CHAPTER 15

Planning and Researching Proposals and Reports

Chapter Outline

Researching the Gulf Disaster

On April 20, 2010, the *Deepwater Horizon*, an oil rig operating in the Gulf of Mexico, exploded, killing 11 crew members and injuring another 17. The explosion tore off the top of the well and oil began spilling into the ocean. For three months, millions of barrels of crude oil poured into the Gulf of Mexico, causing an unprecedented environmental disaster.

Even before the well had been capped, President Barack Obama organized a commission to investigate the cause and results of the accident, and to make recommendations for the future. In January 2011, the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling presented its final report to the president and posted it on their website. The nearly 400-page report details the causes of the accident, the mistakes during the accident, and the errors in corporate and government responses.

"A report this size did not happen overnight. The commission members worked for months to gather data, conduct interviews, and make field observations."

A report this size did not happen overnight. The commission members worked for months to gather data, conduct interviews, and make field observations. But all of their research began with a specific plan. When the commission was organized, they were given two tasks: (1) "Examine the performance of the technologies and practices involved in the probable causes of the explosion," and (2) "Identify and recommend available technology, industry best practices, best available standards, and other measures . . . to avoid future occurrence of such events."

In response to these two tasks, the commission listed the pieces of technology involved in the explosion and the practices of the rig's workers, supervisors, company executives, and contractors. From those lists, the commission determined who to interview and what to research. Over the next several months, as the research progressed, the commission expanded and adjusted their plan.

In January, the commission submitted its report to the president. Careful planning and thorough research helped the commission fulfill its purpose and complete its tasks.

Sources: National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, *Deepwater: The Gulf Oil Disaster and the Future of Offshore Drilling* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011); and Committee for the Analysis of Causes of the Deepwater Horizon Explosion, Fire, and Oil Spill to Identify Measures to Prevent Similar Accidents in the Future; National Academy of Engineering; National Research Council, *Interim Report on Causes of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Rig Blowout and Ways to Prevent Such Events* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2010).

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know how to

LO 15-1 Define report problems.

LO 15-2 Employ different research strategies.

LO 15-3 Use and document sources.

Proposals and reports depend on research. The research may be as simple as pulling up data with a computer program or as complicated as calling many different people, conducting focus groups and surveys, or even planning and conducting experiments. Care in planning and researching proposals and reports is needed to produce effective documents.

In writing any report, there are five basic steps:

1. Define the problem.
2. Gather the necessary data and information.
3. Analyze the data and information.
4. Organize the information.
5. Write the report.

After reviewing the varieties of reports, this chapter focuses on the first two steps. Chapter 18 discusses the last three steps. You can find tips for creating visuals and data displays in Chapter 16. Chapter 17 covers guidelines for writing proposals.

VARIETIES OF REPORTS

Many kinds of documents are called reports. In some organizations, a report is a long document or one that contains numerical data. In others, one- and two-page memos are called reports. In still others, reports consist of PowerPoint slides delivered orally or printed and bound together. A short report to a client may use letter format. **Formal reports** contain formal elements such as a title page, a transmittal, a table of contents, and a list of illustrations. **Informal reports** may be letters and memos or even computer printouts of production or sales figures. But all reports, whatever their length or degree of formality, provide the information that people in organizations need to make plans and solve problems.

Reports can provide just information, both information and analysis alone, or information and analysis to support a recommendation (see Figure 15.1). Reports can be called **information reports** if they collect data for the reader, **analytical reports** if they interpret data but do not recommend action, and **recommendation reports** if they recommend action or a solution.

The following reports can be information, analytical, or recommendation reports, depending on what they provide:

- **Accident reports** can simply list the nature and causes of accidents in a factory or office. These reports can also analyze the data and recommend ways to make conditions safer.
- **Credit reports** can simply summarize an applicant's income and other credit obligations. These reports can also evaluate the applicant's collateral and creditworthiness and recommend whether or not to provide credit.

Figure 15.1 Variety of Information Reports Can Provide

Information only

Sales reports (sales figures for the week or month).

Quarterly reports (figures showing a plant's productivity and profits for the quarter).

Information plus analysis

Annual reports (financial data and an organization's accomplishments during the past year).

Audit reports (interpretations of the facts revealed during an audit).

Make-good or payback reports (calculations of the point at which a new capital investment will pay for itself).

Information plus analysis plus a recommendation

Recommendation reports evaluate two or more alternatives and recommend which alternative the organization should choose.

Feasibility reports evaluate a proposed action and show whether or not it will work.

Justification reports justify the need for a purchase, an investment, a new personnel line, or a change in procedure.

Problem-solving reports identify the causes of an organizational problem and recommend a solution.

- **Progress and interim reports** can simply record the work done so far and the work remaining on a project. These reports can also analyze the quality of the work and recommend that a project be stopped, continued, or restructured.
- **Trip reports** can simply share what the author learned at a conference or during a visit to a customer or supplier. These reports can also recommend action based on that information.
- **Closure reports** can simply document the causes of a failure or possible products that are not economically or technically feasible under current conditions. They can also recommend action to prevent such failures in the future.

THE REPORT PRODUCTION PROCESS

When you write a report, you know the actual writing will take a significant chunk of time. But you should also plan to spend significant time analyzing your data, revising drafts, and preparing visuals and slides.

When you write a report for a class project, plan to complete at least one-fourth of your research before you write the proposal. Begin analyzing your data as you collect it; prepare your list of sources and drafts of visuals as you go along. Start writing your first draft before the research is completed. An early draft can help clarify where you need more research. Save at least one-fourth of your time at the end of the project to think and write after all your data are collected. For a collaborative report, you'll need even more time to write and revise.

Up-front planning helps you use your time efficiently. Start by thinking about the whole report process. Talk to your readers to understand how much detail and formality they want. Look at reports that were produced earlier (sample reports in this text are in Chapter 18). List all the parts of the report

Researching and Reporting at Reuters

Thomson Reuters is the largest business-to-business information services company in the world. Some years ago, it began to reinvent itself by learning more about clients who use its products and services: tax professionals, investment managers, brokers, lawyers, accountants, financial analysts, and researchers.

Thomson Reuters began by identifying eight market segments and exploring each of them in greater detail. It employed both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (interviews) research methods to collect information. Thomson Reuters even filmed users as they performed their job duties.

The comprehensive approach to research paid off. After thoroughly investigating the eight market segments, Thomson Reuters created a list of product attributes that needed improvement to yield better customer satisfaction. Based on its exhaustive market research, Thomson Reuters redesigned its product portfolio, beginning with what could be done most easily and moving to advanced features. Today, nearly 70% of Thomson Reuter's products have undergone improvements based on its user-oriented market research process, adding both to the company's bottom line and customer satisfaction.

Adapted from Richard J. Harrington and Anthony K. Tjan, "Transforming Strategy One Customer at a Time," *Harvard Business Review* 86, no. 3 (March 2008): 62–72.

Research for Developing Countries

Procter & Gamble researchers found that 60% of shoppers at tiny stores in developing countries already know what they want, so they do not spend time browsing. But they do gaze at the cashier's area for 5 seconds as they wait for their purchase or change. So P&G is thinking of ways to persuade store owners to put more P&G products in these areas.

Because running water is in short supply for many low-income Mexican consumers, P&G researchers developed a fabric softener that, when added to the laundry load along with the detergent, can eliminate a rinse cycle in the kinds of washing machines being used.

To keep prices down for these customers, P&G employs "reverse engineering." It starts with the price consumers can afford for the product and then adjusts features and manufacturing accordingly. To hold down the cost of a detergent used for hand washing clothes, P&G used fewer enzymes. The result was a cheaper product, and one that was gentler on the hands than the regular detergent.

Adapted from Ellen Byron, "P&G's Global Target: Shelves of Tiny Stores: It Woos Poor Women Buying Single Portions; Mexico's 'Hot Zones,'" *Wall Street Journal,* July 16, 2007, A1.

you'll need to prepare. Then articulate—to yourself or your team members—the purposes, audiences, and generic constraints for each part. The fuller idea you have of the final product when you start, the fewer drafts you'll need to write and the better your final product will be.

REPORT PROBLEMS LO 15-1

Good reports grow out of real problems: disjunctions between reality and the ideal, choices that must be made. When you write a report as part of your job, the organization may define the problem. To brainstorm problems for class reports, think about issues that face your college or university; housing units on campus; social, religious, and professional groups on campus and in your city; local businesses; and city, county, state, and federal governments and their agencies. Read your campus and local papers and newsmagazines; read the news on the Internet, watch it on TV, or listen to it on National Public Radio.

A good report problem in business or administration meets the following criteria:

1. The problem is
   - Real.
   - Important enough to be worth solving.
   - Narrow but challenging.
2. The audience for the report is
   - Real.
   - Able to implement the recommended action.
3. The data, evidence, and facts are
   - Sufficient to document the severity of the problem.
   - Sufficient to prove that the recommendation will solve the problem.
   - Available to *you.*
   - Comprehensible to *you.*

Often problems need to be narrowed. For example, "improving the college experiences of international students studying in the United States" is far too broad. First, choose one college or university. Second, identify the specific problem. Do you want to increase the social interaction between U.S. and international students? Help international students find housing? Increase the number of ethnic grocery stores and restaurants? Third, identify the specific audience that would have the power to implement your recommendations. Depending on the specific topic, the audience might be the Office of International Studies, the residence hall counselors, a service organization on campus or in town, a store, or a group of investors.

Some problems are more easily researched than others. If you have easy access to the Chinese Student Association, you can survey them about their experiences at the local Chinese grocery. However, if you want to recommend ways to keep the Chinese grocery in business, but you do not have access to their financial records, you will have a much more difficult time solving the problem. Even if you have access, if the records are written in Chinese, you will have problems unless you read the language or have a willing translator.

Hasbro does extensive research to keep developing games people will play.

Pick a problem you can solve in the time available. Six months of full-time (and overtime) work and a team of colleagues might allow you to look at all the ways to make a store more profitable. If you're doing a report in 6 to 12 weeks for a class that is only one of your responsibilities, limit the topic. Depending on your interests and knowledge, you could choose to examine the prices and brands carried, its inventory procedures, its overhead costs, its layout and decor, or its advertising budget.

Look at the following examples of report problems in the category of technology use:

Too broad: Texting in class and its effects on college students.

Too time-consuming: What are the effects of in-class texting on college students?

Better: What are texting habits of students in XYZ University's Business School?

Better: How can texting be integrated in XYZ University's business courses?

The first problem is too broad because it covers all college students. The second one is too time-consuming. Scholars are only starting to study the effects, and for you to do a report on this topic, you would need to do your own longitudinal project. The third and fourth problems would both be possibilities. You would select one over the other depending on whether you wanted to focus on students or courses.

How you define the problem shapes the solutions you find. For example, suppose that a manufacturer of frozen foods isn't making money. If the problem is defined as a marketing problem, the researcher may analyze the product's price, image, advertising, and position in the market. But perhaps the problem is really that overhead costs are too high due to poor inventory management, or that an inadequate distribution system doesn't get the product to its target market. Defining the problem accurately is essential to finding an effective solution.

Once you've defined your problem, you're ready to write a purpose statement. The purpose statement goes both in your proposal and in your final report. A good **purpose statement** makes three things clear:

- The organizational problem or conflict.
- The specific technical questions that must be answered to solve the problem.
- The rhetorical purpose (to explain, to recommend, to request, to propose) the report is designed to achieve.

Research and Innovation: Fun and Games at Hasbro

On Fridays, employees at Hasbro spend their lunchtime playing board games and thinking about ways to update games or create new ones. The Friday games are just one of the creative approaches to research and innovation used at the company that manufactures some of America's best-known board games, such as Monopoly, Scrabble, Sorry, and Clue.

In the world of board games, continuous innovation is necessary to fit games to changing consumer lifestyles and preferences. Hasbro invests in extensive market research, such as conducting online surveys, observing children and adults playing games in the company's Game-Works lab, and talking with people about how they want to spend leisure time.

In response to information obtained through these strategies, Hasbro has modified several of its traditional games.

- To accommodate consumers' tight schedules, Hasbro developed "express" versions of Monopoly, Sorry, and Scrabble that can be completed within 20 minutes.
- To address consumers' desire for more balanced lives, The Game of Life now includes life experience, education, and family life as elements of a successful life, rather than basing success only on making the most money.
- Based on 3 million votes cast in an online survey, a revised version of Monopoly replaces Boardwalk with Times Square and Pacific Avenue with Las Vegas Boulevard.
- To attract customers who enjoy using technology to play games, game designers developed electronic versions of games.

Adapted from Carol Hymowitz, "All Companies Need Innovation: Hasbro Finds a New Magic," *Wall Street Journal*, February 26, 2007, B1.

The following purpose statement for a report to the superintendent of Yellowstone National Park has all three elements:

> Current management methods keep the elk population within the carrying capacity of the habitat but require frequent human intervention. Both wildlife conservation specialists and the public would prefer methods that controlled the elk population naturally. This report will compare the current short-term management techniques (hunting, trapping and transporting, and winter feeding) with two long-term management techniques, habitat modification and the reintroduction of predators. The purpose of this report is to recommend which techniques or combination of techniques would best satisfy the needs of conservationists, hunters, and the public.

To write a good purpose statement, you must understand the basic problem and have some idea of the questions that your report will answer. Note, however, that you can (and should) write the purpose statement before researching the specific alternatives the report will discuss.

RESEARCH STRATEGIES FOR REPORTS LO 15-2

Research for a report may be as simple as getting a computer printout of sales for the last month; it may involve finding published material or surveying or interviewing people. **Secondary research** retrieves information that someone else gathered. Library research and online searches are the best known kinds of secondary research. **Primary research** gathers new information. Surveys, interviews, and observations are common methods for gathering new information for business reports.

Finding Information Online and in Print

You can save time and money by checking online and published sources of data before you gather new information. Many college and university libraries

Good research uses multiple media and sources.

Finding the Facts

Students aren't the only ones who need to sift through mountains of conflicting information on the Internet. Journalists use the Internet to gather data, collect background information, and verify facts. But how do professionals use the Internet wisely? The *Des Moines Register* offers four strategies:

- **Use documents.** Original documents, including public documents, e-mails, and videos tell you what really happened or was said, not what people say they said.
- **Understand context.** Expand your research to include how the information fits into the big picture. What you may see as important data may look different in the larger pattern.
- **Use credible sources.** Make sure the sources you use have good track records of accuracy and fair treatment of both sides of an issue.
- **Present opinions as opinions.** Forecasts of the future are almost always opinions.

Adapted from Carolyn Washburn, "How Register Journalists Work to Bring You the Facts," *Des Moines Register*, October 31, 2010, OP1.

PARDON MY PLANET

provide workshops and handouts on research techniques, as well as access to computer databases and research librarians.

Categories of sources that may be useful include

- Specialized encyclopedias for introductions to a topic.
- Indexes to find articles. Most permit searches by key word, by author, and often by company name.
- Abstracts for brief descriptions or summaries of articles. Sometimes the abstract will be all you'll need; almost always, you can tell from the abstract whether an article is useful for your needs.
- Citation indexes to find materials that cite previous research. Citation indexes thus enable you to use an older reference to find newer articles on the topic. The *Social Sciences Citation Index* is the most useful for researching business topics.
- Newspapers for information about recent events.
- U.S. Census reports, for a variety of business and demographic information.

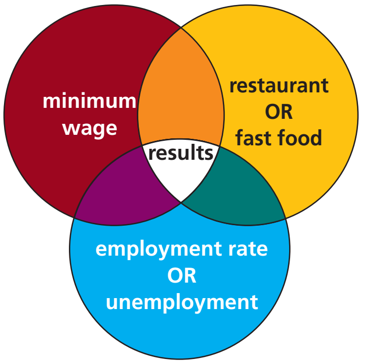
To use a computer database efficiently, identify the concepts you're interested in and choose key words that will help you find relevant sources. **Key words** are the terms that the computer searches for. If you're not sure what terms to use, check the ABI/Inform Thesaurus for synonyms and the hierarchies in which information is arranged in various databases.

Specific commands allow you to narrow your search. For example, to study the effect of the minimum wage on employment in the restaurant industry, you might use a Boolean search (see Figure 15.2):

(minimum wage) *and* (restaurant *or* fast food) *and*
(employment rate *or* unemployment).

This descriptor would give you the titles of articles that treat all three of the topics in parentheses. Without *and,* you'd get articles that discuss the minimum wage in general, articles about every aspect of *restaurants,* and every article that refers to *unemployment,* even though many of these would not be relevant to your topic. The *or* descriptor calls up articles that use the term *fast food* or the term *restaurant.* Many Web search engines, including AltaVista and Google, allow you to specify words that cannot appear in a source.

Figure 15.2 Example of a Boolean Search



Many words can appear in related forms. To catch all of them, use the database's **wild card** or **truncated code** for shortened terms and root words. To find this feature and others, go to the Advanced Search screen for the search engine you are using. Search engines vary in the symbols they use for searches, so be sure to check for accurate directions.

Web search engines are particularly effective for words, people, or phrases that are unlikely to have separate pages devoted to them. For general topics or famous people, directories like Yahoo! may be more useful. Figure 15.3 lists a few of the specialized sources available.

Figure 15.3 Sources for Web Research

Subject matter directories
SmartPros (accounting and corporate finance)
http://smartpros.com/
Rutgers Accounting Web (RAW)
http://raw.rutgers.edu/
Education Index
http://www.educationindex.com
Resources for Economists on the Internet
http://www.aeaweb.org/RFE/
Human Resource Management Resources on the Internet
http://www.nbs.ntu.ac.uk/research/depts/hrm/links.php
Global Edge
http://www.globaledge.msu.edu/
Management and Entrepreneurship
http://www.lib.lsu.edu/bus/managemt.html
KnowThis: Knowledge Source for Marketing
http://www.knowthis.com
Internet Marketing Resources
http://www.lib.lsu.edu/bus/marketing.html
Statistical Resources on the Web (University of Michigan Documents Center)
http://www.lib.umich.edu/government-documents-center/explore/browse/statistics/260/search/

(Continued)

Figure 15.3 Sources for Web Research (Concluded)

News sites

Bloomberg Businessweek
http://www.businessweek.com

CNN/CNNFN
http://www.cnn.com (news)
http://money.cnn.com/ (financial news)

National Public Radio
http://www.npr.org

NewsLink (links to US, Canadian, and international newspapers, magazines, and resources online)
http://newslink.org

New York Times
http://www.nytimes.com

Wall Street Journal
http://online.wsj.com/

Washington Post
http://www.WashingtonPost.com

U.S. government information

FedStats (links from over 100 federal agencies)
http://www.fedstats.gov

U.S. Government Printing Office (free electronic access to government documents)
http://www.gpoaccess.gov/

Bureau of Economic Analysis
http://www.bea.gov/

Bureau of Labor Statistics
http://www.bls.gov/

Census Bureau (including a link to the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*)
http://www.census.gov/

Securities and Exchange Commission Filings and Forms (EDGAR)
http://sec.gov/edgar.shtml

Small Business Administration
http://www.sbaonline.sba.gov/

White House Briefing Room (presidential events and public statements)
http://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing_room/

Reference collections

Hoover's Online (information about businesses)
http://www.hoovers.com/

My Virtual Reference Desk
http://www.refdesk.com/

Tile.Net (reference guide to e-mail newsletters and discussion lists)
http://tile.net/lists/

Evaluating Online Reviews

Do you read reviews online before booking a vacation or buying products? If so, read the fine print of the review.

TripAdvisor, a popular travel site, includes a disclaimer that some hotels are writing fake reviews on its website. The disclaimer, posted near questionable reviews, reads: "TripAdvisor has reasonable cause to believe that either this property or individuals associated with the property may have attempted to manipulate our popularity index by interfering with the unbiased nature of our reviews."

The motivation for hotels is an attempt to heighten their own ranking while harming their competitors. This sneaky approach is not unique to travel sites. Other retail stores and businesses routinely confront the same problem when dealing with online reviews. Website administrators are trying to develop ways to combat fake reviewers. The Apple Store, for instance, requires that customers buy an application before they can review it.

Be cautious about the inherent biases you may be reading in reviews before you book your next trip or buy a new product.

Adapted from "Popular Travel Web Site TripAdvisor Warns of Hotels Posting Fake Reviews," *Des Moines Register,* July 16, 2009, 8A.

Evaluating Web Sources

Some of the material on the Web is excellent, but some of it is wholly unreliable. With print sources, the editor or publisher serves as a gatekeeper, so you can trust the material in good journals. To put up a web page, all one needs is access to a server.

Use the following criteria to evaluate websites for your research project:

- **Authors.** What person or organization sponsors the site? What credentials do the authors have?
- **Objectivity.** Does the site give evidence to support its claims? Does it give both sides of controversial issues? Is the tone professional?
- **Information.** How complete is the information? What is it based on?
- **Currency.** How current is the information?
- **Audience.** Who is the intended audience?

Answers to these questions may lead you to discard some of the relevant sites you find. For example, if you find five different web pages about the cell phones and car accidents that all cite the same Toronto study, you have one source, not five. Choose the most complete for your project.

Many students start their research with Wikipedia. If you are one of them, you are not alone. Wikipedia is the largest, most popular encyclopedia ever. It has over 18 million articles in 279 languages and is the seventh visited website in the world.[1] So, while it may be acceptable as a starting place, be aware that many instructors and other professionals do not accept Wikipedia—or any encyclopedia, frequently—as an authoritative source. These are some of their reasons:

- Many remember the beginnings of Wikipedia when it was full of errors.
- Because not all entries are written by experts on the topic, some entries still contain errors.
- Wikipedia makes the news when pranksters maliciously alter entries.
- Thanks to WikiScanner, some editors have been shown to have self-interest. For instance, Diebold deleted paragraphs criticizing its electronic voting machines, and PepsiCo deleted paragraphs on negative health effects in the Pepsi entry. All edits from IP addresses owned by the Church of Scientology have been banned by Wikipedia.[2]
- Because Wikipedia is constantly changing, information you cite may be changed or eliminated if someone goes to check it.
- One final, growing concern is that the volunteers who edit and police Wikipedia are declining at a much faster rate than new contributors are joining.[3]

Analyzing and Designing Surveys

A **survey** questions a group of people. The easiest way to ask many questions is to create a **questionnaire,** a written list of questions that people fill out. An **interview** is a structured conversation with someone who will be able to give you useful information. Organizations use surveys and interviews to research both internal issues such as employee satisfaction and external issues such as customer satisfaction.

A survey that has been the target of much questioning in the press is the one behind the annual college rankings of *U.S. News & World Report.* Critics charge that the rankings are based far too heavily on opinion (peer evaluations from other schools), uncorroborated data supplied by the schools themselves, and irrelevant data (such as rates of alumni giving). Critics also charge schools with gaming the system through practices such as heavy solicitation of students who have almost no chance of being accepted (low acceptance rates help schools' rankings).[4]

Because surveys can be used to show almost anything, people need to be careful when analyzing the results of surveys or designing their own. These are questions commonly asked about surveys:

1. Who did the survey and who paid for it?
2. How many people were surveyed and how were they chosen?
3. How was the survey conducted?
4. What was the response rate?
5. What questions were asked?

1. Who Did the Survey and Who Paid for It? Unfortunately, it is far too easy to introduce bias into surveys. Thus, a good place to start when examining survey results is with the survey producers. Who are they? How were they financed? How comfortable should you be with the results of a survey about a medical device when the survey was financed by the maker of the device? Was a survey about auto model satisfaction financed by the maker of the auto?

2. How Many People Were Surveyed and How Were They Chosen? To keep research costs reasonable, usually only a sample of the total population is polled. How that sample is chosen and the attempts made to get responses from nonrespondents will determine whether you can infer that what is true of your sample is also true of the population as a whole.

A **sample** is a subset of the population. The **sampling units** are those actually sampled. Frequently, the sampling unit is an individual. If a list of individuals is not available then a household can be the sampling unit. The list of all sampling units is the **sampling frame.** For interviews, this could be a list of all addresses, or for companies a list of all Fortune 500 CEOs.[5] The **population** is the group you want to make statements about. Depending on the purpose of your research, your population might be all Fortune 1000 companies, all business students at your college, or all consumers of tea in the mid-Atlantic states.

A **convenience sample** is a group of subjects who are easy to get: students who walk through the union, people at a shopping mall, workers in your own unit. Convenience samples are useful for a rough pretest of a questionnaire and may be acceptable for some class research projects. However, you cannot generalize from a convenience sample to a larger group.

A purposive or **judgment sample** is a group of people whose views seem useful. Someone interested in surveying the kinds of writing done on campus might ask each department for the name of a faculty member who cared about writing, and then send surveys to those people.

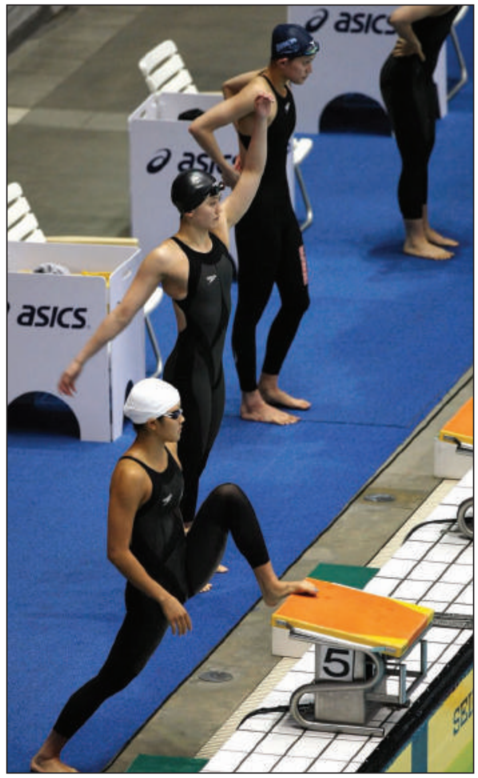
In a **random sample,** each person in the population theoretically has an equal chance of being chosen. When people say they did something *randomly* they often mean *without conscious bias.* However, unconscious bias exists. Someone passing out surveys in front of the library will be more likely to approach people who seem friendly and less likely to ask people who seem intimidating, in a hurry, much older or younger, or of a different race, class, or sex. True random samples rely on random digit tables, published in statistics texts and books such as *A Million Random Digits.* An online random number table site can be found at http://ts.nist.gov/WeightsandMeasures/upload/AppendB-HB133-05-Z.pdf.

Social Networking Hoaxes

You should not believe everything you read online. Here are a few recent examples of social networking hoaxes:

- In March 2011, a Twitter spambot sent a hoax message that actor Jackie Chan died from a heart attack. He became a top-five trend within 24-hours on Twitter. Even President Obama offered his condolences. Other death hoaxes have also appeared about Justin Bieber and Miley Cyrus.
- The home furniture store IKEA was part of a hoax on Facebook. An ad suggested that users who fanned their page would receive a $1,000 gift card.
- One of the top continuing hoaxes is targeted at users of freemail accounts (i.e., Gmail, AOL, Yahoo). They receive an e-mail urging them to forward the message so the company can figure out who is still using their accounts. This hoax has been circulating since 1999.

Adapted from A. Hopkinson, "Social Media Death Hoaxes," *Ethics in the News* (blog), April 26, 2011, http://www.ethicsinthenews.com/social-media-death-hoaxes/; Hans Kullin, "IKEA Victim of Facebook Hoax," *Social Media Today,* March 25, 2010, http://socialmediatoday.com/index.php?q=SMC/184215; and "Overload of Malarkey," Snopes, last updated January 27, 2011, http://www.snopes.com/computer/internet/overload.asp.



Speedo conducted extensive research before launching its new LZR Racer Speedo, which enabled many swimmers to break records at the Beijing Olympics.

Source: Christopher Rhodes and Hiroko Tabuchi, "Olympic Swimmers Race to Get Well Suited," *Wall Street Journal,* June 12, 2008, B8.

If you take a true random sample, you can generalize your findings to the whole population from which your sample comes. Consider, for example, a random phone survey that shows 65% of respondents approve of a presidential policy. Measures of variability should always be attached to survey-derived estimates like this one. Typically, a confidence interval provides this measure of variability. Using the confidence interval, we might conclude it is likely that between 58% and 72% of the population approve of the presidential policy when the confidence interval is ± 7%. The accuracy range is based on the size of the sample and the expected variation within the population. Statistics texts tell you how to calculate these measures of variability.

For many kinds of research, a large sample is important for giving significant results. In addition to its electronic data, Nielsen Media Research collects about 2 million television viewing diaries annually to gather viewing data. The large numbers also allow it to provide viewing information for local stations and their advertisers.[6]

Do not, however, confuse **sample size** with randomness. A classic example is the 1936 Literary Digest poll which predicted Republican Alf Landon would beat Democrat incumbent President Franklin Roosevelt. Literary Digest sent out 10 million ballots to its magazine subscribers as well as people who owned cars and telephones, most of whom in 1936 were richer than the average voter—and more Republican.[7]

Many people mistakenly believe any survey provides information about the general population. One survey with a biased sample that got much publicity involved "sexting." "One in five teenagers electronically share nude or semi-nude photos of themselves" declared the news stories. However, the sample for the survey came from a teenage research panel formed by phone and online recruiting, plus recruiting from existing panel members. This sample included many electronically savvy users, users who would be comfortable sending pictures electronically. So the survey showed the figures were true for this panel (and even there, the numbers were raised by responses from 18- and 19-year-old panelists, a group less inhibited than younger teens and more likely to respond), but because the panel was not a representative sample, no conclusions should be drawn about a wider population.[8]

3. How Was the Survey Conducted? **Face-to-face surveys** are convenient when you are surveying a fairly small number of people in a specific location. In a face-to-face survey, the interviewer's sex, race, and nonverbal cues can bias results. Most people prefer not to say things they think their audience will dislike. For that reason, women will be more likely to agree that sexual harassment is a problem if the interviewer is also a woman. Members of a minority group are more likely to admit that they suffer discrimination if the interviewer is a member of the same minority.

Telephone surveys are popular because they can be closely supervised. Interviewers can read the questions from a computer screen and key in answers as the respondent gives them. The results can then be available just a few minutes after the last call is completed.

Phone surveys also have limitations. First, they reach only people who have phones and thus underrepresent some groups such as poor people. Answering machines, caller ID, and cell phones also make phone surveys more difficult. Since a survey based on a phone book would exclude people with unlisted numbers, professional survey-takers use automatic random-digit dialing.

To increase the response rate for a phone survey, call at a time respondents will find convenient. Avoid calling between 5 and 7 PM, a time when many families have dinner.

Mail surveys can reach anyone who has an address. Some people may be more willing to fill out an anonymous questionnaire than to give sensitive information to a stranger over the phone. However, mail surveys are not effective for respondents who don't read and write well. Further, it may be more difficult to get a response from someone who doesn't care about the survey or who sees the mailing as junk mail. Over the phone, the interviewer can try to persuade the subject to participate.

Online surveys deliver questions over the Internet. The researcher can contact respondents with e-mail containing a link to a web page with the survey or can ask people by mail or in person to log on and visit the website with the survey. Another alternative is to post a survey on a website and invite the site's visitors to complete the survey. This approach does not generate a random sample, so the results probably do not reflect the opinions of the entire population.

Mattel, makers of Barbie, conducted an online poll to see what young girls wanted for the doll's next career. Results of the poll surprised Mattel. Although young girls wanted Barbie to be an anchor woman, the career winning the most votes was computer engineer, because various computer organizations for women asked their members to vote.[9] In general, volunteers for online surveys are more educated, more likely to be white, and more likely to be at the ends of the age spectrum than the general population.[10]

Nevertheless, with online surveys costing about one-tenth of phone surveys, they are increasing their acceptance among experts and growing in popularity as response rates for phone surveys continue to drop. The American Customer Satisfaction Index, a phone survey conducted for years by the University of Michigan, began incorporating online polling in 2010. YouGov, which tracks opinions of corporate brands, has a 1 million panel of U.S. adults.

Researching Emotional Purchasing

Most companies use consumer feedback and customer surveys to improve their products and shape their marketing. Traditional interviews and surveys, however, may not tell the whole picture. Campbell Soup found that people did not have logical reasons for their soup-eating habits. Furthermore, even when surveys showed ads were successful and memorable, that reaction didn't translate to additional sales. Words were not capturing people's unconscious soup responses.

To improve the results, Campbell's turned to a new method, "neuromarketing," using advanced biometrics like eye tracking and measurements of changes in pupil diameter, heart rate, skin moisture, and body temperature to learn how customers feel about product packaging. The researchers found that customers who had positive views of Campbell's products at home were overwhelmed by the choices at the store.

Campbell's revised their packaging based on the research, putting greater emphasis on the image of the soup and adding steam to the photograph to make it appear warm and comforting. They also removed or changed elements that did not get an emotional response.

Biometrics may be the marketing research of the future, testing not only what customers say, but also what they truly feel.

Adapted from Ilan Brat, "The Emotional Quotient of Soup Shopping," *Wall Street Journal,* February 17, 2010, B6.

Daily it sends enough surveys to receive back 5,000 completed ones. Although not random, the survey tries to be representative; YouGov ensures respondents reflect the overall population by factors such as age and gender.[11]

4. What Was the Response Rate? A major concern with any kind of survey is the **response rate,** the percentage of people who respond. People who refuse to answer may differ from those who respond, and you need information from both groups to be able to generalize to the whole population. Low response rates pose a major problem, especially for phone surveys. Answering machines and caller ID are commonly used to screen incoming calls resulting in decreased response rates.

Widespread use of cell phones in recent years has also negatively affected the ability of telephone surveyors to contact potential respondents. Including cell phones in a survey adds significantly to both the cost and the complexity (U.S. laws prevent autodialing of cell phones). The National Center for Health Statistics reports that 25% of households have only cell phone service; for adults age 25–29 that number rises to 49%. Many adults having only cell phones are in the lowest household income categories; they also tend to be single and less well educated. Adults 50 and older are significantly overrepresented in landline phone surveys, where they account for 66% of the average sample.[12] These figures show that phone surveys that are landline only, as is true for most, may have significant biases built into their samples.

The problem of nonresponse has increased dramatically in recent years. The response rate for random phone surveys is mostly 10% to 15% and often less than 10%; the rate for cell phone surveys is even less.[13] The mail response rate for the *mandatory* U.S. Census was only 65%, even with the $370.6 million dollars spent promoting response.[14]

To get as high a response rate as possible, good researchers follow up, contacting nonrespondents at least once and preferably twice to try to persuade them to participate in the survey. Sometimes money or other rewards are used to induce people to participate.

5. What Questions Were Asked? Surveys and interviews can be useful only if the questions are well designed. Good questions have these characteristics:

- They ask only one thing.
- They are phrased neutrally.
- They are asked in an order that does not influence answers.
- They avoid making assumptions about the respondent.
- They mean the same thing to different people.

At a telecommunications firm, a survey asked employees to rate their manager's performance at "hiring staff and setting compensation." Although both tasks are part of the discipline of human resource management, they are different activities. A manager might do a better job of hiring than of setting pay levels, or vice versa. The survey gave respondents—and the company using the survey—no way to distinguish performance on each task.[15]

Phrase questions in a way that won't bias the response. In the political sphere, for example, opinions about rights for homosexuals vary according to the way questions are asked. With regard to homosexual relations, the number of people who say such behavior should be "illegal" is greater than the number who say "consenting adults engaged in homosexual activities in private should be prosecuted for a crime."[16]

Looking with the Customers' Eyes

IDEO, a design firm based in Palo Alto, California, uses observational research to design work processes that improve the customer's experience. IDEO requires its clients to participate in the research so that they can see how it feels to be one of their own customers. Clients may try using the company's product or go on shopping trips, or they may quietly observe customers. Following an initial observation phase, IDEO works with clients to use the observation data for brainstorming. IDEO then prepares and tests prototypes of the redesigned service, refines the ideas, and puts the revisions into action.

IDEO helped Kaiser Permanente revise its long-term growth plan to be more focused on clients' experiences with the health system. Working in teams with nurses, doctors, and managers from Kaiser, IDEO employees observed patients and occasionally role-played patient experiences. They saw that the check-in process was annoying, and waiting rooms were uncomfortable. Many of the patients arrived with a relative or friend for support, but they were often not allowed to remain together. Sitting alone in examination rooms was unpleasant and unnerving.

Based on these observations, Kaiser realized that it needed to focus more on improving patient experiences than on the original plan of modernizing buildings. The company created more comfortable areas in which patients could wait with family and friends, as well as examination rooms large enough to accommodate two people in addition to the patient. Instructions on where to go were made clearer as well.

Adapted from Bruce Nussbaum, "The Power of Design," *BusinessWeek*, May 17, 2004, 86.

The order in which questions are asked may matter. Asking about the economy—and its impact on families—before asking about the President will lower opinions of the President during bad economic times; the opposite is true for good economic times.[17]

Avoid questions that make assumptions about your subjects. The question "Does your spouse have a job outside the home?" assumes that your respondent is a married.

Use words that mean the same thing to you and to the respondents. If a question can be interpreted in more than one way, it will be. Words like *often* and *important* mean different things to different people. When a consulting firm called Employee Motivation and Performance Assessment helped Duke Energy assess the leadership skills of its managers, an early draft of the employee survey asked employees to rate how well their manager "understands the business and the marketplace." How would employees know what is in the manager's mind? Each respondent would have to determine what is reasonable evidence of a manager's understanding. The question was rephrased to identify behavior the employees could observe: "resolves complaints from customers quickly and thoroughly." The wording is still subjective ("quickly and thoroughly"), but at least all employees will be measuring the same category of behavior.[18]

As discussed in Chapter 5, **bypassing** occurs when two people use the same words or phrases but interpret them differently. To catch questions that can be misunderstood and to reduce bypassing, avoid terms that are likely to mean different things to different people and pretest your questions with several people who are like those who will fill out the survey. Even a small pretest with 10 people can help you refine your questions.

Survey questions can be categorized in several ways. **Closed questions** have a limited number of possible responses. **Open questions** do not lock the subject into any sort of response. Figure 15.4 gives examples of closed and open questions. The second question in Figure 15.4 is an example of a Likert-type scale.

Closed questions are faster for subjects to answer and easier for researchers to score. However, since all answers must fit into prechosen categories, they cannot probe the complexities of a subject. You can improve the quality of closed questions by conducting a pretest with open questions to find categories that matter to respondents. Analyzing the responses from open questions is usually less straightforward than analyzing responses from closed questions.

Use closed multiple-choice questions for potentially embarrassing topics. Seeing their own situation listed as one response can help respondents feel that it is acceptable. However, very sensitive issues are perhaps better asked in an interview, where the interviewer can build trust and reveal information about himself or herself to encourage the interviewee to answer.

Use an "Other, Please Specify" category when you want the convenience of a closed question but cannot foresee all the possible responses. These responses can be used to improve choices if the survey is to be repeated.

What is the single most important reason that you ride the bus?
_____ I don't have a car.
_____ I don't want to fight rush-hour traffic.
_____ Riding the bus is cheaper than driving my car.
_____ Riding the bus conserves fuel and reduces pollution.
_____ Other (please specify): _____

Watch Your Language

The connotation of a phrase in a survey can unintentionally skew the way people react to a question. A survey used to learn about the leadership skills of managers asked employees whether their manager "takes bold strides" and "has a strong grasp" of complicated issues. Male managers tended to outscore female managers. In a literal sense, males on average take longer strides and have more muscle strength than females. The company changed the wording of the survey. "Has a strong grasp of complex problems" became "discusses complex problems with precision and clarity." After this change, the difference in ratings of female and male managers disappeared. Employees apparently stopped mixing images of size and strength into their ratings of intellectual insight.

Another word-related bias is that respondents tend to agree more than disagree with statements. If a survey about managers asks employees whether their manager is fair, ethical, intelligent, knowledgeable, and so on, they are likely to assign all of these qualities to the manager—and to agree more and more as the survey goes along. To correct for this, some questions should be worded to generate the opposite response. For example, a statement about ethics can be balanced by a statement about corruption, and a statement about fairness can be balanced by a statement about bias or stereotypes.

Adapted from Palmer Morrel-Samuels, "Getting the Truth into Workplace Surveys," *Harvard Business Review* 80, No. 2 (February 2002): 111–18.

http://www.publicagenda.org/pages/20-questions-journalists-should-ask-about-poll-results

Public Agenda provides 20 questions to ask about poll results. Questions include

- Who did the poll and who paid for it?
- How many people were surveyed and how were they chosen?
- How was the survey done?
- What questions were asked?

http://www.gallup.com

Designing survey questions is an important and difficult part of getting valid results. For examples of surveys, including information about their design, visit the Gallup Poll pages of the Gallup Organization's website. The website also includes videos of Gallup's survey work. Some videos discuss the results of particular polls; some also talk about the poll's audience and purpose, important factors in a survey's design. Watch several videos and examine several polls for the ways in which audience and purpose shape the questions in the survey.

Figure 15.4 Closed and Open Questions

Closed questions

Are you satisfied with the city bus service? (yes/no)

How good is the city bus service?

Excellent 5 4 3 2 1 Terrible

Indicate whether you agree (A) or disagree (D) with each of the following statements about city bus service.

A D The schedule is convenient for me.
A D The routes are convenient for me.
A D The drivers are courteous.
A D The buses are clean.

Rate each of the following improvements in the order of their importance to you (1 = most important and 5 = least important).

_____ Buy new buses.
_____ Increase non-rush-hour service on weekdays.
_____ Increase service on weekdays.
_____ Provide earlier and later service on weekdays.
_____ Buy more buses with wheelchair access.
_____ Provide unlimited free transfers.

Open questions

How do you feel about the city bus service?
Tell me about the city bus service.
Why do you ride the bus? (or, Why don't you ride the bus?)
What do you like and dislike about the city bus service?
How could the city bus service be improved?

When you use multiple-choice questions, make the answer categories mutually exclusive and exhaustive. This means you make sure that any one answer fits in only one category and that a category is included for all possible answers. In the following example of overlapping categories, a person who worked for a company with exactly 25 employees could check either *a* or *b*. The resulting data would be hard to interpret.

Overlapping categories: Indicate the number of full-time employees in your company on May 16:

_____ a. 0–25
_____ b. 25–100
_____ c. 100–500
_____ d. over 500

Discrete categories: Indicate the number of full-time employees on your payroll on May 16:

_____ a. 0–25
_____ b. 26–100
_____ c. 101–500
_____ d. more than 500

The number of answer choices for multiple-choice questions can influence the results. During one month of Obama's presidency, polls such as Gallup that asked whether people approved or disapproved of Obama's performance found that more people approved than disapproved. However, the Rasmussen poll for the same month offered people four choices: strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, and strongly disapprove. With these choices, the disapprovers won.[19]

Branching questions direct different respondents to different parts of the questionnaire based on their answers to earlier questions.

10. Have you talked to an academic adviser this year? yes no
    (If "no," skip to question 14.)

Generally, put early in the questionnaire questions that will be easy to answer. Put questions that are harder to answer or that people may be less willing to answer (e.g., age and income) near the end of the questionnaire. Even if people choose not to answer such questions, you'll still have the rest of the survey filled out.

If subjects will fill out the questionnaire themselves, pay careful attention to the physical design of the document. Use indentations and white space effectively; make it easy to mark and score the answers. Label answer scales frequently so respondents remember which end is positive and which is negative. Include a brief statement of purpose if you (or someone else) will not be available to explain the questionnaire or answer questions. Pretest the questionnaire to make sure the directions are clear. One researcher mailed a two-page questionnaire without pretesting it. One-third of the respondents didn't realize there were questions to answer on the back of the first page.

See Figure 15.5 for an example of a questionnaire for a student report.

Conducting Research Interviews

Schedule interviews in advance; tell the interviewee about how long you expect the interview to take. A survey of technical writers (who get much of their information from interviews) found that the best days to interview subject matter experts are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursday mornings.[20] People are frequently swamped on Mondays and looking forward to the weekend, or trying to finish their week's work on Fridays.

Interviews can be structured or unstructured. In a **structured interview,** the interviewer uses a detailed list of questions to guide the interview. Indeed, a structured interview may use a questionnaire just as a survey does.

In an **unstructured interview,** the interviewer has three or four main questions. Other questions build on what the interviewee says. To prepare for an unstructured interview, learn as much as possible about the interviewee and the topic. Go into the interview with three or four main topics you want to cover.

Interviewers sometimes use closed questions to start the interview and set the interviewee at ease. The strength of an interview, however, is getting at a person's attitudes, feelings, and experiences. **Situational questions** let you probe what someone does in a specific circumstance. **Hypothetical questions** that ask people to imagine what they would do generally yield less reliable answers than questions about **critical incidents** or key past events.

Situational question:	How do you tell an employee that his or her performance is unsatisfactory.
Hypothetical question:	What would you say if you had to tell an employee that his or her performance was unsatisfactory?
Critical incident question:	You've probably been in a situation where someone who was working with you wasn't carrying his or her share of the work. What did you do the last time that happened?

If People Can Misunderstand the Question, They Will

Q: Give previous experience with dates.
A: Moderately successful in the past, but I am now happily married!

Q: How many autopsies have you performed on dead people?
A: All my autopsies have been on dead people.

Q: James stood back and shot Tommy Lee?
A: Yes.
Q: And then Tommy Lee pulled out his gun and shot James in the fracas?
A: (After hesitation) No sir, just above it.

Q: What is the country's mortality rate?
A: 100%. Everybody dies.

Q: Give numbers of employees broken down by sex.
A: None. Our problem is booze.

Q: Sex?
A: Once a week.

Adapted from James Hartley, *Designing Instructional Text* (London: Kogan Page, 1978), 109; Richard Lederer, *Anguished English* (New York: Wyrick, 1988); and surveys of college students.

Figure 15.5 Questionnaire for a Student Report Using Survey Research

An interesting title can help.

In your introductory ¶,
(1) tell how to return the survey
(2) tell how the information will be used

Survey: Why Do Students Attend Athletic Events?

The purpose of this survey is to determine why students attend sports events, and what might increase attendance. All information is to be used solely for a student research paper. Please return completed surveys to Elizabeth or Vicki at the Union help desk. Thank you for your assistance!

Start with easy–to–answer questions

1. Gender (Please circle one) M F

2. What is your class year? (Please circle) 1 2 3 4 Grad Other

The words below each number anchor responses, while still allowing you to average the data.

Seeing a response in a survey can make respondents more willing to admit to feelings they may be embarrassed to volunteer.

3. How do you feel about women's sports? (Please circle)

1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy watching women's sports		I'll watch, but it doesn't really matter		Women's sports are boring/ I'd rather watch men's sports

4. Do you like to attend MSU men's basketball games? (Please circle)
Y N

5. How often do you attend MSU women's basketball games? (Please circle)

1	2	3	4	5
All/most games	Few games a season	Once a season	Less than once a year	Never

6. If you do not attend all of the women's basketball games, why not? (Please check all that apply. If you attend all the games, skip to #7.)

Think about factors that affect the problem you're studying, and write survey questions to get information about them.

__I've never thought to go.
__I don't like basketball.
__I don't like sporting events.
__The team isn't good enough.
__My friends are not interested in going.
__I want to go, I just haven't had the opportunity.
__The tickets cost too much ($5).
__Other (please specify) ______________________________

7. To what extent would each of the following make you more likely to attend an MSU women's basketball game? (please rank all)

1	2	3
Much more likely to attend	Possibley more likely	No effect

__Increased awareness on campus (fliers, chalking on the Oval, more articles in the *Gazette*)
__Marketing to students (give-aways, days for residence halls or fraternities/sororities)
__Student loyalty program (awarding points towards free tickets, clothing, food for attending games)
__Education (pocket guide explaining the rules of the game provided at the gate)
__Other (please specify) ______________________________

Thank you!
Please return this survey to Elizabeth or Vicki at the Union help desk.

Repeat where to turn in or mail completed surveys.

A **mirror question** paraphrases the content of the last answer: "So you confronted him directly?" "You think that this product costs too much?" Mirror questions are used both to check that the interviewer understands what the interviewee has said and to prompt the interviewee to continue talking. **Probes** follow up an original question to get at specific aspects of a topic:

Question: What do you think about the fees for campus parking?

Probes: Would you be willing to pay more for a reserved space? How much more?
Should the fines for vehicles parked illegally be increased?
Do you think fees should be based on income?

Probes are not used in any definite order. Instead, they are used to keep the interviewee talking, to get at aspects of a subject that the interviewee has not yet mentioned, and to probe more deeply into points that the interviewee brings up.

If you read questions to subjects in a structured interview, use fewer options than you might in a written questionnaire.

> I'm going to read a list of factors that someone might look for in choosing a restaurant. After I read each factor, please tell me whether that factor is Very Important to you, Somewhat Important to you, or Not Important to you.

If the interviewee hesitates, reread the scale.

Always tape the interview. Test your equipment ahead of time to make sure it works. If you think your interviewee may be reluctant to speak on tape, take along two tapes and two recorders; offer to give one tape to the interviewee.

Pulitzer Prize winner Nan Robertson offers the following advice to interviewers:

- Do your homework. Learn about the subject and the person before the interview.
- To set a nervous interviewee at ease, start with nuts-and-bolts questions, even if you already know the answers.
- Save controversial questions for the end. You'll have everything else you need, and the trust built up in the interview makes an answer more likely.
- Go into an interview with three or four major questions. Listen to what the interviewee says and let the conversation flow naturally.
- At the end of the interview, ask for office and home telephone numbers in case you need to ask an additional question when you write up the interview.[21]

Well-done interviews can yield surprising results. When the owners of Kiwi shoe polish interviewed people about what they wanted in shoe care products, they learned that shiny shoes were far down on the list. What people cared most about was how fresh and comfortable their shoes were on the inside. So Kiwi developed a new line of products, including "fresh'ins" (thin, lightly scented shoe inserts) and "smiling feet" (cushioning and nonslip pads and strips).[22]

Using Focus Groups

A focus group, yet another form of qualitative research, is a small group of people convened to provide a more detailed look into some area of interest—a product, service, process, concept, and so on. Because the group setting allows

Ethical Issues in Interviewing

If you're trying to get sensitive information, interviewees may give useful information when the interview is "over" and the tape recorder has been turned off. Is it ethical to use that information?

If you're interviewing a hostile or very reluctant interviewee, you may get more information if you agree with everything you can legitimately agree to, and keep silent on the rest. Is it ethical to imply acceptance even when you know you'll criticize the interviewee's ideas in your report?

Most people would say that whatever public figures say is fair game: they're supposed to know enough to defend themselves. Do you agree?

Many people would say that different rules apply when you'll cite someone by name than when you'll use the information as background or use a pseudonym so that the interviewee cannot be identified. Do you agree?

As a practical matter, if someone feels you've misrepresented him or her, that person will be less willing to talk to you in the future. But quite apart from practical considerations, interview strategies raise ethical issues as well.

members to build on each other's comments, carefully chosen focus groups can provide detailed feedback; they can illuminate underlying attitudes and emotions relevant to particular behaviors.

Focus groups also have some problems. The first is the increasing use of professional respondents drawn from databases, a practice usually driven by cost and time limitations. The *Association for Qualitative Research Newsletter* labeled these respondents as a leading industry problem.[23] In order to get findings that are consistent among focus groups, the groups must accurately represent the target population. A second problem with focus groups is that such groups sometimes aim to please rather than offering their own evaluations.

Using Online Networks

An updated version of the focus group is the online network. Del Monte, for instance, has an online community, called "I Love My Dog," of 400 hand-picked dog enthusiasts that it can query about dog products. These networks, first cultivated as research tools by technology and video game companies, are being employed by various producers of consumer products and services, including small companies. The networks are often cheaper and more effective than traditional focus groups because they have broader participation and allow for deeper and ongoing probing. Companies can use them for polls, real-time chats with actual consumers, and product trials.[24]

Some of the better online panels include experts as well as users. One small-scale automaker has design engineers and transportation experts on its panel. Although larger than focus groups, these panels carry some of the same drawbacks. They are not necessarily representative, either of current or future customers. Studies have also shown that they tend to discourage innovation.[25] On the other hand, they tend to give responses which members see as positive for the sponsor. Procter & Gamble repeatedly got go-aheads for product development from its online panels, only to see the new products fail field tests.[26]

A still larger online community comes from Twitter and online blogs. These communities are the least controllable of feedback groups, but are becoming more important all the time. Many companies are hiring employees or technology services to monitor comments on social networks and respond quickly. They also use data from Twitter and Facebook to track trends and preferences.

Observing Customers and Users

Answers to surveys and interviews may differ from actual behavior—sometimes greatly. To get more accurate consumer information, many marketers observe users. For example, one problem with asking consumers about their television-watching behavior is that they sometimes underreport the number of hours they watch and the degree to which they watch programs they aren't proud of liking.

Researchers have tried to develop a variety of measurement methods that collect viewing data automatically. Arbitron introduced the Portable People Meter (PPM), which receives an inaudible electronic signal from radio stations and broadcast and cable TV stations. Consumers simply carry the PPM, and it records their media exposure. One of the first results showed that consumers listened to radio more than they had indicated in diaries.[27] Nielsen Media Research has added commercial viewings to its famous TV show numbers; advertisers are naturally anxious to know how many people actually watch commercials instead of leaving to get a snack or fast-forwarding through them on digital video recorders.[28] Nielsen has also started tracking college students' viewing, installing its people meters in commons areas such as dorms. The new data boosted ratings for some shows, such as *Grey's Anatomy* and *America's Next Top Model*, by more than 35%.[29]

Interviewee Types

One of the greatest challenges of interviewing people is finding how to help the subjects open up and express real answers to your questions. One former U.S. Army interrogator, Greg Hartley, believes you can help people talk by understanding their personality type and shaping the interview around it. Here are five of his personality types and tips for interacting with them:

- **Teachers.** "Teachers" (consultants, academics, analysts) have extensive knowledge and experience. As an interviewer, take the role of a student and allow the subject to teach, answer questions, and display their expertise.
- **Jargon Dorks.** To cut through the jargon used by some newbies and insecure people, play dumb and ask for definitions and explanations.
- **Complainers.** You may not have trouble getting complainers to talk, but you may need to steer the conversation by using complaints of your own and expressions of empathy.
- **Smartypantses.** These people have to be smarter than everyone else. Making incorrect statements or challenging their opinions will provoke them into talking.
- **Worriers.** Conservative and careful, worriers don't want to say anything that will cause trouble or draw attention. To get them to open up, act as if you already know about their responses.

Adapted from "Make Them Talk," *Inc.*, April 2011, 82.

Procter and Gamble, maker of products like Swiffer, researches shopping patterns for both in-store and online customers.

Observation can tell marketers more about customers than the customers can put into words themselves. Intuit, a leader in observation studies, sends employees to visit customers and watch how they use Intuit products such as QuickBooks. Watching small businesses struggle with QuickBooks Pro told the company of the need for a new product, QuickBooks Simple Start.[30]

Observation can also be used for gathering in-house information such as how efficiently production systems operate and how well employees serve customers. Some businesses use "mystery shoppers." For instance, McDonald's has used mystery shoppers to check cleanliness, customer service, and food quality. The company posts store-by-store results online, giving store operators an incentive and the information they need to improve quality on measures where they are slipping or lagging behind the region's performance.[31]

Even health care facilities use mystery "shoppers." After they give their reports, the most common changes are improved estimates of waiting times and better explanations of medical procedures. So many organizations use mystery shoppers that there is a Mystery Shopping Providers Association.

Observation is often combined with other techniques to get the most information. **Think-aloud protocols** ask users to voice their thoughts as they use a document or product: "First I'll try. . . ." These protocols are tape-recorded and later analyzed to understand how users approach a document or product. **Interruption interviews** interrupt users to ask them what's happening. For example, a company testing a draft of computer instructions might interrupt a user to ask, "What are you trying to do now? Tell me why you did that." **Discourse-based interviews** ask questions based on documents that the interviewee has written: "You said that the process is too complicated. Tell me what you mean by that."

SOURCE CITATION AND DOCUMENTATION LO 15-3

In effective proposals and reports, sources are cited and documented smoothly and unobtrusively. **Citation** means attributing an idea or fact to its source in the body of the text: "According to the 2010 Census . . . " "Jane Bryant Quinn argues that. . . ." In-text citations provide, in parentheses in the text, the source

The Cost of Plagiarism

Copying from other articles or online sources may seem like a small thing, but it is dishonest and can cost you much more than a poor grade on a school paper. One German politician, Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg, was forced to resign in 2011 after revelations that he plagiarized large sections of his doctoral thesis.

As Germany's defense minister, zu Guttenberg was one of the country's most powerful and popular politicians. He seemed to be on track to become chancellor someday. But all of that was derailed when a law professor preparing to write a review of zu Guttenberg's thesis ran some passages through Google and found that they matched articles from newspapers and other sources. Later searches by Internet activists found evidence of plagiarism on 75% of the thesis's 400 pages.

Zu Guttenberg's downfall can serve as a warning to business communicators. Plagiarism is not only dishonest, it is costly. And, with Internet research tools, plagiarism is becoming much easier to detect.

Adapted from Marcus Walker and Patrick McGroarty, "German Minister Quits over Scandal," *Wall Street Journal*, March 2, 2011, A13.

where the reference was found. Citing sources demonstrates your honesty and enhances your credibility. **Documentation** means providing the bibliographic information readers would need to go back to the original source. The two usual means of documentation are notes and lists of references.

Failure to cite and document sources is **plagiarism,** the passing off of the words or ideas of others as one's own. Plagiarism can lead to nasty consequences. The news regularly showcases examples of people who have been fired or sued for plagiarism. Now that curious people can type sentences into Google and find the sources, plagiarism is easier than ever to catch. Plagiarism is both unethical and illegal.

Another unethical practice that may occur when using sources is taking material out of context in such a way that the meaning of the material used is counter to the meaning of the material within its full context. An example of this practice discussed in national news occurred when Shirley Sherrod, the Agriculture Department's director of rural development in Georgia, was asked to resign because of a comment that became racist when taken out of context. (See sidebar on this page.)

Note that citation and documentation are used in addition to quotation marks. If you use the source's exact words, you'll use the name of the person you're citing and quotation marks in the body of the proposal or report; you'll indicate the source in parentheses and a list of references or in a footnote or endnote. If you put the source's idea into your own words (paraphrasing), or if you condense or synthesize information, you don't need quotation marks, but you still need to tell whose idea it is and where you found it. See Appendix C for examples of quoting and paraphrasing using both APA and MLA formats.

Long quotations (four typed lines or more) are used sparingly in business proposals or reports. Since many readers skip quotes, always summarize the main point of the quotation in a single sentence before the quotation itself. End the sentence with a colon, not a period, since it introduces the quote. Indent long quotations on the left to set them off from your text. Indented quotations do not need quotation marks; the indentation shows the reader that the passage is a quote.

To make a quotation fit the grammar of your writing, you may need to change one or two words. Sometimes you may want to add a few words to explain something in the longer original. In both cases, use square brackets to indicate words that are your replacements or additions. Omit any words in the original source that are not essential for your purposes. Use ellipses (spaced dots) to indicate your omissions.

Document every fact and idea that you take from a source except facts that are common knowledge. Historical dates and facts are considered common knowledge. Generalizations are considered common knowledge ("More and more women are entering the workforce") even though specific statements about the same topic (such as the percentage of women in the workforce in 1975 and in 2000) would require documentation.

The three most widely used formats for footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies in reports are those of the American Psychological Association (APA), the Modern Language Association (MLA), and the University of Chicago *Manual of Style* format, which this book uses. Some technical materials use IEEE or CBE formats.

Internal documentation provides in parentheses in the text the source where the reference was found. (See appendix C for a complete explanation and example.)

For a portion of a report in APA and MLA formats, see Appendix C. Appendix C also outlines the APA and MLA formats for the sources most often used in proposals and reports.

A Costly Comment out of Context

Shirley Sherrod was the Agriculture Department's director of rural development in Georgia. Then conservative activist Andrew Breitbart posted video excerpts of her March 2010 speech to an NAACP event. The excerpts seemed to say that she did not give the white farmer who came to her for bankruptcy help the same help she would give to black farmers, in other words, racial discrimination. Fox News and CBS reported on the excerpts the same day they were posted, and Sherrod was asked to resign by government officials, which she did.

In the full video, posted later on other websites, it became clear that the white farmer was an example of a time when she could have discriminated but didn't; he was the person who taught her that white people didn't always have advantages. In fact, the farmer in question told CNN that he and Sherrod were still friends, 20 years later.

Adapted from Marcus K. Garner and Christian Boone, "USDA Reconsiders Firing of Ga. Official over Speech on Race," *Atlanta Journal Constitution,* July 21, 2010, http://www.ajc.com/news/usda-reconsiders-firing-of-574027.html.

If you use a printed source that is not readily available, consider including it as an appendix in your report. For example, you could copy an ad or include an organization's promotional brochure.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- **Information reports** collect data for the reader; **analytical reports** present and interpret data; **recommendation reports** recommend action or a solution.
- A good purpose statement must make three things clear:
  - The organizational problem or conflict.
  - The specific technical questions that must be answered to solve the problem.
  - The rhetorical purpose (to explain, to recommend, to request, to propose) that the report is designed to achieve.
- Use indexes and directories to find information about a specific company or topic.
- To decide whether to use a website as a source in a research project, evaluate the site's authors, objectivity, information, and revision date.
- A **survey** questions a large group of people, called **respondents** or subjects. A **questionnaire** is a written list of questions that people fill out. An **interview** is a structured conversation with someone who will be able to give you useful information.
- Because surveys can be used to show almost anything, people need to be careful when analyzing the results of surveys or designing their own. These are questions commonly asked about surveys:
  - Who did the survey and who paid for it?
  - How many people were surveyed and how were they chosen?
  - How was the survey conducted?
  - What was the response rate?
  - What questions were asked?
- Qualitative research may also use interviews, focus groups, and online networks.
- Good questions ask just one thing, are phrased neutrally, avoid making assumptions about the respondent, and mean the same thing to different people.
- **Closed questions** have a limited number of possible responses. **Open questions** do not lock the subject into any sort of response. **Branching questions** direct different respondents to different parts of the questionnaire based on their answers to earlier questions. **Hypothetical questions,** which ask what people *might* do, are generally less reliable than **situational questions,** which ask what people *actually* do in specific situations. A **mirror question** paraphrases the content of the last answer. **Probes** follow up an original question to get at specific aspects of a topic.
- A **convenience sample** is a group of subjects who are easy to get. A **judgment sample** is a group of people whose views seem useful. In a **random sample,** each object in the population theoretically has an equal chance of being chosen. A sample is random only if a formal, approved random sampling method is used. Otherwise, unconscious bias can exist.

Internet Pranks

The wealth of good Information available on the Internet is often drowned or diluted by inaccurate, misleading, or blatantly false information. Students who have grown up using the Internet as their primary research tool may have trouble distinguishing between the good and the bad.

One instructor uses the Internet to teach his students to think about sources and information carefully. He begins with an introduction about a dangerous substance called DHMO that is found in many products and causes thousands of deaths each year. He then asks his students to research the substance, directing them specifically to sources like www.dhmo.org, which advocates a government ban on DHMO.

Only after his students start to be convinced does the teacher reveal that DHMO, or dihydrogen monoxide, is simply another term for water, and that the one-sided articles they read were part of an elaborate Internet hoax. This exercise, along with a similar exercise involving a tree octopus, helps the students learn to critique information and its source.

Adapted from Brent Vasicek, "Danger on the Internet: A Lesson in Critical Thinking," Scholastic.com, February 9, 2011, http://blogs.scholastic.com/classroom_solutions/2011/02/danger-on-the-internet-a-lesson-in-critical-thinking.html.

- **Citation** means attributing an idea or fact to its source in the body of the report. **Documentation** means providing the bibliographic information readers would need to go back to the original source.

CHAPTER 15 Exercises and Problems

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

15.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. What are some criteria for defining report problems? (LO 15-1)
2. What are four criteria for evaluating web sources? (LO 15-2)
3. What questions should you use to analyze a survey? (LO 15-2)
4. What are some criteria for good survey questions? (LO 15-2)
5. What is a random sample? (LO 15-2)
6. What are some disadvantages of focus groups and online networks? (LO 15-2)

15.2 Reviewing Grammar

Reports use lots of numbers. Test your knowledge about writing numbers by doing Exercise B.10 in Appendix B.

15.3 Defining and Evaluating Report Problems

In small teams, turn the following categories into specific report problems you could research for a business communication course. Write three possible report problems for each category.

1. Social media sites
2. Global warming or climate change
3. Globalization
4. Marketing to younger audiences
5. Career planning
6. Technology/cell phone use
7. Credit card debt
8. Campus-based organizations
9. Tuition
10. Housing/parking on campus

Once you have defined three possible problems for each category, evaluate the problems using the following questions:

- Which problem(s) could you address satisfactorily in the time allotted for your course project?
- Which problem(s) are real?
- Which problem(s) are important enough to be worth researching?
- Are the problem(s) narrow enough?
- Who will be able to implement recommended action from your research?
- For which problem(s) could you find adequate resources to create sound solutions?

As your instructor directs,

a. Write a memo to your instructor that shares your evaluation of the problems.

b. Pick two of the categories and present to the class your evaluation of the problems in an oral presentation.

c. Write a preliminary purpose statement for each of the three problems you have identified for a category.

15.4 Identifying the Weaknesses in Problem Statements

Identify the weaknesses in the following problem statements.

- Is the problem narrow enough?
- Can a solution be found in a semester or quarter?
- What organization could implement any recommendations to solve the problem?
- Could the topic be limited or refocused to yield an acceptable problem statement?

1. One possible report topic I would like to investigate would be the differences in women's intercollegiate sports in our athletic conference.
2. How to market products effectively to college students.
3. Should web banners be part of a company's advertising?
4. How can U.S. and Canadian students get jobs in Europe?
5. We want to explore ways our company can help raise funds for the Open Shelter. We will investigate whether collecting and recycling glass, aluminum, and paper products will raise enough money to help.
6. How can XYZ University better serve students from traditionally underrepresented groups?
7. What are the best investments for the next year?

15.5 Writing a Preliminary Purpose Statement

Answer the following questions about a topic on which you could write a formal report.

As your instructor directs,

a. Be prepared to answer the questions orally in a conference.
b. Bring written answers to a conference.
c. Submit written answers in class.
d. Give your instructor a photocopy of your statement after it is approved.

1. What problem will you investigate or solve?
   a. What is the name of the organization facing the problem?
   b. What is the technical problem or difficulty?
   c. Why is it important to the organization that this problem be solved?
   d. What solution or action might you recommend to solve the problem?
   e. Who (name and title) is the person in the organization who would have the power to accept or reject your recommendation?
2. Will this report use information from other classes or from work experiences? If so, give the name and topic of the class and/or briefly describe the job. If you will need additional information (that you have not already gotten from other classes or from a job), how do you expect to find it?
3. List the name, title, and business phone number of a professor who can testify to your ability to handle the expertise needed for this report.
4. List the name, title, and business phone number of someone in the organization who can testify that you have access to enough information about that organization to write this report.

15.6 Choosing Research Strategies

For each of the following reports, indicate the kinds of research that might be useful. If a survey is called for, indicate the most efficient kind of sample to use.

a. How can XYZ store increase sales?
b. What is it like to live and work in [name of country]?
c. Should our organization have a dress code?
d. Is it feasible to start a monthly newsletter for students in your major?
e. How can we best market to mature adults?
f. Can compensation programs increase productivity?
g. What skills are in demand in our area? Of these, which could the local community college offer courses in?

15.7 Evaluating Websites

Choose five websites that are possible resources for a report. Evaluate them on the credibility and trustworthiness of their information. Consider the following questions and compare and contrast your findings.

- What person or organization sponsors the site? What credentials do the authors have?
- Does the site give evidence to support its claims? Does it give both sides of controversial issues?
- Is the tone professional?
- How complete is the information? What is it based on?
- How current is the information?

Based on your findings, which sites are best for your report and why?

As your instructor directs,

a. Write a memo to your instructor summarizing your results.

b. Share your results with a small group of students.

c. Present your results to the class in an oral presentation.

15.8 Choosing Samples for Surveys and Interviews

For the following topics, indicate the types of sample(s) you would use in collecting survey data and in conducting interviews.

a. How can your school save money to limit tuition increases?

b. How can your favorite school organization attract more student members?

c. How can your school improve communication with international students?

d. How should your school deal with hate speech?

e. How can instructors at your school improve their electronic presentations for students?

15.9 Evaluating Survey Questions

Evaluate each of the following questions. Are they acceptable as they stand? If not, how can they be improved?

a. Survey of clerical workers:

Do you work for the government? ☐
or the private sector? ☐

b. Questionnaire on grocery purchases:

1. Do you *usually* shop at the same grocery store?
   a. Yes
   b. No
2. Do you use credit cards to purchase items at your grocery store?
   a. Yes
   b. No
3. How much is your average grocery bill?
   a. Under $25
   b. $25–50
   c. $50–100
   d. $100–150
   e. Over $150

c. Survey on technology:

1. Would you generally welcome any technological advancement that allowed information to be sent and received more quickly and in greater quantities than ever before?
2. Do you think that all people should have free access to all information, or do you think that information should somehow be regulated and monitored?

d. Survey on job skills:

How important are the following skills for getting and keeping a professional-level job in U.S. business and industry today?

	Low				**High**
Ability to communicate	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership ability	1	2	3	4	5
Public presentation skills	1	2	3	4	5
Selling ability	1	2	3	4	5
Teamwork capability	1	2	3	4	5
Writing ability	1	2	3	4	5

15.10 Designing Questions for an Interview or Survey

Submit either a one- to three-page questionnaire or questions for a 20- to 30-minute interview AND the information listed below for the method you choose.

Questionnaire

1. Purpose(s), goal(s).
2. Subjects (who, why, how many).
3. How and where to be distributed.
4. Any changes in type size, paper color, etc., from submitted copy.
5. Rationale for order of questions, kinds of questions, wording of questions.
6. References, if building on questionnaires by other authors.

Interview

1. Purpose(s), goal(s).
2. Subjects (who, and why).
3. Proposed site, length of interview.
4. Rationale for order of questions, kinds of questions, wording of questions, choice of branching or follow-up questions.
5. References, if building on questions devised by others.

As your instructor directs,

a. Create questions for a survey on one of the following topics:
   - Survey students on your campus about their knowledge of and interest in the programs and activities sponsored by a student organization.
   - Survey workers at a company about what they like and dislike about their jobs.
   - Survey people in your community about their willingness to pay more to buy products using recycled materials and to buy products that are packaged with a minimum of waste.
   - Survey two groups on a topic that interests you.

b. Create questions for an interview on one of the following topics:
   - Interview an international student about the forms of greetings and farewells, topics of small talk, forms of politeness, festivals and holidays, meals at home, size of families, and roles of family members in his or her country.
   - Interview a TV producer about what styles and colors work best for people appearing on TV.
   - Interview a worker about an ethical dilemma he or she faced on the job, what the worker did and why, and how the company responded.
   - Interview the owner of a small business about problems the business has, what strategies the owner has already used to increase sales and and profits and how successful these strategies were, and the owner's attitudes toward possible changes in product line, decor, marketing, hiring, advertising, and money management.
   - Interview someone who has information you need for a report you're writing.

15.11 Comparing Online Survey Sites

Visit these online survey websites and analyze their features. What kinds of services do they offer? How useful are they? What are their limitations?

http://www.surveymonkey.com
http://www.polldaddy.com/
http://web-online-surveys.com/
http://www.vizu.com/index.htm
http://freeonlinesurveys.com/

Discuss your findings in small groups.

15.12 Comparing an Online Survey with a Face-to-Face Survey

Surveymonkey.com is an online survey website whose basic features are available free of cost for those who sign up. Design a small survey using the website for a course project or something else. Administer the survey. The website compiles and analyzes the results for you.

Now, distribute the same survey in the form of a questionnaire to the same number of people, but choose new respondents.

Compare the results of the online survey with those of the survey that respondents filled out manually. What similarities and differences do you find in the two results? What might account for these similarities and differences? Do this exercise individually or in a group. Share the results with the class.

15.13 Reviewing Corporate Reports

As companies become increasingly socially and environmentally conscious, they document their social and environmental contributions in reports such as corporate citizenship reports, corporate responsibility reports, corporate sustainability reports, sustainability progress reports, and so on. These reports are available on the companies' websites, often on pages that contain company information.

Go to www.fortune.com, which creates lists of the top 500 and 100 companies as well as the most admired companies. Select a company related to your major and future career field. Visit its website and access one of the reports mentioned above or a report similar to the ones mentioned above. Study the nature and structure of the report; find out whether it informs, analyzes, recommends, or does all three. What kinds of evidence does it use? How well supported are the conclusions? Share your findings in small groups.

15.14 Citing Sources

As your instructor directs,

a. Revise the following list of sources using MLA format.

b. Revise the following list of sources using APA format.

For help, see Appendix C.

1. Shayndi Raice
   Wall Street Journal
   Social Media, Phones Ally
   February 18, 2011
   B7
2. Ben Sisario and Miguel Helft
   The New York Times
   Facebook Is Developing Ways to Share Media
   http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/27/technology/27facebook.html?ref=technology
   May 26, 2011
   Accessed May 26, 2011
3. Dorie Clark
   Reinventing Your Personal Brand
   Harvard Business Review
   Volume 89, Issue No. 3
   March 2011
   78-81
4. Jakob Nielsen
   Alertbox
   Incompetent Research Skills Curb Users' Problem Solving
   http://www.useit.com/alertbox/search-skills.html
   April 11, 2011
   Accessed March 25, 2011
5. Richard C. Freed, Shervin Freed, Joseph D. Romano
   Writing Winning Business Proposals
   3rd edition
   2010
   McGraw-Hill
   New York

15.15 Writing a Report Based on a Survey

As your instructor directs,

a. Survey 40 to 50 people on some subject of your choice.

b. Team up with your classmates to conduct a survey and write it up as a group. Survey 50 to 80 people if your group has two members, 75 to 120 people if it has three members, 100 to 150 people if it has four members, and 125 to 200 people if it has five members.

c. Keep a journal during your group meetings and submit it to your instructor.

d. Write a memo to your instructor describing and evaluating your group's process for designing, conducting, and writing up the survey.

For this assignment, you do **not** have to take a random sample. Do, however, survey at least two different groups so that you can see if they differ in some way. Possible groups are men and women, business majors and English majors, Greeks and independents, first-year students and seniors, students and townspeople.

As you conduct your survey, make careful notes about what you do so that you can use this information when you write up your survey. If you work with a group, record who does what. Use complete memo format. Your subject line should be clear and reasonably complete. Omit unnecessary words such as "Survey of." Your first paragraph serves as an introduction, but it needs no heading. The rest of the body of your memo will be divided into four sections with the following headings: Purpose, Procedure, Results, and Discussion.

In your first paragraph, briefly summarize (not necessarily in this order) who conducted the experiment or survey, when it was conducted, where it was conducted, who the subjects were, what your purpose was, and what you found out. You will discuss all of these topics in more detail in the body of your memo.

In your **Purpose** section, explain why you conducted the survey. What were you trying to learn? What hypothesis were you testing? Why did this subject seem interesting or important?

In your **Procedure** section, describe in detail *exactly* what you did. "The first 50 people who came through the Union on Wed., Feb. 2" is not the same as "The first 50 people who came through the south entrance of the Union on Wed., Feb. 2, after 8 am, and agreed to answer my questions." Explain any steps you took to overcome possible sources of bias.

In your **Results** section, first tell whether your results supported your hypothesis. Use both visuals and words to explain what your numbers show. (See Chapter 16 on how to design visuals.) Process your raw data in a way that will be useful to your reader.

In your **Discussion** section, evaluate your survey and discuss the implications of your results. Consider these questions:

1. What are the limitations of your survey and your results?
2. Do you think a scientifically valid survey would have produced the same results? Why or why not?
3. Were there any sources of bias either in the way the questions were phrased or in the way the subjects were chosen? If you were running the survey again, what changes would you make to eliminate or reduce these sources of bias?
4. Do you think your subjects answered honestly and completely? What factors may have intruded? Is the fact that you did or didn't know them, were or weren't of the same sex relevant? If your results seem to contradict other evidence, how do you account for the discrepancy? Were your subjects shading the truth? Was your sample's unrepresentativeness the culprit? Or have things changed since earlier data were collected?
5. What causes the phenomenon your results reveal? If several causes together account for the phenomenon, or if it is impossible to be sure of the cause, admit this. Identify possible causes and assess the likelihood of each.
6. What action should be taken?

The discussion section gives you the opportunity to analyze the significance of your survey. Its insight and originality lift the otherwise well-written memo from the ranks of the merely satisfactory to the ranks of the above-average and the excellent.

The whole assignment will be more interesting if you choose a question that interests you. It does not need to be "significant" in terms of major political or philosophic problems; a quirk of human behavior that fascinates you will do nicely.

15.16 Analyzing Annual Reports

Locate two annual reports either in paper or electronic form. Use the following questions to analyze both reports:

- Who is (are) the audience(s)?
- What is (are) the purpose(s) of the report?
- How is the report organized and what does the order of information reflect about the company?
- How does the report validate/support the claims it makes? What type of evidence is used more often—textual or visual? What kinds of claims are used—logical, emotional, or ethical?
- How does the text establish credibility for the report?
- What can you tell about the company's financial situation from the report?
- What role do visuals play in the report? What image do they portray for the company? How do the visuals help establish credibility for the report? What do they imply about power distribution in the company?
- Does the report deal with any ethical issues?

As your instructor directs,

a. Write a memo to your instructor comparing and contrasting the two reports according to your analysis answers. Explain which report you find more effective and why.

b. Share your results orally with a small group of students.

c. Present your results to the class.

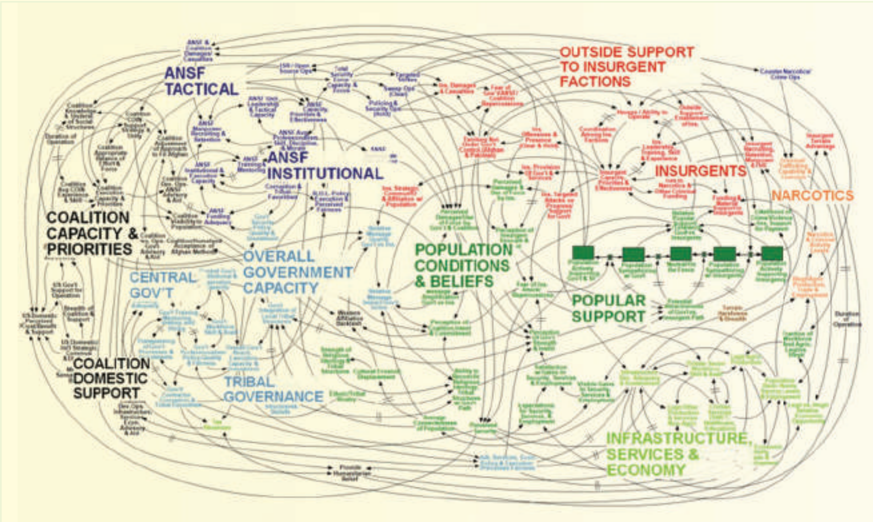
CHAPTER 16

Creating Visuals and Data Displays

Chapter Outline

Newsworthy Communication

Visualizing in the Army



The U. S. Armed Forces thrive on information. With the conflict in Afghanistan, generals, officers, and politicians receive daily briefings on the complex situations in the war zone. These briefings must provide military administration with enough information to make decisions on overall goals and troop movements. And, like similar presentations in the business world, many of these briefings are conducted using Microsoft PowerPoint.

PowerPoint has become an essential business tool since it was first introduced in 1987. It allows presenters to highlight important points and to enhance their information with visuals and data displays. However, some critics claim that PowerPoint is overused and leads to creating bad, uninteresting, or misleading information.

For the U.S. Army, poor use of PowerPoint to present daily briefings has come under increasing criticism. Colonel Lawrence Sellin, a staff officer in army headquarters in Afghanistan, stated, "For headquarters staff, war consists largely of the endless tinkering with PowerPoint slides to conform with the idiosyncrasies of cognitively challenged generals in order to spoon-feed them information." His harsh words about army operations cost him his job.

Colonel Sellin's criticism was widely reported in the media, along with an image of the now-infamous "spaghetti slide"—a slide used in a daily briefing to show strategy complexity. The slide was aptly named because the strategy looks like a pile of spaghetti with curling lines going in almost every direction (see photo). The leader of the forces in Afghanistan, General McChrystal, reportedly responded, "When we understand that slide, we'll have won the war."

General McChrystal reportedly responded, "When we understand that slide, we'll have won the war."

But it is not just the complicated slides that cause misunderstandings. Many of the PowerPoint slides used in the daily briefings are bulleted lists that oversimplify the problems of war.

In spite of these criticisms, communicating visually with PowerPoint can be helpful. When used well, PowerPoint can combine text, images, data, video, and audio into a powerful informative and persuasive message. But like any other form of communication, creating visuals requires careful thought, planning, and attention to the context, the message, and the audience. For the U.S. Army, better visuals could ultimately result in fewer soldier deaths and, perhaps, an earlier end to the war.

Source: Nancy Duarte, "Why We Hate PowerPoints—and How to Fix Them," CNN.com, October 15, 2010, http://www.cnn.com/2010/OPINION/10/15/duarte.powerpoint.fatigue/index.html?hpt=T2; Elisabeth Bumiller, "We Have Met the Enemy and He Is PowerPoint," *New York Times*, April 26, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/27/world/27powerpoint.html?_r=3; and "The PowerPoint Rant That Got a Colonel Fired," *Army Times*, December 6, 2010, http://www.armytimes.com/news/2010/09/army-colonel-fired-for-powerpoint-rant-090210w/.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know

LO 16-1 When to use visuals and data displays.

LO 16-2 How to create effective visuals and data displays.

LO 16-3 How to integrate visuals and data displays into text.

Visuals and data displays are design elements that help make data meaningful and support arguments in your proposals and reports. They can also help communicate your points in documents such as brochures, newsletters, reports, and other business messages, where they can add color and emotional appeal, as well as new information. Visuals, particularly PowerPoint slides, are also used to enhance oral presentations; PowerPoint slides are discussed in Chapter 19.

Visuals and data displays are particularly useful for presenting numbers dramatically. Suppose you want to give investors information about various stocks' performances. They would not want to read paragraph after paragraph of statements about which stocks went up and which went down. Organizing the daily numbers into tables would be much more useful.

Tables of stock prices have been the norm until recently. Now, the Internet offers options such as Map of the Market, www.smartmoney.com/map-of-the-market, a graphics tool that helps investors see the top performers. Map of the Market displays visual information for 1,000 U.S. and international stocks, providing details about each company's performance. Each company is shown as a rectangle, and companies are clustered into industry groups. The blocks are color-coded to signify the size of the stock price change or other criteria selected by the user. Size and color provide easy cues for spotting the best and worst performers.

WHEN TO USE VISUALS AND DATA DISPLAYS LO 16-1

The ease of creating visuals and data displays by computer may make people use them uncritically. Use visuals and data displays only to achieve a specific purpose. Never include them in your documents just because you have them; instead, use them to convey information the audience needs or wants.

In your rough draft, use visuals and data displays

- **To see that ideas are presented completely.** A table, for example, can show you whether you've included all the items in a comparison.
- **To find relationships.** Charting sales on a map may show that the sales representatives who made quota all have territories on the East or the West Coast. Is the central United States suffering a recession? Is the product one that appeals to coastal lifestyles? Is advertising reaching the coasts but not the central states? Even if you don't use the visual in your final document, creating the map may lead you to questions you wouldn't otherwise ask.

In the final presentation or document, use visuals and data displays

Visuals of Fallen Heroes

After only a few weeks in office, President Obama reversed a controversial policy dealing with visuals. His administration overturned a policy that prohibited the media from photographing caskets of fallen soldiers returning to the United States. Under the new policy, the families of fallen soldiers have the right to choose whether the media can be present at the Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, the place where all deceased soldiers are brought.

Former President George H. W. Bush started the policy in 1991 during the Gulf War. Critics suggest the policy was enacted to prevent the public from seeing the horrors of war and the number of people who had died. On the other hand, critics of the new policy argue that allowing the press to be present creates a spectacle out of a private family matter.

Supporters of the new policy believe the photos are a reminder to all Americans of the sacrifices made by our troops and of the high price of freedom.

How ethical do you believe it is to show the final ceremony of fallen soldiers? If you had a family member who died in war, would you want the press to be present?

Adapted from Julian E. Barnes, "U.S. to Allow Photos of War Dead's Coffins," *The Seattle Times: Politics & Government*, February 27, 2009, http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/politics/2008791894_wardead27.html.

- **To make points vivid.** Readers skim memos and reports; a visual catches the eye. The brain processes visuals immediately. Understanding words—written or oral—takes more time.
- **To emphasize material** that might be skipped if it were buried in a paragraph. The beginning and end are places of emphasis. However, something has to go in the middle, especially in a long document. Visuals allow you to emphasize important material, wherever it logically falls.
- **To present material more compactly and with less repetition** than words alone would require. Words can call attention to the main points of the visual, without repeating all of the visual's information.

The number of visuals and data displays you will need depends on your purposes, the kind of information, and the audience. You'll use more when you want to show relationships and to persuade, when the information is complex or contains extensive numerical data, and when the audience values visuals and data displays. Some audiences expect oral presentations and reports to use lots of visuals and data displays. Other audiences may see them as frivolous and time spent making them as time wasted. For these audiences, sharply limit the number of visuals and data displays you use—but you should still use them when your own purposes and the information call for them.

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING EFFECTIVE VISUALS AND DATA DISPLAYS LO 16-2

Use these six steps to create effective visuals and data displays:

1. Check the quality of the data.
2. Determine the story you want to tell.
3. Choose the right visual or data display for the story.
4. Follow conventions.
5. Use color and decoration with restraint.
6. Be accurate and ethical.

Let's discuss each of these in more detail.

1. Check the Quality of the Data.

Your data display is only as good as the underlying data. Check to be sure that your data come from a reliable source. See "Evaluating the Source of the Data" in Chapter 18.

Also check that you have data for all factors you should consider. Are some factors missing data from key locations or demographic areas? When Nielsen Media Research, the TV audience measuring organization, switched from paper diaries of TV viewing to "people meters," electronic recording devices, they discovered a marked rise in TV viewing by children and young adults.[1]

If the data may not be reliable, you're better off not using visuals. The visual picture will be more powerful than verbal disclaimers, and the audience will be misled.

2. Determine the Story You Want to Tell.

Every visual should tell a story. Stories can be expressed in complete sentences that describe something that happens or changes. The sentence also serves as the title of the visual.

Managing by Data

The best decisions are not necessarily the ones based on analyzing large amounts of data. Sometimes companies that manage with a bent toward numerical data are setting themselves up for failure because some important information isn't quantifiable. Employee morale, changing customer tastes, and new competition are examples.

Data can be called up almost effortlessly using dashboard displays. However, in some cases the recent hype of these data technology tools causes CEOs and other higher ups to rely on them. For example, when executives at Ford and GM were marketing SUVs, whose numbers looked great on the page, they failed to consider the largest factor and ultimately their biggest setback—gas prices.

Even when the numbers are complete, their interpretation can lead to bad calls. For instance, managers relying on data may assume cause/effect relationships that aren't necessarily true. Furthermore, the way data are expressed can also shape interpretations. Notice the difference between saying 10% of employees will leave if management changes versus 90% will stay.

Adapted from David H. Freedman, "Do You Manage by the Numbers? Be Careful If You Do; Your Data May Be Playing Tricks on You," *Inc.*, November 2006, 59–60.

> **Environmental Maps**
>
> Environmental activists are using the interesting visuals available in Google Earth to show consumers the environmental impact of practices such as clear-cutting and mountain-top removal.
>
> One such group is Appalachian Voices, which fights against the environmental dangers of coal mining. You can visit their website at www.ilovemountains.org/myconnection and enter your zip code to learn whether mountain tops have been removed to provide coal for your electricity providers. The site also provides links to help you protest to your legislators and power company.
>
> Some critics, however, question whether the dramatic visuals will have any impact on consumer buying practices. They suggest that the only people who will be concerned with the images are people already doing environmental work, not the general public.
>
> What do you think? After viewing the website, are you inclined to change any of your buying practices to protect mountain tops or other natural resources?
>
> Adapted from Kevin J. Delaney, "Activists Start Googling: Internet Maps Illustrate Environmental Woes," *Wall Street Journal,* November 15, 2007, B4.

Not a story: U.S. Sales, 2005–2010

Possible stories: Forty Percent of Our Sales Were to New Customers.
Growth Was Highest in the South.
Sales Increased from 2005 to 2010.
Sales Were Highest in the Areas with More Sales Representatives.

Stories that tell us what we already know are rarely interesting. Instead, good stories may

- Support a hunch.
- Surprise you or challenge so-called common knowledge.
- Show trends or changes the audience didn't know existed.
- Have commercial or social significance.
- Provide information needed for action.
- Be personally relevant to the audience.

To find stories,

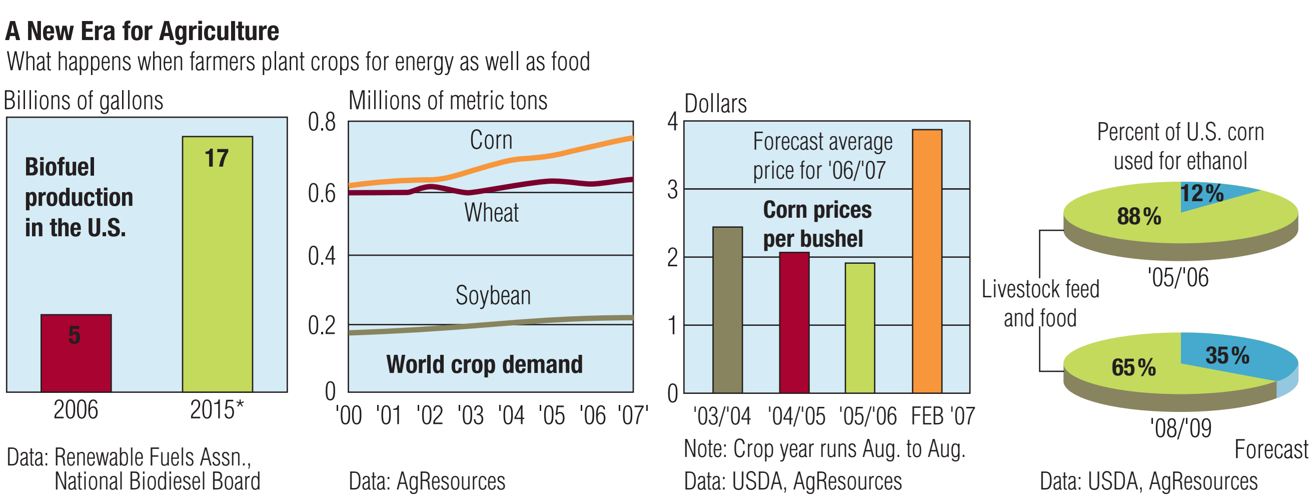
1. Focus on a topic (where are the most SUVs bought, who likes jazz, etc.).
2. Simplify the data on that topic and convert the numbers to simple, easy-to-understand units.
3. Look for relationships and changes. For example, compare two or more groups: do men and women have the same attitudes? Look for changes over time. Look for items that can be seen as part of the same group. To find stories about entertainers' incomes, for example, you might compare the incomes of writers, actors, and musicians.
4. Process the data to find more stories. Find the average and the median. Calculate the percentage change from one year to the next.

When you think you have a story, test it against all the data to be sure it's accurate.

Some stories are simple straight lines: "Computer Sales Increased." But other stories are more complex, with exceptions or outlying cases. Such stories will need more nuanced titles to do justice to the story. And sometimes the best story arises from the juxtaposition of two or more stories. In Figure 16.1, *BusinessWeek* used four grouped visuals to tell a complex story.

Almost every data set allows you to tell several stories. You must choose the story you want to tell. Dumps of uninterpreted data confuse and frustrate your audience; they undercut the credibility and goodwill you want to create.

Figure 16.1 A Complex Story Told Using Grouped Visuals



Source: From "A New Era for Agriculture: What Happens When Farmers Plant Crops for Energy as Well as Food." Reprinted from the February 5, 2007 issue of *BusinessWeek.* Used with permission of Bloomberg L.P. Copyright © 2011. All rights reserved.

Sometimes several stories will be important. When that's the case, you'll need a separate visual for each.

3. Choose the Right Visual or Data Display for the Story.

Visuals and data displays are not interchangeable. Good writers choose the one that best matches the purpose of the communication. Follow these guidelines to choose the right visuals and data displays:

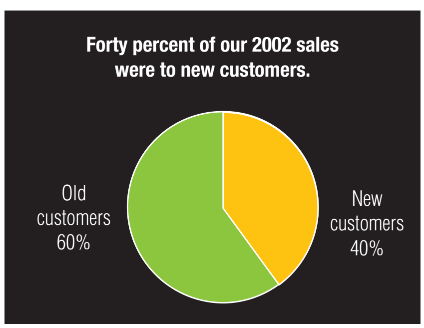
- Use a **table** when the audience needs to be able to identify exact values. (See Figure 16.2a.)
- Use a chart or graph when you want the audience to focus on relationships.
  - To compare a part to the whole, use a **pie chart.** (See Figure 16.2b.)
  - To compare one item to another item, use a **bar chart.** (See Figure 16.2c.)
  - To compare items over time, use a **bar chart** or a **line graph.** (See Figure 16.2d.)
  - To show frequency or distribution, use a **line graph** or **bar chart.** (See Figure 16.2e.)
  - To show correlations, use a **bar chart,** a **line graph,** or a **dot chart.** (See Figure 16.2f.)
- Use **Gantt charts** to show timelines for proposals or projects.
- Use photographs to create a sense of authenticity or show the item in use. If the item is especially big or small, include something in the photograph that can serve as a reference point: a dime, a person.
- Use drawings to show dimensions, emphasize detail, or eliminate unwanted detail.
- Use maps to emphasize location.

Figure 16.2 Choose the Visual to Fit the Story

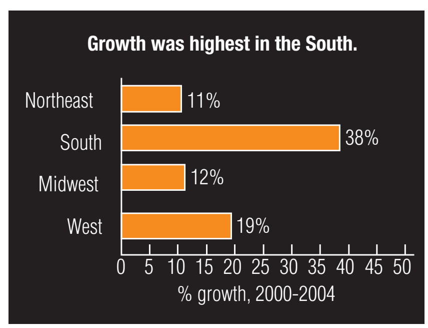
US sales reach $44.5 million.

	Millions of dollars		
	2000	2002	2004
Northeast	10.2	10.8	11.3
South	7.6	8.5	10.4
Midwest	8.3	6.8	9.3
West	11.3	12.1	13.5
Totals	37.4	38.2	44.5

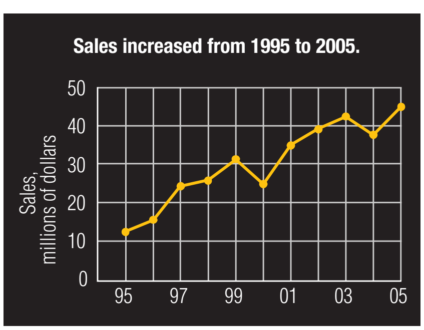
a. Tables show exact values.



b. Pie charts compare a component to the whole.

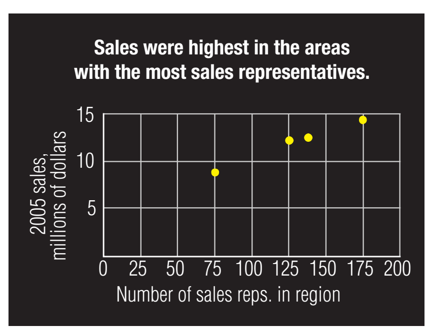


c. Bar charts compare items or show distribution or correlation.



d. Line charts compare items over time or show distribution or correlation.

e. Bar charts can show frequency.



f. Dot charts show correlation.

4. Follow Conventions.

Follow conventions when creating visuals and data displays. When you stray from conventions, you may confuse or alienate your audience.

Proposals and reports use formal visuals and data displays, which are typically divided into tables and figures. Tables are numbers or words arrayed in rows and columns. Figures are everything that isn't a table and may include graphs, charts, maps, drawings, and photographs. Formal visuals and data displays use both numbers and titles: "Figure 1. The Falling Cost of Computer Memory, 1992–2012." In an oral presentation, the title is usually used without the number: "The Falling Cost of Computer Memory, 1992—2012." The title should tell the story so the audience knows what to look for in the visual and why it is important.

Other types of documents use informal visuals and data displays, which are inserted directly into the text; they do not have numbers or titles.

Visuals and data displays usually contains these components:

- A title telling the story that the visual or data display shows.
- A clear indication of what the data are. For example, what people *say* they did is not necessarily what they really did. An estimate of what a number will be in the future differs from numbers in the past that have already been measured.
- Clearly labeled units.
- Labels or legends identifying axes, colors, symbols, and so forth.
- The source of the data, if you created the visual from data someone else gathered and compiled.
- The source of the visual or data display, if you reproduce one someone else created.

5. Use Color and Decoration with Restraint.

Color makes visuals more dramatic, but it also creates some problems. Colors may be interpreted positively or negatively depending on their context and the unique experiences of the people viewing them. Figure 16.3 gives some common positive and negative associations found in Western cultures. A good use of color occurs in the weather maps printed daily in many newspapers. Blue seems to fit cold; red seems to fit hot temperatures.

Meanings assigned to colors differ depending on the audience's national background and profession. Blue suggests masculinity in the United States, criminality in France, strength or fertility in Egypt, and villainy in Japan. Red is sometimes used to suggest danger or *stop* in the United States; it means *go* in China and is associated with festivities. Red suggests masculinity or aristocracy in France, death in Korea, blasphemy in some African countries, and luxury in many parts of the world.[2]

These general cultural associations may be replaced by corporate, national, or professional associations. Some people associate blue with IBM or Hewlett-Packard and red with Coca-Cola, communism, or Japan. People in specific professions learn other meanings for colors. Blue suggests *reliability* to financial managers, *water* or *coldness* to engineers, and *death* to health care professionals. Red means *losing money* to financial managers, *danger* to engineers, but *healthy* to health care professionals. Green usually means *safe* to engineers, but *infected* to health care professionals.

Try to avoid graphs that contrast red and green, because the colors will be indistinguishable to people with red–green colorblindness. Almost 10% of men and 2% of women are colorblind. Furthermore, as people get older, their ability to perceive colors also decreases.[3]

Fan Cans

How connected are people to college colors? How much can those colors influence behaviors?

Anheuser-Busch found the answers to these questions when it started producing Bud Light cans in school colors. For instance, the fan cans used purple and gold for Louisiana State University; red and gold for Iowa State University. The campaign, known as "Team Pride," didn't use any trademarks or school logos, just the colors. Their intent, beyond increasing sales, was to encourage team spirit on game days.

Many university administrators were upset and demanded the cans be removed from store shelves. Their primary concern was that the fan cans would encourage binge and underage drinking. They also did not want people to think the university endorsed alcohol. The University of Michigan threatened legal action to have the cans removed from the entire state of Michigan. The University of Colorado, Boston College, and Texas A&M all demanded a stop to distribution as well. Anheuser-Busch agreed to drop the color campaigns near any school that made a formal complaint.

What do you think? If fan cans used your school's colors, would they encourage you to drink? Are colors so powerful that they would encourage binge and underage drinking if placed on alcohol?

Adapted from John Hechinger, "Team-Color Bud Cans Leaves Colleges Flat," *Wall Street Journal*, August 21, 2009, A1.

Figure 16.3 Colors and Their Common Connotations in Western Culture

Color	Positive	Negative
White	Clean, innocent, pure	Cold, empty, sterile
Red	Strong, brave, passionate	Dangerous, aggressive, domineering
Yellow	Happy, friendly, optimistic	Cowardly, annoying, brash
Brown	Warm, earthy, mature	Dirty, sad, cheap
Green	Natural, tranquil, relaxing	Jealous, inexperienced, greedy
Blue	Strong, trustworthy, authoritative	Cold, depressing, gloomy

Source: Katherine Nolan, "Color It Effective: How Color Influences the User," in *Microsoft Office Online, FrontPage 2003 Help and How-to: Working with Graphics,* accessed June 1, 2011, http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/frontpage-help/color-it-effective-how-color-influences-the-user-HA001042937.aspx.

Remember that color preferences change over time. In the 1970s, avocado green and harvest gold were standard colors for kitchen appliances, but today these colors seem retro to most U.S. audiences.[4]

These various associations suggest that color is safest with a homogenous audience that you know well. In an increasingly multicultural workforce, color may send signals you do not intend.

In any visual, use as little shading and as few lines as are necessary for clarity. Don't clutter up the visual with extra marks. When you design black-and-white graphs, use shades of gray rather than stripes, wavy lines, and checks to indicate different segments or items.

Resist the temptation to make your visual "artistic" or "relevant" by turning it into a picture or adding clip art. **Clip art** consists of predrawn images that you can import into your document or visual. A small drawing of a car in the corner of a line graph showing the number of miles driven is acceptable in an oral presentation but out of place in a written report. Turning a line graph into a highway to show miles driven makes it harder to read: it's hard to separate the data line from lines that are merely decorative. Visuals authority Edward Tufte uses the term **chartjunk** for decorations that at best are irrelevant to the visual and at worst mislead the reader.[5]

6. Be Accurate and Ethical.

To be a trustworthy communicator and to avoid misleading your audience, strive to be ethical in your choice of visuals or data displays and ensure their accuracy. Always double-check them to be sure the information is accurate. In some cases, visuals or data displays have accurate labels but misleading visual shapes. Visuals or data displays communicate quickly; audiences remember the shape, not the labels. If the audience has to study the labels to get the right picture, the visual or data display is unethical even if the labels are accurate.

Figure 16.4 is distorted by **chartjunk** and dimensionality. In an effort to make the visual interesting, the artist used a picture of a young man (presumably an engineer) rather than simple bars. By using a photograph rather than a bar, the chart implies that all engineers are young, nerdy-looking white men. The photograph also makes it difficult to compare the numbers. The number represented by the tallest figure is not quite 5 times as great as the number represented by the shortest figure, yet the tallest figure takes up 12 times as much space and appears even bigger than that. Two-dimensional figures distort data by multiplying the apparent value by the width as well as by the height—four times for every doubling in value. Three dimensional graphs are especially hard for readers to interpret and should be avoided.[6]

Medical Picture Boards

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to explain a medical emergency to nurses or doctors if they did not speak your language? This scenario could happen for an estimated 23 million Americans who have only limited English skills. To resolve the communication barriers, medical professionals are turning to visuals.

Servision Inc. developed picture boards to be used in medical settings. These boards contain common problems such as a cut, fall, burn, itch, etc., and the part of the body that is affected. Other boards illustrate medical conditions such as nausea, pain, and breathing problems. Many of the boards also have English and Spanish words related to the pictures.

Thousands of these picture boards have been adopted by hospitals across the country. As an added bonus, the medical picture boards can also help deaf or mute patients.

Adapted from Linda A. Johnson, "Picture Boards Help Bridge Language Gap in Health Emergencies," *Associated Press Archive,* September 7, 2007.

Train + Antelope = Doctored Photo

China's state-run news organization issued an apology after a photograph, depicting a herd of antelope running beneath a bridge on which China's new high-speed Qinghai-Xizang train zoomed by, was discovered to be fake. The photograph had received honors in 2006 as one of China's top photos of the year. It created a national stir because it eased environmental concerns about the new train connecting China and Tibet.

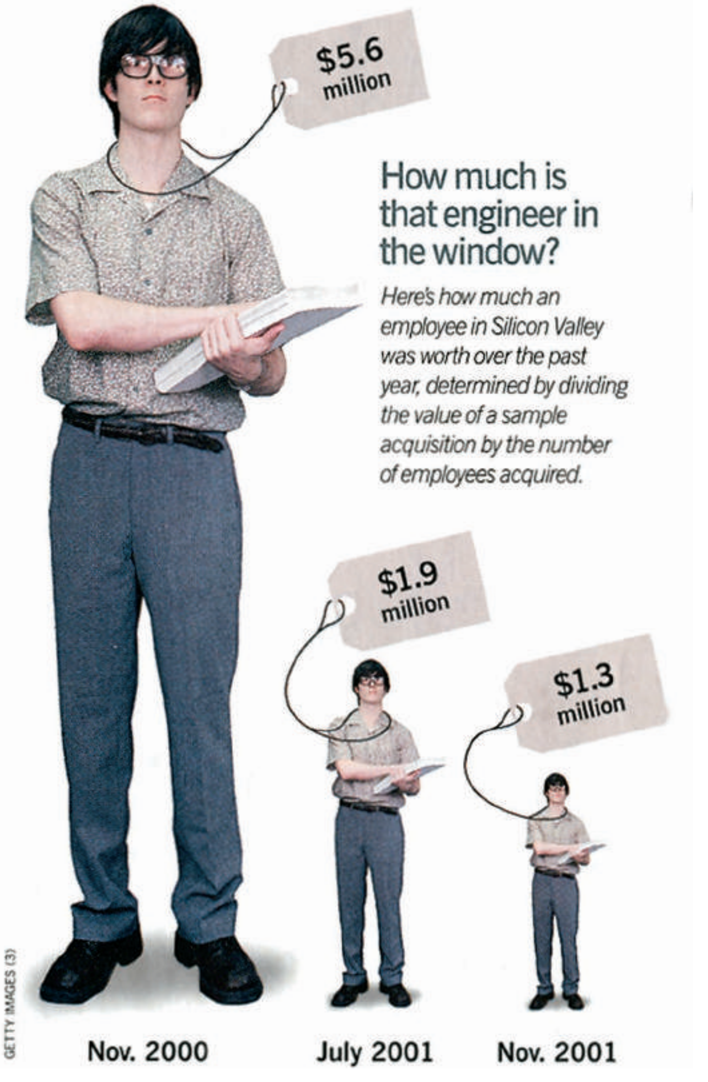
After the photo was displayed in a Beijing subway terminal, Chinese citizens started to question the authenticity of the photo. The first suspicions were posted on Internet blogs and from there developed momentum. Even scientists who study the antelope argued that the noise from the train would encourage the animals to scatter, instead of running in the tight pack pictured in the photo.

The photographer confessed to forging the photo; he spliced two different pictures together in Photoshop. He has since been stripped of all his awards and has resigned from his position as a photojournalist.

Adapted from Jane Spencer and Juliet Ye, "China Eats Crow over Faked Photo of Rare Antelope: They Didn't Truly Run with a Train to Tibet; Xinhua Agency Recants," *Wall Street Journal,* February 22, 2008, A1.

Cigarette warning labels are more severe in other countries. American audiences have not been receptive to such dire warnings.

Figure 16.4 Chartjunk and Dimensions Distort Data



Source: Adam Lashinsky, "Valley Horror Show: The Incredible Shrinking Engineer," *Fortune,* December 10, 2001, p. 40.

Even simple bar and line graphs may be misleading if part of the scale is missing, or truncated. **Truncated graphs** are most acceptable when the audience knows the basic data set well. For example, graphs of the stock market almost never start at zero; they are routinely truncated. This omission is acceptable for audiences who follow the market closely.

Since part of the scale is missing in truncated graphs, small changes seem like major ones. Figure 16.5 shows three different truncated graphs of US unemployment data. The first graph shows the trend in unemployment from May 2003 to January 2004. The curve falls from the fifth level of the graph to the second, resembling a 60% decline. But a close look at the numbers shows the decline is from a high of 6.3% to a low of 5.6% (a decline of 11%). The period chosen for the horizontal axis also is truncated. The first graph emphasizes the declining trend in unemployment since a tax cut was enacted in 2003. The second graph uses the period November 2002–November 2003 to show unemployment wavering around 6%. The graph accompanies a news article about "cautious" employers and unemployment that "edged lower." The truncated scale on the vertical axis again makes the changes appear larger. The third graph takes a longer view and puts the percentages on a scale starting at zero. On this scale, the changes in the unemployment rate seem less dramatic, and the recent decline looks as if it could be part of a regular pattern that follows recessions (the shaded areas). The graph starting with 1980 shows that the latest ("current") unemployment rate was lower than those after past recessions.[7]

Data can also be distorted when the context is omitted. As Tufte suggests, a drop may be part of a regular cycle, a correction after an atypical increase, or a permanent drop to a new, lower plateau.[8]

To make your data displays more accurate,

- Differentiate between actual and estimated or projected values.
- When you must truncate a scale, do so clearly with a break in the bars or in the background.
- Avoid perspective and three-dimensional graphs.
- Avoid combining graphs with different scales.
- Use images of people carefully in histographs to avoid sexist, racist, or other exclusionary visual statements.

Absolut-ly Not Political

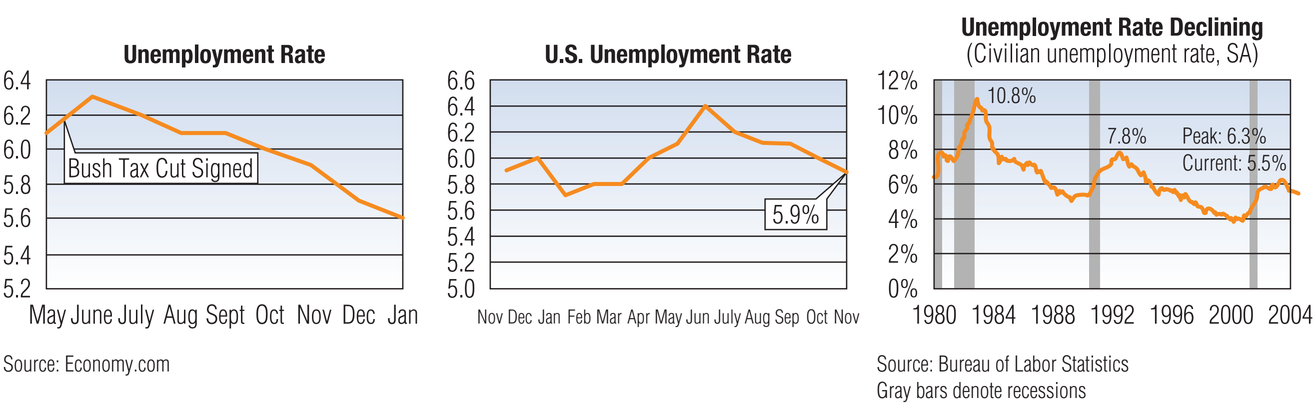
In a Mexican ad campaign, Absolut Vodka used a map of North America showing Mexico and the United States as being about the same size. The map pictured what the border would look like in an "Absolut World": translate that to be a better world from a Mexican perspective. California, Nevada, Texas, and Utah, plus parts of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming were all pictured as part of Mexico, as they would have been without the Mexican–American War.

The ad spread quickly through the Internet. While it appealed to its intended Mexican audience, it riled U.S. audiences—so much so that Absolut issued an apology.

Is the map ethical? Would it offend you? Can you think of other examples where maps have been used for political purposes?

Adapted from Frank Jacobs, "264—an Absolut Mexico," *Strange Maps* (blog), April 5, 2008, http://bigthink.com/ideas/21316.

Figure 16.5 Truncated Scales Distort Data



Sources: Jerry Bowyer, "In Defense of the Unemployment Rate," *National Review,* March 5, 2004, http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/209769/defense-unemployment-rate/jerry-bowyer; Mark Gongloff, "Payroll Growth Disappoints," CNN Money, December 5, 2003, http://money.cnn.com/2003/12/05/news/economy/jobs/index.htm; and Joint Economic Committee, "Charts: Economy," August 27, 2004 http://jec.senate.gov.

Finding the Fakes

With the growing trend of altered photos, a researcher set out to find an easy way to spot them. Hany Farid, a computer scientist and forensic imagine specialist at Dartmouth College, developed a system to spot manipulated images and tell what kind of camera snapped the original picture.

Since most photo editing software programs leave a digital signature, his system can tell if manipulation occurred by cross-checking it with a database of more than 10,000 digital camera models. One drawback to the program, however, is that it tells only if a photo has been altered, not what has been edited.

When the program is available for public use, Farid hopes the system will help law enforcement agencies and the newspaper industry.

Adapted from Oliver Staley, "Innovator: Hany Farid," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, January 3, 2011, 37.

Photographs in particular have received close attention for accuracy and ethics concerns. British Airways faced a scandal when their internal staff magazine promoting mobile-boarding passes showed a picture of an iPhone displaying a boarding pass. The first-class passenger's name was "Bin Laden/Osama." No one knows exactly who altered the photo, but British Airways had to deal with a public relations nightmare.[9]

Photographers have always been able to frame their pictures in ways that cut objects they do not want. Pictures of homes for real estate sales can omit the collapsing garage; shots of collapsed homeless people can omit the image of social workers standing by to give aid.

Adobe Photoshop and similar photoediting software have added a new dimension to the problem with their easy photo-altering aids. After recent major worldwide occurrences, such as the Haitian earthquake, the death of Osama bin Laden, the Japanese earthquake and tsunami, handfuls of fabricated pictures have popped up on the Internet. Some were so convincing that even the Associated Press was fooled and sent them across their newswire.[10]

Not long after the oil spill in the Gulf, BP faced another scandal when a photo posted on their website was discovered to be altered. The photo showed BP's Houston Deepwater Horizon command center with control operators closely monitoring live video feeds on large screens. The three fake underwater images were inserted to cover blank screens.[11]

Other controversies have involved the use of digital alterations to increase the beauty of ad models to unnatural degrees. You can watch the short video at www.dove.us/?source=email#/features/videos/default.aspx[cp-documentid=7049579] to see an illustration. First the model's looks are greatly enhanced with makeup and hairstyling. But even that gorgeous result is not good enough. The video shows the made-up model having her brows raised and her neck thinned and elongated with digital alterations for her billboard display.

In another disgrace, *Practical Parenting and Pregnancy* magazine came under fire for airbrushing the baby on the cover. The photographer admitted to eliminating some creases on the baby's chubby arms.[12]

In his discussion of photography ethics, John Long notes that it's easy to think of small changes to photographs as harmless. He argues that any change to the picture is deceptive, because when people see a photo, they assume that it's a true record of a real event. When you change a photo, you use that assumption to deceive.[13] In an attempt to be more ethical, some countries like England and France are trying to push legislation that would require disclaimers on altered photographs.

INTEGRATING VISUALS AND DATA DISPLAYS IN YOUR TEXT LO 16-3

Refer in your text to every visual and data display. Normally the text gives the table or figure number but not the title. Put the visual as soon after your reference as space and page design permit. If the visual must go on another page, tell the reader where to find it:

As Figure 3 shows (page 10), . . .

(See Table 2 on page 14.)

Summarize the main point of a visual or data display *before* you present the visual itself. Then when readers get to it, they'll see it as confirmation of your point.

Weak: Listed below are the results.

Better: As Figure 4 shows, sales doubled in the last decade.

How much discussion a visual or data displays needs depends on the audience, the complexity of the visual, and the importance of the point it makes. Use these guidelines:

- If the material is new to the audience, provide a fuller explanation than if similar material is presented to this audience every week or month.
- If the visual is complex, help the reader find key points.
- If the point is important, discuss its implications in some detail.

In contrast, one sentence about a visual or data display may be enough when the audience is already familiar with the topic and the data, when the visual is simple and well designed, and when the information in the visual is a minor part of your proof.

When you discuss visuals and data displays, spell out numbers that fall at the beginning of a sentence. If spelling out the number or year is cumbersome, revise the sentence so that it does not begin with a number.

Forty-five percent of the cost goes to pay wages and salaries.

In 2002, euronotes and coins became legal tender.

Put numbers in parentheses at the end of the clause or sentence to make the sentence easier to read:

Hard to read: As Table 4 shows, teachers participate (54%) in more community service groups than do members of the other occupations surveyed; dentists (20.8%) participate in more service groups than do members of five of the other occupations.

Better: As Table 4 shows, teachers participate in more community service groups than do members of the other occupations surveyed (54%); dentists participate in more service groups than do five of the other occupations (20.8%).

DESIGNING VISUALS AND DATA DISPLAYS

Once you know your story—what you're saying, how you're saying it, and how you want text and visuals to combine to say it—then you're in a position to choose and create visuals and data displays. Each type of visual can do different things for you. Here are some of the most common types of visuals and data displays, and here's when, where and how they're most effective.

Tables

Use tables only when you want the audience to focus on specific numbers. Graphs convey less specific information but are more memorable. Figure 16.6 illustrates the basic structure of tables, and Figure 16.7 illustrates a completed table. The **boxhead** is the variable whose label is at the top; the **stub** is the variable listed on the side. When constructing tables,

- Use common, understandable units. Round off to simplify the data (e.g., 35% rather than 35.27%; 44.5 million rather than 44,503,276).
- Provide column and row totals or averages when they're relevant.
- Put the items you want audiences to compare in columns rather than in rows to facilitate mental subtraction and division.
- When you have many rows, shade alternate rows (or pairs of rows) or double-space after every five rows to help audiences line up items accurately.

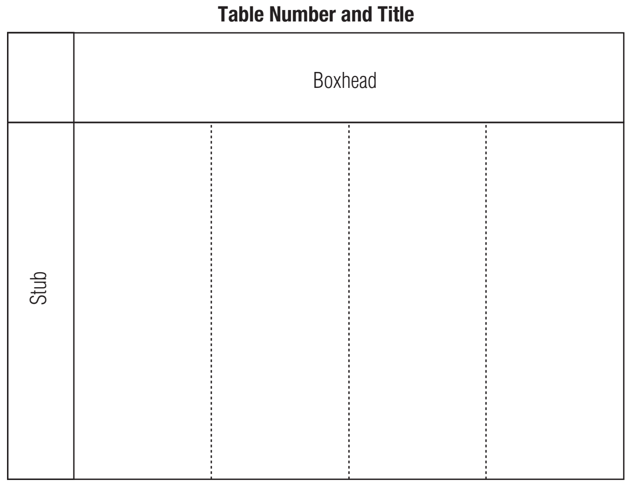
Visuals That Translate Well

When preparing visuals, keep in mind cultural differences:

- Make sure any symbols in the visual will have the correct meaning in the culture of your audience. For example, a red cross symbolizes first aid in North America, but in Muslim countries the symbol with that meaning is typically a green crescent.
- If you use punctuation marks as symbols, be sure they are meaningful to your audience. A question mark in English and certain other languages might signal a help function or answers to questions. But in languages without this symbol, it has no meaning.
- In showing humans, respect the cultural norms of your audience. Europeans tend to accept images of nudity, but some cultures can be offended by images of even a bare leg or other body part.
- Organize the information according to the reading customs of the audience. North American and European audiences will tend to read visual information as they do text: from left to right. Asians view from right to left, and Middle Easterners in a rotation moving counterclockwise.
- Learn your audience's conventions for writing numbers. In the United States, a period indicates the decimal point, and commas separate groups of three digits. In much of Europe, a comma represents the decimal point, and a space goes between each group of three digits. For US and French readers, 3,333 would have different values.

Adapted from Gerald J. Alred, Charles T. Brusaw, and Walter E. Oliu, *The Business Writer's Handbook,* 8th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 248–50, 558–62; and *The Chicago Manual of Style,* 16th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 471.

Figure 16.6 Table Structure



Pie Charts

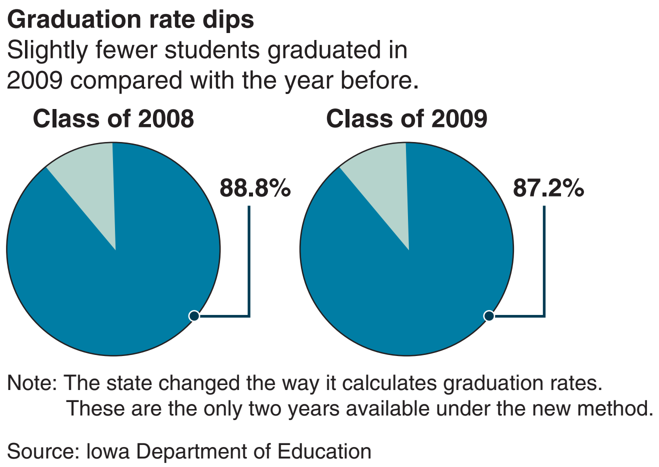
Pie charts force the audience to measure area. However, people can judge position or length (which a bar chart uses) more accurately than they judge area, thus making information in pie charts more difficult for an audience to understand accurately. The data in any pie chart can be put in a bar chart. Therefore, use a pie chart only when you are comparing one segment to the whole. When you are comparing one segment to another segment, use a bar chart, a line graph, or a map—even though the data may be expressed in percentages. In Figure 16.8, notice how it's nearly impossible to tell the difference in graduation rates between the two pie charts.

Figure 16.7 Tables Show Exact Values for Top U.S. Search Sites for June 2010

Rank	Site	Searches (000)	Share of Searches	MoM % Change
	All Search	9,137,637	100%	
1	Google	5,935,561	65.0%	−0.1%
2	Yahoo! Search	1,250,246	13.7%	−0.1%
3	MSN/WindowsLive/Bing	1,221,873	13.4%	0.4%
4	AOL Search	192,187	2.1%	0.0%
5	Ask.com Search	184,518	2.0%	0.0%
6	My Web Search Search	98,789	1.1%	−0.1%
7	Comcast Search	44,633	0.5%	0.0%
8	NexTag Search	24,377	0.3%	0.0%
9	WhitePages.com Network Search	23,769	0.3%	0.0%
10	Yellow Pages Search	17,588	0.2%	0.0%

Source: The Nielsen Company, "Top U.S. Search Sites for June 2010," July 13, 2010, http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile/top-u-s-search-sites-for-june-2010/.

Figure 16.8 Difficult to Compare Two Pie Charts



Source: Sheena Dooley, "Academic Progress Flat Despite More Teachers," *Des Moines Register;* November 7, 2010, 1A.

When constructing pie charts,

- Make the chart a perfect circle. Avoid 3D circles; they distort the data.
- Start at 12 o'clock with the largest percentage or the percentage you want to focus on. Go clockwise to each smaller percentage or to each percentage in some other logical order.
- Limit the number of segments to no more than seven. If your data have more divisions, combine the smallest or the least important into a single "miscellaneous" or "other" category.
- Label the segments outside the circle. Internal labels are hard to read.

Bar Charts

Bar charts are easy to interpret because they ask people to compare distance along a common scale, which most people judge accurately. Bar charts are useful in a variety of situations: to compare one item to another, to compare items over time, and to show correlations. Use horizontal bars when your labels are long; when the labels are short, either horizontal or vertical bars will work. When constructing bar charts,

- Order the bars in a logical or chronological order.
- Put the bars close enough together to make comparison easy.
- Label both horizontal and vertical axes.
- Put all labels inside the bars or outside them. When some labels are inside and some are outside, the labels carry the visual weight of longer bars, distorting the data.
- Make all the bars the same width.
- Use different colors for different bars only when their meanings are different: estimates as opposed to known numbers, negative as opposed to positive numbers.
- Avoid using 3D perspective; it makes the values harder to read and can make comparison difficult.

The Power of the Golden Arches

Company logos have big business implications. In a 2007 taste test with 63 children aged 3 to 5, researchers found that the children preferred food if it came in McDonald's packaging. Even though the children were served the same chicken nuggets from McDonald's in two different bags, 59% of children preferred chicken nuggets in the McDonald's packaging; only 23% suggested there was no difference. The same held true for milk with 61% of children preferring the McDonald's cup, fries with 77% preference, and carrots with 54% preference. The researchers also found that the children who lived in houses with more televisions were more likely to prefer McDonald's branded food.

Assuming these results hold true for a larger random sampling of children, what should McDonald's do with this information? What ethical implications exist in this study's results?

Adapted from Nicholas Bakalar, "If It Says McDonald's, Then It Must Be Good," *New York Times,* August 17, 2007, 7.

Several varieties of bar charts exist. See Figure 16.9 for examples.

- **Grouped bar charts** allow you to compare either several aspects of each item or several items over time. Group together the items you want to compare. Figure 16.9a shows that sales were highest in the West each year. If we wanted to show how sales had changed in each region, the bars should be grouped by region, not by year.
- **Segmented, subdivided, or stacked bars** sum the components of an item. It's hard to identify the values in specific segments; grouped bar charts are almost always easier to use.
- **Deviation bar charts** identify positive and negative values, or winners and losers.
- **Paired bar charts** show the comparison between two items.
- **Histograms or pictograms** use images to create the bars.

Line Graphs

Line graphs are also easy to interpret. Use line graphs to compare items over time, to show frequency or distribution, and to show possible correlations. When constructing line graphs,

- Label both horizontal and vertical axes. When time is a variable, it is usually put on the horizontal axis.
- Avoid using more than three different lines on one graph. Even three lines may be too many if they cross each other.
- Avoid using perspective. Perspective makes the values harder to read and can make comparison difficult.

Gantt Charts

Gantt charts are bar charts used to show schedules. They're most commonly used in proposals to show when elements of a project will be completed. Figure 16.10 is a Gantt chart for a marketing plan. From the chart, it is easy to see which activities must be completed first to finish the total plan on time. When using Gantt charts,

- Color-code bars to indicate work planned and work completed.
- Outline **critical activities,** which must be completed on time if the project is to be completed by the due date.
- Indicate progress reports, major achievements, or other accomplishments.

Photographs

Photographs convey a sense of authenticity. The photo of a prototype helps convince investors that a product can be manufactured; the photo of a devastated area can suggest the need for government grants or private donations. You may need to **crop,** or trim, a photo for best results. However, make sure to be ethical with any cropping you do.

Personality from Photos

"Your appearance tells a lot more about you than you may think. And all it takes is a snapshot.

A new study finds that people can draw accurate conclusions about your personality—such as how extroverted you are—from a single photograph. And when the picture is spontaneous and unposed, it can reveal a virtual personality profile—how easy going you are, how open you are to new experiences, your political orientation, and how religious you are.

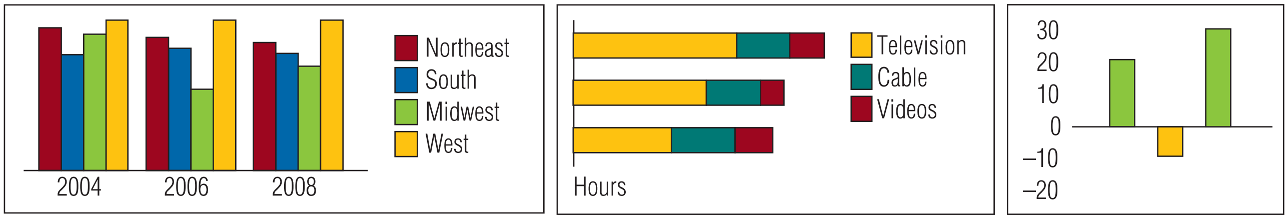
Simine Vazire, a Washington University psychologist, and researchers at other universities assessed college students' personalities through questionnaires they and their friends filled out. Ten personality traits were measured.

The researchers took two full-length pictures of each student, one a standardized pose with hands by their sides and a neutral facial expression, and a second for which students weren't told how to pose.

Judges did best with unposed pictures: They were right most of the time for 9 of 10 character traits."

Quoted from "Study Says Pictures Reveal Personality," *Des Moines Register,* December 27, 2009, 3AA.

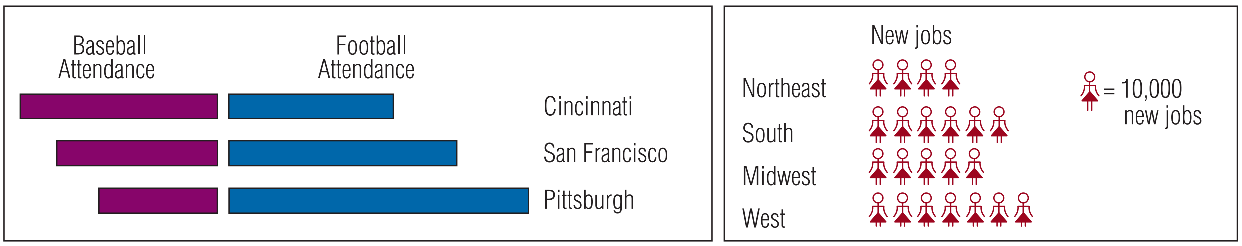
Figure 16.9 Varieties of Bar Charts



a. Grouped bar charts compare several aspects of each item, or several items over time.

b. Segmented, subdivided, or **stacked bars** sum the components of an item.

c. Deviation bar charts identify positive and negative values.

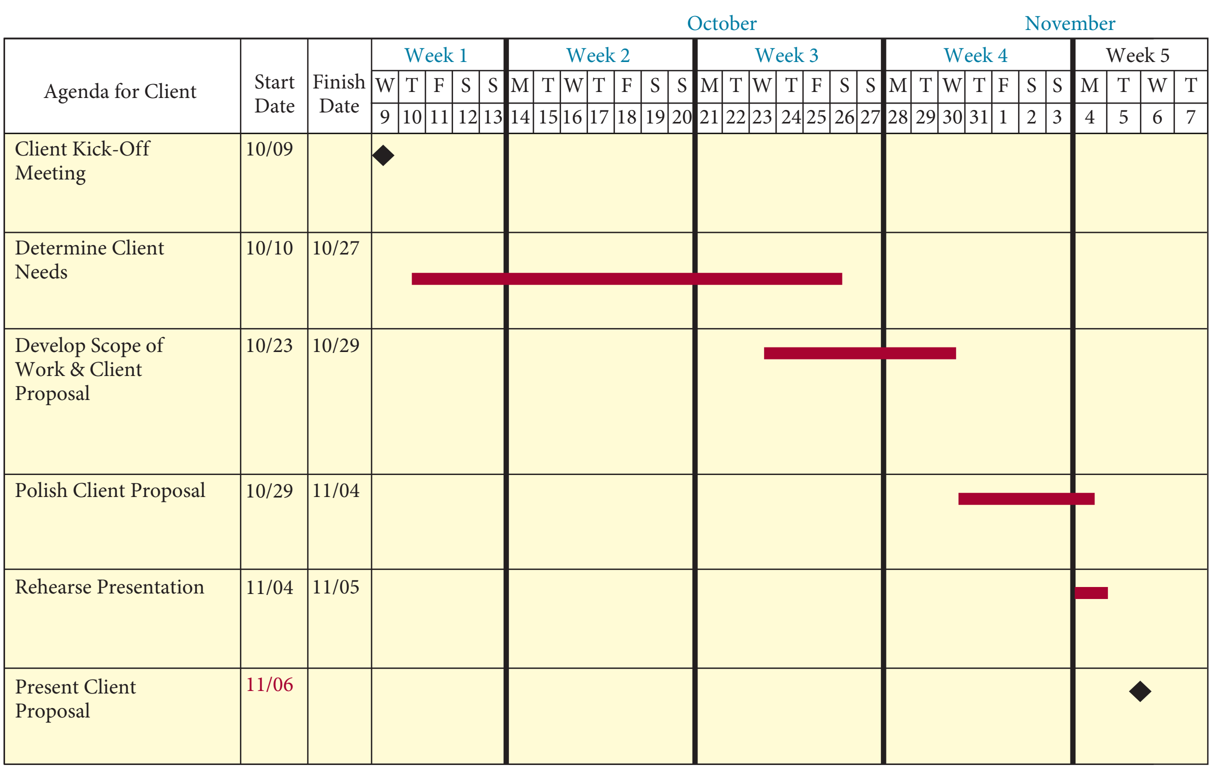


d. Paired bar charts show the comparison between two items.

e. Histograms or **pictograms** use images to create the bars.

A growing problem with photos is that they may be edited or staged, purporting to show something as reality even though it never occurred. See the discussion of ethics and accuracy earlier in this chapter.

Figure 16.10 Gantt Charts Show the Schedule for Completing a Project



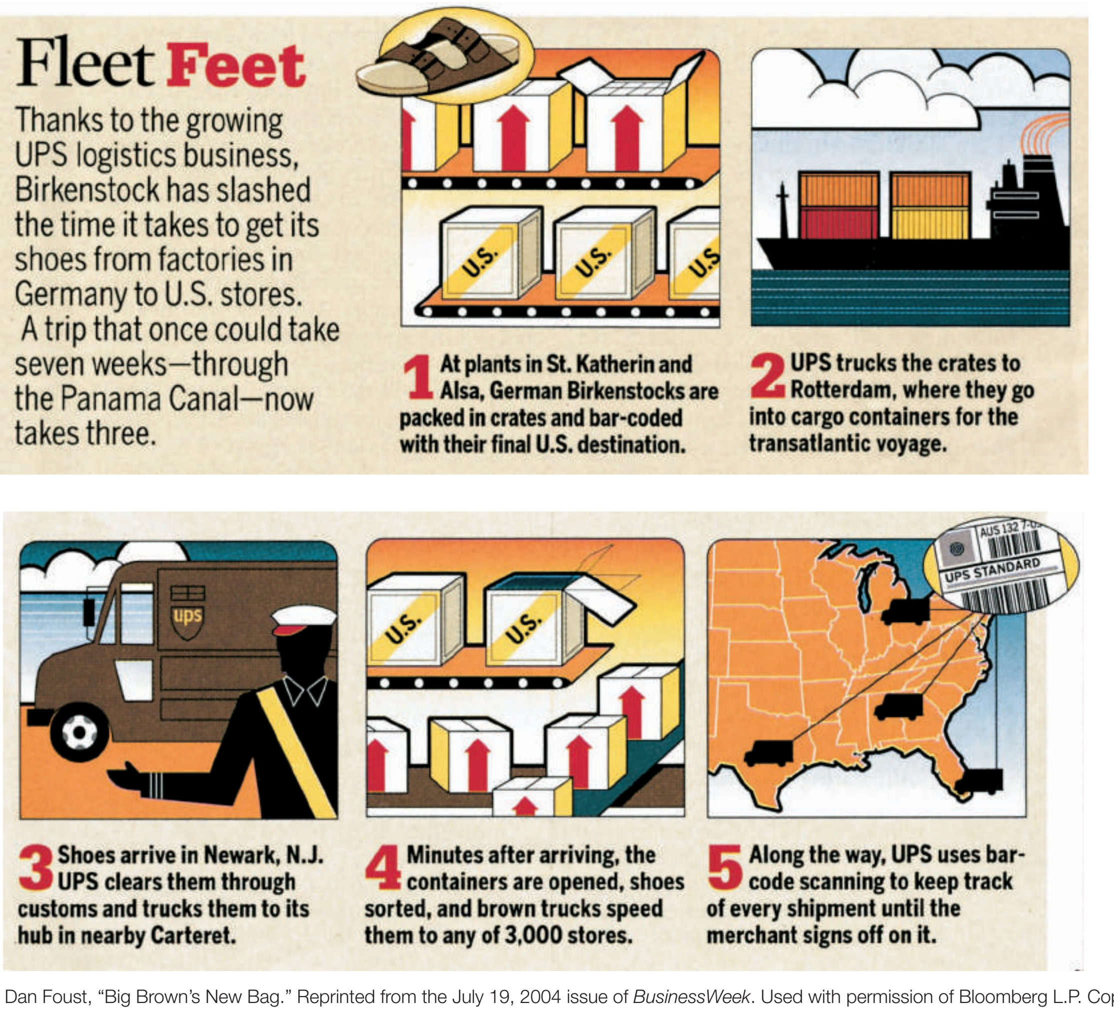
On the other hand, sometimes photos are obviously edited to serve a purpose. The consulting, technology, and outsourcing company Accenture got much publicity from their advertisement showing an elephant surfing on its hind legs. The ad's text said, "Who says you can't be big and nimble?"[14]

Drawings

The richness of detail in photos makes them less effective than drawings for focusing on details. With a drawing, the artist can provide as much or as little detail as is needed to make the point; different parts of the drawing can show different layers or levels of detail. Drawings are also better for showing structures underground, undersea, or in the atmosphere.

In the drawings in Figure 16.11, no attempt is made to show the details of warehousing and transportation facilities. Such details would distract

Figure 16.11 Sketches Can Show Processes



Source: From Dan Foust, "Big Brown's New Bag." Reprinted from the July 19, 2004 issue of *BusinessWeek*. Used with permission of Bloomberg L.P.

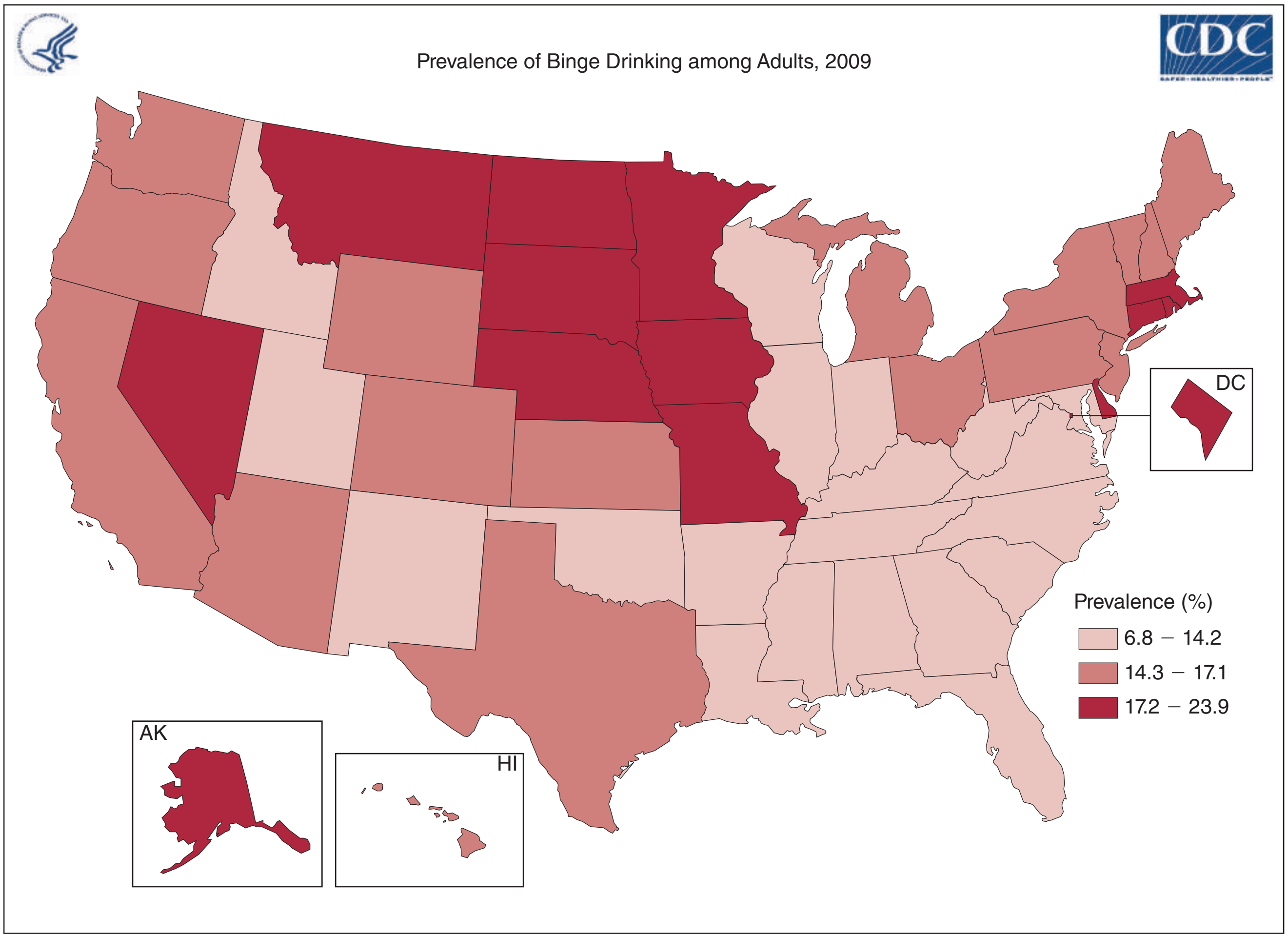
from the main point. Here, the drawings show how UPS Logistics handles the various activities required to move Birkenstock sandals from the shoe company's German factories to thousands of stores in the United States.

Drawings can also be used to insert creativity into the presentation of information. *Time* magazine used a Seek & Find drawing, like those in magazines asking children to find the hidden items in a picture, to highlight consumer goods whose prices would likely rise as corn is turned into ethanol.[15]

Maps

Use maps to emphasize location or to compare items in different locations. Figure 16.12 shows the prevalence of binge drinking among adults by state.

Figure 16.12 Prevalence of Binge Drinking among Adults



Source: Center for Disease Control, "Prevalence of Binge Drinking among Adults, 2009," accessed June 3, 2011, http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/index.htm.

A map is appropriate because the emphasis is on the distribution of binge drinking in various regions. Several computer software packages now allow users to generate local, state, national, or global maps, adding color or shadings, and labels. When using maps,

- Label states, provinces, or countries if it's important that people be able to identify levels in areas other than their own.
- Avoid using perspective. Perspective makes the values harder to read and can make comparison difficult.

Dynamic Displays

Online visuals are expanding the possibilities of data displays. Many of these displays are interactive, allowing users to adapt them to personal needs. At BabyNameWizard.com, you can see the popularity of various names over the years, or you can track the popularity of one name. Some displays are animated. At CReSIS, the Center for Remote Sensing of Ice Sheets, you can see the effects of global warming on coastal areas around the world as coasts flood while you watch.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Visuals and data displays help make data meaningful for your audience and support your arguments.
- In the rough draft, use visuals and data displays to see that ideas are presented completely and to see what relationships exist. In the final presentation or document, use visuals and data displays to make points vivid, to emphasize material that the reader might skip, and to present material more compactly and with less repetition than words alone would require.
- Use visuals and data displays when you want to show relationships and to persuade, when the information is complex or contains extensive numerical data, and when the audience values visuals.
- Always check the quality of your data.
- Pick data to tell a story, to make a point.
- Visuals and data displays are not interchangeable. The best selection depends on the kind of data and the point you want to make with the data.
- Follow conventions to avoid alienating your audience.
- Use color and decoration with restraint.
- Present data accurately and ethically. **Chartjunk** denotes decorations that at best are irrelevant to the visual and at worst mislead the reader. **Truncated graphs** omit part of the scale and visually mislead readers. Graphs and charts with 3D mislead readers.
- Summarize the main point of a visual or data display before it appears in the text.

CHAPTER 16 Exercises and Problems

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

16.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. When should you use visuals and data displays? (LO 16-1)
2. What are some specific ways to create effective visuals and data displays? (LO 16-2)
3. What are some concerns that must be addressed to keep your visuals and data displays accurate and ethical? (LO 16-2)
4. What are some guidelines for integrating visuals and data displays into your text? (LO 16-3)
5. What are some guidelines for constructing bar charts? (LO 16-2)

16.2 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. Using photos of Hawaiian beaches in advertising for Bermuda tourism, without indicating the location of the beaches.
2. Editing a photo by inserting an image of a young black person into a picture of an all-white group, and using that photo in a recruiting brochure designed to attract minority applicants to a university.
3. Altering people in your photographs so that they look skinnier and younger. (Watch the short video mentioned in the ethics discussion of this chapter.)
4. Modifying real estate photos by changing the physical appearance of houses or stores.
5. Including pictures in restaurant menus that are exaggerated in presentation quality, color appearance, and portion size.
6. Creating photos of Osama bin Laden's dead body after the White House withheld releasing the real images.

16.3 Evaluating Visuals

Evaluate each of the following visuals.

Is visual's message clear?

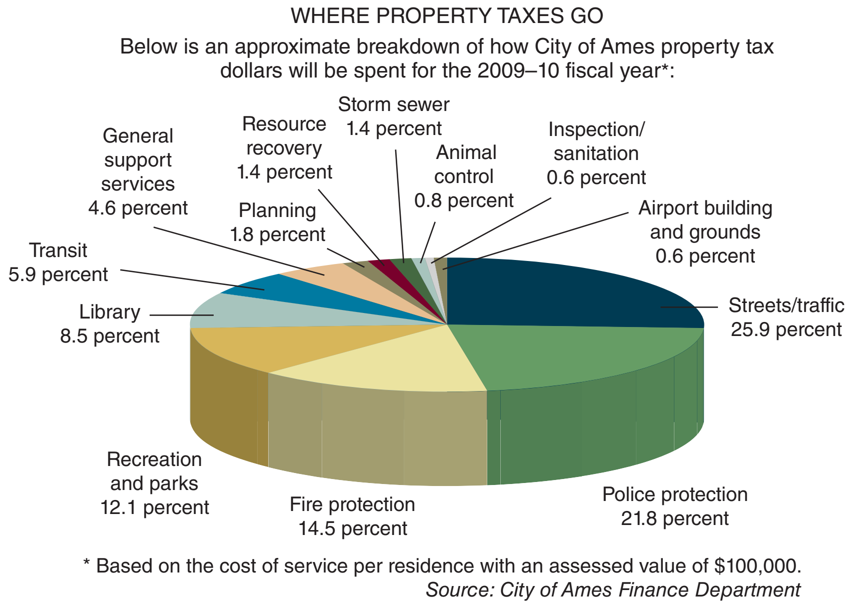
Is it the right visual for the story?

Is the visual designed appropriately? Is color, if any, used appropriately?

Is the visual free from chartjunk?

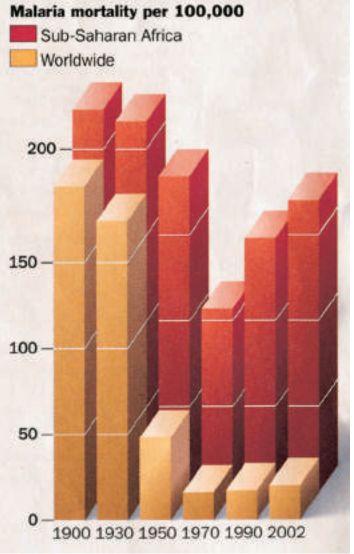
Does the visual distort data or mislead the reader in any way?

1.



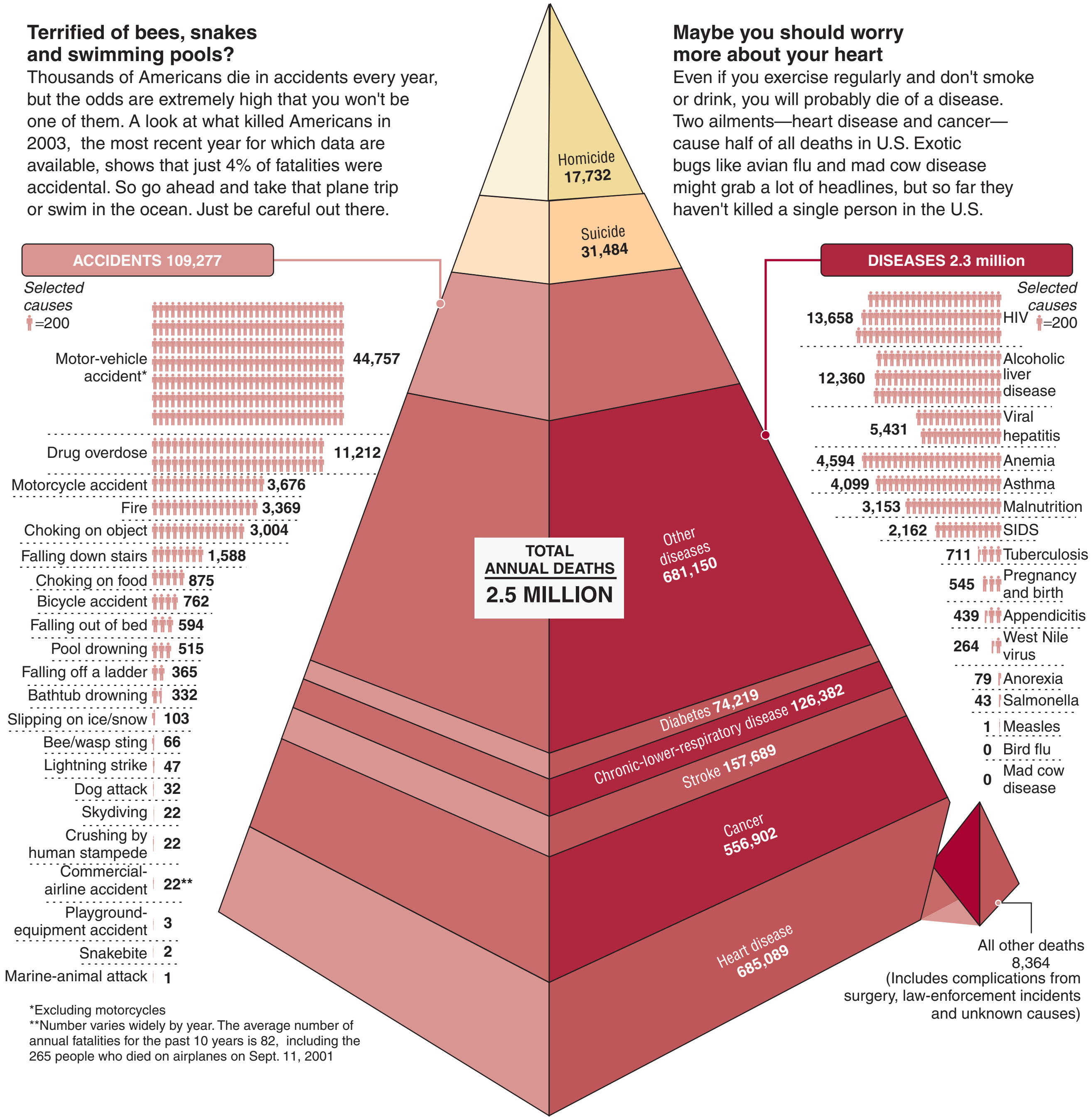
Source: "Where Property Taxes Go," *Ames Tribune,* February, 3, 2009, A2.

2.



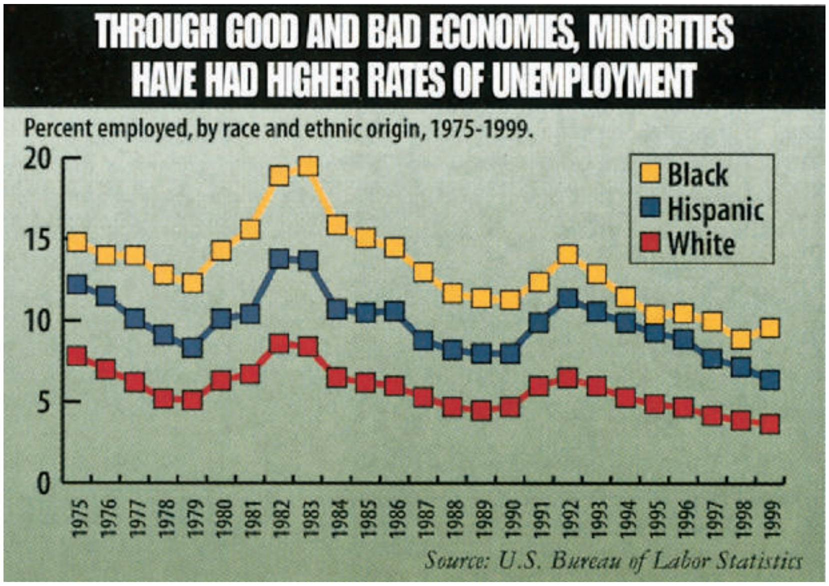
Source: Data provided by World Health Organization.

3.



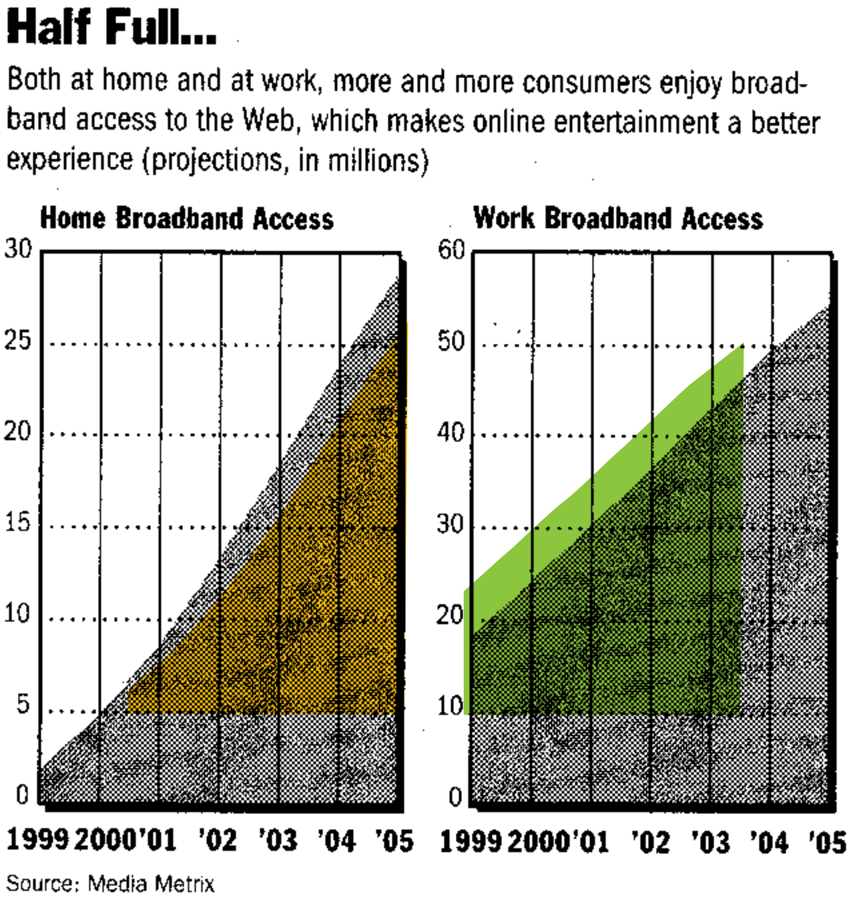
Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Transportation Safety Board.

4.



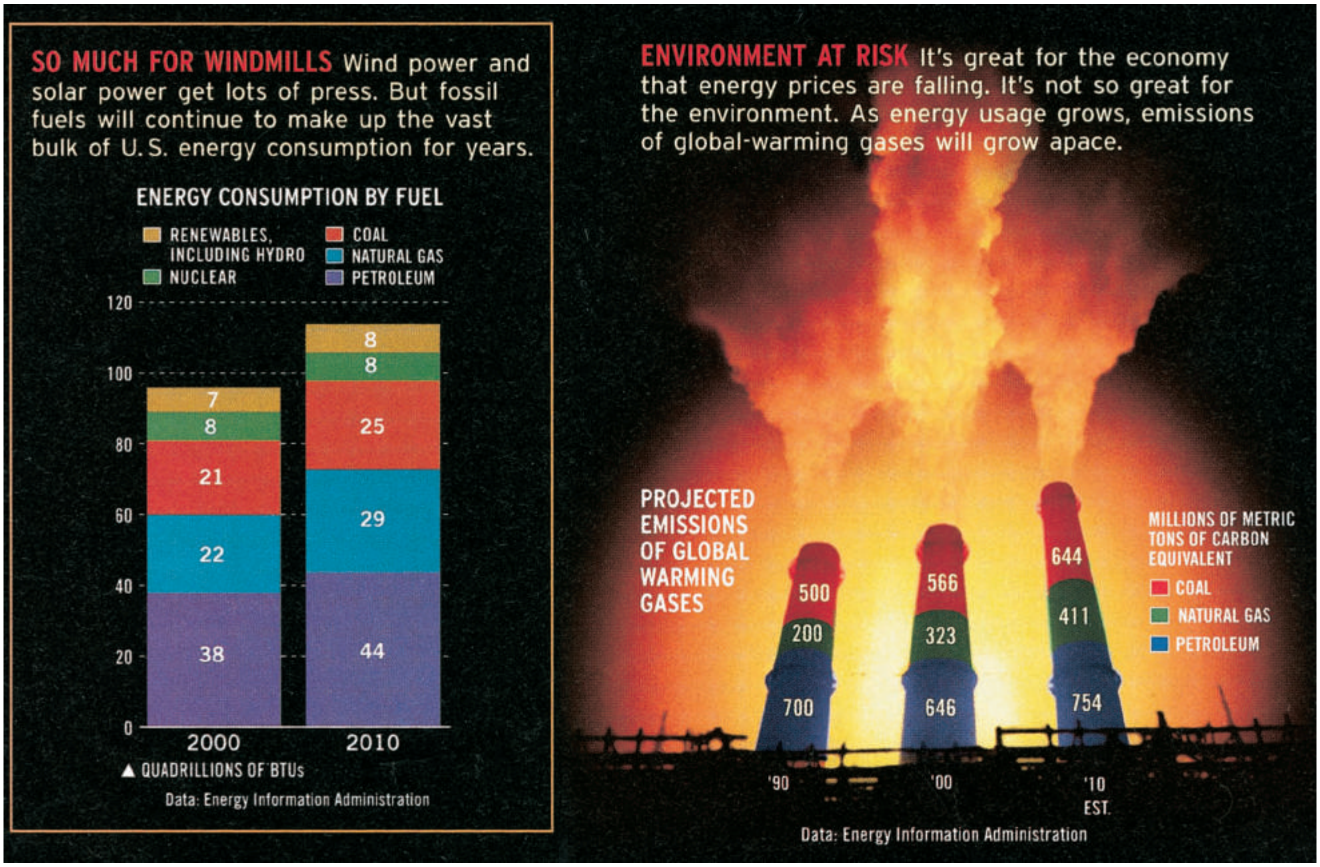
Source: From American Demographics, June 2000. With permission.

5.



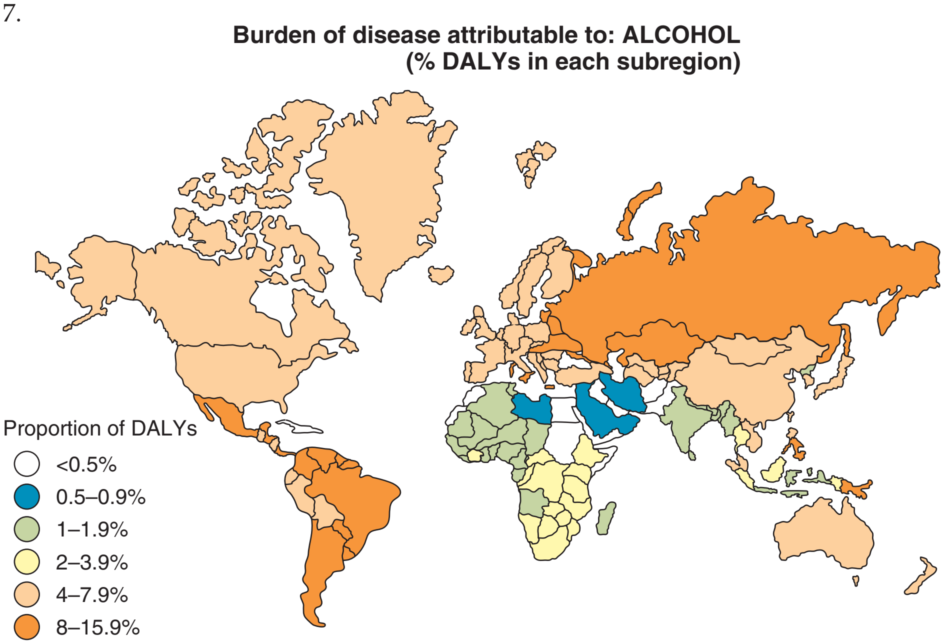
Source: From *The Wall Street Journal,* March 26, 2001, Copyright © 2001 by Dow Jones & Company, Inc. Reproduced with permission of Dow Jones & Company, Inc. via Copyright Clearance Center.

6.



Source: Reprinted from the August 27, 2001 issue of *BusinessWeek* by special permission. Used with permission of Bloomberg L.P. Copyright © 2011. All rights reserved.

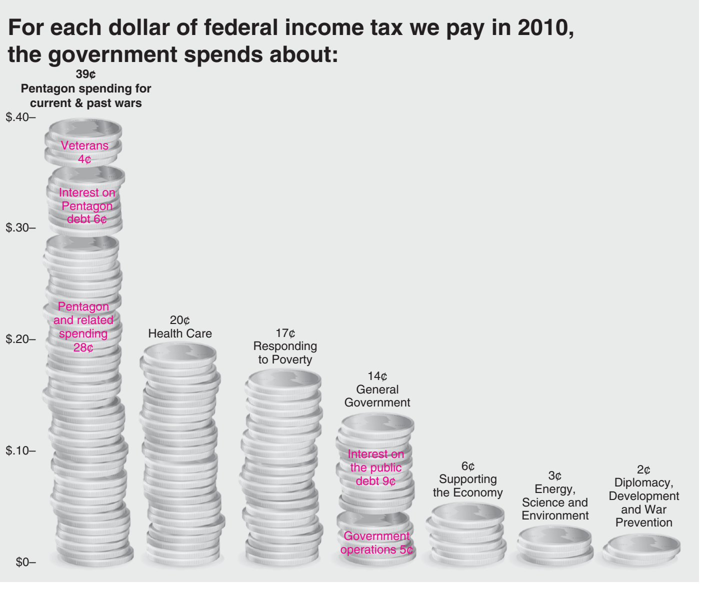
7.



Worldwide alcohol causes 1.8 million deaths (3.2% of total) and 58.3 million (4% of total) of Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs). Unintentional injuries alone account for about one-third of the 1.8 million deaths, while neuro-psychiatric conditions account for close to 40% of the 58.3 million DALYs. The burden is not equally distributed among the countries, as is shown on the map.

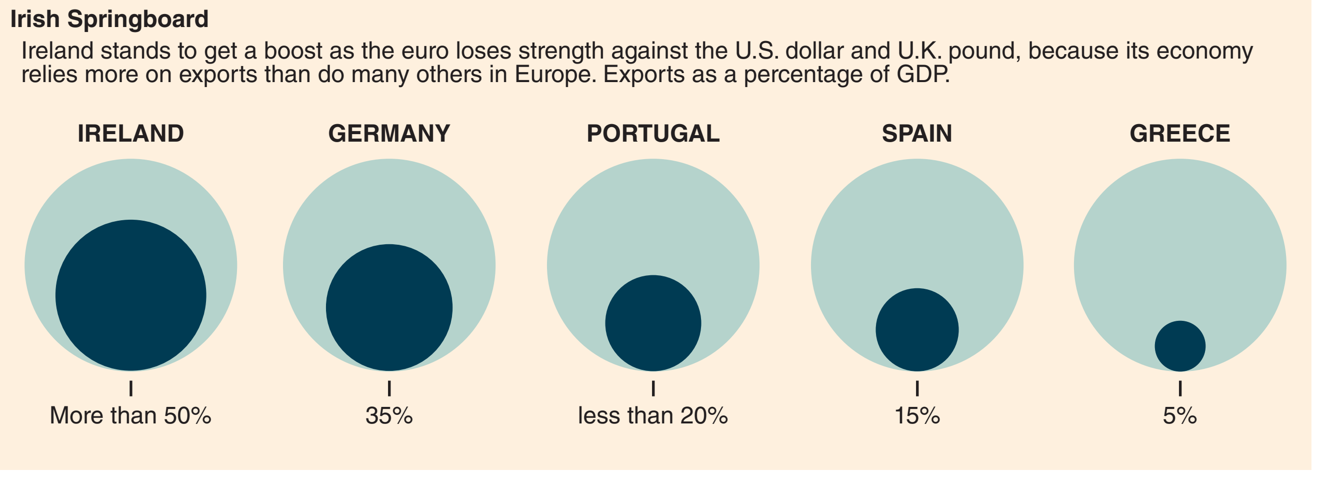
Source: World Health Organization, "Alcohol," in *Management of Substance Abuse,* http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/facts/alcohol/en/ (accessed May 5, 2009).

8.



Source: Friends Committee on National Legislation, "Where Do Our Income Tax Dollars Go?" October 2010, http://fcnl.org/assets/issues/budget/Taxes10coin_chart.pdf.

9.



Source: Neil Shah, "Weaker Euro Set to Spur Irish Turnaround," *Wall Street Journal,* June 29, 2010, A14.

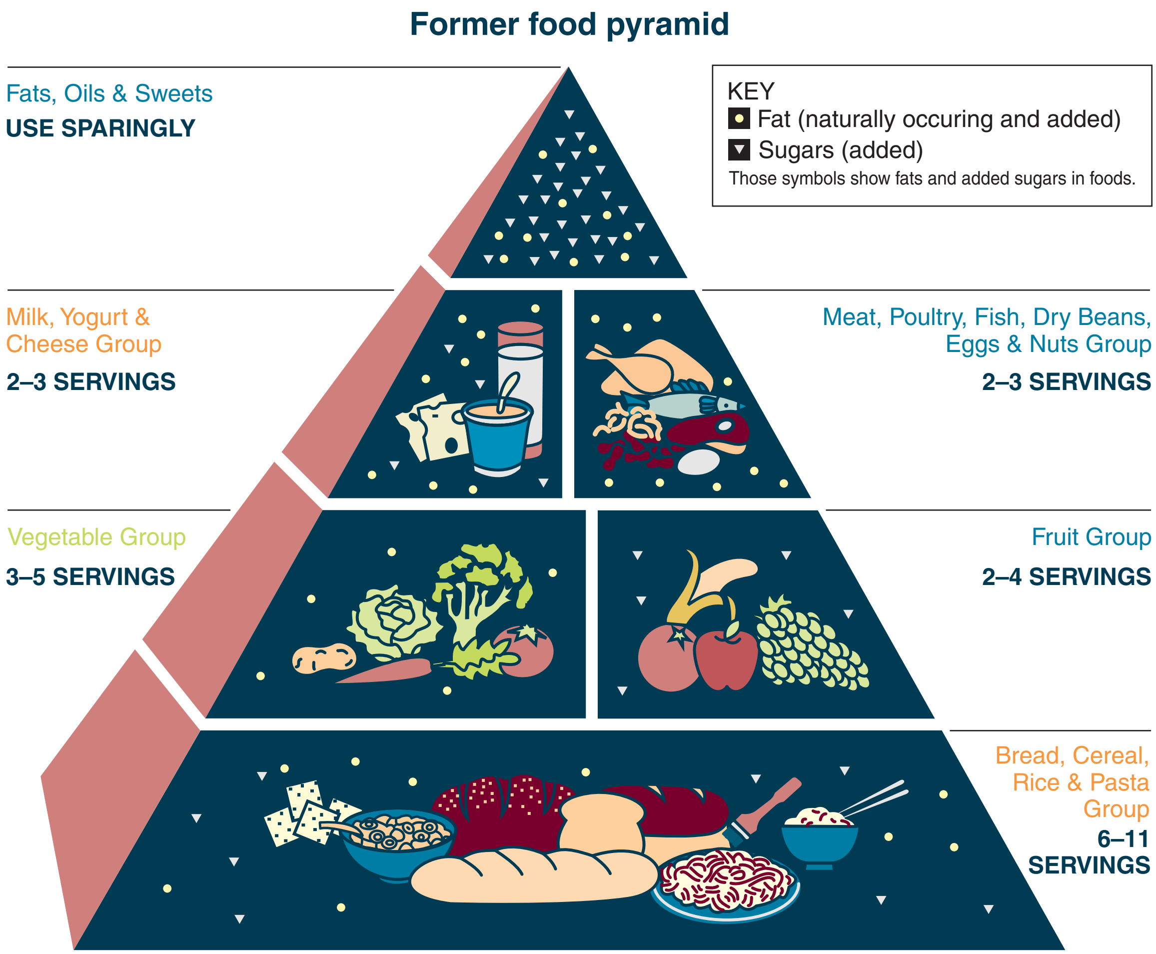
16.4 Visualizing Healthy Eating Habits

With soaring obesity rates in the United States, the government continues to produce visuals that encourage healthy eating habits. While the food pyramids have been the norm, their messages have been largely ignored by U.S. citizens. The newest version of the visual to encourage healthy eating uses a plate with various portion sizes for fruits, grains, vegetables, protein, and dairy.

Evaluate each of the visuals.

Which version of the visual is right for the story?
Which healthy eating visual is clearest?
Which is most informative?
Which visual will most likely encourage healthy eating habits?
Which visuals contain chartjunk?
Which did you prefer? Why?

1.



Source: http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/MyPyramid/OriginalFoodGuidePyramids/FGP/FGPPamphlet.pdf (accessed May 5, 2009).

2.

Anatomy of MyPyramid

One size doesn't fit all

USDA's new MyPyramid symbolizes a personalized approach to healthy eating and physical activity. The symbol has been designed to be simple. It has been developed to remind consumers to make healthy food choices and to be active every day. The different parts of the symbol are described below.

Activity

Activity is represented by the steps and the person climbing them, as a reminder of the importance of daily physical activity.

Moderation

Moderation is represented by the narrowing of each food group from bottom to top. The wider base stands for foods with little or no solid fats or added sugars. These should be selected more often. The narrower top area stands for foods containing more added sugars and solid fats. The more active you are, the more of these foods can fit into your diet.

Personalization

Personalization is shown by the person on the steps, the slogan and the URL. Find the kinds and amounts of food to eat each day at Mypyramid.gov.

Current Food Pyramid

MyPyramid.gov

STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOU

Proportionality

Proportionality is shown by the different widths of the food group bands. The widths suggest how much food a person should choose from each group. The widths are just a general guide, not exact proportions. Check the Web site for how much is right for you.

Variety

Variety is symbolized by the 6 color bands representing the 5 food groups of the Pyramid and oils. This illustrates that foods from all groups are needed each day for good health.

Gradual Improvement

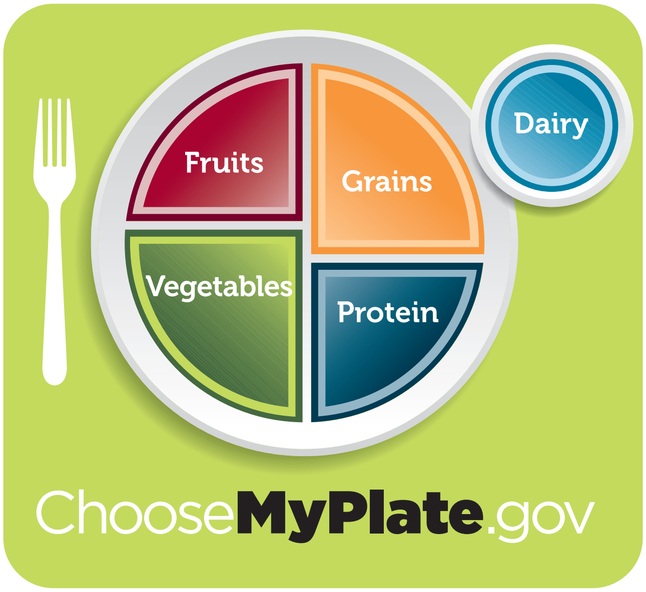
Gradual improvement is encouraged by the slogan. It suggests that individuals can benefit from taking small steps to improve their diets and lifestyle each day.

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
April 2005 CNPP-16
USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer

GRAINS | VEGETABLES | FRUITS | OILS | MILK | MEAT& BEANS

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, "Steps to a Healthier You," in MyPyramid.gov, http://www.mypyramid.gov (accessed May 5, 2009).

3.



Source: United States Department of Agriculture, "Choose My Plate," in ChooseMyPlate.gov, accessed June 3, 2011, http://www.choosemyplate.gov/images/MyPlateImages/JPG/myplate_green.jpg.

16.5 Creating a Web Guide to Graphs

Create a web page explaining how to create effective visuals and data displays. Offer principles to a specific audience. Your web page should also provide at least seven links to examples of good and poor visuals and data displays. (More is better.) At the top of your web page, offer an overview of what the page contains. 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 one copy of your page(s). On another page, give the URLs for each link.
b. Electronically submit your web page files.
c. 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.
d. Present your page orally to the class.

Hints:

- Searching for words *(graphs, maps, Gantt charts, data)* will turn up only pages with those words. Check pages on topics that may use graphs to explain their data: finance, companies' performance, sports, cost of living, exports, and so forth.
- In addition to finding good and bad visuals on the web, you can also scan in examples you find in newspapers, magazines, and textbooks.
- If you have more than nine links, chunk them in small groups under headings.

16.6 Creating Visuals

As your instructor directs,

a. Identify visuals that you might use to help analyze each of the following data sets.
b. Identify and create a visual for one or more of the stories in each set.
c. Identify additional information that would be needed for other stories related to these data sets.

1. Active Internet home users.

	Worldwide Active Internet Home Users, June 2009			
Country	**May 2009**	**June 2009**	**Growth (%)**	**Difference**
Australia	11,237,351	11,514,606	2.47	277,255
Brazil	25,566,439	25,600,214	0.13	33,775
France	31,099,132	30,971,894	−0.41	−127,238
Germany	36,703,500	37,093,495	1.06	389,995
Italy	17,769,768	18,069,093	1.80	319,325
Japan	49,711,242	50,048,857	0.68%	337,615
Spain	19,826,831	19,726,429	−0.51	−100,402
Switzerland	3,765,629	3,637,642	−3.40	−127,987
U.K.	29,048,332	29,956,108	3.13	907,776
U.S.	156,557,641	172,770,464	10.36	16,212,823

Source: From Enid Burns, "Active Home Internet Users by Country," April 2007, in *Trends and Statistics: The Web's Richest Source.* Reprinted with permission.

2. Daily Change in Traffic to NCAA-Related Sports Websites, during "March Madness" (U.S., Home and Work).

Site	**Wed: 3/15 UA (000)**	**Thurs: 3/16 UA (000)**	**Fri: 3/17 UA (000)**	**Wed Fri Growth**
CBS Sportsline.com Network	1,958	3,603	3,135	84%
AOL Sports (Web-only)	761	999	1,006	31%
FOX Sports on MSN	1,510	1,953	2,237	29%
Yahoo! Sports	2,121	2,601	2,377	23%
SI.com	724*	819*	773*	13%*
ESPN	3,074	3,312	2,941	8%
Total Unduplicated UA (Unique Audience)	**8,005**	**9,659**	**9,573**	**21%**

*These estimates are calculated on smaller sample sizes and are subject to increased statistical variability as a result.
From Enid Burns, "March Madness Invades Office Life," *Trends & Statistics: The Web's Richest Resource.* Reprinted with permission.

3. Customer Satisfaction with Airlines.

	Base-line	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	Previous Year % Change	First Year % Change
Airlines	**72**	**69**	**69**	**67**	**65**	**63**	**63**	**61**	**66**	**67**	**66**	**66**	**65**	**63**	**62**	**64**	**66**	**3.1**	**−8.3**
Southwest Airlines	78	76	76	76	74	72	70	70	74	75	73	74	74	76	79	81	79	−2.5	1.3
All Others	NM	70	74	70	62	67	63	64	72	74	73	74	74	75	75	77	75	−2.6	7.1
Continental Airlines	67	64	66	64	66	64	62	67	68	68	67	70	67	69	62	68	71	4.4	6.0
American Airlines	70	71	71	62	67	64	63	62	63	67	66	64	62	60	62	60	63	5.0	−10.0
Delta Air Lines (Delta)	77	72	67	69	65	68	66	61	66	67	67	65	64	59	60	64	62	−3.1	−19.5
US Airways	72	67	66	68	65	61	62	60	63	64	62	57	62	61	54	59	62	5.1	−13.9
Northwest Airlines (Delta)	69	71	67	64	63	53	62	56	65	64	64	64	61	61	57	57	61	7.0	−11.6
United Airlines	71	67	70	68	65	62	62	59	64	63	64	61	63	56	56	56	60	7.1	−15.5

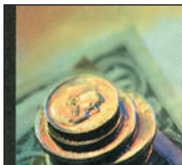
Source: "Airlines" *in The American Customer Satisfaction Index: Scores by Industry*, http://www.theacsi.org. Reprinted with permission.

16.7 Interpreting Data

As your instructor directs,

a. Identify at least five stories in one or more of the following data sets.
b. Create visuals for three of the stories.
c. Write a memo to your instructor explaining why you chose these stories and why you chose these visuals to display them.
d. Write a memo to some group that might be interested in your findings, presenting your visuals as part of a short report. Possible groups include career counselors, radio stations, advertising agencies, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving.
e. Brainstorm additional stories you could tell with additional data. Specify the kind of data you would need.

1. Data on tipping.



Tipping Made Easy

The vast majority (74 percent) of Americans tip their waiter or waitress a percentage of the final bill, about 17 percent on average. But 22 percent tip a flat amount instead, $4.67 on average.

	PEOPLE WHO TIP A PERCENTAGE OF THE BILL	AVG. PERCENT	PEOPLE WHO TIP A FLAT AMOUNT	AVG. AMOUNT	PEOPLE WHO DON'T TIP
Waiter or waitress	74%	17%	22%	$4.67	2%
Bartender	20%	16%	48%	$1.85*	18%
Barber, hair stylist, or cosmetician	26%	17%	52%	$4.21	18%
Cab or limousine driver	31%	14%	43%	$5.55	16%
Food delivery person	31%	15%	50%	$2.88	12%
Hotel maid	14%	14%	53%	$8.08**	26%
Skycap or bellhop	N/A	N/A	71%	$3.68***	10%
Masseuse	26%	16%	28%	$7.50	25%
Usher at theatre, sporting events, etc.	5%	13%	17%	$5.26	70%

* *for one drink;* ** *for a two-night stay;* *** *for two bags*
Note: "No Answer/Refused" not shown

Source: Taylor Nelson Sofres Intersearch

Beauty Gets Bucks

While only 11 percent of all Americans say they give a bigger tip to service providers they find attractive, single people are twice as likely to make a habit of it (16 percent) than their married counterparts (8 percent).

PERCENTAGE OF AMERICANS WHO SAY THEY TIP MORE WHEN THEIR SERVICE PROVIDER IS:

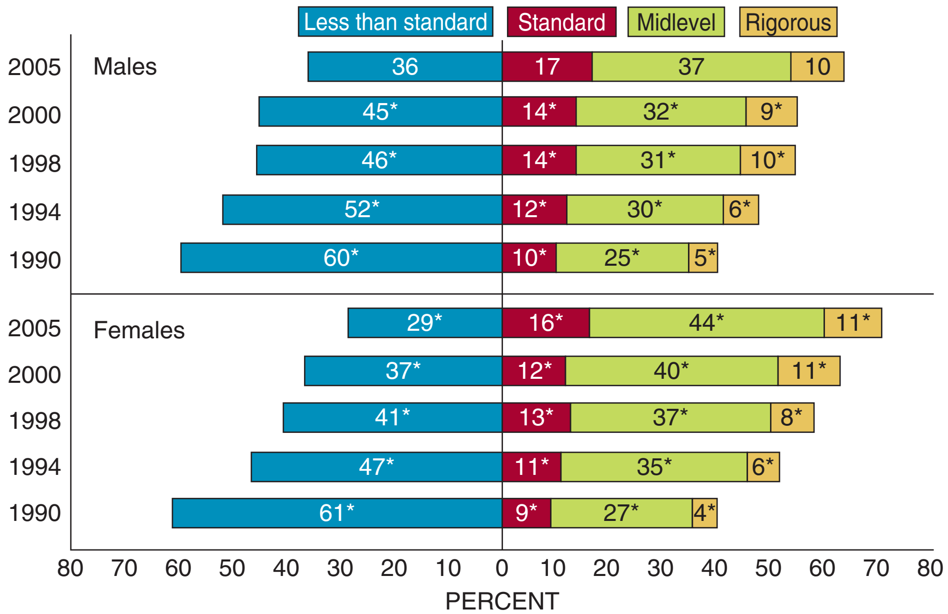
	OVERALL	MEN	WOMEN	MARRIED	UNMARRIED	WHITE	BLACK
Older than others who usually do the job	20%	17%	22%	16%	24%	18%	30%
A student	25%	24%	27%	25%	26%	24%	36%
A parent	17%	14%	19%	17%	16%	16%	27%
Attractive	11%	17%	5%	8%	16%	11%	14%
Someone I know	38%	38%	38%	34%	42%	39%	29%
A female	6%	9%	3%	4%	9%	6%	8%
A male	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%	6%
Disabled	33%	34%	32%	33%	34%	32%	47%
A racial minority	3%	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%	9%
Flirtatious	11%	17%	5%	7%	15%	11%	9%

Source: Taylor Nelson Sofres Intersearch

Source: From *American Demographics*, June 2000. With permission.

2. Statistics on high school graduates.

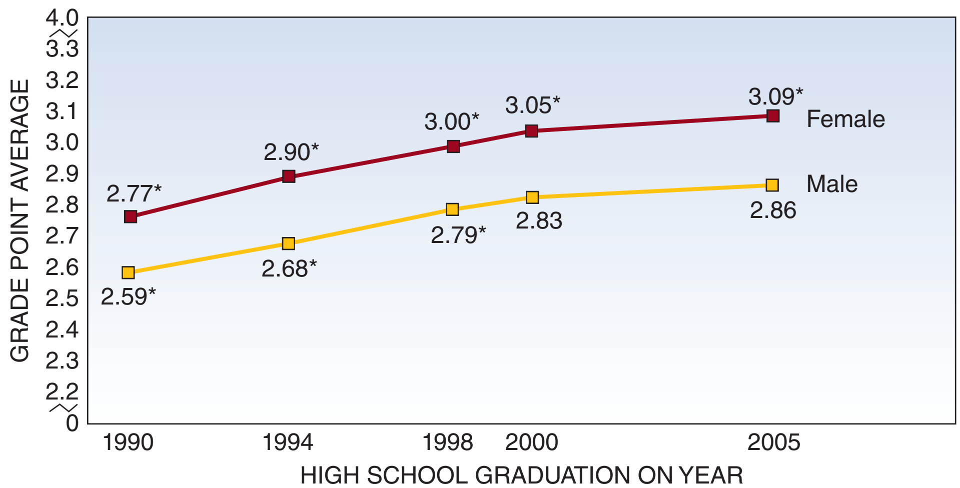
a. Curriculum levels completed, by gender



*Significantly different from 2005.

Source: "Curriculum Levels Completed, by Gender," in *U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Transcript Study (HSTS), various years, 1990–2005,* http://nationsreportcard.gov/hsts_2005/hs_stu_5b_2.asp (accessed May 5, 2009).

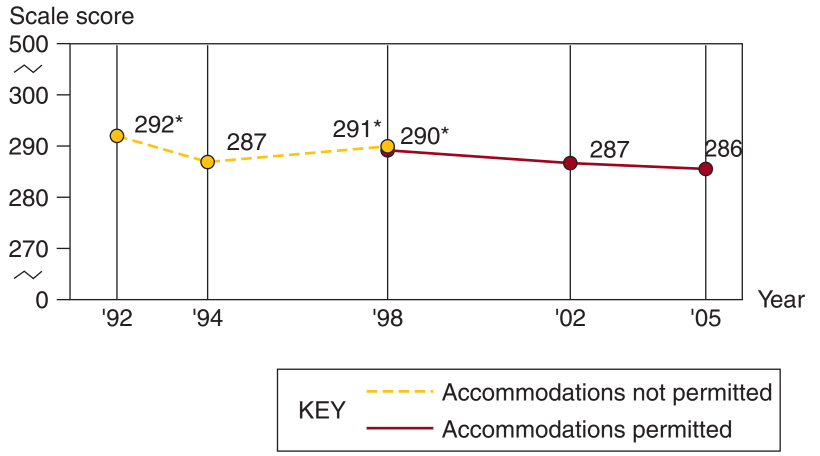
b. Trend in grade point average by gender



*Significantly different from 2005.

Source: "Trend in Grade Point Average, by Gender," in *U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Transcript Study (HSTS), various years, 1990–2005,* http://nationsreportcard.gov/hsts_2005/hs_stu_5b_3.asp (accessed May 5, 2009).

c. Trend in twelfth-grade average NAEP reading scores



*Significantly different from 2005.

Source: "Trend in Twelfth-Grade Average NAEP Reading Scores," in *U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Transcript Study (HSTS), various years, 1990–2005,* http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_grade12_2005/s0202.asp (accessed May 5, 2009).

16.8 Creating Graphs for Two Audiences and Scenarios

"Assume that you work for a local nonprofit organization with the following income expense for 2011 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Income		Expenses	
Description	$ Amount	Description	$ Amount
Government grants	$375,000	Program services	$741,935
Fees for services	$273,467	Administrative costs	$ 88,500
Contributions	$114,763	Miscellaneous	$ 5,230
Special events	$ 58,450		
Sale of products produced by participants in your program	$ 12,468		
Total income	$834,148	Total expenses	$835,665

As directors of the organization, you are responsible for bringing in more money and must present the past year's financial information to two groups of people, described in the following scenarios:

1. Within the community is a core group of consistent contributors who give the same amount each year, although the cost of running your organization continues to go up. You must convince these contributors to give additional funds during your presentation at the annual fund-raising banquet. You need to create graphic representations of financial data that will convince the contributors of the need for additional funds and that will reassure them the money they have given in the past has been spent wisely.
2. Your organization is eligible for a new grant from a federal government agency. You have to write a proposal explaining why your organization needs the money and demonstrating that it is fiscally responsible. There is a strict page limit, so you must present financial information concisely but in enough detail to make a strong case."

With a group of two or three peers, as your instructor directs,

a. Create a graphic representation of the financial data for the presentation and the proposal.
b. Write a memo that justifies the choices you made in creating the graphics for the different audiences and situations.
c. Prepare a brief presentation to the class that justifies your choices in creating the graphics.

Quoted from Susan M. Katz, "Creating Appropriate Graphics for Business Situations," *Business Communication Quarterly,* 71, 1, March 2008, pp: 71–75.

16.9 Graphing Data from the Web

Find data on the web about a topic that interests you. Some sites with data include the following:

Catalyst (women in business)
  http://www.catalyst.org/page/64/browse-research-knowledge
ClickZ (digital marketing)
  http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=stats
FEDSTATS (links to 70 US government agencies)
  http://www.fedstats.gov/
United Nations Environment Program
  http://na.unep.net/
U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee
  http://jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=Charts

As your instructor directs,

a. Identify at least five stories in the data.
b. Create visuals for three of the stories.
c. Write a memo to your instructor explaining why you chose these stories and why you chose these visuals to display them.
d. Write a memo to some group which might be interested in your findings, presenting your visuals as part of a short report.
e. Print out the data and include it with a copy of your memo or report.

16.10 Creating a Visual Argument

With a partner, research one of the following topics:

- Having English-only laws in the workplace.
- Introducing new technology into the marketplace.
- Laying off employees during economic downturns.
- Requiring employers to offer insurance plans.
- Banning smoking in the workplace for insurance purposes.
- Hiring/recruiting and diversity in the workplace.
- Current hot business topic.

Then, prepare a four-minute slideshow presentation to share with your peers. The presentation should include only visual elements and contain no words. With the visuals, you should take a stand and present an argument about one of the topics. Recall the guidelines outlined in this chapter about effectively using visuals.

Remember that your presentation needs to be captivating to the audience and effectively convey your purpose. Finally, don't forget to cite all source material.

As your instructor directs,

a. Submit a copy of your slideshow presentation, including both hard and electronic versions.
b. Write a brief memo in which you explain in words the argument you were trying to make.
c. Submit a list of works cited for each of the visuals you used.

CHAPTER 17

Writing Proposals and Progress Reports

Chapter Outline

Proposals by Corporate Investors

Public companies invite proposals from their shareholders on the company's response to its stakeholders. Corporate investors, led by religious groups and socially responsible investors, have increasingly been bringing forth environmental and social proposals. Often companies work with proponents of these proposals to arrive at mutually agreeable outcomes.

"Corporate investors . . . have increasingly been bringing forth environmental and social proposals."

The growth in these proposals has been tremendous—from around 7% to 32% between 2004 and 2007—counting those that garnered at least 15% votes. Among specific issues that these proposals address are companies' sexual orientation policies, pollution policies, labor policies, efforts on climate change, and political contributions. Some of these proposals find mention in the following year's annual or corporate sustainability report, while some others result in specific agreements with the company. Proposals can be resubmitted, so it's in the companies' interest to take proposals seriously.

Two major examples come from Exxon. The Sisters of St. Dominic were the lead filers on a proposal, which got 31% support, asking for greenhouse gas reduction. A different proposal from an individual investor, which got 27% support, asked for the development of renewable energy sources. Another instance is Domini Social Investments' proposal asking Home Depot to produce a report on its sustainably harvested lumber. Home Depot agreed to publish on its website its wood purchasing policy, including quantitative information.

Adapted from William J. Holstein, "A Bumper Crop of Green Proposals," *BusinessWeek*, June 26, 2008, http://www.businessweek.com/managing/content/jun2008/ca20080626_395541.htm.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know how to

LO 17-1 Write proposals.

LO 17-2 Prepare budget and costs sections.

LO 17-3 Write progress reports.

Proposals and progress reports are two documents that frequently are part of larger, longer projects. **Proposals** argue for the work that needs to be done and who will do it. **Progress reports** let people know how you are coming on the project.

WRITING PROPOSALS LO 17-1

In the workplace, much work is routine or specifically assigned by other people. But sometimes you or your organization will want to consider new opportunities, and you will need to write a proposal for that work. Generally, proposals are created for projects that are longer or more expensive than routine work, that differ significantly from routine work, or that create larger changes than does normal work.

Proposals argue for work that needs to be done; they offer a method to find information, evaluate something new, solve a problem, or implement a change. (See Figure 17.1.) Proposals have two major goals: to get the project accepted and to get you or your organization accepted to do the work. To accomplish these goals, proposals must stress benefits for all affected audiences. A proposal for an organization to adopt flex hours would offer benefits for both employees and management, as well as for key departments such as finance.

Proposals may be competitive or noncompetitive. **Competitive proposals** compete against each other for limited resources. Applications for research funding are often highly competitive. Many companies will bid for corporate or government contracts, but only one will be accepted. In FY 2010, the National Science Foundation spent $6.9 billion supporting research. The National Institute of Health supports almost 50,000 research projects at a cost of $31.2 billion annually.[1] These funds are awarded mainly through competitive proposals.

Noncompetitive proposals have no real competition. For example, a company could accept all of the internal proposals it thought would save money or

Figure 17.1 Relationship among Situation, Proposal, and Final Report

Company's current situation	The proposal offers to	The final report will provide
We don't know whether we should change.	Assess whether change is a good idea.	Insight, recommending whether change is desirable.
We need to/want to change, but we don't know exactly what we need to do.	Develop a plan to achieve desired goal.	A plan for achieving the desired change.
We need to/want to change, and we know what to do, but we need help doing it.	Implement the plan, increase (or decrease) measurable outcomes.	A record of the implementation and evaluation process.

Source: Adapted from Richard C. Freed, Shervin Freed, and Joseph D. Romano, *Writing Winning Business Proposals: Your Guide to Landing the Client, Making the Sale, Persuading the Boss,* 3rd ed (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010).

improve quality. And often a company that is satisfied with a vendor asks for a noncompetitive proposal to renew the contract. Noncompetitive proposals can still be enormous. In 2009 the Census Bureau submitted to Congress a $1 billion proposal for the 2010 census jobs.[2]

Proposal Questions

To write a good proposal, you need to have a clear view of the opportunity you want to fill or the problem you hope to solve and the kind of research or other action needed to solve it. A proposal must answer the following questions convincingly:

- **What problem are you going to solve or what opportunity do you hope to fill?** Show that you understand the problem or the opportunity and the organization's needs. Define the problem or opportunity as the audience sees it, even if you believe it is part of a larger problem that must first be solved. Sometimes you will need to show that the problem or opportunity exists. For instance, management might not be aware of subtle discrimination against women that your proposal will help eliminate.
- **Why does the problem need to be solved now or the opportunity explored immediately?** Show that money, time, health, or social concerns support solving the problem or exploring the opportunity immediately. Provide the predicted consequences if the problem is not solved now or if the opportunity is not explored immediately.
- **How are you going to solve it?** Prove that your methods are feasible. Show that a solution can be found in the time available. Specify the topics you'll investigate. Explain how you'll gather data. Show your approach is effective and desirable.
- **Can you do the work?** Show that you, or your organization, have the knowledge, means, personnel, and experience to do the work well. For larger projects, you will have to show some evidence such as preliminary data, personnel qualifications, or similar projects in the past.
- **Why should you be the one to do it?** Show why you or your company should do the work. For many proposals, various organizations could do the work. Why should the work be given to you? Discuss the benefits—direct and indirect—you and your organization can provide.
- **When will you complete the work?** Provide a detailed schedule showing when each phase of the work will be completed.
- **How much will you charge?** Provide a detailed budget that includes costs for items such as materials, salaries, and overhead. Give careful thought to unique expenses that may be part of the work. Will you need to travel? Pay fees? Pay benefits in addition to salary for part-time workers?
- **What exactly will you provide for us?** Specify the tangible products you'll produce; develop their benefits.

Since proposals to outside organizations are usually considered legally binding documents, get expert legal and financial advice on the last two bullets. Even if the proposal will not be legally binding (perhaps it is an internal proposal), safeguard your professional reputation. Be sure you can deliver the promised products at the specified time using resources and personnel available to you.

Proposal Style

Good proposals are clear and easy to read. Remember that some of your audience may not be experts in the subject matter. Highly statistical survey and data analysis projects may be funded by finance people; medical and scientific studies may be approved by bureaucrats. This means you should use the language your readers understand and expect to see. Anticipate and answer questions your readers may have. Support generalizations and inferences with data and other information. Stress benefits throughout the proposal, and make sure you include benefits for all elements of your audience.

Watch you word choice. Avoid diction that shows doubt.

Weak: "*If* we can obtain X. . . ."

"We *hope* we can obtain X."

"We will *try* to obtain X."

Better: "We plan to obtain X."

"We expect to obtain X."

Avoid bragging diction: "huge potential," "revolutionary process." Also avoid "believing" diction: "we believe that. . . ." Use facts and figures instead. Be particularly careful to avoid bragging diction about yourself.

Use the expected format for your proposal. Shorter proposals (one to four pages) are generally in letter or memo format; longer proposals are frequently formal reports. Government agencies and companies often issue **requests for proposals,** known as **RFPs.** Follow the RFP's specified format to the letter. Use the exact headings, terminology, and structure of the RFP when responding to one. Competitive proposals are often scored by giving points in each category. Evaluators look only under the headings specified in the RFP. If information isn't there, the proposal may get no points in that category.

Beginnings and endings of proposals are important. If you are not following an RFP, your proposal should begin with a clear statement of what you propose doing, why you propose doing it, and what the implications are of the proposed action, or why the action is important. Proposals should end with a brief but strong summary of major benefits of having you do the work. In some circumstances, an urge to action is appropriate:

> If I get your approval before the end of the month, we can have the procedures in place in time for the new fiscal year.

Allow a generous amount of time before the due date for polishing and finishing your proposal:

- Edit carefully.
- Make a final check that you have included all sections and pieces of information requested in the RFP. Many RFPs call for appendices with items such as résumés and letters of support. Do you have all of yours?
- Ensure that your proposal's appearance will create a good impression. This step includes careful proofreading.
- Allow enough time for production, reproduction, and administrative approvals before the deadline for receipt of the proposal. If multiple signatures are needed, it may take more than a day to get them all. If you are submitting a government grant, the grants.gov server may be clogged with heavy usage on the final due date, or even the day before, so don't wait until the last minute.

MBA Business Plans

Some students working toward MBA degrees participate in business plan contests. Groups of students write a business plan and present it to real-world bankers and venture capitalists. The stakes are high. Major contests have big cash awards and a shot at really starting the business the students have been planning. Even the losers benefit from the writing practice and the feedback they can use to continue improving their plans.

Among the winners is Sarah Takesh, who took first place in the National Social Ventures Competition, earning $25,000 for a fashion company called Tarsian and Blinkley. In Takesh's business, which she has since launched, Afghan workers apply local handicrafts to produce clothing sold in boutiques in New York and San Francisco. Although the items are beautiful, Takesh's fashion sense was less important to the judges than her insights about international trade.

Another contest winner, KidSmart, is a plan for a company offering a new product: a smoke alarm that alerts children with a recording of a parent's voice, rather than the earsplitting beeps of a traditional smoke alarm. The KidSmart business plan won the $100,000 grand prize in Moot Corp, sponsored by the University of Texas. The four-person KidSmart team supported its presentation with video footage showing that its smoke detector is better at waking children than the traditional beeps.

Adapted from Patrick J. Sauer, "How to Win Big Money and Get Ahead in Business," *Inc.* 25, no. 9 (September 2003): 95–96 +.

Proposals for Class Research Projects

You may be asked to submit a proposal for a report that you will write for a class. Your instructor wants evidence that your problem is meaningful but not too big to complete in the allotted time, that you understand it, that your method will give you the information you need, that you have the knowledge and resources to collect and analyze the data, and that you can produce the report by the deadline.

A proposal for a student report usually has the following sections:

1. In your first paragraph (no heading), summarize in a sentence or two the topic and purposes of your report.
2. **Problem/Opportunity.** What problem or opportunity exists? Why does it need to be solved or explored? Is there a history or background that is relevant?
3. **Feasibility.** Are you sure that a solution can be found in the time available? How do you know? (This section may not be appropriate for some class projects.)
4. **Audience.** Who in the organization would have the power to implement your recommendation? What secondary audiences might be asked to evaluate your report? What audiences would be affected by your recommendation? Will anyone in the organization serve as a gatekeeper, determining whether your report is sent to decision makers? What watchdog audiences might read the report? Will there be other readers?

   For each of these audiences give the person's name and job title and answer the following questions:

   - What is the audience's major concern or priority? What "hot buttons" must you address with care?
   - What will the audience see as advantages of your proposal? What objections, if any, is the audience likely to have?
   - How interested is the audience in the topic of your report?
   - How much does the audience know about the topic of your report?

   List any terms, concepts, or assumptions that one or more of your audiences may need to have explained. Briefly identify ways in which your audiences may affect the content, organization, or style of the report.
5. **Topics to investigate.** List the questions and subquestions you will answer in your report, the topics or concepts you will explain, the aspects of the problem or opportunity you will discuss. Indicate how deeply you will examine each of the aspects you plan to treat. Explain your rationale for choosing to discuss some aspects of the problem or opportunity and not others.
6. **Methods/procedure.** How will you get answers to your questions? Whom will you interview or survey? What questions will you ask? What published sources will you use? Give the full bibliographic references. Your methods section should clearly indicate how you will get the information needed to answer questions posed in the other sections of the proposal.
7. **Qualifications/facilities/resources.** Do you have the knowledge and skills needed to conduct this study? Do you have adequate access to the organization? Is the necessary information available to you? Are you aware of any supplemental information? Where will you turn for help if you hit an unexpected snag?

Evidence to Support Superlatives in Business Plans

Dave Lavinsky, a cofounder of Growthink, a professional consulting firm, advises small business owners to draft their business plans carefully because investors will evaluate the potential of the business based on the intelligence shown in the plan.

Specifically, Dave advises his clients to provide evidence for superlatives (*best* customer service, *finest* quality) in the plan.

He advises business owners to cite third-party research or offer other concrete evidence when making superlative claims. For instance, if a firm believes that the market for its products is growing exponentially, it should cite some independent research that validates this claim. Similarly, if a firm claims in the business plan that it has the best people working for it, the plan should include details of qualifications and experiences of the personnel to support the claim.

The practice of always supporting superlative claims in the business plan will increase a firm's fundraising chances by making it appear more credible in the eyes of the investors.

Adapted from Dave Lavinsky, "Business Plan Readers No Longer Believe the Hype," in *BusinessWeek: Small Biz: Tips*, March 20, 2009, http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/tips/archives/2009/03/business_plan_r.html.

You'll be more convincing if you have already scheduled an interview, checked out books, or printed online sources.

8. **Work schedule.** For each activity, list both the total time you plan to spend on it and the date when you expect to finish it. Some possible activities you might include could be gathering information, analyzing information, preparing a progress report, writing the report draft, revising the draft, preparing visuals, and editing and proofreading the report. Think of activities needed to complete your specific project.

   These activities frequently overlap. Many writers start analyzing and organizing information as it comes in. They start writing pieces of the final document and preparing visuals early in the process.

   Organize your work schedule in either a chart or calendar. A good schedule provides realistic estimates for each activity, allows time for unexpected snags, and shows that you can complete the work on time.
9. **Call to action.** In your final section, indicate that you'd welcome any suggestions your instructor may have for improving the research plan. Ask your instructor to approve your proposal so that you can begin work on your report.

Figure 17.2 shows a student proposal for a long report.

Proposals for Action

Some proposals call for action or change in your organization. Normally, proposals for action recommend new programs or ways to solve problems. As manager of compensation planning, Catherine Beck had to propose a compensation system when telephone companies Bell Atlantic and Nynex Corporation merged and again a few years later when Bell Atlantic merged with GTE to form Verizon. When two companies merge, each has its own pay scale, bonus policy, and so on; the problem is that the merged companies will need a single, unified system. In these two mergers, Beck had to recommend the system she thought would work best in the new company.[3]

Writing a proposal for action requires considerable research. Beck worked with a team of human resource and other managers plus compensation experts. Together they began by studying the existing policies of the merging organizations. They compared the two systems, looking for their underlying principles. In the first merger, between Bell Atlantic and Nynex, they determined that the two plans were so different that they would have to create a completely new system. In the second merger, of Bell Atlantic and GTE, they concluded that the plans were similar enough to be modified and combined into a single system. After this internal research leading to an initial decision, preparing a proposal and implementing a system for tens of thousands of management employees took months in both mergers.[4]

Often, writing a proposal requires gathering information from outside the organization, too. Basic steps include reading articles in trade and professional journals, looking up data online, and talking to employees or customers.

Remember that all proposals, including in-house ones, need benefits for all levels of audiences. These benefits help ensure buy-in.

Sales Proposals

To sell expensive goods or services, you may be asked to submit a proposal.

To write a good sales proposal, be sure that you understand the buyer's priorities. A phone company lost a $36 million sale to a university because it assumed the university's priority would be cost. Instead, the university wanted a state-of-the-art system. The university accepted a higher bid.

Figure 17.2 Proposal for a Student Team Report

March 24, 2011

To: Professor Christopher Toth

From: JASS LLC (Jordan Koole, Alex Kuczera, Shannon Jones, Sean Sterling)

In the subject line ① indicate that this is a proposal ② specify the kind of report ③ specify the topic.

Subject: Proposal to Research and Make Recommendations on the Feasibility of Expanding RAC Inc. to South Korea

---

Summarize topic and purpose of report.

RAC Inc. has recently approached our company to determine the possibility of expanding internationally. We believe South Korea could be suitable for this expansion based on our initial investigation of technology in the country. This proposal provides a brief look at South Korea and gives an overview of our research topics and procedures in preparation for the formal research report.

Problem

If the "Problem" section is detailed and well-written, you may be able to use it unchanged in your report.

After establishing a solid consumer base in the U.S., RAC Inc. is looking to expand their business internationally so that they do not fall behind their competitors. They have asked us to research South Korea as a possible alternative site for the manufacturing of their slate tablets.

Country Overview

This section is a "Background" section for this proposal. Not all proposals include background.

After some initial research, we believe that South Korea is a suitable country to research for RAC's international manufacturing of new technology. South Korea has a population of 48.3 million, with 27% of the population located in the capital city Seoul and in Busan. They have a labor force of 24.62 million, ranking as the 25th highest workforce in the world (CIA Factbook, 2011). The official language is Korean, but English, Chinese, and Japanese are taught as second languages (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Proposal uses in-text citations.

In 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea, beginning the Korean War. After three years of fighting and pushing troops across both borders, North and South Korea signed an armistice and agreed to a demilitarized zone (DMZ), which currently serves as the border between the two countries and is protected by both countries' military (U.S. Department of State, 2010). While relations between the two countries are still tense and a few minor skirmishes along the border have occurred, we are not concerned about South Korea's stability.

In fact, since the devastation of the Korean War, the economy of South Korea has recovered and has joined the ranks of the most economically prosperous nations. They have risen to the 13th highest GDP in the world and have the 45th highest GDP per capita at the equivalent of \$30,200. They have a very low unemployment rate that has dropped in the last year to 3.3% (CIA Factbook, 2011).

South Korea is now ranked the 7th largest exporter in the world and the 9th largest importer. Their economic policy has emphasized exporting products, explaining why their exports are so high (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Their main exports include computers and component parts, semiconductors, and wireless telecommunication equipment. South Korea is known for making excellent products in these areas. They export mainly to the U.S., China, and Japan, and import primarily from the same countries. As one of the most economically healthy countries in the world, South Korea is situated as a prime country for RAC Inc.'s possible expansion.

Not all class reports will need a "Feasibility" section.

(Continued)

Figure 17.2 Proposal for a Student Team Report (Continued)

Include a header on all additional pages.

RAC Inc. Proposal
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List your major audiences. Identify their knowledge, interests, and concerns.

Audience

Our formal report will have multiple layers of audiences.

- *Gatekeeper*: Professor Toth has the power to accept or reject our proposal for the formal report before it is passed on to Ms. Katie Nichols from RAC Inc.

- *Primary*: Ms. Katie Nichols, CEO of RAC Inc., and the board of directors are our primary audiences, along with other influential members of RAC Inc. They will decide whether to accept the recommendation found in the formal report.

- *Secondary*: Employees of RAC Inc., the legal department of RAC Inc., as well as current RAC Inc. employees who may be transferred to South Korea may all be affected by the primary audience's decision. In addition, the potential employees in South Korea who would work for RAC Inc. also make up this audience.

- *Auxiliary*: Other employees not involved with the expansion effort into South Korea and any Americans or South Koreans who will read about the expansion in the news serve this role.

- *Watchdog*: Stockholders of RAC Inc., the South Korean government, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the U.S. Department of Commerce, and other companies that may want to expand internationally to South Korea all have economic, social, and political power. Competitors of RAC Inc. already in South Korea (Samsung and LG) may also pay close attention.

Indicate what you'll discuss briefly and what you'll discuss in more detail. This list should match your audiences' concerns.

Topics to Investigate

We plan to answer the following questions in detail:

1. What information does RAC Inc. need to know about South Korean culture, politics, economy, and workforce to be succesful?

All items in list must be grammatically parallel. Here, all are questions.

- Culture—What differences exist between Korean and American cultures that might influence the move?
- Politics—How will relationships between North and South Korea and relationships between the U.S. and South Korea affect business with South Korea?
- Economics—What is the current economic state of the country? How could free trade between the U.S. and South Korea affect business?
- Workforce—What is the availabe workforce? How will the economy of the country affect the overall workforce?

2. How should RAC Inc. adapt their business practices to successfully expand into the South Korean market?

- Competition—Who is the competition in South Korea? How could they affect the business?
- Location—What city could RAC Inc. expand to for production of the slate tablet? Where should they locate the headquarters? Where should they host the initial product launch?
- Slate Tablet—What changes, if any, are needed to market and sell the product in South Korea?

Figure 17.2 Proposal for a Student Team Report (Continued)

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3. What other issues may RAC Inc. have by introducing their product into South Korea?

If it is well written, "Topics to Investigate" section will become the "Scope" section of the report—with minor revisions.

- Business Culture—How will the differences in business culture influence the expansion to South Korea?
- Technology—To what extent will the advanced state of South Korean technology influence marketing the tablet?
- Marketing—How will competitors' similar products sold in South Korea influence business?
- Integration—How receptive are the people of South Korea to new products from different companies and countries?

If you'll administer a survey or conduct interviews, tell how many subjects you'll have, how you'll choose them, and what you'll ask them. This group does not use a survey.

Methods and Resources

We expect to obtain our information from: (1) various websites, (2) books, and (3) interviews with a native South Korean. The following websites and books appear useful.

If you're using library or web research, list sources you hope to use. Use full bibliographic citations.

This list uses APA format.

Central Intelligence Agency. (2011). *The world factbook: South Korea*. Retrieved March 18, 2011, from https:/ /www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html#.

Fackler, M. (2011, January 6). Lessons learned, South Korea makes quick economic recovery. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http:// www.nytimes.com/2011/01/07/world/asia/07seoul.html?_r=2.

Jeon, Kyung-Hwan. (2010, September 7). Why your business belongs in South Korea. Retrieved from http:/ /www.openforum.com/articles/why-your-business-belongs-in-south-korea-kyung-hwan-jeon.

Life in Korea. (n.d.). Cultural spotlight. Retrieved March 31, 2011, from http:/ /www.lifeinkorea.com/Culture/spotlight.cfm.

Manyin, M. E. (2004). *South Korea–U.S. economic relations*. Washington, D.C: CRS of Congress.

Manyin, M. E. (2007). *The proposed South Korea–U.S. free trade*. Washington, D.C.: CRS of Congress.

Moon, K. (2004). South Korea–U.S. relations. *The Asian Perspective 28.4*. Retrieved from http:/ /www.asianperspective.org/articles/v28n4-c.pdf.

Ogg, E. (2010, May 28). What makes a tablet a tablet? *CNet News*. Retrieved March 19, 2011, from http:/ /news.cnet.com/8301-31021_3-20006077-260.html?tag=newsLeadStoriesArea.1.

Savada, A.M. & Shaw, W. (1990). South Korea: A country study. *South Korea*. Retrieved March 18, 2011, from http:/ /countrystudies.us/south-korea/.

Settimi, C. (2010, September 1). Asia's 200 best under a billion. *Forbes*. Retrieved from http://www.forbes.com/2010/09/01/ bub-200-intro-asia-under-billion-10-small-companies.html.

Taylor, C. (2006, July 14). The future is in South Korea. *CNN Money.* Retrieved from http:/ /money.cnn.com/2006/06/08/technology/business2_futureboy0608/index.htm.

Your list of sources should convince your instructor that you have made initial progress on the report.

(Continued)

Figure 17.2 Proposal for a Student Team Report (Concluded)

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UK Trade & Investment. (2011). 100 opportunities for UK companies in South Korea. Retrieved March 19, 2011, from http:/ /www.ukti.gov.uk/export/countries/asiapacific/fareast/koreasouth/item/119500.html.

U.S. Deparment of State. (2010, December 10). Background note: South Korea. Retrieved March 18, 2011, from http:/ /www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm.

World Business Culture. (n.d.). Doing business in South Korea. Retrieved March 19, 2011, from http:/ /www.worldbusinessculture.com/Business-in-South-Korea.html.

Qualifications

Cite knowledge and skills from other classes, jobs, and activities that will enable you to conduct the research and interpret your data.

We are all members of JASS LLC who have backgrounds in finance, accounting, computer science, and technology. These diverse backgrounds in the business and technology world give us a good perspective and insight for this project. In addition, we are all enrolled in a business communication course that provides us with knowledge on producing high-quality documents. We are dedicated to producing a thoroughly researched report that will provide solid evidence on the feasibility of an international expansion for RAC Inc. into South Korea.

Work Schedule

The following schedule will enable us to finish this report on time.

Activity	Total Time	Completion Date
Gathering information	12 hours	March 30
Analyzing information	8 hours	April 2
Organizing information	4 hours	April 7
Writing draft/creating visuals	8 hours	April 10
Revising draft	3 hours	April 12
Preparing presentation slides	3–4 hours	April 14
Editing draft	3 hours	April 17
Proofreading report	3 hours	April 18
Rehearsing presentation	2 hours	April 20
Delivering presentaion	1 hour	April 21

Good reports need good revision, editing, and proofreading as well as good research.

Allow plenty of time

Time will depend on the length and topic of your report, your knowledge of the topic, and your writing skills.

Call to Action

We are confident that JASS LLC can complete the above tasks as scheduled. We would appreciate any suggestions for improving our project plan. Please approve our proposal so that we may begin work on the formal report.

It's tactful to indicate you'll accept suggestions. End on a positive, forward-looking note.

Make sure your proposal presents your goods or services as solving the problem your audience perceives. Don't assume that the buyer will understand why your product or system is good. For everything you offer, show the benefits of each feature. Be sure to present the benefits using you-attitude.

Use language appropriate for your audience. Even if the buyers want a state-of-the-art system, they may not want the level of detail that your staff could provide; they may not understand or appreciate technical jargon.

Sales proposals, particularly for complicated systems costing millions of dollars, are often long. Provide a one-page cover letter to present your proposal succinctly. The best organization for this letter is usually a modified version of the sales pattern in Chapter 11:

1. Catch the reader's attention and summarize up to three major benefits you offer.
2. Discuss each of the major benefits in the order in which you mentioned them in the first paragraph.
3. Deal with any objections or concerns the reader may have. In a sales proposal, these objections probably include costs. Connect costs with benefits.
4. Mention other benefits briefly.
5. Ask the reader to approve your proposal and provide a reason for acting promptly.

Business Plans and Other Proposals for Funding

Proposals for funding include both **business plans** (documents written to raise capital for new business ventures) and proposals submitted to foundations, corporations, and government agencies, to seek money for public service projects. In a proposal for funding, stress the needs your project will meet and show how your project helps fulfill the goals of the organization you are asking for funds. Every funding agency has a mission, so be sure to align your idea to fit their needs in obvious ways. Try to weave their mission throughout your proposal's content. Remember effective you-attitude—write for the needs of your audience, not yourself.

Since venture capitalists and other investors are not known for their patience, business plans in particular need to have a concise, compelling beginning describing exactly what you plan to do and what need it will fill. Pay careful attention to the Executive Summary. This overview section is one of the most important places in any proposal. After reading this opening, the reviewer will make initial decisions about you, your writing, your idea, and your logic. Therefore, it must spark enthusiasm for your idea; the reviewer's interest will never increase later on in your proposal. This section should also provide an overview of all of the major topics you will cover in the body.

Your business plan should answer these questions:

- What is your product or service?
- How well developed is it? Is a mock-up or demo available?
- Who is your market? How large is it? Why does this market need your product or service?
- How will you promote your product or service?
- Who are your competitors? How will you be better?
- Who is also providing support for your business?
- Who will be working with you? How many more employees will you need? What will you pay them? What benefits will you give them?

Financial information is important in any proposal, but it is even more crucial in a business plan. You will need to show how much of your own money you are

Writing an Effective Business Plan

How do entrepreneurs raise the capital needed to launch a new business? They write a business plan. When you write one, you need to persuade an investor that your concept for an organization is solid and that you're the best person to carry it out. Venture capitalists and successful entrepreneurs give the following advice about writing a solid business plan:

- Keep it short and simple—a good business plan articulates what the company will do and how it will benefit the customer. Specify the product or service. Begin with an executive summary.
- Introduce the management team—a good business plan explains the people behind the product.
- Anticipate problems and challenges—a good business plan answers the tough questions about your idea. Venture capitalists will already know the problem; they want to be sure you do too.
- Show there is a market—a good business plan identifies a target market and demonstrates that people will use the product or service offered.
- Show a path to profit—a good business plan explains how the business will make money.
- Make it personal—a good business plan is not a template; it shows passion about ideas.

Adapted from Greg Farrell, "Business Plans Should Be Simple, Passionate," *USA Today,* July 31, 2006, 5E.

investing, what investors you already have supporting you, and how you plan to use the money you get. Many investors want to see a five-year financial forecast. Explain with convincing detail how you expect to make money. What is your time frame for financial success? What is your estimated monthly income the first year?

Anticipate problems (investors will already know them; this shows you do, too); show how you plan to solve them. Use details to help convince your audience. Many business plans are too general to convince investors. Details show you have done your homework; they can also show your business acumen.

Proposals are also a major part of nonprofits' fund-raising activity; they write grant proposals to governmental organizations, foundations, and individuals to raise money for their organization. The writing process involves considerable research and planning, and often is preceded by informal conversations and formal presentations to potential funders. The funding process is often seen as a relationship-building process that involves researching, negotiating with, and persuading funders that the proposal not only meets their guidelines, but also is a cause worthy of a grant.

Every funding source has certain priorities; some have detailed lists of the kind of projects they fund. Be sure to do research before applying. Check recent awards to discover foundations that may be interested in your project. See Figure 17.3 for additional resources.

When you write proposals for funding, be sure you follow all format criteria to the letter. Be particularly obedient to specifications about page count, type size, margins, and spacing (single or double spacing). When flooded with applications, many funders use these criteria as preliminary weeding devices. One state Department of Education threw out funding applications from 30 school districts because they were not double-spaced as required.[5]

Finally, be sure to pay close attention to deadlines by reading the fine print. Turn your materials in early. The National Endowment for the Humanities encourages fund seekers to submit drafts six weeks before the deadline to allow time for their staff to review materials.[6]

Budget and Costs Sections LO 17-2

For a class research project, you may not be asked to prepare a budget. However, many proposals do require budgets, and a good budget is crucial to making the winning bid. In fact, your budget may well be the most carefully scrutinized part of your proposal.[7]

Ask for everything you need to do a quality job. Asking for too little may backfire, leading the funder to think that you don't understand the scope of the project. Include less obvious costs, such as overhead. Also include costs that will be paid from other sources. Doing so shows that other sources also have confidence in your work. Pay particular attention to costs that may appear to

Keys to Successful Business Plans

Of the thousands of business plans presented to potential investors each year, only a few succeed. John W. Mullens, at the London Business School, offers five reasons why business plans fail.

- **No problem.** Plans must fix a problem or fill a need instead of just being examples of cool technology or good ideas.
- **Unrealistic ambition.** Successful business plans recognize a specific market, instead of aiming at the entire population.
- **Flawed spreadsheets.** Carefully prepared revenue models can work on paper, but successful business plans must work in the real economy.
- **Wrong team.** Investors are not necessarily impressed by education and work experience, unless those contribute to the success of the business.
- **Perfect plan.** Successful plans recognize realistic challenges to the business plan, instead of presenting everything in the best light.

Mullens suggests three keys for success: (1) A clear problem and a logical solution; (2) hard evidence that you have done your research; (3) complete candor about challenges and risks associated with your plan.

Adapted from John W. Mullens, "Why Business Plans Don't Deliver," *Wall Street Journal,* June 22, 2009, R3.

Figure 17.3 Additional Resources for Writing Business Plans and Funding Proposals

Organization	URL	Description
U.S. Small Business Administration	http://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/starting-managing-business/starting-business	Offers detailed advice for writing a business plan.
Philanthropic Research Inc.	http://www.guidestar.org	Publishes free information about grants and grantmakers.
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	http://www.grants.gov	Offers information on grant programs of all federal grant-making agencies, as well as downloadable grant applications.
The Foundation Center	http://foundationcenter.org/	Indexes foundations by state and city as well as by field of interest.

benefit you more than the sponsor such as travel and equipment. Make sure they are fully justified in the proposal.

Do some research. Read the RFP to find out what is and isn't fundable. Talk to the program officer (the person who administers the funding process) and read successful past proposals to find answers to the following questions:

- What size projects will the organization fund in theory?
- Does the funder prefer making a few big grants or many smaller grants?
- Does the funder expect you to provide in-kind or cost-sharing funds from other sources?

Think about exactly what you'll do and who will do it. What will it cost to get that person? What supplies or materials will he or she need? Also think about indirect costs for using office space, about retirement and health benefits as well as salaries, about office supplies, administration, and infrastructure.

Make the basis of your estimates specific.

Weak:	75 hours of transcribing interviews	$1,500
Better:	25 hours of interviews; a skilled transcriber can complete 1 hour of interviews in 3 hours; 75 hours @ $20/hour	$1,500

Figure your numbers conservatively. For example, if the going rate for skilled transcribers is $20 an hour, but you think you might be able to train someone and pay only $12 an hour, use the higher figure. Then, even if your grant is cut, you'll still be able to do the project well.

WRITING PROGRESS REPORTS LO 17-3

When you're assigned to a single project that will take a month or more, you'll probably be asked to file one or more progress reports. A progress report reassures the funding agency or employer that you're making progress and allows you and the agency or employer to resolve problems as they arise. Different readers may have different concerns. An instructor may want to know whether you'll have your report in by the due date. A client may be more interested in what you're learning about the problem. Adapt your progress report to the needs of the audience.

Christine Barabas's study of the progress reports in a large research and development organization found that poor writers tended to focus on what they had done and said very little about the value of their work. Good writers, in contrast, spent less space writing about the details of what they'd done but much more space explaining the value of their work for the organization.[8]

When you write progress reports, use what you know about emphasis, positive tone, and you-attitude. Don't present every detail as equally important. Use emphasis techniques to stress the major ones. Readers will generally not care that Jones was out of the office when you went to visit him and that you had to return a second time to catch him. Trivial details like this should be omitted.

In your report, try to exceed expectations in at least some small way. Perhaps your research is ahead of schedule or needed equipment arrived earlier than expected. However, do not present the good news by speculating on the reader's feelings; many readers find such statements offensive.

Poor: You will be happy to hear the software came a week early.

Better: The software came a week early, so Pat can start programming earlier than expected.

Remember that your audience for your report is usually in a position of power over you, so be careful what you say to them. Generally it is not wise to blame them for project problems even if they are at fault.

Tapping into the Research Experts

Where else can you go besides Google to find the information you need for your next report? You might try your local library. While you can find a wealth of information on Google, libraries subscribe to commercial databases that can give you access to powerful tools for writing your company's business or marketing plan. An added plus is that librarians are experts at navigating those databases.

Small business owners, in particular, can benefit. Many libraries even hold classes for entrepreneurs and provide networking opportunities with other local agencies and organizations geared to help the small business person. So the next time you are working out a business problem, visit your local library.

Adapted from Tara Siegel Bernhard, "Enterprise: Big Help for Small Businesses at the Library; Commercial Databases, Assistance on Research and Classes Are Offered," *Wall Street Journal,* August 29, 2006, B4.

Poor: We could not proceed with drafting the plans because you did not send us the specifications for the changes you want.

Better: Chris has prepared the outline for the plan. We are ready to start drafting as soon as we receive the specifications. Meanwhile, we are working on. . . .

Subject lines for progress reports are straightforward. Specify the project on which you are reporting your progress.

> Subject: Progress on Developing a Marketing Plan for Fab Fashions

If you are submitting weekly or monthly progress reports on a long project, number your progress reports or include the time period in your subject line. Include information about the work completed since the last report and work to be completed before the next report.

Make your progress report as positive as you *honestly* can. You'll build a better image of yourself if you show that you can take minor problems in stride and that you're confident of your own abilities.

> The preliminary data sets were two days late because of a server crash. However, Nidex believes they will be back on schedule by next week. Past performance indicates their estimate is correct, and data analysis will be finished in two weeks, as originally scheduled.

Focus on your solutions to problems rather than the problems themselves:

Negative: Southern data points were corrupted, and that problem set us back three days in our data analysis.

Positive: Although southern data points were corrupted, the northern team was able to loan us Chris and Lee to fix the data set. Both teams are currently back on schedule.

In the above example the problem with the southern data points is still noted, because readers may want to know about it, but the solution to the problem is emphasized.

Do remember to use judicious restraint with your positive tone. Without details for support, glowing judgments of your own work may strike readers as ill-advised bragging, or maybe even dishonesty.

Overdone positive tone, lack of support: Our data analysis is indicating some great new predictions; you will be very happy to see them.

Supported optimism: Our data analysis is beginning to show that coastal erosion may not be as extensive as we had feared; in fact, it may be almost 10% less than originally estimated. We should have firm figures by next week.

Progress reports can be organized in three ways: by chronology, by task, and to support a recommendation. Some progress reports may use a combination: they may organize material chronologically within each task section, for instance.

Chronological Progress Reports

The chronological pattern of organization focuses on what you have done and what work remains.

1. **Summarize your progress in terms of your goals and your original schedule.** Use measurable statements.

The Political Uses of Progress Reports

Progress reports can do more than just report progress. You can use progress reports to

- **Enhance your image.** Details about the number of documents you've read, people you've surveyed, or experiments you've conducted create a picture of a hardworking person doing a thorough job.
- **Float trial balloons.** Explain, "I could continue to do X [what you approved]; I could do Y instead [what I'd like to do now]." The detail in the progress report can help back up your claim. Even if the idea is rejected, you don't lose face because you haven't made a separate issue of the alternative.
- **Minimize potential problems.** As you do the work, it may become clear that implementing your recommendations will be difficult. In your regular progress reports, you can alert your boss or the funding agency to the challenges that lie ahead, enabling them to prepare psychologically and physically to act on your recommendations.

Poor: Progress has been slow.

Better: Analysis of data sets is about one-third complete.

2. **Under the heading "Work Completed," describe what you have already done.** Be specific, both to support your claims in the first paragraph and to allow the reader to appreciate your hard work. Acknowledge the people who have helped you. Describe any serious obstacles you've encountered and tell how you've dealt with them.

Poor: I have found many articles about Procter & Gamble on the web. I have had a few problems finding how the company keeps employees safe from chemical fumes.

Better: On the web, I found Procter & Gamble's home page, its annual report, and mission statement. No one whom I interviewed could tell me about safety programs specifically at P&G. I have found seven articles about ways to protect workers against pollution in factories, but none mentions P&G.

3. **Under the heading "Work to Be Completed," describe the work that remains.** If you're more than three days late (for school projects) or two weeks late (for business projects) submit a new schedule, showing how you will be able to meet the original deadline. You may want to discuss "Observations" or "Preliminary Conclusions" if you want feedback before writing the final report or if your reader has asked for substantive interim reports.
4. **Express your confidence in having the report ready by the due date.** If you are behind your original schedule, show why you think you can still finish the project on time.

Even in chronological reports you need to do more than merely list work you have done. Show the value of that work and your prowess in achieving it, particularly your ability at solving problems. The student progress report in Figure 17.4 uses the chronological pattern of organization.

Task Progress Reports

In a task progress report, organize information under the various tasks you have worked on during the period. For example, a task progress report for a team report project might use the following headings:

Finding Background Information on the Web and in Print
Analyzing Our Survey Data
Working on the Introduction of the Report and the Appendices

Under each heading, the team could discuss the tasks it has completed and those that remain.

Task progress reports are appropriate for large projects with distinct topics or projects.

Recommendation Progress Reports

Recommendation progress reports recommend action: increasing the funding or allotted time for a project, changing its direction, canceling a project that isn't working out. When the recommendation will be easy for the reader to accept, use the direct request pattern of organization from Chapter 11. If the recommendation is likely to meet strong resistance, the problem-solving pattern may be more effective.

Figure 17.4 A Student Chronological Progress Report

Date: April 11, 2012

To: Ms. Katie Nichols, CEO of RAC. Inc

From: S. Jones SJ

Subject: Progress on JASS LLC's South Korean Feasibility Study

¶ 1: Summarize results in terms of purpose, schedule.

JASS LLC has collected information on South Korea that will enable us to answer the Topics to Investigate section from our proposal. We are currently analyzing and compiling the information for the formal report that will be submitted on April 21. Although we are slightly behind our original work schedule, we have planned an additional meeting on April 12 and will be back on track.

Work Completed Bold headings

Be very specific about what you've done.

To invesigate the feasibility of RAC Inc. expanding operations into South Korea, JASS LLC submitted a research proposal to Professor Toth that defined our topics to investigate and provided a list of preliminary sources. For this proposal, I wrote part of the problem, country overview, and qualifications sections. I also discovered three sources included in the methods section. These sources will give RAC Inc. important information regarding the competition, the available workforce, and the state of technology in South Korea. Serving as editor for the proposal, I also assisted with improving our writing style and formatting. Since submitting the proposal and getting approval, I have found six additional sources that should prove useful in our formal report.

Show how you've solved minor problems.

Due to scheduling conflicts with our course projects, we were unable to complete the first draft of the report as we had originally planned. However, we scheduled an additional meeting for tomorrow to accomplish this task and to get our group back on schedule. For tomorrow's meeting, I have read and analyzed eight sources and will be ready to compile information into our report draft. Specify steps you will take to correct deviations from schedule.

Work to Be Completed

Specify the work that remains.

During our additional meeting, JASS LLC will write the first full draft of our formal report by organizing information that the four of us have researched. We will also be prepared to conference with Professor Toth about our rough draft by the end of this week. After we receive his feedback, we will move into the revising and editing stages for the formal report. Finally, we still need to assemble our presentation slides and begin rehearsing together.

We will be prepared to submit our formal report and to deliver our presentation for you on April 21.

End on a positive note.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Proposals argue for the work that needs to be done and who will do it.
- A proposal must answer the following questions:
  - What problem are you going to solve?
  - Why does the problem need to be solved now?
  - How are you going to solve it?
  - Can you do the work?
  - Why should you be the one to do it?
  - When will you complete the work?
  - How much will you charge?
  - What exactly will you provide for us?
- In a proposal for a class research project, prove that your problem is the right size, that you understand it, that your method will give you the information you need to solve the problem, that you have the knowledge and resources, and that you can produce the report by the deadline.
- In a project budget, ask for everything you will need to do a good job. Research current cost figures so yours are in line.
- Business plans need to pay particular attention to market potential and financial forecasts.
- In a proposal for funding, stress the needs your project will meet. Show how your project will help fulfill the goals of the organization you are asking for funds.
- Progress reports let people know how you are coming on a project.
- Progress reports may be organized by chronology, by task, or to support a recommendation.
- Use positive emphasis in progress reports to create an image of yourself as a capable, confident worker.

CHAPTER 17 Exercises and Problems

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

17.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. What are six questions a good proposal should answer? (LO 17-1)
2. What are some guidelines for preparing a budget for a proposal? (LO 17-2)
3. What are the differences between chronological and task progress reports? (LO 17-3)

17.2 Writing a Proposal for a Student Report

Write a proposal to your instructor to do the research for a formal or informal report.

The headings and the questions in the section titled "Proposals for Class Research Projects" are your RFP; be sure to answer every question and to use the headings exactly as stated in the RFP. Exception: where alternate heads are listed, you may choose one, combine the two ("Qualifications and Facilities"), or treat them as separate headings in separate categories.

17.3 Proposing a Change

No organization is perfect, especially when it comes to communication. Propose a change that would improve communication within your organization. The change can be specific to your unit or can apply to the whole organization; it can relate to how important information is distributed, who has access to important information, how information is accessed, or any other change in communication practices that you see as having a benefit. Direct your proposal to the person or committee with the power to authorize the change.

17.4 Proposing to Undertake a Research Project

Pick a project you would like to study whose results could be used by your organization. Write a proposal to your supervisor requesting time away from other duties to do the research. Show how your research (whatever its outcome) will be useful to the organization.

17.5 Writing a Proposal for Funding for a Nonprofit Group

Pick a nonprofit group you care about. Examples include professional organizations, a charitable group, a community organization, or your own college or university.

As your instructor directs,

a. Check the web or a directory of foundations to find one that makes grants to groups like yours. Brainstorm a list of businesses that might be willing to give money for specific projects. Check to see whether state or national levels of your organization make grants to local chapters.
b. Write a proposal to obtain funds for a special project your group could undertake if it had the money. Address your proposal to a specific organization.
c. Write a proposal to obtain operating funds or money to buy something your group would like to have. Address your proposal to a specific organization.

17.6 Writing a Sales Proposal

Pick a project that you could do for a local company or government office. Examples include

- Creating a brochure or web page.
- Revising form letters.
- Conducting a training program.
- Writing a newsletter or an annual report.
- Developing a marketing plan.
- Providing plant care, catering, or janitorial services.

Write a proposal specifying what you could do and providing a detailed budget and work schedule.

As your instructor directs,

a. Phone someone in the organization to talk about its needs and what you could offer.
b. Write an individual proposal.
c. Join with other students in the class to create a team proposal.
d. Present your proposal orally.

17.7 Presenting a Stockholder Proposal

Visit the websites of the following companies and locate their latest proxy statements or reports. These are generally linked from the “about us/company information–investor relations” or “investors” pages. Find shareholder proposals under the heading “proposals requiring your vote,” “stockholder proposals,” or “shareholder proposals.”

- Ford Motor Company
- Citigroup
- AT&T
- J. P. Morgan Chase & Co.
- Southwest Airlines
- Home Depot
- Procter & Gamble
- Boeing
- Google
- Dow Chemical

As a team, select one proposal, and the management response following it, and give an oral presentation answering these questions:

1. What is the problem discussed in the proposal?
2. What is the rationale given for the urgency to solve the problem?
3. How does the proposal seek to solve it?
4. What benefits does the proposal mention that will accrue from the solution?
5. What is the management response to the proposal and what are the reasons given for the response? Does the management response strike you as justified? Why or why not?

Hint: it may help you to do some research on the topic of the proposal.

17.8 Writing a Progress Report to Your Superior

Describe the progress you have made this week or this month on projects you have been assigned. You may describe progress you have made individually, or progress your unit has made as a team.

17.9 Writing a Progress Report

Write a memo to your instructor summarizing your progress on your report.

In the introductory paragraph, summarize your progress in terms of your schedule and your goals. Under a heading titled *Work Completed,* list what you have already done. (This is a chance to toot your own horn: if you have solved problems creatively, say so. You can also describe obstacles you've encountered that you have not yet solved.) Under *Work to Be Completed,* list what you still have to do. If you are more than two days behind the schedule you submitted with your proposal, include a revised schedule, listing the completion dates for the activities that remain.

17.10 Writing a Progress Report for a Team Report

Write a memo to your instructor summarizing your team's progress.

In the introductory paragraph, summarize the team's progress in terms of its goals and its schedule, your own progress on the tasks for which you are responsible, and your feelings about the team's work thus far.

Under a heading titled *Work Completed,* list what has already been done. Be most specific about what you yourself have done. Describe briefly the chronology of team activities: number, time, and length of meetings; topics discussed and decisions made at meetings.

If you have solved problems creatively, say so. You can also describe obstacles you've encountered that you have not yet solved. In this section, you can also comment on problems that the team has faced and whether or not they've been solved. You can comment on things that have gone well and have contributed to the smooth functioning of the team.

Under *Work to Be Completed,* list what you personally and other team members still have to do. Indicate the schedule for completing the work.

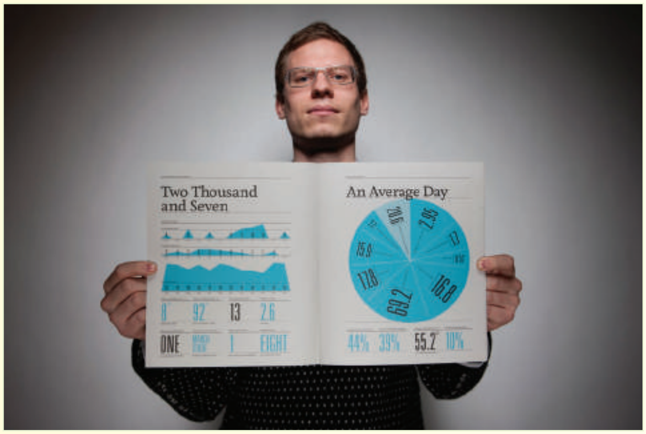
CHAPTER 18

Analyzing Information and Writing Reports

Chapter Outline

Newsworthy Communication

Reporting on Life



Each year, most publicly held companies produce annual reports. Because the reports can affect stock prices and credit ratings, companies take great care to produce detailed, attractive, and persuasive reports that fit within government guidelines.

Nicholas Felton, a graphic designer in New York City, has taken the idea of an annual report one step farther. Each year since 2005, he has produced a personal annual report, filled with the minute details of his life—encounters with other individuals, places he traveled, restaurants and shops he visited, and so on. With custom-designed charts and graphs, Felton tells his own story of the previous year in "The Feltron Annual Report," which he produces as a printed brochure and sells on his website.

Felton's creative approach to cataloging his life in an annual report has caught the attention of others. A 2010 *New York Times* profile of him reported that other people have begun similar personal data collections. In fact, Felton got so many requests that he started a website to help people track their movements and record their personal data.

"Like Nicholas Felton, companies then compile the data into charts, graphs, and text that will help their readers understand and interpret the data."

Companies gather data for months or even years to produce reports. They analyze the data, looking for patterns that will shape the narratives of their final documents. And, like Nicholas Felton, companies then compile the data into charts, graphs, and text that will help their readers understand and interpret the data.

Sources: "Feltron," Nicholas Felton, accessed June 16, 2011, http://feltron.com/; and "An Annual Report on One Man's Life," *Bits* (blog), *New York Times*, February 9, 2010, http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/09/an-annual-report-on-one-mans-life/.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know

LO 18-1 Ways to analyze data, information, and logic.

LO 18-2 How to choose information for reports.

LO 18-3 Different ways to organize reports.

LO 18-4 How to present information effectively in reports.

LO 18-5 How to prepare the different components of formal reports.

Careful analysis, smooth writing, and effective document design work together to make effective reports, whether you're writing a 2½-page memo report or a 250-page formal report complete with all the report components.

Chapter 15 covered the first two steps in writing a report:

1. Define the problem.
2. Gather the necessary data and information.

This chapter covers the last three steps:

3. Analyze the data and information.
4. Organize the information.
5. Write the report.

USING YOUR TIME EFFICIENTLY

To use your time efficiently, think about the parts of the report before you begin writing. Much of the introduction can come from your proposal (see Chapter 17), with only minor revisions. You can write six sections even before you've finished your research: Purpose, Scope, Assumptions, Methods, Criteria, and Definitions. Mock up tables and figures early using the guidelines in Chapter 16.

The background reading for your proposal can form the first draft of your list of references. Save a copy of your questionnaire or interview questions to use as an appendix. You can print appendixes before the final report is ready if you number their pages separately. Appendix A pages would be A-1, A-2, and so forth; Appendix B pages would be B-1, B-2, and so forth.

You can write the title page and the transmittal as soon as you know what your recommendation will be.

After you've analyzed your data, write the body, the conclusions and recommendations, and the executive summary. Prepare a draft of the table of contents and the list of illustrations.

When you write a long report, list all the sections (headings) that your report will have. Mark those that are most important to your reader and your logic, and spend most of your time on them. Write the important sections early. That way, you won't spend all your time on Background or History of the Problem. Instead, you'll get to the heart of your report.

ANALYZING DATA AND INFORMATION FOR REPORTS LO 18-1

Good reports begin with good data. Analyzing the data you have gathered is essential to produce the tight logic needed for a good report. Analyze your data with healthy skepticism. Check to see that they correspond with expectations or other existing data. If they don't, check for well-supported explanations of the difference.

Be suspicious of all data, even from reputable sources. Ask yourself "How do they know?" or "What could prevent that data from being right?"

- If you read in the paper that 300,000 people attended a demonstration at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., ask yourself how they know. Unless they were able to get a photo from a satellite, they are estimating, and such estimates have been known to vary by 100,000 or more, depending on whether the estimator wants a larger or smaller crowd.
- Want to know how many centenarians live in the United States? Surely the Census Bureau knows? Well, not exactly. An accurate count is obscured by lack of birth records, low literacy levels, cognitive disabilities, and the human desire to hit a milestone number.
- Did you read in a job-hunt article that U.S. workers average seven career changes during their working years? That number is a myth. It has been attributed to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics so many times that the bureau now posts a disclaimer on its website. The bureau does not estimate lifetime career changes for a simple reason: no consensus exists for the definition of a career change. Is a promotion a career change? Is a layoff, a temporary subsistence job, and a return to work 0, 1, or 2 career changes?
- Have you heard that Thanksgiving is the busiest travel day of the year? Actually, no day in November has made the top 35 busiest airline days for years, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation (busiest days occur in the summer, when school is out). Even for those traveling by car, July 4, Labor Day, and Christmas are busier holidays.[1]
- Sometimes the discrepancies are not fun facts. Some states are meeting No Child Left Behind federal mandates for continued funding by lowering grade-level proficiency standards (see sidebar on this page).[2]

Spreadsheets can be particularly troublesome. Cell results derived by formulas can be subtly, or grossly, wrong by incorrectly defining ranges, for example. It is easy to generate results that are impossible, such as sums that exceed known totals. Always have an estimate of the result of a calculation. Using spreadsheets, you can easily be wrong by a factor of 10, 100, or even 1,000. Studies have found up to 80% of spreadsheets have errors, such as misplaced decimal points, transposed digits, and wrong signs. Some of these errors are enormous. Fidelity's Magellan fund's dividend estimate spreadsheet was $2.6 billion off when a sign was wrongly transposed from minus to plus. Fannie Mae, the financer of home mortgages, once discovered a $1.136 billion error in total shareholder equity, again from a spreadsheet mistake.[3]

Try to keep ballpark figures, estimates of what the numbers should be, in mind as you look at numerical data. Question surprises before accepting them.

Analyzing data can be hard even for experts. Numerous studies exist in scholarly journals challenging the data-based conclusions of earlier articles. One example is the fate of unmarried, college-educated women over 30. A famous *Newsweek* cover story, "Too Late for Prince Charming?" reported the Yale and Harvard study that suggested such women had only a 20% chance of finding husbands, and only a 2.6% chance by the time they reached 40. Twenty years later an economist at the University of Washington examined 30 years of census data. Her figures for the decade of the original study showed that women aged 40–44 with advanced degrees were only 25% less likely to be married than comparably aged women with just high school diplomas. By 2000, those women with postcollege education were slightly more likely to be married than those who had finished only high school.[4]

Changing Standards

Under the No Child Left Behind law, every child in the United States must become proficient in reading and math by 2014. Schools that fail to show consistent improvement risk losing funding from both state and federal education programs.

Some states, according to research by the U.S. Department of Education, have been meeting the goals of NCLB in a unique way: by changing what it means to be proficient. The NCLB law requires states to set standards and measure achievement. As the 2014 goal deadline approaches, however, states are changing those standards to make sure their schools meet the requirements of the law.

Between 2005 and 2007, fifteen states lowered the standards for fourth and eighth graders on at least one subject test. Eight other states raised their standards. The result? *Proficient* means something different in every state. According to these different standards, a proficient math student in Massachusetts would be five or six years more advanced than a student in the same grade in Tennessee.

Do you think it is ethical for states to lower their standards for proficiency? Would your opinion change if the states were doing this so they could continue to receive money badly needed for educating children? Is raising standards fair?

Adapted from John Hechinger, "Some States Drop Testing Bar," *Wall Street Journal*, October 30, 2009, A3.

Evaluating the Source of the Data

When evaluating the source of your data, question the authors, objectivity, completeness, and currency of the source.

Identify the **authors.** Which people or organization provided the data? What credentials do they have? If you want national figures on wages and unemployment, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics would be a good source. But if you want the figures for your local town, your local Chamber of Commerce might be a more credible source. Use the strategies outlined in Chapter 15 to evaluate web sources.

Assess the **objectivity** of the source. Does the source give evidence to support claims? Is the surrounding prose professional and unbiased? If the subject supports multiple viewpoints, are other opinions referenced or explained? When the source has a vested interest in the results, scrutinize the data with special care. To analyze a company's financial prospects, use independent information as well as the company's annual report and press releases.

Drug and medical device companies, and the researchers funded by them, keep appearing in the news with reports of undue influence. Duke University researchers checked 746 studies of heart stents published in one year in medical journals. They found that 83% of the papers did not disclose whether authors were paid consultants for companies, even though many journals require that information. Even worse, 72% of the papers did not say who funded the research.[5] A study in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* noted that positive studies of antidepressant trials got published and negative ones did not: "According to the published literature, it appeared that 94% of the trials conducted were positive. By contrast, the FDA analysis showed that 51% were positive."[6]

If your report is based upon secondary data from library and online research, look at the sample, the sample size, and the exact wording of questions to see what the data actually measure. (See Chapter 15 for more information on sampling and surveying.) Does the sample have a built-in bias? A survey of city library users may uncover information about users, but it may not find what keeps other people away from the library.

Try to assess the **completeness** of the data. What are they based on? Two reputable sources can give different figures because they take their data from different places. Suppose you wanted to know employment figures. The Labor Department's monthly estimate of nonfarm payroll jobs is the most popular, but some economists like Automatic Data Processing's monthly estimate, which is based on the roughly 20 million paychecks it processes for clients. Both survey approximately 400,000 workplaces, but the Labor Department selects employers to mirror the U.S. economy, while ADP's sample is skewed, with too many construction firms and too few of the largest employers. On the other hand, the government has trouble counting jobs at businesses that are opening and closing, and some employers do not return the survey. (Both organizations do attempt to adjust their numbers to compensate accurately.)[7]

Also check the **currency** of the data. Population figures should be from the 2010 census, not the 2000 one. Technology figures in particular need to be current. Do remember, however, that some large data sets are one to two years behind in being analyzed. Such is the case for some government figures, also. If you are doing a report in 2012 that requires national education data from the Department of Education, for instance, 2011 data may not even be fully collected. And even the 2010 data may not be fully analyzed, so indeed the 2009 data may be the most current available.

Measuring Innovation

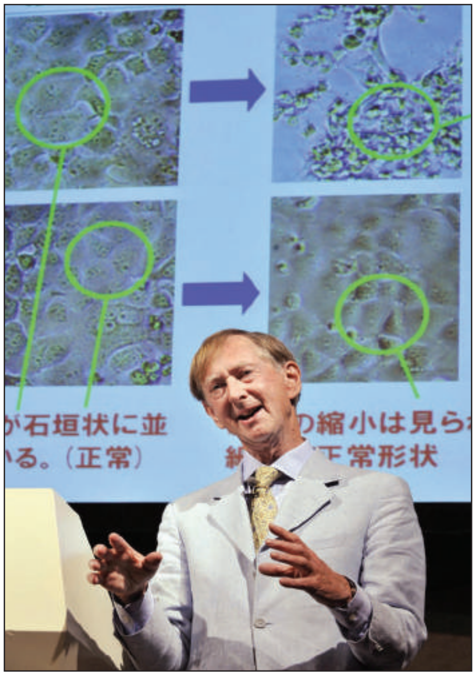
It is commonly accepted wisdom that one measure of a company's innovation is the number of patents it commands. In recent years, however, research has shown that companies increasingly use patents as a defensive strategy rather than a strategy for innovation.

A Boston University study found that software companies with more patents actually reduced their research and development expenditure vis-à-vis sales. Additionally, with companies vying for patents for the smallest addition to product features, patents may be a dubious measure of innovation.

Recent studies on patents also show a growing trend of acquiring patents on design or form of products rather than their technical aspects. Companies such as Samsung Electronics and Nike have earned a name for themselves for innovation by acquiring patents based on product design.

Compared to patents themselves, patent citations, or the references to a company's patent by patents of other companies, may be a better metric of innovation. A high number of patent citations may show that the company's patent truly represents innovation and may be licensed for a fee or royalties. Companies such as Procter & Gamble have adopted this strategy.

Adapted from Jena McGregor, "Are Patents the Measure of Innovation?" *BusinessWeek*, May 4, 2007, http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/content/may2007/id20070504_323562.htm.



Sharp uses what it calls "academic marketing" to sell air purifiers in Japan. Ads in Japanese newspapers and magazines provide data, diagrams, and charts in support of Sharp's plasmacluster technology.

Source: Daisuke Wakabayashi, "Using 'Academic Marketing' to Sell Air Purifiers," *Wall Street Journal,* December 26, 2008, B4.

Analyzing Numbers

Many reports analyze numbers—either numbers from databases and sources or numbers from a survey you have conducted. The numerical information, properly analyzed, can make a clear case in support of a recommendation.

Recognize that even authorities can differ on the numbers they offer, or on the interpretations of the same data sets. Researchers from the United Nations and Johns Hopkins University differed on their estimates of Iraqi deaths in the war by 500% (see sidebar on this page).[8] The cover story of the January 4, 2008, *National Journal* was an explanation of how the two estimates could vary so wildly (research design and execution flaws; sampling error; lack of transparency with the data).[9] You will be best able to judge the quality of data if you know how it was collected.

In their books, *The Tipping Point* and *Freakonomics,* Malcolm Gladwell and Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner reach different conclusions about the data on dropping crime rates for New York City. Gladwell attributes the drop to the crackdown by the new police chief on even minor crimes such as graffiti and public drunkenness. Levitt and Dubner first explain why the cause was not a crackdown on crime (the years don't match well; other cities also experienced the drop) and attribute it to the legalization of abortion (at the time of the crime drop the first wave of children born after Roe v. Wade was hitting late teen years and thus prime crime time; that group was short on the category most likely to become criminal: unwanted children). They also provide corroborating evidence from other countries.[10]

When you have multiple numbers for salaries or other items, an early analysis step is to figure the average (or mean), the median, and the range. The **average** or **mean** is calculated by adding up all the figures and dividing by

Getting the Data Right

A 2006 report by Johns Hopkins University claimed that 655,000 Iraqis had died in the war in Iraq, a figure that diverged wildly from other estimates—sometimes more than 1,000%. The Hopkins figure is 500% more than that of the United Nations. Such a difference from other reports calls into question the accuracy of the Hopkins report.

To understand why the figure is so much higher than other research reports, it is important to consider how the data were gathered. The Hopkins researchers used cluster sampling for interviews, a methodology that makes sense given the country's war-zone status. Researchers randomly selected neighborhoods and then conducted door-to-door interviews with "clusters" of individuals from within those neighborhoods. Such a technique saves time and money and is common in research within developing countries.

But the key to this kind of technique is to use enough cluster points. A lack of cluster points can mean that the population sampled isn't representative of the population in Iraq. The Hopkins researchers did not use enough cluster points. In addition, the Hopkins researchers didn't gather demographic data from their participants for comparison to census data. Doing so would have added to the believability of their results.

Getting the data right is important because numbers can have a significant impact on decisions and policies. In terms of casualties, the decisions made based on the numbers reported have an impact on millions of Iraqis and Americans.

Adapted from Stephen E. Moore, "655,000 War Dead?" *Wall Street Journal,* October 18, 2006, A20.

the number of samples. The **mode** is the number that occurs most often. The **median** is the number that is exactly in the middle in a ranked list of observations. When you have an even number, the median will be the average of the two numbers in the center of the list. The **range** is the difference between the high and low figures for that variable.

Averages are particularly susceptible to a single extreme figure. In 2007, three different surveys reported the average cost of a wedding at nearly $30,000. Many articles picked up that figure because weddings are big business. However, the median cost in those three surveys was only about $15,000. And even that is probably on the high side, since the samples were convenience samples for a big wedding website, a bride magazine, and a maker of wedding invitations, and thus probably did not include smaller, less elaborate weddings.[11]

Often it's useful to simplify numerical data: rounding it off, combining similar elements. Then you can see that one number is, for instance, about 2½ times another. Graphing it can also help you see patterns in your data. (See Chapter 16 for a full discussion of tables and graphs as a way of analyzing and presenting numerical data.) Look at the raw data as well as at percentages. For example, a 50% increase in shoplifting incidents sounds alarming. An increase from two to three shoplifting incidents sounds less so but could be the same data, just stated differently.

Analyzing Words

Be sure you are clear about definitions on which data are based. For instance, China and the United States are jockeying for first place in number of Internet users. Different sources give different results, and one reason is that they are defining "Internet user" in different ways: Is a user anyone who has access to the Internet at home, school, or work? What about a four-year-old child who has access to the Internet through her family but does not use it? Is anyone who has used the Internet only once in the past six months a user?[12]

State accurately what your data show. For example, suppose that you've asked people who use computers if they could be as productive without them and the overwhelming majority say *no.* This finding shows that people *believe* that computers make them more productive, but it does not prove that they in fact are more productive.

Also try to measure words against numbers. A study of annual reports in the United Kingdom found a large increase (375%) in narrative information and noted that accounting narratives were being used to manage impressions of annual performance.[13] Numbers require interpretation and context for easy comprehension.

Analyzing Patterns

Patterns can help you draw meaning from your data. If you have library sources, on which points do experts agree? Which disagreements can be explained by early theories or numbers that have now changed? Which disagreements are the result of different interpretations of the same data? Which are the result of having different values and criteria? In your interviews and surveys, what patterns do you see?

- Have things changed over time?
- Does geography account for differences?
- Do demographics such as gender, age, or income account for differences?

Sun and Statistics

Recent research suggests that patients with low levels of vitamin D, which can be gained from moderate exposure to the sun, have higher risks of cancer, heart disease, and autoimmune disorders.

The Indoor Tanning Association quickly jumped at this new finding. They used their interpretation of the statistics about low vitamin D levels as a way to promote indoor tanning, suggesting that UV rays can prevent cancer.

The medical community was outraged at the ITA's twisted approach to the statistics. Doctor Lichtenfeld of the American Cancer Society suggested that UV ray promotion was "like recommending smoking to reduce stress." The ITA advertisements failed to suggest there were any downsides to tanning, such as the link between prolonged exposure to UV rays and melanoma. They also omitted that the tanner the skin, the longer it takes to absorb vitamin D.

How ethical is the ITA's use of research statistics? Would you be more likely to tan indoors if you saw one of their advertisements?

Adapted from Pat Wingert, "Teens, Tans, and Truth," *Newsweek,* May 19, 2008, 42–43.

- What similarities do you see?
- What differences do you see?
- What confirms your hunches?
- What surprises you?

Many descriptions of sales trends are descriptions of patterns derived from data.

Checking Your Logic

Check that your data actually measure what you want them to. A common belief is that satisfied customers will be repeat customers. But a *Harvard Business Review* study found little relationship between the two groups; customers who said on surveys they were satisfied did not necessarily make repeat purchases. Instead, the best predictor of repeat purchases was that the customer would recommend the company to others.[14]

Another common logic error is confusing causation with correlation. *Causation* means that one thing causes or produces another. *Correlation* means that two things happening at the same time are positively or negatively related. One might cause the other, but both might be caused by a third. For instance, consider a study that shows pulling all-nighters hurts grades: students who pull all-nighters get lower grades than those who do not pull all-nighters. But maybe it is not the all-nighter causing the poor grades; maybe students who need all-nighters are weaker students to begin with.

Correlation and causation are easy to confuse, but the difference is important. The Census Bureau publishes figures showing that greater education levels are associated with greater incomes. A widely held assumption is that more education causes greater earnings. But might people from richer backgrounds seek more education? Or might some third factor, such as intelligence, lead to both greater education and higher income?[15]

Some spurious correlations are amusing. The *Wall Street Journal* reported with tongue in cheek the Tiger Woods phenomenon. During the 11 years of 1997–2008, the April bond market performed positively when Woods won the Masters golf tournament, and negatively when he did not.[16]

Consciously search for at least three possible causes for each phenomenon you've observed and at least three possible solutions for each problem. The more possibilities you brainstorm, the more likely you are to find good options. In your report, discuss in detail only the possibilities that will occur to readers and that you think are the real reasons and the best solutions.

When you have identified causes of the problem or the best solutions, check these ideas against reality. Can you find support in references or in numbers? Can you answer claims of people who interpret the data in other ways?

Make the nature of your evidence clear to your reader. Do you have observations that you yourself have made? Or do you have inferences based on observations or data collected by others? Old data may not be good guides to future action.

If you can't prove the claim you originally hoped to make, modify your conclusions to fit your data. Even when your market test is a failure or your experiment disproves your hypothesis, you can still write a useful report.

- Identify changes that might yield a different result. For example, selling the product at a lower price might enable the company to sell enough units.
- Divide the discussion to show what part of the test succeeded.

Charity Data

Many people believe they "know" "facts" and figures that are not so. When you encounter these false beliefs, you need to be sure you provide reliable data to counteract them. One area subject to common misperceptions is charity donations. Below are some common myths paired with realities.

Myth: Most charitable giving goes to help the needy. Reality: Less than one-third of individually donated money to nonprofits goes to the economically disadvantaged. And only 8% provides basic needs like food and shelter.

Myth: The wealthy look after those in need. Reality: Only about a quarter of their donations go to the poor, and only 4% to basic needs.

Myth: Religious donations go to those in need. Reality: Less than one-fifth of money donated goes to the poor.

Myth: Americans give generously to international causes. Reality: Only 8% of US individual donations support any international cause whatsoever.

Adapted from Sheryl Sandberg [board member of Google.org, Google's philanthropic arm], "The Charity Gap," *Wall Street Journal,* April 4, 2007, A15.

Movie Rankings

In late 2009, James Cameron's *Avatar* took the worldwide box office by storm. It set records in the United States and overseas to become the top-grossing movie of all time, with over $2.7 billion in ticket sales. That huge number, however, reflects higher ticket prices and charges for 3-D glasses that distort the movie's place in history.

For many years, movie studios have focused on box office grosses as evidence of success. But the ever-increasing grosses do not take into account inflation, or rising population figures. Some have tried to even the playing field by estimating the number of tickets sold or adjusting ticket prices for inflation. With those revised numbers, *Avatar* is no longer the top all-time grossing movie. In fact, it comes in at number 14. The top-grossing movie of all time remains 1939's best picture, *Gone with the Wind.* But even box office numbers adjusted for inflation don't tell a completely accurate story, because popular older movies like *Gone with the Wind* were released in theaters every few years until the advent of home video.

Like other comparative lists, the all-time worldwide box office rankings depend on how the numbers are counted.

Adapted from Carl Bialik, "What It Takes for a Movie to Be No. 1," *Wall Street Journal,* January 30–31, 2010, A2; and "All Time Box Office Adjusted for Ticket Price Inflation," *Box Office Mojo,* accessed June 16, 2011, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/adjusted.htm.

As employees become buried in paperwork, it becomes even more important to select carefully and interpret clearly the information to be included in reports.

- Discuss circumstances that may have affected the results.
- Summarize your negative findings in progress reports to let readers down gradually and to give them a chance to modify the research design.
- Remember that negative results aren't always disappointing to the audience. For example, the people who commissioned a feasibility report may be relieved to have an impartial outsider confirm their suspicions that a project isn't feasible.

A common myth associated with numbers is that numbers are more objective than words: "numbers don't lie." But as the above examples show, numbers can be subject to widely varying interpretation.

CHOOSING INFORMATION FOR REPORTS LO 18-2

Don't put information in reports just because you have it or just because it took you a long time to find it. Instead, choose the information that your reader needs to make a decision. NASA received widespread criticism over the way it released results from an $11.3 million federal air safety study. NASA published 16,208 pages of findings with no guide to understanding them. Critics maintain the lapse was deliberate because the data contained hundreds of cases of pilot error.[17]

If you know your readers well, you may already know their priorities. For example, the supervisor of a call center knows that management will be looking for certain kinds of performance data including costs, workload handled, and customer satisfaction. To write regular reports, the supervisor could set up a format in which it is easy to see how well the center is doing in each of these areas. Using the same format month after month simplifies the reader's task.

If you don't know your readers, you may be able to get a sense of what is important by showing them a tentative table of contents (a list of your headings) and asking, "Have I included everything?" When you cannot contact an external audience, show your draft to colleagues and superiors in your organization.

How much information you need to include depends on whether your audience is likely to be supportive, neutral, or skeptical. If your audience is likely to be pleased with your research, you can present your findings directly. If your audience will not be pleased, you will need to explain your thinking in a persuasive way and provide substantial evidence.

You must also decide whether to put information in the body of the report or in appendixes. Put material in the body of the report if it is crucial to your proof, if your most significant readers will want to see it there, or if it is short. (Something less than half a page won't interrupt the reader.) Frequently decision makers want your analysis of the data in the report body rather than the actual data itself. Supporting data that will be examined later by specialists such as accountants, lawyers, and engineers are generally put in an appendix.

Anything that a careful reader will want but that is not crucial to your proof can go in an appendix. Appendixes can include

- A copy of a survey questionnaire or interview questions.
- A tally of responses to each question in a survey.
- A copy of responses to open-ended questions in a survey.
- A transcript of an interview.
- Complex tables and visuals.
- Technical data.
- Previous reports on the same subject.

ORGANIZING INFORMATION IN REPORTS LO 18-3

Most sets of data can be organized in several logical ways. Choose the way that makes your information easiest for the audience to understand and use. If you were compiling a directory of all the employees at your plant, for example, alphabetizing by last name would be far more useful than listing people by height, social security number, or length of service with the company, although those organizing principles might make sense in lists for other purposes.

The following three guidelines will help you choose the arrangement that will be the most useful for your audience:

1. **Process your information before you present it to your audience.** The order in which you became aware of information usually is not the best order to present it to your audience.
2. **When you have lots of information, group it into three to seven categories.** The average person's short-term memory can hold only seven chunks, though the chunks can be of any size.[18] By grouping your information into seven categories (or fewer), you make your report easier to comprehend.
3. **Work with the audience's expectations, not against them.** Introduce ideas in the overview in the order in which you will discuss them.

Basic Patterns for Organizing Information

Organize information in a way that will work best for your audience. Here are basic patterns for organizing information that are particularly useful in reports:

- Comparison/contrast.
- Problem-solution.
- Elimination of alternatives.
- SWOT analysis.
- General to particular or particular to general.
- Geographic or spatial.
- Functional.
- Chronological.

Tell Them a Story

To persuade people, tell them a story or anecdote that proves your point.

Experiments show that people are more likely to believe a point and more likely to be committed to it when points were made by examples, stories, and case studies. Stories alone were more effective than a combination of stories and statistics; the combination was more effective than statistics alone. In another experiment, attitude changes lasted longer when the audience had read stories than when they had only read numbers. Research suggests that stories are more persuasive because people remember them.

In many cases, you'll need to provide statistics or numbers to convince the careful reader that your anecdote is a representative example. But give the story first. It's more persuasive.

Adapted from Dean C. Kazoleas, "A Comparison of the Persuasive Effectiveness of Qualitative versus Quantitative Evidence," *Communication Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 40–50; and Joanne Martin and Melanie E. Powers, "Truth of Corporate Propaganda," in *Organizational Symbolism*, ed. Louis R. Pondy, et al. (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1983), 97–107.

A Plan to Fail

In the days following the tragic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, BP assured the U.S. government and conservation experts that it was acting in accordance with its 582-page emergency spill response plan. As the details of the plan came to light, however, they revealed deep problems with the company's planning.

For example, the plan, written in 2009, lists Professor Peter Lutz as a wildlife expert. Unfortunately, the professor died in 2005. Additionally, the plan gives detailed instructions on treating sea creatures affected by spills, including walruses, sea otters, sea lions, and seals—none of which live in the Gulf of Mexico.

According to an AP study, the response plan did not address obvious problems and contained serious errors and omissions. Consequently, when the crude oil began to gush into the gulf, BP's employees were left scrambling for solutions without guidance or resources.

Adapted from Justin Pritchard, "Spill Response Plan Was Severely Flawed," *Des Moines Register,* June 10, 2010, 1A.

Any of these patterns can be used for a whole report or for only part of it.

Comparison/contrast Many reports use comparison/contrast sections within a larger report pattern. Comparison/contrast can also be the purpose of the whole report. Recommendation studies usually use this pattern. You can focus either on the alternatives you are evaluating or on the criteria you use. See Figure 18.1 for ways to organize these two patterns in a report.

Focus on the alternatives when

- One alternative is clearly superior.
- The criteria are hard to separate.
- The audience will intuitively grasp the alternative as a whole rather than as the sum of its parts.

Focus on the criteria when

- The superiority of one alternative to another depends on the relative weight assigned to various criteria. Perhaps Alternative A is best if we are most concerned about Criterion 1, cost, but worst if we are most concerned about Criterion 2, proximity to target market.
- The criteria are easy to separate.
- The audience wants to compare and contrast the options independently of your recommendation.

Figure 18.1 Two Ways to Organize a Comparison/Contrast Report

Focus on alternatives	
Alternative A	Opening a New Store on Campus
Criterion 1	Cost of Renting Space
Criterion 2	Proximity to Target Market
Criterion 3	Competition from Similar Stores
Alternative B	Opening a New Store in the Suburban Mall
Criterion 1	Cost of Renting Space
Criterion 2	Proximity to Target Market
Criterion 3	Competition from Similar Stores

Focus on criteria	
Criterion 1	Cost of Renting Space for the New Store
Alternative A	Cost of Campus Locations
Alternative B	Cost of Locations in the Suburban Mall
Criterion 2	Proximity to Target Market
Alternative A	Proximity on Campus
Alternative B	Proximity in the Suburban Mall
Criterion 3	Competition from Similar Stores
Alternative A	Competing Stores on Campus
Alternative B	Competing Stores in the Suburban Mall

A variation of the comparison/contrast pattern is the **pro-and-con pattern.** In this pattern, under each specific heading, give the arguments for and against that alternative. A report recommending new plantings for a university quadrangle uses the pro-and-con pattern:

> Advantages of Monocropping
>   High Productivity
>   Visual Symmetry
> Disadvantages of Monocropping
>   Danger of Pest Exploitation
>   Visual Monotony

This pattern is least effective when you want to de-emphasize the disadvantages of a proposed solution, for it does not permit you to bury the disadvantages between neutral or positive material.

Problem-solution Identify the problem; explain its background or history; discuss its extent and seriousness; identify its causes. Discuss the factors (criteria) that affect the decision. Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of possible solutions. Conclusions and recommendation can go either first or last, depending on the preferences of your audience. This pattern works well when the audience is neutral.

A report recommending ways to eliminate solidification of a granular bleach during production uses the problem–solution pattern:

> Recommended Reformulation for Vibe Bleach
> Problems in Maintaining Vibe's Granular Structure
>   Solidification during Storage and Transportation
>   Customer Complaints about "Blocks" of Vibe in Boxes
> Why Vibe Bleach "Cakes"
>   Vibe's Formula
>   The Manufacturing Process
>   The Chemical Process of Solidification
> Modifications Needed to Keep Vibe Flowing Freely

Elimination of alternatives After discussing the problem and its causes, discuss the *impractical* solutions first, showing why they will not work. End with the most practical solution. This pattern works well when the solutions the audience is likely to favor will not work, while the solution you recommend is likely to be perceived as expensive, intrusive, or radical.

A report on toy commercials, "The Effect of TV Ads on Children," eliminates alternatives:

> Alternative Solutions to Problems in TV Toy Ads
>   Leave Ads Unchanged
>   Mandate School Units on Advertising
>   Ask the Industry to Regulate Itself
>   Give FCC Authority to Regulate TV Ads Directed at Children

SWOT Analysis A SWOT analysis is frequently used to evaluate a proposed project, expansion, or new venture. The analysis discusses **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats of the proposed action. Strengths and weaknesses are usually factors within the organization; opportunities and threats are usually factors external to the organization.

Cupid by the Numbers

Online dating sites collect mountains of data about their users—interests, hobbies, demographics, and characteristics—all of which are used to match users with potential partners. One site, however, is using all of that data to do more.

OkCupid, founded by four Harvard-educated mathematicians, maintains a blog called OkTrends, which mines user data to note interesting, amusing, and controversial trends. By running computer calculations and comparisons, the blog has compiled features like "Rape Fantasies and Hygiene by State," and "How Your Race Affects the Messages You Get."

While some of the data presented on OkTrends is useful to OkCupid's users (like how to pose for a profile picture and what greetings to use), much of it is posted simply to show trends and interesting facts (like iPhone users have more sex than other smartphone users). It also serves to drive traffic to the OkCupid site—visits have doubled since the OkTrends blog was introduced.

Adapted from Jason Del Ray, "In Love with Numbers: Getting the Most Out of Your Data," *Inc.*, October 2010, 105–6.

Annual Reports

Report Watch posts annual lists of the best annual reports. They also post tips for creating good annual reports:

- Start with an eye-catching, interest-grabbing cover.
- Live up to the cover's promise in the body of the report.
- Don't overemphasize or underplay important points
- Offer a longer-term, strategic view of the future in addition to information about the past year.
- Use clear headings and bullets to help readers who skim.
- Use a clear, readable style.
- Make all visuals striking, relevant, and creative.

Adapted from Report Watch, "Report Essentials," Report watch, accessed June 16, 2011, http://www.reportwatch.net/reportessentials/.

A report recommending an in-house training department uses a SWOT analysis to support its recommendation:

Advantages of In-House Training
Disadvantages of In-House Training
Competitor Training Businesses
Opportunities for Training Expansion

This report switches the order of threats (Competitor Training Businesses) and opportunities to end with positive information.

General to particular or particular to general General to particular starts with the problem as it affects the organization or as it manifests itself in general and then moves to a discussion of the parts of the problem and solutions to each of these parts. Particular to general starts with the problem as the audience defines it and moves to larger issues of which the problem is a part. Both are good patterns when you need to redefine the audience's perception of the problem to solve it effectively.

The directors of a student volunteer organization, VIP, have defined their problem as "not enough volunteers." After studying the subject, the writer is convinced that problems in training, supervision, and campus awareness are responsible for both a high dropout rate and a low recruitment rate. The general-to-particular pattern helps the audience see the problem in a new way:

Why VIP Needs More Volunteers
Why Some VIP Volunteers Drop Out
    Inadequate Training
    Inadequate Supervision
    Feeling That VIP Requires Too Much Time
    Feeling That the Work Is Too Emotionally Demanding
Why Some Students Do Not Volunteer
    Feeling That VIP Requires Too Much Time
    Feeling That the Work Is Too Emotionally Demanding
    Preference for Volunteering with Another Organization
    Lack of Knowledge about VIP Opportunities
How VIP Volunteers Are Currently Trained and Supervised
Time Demands on VIP Volunteers
Emotional Demands on VIP Volunteers
Ways to Increase Volunteer Commitment and Motivation
    Improving Training and Supervision
    Improving the Flexibility of Volunteers' Hours
    Providing Emotional Support to Volunteers
    Providing More Information about Community Needs and VIP Services

Geographic or spatial In a geographic or spatial pattern, you discuss problems and solutions by units according to their physical arrangement. Move from office to office, building to building, factory to factory, state to state, region to region, etc.

A sales report uses a geographic pattern of organization:

Sales Have Risen in the European Community
Sales Are Flat in Eastern Europe
Sales Have Fallen Sharply in the Middle East

Sales Are Off to a Strong Start in Africa
Sales Have Risen Slightly in Asia
Sales Have Fallen Slightly in South America
Sales Are Steady in North America

Functional In functional patterns, discuss the problems and solutions of each functional unit. For example, a small business might organize a report to its venture capitalists by the categories of research, production, and marketing. A government report might divide data into the different functions an agency performed, taking each in turn:

Major Accomplishments FY 12
- Regulation
- Education
- Research
- International coordination

Chronological A chronological report records events in the order in which they happened or are planned to happen. Many progress reports are organized chronologically:

Work Completed in October
Work Planned for November

If you choose this pattern, be sure you do not let the chronology obscure significant points or trends.

Specific Varieties of Reports

Informative, recommendation, and justification reports will be more successful when you work with the audience's expectations for that kind of report.

Informative and closure reports **Informative** and **closure reports** summarize completed work or research that does not result in action or recommendation.

Informative reports often include the following elements:

- Introductory paragraph summarizing the problems or successes of the project.
- Purpose and scope section(s) giving the purpose of the report and indicating what aspects of the topic it covers.
- Chronological account of how the problem was discovered, what was done, and what the results were.
- Concluding paragraph with suggestions for later action. In a recommendation report, the recommendations would be based on proof. In contrast, the suggestions in a closure or informative report are not proved in detail.

Figure 18.2 presents this kind of informative closure report.

Closure reports also allow a firm to document the alternatives it has considered before choosing a final design.

Figure 18.2 An Informative Memo Report Describing How a Company Solved a Problem

March 14, 2012

To: Donna S. Kienzler

From: Sara A. Ratterman SAR

Informal short reports use letter or memo format.

Subject: Recycling at Bike Nashbar

First paragraph summarizes main points.

Two months ago, Bike Nashbar began recycling its corrugated cardboard boxes. The program was easy to implement and actually saves the company a little money compared to our previous garbage pickup.

Purpose and scope of report.

In this report, I will explain how and why Bike Nashbar's program was initiated, how the program works and what it costs, and why other businesses should consider similar programs.

Bold headings.

The Problem of Too Many Boxes and Not Enough Space in Bike Nashbar

Cause of problem.

Every week, Bike Nashbar receives about 40 large cardboard boxes containing bicycles and other merchandise. As many boxes as possible would be stuffed into the trash bin behind the building, which also had to accommodate all the other solid waste the shop produces. Boxes that didn't fit in the trash bin ended up lying around the shop, blocking doorways, and taking up space needed for customers' bikes. The trash bin was emptied only once a week, and by that time, even more boxes would have arrived.

Triple space before heading.

The Importance of Recycling Cardboard Rather than Throwing It Away

Double space after heading.

Arranging for more trash bins or more frequent pickups would have solved the immediate problem at Bike Nashbar but would have done nothing to solve the problem created by throwing away so much trash in the first place.

Double space between paragraphs within heading.

Further seriousness of problem.

According to David Crogen, sales representative for Waste Management, Inc., 75% of all solid waste in Columbus goes to landfills. The amount of trash the city collects has increased 150% in the last five years. Columbus's landfill is almost full. In an effort to encourage people and businesses to recycle, the cost of dumping trash in the landfill is doubling from $4.90 a cubic yard to $9.90 a cubic yard next week. Next January, the price will increase again, to $12.95 a cubic yard. Crogen believes that the amount of trash can be reduced by cooperation between the landfill and the power plant and by recycling.

Capitalize first letter of major words in heading.

How Bike Nashbar Started Recycling Cardboard

Solution.

Waste Management, Inc., is the country's largest waste processor. After reading an article about how committed Waste Management, Inc., is to waste reduction and recycling, I decided to see whether Waste Management could recycle our boxes. Corrugated cardboard (which is what Bike Nashbar's boxes are made of) is almost 100% recyclable, so we seemed to be a good candidate for recycling.

Figure 18.2 An Informative Memo Report Describing How a Company Solved a Problem *(Continued)*

Donna S. Kienzler
March 14, 2012
Page 2

Reader's name, date, page number.

To get the service started, I met with a friendly sales rep, David Crogen, that same afternoon to discuss the service.

Waste Management, Inc., took care of all the details. Two days later, Bike Nashbar was recycling its cardboard.

How the Service Works and What It Costs

Talking heads tell reader what to expect in each section.

Details of solution.

Waste Management took away our existing 8-cubic-yard garbage bin and replaced it with two 4-yard bins. One of these bins is white and has "cardboard only" printed on the outside; the other is brown and is for all other solid waste. The bins are emptied once a week, with the cardboard going to the recycling plant and the solid waste going to the landfill or power plant.

Since Bike Nashbar was already paying more than $60 a week for garbage pickup, our basic cost stayed the same. (Waste Management can absorb the extra overhead only if the current charge is at least $60 a week.) The cost is divided 80/20 between the two bins: 80% of the cost pays for the bin that goes to the landfill and power plant; 20% covers the cardboard pickup. Bike Nashbar actually receives $5.00 for each ton of cardboard it recycles.

Double space between paragraphs.

Each employee at Bike Nashbar is responsible for putting all the boxes he or she opens in the recycling bin. Employees must follow these rules:

- The cardboard must have the word "corrugated" printed on it, along with the universal recycling symbol.

Indented lists provide visual variety.

- The boxes must be broken down to their flattest form. If they aren't, they won't all fit in the bin and Waste Management would be picking up air when it could pick up solid cardboard. The more boxes that are picked up, the more money that will be made.

- No other waste except corrugated cardboard can be put in the recycling bin. Other materials could break the recycling machinery or contaminate the new cardboard.

- The recycling bin is to be kept locked with a padlock provided by Waste Management so that vagrants don't steal the cardboard and lose money for Waste Management and Bike Nashbar.

(Continued)

Figure 18.2 An Informative Memo Report Describing How a Company Solved a Problem *(Concluded)*

Donna S. Kienzler
March 14, 2012
Page 3

Dis-advantages of solution.

Minor Problems with Running the Recycling Program

The only problems we've encountered have been minor ones of violating the rules. Sometimes employees at the shop forget to flatten boxes, and air instead of cardboard gets picked up. Sometimes people forget to lock the recycling bin. When the bin is left unlocked, people do steal the cardboard, and plastic cups and other solid waste get dumped in the cardboard bin. I've posted signs where the key to the bin hangs, reminding employees to empty and fold boxes and relock the bin after putting cardboard in it. I hope this will turn things around and these problems will be solved.

Advantages of solution.

Advantages of the Recycling Program

The program is a great success. Now when boxes arrive, they are unloaded, broken down, and disposed of quickly. It is a great relief to get the boxes out of our way, and knowing that we are making a contribution to saving our environment builds pride in ourselves and Bike Nashbar.

Our company depends on a clean, safe environment for people to ride their bikes in. Now we have become part of the solution. By choosing to recycle and reduce the amount of solid waste our company generates, we can save money while gaining a reputation as a socially responsible business.

Why Other Companies Should Adopt Similar Programs

Argues that her company's experience is relevant to other companies.

Businesses and institutions in Franklin County currently recycle less than 4% of the solid waste they produce. David Crogen tells me he has over 8,000 clients in Columbus alone, and he acquires new ones every day. Many of these businesses can recycle a large portion of their solid waste at no additional cost. Depending on what they recycle, they may even get a little money back.

The environmental and economic benefits of recycling as part of a comprehensive waste reduction program are numerous. Recycling helps preserve our environment. We can use the same materials over and over again, saving natural resources such as trees, fuel, and metals and decreasing the amount of solid waste in landfills. By conserving natural resources, recycling helps the U.S. become less dependent on imported raw materials. Crogen predicts that Columbus will be on a 100% recycling system by the year 2020. I strongly hope that his prediction will come true.

Recommendation reports Recommendation reports evaluate two or more alternatives and recommend one of them. (Doing nothing or delaying action can be one of the alternatives.)

Recommendation reports normally open by explaining the decision to be made, listing the alternatives, and explaining the criteria. In the body of the report, each alternative will be evaluated according to the criteria using one of the two comparison/contrast patterns. Discussing each alternative separately is better when one alternative is clearly superior, when the criteria interact, or when each alternative is indivisible. If the choice depends on the weight given to each criterion, you may want to discuss each alternative under each criterion.

Whether your recommendation should come at the beginning or the end of the report depends on your audience and the culture of your organization. Most audiences want the "bottom line" up front. However, if the audience will find your recommendation hard to accept, you may want to delay your recommendation until the end of the report when you have given all your evidence.

Justification reports **Justification reports** justify a purchase, investment, hiring, or change in policy. If your organization has a standard format for justification reports, follow that format. If you can choose your headings and organization, use this pattern when your proposal will be easy for your audience to accept:

1. **Indicate what you're asking for and why it's needed.** Since the audience has not asked for the report, you must link your request to the organization's goals.
2. **Briefly give the background of the problem or need.**
3. **Explain each of the possible solutions.** For each, give the cost and the advantages and disadvantages.
4. **Summarize the action needed to implement your recommendation.** If several people will be involved, indicate who will do what and how long each step will take.
5. **Ask for the action you want.**

If the reader will be reluctant to grant your request, use this variation of the problem-solving pattern described in Chapter 11:

1. **Describe the organizational problem (which your request will solve).** Use specific examples to prove the seriousness of the problem.
2. **Show why easier or less expensive solutions will not solve the problem.**
3. **Present your solution impersonally.**
4. **Show that the disadvantages of your solution are outweighed by the advantages.**
5. **Summarize the action needed to implement your recommendation.** If several people will be involved, indicate who will do what and how long each step will take.
6. **Ask for the action you want.**

How much detail you need to give in a justification report depends on the corporate culture and on your audience's knowledge of and attitude toward your recommendation. Many organizations expect justification reports to be short—only one or two pages. Other organizations may expect longer reports with much more detailed budgets and a full discussion of the problem and each possible solution.

PRESENTING INFORMATION EFFECTIVELY IN REPORTS LO 18-4

The advice about style in Chapter 5 also applies to reports, with three exceptions:

1. **Use a fairly formal style, without contractions or slang.**
2. **Avoid the word *you*.** In a document with multiple audiences, it will not be clear who *you* is. Instead, use the company's name.

The Importance of Annual Reports

A survey, conducted by WithumSmith & Brown and MGT Design Inc., found that the annual report is the most important publication that a company produces. To understand the value of annual reports, the survey asked individual investors, portfolio managers, and securities analysts (the primary audiences for annual reports) about the ways that they read and use the reports to make decisions.

Here are some of their findings:

- 75% said the annual report is the most important publication that a company produces.
- 79% said the annual report is an important tool for investment decisions.
- 66% prefer photos and/or illustrations in annual reports.
- 90% said that important concerns facing the industry, such as environment issues and corporate governance, should be addressed in the report.
- 81% prefer a print version over electronic versions. Respondents said the print documents were easier to read, highlight, annotate, and file.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the annual report is an important communication for organizations and well worth the time spent creating it.

Adapted from Kirk Holderbaum, "Survey Reveals Importance of Corporate Annual Reports," Commerce & Industry Association of New Jersey, accessed May 29, 2011, 66, http://www.withum.com/fileSave/Commerce_Kirk_0207.pdf.

3. **Include in the report all the definitions and documents needed to understand the recommendations.** The multiple audiences for reports include readers who may consult the document months or years from now; they will not share your special knowledge. Explain acronyms and abbreviations the first time they appear. Explain as much of the history or background of the problem as necessary. Add as appendixes previous documents on which you are building.

The following points apply to any kind of writing, but they are particularly important in reports:

1. Use clear, engaging writing.
2. Keep repetition to a minimum.
3. Introduce sources and visuals.
4. Use forecasting, transitions, topic sentences, and headings to make your organization clear to your reader.

Let's look at each of these principles as they apply to reports.

1. Use Clear, Engaging Writing.

Most people want to be able to read a report quickly while still absorbing its important points. You can help them do this by using accurate diction. Not-quite-right word choices are particularly damaging in reports, which may be skimmed by readers who know little about the subject. Occasionally you can simply substitute a word:

Incorrect: With these recommendations, we can overcome the solutions to our problem.

Correct: With these recommendations, we can overcome our problem.

Also correct: With these recommendations, we can solve our problem.

Sometimes you'll need to completely recast the sentence.

Incorrect: The first problem with the incentive program is that middle managers do not use good interpersonal skills in implementing it. For example, the hotel chef openly ridicules the program. As a result, the kitchen staff fear being mocked if they participate in the program.

Better: The first problem with the incentive program is that some middle managers undercut it. For example, the hotel chef openly ridicules the program. As a result, the kitchen staff fear being mocked if they participate in the program.

A strong writing style is especially important when you are preparing a report that relies on a wealth of statistics. Most people have difficulty absorbing number after number. To help your audiences, use text to highlight the message you want the statistics to convey. Examples and action-oriented details keep the audience engaged.

Warren Buffett says this about clear, engaging writing in annual reports, which can certainly present a wealth of statistics:

> I really have a mental picture of my sisters in mind and it's Dear Doris and Birdie. And I envision them as people who have a very significant part of their net worth in the company, who are bright but who have been away for a year and who are not business specialists.
>
> And once a year I tell them what's going on. . . . I think that should be the mental approach.[19]

Who Did What?

The passive verbs and impersonal constructions in U.S. reports of coal mine disasters ("coal dust was permitted to accumulate" and "an accident occurred") suggest that accidents are inevitable. Who permitted the coal dust to accumulate? What could have been done to prevent the accumulation? Mine disaster reports contain sentences like the following: "The . . . fatality occurred when the victim proceeded into an area . . . before the roof was supported." *Why* did the man who was killed go into the area? Had a supervisor checked to see that the roof was supported? Who ordered what?

British reports of mine disasters, in contrast, focus on people and what they did to limit the damage from the disaster. Perhaps as a result, British mines have a much lower incidence of disasters than do U.S. coal mines.

Adapted from Beverly A. Sauer, "Sense and Sensibility in Technical Documentation: How Feminist Interpretation Strategies Can Save Lives in the Nation's Mines," *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 7 (January 1993): 63–83.

2. Keep Repetition to a Minimum.

Some repetition in reports is legitimate. The conclusion restates points made in the body of the report; the recommendations appear in the transmittal, the abstract or executive summary, and in the recommendations sections of the report. However, repetitive references to earlier material ("As we have already seen") may indicate that the document needs to be reorganized. Read the document through at a single sitting to make sure that any repetition serves a useful purpose.

3. Introduce Sources and Visuals.

The first time you cite an author's work, use his or her full name as it appears on the work: "Thomas L. Friedman points out. . . . " In subsequent citations, use only the last name: "Friedman shows. . . . " Use active rather than passive verbs.

The verb you use indicates your attitude toward the source. *Says* and *writes* are neutral. *Points out, shows, suggests, discovers,* and *notes* suggest that you agree with the source. Words such as *claims, argues, contends, believes,* and *alleges* distance you from the source. At a minimum, they suggest that you know that not everyone agrees with the source; they are also appropriate to report the views of someone with whom you disagree.

The report text should refer to all visuals:

As Table 1 shows, . . .
See Figure 4.

4. Use Forecasting, Transitions, Topic Sentences, and Headings.

Forecasts are overviews that tell the audience what you will discuss in a section or in the entire report. Make your forecast easy to read by telling the audience how many points there are and using bullets or numbers (either words or figures). In the following example, the first sentence in the revised paragraph tells the reader to look for four points; the numbers separate the four points clearly. This overview paragraph also makes a contract with readers, who now expect to read about tax benefits first and employee benefits last.

Paragraph without numbers:	Employee stock ownership programs (ESOPs) have several advantages. They provide tax benefits for the company. ESOPs also create tax benefits for employees and for lenders. They provide a defense against takeovers. In some organizations, productivity increases because workers now have a financial stake in the company's profits. ESOPs are an attractive employee benefit and help the company hire and retain good employees.
Revised paragraph with numbers:	Employee stock ownership programs (ESOPs) provide four benefits. First, ESOPs provide tax benefits for the company, its employees, and lenders to the plan. Second, ESOPs help create a defense against takeovers. Third, ESOPs may increase productivity by giving workers a financial stake in the company's profits. Fourth, as an attractive employee benefit, ESOPs help the company hire and retain good employees.

Legal Liability and Report Drafts

During civil litigation (such as a tort case charging that a product has injured a user), rough drafts may be important to establish the state of mind and intent of a document's drafters.

To protect the company, one lawyer recommends labeling all but the final draft "Preliminary Draft: Subject to Change." That way, if there's ever a lawsuit, the company will be able to argue that only the final report, not the drafts, should be used as evidence.

Adapted from Elizabeth McCord, "'But What You Really Meant Was . . . Multiple Drafts and Legal Liability," paper presented at the Association for Business Communication Midwest Regional Conference, Akron, OH, April 3–5, 1991.

Transitions are words, phrases, or sentences that tell audiences whether the discussion is continuing on the same point or shifting points.

There are economic advantages, too.

(Tells audience that we are still discussing advantages but that we have now moved to economic advantages.)

An alternative to this plan is . . .

(Tells audience that a second option follows.)

The second factor . . .

(Tells audience that the discussion of the first factor is finished.)

These advantages, however, are found only in A, not in B or C.

(Prepares audience for a shift from A to B and C.)

A **topic sentence** introduces or summarizes the main idea of a paragraph. Audiences who skim reports can follow your ideas more easily if each paragraph begins with a topic sentence.

Hard to read (no topic sentence):	Another main use of ice is to keep the fish fresh. Each of the seven kinds of fish served at the restaurant requires one gallon twice a day, for a total of 14 gallons. An additional 6 gallons a day are required for the salad bar.
Better (begins with topic sentence):	Twenty gallons of ice a day are needed to keep food fresh. Of this, the biggest portion (14 gallons) is used to keep the fish fresh. Each of the seven kinds of fish served at the restaurant requires one gallon twice a day. An additional 6 gallons a day are required for the salad bar.

Headings (see Chapter 6) are single words, short phrases, or complete sentences that indicate the topic in each section. A heading must cover all of the material under it until the next heading. For example, *Cost of Tuition* cannot include the cost of books or of room and board; *College Costs* could include all costs. You can have just one paragraph under a heading or several pages. If you do have several pages between headings you may want to consider using subheadings. Use subheadings only when you have two or more divisions within a main heading.

Topic headings focus on the structure of the report. As you can see from the following example, topic headings are vague and give little information.

Recommendation
Problem
    Situation 1
    Situation 2
Causes of the Problem
    Background
    Cause 1
    Cause 2
Recommended Solution

Talking heads, in contrast, tell the audience what to expect. Talking heads, like those in the examples in this chapter, provide a specific overview of each section and of the entire report.

Recommended Reformulation for Vibe Bleach
Problems in Maintaining Vibe's Granular Structure
  Solidification during Storage and Transportation
  Customer Complaints about "Blocks" of Vibe in Boxes
Why Vibe Bleach "Cakes"
  Vibe's Formula
  The Manufacturing Process
  The Chemical Process of Solidification
Modifications Needed to Keep Vibe Flowing Freely

Headings must be parallel (see Chapter 5); that is, they must use the same grammatical structure. Subheads must be parallel to each other but do not necessarily have to be parallel to subheads under other headings.

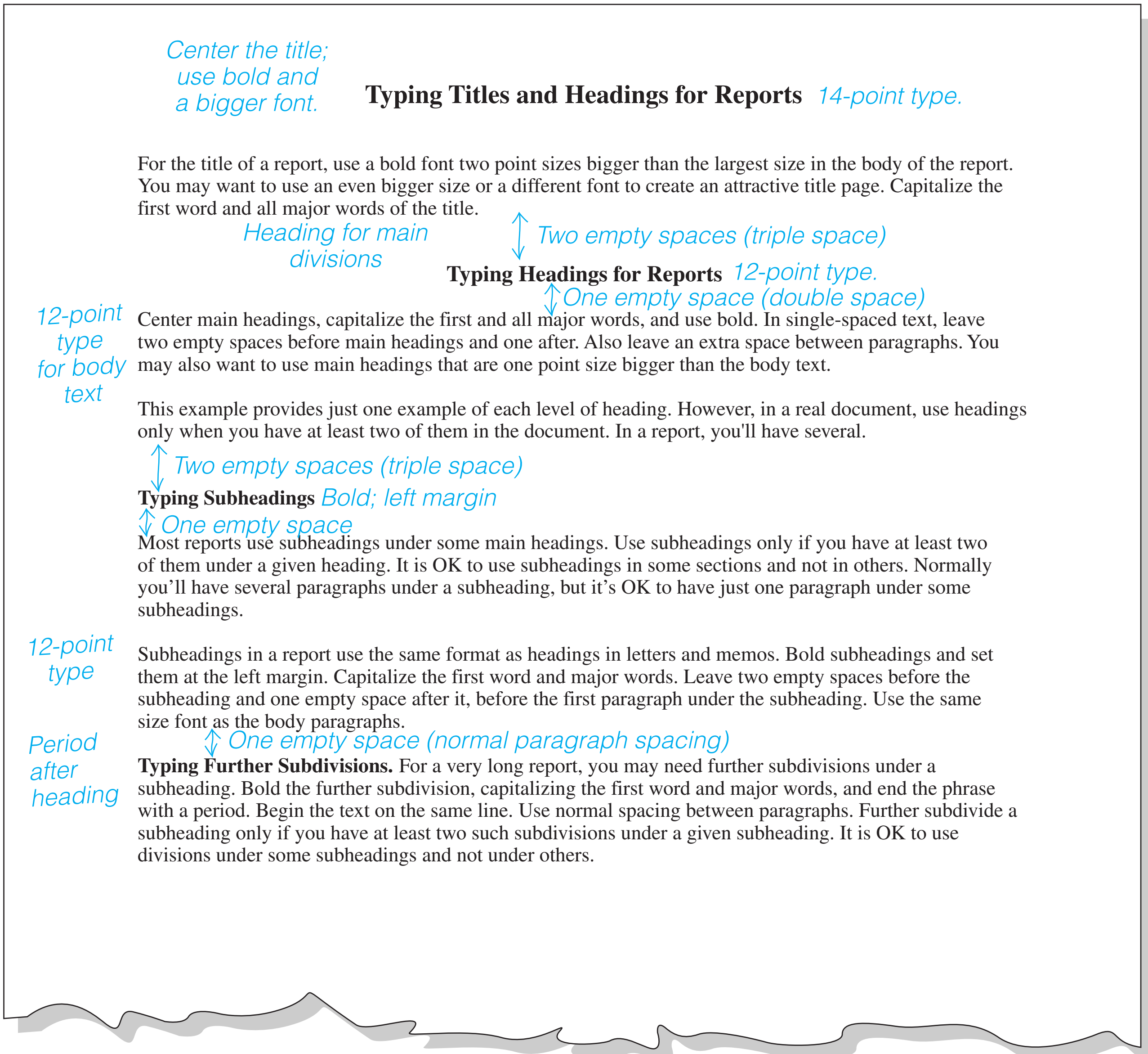
Not parallel: Are Students Aware of VIP?
  Current Awareness among Undergraduate Students
  Graduate Students
Ways to Increase Volunteer Commitment and Motivation
  We Must Improve Training and Supervision
  Can We Make Volunteers' Hours More Flexible?
  Providing Emotional Support to Volunteers
  Provide More Information about Community Needs and VIP Services

Parallel: Campus Awareness of VIP
  Current Awareness among Undergraduate Students
  Current Awareness among Graduate Students
Ways to Increase Volunteer Commitment and Motivation
  Improving Training and Supervision
  Improving the Flexibility of Volunteers' Hours
  Providing Emotional Support to Volunteers
  Providing More Information about Community Needs and VIP Services

In a complicated report, you may need up to three levels of headings. Figure 18.3 illustrates one way to set up headings. Follow these standard conventions for headings:

- Although the figure shows only one example of each level of headings, in an actual report you would use a subheading only when you had at least two subsections under the next higher heading.
- Avoid having a subhead come immediately after a heading. Instead, some text should follow the main heading before the subheading. (If you have nothing else to say, give an overview of the division.)
- Avoid having a heading or subheading all by itself at the bottom of the page. Instead, have at least one line (preferably two) of type. If there isn't room for a line of type under it, put the heading on the next page.
- Don't use a heading as the antecedent for a pronoun. Instead, repeat the noun.

Figure 18.3 Setting Up Headings in a Single-Spaced Document



Typing Titles and Headings for Reports

For the title of a report, use a bold font two point sizes bigger than the largest size in the body of the report. You may want to use an even bigger size or a different font to create an attractive title page. Capitalize the first word and all major words of the title.

Typing Headings for Reports

Center main headings, capitalize the first and all major words, and use bold. In single-spaced text, leave two empty spaces before main headings and one after. Also leave an extra space between paragraphs. You may also want to use main headings that are one point size bigger than the body text.

This example provides just one example of each level of heading. However, in a real document, use headings only when you have at least two of them in the document. In a report, you'll have several.

Typing Subheadings

Most reports use subheadings under some main headings. Use subheadings only if you have at least two of them under a given heading. It is OK to use subheadings in some sections and not in others. Normally you'll have several paragraphs under a subheading, but it's OK to have just one paragraph under some subheadings.

Subheadings in a report use the same format as headings in letters and memos. Bold subheadings and set them at the left margin. Capitalize the first word and major words. Leave two empty spaces before the subheading and one empty space after it, before the first paragraph under the subheading. Use the same size font as the body paragraphs.

Typing Further Subdivisions. For a very long report, you may need further subdivisions under a subheading. Bold the further subdivision, capitalizing the first word and major words, and end the phrase with a period. Begin the text on the same line. Use normal spacing between paragraphs. Further subdivide a subheading only if you have at least two such subdivisions under a given subheading. It is OK to use divisions under some subheadings and not under others.

WRITING FORMAL REPORTS LO 18-5

Formal reports are distinguished from informal letter and memo reports by their length and by their components. A full formal report may contain the following components (see Figures 18.4 and 18.5):

- Cover
- Title Page
- Letter or Memo of Transmittal
- Table of Contents
- List of Illustrations
- Executive Summary

Figure 18.4 The Components in a Report Can Vary

More formal ⟵		⟶ Less formal
Cover	Title Page	Introduction
Title Page	Table of Contents	Body
Transmittal	Executive Summary	Conclusions
Table of Contents	Body	Recommendations
List of Illustrations	Introduction	
Executive Summary	Body	
Body	Conclusions	
Introduction	Recommendations	
Body		
Conclusions		
Recommendations		
References/Works Cited		
Appendixes		
Questionnaires		
Interviews		
Computer Printouts		
Related Documents		

http://www.pewinternet.org/

To see examples of the ways in which reports are written and disseminated, visit the Pew Internet & American Life Project at the above website.

The project produces reports on the impact of the Internet on American lives, collecting and analyzing data on real-world developments as they intersect with the virtual world. Following data collection, the results are written into the reports and posted as PDFs to the website.

Visit the Project's web pages to see examples of the ways in which reports are first presented and then rewritten by the press for their audience and purpose.

- Report Body
  - Introduction (Orients the reader to the report. Usually has subheadings for Purpose and Scope; depending on the situation, may also have Limitations, Assumptions, Methods, Criteria, and Definitions.)
  - Background or History of the Problem (Orients the reader to the topic of the report. Serves as a record for later readers of the report.)
  - Body (Presents and interprets data in words and visuals. Analyzes causes of the problem and evaluates possible solutions. Specific headings will depend on the topic of the report.)
  - Conclusions (Summarizes main points of report.)
  - Recommendations (Recommends actions to solve the problem. May be combined with Conclusions; may be put at beginning of body rather than at the end.)
- Notes, References, or Works Cited (Documents sources cited in the report.)
- Appendixes (Provides additional materials that the careful reader may want: transcripts of interviews, copies of questionnaires, tallies of all the questions, complex tables, computer printouts, previous reports.)

As Figure 18.4 shows, not every formal report necessarily has all these components. In addition, some organizations call for additional components or arrange these components in a different order. As you read each section below, you may want to turn to the corresponding pages of the long report in Figure 18.5 to see how the component is set up and how it relates to the total report.

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report

Center all text on the title page.

Slated for Success

Use a large font size for the main title.

RAC Inc. Expanding to South Korea

Use a slightly smaller font size for the subheading.

Prepared for

No punctuation.

Name of audience, job title, organization, city, state, and zip code.

Ms. Katie Nichols
CEO of RAC Inc.
Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49503

Prepared by

No punctuation.

Name of writer(s), organization, city, state, and zip code.

JASS LLC
Jordan Koole
Alex Kuczera
Shannon Jones
Sean Sterling
Allendale, MI 49401

April 21, 2011

Date report is released.

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

This student group designed their own letterhead, assuming they were doing this report as consultants.

This letter uses block format.

JASS LLC
1 Campus Drive
Allendale, MI 49401

April 21, 2011

Ms. Katie Nichols, CEO
RAC Inc.
1253 W. Main Street
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

In paragraph 1, release the report. Note when and by whom the report was authorized. Note the report's purpose.

Dear Ms. Nichols:

In this document you will find the report that you requested in March. We have provided key information and made recommendations on a plan of action for the expansion of a RAC Inc. slate tablet manufacturing plant into South Korea.

Give recommendations or thesis of report.

Our analysis of expansion into South Korea covered several important areas that will help you decide whether or not RAC Inc. should expand and build a manufacturing plant in South Korea. To help us make our decision, we looked at the government, economy, culture, and most important the competition. South Korea is a technologically advanced country and its economy is on the rise. Our research has led us to recommend expansion into South Korea. We strongly believe that RAC Inc. can be profitable in the long run and become a successful business in South Korea.

Note sources that were helpful.

JASS LLC used several resources in forming our analysis. The Central Intelligence Agency's *World Factbook*, the U.S. Department of State, World Business Culture, and Kwintessential were all helpful in answering our research questions.

Thank the audience for the opportunity to do the research.

Thank you for choosing JASS to conduct the research into South Korea. If you have any further questions about the research or recommendation please contact us (616-331-1100, info@jass.com) and we will be happy to answer any questions referring to your possible expansion into South Korea at no charge. JASS would be happy to conduct any further research on this issue or any other projects that RAC Inc. is considering. We look forward to building on our relationship with you in the future.

Offer to answer questions about the report.

Sincerely,

Jordan Koole

Jordan Koole
JASS Team Member

Center inital page numbers at the bottom of the page. Use a lowercase roman numeral for initial pages of report.

i

(Continued)

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

Main headings are parallel, as are subheadings within a section.

Table of Contents does not list itself.

Table of Contents

Use lowercase roman numerals for initial pages.

Introduction begins on page 1.

Capitalize first letter of each major word in headings.

Indentions show level of heading at a glance.

Line up right margin (justify).

Add a "List of Illustrations" at the bottom of the page or on a separate page if the report has many visuals.

List of Illustrations

Figures and tables are numbered independently.

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

Report title.

Slated for Success

Many audiences read only the Executive Summary, not the report. Include enough information to give audiences the key points you make.

RAC Inc. Expanding to South Korea

Start with recommendation or thesis.

Executive Summary

To continue growth and remain competitive on a global scale, RAC Inc. should expand its business operations into South Korea. The country is a technologically advanced nation and would provide a strong base for future expansion. Slate tablet competitors of RAC Inc. in South Korea are doing quite well. Since RAC Inc. can compete with them in the United States, we are confident that RAC can remain on par with them in this foreign market.

The research we have done for this project indicates that this expansion will be profitable, primarily because the South Korean economy is flourishing. The workforce in South Korea is large, and finding talented employees to help set up and run the facility will be easy. In addition, the regulations and business structure are similar to those in the United States and will provide an easy transition into this foreign nation. The competition will be fierce; however, we believe that RAC Inc. will be profitable because of its track record with the Notion Tab in the United States.

Provide brief support for recommendations.

To ensure a successful expansion, JASS LLC recommends the following:

1. **RAC Inc. should establish its headquarters and manufacturing plant in Busan.**
   - Purchase a building to have a place to begin manufacturing the Notion Tab.
   - Educate RAC employees about South Korean culture and business practices before they begin working directly with South Koreans to avoid being disrespectful.
   - Explore hiring South Koreans; the available workforce is large.
   - Ensure that the Notion name is appropriate when translated into Korean. If not, change the name to better market the product.
   - Market and sell the product in both Busan and Seoul.

2. **After one year RAC should determine the acceptance and profitability of the expansion.**
   - Conduct a customer satisfaction survey with people who purchased the Notion Tab living in Seoul and Busan to determine the acceptance of the product.
   - Compare and contrast first-year sales with a competitor's similar product.

3. **If the tablet is competitive and profitable, RAC Inc. should expand its product line into all large cities in South Korea.**
   - To gain an edge on the competition, create a marketing plan that will offer the Notion Tab at some discount in the new cities.
   - Explore integrating other RAC Inc. products into South Korea. These products could also be manufactured at the new manufacturing plant in Busan.

Language in the Executive Summary can come from the report. Make sure any repeated language is well-written!

The Abstract or Executive Summary contains the logical skeleton of the report: the recommendation(s) and supporting evidence.

iii

(Continued)

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

A running header is optional.

Introduction

Center main headings.

To avoid getting left behind by competition in global expansion, RAC Inc. has contacted JASS LLC to perform an analysis about expanding into South Korea. JASS has researched South Korea to determine if RAC Inc. will be successful in expanding into this foreign market.

"Purpose" and "Scope" can be separate sections if either is long.

Purpose and Scope

RAC Inc. is a successful business in the United States and has had substantial growth over the last five years. With their competitors beginning to venture into foreign markets to gain more global market share, RAC Inc. is looking to expand into the international market as well. The purpose of our research is to decide whether or not RAC Inc. should expand its business into South Korea.

Give topics in the order you'll discuss them.

Tell what you discuss and how thoroughly you discuss each topic.

Topics in "Scope" section should match those in the report.

This report will cover several topics about South Korea including their government, economy, culture, technology market competition, and possible locations. Our research will not include any on-site research in South Korea. We are also not dealing directly with the South Korean people.

List any relevant topics you do not discuss.

Assumptions

Assumptions cannot be proved. But if they are wrong, the report's recommendation may no longer be valid.

The recommendations that we make are based on the assumption that the relationship between North and South Korea will remain the same as of the first part of 2011. We are also assuming that the technological state of South Korea will remain constant and not suffer from a natural disaster or an economic crash. In addition, we assume that the process of expansion into South Korea is the same with RAC Inc. as it has been with other American companies. Another assumption that we are making is that RAC Inc. has a good name brand and is competitive in the United States with Apple, Samsung, LG and other electronic companies.

If you collected original data (surveys, interviews, and observations), tell how you chose your subjects, whatkind of sample you used, and when you collected the information. This report does not use original data; it just provides a brief discussion of significant sources.

Methods

The information in our report comes from online sources and reference books. We found several good sources, but the best information that we obtained came from The Central Intelligence Agency's *World Factbook*, the U.S. Department of State, World Business Culture, and Kwintessential. These resources have given us much useful information on which we have based our recommendation.

These limitations are listed because the students correctly assumed their teacher would want to know them. Limitations such as these would never be listed in a real consulting report, since they would disqualify the firm.

Limitations

If your report has limitations, state them.

The information in the report was limited to what we retrieved from our sources. We were not able to travel to South Korea to conduct on-site research. JASS was also limited by the language barrier that exists between the United States and South Korea. Other limitations exist because we have not been immersed in the Korean culture and have not gotten input from South Koreans on the expansion of companies into their country.

Definitions

Define key terms your audience will need to read your report.

There are a few terms that we use throughout the report that we would like to explain beforehand. The first term is slate tablet, an industry term, which from this point on is referred to as a tablet. Another term we would like to clarify is the city Busan. Some sources referred to it as Pusan. From this point forward, we use only Busan. An abbreviation we use is GDP, which stands for gross domestic product. The South Korean and United States Free Trade Agreement signed in 2007 is abbreviated as KORUS FTA, its official name in the United States government.

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

Slated for Success 2

This section outlines the criteria used to make the overall recommendation.

Criteria

JASS LLC has established criteria that need to be favorable before we give a positive recommendation about South Korea. The criteria include the government, economy, culture, and market competition. We have weighted our criteria by percentages:

- Government = 20%
- Economy = 20%
- South Korean culture = 20%
- Market possibilities and competitors = 40%

We will examine each separately and give each criterion a favorable or not favorable recommendation. Market competition is weighted the heaviest and must be favorable or somewhat favorable for us to give a positive recommendation. Market competition can be given a favorable, nonfavorable, or somewhat favorable recommendation based on various external factors in the marketplace. We need a minimum of a 70% total to give a positive recommendation overall.

Triple-space before major headings and double-space after them.

Government

Begin most paragraphs with topic sentences.

South Korea is recognized as a republic government by the rest of the world. A republic government is a democracy where the people have supreme control over the government (South Korea: Political structure, 2009). This foundation makes it similar to the United States' democracy. There is a national government as well as provincial-level governments (similar to state-level governments) with different branches. Larger cities, like Seoul and Busan, have their own city government as well. The government is considered multipartied and has multiple parties vying for positions (South Korea: Political structure, 2009). The Republic of South Korea shares its power among three branches of government, thus providing checks and balances inside the government. The three branches of the government are the presidential, legislative, and judicial (U.S. Department of State, 2010). In this section, we will discuss government control, business regulations, taxes, free trade, and concerns about North Korea.

List subtopics in the order in which they are discussed.

Government Control

It's OK to have subheadings under some headings and not others.

The Grand National Party (GNP) controls the major policy-making branches of the government. President Lee Myung-Bak and Prime Minister Kim Hwang-Sik are both members of the GNP. Winning control of the National Assembly in April 2008 (South Korea: Political structure, 2009), the GNP is considered the conservative party in South Korea and is similar to the Republican Party in the United States. Their policies favor conservatism and are considered pro-business (Grand National Party, 2011). RAC Inc. should not expect much interference from the government with their business venture into South Korea, unless the GNP loses control of the government in the next election.

Use subheadings only when you have two or more sections.

Business Regulations

South Korea ranks 16th on the ease of doing business index (World Bank Group, 2011a). This index measures the regulations that a government imposes on businesses and how easy it is to start and run a business in a given country. Factors this index measures include the ease of starting a business, doing taxes, and enforcing contracts. For comparison, the United States is ranked fifth on this list (World Bank Group, 2011b). While there are more regulations on business in South Korea, they are still near the top of the list. The relatively low rating on regulation can be due in part to the Grand National Party controlling the government. There are a few general regulations that RAC Inc. should know before going into South Korea. For more specific business regulations, RAC Inc. may need to do further research before expanding.

(Continued)

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

South Korea has been known for having long workweeks and long working days. South Korea leads the world in hours worked with an average of 2,357 hours per worker per year (Olson, 2008). However, the government has recently passed laws regulating the workweek. In 2003, they shortened their workweek from six days down to the traditional five-day workweek within the public sector. They also shortened the workweek for the public sector down to 40 hours a week (Kirk, 2001). The private sector, however, continues to work long hours because it has not yet been regulated. But the government hinted at regulating the private sector in the future when the public sector law was passed (Kirk, 2001). Nonetheless, no legislation has come through the National Assembly, and South Koreans continue to be the hardest-working people in the world.

Period goes outside of parenthesis.

The South Korean government has also been known to have strong import restrictions placed on companies (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). As a result, companies have been forced to gather resources from South Korea instead of importing them. This approach helped South Korea grow its GDP and other economic health measures. It has also influenced the South Korean consumers' view of foreign products.

RAC Inc. may need to be concerned about these regulations when expanding to South Korea. In general, however, regulations on business in South Korea are similar to those of the United States because of the closeness in government structures. While the conservative Grand National Party is in control of the major branches of the government, they are likely to shoot down any attempts at business regulations. The result is that future regulations on business in South Korea will remain low.

Taxes

The total tax rate in South Korea is lower than that of the United States. (The total tax rate measures all of the mandatory taxes that a company has to pay on their operations in a given country.) The United States has a 46% tax rate, while South Korea has only a 29% tax rate (World Bank Group, 2011a, 2011b). This lower rate means that a company is able to keep more of their profits in South Korea than in the United States. Lower taxes are a positive factor for RAC Inc. to consider.

Free Trade

In June 2007, South Korea and the United States announced that they had drafted a free trade agreement with each other known as the KORUS FTA (Manyin, 2007). Even though it has been agreed upon since that date, neither nation's legislature has ratified the agreement. Ratification stalled in 2007 because of concerns by a Democratic-controlled congress in the United States and opposition lead by current President Barack Obama. In 2010, President Obama got both sides back together and drafted a new agreement that is pending the approval of both nations' legislatures (AFP, 2010). The highlights of the agreement are an immediate reduction of tariffs and duty-free trade on 95% of all goods exchanged between the countries in three years. In 10 years, all tariffs will be eliminated between the two nations. There would be access between the two countries' service sectors, allowing for faster international deliveries between the two nations (Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, 2011).

The KORUS FTA will be a positive for potential companies expanding into the region by creating a stable political and economic relationship between the United States and South Korea. KORUS FTA will give companies an open door into the region and an ability to conduct business with little to no interference between the governments. However, both nations' legislatures need to ratify the agreement before this trade agreement can make positive impacts for RAC Inc.

Concerns about North Korea

North and South Korea have been separated since 1945. These two countries were at war between 1950 and 1953. Since this conflict, there have been moments of tension, including some moments in 2010. Currently there is no escalation of hostilities (U.S. Department of State, 2010). We are assuming this state of conflict will not change in the near future. Improved relations would be ideal for the region, the world, and RAC Inc.

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

Slated for Success 4

Summary

This team provides a "summary" section at the end of each major section to highlight important points.

JASS LLC believes that South Korea's politics favor RAC Inc. expanding into the country. The Grand National Party allows for a favorable government for all businesses. South Korea has low regulations by the government, and they have lower taxes. The restrictions on importing and future workweek regulations are factors that need to be researched more by RAC Inc. if they decide to expand their operations. The KORUS FTA shows the stable relations between the United States and South Korea. The situation with North Korea is as stable as can be at this time. These factors allow JASS to give the government criterion a favorable rating.

Economy

Headings must cover everything under that heading until the next one.

South Korea's economy is considered one of the largest in the world. According to the CIA's *World Factbook*, the country recently became part of the top 20 economies in the world. They are considered a high-tech industrialized country (2011). Major industries in South Korea's economy include electronics, telecommunications, automobile production, chemicals, ship building, and the steel industries. Natural resources from South Korea include coal, tungsten, graphite, molybdenum, lead, and hydropower (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Not only is South Korea one of the largest economies in the world, it is one of the fastest growing. Economic growth, along with the GDP, imports and exports, and currency will be addressed in this section.

Economic Growth

Capitalize all main words of headings and subheadings.

World War II and the Korean War ravished the country and its economic base, and the country has had to rebuild its entire economy. Their GDP was among the poorest in the world in 1960. Since then, South Korea has had record growth in economic measures such as GDP and GDP per capita (South Korea's GDP Growth, 2010). According to the CIA's *World Factbook*, "a system of close government and business ties, including directed credit and import restrictions, made this success possible. The government promoted the import of raw materials and technology at the expense of consumer goods, and encouraged savings and investment over consumption" (2011). Figure 1 shows how the economy of South Korea has grown over time using GDP as a measure.

Refer to figure in text. Tell what point it makes.

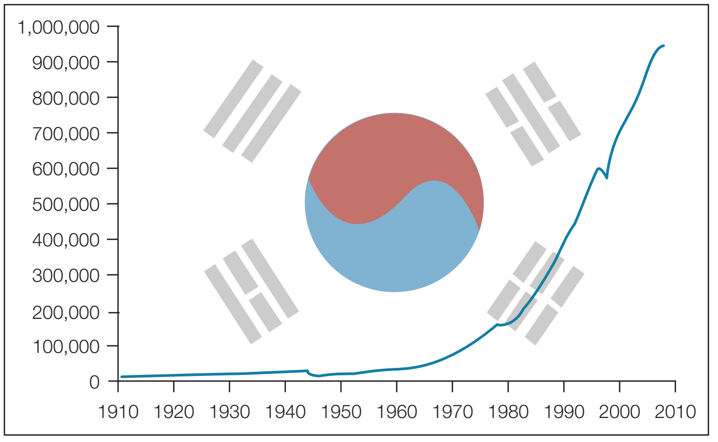


Figure 1: South Korea's GDP (PPP) Growth from 1911 to 2008 (Source: South Korea's GDP Growth, 2010)

Number figures and tables independently.

Cite source of data.

(Continued)

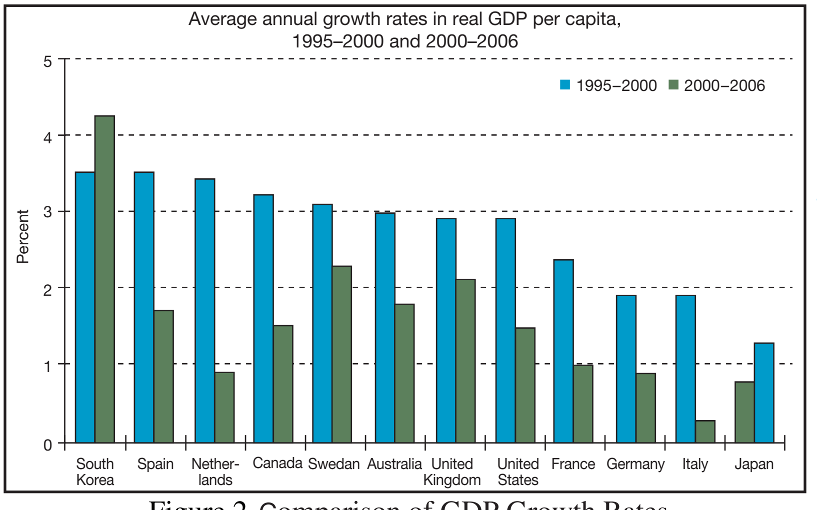
Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

Since the 1960s, the GDP has had only one dip, a result of the Asian Economic crisis in the late 1990s that affected most Asian countries. In 2004, South Korea became a part of the trillion-dollar economy club, making them one of the world's top economies (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011).

However the economy faces challenges in maintaining steady growth in the future. These challenges include an aging population, inflexible workforce, and an overdependence on exports. Right now, though, South Korea's economy continues to grow. Their industrial production growth rate was 12.1% in 2010, making them the 11th fastest-growing nation in the production industry. In 2010, their GDP grew by 6.8%, the 28th largest growth of GDP in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). This growth makes South Korea a viable place of expansion.

GDP and Other Important Economic Measures

The official GDP of South Korea was $1.467 trillion in 2010 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). This GDP is the 13th highest in the world. GDP measures the total value of goods produced by a country's economy. Figure 2 shows a comparison of GDP growth rates for top countries. GDP per capita in South Korea is $30,200, which is the 44th largest in the world. This measures the output of goods and services per person in the country. It is also an indicator of the average worker's



Label both axes of graphs. See chapter 16 for more information on creating data displays.

Figure 2: Comparison of GDP Growth Rates

(Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008)

Number figures consecutively throughout the report.

Figure captions need to be descriptive.

salary in the country. South Korea only has 15% of their population living in poverty. They have a labor force of 24.62 million which is the 25th largest labor force in the world, with an unemployment rate of 3.3% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). These numbers need to be considered when starting operations in South Korea. South Korea also has a service-driven economy with 57.6% of the country's GDP output in the service industry and 68.4% of the labor force employed in the service industry (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). All of these numbers and high world rankings of the economic measures show that South Korea has a stable and healthy economy where a business could prosper.

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

Imports and Exports

The South Korean economy has grown exponentially because of the government's policy on exporting products instead of importing them. As a result, South Korea has traditionally had more exports than imports. They are the world's seventh largest exporter: $466.3 billion dollars' worth of goods in 2010. The countries they export to are China, the United States, Japan, and Hong Kong (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). Exporting has helped the South Korean economy grow into what it is today and has made it an important economy in the global marketplace.

With the world becoming more globalized, South Korea now also imports a large amount of goods. South Korea is practically on an island because the only land border is with North Korea, which is not connected to the global marketplace. These factors have made it more important over time for South Korea to import products and relax the government's stance on limiting imports. South Korea is the ninth largest importer in the world. The total dollar amount of imports was $417.9 billion in 2010. Major import partners are China, Japan, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Australia (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011).

South Korea exports were $48.4 billion greater than its imports while trading with its partners throughout the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). This balance has stayed positive helping the South Korean economy grow. This balance can also be taken as a sign that South Korea's economy is healthy and has useful products and services for their people and consumers worldwide.

Dollars and Cents

South Korea's currency is the won. Asian currencies are traditionally inflated compared to the United States dollar and other currencies around the world. The won is no exception. According to *MSN Money,* the exchange rate as of April 10, 2011, was 1090.513 won to 1 American dollar (KRWUS, 2011).

Summary

With all of these economic factors, JASS LLC believes that the economy is strong enough to support expansion. South Korea has been one of the world's fastest-growing economic markets and has become a major player in today's global economy. All measures and statistics of the economy lead JASS to give a favorable rating to the economy of South Korea.

South Korean Culture

For RAC Inc. to be successful in South Korea, they need to understand its people and culture. Unlike the United States with its numerous cultures, South Korea is primarily made up of South Koreans. Their family heritage and customs are extremely important to them, passing down through generations (Life, n.d.). South Korean society is a class system primarily based on economic status, but also partly based on education. Major status symbols are the size of one's residence, whether it is a house or a condominium, having a chauffeur, and the style and quality of one's clothes (Advameg, Inc., 2011).

Outlines subsections for this part of report.

Not only is South Korean society based on a class system, but there is also a long tradition of male superiority, in public, though not private, situations. In this section, we will report findings about the business culture, honor and respect, and religion as it relates to RAC's interests.

(Continued)

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

Business Culture

Division of labor by gender is something that RAC Inc. should be extremely aware of, because of its impact on the workforce and social patterns. In public, men are the household head (*boju*) making decisions for their wives and daughters, and women are expected to be submissive. However in private settings, husbands tend to leave the decision making to their wives (Kwintessential, 2010).

Many South Koreans, however, believe that women's work is to take care of the home and house work, even if they work outside the home. Women doing the same job as men are paid only 63.4% of what their male counterparts earn (Advameg, Inc., 2011). RAC Inc. may see this as being sexist, but for many South Koreans, it is an integral part of their culture.

When hiring, many South Koreans rely on social connections for new employees, especially in small companies. Larger companies tend to hire headhunters for finding candidates in upper-level management. South Korean job advancement reflects a strong tradition of seniority, and sometimes will bypass qualified women for a man with higher seniority. New or empty job positions that need to be filled will first be filled by the most senior of employees before someone from the outside is brought in. Only in more recent times is this tradition being challenged (World Business Culture, n.d.).

Use "n.d." for a source with no date.

In the United States, many important meeting and business deals happen in an office, whereas in South Korea these happen in bars and restaurants. Entertainment is as much a part of their culture as it is of their business (Kwintessential, 2010). If RAC employees are invited for dinner, they should accept the invitation. While out, many South Koreans are apt to decide if RAC employees are trustworthy and honorable, thus deciding if they will do business with them or not. Although it may be considered taboo to drink while doing business in America, the Koreans enjoy their alcohol and want to share it with people with whom they wish to do business. They will not look poorly on RAC employees if they don't but joining South Koreans could help build goodwill (World Business Culture, n.d.).

Honor and Respect

Honor and respect work hand-in-hand with Korean culture. Their values stem from their ancestors, elders, and belief in Confucianism (see Religion). These follow them into the workplace where they value collective group harmony and respect for authority, as well as embracing the importance of family, clan, and friendship (World Business Culture, n.d.). When American companies come to South Korea, the traditional values can cause tension between the two styles of management. Being on time, knowing facts (especially technical details), having patience, presenting gifts with both hands, and thanking Koreans with small gifts are things to keep in mind to be both honorable and respectful (Kwintessential, 2010). Something as small as a business card holds a great deal of honor to many Koreans; it is taboo to either write on or fold them (World Business Culture, n.d.).

South Korean managers have a primary goal of encouraging their employees to work together as a unit. They spend most of their day ensuring that the team has a good working relationship. Managers also take a holistic interest in their employees, including their personal lives (World Business Culture, n.d.). This approach contrasts to how American companies may work.

Religion

South Korea has a wide range of religious beliefs, including Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Shamanism has evolved from indigenous folk; they believe in the existence of a myriad of gods (such as mountain, house, and fire) and spirits of the dead, all of which influence people's fortunes. Korean Buddhists believe that human suffering is caused mainly by desire; therefore, they try to reach enlightenment by cultivating an attitude of detachment. Others try to seek fulfillment by offering prayers to Kwanum, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Within Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism have became the two most popular (Advameg, Inc., 2011).

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

Slated for Success 8

Confucianism emphasizes propriety in the five sets of human relationships between sovereign and subject, father and son, husband and wife, senior and junior, and friend and friend. It is also a political and social philosophy that emphasizes the values of *in* (translated as "human-heartedness"). Death and the afterlife are other areas of strong involvement from South Koreans. They believe in ancestral spirits and observe Confucian rituals concerning funerals, mourning practices, and memorial services (Advameg, Inc., 2011).

Summary

Although the culture of South Korean can be vastly different from that of the United Stares, RAC Inc. can overcome these differences. JASS recommends that additional education in Korean culture and business practices be given to any RAC employee that would be directly doing business with them to prevent disrespect. As for religious practices, they are similar to what exists in the United States, though RAC may have to allow special days off work for religious ceremonies. Being honorable and respectful is at the heart of Korean culture and should not be difficult for RAC to adapt. JASS finds the culture favorable for expanding into South Korea.

Market Possibilities and Competitors

Use author's name in parentheses when it isn't introduced in the sentence.

Tablets are one of the newest products to emerge in the last few years and are growing in popularity. The tablet is marketed as a computer that is more mobile than a laptop, with the ease of use of a smartphone (Ogg, 2010). With app development supported by several companies, tablets constantly offer new features.

Currently, the most popular product around the world, with millions of products sold, is Apple's iPad and iPad 2 (iPad 2, 2011). This product, along with products from Samsung, LG, Motorola, and other companies, will create a tough foreign market for RAC to enter. However, since RAC Inc. is competing with these companies and their products in the United States, a successful integration of RAC's Notion Tab is definitely possible. In this section, we will cover information on technology use in South Korea, competition—LG and Samsung—and integration of the Notion Tab.

Technology Use

Tablets are one of the fastest-growing devices in the technology field worldwide; South Koreans have been quick to embrace this technology. In general, the country is on the cutting edge with new technologies such as tablets and NFC (near field communication). Earlier this decade, a greater number of South Korean homes had faster Internet connections than United States homes (Borland & Kanellos, 2004). As of 2009, the year with the latest data, South Korea has the 11th most Internet users worldwide, with 39.4 million (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011).

About 90% of South Koreans own a cellular phone (Koreans love, 2009). Along with the normal calling and texting, they also have Digital Multimedia Broadcasting (DMB), which is used for watching videos, listening to radio, and datacasting (Cho, 2006). The country is set up nicely for technology companies like RAC Inc. to produce and sell their products.

(Continued)

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

Competition

Since RAC Inc. has decided what specifications their Notion Tab will have, they should understand what the competition offers with their tablets. Currently, LG and Samsung are the leading competition for RAC Inc. in South Korea. The current specs for LG's G-Slate, Samsung's Galaxy Tab and Apple's iPad 2 are as outlined in Table 1. Refer to figure or table before it appears in text.

Specs	G-Slate	Galaxy Tab	iPad 2	Notion Tab
Processor	1 Ghz NVidia Terga 2 Dual-Core	1 Ghz NVidia Terga 2 Dual-Core	1 Ghz Dual-Core A5	1 Ghz NVidia Terga 2 Dual-Core
Memory	1 GB	1 GB	512 MB	1 GB
Hard Drive	32 GB	16 GB or 32 GB	16 GB, 32 GB, 64 GB	32 GB or 64 GB
Screen Resolution	1280 × 768	1280 × 800	1024 × 768	1024 × 768
Camera	Front and Rear	Front and Rear	Front and Rear	Front and Rear
Display Size	8.9" LCD	8.9" or 10.1" LCD	9.7" LED	9.0" LCD
Operation System	Android 3.0 (Honeycomb)	Android 3.0 (Honeycomb)	iOS 4.3	Android 3.0 (Honeycomb)
Price	$699.99	$469.99–$599.99	$499.99	$499.99

Because tables are numbered separately from other visuals, reports can have both a Figure 1 and a Table 1

Table 1: Comparsion of Specifications for Existing Tablets
(Sources: LG Slate, 2011; Samsung Galaxy Tab, 2011; iPad 2, 2011)

LG

The LG Corporation is the second largest company in South Korea behind Samsung (see below). Their revenues, as of 2009, were $78.89 billion (in U.S. dollars). LG is not as diversified as Samsung, but they do produce products in the fields of electronics, telecommunications, and chemicals (LG Corp, 2011). LG will be one of the main rivals for RAC Inc. in South Korea. LG released their version of a tablet, the G-Slate, as it is called in the United States, in March 2011. The specifications of this tablet are outlined in Table 1 (LG Slate, 2011). LG is relatively new to the field of tablets, so JASS believes RAC Inc. will not have to worry as much about LG as it does about Samsung.

Samsung

Samsung is the largest company in the world, and in South Korea, based upon revenue. As of 2009, their revenue was $172.5 billion (in U.S. dollars). Samsung is part of a larger group of corporations that comprise a diverse set of areas; technology is the biggest (Samsung, 2011). Samsung would be RAC Inc.'s largest competitor in South Korea. Samsung has a tablet, called the Galaxy Tab, launched at the end of 2010. They have a newer version hitting retail stores sometime late 2011. The specifications of this tablet are outlined in Table 1 (Samsung Galaxy, 2011). The Galaxy Tab is actually the second version of their tablet that they have released, with updated technology and software. As a hometown Seoul business, Samsung will present a challenge for RAC Inc. to win the loyalties of the South Korean people and increase market share.

Integration

One way RAC Inc. could improve receptiveness from the South Korean people, and possibly cut costs for their Notion Tab, is to partner with a South Korean company to more readily manufacture their product. Some of these companies are Digitech Systems, Nextchip, and Partron. Digitech Systems has an emphasis on touch screens for phones and other devices, which is a major component of tablets. Nextchip deals with the sensors that are used in touch screens, which is another important element of the device. And finally, Partron deals with basic parts for mobile phones and telecommunication devices (Settimi, 2010).

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

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If RAC Inc. does expand to South Korea, they will need to have a telecommunications company to carry the service, at least the data service for their Notion Tab. The best option JASS has researched is SK Telecom. SK Telecom, part of the SK group, is South Korea's largest telecommunications group for cellular phone service in the region. They have 50.5% of the market share (SK Telecom, 2011). The other two options are LG Telecom and KT, formally Korea Telecom. LG Telecom would not be a good choice since they are a subsidiary of a competitor, LG (LG Telecom, 2010). KT would also not be the best choice because they are not the largest provider in the country and all of the competitors use SK Telecom as their data service (KT, 2011).

Summary

The people of South Korea are in sync with the latest technology trends such as NFC and DMB. Their affinity with technology has led JASS to choose South Korea as a viable option. However, there are disadvantages as well. The main competitors of RAC Inc. in South Korea, LG and Samsung, are major hurdles. They are the top two companies in South Korea, with Samsung being the largest in the world. Because of these factors, we have determined this criterion is only somewhat favorable for expansion. This criterion could go either way; therefore, JASS cannot give it a full favorable recommendation for expansion into South Korea.

Location, Location, Location

South Korea offers many suitable cities for RAC's expansion. We researched many before picking a city that will generate the most benefits for RAC Inc. Our research covered possible locations for RAC's headquarters, operations, and Notion Tab product launches. We researched the cities of Seoul, Busan, Incheon, Daegu and Cheongju. We picked these cities to research based on size and location. The factors we used in determining the right cities are economic status, population, proximity to North Korea, proximity to shipping ports (coastline), and direct competition to Samsung and LG, whose headquarters are in Seoul. The entire country of South Korea is technologically advanced, so any of these cities could be a possibility for expansion.

JASS has decided that the city with the highest potential to expand business operations is the centrally located Busan. Busan is the second largest city in South Korea with population of 3.4 million. Busan is also the largest port city in South Korea and the fifth largest port city in the world (Park, 2009). Because Busan is a port city, it will allow easy importation of raw materials, as well as easier exportation of finished product to other countries and back to the United States. If manufacturing is cheaper in South Korea, RAC Inc. may decide to create more products in South Korea and ship them back to the United States.

JASS also recommends that the headquarters be in Busan, allowing close proximity to the manufacturing plant, if any issues arise. RAC Inc. should initially launch the Notion Tab in Seoul and Busan. These are the two largest cities in South Korea and have a high-density population. Launching the Notion Tab in these cities will result in the greatest benefit for RAC Inc.

(Continued)

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

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Conclusions repeat points made in the report. Recommendations are actions the audience should take.

Some companies ask for Conclusions and Recommendations at the beginning of the report.

Conclusions and Recommendations

All of the research that we have done supports the decision to expand into South Korea. The government, economy, and culture criteria all received favorable recommendations for a total of 60%. Market possibilities and competition received half support for an additional 20%. Together, South Korea has earned 80% based on our criteria.

Therefore, we believe that RAC Inc. could profitably expand into South Korea. The Notion Tab is a high-quality product, and it will be easily integrated into this technologically advanced county. In conclusion, we recommend that RAC Inc. should expand into South Korea.

To ensure a successful expansion, JASS LLC recommends the following:

Numbering points makes it easier for the audience to follow and discuss them.

1. **RAC Inc. should establish its headquarters and manufacturing plant in Busan.**
   - Purchase a building to have a place to begin manufacturing the Notion Tab.
   - Educate RAC employees about South Korean culture and business practices before they begin working directly with South Koreans to avoid being disrespectful.
   - Explore hiring South Koreans; the available workforce is large.
   - Ensure that the Notion name is appropriate when translated into Korean. If not, change the name to better market the product.
   - Market and sell the product in both Busan and Seoul.

Make sure all items in a list are parallel.

2. **After one year RAC should determine the acceptance and profitability of the expansion.**
   - Conduct a customer satisfaction survey with people who purchased the Notion Tab living
   - in Seoul and Busan to determine the acceptance of the product.
     Compare and contrast first-year sales with a competitor's similar product.

3. **If the tablet is competitive and profitable, RAC Inc. should expand its product line into all large cities in South Korea.**
   - To gain an edge on the competition, create a marketing plan that will offer the Notion Tab
   - at some discount in the new cities.
     Explore integrating other RAC Inc. products into South Korea. These products could also be manufactured at the new manufacturing plant in Busan.

Because many readers turn to the "Recommendations" first, provide enough information so that the reason is clear all by itself. The ideas in this section must be logical extensions of the points made and supported in the body of the report.

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Continued)*

Slated for Success 12

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This report uses APA citation style.

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Compare this list of sources with those in the proposal. Notice how the authors had to adjust the list as they completed research.

List all the printed and online sources cited in your report. Do not list sources you used for background but did not cite.

(Continued)

Figure 18.5 A Formal Report *(Concluded)*

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Title Page

The title page of a report usually contains four items: the title of the report, the person or organization for whom the report is prepared, the person or group who prepared the report, and the release date. Some title pages also contain a brief summary or abstract of the contents of the report; some title pages contain decorative artwork.

The title of the report should be as informative as possible. Like subject lines, report titles are straightforward.

Poor title: New Plant Site

Better title: Eugene, Oregon, Site for the New Kemco Plant

Large organizations that issue many reports may use two-part titles to make it easier to search for reports electronically. For example, U.S. government report titles first give the agency sponsoring the report, then the title of that particular report.

> Small Business Administration: Management Practices Have Improved for the Women's Business Center Program

In many cases, the title will state the recommendation in the report: "Why the United Nations Should Establish a Seed Bank." However, the title should omit recommendations when

- The reader will find the recommendations hard to accept.
- Putting all the recommendations in the title would make it too long.
- The report does not offer recommendations.

If the title does not contain the recommendation, it normally indicates what problem the report tries to solve or the topic the report discusses.

Eliminate any unnecessary words:

Wordy: Report of a Study on Ways to Market Life Insurance to Urban Professional People Who Are in Their Mid-40s

Better: Marketing Life Insurance to the Mid-40s Urban Professional

The identification of the receiver of the report normally includes the name of the person who will make a decision based on the report, his or her job title, the organization's name, and its location (city, state, and zip code). Government reports often omit the person's name and simply give the organization that authorized the report.

If the report is prepared primarily by one person, the *Prepared by* section will have that person's name, his or her title, the organization, and its location (city, state, and zip code). In internal reports, the organization and location are usually omitted if the report writer works at the headquarters office.

If several people write the report, government reports normally list all their names, using a separate sheet of paper if the group working on the report is large. Practices in business differ. In some organizations, all the names are listed; in others, the division to which they belong is listed; in still others, the name of the chair of the group appears.

The **release date,** the date the report will be released to the public, is usually the date the report is scheduled for discussion by the decision makers. The report is frequently due four to six weeks before the release date so that the decision makers can review the report before the meeting.

If you have the facilities and the time, try using type variations, color, and artwork to create a visually attractive and impressive title page. However, a plain typed page is acceptable. The format in Figure 18.5 will enable you to create an acceptable typed title page.

Letter or Memo of Transmittal

Use a letter of transmittal if you are not a regular employee of the organization for which you prepare the report; use a memo if you are a regular employee.

The transmittal has several purposes: to transmit the report, to orient the reader to the report, and to build a good image of the report and of the writer. An informal writing style is appropriate for a transmittal even when the style in the report is more formal. A professional transmittal helps you create a good image of yourself and enhances your credibility. Personal statements are appropriate in the transmittal, even though they would not be acceptable in the report itself.

Organize the transmittal in this way:

1. **Transmit the report.** Tell when and by whom it was authorized and the purpose it was to fulfill.
2. **Summarize your conclusions and recommendations.** If the recommendations will be easy for the audience to accept, put them early in the transmittal. If they will be difficult, summarize the findings and conclusions before the recommendations.
3. **Mention any points of special interest in the report. Show how you surmounted minor problems you encountered in your investigation. Thank people who helped you.** These optional items can build goodwill and enhance your credibility.
4. **Point out additional research that is necessary, if any.** Sometimes your recommendation cannot be implemented until further work is done. If you'd be interested in doing that research, or if you'd like to implement the recommendations, say so.
5. **Thank the audience for the opportunity to do the work and offer to answer questions.** Provide contact information. Even if the report has not been fun to do, expressing satisfaction in doing the project is expected. Saying that you'll answer questions about the report is a way of saying that you won't charge the audience your normal hourly fee to answer questions (one more reason to make the report clear!).

The letter of transmittal on page i of Figure 18.5 uses this pattern of organization.

Table of Contents

In the table of contents, list the headings exactly as they appear in the body of the report. If the report is less than 25 pages, you'll probably list all the levels of headings. In a long report, pick a level and put all the headings at that level and above in the table of contents.

Page ii of Figure 18.5 shows the table of contents.

List of Illustrations

A list of illustrations enables audiences to refer to your visuals.

Report visuals comprise both tables and figures. *Tables* are words or numbers arranged in rows and columns. *Figures* are everything else: bar graphs, pie charts, flow charts, maps, drawings, photographs, computer printouts, and so on. Tables and figures may be numbered independently, so you may have both a Table 1 and a Figure 1. In a report with maps and graphs but no other visuals, the visuals are sometimes called Map 1 and Graph 1. Whatever you call the illustrations, list them in the order in which they appear in the report; give the name of each visual as well as its number.

See Chapter 16 for information about how to design and label visuals.

Executive Summary

An **executive summary** or **abstract** tells the audience what the document is about. It summarizes the recommendation of the report and the reasons for the recommendation or describes the topics the report discusses and indicates the depth of the discussion. It should be clear even to people who will read only the abstract.

A good abstract is easy to read, concise, and clear. Edit your abstract carefully to tighten your writing and eliminate any unnecessary words.

Wordy: The report describes two types of business jargon, *businessese* and *reverse gobbledygook.* It gives many examples of each of these and points out how their use can be harmful.

Tight: The report describes and illustrates two harmful types of business jargon, *businessese* and *reverse gobbledygook.*

Abstracts generally use a more formal style than other forms of business writing. Avoid contractions and colloquialisms. Try to avoid using the second-person *you.* Because reports may have many different audiences, *you* may become inaccurate. It's OK to use exactly the same words in the abstract and the report.

Summary abstracts present the logic skeleton of the report: the thesis or recommendation and its proof. Use a summary abstract to give the most useful information in the shortest space.

> To market life insurance to mid-40s urban professionals, Interstate Fidelity Insurance should advertise in upscale publications and use direct mail.
>
> Network TV and radio are not cost-efficient for reaching this market. This group comprises a small percentage of the prime-time network TV audience and a minority of most radio station listeners. They tend to discard newspapers and general-interest magazines quickly, but many of them keep upscale periodicals for months or years. Magazines with high percentages of readers in this group include *Architectural Digest, Bon Appetit, Forbes, Golf Digest, Metropolitan Home, Southern Living,* and *Smithsonian.*
>
> Any advertising campaign needs to overcome this group's feeling that they already have the insurance they need. One way to do this would be to encourage them to check the coverage their employers provide and to calculate the cost of their children's expenses through college graduation. Insurance plans that provide savings and tax benefits as well as death benefits might also be appealing.

One way to start composing an abstract is to write a sentence outline. A **sentence outline** not only uses complete sentences rather than words or phrases but also contains the thesis sentence or recommendation and the evidence that proves that point. Combine the sentences into paragraphs, adding transitions if necessary, and you'll have your abstract.

Descriptive abstracts indicate what topics the report covers and how deeply it goes into each topic, but they do not summarize what the report says about each topic. Phrases that describe the report ("this report covers," "it includes,"

Executive Summary of a Government Plan

On February 18, 2009, the Obama administration announced a "Homeowner Affordability and Stability" plan to counter the home mortgage crisis. The executive summary of the plan—given to the press—included the following:

- First, a statement of background, which included bullet points listing the effects of the crisis (for example, that nearly 6 million households will face foreclosure), and ending with the purpose of the plan (that the plan will help nearly 7 to 9 million families to "restructure" their mortgages to avoid foreclosure).
- Then, the two main components of the plan ("affordability" and "stability") together with their subcomponents (a few subcomponents are given below as examples):
- "Affordability"
  - "Enabling refinancing"
  - "Reducing monthly payments"
- "Stability"
  - "Helping homeowners stay in their homes"
  - "Not aiding speculators"
  - "Protecting neighborhoods"

The summary provided numbers and, where appropriate, examples to inform and explain the plan. A busy reader—or one who wanted to know the broad contours of the plan without going through its nuts and bolts—would likely benefit from reading the summary before deciding whether to read the whole plan.

Adapted from "Homeowner Affordability and Stability Plan Executive Summary," *BusinessWeek,* February 18, 2009, http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/feb2009/db20090218_403370.htm.

Analyzing Numbers, "West Concord, MA, has . . . one of the highest [per capita incomes] in the nation. . . . It also has one of the highest number of single men in Massachusetts. Why? On the outskirts of West Concord is a medium-to-maximum security prison!

So, when one naively juxtaposes these data points, one can be led to assume that there are plenty of single, wealthy men there—when that isn't the case. . . . Think before arriving to conclusions indicated by data crunching."

Quoted from Thomas M. Bodenberg, Letter to the Editor, *American Demographics*, August 2001, 8.

"it summarizes," "it concludes") are marks of a descriptive abstract. An additional mark of a descriptive abstract is that the audience can't tell what the report says about the topics it covers.

> This report recommends ways Interstate Fidelity Insurance could market insurance to mid-40s urban professionals. It examines demographic and psychographic profiles of the target market. Survey results are used to show attitudes toward insurance. The report suggests some appeals that might be successful with this market.

Introduction

The **Introduction** of the report always contains a statement of purpose and scope and may include all the parts in the following list.

- **Purpose.** The purpose statement identifies the problem the report addresses, the technical investigations it summarizes, and the rhetorical purpose (to explain, to recommend).
- **Scope.** The scope statement identifies how broad an area the report surveys. For example, Company XYZ is losing money on its line of computers. Does the report investigate the quality of the computers? The advertising campaign? The cost of manufacturing? The demand for computers? A scope statement allows the reader to evaluate the report on appropriate grounds.
- **Assumptions.** Assumptions in a report are like assumptions in geometry: statements whose truth you assume, and which you use to prove your final point. If they are wrong, the conclusion will be wrong too.

  For example, to plan cars that will be built five years from now, an automobile manufacturer commissions a report on young adults' attitudes toward cars. The recommendations would be based on assumptions both about gas prices and about the economy. If gas prices radically rose or fell, the kinds of cars young adults wanted would change. If there were a major recession, people wouldn't be able to buy new cars.

  Almost all reports require assumptions. A good report spells out its assumptions so that audiences can make decisions more confidently.
- **Methods.** If you conducted surveys, focus groups, or interviews, you need to tell how you chose your subjects, and how, when, and where they were interviewed. If the discussion of your methodology is more than a paragraph or two, you should probably make it a separate section in the body of the report rather than including it in the introduction. Reports based on scientific experiments usually put the methods section in the body of the report, not in the Introduction.

  If your report is based solely on library or online research, provide a brief description of significant sources. See Appendix C on how to cite and document sources.
- **Limitations.** Limitations make your recommendations less valid or valid only under certain conditions. Limitations usually arise because time or money constraints haven't permitted full research. For example, a campus pizza restaurant considering expanding its menu may ask for a report but not have enough money to take a random sample of students and townspeople. Without a random sample, the writer cannot generalize from the sample to the larger population.

  Many recommendations are valid only for a limited time. For instance, a campus store wants to know what kinds of clothing will appeal to college men. The recommendations will remain valid for only a short time: three years from now, styles and tastes may have changed, and the clothes that would sell best now may no longer be in demand.

- **Criteria.** The criteria section outlines the factors or standards that you are considering and the relative importance of each. If a company is choosing a city for a new office, is the cost of office space more or less important than the availability of skilled workers? Check with your audience before you write the draft to make sure that your criteria match those of your audiences.
- **Definitions.** Many reports define key terms in the introduction. For instance, a report on unauthorized Internet use by employees might define what is meant by "unauthorized use." A report on the corporate dress code might define such codes broadly to include general appearance, so it could include items such as tattoos, facial piercings, and general cleanliness. Also, if you know that some members of your primary, or secondary audience will not understand technical terms, define them. If you have only a few definitions, you can put them in the Introduction. If you have many terms to define, put a **glossary** in an appendix. Refer to it in the Introduction so that audiences know that you've provided it.

Background or History

Formal reports usually have a section that gives the background of the situation or the history of the problem. Even though the current audience for the report probably knows the situation, reports are filed and consulted years later. These later audiences will probably not know the background, although it may be crucial for understanding the options that are possible.

In some cases, the history section may cover many years. For example, a report recommending that a U.S. hotel chain open hotels in Romania may give the history of that country for at least several decades. In other cases, the background section is much briefer, covering only a few years or even just the immediate situation.

The purpose of most reports is rarely to provide a history of the problem. Do not let the background section achieve undue length.

Body

The body of the report is usually its longest section. Analyze causes of the problem and offer possible solutions. Present your argument with all its evidence and data. Data that are necessary to follow the argument are included with appropriate visuals and explanatory text. Extended data sets, such as large tables and long questionnaires, are generally placed in appendixes. It is particularly important in the body that you use headings, forecasting statements, and topic sentences to help lead your audience through the text. Audiences will also appreciate clear, concise, and engaging prose. Remember to cite your sources (see Appendix C) and to refer in the text to all visuals and appendixes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions summarize points you have made in the body of the report; **Recommendations** are action items that would solve or ameliorate the problem. These sections are often combined if they are short: *Conclusions and Recommendations*. No new information should be included in this section.

Many audiences turn to the recommendations section first; some organizations ask that recommendations be presented early in the report. Number the recommendations to make it easy for people to discuss them. If the recommendations will seem difficult or controversial, give a brief paragraph of rationale after each recommendation. If they'll be easy for the audience to accept, you can simply list them without comments or reasons. The recommendations will also be in the executive summary and perhaps in the title and the transmittal.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Good reports begin with good data. Make sure your data come from reliable sources.
- Analyze report numbers and text for accuracy and logic.
- Choose an appropriate organizational pattern for your information and purposes. The most common patterns are comparison/contrast, problem-solving, elimination of alternatives, SWOT analysis, general to particular, particular to general, geographic or spatial, functional, and chronological.
- Reports use the same style as other business documents, with three exceptions:
    1. Reports use a more formal style, without contractions or slang, than do many letters and memos.
    2. Reports rarely use the word *you.*
    3. Reports should include all the definitions and documents needed to understand the recommendations.
- To create good report style,
    1. Use clear, engaging writing.
    2. Keep repetition to a minimum.
    3. Introduce all sources and visuals.
    4. Use forecasting, transitions, topic sentences, and headings.
- **Headings** are single words short phrases, or complete sentences that describe all of the material under them until the next heading. **Talking heads** tell the audience what to expect in each section.
- Headings must use the same grammatical structure. Subheads under a heading must be parallel to each other but do not necessarily have to be parallel to subheads under other headings.
- The title page of a report usually contains four items: the title of the report, whom the report is prepared for, whom it is prepared by, and the date.
- If the report is 25 pages or less, list all the headings in the table of contents. In a long report, pick a level and put all the headings at that level and above in the contents.
- Organize the transmittal in this way:
    1. Release the report.
    2. Summarize your conclusions and recommendations.
    3. Mention any points of special interest in the report. Show how you surmounted minor problems you encountered in your investigation. Thank people who helped you.
    4. Point out additional research that is necessary, if any.
    5. Thank the reader for the opportunity to do the work and offer to answer questions.

- **Summary abstracts** present the logic skeleton of the article: the thesis or recommendation and its proof. **Descriptive abstracts** indicate what topics the article covers and how deeply it goes into each topic, but do not summarize what the article says about each topic.
- A good abstract or executive summary is easy to read, concise, and clear. A good abstract can be understood by itself, without the report or references.
- The **Introduction** of the report always contains a statement of purpose and scope. The **Purpose** statement identifies the organizational problem the report addresses, the technical investigations it summarizes, and the rhetorical purpose (to explain, to recommend). The **Scope** statement identifies how broad an area the report surveys. The introduction may also include **Limitations,** problems or factors that limit the validity of your recommendations; **Assumptions,** statements whose truth you assume, and which you use to prove your final point; **Methods,** an explanation of how you gathered your data; **Criteria** used to weigh the factors in the decision; and **Definitions** of terms audiences may not know.
- A **Background** or **History** section is usually included because reports are filed and may be consulted years later by people who no longer remember the original circumstances.
- The **Body** of the report, usually the longest section, analyzes causes of the problem and offers possible solutions. It presents your argument with all evidence and data.
- **Conclusions** summarize points made in the body of the report; **Recommendations** are action items that would solve or ameliorate the problem. These sections are often combined if they are short.

CHAPTER 18 Exercises and Problems

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

18.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. What are some criteria to check to ensure you have quality data? (LO 18-1)
2. What kinds of patterns should you look for in your data and text? (LO 18-1)
3. What are some guidelines for choosing information for reports? (LO 18-2)
4. Name seven basic patterns for organizing reports. For four of them, explain when they would be particularly effective or ineffective. (LO 18-3)
5. What are three ways that style in reports differs from conventional business communication style? (LO 18-4)
6. Name four good writing principles that are particularly important in reports. (LO 18-4)
7. How do you introduce sources in the text of the report? (LO 18-4)
8. Why should reports try to have a topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph? (LO 18-4)
9. What are the characteristics of an effective report title? (LO 18-5)
10. What goes in the letter of transmittal? (LO 18-5)
11. What is the difference between summary and descriptive abstracts? (LO 18-5)
12. What goes in the introduction of a report? (LO 18-5)
13. What is the difference between conclusions and recommendations? (LO 18-5)

18.2 Identifying Assumptions and Limitations

Indicate whether each of the following would be an assumption or a limitation in a formal report.

a. Report on Ways to Encourage More Students to Join XYZ Organization
   1. I surveyed a judgment sample rather than a random sample.
   2. These recommendations are based on the attitudes of current students. Presumably, students in the next several years will have the same attitudes and interests.

b. Report on the Feasibility of Building Hilton Hotels in Romania

1. This report is based on the expectation that the country will be politically stable.
2. All of my information is based on library research. The most recent articles were published two months ago; much of the information was published a year ago or more. Therefore some of my information may be out of date.

c. Report on Car-Buying Preferences of Young Adults

1. These recommendations may change if the cost of gasoline increases dramatically or if there is another deep recession.
2. This report is based on a survey of adults ages 20 to 24 in California, Texas, Illinois, Ontario, and Massachusetts.
3. These preferences are based on the cars now available. If a major technical or styling innovation occurs, preferences may change.

18.3 Revising an Executive Summary

The following Executive Summary is poorly organized and too long. Rearrange information to make it more effective. Cut information that does not belong in the summary. You may use different words as you revise.

In this report I will discuss the communication problems which exist at Rolling Meadows Golf Club. The problems discussed will deal with channels of communication. The areas which are causing problems are internal. Radios would solve these internal problems.

Taking a 15-minute drive on a golf cart in order to find the superintendent is a common occurrence. Starters and rangers need to keep in touch with the clubhouse to maintain a smooth flow of players around the course. The rangers have expressed an interest in being able to call the clubhouse for advice and support.

Purchasing two-channel FM radios with private channels would provide three advantages. First, radios would make the golf course safer by providing a means of notifying someone in the event of an emergency. Second, radios would make the staff more efficient by providing a faster channel of communication. Third, radios would enable clubhouse personnel to keep in touch with the superintendent, the rangers, and the starters.

During the week, radios can be carried by the superintendent, the golf pro, and another course worker. On weekends and during tournaments, one radio will be used by the golf professional. The other two will be used by one starter and one ranger. Three radios is the minimum needed to meet basic communication needs. A fourth radio would provide more flexibility for busy weekends and during tournaments.

Tekk T-20 radios can be purchased from Page-Com for $129 each. These radios have the range and options needed for use on the golf course. Radios are durable and easy to service. It is possible that another brand might be even less expensive.

Rolling Meadows Golf Club should purchase four radios. They will cost under $600 and can be paid for from the current equipment budget.

18.4 Comparing Report Formats

Locate five business or organizational reports (or white papers as they're sometimes called) on the Internet. A good online collection of organizational reports is the website of the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) accessible at http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/. Additionally, you can find reports linked from the websites of the Fortune 500 organizations, or you can search for them on Google using keywords such as "reports," "business reports," "company reports," or "organizational reports."

The reports you find could be about the organizations' environmental sustainability efforts, their products, or any other aspect of their operations.

Compare the organization (the reports' contents or the way they're structured) of the five reports you select. What similarities and differences do you see in the formatting of all these reports? Make a table of your findings. Discuss your findings in small groups.

18.5 Comparing Style in Annual Reports

Locate two annual reports on the Internet. A good source is Report Watch, http://www.reportwatch.net/ Compare the style of the two reports. Here are some questions to get you started:

1. How do they use visuals to keep attention?
2. What differences do you see in the letters from the CEOs?
3. How do they present number-heavy information? Do they rely mainly on tables and graphs? Do they give prose summaries?
4. Is the writing easy to understand?
5. Do you see places where negative information is given a positive spin?
6. Is one report easier to understand than the other? Why?
7. Is one report more interesting than the other? Why?
8. Is one report more convincing than the other? Why?

As your instructor directs,

a. Work in small groups to do your comparison. Share your findings in a five-minute oral presentation to the class.
b. Work in small groups to do your comparison. Share your findings in a memo posted on the class website.
c. Work individually to do your comparison. Share your findings in a memo to your instructor.

18.6 Evaluating a Report from Your Workplace

Consider the following aspects of a report from your workplace:

- Content. How much information is included? How is it presented?
- Emphasis. What points are emphasized? What points are deemphasized? What verbal and visual techniques are used to highlight or minimize information?
- Visuals and layout. Are visuals used effectively? Are they accurate and free from chartjunk? What image do the pictures and visuals create? Are color and white space used effectively? (See Chapter 16 on visuals.)

As your instructor directs,

a. Write a memo to your instructor analyzing the report.
b. Join with a small group of students to compare and contrast several reports. Present your evaluation in an informal group report.
c. Present your evaluation orally to the class.

18.7 Analyzing and Writing Reports

Reread the sidebar about the Pew Internet and American Life Project at http://www.pewinternet.org/ on page 575. Go to the website and browse through the reports. Select a report and answer the following questions:

- Who is the report's audience?
- What is its purpose?
- How were the data collected?
- What did the data collection measure?
- Why was the data collection important?

Given your analysis of the report's audience, purpose, and data collection, consider the strategies used in the report to convey the information. Answer these questions:

- What tone did the writer adopt?
- How was the report organized and designed to meet the needs of the audience?
- What language choices did the writer make?

Finally, examine the press releases that are written about the report (the press releases for each report are included as links) for the ways the information in the report is adapted for a different audience and purpose. How do the content, organization, tone, and language choices differ from those of the original report? Do you see any ethical issues involved in condensing the report into a press release?

As your instructor directs,

- Write a report of your findings to your instructor.
- Present your findings to the class using presentation software.

18.8 Preparing an Information Report

Visit the website of the Global Reporting Initiative (http://www.globalreporting.org/Home), a group of analysts from various industries and professions that is committed to advancing the cause of socially responsible reporting by organizations. Prepare an information report, either as a memo to your instructor or as a PowerPoint presentation for the class, describing the organization, the people behind it, their guidelines, their work, and their impact on the corporate world.

18.9 Recommending Action

Write a report recommending an action that your unit or organization should take. Possibilities include

- Buying more equipment for your department.
- Hiring an additional worker for your department.
- Making your organization more family-friendly.
- Making a change that will make the organization more efficient.
- Making changes to improve accessibility for customers or employees with disabilities.

Address your report to the person who would have the power to approve your recommendation.

As your instructor directs,

a. Create a document or presentation to achieve the goal.

b. Write a memo to your instructor describing the situation at your workplace and explaining your rhetorical choices (medium, strategy, tone, wording, graphics or document design, and so forth).

18.10 Writing a Recommendation Report

Write a report evaluating two or more alternatives. Possible topics include the following:

1. Should students in your major start a monthly newsletter?
2. Should your student organization write an annual report? Would doing so help the next year's officers?
3. Should your student organization create a wiki, blog, or newsletter to facilitate communication with a constituency?
4. Should your workplace create a newsletter to communicate internally?
5. Should a local restaurant open another branch? Where should it be?

In designing your study, identify the alternatives, define your criteria for selecting one option over others, carefully evaluate each alternative, and recommend the best course of action.

18.11 Writing an Informative or Closure Report

Write an informative report on one of the following topics.

1. What should a U.S. manager know about dealing with workers from ______ [you fill in the country or culture]? What factors do and do not motivate people in this group? How do they show respect and deference? Are they used to a strong hierarchy or to an egalitarian setting? Do they normally do one thing at once or many things? How important is clock time and being on time? What factors lead them to respect someone? Age? Experience? Education? Technical knowledge? Wealth? Or what? What conflicts or miscommunications may arise between workers from this culture and other workers due to cultural differences? Are people from this culture similar in these beliefs and behaviors, or is there lots of variation?
2. What benefits do companies offer? To get information, check the web pages of three companies in the same industry. Information about benefits is usually on the page about working for the company.
3. Describe an ethical dilemma encountered by workers in a specific organization. What is the background of the situation? What competing loyalties exist? In the past, how have workers responded? How has the organization responded? Have whistle-blowers been rewarded or punished? What could the organization do to foster ethical behavior?
4. Describe a problem or challenge encountered by an organization where you've worked. Describe the problem, show why it needed to be solved, tell who did what to try to solve it, and tell how successful the efforts were. Possibilities include
   - How the organization is implementing work teams, downsizing, or changing organizational culture.
   - How the organization uses e-mail or voice mail.
   - How the organization uses telecommuting.
   - How managers deal with stress, make ethical choices, or evaluate subordinates.
   - How the organization is responding to changing U.S. demographics, the Americans with Disabilities Act, or international competition and opportunities.

18.12 Writing a Consultant's Report—Restaurant Tipping

Your consulting company has been asked to conduct a report for Diamond Enterprises, which runs three national chains: FishStix, The Bar-B-Q Pit, and Morrie's. All are medium-priced, family-friendly restaurants. The CEO is thinking of replacing optional tips with a 15% service fee automatically added to bills.

You read articles in trade journals, surveyed a random sample of 200 workers in each of the chains, and conducted an e-mail survey of the 136 restaurant managers. Here are your findings:

1. Trade journals point out that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) audits restaurants if it thinks that servers underreport tips. Dealing with an audit is time-consuming and often results in the restaurant's having to pay penalties and interest.
2. Only one Morrie's restaurant has actually been audited by the IRS. Management was able to convince the IRS that servers were reporting tips accurately. No penalty was assessed. Management spent $1,000 on CPA and legal fees and spent over 80 hours of management time gathering data and participating in the audit.
3. Restaurants in Europe already add a service fee (usually 15%) to the bill. Patrons can add more if they choose. Local custom determines whether tips are expected and how much they should be. In Germany, for example, it is more usual to round up the bill (from 27 € to 30 €, for example) than to figure a percentage.
4. If the restaurant collected a service fee, it could use the income to raise wages for cooks and hosts and pay for other benefits, such as health insurance, rather than giving all the money to servers and bussers.
5. Morrie's servers tend to be under 25 years of age. FishStix employs more servers over 25, who are doing this for a living. The Bar-B-Q Pit servers are students in college towns.
6. In all three chains, servers oppose the idea. Employees other than servers generally support it.

	Retain tips	**Change to service fee added to bill**	**Don't care**
FishStix servers (n = 115)	90%	7%	3%
Bar-B-Q servers (n = 73)	95%	0%	5%
Morrie's servers (n = 93)	85%	15%	0%
Morrie's nonservers (n = 65)	25%	70%	5%
FishStix nonservers (n = 46)	32%	32%	37%
Bar-B-Q nonservers (n = 43)	56%	20%	25%

(Numbers do not add up to 100% due to rounding.)

7. Servers said that it was important to go home with money in their pockets (92%), that their expertise increased food sales and should be rewarded (67%), and that if a service fee replaced tips they would be likely to look for another job (45%). Some (17%) thought that if the manager distributed service-fee income, favoritism rather than the quality of work would govern how much tip income they got. Most (72%) thought that customers would not add anything beyond the 15% service fee, and many (66%) thought that total tip income would decrease and their own portion of that income would decrease (90%).
8. Managers generally support the change.

	Retain tips	**Change to service fee added to bill**	**Don't care**
FishStix managers (n = 44)	20%	80%	0%
Bar-B-Q managers (n = 13)	33%	67%	0%
Morrie's managers (n = 58)	55%	45%	0%

9. Comments from managers include: "It isn't fair for a cook with eight years of experience to make only $12 an hour while a server can make $25 an hour in just a couple of months," and "I could have my pick of employees if I offered health insurance."
10. Morale at Bar-B-Q seems low. This is seen in part in the low response rate to the survey.
11. In a tight employment market, some restaurants might lose good servers if they made the change. However, hiring cooks and other nonservers would be easier.
12. The current computer systems in place can handle figuring and recording the service fee. Since bills are printed by computer, an additional line could be added. Allocating the service-fee income could take extra managerial time, especially at first.

Write the report.

18.13 Writing a Library Research Report

Write a library research report.

As your instructor directs,

Turn in the following documents:

a. The approved proposal.
b. Two copies of the report, including

   Cover.

   Title Page.

   Letter or Memo of Transmittal.

   Table of Contents.

   List of Illustrations.

   Executive Summary or Abstract.

   Body (Introduction, all information, recommendations). Your instructor may specify a minimum length, a minimum number or kind of sources, and a minimum number of visuals.

   References or Works Cited.
c. Your notes and at least one preliminary draft.

Choose one of the following topics.

1. **Selling to College Students.** Your car dealership is located in a university town, but the manager doubts that selling cars to college students will be profitable. You agree that college incomes are low to nonexistent, but you see some students driving late-model cars. Recommend to the dealership's manager whether to begin marketing to college students, suggesting some tactics that would be effective.
2. **Advertising on the Internet.** You work on a team developing a marketing plan to sell high-end sunglasses. Your boss is reluctant to spend money for online advertising because she has heard that the money is mostly wasted. Also, she associates the ads with spam, which she detests. Recommend whether the company should devote some of its advertising budget to online ads. Include samples of online advertising that supports your recommendation.
3. **Improving Job Interview Questions.** Turnover among the sales force has been high, and your boss believes the problem is that your company has been hiring the wrong people. You are part of a team investigating the problem, and your assignment is to evaluate the questions used in job interviews. Human resource personnel use tried-and-true questions like "What is your greatest strength?" and "What is your greatest weakness?" The sales manager has some creative alternatives, such as asking candidates to solve logic puzzles and seeing how they perform under stress by taking frequent phone calls during the interview. You are to evaluate the current interviewing approaches and propose changes that would improve hiring decisions.
4. **Selling to Walmart.** Your company has a reputation for making high-quality lamps and ceiling fans sold in specialty stores. Although the company has been profitable, it could grow much faster if it sold through Walmart. Your boss is excited about her recent discussions with that retailer, but she has heard from associates that Walmart can be a demanding customer. She asked you to find out if there is a downside to selling through Walmart and, if so, whether manufacturers can afford to say no to a business deal with the retail giant.
5. **Making College Affordable.** The senator you work for is concerned about fast-rising costs of a college education. Students say they cannot afford their tuition bills. Colleges say they are making all the cuts they can without compromising the quality of education. In order to propose a bill that would help make college affordable for those who are qualified to attend, the senator has asked you to research alternatives for easing the problem. Recommend one or two measures the senator could include in a bill for the Senate to vote on.
6. With your instructor's permission, investigate a topic of your choice.

18.14 Writing a Recommendation Report

Write an individual or a team report.

As your instructor directs,

Turn in the following documents:

1. The approved proposal.
2. Two copies of the report, including

   Cover.

   Title Page.

   Letter or Memo of Transmittal.

   Table of Contents.

   List of Illustrations.

   Executive Summary or Abstract.

   Body (Introduction, all information, recommendations). Your instructor may specify a minimum length, a minimum number or kind of sources, and a minimum number of visuals.

   Appendixes if useful or relevant.
3. Your notes and at least one preliminary draft.

Pick one of the following topics.

1. **Improving Customer Service.** Many customers find that service is getting poorer and workers are getting ruder. Evaluate the service in a local store, restaurant, or other organization. Are customers made to feel comfortable? Is workers' communication helpful, friendly, and respectful? Are workers knowledgeable about products and services? Do they sell them effectively? Write a report analyzing the quality of service and recommending what the organization should do to improve.
2. **Recommending Courses for the Local Community College.** Businesses want to be able to send workers to local community colleges to upgrade their skills; community colleges want to prepare students to enter the local workforce. What skills are in demand in your community? What courses at what levels should the local community college offer?
3. **Improving Sales and Profits.** Recommend ways a small business in your community can increase sales and profits. Focus on one or more of the following: the products or services it offers, its advertising, its decor, its location, its accounting methods, its cash management, or any other aspect that may be keeping the company from achieving its potential. Address your report to the owner of the business.
4. **Increasing Student Involvement.** How could an organization on campus persuade more of the

students who are eligible to join or to become active in its programs? Do students know that it exists? Is it offering programs that interest students? Is it retaining current members? What changes should the organization make? Address your report to the officers of the organization.

5. **Evaluating a Potential Employer.** What training is available to new employees? How soon is the average entry-level person promoted? How much travel and weekend work are expected? Is there a "busy season," or is the workload consistent year-round? What fringe benefits are offered? What is the corporate culture? Is the climate nonracist and nonsexist? How strong is the company economically? How is it likely to be affected by current economic, demographic, and political trends? Address your report to the Placement Office on campus; recommend whether it should encourage students to work at this company.
6. With your instructor's permission, choose your own topic.

CHAPTER 19

Making Oral Presentations

Chapter Outline

Steve Jobs, Orator

When most company CEOs give presentations, the news media may provide a brief report in the business or technology sections. However, when Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Inc., gave a presentation, he almost always got extra attention, and often ended up as a lead story on many news websites. Part of the attention was directed at Apple's innovative products, of course, but the rest was devoted to Jobs himself: as a dynamic CEO, a technology innovator, and a master presenter.

Communications coach Carmine Gallo watched all of Steve Jobs's presentations as he prepared to write his book *The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs: How to Be Insanely Great in Front of Any Audience.* Gallo, like many other presentation experts, believes that Jobs is the epitome of the modern CEO presenter. He captivated, enthralled, and sold his products in carefully orchestrated presentations. So what makes the difference?

"He captivated, enthralled, and sold his products in carefully orchestrated presentations."

Gallo believes that Jobs's success as a presenter depended on five key points:

1. A simple headline that carries over from the presentation to all marketing materials ("The World's Thinnest Laptop," for example).
2. A villain, who can motivate the audience to unite behind the hero (Apple).
3. A simple slide, focused on visuals and with no bulleted lists. Gallo found that Jobs once used only 7 words on 10 slides.
4. A demonstration of the product. Jobs never talked about a product when he could show it off instead.
5. A holy smokes moment, where he wowed the audience with something new.

Finally, these five points would not be nearly as powerful without Jobs's careful attention to detail. He rehearsed each presentation multiple times and anticipated glitches and problems. And, most of all, he understood the audience in the room and prepared his presentation for them.

Anyone can incorporate some of the successful strategies used by Steve Jobs, particularly focusing on the audience, simplifying the message and the slides, and preparing and practicing the presentation.

Sources: Carmine Gallo, "Uncovering Steve Jobs' Presentation Secrets," *BusinessWeek*, October 6, 2009, http://www.businessweek.com/print/smallbiz/content/oct2009/sb2009106_706829.htm; and Jon Thomas, "No Presenter Is Perfect, Not Even Steve Jobs," *Presentations Advisors*, March 9, 2010, http://www.presentationadvisors.com/no-presenter-is-perfect-not-even-steve-jobs.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know how to

LO 19-1 Plan effective presentations.

LO 19-2 Select and organize information for effective presentations.

LO 19-3 Deliver effective presentations.

LO 19-4 Handle questions during presentations.

The power to persuade people to care about something you believe in is crucial to business success. Making a good oral presentation is more than just good delivery: it also involves developing a strategy that fits your audience and purpose, having good content, and organizing material effectively. The choices you make in each of these areas are affected by your purposes, audience, and situation.

IDENTIFYING PURPOSES IN ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Oral presentations have the same three basic purposes that written documents have: to inform, to persuade, and to build goodwill. Like written messages, most oral presentations have more than one purpose.

Informative presentations inform or teach the audience. Training sessions in an organization are primarily informative. Secondary purposes may be to persuade new employees to follow organizational procedures, rather than doing something their own way, and to help them appreciate the organizational culture.

Persuasive presentations motivate the audience to act or to believe. Giving information and evidence is an important means of persuasion. Stories and visuals are also effective. In addition, the speaker must build goodwill by appearing to be credible and sympathetic to the audience's needs. The goal in many presentations is a favorable vote or decision. For example, speakers making business presentations may try to persuade the audience to approve their proposals, to adopt their ideas, or to buy their products. Sometimes the goal is to change behavior or attitudes or to reinforce existing attitudes. For example, a speaker at a meeting of factory workers may stress the importance of following safety procedures.

Goodwill presentations entertain and validate the audience. In an after-dinner speech, the audience wants to be entertained. Presentations at sales meetings may be designed to stroke the audience's egos and to validate their commitment to organizational goals.

Make your purpose as specific as possible.

Weak: The purpose of my presentation is to discuss saving for retirement.

Better: The purpose of my presentation is to persuade my audience to put their 401k funds in stocks and bonds, not in money market accounts and CDs.

or: The purpose of my presentation is to explain how to calculate how much money someone needs to save in order to maintain a specific lifestyle after retirement.

Your purpose statement is the principle that guides your choice of strategy and content, so write it down before you start preparing your presentation. Note that the purpose is *not* the introduction of your talk; it may not be explicit in your presentation at all.

COMPARING WRITTEN AND ORAL MESSAGES

Giving a presentation is in many ways very similar to writing a message. All the chapters on using you-attitude and positive emphasis, developing benefits, analyzing your audience, and designing visuals remain relevant as you plan an oral presentation.

Oral messages make it easier to

- Use emotion to help persuade the audience.
- Focus the audience's attention on specific points.
- Answer questions, resolve conflicts, and build consensus.
- Modify a proposal that may not be acceptable in its original form.
- Get immediate action or response.

Written messages make it easier to

- Present extensive or complex data.
- Present many specific details of a law, policy, or procedure.
- Minimize undesirable emotions.

Oral and written messages have many similarities. In both, you should

- Adapt the message to the specific audience.
- Show the audience how they would benefit from the idea, policy, service, or product.
- Overcome any objections the audience may have.
- Use you-attitude and positive emphasis.
- Use visuals to clarify or emphasize material.
- Specify exactly what the audience should do.

Oral presentation skills are a big asset in the business world.

Why It's So Hard

"We may grudgingly admit that, like it or not, verbal blunders have the inevitability of gravity. The next question is why? It's because speaking is one of the most complicated human activities that we do, at any age. The average adult English speaker has a vocabulary of around thirty thousand words. . . . Most of us in modern America, apart from the very solitary and the very garrulous, speak anywhere from 7,500 to 22,500 words a day. Grabbing these words, one every four hundred milliseconds on average, and arranging them in sequences that are edited and reviewed for grammar and appropriateness before they're spoken requires a symphony of neurons working quickly and precisely. Pronouncing words in any language requires that your brain coordinate with your body in order to turn the electricity of nerve impulses into waves of sound. . . .

"Given the speeds involved, why aren't we better equipped to puts units of language in the right order? The problem is that sounds, words, and grammatical items aren't arranged in our brains as though on a library's shelves, with all the items ordered and catalogued by topics and authors. Rather, they're associated with one another in a matrix or a web."

Quoted from Michael Erard, *Um . . . Slips, Stumbles and Verbal Blunders and What They Mean* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), 61–62.

PLANNING A STRATEGY FOR YOUR PRESENTATION LO 19-1

How will you reach your specific goals with a specific audience?

In all oral presentations, simplify what you want to say. Identify the one idea you want the audience to take home. Simplify your supporting detail so it's easy to follow. Simplify visuals so they can be taken in at a glance. Simplify your words and sentences so they're easy to understand. Researchers at Bell Labs are practicing these techniques. Where once they spent their days on basic research and academic papers, they now are condensing their scientific work into eight-minute PowerPoint presentations for potential corporate partners and venture capital as the Labs' new director seeks to make it profitable.[1]

An oral presentation needs to be simpler than a written message to the same audience. If readers forget a point, they can turn back to it and reread it. Headings, paragraph indentation, and punctuation provide visual cues to help readers understand the message. Listeners, in contrast, must remember what the speaker says. Whatever they don't remember is lost. Even asking questions requires the audience to remember which points they don't understand.

Analyze your audience for an oral presentation just as you do for a written message. If you'll be speaking to co-workers, talk to them about your topic or proposal to find out what questions or objections they have. For audiences inside the organization, the biggest questions are often practical ones: Will it work? How much will it cost? How long will it take? How will it impact me?

Think about the physical conditions in which you'll be speaking. Will the audience be tired at the end of a long day of listening? Sleepy after a big meal? Will the group be large or small? The more you know about your audience, the better you can adapt your message to them.

Choosing the Kind of Presentation

Choose one of three basic kinds of presentations: monologue, guided discussion, or interactive.

In a **monologue presentation,** the speaker talks without interruption; questions are held until the end of the presentation, at which time the speaker functions as an expert. The speaker plans the presentation in advance and delivers it without deviation. This kind of presentation is the most common in class situations, but it's often boring for the audience. Good delivery skills are crucial, since the audience is comparatively uninvolved.

In a **guided discussion,** the speaker presents the questions or issues that both speaker and audience have agreed on in advance. Rather than functioning as an expert with all the answers, the speaker serves as a facilitator to help the audience tap its own knowledge. This kind of presentation is excellent for presenting the results of consulting projects, when the speaker has specialized knowledge, but the audience must implement the solution if it is to succeed. Guided discussions need more time than monologue presentations, but produce more audience response, more responses involving analysis, and more commitment to the result.

An **interactive presentation** is a conversation, even if the speaker stands up in front of a group and uses charts and overheads. Most sales presentations are interactive presentations. The sales representative uses questions to determine the buyer's needs, probe objections, and gain provisional and then final commitment to the purchase. Even in a memorized sales presentation, the buyer will talk a significant portion of the time. Top salespeople let the buyer do the majority of the talking.

Keeping It Simple

In a market flooded with constant updates to technologies, Apple makes its products stand out from the crowd. One reason is the simple messages provided by former CEO Steve Jobs, which are echoed consistently in online marketing, television ads, and in Apple Stores around the world. When Jobs introduced the iPad in January 2010, for example, he called it "truly magical and revolutionary." His introduction helped catapult the iPad to a commanding share of the new tablet market.

Other technology companies have not been as successful in articulating their messages. RIM, the maker of longtime smartphone leader BlackBerry, introduced its answer to the iPad in late 2010. In his introduction of the Playbook, RIM's CEO Jim Balsillie said, "There's tremendous turbulence in the ecosystem, of course, in mobility. And that's sort of an obvious thing, but also there's tremendous architectural contention at play. And so I'm going to really frame our mobile architectural distinction. We've taken two fundamentally different approaches in their causalness. It's a causal difference, not just nuance. It's not just a causal direction that I'm going to articulate here—and feel free to go as deep as you want—it's really as fundamental as causalness."

Remember, for successful presentations, keep it simple.

Adapted from Diane Brady and Hugo Miller, "Failure to Communicate," *Bloomberg Businessweek,* October 11–17, 2010, 76–80.

Technology also continues to offer new ways for audience interaction. Audience response devices (see sidebar on this page) allow people to answer multiple-choice, true/false, and yes/no questions; software then quickly tabulates the responses into charts and graphs the audience can see. Some new audience response systems use mobile phones, twitter, and the web; they also display results in charts. The question for you will be how much such a system tempts your audience to send its own tweets instead of listening to you.

Adapting Your Ideas to the Audience

Measure the message you'd like to send against where your audience is now. If your audience is indifferent, skeptical, or hostile, focus on the part of your message the audience will find most interesting and easiest to accept.

Make your ideas relevant to your audience by linking what you have to say to their experiences and interests. Showing your audience that the topic affects them directly is the most effective strategy. When you can't do that, at least link the topic to some everyday experience.

Planning a Strong Opening

The beginning and the end of a presentation, like the beginning and the end of a written document, are positions of emphasis. Use those key positions to interest the audience and emphasize your key point. You'll sound more natural and more effective if you talk from notes but write out your opener and close in advance and memorize them. (They'll be short: just a sentence or two.)

Good presentations adapt their ideas to a particular audience.

Audience Feedback

Just as when you're speaking with someone face-to-face, when you're presenting in front of a group it's important to look for feedback from your audience. Pay attention to body language, and ask your audience questions: the feedback that you get will help you build rapport with your audience so that you can express your message more clearly.

In some settings, such as when you're presenting to a large group, you might use other tools to gather audience feedback. For example, you could build a group discussion into your presentation: give your audience some questions to discuss in small groups, then invite them to share their answers with the room. Give questionnaires to your audience, either before your presentation or during a break. Have a member of your team tabulate audience responses, then build them into the remainder of your talk.

Audience response devices give you another option for getting instant audience feedback. These devices—popular with training departments—allow your audience to respond quickly to multiple-choice or yes/no questions during presentations. Software tabulates the responses as numbers, charts, or graphs for all to see. These devices are particularly good for feedback in situations where people may want anonymity.

Look at the product websites of some popular audience response devices:

- www.meridiaars.com/
- www.optiontechnologies.com
- www.qwizdom.com
- www.turningtechnologies.com

How do these devices compare to each other? How might you use them in your own presentations?

Consider using one of four common modes for openers: startling statement, narration or anecdote, quotation, or question. The more you can do to personalize your opener for your audience, the better. Recent events are better than things that happened long ago; local events are better than events at a distance; people they know are better than people who are only names.

Startling Statement

> Twelve of our customers have canceled orders in the past month.

This presentation to a company's executive committee went on to show that the company's distribution system was inadequate and to recommend a third warehouse located in the Southwest.

Narration or Anecdote The same presentation could also start with a relevant story.

> Last week Joe Murphy, purchasing agent for Westtrop's, our biggest client, came to see me. I knew something was wrong right away, because Joe was wearing a jacket instead of his usual cowboy shirt and smile. "Ajit," he said, "I have to tell you something. I didn't want to do it, but I had to change suppliers. We've been with you a long time, but it's just not working for us now."

Elements such as dialogue and sensory details will give stories more impact.

Quotation A quotation could also start the presentation. This quotation came from Boyers, a major account for the company:

> "Faster and easier!" That's what Boyers said about their new supplier.

Quotations work best when they are directly connected to the audience, as opposed to quotes from famous people.

Question Asking the audience to raise their hands or reply to questions gets them actively involved in a presentation. Tony Jeary skillfully uses this technique in sessions devoted to training the audience in presentation skills. He begins by asking the audience members to write down their estimate of the number of presentations they give per week:

> "How many of you said one or two?" he asks, raising his hand. A few hands pop up. "Three, four, six, eight?" he asks, walking up the middle of the aisle to the back of the room. Hands start popping up like targets in a shooting gallery. Jeary's Texas drawl accelerates and suddenly the place sounds like a cattle auction. "Do I hear 10? Twelve? Thirteen to the woman in the green shirt! Fifteen to the gentleman in plaid," he fires, and the room busts out laughing.[2]

Most presenters will not want to take a course in auctioneering, as Jeary did to make his questioning routine more authentic. However, Jeary's approach both engages the audience and makes the point that many jobs involve a multitude of occasions requiring formal and informal presentation skills.

Your opener should interest the audience and establish a rapport with them. Some speakers use humor to achieve those goals. However, an inappropriate joke can turn the audience against the speaker. Never use humor that's directed against the audience or an inappropriate group. Humor directed

Mastering Toasts

To some, Toastmasters International still reflects its roots: helping nervous groomsmen prepare wedding toasts. But it has grown into an organization with over 250,000 members and is growing at about 10% every year. Its 2011 International Speech Contest drew 38,000 contestants from 113 countries. So what is it all about?

Toastmasters helps its members learn and practice public speaking. But their aim is not at high-stakes motivational speaking. Rather, "We help the new supervisor who just got promoted and doesn't feel comfortable talking to the five people working for him," says Daniel Rex, the executive director. "We teach people skills, but what we really teach is confidence."

Their success in teaching has been noticed. Official branches of the organization can be found in many major corporations, and other companies sponsor Toastmasters classes for their employees. The principles taught—confidence, simplicity, personal branding, and audience engagement—are important for any presenter to learn.

Adapted from Joel Stein, "Making Every Word Count," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, January 24–30, 2011, 112–13.

at yourself or your team is safer, but even there, limit it. Don't make your audience squirm with too much self-revelation.

Humor isn't the only way to set an audience at ease. Smile at your audience before you begin; let them see that you're a real person and a nice one.

Planning a Strong Conclusion

The end of your presentation should be as strong as the opener. For your close, you could do one or more of the following:

- Restate your main point.
- Refer to your opener to create a frame for your presentation.
- End with a vivid, positive picture.
- Tell the audience exactly what to do to solve the problem you've discussed.

When Mike Powell described his work in science to an audience of nonscientists, he opened and then closed with words about what being a scientist feels like. He opened humorously, saying, "Being a scientist is like doing a jigsaw puzzle . . . in a snowstorm . . . at night . . . when you don't have all the pieces . . . and you don't have the picture you are trying to create." Powell closed by returning to the opening idea of "being a scientist," but he moved from the challenge to the inspiration with this vivid story:

> The final speaker at a medical conference [I] attended . . . walked to the lectern and said, "I am a thirty-two-year-old wife and mother of two. I have AIDS. Please work fast."[3]

When you write out your opener and close, be sure to use oral rather than written style. As you can see in the example close above, oral style uses shorter sentences and shorter, simpler words than writing does. Oral style can even sound a bit choppy when it is read by eye. Oral style uses more personal pronouns, a less varied vocabulary, and more repetition.

CHOOSING INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN A PRESENTATION LO 19-2

Choose the information that is most interesting to your audience, that answers the questions your audience will have and that is most persuasive for them. Limit your talk to three main points. In a long presentation (20 minutes or more) each main point can have subpoints. Your content will be easier to understand if you clearly show the relationship between each of the main points.

Turning your information into a **story** also helps. For example, a presentation about a plan to reduce scrap rates on the second shift can begin by setting the scene and defining the problem: Production expenses have cut profits in half. The plot unfolds as the speaker describes the facts that helped her trace the problem to scrap rates on the second shift. The resolution to the story is her group's proposal.

In an informative presentation, link the points you make to the knowledge your audience has. Show the audience members that your information answers their questions, solves their problems, or helps them do their jobs. When you explain the effect of a new law or the techniques for using a new machine, use specific examples that apply to the decisions they make and the work they do. If your content is detailed or complicated, give people a written outline or handouts. The written material both helps the audience keep track of your points during the presentation and serves as a reference after the talk is over.

Prezi Presentations

Prezi, a free online tool, provides business communicators with another option when planning presentations. While PowerPoint's presentation philosophy is based on older techniques of clicking through actual physical slides, Prezi uses modern technologies to create a different experience.

Rather than a series of consecutive slides, Prezi creates one large canvas. The presenter can place text and images anywhere on the canvas, and zoom in and out on areas or pan to different areas of the canvas. This approach allows presenters to display hierarchies and spatial relationships between items in ways that PowerPoint's linear progression doesn't allow.

Prezi's zooming and panning approach may be more engaging than PowerPoint, especially to viewers who are not familiar with it. But, just as with PowerPoint's transitions and animations, Prezi's movements can become distracting if used unwisely. Overuse of Prezi's movements can create a dizzying effect on the audience.

How Not to Give a Presentation

John R. Brant has some excellent advice on how to give an awful presentation:

- Have a dull opening: If you really want to lose your audience in the first few minutes, read a prepared statement to them from a slide or a handout.
- Bury them in slides: Bore your audience with more slides than they'll be able to remember, or speed through your slides so quickly that your PowerPoint turns into a blur.
- Use the wrong humor: Make everyone uncomfortable with self-deprecating humor.
- Show them your back: Demonstrate how disconnected you are with your audience by turning your back to them, and avoid the possibility of rapport-building eye contact by looking at the screen instead of at your audience.

Think about the uninspiring presentations you've seen from other students, or even from your instructors. What could the presenters have done to improve their work and gain your interest?

Adapted from John R. Brandt, "Missing the (Power) Point," *Industry Week*, January 2007, 48.

To be convincing, you must answer the audience's questions and objections. However, don't bring up negatives or inconsistencies unless you're sure that the audience will think of them. If you aren't sure, save your evidence for the question phase. If someone does ask, you'll have the answer.

Choosing Data

As part of choosing what to say, you should determine what data to present, including what to show in visuals. Any data you mention should be necessary for the points you are making. Databases and PowerPoint have given employees direct access to ready-made and easy-to-create slides. The temptation is to overuse them rather than starting with decisions about what the audience needs to know.

Statistics and numbers can be convincing if you present them in ways that are easy to hear. Simplify numbers by reducing them to two significant digits and putting them in a context.

Hard to hear: Our 2010 sales dropped from $12,036,288,000 to $9,124,507,000.

Easy to hear: Our 2010 sales dropped from $12 billion to $9 billion. This is the steepest decline our company has seen in a quarter century.

Double-check your presentation statistics and numbers to ensure they are accurate. Mark Hurd, former chairman and CEO of Hewlett-Packard, gave as the best advice he ever got, "It's hard to look smart with bad numbers."[4]

Choosing Demonstrations

Demonstrations can prove your points dramatically and quickly. Dieticians had long known that coconut oil, used on movie popcorn, was bad for you. But no one seemed to care. Until, that is, the folks at the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) took up the cause. They called a press conference to announce that a medium movie popcorn (and who eats just a medium?) had more saturated fat than a bacon-and-eggs breakfast, a Big Mac and fries lunch, and a steak dinner with all the trimmings—combined. They provided the full buffet for TV cameras. The story played on all the major networks as well as the front pages of many newspapers. Even better, people remembered the story and popcorn sales plunged.[5]

In their book *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*, Chip Heath and Dan Heath say that ideas are remembered—and have lasting impact on people's opinions and behavior—when they have six characteristics:

1. **Simplicity:** they are short but filled with meaning: the demonstration above could be comprehended in seconds.
2. **Unexpectedness:** they have some novelty for us: a bag of movie popcorn is worse than a whole day's meals of fatty foods.
3. **Concreteness:** the ideas must be explained with psychological description (see Chapter 11) or in terms of human actions: the display of fatty foods was graphic.
4. **Credibility:** ideas have to carry their own credibility if they do not come from an acknowledged expert. In the demonstration above, people could see the effects for themselves.
5. **Emotions:** the ideas must make people feel some emotion, and it has to be the right emotion. Antismoking campaigns for teenagers have not been successful using fear, but they have had some success using resentment at the duplicity of cigarette companies.
6. **Stories:** the ideas have to tell stories.

The Heaths call the combination of these six factors stickiness. And the concept really works. Amounts of saturated fats are not exciting ideas, but CSPI changed movie popcorn with its demonstration.[6]

ORGANIZING YOUR INFORMATION

Most presentations use a direct pattern of organization, even when the goal is to persuade a reluctant audience. In a business setting, the audience is in a hurry and knows that you want to persuade them. Be honest about your goal, and then prove that your goal meets the audience's needs too.

In a persuasive presentation, start with your strongest point, your best reason. If time permits, give other reasons as well and respond to possible objections. Put your weakest point in the middle so that you can end on a strong note.

Often one of five standard patterns of organization will work:

- **Chronological.** Start with the past, move to the present, and end by looking ahead. This pattern works best when the history helps show a problem's complexity or magnitude, or when the chronology moves people to an obvious solution.
- **Problem–causes–solution.** Explain the symptoms of the problem, identify its causes, and suggest a solution. This pattern works best when the audience will find your solution easy to accept.
- **Excluding alternatives.** Explain the symptoms of the problem. Explain the obvious solutions first and show why they won't solve the problem. End by discussing a solution that will work. This pattern may be necessary when the audience will find the solution hard to accept.
- **Pro–con.** Give all the reasons in favor of something, then those against it. This pattern works well when you want the audience to see the weaknesses in its position.
- **1–2–3.** Discuss three aspects of a topic. This pattern works well to organize short informative briefings. "Today I'll review our sales, production, and profits for the last quarter."

Make your organization clear to your audience. Written documents can be reread; they can use headings, paragraphs, lists, and indentations to signal levels of detail. In a presentation, you have to provide explicit clues to the structure of your discourse.

Early in your talk—perhaps immediately after your opener—provide an **overview** of the main points you will make.

> First, I'd like to talk about who the homeless in Columbus are. Second, I'll talk about the services The Open Shelter provides. Finally, I'll talk about what you—either individually or as a group—can do to help.

An overview provides a mental peg that hearers can hang each point on. It also can prevent someone from missing what you are saying because he or she wonders why you aren't covering a major point that you've saved for later.

Offer a clear signpost as you come to each new point. A **signpost** is an explicit statement of the point you have reached. Choose wording that fits your style. The following statements are three different ways that a speaker could use to introduce the last of three points:

> Now we come to the third point: what you can do as a group or as individuals to help homeless people in Columbus.

An Alternative to PowerPoint

"Barbara Waugh was Worldwide Personnel Manager at Hewlett-Packard Labs. [Several years ago, she was researching how to make HP Labs the best in the business. Waugh's data helped her narrow the problem to three areas needing improvement: programs (clearer priorities and fewer projects), people (elimination of poor performers and more freedom for good performers), and processes (better information sharing). Next, Waugh's challenge was to present these ideas to top managers in a way they could understand and accept.] The last thing she wanted was to preach through PowerPoint. So instead of creating bullet-point slides, she drew on her experience with street theatre and created a "play" about HP Labs. She worked passages from the surveys into dialogue and then recruited executives to act as staff members, and junior people to act as executives. The troupe performed for 30 senior managers. 'At the end of the play, the managers were very quiet,' Waugh remembers. 'Then they started clapping. It was exciting. They really got it. They finally understood.'"

Quoted from Katherine Mieszkowski, "I Grew Up Thinking That Change Was Cataclysmic. The Way We've Done It Here Is to Start Slow and Work Small." *Fast Company*, December 1998, 152.

So much for what we're doing. Now let's talk about what you can do to help.

You may be wondering, what can I do to help?

PLANNING POWERPOINT SLIDES

Once you have planned a strategy for your presentation, you need to decide if you will use PowerPoint. Not all presentations benefit from PowerPoint slides. Information design expert Edward Tufte wrote a famous essay blasting the slides. However, the slides have become ubiquitous at presentations, so your audience might expect them. And they definitely offer advantages for talks that benefit from visuals that can be seen at a distance. These visuals can give your presentation a professional image and greater impact.

Well-designed visuals can serve as an outline for your talk (see Figure 19.1), eliminating the need for additional notes. Visuals can help your audience follow along with you, and help you keep your place as you speak. Your visuals should highlight your main points, not give every detail. Elaborate on your visuals as you talk; most people find it mind-numbing to have slide after slide read to them. **If the audience can read the entire presentation for themselves, why are you there?**

Designing PowerPoint Slides

As you design slides for PowerPoint and other presentation programs, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Use a consistent background
- Use a big font size: 44 or 50 point for titles, 32 point for subheads, and 28 point for examples. You should be able to read the smallest words easily when you print a handout version of your slides.
- Use bullet-point phrases rather than complete sentences.
- Use clear, concise language.
- Make only three to five points on each slide. If you have more, consider using two slides.
- Customize your slides with your organization's logo, and add visuals: charts, pictures, downloaded web pages, photos, and drawings.

New to Admissions: PowerPoint

The University of Chicago Business School took a novel approach to their application process in 2007 when they began asking students to submit PowerPoint presentations in addition to other admission requirements. Since knowing how to create effective slides is crucial for people in business, the inclusion of four slides into the application materials seems almost natural. In fact, Microsoft estimates that 30 million presentations are given per day using their software.

Rose Martinelli, an admissions officer, stated that "we wanted to have a freeform space for students to be able to say what they think is important." The school hopes the new medium will help attract students who can think outside the box, an ability which often bodes well in business.

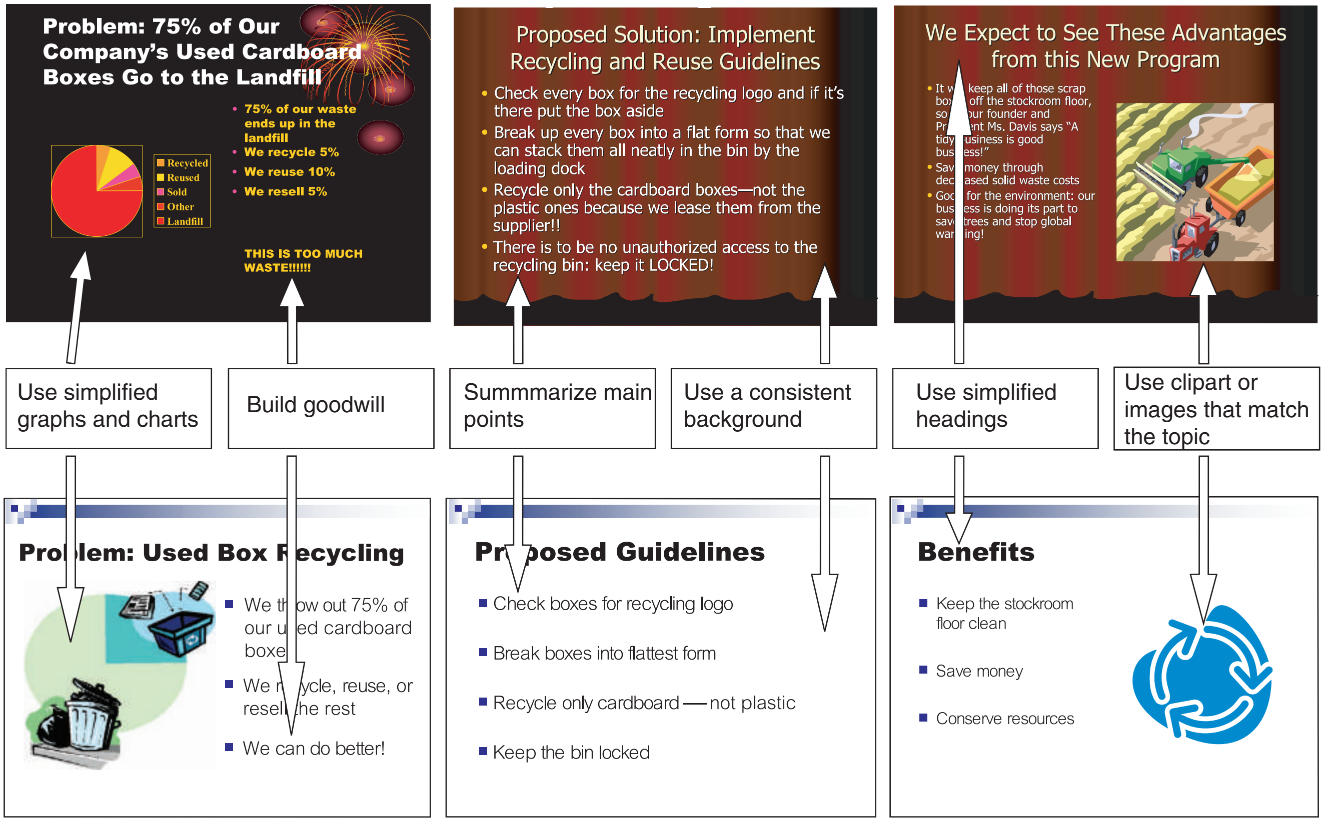
If you were applying to this school, would you be excited about showing off your presentation skills? What type of material would you include on your slides? What slide design techniques would help you stand out from the pack?

Adapted from Justin Pope, "School Adds PowerPoint for Entrance," *Des Moines Register,* August 8, 2007, D5.

@http://www.ted.com/

TED offers "riveting talks by remarkable people, free to the world." You can sort talks by categories such as business or science, or by tags such as persuasive, informative, funny, "most e-mailed this week," or "rated jaw-dropping."

Figure 19.1 Poorly Formatted Presentation Slides (Top) and Well-Formatted Slides (Bottom)



Use animation to make words and images appear and move during your presentation—but only in ways that help you control information flow and build interest. Avoid using animation or sound effects just to be clever; they will distract your audience.

Use **clip art** in your presentations only if the art is really appropriate to your points. Internet sources have made such a wide variety of drawings and photos available that designers really have no excuse for failing to pick images that are both appropriate and visually appealing. Even organizations on tight budgets can find free and low-cost resources, such as the public domain (that is, not copyrighted) collections of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (http://digitalmedia.fws.gov) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/).

Choose a consistent **template,** or background design, for your entire presentation. Make sure that the template is appropriate for your subject matter and audience. For example, use a globe only if your topic is international business and palm trees only if you're talking about tropical vacations. One problem with PowerPoint is that the basic templates may seem repetitive to people who see lots of presentations made with the program. For an important presentation, you may want to consider customizing the basic template. You can also find many professionally designed free templates online to help lend your presentation a more unique look. Make sure your template does not detract from your information.

Choose a light **background** if the lights will be off during your presentation and a dark background if the lights will be on. Slides will be easier to read if you use high contrast between the words and backgrounds. See Figure 19.2 for examples of effective and ineffective color combinations.

http://norvig.com/Gettysburg/index.htm

Not every speech needs visuals. As Peter Norvig shows, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is hurt, not helped, by adding bland PowerPoint slides.

Student Perceptions of PowerPoint Instruction

Students from various business majors took a survey assessing their perceptions of PowerPoint instruction in their courses. The survey revealed that only 27% of students thought that PowerPoint was "interesting and fresh" as an educational tool.

The researchers also discovered that those students who didn't see PowerPoint as interesting viewed traditional lecture as a better way to handle classroom discussion and encourage social interaction. Moreover, students were also likely to suggest that PowerPoint provoked boredom and attention difficulties.

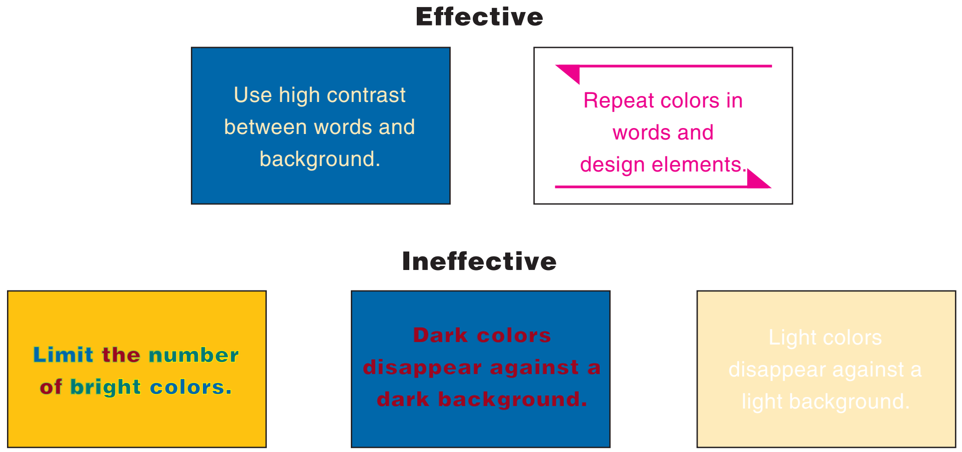
What are your perceptions of PowerPoint? How effectively do you learn from PowerPoint instruction? What could make your classroom learning experience more effective?

Adapted from Lisa A. Burke and Karen. E. James, "PowerPoint Based Lectures in Business Education: An Empirical Investigation of Student-Perceived Novelty and Effectiveness," *Business Communication Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (September 2008): 277–96.

http://www.authorstream.com/

Created a great PowerPoint that you would like to share with the rest of the world? Interested in viewing some intricately crafted PowerPoint presentations? Well, Author Stream is just the place. You can join for free and upload your PowerPoint presentations on just about any topic. Author Stream also allows you to rate and comment on other users' PowerPoint presentations. An additional feature lets you keep track of people who embed your presentation on their website and the number of times it gets viewed.

Figure 19.2 Effective and Ineffective Colors for Presentation Slides



Using Figures and Tables

Visuals for presentations need to be simpler than visuals the audience reads on paper. For example, to adapt a printed data table for a presentation, you might cut out one or more columns or rows of data, round off the data to simplify them, or replace the chart with a graph or other visual. If you have many data tables or charts in your presentation, consider including them on a handout for your audience.

Your presentation visuals should include titles, but don't need figure numbers. As you prepare your presentation, be sure to know where each visual is so that you can return to it easily if someone asks about it during the question period. Rather than reading from your slides, or describing visuals to your audience in detail, summarize the story contained on each slide and elaborate on what it means for your audience.

Using PowerPoint Technology to Involve Your Audience

Projected visuals work only if the technology they depend on works. When you give presentations in your own workplace, check the equipment in advance. When you make a presentation in another location or for another organization, arrive early so that you'll have time to not only check the equipment but also track down a service worker if the equipment isn't working. Be prepared with a backup plan to use if you're unable to show your visuals.

Keep in mind how you will use your presentation slides. Most likely, they will provide visual support for an oral presentation in a face-to-face meeting or videoconference. The slides should visually identify the key points of your presentation in a way that allows you to interact with your audience. Your oral presentation should always include more material than the text on your slides.

Consider ways to stimulate your audience's curiosity, invite questions, and build enthusiasm. For instance, instead of saying, "Sales grew 85% with this program," you could show a graph that shows sales declining up to the introduction of the program; invite the audience to consider what this program might do; and finally, after explaining the program, reveal the full sales graph with an animation that highlights the spike using a dramatic magenta line.

Remember that your audience can look at you or your visual, but not both at the same time. Direct attention to more complex visuals, such as figures, and explain them or give your audience a few seconds to absorb them.

WARNING: Be sure you have a backup plan in case of a technology failure that prevents your use of PowerPoint.

DELIVERING AN EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION LO 19-3

Audiences want the sense that you're talking directly to them and that you care that they understand and are interested. They'll forgive you if you get tangled up in a sentence and end it ungrammatically. They won't forgive you if you seem to have a "canned" talk that you're going to deliver no matter who the audience is or how they respond. You can convey a sense of caring to your audience by making direct eye contact with them and by using a conversational style.

Dealing with Fear

Feeling nervous about public speaking is normal; most people feel some fear about public speaking. But you can harness that nervous energy to help you do your best work. As various trainers have noted, you don't need to get rid of your butterflies. All you need to do is make them fly in formation.

To calm your nerves before you give an oral presentation,

- Be prepared. Analyze your audience, organize your thoughts, prepare visual aids, practice your opener and close, check out the arrangements.
- Have backup plans for various contingencies, including technical problems and likely questions.
- Use only the amount of caffeine you normally use. More or less may make you jumpy.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages.
- Relabel your nerves. Instead of saying, "I'm scared," try saying, "My adrenaline is up." Adrenaline sharpens our reflexes and helps us do our best.

Just before your presentation,

- Consciously contract and then relax your muscles, starting with your feet and calves and going up to your shoulders, arms, and hands.
- Take several deep breaths from your diaphragm; picture stress leaving your body as you exhale.

During your presentation,

- Pause and look at the audience before you begin speaking.
- Concentrate on communicating with your audience, not your feelings.
- Use body energy in strong gestures and movement.

Using Eye Contact

Look directly at the people you're talking to. Make eye contact with individuals in different locations throughout the audience, because you want everyone to feel you are connecting with them. Do not stare at your computer screen or your notes. Researchers have found that observers were more than twice

Avoiding Disastrous PowerPoints

Conference keynote presentations are notoriously boring, with long PowerPoint shows and droning presenters. Participants, bored, fiddle with smartphones and participate in electronic discussions. During one keynote presentation, bored audience members even designed a T-shirt and put it up for sale online. The shirt's message? "I survived the keynote disaster of 09."

How can you keep your presentations from ending up with their own T-shirts? Here are a few tips:

- *Use visuals and words together.* Your PowerPoint slides should augment and enhance your presentation, not distract from or displace it.
- *Keep your slides simple.* An audience should be able to completely understand each slide in two or three seconds.
- *Break complex ideas into multiple slides.* Don't try to get all the information on a single slide. Use several slides that add up to something more complex.
- *Use your slides as a mnemonic device.* Your slides should make your presentation emotionally appealing and memorable to your audience.

Adapted from Nancy Duarte, "Avoiding the Road to PowerPoint Hell," *Wall Street Journal*, January 27, 2011, C12.

http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/tutorials/powerpoint

Want to sharpen your PowerPoint skills? Try out this tutorial that will help improve your preparation design and delivery the next time you have to deliver a presentation. The site also features pros and cons for using PowerPoint and suggests additional resources.

Pressure Presentations

Technology entrepreneurs routinely pitch their ideas to financial investors at the large Tech-Crunch 50 and DEMO conferences. This presentation situation is stressful for many people. These are five tips for presenting under pressure at such conferences.

- *Keep it brief:* Technology conferences charge enormous fees to present, so you are paying thousands of dollars for every minute of your talk. Besides, most audiences get bored within 10 minutes anyway.
- *Don't overload:* The human brain can absorb only so much at one sitting. What is the most important information to guide investors to a favorable decision about your idea?
- *Set the stage:* Define the problem before explaining what your product can do. If there is no problem, your idea lacks impact.
- *Rehearse:* Most people don't spend enough time rehearsing. Practice, practice, practice! Oh, and ditch the notecards, too.
- *Be prepared:* If technology fails, don't stop talking. Acknowledge the issue and move on. Your audience cares about what you have to say, not your slides.

Adapted from Carmine Gallo, "How to Deliver a Presentation under Pressure," *BusinessWeek,* September 19, 2008, http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/content/sep2008/sb20080919_919248.htm.

Part of an effective presentation is its setting. Do you think this outdoor setting helps or hinders the presentation?

as likely to notice and comment on poor presentation features, like poor eye contact, than good features, and tended to describe speakers with poor eye contact as disinterested, unprofessional, and poorly prepared.[7]

The point in making eye contact is to establish one-on-one contact with the individual members of your audience. People want to feel that you're talking to them. Looking directly at individuals also enables you to be more conscious of feedback from the audience, so that you can modify your approach if necessary.

Developing a Good Speaking Voice

People will enjoy your presentation more if your voice is easy to listen to. To find out what your voice sounds like, tape-record it. Listen to your voice qualities and delivery.

Voice Qualities

Tone of voice refers to the rising or falling inflection that tells you whether a group of words is a question or a statement, whether the speaker is uncertain or confident, whether a statement is sincere or sarcastic.

When tone of voice and the meaning of words conflict, people "believe" the tone of voice. If you respond to your friends' "How are you?" with the words "I'm dying, and you?" most of your friends will reply "Fine." If the tone of your voice is cheerful, they may not hear the content of the words.

Pitch measures whether a voice uses sounds that are low or high. Low-pitched voices are usually perceived as being more authoritative, sexier, and more pleasant to listen to than are high-pitched voices. Most voices go up in pitch when the speaker is angry or excited; some people raise pitch when they increase volume. Women whose normal speaking voices are high may need to practice projecting their voices to avoid becoming shrill when they speak to large groups.

Stress is the emphasis given to one or more words in a sentence. As the following example shows, emphasizing different words can change the meaning.

I'll give you a raise.

[Implication, depending on pitch and speed: "Another supervisor wouldn't" or "I have the power to determine your salary."]

I'll **give** you a raise.

[Implication, depending on pitch and speed: "You haven't **earned** it" or "OK, all right, you win. I'm saying 'yes' to get rid of you, but I don't really agree," or "I've just this instant decided that you deserve a raise."]

I'll give **you** a raise.

[Implication: "But nobody else in this department is getting one."]

I'll give you **a** raise.

[Implication: "But just one."]

I'll give you a **raise.**

[Implication: "But you won't get the promotion or anything else you want."]

I'll give **you** a **raise.**

[Implication: "You deserve it."]

I'll give you a **raise!**

[Implication: "I've just this minute decided to act, and I'm excited about this idea. The raise will please both of us."]

Speakers who use many changes in tone, pitch, and stress as they speak usually seem more enthusiastic; often they also seem more energetic and more intelligent. Someone who speaks in a monotone may seem apathetic or unintelligent. When you are interested in your topic, your audience is more likely to be also.

Delivery When you speak to a group, talk loudly enough so that people can hear you easily. If you're using a microphone, adjust your volume so you aren't shouting. When you speak in an unfamiliar location, try to get to the room early so you can check the size of the room and the power of the **amplification** equipment. If you can't do that, ask early in your talk, "Can you hear me in the back of the room?"

The bigger the group is, the more carefully you need to **enunciate,** that is, voice all the sounds of each word. Words starting or ending with *f, t, k, v,* and *d* are especially hard to hear. "Our informed and competent image" can sound like "Our informed, incompetent image."

Use your voice as you would use your facial expressions: to create a cheerful, energetic, and enthusiastic impression for your audience. Doing so can help you build rapport with your audience, and can demonstrate the importance of your material. If your ideas don't excite you, why should your audience find them exciting?

Practice your speech over and over, out loud, in front of a mirror or to your family and friends. There are various reasons for doing so. Practice allows you

- To stop thinking about the words and to concentrate instead on emotions you wish to communicate to your audience.
- To work on your transitions that move your speech from one point to the next. Transitions are one of the places where speakers frequently stumble.
- To avoid unintentional negatives. British Petroleum continued to make negative news during the Gulf oil spill with negative public statements from its officials. Its chairman, Carl-Henric Svanberg, told the press "We care about the small people." Its CEO, Tony Hayward, said he "wants his life back."[8]
- To reduce the number of *uhs* you use. **Filler sounds,** which occur when speakers pause searching for the next word, aren't necessarily signs of nervousness. Searching takes longer when people have big vocabularies or talk about topics where a variety of word choices are possible. Practicing your talk makes your word choices automatic, and you'll use fewer *uhs.*[9]

Your Call Is Important to Us

Companies spend thousands of dollars developing detailed automated systems to answer customer calls. Yet many callers bypass the systems to talk to a live agent, which can cost the company $3 to $9 per phone call. How can companies persuade customers to use the automated systems? Some believe the recorded voice can make all the difference.

Aflac, for example, replaced the many different voices on its customer service line with a consistent voice provided by a middle-aged female actress.

The insurance company Asurion conducted a similar change in their system. They coached their new voice actress to sound warmer, more competent, and more like a live customer service agent.

The new voices seem to be working. More customers are using the automated systems than before, and customer satisfaction with the systems in both companies has risen between 5% and 10%.

Adapted from Joe Light, "Automated Lines' Softer Tone," *Wall Street Journal*, November 1, 2010, B10.

Deep Voice Politics

"[Political candidates'] vocal chords—as much as the substance of their words—can influence who becomes the next president, claim the people who study, measure, and coach the human voice.

"'Voice matters—it's what sells,' says John Daly, a University of Texas communications professor who has written a book about persuasion. University of California at Los Angeles psychology professor Albert Mehrabian even claims to have quantified how important a voice is. When we are deciding whether we like the person delivering a message, tone of voice accounts for 38% of our opinion, body language for 55%, and the actual words for just 7%, his studies suggest."

Do you believe that your impressions of public speakers are shaped by vocal tones?

Many presenters spend too much time thinking about what they will say and too little time rehearsing how they will say it. Presentation is important; if it weren't, you would just e-mail your text or PowerPoint to your audience.

Standing and Gesturing

Stand with your feet far enough apart for good balance, with your knees flexed. Unless the presentation is very formal or you're on camera, you can walk if you want to. Some speakers like to come in front of the lectern to remove that barrier between themselves and the audience, or move about the room to connect with more people.

If you use PowerPoint, stand beside the screen so that you don't block it.

Build on your natural style for gestures. Gestures usually work best when they're big and confident. Avoid nervous gestures such as swaying on your feet, jingling coins in your pocket, or twisting a button. These mannerisms distract the audience.

Using Notes and Visuals

If using PowerPoint, use the notes feature. If not using PowerPoint, put your notes on cards or on sturdy pieces of paper and number them. Most speakers like to use 4-by-6-inch or 5-by-7-inch cards because they hold more information than 3-by-5-inch cards.

Your notes need to be complete enough to help you if you go blank, so use long phrases or complete sentences. Under each main point, list the evidence or illustration you'll use.

Look at your notes infrequently. Most of your gaze time should be directed to members of the audience. If using paper note cards, hold them high enough so that your head doesn't bob up and down as you look from the audience to your notes and back again.

If you have lots of visuals and know your topic well, you won't need notes. Face the audience, not the screen. Show the entire visual at once: don't cover up part of it. If you don't want the audience to read ahead, use PowerPoint animation or prepare several slides that build up.

Keep the room lights on if possible; turning them off makes it easier for people to fall asleep and harder for them to concentrate on you.

HANDLING QUESTIONS LO 19-4

Prepare for questions by listing every fact or opinion you can think of that challenges your position. Treat each objection seriously and try to think of a way to deal with it. If you're talking about a controversial issue, you may want to save one point for the question period, rather than making it during the presentation. Speakers who have visuals to answer questions seem especially well prepared.

During your presentation, tell the audience how you'll handle questions. If you have a choice, save questions for the end. In your talk, answer the questions or objections that you expect your audience to have. Don't exaggerate your claims so that you won't have to back down in response to questions later.

During the question period, don't nod your head to indicate that you understand a question as it is asked. Audiences will interpret nods as signs that you agree with the questioner. Instead, look directly at the questioner. As you answer the question, expand your focus to take in the entire group. Don't say, "That's a good question." That response implies that the other questions have been poor ones.

If the audience may not have heard the question or if you want more time to think, repeat the question before you answer it. Link your answers to the points you made in your presentation. Keep the purpose of your presentation in mind, and select information that advances your goals.

If a question is hostile or biased, rephrase it before you answer it. Suppose that during a sales presentation, the prospective client exclaims, "How can you justify those prices?" A response that steers the presentation back to the service's benefits might be: "You're asking about our pricing. The price includes 24-hour, on-site customer support and . . . " Then explain how those features will benefit the prospect. The late Senator Paul Simon was admired for the way he handled hostile questions. Simon would reply, "There are two ways to consider that matter. The way you just mentioned—and a way that starts from a slightly different base." Then Senator Simon would politely explain his point of view. This kind of response respects the questioner by leaving room for more than one viewpoint.[10]

Occasionally someone will ask a question that is really designed to state the speaker's own position. Respond to the question if you want to. Another option is to say, "That's a clear statement of your position. Let's move to the next question now." If someone asks about something that you already explained in your presentation, simply answer the question without embarrassing the questioner. No audience will understand and remember 100% of what you say.

If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. If your purpose is to inform, write down the question so that you can look up the answer before the next session. If it's a question to which you think there is no answer, ask if anyone in the room knows. When no one does, your "ignorance" is vindicated. If an expert is in the room, you may want to refer questions of fact to him or her. Answer questions of interpretation yourself.

At the end of the question period, take two minutes to summarize your main point once more. (This can be a restatement of your close.) Questions may or may not focus on the key point of your talk. Take advantage of having the floor to repeat your message briefly and forcefully.

Attack Responses

In their book, *Buy*In,* John Kotter and Lorne Whitehead suggest 24 common attacks (A) on presentations. They recommend that speakers answer the attacks with brief commonsense responses (R). Here are some examples.

- A: We've never done this in the past, and things have always worked out okay.
  R: True. But surely we have all seen that those who fail to adapt eventually become extinct.
- A: Your proposal doesn't go nearly far enough.
  R: Maybe, but our idea will get us started moving in the right direction and will do so without further delay.
- A: You can't do A without first doing B, yet you can't do B without first doing A. So the plan won't work. R: Well, actually, you can do a little bit of A, which allows a little bit of B, which allows more A, which allows more of B, and so on.

Attacks and responses quoted from John. P. Kotter and Lorne A. Whitehead, "Twenty-Four Attacks and Twenty-Four Responses," chap. 7 in *Buy*In: Saving Your Good Idea from Getting Shot Down* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2010). Reprinted with permission.

Checklist for Oral Presentations

- ☐ Is the presentation effective for the situation?
- ☐ Is the purpose clear, even if not explicitly stated? Is the purpose achieved?
- ☐ Does the presentation adapt to the audience's beliefs, experiences, and interests?
- ☐ Does the presentation engage the audience?
- ☐ Is the material vivid and specific?
- ☐ Does the material counter common objections without giving them undue weight?
- ☐ Is there an overview of the main points?
- ☐ Does the body contain signposts of the main points?
- ☐ Are there adequate transitions between points? Are the transitions smooth?
- ☐ Are the opening and closing strong and effective?
- ☐ Are there engaging visuals? Do they use an appropriate design or template?
- ☐ Are the visuals readable from a distance?
- ☐ Are visuals free of spelling, punctuation, and grammar mistakes?
- ☐ If the visuals contain data, are the data quickly assimilated?
- ☐ Did the speaker make good eye contact with the audience?
- ☐ Was the speaker positioned effectively? Did the speaker's body block the screen?
- ☐ Did the speaker use engaging vocal delivery?
- ☐ Could you hear and understand what the speaker was saying?

- ☐ Did the speaker use confident gestures?
- ☐ Did the speaker avoid nervous mannerisms?
- ☐ Did the speaker handle questions effectively?
- ☐ Did the presentation hold your attention? If it was a persuasive presentation, did it convince you?

Additional Points for Group Presentations

- ☐ Were team members introduced to the audience?
- ☐ Were all team members adequately involved in the presentation?
- ☐ Did the presentation move smoothly among the team members?
- ☐ Did the individual presentations coordinate well?
- ☐ Did team members stay tuned in to the person speaking at the time?

MAKING GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Plan carefully to involve as many members of the group as possible in speaking roles.

The easiest way to make a group presentation is to outline the presentation and then divide the topics, giving one to each group member. Another member can be responsible for the opener and the close. During the question period, each member answers questions that relate to his or her topic.

In this kind of divided presentation, be sure to

- Plan transitions.
- Coordinate individual talks to eliminate repetition and contradiction.
- Enforce time limits strictly.
- Coordinate your visuals so that the presentation seems a coherent whole.
- Practice the presentation as a group at least once; more is better.

Some group presentations are even more fully integrated: the group writes a very detailed outline, chooses points and examples, and creates visuals together. Then, within each point, voices trade off. This presentation is effective because each voice speaks only a minute or two before a new voice comes in. However, it works only when all group members know the subject well and when the group plans carefully and practices extensively.

Whatever form of group presentation you use, be sure to introduce each member of the team to the audience and to pay close attention to each other. If other members of the team seem uninterested in the speaker, the audience gets the sense that that speaker isn't worth listening to.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- **Informative presentations** inform or teach the audience. **Persuasive presentations** motivate the audience to act or to believe. **Goodwill presentations** entertain and validate the audience. Most oral presentations have more than one purpose.
- A written message makes it easier to present extensive or complex information and to minimize undesirable emotions. Oral messages make it easier to use emotion, to focus the audience's attention, to answer questions and resolve conflicts quickly, to modify a proposal that may not be acceptable in its original form, and to get immediate action or response.

Giving Feedback

Getting feedback from peers is one important part of preparing a presentation, and speakers can't get good feedback without peers who can give good feedback.

Too often peers comment just on simple things, like word choice or body posture, but the most important feedback is frequently about content. Help speakers adapt their material to the audience by asking questions about the people they expect to address. Also, summarize the presenters' message as you understand it, and repeat it back. Doing so can help presenters see where they need to clarify.

No one likes to be criticized, so phrase your critiques in positive terms. Point out changes or suggestions that will make their presentation better, and if you can, back up your advice with tips from professionals.

Think about the way you prepare your own presentations. Do you practice them in front of an audience? What kind of feedback do you get? How could you encourage a practice audience to give you more helpful advice?

Adapted from Kinley Levack, "Talking Head to Rock Star: How You Can Turn Your Top Executives into Polished Presenters," *Successful Meetings* 55, no.13 (December 2006): 28–33.

- In both oral and written messages, you should
  - Adapt the message to the specific audience.
  - Show the audience how they benefit from the idea, policy, service, or product.
  - Overcome any objections the audience may have.
  - Use you-attitude and positive emphasis.
  - Use visuals to clarify or emphasize material.
  - Specify exactly what the audience should do.
- An oral presentation needs to be simpler than a written message to the same audience.
- In a **monologue presentation,** the speaker plans the presentation in advance and delivers it without deviation. In a **guided discussion,** the speaker presents the questions or issues that both speaker and audience have agreed on in advance. Rather than functioning as an expert with all the answers, the speaker serves as a facilitator to help the audience tap its own knowledge. An **interactive presentation** is a conversation using questions to determine needs, probe objections, and gain provisional and then final commitment to the objective.
- Adapt your message to your audience's beliefs, experiences, and interests.
- Use the beginning and end of the presentation to interest the audience and emphasize your key point.
- Use visuals to seem more prepared, more interesting, and more persuasive.
- Limit your talk to three main points. Early in your talk—perhaps immediately after your opener—provide an overview of the main points you will make. Offer a clear signpost as you come to each new point. A **signpost** is an explicit statement of the point you have reached.
- To calm your nerves as you prepare to give an oral presentation,
  - Be prepared. Analyze your audience, organize your thoughts, prepare visual aids, practice your opener and close, check out the arrangements.
  - Use only the amount of caffeine you normally use. Avoid alcoholic beverages.
  - Relabel your nerves. Instead of saying, "I'm scared," try saying, "My adrenaline is up." Adrenaline sharpens our reflexes and helps us do our best.
- During your presentation,
  - Pause and look at the audience before you begin speaking.
  - Concentrate on communicating, not your feelings.
  - Use body energy in strong gestures and movement.
- Convey a sense of caring to your audience by making direct eye contact with them and by using a conversational style.
- Treat questions as opportunities to give more detailed information than you had time to give in your presentation. Link your answers to the points you made in your presentation.
- Repeat the question before you answer it if the audience may not have heard it or if you want more time to think. Rephrase hostile or biased questions before you answer them.

Under the Big Top

At the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's circus, the ringmaster has always played an important role. From the early days of the circus, when consummate showman P. T. Barnum deftly directed the audience's attention to the action in the big top's three rings, the ringmaster has been front and center. Today, after 138 years of the circus, the role has changed in some ways, but the ringmaster is still responsible for managing the experience of the audience. Chuck Wagner, one of the current ringmasters, spoke about his experiences as the primary presenter in The Greatest Show on Earth. Here are some things he's learned:

- To engage an audience, you need to invest energy and enthusiasm.
- If something goes wrong, "stay poised, stay polished, stay calm, and keep that smile on [your] face."
- If something goes really wrong, acknowledge it, but move on with the show.
- In every performance, play to the back row. This means finding a way to draw the people from the top seats of a 20,000-seat arena into the action. Use your voice and motions to address each person individually.
- Be confident and professional.

Most business presentations are not like running a circus. But the lessons learned by a ringmaster have value for every presenter.

Adapted from "Playing to the Back Row: A Conversation with Ringmaster Chuck Wagner," *Harvard Business Review,* January 2009, 41–44.

CHAPTER 19 Exercises and Problems

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

19.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. What are four major components of planning effective presentations? (LO 19-1)
2. What are four different kinds of presentation openers you can use? (LO 19-1)
3. Name 10 guidelines for creating effective visuals. (LO 19-1)
4. What are some major criteria for choosing the information for your presentation? (LO 19-2)
5. Provide a suitable topic for each of the five common patterns of organization for presentations. (LO 19-2)
6. What are some ways to deal with the common fear of public speaking? Which ways would work for you? (LO 19-3)
7. List some pointers for effectively handling questions during presentations. (LO 19-4)

19.2 Analyzing Openers and Closes

The following openers and closes came from class presentations on information interviews.

- Does each opener make you interested in hearing the rest of the presentation?
- Does each opener provide a transition to the overview?
- Does the close end the presentation in a satisfying way?

a. Opener: I interviewed Mark Perry at AT&T.
   Close: Well, that's my report.

b. Opener: How many of you know what you want to do when you graduate?
   Close: So, if you like numbers and want to travel, think about being a CPA. Ernst & Young can take you all over the world.

c. Opener: You don't have to know anything about computer programming to get a job as a technical writer at CompuServe.
   Close: After talking to Raj, I decided technical writing isn't for me. But it is a good career if you work well under pressure and like learning new things all the time.

d. Opener: My report is about what it's like to work in an advertising agency.
   Middle: They keep really tight security; I had to wear a badge and be escorted to Susan's desk.
   Close: Susan gave me samples of the agency's ads and even a sample of a new soft drink she's developing a campaign for. But she didn't let me keep the badge.

19.3 Developing Points of Interest

One of the keys to preparing an engaging presentation is finding interesting points to share with your audience, either in the form of personal anecdotes to create rapport and build goodwill, or in the form of interesting facts and figures to establish your ethos as a presenter. For each of the following topics, prepare one personal anecdote based on your own experience, and research one interesting fact to share with your audience.

1. Why people need to plan.
2. Dealing with change.
3. The importance of lifelong learning.
4. The importance of effective communication.
5. The value of good customer service.
6. The value of listening.

As your instructor directs,

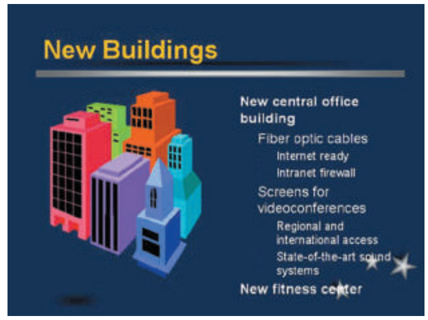
a. Share your points of interest with a small group of students, and critique each other's work.
b. Turn in your stories in a memo to your instructor.
c. Make a short (1–2 minute) oral presentation featuring your story and fact(s) for one of the assignment topics.

19.4 Evaluating PowerPoint Slides

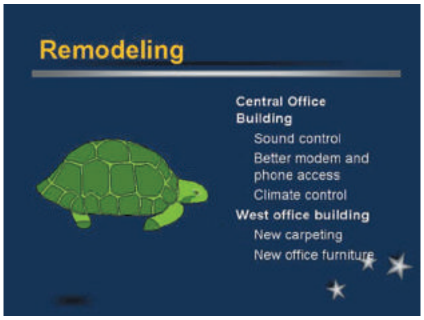
Evaluate the following drafts of PowerPoint slides.

- Are the slides' background appropriate for the topic?
- Do the slides use words or phrases rather than complete sentences?
- Is the font big enough to read from a distance?
- Is the art relevant and appropriate?
- Is each slide free from errors?

a(1)



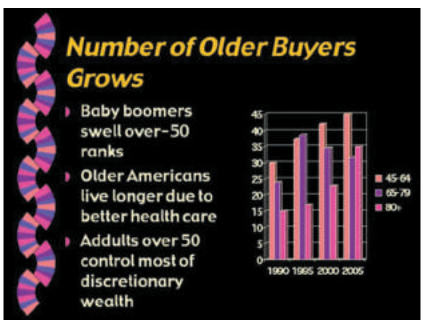
a(2)



a(3)

a(4)

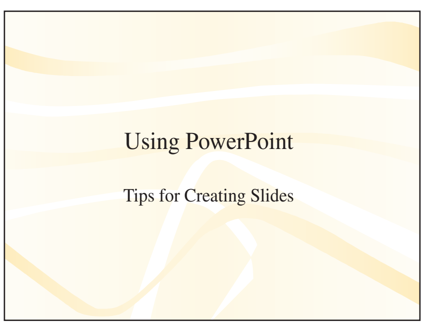
b(1)



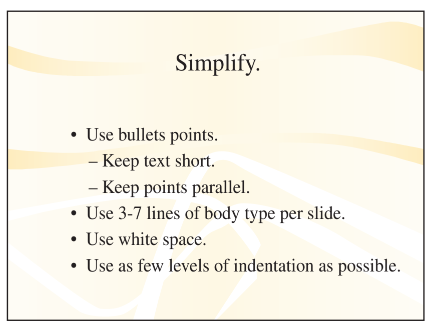
b(2)

b(3)

b(4)



c(1)



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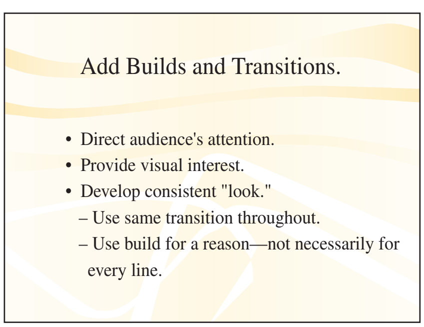

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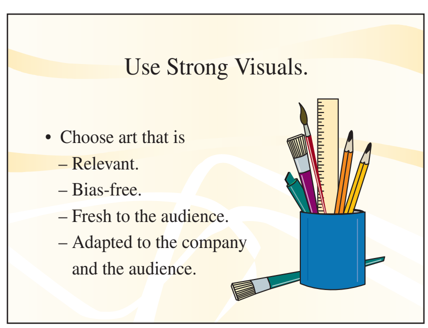

c(4)

19.5 Evaluating Speakers

Attend a lecture or public presentation on your campus. While the speaker is presenting, don't focus on the content of the message. Instead, focus only on his/her speaking ability and take notes. Pay attention to the speaker's abilities to deal with fear, use eye contact with the audience, and project a clear speaking voice. In addition, notice how the speaker stands and gestures, uses notes and visuals, and handles questions.

As your instructor directs,

a. Deliver your findings to the rest of the class in a short 2–4 minute presentation.
b. Write a memo to your instructor that discusses the presenter's speaking abilities, and how, if at all, they can be improved.

19.6 Evaluating the Way a Speaker Handles Questions

Listen to a speaker talking about a controversial subject. (Go to a talk on campus or in town, or watch a speaker on a TV show like *Face the Nation* or *60 Minutes*.) Observe the way he or she handles questions.

- About how many questions does the speaker answer?
- What is the format for asking and answering questions?
- Are the answers clear? responsive to the question? something that could be quoted without embarrassing the speaker and the organization he or she represents?
- How does the speaker handle hostile questions? Does the speaker avoid getting angry? Does the speaker retain control of the meeting? How?
- If some questions were not answered well, what (if anything) could the speaker have done to leave a better impression?
- Did the answers leave the audience with a more or less positive impression of the speaker? Why?

As your instructor directs,

a. Share your evaluation with a small group of students.
b. Present your evaluation formally to the class.
c. Summarize your evaluation in a memo to your instructor.

19.7 Presenting the News

Research a hot business communication topic from the news (ethics, the economy, job layoffs, communication technology, etc.). Find at least 3–5 sources for your topic. Then, make a short (2–3 minute) presentation where you share your findings with the class. Your presentation should invoke some effective communication strategies you learned in this course by discussing how the situation could have been handled more effectively.

As your instructor directs,

a. Deliver your presentation to the class.
b. Turn in a listing of your sources in APA or MLA format.
c. Write a memo to your instructor that discusses the situation and explains how business communication principles would have helped improve the situation.

19.8 Making a Short Oral Presentation

As your instructor directs,

Make a short (3–5 minute) presentation with PowerPoint slides on one of the following topics:

1. Explain how what you've learned in classes, in campus activities, or at work will be useful to the employer who hires you after graduation.
2. Describe your boss's management style.
3. Describe how your co-workers employ teamwork on the job.
4. Explain a "best-practice" in your organization.
5. Explain what a new hire in your organization needs to know to be successful.
6. Tell your boss about a problem in your unit.
7. Make a presentation to raise funds for a nonprofit organization.
8. Profile someone who is successful in the field you hope to enter and explain what makes him or her successful.
9. Describe a specific situation in an organization in which communication was handled well or badly.
10. Explain one of the challenges (e.g., technology, ethics, international competition) that the field you plan to enter is facing.

11. Profile a company that you would like to work for and explain why you think it would make a good employer.
12. Share the results of an information interview.
13. Share some advice for students currently on the job market.
14. Explain your job interview strategy.

19.9 Making a Longer Oral Presentation

As your instructor directs,

Make a 5- to 12-minute presentation on one of the following. Use visuals to make your talk effective.

1. Persuade your supervisor to make a change that will benefit the organization.
2. Persuade your organization to make a change that will improve the organization's image in the community.
3. Describe the communication process of a person you've interviewed who is working in the field you plan to enter.
4. Evaluate a business document.
5. Evaluate the design of a corporate web page.
6. Present a web page you have designed.
7. Analyze rejection letters that students on your campus have received.
8. Persuade an organization on your campus to make a change.
9. Analyze international messages that your workplace has created or received.
10. Present the results of a survey you conduct.
11. Research an organization you would like to work for.
12. Persuade classmates to donate time or money to a charitable organization.

19.10 Watching Yourself

One of the best ways to improve your presentation skills is to watch yourself present. After you have prepared a presentation on one of the topics listed in exercise 19.8 or 19.9, use a video camera to record your presentation. You should then review your presentation, noting what you did well and what you could improve.

As your instructor directs,

a. Write a two-page memo that discusses your strengths and weaknesses as a presenter. Address how you could improve your weaknesses.

b. Prepare a brief (two-minute) oral summation for your peers about your strengths and weaknesses.

c. Record the presentation a second time to see if you have improved some of your weaknesses.

19.11 Making a Group Oral Presentation

As your instructor directs,

Make an 8- to 12-minute presentation on one of the following. Use visuals to make your talk effective.

1. Explain the role of communication in one or more organizations.
2. Create and present a fund-raising strategy for a nonprofit organization.
3. Report on the nonverbal customs of another country.
4. Report on the written communication styles of another country.
5. Report on the business outlook of another country.
6. Analyze print business materials of an organization and present your findings to the class.
7. Interview the employees of an organization about their teamwork strategies and present the information to the class.
8. Interview an office about their routine communication practices and present your findings to the class.

19.12 Evaluating Oral Presentations

Evaluate an oral presentation given by a classmate or a speaker on your campus. Use the following categories:

Strategy

1. Choosing an effective kind of presentation for the situation.
2. Adapting ideas to audience's beliefs, experiences, and interests.
3. Using a strong opening and close.
4. Using visual aids or other devices to involve audience.

Content

5. Providing a clear, unifying purpose.
6. Using specific, vivid supporting material and language.
7. Providing rebuttals to counterclaims or objections.

Organization

8. Providing an overview of main points.
9. Signposting main points in body of talk.
10. Providing adequate transitions between points and speakers.

Visuals

11. Using an appropriate design or template.
12. Using standard edited English.
13. Being creative.

Delivery

14. Making direct eye contact with audience.
15. Using voice effectively.
16. Using gestures effectively.
17. Handling questions effectively.
18. Positioning (not blocking screen)

As your instructor directs,

a. Fill out a form indicating your evaluation in each of the areas.
b. Share your evaluation orally with the speaker.
c. Write a memo to the speaker evaluating the presentation. Send a copy of your memo to your instructor.

19.13 Evaluating Team Presentations

Evaluate team presentations using the chapter checklist.

As your instructor directs,

a. Fill out a form indicating your evaluation in each of the areas.
b. Share your evaluation orally with the team.
c. Write a memo to the team evaluating the presentation. Send a copy of your memo to your instructor.