect team members from having the team take advantage of them?
- What is your instructor's role in your team's policy?
- How would your team evaluate each member's contributions fairly?