

INTERMEDIATE WRITING

PBI

BUSINESS LETTER

SESSION 13

MEIYANTI NURCHAERANI S.S.,M.HUM

UNIVERSITAS ESA UNGGUL

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Business writing includes memorandums, reports, proposals, emails, and other forms of writing used in organizations to communicate with internal or external audiences.

Business writing is a type of professional communication and is also known as business communication and professional writing. Learning how to write proper business documents is immeasurably easier by studying examples of proper business writing as well as tips on how to accomplish it.

Purpose of Business Writing

Business writing is informative, instructive, persuasive, and transactional. The goal of business writing is to transmit information to a reader, so clear language is necessary to help a reader understand information easily, says Cullen, adding, "Writing clearly is one of the harder aspects of business writing."

Ginger, a writing-reference website, notes that business writing must:

- **Convey information:** Business communications such as research reports or policy memorandums seek to distribute knowledge.
- **Deliver news:** Professional writing is often used to share recent events with an audience made up of others from inside or outside the company.
- **Direct action:** Many professionals use their business writing skills to tell others what to do or how to do it.

- **Explain or justify:** Professional writing is a suitable way to provide an explanation or justify an action that has already been taken, particularly if the matter is a complicated one.
- **Influence someone to take action:** Business communication is often used to influence others to take a specific action, whether to use a certain tool during the course of business or to purchase a product or service that is on offer.

Brant W. Knapp, in his book, "A Project Manager's Guide to Passing the Project Management Exam," notes that,

"The main aim of business writing is that it should be understood clearly when read quickly. The message should be well planned, simple, clear, and direct."

Additionally, business writing should be transactional, meaning that it relates to business, of course, but also that it relates to buying or selling products or merchandise or that it relates to the specific and purposeful transaction between two people. Business writing is never frivolous: It always seeks to achieve a specific purpose.

Grammar and Style in Business Writing

- Business writing must include certain style and grammatical requirements and norms as follows:

- Know your audience. Also be mindful of your tone, which will vary depending on the message you wish to convey, notes "Technical & Business Writing." For example, a letter of complaint will have a far different tone than a grant proposal, says the reference guide.
- Use nonsexist language. It should be obvious in today's business climate that sexism is not tolerated at most companies. Work to eliminate gender-biased language.
- Don't overuse visuals. Graphic displays should make up no more than 10 to 25 percent of the business writing, says "Technical & Business Writing."
- Use simple, active verbs. Passive writing is harder for your audience to read and it's generally more convoluted. So, don't say: "Two students have been assigned to assist the professor." Instead, keep it simple, direct, and active: "Two students will assist Professor Smith."
- Avoid jargon and words that simply seek to impress. So, say *complete* not *aggragate*, *aware* not *cognizant*, and *prevent* not *obviate*, for example.
- Avoid unsupported generalizations, says "Technical & Business Writing." Don't say: "The study proves that the only way to lose weight is by counting calories." Instead, write, "The study suggests one very successful way to lose weight is to count calories."

Business Writing Examples

There are numerous types of business writing, which is by no means restricted to letters or emails, but memos, business letters, and emails are the most common.

Business Memo

A memo is generally an internal business document that is sent from one person within a company to another person in the same department in that company or a different department in that company. A sample memo, adapted from [Purdue OWL](#), might read:

TO: Kelly Anderson, Marketing Executive

FROM: Jonathon Fitzgerald, Market Research Assistant

DATE: May 23, 2018

SUBJECT: Fall Clothes Line Promotion

Market research and analysis show that the proposed advertising media for the new fall lines need to be reprioritized and changed. Findings from focus groups and surveys have made it apparent that we need to update our advertising efforts to align them with the styles and trends of young adults today. No longer are young adults interested in sitcoms as they watch reality television shows. Also, it is has become increasingly important to use the internet as a tool to communicate with our target audience to show our dominance in the clothing industry.

Internet Advertising

XYZ Company needs to focus advertising on internet sites that appeal to young people. According to surveys, 72 percent of our target market uses the internet for five hours or more per week. The following list shows in order of popularity the most frequented sites:

- Google
- Facebook
- YouTube
- EBay
- iTunes

Shifting our efforts from our other media sources such as radio and magazine to these popular internet sites will more effectively promote our product sales. Young adults are spending more and more time on the internet downloading music, communicating and researching for homework and less and less time reading paper magazines and listening to the radio. As the trend for cultural icons is to go digital, so must our marketing plans.

Television Advertising

It used to be common to advertise for our products on shows like *Blue Bloods* and *Chicago Med* for our target audience, but even the face of television is changing. Young adults are tuning into reality television shows for their entertainment. Results from the focus group show that our target audience is most interested in shows like *America's Got Talent*, *So You Think You Can Dance*, and *American Ninja Warrior*. The only nonreality television show to be ranked in the top 10 most commonly watched shows

by females 18 to 25 is *The Bachelor*. At Blue Incorporated, we need to focus our advertising budget on reality television shows and reduce the amount of advertising spent on other programs.

By refocusing our advertising efforts of our new line of clothing we will be able to maximize the exposure of our product to our target market and therefore increase our sales. Tapping into the trends of young adults will help us gain market share and sales through effective advertising.

Attachments: Focus Group Results, January–May 2018; Survey Findings, January–April 2018

Note a few important stylistic and grammatical norms here: The salutation is very direct; the "TO," "FROM," "DATE," and "SUBJECT" are in all caps, though that is not a hard-and-fast rule. It is also acceptable to uppercase just the first letter of each part of the salutation. The name of the person sending the memo (such as you) is listed in full, followed by your title. On the next line, with one space in between, list the name and title of the person receiving the memo, followed on the next line (leaving one space) by the date, followed on the next line with the subject. In four short lines, the sender, receiver, date, and subject are known.

Include an introductory paragraph, just as described above, followed by body paragraphs that give the details, or in this case, explain the argument (that research shows that advertising should be geared toward younger adults). Because the memo is longer than four or five paragraphs, the writer correctly broke up the text under informative subheads. Just as in most

newspaper and other writing styles, the subheads are in title case (with major words starting with an uppercase letter and minor words all in lowercase).

As shown here, list any attachments (and their dates) at the end of the memo.

Business Letter

A business letter actually follows a very similar style as a business memo with some notable exceptions, as in this example adapted from [Writing-Help-Central](#):

Ms. Raymond Gaudet
Manager, Corporate Programs
Final Edition Publications
3535 E. Third Street
New York, NY 10002
(292) 745-2398

May 23, 2018

Ms. Margaret Campion
Director, Corporate Services
Riviera Industries Inc.
245 Dearborn Park Road
Chicago, IL 60610

Dear Ms. Campion:

It was a pleasure meeting you briefly at last week's Board of Trade event. It's amazing how small the world does seem sometimes, considering that we both earned our undergraduate degrees at U. of Kansas, even overlapping for one year! I suppose we were destined to eventually meet face-to-face.

I was fascinated by your synopsis of the history of Riviera Industries over the past almost half-century. Clearly, your company has a rich corporate heritage and tradition. At the same time, the company has been blessed with a continuum of leaders of foresight and imagination who had the courage to change course at key points along the way so that the company could remain competitive and continue to lead its industry.

As I was mentioning to you, Final Edition Publications is a specialty publisher that focuses on corporate publications, including annual reports, corporate profiles, and corporate histories. We have been in business for over 15 years and during that time have grown from a two-person start-up to a serious corporate publisher with over 100 employees. We have been contracted by over a dozen Fortune 500 companies to produce both annual and special-occasion publications on their behalf.

After our chat at last week's meeting, it occurred to me that with Riviera approaching its 50th anniversary, it would be the perfect occasion to produce a Corporate History to celebrate your company's first half-century. It

so happens that these are exactly the types of corporate publications that we specialize in here at Final Edition. In fact, we have produced corporate histories for dozens of companies.

With Riviera's 50th just around the corner, I'm sure that you have been thinking about ways to make that anniversary a special one. Accordingly, I would very much like to meet with you and show you some of the corporate work we have done, and brief you further on our services. I have a strong feeling that what we offer at Final Edition might be just the kind of thing you've been looking for to celebrate Riviera's 50th.

Please feel free to call me at (292) 745-2398 so that we can discuss this further. If I don't hear from you by the end of next week I will follow up with you and see if we can set up a meeting at your convenience.

Yours truly,

Raymond
Manager, Corporate Programs

Gaudet

Enclosure: Final Edition Publication, Company Brochure

Note how this business letter is just a bit long—5.5 paragraphs—and a bit personal, but it is effective. Any use of the first person is included to remind

the receiver of a previous contact and something the sender and receiver have in common.

Since this letter is clearly a sales pitch, the writer chose to wait until the third paragraph to mention the true purpose of the correspondence: The sender wants the receiver to purchase his company's publication services. The text actually covers most of the basic areas a business letter should cover: It seeks to inform, instruct, and persuade (through the sales pitch), and it's transactional,

After providing the details of the sales pitch, including information about what his company has to offer, the writer finishes the letter with a proper closing. Similar to the memo, enclosures are mentioned after the closing, next to the word, "Enclosure."

Business Email

Emails are an increasing and growing part of business writing. Business emails should be brief. In today's fast-paced business world, it's unlikely that most receivers would take the time to read lengthy emails. An email should be topped with a subject line, followed by a brief salutation listing the person's name, as in this example:

To: Jsmith@gammagamma.com

Subject: Barney Self Report/Invoice for Week Ending May 20

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am reporting the hours that I worked for Gamma Gamma Publishing for the week ending May 20. I worked on the following projects:

- **Jumping Fish Project:** 2 Stories, 6 Hours
- **Catfish Are Swimming:** 3 Stories, 5 hours
- **Camping in the Wild:** 4 Stories, 10 Hours

The Camping in the Wild stories took a bit longer because I had to drive to Joshua Tree to research the articles. My invoice is attached, as well as the required form for mileage reimbursement.

Thank you for the chance to write for your company. Please keep me in mind for future projects.

Sincerely,

Ben Barney

You don't need to include the date or address in an email. You are not sending a letter, so you are, technically, not sending correspondence to a physical address. The fact that you have sent the email to the receiver's email address is sufficient. For the same reason, you do not need to include an "inside address" listing your physical address in the email.

Bullet points may be OK as is the case in this example, but you should study emails you receive from the company to determine the level of formality. You don't need to add the words "Attachments" or "Attachments Enclosed" because you have mentioned in the body of your email that you are

enclosing attachments. Note that on those attachments—your invoice and your mileage reimbursement form—you *may* need to include your address depending on the company's policy and requirements.

Any reports, invoices, detailed discussions, position papers, etc. should be attached to the email either as a word-processing document or a PDF. You might also attach it as a Google Doc. Ensure that the company will be able to open your attachments or that it accepts Google Docs.

Tips for Effective Business Writing

Oxford Living Dictionaries offers these tips for effective business writing:

Put your main points first. State exactly why you are writing the letter, memo, or other business correspondence up front. But, as noted in the example, in a sales pitch, you can grease the wheels a bit first by reminding the receiver of a past meeting or things you have in common.

Use everyday words. Use words like "about" instead of "concerning," "expect" instead of "anticipate," and "part" instead of "component," for example.

Avoid unnecessary jargon and specialist terms. Don't try to make your letters, emails, or memos too technical. If a topic requires a lot of technical jargon, attach it in a separate report.

Use "we're" not "we are," and "we've" not "we have." In a decided change from a few years ago, in an effort to make business correspondence

more accessible, style guides now call for using contractions. Still, use them sparingly.

Use active verbs rather than passive ones. This has long been a rule in journalism, and the style dictum has (thankfully) made its way to business letters. Active verbs are easier for the reader to read. So, don't say, "The decision has been taken to reduce working hours." After all, *who* made the decision? Instead, say, "We've decided to reduce working hours." Also write tight. Note how the second sentence requires fewer words by saying "decided" instead of "made the decision."

Don't be a slave to supposed grammar rules. In other words, go ahead and end a sentence with a preposition if it reads better (and more closely parallels real speech). You don't have to use the awkward construction, "The chairman would like a more detailed explanation for what this investment will be used." Instead, say, "The chairman would like a more detailed explanation of what this investment will be used for."

Avoid too many fonts. Stick to a nice, clean type style such as Helvetica or Times New Roman. Your receiver probably has many things to read during the business day: Make the correspondence easy on the eyes, brief and to the point, and free of errors.

Follow these rules and you'll soon be sending business correspondence that is well received and far more likely to elicit the response you want.

REFERENCES

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-business-writing-1689188>